FROM CORPORATE TO CONNECTED:
RESISTING FOOD SYSTEM DISTANCING IN INDIA AND CANADA

by

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Abstract

The mainstream western food system is built on industrial production, processing, packaging, and distribution of highly processed food products that are detrimental to dietary, social, and ecological health. This unhealthy food system is characterized by a growing physical and conceptual distance between the production and consumption of food. Although distancing is often cited as a problem within the industrial food system, little is known about how it manifests in people’s lives or how best to address the problem of distancing in the food system. By examining the perspectives and motivations of people who are engaged in resisting distancing, this research highlights the meaning and value of food in their lives and shows how a focus on the intrinsic value of food can support healthy food systems change.

This study examined how individuals in India and Canada resisted food system distancing, how they understood the problem of distancing, and assessed their motivations to resist. Thirty-seven semi-structured interviews were conducted in a qualitative, cross-cultural comparative study.

Distancing and industrialization were seen as mutually supportive phenomena that concentrate power in middle spaces occupied by large corporations, usually to the detriment of individual producers and consumers of food. Although resisters in India and Canada were experiencing different levels of food system industrialization, participants in both countries felt that industrialization contributed to changes in social norms and individual values which, once normalized, facilitated further distancing. The primary motivation of the research participants was a belief that food has intrinsic or sacred value. Resisters in India used more explicitly spiritual language, but people in both countries described how recognition of the intrinsic value of food provided a source of deep spiritual meaning in their lives.

Based on the interpretations and motivations of these resisters, this study concludes that there is a need for a paradigm shift in how food is conceptualized in mainstream society.
This would require a broad, systemic approach designed to enable recognition of food’s intrinsic value and support meaningful connections around food without codifying ideological visions of a singular “right” kind of food system.
I was solely responsible for planning, conducting, and analyzing all aspects of the research presented in this dissertation.

This research involved the participation of human subjects and thus required approval from the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The research was approved by certificate number H07-00439.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALR</td>
<td>Agricultural Land Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPA</td>
<td>bisphenol A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFC</td>
<td>chlorofluorocarbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CISSA</td>
<td>Centre for Innovation in Science and Social Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>community supported agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMC</td>
<td>diets-making complex</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFCF</td>
<td>FarmFolk/CityFolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHG</td>
<td>greenhouse gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td>genetically modified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAP</td>
<td>Health Action for People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCD</td>
<td>non-communicable disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFHS</td>
<td>National Family Health Survey (India)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIDDM</td>
<td>non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFSTE</td>
<td>Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEZ</td>
<td>special economic zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>The Environment Collective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLC</td>
<td>The Land Conservancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>UBC</td>
<td>University of British Columbia</td>
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</table>
commensality. Sharing food and eating together.

community supported agriculture. A risk sharing scheme in which consumers purchase shares in an agricultural operation at the start of the growing season in exchange for a portion of the produce at harvest time.

convivium/convivia. Local chapter(s) of Slow Food.

ecological paradigm. Holistic approach to organizing the food system based on relationships and connections.

Feast of Fields. Major FFCF fundraising event; held annually at a farm, where ticket holders sample foods made by local chefs who have partners with local food producers.

food system. The system through which people obtain food. It includes all aspects of food, e.g., primary production, transport, storage, processing and packaging, procurement, consumption, waste and recycling. It involves individuals, families, cultures, commercial entities, the planet, and a multitude of living organisms.

food system distancing. The physical and conceptual chasm between people and food. From a consumer perspective, this involves a loss of knowledge, skills, or understanding regarding where food has come from; what is in it; how it was produced, transported, or processed; or who was involved in its production, transport, or processing.

glocalization. Phenomenon whereby global objects and practices are adapted for a new locality in the context of globalization, e.g., when global brands offer products specifically geared toward the local food culture when entering a new market.

health. I use a holistic definition of health based on three main aspects: (1) human physical health, particularly nutrition, food security, and diet-related disease, as well as environmental health and food safety; (2) ecological health, which refers to environmental sustainability and respect for natural systems; and (3) social health, encompassing cultural and spiritual practices, social justice and human rights, equity, community health, and economic and social sustainability.
highly processed food products. Food products that are processed beyond a minimal level. Processed foods are foods such as pasteurized milk, oil, sugar, canned or frozen produce, flour, etc., while highly processed food products would include frozen meals, frozen French fries, instant foods, salty snack foods, candy, etc.

life sciences paradigm. Approach to food system based on biotechnology solutions to health and environmental problems.

nutrition transition. Shift from period of widespread under-nutrition and infectious disease to one of over-nutrition and related chronic illness as major health problems, usually occurring during economic development of a nation; some transitions involve the co-occurrence of under- and over-nutrition within a given population.

productionist paradigm. Perspective from which the dominant western food system emerged.

Slow Food. International movement to preserve regional agricultural and culinary diversity and heritage; started in Italy after a McDonald’s restaurant opened in the Piazza di Spagna in Rome.

Terra Madre. Biennial Slow Food event held in Torino, Italy; brings together communities of producers, chefs, and academics from around the world to celebrate and preserve diverse local and regional foods.
Glossary of Indian Terms

agni. Fire (specifically that used for cooking).
alo. Potatoes.
annadaana. Giving of food.
Anna Swaraj. Local food sovereignty movement in Kerala state.
annam. Sanskrit word for food.
atta. Fine whole wheat flour, used for making chapatti.
ayurveda. Traditional Indian system of medicine and healthy eating.
Baghpat. Village in western Uttar Pradesh state; I visited with a cooperative farming group in Baghpat that works with Navdanya.
Balasore. City in Orissa state, eastern India.
Bangalore. City in Karnataka state, southern India.
Bhagavad Gita. Hindu scripture, part of the Mahabharata epic.
Bija Vidyapeeth. Navdanya’s agricultural education centre near Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.
bija yatra. Seed walk (as protest or demonstration).
Brahman. God in Hindu culture; also high priestly caste.
brinjal. Eggplant.
chai. Spiced tea with milk and sugar.
chapatti. Simple wheat flatbread.
chakki. Grinding mill such as would be used to grind grain into flour.
chikoo. Sapodilla fruit.
**chole bhature.** Simple meal of spiced chickpeas (*chole*) with puffed fried bread (*bhatura*).

**Dabbawala.** Men who deliver home-cooked lunches by bicycle to office workers in Mumbai. Literally, “one who carries the box.”

**dahi.** Yogurt; translated as “curd” in India.

**dal.** Lentils, usually cooked as a soup or stew.

**Dehradun.** City in Uttarakhhand state, northern India.

**desi.** Indigenous to India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh; often used to denote “pureness” of foods.

**Dharamsala.** Region and town in Himachal Prades state, northern India.

**Didi.** Sister; often used as a term of endearment for friends or others who are not technically sisters in the biological or familial sense.

**Dilli Haat.** Indigenous food market and bazaar run by Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation.

**Garhwal.** District in Uttarakhhand state in India; location of Bija Vidyapeeth school.

**Garhwali.** Language of Garhwal district.

**ghee.** Clarified butter.

**Grishma Ritu Bhog.** Annual celebration of seasonal foods.

**guna.** Quality of nature, of which there are three: *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas.*

**Hauz Khas.** Neighbourhood in New Delhi where Navdanya’s main offices are located.

**Himachal Prades.** State in northern India.

**jaggery.** Raw cane sugar with a molasses-like flavour.

**jhangora.** Barnyard millet.

**Kanak Utsav.** Wheat festival.

**khadi.** Domestically produced, hand-spun cloth promoted by Gandhi.

**khir.** Cream of wheat.

**kosa.** Sheath; used to refer to layers of awareness, of which the physical body is one, through which one works toward enlightenment.
lassi. Drink made from yogurt and water or ice; usually with sweetener, salt, or fruit added.

maida. Refined white flour.

Mahila Annaswaraj. Navdanya program to support traditional women’s food processing knowledge.

masala. Spice mixture.

Mumbai. Current name for city of Bombay.

Mussoorie. Small town in Himalayan foothills, in Garhwal district of Uttarakhand state.

navdanya. Nine seeds; also new gift.

Orissa. Coastal state in eastern India.

Oriya. Language of Orissa state.

panch. Five.

papad. Crispy lentil wafer.

paratha. Pan-fried flatbread formed from layers of dough, sometimes stuffed with vegetables of cheese (paneer); usually served with pickle or chutney, watery lentil or vegetable curry (sambar), and possibly yogurt (curd).


rajas. Excitement; one of the three gunas.

rupee. Indian currency unit; abbreviated as Rs. In December 2008, $1 (CAD) was approximately equivalent to Rs40 (INR).

sabji. Vegetables.

samosa. Indian snack of deep fried pastry filled with spiced potatoes, vegetables, peas, lentils, or sometimes meat; often sold from street vendors.

sari. Traditional Indian attire worn by adult women; a long strip of cloth is wrapped around the body and draped over the shoulder to create a dress.

sarvodaya. Universal progress or uplift; term used by Mahatma Gandhi to denote equity.

sattva. Virtue; one of the three gunas.
sherbet (also sharbat). Cold drink made from fresh fruits or flower extracts, such as bael fruit, lime, mango, or rose.

sooji. Wheat product similar to semolina.

swadeshi. Self-sufficiency; term used by Mahatma Gandhi in boycotting imported products to focus on domestic goods, notably handloom (khadi) cottons.

swaraj. Self-governance; term used by Mahatma Gandhi in promotion of Indian home rule.

tamas. Dullness; one of the three gunas.

Thanal. Shade; also name of a food organization in Kerala.

Thiruvananthapuram. Capital city of Kerala state, India; previously called Trivandrum.

tiffin. Metal boxes used for packed lunches.

Upanishads. Hindu philosophical texts.

Uttarakhand. State in northern India; previously called Uttaranchal.

Vasant Kunj. Neighbourhood in Delhi.

Vasundhera. Gathering of seed keepers and organic producers.

Vedas. Hindu philosophical texts.
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In memory of May and Elsie, 
my grandmothers, 
who taught me the joy of feeding.
Food is "everyday"—it has to be, or we would not survive for long. But food is never just something to eat. It is something to find or hunt or cultivate first of all; for most of human history we have spent a much longer portion of our lives worrying about food, and plotting, working, and fighting to obtain it, than we have in any other pursuit. As soon as we can count on a food supply (and so take food for granted), and not a moment sooner, we start to civilize ourselves. Civilization entails shaping, regulating, constraining, and dramatizing ourselves; we echo the preferences and the principles of our culture in the way we treat our food.

—Margaret Visser, *Much Depends on Dinner*
CHAPTER ONE:
Food Systems, Distancing, and Health

That God of ours, the Great Geometer,
Does something for us here, where He hath put
(if you want to put it that way) things in shape,
Compressing the little lambs in orderly cubes,
    Making the roast a decent cylinder,
    Fairing the tin ellipsoid of a ham,
    Getting the luncheon meat anonymous
In squares and oblongs with the edges bevelled
Or rounded (streamlined, maybe, for greater speed).

Praise Him, He hath conferred aesthetic distance
    Upon our appetites, and on the bloody
Mess of our birthright, our unseemly need,
Imposed significant form. Through Him the brutes
    Enter the pure Euclidean kingdom of number,
    Free of their bulging and blood-swollen lives
    They come to us holy, in cellophane
Transparencies, in the mystical body,
    That we may look unflinchingly on death
As the greatest good, like a philosopher should.

—Howard Nemerov, *Grace to Be Said At the Supermarket*
CHAPTER ONE: Food Systems, Distancing, and Health

Introduction

The value of food to human existence is difficult to dispute. We need food to live and unless poverty or circumstance prevents it, we eat food several times each day. Huge proportions of the global economy circulate because of food, much of the world’s workforce is employed in some kind of food work and the vast majority of the earth’s resources are engaged in ensuring a consistent supply of food. Despite all this, the distance between many people’s perceptions and the realities of the mainstream industrial food system is vast. This dissertation seeks to better understand and address that distance. The research presented here examines food system distancing from the perspective of people actively engaged in resisting it, with the goal of supporting food systems that are healthier for people, the planet, and society.

Food systems are complex networks encompassing all aspects of what we eat, why we eat it, where it comes from, and how it gets onto our plates and into our mouths (Tansey and Worsley 2004). Given that food is necessary for human life, it may seem obvious that food systems are intimately connected with health and that some diets are more conducive to human health than others. Perhaps less obvious is the fact that food systems also impact the health of communities, cultures, and the planet. The highly industrialized dominant western food system presents serious challenges with respect to dietary, social, and ecological health1 (e.g., Lang and Heasman 2004).

Food system distancing refers to the physical and conceptual gap between people and their food, i.e., a loss of knowledge regarding what they are eating, where it came from, how it was made, and how it got to them (Blay-Palmer 2008; Clapp 2012; Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996; Kneen 1993). Distancing is a key feature of the dominant western food system; it is both a symptom of and a contributing factor to many of the unhealthy aspects of that system. As the food system becomes more globalized, so does distancing and the health issues that go along with it. Although food system distancing is not a new concept in the

1 I use a holistic definition of health based on three main aspects: (1) human physical health, particularly nutrition, food security, and diet-related disease, as well as environmental health and food safety; (2) ecological health, which refers to environmental sustainability and respect for natural systems; and (3) social health, encompassing cultural and spiritual practises, social justice and human rights, equity, community health, and economic and social sustainability.
academic literature (e.g., Jaffe and Gertler 2006; Kneen 1993; Willis 1991), little is known about distancing from the perspective of people most engaged in resisting it. Using participant observation and in-depth interviews, I conducted an interpretive analysis of how and why people resist distancing in the food system. In order to address the globalization of distancing, I focussed the research in two countries at different stages of economic development, India and Canada, which provided an alternative lens through which to view aspects of the industrialized food system in each place.

This chapter begins with an overview of the frameworks I used to examine food system distancing with a particular focus on human, ecological, and social health. Paying specific attention to the role of distancing, I explain why I believe the dominant western food system is unhealthy and show how negative aspects of the system are being exported to industrializing nations. Finally, I explain how a cross-cultural comparative study of resisters of distancing can support healthier food system change.

**Healthy Food Systems Framework**

The theoretical framing of this dissertation is drawn from several related perspectives that I collectively refer to as an ecological approach to healthy food systems. An ecological approach to food integrates economics, health, environment, and social issues within a single framework that assesses the complex ecological and social relationships within the global food system (Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2001; Lang 2009; Waltner-Toews and Lang 2000). Systems thinking likewise encourages examination of the components of a system, paying particular attention to the connections and relationships within it (Leischow and Milstein 2006). An ecological and systems framework is therefore useful to examine the complex relationships that arise in my investigation of distancing. Because the research is rooted in the concept of health (broadly defined within human, ecological, and social parameters), I will also borrow from public health frameworks, particularly those that take a holistic or ecological approach to addressing health. Public health and food systems form an easy partnership: both perspectives
relate to a broad range of policies and outcomes, and both consider nutritional, environmental, social, behavioural, and structural determinants of health.

**Food Paradigms**

Lang and Heasman (2004) use a paradigm approach as a way of examining issues of human, ecological, and social health within the food system. They view planning, production, distribution, marketing, retail, waste disposal, power and control, and policy as “an underlying, fundamental set of framing assumptions that shape the way... [food] knowledge is thought of” (Lang and Heasman 2004, 17). This approach offers a political lens through which to view all aspects of the food system as well as the interconnections between them. The current dominant food system developed within a productionist paradigm, emerging in the aftermath of World War II when meeting basic food needs was a major priority worldwide. As such, this food system is focussed on efficiency and maximum output of food through mass production, large scale processing, and widespread distribution. Lang and Heasman (2004) argue that the dominant productionist food paradigm is in flux and may be superseded by one of two emerging food paradigms: the life sciences integrated paradigm (which uses biological and technological approaches to address some of the problems within the productionist paradigm) or the ecologically integrated paradigm (which takes a more holistic view of food, environment, and health).

The dominant productionist food system is based largely on industrialization and intensification, relying heavily on non-renewable sources of energy (e.g., petroleum), chemical inputs, mechanization, and economies of scale. This system is a product of the post-war era from which it emerged, when chemical knowledge was being applied in new ways (MacIntyre 1987; Vandeman 1995) and there was a need to produce a sufficient quantity of food to feed a growing global population (Cannon and Leitzmann 2005). The requirements of mass production have resulted in an abundant supply of homogenous, durable foodstuffs created through a marriage of industrial technology with agriculture, food preservation, and cooking. The productionist food system is characterized by inequitable distribution of food, power imbalances, environmental damage, and high rates of diet-related non-communicable diseases
(NCDs). Despite the top down control over food within the dominant food system, the productionist paradigm that drives it places a lot of responsibility on the individual. Consumers are provided with an overwhelmingly large range of options and are responsible for selecting foods that meet their own needs with respect to cost, convenience, preference, and health (Lang and Heasman 2004).

The life sciences paradigm takes a similar perspective as the productionist paradigm, using biotechnology and other technologies to address some of the problems created by a dependence on chemicals (Lang and Heasman 2004). Proponents of this paradigm believe in the adoption of technological approaches to minimize dependence on agrochemicals and fossil fuels, as well as the use of engineered novel foods to address individual health concerns. A food system based on the life sciences paradigm would continue to rely on monoculture and large scale food production, but the focus would shift from chemical fertilizers and pesticides to genetically modified (GM) crops engineered to resist pests. Diet-related health problems would be addressed by nutraceuticals or foods engineered without components believed to be harmful (such as trans fats). Further, human genetics could be employed to assess predisposition to disease such that foods could be tailored to individual needs in the same way that drugs might be (Lang and Heasman 2004). In a sense, the life sciences paradigm treats food more as a source of nutrients than nourishment.

The second emerging alternative to the dominant productionist food system is the ecologically integrated paradigm, based on principles of equity, health, sustainability, and democracy (Lang and Heasman 2004). Although firmly rooted in the science of biology, the ecological paradigm shifts from a reductionist use of science based on technological fixes to a holistic perspective based on a broad view of health and interconnection. Lang and Heasman (2004) suggest that a food system situated within an ecological paradigm would facilitate a move away from centralized industrial systems toward a more localized, integrated means of production and distribution that relies on knowledge, skills, and empowering relationships in all sectors of the food supply chain. It replaces homogeneity with diversity, consumers with food citizens, and top down control with horizontal networks. Although they acknowledge that the evidence is still emerging, Lang and Heasman (2004) suggest that an ecological approach to
food systems is inherently equitable, sustainable, and healthy. The ecologically integrated paradigm describes a vision much like that of a growing number of alternative food movements, including those with which I engaged for this research.

Public Health Frameworks for Food Systems Analysis

Until recently, integration between food systems research and public health or nutrition studies has been limited. This is likely related to nutrition’s origins as a reductionist biochemical science (Cannon and Leitzmann 2005) and the broad range of non-health disciplines engaged in food systems research (e.g., geography, sociology). The multiple disciplines engaged in food studies have now begun to converge and comprehensive frameworks are emerging. Systems thinking is being applied to nutrition and public health (e.g., American Public Health Association 2007; Sobal, Kettel Khan, and Bisogni 1998) and the definition of nutrition—and public health nutrition in particular—is being redefined to fit within a more holistic, ecological paradigm (see Wahlqvist 2005b). More recently, Blay-Palmer and Koc (2010, 225-226) offered a model for sustainable food systems that embedded fresh, healthy, nourishing foods within their definition of a sustainable food system.

Food and nutrition system

The earliest example of integration between food systems and nutrition that I have found is the “food and nutrition system” model conceptualized by Sobal, Kettel Khan, and Bisogni (1998). The Sobal et al. model incorporates biomedical, environmental, and social health and explicitly considers the complex relationships between all aspects of the system. Particularly relevant to this dissertation is the organization of subsystems in this model. The producer subsystem incorporates production, processing, and distribution as distinct but related processes. The consumer subsystem considers not only acquisition and consumption of food, but also preparation, which is a key site for deskilling and distancing in the food system as these practices move outside the domestic sphere, which I will discuss later in this chapter. The importance of physical utilization and health outcomes are viewed as distinct from consumption, highlighting the biomedical or nutritional aspects of food that are sometimes overlooked in food systems analyses.
As food systems research increasingly incorporates nutritional health, the field of public health (and public health nutrition in particular) is likewise undergoing a 21st century paradigm shift to broaden its reach into non-medical aspects of the food system. The American Public Health Association, in its policy Toward a Healthy, Sustainable Food System, has adopted a food systems approach based on the work of Leischow and Milstein (2006) and Sobal, Kettel Khan, and Bisogni (1998), stressing the role of actors within the food system:

A systems approach to food enables consideration of the many intricately related factors involved in getting food from farm to consumer, as well as their implications for health. Food systems include inputs, mechanisms, and structures for food production, processing, distribution, acquisition, preparation, consumption, and metabolism. Also included in a food system approach are the participants in that system, including farmers, fishers, industries, workers, governments, institutional purchasers, communities, and consumers. Food systems are deeply entwined with many social issues. Overlapping food systems serve local, regional, national, and global levels; herein, the term refers to the national level, unless noted.

APHA defines a sustainable food system as one that provides healthy food to meet current food needs while maintaining healthy ecosystems that can also provide food for generations to come with minimal negative impact to the environment. A sustainable food system also encourages local production and distribution infrastructures and makes nutritious food available, accessible, and affordable to all. Further, it is humane and just, protecting farmers and other workers, consumers, and communities. (American Public Health Association 2007, par. 3–4)

**New nutrition science**

The emerging paradigm of public nutrition explicitly addresses the need for food systems action to address nutritional health (Beaudry and Delisle 2005; Beaudry, Hamelin, and Delisle 2004). Taking a broader approach than traditional public health frameworks, public nutrition is firmly rooted in the idea that the determinants of diet are frequently beyond the control not only of individuals but also of nutritional health professionals. This paradigm considers the impacts of structure on lifestyle choices and therefore recognizes that changes are needed at multiple places within the food system in order to encourage dietary change and thus better nutritional outcomes for a population (Beaudry, Hamelin, and Delisle 2004). Public nutrition thus addresses not just food but people’s relationships with food (Beaudry and Delisle 2005). The authors suggest that health system actors may not form the most important sector
in enacting changes to influence population nutrition (Beaudry, Hamelin, and Delisle 2004). Specifically, nutrition professionals working within a paradigm of public nutrition need to increase their knowledge and awareness of food systems issues so that they can support the public in making responsible food decisions that are nutritionally and environmentally healthy (Beaudry and Delisle 2005).

Public nutrition goes beyond taking a systems approach to the traditional work of public health nutrition; it also integrates the field of international nutrition with food systems and, perhaps most notably, removes the divisions between the different fields of nutrition (Beaudry and Delisle 2005). While nutrition science in the West originated within a paradigm focussed on providing sufficient food and nutrients for optimal health (Levenstein 2003; Ostry 2006), international nutrition has historically concerned itself with issues of food insecurity, hunger, and under-nutrition in low-income countries (Bengoa 1997). And, as nutrition science in the West has shifted focus from diseases of deficiency to diseases of over-nutrition and malconsumption, the proponents of public nutrition contend that international nutrition needs to expand in focus. Public nutrition recognizes that malconsumption (or dysnutrition) is no longer solely a problem of wealthy nations and frequency exists in places with widespread hunger or food insecurity, conversely that populations in wealthy countries are not immune to under-nutrition, and that food environments and food systems play an important role in the nutrition/dysnutrition balance (Beaudry and Delisle 2005).

Public nutrition is part of an ongoing project of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences on “The New Nutrition Science,” which aims to broaden nutritional paradigms. A meeting at the University of Giessen in Germany in 2005 culminated in the publication of a special issue of the journal Public Health Nutrition focussed on this project (Wahlqvist 2005b). The new nutrition science project aims to reframe nutrition science within a new paradigm built not just on biological but also social and environmental health as central tenets of nutrition science (Beauman et al. 2005; Wahlqvist 2005a; 2005b). This work follows Nancy Milio’s (1989) innovative work on healthy public policy, in which she stressed the importance of supportive environments in supporting healthy behaviours (including eating habits) by making the
healthiest choices the “easiest—the ‘cheapest’ and most numerous—choices for selection . . . among all the options available” (83).

**Making Healthy Choices Easy Choices**

Making healthy choices easy implies the need for attention at the nexus of structure and agency; it also suggests a link between food systems and nutrition. Milio (1989; 1990a; 1990b) was clear that healthy food choices are a direct function of the choices actually made available. An entirely structuralist approach implies that individuals act like lemmings at the mercy of their surroundings, or worse, that they are incapable of making responsible food choices and need to have their diets dictated. A consumerist approach ignores the multiple constraints place on individuals within the food system and burdens them with excessive responsibility. Neither approach can effectively solve questions regarding the ‘best’ or ‘healthiest’ way of eating. More likely, the solution lies somewhere in the middle.

Dominant political and industry rhetoric attests to the abundance of consumer choice and consumers’ ability (or responsibility) to ‘vote with their dollars’ to create structural change, but a closer examination shows the irrational nature of such an expectation, particularly with respect to the food system (Gabriel and Lang 2006; Korthals 2004; Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009; Lang and Heasman 2004). Food choices are constrained by the food system itself (Beaudry, Hamelin, and Delisle 2004), just as individuals’ health choices are impacted by factors beyond their control that prevent them from holding sole responsibility for health behaviours (Frieden 2010). Welsh and MacRae (1998) welcome active engagement by individual consumers in food system issues, but they also point to constraints against fully realized food citizenship because the capacity to act is frequently limited by the system. They point to corporate concentration, a lack of complete information about food products, and heavy promotion and retailing of processed foods as constraints against full consumer autonomy in the current food system. Similarly, Wilkins (2005), discussing consumer responsibility and choice in an address on food citizenship, states that “[t]he first barrier, as I see it, is the food system itself” (Wilkins

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2 Food citizenship refers to full participation in the food system, including the rights and responsibilities that accompany any form of citizenship (Welsh and MacRae 1998).
Distancing surely plays a central role here: with the severing of temporal and spatial feedback between production and consumption, consumers lack knowledge about the decisions they are making and therefore cannot exercise real choice. According to Princen (2002), distancing separates rights and responsibilities such that consumers cannot be held fully responsible for the consequences of their decisions.

Food consumers are frequently overwhelmed with (often contradictory) information, yet lacking in appropriate knowledge to exercise true choice in the food system (Gabriel and Lang 2006). Even when they have adequate knowledge, consumers are faced with great challenges in making so-called responsible choices. Just because someone knows how they want to eat does not mean they have the ability to do so. The apparently endless choice of foods offered in most supermarkets is in many respects not choice at all, but selection between a series of options provided by actors within the food industry, many of which are simply variations on a theme in different packaging (Soper 2007). Lang (2009) terms this process “choice edits”; it is the retailers who decide what will be made available on store shelves and therefore what consumers have the option to choose from. Although the most obvious mediator of consumer choice, retail is but one sector that influences food options available. Lang (2005) provides an overview of how multiple sectors including biotechnology, processing technology, trade, supply chain logistics, animal husbandry and breeding techniques, mass marketing, and even labour relations influence the food supply. Food choices are not thus individual consumer acts, but the culmination of institutional arrangements, actors from multiple sectors such as government and industry, and consumer preference (Korthals 2004).

Excessive focus on individual behaviour regarding food system choices is not only ineffective; it can lead to blaming of victims who don’t make the ‘right’ choices and claims of moral superiority from those who feel they do. In a survey of Danish food consumers, Holm (2003) found that consumers often felt that they didn’t have sufficient information or lacked appropriate options or means to make the food choices they desired. If people are expected to exercise responsibility without sufficient capacity to make real choices, victim blaming results.

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3 To illustrate Wilkins’s point, Lustig, Schmidt, and Brindis (2012) point out that sugar, a substance that humans desire for evolutionary reasons, is unavoidable in modern western society, and that even consumers actively trying to avoid sugar will be pressed find any processed foods without sugar added.
Blaming people for poor choices has a long history in public health policy, and just as long a history of ineffectiveness. Although it may not be obvious, the public often “chose[s] the best they [can] among the miserable options available to them” (Milio 1990b, 45).

Individuals are ostensibly free to make spending and consumption choices that support their values (and probably should do so where they can). While these consumer actions may make a statement that encourages systemic change (e.g., Pollan 2008), it is important not to view such actions as superior to those by people facing more structural constraints. Moreover, there is an ongoing debate whether such “political consumerism” can actually lead to systemic change or whether it is simply a way to justify commodity fetishism among people who are politically disenchanted (Barnett 2010; Maniates 2001) or merely self-serving. Political consumerism alone is not likely to be sufficient to change the food system such that it becomes more healthful and sustainable for everyone (see Guthman 2007a; Guthman 2007b). Efforts that advocate for structural change and individual consumer actions can, however, be mutually supportive.

Research Problem

Dominant Western Food System

The dominant western food system is characterized by industrialization, convenience and fast foods, and a chasm between the production and consumption of foods. The scale and nature of industrial production, processing, packaging, transport, retailing, consumption, and disposal of end products (i.e., waste) raise health concerns on all levels—for people, the planet, and society. The complex relationships between these issues thus need to be addressed through integrative approaches (American Public Health Association 2007; Beauman et al. 2005). In the following sections, I will review ways in which what people eat and how those foods are produced can impact dietary, ecological, and social health.
Dietary health in the western food system

Diet has a large influence on health. It can be a major risk factor in diet-related illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer, as well as contributing to obesity (Danaei et al. 2009; Katzmarzyk 2002; Michael and Yen 2009; Tremblay, Katzmarzyk, and Willms 2002; Tremblay and Willms 2000). Although I will not provide a detailed overview of nutritional aspects of disease, I will point to some aspects of diet that are unique to the mainstream industrial food system.

Processed, packaged, and prepared foods are ubiquitous in the western diet, and they range in quality from freshly prepared foods to those which merely resemble ‘real’ food but are made with a dizzying list of additives and non-food ingredients using processes not seen in any home kitchen (Atkins and Bowler 2001). Some are constructions deemed edible but with few actual food ingredients.4 Highly processed food products—and I use the term products deliberately—have been described as “pseudo foods” (Winson 2004), “edible foodlike substances” (Pollan 2008), and “ultra-processed foods” (Monteiro 2010). Highly processed food products are formulated from industrially processed food constituents; attractively packaged and aggressively marketed; ready to eat, heat, or assemble; convenient to purchase, prepare, and eat; cheaper than their fresh counterparts (if any); manufactured at centralized facilities; durable; and without strong or unusual flavours (Jaffe and Gertler 2006; Monteiro 2010; Pollan 2008; Winson 2004). These products also tend to be high in added sweeteners, fats, and/or salt and low in micronutrients and fibre. Trans fatty acids from hydrogenated vegetable oils and high fructose corn sweeteners are only found in industrially produced foods.5 Both ingredients are associated with high caloric intake and increased risk of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes among adults and children (Bray 2004; Bray, Nielsen, and Popkin 2004; Drewnowski and Popkin 1997; Popkin 2003; Winson 2004).

4 Children’s breakfast cereals such as Lucky Charms® or Count Chocula® are typical examples of such edible products. They contain few natural ingredients (i.e., actual foods such as broccoli or milk), as opposed to ‘non-food ingredients’ (i.e., highly refined flour, modified starches, manufactured sweeteners, flavour enhancers, dyes, preservatives, etc.)

5 Hydrogenated vegetable oils or high fructose corn sweeteners may be found in ready-made food products such as biscuits and beverages, and may also be in some ingredients such as hydrogenated margarine and shortening that can be used in home cooking.
In addition to the direct nutritional implications of the mainstream western diet, the food system has been a source of pesticide exposure (Hjorth et al. 2011), toxic contamination of foodstuffs (e.g., melamine in products from China (Ingelfinger 2008)), and microbiological contamination (Jackson et al. 2009). New issues arise with increasing frequency and the introduction of new technologies or research. Although debate continues regarding possible health risks associated with consumption of foods from genetically modified (GM) seeds, many packaged food products contain GM ingredients. Irradiation of foods (Diehl 2002), the use of nanoparticles (Sozer and Kokini 2009; Vandermoere et al. 2011), bisphenol A (BPA) residues from food and beverage packaging (Cao, Corriveau, and Popovic 2010), contamination of farmed salmon (Hites et al. 2004), and antibiotic resistance due to prophylactic use in confined poultry and livestock operations (Jackson et al. 2009; Lang and Heasman 2004) are only a few of the issues that have received widespread attention and research in the past few years.

**Ecological implications of the dominant food system**

The dominant western food system, with its intensive industrial production and processing, is faced with challenges of resource depletion, pollution, and environmental degradation. Although no form of agriculture is environmentally neutral, agriculture can make a light footprint or contribute to restoring ecosystem function. The industrial food system, however, introduces problems particular to its massive scale and degree of industrialization. The ecological implications of industrial agriculture are described in detail elsewhere (e.g., Altieri 1998; Altieri and Nicholls 2005; Kimbrell 2002; Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009; Lang and Heasman 2004; Norberge-Hodge, Goering, and Page 2001; O’Kane 2012; Tilman et al. 2002). Environmental challenges relate to wastes from intensive livestock production (see Thorne 2006); monocropping, water use, and chemical inputs for fruit and vegetable production (Tilman et al. 2002); and depletion of wild fish stocks and impacts of offshore aquaculture (Pauly et al. 2002; Schiermeier 2002). Industrial agriculture is also a major consumer of fossil fuel energy for fertilizer production and equipment operation, as well as a major producer of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Ellers et al. 2010).

Post production (i.e., food processing) activities in the food system involve high consumption of resources and production of wastes. In 2002, 4% of manufacturing energy in
Canada was used by the food and beverage industry. In 2005, the industry used almost 20% of industrial water, 77% of which was discharged as waste (Ellers et al. 2010). Packaging creates a huge environmental impact in both its production and waste. Fifty-six percent of all packaging produced is for food, and 15% of waste is from food packaging. Among residential waste, 30% came from packaging and 40% of that from food packaging (based on 1990 data) (Maxime, Marcotte, and Arcand 2006). There is debate over the relative contribution of emissions from long distance transport of foods to greenhouse gas production as well as the relative efficiency of different systems of production, processing, and storage (Edwards-Jones et al. 2008; McWilliams 2009; Weber and Matthews 2008). Environmental impact depends partly on the type of food in question (e.g., animal versus plant foods), season, production method, and local agronomic conditions, to name a few (Edwards-Jones et al. 2008). However, individual trips to grocery stores are an important source of emissions, suggesting that neither frequent trips to ‘big box’ style supermarkets that tend not to be in urban residential areas (and that also sell predominantly packaged foods) (Pretty et al. 2005) nor multiple car trips to smaller fresh markets (McWilliams 2009) are supportive of ecological health.

**Social health in the dominant food system**

Despite being characterized by abundance and excess, the mainstream western food system has not achieved equity in the realm of production or consumption. Industrialization in primary production, packing, distribution, and processing has shifted the bulk of production from small independent operations to large enterprises fuelled by low level employment. Access to a sufficient quantity and quality of food is not universally available, even in regions with abundant food supplies. Moreover, the way food is consumed in the mainstream western food system presents social as well as nutritional challenges.

The food system is a major employer and source of revenue for the economy, but its contributions are far from equitable. Schlosser (2002) exposed dangerous and unstable working conditions in the meat processing industry that bore striking resemblance to those described a century prior in Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, the publication that ultimately stimulated creation of the United States Food and Drugs Act (Sinclair [1906] 1981). Although meat processing can be a source of particularly gruesome injuries (Culp et al. 2008; Schlosser 2002), agricultural
workers also deal with hardships hardly commensurate with their incomes or the extent to which our food system depends on their labour. They are often subjected to unsafe conditions, long hours, and abuse, with little redress regardless of whether they are in Canada (Binford 2009; Preibisch 2010) or in the export markets of the global South (Barndt 2002). Farmers who own their land are challenged with meeting the economics of scale and mechanization of the industrial food system. Farms find a niche market, consolidate into fewer hands, or struggle to earn a decent living (Blay-Palmer 2008; National Farmers Union 2003; 2005).

Despite increases in overall food production, food insecurity remains a problem even in wealthy countries like Canada. According to the Canadian Community Health Survey, nearly 8% of Canadian households experienced food insecurity in 2007–2008 (Health Canada 2011). Moreover, low income consumers depend largely on highly processed products. Although not high in micronutrient density (unless fortified), the durability, palatability, and energy density of highly processed food products may be desirable to people who can least afford to have food go to waste from decay or distaste (Rideout, Seed, and Ostry 2006; Tarasuk 2004).

Exporting the Western Food System

The mainstream western food system—or at least its basic principles and governance structures—is spreading globally, particularly with changes in global trade and investment rules since the early 1990s (Friedmann 1999; Hawkes 2006; McMichael 2000). The international flow of food favours highly industrialized nations on several levels. Fresh fruits and vegetables, tropical fruits, high value crops such as coffee or cacao, and non-food crops such as tobacco or cotton, move from the South\(^6\) to the West. In return, the western world supplies less industrialized countries with highly processed foods (Baris and McLeod 2000; Barndt 2002; Caraher and Coveney 2004). Perhaps more important than the physical flow of processed food products is the cultural normalization of commercially produced branded foods in the South (Caraher and Coveney 2004; Lang 1999a; 1999b). As Deborah Barndt (2002) writes in her deconstruction of the global tomato industry:

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\(^6\) I use the term South to refer to so-called developing, low income, or industrializing countries, which are located predominantly in the southern hemisphere, as opposed to highly industrialized, wealthier western nations, located predominantly in the northern hemisphere.
A key contradiction in the tomato story is that the corporate tomato comes north, while McDonald’s hamburgers go south; in Canada and the United States, we depend on southern production for our food, while northern practices of production and consumption are exported to increasingly transform southern economics and culture. (Barndt 2002, 64)

While we in the West receive massive quantities of fresh produce that permit us to forget about the seasonality of horticulture (Goldfrank 2005), we return the favour by exporting the aspects of our food system that are most detrimental to health—a culture of convenience and a built environment that promotes consumption of highly processed food products. Although frequently promoted as an example of increased development and freedom of choice in industrializing countries, the cultural shift toward branded and highly processed foods is fraught with the same risks as in the West (see Making Healthy Choices Easy Choices above).

This dietary shift in industrializing countries is strengthened by increasing urbanization and proliferation of fast food outlets and supermarkets that advertise and sell branded products (Hawkes 2002; Reardon et al. 2003). Facilitating processes of westernization is the phenomenon of globalization, through which global objects and practices are adapted for the local context (Ritzer 2004) (fig. 1.1). Although it has been argued that globalization creates a space for local empowerment, I agree with scholars (e.g., Hawkes 2002; Lang and Heasman 2004; Ritzer 2004) who take the position that the dominant impact of globalization has been to facilitate the introduction of global brands into new markets. Western governments promote food industry expansion into these emerging markets (Food Value Chain Bureau 2004), while corporations actively seek to expand by tapping into previously undeveloped markets, introducing new, often unhealthy, foods to middle class populations aspiring to adopt modern lifestyles (Hawkes 2005; Reardon et al. 2003). In India, all but the poorest 20% of the population have increased their consumption of packaged fast and snack foods while eating fewer fruits and vegetables. Middle class people splurge on the global brands, while unbranded versions are available to those who aspire to this lifestyle but can’t afford these products (Vepa 2004).

7 The menu of McDonald’s India provides a clear example of glocalization, with ‘Indianized’ items such as the vegetarian McSpicy Paneer™ sandwich interspersed with traditional McDonald’s offerings like the Sausage McMuffin™ and Hash Brown™ (McDonald’s India 2010).
The adoption of western style eating habits is associated with measured changes in health status toward an increase in overweight and NCDs (Chopra, Galbraith, and Darnton-Hill 2002). As incomes and food availability rise, the nutrition transition is associated with a shift from under-nutrition and infectious diseases to over-nutrition and NCDs such as cancer and non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM) as major health issues (Popkin 2003). A similar shift occurred in the West in the early 20th century. However, it is now occurring at earlier stages of development in low- to middle-income countries that now face a double burden of under-nutrition alongside these diseases of affluence (Popkin and Gordon-Larsen 2004; Popkin 2002). The World Health Organization has identified dietary change and the health outcomes associated with the nutrition transition as serious global public health problems (World Health Organization 2003; 2004).

A variety of factors have been credited with contributing to the impacts of the nutrition transition, many of which are not inherently negative. Rising incomes allow people to purchase a greater quantity and variety of food. Urbanization and women working outside the home mean there is less time to prepare meals at home using basic ingredients (Haddad 2003). However, the extent to which structural factors such as increased availability of processed
foods through fast food outlets and supermarkets contribute to the nutrition transition should not be overlooked (Hawkes 2005; 2006; Kennedy, Nantel, and Shetty 2004).

The nutrition transition began to emerge in India over a decade ago. The 1998–1999 Indian National Family Health Survey (NFHS 2) showed that people living in urban areas, which was correlated with higher socioeconomic status, increased education, and more sedentary employment, were more likely to be overweight or obese (37% of women in large cities were overweight). At the same time, poorer rural residents tended toward underweight (42% of rural women were underweight) (Griffiths and Bentley 2001). The trend continued in the 2005–2006 sample, which showed marked increases in prevalence of overweight or obesity with increasing income (Wang et al. 2009). Rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers are also markedly higher in urban areas, changes that have been attributed to lifestyle factors, eating out, meat and fat intake, and substitution of coarse cereal grains with refined versions. The negative health impacts of these changes are expected to increase as India opens its markets to global products and shifts agricultural production toward export crops (Shetty 2002).

**Deskilling and Distancing: What Goes Around Comes Around**

This research initiated with a concern about deskilling in the food system and the potential implications for the future of farming, consumption, and our cultural relationship with food. I was aware of a loss of cooking skills among the general public and became deeply concerned with how a lack of basic food knowledge and skills would limit one’s ability to act within the constraints of the food system and make informed consumption choices. Through conversations with people versed in agriculture, I realized that deskilling was a double-edged sword. Not only were the skills needed to make informed food choices disappearing, but also differential knowledge of how to produce food was being lost as agriculture became more mechanized and corporatized. My initial review of the literature indicated that the loss of knowledge and skills was part of the much broader phenomenon of distancing, which both facilitates deskilling and creates a system in which self-conscious action becomes more and more difficult to exercise even among educated, skilled individuals. Diet is increasingly
determined by the structures present in the food system than by real choices made by informed people.

**Deskilling**

As societies become more and more dependent on highly processed, pre-packaged convenience foods, it is important to consider the skills and knowledge that may be lost. For many people, cooking has become more a process of assembly and less an act of creation (Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009). Cookbooks focus on convenience and time-saving techniques, even in places like India still undergoing a nutrition transition (fig. 1.2), while magazine articles promote recipes by likening them to instruction manuals for combining ready-made components (Martocq and Seymour 2006; Sylkes 1989). Caraher et al. (1999) describe a cooking skills transition in which people are becoming less skilled in the manual aspects of preparing fresh meals from raw ingredients and more skilled at using technology in the form of assembling packaged ingredients or using appliances such as microwaves. In her studies of domestic cooking skills in England, Short (2003a; 2003b) considers tacit skills such as the ability to multi-task, be creative in using leftovers or available foods, plan meals, make judgements, or meet dietary preferences of different family members. She considers cooking skills to be what people do to get food on the table, regardless of whether fresh or prepared ingredients are used. I agree that such tacit skills are essential, but perhaps they should include the ability to put food on the table without reliance on prepared ingredients. But even if one does not actually cook, knowledge of cooking and ingredients is essential to make the best selection among available products (Caraher et al. 1999; Dixon, Hinde, and Banwell 2006; Furey et al. 2000; Lang and Caraher 2001).
Discussions of domestic deskilling borrow from the industrial labour theories of Taylor (1947) and Braverman (1974). Taylorism promotes efficiency through the separation of the mental and physical aspects of work; workers perform simple manual tasks without an understanding of the functioning of the whole (Fantasia 1995; Taylor 1947). Braverman’s (1974) theory deals with the degradation in the quality of work as workers lose control over the production process. A worker in a bread factory does not need to know how to make bread, and thus has little control over the outcome of the product. Jaffe and Gertler (2006) apply Braverman’s ideas to the separation of food producers and consumers. During times of self-provisioning, people produced most of what they consumed. When people began to engage in waged labour, they purchased foods, and later appliances, which opened up new markets for yet more purchased food products. Over time, people became less familiar with how the things that they bought had been produced.

Deskilling does not necessarily refer to an absolute loss of skills, but rather a transfer of skills. Farming, processing, cooking, and telling people what is good to eat became the domain of scientists, specialists, and technologists as more steps in the food acquisition process moved
outside the domestic sphere (Goodman and Redclift 1991; Lang and Caraher 2001; Lyon, Colquhoun, and Alexander 2003). Farmer knowledge was largely replaced by chemical and seed industries, making farmers dependent on industry for inputs and knowledge (Vandeman 1995). In accepting factory foods in the early 20th century, North American consumers implicitly accepted the authority of food scientists over domestic cooks (Pawsey 2000). The creation of nutrition science, with its focus on chemical and microbiological factors, implied that the traditional knowledge of women was unscientific and backward (Jaffe and Gertler 2006; Levenstein 2003; Ostry 2006; Roth 2000). Food manufacturers were then able to fill the knowledge gap with labels and health claims aimed at discerning housewives who wanted the safest, healthiest foods for their families (Levenstein 2003; Ostry 2006). These transfers of skill made it increasingly difficult to understand the basic processes of the food system.

**Distancing**

Food system distancing is the physical and conceptual gap between people and food (Blay-Palmer 2008; Clapp 2012; Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996; Kneen 1993). Distancing prevents eaters from understanding where their food has come from, how it has been transformed into its current form, who has been involved in the process, and how it has ultimately reached them. Ironically, distancing prevents even those people intimately involved in some part of the process from fully knowing the history of the foodstuff or what will happen to it after it leaves them. Distancing is a form of deskilling in that, following Braverman’s (1974) theory, people lose control over their personal food system because they do not (or cannot) understand the system through which the food is produced. They lack the “information, knowledge, and analytical frameworks needed to make informed decisions that reflect their own ‘fully costed’ interests” (Jaffe and Gertler 2006, 143).

The gap between people and their food is growing in several ways. People are eating food produced further and further away from where they live (Bentley and Barker 2005; Pretty et al. 2005; Xuereb 2005). As well, food is subject to an increasing amount of industrial and technological processes. As this occurs, people know less about where their food comes from, what is actually in it, and what has happened to it. Food comes to be perceived as a mysterious substance that we are ill equipped to deal with (Fischler 1980). Wendell Berry put it succinctly:
[It] is virtually impossible for us to know the economic history or the ecological cost of the products we buy; the origins of the products are typically too distant and too scattered and the processes of trade, manufacture, transportation, and marketing too complicated. There are, moreover, too many good reasons for the industrial suppliers of these products not to want their histories to be known. (Berry 2002, 237)

Ironically, as distancing has proliferated, the food system has become more connected in some ways. People have access to a wider range of foods from all over the world, and many branded products can be purchased in identical form almost anywhere in the world. Processes and locations within the global food system have become highly integrated, coordinated through extremely complex data systems. Despite this breadth in the number and extent of connections, those connections lack a depth of meaning or relationship: even the connections have undergone conceptual distancing.

Industrialization and commodification in agriculture and food processing are defining characteristics of the distanced food system. Industrially processed food products are profitable for the food industry because of opportunities for adding value⁸ (Atkins and Bowler 2001; Smith and Trant 2003; Winson 2004). Highly processed products also make excellent commodities because durability (the ability to be distanced from impacts of time and space such as bruising or rotting) is valued more than quality attributes like nutrition, texture, or flavour⁹ (Friedmann 1993; Kneen 1993). Thus, “good food is a bad commodity, but good commodities are often bad foods” (Caraher and Coveney 2004, 593). The best commodities actually maximize the knowledge discrepancy between consumers and producers by disconnecting food from the realities of time and space (Appadurai 1986). High profit margins in “value-added” commodities encourage the industry to expand markets, usually by creating new and ostensibly unique products. The resulting array of convenient, pre-prepared food products reduces the need for consumers to participate in basic food procurement and preparation activities (Warde 1997). It

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⁸ From an industry perspective, “value” refers to opportunities for economic gain along the food chain, as opposed to nutritional or other more qualitative values. Processed foods are considered “value-added” because additional value is added to a product at each step along the supply chain (processing) or because special handling is required (e.g. perishable fruits and vegetables). The more highly processed or specialized a food product is, the more opportunity there is for adding value along the supply chain.

⁹ Barndt’s (2002) deconstruction of the global tomato provides a useful illustration of durability trumping quality.
also puts control over key aspects of food, such as serving size and ingredients, into the hands of food companies (Dixon, Hinde, and Banwell 2006).

The commodified food system relies heavily on standardized products and processes that contribute to cultural as well as industrial changes. McDonaldization is a standardized model of operation based on efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control that facilitates growth and minimizes costs for industry (Ritzer 2004). Consumers are offered a standardized selection of products that meet a minimum quality standard and that are always available, always the same, and available everywhere. When people become accustomed to such uniformity, these standardized products become normalized, accepted, and eventually expected. People forget subtle differences in taste and texture, eventually losing appreciation for them. The international Slow Food movement was created to preserve regional agricultural and culinary diversity that was at risk of being lost in an increasingly McDonaldized food system (Slow Food n.d.).

Corporate concentration in the food industry further contributes to distancing by concentrating control in the spaces where food is produced, marketed, distributed, processed, and sold (Lang 2003). Each major sector of the Canadian food industry (such as retail, grain milling, or seed markets) is controlled by a handful of companies operating as an oligopoly (Lang and Heasman 2004). Those companies in turn engage in vertical integration, whereby a single firm or group controls processes at different levels (such as feed, meat packing, and transportation) within the food system (Kneen 1993; Lang and Heasman 2004). Packaging and retailing of food provide a particularly powerful means for the industry to control information through package labels and brand-specific advertising (Willis 1991). With single entities concentrating power at multiple levels, the corporation becomes the strongest determining factor in what and how we eat (Kneen 1993; Lang 2003) and cements the distance between consumers and their food.

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10 Inspired in reaction to the opening of a McDonald’s restaurant in the Piazza di Spagna in Rome, Slow Food aims to preserve biodiversity and culinary heritage through programs such as the Ark of Taste and Presidia and events like Terra Madre. By keeping traditional foods and practices alive, they aim to prevent extinction of foods threatened by standardization, creating viable alternatives to the global industrial food system.
Distancing and deskilling in the industrial food system have a disproportionate impact on low versus high income earners. The cultural shift toward convenience foods does not encourage the kind of knowledge required to make healthful (and inexpensive) meals from basic ingredients like vegetables, grains, and dried legumes. As such, health promotion efforts intended to re-skill the poor risk “ghettoising” the issue rather than improving health (Caraher et al. 1999). Cooking classes and other educational programs designed for low income people do not tackle any of the structural issues that lead to deskilling in the first place. They do nothing to shift cultural views on the value of time and norms for acceptable food choices; nor do they remedy the tiny or ill-equipped kitchens present in many low cost apartments, or the relatively high cost per calorie of prepared foods. The wealthy can buy relatively healthy convenience products and even freshly cooked organic meals (Jaffe and Gertler 2006) via personal chefs or high end grocery stores. While preferable to lower quality alternatives, these do not address broad concerns about deskilling and distancing, since consumers still relinquish full knowledge of and control over their diets. People who lack both the ability to cook from scratch and the money to buy expensive, healthier alternatives must accept what is on offer from the industrial food complex.

**Feedback spirals in the distanced food system**

Many of the issues discussed above can be viewed as both causes and outcomes of distancing. Princen (2002) defines distancing in terms of severed feedback as “the separation of production and consumption decisions, both of which impede ecological and social feedback” (104), which facilitates externalizing of negative outcomes (e.g., ill health or ecological damage). Vertically integrated corporate entities are highly linked, but feedback to farmers, consumers, and other small players is obscured. When negative impacts of distancing are externalized, the dominant food system reinforces itself through a series of positive feedback loops, or a feedback spiral. The introduction and eventual acceptance of processed foods leads to normalization of such products, which in turn creates consumer demand for more of same. Similarly, as the knowledge and skills associated with direct involvement with the food system are lost, people also lose the capacity to be more engaged and become dependent on the industrial sector to provide for them. As Lang (1999c, 218) puts it: “food is both a symptom and
a symbol of how we organize ourselves and our societies. It is both a vignette and a microcosm of wider social realities.”

As the skills needed to navigate the food system become even more complex, regulations and expert advice are necessary to protect consumers against adulteration or false claims and to help them understand the science of nutrition. The nexus of nutrition science, health recommendations, the media, and the food industry created what Dixon and Banwell (2004) termed the “diets-making complex” (DMC). The DMC explains the sometimes inadvertent support among the actors in this complex through “the mutual, but not identical, interests of scientists, health professionals and the food industry, and it is this interaction—albeit with the industry as the dominant player—which plays a major role in shaping food choice” (118). Consumers’ need for expert guidance in the modern (distanced) food system opened a new space for the food industry to gain influence. Consumers tend to distrust industry and look elsewhere for expert information. However, the food industry can gain credibility by using expert information to promote their products or by working directly with more credible sources. Health professionals frequently engage with industry in order to benefit from funding and sponsorships that allow them to do their work and reach a wider target group. Industry, in turn, gains credibility by working with well-intentioned health professionals who inadvertently contribute to the hegemonic status of industrialized food.

As ideas about what to eat and what is healthy changed, expectations around food also changed. With the widespread acceptance of processed foods in the early to mid-19th century came an acceptance of lower standards of nutrition and taste (Levenstein 2003). Processed food products and the appliances that support their storage and preparation (e.g., freezers and microwaves) became “normalized” and eventually expected (Shove and Southerton 2000). In this context, the predictability of a meal made by assembling factory-made ingredients may be

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11 In some cases, the food industry co-opts scientific information to increase credibility and sales. They make place health claims such as “low fat” or “cholesterol free” on product labels. They also hire health professionals or create very public partnership with health promoting organizations, effectively exchanging funding for credibility (e.g., healthy choice logos such as Health Check™ (Heart and Stroke Foundation 2010)). Some industry groups even create front groups designed to look like health organizations but that use industry-friendly ‘science’ to give the impression that a product is healthy. One such front group, The Center for Consumer Freedom, claims to protect consumer choice while discrediting science about sugar, fats, or other food components (Center for Consumer Freedom 2012; Simon 2006).
preferred over the less consistent outcome of meals made from scratch (Jaffe and Gertler 2006). Short (2003a) found that people saw cooking efforts as failures when foods didn’t look like the pictures or like their packaged counterparts. Loss of consumers’ confidence in their own skills opens yet more space for standardized, packaged food products in the mainstream food system.

Much of the shift in domestic food preparation from scratch cooking to convenience foods has been associated with freeing women from domestic servitude. As women moved into the economic sphere, domestic food activities were devalued rather than shared more equally between the sexes (Willis 1991). Employed women remain largely responsible for feeding the family (DeVault 1991; Kaufman 2010), often spending more time driving, shopping, and assembling food than cooking or eating it (Gershuny 1987; Scanlon 2004). It is thus important to consider gender roles and time in any effort to shift the food system away from convenience foods toward a more connected—and potentially labour-intensive—system based on fresh or local foods. Additional responsibility must not be placed on already over-burdened women (Little, Ilbery, and Watts 2009; Szabo 2011). Structural change is needed so that basic knowledge, skills, and foods are easily accessible. In other words, cooking simply with basic ingredients needs to become more convenient (see section on *Making Healthy Choices Easy Choices*).

Regardless of the amount and kind of food available, the way it is consumed has shifted from communal or family meals to consumption alone or outside the home (Fischler 1980). In the United States, the proportion of meals eaten away from home increased from 16% in the late 1970s to 22% in 1995 (Lin, Guthrie, and Frazão 1999). Even in France, where cuisine has a greater cultural value, fast food has begun to replace family meals (Fantasia 1995). Household members need not eat at the same time or even eat the same meals when prepared foods can simply be reheated according to personal preferences and schedules (Ritzer 2004; Visser 1989). With women working outside the home and busier, more scheduled lives for everyone, communal meals may be seen as an anachronistic luxury. Although the actual impact on health is unclear, there is evidence to suggest that commensal eating improves dietary intake and supports healthy food habits (Sobal and Nelson 2003). Home meals are generally nutritionally
superior (Lin, Guthrie, and Frazão 1999) or associated with improved nutritional intake (Gillman et al. 2000; Neumark-Sztainer et al. 2003). There is also a social cost as families lose a regular structure in which to build relationships, teach social skills, and engage in meaningful communication (Levenstein 2003; Mackenzie 1993; Ritzer 2004; Visser 1989). Even the simple act of celebrating food may contribute to health, since celebratory meals usually favour fresh, home-cooked foods over packaged products. Social meals also tend to be more pleasurable (Rozin 2005; Rozin et al. 1999; Rozin et al. 2003) and foster relationships or community building, all of which contribute to health (Netter 1996; Raphael 2004).

**Distancing as the central problem**

I have shown above how distancing is an appropriate ‘catch-all’ term to describe the mainstream industrial food system and many of its problems. Distancing—the physical or conceptual separation between people and the food system—is virtually inevitable given the commodified industrial food system that dominates western nations and is now spreading throughout much of the world. The more distanced people become, the more accepting they tend to be of that industrialized system, creating a self-reinforcing spiral of increased distancing and industrialization. This system, and arguably the very fact of being distanced, undermines the health of people, the planet on which we live, and the communities to which we belong.

Distancing is neither new nor entirely avoidable; it is the nature and extent of distancing that is of particular concern for this research. Over 40 years ago, Canadian commentator and cookbook author Pierre Burton wondered why new technologies were being used to create novel “ersatz” foods rather than to free up extra time for gardening, canning, cooking, and celebrating good food (Berton 1967). Urban living and many aspects of modern civilization depend on specialization and therefore separation of tasks so that time and energy may be spent on things other than meeting basic needs (Kneen 1993). Similarly, a measure of processing is beneficial to many foods for the sake of palatability, safety, usefulness, or preservation (Visser 1986). I hold no nostalgic vision of pioneer life nor do I advocate “culinary Luddism” (Laudan 2001) by rejecting such things as basic preserving techniques, roadside food stalls, or neighbourhood bakeries. It is the extent, quality, and intention of food processing that determines its role in distancing. Rather than argue for stepping back in time, I am searching for
better ways of organizing our food system, ways that fit the current context and support human, social, and ecological health.

Response to the Research Problem

Study Goals

This dissertation reports on an exploratory study designed to bring a depth of understanding to a central problem in the food system: distancing. If distancing could be halted or reversed, I believe that many problems with the dominant global food system could be overcome. In order for changes to occur, however, it is important to have as much information as possible about the issue that needs to be addressed. As this chapter has illustrated, distancing in the food system has been the focus of much research and commentary. Much of this work is concerned with what is wrong—the causes and outcomes of food system distancing. However, as Blay-Palmer (2008) argues, “until we understand what drives people in North America to eat as they do, little progress will be made in moving the alternative food movement forward” (3).

My goal in this research is to better understand food system distancing from the perspective of individuals in India and Canada who are actively engaged in resisting distancing. I ask how they experience the causes and outcomes of distancing, as well as what drives them to push back. Through an in-depth understanding of distancing from the standpoint of the resistance in two different contexts, I will be able to extract new ideas for how distancing might be addressed at the systemic scale. Perhaps eventually, the dominant food system might be re-structured such that the choices that are healthiest for people, the planet, and society really are the easiest choices.

Resisters to Distancing as a Point of Entry

The resistance to food system distancing is not a cohesive movement per se, but comes from a variety of organizations and individuals interested in food system change. In their study of people trying to “reconnect” through food, Dowler et al. (2009) describe them as people who
reject the individualized, profit-oriented aspects of the mainstream food system in favour of more relational endeavours. Resistance is a form of “struggle against sites of power and authority, or what are often called ‘dominant’ actors or regimes, carried out by less powerful or so-called subordinate actors, both individual and collective” (Long 2008, 70). In order to understand distancing from the perspective of people who are engaged in resisting it, I needed to find a way to identify such people. I felt that the most engaged people would be attracted to a food movement working on such issues. Although I chose not to study alternative food systems organizations per se, I used two such organizations (Navdanya in India and FarmFolk/CityFolk in Canada) as entry points to identify engaged individuals. I decided to involve food systems organizations that focus on building or maintaining connections between the production and consumption of food because I view this kind of connection as the antithesis of distancing in the food system. I specifically avoided focussing on a single organization or well-defined movement (such as food sovereignty or community food security) in order to leave the research open to different alternatives and forms of resistance. I was more interested in finding people engaging in change than those with a specified idea of what that change should look like.

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12 My focus on the resisters of distancing as a method to identify how to better counter distancing at the systems level borrows a strategy from the field of marketing, whereby marketing firms study existing customers in order to identify strategies to sell more (Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009). I am aware of the irony of using a strategy used in marketing and branding of consumer goods in a study aimed at resisting forces that promote corporatized food consumption.

13 My use of the term consumption throughout this dissertation is not without some reticence, but I use it, with a caveat, to facilitate ease of reading. The word consumption implies an economic role (i.e., consumer) and a sense of finality. To consume is to use something in a way that destroys or transforms it. The resisters who participated in this study are referred to as consumers of food. This is technically true, in that they usually (though not always) purchase it through an economic interaction, and transform it through the act of eating. As resisters of distancing, I think the word “eater” would be more appropriate than “consumer”; however, I maintain use of the term consumer to avoid the awkwardness of “eater” and because consumption is a term normally used to describe eating. It is my hope that this research will contribute to a scholarship on distancing that will bring us closer to being eaters of food than consumers of edible goods.

14 Although the language of connecting production with consumption implies a linear chain rather than a complex system, the language of production–consumption linkages simplifies the analysis and focuses on the key nodes and links that I am examining in this dissertation. A well, the “connection” in this case does not need to be a direct link; the connection may be conceptual. I use the term connection throughout the dissertation as an antonym to distancing.
Alternative food systems movements

There has been a movement emerging in recent years to promote a holistic vision of a food system that is equitable, sustainable, and healthy. Effectively, this movement is pushing for a shift away from the dominant productionist paradigm toward Lang and Heasman’s (2004) concept of a more ecologically integrated paradigm. It brings together farmer and consumer perspectives by focussing on what people eat (consumption), where food comes from (production), and what happens to it along the way (connections). This movement is not a unified global one; rather it has been a collection of mostly grassroots organizations, citizens, and farmers’ groups working on one or more aspects of their local food system. In general, these alternative food movements have been framed under the rubric of concepts like community food security (Allen 1999; Anderson and Cook 1999), food sovereignty (International Commission on the Future of Food and Agriculture 2003; Menezes 2001), food democracy (Hassanein 2003; Shiva 2005), reconnection (Dowler et al. 2009; Kneafsey et al. 2009), or simply good food (Pollan 2010).

One of the criticisms of alternative food systems movements is that the grassroots nature that gives them strength and credibility is too fragmented to bring about real systemic change (Hassanein 2003). Others are criticized for being individualistic and elitist (Guthman 2007a; 2007b). Grassroots movements tend to either “opt out” of the mainstream system, try to bring about incremental changes (Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996), or create parallel systems (Clapp 2012). With effective coordination, however, the diversity of grassroots organizations could be beneficial in facilitating societal shifts in our relationship with our food system if their approaches could be integrated (Henderson 1998; Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002). A common focus among alternative food movements, regardless of their explicit theoretical paradigm, is the need to build and maintain relationships around food, effectively minimizing the difference and distance between consumer and producer and building mutually supportive relationships within the food system.

Links between the food systems of India and Canada

Because food system distancing is a global phenomenon, I chose to compare the perspectives of resisters in places at different stages along a continuum of industrialization, and
India and Canada formed an ideal pair for comparison. Canada is a highly industrialized country where the processes of food system distancing are fully entrenched in mainstream society. India is undergoing a period of rapid industrialization and food system distancing is currently in progress. Canada experienced many changes as its food system industrialized and globalized. Parallel changes are now happening in India, albeit at a much faster rate than they occurred in Canada. By looking at similar issues in both countries at once, a richness of understanding can be gained that would not be possible by examining the situation in just one country.

I used the lens of the Canadian experience to examine the current food system in India, investigate some of the drivers of change, and enquire about potential impacts. Examining the ongoing changes in India facilitated insight into changes that have already happened in Canada but that have become so normalized as to be difficult to see. For example, the Indian Food Safety and Standards Act (2006) is being resisted on the grounds that it favours industry over local vendors and further separates people from their food by promoting industrially packaged foods and prohibiting sale of freshly prepared street foods (Shiva and Shiva 2012). These forms of regulation, while important in an industrial system, can have apparently unintended social, health, and environmental consequences by their role in contributing to distancing. In 2006, the Indian government allowed the introduction of the first supermarkets in Indian cities, an act that will likely encourage the shift toward industrialization of the Indian food system (see Hawkes 2008). India’s unique food culture remains robust, but is increasingly influenced by western style products (Shetty 2002; Vepa 2004).

It is important to note a key difference in India’s nutrition transition versus that which happened in Canada in the first half of the 20th century. In the 1930s to 1950s, Canadians at virtually all income levels increased their consumption of animal fats in the form of meat and dairy products, partly as a function of rising incomes after the depression and partly due to government agri-food policy and nutrition recommendations (Ostry 2006). As of 2004, foods not included in the four major food groups, such as cooking oils, soft drinks, potato chips and similar snack foods, syrups, and candies, accounted for 22% of Canadians’ energy intake (Garriguet 2006). India’s recent transition, which has occurred within a very different cultural and historical context and primarily affects the middle classes, is similar to Canada’s second
transition. Animal fat consumption has not risen dramatically. However, as incomes rise, the new middle classes consume more processed foods and fast foods high in added fats and sweeteners rather than increasing the variety and quality of their diets (Vepa 2004). In urban areas of India, about 30% of adults are overweight or obese, while national prevalence of underweight remains over 30% (Wang et al. 2009). Although obesity mostly affects the urban middle and upper classes (Wang et al. 2009), India’s middle class does not enjoy the same level of affluence as the Western middle classes.

Through trade, investment, and exchange of popular culture, Western nations are exporting not only commodified food products to industrializing countries such as India, but also a way of eating and producing food that have been detrimental to the health of people and the environment (see section on Exporting the Western Food System). Although I compared India and Canada in this project, a similar comparison could be made between other highly industrialized and rapidly industrializing countries. For example, Barndt’s (2002) study of the North American tomato industry highlighted how the global industrial food system played out quite differently in industrializing Mexico than in the highly industrialized countries to the north. India and Canada formed a pragmatic pairing for this project. The two countries have a long historical relationship originating in the British Empire and continuing via membership in the Commonwealth. A few elements of British colonial rule have remained a part of modern India, notably the widespread use of English language, which increased feasibility of fieldwork in that country. I live and work in Canada, making it an obvious choice of industrialized country in which to conduct field-based research.

**Distancing Throughout the Food System**

This research was conducted through a lens of healthy food systems. As I described in the preceding sections, my holistic definition of health (human, social, and ecological) relates to all aspects of the food system. A healthy food systems framework thus warrants consideration of the entire system. In the case of food, the system is not linear. It is a complex system of interconnected parts that neither begins with production nor ends with consumption. I focus

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15 Although few aspects of British food integrated into Indian culinary culture, those that did (such as tea, which became the ubiquitous Indian chai) became staples of Indian diets (Achaya 2000).
on the production to consumption aspects of the system in this study because that is the stated focus of the organizations through which I recruited participants, as will be described in detail in Chapter Three. Although their missions related to connecting the production and consumption of food, their rhetoric and programming suggest that they also take a wider systemic view of food. However, the acts of resistance by these organizations and the individuals interacting with them related to either production, consumption, or a link between them.

A complete systems analysis would move beyond the production to consumption trajectory to also consider post-consumption aspects of the food system (which would ultimately return to production within a closed system). I raised some of the issues associated with resource use and waste in the section on Ecological implications of the dominant food system. The food system includes not just wastes from industrial production, processing, packaging, and transport, but also food waste in general. One problematic aspect of the industrial food system not raised is the fact that most of the post-consumption products of the food system are treated as waste rather than nutrients (i.e., compost) to be recycled into further production, or that much of that waste is too toxic to be safely recycled into future foods and often creates its own health hazards (i.e., effluent from confined animal feeding operations (Thorne 2006)). Moreover, vast amounts of edible food are wasted. In the United States, an estimated 40% of available food goes uneaten (up 50% from what was wasted in the 1970s), with an average American wasting ten times the amount of food wasted per capita in Southeast Asia (Gunders 2012). This waste goes largely unnoticed by consumers who are disconnected from the impacts of that waste, whether in terms of its presence in landfills or the loss of edibles.

Despite the importance of recognizing the multiple interactions in all parts of the food system, its vastness and complexity warrant the use of some “boundaries and blinders” in order to avoid being bogged down by the very complexity that is so important to consider (Hinrichs 2010). In a system characterized by distancing, most people do not see the extent or impact of waste and they have little reason to even be aware of it. Thus, people who are distanced from
their food lack full knowledge of what they are eating, where it came from, how it got to them, and what has been left over from each phase of its lifecycle.

Research Questions

In this dissertation I will address four major research questions that emerged from my overarching goal of understanding food system distancing from the perspective of people engaged in resisting it. To that end, the first question aims to understand the resistance movement as practiced by the participants in this study by gathering general descriptive information about the organizations and their activities.

1. **How are people approaching the task of resisting food system distancing?**
   - What are some strategies? What are they working toward? What are some successes and challenges they face? How do they work with others?

The second question relates to understanding how distancing has been experienced by the research participants, because relatively little is known about distancing from the perspective of people trying to resist it. It tries to build a description of the causes and consequences of distancing in the mainstream western/industrial food system.

2. **How do people who are engaged in efforts to resist food system distancing understand the current mainstream food system?**
   - How has distancing manifested in the mainstream food system? What does it mean with respect to the production and consumption of food? How has distancing occurred?
   - Why is distancing a problem?

The third question relates to motivation. A better understanding of why people engage in resisting food system distancing can be used to inform approaches to wider food system change. The motivations of these resisters may be useful in broadening the scope of their efforts—to help normalize the alternatives—by gaining knowledge of what drives people to take action.

3. **How do people come to be engaged in resisting food system distancing?**
   - What makes food so important to some people?
The final research question encompasses the cross-cultural comparative aspects of this research. By looking at the issue of distancing from the perspective of different contexts, it is hoped that deeper understanding might be gained.

4. **What can be learned from comparing the resistance to food system distancing in India and Canada?**

   How is the phenomenon expressed in the two places? How do the resistance efforts compare? What can be learned from a comparison of the temporal and spatial trajectories of distancing in India and Canada?

**Overview of the Dissertation**

In this chapter, I have introduced the research problem and the overall framework I used to investigate the problem. The next chapter reports the methodology used in the research. Chapter Three presents my broad descriptive findings, describing my research partners and participants as well as their efforts to resist distancing (research question 1). My major findings and interpretation are in the next two chapters, organized according to my research questions: Chapter Four addresses what I learned about distancing from the resisters who participated in the study (research question 2) and Chapter Five deals with the key motivations driving people to resist distancing, namely a respect for food and a sense that food is sacred (research question 3). Although points of comparison between results from India and Canada (research question 4) will be addressed as they arise throughout the earlier chapters, those that warrant further discussion will be spoken to in Chapter Six. This final chapter also “unpacks” other recurring themes in the context of the research questions and relevant scholarly conversations, and concludes the dissertation with a summary, bringing together the concepts of connection, sacredness, and health in support of a paradigm shift in how we think about food.
CHAPTER TWO:
Integrative Methodologies of Distancing and Connection

The characteristic feature of mythical thought is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited. It has to use this repertoire, however, whatever the task in hand because it has nothing else at its disposal. Mythical thought is therefore a kind of intellectual ‘bricolage.’

—Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*

Introduction

This chapter describes how I approached this research from an epistemological and theoretical perspective and explains the methods I used to conduct the research. I have organized the chapter according to Crotty’s (2009) “scaffolded” approach to understanding the four main elements of qualitative social research. I begin by describing the constructionist paradigm from which I approached the research problem, and then present the critical–interpretive theoretical perspective informing my work. Next I describe my research design and methodology, as well as the specific methods and tools I used to collect the data. I follow these with an overview of my analytic methods, and conclude the chapter with a discussion of ethical considerations.
I approached this project from within a constructionist research paradigm using an integrative qualitative approach to methodology. My theoretical approach incorporates interpretive and critical components. The goal of this research was to better understand food system distancing, as well as actions being taken to reduce it, from the perspective of people actively engaged in resisting it. This required an approach to research focused on depth rather than breadth, nuanced interpretation rather than overview, and understanding of the particular rather than the general. I wanted to conduct a detailed investigation of how engaged individuals (i.e., resisters) understand food system distancing so that I could use the results to identify new ways to address a problem that impacts the general public. Although not generalizing my findings to a broader population, I will use this information in a manner that has “wider resonance” than the individuals participating in the study (Mason 2002). It was particularly important that I capture resisters’ points of view rather than imposing my own interpretations of how and why they resist food system distancing. Only a qualitative model could provide the deep description and participant perspective required to meet my research goals (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Silverman 2005).

Crotty defines constructionism as “the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty 2009, 42). The constructionist perspective rejects the existence of purely objective truths or meanings. Nor does it accept that reality is wholly subjective. Rather, meaning is constructed out of interactions between humans and their world, between subject and object. This interaction or conscious engagement between humans (subject) and their world (object of consciousness) is termed intentionality, based on the Latin root *tendere* meaning to tend, or reach out to. It is this combination of relationship and context from which meaning emerges (Crotty 2009). My study of food system distancing deals basically
with how people engaged in resisting food system distancing relate to food, particularly with how food becomes so meaningful to those people. Constructionism, rooted in the concept of intentionality, is largely about how meaning is created through relatedness, therefore offering a solid epistemological basis from which I could learn how my participants created strong relationships with, and meaning for, food.

Borrowing Lévi-Strauss’s concept of researcher as bricoleur (Lévi-Strauss 1966), I see my role in this project as re-interpreter of conventional meaning and identifier of new meanings. Crotty describes the bricoleur as more than a ‘jack of all trades’. The bricoleur is one who constructs something new out of pre-existing materials, who is open to seeing new possibilities and is not limited by conventional meanings. The overarching goal of this research is to find innovative approaches to addressing distancing, and thus creating healthier diets and fairer, more sustainable food systems. Existing approaches to the problem tend to focus on some aspect of social justice, sustainability, or healthy eating. My role in this research is to re-interpret meaning by focussing on the health of the whole system without creating a trichotomy between the system components (society, the planet, and people). I must look for responses to the problem that address the system as a whole, rather than individual problems within the system. This requires a new way of thinking that steps outside the conventional realms of nutritional health promotion, sustainable agriculture, or fair trade approaches. The bricoleur works by relating to the tools and materials at hand to construct something new. In the same way, I must focus on the way my participants relate to food to find new approaches to food system problems. Intentionality holds that meaning does not exist in the subject or object, but in the conscious relationship between them. This suggests that in order to address the problems of the food system, I need not only to examine the relationships within the system, but also to find approaches to creating change that target those relationships.

Existing approaches to the dietary issues that I have associated with distancing have been focussed on individuals and populations (the subject) or food (the object) rather than on the connection between them. Historically, health promotion efforts based on theories of

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16 I use the phrase relate to food to describe how people connect with food in terms of meaning and action, i.e., how they foster relationships with and around food, as opposed to accepting the distancing that is so prevalent in the dominant western food system.
behaviour change encouraged *individuals* to consume or avoid certain foods or to eat in particular ways. There was little consideration given to the object of that interaction, i.e., the food supply, let alone the interaction itself. Although more recent efforts, particularly those emerging from a community food security perspective, do take a more holistic approach and explicitly address relationships, these approaches may be considered alternative or radical by the mainstream. Conversely, technical approaches emerging from a life sciences paradigm (Lang and Heasman 2004), such as creating processed foods with added micronutrients or reduced levels of ostensibly harmful food components, focus entirely on the object without consideration (other than aggressive marketing techniques) on people or how they eat. Health promotion is now transforming from a focus on *how* people eat to also consider the food environment in which they do so, but integrative theories that consider people, food, and the environment are still emerging. Technical approaches focus almost exclusively on *what* people eat. Neither approach has met with widespread success, particularly if assessed on a food systems level. I argue this is because they lack integration of what people eat with how they eat, that is, the interactions between people and food. This research emerged out of my conviction that the answers lie in the connections or relationships, situating me firmly within this constructionist epistemology.

**Theoretical Perspective**

I situated this research within a food systems framework. By its nature, the concept of food systems encompasses wide ranging issues, perspectives, approaches, and methods (e.g., policy analysis, critical reflection, economics, sociology, public health, environmental sciences, as well as many others). As such, I integrated different ways of knowing and approaches to research in order to examine the central theme of distancing in the food system. In particular, I took a critical approach to my overarching study goals and research problem and employed an interpretive methodology to investigate distancing from the perspective of resisters of food system distancing. I used my interpretation of their insights to address the broader cultural problem of distancing that I see as emanating from the hegemony of the food industry and
their use of reductionist nutritional science (via the diets-making complex outlined in the previous chapter). This creates what I refer to as a critical–interpretive approach to the study as a whole.

The possibility of a critical–interpretive approach may seem like an oxymoron, as the two perspectives can be defined in opposition to one another (McGregor and Murnane 2010). Crotty (2009) defines interpretivism as an “uncritical exploration of cultural meaning” (60; emphasis added). I will explain here how my use of interpretive methods supports the critical intentions of this research. By integrating the two approaches, I have been able to conduct research that crosses disciplinary and theoretical boundaries to address issues of relationship within the food system. Such integration of approaches and methods is both practical and essential to identify integrative solutions to systemic problems. As Leischow and Milstein (2006) astutely warn in their editorial on systems thinking in public health, “We must guard against the tendency to acknowledge the presence of complex relationships in shaping population health while employing analytic methods or program practices that exclude key parameters or assume independence among those that are included” (404). Here again I play the part of bricoleur by using the resources available and putting them together in new ways to construct research that comprehensively addresses the problem of food system distancing.

In integrating approaches to research, I formulated the dissertation project based on practicality rather than convention, driven by my desire to address a societal problem (i.e., food system distancing) rather than conform to conventional approaches. Such an approach can be traced to Aristotle’s tripartite concept of knowledge consisting of episteme (analytic knowledge), techne (technical ‘know-how’), and phronesis (practical wisdom). The phronetic approach to social science research is both practical and intellectual, aimed at using and interpreting other forms to knowledge to address real societal problems (Flyvbjerg 2001).

**Critical Approach to Research**

This research, taken as a whole, applies a critical perspective to the issue of food system distancing. Critical research is at its core transformative. It confronts inequities and injustices in society by first identifying them and ultimately engaging in action to institute change. Critical
perspectives deal explicitly with issues of power and oppression, particularly in the context of institutions, nations, or cultural norms, and seek to both expose the oppression and emancipate the oppressed (Crotty 2009; Kincheloe and McLaren 2005; LeCompte and Schensul 1999). A central tenet of critical research is that oppression can be woven so deeply into a culture that the oppressed may give apparent consent to their domination by the hegemonic power (Kincheloe and McLaren 2005) or interpret oppression as cultural practice (LeCompte and Schensul 1999). In the case of the food system, power and oppression may be seen at multiple levels in multiple sites, showing up repeatedly through the positive feedback spiral of distancing and its impacts that I described in Chapter One.

The idea that oppression is unseen or even consented to reads closely with descriptions of the food industry in the mainstream western food system. As I discussed in the previous chapter, development of highly processed food products that are aggressively marketed as convenience foods, paralleling the widespread entry of women into the workplace, has effectively created demand for such products. The more new products introduced to the market, the more choice consumers feel they have, when in fact choice is minimized as control over the food supply is concentrated in fewer and larger hands. Examples of oppression disguised as cultural practice are easy to locate in the food system. The idea that certain cultural groups, usually of low socio-economic status, prefer to eat certain kinds of foods (e.g., McDonald’s or Kraft Dinner) hides the reality that they likely have little other choice. The use of western style convenience or fast foods may indeed be a signal of affluence among the emerging middle class of India. The expression of status masks their struggle to maintain life without the shared labour of an extended family household, as women enter the workforce, and in the context of the growing influence of western style media. Moreover, it hides the degradation of a rich culinary culture that is being attenuated in the name of modernization.

**Interpretive Approach to Methods**

I used an interpretive approach to the fieldwork for this research, in which I engaged at length with resisters of food system distancing. According to Mason (2002), interpretive approaches “see people, and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings,
as the primary data sources” (56). I wanted to gain knowledge and understanding of study participants’ perspectives on the issues and examine the meanings they attribute to food, mainstream society’s distancing from it, and the actions they take in response. Unlike ethnography, interpretive approaches do not require the researcher to be wholly immersed in a culture or setting, attempting to describe an entire set of actions and interactions from the outside. Interpretivism permits the use of interview methods for primary data collection in an attempt to gain an insider view through participants’ own descriptions of their perceptions. Working from this perspective, I was able to talk to people about their perceptions on distancing, its problematic, and possible solutions and to make enquiries to learn how they came to be so engaged with food. This was not the uncritical interpretivism described by Crotty (2009). Although I was not critical of my participants’ accounts of their own perceptions and meanings, I used these descriptions in a critique of food system distancing.

Although critical and interpretive perspectives differ in many ways, they share common characteristics with respect to logic, values, and the role of the researcher (McGregor and Murnane 2010). In both the critical and interpretive aspects of this research, I used an inductive logic to understand how my participants made sense of the food system and their relationships with it as well as how their accounts of relationships, issues, and actions in the food system might be employed to counter the power of the mainstream food system over individuals. My own biases, and my own engagement in food system activism, were central to the research and my interpretation of the data. I developed close relationships with some of my participants, particularly those with key roles in the hub organizations, but I used these relationships less to gain insight into their unconscious than to create rapport and open communication, permitting rich interview data that I would later employ in trying to contribute to food system change through this dissertation.

Research Methodology

I used a qualitative methodology for this research, taking an integrative approach to study design that was informed by several methodological approaches. In focussing on the
resisters of food system distancing rather than on people more negatively impacted by distancing, I take an assets-based approach to examine spaces where people are actively engaging in connection as a resistance to distancing. I used cross-cultural comparison to examine the resistance to distancing in two locales.

**Assets Inquiry**

As I alluded in Chapter One, my decision to focus on resisters of food system distancing rather than studying specifics of the problem emerged partly from a desire to focus on the “spaces of hope” (Rojas 1986)—places where positive things are happening—in order to find solutions to complex problems that do not seem obvious. I expected that these people who are resisting distancing in the face of large structural forces would have a rich understanding of what distancing really means and would have unique perspectives and ideas about how to counter it. I was seeking insights that might not become clear through a study of what was wrong; I wanted to know what might work. Perhaps more importantly, I was working toward an ultimate goal of systemic change which required examining familiar concepts in new ways, possibly leading to ideas entirely outside existing approaches to health and sustainability. In his *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold ([1949] 1966) espouses the value of “thinking like a mountain” (137) to find the hidden meanings that support a longer term perspective. He tells a story of killing wolves because they were killing the deer valued by hunters. The story shows how such a short-sighted approach misses the reality that, without the control of predators, the deer will eventually self-sabotage by destroying their own habitat (Leopold [1949] 1966).

Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson (1996) also use this story to show the importance of taking a long-term systemic view while searching for the hidden positive elements of that system, and they caution that excessive critical analysis can lead to overlooking the positive spaces that already exist.

Assets approaches take the perspective that deficit approaches, which focus on what is wrong, tend to disregard the positive spaces where things work well (Morgan and Ziglio 2007). I designed this research to learn from those positive spaces. A focus on resistance and an examination of actions determined to be the antithesis of distancing may on the surface
suggest a deficit approach. My primary interest, however, was in the resisters’ understandings of what was needed and what motivated them to act. Although I did not conduct an assets mapping and evaluation exercise, I used the epistemological underpinnings of assets inquiry in planning my own approach. Public health assets approaches are rooted in the concept of *salutogenesis*, which considers “what causes some people to prosper and others to fail or become ill in similar situations?” (Morgan and Ziglio 2007, 19). Salutogenesis focuses on creating health (positive) rather than avoiding illness (negative); similarly, I focussed this research on finding innovative approaches to support systemic health versus the current status of unsustainable food systems, social injustices, and nutritional ill-health.

**Cross-Cultural Comparison**

Comparative studies, particularly when conducted across cultures, not only increase the breadth of applicability of the study but also increase the range of perspectives from which the researcher can draw interpretations (Silverman 2005). Because I was interested in the global (and globalizing) phenomenon of food system distancing, I saw value in studying resisters in multiple sites, with different degrees of food system globalization, and at different stages of industrial development. The comparison I used was between resisters of food system distancing in two major cities (Delhi and Vancouver), one located in a rapidly industrializing middle-income country (India) and the other in a highly industrialized high-income country (Canada). My two research sites thus differed in terms of place, time, and culture. Although I branched out from these base cities, they were the origin of my case studies and participants outside these cities came through the snowball and radial sampling strategy that will be described later in this chapter.

**Methods of Data Collection**

Given my integrative approach to the research, it follows that I engaged more than one method of data collection during my fieldwork. My primary interest from my interactions with the organizations and the study participants was to gather their perceptions, motivations, and
actions related to food system distancing. Although I situated myself within the research as a fellow resister of distancing, I also wanted to learn more about culture of resistance in which they were operating. This was particularly important for the fieldwork in India, where I was less familiar with both the general culture and the local resistance movement. Interviews are typically used in interpretive research to understand the experiences of others, while observation techniques are employed in research aiming to understand other cultures or subcultures (Silverman 2005). I used interview methods to gather detailed information from individual resisters, who I identified using a combination of snowball sampling with a radial model of team organization. In both locales, I observed the resistance and the resisters by situating myself in the field as a participant and volunteer in order to gain deeper understanding of the resistance and the people engaged with it. All fieldwork occurred between November 2006 and December 2008, during which time I travelled between India and Canada. Details of significant dates and events are specified in the next chapter.

**Sampling Design**

My sampling framework is best described as a double radial design. I based the model on Stevenson et al.’s (1994) concept of radially organized teams that was originally developed to foster collaboration among diverse groups working on systemic food issues. The radial design is based on a wheel with hub and spokes. The main organizations where I focussed my fieldwork in each study locale served as hubs and the primary sources of study participants. Imagine the organizations as the two main hubs, with visionaries and leaders, staff, farmers, and engaged members of the public as spokes. Collaborator organizations formed satellites (smaller hubs) at the end of a spoke. The collaborator organizations usually linked with one or both of the hub organizations, although could also be linked between other organizations (fig. 2.1). The links and multiple connections between individuals can be clearly seen in the social network map of participants in Chapter Three (see fig. 3.6).
Hub organization selection

The two hub organizations that participated in this study were Navdanya, based in Delhi, India and FarmFolk/CityFolk (FFCF), based in Vancouver, Canada. They were selected to meet the following criteria:

- engages in “seed to table” activities, strengthening connections between consumers and producers of food in some way (e.g., physically through food marketing/distribution or farm tours, or conceptually through educational or awareness-raising efforts)
- works at all levels of the food system: from farm to consumer, rural to urban, etc.
- mandate includes broad goals relating to human health, ecological health or sustainability, and social justice and equity
- engages with both producers and consumers of food, with a focus on connecting producers and consumers as a form of education and/or empowerment for both
- engages in some kind of advocacy to change policies that contribute to distancing in the food system, i.e., aims to change structural issues that make food system distancing the norm
- works to create alternatives outside the corporatized industrial food system
- is not a government-sponsored or government agency
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- practically accessible, interested in participating in the research, and operates in English
- situated in a highly industrialized country (Canada) or a country undergoing rapid economic development and industrialization (India)

The above criteria were developed during the early planning stages of this project to ensure that I selected hub organizations that would help me meet my research objectives. I specifically wanted to connect with hub organizations that I felt would help identify a broad range of people engaged in resisting food system distancing. Although I was already familiar with Navdanya and FFCF, I had not yet finalized my choice of hub organizations and used the criteria to ensure that I identified and selected the most appropriate organizations for the study. I created a list of potential organizations based on my own knowledge as a food systems researcher and activist, as well as through Internet searches using keywords such as “producer consumer connection” and “food system” along with specific location limiters (India and British Columbia\(^\text{17}\)). I then assessed each potential organization according to the criteria and the information available.

Navdanya and FFCF were the best fit with my criteria for organization focus and location. I spoke personally with the directors of each organization to discuss possible collaboration.\(^\text{18}\) I was still finalizing the research design at that stage, and both were agreeable to participate based on my general plan to volunteer with the organization and interview people in different roles. The directors of both organizations provided information such as potential key informants, the kinds of information I might be able to gather about the organizations and their members, brief historical details, and a general overview of their work, all of which helped with planning details of the data collection. I also identified Slow Food as another organization that fully met my criteria. Slow Food is an international organization based in Italy that also works locally in many countries, including India and Canada. I considered

\(^{17}\) British Columbia was a pragmatic choice within Canada. I did not have a preference for any specific region of India, so searched for organizations anywhere in the country.

\(^{18}\) I had a general familiarity with FFCF because of their presence in my local area, but no direct involvement prior to this project. I first met Vandana Shiva, the founder of Navdanya, while taking a course at Schumacher College in England, before the idea for this project had been developed. I later attended a course with Navdanya in India, during which I approached the organization’s leaders about the possibility of collaboration.
including Italy as a third research site, but this would have added unnecessary complexity and time to the project. Slow Food later emerged serendipitously as a collaborator of both hub organizations.

Navdanya and FFCF (and Slow Food) might be considered “ideal” cases on which to centre this research. The other potential organizations that I identified in British Columbia work on more specific aspects of connecting producers and consumers than does FFCF. For example, Your Local Farmers’ Market Society in Vancouver engages in linking farmers with urban consumers, but they focus on the single tool of farmers’ markets, while FFCF addresses the issue from a broad perspective using multiple strategies. Other potential hubs in India were difficult to identify prior to beginning my work there, as many do not have a strong Internet presence. Those that I identified before or during the course of the research were again more focussed on specific aspects than on the broad issue of connection. The Centre for Innovation in Science and Social Action (CISSA) in Thiruvananthapuram, for example, addresses issues of distancing and westernization from the specific perspective of preventing chronic diseases among urban consumers. The GREEN Foundation in Bangalore was beginning to engage consumers but was predominantly focussed on agriculture. If additional time and resources had been available, GREEN’s early engagement with consumers could have provided a valuable additional perspective to this research (see section on Limitations of the Study in Chapter Six for more discussion of the implications of hub organization selection on the study results).

Individual participant selection

Within the double radial design, I used snowball sampling to identify individual interview participants for the study. Specifically, I focussed on leading visionaries (founders and directors) as well as other staff, members, and volunteers within the hub organizations; farmers or food producers with whom the organizations worked; engaged members of the public or consumers who interacted with one of the organizations through events, volunteer work, or food distribution projects; collaborative partners from other organizations; and in some cases bureaucrats or policy makers from within their advocacy networks. I interviewed most of the core program staff from each hub organization, both of which were administratively small. Through early discussions with core staff, I created a list of other potential participants from
each organization, including food producers, members, volunteers, additional staff members, and individuals associated with other organizations.

In India, I attempted to recruit engaged members of the public through posters in Navdanya’s offices and shops (Appendix C) and via recommendations from program staff. Email is frequently not an effective means of communication in India, so one of the directors of Navdanya contacted members, consumers, and collaborators who she thought might be interested in participating. If they were interested, I followed up with them later by telephone. Farmer connections were made directly via requests from Navdanya field staff because most of the farmers did not speak English. I offered a Navdanya book about traditional foods as a participation incentive to the consumer participants, who may have had less personal investment in the resistance movement.

In Canada, the executive director of FFCF invited farmers, volunteers, collaborators, and off-site staff who then followed up with me. I attempted to recruit engaged members of the public through posters in the FFCF office (Appendix A), a newsletter article (Appendix B), and by making announcements at public events and volunteer gatherings. I was able to recruit two of my interview participants following announcements at an event (a tour of regional farms). Members of the public, who may have less personal investment in the resistance movement and thus less incentive to participate, were offered a book about the history and work of FFCF as a participation incentive.

Once my fieldwork began, it became clear that both organizations collaborated on multiple levels with other entities. Often, organizations with a more specific focus would address aspects of concern to one of the hub organizations and they would work collectively on that issue. There was some overlap between organizations when individuals were involved in more than one group. I decided that it was important to include as many of these organizations and people as I could, so I included individuals who were not directly involved with one of the two hub organizations. Through this snowball method, I identified potential participants from collaborating organizations who were identified during interviews or through recommendations from organization staff. I contacted potential collaborators and followed up with informal meetings. In some cases I met with them on multiple occasions and conducted more formal
interviews. Snowballing occurred to a greater extent in India than in Canada, largely due to slight differences in organization focus and degree and type of collaboration, which is described in more detail in the next chapter. In both countries, I continued to interview individual participants until the data reached a point of saturation at which themes were being repeated and new issues were no longer emerging (Rubin and Rubin 2005).

Semi-Structured Interviews

My primary data collection took the form of a series of semi-structured interviews. Through interviewing a range of key informants in both countries, I aimed to gain insight into the different motivations, experiences, and understandings of people involved in resisting food system distancing. I followed Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) method of “responsive interviewing,” which meshed well with my critical–interpretive approach to the research. Responsive interviewing is a flexible way to elicit the interpretations of people with experiences of interest to the research. It requires openness and reflexivity on the part of the interviewer and pays particular attention to the fact that an interview scenario creates a relationship with the interviewee that needs to be respected.

I created the original interview guide with six main questions based on my research questions. As these were relatively broad, I divided the main questions and reworded them into language appropriate for the participant (e.g., considering language, culture, level of education, degree of involvement in the resistance, role, etc.). In keeping with the emergent and responsive nature of qualitative inquiry (Rubin and Rubin 2005; Wolcott 2005), the interview guide remained flexible during the course of the research. I began with specific research guides for staff (of the hub organizations), producers (farmers), consumers (including engaged members of the public, organization members, and volunteers), and partners (collaborators from other organizations) that were identical except for a few specific questions directly related to their role. As the research progressed, I merged the four versions to a single guide for simplicity and adapted my wording of the questions and probes as needed. Most other changes were revisions in wording for clarity or changed in the order of questions to improve flow. Secondary questions were added or deleted depending on whether they were eliciting the
desired information or to help draw out additional detail. As the research questions evolved, the interview questions were slightly restructured to link more closely to the research questions. The revisions I made to the interview guide are summarized in Table A1, along with four sample guides from different stages of the research process (Appendix D). As a neophyte qualitative researcher more accustomed to working within a positivist framework, I was unfamiliar with how to navigate emergent design during the early fieldwork stage. Thus, the interview guide did not evolve as quickly or as much as it otherwise might have.

The interviews were semi-structured: I wanted to cover specific topics while giving participants the opportunity to direct the conversations according to their own perceptions of the issues and focus on the aspects most important to them. I used follow-up questions and probes as needed to keep the conversations flowing and to clarify responses. Interviews ranged in length from 25 to 112 minutes, averaging about an hour. They were audio recorded except in several cases when the participant was not comfortable with recording. I took detailed notes in a steno style notebook during the course of the interviews, jotting main points and quotations from the responses and noting details of the physical setting and interpersonal relations, key relationships in the responses, interpretations, ideas for follow-up questions, and technical issues with the interview guide in the margins. I also wrote memos as soon as possible following interviews to note ideas and connections as well as major themes I saw emerging. The participants knew that I was interested in resisting food system distancing, but I was conscious to keep my own ideas out of the interviews, focusing the conversations on their ideas, perspectives, motivations, or priorities. I conducted the interviews from an interpretive rather than critical stance, seeking to understand rather than evaluate.

**Participant Approach to Situating Myself in the Field**

Prior to beginning the research, I was not directly involved with either organization, although I was familiar with their work through my interest in local and international food issues. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the organizations, their motivations, their methods, their people, and the cultures within which they work, I volunteered with each organization for the duration of the field research. In addition to supporting the research,
engaging in this manner allowed me to make a small contribution to support the work of both organizations (while remaining aware that my contribution in no way equated the value of their participation to my ability to conduct this research).

My volunteer tasks were identified as the research progressed, but generally fell under the categories of needs of the organization (i.e., tasks requiring extra help) or my own research needs (i.e., tasks providing insight into the work of the organization and its people). We agreed that volunteer work might include research, writing articles, assisting with event planning, and engaging in program planning. Volunteering served a dual purpose during the research. First, it provided a forum for engagement with stakeholders and contribution to the movement which I was studying. Second, it served as vantage point from which I could closely observe the activities of the organizations and their people. I spent a lot of time doing what I call ‘purposeful hanging out’ around the offices and at events, during which I could observe subtleties in operation and human interactions. I became aware of activities that participants may not have considered important enough to raise in more formal interview settings. I was also able to see the ways in which people showed their passion for the movement and where they found frustration, as well as gain some insight into why and how they kept the work going on a daily basis.

I followed Spradley’s general guidelines for “doing” participant observation (Spradley 1980). My participation in the work of the hub organizations gave me a role other than researcher so that I could integrate more smoothly into the environment and have a purpose while ‘hanging out’ and learning about the people and their work. It also allowed me to become somewhat of an insider to the resistance, facilitating better understanding of many of the issues that came up in the interviews. My role as a participant and researcher was not true participant observation in the ethnographic sense. I did not take detailed notes of all activities and interactions for subsequent analysis. However, I did keep a field journal in which I summarized activities, observations about relationships, ideas for possible interview participants, or additional ways I could engage with the hub organizations. Through the course of my ‘purposeful hanging out,’ I produced field notes and photographs that I used to supplement and back up the interview data. In particular, I frequently met collaborators and
people from other organizations, either through the course of my participation with the hub organizations or by following up on recommendations for people I might wish to speak to about the issues. These meetings were recorded as field notes and sometimes led to recruitment of additional interview participants. Some of the photographs taken while in the field or at events related to participants’ activities, have been used in the following chapters to illustrate points of discussion or add depth to text descriptions.  

Data Handling and Analysis

All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, either by me or by a paid transcriptionist. I also transcribed field notes from the interviews as well as notes from meetings and other rich moments of observation. I proofread all transcripts for accuracy prior to importing the final versions into the qualitative data analysis software (ATLAS.ti version 6.2). While transcribing interviews (or proofing and listening to those I did not personally transcribe), I created new memos on notable quotes, new ideas, or thoughts that were triggered by re-listening to the interview. I noted links between the interviews, points I wanted to follow up on, and resources I wanted to check. I also summarized the main points of the interview with particular attention to how it addressed my research questions.

Although I kept a field journal and memos of emerging themes during the fieldwork stage, I did not begin formal analysis until after all the interviews were complete. The practicalities of conducting research in two countries, one of which I was a visitor in, required me to focus on data collection during my trips to India. Because I was splitting my time and travelling between countries, it seemed prudent to conduct all the data analysis once collection was complete and I could address all the data with same level of focus. My memos and field notes thus served as particularly valuable reminders of my initial impressions and

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19 Although I took most of the photos included in the dissertation, one was taken by a staff member while I was engaged in other tasks and is used with permission, as indicated in the figure caption. I also took several photos after the fieldwork phase of the research in order to illustrate points in the dissertation for which I had not taken a photo of sufficient quality or had been unable to take photographs at the time. However, any photo taken at a later date illustrated an object or event representative of what I experienced during field research, for which an equivalent photo could have been taken at the time.
interpretations of the interviews, as did the exercise of listening to and transcribing the interview texts. Rubin and Rubin (2005) recommend reviewing each interview and using emerging themes and ideas to inform the next. As this was not possible, I treated the transcription, proofing, field note review, and late stage memoing as a second stage of fieldwork during which I noted changes that could have been made, and I adjusted the focus of my ongoing analysis accordingly.

I used a deductive to inductive coding process. I began with a list of six a priori (deductive) codes based on the research questions and interview guides. Additional emergent codes were added post hoc as the analysis progressed, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005). In the initial deductive phase, I coded large sections of the transcripts using the a priori codes, which were based on broad topics and concepts. I also began to mark notable quotes within the text. Once all transcripts were coded using Atlas.ti, I grouped all sections of text associated with each broad deductive code (which also corresponded with the planned chapter structure for the dissertation). I then examined the relevant sections of transcripts in greater detail, moving between transcripts to interpret the meanings and stories I used to create my arguments.

The inductive phase began with this re-examination of the text associated with each broad deductive code. Based on this detailed examination, memos, and notes made during the deductive phase, I created a series of inductive codes and sub-codes based on emerging themes. Where very large sections of text formed a single quotation, I added new temporary codes. Where the same codes were repeatedly applied to the same sections of text, I grouped them together. Once the initial round of coding was completed, I again reviewed the memos and list of codes that had emerged in relation to each broad deductive (chapter) theme. I created a coding framework with sub-codes and detailed code definitions (Appendix E). I then re-read the interview transcripts and coded them in greater detail in Atlas.ti using this inductive coding framework. This coding framework remained flexible throughout the coding process as some codes were further subdivided or combined.

I coded interviews in strategic order, beginning with visionaries and core staff of the hub organizations and following with examples from each category of participant; I started with the

20 The initial code list was DEMOGRAPHICS, RESISTANCE, DISTANCING, MOTIV-CONNECTION, MOTIV-OTHER, COMPARISON.
interviews I recalled as being particularly rich in meaning. I continually moved back and forth between Canadian and Indian participants in order to keep the comparison alive in my thoughts and continually note similarities and differences between interviews in the two locales.

To move from coding to analysis, I reviewed the quotes captured under each inductive sub-code and developed thematic summary statements for each. I created Excel spreadsheets in which I matched relevant quotes to each summary statement. Each worksheet represented a broad (i.e., chapter level) code, with approximately one to five rows of summary statements and quotes for each sub-code. Based on the summary statements and corresponding quotes, I wrote a thematic outline for each chapter. I continually drew from the Excel spreadsheets as I transformed the thematic outlines into chapter text, revisiting original transcripts and field notes as necessary to confirm and clarify context or to search for additional quotes.

**Ethical Considerations**

This research was approved by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Certificate Number H07-00439). All Canadian participants signed approved letters of consent which outlined the objectives of the research, the expectations of participants, and provided sources for obtaining additional information about participation in the study. Most participants in India who were literate in English signed a letter of consent. Those who were not literate in English or for whom written consent was not practical (i.e., telephone interview) or culturally appropriate (mostly rural farmers and consumers) were read a script containing the contents of the consent letter either in English or through a local language interpreter and provided oral consent to participate. It is important to note that forms and signed declarations are less common in Indian versus Canadian society, and that forms signify official business in a manner that can seem frightening, particularly for people who are not literate.

All participants were assured that their involvement was wholly voluntary and they could choose to withdraw participation at any time. They were also informed that their identities and interview responses would be kept confidential. Although the nature of the interviews was not particularly sensitive, confidentiality was a concern for some staff who may
have made critical remarks about the organization that employed them and assurance was given that their comments would not be passed on to superiors in the organization. Some of the participants were public figures whose identity would be difficult or in some cases impossible to obscure in a description of their role within an organization or movement. These participants were aware of their public roles and had no concerns regarding possible identification and provided oral permission to identify them when quoting their comments. Most of the interviews were audio recorded and field notes were taken during each interview. If the participant did not agree to audio recording, the data relied on field notes only.

Given the participatory nature of the research, I naturally developed close relationships with some of the research subjects. I was conscious that close relationships may lead to richer and more intimate data emerging from the observation and interviews, but also create a level of vulnerability that must be respected. The primary ethical consideration of this study was that of dissemination and return of the research to the participants. Progress and future directions of the study were discussed with my primary contacts from each hub organization throughout the course of the fieldwork. Following completion of the project, I will be providing each organization with the key findings in a short form report. I will be able to provide this in person in Canada, and will agree to present the results at an event or annual general meeting if requested. I had hoped to return to India to share my research results in person, but resources may not permit this. In the event that I cannot share the findings in person, I will engage in an email (and possibly telephone) dialogue to discuss the research and answer any questions that participants or organizations may have.
CHAPTER THREE:
Resisters of Distancing

The force that drives us is a desire to change the world in which we live: to learn and teach others how to care for the earth, conserve its resources and create a socially just society.
—Herb Barbolet, Angela Murrills, and Heather Pritchard, FarmFolk/CityFolk

Gandhi’s creative vision of Swadeshi, Swaraj, Satyagraha, and Sarvodaya inspires us to build living economies and living democracies. In his legacy we find hope, we find freedom, we find our own creativity.
—Vandana Shiva, The Seed and the Spinning Wheel

Introduction

This chapter forms a bridge between the methodology described in Chapter Two and my thematic findings in Chapters Four through Six. This chapter deals primarily with the organizations (data from observations, websites, and print material); participants’ perspectives (interview data) will emerge in the following three chapters. Although individual resisters of food system distancing were the primary focus of the research, the organizations were important because of the radial design. The two hub organizations were central to the recruitment process and the basis of my participant observation activities. This descriptive chapter provides detail about the processes of recruitment and data collection in the field. It
also provides context relating to my first research question about what people do to resist distancing in the food system; it outlines major actions aimed at resisting food system distancing and the kinds of resistance the organizations were involved in. This context is a convenient place to begin my exploration of distancing by describing and comparing the ways the two organizations work.

I begin this chapter by describing how I approached the two hub organizations and secured their participation in the research. I then give a detailed description of my fieldwork in India. I will provide an overview of the hub organization and their work, my involvement with them as a participant observer, followed by a general description of the participants and how they were recruited. The same information is then provided with respect to the Canadian fieldwork. I will then show how all participants are connected through a series of resistance networks. This is followed by a comparison of the work of the two hub organizations; the chapter begins with descriptions of what they do, whereas the later section discusses how they approach this work. I conclude the chapter with commentary on my experience working in two cultures.

**Approach and Recruitment of Hub Organizations**

As outlined in the previous chapter, I used a double radial sampling plan to identify resisters of distancing who might be recruited to participate in this research. I identified one organization in each research area and used those organizations as hubs, or portals, through which I entered the field. In Delhi, I worked with Navdanya (www.navdanya.org). In Vancouver, I worked with the FarmFolk/CityFolk Society (FFCF) (www.ffcf.bc.ca).

My initial interaction with Navdanya occurred in February 2006 when I attended a short course on international development at Schumacher College in the United Kingdom. One of the instructors was Dr. Vandana Shiva, the founder of Navdanya. I had been familiar with her work on women’s rights and seed sovereignty and attended the course primarily for the opportunity to study with her. In November and December 2006, I attended a short course titled *Gandhi and Globalization* at Bija Vidyapeeth, Navdanya’s agricultural education centre near Dehradun,
India. Vandana Shiva was one of the instructors for this course, and we discussed how I might collaborate with Navdanya to study the issue of distancing in the food system in India.

FarmFolk/CityFolk (FFCF) is a prominent organization in the Vancouver food systems community; I first learned of them when I moved to Vancouver in 1999 but I had not been directly involved in their work. In January 2007, I approached Heather Pritchard, then executive director of FFCF, and explained my early thoughts and plans for the research. She was extremely receptive to the idea and immediately agreed to participate in the project. We initially met on a weekly basis to discuss ongoing plans and identify ways in which the partnership might proceed.

There were links between the two organizations that, although not part of my original criteria for choosing research partners, turned out to be serendipitous as the research progressed. The leadership from both organizations were familiar with the other. Vandana Shiva, the founder of Navdanya, is an internationally renowned activist whose work is recognized widely among food system activists. Vandana had met Herb Barbolet, the founder of FFCF on at least one previous occasion. In addition, FFCF hosted the world premiere of a documentary film about food security titled Deconstructing Supper (directed by Marianne Kaplan, Bullfrog Films, 2002) that was hosted by John Bishop, a local Vancouver restaurateur and chef, and which featured Navdanya’s work.

In addition to mutual familiarity, both organizations were involved with the international Slow Food movement and Terra Madre. Navdanya is the official representative and partner organization for Slow Food’s presence in India, and Vandana Shiva works closely with the executive of Slow Food International. Many of the farmers involved in Navdanya’s work, some of whom participated in this research project, had attended Terra Madre (Slow Food’s biennial gathering of international communities of farmers, chefs, and academics in Torino, Italy). Heather Pritchard and several other key members of FFCF had attended Terra Madre in the past, and a significant part of my volunteer involvement with FFCF encompassed engagement with the local convivium of Slow Food and the facilitation of a Terra Madre workshop in 2008. I attended Terra Madre as a representative of the UBC Faculty of Land and

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21 Convivia are local chapters of Slow Food. The word comes from the term convivial, which connotes celebratory gatherings, particularly those involving food.
Food Systems, where I had the opportunity to engage with many of my key informants—who were from different continents—on common ground in Italy.

India

Navdanya

About Navdanya: History and mandate

Navdanya is a program of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology (RFSTE), a public interest research organization started by Dr. Vandana Shiva, who has gained international fame for her activism. Navdanya began in 1987 as a local seed movement in the Garhwal district in northern India. The word navdanya means “nine seeds,” a reference to biodiversity and the symbol of food. In southern regions of India, the word navdanya also refers to a specific multi-cropping practice. Nav also means “new” and danya means “gift.” According to the organization’s director, Navdanya is the new gift of going back to the agriculture that was forgotten during the Green Revolution. In choosing the name for the organization, Vandana Shiva was inspired by the image of Gandhi’s spinning wheel: the seed is to Dr. Shiva what the wheel was to Mahatma Gandhi (Maya Goburdhun, instructor, Gandhi and Globalization course, 24 November 2006, Bija Vidyapeeth, Ramghar, India; see also Navdanya 2007).

During a meeting to discuss a possible research relationship, Navdanya’s director outlined the history and programming of the organization (Maya Goburdhun, Navdanya Director, personal communication, 13 December 2006, Delhi, India). Following the Green Revolution of the 1950s and 1960s, there was a loss of local seeds to hybrids in India. With this came a loss of local ways of eating. The Navdanya movement began as a fight against multinational corporations for control of local seeds. The decision to use organic production was largely a result of the fact that local seeds would only yield properly when grown organically. In 1990, Navdanya began to operate a seed bank and organic farm just outside the city of Dehradun, the capital of Uttaranchal. They started with two seed banks, but because

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22 Uttaranchal was renamed Uttarakhand in 2007. I will use the new name for the rest of dissertation.
the local farmers were no longer growing the seeds, the organization was dependent on grants for survival. They encouraged farmers to grow the local seeds, but there were no markets for the crops. Dr. Shiva wanted the seed bank to be a living practice with activities focussed from seed to table, so Navdanya now works with local farmers’ groups to teach them how to use the local seeds and with consumers to teach them how to make food with traditional crops. Farmers will only grow what people want to buy and eat. Consumers, however, had forgotten how to use the traditional crops and had long since stopped asking for them. Dr. Shiva felt that simply waiting for consumer demand before farmers started growing these crops would result in a loss of the old ways and the biodiversity. Thus, education began at the table end of the chain to teach consumers the value of these foods and rebuild the knowledge of how to use them. As one staff member explained in an interview:

Well our very first strategy was, after starting with local seed conservation and our organic farming for conserving the local seeds, we realized that the synergies at the seed and at the table level must work for it to be a meaningful exercise. Otherwise it becomes a museum exercise, and that’s not at all what we wanted to do. [IS1]

They began with stalls at craft shows and by holding festivals with growers to showcase the diversity of the traditional foods. They view consumers as co-producers—an essential part of the system of maintaining the biodiversity and traditional ways of eating.

Navdanya’s mission is “to protect nature and people’s rights to knowledge, biodiversity, water and food” (Navdanya 2009b, opening statement). They focus on conservation, renewal and rejuvenation of the local biodiversity, with a focus on maintaining livelihoods and common ownership. They aim to help “producers and consumers shap[e] their food cultures through participation and partnerships through cooperation and caring,” and to “create another food culture, which respects diversity, local production and food quality” (Navdanya 2009b, par. 5). Navdanya works on a wide range of food-related issues, including building links between seed and table, support of traditional foods and food culture, food retail, corporate involvement in the food system, trade issues, primary agronomic research, patents on seeds, and genetically modified seeds.
Navdanya administration

Navdanya operates nationally and, on some issues such as seed patents, internationally. The organization is run out of a series of small offices in Delhi and Dehradun, with assistance from regional coordinators (see fig. 3.1 for a map of locations). There are three offices in the Hauz Khas neighbourhood of Delhi from which approximately fifteen staff members organize administration of the organization, engage in research activities, and market food products through the organic shop and café. The Dehradun office houses approximately five staff who conduct agronomic and agricultural research, manage operations of the Navdanya farm outside the city, and host workshops and courses at Bija Vidyapeeth (Earth University) to teach farmers about organic agriculture and for educational programs aimed at the general public. At the time of my research, regional coordinators were working in thirteen states: Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. There are groups in each state through which the regional coordinator works with local farmers on converting to organic production, local marketing of surplus crops, locating seeds, and other agricultural activities as needed. The coordinators also collect seeds from local farmers for the seed bank.
Figure 3.1. Map of India research area
Red dots indicate locations where interviews were conducted; red ovals indicate general research area for interviews and participant observation; purple dots indicate locations were I met with collaborators for informal information meetings. Map courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/india.html
On many issues, Navdanya partners with smaller groups operating in local regions. Navdanya often plays the linking and publicity role for their work, and creates a national alliance for community-based knowledge and action on a given issue. As Navdanya’s leader articulated during an interview, the collaboration creates

[n]ot just a national picture. We create a national alliance [of activist organizations]. And the national alliance is what changes the politics. Now, these movements were there fighting on the ground. It’s not until we built a national alliance on land that the government had to start saying, ok, we’ll dilute the incident [expropriation of agricultural land for development], we’ll reduce the scale of it essentially.

**Navdanya projects**

Navdanya operates through a series of six main program areas (Maya Goburdhun, Navdanya Director, personal communication, 13 December 2006, Delhi, India; Navdanya 2009a):

1. *Bija Vidyapeeth Earth University*. Bija Vidyapeeth is the educational program of Navdanya which operates from their organic farm near Dehradun, Uttarakhand. They offer courses on agriculture, sustainability, democracy, and diversity for farmers and the general public, with participants coming from India and around the world.

2. *Diverse Women for Diversity*. Navdanya is a gender-sensitive, women-run organization. They promote women’s grassroots movements and provide an international platform for local women’s groups. One of the programs under this umbrella is *Mahila Annaswaraj*, which supports women’s traditional knowledge in food processing such as pickle or *papad* [crispy lentil wafers] making.

3. *Earth Democracy/Seed Sovereignty*. Navdanya began as a seed movement with one seed bank. As of 2012, the website reports that they have fifty-four seed banks in sixteen states within India. Through these seed banks, they have worked with thousands of farmers and saved numerous indigenous crop varieties. Seeds are
exchanged freely with any farmer willing to grow them, in exchange for return of seed in the future.

4. *Earth Democracy/Food Sovereignty*. Navdanya mobilizes and trains farmers and citizens around issues of seed saving and organic agriculture, which they view as the answer to rural poverty. They also engage in advocacy work related to policies of seed ownership, trade liberalization, genetically modified organisms, and corporate involvement in agriculture. Since 2000, Navdanya has held an annual Albert Howard Lecture and banquet each October 2nd (Gandhi’s birthday) in Delhi to educate the public and honour Albert Howard and Mahatma Gandhi for their work on sustainability and non-violence.

5. *Fair Trade/Connecting Farmers to Co-Producers*. Navdanya operates on a “seed-to-table” basis, viewing consumers as co-producers. They facilitate direct marketing from farmers to co-producers through retail outlets, home delivery, festivals, cooking classes, publication and cookbooks, and cafes. They run a Slow Food Café at their Delhi offices in the Hauz Khas neighbourhood of Delhi, as well as a food stall and retail shop at Dilli Haat, an indigenous food market and craft bazaar run by the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation.

6. *Slow Food Café*. Navdanya is the official representative of the Slow Food Movement in India. When co-producers join Navdanya as members, they also become full members of Slow Food.

The above program areas have been somewhat expanded since I completed my field research with Navdanya in 2008. The projects outlined here represent Navdanya’s major focus as of 2006 through 2008. There are approximately four hundred fifty consumer members throughout India. Farmers who work with or are trained by Navdanya are also members; there are approximately two hundred thousand farmer members in India.

Navdanya operated five retail outlets and had plans for one more at the time of this research. One is in Dehradun near the Navdanya farm. There are three in Delhi: at Hauz Khas (connected to the Slow Food Café), at the Dilli Haat tourism bazaar (fig. 3.2), and in the Vasant

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23 Albert Howard was a British botanist widely considered the father of organic agriculture, many of the principles of which he based on Indian farming systems.
Kunj shopping centre and market area. A retail outlet and Navdanya office opened in Mumbai in February 2007 (fig. 3.3). Although Navdanya has no farming operations in the area, they sell food from other places, mostly dry goods, to help raise awareness and expand the market for organic and traditional products. There had been discussion between the regional coordinator in Orissa and some local physicians about opening an outlet in the city of Bhubaneswar, although plans were not finalized at the time of this research.

Figure 3.2. Navdanya retail and food outlet at Dilli Haat in Delhi
My participation in Navdanya’s work

I spent a total of approximately eight months in India between November 2006 and January 2008. I was in India from late November through December 2006 for preliminary exploration and planning. Research trips occurred in April through May 2007 (participant observation, networking, and Hindi language study), October 2007 through mid-January 2008, and mid-March through early June 2008 (participant observation, interviews, and Hindi study).

My participation with Navdanya focussed on developing a better understanding of their work and organizational culture. My level of engagement was somewhat limited due to language issues, although they operate mainly in English. I maintained a daily presence in one of the Delhi offices whenever I was in the city, which provided opportunities for informal discussions with staff and allowed me to remain current with Navdanya’s activities in the city (i.e., the consumption-related or ‘table’ aspects of their work). I also spent approximately two months in total at the Navdanya farm and educational centre at Bija Vidyapeeth to gain more familiarity with their agricultural work. I attended two courses at Bija Vidyapeeth: *Gandhi and Globalization* in 2006 and *Food Safety and Food Security* in 2007.

I accompanied a Navdanya staff member to Baghpat village in western Uttar Pradesh state. We visited a cooperative of farmers that had been working with Navdanya for several years and were then trying to convert from wheat and sugar cane to organic vegetable
production. I had planned to return to this village to interview one of the farmers, but the staff person who had taken me there left Navdanya and I was not able to organize the return trip.

My interest in the proliferation of supermarkets coincided with Navdanya’s work on “retail democracy.” I spent several days in April and May 2007 visiting supermarkets in Delhi and surrounding suburbs. I used this information toward a commentary article for the Navdanya newsletter on the impacts of supermarkets on food culture in Delhi. Unfortunately, my travels interfered with the timeline for the retail issues and the article was not printed. However, the article was posted on my research blog (Rideout 2007b) and provided to Navdanya for their reference and possible future use. Toward the end of my fieldwork in India in 2008, I consulted with a staff member during planning of a research project on changes to retail markets in Delhi. I offered guidance on research methodology and assisted the staff lead on the project in designing a research program to gather balanced and complete data for the retail democracy project.

I also wrote an article for Resurgence magazine about the meaning of innovation in the food system (Rideout 2007). The editor of the magazine, Satish Kumar, was an instructor at the Gandhi and Globalization course I attended at Bija Vidyapeeth. He requested I write the article after a conversation we had in which I raised the topic.

I helped organize and publicize events when possible, but mostly participated as an observer or general helper. Some of the major events in which I participated in a primarily observational role are outlined here:

- **Kanak Utsav** [Wheat festival] is an annual festival to promote traditional wheat products such as *atta* [fine whole wheat flour] and *sooji* [similar to semolina] as well as traditional wheat breads and cooked dishes such as *khir* [cream of wheat]. I visited the 2007 wheat festival that was held April 14–21 at Dilli Haat market in Delhi.

- In April 2007, I assisted in a workshop given by Navdanya’s nutrition consultant at an elementary school in Delhi. These workshops were provided at different schools as an effort to teach children about traditional foods, healthy eating, and provide
general knowledge about where food comes from. There was a hands-on cooking demonstration using traditional grains (red rice and jhangora [barnyard millet]).

- I attended *Grishma Ritu Bhog* on 10 May 2007. This is an annual celebration held at the India International Centre in Delhi to educate people about the healthfulness of eating seasonally.

- I assisted with publicity and setup for the “Bread of Freedom” festival held in May 2007. The festival was part of the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the First War of Indian Independence (1857). Traditional breads were highlighted in recognition of rebellion soldiers who passed messages inside lotuses and wrapped in *chapattis* [flatbread]. Navdanya was both highlighting the role of a traditional food in the historical development of the nation and linking national sovereignty with the concept of seed sovereignty. (Unfortunately, my active participation the day of the event was cut short by heat stroke.)

- In May 2007, I participated in a *bija yatra* [seed walk] through the villages near Bija Vidyapeeth in honour of International Biodiversity Day (May 22). A group of about ten people walked through the villages to talk to people about biodiversity and the importance of saving seeds. On May 22, a large gathering of farmers and dignitaries was held at Bija Vidyapeeth. Although much of the program was conducted in Garhwali [language of Uttarakhand], I was able to hear folk performances about traditional crops and seeds. (Unfortunately, my participation in this event was also cut short by heat exhaustion.)

- I attended the annual Albert Howard Lecture in 2007, which was given by Professor Marion Nestle. The talk focussed on issues relating to food safety and food security (the topic of the Bija Vidyapeeth course I attended immediately following).

- In October 2007, a semi-annual gathering of seed keepers and organic producers called *Vasundhara* was held at Bija Vidyapeeth. As this was a local event held in the local language, I did not participate directly. However, a freelance journalist highlighted the event on the CBC Radio One show Dispatches on 24 March 2008,
including comments by me on Navdanya’s work (available at http://podcast.cbc.ca/mp3/dispatches_20080324_5085.mp3).

- In December 2007, as part of Navdanya’s Food for Thought series of public events, I attended “Soil, Soul, Society” at the Navdanya café in Delhi. The evening included music and talks to highlight the role of food in nourishing the soul and the soil; it was a commentary and exploration of ways to integrate more connections between people, land, and soil into society.

Interviews in the Navdanya Network

I conducted twenty-two interviews and eight informal meetings between November 2007 and May 2008. (Table 3.1 provides an overview of interview participants and recruitment methods in India). I began in Delhi, where Navdanya is based. I later recruited participants from the agricultural regions of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh north of Delhi, Mumbai, an agricultural region in the eastern state of Orissa, and satellite locations in the southern state of Kerala. Participants ranged in age from early twenties to late eighties, with most participants falling into the middle age categories (mid-thirties to mid-sixties). There were sixteen women and six men. I attribute the gender imbalance to two things. First, Navdanya is partly a women’s movement in that it works to retain traditional women’s knowledge; food-related activities, including farming and cooking, are traditionally female domains in Indian culture. As well, all of the members of the public that I interviewed were consumers who purchased food from Navdanya’s retail outlets. Food purchase is very much female dominated in India, even among the wealthy, educated elite.
Table 3.1. Resisters of distancing in India: Roles, demographics, recruitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Recruitment tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Personal contacts in Delhi or Mumbai office (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Email or telephone contact from Navdanya office (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers/Members/Volunteers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Telephone contact from Navdanya staff (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers/Producers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Personal contact from Navdanya staff (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Met through personal networking before learning of connection with Navdanya (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborators</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Introduction from Navdanya staff (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal collaborator meetings</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Network (snowball) connections (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction from Navdanya staff (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20–35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>36–50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51–65</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I interviewed most of the core staff involved in organizational visioning and direction, as well as regional representatives and specific program staff. Several were not regular employees, but engaged on a contract or project basis, or as consultants on specific issues. Most of the Navdanya staff members that I interviewed were based either at the central offices in Delhi or the satellite office in Mumbai, as much of the programming around urban consumers (i.e., the “table” aspect of their “seed to table” work) occurs in these two major urban centres. Two other staff members worked as Navdanya representatives in the states of Orissa and Kerala. I interviewed farmers in three different regions. Two of the farmer participants were employed on the Navdanya farm at Bija Vidyapeeth and worked closely with the organization’s training and seed saving programs. Two others lived in the state of Orissa and had converted to organic production of traditional crops with the ongoing guidance and support of the regional director. Most of these farmers had also attended Terra Madre. An additional farmer worked independently in the Dharamsala region where there is no Navdanya presence. However, this farmer was dedicated to reviving the production of traditional crops in the region and sharing the knowledge of production and use of such crops among the local
community. He consulted with the director of the Navdanya farm for access to seeds and assistance with production and processing techniques. The consumer participants were people who purchased organic food from Navdanya in Delhi or Mumbai (although some had ceased to source food via Navdanya); some had joined the organization as members and attended festivals and events.

Interviews with staff members continued until I had interviewed most of the available staff who worked on connection issues in the regions where I was conducting fieldwork. I interviewed all the farmers that I was able to access during my fieldwork trips. Because these interviews usually required a lot of staff assistance, it was difficult to access a wide range or larger number of farmer participants. Although the farmer interviews seemed to be nearing a point of saturation as topics and themes were repeated in small number of interviews, they represented a small proportion of the number of farmers Navdanya works with in an advisory and support capacity (but a significant proportion of those they work with directly at the Bija Vidyapeeth farm). Interviews with consumers continued until I reached a point of thematic saturation and new themes were no longer arising. However, one participant offered a different perspective on some issues, and with more time I would have attempted to recruit more consumers to ensure full saturation. I would have preferred to interview more people from collaborating organizations, but it was difficult to identify collaborators who were closely involved in the resistance to distancing.

I conducted an additional nine interviews with farmers and market consumers in an isolated rural village in Orissa that are not included in this list. Although I knew at the time of that many of the interviewees were not particularly involved in resisting distancing, I interviewed them to maintain positive relations with the villagers and local coordinator. It was clear that the presence of an outsider, particularly a foreigner from a university, was viewed as a rare and potentially valuable occurrence and there was some prestige associated with being interviewed. Although I tried via my translator to impress upon them that my work was focussed on learning about their situation and that I had no influence in terms of marketing their products or bringing in outside assistance, I was not always confident that this message
was adequately conveyed. In fact, the leader of the local farmers’ organization insisted on a photo opportunity of us shaking hands at the local market.

I met informally with many collaborators who shared a range of direct and indirect connections with Navdanya. Although many of their organizations were involved with preserving traditional agriculture, crops, and food culture, I did not recruit interview participants from organizations without a strong focus on connecting producers and consumers.

- I met with the managing trustee of GREEN Foundation (www.greenconserve.com) based in Bangalore, who works in partnership with Navdanya on seed and organic agriculture issues. Although they promoted local organic and traditional foods in the city of Bangalore, their focus was primarily on agriculture.
- Through their connection with Slow Food, the Mumbai staff were able to introduce me to the president of the Mumbai Dabbawalas [people who carry boxes] (www.mumbaidabbawala.org). Through their task of delivering lunches packed in tiffin boxes by bicycle from people’s own kitchen to their workplace, the dabbawalas do work at the level of connection with food, but they are a delivery service rather than an advocacy organization.
- Navdanya’s representative in Kerala also runs an umbrella group called The Environment Collective (TEC). She introduced me to the Gandhi Smaraka Grama Seva Kendram (www.gsgsk.org). They worked on a range of food systems and public health issues, but primarily from a community development perspective.
- The Kerala representative also introduced me to the Centre for Innovation in Science and Social Action (CISSA; www.cissa.co.in). One of their focus areas was promoting traditional diets as a way of resisting westernization and industrially processed diets. They collaborated with Navdanya and TEC on an ongoing state-wide program called Anna Swaraj [Local Food Sovereignty Movement] and another with Navdanya, TEC, and Slow Food called Annam [Sanskrit word for food], both of which educate people about the importance of traditional foods for health and self-sufficiency. I recruited three participants who were involved with CISSA and/or TEC.
- Staff at CISSA connected me with Health Action by People (HAP; www.hapindia.org). Although they publicly support traditional diets, HAP’s focus is primary research in nutritional epidemiology and health promotion.
- It was via CISSA that I connected with two faculty members of the Kerala Agricultural University (www.kau.edu) who were engaged in research relating to traditional diets and urban and peri-urban agriculture.
- Through the agriculture faculty, I connected with an organization called Thanal (www.thanal.co.in). Thanal [shade] was promoting a return to traditional homestead farming (i.e., backyard farming in peri-urban areas for home consumption) and marketing locally grown traditional and organic foods in the city of Thiruvananthapuram.
- Both CISSA and the faculty at Kerala Agricultural University connected me with an organization called Just Change, a community-based business venture aimed at supporting traditional agriculture in economically sustainable ways. I met with a representative of Just Change while in Bangalore.

Canada

FarmFolk/CityFolk (FFCF)

About FarmFolk/CityFolk: History and mandate
FarmFolk/CityFolk (FFCF) is a non-governmental organization that works with food communities to build a sustainable local food system in British Columbia, Canada. They work with both farm- and city-based communities to create their vision of a sustainable local food system that promotes human and ecological health, social justice, and vibrant local economies. They take a grassroots approach to working with food systems, focussing more on the relationships between the parts of the system rather than the individual parts. According to their website, they “believe it is the connection [emphasis added] between farm and city,
producer and consumer, grower and eater that creates sustainable communities” (FarmFolkCityFolk 2011a).

FFCF was founded in 1993 by Herb Barbolet, a Vancouverite-turned-cooperative-farmer and environmental activist who wanted to work toward a “just and sustainable food system” (Barbolet, Murrills, and Pritchard 1998, 2). Barbolet and his colleagues who helped form FFCF were driven by a desire to resist corporate-driven “McCulture” and the negative impact it was having on consumers’ appreciation of good food. FFCF was built around values for an integrative approach to agriculture and community design, preservation and promotion of biodiversity, and minimizing the ecological footprint. Partly inspired by food activists such as Alice Waters, FFCF sought to support these values by building connections between producers, preparers, and eaters of food (Barbolet, Murrills, and Pritchard 1998). The mandate of FFCF continues to focus on supporting links between farm and city.

**FFCF administration**

FFCF is a relatively small organization, with about four core staff members, a volunteer board, and a heavy reliance on volunteers. Small in size, it is influential within southwestern BC. It is a membership-based registered charity with an elected board of directors. Although technically a provincial organization, the bulk of their efforts are focussed around the Lower Mainland (Vancouver and environs) and southern Vancouver Island (Victoria and environs) regions of British Columbia, keeping their programming contained within about a 200-km radius of their central office (fig. 3.4). Their small size and geographical compactness allows FFCF to operate in a very horizontal, collaborative manner which is likely facilitated by their origins in cooperative farming. During my participation in their work, FFCF seemed to maintain very close relationships between staff, board members, farmers, and volunteers.

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24 Alice Waters is a food activist, chef, and owner of Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, California, which was one of the first well-known efforts to connect fine cuisine with local, seasonal produce.
Figure 3.4. Map of British Columbia research area
Red dots indicate locations where interviews were conducted, red oval indicates general research area for interviews and participant observation. Map courtesy of Natural Resources Canada Atlas of Canada.

FFCF projects

FFCF’s work touches on all aspects of the food system. They support seed saving and protection of agricultural lands, research traditional crop varieties, work with children in
schools, advise policy makers from the municipal to provincial level, find new and innovative ways for new farmers to access land, organize public education events, and celebrate food with producers, chefs, and consumers. When I met with the executive director to plan how the research relationship would proceed, she told me that their use of celebration as a means to build community comes out of the idea that it is difficult to truly celebrate food unless you have good food to celebrate, and good food comes from a vibrant, healthy, local, and sustainable food system (Heather Pritchard, personal communication, 30 January 2007, Vancouver, BC). In an internal report titled “Seven years of FarmFolk/CityFolk: A summary of past and current endeavours” (August 2000), Mark Ritchie of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy described the work of FFCF succinctly: “We have come to see Farm Folk/City Folk as a fantastic model for the best ways to integrate grassroots action, policy development, and direct linking of producers and consumers [emphasis added]. The impact of FF/CF [sic] is far-reaching, providing leadership to all of North America and beyond”. FFCF organizes their project work via three broad themes: farm, city, and farm–city linkages. Programming changes over time depending on need and available resources. Although new initiatives have begun since the peak of my involvement between 2007 and 2009, I will outline the major projects that coincided with my research. Much of this information is drawn from my own field notes but can also be accessed via the FFCF website (www.ffcf.bc.ca).

In addition to ongoing informal support for local sustainable growers in British Columbia, FFCF was working on two major farm projects during my involvement as a researcher. The Community Farms Program began in response to the related challenges of a lack of new, young farmers and the lack of financial access to farmland, particularly in peri-urban areas. Community Farms is developing innovative models of land tenure and farm structure to facilitate new farmers entering the field and keeping existing farmers on the land. Much of this work revolves around alternative systems of land ownership (and co-ownership) and advocating for changes to housing regulations for agricultural land to facilitate more cooperative and shared farming options. The Grain Chain project is a direct response to a lack of locally grown food grains, and emerged from a student project that examined the history of grain production in British Columbia. This project supports and promotes local production,
milling, distribution, and use of local grains, and played a central role in the first grain CSA\textsuperscript{25} in the region.

Given the organization’s mandate, the bulk of FFCF projects revolve around supporting farm–city links. These projects range from education and awareness-raising campaigns to major initiatives to build connections between different parts of the local food system. Seasonal Sustainability, which ceased in 2009, was a series of community education events geared toward farm and city folk. Events included film screenings, speakers, and meals of local and seasonal foods. Incredible Edible tours provided an opportunity for city folk to visit local farms and learn more about farming around Vancouver. These were initially full day events with lunch, transport, and a FFCF tour guide provided, and included tours of three to four farms; several tours were offered each summer for three years.

Two of the farm–city projects serve a dual purpose of educating and creating connections while also raising money for the organization. Brian Harris, a local photographer known for his work with the international organization Seva, offers his services to create full colour FFCF art calendars featuring local farms.\textsuperscript{26} The Feast of Fields (www.feastoffields.com) is FFCF’s major fundraising event. It occurs annually in August or September in three locations: Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, and the Okanagan Valley, and was held in the Sea-to-Sky area (Pemberton Valley and Whistler) for three years (2006–2008). The Feast, situated on a sustainable farm in each region, matches local chefs with local producers to create finger foods that are prepared on site the day of the Feast. Local musicians, microbreweries, and wineries provide entertainment and beverages while ticket holders visit the farm and visit the food stalls like an outdoor cocktail party (fig. 3.5). This event usually garners a lot of media attention and attracts a range of people.

\textsuperscript{25} CSA refers to “community supported agriculture,” a risk sharing scheme in which consumers purchase shares in an agricultural operation at the start of the growing season in exchange for a portion of the produce at harvest time.

\textsuperscript{26} More recently, Brian Harris has also created FFCF art cards and provided images for Home Grown: Local Sustainable Food, a FFCF exhibition at the Museum of Vancouver, August 2010 through January 2011.
Figure 3.5. Feast of Fields
_left_, consumers interacting with chefs and producers in Pemberton, 2007; _right_, farm site on Vancouver Island, 2006. Photographs by Michael Marrapese, with permission.

Get Local, a partnership with the Vancouver Farmers’ Market Society, was launched in 2008 as one of FFCF’s major programs. Get Local promotes local food distribution and networking among local food producers and users. It aims to educate consumers about local food, what it is, why it is important, and where they can get it. It also offers a network of food producers and buyers (such as restaurants and retailers) to help match supply and demand and improve the distribution network for local food in British Columbia (FarmFolkCityFolk 2011b).

During my involvement with FFCF, city projects involved staff participation in relevant policy or committee work. The executive director was one of the founding members of the Vancouver Food Policy Council, and also sat on the Agricultural Land Reserve Protection and Enhancement Committee (ALR-PEC), a community based committee focussed on raising awareness of threats to the ALR, particularly those relating to land exclusion applications (i.e., applications to remove land from the Agricultural Land Reserve). At the time of writing, the current executive director of FFCF is a member of the Vancouver Food Policy Council.

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27 The ALR is a British Columbia program intended to protect agricultural lands from development and price speculation. Land listed within the ALR receives some tax exemptions, cannot be used for non-agricultural purposes, and cannot be subdivided, theoretically protecting it from non-agricultural development and controlling prices (because of the lack of development opportunities). There is, however, a mechanism by which land can be removed from the ALR following an application and hearing process. More information is available at http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alr/alr_main.htm).
My participation in FFCF’s work

I engaged as an active participant with FFCF for two years (January 2007 through December 2008) while alternating between fieldwork in India and Canada. I engaged in a range of technical, planning, and support activities and had regular interactions with staff and volunteers. When I was in the city, I maintained a weekly presence at the Vancouver office for informal discussions with staff, particularly the executive director, and to remain current with FFCF activities. To mark the beginning of my association with the organization, I wrote an article about my research and engagement with the organization, which was published in their Spring 2007 Newsletter (Appendix B) (Rideout 2007a). I also introduced myself and my research at the organization’s annual Volunteer Night in March 2007. Between 2007 and 2009, I regularly attended events that FFCF participated in or organized, including annual general meetings, public lectures, farm tours, and networking events. My role at events varied but included attendance, helping out with setup or cleanup, logistics, engagement with participants (e.g., at the inaugural gathering of Get Local), or involvement in discussions and planning activities (e.g., at a Vancouver Food Policy Council forum in which FFCF played a key role).

One of my key volunteer roles was as a member of the planning and operations committee for the Lower Mainland Feast of Fields in 2007 and 2008 at UBC Farm. I coordinated volunteers for the event for two years, recruiting, training, and supervising approximately fifty volunteers for the annual event. I also volunteered at FFCF’s information booth at the Sea-to-Sky Feast of Fields in Pemberton in 2007.

I joined the local Slow Food convivium in the position of Community Liaison Coordinator (2007–2008) to help raise the profile of farming within the convivium. The executive director of FFCF, who had attended Terra Madre several times, was not engaged with the local convivium, which she felt had a bias toward consumption of gourmet food rather than a celebration of regional cuisine. My role as a representative of FFCF was to raise the profile of local food and agriculture issues within the Vancouver Slow Food convivium. On a visit to Bra, Italy to meet with Slow Food and Terra Madre organizers, I proposed a workshop for Terra Madre 2008 to highlight issues around farmland use and land stewardship in different locales. The proposal was accepted and I facilitated an online forum leading up to the event as well as the session at
Terra Madre titled “Agroecology: Stop the cement” (Fondazione Terra Madre 2008; Miranti 2008). I also helped secure funding from the BC Investment Agriculture Foundation to support several members of FFCF’s farm community to attend Terra Madre in 2008.

I attended two Incredible Edible Tours in the summer of 2007. I did not participate in a volunteer capacity; rather, I attended these events to support my research. First, they provided valuable insight into some of the local farms that FFCF supports through its work. Second, they were an opportunity to engage more closely with members of the public that respond to FFCF’s outreach efforts. Through these tours, I was able to recruit two participants for my interview research.

**Interviews in the FFCF Network**

I conducted fifteen interviews and met informally with one collaborator (Table 3.2). I interviewed eight women and seven men. They ranged in age from early twenties to mid-sixties, with a fairly even distribution among age categories. All interviews were conducted in southwestern British Columbia between August 2007 and September 2008. The participants were located in the city of Vancouver, the Fraser Valley (a mixed suburban and agricultural region approximately 50–70 km east of Vancouver), and southern Vancouver Island (see fig. 3.4).
The staff that I interviewed comprised most of the core staff of the organization, as well as several people who played visionary roles in the development of FFCF but were no longer officially affiliated. Several staff members were or had been also involved in sustainable agriculture operations connected to the organization. The four farmers I interviewed were associated with a farm that sometimes engages in their farm–city link programming. Some were connected simply via their farm association, and others also played a more involved role in FFCF projects. Two of the consumer participants were members of the general public who attended farm–city program events; the other was a volunteer who developed a stronger link to the organization as a result of the initial connection. Two of FFCF’s collaborators that were involved in this research had interactions with FFCF projects through the course of their work with government departments, as well as through Slow Food and other umbrella groups involved in food system work. A third collaborator worked with a farmers’ market organization that frequently collaborates with FFCF on projects and through related umbrella groups. The informal meeting I held was with a representative of The Land Conservancy (TLC), which was
partnering with FFCF on their Community Farms program, but TLC’s own work was not particularly relevant to this research so I did not pursue a formal interview.

Interviews with FFCF staff members continued until I had interviewed the core program staff as well as several contractors and previous staff who had played a central role in the organization’s work and whose perspective was considered essential by the current leadership. I interviewed all the farmers that I was able to recruit and reached thematic saturation. There was a possibility to interview two additional farmers who lived in northern British Columbia. These additional farmers may have offered slightly different perspectives as the issues in the north are quite different, but the distance to travel did not seem warranted given the quality of data I had received through interviewing other farmers. Two other farmers were invited to participate but I did not receive any response after follow-up from FFCF. It is possible that they would have presented different perspectives, as all the farmers I interviewed belonged to the same farming collective. Despite their similarity, however, I did interview the farmers that FFCF works most closely with. I attempted to recruit additional consumer participants, and although I received expressions of interest based on recruitment efforts at events, I was not able to secure interviews on follow-up. A larger number of consumers associated with FFCF’s work would probably have increased the diversity of my data, as the consumer participants offered a greater range of responses to my interview questions than did some of the other categories. I interviewed all the current collaborators who had been identified and who were involved in work related to connecting the production and consumption of food.

**Participant Networks**

The relationships between the participants who contributed insights for this dissertation are illustrated in the social network map of study participants and organizations (fig. 3.6). Although my decision to examine actors who are resisting distancing in two different locales was primarily for the purpose of comparison, some connections between the resisters in India and Canada already existed. There were many indirect points of connection mediated via links to the international Slow Food movement, with which both hub organizations are affiliated and
with which many individual resisters are associated. Navdanya is officially linked with Slow Food as the Indian representative of Slow Food. Navdanya’s Delhi café and range of public events double as local Slow Food convivium events. Many of the Navdanya staff and farmers that participated in my study have attended Terra Madre on several occasions. Membership in the two organizations is linked, and Indian members of Slow Food join via membership in Navdanya. FFCF does not have a formal organizational link with Slow Food, but connections are maintained on several levels. Several current and past FFCF staff members who participated in this study have held official positions with convivia in Canada or with the national body of Slow Food Canada, as well as with Terra Madre and Ark of Taste activities. FFCF’s Community Farms project forms one of the “food communities” that have attended all three Terra Madre events in 2006, 2008, and 2010, and several of the farmers with whom I connected through FFCF have attended Terra Madre. In addition, one of FFCF’s collaborators has been involved both with the local Slow Food convivium and has attended Terra Madre.
Figure 3.6. Social network map of all study participants and informal connections
Shapes: sharp rectangles = hub organizations; rounded rectangles = interview participants; ovals = collaborating organizations. Colours: green = organizations included in data; pale green = organizations in network but not included in data; orange = staff; blue = farmers; purple = public/consumers/members/volunteers; yellow = collaborators.

It should be noted that in Canada, my network of organizations was limited to British Columbia and maintained a focus on Vancouver and southwestern British Columbia. This was
due to the nature of FFCF’s work; although they are a provincial organization, their mandate is to link farm and city, which is a more salient issue around the two largest cities of Vancouver and Victoria. In India, my reach extended to a variety of states and regions throughout the country as Navdanya is directly engaged with groups in many different states.

**Comparison of Organizations Resisting Distancing in India and Canada**

Here I will introduce some general features of the resistance organizations in India and Canada. A comparative analysis of the perspectives and activities of individual resisters of food system distancing in the two countries will be discussed in Chapters Four through Six in the context of my interview data. The description here will create a clearer picture of how organizations were resisting distancing in the two places. Drawing primarily on my experience as a participant observer, I will provide a comparison of the focus and programming in each locale.

**Focus of programs and activities**

The organizations that I engaged with in British Columbia (i.e., FFCF and the Vancouver Farmers’ Market Society) were primarily focussed on the connections between producers and consumers. There was a focus on linking activities such as farm tours, events that bring together producers, chefs, and the public, as well as on efforts to build networks to link different levels within the local food system. Although Navdanya had a clear mandate highlighting the importance of the link between seed and table that drove program planning, specific activities were predominantly focussed either on the farmer (i.e., seed) or consumer (i.e., table) aspects of resisting distancing.

**Preserving tradition or creating alternatives**

A lot of Navdanya’s activities, as well as those of their collaborators, were situated around preserving traditional crops and methods of agriculture on the “seed” end and promoting traditional diets at the “table” end. In FFCF’s network, the focus was more creating alternatives to the existing dominant food system. In India it seemed important to resist westernization, while in Canada there was a drive to create something new and better.
Following on the idea of tradition, Navdanya used traditional cultural festivals and holidays as a way to promote traditional foods. There are many historical cultural and religious festivals connected to food and agriculture in India; there are ancient harvest festivals for different crops and seasonal celebrations that historically involved particular types of food. Navdanya used these as tools to promote the seasonality of foods and the important role that food plays in people’s lives, as well as to make traditions relevant to the present day. With no rich cultural tradition around food in North America, FFCF’s work frequently promoted artisanal products made by small, local producers. Regardless of the historical or cultural origins of these efforts, they share a theme of celebration—sharing food and building relationships around food—and perhaps also of simplicity and a sense of place.

**Incorporation of health messages**

Health messages were present in the work of organizations in both countries, although they tended to be much more explicit in India than in Canada. Traditional views relating to health and food, such as food habits from *ayurvedic* [traditional Indian] medicine, were incorporated into food festivals. Organizations such as CISSA promoted traditional foods (versus North American style fast foods or highly processed foods) as a way to combat rapidly rising rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease that are spreading as the nutrition transition reaches a broader range of people. At Vancouver farmers’ markets and FFCF events, there were often subtle messages that local or sustainably produced foods were associated with healthy eating or healthy communities, but health was rarely used explicitly, probably due to the plethora of health promoting agencies and messages already in the public realm.

**Agriculture and food production**

Resisting food system distancing almost by definition requires consideration of agriculture and food production, but messages and programming around agriculture differed in the two locales. There was a strong focus on organic agriculture in the work of Navdanya and other groups such as GREEN Foundation or Thanal. Indigenous crops are produced organically and as such, organic agriculture parallels the preservation of local biodiversity and food culture.

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28 With the notable exceptions of aboriginal cultures and annual Thanksgiving dinner.
In Canadian cities, organic food is widely available, but much of it is imported from large industrialized farms in the United States, South America, or further away; there is also a large organic presence in the processed food industry, making it possible to eat an organic foods diet while still remaining entirely distanced from how, where, or by whom the food was produced. FFCF, with its focus on the links between producer and consumer, encouraged people to step outside this model by promoting local, sustainably produced foods (that are frequently, but not necessarily, certified organic).

**Land stewardship**

The concepts of land and retail—opposite ends of the production-consumption spectrum—were addressed by organizations in both countries. Navdanya was fighting the appropriation of farmland in regions slated as “special economic zones” (SEZs), where agricultural lands were being converted to manufacturing facilities engaged in global trade, ironically often in food processing industries. FFCF was actively engaged in preventing land removal from the ALR to be used for suburban residential and business development. It was this shared issue that led me to propose, organize, and host a workshop on agricultural land tenure at Slow Food’s 2008 Terra Madre meetings in Italy.

**Food retailing**

With respect to food acquisition, Navdanya and FFCF were engaged in efforts to reduce distancing through the way people obtain food at the retail level. Large corporate retail chains were just beginning to enter the Indian marketplace at the time of my field research in 2007 and 2008. Navdanya was leading a movement for “retail democracy” to prevent the full entry of global or domestic supermarket chains into the Indian economy as a way to protect farmers from losing more control over prices and markets to distributors or “middle men,” and also because of the role supermarkets can play in promotion of processed and imported foods. FFCF addressed food access issues by promoting alternative means of accessing foods, such as farmers’ markets and direct sales schemes such as community supported agriculture.
Reflections on the Cross-Cultural Research Process

Conducting this research in two very different places resulted in a rich depth of data and enlightening comparisons about resisters of food system distancing in India and Canada, but it also created challenges related to the comparative nature of the research and the specific choice of location for the work. Because I used a different hub organization in each country, differences in focus and operational style introduced another layer to the data, making the comparison more complex than if I was using a single organization working in two places, or two different organizations working in the same place. Cultural norms, language, and familiarity made for very different experiences for the international and local fieldwork.

Working as a Local and a Foreigner

The fact that FFCF was located in the city in which I lived and worked and was involved in food system activism undoubtedly contributed to the ease with which I came to feel integrated into the organization. While both FFCF and Navdanya were welcoming of my presence and expressed an interest in supporting my research, I felt that I became more a part of FFCF. Possibly a function of the compactness and horizontal nature of the organization, I was included in many brainstorming and planning activities and represented the organization at numerous events. Navdanya staff also asked for my input and included me in relevant discussions when I was present, but the relationship was more akin to that of a consultant than as a fellow member of an organization. I offer this not as a criticism, but to illustrate the subtle differences in my relationships with the two hub organizations. The distinction, I think, was a natural consequence of how I was situated in each field location. I live in Vancouver and had a familiarity with the issues that FFCF was dealing with; there was also potential for the research relationship to continue into the future. I was a visitor to India and thus less integrated in the issues and the local environments in which Navdanya was working. My presence was more sporadic, as I visited for several weeks or months at a time. Although my presence in Vancouver was interrupted by frequent trips abroad, it was the place I returned to, rather than visited temporarily.
Language and Interpretation

Language created additional challenges to my fieldwork in India. Navdanya operates primarily in English, particularly with respect to their urban education programming, and most of their publications are in English, which one of many official languages in India. Hindi was frequently spoken with non-English speaking members and during informal conversation, as this was the native language of many of the staff and the major Indian language spoken in Delhi. India is a heterogeneous country, and different languages are spoken in different regions throughout the country with frequent variation through local dialects. Most of the farmers I met were not formally educated and did not speak English; they spoke the local language and sometimes Hindi as well.

To minimize the language barrier, I invested time to learn basic Hindi, taking private lessons in Delhi and two weeks of intensive Hindi speech and writing training at the Landour Language School in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand (a village in the Himalayan foothills not far from Bija Vidyapeeth). Although I was not able to conduct interviews in Hindi, I eventually developed sufficient proficiency to carry out basic interactions and exchange pleasantries (e.g., taxi directions, shopping and bargaining, ordering food, and simple conversations about family, marriage, names, etc.). This very basic Hindi, certainly an asset for my ability to travel and operate in the country with greater ease, served also to help build a rapport with farmers and villagers. People seemed more open to speaking to me (via an interpreter) when I also spoke a few words of Hindi. One participant actually told the interpreter that she would speak more freely and openly when I could speak to her directly in her own language. Unfortunately, my proficiency in Hindi was at its best as I was prepared to leave the Hindi-speaking north and spend time meeting with Navdanya collaborators in southern India where Hindi is rarely spoken. Local languages are more common in the south, although English is widely used in the state of Kerala where publicly funded education is almost universal.

Because of language challenges, I conducted interviews with English speaking participants whenever possible. All but one of my interviews with farmers, however, were conducted through an interpreter in a local language (Hindi; Garhwali, the language of the state of Uttarakhand; or Oriya, the language of the state of Orissa). I found it difficult to find qualified
interpreters and because of variation in location and language, I was not able to work with the same interpreter throughout the course of the fieldwork. Although I gave specific instructions regarding how I wished to handle translation during interviews, I found it difficult to direct the course of the conversations as they were happening. I used two interpreters, both of whom were graduate students with excellent English skills. They were not professional interpreters and tended to paraphrase and summarize rather than interpret directly. My ability to probe on specific points or change the direction of the conversations was much more difficult than when conducting interviews myself in English. Despite these challenges, I was able to gather useful data from these interviews, which clearly provided a perspective unique from the other participant groups.
CHAPTER FOUR:
Understanding Food System Distancing

The average consumer either does not reflect on what he or she is eating or has to make a titanic effort to obtain the information that will explain it.
—Carlo Petrini, Slow Food Nation

Introduction

This chapter will describe the meanings of distancing as expressed by the research participants, with particular focus on how they viewed the causes and outcomes of food system distancing. It will draw on my interviews with resisters of distancing in India and Canada to explore what distancing means to them and why it is seen as a problem by people engaged in building a more connected food system. Their perspectives on food system distancing provide additional insight into the problems raised in Chapter One and help move toward creative approaches to addressing the issue.

Participants frequently discussed distancing in the context of industrialization in the food system, the two phenomena sharing key characteristics. I argue here that industrialization and commodification help create, and recreate, distancing in the food system. As this cycle of positive feedback continues, distancing becomes normalized, creating societal changes that support further distancing in the food system. These changes enable the devaluing of food in
mainstream society, the recognition of which was the major motivation for resistance among participants in this research.

I will begin this chapter by describing how resisters viewed industrialization as the major driver of food system distancing, and how industrialization and distancing together affect the distribution of power within the food system. I will follow this with descriptions of how socio-cultural norms and individual values result from distancing and then contribute to further distancing. I will also discuss ways in which participants perceived relationships between distancing and eating habits. I conclude the chapter with an introduction to how resisters’ perceptions of distancing support their motivations to engage with food systems issues, which is the focus of Chapter Five.

**Resisters’ Interpretations of Distancing**

This section addresses the ways in which resisters of food system distancing perceived the food system in general and distancing in particular. Although they were experiencing the food system within different contexts and stages of industrialization, participants in India and Canada shared many views on the meanings, origins, and consequences of distancing. I will also highlight notable differences and surprising parallels in the way distancing was experienced and interpreted by the study participants. In both countries, participants played different roles in resisting food system distancing: they were staff of alternative food systems organizations, consumers who engaged with those organizations, farmers, or “partners” from an organization that was associated in some way with the work of an alternative food systems organization. Although they were all involved in resisting food system distancing or supporting connections between the production and consumption of food, participants approached the issue from somewhat different perspectives.

As outlined in Chapter Three, the hub organizations are part of an activist food movement, a fact that was reflected in the worldviews of their staff and affiliates. Navdanya is a national agricultural organization based on principles of biodiversity and sovereignty. Its programs are focussed on organic production, traditional (regional and national) foods, and
freedom from foreign corporate influences. From my presence as a participant-observer, it became clear that Navdanya works within a paradigm that views organic agriculture and traditional foods as virtually synonymous with healthy or sustainable food systems. In India traditional crops are only grown using traditional, i.e., organic and non-mechanized, methods. Navdanya also promotes local food, but “local” had different meanings in different contexts. When I spoke to people in urban areas, local might be associated with foods from an individual’s home village, foods produced in or unique to a given state, or desi [Indian] foods. FarmFolk/CityFolk promotes local food systems and direct links between producers and consumers in British Columbia. The dominant food system throughout North America is based on global trade and long distance transport, and there is a strong push to localize within the alternative food system movement. FFCF operates within a strong local food paradigm in which localization and direct connections between producers and consumers are considered essential aspects of healthy, sustainable food systems. The importance of small farmers and localizing food systems was thus implicit in their discussions of distancing.

Staff members from the hub and partner organizations were particularly descriptive in articulating their views on food system issues, a trend I attribute to the fact that they examined and spoke about these issues as part of their daily professional lives. Moreover, many were in activist roles and held strong views on food systems in general and the value of connecting production and consumption in particular. Some of the partners also worked for activist organizations, while others were involved in policy, science, community development, or health promotion institutions with a range of perspectives. Regardless of their specific role within the movement to resist food system distancing, the collaborating partners were equally articulate and knowledgeable of the issues.

29 In a conversation at a rural market in India, “local” meant the village and immediate surroundings, while foods from 50 km away were considered to be “imported.” In rural India, it is not unusual to spend one’s entire life living in the same or neighbouring village. Distances of tens or hundreds of kilometres are considered very far to people who have not travelled far from their village or who have travelled only via low-speed train or bus. The local food movement in North America, on the other hand, typically uses distances such as 100 miles (160 km) or more as a means to define local, while reserving terms like “imported” to refer to foods from overseas or another country or continent. Urbanites in India used the terms similarly to North Americans.
The consumers were more variable and had differing levels of engagement with the hub organizations. They included current or past food customers, attendees at events, and active volunteers, and had a range of perspectives and levels of involvement with food system activism. Some of the consumer/member participants in India were particularly articulate about the issues. I will address this in more detail in Chapter Six, but it was likely due to the fact that they belonged to an intellectual elite with sufficient time and resources to be involved in Navdanya’s work. Still, a range of perspectives emerged from my interviews with consumers in India. In Canada, consumer participants were volunteers or members of the general public who had informal links to FFCF through attendance at a public event. They, along with the less activist Indian consumers, might be better described as reflexive consumers than activists. According to DuPuis (2000), “a reflexive consumer is not a social activist, nor is he or she necessarily committed to a particular political point of view, as espoused by other actors in the network. The reflexive consumer does not necessarily ascribe to the ideologies of new social movements around food” (289). These consumers tended to be more fluid in their views.

Some farmers were activist farmers, while others were supported by a hub organization, and there was a notable difference in responses from the two groups. With the exception of one person who chose farming after a different career, the farmers in India were not formally educated, did not speak English, and were from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Their worldviews centred on their own daily lives and they spoke less about broader political and cultural phenomenon than did other participants. It is difficult to judge to what extent this was a factor of speaking through an interpreter and the use of interpreters made it difficult to adjust the interview in a responsive manner. They were clearly aware of societal change and problems in the food system, but they articulated them in terms of impacts on their own realities. Among the complete sample of interview participants, these Indian farmers brought the most difference in worldview and perspective, but were also the group whose comments were the most difficult to fully comprehend because of the language challenge. By contrast, none of the Canadian farmers came from a farming background; all had chosen farming for social or political reasons after attending university or working in other professions. They were

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30 Recall from Chapter Three that Navdanya operates retail outlets in several cities.
what Guthman (2002) might describe as “gentleman [or gentlewoman] farmers”: hard-working and dedicated alternative growers who charge quality premiums to cover the costs of their expensive peri-urban land and labour-intensive practices.

Almost all study participants were formally educated, usually at the post-secondary level, and were from the middle to upper socioeconomic strata of society. Overall, their shared focus on connection in the food system probably influenced their perceptions more than their professional roles or even the country in which they lived. In the following sections, I will present the data from different participant categories together, although role and country can be ascertained from the identifier codes that follow each individual quote.  

**Industrialization and Food System Distancing**

Participants pointed to industrialization as the major driver of distancing as well as a defining characteristic of the distanced food system. Their comments about the origins and causes of distancing largely supported my argument from Chapter One that distancing is a major problem in the dominant western (i.e., industrialized) food system. A highly industrialized food system is almost by definition a distanced food system, because the processes of industrialization create both physical and conceptual distance between the production and consumption of food (Blay-Palmer 2008; Clapp 2012). In this section I will discuss participants' interpretations and experiences of distancing in the context of industrialization, paying particular attention to the way industrialization concentrates power in a large middle space occupied by a few powerful players and the impacts of this on individual producers and consumers of food.
CHAPTER FOUR: Understanding Food System Distancing

Industrial Roots of Distancing

Participants from Canada described a major shift in the post-World War II era of industrial growth and economic globalization, beginning what they viewed as a downhill slide toward the current state of disconnection in the food system. One participant explained how she saw globalization and industrialization working together to make food from all over the world widely and cheaply available through vast corporate supermarkets.

I guess I take the easy road and just kind of blame the globalization of the industrial food system and industrial food systems themselves developing, and then free trade being set up and labour being driven down, prices of labour being driven down, etcetera. . . . So for me that’s when things started to change, and why they started to change is just realizing that if we could lower food prices and sell on volume and source it from other countries and ship over here. And that there were grocery stores—superstores—that could be built around that, then that became a viable sort of business plan for corporations to just get larger and larger. [CP4]

As these processes developed, power shifted away from local production and distribution and the global system quickly became normalized. As one participant put it, “part of the globalization argument and energies was to convince us that there is no alternative . . . and they succeeded really well” [CS4].

Participants linked processes of global industrialization with both physical and conceptual distancing from the consumer’s perspective. One illustrated the path from physical to conceptual distancing; he pointed out the ease with which we can stop thinking about food once we no longer see it being produced, which is naturally followed by the challenge of understanding products and processes with which we have never had a direct connection.

Oh, the Industrial Revolution. When we moved out of the villages and off the farms into the towns, and stopped growing our food and stopped seeing the food being grown, and it just becomes another monetized commodity. Yeah, out of sight, out of mind. And the fact that—with the transportation and

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A general note regarding quotations: In recognition that conversational speech differs from written language, and that meaning is more central to this research than intricacies of language, quotes have been corrected for basic grammar and extraneous words have been deleted (such as “like,” “um,” “you know,” repeated words, or similar turns of phrase). In some cases, deletions have been made for the sake of brevity and focus; where substantive phrases have been removed, they are replaced with “. . . ”, while taking care to retain the original meaning and intent of the quote. Implied or explanatory words that have been added for clarity are indicated by square brackets.
communication revolution since the turn of the last century—the fact that we can access food from all over the world just makes it that much more distant from us. I remember my mom telling me stories about after the war and they saw their first bananas. And, I mean, how can you really connect in a meaningful way with the lives of a banana producer when you’ve never left [small town]? [CP3, emphasis added]

Similar processes of industrialization and distancing began in India 20 years ago when the national government liberalized trade (Vepa 2004). Although India remains predominantly an agricultural country, participants felt that people growing up and living exclusively in urban areas are increasingly distanced from the source of their food and “have no sense that India is still two-thirds agriculture” [IS3].

Participants’ views on the food system echoed the idea that the current system is firmly rooted in a productionist paradigm (see Lang and Heasman 2004). Their collective contention that globalization and industrialization in the food system contributed to distancing have been expressed by many scholars of food system distancing (e.g., Blay-Palmer 2008; Clapp 2012; Jaffe and Gertler 2006; Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009). Long distance trade and commercial processing created a physical separation between consumers and the food they were eating, severing contact between production and consumption of food (Princen 2002) and ultimately allowing it to be viewed like any other consumer good rather than as an intimate aspect of human life (Winson 1993). As one FFCF staff member put it, “It’s easy to become disconnected about something that you don’t know about or was produced far away. Every time something is produced closer to you, you take more of a vested interest in that production model” [CS3]. In the global industrial food system, direct exchange and interaction were replaced by large corporate middle players such as traders, financial speculators, distributers, processors, and retailers, further separating the link between production and consumption of food and adding a mental disconnect to the physical distance. As concentration and activity in the food sector increases, this space increases in length but not breadth, forming a narrow bottleneck of control and further stretching the distance between production and consumption (Clapp 2012; Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009; Patel 2009).

I will restate my definition of distancing here: “a physical and conceptual gap between people and food.” We have a lack of knowledge and understanding of where any given food has
come from, or what has happened to it along the way. This mental gap has been perpetuated by opaqueness and power imbalances in the system, as I will show in the following section.

Power and Control in the Industrialized Food System

Power in the middle

Participants who discussed the role of the food industry felt that distancing was more than just a side effect of globalization and industrialization. They noted a direct relationship between industrialization and distancing because of inherent features of industrial practices. “Agribusiness means centralized control. Centralized control does not tolerate decentralized systems—local food systems” [IS3]. They felt that the chasm was a deliberate construction by an industry trying to increase profit by increasing control. Large corporations, sometimes aided by sympathetic or co-opted governments, were seen as power-hungry behemoths taking control of the food system by influencing policy and regulation.

Industry power

Some participants felt that the industry held excessive power, particularly with respect to lobbying governments for regulations or policies that better serve their interests. Governments were not viewed as playing a driving role in food system distancing, but they were seen to influence food system issues through the kinds of policies they did, and did not, implement. One participant said that:

Government policies do protect certain kinds of corporate decisions and corporate development. At the same time, they turn a blind eye to what’s happening on the other side, and when you protect those corporations and allow certain things to happen, certain other things do not happen. [CP4]

Industry and government were often considered to be “in bed together,” with the food industry using economic strength to push for legislative changes that favoured large corporate enterprises to the detriment of local and small scale producers, processors, or retailers.

Most food in the industrial food system is sold through supermarkets. Well-established in the West, supermarkets are now proliferating in middle income and industrializing countries (e.g., Reardon and Berdegué 2002; Reardon et al. 2003), increasing the availability and
consumption of processed food products (e.g., Hawkes 2008; Rodriguez et al. 2002).

Participants talked about how supermarkets promote consumption of highly processed food products.

I think it creates a distance between people and their food because it takes it far away from the farm and it puts it in a different form. It packages it and it displays and it and it just doesn’t look like, in most cases, what it started as. And I think the whole supermarket, and the idea of the supermarkets, they’re all made to make money. They set them [up], they design them so that that the healthy food is at the back of the store and you have to walk past all the junk to get there. And there’s so much junk! You go into the supermarket and 90% of what you look at is all corn, soy, and canola oil based. So there’s an illusion of plenty, but really there’s so little [variety] that’s just [been] manufactured into lots of different forms. So there’s so much about the supermarket that is so unnatural really. [CF1]

The above quote raises a number of salient points. Centralized distribution maximizes the physical distance between production and consumption, and conceptual distancing results when food products no longer resemble their natural origins (Willis 1991) (fig. 4.1). Supermarkets undermine consumer choice by promoting consumption of certain foods and limiting access to others while maintaining an illusion of increased choice. The least healthy foods are promoted through packaging and branding, display, and pricing techniques that favour processed foods over fresh (Hawkes 2008; Willis 1991). The apparent variety in product choice is illusory; consumers select from multiple varieties of virtually the same product, which are repackaged, rebranded, and renamed in ways that are difficult to decipher by the average person who depends on package claims for information (Caraher and Coveney 2004; Soper 2007) (fig. 4.2). On the other hand, alternative means of purchasing food such as vegetable box schemes offer more variety in their products, even if consumers don’t get to “choose” which of those varieties they wish to purchase (Kneafsey et al. 2009). The reason supermarkets stress packaged products over fresh food was obvious to one participant who said, “All of the processed, packaged food, that’s where supermarkets make their money. . . . There’s not a lot of money to be made in produce. There is a lot of money to be made in processed foods because they have a shelf life. They don’t have to throw it out after a week” [CF4].
Figure 4.1. Examples of supermarket role in distancing in India
*Top left*, example of new western style grocery store in Delhi; *top right*, typical urban food market in Delhi; *bottom left and right*, interior shelves of new grocery store in Delhi. Note the contrast between the modern sealed exterior of the grocery store and the orderly interior with packages and coded produce, and the open air street stall selling only fresh produce.
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Figure 4.2. Examples of supermarket role in distancing in Canada
Left, illusion of plenty in retail setting, with multiple varieties of the same processed product; right, health claims on packaging of highly processed food products.

The power of supermarkets to promote industrially produced and highly processed food products plays a key role in that middle space separating the production and consumption of food. They may be effective at distributing large amounts of food to large numbers of people, but participants felt “there is just too much distance there, too much meaninglessness” [CF2].

In his analysis of supermarket-led supply chains in the United Kingdom, Marsden (2004) found that these long, complex supply chains focussed power with retailers and away from producers (as well as consumers). Moreover, supermarketization is occurring much more rapidly in developing countries than it did in the West in the mid-20th century (Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009). Such concerns, along with a rapid increase in foreign investment in the food retail sector in India, led Navdanya to launch a campaign for “retail democracy” in 2007 (Shiva 2007).

Regulation and food safety

Regulations ostensibly aimed at protecting public health and addressing food safety issues were frequently seen as pro-industry, unnecessary and unfeasible for small players, and supportive of processed food consumption. As an example, changes to meat inspection regulations happening in British Columbia at the time of my interviews were regarded with suspicion by many in the local food movement, including FFCF. For example:

Cargill and Monsanto, the two companies that control all the herbicides, pesticides, seed, all the distribution of food—the two biggest conglomerates [in] production and supply, to a large degree are driving the way that legislation is
written in the United States and Canada, because they have the lobby power. So why do we need federally legislated inspection facilities for meat? It’s not because the little guys are asking for it. It’s because the big guys are asking for it, because the border is getting shut down without proper regulations. They’re really driving—they hold the power. [CS2]

In India, small food outlets and street food vendors were being shut down in Delhi as new national food safety legislation became law (Sengupta 2007). Food activists across the country, largely led by Navdanya, were protesting this legislation because they believed it would be detrimental to local food culture.

We all know that there is a food industry that is pushing the changes that government are bringing about. Let us say the recent ban on street food. Now street food in India is so diverse. You have . . . _chole bature, samosas_, and _parathas_. Everything co-exists on the street, and for everyone. And if they are banning on the basis of food safety . . . At a certain level, people who may have banned it may not be aware that they are actually operating from the pressures of a food industry that wants to bring in only their kind of food. . . . I’m not saying their intentions are good or bad. I’m saying they are operating from an uninformed way and from a very narrow perspective. [IS1]

Navdanya activists strongly believed that these laws had been orchestrated by industry to shut out local businesses and shift public support to industrially processed foods. Without traditional street foods, participants felt that people would become dependent on highly processed, packaged, western style convenience foods, which they saw as more expensive, less healthy, and a threat to Indian food traditions, but which were being promoted as “pure” or more “hygienic” (fig. 4.3).
Even where health protection regulations were perceived to be well-intentioned, they were often considered to be short-sighted or have unintended consequences on the food system. Such policies impact the ability of consumers and producers to support the kind of connected food system they want. One farmer gave the example of government’s response to an outbreak of avian flu that went beyond what she saw as necessary to protect human or bird health, and in the process destroyed the diversity of chicken breeds in British Columbia.

The government bureaucracy does frighten me; it does scare me, because there are a lot of really stupid rules around food production. Some of them are in the organic certification program, some of them are the Canadian Food Inspection Agency’s rules, some of them are marketing boards, and other areas like that. There are, I think, way too many rules, and I think there are some real heavy-handed approaches to dealing with things, like when avian flu broke out and they were slaughtering flocks of birds that don’t even get avian flu, and they were doing it indiscriminately and with no thought whatsoever as to how this will affect a bigger industry. I mean, they wiped out a farm that produced rare breeds of poultry that no longer exist. The [name of] hatchery is history. You cannot get rare breeds in BC any more, and that was just stupid. So you realize that there are bigger forces that can crush you in no time flat, and it’s very, very scary. [CF1]
Food activists and regulators continue to debate whether current regulatory frameworks do more to protect consumer health or the financial health of the food industry. Regardless, the food industry has a history of offering (i.e., selling) so-called solutions to many of the problems associated with its products and methods. There is a huge range of “better for you” packaged food products designed to address the health concerns associated with processed food consumption (Blay-Palmer 2008; Hawkes 2008; Lewin, Lindstrom, and Nestle 2006; Monteiro 2010; Nestle 2006). Rather than prevent or correct potential health concerns related to food safety or nutrition, food companies offer new technologies or processes to counter the hazards associated with their methods (e.g., irradiation of potentially contaminated meat) (Blay-Palmer 2008; Stuart and Worosz 2012) or introduce products promoted as less harmful alternatives (e.g., lower fat, lower sodium, cholesterol free, fortified with vitamins, added fibre, etc.) (Lewin, Lindstrom, and Nestle 2006; Monteiro 2010; Nestle 2002; 2006; 2010).

Because most countries have no food policy per se, food-related policy usually falls under departments of health, agriculture, trade, and environment, all of which hold different mandates. Several participants talked about the need for closer coordination between health authorities and local agriculture to ensure that health protection policies don’t unnecessarily harm small producers. As one participant put it:

We need for our health authorities to come on board. We have health authorities here that are saying that locally raised eggs from farms are not permitted for commercial use in restaurants. You can only get eggs from approved sources, and a lot of those approved sources are factory farms. So the small grower can’t get in on that action, and the chef cannot support that small grower. [CP4]

Many participants, particularly in Canada where health and agriculture are more tightly regulated, raised similar issues in which protection of one area (usually health) created problems in others (such as local food provision), or when governments changed and proposed policies or programs were not implemented, creating challenges for food systems organizations that had planned around them. Or, ministries that many people might think of as being responsible for promoting a certain kind of agriculture actually have a different mandate. A participant from an agriculture ministry told me that, regardless of interest in or perceived
value of local agriculture, it was not the ministry’s role to promote or even support that. “Our mandate as the ministry is significantly concerned with sector profitability” [CP3], meaning that even when government agencies or individuals working within them are supportive of certain policies or programs that might support food system change, they may not be in an appropriate position to enact that change.

The examples provided above illustrate how policy can hinder healthy food systems when policy makers overtly favour agri-business, when industry has excessive influence over policy and regulation, when unintended consequences result from well-intentioned policies, when the priorities of one jurisdiction (e.g., trade) trump those of another (e.g., health), when political will or mandate is absent, or when some issues are prioritized at the expense of others (e.g., streamlining food safety at the industrial level versus alternative forms of food production or processing). Together, these jurisdictional challenges and untended consequences of policies suggest a need for increased cooperation and integration of policy and planning around food and have led to call for more “joined-up” or integrated food policies that support healthy food systems and community food security (e.g., Barling, Lang, and Caraher 2002; MacRae 1993; Milio 1990a; Rideout et al. 2007; Waltner-Toews and Lang 2000).

**Balance of power**

Several farmers illustrated how imbalances in power and scale allow the industry to set the terms of business in their own favour. One farm almost had to stop growing a specific vegetable variety “because the place where they were getting [the seed] from got bought out by a large seed company that discontinued that line” and it wasn’t available elsewhere. One of his fellow growers was "owed tens of thousands of dollars from distributors . . . who have never paid him,” and he told me that they “don’t want to sell to restaurants directly, because

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33 The tensions between food safety (food protection) and (community) food security have been highlighted in British Columbia in recent years as conflicts between small producers, processors, and community food activists and food protection regulators have occurred with respect to meat inspection regulations, egg marketing, avian flu, farmers’ markets, and a range of other issues (see Cheadle 2011; Seed 2011). Efforts are currently underway to address those tensions.

34 Community food security has been defined by Bellows and Hamm (2003) as a food system in which “all citizens obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance and equal access for everyone” (37).
trying to get money from a restaurant—it’s almost impossible” [CF4]. Another farmer noted how the factors such as minimum supply requirements for farmers selling to a larger distributor showed that buying from small producers “just doesn’t fit into their business plan of constant supply, of constant price, and of cheap price” [CF3]. Even medium size companies that originated as small, values-based businesses became more difficult to deal with as they grew larger and lost their ability to be flexible. Farmers selling to larger distributors or markets felt that the terms of sale, including price, were set by the larger company regardless of farmers’ preferences or needs, and were clearly arranged to the advantage of the company.

Well, the bigger the organization, the more power they have. If you take things in to big food people, they have thermometers and colour codes, and they’ve got all these criteria. . . . If you bring in tomatoes . . . they bring out the colour chart and see what colour they are, and they say, “This isn’t what was on the invoice. These were supposed to be shade 317, and we can’t accept these. We’ve already got this colour.” . . . And they take the temperature of them, and if they’re too hot or too cold, they don’t want them. And they tell you, “You have to be here, your docking time is 9:30.” So you have to show up at 9:30 . . . and if you’re late, well, you have to make another appointment, but if they’re busy, you have to sit and wait for them. So they’re the gatekeepers on that level. [CF2]

The experiences of these farmers are in keeping with the metaphor of the food system as a bottleneck or hourglass with power concentrated in the narrow middle space. This middle space is occupied predominantly by large industry, which wields immense power over the smaller producers and individual consumers on either side (Clapp 2012; Lang and Heasman 2004; Patel 2009). Clapp (2012) notes that this power is magnified by the ability of the processors, distributers, retailers, or seed and chemical companies in the middle to set the terms of business. The high degree of concentration means they are often operating in a virtual monopoly (due to vertical integration) or oligopoly situations which they can structure to serve their own needs. These terms of business, as the quotes above illustrate, make little room for the realities of individual producers or consumers. This crux of power forms an opaque space that perpetuates the conceptual distance between the production and consumption of food.

Consumers and producers: Power as potential

There was general agreement among participants that the food industry held an excess of power and had enormous ability to influence government policies and consumer decisions.
Views on the ability of consumers to drive change or make decisions that support healthier food systems were more complex. Some suggested that consumers had the capacity to resist distancing and industrialization or that producers held unique power because of their role in actually feeding people. Others felt that the industrial food system had intentionally created so much distance between production and consumption of food that those on either end of the corporate power bottleneck were unable to take free action or make fully informed choices.

Consumers

The potential power of consumers was recognized by participants, but their actual role in driving change seemed overshadowed by the power of industry and government. One farmer recognized that, regardless of whether change originated with the public, a “critical mass” of engaged consumers was important. “The more small, diverse farms there are and the more switched-on consumers there are, I think the more we are able to stand up to any of that reaction [destroying unaffected flocks in reaction to avian flu]. . . . There are things like [allowing unpasteurized milk sales or banning genetically modified crops] that won’t happen without pressure from consumers” [CF1].

Participants blamed the industrial food system for making it difficult for consumers to make alternative choices regarding food, making them unaware that the mainstream system was problematic, or fostering a society in which consumers were passive or individualistic. In India, people articulated a strong sense that consumers were being manipulated by advertising and popular media to consume highly processed foods.

[Advertising] is definitely working. When Maggi35 noodles came in, my sister in law used to live in [a lower middle class urban neighbourhood]. So [the neighbours] see it on TV and they know that she grew up in Bombay, so they used to come and talk to her and say, “Listen, today we are making Maggi noodles because our children want to do it. How do you do it?” And they were following instructions, so she said, “Okay, but I’m not sure your children will like it.”

“No no no no, but they want to eat it!”

So the next day, going to work, she met them, and she said, “How was your meal?”

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35 Maggi is a brand of instant noodles, manufactured by Nestlé, which is aggressively marketed in India as a healthy product.
“We couldn’t eat it, it was so bland, there was no taste in it.”
But the fact is they did try it. Why did they try it? She said, because of advertising. And then it was like, “Perhaps we could have it with some pickle, or perhaps we can have it with some lemon…” [IS8]

Several participants commented that upwardly mobile urbanites wanted to like the new packaged foods because of the images portrayed in the advertisements. “They just bombard people with advertisements” [IF1].

Participants in both countries described this kind of push–pull interplay between industry and consumers within the industrial food system. One farmer articulated the conundrum particularly well, while admitting that his views might be naïve or idealistic.

These companies can’t force you to buy their product. They can only trick you or convince you to buy their product. So if people divert their money from where it’s going now into other areas, I think that’s how the power will shift. Because politicians, even though they [industry] have lobby groups in this, ultimately they’re accountable to the mob, and so whatever the mob does the government responds to. That’s my view on it. But the conventional view, I guess, would be these large companies have lobbyists, and they influence policy and the government, and they get subsidies and tax breaks, and so it’s just the money. The large amount of money there is too powerful an influence over people like us who have so little money. But these large companies who are affording these lobbyists, where are they getting their money from? They’re getting it from consumers who are buying their products. So you take away that money and they have no power. [CF3]

Another was less optimistic, but still felt consumers held (potentially) more power.

I think the power is where it’s always been. It’s with the public, the people, the citizens. We’ve been dumbed down to the degree that we don’t exercise power. If you don’t exercise power, no, you don’t have it. But potential power is still power. [CS4]

Consumers in an industrial food system can exercise a lot of agency, but are definitely influenced by the environment and conditions in which they live. The food industry both increases and limits choice as it creates a set of conditions under which consumers think about food and make decisions about how and what to eat (Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009).

There was awareness among participants that consumers were not well equipped to resist the immense power of the industrial food system. Several participants from Canada who valued local food as an alternative to distancing noted that conscious food consumers made up
only a small proportion of the general population. Even when they spoke about the potential for consumers to drive food system change, it was not clear whether they felt that consumers should be responsible for engendering change through their eating and purchasing decisions. As one participant put it:

I think the more connection there is with producers and consumers, the more people know about what’s going on and they can make better choices. Because you can’t tell people what to do. All you can do is give them information and say, “Well, you’ve got this, you’ve got this, you’ve got this. If you make this choice, this is the result.” [CF1; emphasis added]

People spoke of consumers as both victims of industry tactics and supporters of the industrial system in a manner reminiscent of the positive feedback spiral of distancing described in Chapter One: as people become more disconnected, distancing and industrial foods are normalized and eventually expected. Consumers “don’t make a lot of choices that would support healthy, environmentally responsible lifestyles because they don’t have those choices available to them or they don’t know what those choices mean” [CF4]. Distancing was seen as so entrenched that it would be unrealistic to expect consumers to take full responsibility.

You ask a child where the milk comes from—they say Amul [large cooperative dairy brand]. Where do vegetables come from?—from the vegetable market. But you can’t blame the child because the parents probably also don’t know. When you are living in the big cities and buying things from the mall, you’re not connected. [IS9]

Jaffe and Gertler (2006) similarly point out that consumers who do not or cannot know about what happens in the food system are not equipped to demand anything different.

Recent critiques of alternative food movements in North America have argued that promoting a consumption-based movement toward local food systems may not have the desired impact of many social activists. They argue that a focus on consumption is individualistic, shifts the focus toward personal responsibility for personal gain (e.g., health, sense of belonging, living one’s values, etc.), and risks losing track of the larger goals of increasing sustainability, health, or equity in the system. A focus on individuals taking responsibility by “voting with their dollars” can also reinforce inequities, because only those with the means to do so can contribute in this way (DeLind 2011; DuPuis and Goodman 2005). This can create divisions between people with different ideologies or further elevate an elite
class who are more able to make informed, time-intensive, or costly food choices (Allen 1999; DeLind 2011; Hinrichs 2003).

**Producers**

As with the potential for consumers to exercise power, individual food producers have at least theoretical power within the food system. Though distancing may obscure the connection, they have power because what they do allows people to eat. The relationship was obvious to one Indian farmer who said, “We have power, because we give good grain to people” [IF3]. She recognized the value in feeding people with her indigenous varieties of organically grown crops even though she did not experience a powerful position in society. Although she still felt at the whim of markets and consumers to pay her a fair price for the products of her labour, her awareness of the value of what she was doing in terms of providing good food to sustain life was important because it motivated her to continue producing in the manner that she did. It seemed to give her a sense of dignity in a world that does not give the poor or lower classes much respect.

Not all food producers feel powerful, probably because, from an industrial perspective, they are replaceable. If their efforts are devalued by society in general or large societal forces such as industry, producers may cease to produce or shift toward an industrial model in which they are more subject to corporate power. Navdanya’s *Mahila Annaswaraj* [Women’s Good Food Movement] program was introduced to re-value the traditional food work of women:

. . . because industry totally discounted their knowledge in that sector and took it over, robbing them of income and short-shifting their knowledge. They are made to feel that it’s no big deal, in fact it’s better, because it is less tedious to do it in the industry. I mean at what cost? Nobody is ever going sit and think about it, not the industrialist. So when we rehabilitate that knowledge, then the women feel happy that their knowledge is worth something . . . and slowly a knowledge that was under threat of disappearing completely can be brought back. [IS1]

These marginalized women recognized the value of their knowledge once it was legitimized by Navdanya. According to Foucault’s writing on the “knowledge/power” nexus, something becomes a truth, and thus powerful, when it is so labelled. He argued that power is not possible without knowledge and knowledge must engender power (Mills 2003). Similarly, Mintz’s concepts of inside and outside meaning explain the influence of social norms on individual
power (Mintz 1996). Navdanya was empowering these women by giving wider social value (outside meaning/power) to their unique food processing skills (inside meaning/knowledge).

I showed in the previous section on Power in the middle how the industrial food system increases its power partly through sheer size and scale and its ability to set the terms of business. The small producers in this study tended to avoid what they saw as one-sided interactions with large distributors by selling at farmers’ markets or via other direct marketing mechanisms (fig. 4.4). This allowed them more influence over the terms, but they also preferred the human connection and communication to the rules-based transactions they would have with larger distributors. The farmers I spoke to felt that by connecting directly with processors, restaurants, retailers, and consumers who valued quality and freshness, they could charge what they felt was a fair price and people would pay because they understood why the price might be higher and were willing to pay the full cost for good food. The direct connections allowed them to harvest just prior to delivery and sell based on availability rather than in response to orders.

At the farmer’s markets, you really build relationships with your customers, and people appreciate that, so that the farmers’ market becomes more than just a shopping experience, but it’s a chance for them to talk about recipes and how to prepare foods, and to try different foods, and to meet other people, and to hear other people’s stories about their experiences with different kinds of foods. It’s a wonderful exchange. People learn a little bit more about growing food as well as preparing it. They learn a bit more about what’s involved in trying to grow food and bring it to the market, so I think all of that, it makes people certainly more willing to support the farmers’ market or the local farmer when they know what goes into it and what effects their choices have on the big picture. [CF1]
Small, quality-oriented exchanges also open opportunities for small producers that are not suited to the mechanisms of industrial-scale operations. The same characteristics that threaten these producers in the context of an industrialized food system also allow them to inhabit spaces that agri-business cannot, such as those based on quality and diversity.

So that [industrial systems] can be the cheapest in the marketplace, they have to operate at a big scale. Ultimately, that determines a certain style of production, and so they can't grow coreless carrots because you can't ship them. So that leaves room in the market for somebody to grow carrots that are coreless, that taste better. You have to get them to the market really fast, and somebody's going to want them because they taste really sweet when they're fresh. And then the big guys start to realize . . . there's a market for organic spring mix, so they start growing it, but they can't quite grow it the way the small scale farmer does. . . . And what the local fringe [agriculture] has to do is keep evolving. It’s in a constant state of evolution where they’re finding little cracks . . . and gradually, if you keep doing that, these little fringe agriculturists are actually leading the market. [CS2]

Exchanges based on quality and relationship over quantity and cheapness were thus considered by participants to be viable alternatives to the industrial food system. While local has often been a focus for resisting distancing in North America, a focus on quality or “good food” has been a driving force in numerous alternative food networks in Europe (Marsden 2004; Sage 2003). Marsden (2004) specifically highlights the distinction between short (alternative) and long (conventional) food supply chains. His concept of short supply chains are based on
producer- or consumer-defined measures of quality rather than retailer- or industry-led measures. While “short” can refer to direct local exchanges, Marsden also considers conceptually transparent supply chains, i.e., those with fewer links, as short because producers and/or consumers are able to obtain more complete information and make their own assessments of quality. Marsden’s inclusion of transparency in the characterization of supply chains closely parallels the conceptual definition of distancing used in this dissertation.

Alternative networks have an opportunity to take advantage of those quality- and relationship-based exchanges that are difficult for industrialized systems based on long supply chains to inhabit (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002; Kirschenmann et al. 2008). There is a real risk, however, that dominant players within the food industry will try to find ways to capture these markets and thus “alternatives cannot take for granted their ability to capture this space without a struggle” (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002, 360).

Another limit to the power of producers, particularly those who are small in scale and/or outside the industrial system might relate to the difficulty of their existence as small, independent farmers. Independent or “family” farmers are aging and decreasing in numbers and being replaced by larger, more corporate producers (Blay-Palmer 2008; Kirschenmann et al. 2008). In India, many farmers “prefer to go in for cash crops and commercial plantations, rubber plantations, cardamom plantations, and things like that, which are not the day to day food” [IS5]. All of these risks contribute to making the “loss of farmers a huge, scary thing” [CF1] for many study participants.

Many participants expressed concern about a scarcity of new, younger farmers. Although the way agriculture is perceived by urban dwellers differs between India and Canada, it doesn’t hold high status in either country. One farmer in Canada described how farming is almost considered a shameful or unsuccessful profession.

We need farming to be something that people consider becoming when they grow up. Counsellors don’t tell kids to become farmers. . . . If you live on the farm, success is not being on the farm when you grow up, and that’s crazy. It’s so sad that their parents are looked at as, “Well, that’s all they could do, but I can do something more,” or their parents want to provide their kids with something better. It’s not to say that, us having kids, that they’re going to have to do everything that we’re doing or continue [farming], but hopefully they wouldn’t be ashamed of what their family does. [CF4]
Distancing was seen to facilitate a loss of regard for farmers in India, as pointed out in this comment:

> I think . . . there’s a social issue: indifference to the farmers and the plight of the farmers. Because people are still spending their 1000 rupees [Indian currency; about $20CAD] on food, but they’re not realizing that, of that 1000, 750 is going to business. And if they knew a little more about food, they would care a little more about a bigger share going to the actual producer, the person who does the work. And not knowing about food is putting them into a situation of deep indifference to the farmers. [IS3]

Development and land speculation were problems in both India and Canada. Farmland is expensive in British Columbia, making it difficult for people to begin farming, particularly near urban areas. Participants expressed concerns about land price barriers for farmers and worried about the permanent loss of fertile land, including that within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). “If you pave it all, where are you going to grow [food]? You’re gonna grow it in California? They’re paving all of theirs. You’re gonna grow it in Chile? Chile is going to have some issues. Food—where are we going to grow our food?” [CS2]. Similar concerns were raised regarding the introduction of special economic zones (SEZs) in India. The Indian government was purchasing large amounts of agricultural land from cash-poor farmers in order to build large industrial parks for trade-based production. At an international trade fair I attended in Delhi in November 2007, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries was strongly promoting development of food processing for the export market (fig. 4.5). Many of these SEZs were being promoted for use as “food parks” by the food processing industry, as well as for other industrial uses. One interviewee echoed the concerns expressed in the previous quote about paving farmland: “If you’re going to take away all the agricultural land and sell it off to SEZs then what do you do? Or if you promote cash crops instead of subsistence food crops, you know, what do you do? These are all things that the government has its hands in” [IC3].
One Canadian participant who was particularly involved in farmland protection saw a direct link between land pressures in different parts of the world. “There they are taking land in India to put into new industrial zones. They’re going to be making really cheap goods for us here. We’re taking land out of the ALR here in order for us to build a port that’s going to bring all this stuff in” [CS1]. She was referring to cheap, semi-disposable consumer goods rather than processed foods, but her concerns were salient. She felt that the western addiction to “stuff” was driven by misplaced ideas about fulfillment that also served to minimize the value placed on good food in western culture.36

Industrialization and imbalances in power were clearly viewed as creating distance between the production and consumption of food. The concentration of power in the middle spaces of the food system was seen as having major impacts on the experiences of both production and consumption. Once created, processes of industrialization quickly become normalized and lead to more distancing in a cyclical, self-enforcing push–pull relationship. The process of normalization will be addressed in the next section.

36 It was participants’ concern about land use that inspired the workshop called “Agroecology: Stop the cement” that I facilitated at Terra Madre in 2008 to explore issues of development and farmland stewardship in countries around the world (see Fondazione Terra Madre 2008; Miranti 2008).
Living Food: Distancing in Society

Participants understood distancing partly as a cultural disconnect between individuals and the food system in modern societies. They felt that food was more often a source of shame or a tool of conspicuous consumption than it was recognized as a basic and essential aspect of life. The place of food in society was strongly impacted by factors such as family structure, gender roles, and the dominance of western culture over global diversity.

Shame and Fetish

Participants felt that the place of food and food-related activities had become distorted such that they are frequently either devalued or fetishized, but that food’s real importance is not appreciated in mainstream society. “Basically we have stopped paying attention to the importance of food” [IS9]. Where attention is given to food, most participants described it as misdirected. In the earlier section about Producers, I described how farming—the business of growing food—is not considered a desirable vocation. These negative views were also applied to the ways some people access, or lack access to, food.

There’s so much about food in our society that can be shameful. There’s shame associated with going to a food bank. There’s shame associated with being a farmer as a profession. What does that say about your society when the very basic part of how we live is shameful? It’s something that we should celebrate, that we should really hold pride in having. [CF4]

On the other end of the spectrum, many participants recognized that food had begun to play a prominent role in popular culture, but not in a manner they viewed as positive. They saw food portrayed in the media in ways that were aesthetically beautiful but not attainable by most people. Chefs are major celebrities and eating at the ‘right’ restaurants is a sign of social status. They considered it problematic that so many people consume food media yet don’t think much about the origins of the food they eat. A Navdanya member described it thus:

Food is either fetishized or made into a fashion or it’s treated completely mindlessly. I think people are not—it’s a crazy thing—are not seeing the relationship between food and life.

She continued later by adding:
On the one hand, [food] has been fetishized. It's become a kind of status symbol and entertainment. So that way there is a lot of emphasis on . . . . Every newspaper, every magazine has a portion on food, but it's not talking about the real issues. It's telling you where somebody went and ate and had turkey with saffron sauce or something. Give me a break. It is not talking about the ordinary things [like] how you get a nutritious snack for your child to go to school. [IC1]

Such concerns are valid in the context of distancing. Television cooking programs do not play a significant role in providing culinary information but are highly valued as entertainment (Caraher, Lange, and Dixon 2000). As people cook less at home, cooking has come to be viewed more as a leisure activity (Lyon, Colquhoun, and Alexander 2003). As I discussed in Chapter One, loss of knowledge and skills related to food not only makes people more dependent on professionals or the food industry to provide for them, but leaves them less equipped to make appropriate choices from what is available to them (Caraher et al. 1999; Lang and Caraher 2001; Lyon, Colquhoun, and Alexander 2003) and more inclined to demand the very kinds of products that facilitated their deskilling.

The irony of a society in which food falls into the realm of celebrity yet is so often consumed mindlessly was commented on by people in both countries. The habit of eating out of packages while paying attention to other things was more established in the West, but was also noted by participants in India. One participant described the phenomenon in terms of its effect on appetite and triggers for hunger.

People are eating meals in front of their TV or eating meals in their car. . . . If you’re just putting it in your mouth like this, you’re not smelling it. . . . And here, you’ll watch somebody on the TV, like some kid who’s playing video games and stops and presses the button, opens the microwave, steam comes out of the microwave, and then you think, as you’re sitting on the couch, “I’m hungry,” and then you go [eat]. [CS3]

There was recognition that changes were occurring and that a sub-section of society was becoming very involved with their food and paying close attention to what and how they ate. Still, people were very much aware that although the local food movement is strong, “it is strong within an alternative culture” [CS1]. This alternative movement in North American has also been critiqued as a predominantly white, middle class movement (Hinrichs 2003) that risks losing a focus on systemic change if ideologies become codified or fetishized (DeLind 2011). On
CHAPTER FOUR: Understanding Food System Distancing

the other hand, westernization (and industrial food consumption) is a growing phenomenon among the middle classes of urban India. The alternative food movement in India is being led primarily by people from the upper middle and elite classes.

Westernization

Westernization was seen as a major contributor to the growing disconnect between people and their food system in India. Most participants were critical of the ways in which the West was influencing food around the globe. In particular, westernization in the food culture was associated with an influx of highly processed, packaged foods or fast food outlets, which have been rapidly increasing over the past 20 years since trade was liberalized in India (Vepa 2004). Paralleling the arrival of western dishes such as burgers and pizza was the introduction of packaged or instant Indian dishes, such as masalas [spice mixes], ready-made dough, frozen foods, and an increased reliance on takeout or restaurant foods in urban areas. These foods were seen as unhealthy because processed food tends to replace fresher, more traditional foods. One Canadian participant who had previously worked in an industrializing country described how fresh or local foods lost their importance when western style packaged foods became available.

I remember when sliced white bread came in and that was a real status symbol. . . . So the farm food, all of a sudden it loses its appeal and then the processed stuff is just, “Oh, this is wonderful!” . . . It puts distance between people and where the food comes from, and I think that’s the intention. I think maybe that’s how they sell more food—taking it and putting it into different forms and putting fancy, pretty labels on it, so people think they’re getting so much, and they’re really not. [It’s] a lot of different ways of selling the same thing. [CF1]

Someone watching this process happen in India described the fallout as going deeper than simply what people chose to eat. She felt it was a threat to the entire food culture.

Because it’s also a cultural issue. Their food changes. People are made to give up their traditions by making them feel their traditions are inferior to modern options. That’s how fresh food is replaced by processed food. Why would people stop drinking freshly squeezed oranges? It was on every street corner in India in season. But if you want to be modern you should get the carton of the processed stuff, which is bad. [IS3; emphasis added]
Everyone recognized that processes of westernization were happening in India, and that it contributed to distancing in the food system. Pre-prepared foods, whether Indian or western style, meant “less control over the quality of the food you’re eating” [IC3]. But not everyone felt the changes were entirely negative; the consumers I interviewed expressed a range of opinions. Most felt westernization was a serious threat to health, local agriculture, and Indian food cultures; others were wary of it, but were also happy to see quality, locally made snacks and packaged foods. One consumer, who happened to be a busy professional with a family, was cautious about the changes but also felt they were meeting a need. She recognized that the realities of working women, smaller families, and busy urban living required some changes to the way people get food. People were eating packaged foods because such products were available and because people had a use for them: “The fact that it’s available. I think ready-made foods being there is partly because of need, no? Because of time” [IC3]. As with industrialization, westernization of eating habits is reinforced as new foods become normalized.

Advertising sold status to the upwardly mobile, but had less impact on the established elite (including some participants in this study). 37 Perhaps these foods were less desirable to people who didn’t feel a need to show off their sophistication, and who could afford household staff to prepare quality, fresh meals for them. It is not clear, however, whether this would apply more widely to the elite or simply to the engaged subsector involved in the food movement. Some participants expressed views that the elite considered themselves as too “fine” for “rubbish” such as McDonalds, while others spoke of wealthy friends who were entirely disconnected from eating traditional or fresh, whole foods. Health statistics show that both middle and upper income urbanites are already experiencing the negative health impacts associated with westernization and the nutrition transition that I described in Chapter One (Griffiths and Bentley 2001; Shetty 2002; Vepa 2004).

Family Structure

Family structure, particularly the role of women within families, plays a major part in determining social norms around food, including those associated with distancing. In the latter

37 The issue of elitism in the food movement and the social status of study participants in India and Canada will be addressed further in Chapter Six.
part of the 20th century, normal family structure in Canada gradually shifted from predominantly single to mostly dual earner families as women stayed in the workforce after marriage, a change now in process in urban India (Shetty 2002). Without an adult working in the home, there is less time available for food-related (as well as many other) tasks and consumption of processed foods tends to increase (Jaffe and Gertler 2006). Most participants in this study agreed that time pressures contributed to distancing in the food system by encouraging consumption of highly processed prepared foods or fast food.

I think it takes now—the average household with two kids and two adults—98 hours a week of work to support that family. So we’re having to make decisions, and it seems like these forces have all kind of conflated and in that confluence food has just completely drifted to the wayside in terms of . . . the time you spend on it, the money you pay for it, where you get it from. All those factors have kind of converged. [CP4]

The similarity between the challenge of preparing meals for the family in urban India and in Canada is remarkable.

Whereas in the cities you will see, especially with the advent of two-income families and the women having to bear the brunt of everything, more and more distancing. Because if you are working the whole day, you have to rush out, and before that prepare tiffins [lunch boxes] for the children and maybe for the husband and maybe for yourself. You’re not going to see to it that you’re going to get into elaborate cooking or whatever. [IS1]

As these quotes show, time pressures can overshadow the value given to growing, cooking, shopping for, and even eating food. Busy people, and employed women in particular, face huge challenges to providing meals along with everything else they must fit into hectic lives (Szabo 2011). Bava, Jaeger, and Park (2008) found that “busy” women frequently used packaged products as trade-offs to make meals that weren’t ideal but might be healthier than resorting to fast food. Similarly, Slater et al. (2011) reported that middle class employed women purchased fast foods or ready-made products even though they viewed them as unhealthy, because they didn’t feel like they could adequately meet all the demands on their time. By increasing demand for packaged foods even among people who view such foods as substandard, time pressures contribute to food system distancing.
In urban India, several participants described how a move away from living with extended family toward nuclear family households further exacerbates time challenges. Not only does the mother begin working outside the home, but there is no mother-in-law at home to help out.

And the other part is because the change of time, and families have become unit size [nuclear] families now. Earlier they had joint families, and in those days they used to have lot of home-made goodies at home to eat when we came back from school. But now, because it is unit family and in most cases the husband and wife go to work and the child reaches home early, there is no one to take food and give it to him. The mother or the father doesn’t have time to cook either, these traditional foods, so the child depends on lots of bakery items.  

Participants in both countries noted that the feminist movement, which facilitated wider participation of women in the paid workforce, contributed to distancing in deeper ways than adding demands on time. Whether it was an unintended consequence or misinterpretation of feminist messages, some people felt that feminism inadvertently played a role in devaluing food and food-related work in the home.

We've had a feminist movement here [in India] too, with people picking up the wrong things of feminism like forgetting the roles of nurturers that women have, which is an important role. And equating equality with sameness—equality is very different from sameness. We must be equal, but we don’t have to be same, and it should not be the same at all, because if we are the same, we'll be patriarchal women. We don’t want that! So that also distanced women from the kitchen because they say, “Why should I be doing the cooking?”

Others suggested that, in freeing women from domestic servitude, society developed a perception that cooking traditional foods was very laborious. Although some dishes do take a lot of time, several participants felt it was acceptable to adjust traditional methods and that there were ways to prepare quality, fresh meals without “becoming a martyr in the kitchen” [IC1]. While feminism has succeeded in opening new opportunities for women, they continue to carry primary responsibility for family food provisions, regardless of whether they also work outside the home (Beagan et al. 2008; DeVault 1991; Kaufman 2010; Little, Ilbery, and Watts 2010).

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38 Bakeries are common in the part of India where this participant lives. They primarily sell locally made packaged snacks made with highly refined white flour, white sugar, and oils. Most traditional Indian snacks are made with whole grain or legume flours, vegetables, fresh milk, and jaggery [raw cane sugar].
Deciding to participate in alternatives to the industrial food system involves a significant commitment, usually from women, in terms of shopping from multiple markets (instead of a single large supermarket), cooking from scratch, and other activities such as home preserving (Little, Ilbery, and Watts 2009; Szabo 2011). As the food processing industry shifted some of the burden for food work from the home to the factory, it also gained control over these processes (DeVault 1991; Lang and Caraher 2001; Pawsey 2000). Traditional female caring roles related to feeding were also transferred from family members to low-status employees in commercial kitchens and shops (Duffy 2005). This not only makes people dependent on industry to provide, but also increases conceptual distancing as more and more processes occur outside of people’s day to day realities and they no longer hold knowledge about that food.

**Loss of Knowledge and Tradition**

Distancing can be accompanied by losses of valuable knowledge and traditions that are considered important to health, diversity, and cultural memory. One of the first things to disappear in a globalized food system is the practice of eating seasonally. Packaged foods have long shelf lives, allowing them to be consumed year round. With industrial farming and global trade, even perishables can be made available on a consistent basis. As long as a food is in season somewhere, and it almost always is, it is in season in the supermarket. In India, participants noted that until recently, “if something was out of season, it was got from somewhere else; it wasn’t considered healthy” because it was likely preserved with the use of cosmetic chemicals or adulterants. Awareness of seasons was seen as important for choosing healthier foods.

Well, it’s only after we started using Navdanya products that I shifted, but before that—except the greens and stuff—I don’t think we really gave too much thought to where it came from. Because in Mumbai we’ve had access to all vegetables, seasonal or non-seasonal. So we know that they’re grown with a lot of [chemicals]. When we were kids there were some vegetables we didn’t see in

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39 Perishables can be transported globally with a few exceptions. Highly perishable foods with an existing or potential global market can be bred for durability in order to survive transport (e.g., tomatoes). A few exceptions, or indigenous varieties, that do not transport well remain as local delicacies as long as farmers continue to grow them (e.g., chikoo [sapodilla] fruits, which are common in India).

40 This phenomenon was dubbed “Permanent global summertime” in the title of a 2004 article by Joanna Blythman in *The Ecologist* magazine (vol. 34, no. 7: 18–21).
some months of the year, or some fruit we didn’t see, so we looked forward to it. But now it’s just whatever you want to eat, whichever part of the year, it’s available. So we know it’s not the best thing to be eating. [IS6]

Participants explained how knowledge loss with distancing goes beyond knowing how to prepare food to primary production or even eating. An Indian farmer recounted a story in which she astounded an official with her knowledge of indigenous rice biodiversity.

In 2001 or 2002 when I got an award in Portugal, we went to Delhi and a man at the airport asked Didi [companion; literally, sister] why I was going. So she said I was going because I knew all about rice and seeds. The man said well, there are only a few types of rice anyway. So Didi said to me, “Just tell him the names of a few varieties of rice.” When I rattled off about ten names, he said, “That’s enough!” [IF2; translated]

This anecdote shows how the diversity of a common food crop disappears from common knowledge when only a limited number of varieties are widely available. Similarly, participation in global markets reduces diversity of production as people grow for trade to the detriment of local varieties.

The varieties of fruit that we ate as kids, all the flavours of the vegetables that we ate as kids, are non-existent. They’re very nice looking but there isn’t that distinct flavour that each vegetable had or the tanginess of the apple or the different apples. But now there’s nothing. They’re just nice looking and they all taste terrible. . . . And I think it’s kind of killed a whole category of things that our farmers grew, like the brinjal [eggplant]. There were varieties which are called the local; there are ones which are from Gujarat [state]; each one had the different flavour and it cooked differently. [IS6]

On a drive through a rural farming area, a Navdanya staff member noted that a favourite variety of green melon, once typical of the region, hadn’t been seen for several years and people had already stopped asking for it. This shows how quickly mental distancing can occur.

People saw connections made through farmers markets and other close exchanges as a partial solution to the loss of awareness about produce variety. However, they also expressed concern that if people don’t know how to cook or follow a recipe, they will shy away from trying “new” things or buying raw ingredients, even if they are curious. Others expressed concern that people who lack basic knowledge about food would be ill prepared to resist actions that further exacerbate distancing (e.g., development of agricultural land, regulations
seen to support the industrial food system, or support for independent farmers). One participant spoke extensively of her childhood memories of her grandparents’ gardening and preserving, tasks she saw disappearing in urban settings where people don’t have gardens. She was concerned about how a generation with no connection to food production could responsibly ensure appropriate government policies to protect it. “There’s going to be a generation soon that won’t have that memory of gardens, or driving out in [town] and looking at the farms . . . so there’s a danger then of legislation not being in place to protect [local agriculture]” [CC1].

**Thinking Food: Value, Time, and Money**

As the role of food in society changes, it makes sense for the way people think about or place value on food to change as well. This section addresses the impacts of food system distancing with respect to the money and time people choose to spend on food and food-related activities. Participants in this study felt that distancing causes people to value food less and direct their time and money to other priorities, an issue that will be addressed in detail in Chapter Five.

**Fulfilled, or Just Filled Up?**

Many participants felt that the general public does not put sufficient value or attention on food. While recognizing the limits on people’s time, they felt that food was not as much of a priority as it could be. The loss of respect and attention to food was expressed in strikingly similar ways in India and Canada. Many participants in India lamented the loss of mealtime rituals.

When I was a child, everybody was very relaxed. Before eating food, we would go and wash our hands, wash our feet, and the food was cooked right in front in you, slowly. Even sometimes, when the food is not being cooked, and the children were waiting, we would be told a story. So it was a very warm sort of atmosphere, lingering, you know, that aroma sort of a thing. And now it is half the time fast food or made quickly or cooked from three days [ago] and put in the microwave. It is a complete contrast, I tell you. Food is not given enough
time anymore, either for growing or for cooking or for eating. When we say fast food, it is fast in every direction. [IS9]

Participants in Canada were also concerned about the loss of conviviality around meal times.

I’ve seen in my lifetime food going from being something that is more of an essential priority for families to being something that’s seen as a convenience and a commodity. And something that it’s been sort of pushed to the sidelines. It’s kind of like, “Well, we don’t have a lot of time to eat tonight. Let’s just go grab a pizza.” Even thinking about making dinner and then making enough for leftovers for the next day—that kind of thinking seemed to be much more prevalent when I was younger. [CP4]

People have such busy schedules and they value getting all the children out to sports and all the various activities the kids do, but they won’t actually value it enough to schedule their life so that they can sit down and eat together. [CS1]

Although major constraints due to time or money are rarely chosen, the amount of time or money that people are willing to spend on food relates partly to the way they value it. Most participants in this study prioritized the human relationships built through the acts of producing, cooking, sharing, or eating food.

Bonds [were] traditionally formed at family dinners or gatherings and barbecues. The Mediterranean dinner is a classic example of people eating outside and having a good time with wine and cheese and this and that. And so you form strong family bonds, strong social bonds, community bonds too, that will then end up disappearing when people don’t take time to prepare and eat, enjoy, purchase their food. [CF3]

They felt that food had shifted from being part of a full life to simply serving as a fuel for the body. Again, they saw this as both a side effect of distancing and as something that encourages people to become more disconnected: “If most of your food comes wrapped in plastic and Styrofoam now, and you microwave it and off you go, it’s kind of fuel for the body more than anything else” [CP3]. One of the consumers in India had a different take on the interplay between relationships, convenience, and meals.

One thing that, for me, fits very well into my [life] is the Baristas and the Coffee Days, the coffee shops. They are very friendly places, they’re nice places, they’re bright places, they’re happy places. And they are places where people meet. You know, you meet people over there [when] you’re running through, you pick up a bite. [IC3]
For her, places selling convenient, quick meals also provided a location and opportunity to socialize and foster relationships with others.

There was an interesting dichotomy with respect to how much time participants felt was appropriate for food work in the home. As I mentioned previously in the section on *Family Structure*, several participants felt that women mistakenly perceived cooking as laborious and that working women were under an illusion that packaged foods were a good time-saving technique. Although I do not know whether they had access to domestic help, those participants were from a strata of society that usually does employ such help to ease the burden of cooking and other household tasks. 41 The working woman quoted above who appreciated the relaxed atmosphere in western style cafés appreciated such places for their social attributes as well as for their role in providing convenient meals. Others acknowledged that some traditional methods or specific dishes were time-consuming, but felt there were ways to save time without resorting to packaged foods: “Friends of mine have just short-cutted everything, and it tastes very good. They enjoy it, but it doesn’t take four hours, you know, it probably takes about half an hour” [IC1]. Others, however, lamented the fact that people wanted meal preparation to be quick and interpreted this as a sign of distancing. One farmer in Canada spoke about how cooking and eating together should be a central part of life and not something to be rushed.

I really like the image in a house that the kitchen should be sort of the central part. . . . It should be a focal point; it’s where we should spend a lot of our time. For us, it is. We spend hours cooking. Sometimes if I’m home for lunch, it’ll take 2 hours to make lunch, and it should be a real focal point. But for so many people, it isn’t. It’s something you buy quickly and you eat. [CF4]

Another participant pragmatically admitted that although the short-cut options were tempting, they were less fulfilling.

It’s a funny thing because it’s an easy thing to just kind of push it aside. Just get dinner on the table in 15 minutes or less, make a meal in 20 minutes or less. I have these *Canadian Living* magazines at home with the 20-minute [recipes], literally from beginning to finish when you’ve started it to when you’re eating it,

41 On a personal note, I noticed while living in Delhi that daily housekeeping tasks such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, or laundry were more time consuming than they are in Canada due to added challenges of less mechanization, slow urban transportation, the need to boil or filter water for washing produce, and increased cleaning tasks associated with a hot, dusty, highly polluted urban environment.
it’s 20 minutes. And it’s easy to do that, but it’s definitely not fulfilling. So I think what you kind of lose is a piece of yourself and I think what you gain back is a piece of yourself, when you make a little bit more effort. [CP4]

This range of views clearly shows the complex relationships between food, values, and time. The issue of time presents a conundrum whereby food activities that resist distancing tend to be more time-consuming than their industrial counterparts because of the nature of what they are trying to do. Indeed, the time- or labour-intensive aspects of highly connected food activities (in production, processing, preparation, or eating) contribute to keeping large industry from taking over those spaces. Time is both a barrier and a strength in resisting distancing (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002). Regardless of how people adjust their food choices to cope with demands on their time, the way they think about those food choices is important, and may serve to minimize distancing even where trade-offs are made.

People spoke about how a relationship to the food and a respect for the food is fostered when food is given importance, and that the act of eating loses value when distancing cuts off some aspect of the connection.

I guess there’s a difference between eating and being nourished, and certainly you can take in calories and wolf down a samosa, but when you’re nourishing yourself, you’re taking responsibility for that act, and you’re taking responsibility for those that you’re feeding and you’re asking them to participate in that and you’re agreeing to participate in that, if you’re cooking for someone else. When you plan a meal, shop for it—it can start even further than that—when you grow that food, when you go out and acquire those seeds or maybe you’ve saved those seeds from the year before, you’ve grown that food, you have harvested it from your garden, you’ve gone all the way down the line and then you’ve cooked it, you’ve created a whole different act of eating, and it’s a complete act of eating. We can segment that at any point and we can just cut off and jettison any of those pieces, whether it be the seed saving or the growing of the food or the shopping for the food or the cooking of it. We can sever those pieces off, but I think that each time, we sever more and more of that nourishment off. And that act of eating, that act of nourishment, becomes smaller and smaller and smaller, so you’re just getting less nourishment overall. [CP4; emphasis added]

Time can be a major constraint on the food choices people make, but food can be prioritized to different extents within those constraints. Similarly, although financial constraints can be large, it follows that the more people value food, the more money they would be willing to spend to eat the way they want, as the next section shows.
Good Food, or Food as (Cheap) Good?

Distancing creates a situation in which people may not put financial value on good food, even when they have the material means with which to pay for it. There was a widely held perception among study participants in Canada that even people with economic means expect to pay very little for food. “Part of it might be due to ignorance, just because people have been getting cheap food for a while. They expect it to be cheap” [CF3]. While recognizing the fact that some people cannot afford to buy sufficient food, many participants lamented that Canadians spend the least amount, as a proportion of income, on food of almost any other country (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2009).

Adding weight to the contention that food could be given greater economic value is the disproportionate value put on consumer goods. Many participants pointed out the distortions in how much the general public is willing to spend on durable goods or ready-made food and drink. They compared the cost and value of different foods with comments like “people will be willing to spend, you know, four or five bucks on a large latte and they’ll balk at a carton of eggs that will last them much longer . . . so it is definitely about people’s . . . priorities and values” [CP4] or “somebody will say it’s too expensive to eat organically but they might eat out at restaurants several times a month” [CS1]. Others noted the more extreme discrepancies in spending on luxury goods over quality food.

People will buy expensive cars, they’ll buy expensive clothes, they’ll put value—they’ll spend more money on luxury items, but they’re not willing to spend more money on essentials. They’ll cut corners on medicine and food, but they won’t on pieces of clothing and going out to movies, and I don’t know what else people buy, but stuff. [CF3]

Research on the subject is limited, but there is emerging evidence that lower income individuals do participate in alternative food systems, finding increased value in the higher quality foods or reorganizing their habits to support systems that sustain their personal values (Dowler 2008).

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42 The issue of poverty and food insecurity was generally viewed as a separate problem than people who are unwilling to pay the full cost of food production. This issue was not explored in depth in the interviews as it was outside the scope of this study. However, the sentiment was articulated particularly well in one interview: “I’m always really careful with this, because there are some people that don’t have money for food. That is different than food being expensive. The solution is not to drive down the cost of food and have the farmers get paid nothing for producing it so that the people who have no money can afford it, while those people who are being paid certainly enough to afford food are being charged the same amount” [CS1].
The fetishization of food I discussed in the section on Living Food relates to another way people attribute economic value to food. While most participants felt that food should be given more value and people should be willing to pay more, they also expressed incredulity in spending money on extravagant restaurant meals or “thinking that a $2500 bottle of wine is not an insanity” [CS4]. There was a clear distinction between spending money to cover the real cost of quality food,⁴³ while not overvaluing celebrity (chefs) and conspicuous consumption (of food or other goods).

In India, extreme poverty and food insecurity exist alongside overconsumption and chronic diseases (see section on Dietary shifts and the nutrition transition in Chapter One) (Griffiths and Bentley 2001; Shetty 2002; Wang et al. 2009). Only those with sufficient means are able to pay a premium for organic or local food, or for western style packaged foods. One farmer growing traditional and organic crops told me that “only people who can afford it buy good [organic] food. Good food costs more money. The well to do come and buy, but poor people cannot” [IF2]. Ironically, those in rural areas of India who can’t afford to buy the premium produce are probably among the most connected to their food system because they have not even entered the industrialized food system and their subsistence is closely tied to the local production. The middle and upper classes of urban areas are the ones most likely to buy highly processed or western style fast foods; consumption of processed and ready to eat foods increases in proportion to income in urban India (Vepa 2004).

Participants noted that the economic well-being of communities can be related to the way people value food. In the industrial food system, profits are reaped primarily by those in the middle—processors, distributors, traders, retailers, or marketers—rather than individual producers and eaters of food. These middle entities were seen not only as having excessive wealth, but also to have obtained that wealth by pushing down prices for farmers and cutting corners to save money on labour. People talked about low wages in all parts of the food system, as well as about harsh, often dangerous, working conditions for unskilled or migrant labourers on industrial farms, in factories or packing plants, and slaughterhouses. These practices allow food to be sold cheaply, and participants blamed distancing for the continuation

⁴³ “Real cost” usually refers to inclusion of externalities such as health, environmental, and social costs associated with the food system.
of such injustice. One participant noted that “it’s really easy in our society not to care. Our entire society is built around alleviating you of responsibility” [CF4], suggesting that when people aren’t aware of the full implications of their actions, they are not able to act in more ethical or sustainable ways. Several participants suggested that supporting local economies and engaging in more connected exchanges would serve to improve the economic health of local communities.

Local food systems lead to stronger local economies, period. I mean, if you give your money to the local farmer, the local farmer comes and shops in your store. You give the money to Walmart, your money ends up somewhere down in Florida. It doesn’t stay in the community . . . so it’s really tied into buying from the local seed purveyor, who sells to the local farmer, who sells to the local chef, who buys from the . . . It’s a closed loop, the local economy. [CS2]

Others described it on an individual level.

I do want to be quite sure that whoever is getting my patronage or custom or whatever, is the right way. I really don’t want to be sponsoring and giving money to somebody whose values are too much in greed, and I would really much rather be cheated by a poor chap in the market. I would rather give him two rupees extra and, it’s alright, he’s got a family to feed and he needs to look after them, and I have a relationship with [him], and I can chat with that man or woman. [IC1]

Whether for the individual one deals with on a daily basis or the general state of the local community, livelihoods were seen as an essential aspect of a healthy food system.

**Eating Food: Resisting Distancing for Health**

Participants in the study described ‘healthy’ eating or ‘good’ food in many ways, such as nutritionally balanced, pure or hygienic, free of chemicals or toxins, organic, traditional, local, or homemade. Regardless of how they defined healthy food, shortening the physical or conceptual distance between production and consumption was considered an important aspect of healthy eating, as I will show in this section.
Know Your Food

Food consumed close to its source was usually seen as fresher, more nutritious, and less processed. “The closer you are to that source of energy in terms of the food that you’re eating, the healthier it is. The less processed it is, the better it is for you, the more likely you are to get the nutrients that come with growing these foods” [CF4]. Participants valued knowing what they were eating, sometimes regardless of “whether the food is good or bad.” In India, knowledge of provenance was strongly associated with a mistrust of foods from far away or that looked too perfect; people had very real fears of adulteration or excessive use of chemicals (fig. 4.6). During my travels around India, I heard many stories of colours being added to brighten fruits, or even liquids injected into foods such as eggplant to keep them firm and plump. I don’t know the extent to which this was happening, but concerns were prevalent. One participant described it this way:

Then there is food on that it is written some country’s name, so you know it is coming from there, and suddenly you have this feeling that most of things that are coming from there would be in some way tampered; it may not be natural. Because we find that such food, coming from certain sources, when kept for so many days, do not perish. [IS5]

Figure 4.6. Examples of fresh produce imported to India from distant locations
Left, apple found in Delhi grocery store bearing the same produce stickers found on Washington apples purchased in North American supermarkets (apples are widely grown in India); right, umbrella in shopping district advertising pears imported from the United States.
Knowing where something came from wasn’t always associated with increased trust, if that knowledge included practices considered unhealthy.

There was one season I had a lot of mangos. Navdanya—I knew their mangos were very good, because they picked them, I mean, I saw them in the orchard. The same season, my brother-in-law sent me some mangos from his garden in . . . an army place which they use for mango orchard. He said that they picked the mangos when they were slightly less ripe, put it in some medicine or something, applied some chemical to it, and made it ripe. I mean I knew that they came from there, but that didn't help, you know. So that was the thing. I don’t always know. I think people don’t always tell the truth. I feel I’m wasting my time trying to know. [CS3]

Winter (2003) also cites several examples where food marketed as “local” was not necessarily organic, healthier, or more sustainably produced than other foods. Although frequently viewed as such, local doesn’t necessarily mean better (Born and Purcell 2006). Still, it is one way in which consumers can step outside the mainstream and feel more engaged with their food system. The closer contact offers greater potential for building trust than does the distanced, opaque mainstream food system.

**Processed Foods as Unhealthy**

Packaged or processed foods were seen as a major problem in the food system. An industrial diet based on processed foods—very much a part of western food culture—was not considered healthy by participants in either country. Moreover, the processed food diet was critiqued in terms of the production processes that provide raw materials, the processing itself, and the prominent place of processed food at the retail level.

Distancing is characterized by a reliance on highly processed and packaged food. In the addition to the form of agriculture the industrial food processing industry is built on, participants expressed concern about the use of energy in processing plants and about the waste and pollution involved in the packaging, and disposal of packaging, for processed foods.

[N]aturally if you are relying on the packaged food industry, then the whole way that food is produced is going to have an impact on the soil and on the environment. . . . And then at the processing stage, where there is . . . high use of energy. And the whole packaging of it afterwards. A lot of times they package in plastic, and plastic is also a by-product of the petrol. So all that, and then the
disposal of all that. So health is also a casualty of that kind of cooking [based on packaged food]. . . . From the seed to the table it’s totally negative. [IS1]

Participants raised a range of concerns about the health of processed food consumption, including the “unnatural” process of manufacturing food from components rather than whole ingredients or because of what non-food ingredients might be added during processing. In part, these unnatural processes were considered a form of distancing that destroyed the relationship between people and the food while providing opportunity for the industry to extract greater profit.

The relationship has to do with the processing of food, and taking whole foods and breaking them down into parts, and then trying to reconstitute them into a whole food. . . . I find really degrades the quality of the food, and it’s in the interest of these companies to maximize their profits to sell you these broken down foods, because they can sell you a cob of corn for 50 cents or they can break down the corn and extract the fructose syrup and . . . whatever else they take out of it, and make ten times as much money off it. [CF3]

Others had similar concerns, but expressed them in terms of what was added to the food rather than what had been done to it physically.

I’m sure those things are made with a lot more preservatives and they’re made on a mass scale, so I really don’t know where and how they’re being produced. So we’re definitely eating less healthy overall. Because that stuff has to move from where it’s made to the shelves and stay there and be sold over the whole week. Whereas if I was making it in the home, there would be no preservatives. It has to be consumed on that day or the next day after. [IS6]

In India, the processed food diet was closely linked with shifts away from more traditional (and apparently healthier) ways of eating. Consumption of processed foods was discussed in the context of faster lifestyles, women in the paid workforce, the shift from extended to nuclear families, and increased cash income, which I discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. Many participants saw processed foods as contributing to health issues such as diabetes and obesity, which are increasing in urban India (Wang et al. 2009) (fig. 4.7).

The major impact [of distancing] is naturally appearing as the packaged food, and the unhealthiness of the eating. The school where I go to teach twice a week—I teach there for about 2 hours—by the time I’m exiting it’s the recess time where children open their tiffin [lunch] boxes and I always peep into it to see what is it that they are eating, and I’m shocked. Often it’s the silly Maggi
noodles that are in there. Or I find that they have opened a packet of chips and they are passing it around. Or they have all this industrial foods with kids, cakes and that kind of thing. Some of the children would have parathas or other traditional stuff, but a lot of them would have the packaged food also. [IS1]

Participants were concerned about the rise of so-called lifestyle diseases among children and were aware of the risks of normalizing processed foods and the potential delayed health effects. “And the whole trouble is, it’s a taste that you develop from childhood . . . so the long term effects of what is happening will be known only a few years later” [IS5]. Although maida [refined white flour] was considered an extremely unhealthy component of packaged foods, other nutritional issues such as high fat and sugar or low fibre content were not specifically mentioned. However, CISSA, one of the partner organizations I visited in Kerala, India, was particularly focussed on food system change as a way to improve nutritional health and prevent chronic illnesses. They were promoting traditional diet patterns (rather than specific foods) as way to minimize consumption of processed foods and address the growing problem of diet-related diseases in the state.

Figure 4.7. Sign in Delhi advertising a health promotion campaign against obesity
Not Just What, But How

One of the major concerns that participants expressed about distancing is that it creates a system in which people don’t know how to eat because they don’t know what they are eating. It is difficult to eat well without awareness.

There are so many things that people don’t know about their food [in] that disconnection from it. People don’t know how to eat. [I heard from a dietitian that, often] pickles are the closest thing that people can identify as fresh vegetables. It’s frightening, because people don’t know how to eat. And I think that that’s really—I don’t think it’s an economic problem and I don’t think it’s an industry problem—I think it’s a cultural problem. [CF4]

Most participants felt that it is important for people to know what they are eating if they are to be healthy, a skill made more challenging by the way in which the food industry pushes the least healthy foods, often by claiming they are good for you. One participant noted that “they’re always over-claiming their nutritional benefit” by making excessive claims such as kids will do better in school “just because of Kellogg’s Corn Flakes they ate” [IS3].

Most participants, even those who described health issues with processed foods in terms of specific ingredients or contaminants, situated their concerns within a broader context of the way people approach eating. People focussed on the whole diet rather than individual foods. Highly processed food products, as a whole, were described as substandard foods or even as non-foods (fig. 4.8). This common notion was expressed clearly in this statement:

The other thing is what we call food. I mean, we have substances or whatever you call them, products I guess, that really are a construct. They’re manufactured. They basically aren’t food. They’re for us to consume because there is something that we’re wanting to fill up, and we’re wanting that experience of food, which is so essential to us, and we’re wanting to have the enjoyment of it. So as we get faster and faster, we have to eat more and more of it in order for us to be able to have any kind of enjoyment. [CS1]

On the other end of the spectrum, participants felt that paying attention and caring about food automatically led to eating a relatively healthy, if not perfect, diet, “because if it’s meaningful to you then you’re going to eat better food.”
Meanings of Distancing

Food system distancing is a broad concept, which participants in this study perceived as manifesting in different aspects of life including individual or community health, family life, socio-cultural norms, and political power. It was very closely related to processes of industrialization throughout the food system as well as the impacts of industrialization on lifestyle. As expected, the industrial food system was described as well entrenched within Canadian society; in India, it had emerged relatively recently but was growing with such momentum that people saw it as a lasting reality that would have long term impacts on local food systems and health. The self-reinforcing nature of distancing was clear. Participants described multiple examples of the positive feedback spiral between the structures created by an industrial food system and the ability of individuals to make free and fully informed choices about food.
I have shown in this chapter how the normalization of the industrialization–distancing complex has led to changes in food production, processing, distribution, preparation, and consumption in mainstream modern societies. There has been a shift from home-based, convivial food practices toward more individualized consumption of industrially produced products. As these foods and food practices normalized, the ways that people value the time and money spent on food has also declined. Both the kinds of foods commonly consumed and the environments and contexts in which they are eaten were seen as increasingly unhealthy by the participants in this study. They perceived the lack of attention to and focus on food as a central problem associated with distancing, one which is difficult to resist within the constraints of modern urban life. I think this devaluing of food points to a need for innovative approaches to address the health of food systems. It becomes important to consider approaches and attitudes to food as well as focussing on specific diets, agricultural techniques, or food exchange mechanisms.

**Meaning as Motivation**

As resisters of food system distancing, participants were highly conscious of industrialization and its perceived impacts. A major research question for this dissertation addressed how people made the shift from awareness of the issue to being motivated to engage in resisting it. Most participants discussed multiple concerns that they felt driven to act upon. I questioned them specifically about how they saw distancing in relation to the health of the food system. They described motivations based on concerns for the well-being of farmers or food workers; equity and food security in the context of globalization; sustainability of local food production; land degradation and pollution; the nutrition transition in India; and a desire for a healthy, fresh, or pure food for their own consumption. Despite this comprehensive list, most participants mentioned these things as general issues rather than with the passion of an activist.

Participants *did* express passion when talking about something much harder to define, harder to measure, and even harder to label—a conviction that food has intrinsic value that transcends the important side effects of the food system I had questioned them about. This is
not to suggest that they were not motivated by issues of social, ecological, or human health, but that those motivations were superseded by something of a higher order. The meaning that food had in the lives of these people drove them to engage in activities to resist distancing, a phenomenon they blamed for diminishing the essential nature of food in our lives. The motivation to resist conceptual distancing based on the intrinsic value of food forms the basis of the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE:
For Food’s Sake

Introduction

This chapter will shift from an investigation of what food system distancing means to an exploration of why people care about it. In Chapter Four, I articulated ways in which participants in this project experienced food system distancing. I showed how the processes of distancing and industrialization are closely linked in a spiral of mutually-reinforcing feedback, each contributing to the normalization of the other. From the perspective of the resisters I interviewed, this normalization of distancing contributes to a devaluing of food in individual and social life as food becomes less present in people’s minds and less central to their lives. In this chapter, I will address some of the internal motives that inspired people to resist food system distancing.

In early interviews, I asked people about strategies to resist distancing and what they hoped would come out of the movement, probing into obvious issues like health, sustainability, or social justice. Most participants answered with brief comments concerning programs or
activities, and sometimes spoke in more depth about health, the environment, or social issues. However, interviews usually shifted naturally to conversations about something deeper, and participants became more passionate when talking about the importance of food in general. I began to ask more general questions about what drew participants to become engaged in an alternative food movement or toward particular activities, frequently posing the question directly: “What makes food so important to you?” Although most participants were concerned about food-related issues such as human health, farmers’ rights, ecological balance, economics, food culture, or the sustainability of local communities, it was clear that the dominant and unifying theme was a belief that food is important for its own sake.

The idea that food is important for its own sake is the central theme of this chapter. I will show how the participants in this study were motivated by an awareness of the intrinsic value of food, and how a focus on this intrinsic value could be helpful for driving positive food system change. Most food systems scholarship addresses the (very important) issues that are part of, and affected by, the food system, which I have addressed at length in earlier chapters of this dissertation. Here I will move beyond the issues associated with food—‘side effects’ of the food system—to focus on food itself and the role that valuing food for food’s sake played in motivating people to resist distancing. I will first illustrate the ways in which participants in this study valued food in its own right, which they expressed in terms of meaningful connections, a sense of food as sacred, and awareness of interconnectedness within the food system. I will then show how appreciation of food’s intrinsic value can help support food system change as a necessary, if not sufficient, ingredient for minimizing distancing.

For the Love of Food: Motivations to Resist Distancing

Participants mentioned a range of issues that motivated them to engage with food systems work, but the common theme was valuing food for food’s own sake. People expressed a strong respect for food because of what they perceived as its intrinsic value. Although they did speak at length about nutrition, the environment, local communities, or other food systems-related issues, their comments tended to shift toward a discussion of simply how
important they felt food was. The value of food was expressed in terms of the nourishment or fulfillment they associated with relationships built around food, a reverence or respect for food, and the awareness of the central role of food in human life. Most people felt that connections through food were particularly meaningful. For some participants, food played a key role in spiritual or religious practice, and for others, food was sacred in its own right. Many participants felt that food was a key part of an interconnected world and thus it could not be separated (or distanced) from other things.

**Soulful Connections Through Food**

It was clear from the interviews that food was an important medium for deep, soulful connections with other people. The sharing of food was a way to connect with other people, memories of times past, or another place. Feeding was seen as an act of nurturance and care, and for some, a spiritual act.

**Transcending time and space**

Many participants recounted childhood memories and habits that focussed on food. In some cases, particular foods were associated with specific family members and people still felt connected to those relatives when they ate certain foods or dishes. Memories of tastes, smells, and food practices were particularly vivid. For some, family habits or traditions were described as an important part of their history and who they were as people. In these ways, food seemed to transcend time and space. For one person, using her grandmother’s recipes made her feel closer to her grandmother, who had passed on:

I’ll always tell my mother, “Oh, make *nani ji wali dal.*” You know, like the dal Granny made. Yes, so we say “*nani ji wali dal*”, or “*nani ji wali aloo*”, you know, so this kind of way of just doing the potatoes. So you actually connected cooking with her. . . . So then food you realize is a huge integral part of your emotional memory, your sense of times of celebration. So in that sense, the food begins to assume a lot more importance than just something you’ve done yourself. [IC9]

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44 I define “soulful” as relating to the essential aspects of one’s inner life, e.g., spirituality, emotion, or wholeness. Soulful connections would be in stark contrast to the kinds of superficial or impersonal links common in the distanced, industrialized food system, e.g., ‘connections’ between McDonald’s customers in Vancouver and farm workers picking slicer tomatoes in Mexico that eventually end up on fast food hamburgers (see Barndt 2002).
For another, food tasted better when prepared with care by the women in her family, even if she cooked the same foods.

We used to have a grain grinder, you know, that *atta ki chakki* we called it. Now my grannies and all, they used to sing, a song, and then they used to grind the *atta*. . . . Then they used to prepare a dough and then make *chapattis* out of it. So all that singing, all that had a different rhythm into it, you know? And that *chapatti, na*, then we used to really enjoy eating it. But now I know, going to the market, you don't do anything but get that thing and then prepare a *chapatti*. Whether it is round or any shape, it doesn't look any different. Their *chapattis* were so nice, so tasty, I don't know how it became, but it was really wonderful. And they used to make us sit down and then serve it. They used to fan it, so that the thing had a different flavour. [IS2]

These stories suggest more than good memories or reminders of loved ones. These participants described feelings of actually being with those people again through the foods or the memories of those foods.

Others described how foods become a means of connection in the present moment. One person felt reconnected to her family not simply by going back to the family home, but once they engaged in food activities together.

When I was going through university I had a little hot plate in my dorm room, and I would live off of ramen noodles and hot chocolate and Kraft Dinner. And, you know, I would go home and my mom would cook. We would cook together, we'd have a meal at the table, and then I would go out to the orchard and pick some apples with her, and I just felt a tremendous sense of connection and relief. And so I think it's more prevalent when you bring food back into your life, when you spend a little bit more time on it; that's when you feel it. [CP4]

This description suggests that her sense of home was more closely connected to the food activities than to the place itself. The picking, cooking, and eating of food formed a strong bond with loved ones that seemed more meaningful than just returning to the place.

**Communing**

Several participants found food more satisfying when eaten in a communal context. People in both countries told me that they enjoyed food more and even needed to eat less in order to feel full when they shared good food in a positive social environment. For example:

The importance of food plays a very vital role in human life. It connects from one person to another. If I'm cooking the food and I serve it to my family member,
that connection is there. If you go and take your food and just prepare it yourself and eat it, that is a different thing. It doesn't give you that fulfillment, you know? But when my mother is serving to me, I'll be more satisfied in just one spoon of food, you know? [IS2]

Sharing food in a meaningful or positive social context seemed to improve the quality and experience of food for some participants. “Good” food was also seen as a tool for building or improving human connections, which in turn improved their perception of what they are eating.

The value of food, to me, is communal, communality, communing, communing with other people, communing with nature, communing with the sort of respect that some of the aboriginal peoples have for their food. . . . The real value of food is nourishing, not only our stomachs, but our minds, our social relationships, and nourishing the planet. . . . I think that the real value of food is that it’s a metaphor and a tool. The tool part of it is that if people come together around food and nourish themselves with really good, tasty, eye appealing nutritious food, the conversation is helped to be stimulated—the dialogue, discourse, so on—and community is built through that. And people who are in community, or people who have solid social relationships tend not to overindulge. If you have a really fine plate of food, you tend to eat less because you’re satiated, satisfied, nourished. If you have empty calories, you need more. And if you watch television you see commercials, and the commercials tell you that if you buy, you’ll feel better, and you do, for a very short time, until you don’t and then you watch more TV, see more commercials, boom, you consume more, and get addicted. [CS4]

This person saw a clear connection between good food and soulful relationships—and junk food and shallow (or a lack of) relationships—that is not unlike the self-reinforcing feedback cycles of distancing and industrialization (along with its associated negative impacts) that I described in Chapter One and that participants reported in Chapter Four. “Junk” foods are often recognized as poor choices, even by people who eat them, suggesting a widespread recognition among consumers of what has been called the “essential soullessness” of these food products (Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009, 233). The “empty calories” represent a lack of meaning in the experience of eating, and a lack of meaning can create an existential void that we want to fill up. In the absence of commensal relationships, junk food or mindless eating can be an attempt to fill the void, at least temporarily (see Morrison, Burke, and Greene 2007).
Connecting to place

Food was more than a medium for connection to other people or other times. Food was also seen as closely linked with land and place. As one participant said, "agriculture is the most intimate interaction we have with the Earth" [CP2]. The Earth provides the food that is ultimately incorporated into our bodies. Another participant, a chef, described a similar sentiment in terms of showing respect for the specific place where one lives via the food one cooks.

If you can document your contribution as a chef, [it’s] how many really great local dishes did you create? Maybe if you’re a really good chef you created three in a year. And if you created them using an international larder, you’ve betrayed your territory. So on a personal level and on a creative and artistic level, those are the kind of things that are important to me. But also because it’s about more than creativity—it’s like a tribute to this place that I live. [CS3]

The strong language of “betrayal” shows a powerful sense of connection between food and place for this participant. Cooking “good” food, to her, required recognition of the close connection between the local land and the food she was preparing.

Food is one of the few things that can connect individuals, their community and society, and the planet on which we all live.

I understand not having time, but I also really understand the huge importance. It goes beyond just what you put on the table and what you put in your mouth. It really goes deeper into the connections you have with yourself, your family, the land around you, your neighbours and who’s growing your food. [CP4]

This participant led a busy life with a family and a full-time job; she clearly felt the tensions created by the realities of her busy life and the high degree of value she placed on food and the central role she felt it should play in life. These tensions were at least partly eased by integrating food with family activities rather than trying to fit food-related chores around other things they chose to do. From her perspective, preparing and eating a meal could be a family event rather than something to hurry through so everyone could go to their respective activities; going to a farm or market might be a form of recreation to share and enjoy, rather than rushing to the supermarket to get food in between other things that were done for fun.
Care and respect

Food was seen by some as a tool with which to care for others; for them, feeding was an act of nurturance and love. They noted how cooking in the home was once seen as a respected occupation and was deserving of more respect than it now receives. As I discussed in Chapter Four, some participants felt that feminist support for women in the paid workforce had unintentionally contributed to the devaluing of women’s food work in the home. Although concerns over what they saw as a devaluing of traditional female roles within an economically-driven industrial food system were expressed by women from different social strata in both countries, it was women in India who were particularly expressive about the nurturing aspect of cooking and providing food, as well as the joy of feeding others.

And I realized that cooking has joy in the act of cooking itself. That it is itself very therapeutic and creative. And also as a nurturer, it is something; it is a service that you are doing. If your family is healthy and eating well, then there are that many members of society that are more positive. [IS1]

I do not know the details of this woman’s home life, but given her social standing it is likely that she had domestic help, or at least the option to do so, likely making it easier to hold (and live) such a view. The realities and time conflicts of modern life aside, feeding is commonly viewed as “care work,” regardless of whether people feel able to pay it sufficient time and attention (Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann 2010; Szabo 2011), and worthy of consideration when reflecting on the value of food. In their study on “foodies” (people with a passion for “good food”), Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann (2010) found that participants described nurturing aspects of food work as feminine roles, and that female foodies put a high priority on feeding. Another female participant in India referred to an earlier time when women did not frequently work outside the home and thus had more time to spend on food work. From her perspective as an elder, women’s work was highly valued:

It affects like that, that since cooking food was the main thing in life, so cooking was considered a very noble, a good thing, valued. So, it was given respect. My mother and my grandmother were very much respected because they gave us food they cooked themselves. And now that’s completely lost. [IS9]

Although educated, she chose to stay at home and care for her children, including preparing food for them, when they were young. For her, it was important to show care through carefully
and slowly prepared meals, a belief that I witnessed by watching how lovingly she tended her tiny kitchen garden and during several meals I had the pleasure of sharing as a guest in her home.

Food was also recognized as the natural connection between producers and consumers in the food system. Given the focus of the hub organizations that participated in this research, it would be reasonable to assume that most, if not all, participants felt that this link was important and should be given greater attention in society. As one Navdanya representative put it:

I think connecting the producers with the consumers is something essential. Because consumers—we like to call them co-producers more than consumers, as in the Slow Food spirit. First of all, if consumers or co-producers know how that food is produced, they'll have a lot of respect for the food they are eating and for the people who are producing that food. Because producing the food at the seed level is also an act of nurturance. The kind of hardships our farmers have to go through and still they remain growing food for us, is to my mind an act of total giving. [IS1]

This quote highlights the role that connecting producers and consumers can play in supporting food systems change. Many participants felt that practices at all stages could be improved by integrating respect into the food system. Respect is closely related to gratitude. Gratitude (e.g., for the food one is eating) can form the basis for meaningful or respectful relationships. Together, respect and gratitude can transcend desires that emerge from ego or a search for personal gain or profit. One farmer articulated what he saw as one of the key benefits of attending farmers’ markets:

People will come up to me, and they’ll say, “Thanks. Thanks for being our farmer.” And I just take out my wallet and fill it with all this great big fat satisfaction and go home. It doesn’t matter if I made a nickel or not, you know? [CF2]

Although he was clearly in a privileged position to take such a stance, this farmer was motivated as much by the respect and gratitude of the people who appreciated the food he provided as by the money they paid him.
Spiritual connection

Participants in this study also used food as a means of connecting in ways that could be described as sacred or spiritual. Although they didn’t always use such language, almost every participant referred to an intangible connection with something greater than themselves. They described food in the context of a variety of deep connections to other people (e.g., sharing food in a religious tradition), to nature or the Earth (e.g., through growing food), or to God (e.g., through prayer or other personal concepts of God) (fig. 5.1). In India, people were much more open with explicit language of spirituality and religion; although some participants in Canada also used such terms, most spoke with the same kind of reverence regardless of the labels they used.

Figure 5.1. Signs over the entrance to the communal kitchen at the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar, India
Free meals are offered to anyone who enters the temple complex, regardless of creed.

Where food was explicitly spoken of as sacred, there was an ethic of sharing and abundance associated with the sacred nature of food. This ethic was in opposition to the individualized character of the commodified food system.

I define spirituality as William James ([1902] 2004) defined “personal,” or inner, religion: “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men [sic] in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine” (36). James’s concept does not suppose any organized religion or concept of a god. This definition, in its focus on relation to a self-defined concept of the divine, describes the attitudes of these study participants who spoke (explicitly or otherwise) about connection or connectedness as a tenet of spirituality or soulfulness.
I think the first value of food in Indian culture—Indian culture evolved for thousands of years—is food as sacred. And that’s why you will notice, if you go to any traditional household they will not let you go away without eating. Because that’s part of a spiritual duty. . . . To me, all the problems in food began with reducing food to a commodity. . . . To the extent that food is considered sacred—the interesting thing is—your duty with respect to food is sharing it, giving it. Since giving is your first value, there’s never too little. It creates abundance. In a strange, interesting kind of way it creates abundance. The minute it’s a commodity, it creates scarcity. [IS3]

This participant is referring to the ancient Indian concept of *annadaana*, which means the giving of food: one should always give to the hungry, and one should not eat while there are still hungry people nearby (Shiva 2002). Traditional Hindu culture places a much higher value on feeding (giving food) than on eating, and strongly frowns upon eating to excess (Moreno 1992). The idea of a spiritual duty to share as a form of non-commodification suggests a practical application of spiritual or sacred connections through food. Commodification shifts the focus to the individual and to consumption, rather than the collective and sharing or giving.

Another participant expressed a similar sentiment in terms of metaphorical rather than literal feeding. His first effort at growing food was to plant a 2×4-metre plot of wheat. It was important to him that he “had a hand in every stage” of sowing, nurturing, harvesting, grinding, and finally baking this wheat into two loaves of bread. It was a lot of work for two loaves, but he wanted to use it for Eucharistic bread, so that 150 people could eat from (i.e., share) the same loaf. The idea of feeding many people from the same loaf suggests spiritual abundance, and is reminiscent of the well-known Bible story in which Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes (Matthew 14:13–21).

**Soulful connections: Food as central to meaningful relationships**

Harriet Friedmann (1999), in her analysis of how the globalizing industrializing food system was changing how we as a society eat, recognized the shift toward more, but less meaningful, connections. “The most intimate daily practices of people around the world who

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46 This concept is repeated in many sacred Hindu texts, e.g., The Taittiriyiya Upanishad.
47 Eucharistic bread is that used in the Christian sacrament of Holy Communion, a symbolic re-enactment of the Last Supper of Jesus, in which he broke bread and shared with his disciples, instructing them to break and share bread in remembrance of him (Luke 22:19).
are unknown to one another are connected—and disconnected—through growing, processing, transporting, selling, buying, cooking and eating food” (Friedmann 1999, 36). The fact that we can be connected and disconnected at the same time speaks to the quality of those connections which, in the industrial food system, would not be described as soulful. Such a lack of soulful connections no doubt relates to the growing literature on reconnection in the food system (e.g., Dowler et al. 2009; Hinrichs 2000; Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996; Kneafsey et al. 2009; Sage 2003), not to mention the burgeoning projects and organizations that form the focus of that writing (including the organizations that participated in this research).

These results that point to a central importance of deep connections around food suggest the possibility of an additional layer in the scholarship on connection in the food system, one that places more importance on food itself. In their work on reconnection between consumers and producers of food, Kneafsey, Dowler, and their colleagues found that people were motivated to engage in more connected food system alternatives for a range of reasons that were not always easy for them to articulate but that centred around an ethic of care for something that they felt could be addressed by reconnecting within their personal food systems (Dowler et al. 2009; Kneafsey et al. 2009). They also found that once people began to reconnect, they made additional efforts at reconnection. This suggests that food is not simply a means through which people can connect in a distanced society, but that connecting specifically through food is essential.

One could argue that reconnection in society could be made via a multitude of routes, such as food, art, family, hobbies, or workplaces, to name only a few. While reconnection may be occurring in these arenas, I argue here that the fact of reconnecting through food has particular resonance with people because of the intrinsic value of food. Perhaps what those other forms of reconnection lack is the intimate quality of food. Of all the things people do or consume, food is the one that is actually integrated into the body, as Tony Winson pointed out in *The Intimate Commodity* (Winson 1993). Food is the ultimate integration between humans and nature; eating involves taking things from nature, usually altering them (often so

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48 Air and water are also brought into the body, but water is often associated with food in that we drink water with meals and cook food in water, and breathing air is frequently unconscious and always involuntary.
that they no longer resemble their original states), and integrating them into the body. Not only do humans connect with food on this intimate physical level, but we must do so consistently in order to survive (Visser 1986).49 Thus, resisting distancing is not just about reconnecting, but about reconnecting with food, which is so essential to being.

Among participants in this study, the intrinsic value of food often went deeper than the relationships or connections they had with or through food. They regarded food with reverence and a sense that food and food-related activities were sacred in their own right, as I will discuss in the following section.

**Food as Sacred: Connecting With Food**

Food was valued by study participants for more than its ability to connect them with people, places, or times. Many participants spoke about deep connections with food in addition to those made possible through food. More than a medium for connecting, food was worth connecting with because of its own intrinsic value. Participants held food in high regard, that is, as sacred,50 at least in a secular sense. Connections with food were rarely described as solitary endeavours, however, and there was much commonality between participants’ connections through food and their connections with food.

**Celebrating food**

Several people spoke about the importance of celebrating food. Their comments speak of a relationship with food quite different than the shame/fetish dichotomy described in the context of distancing in Chapter Four. Good quality food was worth a great deal to these participants, but not in a trendy or conspicuous manner.

Whereas, you go to Italy or other cultures where it's not a fad, it's actually a necessity of life. It's how you share time with your family; it's how you socialize; it's how you connect with your body, basically. I mean everything you put into your body is considered very, very important. You want the best quality. I don't know if we're making that shift here, that's a bigger, cultural shift. [CS2]

49 The epigraph to this dissertation (Visser 1986) eloquently describes the intimate and essential nature of food in human life.
50 I use the term “sacred” as a way of describing something that is highly respected or valued.
By implying that food awareness in Canada is a passing fashion, this participant may have been dismissing early efforts by a public gradually becoming more in tune with food issues. Still, the need for a broad cultural shift is important to point out (Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009). In keeping with the view that lasting cultural change is needed (as opposed to faddism or gourmand sensibilities), appreciation for “good” food was viewed as synonymous with eating in an ecologically sustainable way rather than as a form of conspicuous consumption.

The thing that [Slow Food founder] Carlo Petrini says, is that in order to be a gastronomer, you have to be an environmentalist. And an environmentalist who doesn’t enjoy good food is very sad. And I think that’s what we have a lot of here. [CS3]

Petrini (2007) presents what he refers to as “the new gastronomy,” which does not necessarily describe the world of the gourmet. His gastronomy is “the reasoned knowledge of everything that concerns man as he eats” (55), stressing the importance of complete knowledge and real choice in all aspects of the food system (e.g., social, ecological, medical, cultural, political, economic, culinary) as well as pleasure in food. Wendell Berry similarly argues that, in transforming us from eaters to “mere consumers,” the industrial food system has taken away our ability to fully engage with our food, and therefore taken away the pleasure in eating. “The pleasure of eating should be an extensive pleasure, not that of the mere gourmet” (Berry 1992, 378). Without full appreciation of what we are eating, we can’t experience the full pleasure of it. Fully appreciating “good” food in modern industrial society usually requires stepping outside the mainstream food system. Industrialization has in a sense taken away our ability or desire to celebrate and take pleasure from food, because many of the processes of industrialization, if known, would destroy any sense of pleasure in eating (Berry 1992; Korthals 2004).

The more soulful connecting with food is analogous to the idea of fulfillment versus filling up that was raised earlier and in Chapter Four. This concept involves using food as a way to nourish the soul rather than simply as fuel for the body. As when food was used as a medium for connecting with others in a meaningful way, truly nourishing food was described as more filling (as well as more fulfilling). One participant described how, when food is eaten to fill a social or emotional void in life, it becomes an addiction that doesn’t truly satisfy.
The other thing, too, is what we call food. We have substances or whatever you call them—products, I guess—that really are a construct. They’re manufactured. They basically aren’t food. They’re for us to consume because there is something that we’re wanting to fill up, and we’re wanting that experience of food, which is so essential to us, and we’re wanting to have the enjoyment of it. And so as we get faster and faster, we have to eat more and more of it in order for us to be able to have any kind of enjoyment. And it’s kind of heavy, it’s an addiction, it really is. It’s like an addiction that’s trying to fill that hole that is more properly addressed through relationships and culture and celebration and slowing down and spending time together. [CS1]

She clearly articulates how industrial or ‘junk’ food is used by many as an attempt to fill a spiritual void left by the absence of connections with good food and strong relationships (Morrison, Burke, and Greene 2007). To her, over-consumption of junk foods is an attempt to fill the void that left when ‘good’ foods are not shared and celebrated through convivial meals.

**Family food culture**

Some participants, mostly in India, spoke of having a family food culture in which food played a central role and was not just a means to an end (such as nutrition or religious practice). The ways they described these traditions suggested that both food and the process of eating it were central to daily life.

> I know that my family has always had a very distinctive food culture. By that I mean there was an idea that you had to make one dal [lentil dish], two sets of sabji [vegetables], some dahi, which is curd [yogurt], and in the summer it had to be, you know, the whey [lassi; yogurt drink]. Things like that. So there was a very definite food thing. [IC9]

This family’s food culture was described in terms of the way meals were constructed, but implicit in that description is the notion that meals would have been eaten together as a family, as this next quote describes:

> Now basically, we had a very deep-rooted food culture in [home state]. We have a system in India, whereby the entire family sits together for food and there is a culture that has evolved out of that sitting together, eating together. [IS5]

It is worth noting that such family meal traditions were only described by participants in India. Although one participant in Canada reminisced about food memories and the influence of early family life on her relationship with food now, it was presented more as something her family
did than as a common tradition in society at that time. This contrast between the countries is no doubt partly related to the long history of India’s food culture. It also reflects the different stages of industrialization of the two countries. Food system industrialization, and its associated distancing, is less than two decades old in India, during which time the urban food environment has changed dramatically. Canada’s food system underwent the most dramatic phase of industrialization over half a century ago. Many participants grew up in the 1950s through 1970s, at the height of widespread adoption of industrial and convenience foods in North America.

Although specific family food cultures weren’t mentioned by participants in Canada, similar sentiments were raised. Food was described as a marker of the passage of time or of stages in a life—positive or negative—that are signified by food because it is such a central part of life.

I think so much of human culture overall is tied back through food and stories of food, and they kind of mark times historically in people’s lives and the lives of families, about when we didn’t have this kind of food or we couldn’t afford this. It’s not just necessarily all the good times that we spent sitting around the table; it’s times of famine, times of deprivation. So much of that history is marked by food or the absence of it or how it changed. [For instance], when we moved to this area we couldn’t get this food any longer so we had to start eating another kind of food. And I’m sure that’s a very common thing for a lot of immigrant families and people who are newly arrived or who have been here for a while. [CP4]

Regardless of whether there are codified cultural traditions, there is little question that food has important cultural and symbolic value in addition to its role in feeding the body and the economy (Fonte 1991). Symbolic value corresponds to inner rather than external or concrete factors, factors that resist commodification. In the industrialized food system, such non-economic values risk being lost as priorities shift toward that which can be commodified (Fonte 1991).

Reverence for food

There is much about food that can be made sacred, whether it be ritual feasts or daily food habits; it need only be “regarded as more significant, powerful, and extraordinary than the self” (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry Jr. 1989, 13). For many of the participants in India, the
The sacredness of food was part of ritual or religious practice. Hinduism in India is more than a religion; it is a culture (Klostermaier 2007). As such, many practices and beliefs associated with the Hindu religion are prevalent in daily life in India, even among non-Hindus or secular people. Other traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism share a similar reverence for food. Jain philosophy, for example, considers food to be “fruits of the Earth” and thus deserving of respect, reverence, and gratitude because the Earth is viewed as sacred (Kumar 2002).

Participants described how, in traditional Indian society, food “is a holy thing” [IC1]. There was much sacred ritual and respect given to the practice of preparing food, as this participant describes:

She used to consider it something like a prayer, her cooking itself. And even at the end of the cooking, in certain Hindu households, they used to put a little food back into the fire, and it is giving to the agni. Agni is the fire from whom they had taken the energy to do this thing. . . .

Just like the reverence that we have towards a deity in the temple, in olden days food was respected a lot. You know, before eating, even when you sit down for food there used to be some mantras. Even when you eat food it used to be thanking the nature around that this has been provided to me. . . . In [state] especially, in our households, we used to enter the kitchen only after taking a complete head bath . . . because they believed that while you sleep at night there is a certain sort of a toxicity on your body. Food is something which you are making for the entire family—it has to be clean, it has to be pure, it has to be good, and it has to be healthy. And so all those things were considered when food was made. And it was done in a very nice way, presented in nice way, and it was not right to throw food on the ground. And suppose there is a grain of rice on the ground and you sort of stamp on it, you know, it was considered wrong, it was disrespecting it. [IS5]

The connection between food, purity, and worship is prevalent in India. Food is used ritually to purify the body (i.e., you are what you eat). On the other hand, there is also a widespread belief that people eat according to their inherent nature or status, such as the common practice of vegetarianism among high-caste Brahmans (i.e., you eat what you are) (Khare 1992).

Eating was also a practice to be done with reverence, because food was connected to God.

Traditionally, in India, food, the eating of food was considered an act of prayer. And the grace that I grew up saying as a child was, “With every morsel of food take the name of God, because this food is the truth.” And the act of eating is
the act of making the ovations. The body is the sacrificial fire, which you make these ovations. So it is a very beautiful [thing] . . . My father would often say at the end of a meal, “May the giver of food be blessed. Blessed is the giver of food.” [IC1]

Not unlike the Jain concept of respect for food as a “fruit of the [sacred] Earth,” the Hindu Upanishads provide a basis for a deep respect for food. Food is a manifestation of both Brahman [God or ultimate Reality] and the self [divine nature] and therefore deserving of respect and reverence (Easwaran 2007). We are instructed to “Respect food: the body is made of food; Food and body exist to serve the Self” (Taittiriya Upanishad, Part III:8.1). There are innumerable rituals through virtually human cultures that link food with God or religion, suggesting that food is more than simply fuel for the body; it also feeds the soul (Kass 1999; Moore 2002).

Agriculture as spiritual vocation

Like cooking, farming was seen as a spiritual or sacred act by some participants. Food production, specifically small scale farming, was a way for one of the Canadian farmers to practice his Christian spiritual beliefs. By participating in what he saw as the miracle of agriculture, he was engaging in a lived experience that could be more real and meaningful than organized religion.

I read, the previous summer, The Omnivore’s Dilemma, and that really got me thinking about some really serious issues, and it also led me to reading Wendell Berry. And that was really the inspiration, both on a community basis and food issues, but also on a spiritual basis, because he writes from a faith background and I was sort of struggling, being disillusioned with organized religion, but saying there’s got to be some other way to express yourself. Not necessarily belief, but interest in, sort of, the mysteries of what’s happening in the world. . . .

There are a lot of people who see a spiritual connection through nature and through their lived daily lives, and I think that that’s sort of the direction that we’ve been going on. If you go to church and you’re evil to people the rest of the week, it doesn’t really have any relevance. You have to find ways of living out your beliefs on a day to day basis, so I think that’s more what we’re doing. And I think that, really, from a lot of what I’ve read from Wendell Berry and so on, has sort of reinforced that there’s something really incredible about the process of life and death and that interconnection in agriculture, and it’s really one of the places where you see it most pertinent in society. [CF4]
For this participant, growing food was a way to enact his spiritual or religious convictions outside the church. Participating in the miracles of nature was a religious experience because he saw God in what was happening as things grow.

You have a seed and it germinates and it creates this amazing plant. I think that's living these mysteries or questions about—I have no idea how this works and I don't want to know all those scientific or religious explanations, but I think that there's something really humbling about being a part of that process. [CF4]

He saw a connection between God and nature, and participating in a key process of nature was to him like an act of faith and worship.

**Eating meditation**

Just as growing or cooking food could be a form of living prayer or a way of connecting with the divine, eating could also be a form of sacred practice. One follower of Buddhist philosophy described the practice of mindfulness in eating:

I attended a demonstration by a very famous Buddhist monk called Thich Naht Hanh. Eating meditation. Walking meditation. He made us eat in front of him. You are slowly going to peel your orange. Look at the orange. Think of the tree where it is growing and then peel it slowly. As you open it, you watch the peel opening, you look at it. Then you put it in your mouth and slowly start feeling the taste of the orange. For that much time, it's just you and the orange. [IS9]

She went on to describe how much more you appreciate the orange and experience its flavour if you eat with mindfulness (see also Nhat Hanh 1991). For her, food had sufficient intrinsic value to warrant such attention and respect. As Thich Nhat Hanh writes, “The purpose of eating is to eat” (Nhat Hanh 1991, 23). Although eating is recognized as having important effects, this philosophy puts primary importance on the primary act of eating. The value resides in the food and the act of eating, as opposed to in something one might achieve through eating. Similarly, many traditions use a grace before a meal to turn the act of eating into an offering—a recognition that food connects us to a wider world, and even that we will eventually become food—and reminds eaters of the importance of gratitude (Snyder 2002).

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51 The monk Thich Nhat Hanh has co-authored, with a registered dietitian, a weight control book based on mindful eating (Nhat Hanh and Cheung 2010).
Food as sacred: It’s about the food

Although participants in Canada used overtly spiritual language at times, participants in India were, on balance, more open in their use of explicitly religious or sacred language. This was not surprising, since Canada is an increasingly secular nation. Weekly attendance at religious services declined from 67% in 1946 (Clark 2003) to 21% in 2001 (Lindsay 2008); monthly attendance at services declined from 41% to 32% between 1988 and 1999–2001 (Clark 2000; 2003). These statistics correspond with a decline in the proportion of the population reporting religious affiliation between 1985 and 2005 (from 89% to 78%), but weekly attendance at services declined even among those reporting an affiliation (from 34% to 27%) (Lindsay 2008).

This secularization and decline in attendance at formal religious services does not imply that the Canadian population does not have the same need for meaning as previously, or as in other more religious societies; it simply means that some people are looking elsewhere to find meaning in their lives (Bibby 2011; 2012). As I will discuss in detail in the section on Meaning, Value, and Motivation, the search for meaning and coherence is an essential aspect of human life (e.g., Frankl [1959] 2006; Heine, Proulx, and Vohs 2006; Steger et al. 2008). Indeed, people living in a secular society may engage in a greater personal search for meaning because they are not receiving teachings from a religious community or practice. When it was the norm for people to attend religious services every week, they were provided with a “package” of coherent teachings about meaning in life, social support, and other such components that support a sense of well-being, but that meaning can be found in many places (Eckersley 2007). In today’s secular western society, people often find other things to replace the functions that regular attendance at religious services provided.

In addition to speaking about food as sacred or of spiritual connections with food, some participants explicitly noted food-related activities as a replacement for more organized religious practice. The farmer who saw agriculture as a vocation, which for him was replacing church as his way to participate in the miracles of life, provides an obvious example. The topic also came up during an interview in which the participant noted that farmers’ markets were, for some, filling the role that church once played in connecting with a regular community.
I think it’s people’s need to reconnect with each other and their communities and the place that they live in. There are farmers’ markets that are so routine now, and farmers’ market goers that are so much into the sort of schedule and rhythm of a farmers’ market that people will say, “I regularly meet my friends down at the farmers’ market every Saturday at 10:00. We have our meeting place, we get a coffee and we talk, and if I don’t see my friends down there I go home that day and I call them and find out if there’s something wrong. Are they sick? Are they okay? Did something happen?” And it’s kind of like, I think, that need in peoples’ lives for a regular community connection, kind of like church. . . . And, you know, some people have even likened farmer’s markets to the new church. [CP4]

While participants in India were more inclined to use words like “God,” speak about prayer and worship, or refer to religious texts, those in Canada spoke of spiritual relationships, connectedness, conviviality, or fulfillment. In secular western societies, spirituality can be seen as reflection on a “lived experience” that does not necessarily include organized religion (Crisp 2008; Frohlich 2001). Spirituality is a form of constructed meaning that relates more to authenticity and truth of one’s own experience than it does to an organized canon. People “create and recreate meaning, joy, and shared life from whatever materials are at hand” (Frohlich 2001, 68). According to religious sociologist Reginald Bibby (2011), the social and spiritual roles traditionally played by the church in Canada could potentially be met outside religion. Thus in a secular society like Canada, concepts like connectedness and activities like farming or visiting farm markets can become a form of worship.

To describe food as sacred is not to place it specifically in a religious context. Any part of life can be sacralised if viewed with deep reverence, respect, or gratitude for its intrinsic value (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry Jr. 1989; Elkins et al. 1988; Kumar 2002). To the participants in this study, food was sacred and therefore deserving of special attention. Their thoughts and actions with respect to food and the food system could be said to have intentionality in the philosophical sense of “aboutness” or “directedness” (Byrne 2006; Siewart 2011). They were motivated by something intrinsic to food itself and by their relationship with food, rather than solely by some external effect within the food system. I will address the significance of intentionality and intrinsic value later in this chapter. First, I will show how participants were
motivated not just by the way they valued food and food-related connections, but also by a sense that food was part of the totality of life.

**Interconnectedness: Food Is Everything**

When some participants spoke of food, they were speaking about something bigger than just the food system. To them, food was not just a microcosm representing larger meanings; food was the manifestation of larger things. It wasn’t simply that they felt food should not be distanced from other things; they felt that food could not be separated from the whole of the Universe. Food, which is literally an intimate connection between humans and the rest of nature, was not surprisingly seen as the way to connect with nature or the Universe. Through eating, drinking, and breathing, humans and the rest of nature physically unite; we take it into our bodies when we eat, and we create new life when we farm. Food was seen as part of the interconnected totality of human life, the natural world, and the divine. According to one of FFCF’s staff participants, “What we’re talking about is spiritual, not material, and it is reconnecting people to themselves, which reconnects them to everything” [CS4].

**Food and humanity**

Food was described by several participants as a central tenet of human civilization; our connection with food was seen as important to our health as living beings.

And I’m a firm believer that, central to all of us as living organisms, we have the need for food and we have built our civilization around that. And where we get disconnected from it, we also get disconnected from ourselves and each other. So to me, health is not just only whether or not my body’s healthy. [CS1]

This quote also illustrates the holistic concept of health I have used throughout this dissertation, whereby the health of everything is interconnected (e.g., the body cannot be healthy if the environment or the community is not healthy). This interconnected view of health recurs in Wendell Berry’s essays in which he critiques the artificial dualism imposed on body and soul, or physical and spiritual health in industrial society (e.g., Berry 1977; 1994). According to Berry (1994), bodies are treated as machines, but we are nothing without food but a cadaver; a machine without power, however, remains a machine. Without food, then, we lose out humanity. He criticizes the concept of food as fuel. As Kass (1999) notes, food is more than
the sum of the biochemical components that fuel the body. The way those components are put together (as animal or vegetable, for example) means much more than energy or nutrients.

Participants shared a range of critiques of commodification in the food system. This quote suggests it is indeed a threat to our humanity:

[What are the impacts when people are distanced from their food?]
Food becomes simply a commodity and there’s no real . . . I think, to live that way you have to be denying a fundamental part of yourself, part of your human self, and you have to put that part of yourself on the shelf and just press on. And I think you lose a lot of value of what it is to be human. . . . It’s a deep essential aspect to how I see humans, my idea anyways, and their connection to each other. But food is one of the only things that connects all humans. It’s not the only thing, but it’s one of them. I think that it’s easy to—particularly in this time of convenience and everything happening virtually and the speed and that kind of thing—it’s easy to sort of push such a main thing in your life to the side to make room for other things. [CP4]

Culture, which is a unique feature of humanity, was also seen as interconnected with food systems.

So somewhere the business of agriculture and food for me, apart from the fact that it’s so much to do with your body, the balance and the whole microcosm of your body, is also to do with a larger, much larger issue now of what it means in terms of as a whole sub-continental identity in terms of your arts and culture. So supporting the farmer to stay with his land, to hold onto it, to grow the good food for you, is not just about food, it’s also about a whole other ecological process to do with, you know, to do with the artistic expression or whatever India has been extremely proud of in the last so many thousands of years. [IC9]52

Similarly, food skills were discussed as important life skills that also provided a link between people and the broader world.

Well, I think there’s a lifelong value in knowing where your food comes from. I mean it’s again, it’s a basic need and humans have very few basic needs but it’s right in there and as one of the top needs that humans have. And so knowing where your food comes from and knowing how to deal with food, how to cook it, how to preserve it, is a life skill. And, you know, knowing how to eat healthfully to protect your own health as you grow up is definitely a life skill. And I think it

52 Many traditional arts and crafts in India emerged from agricultural communities as work done between active planting or harvest seasons, often using aspects of the harvest that were not eaten, such as fibre for weaving cloth or baskets or plant products as dyes. Traditional songs and dances were also closely connected to cycles of nature and agriculture. The links between art and agriculture were discussed at length in this interview.
also binds you to a larger world. It teaches you that you’re, you know, a part of your community, part of a larger environment. [CP4]

Civilizing aspects of humans’ interactions with food highlight the role of human civilization within the broader context of an interconnected world.

Implications of actions in an interconnected food system

Many people spoke of concern for the implications of their actions within the food system. They felt that production, and particularly consumption, had wide-reaching impacts because of the interconnected nature of the food system.

My personal view is that we should all probably pay more attention to what and how we eat because it has implications for our health, for our local economy, for the environment, and really, at the end of the day, for the distribution of wealth and power within the international system. Something as simple as the food that we eat has implications internationally that we’re responsible for.

. . . And in terms of what kind of cabbage I buy, and whether I meditate with my cabbage before I eat it, you know, it’s not as clear, but the same principle, I think, applies. If you buy a fair trade bag of coffee versus a Dole banana or whatever, you are having an impact on the lives of people elsewhere in the world. [CP3]

Similarly, specific environmental and social justice concerns came through particularly clearly in the context of interconnectedness and the implications of how food is produced and consumed.

We are working naturally because we want to see that change happen from unsustainability to sustainability and social justice, because sustainability means social justice. Unless you will have social justice, there will be no sustainability. And eating good food, eating sustainable food, both in the words and of [Slow Food founder] Carlo Petrini and [Navdanya founder] Vandana Shiva, means it is a food that is produced not by robbing people of their livelihood and their access to food. If you rob people of their access to food, how can that food taste good? And how can you then call that food production sustainable? Whom is it sustaining? just a section of society? and that cannot be sustainable for long. It is not sustainable to start with, and it cannot last for long. Because when people will be hungry, there are bound to repercussions of that. [IS1]

Other participants were quite explicit about their own spiritual connection to food through a sense of the interconnectedness of all things.
Well, I guess I define spirituality—because I don’t have a practicing religion myself—I would probably define it as the interconnectedness of everything, and that there is certainly something much larger than me as an individual that the health or the disease of the planet depends on. And so, if everything is connected, even in a kind of an energetic way or scientific way or spiritual way or whatever it is that we come to begin to understand, that whatever we do, wherever we do it on the planet, affects other people. [CS1]

This sentiment of spiritual interconnectedness is prevalent in Indian culture and many sacred texts of Hinduism, as well as of other spiritual traditions practiced in India such as Jainism or Buddhism, as I will discuss in the next section.

**Food as pantheistic in Hindu sacred texts**

Food is highlighted in many of the major historical and philosophical tomes of India, such as the Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu Vedas, the Upanishads, and in the ayurvedic system of medicine, some of which I have alluded to earlier in this chapter. These texts express a common credence that food is part of a totality that includes the divine, or God. All things are one, and God is in all things. Much common tradition, even among non-religious people, is rooted in the stories and guidelines laid out in texts such as the Bhagavad Gita:

> I believe it is written in Bhagavad Gita. Particularly it says that we are made of food. That’s common sense, right? And if we are eating good food, organic food, then we will be like that, our prakriti. Prakriti means our nature, how we should behave. So our nature also becomes like that. Then that makes the self also. Since we are made of food we will be like that. If we eat natural, we will be like that. [IS9]

Prakriti, or nature, is frequently represented by the three gunas [qualities] of sattva [virtue], rajas [excitement], and tamas [dullness] (Klostermaier 2007; Kumar 2002; Wolpert 1991). All foods can be classified according to the gunas. Sattvic food is sacred, simple, pure, fresh, local, and unprocessed; rajasic food is spicy, rich, or fancy (not unlike the fetishized gourmet food discussed in earlier sections and chapters of this dissertation); and tamasic food is preserved, foul, stale or spoiled, or intoxicating (Khare 1992; Klostermaier 2007; Kumar 2002). Highly processed industrial foods would be considered tamasic, which is the quality that sees nature as inferior, while commodified or branded foods would be considered rajasic because of the

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53 Pantheism is a doctrine in which all things are God; God (divinity) and nature (the Universe) are one.
focus on buying and selling, image, and a high degree of waste (Kumar 2002). Similarly, people can be described by the *gunas*. As such, “good” people would prefer the more pure *sattvic* food (Wolpert 1991). *Sattvic* food would also be considered closer to the divine:

> There is a hymn to food in the Vedas that classifies food according to constitution. *Sattvic* food is for meditation; it allows connection to self/Brahman. Food culture comes from the Vedas. Not many people still follow this. Food is one section of it. Food, art, and spirituality all have the same root. The root of Brahman is “Brh”: to grow (the seed kernel inside equals the true self). Self is also Brh: a quality of being. [IC4]

The concept of using food to connect with “self/Brahman” comes from the belief that everything is interconnected and thus the sacred or divine resides in all things. The hymn *In Praise of Food* from the Rigveda explains, “In thee, O Food, is set the spirit of great Gods” (Rigveda, Hymn 187:6; Griffith [1896] 2006, 251). Perhaps the most familiar references to the totality of food appear in the Taittiriya Upanishad, which explains that bodies are made of food. Food forms the first of five *kosas* [sheaths] that eventually lead to a state of bliss or oneness, meaning that food is God (and therefore sacred).

Bhrigu went to his father, Varuna, and asked respectfully: “What is Brahman?”

Varuna replied: “First learn about food, Breath, eye, ear, speech, and mind: then seek to know That from which these are born, by which they live, For which they search, and to which they return. That is Brahman.”

(Taittiriya Upanishad, Part III: 1.1 Easwaran 2007, 257)

The entire Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of the sacred nature of food and the interconnectedness of *Brahman* [God], the body, and food.

**Seed as metaphor for all life**

Seeds were discussed as an important metaphor for life and the way things are all connected. Several people also described seeds as representative of interconnectedness. One

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54 This is a paraphrase of the participant’s comments rather than a direct quote, as this interview was not audio recorded for transcription at the participant’s request. I took particularly detailed field notes during this interview.
person who played a central role in FarmFolk/CityFolk got early inspiration to support connections in the food system by seeing the way children learned from seeds.

I got my inspiration watching children. And when you see a child plant a seed, and they see the seed grow, it’s a miracle, and it changes them. It changes their relationship to the Earth and nature. And I think that’s true for all of us—I think inherently people know about their connectivity. [CS4]

Another participant saw the extent of learning that could come from watching seeds grow.

I’ve seen everything from little three-year-olds that I’ve worked with that have such an affection for seeds because they identify them as babies, and they plant them and they look after them, and then they see the little baby plants. . . and they develop a respect for life and for each other. They focus on building a garden and all of the life forms that are involved with that: not just themselves. [CP4]

The following story about an elderly woman in a farming and craft community in India illustrates how seeds can be seen as central to continued existence:

Once a day she would pull out from her breast a little pouch and open it out and then she would keep polishing something and putting it back. And my friend said, “What do you have, Ma ji, in your hand?” And she showed her these little pouches of seeds. So the way people keep their diamonds . . . this was her wealth. So there were these little pouches of various kinds of organic seeds which were traditionally there. You just kept a part of it away from the crop. You sold the crop, you ate it, and then part of the seeds you kept and you just planted them the next year. So this was her original, and she took them out every day, polished them, gave them a little bit of sun so they don’t get funguses or anything like that. So traditionally . . . you did that to your seeds: you kept them like people keep diamonds. [IC9]

The value this woman placed on her seeds shows her awareness of their role in sustaining life. Seeds effectively hold potential life within each grain, a sentiment echoed earlier by the Canadian farmer who saw agriculture as a sacred vocation through which one could participate in the miracles of life.

**Food and energy**

The interconnectedness of the food system included spiritual connections between people that were mediated by food. Several people in India spoke about energetic connections
and a belief that energy is transferred through food, so food and the people involved in producing it should be treated with respect or the food will carry negative energy.

There’s a Tibetan idea that even in the processing of the food and the packaging of it, there’s an energy that goes with it. . . . I’ll see it in the marketing of a product, for example. Who are they? How are they making their money? Where is that money going? So it’s actually very strange—it’s your whole energy connection to everything. And there is a thing, of course, that the shortest distance between the source of the food and your dining table is the best distance and that’s what it should be. . . . Like it might be organically grown, but suppose I come to know that Navdanya is actually something that grows organic food and gets organic food, but it’s actually not helping the farmers at all, they’re not giving back enough to the farmers. That would become a problem for me, you know? Because then the food has a quality of having exploited someone. So even if it’s organic food and grown very properly but it suddenly happens that the NGOs or whatever is getting the food and the farmers are really not getting an input back from it, then again it becomes tainted in terms of the fact that, spiritually, there is an exploitation factor so the people who are growing it for you are actually being used. [IC9]

Likewise, food was described as a vehicle for positive energy.

Even the chemical farmer, the small farmer, is putting in a lot of labour. Now it’s sad because he has been convinced by the market to use certain things that are not good for the farming. But nonetheless the labour is there. The labour in an organic farm is even more because it’s a biodiverse farm mostly. And to work for the biodiverse farm you have to have a lot of patience and a real love for that act of producing food, for the soil. So when food is produced with so much positive energy and you are aware of that positive energy, then naturally that connection will work for the wellbeing of your own body [as consumer] but also for the wellbeing of people who are producing. [IS1]

The idea of feeding as an expression of care and as a spiritual duty has already been raised in earlier sections of this chapter. Feeding was also discussed in the context of spiritual intention and energy transfer through food.

In *ayurveda*, they say that even if you are cooking for yourself and you know you’re the only person who’s going to be eating, don’t ever cook with the idea that it’s just one person. Always cook for two people or three. So mentally, emotionally, when you are cooking, don’t just make the meal for yourself. That is why traditionally in India they have this thing, the business of feeding the cow, the crow, the dog, and a person, a poor person passing by. So you actually cook for four other people. Not maybe in terms of quantity, but definitely in terms of attitude. [IC9]
She is referring here to a tradition in villages of giving the first few morsels of food to the nearby animals and sharing with the hungry, as part of the spiritual duty to share before consuming food oneself. This duty can be carried out even when alone if the intention to share food is present. Thus, energy could be shared through activities and intentions when growing, packaging, cooking, or serving food.

**Interconnectedness: It is all food**

The stories participants shared in the quotes above show food as a sign of humanity and as a manifestation of our connections to one another. Food also had the ability to represent, or be, everything from the most mundane to the divine. Concepts of interconnectedness and oneness highlight the intrinsic value of food described earlier in this chapter. Through the integration of nature with the body through eating, humans solidify a connection with the world. If nature is everything, and nature is incorporated into the physical body as food, then eating connects people with all of nature. Whether one recognizes that all actions related to food have implications elsewhere or sees the divine on her plate, that food is so interconnected with everything makes it deserving of attention.

The participants in this study were motivated by what they perceived as the intrinsic value of food. They saw food as connector, as worthy of reverence and respect, and as representative of the interconnectedness of all life. I will show in the following section how an appreciation of food’s own value motivates people to support healthy food systems.

**Intrinsic Value as Change-Maker**

I have shown in the previous sections the ways in which participants expressed their motivations to resist food system distancing in terms of the value they placed on food. In some cases, food was an essential aspect of deep, soulful relationships, a way of communing with other people, other times, other places, or with nature. Some people described food as having sacred qualities, as a form of spiritual practice, or as a source of fulfillment. Still others recognized the interconnectedness of food with everything: nature, other people or places, or even the divine. In this section, I will show how recognition of an intrinsic value of food
(however that value might manifest for any given individual) could be cultivated in support of positive food systems change that benefits the health of people, the planet, and society.

**From Awareness Comes Change**

“Basically, we have stopped paying attention to the importance of food” [IS9]. Many participants felt that positive food system change would follow if distancing were addressed and people could develop deep relationships around food. This participant felt that awareness would spread from consumption to production and improve all kinds of health within society:

I think if we eat well, and if the awareness works, it’s actually going to be a win–win situation for everybody. If you eat well, awareness reaches people, you have more demand for organic food, the farmers will grow more, our environment will be safer, we will be healthier, there will be less man-hours [sic] wasted if you are healthy. This will also cut down on the expenses, medical expenses, which the country runs into lots of health expenditure, whether through insurance or whatever. If you’re sick, you’re sick. You spend from your pocket, you will spend through insurance. So it’s a wonderful way of preserving your energy, preserving yourself, and both add up to good quality work and physical health. If you don’t have good physical health, no amount of good medical health [care] will do, or emotional health. So first physical, then you move on to mental, emotional, spiritual. So it’s a win–win situation for everybody. The farmers are happy, you are happy, then nothing is wrong with the world. The environment is good. It’s a win–win situation. But not many are promoting it. I am worried about it. I’m passionate about it. [IC2]

Another participant expressed a similar sentiment in more spiritual terms:

There should be a relationship with nature, which is also a relationship with the self. The rest is just knowledge if you understand this. You have to know your deeper self. We are living on the surface, with externalities and material things. We need to find simplicity, refinement of taste, sensibilities of a whole civilization. Culture is slowly ripening, like Slow Food is slowly ripening. Then, ways of eating will change automatically, once you’re connected to your inner self and to nature. [IC4]55

While remaining cautious about implying individual responsibility for a widespread problem such as food system distancing, I suggest that the above quotes point toward a way to address some of the problems facing the modern global food system. These participants speak

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55 This is a paraphrase of the participant’s comments rather than a direct quote, as this interview was not audio recorded for transcription at the participant’s request. I took particularly detailed field notes during this interview.
of awareness, whether of issues or of the self, as a starting point. They also point to the interconnectedness of the food system and the important value of food. I will argue here that recognition of this value is an essential factor (rather than the essential factor) in creating healthier food systems in the face of widespread distancing.

**Necessary but Not Sufficient**

Many of the participants in this study expressed their belief in the intrinsic value of food. Regardless of whether food’s intrinsic value is accepted as a universal truth, if food is valued for its own sake it holds the potential to drive food system change. If people do not value food they will not have reason to resist that which threatens their food system. If people do value food, as did the participants of this research project, they may act. Though there are no guarantees of action, an awareness of and appreciation for the value of food must be present if people are to be motivated to enact change, “because it’s only when they really have a sense of oneness with the land, they will respect the land and the food” [IS3]. Respect leads to care, which may ultimately lead to action. As Dowler et al. (2009) found, people who engaged in alternative food systems developed a greater awareness of issues, and frequently engaged in additional ways reconnecting as their awareness and interest expanded. Although the participants in their study were reconnecting because of care for some issue related to the food system, their ideas of care were frequently holistic, relating to things such as local food producers, holistic concepts of health, or the well-being of future generations. The results presented here take the notion of care one step further, suggesting that care for food in its own right also motivates people to act. The resisters of distancing involved in this research were driven by what they saw as the intrinsic value of food.

Most of the literature on food systems focuses on one or more issues or side effects associated with food, such as health (e.g., Lang 2009; Stuckler and Nestle 2012), environment or sustainability (e.g., Kloppenburg et al. 2000; Svenfelt and Carlsson-Kanyama 2010), and culture or social interaction (e.g., Hinrichs 2000), among others. (Though distancing may also be considered an impact of the industrial food system, the results of this study suggest that it is also a tool or characteristic of the industrial food system, which in turn results in a range of
negative impacts.) Although their research focussed on ideals of sustainability among a broad cross-section of people involved with alternative food systems, Kloppenburg et al. (2000) reported sacredness as a key theme. Participants in that study considered sacredness to be an important aspect of a sustainable food system. They valued food for reasons beyond its extrinsic functions and described it as a source of soulful connections or spiritual nourishment. They also expressed a belief that recognizing the sacred in food was a way to resist commodification.

Valuing food, rather than the side effects of food systems, helps resist the temptation to codify ideologies or slip in moral superiority and exclusionary attitudes, for which some alternative food systems movements have been criticized (e.g., Allen 1999; DeLind 2011; Desrochers and Shimizu 2012; DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Guthman 2007a; 2007b; McWilliams 2009; Szabo 2011). Codifying normative ideologies assumes there is a “right” way to eat or an “ideal” food system, but this problematizes some specific aspects of the whole range of issues at the expense of others (Halkier 2001). Moreover, who is to decide what is “right”? Alternative food systems actions are related to all manner of things, such as specific nutritional requirements (low fat, high fibre, gluten free), diets (unprocessed, vegetarian, raw), local food, functional foods, non-genetically modified, organic or biodynamic, and many others. In the conclusion to their history of breastfeeding policy in Canada, Nathoo and Ostry (2009) caution against such normative approaches, partly because of their moralistic tone and partly because norms are politically, scientifically, and culturally determined and thus subject to change. There is no consistently accepted “one best way.” Even when people do act reflexively based on what they feel is “right,” their views on a given issue do not explain all their decisions or actions. Competing factors, routines, and availability of options all compete with motivation to act on a specific food issue (DuPuis 2000; Halkier 2001; Murdoch and Miele 2004).

Searching for the elusive “right” food system issue to address and the “right” way to address it is not likely to be effective in managing food systems. Heldke (2012) warns of the dangers of dualisms—local versus cosmopolitan, individualism versus communalism, urban versus rural, industrialism versus agrarian—which are essentially debates between opposing dogmas. Such dichotomies, according to Heldke, “erase nuance” and reinforce ‘us against them’
mentalities whereby people become entrenched in their position, often ignoring contextual factors and new ideas. Born and Purcell (2006) advise against slipping into what they call the “local trap,” whereby the focus is on a particular means (e.g., localization) rather than the goal of a healthier, more just, or more sustainable food system. Focussing on the value of food helps to keep the focus on the ultimate goal, while dichotomous or dogmatic approaches ignore the interconnected realities of food and food systems. The results presented here indicate that it would be useful to integrate multiple perspectives in a focus on food itself. Regardless of changing times, fashions, politics, or science, the intrinsic or sacred value of food remains constant. By definition, something needs to be desired for its own sake, as an end rather than a means, in order to have intrinsic value (although this does not preclude the existence of other external values) (Taylor 1978). In the case of food, recognition of intrinsic value means desiring a healthier food system because food is important, and not only as a way to improve a particular vision of the “best way” to farm, eat, protect ecosystems, or live in community with others.

**Meaning, Value, and Motivation**

Recognizing the value of food offers a basis for meaningful action within the food system. When food is valued, it holds meaning, and meaning is an important aspect of the human condition, as Victor Frankl ([1959] 2006) determined through psychological analysis of his experience in Nazi concentration camps. Meaning has been defined as “the cognizance of order, coherence, and purpose in one’s existence, the pursuit and attainment of worthwhile goals, and an accompanying sense of fulfillment” (Reker and Wong 1988, 221). It is an adaptive tool for making sense of situations and relationships, allowing people to understand the world and their place in it (Park 2005). In the following sections, I will argue for a link between the meaning of food in people’s lives and the goal of healthier food systems.

**Meaning in life**

Humans have an innate need for and desire to find meaning (Epstein 1985; Heine, Proulx, and Vohs 2006; Steger et al. 2008). Heine, Proulx, and Vohs (2006) define meaning in relational terms, as an existential need to connect with people or things beyond the self.
Drawing on the work of Albert Camus and other existentialist philosophers, they contend that humans have an essential drive to find a coherent framework with which to make sense of life. Without meaning, people feel disrupted and disconnected from the realities of their lives. Although there is some debate among social psychologists over whether the search for meaning in life is associated with psychological well-being (Steger et al. 2008), there seems to be little question that humans are strongly driven to find it (Frankl [1959] 2006; Reker and Wong 1988; Steger et al. 2006; Steger et al. 2008). Similarly, although failed searches for meaning have been associated with psychopathologies or “existential sickness” (Elkins et al. 1988; Frankl [1959] 2006; Morrison, Burke, and Greene 2007; Reker and Wong 1988; Steger et al. 2008), finding or having meaning in life is always fulfilling (Reker and Wong 1988). Meaning fulfills by providing a needed sense of coherence to life events (Frankl [1959] 2006; George, Ellison, and Larson 2002; Steger et al. 2006). That is, it helps make sense of the world and provide a larger significance to everyday occurrences by allowing people to interpret their life experiences in the context of something larger than themselves (Park 2005; Reker and Wong 1988). Meaning gives purpose to the mundane.

**Meaning as motivator**

Meaning is a strong motivator. Research on meaning in the workplace suggests that people are motivated more by intrinsic factors such as a sense of purpose or feeling connected to something larger (Dehler and Welsh 1994; McKnight 1984) than by extrinsic factors such as job perks or salary. When people enjoy their work—because it has meaning for them—work becomes more akin to play and performance improves (Dehler and Welsh 1994).56 When mundane tasks are seen as connected to higher goals or something that is highly valued, people are far more motivated to engage in those activities and more likely to enjoy doing them (King, Richards, and Stemmerich 1998; Morrison, Burke, and Greene 2007).

Finding meaning comes from explorations of the inner rather than external aspects of life (Frankl [1959] 2006). It is a facet of spirituality, which I define as relating to an inner life.

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56 The idea of work as play and its relationship to productivity is rooted in Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s extensive body of work on the psychological state of flow, which is worthy of note here but is beyond the scope of this dissertation (e.g., Csiks*zentmihalyi 1975, 1991).
Elkins et al. (1988) describe meaning in life, a sense of the sacredness or interconnectedness of all life, as well as altruism and motivation toward goals beyond the self, as elements of spirituality. Intrinsic value, by definition, implies that people are motivated to seek that which has value (Taylor 1978). Together, meaning and value thus connect the inner world with the outer by serving as a catalyst for action or influencing choices and behaviours (McKnight 1984; Reker and Wong 1988). There has been limited scholarly work on the relationship between spirituality and health (Miller and Thoresen 2003; Raeburn and Rootman 1998; Vader 2006), particularly with respect to food. However, the inclusion of spirituality in definitions of health promotion (O'Donnell 1986; 2009) and as a determinant of health (Vader 2006; World Health Organization 2005) implies that the presence of an inner life is associated with healthy behaviours.

**Meaning and Value as Resistance to Distancing**

Taken together, this body of work suggests that finding meaning or seeing the sacred value in food could provide motivation to support healthy, fair, functioning food systems. Using the language of psychology and meaning, the mainstream industrial food system could be interpreted as psychopathological in that distancing results from disconnection or breaking of the spiritual bonds we have around food and the resulting meaninglessness or spiritual void creates an “existential vacuum.” In western culture, people sometimes try to fill that emptiness through superficial consumption (e.g., of junk foods) if they do not find fulfillment in more soulful ways (e.g., through deep, communal food experiences) (Morrison, Burke, and Greene 2007). The participants in this study valued food, saw it as sacred, or found meaning in it. For them, eating or consuming food was transcendent; it was about food because they were connected through and with food. The forms of consumption participants described as “mindless,” “unfulfilling,” or “attempts to fill the void” were individualized and lacking in meaning, while those described as “nurturing,” “communal,” or “celebratory” were based on connections and relationships that went beyond the self. In other words, it wasn’t about what food could do for them; it was about what they could do through food. Nurturing such connection to meaning (i.e., the intrinsic or sacred value) through food could therefore serve as
effective motivation for food systems change. The spiritual philosopher Thomas Moore (2002) describes this kind of connection as enchantment. He refers to processes of distancing in industrial society as “disenchanted times” during which all manner of food activities have been “short-circuited.” He suggests that imagination, attention, and time could restore food’s ability to serve the soul.
CHAPTER SIX:
Bridging the Distance

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in.
—Leonard Cohen, Anthem

Introduction

This dissertation emerged from concerns about the health of a global food system that is increasingly characterized by physical and conceptual distancing, or disconnects, in the food system. I investigated spaces where that distancing was being resisted by food system activists, farmers, and consumers who were taking action to support deeper connectivity within the food system. We explored their thoughts on the meanings, causes, and outcomes of food system distancing, and I tried to understand the values that motivated them to take action. I wanted to understand food system distancing from the perspectives of people engaged in resisting it, so that I could incorporate their insider lived knowledge into new approaches to support healthier food systems. To that end, I asked three main questions through this research: (1) What are some ways in which food system distancing is being resisted? (2) How do resisters of food system distancing understand the processes and outcomes of distancing? and (3) What drives
people to resist food system distancing? Based on the collective responses to my interviews, as well as my experience as a participant in resistance movements in India and Canada, I asked a fourth question of this research: What can be learned through a comparison of resistance in the two countries? In the coming pages, I will speak to what I learned in response to these questions and discuss the contribution of this knowledge to food systems scholarship.

This chapter begins with a summary of the collective findings of the dissertation, as well as further discussion of key recurring issues. I will show how these results point toward a need for a paradigm shift in the way food systems are addressed from a societal and policy perspective. Finally, I will offer reflections on and implications of the research process and outcomes, concluding with thoughts on moving toward healthier food systems.

**Summary of Major Findings**

Resistance to distancing is happening in many different ways, by many different people, in many different places, in all kinds of spaces throughout the global food system. This dissertation focussed on people with some connection to one of two organizations based in Delhi, India and Vancouver, Canada. Although these results cannot speak for all individuals or organizations involved in resisting food system distancing, they offer useful insights into the resistance. Though they varied in relative size, both organizations were influential in their respective regions and were involved in a range of resistance activities. Moreover, though many alternative food groups engage in work that could be seen as resisting distancing, they may or may not describe themselves as resisters of distancing. The organizations to which participants were affiliated were explicitly focussed on anti-distancing work by supporting connections between the production and consumption of food in a variety of ways.

FarmFolk/CityFolk and Navdanya operate within very different contexts in terms of geography, politics, economics, culture, social norms, industrialization, and nationality. Despite the differences in setting, there are striking similarities in the ways they resist distancing. The specifics of their programming differs between organizations as well as within organizations over time; they continually adapt to what is happening and what they feel is needed at any
given time, while maintaining a focus on basic principles of linking farm with city, seed to table. Through a combination of education, direct support or training, and lobbying or political engagement, the resisters of distancing in both countries focus on supporting farmers to produce food outside the industrial agricultural system; educating consumers about alternatives (usually local, organic, or traditional foods); facilitating distribution of non-industrial foods through processing, retail, and other spaces in the middle; and engaging with policy makers to support healthier, more sustainable, and fair food systems.

The collective responses to interview queries about the causes and consequences of distancing supported a central notion from the literature presented in Chapter One: distancing is closely related to industrialization and commodification in the food system. Moreover, distancing and industrialization were so closely connected from the perspectives of the study participants that it was difficult to separate their descriptions of cause and effect. Their experiences supported the idea of a positive feedback spiral, or self-reinforcing cycle, whereby distancing creates and recreates the conditions that support distancing. Participants described how early changes in industrial society created a physical and conceptual gap between the production and consumption of food. As industrialization progressed, social norms changed (e.g., urbanization, westernization, or increase in female workforce participation) and individual priorities began to shift (particularly with respect to time and money). These changes, along with the gap between the production and consumption of food, contributed to distancing in the food system. Eventually, this conceptual distance seemed to obscure even the existence of that distance.

Study participants painted a picture of an industrial food system in which power is concentrated in the middle spaces populated by corporate food industry players. In so doing, these powerful forces of the middle can influence policy, regulation, and aspects of the food environment such as retail in ways that support and increase their central role. Participants described producers and consumers as caught in a system in which they held some responsibility for the choices they make, but that real choice was limited because those choices are influenced by larger structures. In some cases, they felt that people were entirely unable to make real choices because they were forced to select from options offered to them by the food
industry. On the other hand, some participants felt strongly that producers could carve out niches that were difficult for the industrial food system to inhabit, such as fresher produce or specific varieties not suited to storage and long-distance transport. Consumers, in turn, could support the existence of such niches, helping both producers and consumers to step outside the mainstream industrial system.

The participants in this research were motivated to resist food system distancing for a range of reasons, most of which related to some kind of connection and the central role of food within that connection. Food was both a medium and a target of connection for these resisters. They saw food as an essential means through which they could build deep, soulful connections to other people, through which they could care for or nurture others, or through which they could carry out spiritual duties to feed or care for others. Some viewed food connections with an intentionality that saw food itself as sacred, deserving of deep respect, and a source of celebration. People also described food as both microcosm and macrocosm, as representative of many aspects of life and society as well as being interconnected with all things. Food was an essential aspect of each of these connections, having an intrinsic value that motivated people to want to protect what they saw as important aspects of food. Distancing involves the severing of those deep connections through and with food. I shared examples in Chapters Four and Five where participants described a void within the industrial food system, a void that could not be filled with empty forms of consumption. This was a spiritual void, one that might be filled with more meaningful interactions with food.

**Comparison and Critique: Unpacking Recurring Themes in the Resistance to Distancing**

There are several issues that repeatedly appeared throughout this dissertation in participant quotes and discussions of the literature that will be addressed here in relation to each other and to the research findings as a whole. They relate to recurring themes, respond in more detail to the fourth research question on cross-cultural comparison, and also negotiate some common critiques of alternative food systems scholarship. This section begins by
unpacking one of the more common critiques of writing on alternative food systems: a claim that they are backward-looking, asking people to give up modern conveniences and return to a time of toil and deprivation. It is important to be wary of romanticized ideals of the past, but equally important to avoid discounting what might be learned from it. Participants expressed some nostalgic views, but their approaches for resisting distancing (in relation to the first research question) suggested more realistic notions of flexibility, innovation, and adaptation of knowledge to better fit the present time, particularly in the context of the ongoing nutrition transition in India. Another critique of some food movements is that they can be provincial or exclusionary, particularly with respect to class and income. Foods produced in alternative systems frequently do cost more. But, a reflexive consideration of elitism—particularly in the context of motivation (research question 3) and resistance of dominant powers (research question 2)—can provide insight into issues relevant to food systems in general. Ideas about the safety and purity of food were raised in the very different contexts of India and Canada. These are discussed here in light of the nutrition transition, different cultural interpretations of purity, and the role of food safety rhetoric in the creation and recreation of distancing within the industrialized food system (research question 2). This section ends by revisiting the interplay between distancing and industrialization in the food system.

**Nostalgia: Go Better, Not Back**

This section addresses some of the critiques of alternative food systems that suggest alternative movements cling to ill-placed nostalgia and aim to return us to some illusion of peasant life that most people would not aspire to even if it were possible to go back. While some critiques read as intentional attacks on explorations of the alternative (e.g., Desrochers and Shimizu 2012), others offer a healthy reminder to question assumptions and think beyond one’s own circumstances (e.g., Hinrichs 2003; McWilliams 2009). The latter can serve as effective reminders against slipping into unreflexive dichotomies and dogmatic expressions of good versus bad. Hinrichs (2003) cautions that seemingly innocent desires to return to what is viewed as a simpler, more wholesome time can easily become defensive movements that vilify the other, moving “from healthy nostalgia to a more problematic nativism” (41). Such critiques
effectively point out that the past was not always a romantic time of pastoral bliss and simplicity; it was also full of hardship and uncertainty related to self-provisioning (Laudan 2001; McWilliams 2009). Laudan (2001) takes a strong stance against what she calls “culinary Luddism,” pointing out that truly natural foods (i.e., no cooking, preserving, or treating of any kind) were historically unpalatable, unreliable, prone to spoilage, and involved immense inputs of time and labour. She notes that the introduction of industrial foods corresponded with great improvements in health status and freed women from domestic servitude. Participants in this study did not advocate for an end to all forms of mechanization or processing, and certainly not to basic preservation and cooking techniques. Though she does end her article by noting that we need an ethos of food rather than culinary Luddism, Laudan fails to address important nuances relating to the extent and intent of food processing. She points out that bakeries provide women a break from constant baking of bread (or chapattis), but she doesn’t address the difference between bread made at a neighbourhood bakery from grains, yeast, and salt and the industrial supermarket breads made from highly refined grains, dough conditioners, preservatives, colours, and flavouring agents. As was pointed out in Chapter One, some degree of processing is necessary and desirable. Intent and extent must be considered, and highly processed food products do not belong in the same category as minimally processed foods.

I witnessed some evidence of nostalgic views among the participants in this study, but the sentiment was neither strong nor prevalent. Although some people told nostalgic stories of food habits or events from their past, their descriptions placed more weight on the foods, people, or relationships in the stories than on old ways per se. Participants in India frequently spoke about preserving traditions, and Navdanya’s work partly focusses on preserving traditional foods and means of agriculture, which often implies heavy manual labour for producers. Canadian participants were more likely to comment that their own childhoods involved more industrial foods than they do now. In this context, it is worth noting that India has a long history and deep-rooted food traditions, and many people want to preserve what is most valuable of that. Canada has already fully industrialized, although in such a young country our European traditions were very short to start with. Many of the participants in Canada were raised at a time when industrial foods were novel and widely used in home kitchens. Not
surprisingly, FFCF focuses more on building and supporting structures within the food system than on preserving traditions deemed valuable. Navdanya recognizes a role for minimally processed foods and includes such techniques within its goal of preserving food traditions. Their *Mahila Annaswaraj* campaign outlined in Chapters Three and Four offers an example of minimal processing at a non-industrial scale intended to preserve what they see as technical knowledge and skills that are both useful in a culinary context and empowering to women. One of the participants in Canada addressed this issue explicitly by expressing concerns that we in industrial society are losing focus on the aspects of food that really matter. Still, he pointed out that he did not advocate for a return to peasant life. Rather, he felt we should be more aware of what we eat—perhaps akin to Laudan’s (2001) call for a culinary ethos—and saw a need to incorporate “appropriate technology” [CC3] in food production and processing.

It is important to remain conscious of nostalgia and avoid the risks of romanticizing a difficult past or becoming less inclusive. However, the extent and intention of processes provide important nuance that should not be overlooked. The critiques of Laudan (2001), McWilliams (2009), Hinrichs (2003), and others can be acknowledged without blindly accepting the industrial food system as we now know it. Even Ritzer (2004), in his critical analysis of homogenization and “McDonaldization,” recognizes that automatic and industrial processes have some benefit while pointing out that we must be wary of their drawbacks and use them wisely. It is neither possible nor desirable to go back in time. It is, however, possible to move forward toward a better food system, one that retains some things from the past, adapts others, and adopts new practices in a thoughtful manner. This issue was raised during a course on globalization and development that I attended at Navdanya’s Bija Vidyapeeth school. Buddhist monk and then prime minister of Tibet in exile, Samdhong Rinpoche, pointed out that nostalgia is futile because we cannot move backward in time. All we have is the present, and we should do what is best for the present, regardless of whether it is considered new or old (Lobsang Tenzin, personal communication, 4 December 2006, Ramghar, India).
Distancing and the Nutrition Transition

The differences between perceptions of food system distancing between India and Canada were less striking than I had expected, particularly given the different development trajectories of the two countries. This is undoubtedly related to the socioeconomic status of many of the participants (to be addressed in the next section), which influenced their experience of the nutrition transition. As described in Chapter One, the nutrition transition is characterized by a rise in prevalence of diet-related chronic illnesses that frequently accompanies economic development and shifts toward more highly processed, animal-based diets. Most of the study participants in India (farmers being notable exceptions) belonged to an educated, and in some cases elite, class that would have been affected by the nutrition transition early in India’s period of industrialization because they would have had the means with which to purchase industrially processed foods. As such, the distancing that occurs with a shift toward a more industrial diet was already well established in the lives of these participants. As one of Navdanya’s staff put it, “Just because they [the wealthy] have the affordability, they have eaten the wrong type of [highly processed] food. It has done a lot of damage to their body” [IS2]. Although the nutrition transition began to emerge in India in the late 1990s (Griffiths and Bentley 2001), much later than widespread industrialization of North America’s food system in the mid-19th century (Levenstein 2003), the changes associated with it have existed sufficiently long to seem normal to the people affected by them. In this way, study participants in India had more in common with participants in Canada than with the poor in India.

The findings presented in Chapter Four suggest that, among the resisters of food distancing in this study, distancing and its impacts are closely related to industrialization and globalization of the food system. Since the nutrition transition follows industrialization, it is not surprising that resisters were those who had already experienced its associated changes. There is a growing body of literature suggesting links between globalization of the industrial food system and changes in diet and health outcomes associated with the nutrition transition. I raised the issue of supermarkets and proliferation of highly processed food products in Chapter One (Hawkes 2005; 2006; Kennedy, Nantel, and Shetty 2004). In their review of the links
between trade liberalization and the social determinants of health, Blouin, Chopra, and van der Hoeven (2009) noted that industrialization and trade liberalization in middle income countries (such as India) are associated with increased availability and decreased price of “unhealthy” foods, increased consumption of processed foods where supermarkets enter the retail environment, and a high degree of marketing of such foods by multinational food companies. The nutrition transition, once associated primarily with increased income and urbanization, is now also closely linked with the introduction of global food companies, which brings increased availability and intense marketing of highly processed foods (Banwell et al. 2012; Stuckler et al. 2012). According to market data, consumption of highly processed food products in lower and middle income countries is increasing at a much faster rate than it did in western industrial nations (Stuckler et al. 2012). These changes support the notion that the worst aspects (i.e., normalized consumption of highly processed food products) of western food systems are being exported to industrializing countries.

“Only rich people ask questions”: Elitism in the Resistance to Distancing

The issue of elitism in the resistance to food system distancing has come up several times in this dissertation, and warrants further consideration here. Some analyses of local or alternative food movements critique them as upper class or “yuppie” movements (Guthman 2003; 2007a; 2007b). Others warn against entrenchment as unreflexive, exclusionary, middle class movements not necessarily focussed on widespread system change (Allen 1999; DeLind 2011; DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Hinrichs 2003). I pointed out in the previous section that many of the Indian resisters who participated in this research were from upper socio-economic strata of that society, at least partly because it is the upper classes who have been exposed to industrialized foods for the longest period of time. The poor have little or no participation in the industrial food system in India, and few choices in what they eat, while the upwardly mobile and growing middle class may aspire to consume packaged or convenience foods because they are a status symbol. “They have newly acquired money and for them, having a Maggi [instant noodles] at home would probably enhance a status symbol . . . They will switch from the homemade sherbets [fruit-based drinks] to cold drinks [pop], which means going up the social
ladder” [IC2]. This suggests a similar process to what happened in North America in the post-war years when industrial foods signified a move up from working class status. They eventually became the norm of the middle classes while being rejected by the more affluent (Jaffe and Gertler 2006). The quote that forms the title of this section is the translated response from a farmer in India. When I asked whether people in the markets want to know anything about the food they are buying, she told me that only the wealthy have the luxury to be discerning. Several people echoed this sentiment with comments like “for poor people there is no choice anyway” [IC1]. Lang, Barling, and Caraher (2009) illustrate how the wealthy have extensive choice through improved availability, purchasing power, and access to information, while the poor are more at the mercy of what the food industry offers. Clearly, these two extremes need to move closer together.

Tensions between time constraints and resistance to convenience foods were discussed in Chapter Four. There were differences between the perceptions of participants in India and Canada in this respect because many of those in India would have had access to domestic help (regardless of whether they took advantage of it), common among upper-middle and high income people in India. Certainly, it is easier to resist the temptations of convenience foods if one has servants to assist with preparation or to free up time by taking over other domestic duties. One person pointed out that, at least in a large, expensive city such as Mumbai (Bombay), people with sufficient income to buy convenience foods also have servants or they would continue to live with extended family who could help with food preparation.

If both partners are working, you would have somebody coming in to cook your food. But it’s still cooked daily. You know? So at least the majority of people that I know, eat freshly made food. . . .

When you’re talking about a city like Bombay, property is very expensive, so people who are just up and coming from a slightly lower middle class and all that would find it very difficult to live on their own, so it would be an extended family rather than nuclear family, not that we don't have nuclear families here, but, you know if you're talking about a certain strata of the economic background, and because they come from such a family they would normally be an older person in the house, a mother in law would do the cooking, you know, there would be somebody. [IS8]
Domestic help is not common in Canada and none of the participants made reference to having such help. Domestic servants were once more common in North America, and the introduction of convenience foods and related appliances minimized the need for such help (Jaffe and Gertler 2006; Levenstein 2003). It remains to be seen whether India will follow a similar path.

Class differences between the poor and the predominantly middle class resisters of distancing in the West are less extreme than in India. Still, affordability of food is a very real issue; several participants in Canada explicitly noted the distinction between the poor’s inability to afford food and the need to pay for the full cost of food, including fair prices to farmers. One specifically pointed out the risks of the movement becoming exclusionary, noting that FFCF was successfully avoiding this pitfall:

Great, everybody’s thinking about food, but it’s becoming a pedigree. So it all just requires thinking on a deeper level. And that’s a big part of, I think, FarmFolk and Slow Food’s role, is to get people thinking on a deeper level. I think that cycle’s been broken a bit with Farm Folk. They’re not just chasing the buck. [CS3]

Regardless of the extent of the income divide in any given place, these comments remind of the importance of inclusiveness and equity in food systems thinking. That said, participation in alternative food systems activities is not limited to middle and upper classes (Donald and Blay-Palmer 2006; Dowler 2008; Kneafsey et al. 2009). Even if a movement begins in a particular echelon of society, this does not de-politicize the action taken (Goodman and DuPuis 2002). Reflexive critique can highlight the importance of extending its benefits in a more equitable manner.

Regardless of where one lives, life circumstances influence the level of choice one has, as well as one’s ability to focus on specific issues of concern rather than on meeting immediate needs. According to Bourdieu and Giddens, the interplay between structure and agency impacts life choices. Although particular choices (e.g., regarding what to eat) can be used by upper classes as a means of distinguishing themselves from lower classes, the wealthy can also “legitimate forms of consumption to which they have more access” (Germov 2008, 268). This partly explains how consumption of convenience foods normalizes among the upwardly mobile who may feel empowered by outwardly displaying consumption of branded goods (Mintz 1996). In the case of resistance to food system distancing in India, the elite return to simple
traditional foods, no longer feeling the need to display their ability to consume industrial goods, thus legitimating what may be seen as lower class or peasant foods. This is not unlike the move toward artisanal products among followers of alternative food movements in North America. Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) point out that “perhaps the dominant logic of the system can only be rejected by those in a position to do it” (365). They can create alternative spaces within the food system. These niches, or cracks in the system, can widen, hopefully creating change in the dominant system. This may involve what has been critiqued as watering down when industry players try to fill those cracks, such as with the industrialization of organics (Guthman 2004) or “food miles” labels that focus on distance but not the underlying ethic (McWilliams 2009). Widening cracks also opens the possibility that non-industrial alternatives will take control of those spaces by creating something different (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002). Hopefully the cracks being opened by the resistance to food system distancing can widen to become more inclusive and universally available.

**Purity, Safety, and Transparency**

The concept of food safety needs to be addressed in the context of a globalizing industrial food system. Ideas of food safety differ between India and Canada; at the same time, food safety or cleanliness are used as selling features for industrial food products in both countries. In India, traditional concepts of ritual purity exist alongside scientific knowledge of toxicology and microbiology. As with many issues, there is also a complex and often cyclical relationship between food safety and distancing whereby fears are both exaggerated by industry sales tactics and exacerbated by outbreaks within the industrial food system (Blay-Palmer 2008; Stuart and Worosz 2012).

Ideas of food safety have long been used as a tool to promote industrialization, such as when the “hygienic” nature of packaged foods was promoted during their introduction into

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57 I also observed that the wealthier participants in the study in India were more inclined to wear traditional handloom sarees made from the domestically crafted khadi cloth of natural cotton, silk, or wool advocated by Gandhi.

58 Mintz’s (1996) concept of inside and outside meaning is also relevant to the discussion of class and resistance in the mainstream commodity culture. The aspirational tend to display signs of social progress outwardly while they internalize the dominant social norms, while the outward actions of those who already hold power (e.g., the elite) have wider social significance and can transcend such norms to create new meanings.
western diets (Levenstein 2003). Food processing and hygienic packaging has indeed allowed our society to move away from fears of putrefaction (Fischler 1980; Laudan 2001). However, instead we have a scenario replete with legitimate fears of adulteration, additives (Fischler 1980) or contamination during processing (Stuart and Worosz 2012). As Blay-Palmer (2008) points out, fears around food are closely related to distancing and our inability to have full knowledge about the foods we eat.

Just as hygiene was an early selling feature of packaged foods in North America at a time when the dangers of spoilage were common (e.g., Ostry et al. 2003 on milk and infant formula), purity and hygiene now feature highly in marketing messages and new food regulations in India. Navdanya was particularly critical of what they saw as the role of the Food Safety and Standards Act (2006) in promoting packaged over locally made foods. Since western style foods in India are sold as packaged or pre-prepared products, promotion of packaged foods also implies that western style foods are safer (see fig. 4.3). In such a context, food safety messages become a tool for distancing and westernization, adding to the “power in the middle” (i.e., large industry players) that was discussed in Chapter Four. While packaged products may be bacteriologically safe, there are no guarantees, as the frequency of widespread outbreaks and food scares can attest (e.g., Canadian Food Inspection Agency; Canadian Press 2012; Stuart and Worosz 2012; Weeks 2012). Such foods are less likely to be free from additives nor are they immune to adulteration. Navdanya staff expressed concerns about misplaced trust in packaged foods. One pointed out that even if packaged food is bacteriologically clean, it is not environmentally clean: “People actually think that packaged is cleaner. You have to deconstruct that packaging for them, for them to realize that actually it’s not at all. It’s more polluting” [IS1]. Another staff member noted how being disconnected from food can make people vulnerable to potentially false claims.

When you don’t know where your food comes from, then a bureaucracy gets you scared about the lack of safety and can just impose these pseudo hygiene measures that shut down the street vendor. . . . So, the lack of knowledge about where your food comes from creates a knowledge vacuum, and that knowledge vacuum gets filled by bureaucracies working on behalf of the industry. And you become very easily gullible. . . .

Then [if] you know how things work, you know what’s safe and what’s not safe. You know home cooked chips are not dangerous because they were
cooked by hand. And you do know that if it’s in a big factory with lots of additives in it, in fact it’s very dangerous, even if it wasn’t touched by hand, you know? So your sense of safety changes. [IS3]

While this participant may be minimizing the food safety risks of small scale processing, she raises some valid points regarding concerns over bacterial safety versus the safety of additives. Although it is important for food to be reasonably safe from microbiological contamination, many technological fixes are ‘band-aid’ responses that fail to address the source of problem (Stuart and Worosz 2012) and some of these responses raise further questions of safety. The above quote also points to the role of distancing in creating exaggerated states of fear because of the unknown aspects of the industrial food system (Blay-Palmer 2008).

Different concepts of safety also relate to cultural differences. Certainly, sterile but not necessarily additive-free is a western concept of cleanliness (Visser 1989), one that is in stark contrast with Hindu ideas of ritual purity. From a Hindu perspective, food is used both as a signal of one’s innate level of purity (or caste) and as a tool for ritual purification (Khare 1992). Thus many industrial processes such as irradiation or the use of preservatives may render a food product “clean” from a western perspective while destroying qualities of ritual purity, and vice versa. For example, the sacred Hindu cow produces five pure products—milk, curd (yogurt), ghee [clarified butter], dung, and urine—all of which are used in the context of food even if they are not directly consumed. Dung is a traditional fertilizer, fuel, and building material; urine is used as a pesticide and for disinfecting kitchen areas in traditional dwellings; milk, curd, and ghee (from unpasteurized milk) are consumed regularly, particularly by Brahmins, and are frequently present in sacred purification rituals (Khare 1992).

The interplay between distancing and concepts of food safety or purity relates largely to trust. In exchanges based on direct contact, trust can be built or destroyed through observation. The food industry, however, relies on brand reputation and marketing as a substitute for direct knowledge, hoping to build trust in known brands without offering transparency on which to base that trust (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002).
Circular Processes in Food System Distancing

One of the frequently recurring themes throughout this dissertation has been the cyclical relationship between distancing and industrialization. The concept was a key theme in participants’ perceptions of the causes and outcomes of food system distancing in Chapter Four, a phenomenon seen to be both caused by and enabling of industrialization. It came out again in discussions around motivation and the meanings of food to the participants. As I showed in Chapter Five, participants felt that food has intrinsic value and provides a sense of meaning in life, thus creating a void when people are disconnected from food. Distancing obscures the intrinsic value of food, and when the value of food is not recognized (or recognizable), it is easier for processes of distancing to proceed unnoticed.

The feedback spiral between distancing and industrialization plays out frequently in terms of consumer choice, demand for convenience, and industry pressures that create demand for products. Participants in this study expressed a nuanced awareness of this interplay. They felt that consumers were partly responsible for making decisions that supported distancing and the global food industry (e.g., by buying their products), but also that consumers were victims of intense marketing or lacked true freedom of choice. As was pointed out in Chapter Four (see section on Consumers), people who are distanced from their food may not know how to make choices that support a healthy, sustainable food system. Those who do seek out such knowledge may not have access to the information they want or the kinds of foods they wish to buy (Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009). Thus, while participants in this study did not see consumers as innocent victims without any responsibility for their decisions, they did see them as functioning within a system of structures that made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to enact major change. In addition to the challenges presented by the industrialized food system itself, consumers were also described as living within a society that places multiple demands on their time, further increasing their receptiveness to processed convenience foods. Recognizing this tension, the United Kingdom government has pointed to a need to make healthier, sustainable food choices more readily available and more affordable (Blay-Palmer 2010; Cabinet Office 2008). As Blay-Palmer (2010) points out, this points to a need for policy
change as well as structural change throughout the food system to create a healthier, more sustainable food system that supports individuals to make the choices they want to make.

The push–pull tensions between consumer choice and constructed demand, distancing and industrialization, point to the fact that these processes are not only happening simultaneously; they are largely unnoticed by the people living out those tensions. I suggest, therefore, that distancing be considered an externality of the industrial food system, not unlike other externalities such as health or environmental impacts, that should be included when considering the full cost of policies or transactions within the food system (Daly and Cobb 1994; Stuart and Worosz 2012). Though I have argued that the food industry deliberately supports distancing in order to better serve its own interests (see section on Power in the middle in Chapter Four), distancing is not a declared goal of the food industry and would almost certainly be an unintended consequence of industry-friendly government policies.

Building on the idea of distancing as an externality and the food industry’s implication in supporting distancing is the notion of anti-reflexivity. Anti-reflexivity movements emerged to counter calls for industries to consider environmental externalities (McCright and Dunlap 2010; Stuart and Worosz 2012). Stuart and Worosz (2012) argue that the food industry has created an anti-reflexivity movement in response to widespread food safety concerns. Using Beck’s concept of reflexive modernization (Beck, Bonss, and Lau 2003), which suggests that a reflexive society responds when widespread side effects of modernization are recognized (often by consumers or social movements), Stuart and Worosz (2012) propose that the food industry is deliberately anti-reflexive, doing nothing to address the systemic roots of far-reaching food outbreaks. In the case of foodborne illnesses related to industrial ground beef processing and centralized packing of bagged salad greens, they point out how the industry has denied and deflected responsibility, blamed the victims, and responded with technological ‘band-aids’ rather than addressing the sources of the problems. A similar argument could be made in the case of distancing and highly processed foods: the food industry “blames” consumers for demanding more convenience while aggressively marketing such products in a system with little transparency. They also participate in “front groups” that try to diminish the claims of health science (Simon 2006), at the same time creating their own “health promotion”
campaigns focussed on their own products and physical activity (rather than healthier eating) 
(Ludwig and Nestle 2008). A reflexive response would see the food industry looking for ways to 
supply less highly processed foods. Although some effort has been made to offer “better for 
you” convenience foods, these usually have less of a specific ingredient seen as unhealthy, but 
remain highly processed products that contain other unhealthy components59 (Lewin, 
Lindstrom, and Nestle 2006; Monteiro 2010; Nestle 2006). Indeed, it is not in the industry’s 
interest to promote less processed products as this is where they capture most of the added 
value (Ludwig and Nestle 2008). As one farmer participant in this study said, “there’s not a lot 
of money to be made in produce.” Reflexive modernization would have them respond to the 
recognition of unexpected or unintended side effects (such as health consequences) by 
attempting to anticipate and pre-empt more of such effects in the future, that is, by 
internalizing the externalities (Beck, Bonss, and Lau 2003).

**Toward a New Paradigm for Thinking About Healthy Food Systems**

This section concludes the dissertation by providing an application for my findings about 
the meanings of distancing and the motivations of people engaged in resisting it. I argue that 
there is a need to entirely rethink the way we ‘do’ food in industrial society in order to 
effectively address distancing and its impacts (of ill health, ecological degradation, and 
inequities in all aspects of the food system). The motivations of the resisters in this study will be 
operationalized to inform a new way of looking at food systems.

**A Paradigm Shift is Needed**

The mainstream industrial food system is not healthy. It is largely characterized by 
distancing, which prevents reasoned decisions and obfuscates informed choices. The system is 
so large and complex that addressing any individual aspect—whether nutritional health, 
agricultural sustainability, community health and social justice, or environmental health, to 
name a few—will not fix the system. Moreover, given that the problems associated with the

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59 For example, reduced fat products that contain more added sweetener than the full-fat versions.
industrial food system are interconnected, issues in one area will impact the success of any efforts to address issues in another area. Nancy Milio (1989) wrote, “If health is inextricable from its environmental origins, then health policy cannot be separated from other major areas of policy” (275). The same could be said for healthy food systems. For example, fears around the health consequences of food, exacerbated by distancing and industrial food products, are but one problem central to the food system. The industrial food system then capitalizes on these fears and offers solutions such as so-called better for you foods (Blay-Palmer 2008). One participant in this study described such tactics as “the solution brought to you by the problem.” Similarly, no single approach (whether localization, organic, or traditional) is likely to offer a guaranteed fix (Born and Purcell 2006). To go beyond ‘band-aid’ style patches, I argue here that we need a whole new way of looking at the system, a way that would change the way the food system is governed and regulated and thought about, as well as the way food is produced, stored, transported, processed, sold, eaten, shared, traded, or disposed of. Simply tweaking the existing system might not be enough. Though this new way involves deeper connection in the food system, it does not dictate any specific approach. Just as distancing is conceptual as well as physical, connection also implies making informed decisions rather than following a codified path.

In Chapter One, I wrote about the practice of “adding value” in the food industry through processing, packaging, or other practices in the spaces between production and consumption. In Chapter Four, I described how participants in this study were concerned about the ways in which food is de-valued as a function of distancing. The value that is added is of a different sort than that which participants were concerned about; it is value for the industry rather than value for producers, consumers, society, or the planet. Industrial value-adding involves reconstituting parts to increase economic value. This is what the industrial food system is designed to do, and it is very effective at doing it (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002). Industrial value-adding, which exacerbates distancing, also obscures the deeper intrinsic value of food, the kind of value described in Chapter Five as a motivating force, without which people are left with a void they try to fill with more and more industrial food. This deeper meaning is incongruent with the goals and processes of the current industrial food system, which treats
food as fuel for human machines, rather than nourishment for our souls (Berry 1994). In their survey of hopeful spaces, Lappé and Lappé (2003) question how humans can create systems that seem to move us toward destruction, and find the answer in the work of psychologist Erich Fromm:

   The answer, for Fromm, is the power of our minds to invent ideas that snuff out our deepest sensibilities, even our common sense. We create a world that doesn’t feel like ours because these big ideas can overpower our innate sense of connection to one another and cause us to suppress our need for power in the best sense of the word—power to express ourselves in the public world (21).

The results of this research suggest that we have created a food system that distances us from our innate sense of connection with food, and so we need to change that system.

I argue here that a new paradigm for food systems relates to the intrinsic value, or sacred meaning, of food. The resisters of distancing who participated in this research found a way to connect with the deeper meaning in food. This soulful connection motivated them to find ways of sidestepping the mainstream industrial food system, to find or create cracks that they could inhabit in a more connected way. These cracks are niches or alternative systems that are inhabited by a few. With time, they may be co-opted by industrial forces or they may expand and ultimately weaken the industrial food system (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002). The idea of a new paradigm is a way to think beyond these cracks toward a system in which connection and the value of food are normalized in the same way that distancing has become normalized in the mainstream western food system. This is not to suggest that people can or should be compelled to care about food in a certain way, but recognizing its value could be made easier. In fact, a paradigm based on valuing food would preclude codified dogma about any given right way; rather, it would create the possibility of making informed decisions and having real choices about what is right in any given context. As the quote at the opening of Chapter Four implies, it should not be a monumental task to find out about what one is eating. The complexity and opacity of the industrial food system sets a high bar for anyone wishing to be an “informed consumer” (Jaffe and Gertler 2006; Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009). A new food system paradigm rooted in meaning and intrinsic value brings us back to the notion of intentionality. A new paradigm would be “about” food and our relationship to it, rather than
about individualized consumption of meaningless commodities in an attempt to fill a void left by a lack of connection and meaning.

Referring back to the concept of salutogenesis raised in Chapter Two, I argue here that recognition of the sacred value of, or spiritual connections with, food could be a determinant of health for food systems. Spirituality has been recognized as a determinant of health in the *Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World* (Vader 2006; World Health Organization 2005) and by the editorial board of the *American Journal of Health Promotion* in its definition of health promotion (O’Donnell 1986; 2009). Spirituality has also been included in definitions of sustainable food systems (Blay-Palmer and Koc 2010; Hinrichs 2010; Kloppenburg et al. 2000). Recognizing the sacredness or intrinsic value, i.e., finding meaning, in food is akin to developing a spiritual\(^\text{60}\) connection with food.

For the food system to be healthy with respect to nutritious food, ecological sustainability, and social justice, the central entity (food) needs to be revered more than it currently is in mainstream industrial society. As many scholars of food systems have pointed out, food needs to be viewed less as a commodity and more as an aspect of a full life (e.g., Blay-Palmer 2008; Clapp 2012; Fonte 1991; Friedmann 1999; Guthman 2002; Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002; Lang 2005; Warde 1997; Willis 1991; Winson 1993). Although it may be unrealistic to expect food to be entirely de-commodified, it should be possible to treat it with a measure of respect.\(^\text{61}\) Although many of the participants of this study had specific ideas regarding how to fix the food system, their collective responses suggest a conscientious middle way rather than a dogmatic approach to addressing distancing. That middle way requires reflexivity and a shift in focus from extrinsic to intrinsic consideration of the food system. The conditions for healthier food systems could thus be created by supporting recognition of the meaning or sacred value of food. Because spirituality is recognized as a determinant of health, recognition of sacred value could further promote health by supporting spiritual well-being through connection to food.

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\(^{60}\) In an inner sense rather than a religious sense.

\(^{61}\) As an example of such compromise, Oxfam’s Make Trade Fair campaign focussed on addressing equity and livelihood issues within a globally traded food system, rather than expecting agriculture to be entirely exempted from the World Trade Organization (www.maketradefair.com). This campaign focussed on the people involved in agricultural trade in the same way that I am arguing for a focus on food itself.
Focus on System Change

I argued in the previous section for a transformation in how we deal with food, a transformation that considers the meaning of food in human life, as well as the role such meaning can play in supporting a healthier food system. Here, I will reiterate the importance of taking a broad systems perspective in any new approach to dealing with food. Existing frameworks for food policy are based largely on trade and industrial growth, while those for health promotion focus predominantly on individual behaviours (Chopra, Galbraith, and Darnton-Hill 2002). Concepts such as sacredness, intrinsic value, and meaning do not fit well into these models, despite being recognized as important determinants of health (George, Ellison, and Larson 2002; Miller and Thoresen 2003; Steger et al. 2008; Vader 2006). All these factors need to be considered in order to address the health of the entire food system. Given the far-reaching nature of the globalized food system, it should not be surprising that multijurisdictional systems approaches have been recommended by many food systems and health scholars (e.g., Barling, Lang, and Caraher 2002; Chopra, Galbraith, and Darnton-Hill 2002; Milio 1989; Rideout et al. 2007).

Given the power and influence of the food industry, outside intervention is needed to create an environment in which individuals can make informed decisions (Ludwig and Nestle 2008). The ideal of truly free choice in an entirely free market is a myth that is destroyed by imbalances of power in the private sector and regulatory policy in the public sector (Milio 1989). Heldke (2012) proposed a similar idea, framed in the context of meaning and food choice: “Free people are best able to make meaningful lives if exposed to many options for constructing those lives” (40). Although recognition of meaning cannot be mandated, structural changes could theoretically create an environment in which individuals can recognize meaning without “titanic effort.”

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is useful in dealing with this nexus of structure and agency within a system. With habitus, Bourdieu rejects the dualism between individuals and society, pointing out the close relationship whereby individuals act within society rather than

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62 This is changing, as I outlined in the section on Public Health Frameworks for Food Systems Analysis in Chapter One.
separate from it (Schwartz 1997). He believes that structural influences in society are unconsciously internalized, impacting the propensity of individuals to act in a certain way.

Habitus, then, refers to agency within structure, as opposed to agency and structure (Schwartz 1997). It occurs through a “system of circular relations that unite structures and practices” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 203). To apply this concept to food system distancing and the ability of individuals to connect with food in meaningful ways: the normalization of distancing is the unconscious internalization of a commodified, industrialized concept of food. Changes in the system would eventually become internalized, facilitating the ability of individuals to develop more meaningful or soulful connections with food. The application of Bourdieu’s habitus to healthy food systems frameworks aligns well with Milio’s (1989) idea of making healthy choices easy choices. In her work, Milio clearly recognized the role of the individual within supportive structures. Individuals are not responsible for creating the industrial food system, and nor should they be solely responsible for changing it.

Systems approaches can be a catalyst for change at the nexus of structure and agency. Numerous examples from health promotion and environmental protection have shown success at changing norms and individual values or behaviours. The regulation of tobacco products is an obvious example, since the approach used to curb tobacco use has been suggested as a tool to address obesity and diet-related health (Chopra and Darnton-Hill 2004). Public attitudes and behaviours toward smoking changed as the practice was more and more restricted (Bull, Pederson, and Ashley 1994; Fichtenberg and Glantz 2002). Similarly, environmental behaviours (and eventually attitudes) around recycling (McKenzie-Mohr 2000a; 2000b) or avoidance of environmentally harmful chemicals like chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) (e.g., United Nations Environment Programme 2000) normalized as such practices were made easier through structural changes. What started as alternative behaviours by activists became accepted, expected behaviours in general society only after barriers to action were identified and removed (see McKenzie-Mohr 2000a; 2000b). By addressing the interplay between agency and structure, regulation and choice, social norms and individual values can be impacted and choices that are currently limited largely to an elite group could be more universally available.
Reflections on the Research Process

In any research endeavour, it is important to reflect on the research process. This is particularly relevant to ensure rigour in qualitative research, which is sometimes seen as more subjective or sensitive to researcher bias than quantitative methods. Reflexivity provides an opportunity to critically reflect on the role of the researcher, assess limitations inherent in the study design or due to challenges in practice, and to consider implications of the study for people involved in it. In particular, reflexivity brings attention to the ways in which personal biases and power relations (e.g., gender, class, ethnicity, status, etc.) may have played out in the research context (Kuper, Lingard, and Levinson 2008; Mays and Pope 2000). Although writing within any paradigm is “‘positioned’ and within a stance” (Creswell 2007, 179), reflexivity provides some context for interpretation of that stance. It encourages consideration of the entire process from selecting the problem to address, choosing methods with which to examine it, and the manner in which the researcher presented and changed through the course of the research (Guba and Lincoln 2005).

Reflexivity of the Research Context

“Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (Guba and Lincoln 2005, 210). I saw my role in this project as a critical activist researcher. Although I had no prior involvement with the organizations that participated in the project, I considered myself a resister of food system distancing. In the context of my personal life, I made conscious efforts to step outside the mainstream system and connect with my food. This research offered a way to learn from the insights of people engaged in resisting food system distancing from within organizations or activist groups with which I had no prior personal investment. Though I was sympathetic to the broad issues tackled by these groups, I remained open to and critical of their words and actions. My personal experience in trying to resist distancing offered me a familiarity and understanding of the issues they were addressing; my awareness of it ensured that I

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63 Although it may be less frequently acknowledged, quantitative research is also subject to bias and subjectivity, if not in the methods used, certainly in the nature of the questions asked and the ways in which methods are applied or data are interpreted.
remained reflexive of my role and consciously avoided inserting my own opinions into the interviews.

I shared the goals and plans for this research with the leaders of the two hub organizations as I was planning the project. In doing so, I was explicit about the fact that I was not evaluating the operation of the organizations or their members, but that I hoped to gain understanding of their perspectives on the issue of distancing. I wanted to ensure that they felt free to be open about ideas and concerns without fear that I would publicly critique their organization. Although I was viewed as an insider with respect to my activist stance against distancing, I was an outsider to the organizations. My participation as a volunteer helped to integrate me into their work and increase familiarity among staff, members, and volunteers of both hub organizations. With FFCF, I shared similar status in terms of education and class as most of the people who participated in the research and I was not aware of anything about my role likely to create tension. With Navdanya, I again shared similar status and level of education as most of the participants (with the notable exception of some of the farmers). However, as an outsider from a western country, I was clearly viewed as a foreigner. Because Navdanya was an urban-based activist research organization, staff and members appeared comfortable with my presence. When I met with farmers, however, I sometimes felt that they were cautious about sharing their views, including their views about Navdanya. In other cases, I sensed that they hoped my work could help them directly through increased funding or organizational support, though I tried to dispel those assumptions. As most of the people I met through Navdanya were women and it is a female-led organization, I did not experience reticence regarding my gender.

The method of assets inquiry that I used in choosing participants for this research led me to people with a particular view of food systems—one that is clearly not in favour of industrialization. Although this could be seen as bias in the work, I was intentionally seeking out the perspectives of resisters so that I could learn from people engaged in addressing the problem of distancing. To keep the focus on their perspectives, I tried to represent their voices in the presentation of the data, thus my high reliance on direct quotes rather than summaries of responses. I wanted readers to see the original sources as well as my own interpretations, leaving my interpretations open to critical review.
Limitations of the Study

The most obvious limitation of this research is the relatively small sample size and above-mentioned singularity of perspectives. While this may not provide a full and balanced view of distancing in the food systems, it does provide in-depth analysis of a particular view, one that I specifically sought out in my effort to better understand how people experience food system distancing and how and why they choose to resist it. Adding to the singularity of perspective related to my focus on activists or resisters was a lack of diversity among participants. Even though the research was cross-cultural, occurring in two very different countries, the participants were largely educated and middle (to upper) class with respect to education and social status (if not income). One could make a critique of this research as elitist; in fact, I had concerns about this as the research was progressing. It became clear that such was the nature of the resistance movement at this point in time, an issue that I addressed earlier in this chapter. The specific hub organizations undoubtedly influenced the range of perspectives from all categories within the study sample. I may have achieved more diversity or even a different common perspective had I sampled from other hub organizations with different perspectives on distancing or different approaches to the issue. Although use of hub organizations limited the sampling pool to some extent, these organizations also provided access to engaged individuals who I may not have identified through other means.

The singularity in perspectives may also have been related to the small sample size. Rubin and Rubin (2005) stress the importance of gathering contradictory as well as complementary perspectives in order to maximize credibility of research findings. My study sample did include some diversity in perspectives, but the participants seemed largely in agreement about the main questions asked by this study (with a few instances of difference noted in Chapters Four and Five). The greatest diversity of responses came from the consumer participants, and increasing the size of this category may have increased the range of views expressed in the interviews. As noted in Chapter Three, I attempted to recruit more consumers in Canada but was not successful during the course of the fieldwork. While I did achieve saturation among the farmer interviews, more respondents from a greater number of farms or locations may also have added to the diversity of responses. Similarly, increasing the sample of
participants from collaborating or partner organizations would likely introduced greater
diversity in responses, particularly if those collaborators were from organizations that took a
different approach to resisting distancing.

The process through which I identified interview participants was dictated in part by the
leaders of the two organizations and may have added to the commonalities in perspectives. I
provided criteria for who I wished to recruit, but they decided which members or farmers to
contact on my behalf. I obtained a more complete recruitment of staff, since I had direct
contact with these people during my presence as a participant observer. I felt this was less of an
issue in Canada, as FFCF is a very open, horizontally managed organization. Navdanya, however,
is more hierarchical in nature. Despite this, some participants in India critiqued some of the
work of the organization. The consumer participants, who were part of a privileged sector of
society accustomed to speaking freely and who had nothing to lose by making critical remarks
shared a broader range of perspectives. Staff and farmers in India occasionally seemed more
measured, not in their views on distancing, but when discussing the work of the organization
(their employer or benefactor) in resisting distancing.

Although this was not a case study, my radial study design shared much with case study
methodology. One of the common critiques of case study research is that it is not generalizable
beyond the case used in the research. As Flyvbjerg (2004) argues, however, the detailed data
obtained through in-depth analysis of a specific case or group can provide insights that are
applicable to a wider context. A single, well-chosen example can provide rich information about
a given phenomenon. It can also encourage the researcher to question assumptions and
preconceived notions through the process of dealing with real life complexities and
contradictions that arise during the research. Such data can be used to explain specific issues,
describe norms, or as a reference point to develop new ways of thinking (including
paradigmatic shifts). Although for feasibility reasons I limited the study focus to individuals
associated with two hub organizations, I took care to select organizations that reflected the
majority of organized distancing resistance in their respective locales. They were what Flyvbjerg
(2004) might call “critical” or Stake (2005) would refer to as “instrumental” cases. Still, the FFCF
sample would have been coloured by the cooperative and grassroots origins of the
organization, while the Navdanya sample was likely influenced by that organization’s focus on preserving Indian traditions. As I will discuss in the following section on Implications for Future Food Systems Research, inclusion of individuals not involved with an activist group would provide an entirely different perspective and would be valuable to engage for future studies.

**Implications of the Research**

**Implications for the Food Movement**

Part of my motivation for conducting this research, in keeping with my role as an activist researcher, was to support the work of organizations that are actively resisting food system distancing. I will provide the hub organizations with a condensed report highlighting those aspects of this dissertation most likely to be relevant to their work. For these organizations, and the food movement in general, I hope that this research will provide a new perspective on an issue that is continually raised in discussions of food systems: distancing (e.g., Blay-Palmer 2008; Clapp 2012; Jaffe and Gertler 2006; Kneen 1993). Because it was not an evaluation, this research does not offer specific tactics to use in effectively resisting distancing. By providing insights into what distancing means to resisters and why they are driven to resist it, I hope that this research encourages organizations and individuals to take a reflexive view of what they are doing.

Blay-Palmer (2010) points to the work of other activist researchers such as Harriet Friedmann who are addressing the spaces, or cracks, in the system as hopeful signs of a way forward. Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) also note the potential value of such niches, pointing out that it will require great effort if alternatives are to continue to fill these niches and prevent the food industry from co-opting them. This research highlights a few more of those cracks or niches, and shows how they can contribute to healthier food systems. Blay-Palmer (2010) also points to the emergence of food policy as a possible third food regime, to follow the current corporate regime (Friedmann 1993; McMichael 2000), that is based on inclusiveness and relationships. In calling for structural and change and healthy systems approaches to
addressing food issues, I hope that this research can contribute to the body of work bringing us closer to a new regime.

**Implications for Future Food Systems Research**

There is a range of additional research that could confirm, build on, or emerge from this dissertation. Similar research could be conducted with different organizations in different locales as means of comparing how different groups of resisters understand food system distancing. More studies would also expand the range of views and offer greater depth of understanding to the issues presented here. Additional studies might find other methods of examining how people seek or find meaning through food. Moving forward, this research suggests a need to examine the actual relationships between finding meaning through food and its impact on eating habits: do people who recognize a sacred value in food actually consume healthy diets (however such diets might be defined)?

It would be interesting to examine the idea of meaning with respect to food and distancing among people other than those already resisting distancing. How do policy makers or industry representatives experience food with respect to meaning? Assuming that they are not intentionally creating unhealthy systems other than as a side effect of meeting their own requirements to maximize corporate profits, industry representatives may have unique perspectives on meaning in food.64

Building on the potential for this research to aid the work of organizations within the food movement, research on meaning and organizational behaviour might offer valid insights to the ways in which they operate. There is a growing body of literature on the role of meaning in the workplace (e.g., Dehler and Welsh 1994; Morrison, Burke, and Greene 2007) but not within voluntary organizations. It is probably assumed that people who engage with activist organizations already recognize meaning in the work, but it would be interesting to further assess the deeper motivations of people who engage so strongly with some specific issue.

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64 Prior to initiating this project, I proposed dissertation research that aimed to examine the perspectives of producers, consumers, and industry representatives on a specific aspect of globalization and industrialization in food. The project did not come to fruition, partly because I was unable to obtain buy-in from the industry and I thought their perspectives were essential to a full understanding of the issue.
I have stressed the importance of non-dogmatic, reflexive approaches to addressing problems in the food system, calling for intentional approaches focussing on the central issue (food). This dissertation suggests a need for more scholarship on such approaches. Donald and Blay-Palmer (2006) noted that there are opportunities for creative approaches to emerge out of resistance in the food system, a notion further supported by this research. Non-dogmatic approaches require creativity and a focus on a middle way that avoid dichotomizing the issue into right and wrong, good and bad. In his critique of non-reflexive localism, (McWilliams 2009) calls for a “golden mean” in agriculture that is conscientious and ethical. Laudan (2001) suggested a “culinary ethos.” Others support an “agriculture of the middle” that reclaims power from the middle spaces now occupied by large corporate entities in the food industry (e.g., Kirschenmann et al. 2008). While the “middle” may involve a lot of mid-size operations, it is open to appropriate approaches at any scale that are independent, democratic, and outside the vertically integrated power structures of the current mainstream food industry. Based on the findings of this research, I suggest the middle also relates to intent and extent (of transport, processing, or control), such as processing done for purposes of food preservation rather than to create marketing opportunities.65

Finally, it would be useful to expand the reach of this research by engaging in policy research aimed at identifying ways to operationalize this (and other) socially oriented food systems research. As Lang, Barling, and Caraher (2009) note, enacting widespread change in food systems requires cultural shifts. Although there is a growing body of research on the cultural aspects of food systems, the impact of policy on cultural change is not understood. Research is needed to find ways to apply this kind of research to effective food policies.

65 As an example of processes differing in intent and extent, I offer the distinctions between bread made by a neighbourhood baker and bleached and preserved WONDER™ bread; between a cut of meat from a butcher shop and products made from mechanically separated and reconstituted beef (popularly known as “pink slime”); between whole grain muesli and cartoon cereals like Froot Loops™ or Count Chocula®; between a roadside chole bhature and a fast food burger; or between frozen vegetables from the nearest producing region and similar fresh products trucked across the continent.
Conclusion: (Treat Food) For What It’s Worth

The mainstream industrial food system is not healthy for people, the planet, or society. One of the central themes that both contributes to and results from problems in the food system is distancing. People have become physically and conceptually separated from their food. As a result, they turn toward individualized consumption of commodified food products to try to fill the existential void left by a lack of meaningful connections around food. Those who want full knowledge of what and how they are eating face a monumental task, and even then they may not be able to act on that knowledge in terms of how or what foods they eat (and in some cases, produce). The industrial food system, with its concentration of power in the middle spaces, is monolithic and opaque, masking the intrinsic value of food. Despite such challenges, there are people who are resisting the distanced nature of the food system. They have created cracks that allow them to sidestep the system and connect with food in meaningful ways, and many of them are working to change the system so that others can do the same.

This research used the perspectives and motivations of these resisters to offer a new paradigm through which to consider healthy food systems. Without awareness of meaning, it is easy to lose respect for the sacred value and intimate nature of food. It is therefore essential to facilitate recognition of the deep, sacred meaning of food and to make it easier for people to act on that meaning. Healthy choices, or at least real choices based on complete knowledge and understanding, should be the easiest choices rather than the most challenging. Although not sufficient to create a healthy food system, recognition of food’s value and meaning in human life is vital. Accentuating this meaning can strengthen responses to distancing by helping people to see food not only as a strong connector between people and people or people and nature, but also as an essential aspect of a world in which everything is interconnected.


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Appendices
Appendix A: Poster Displayed in FFCF Office to Recruit Potential Consumer Participants
Growing Communities: Connecting Growers & Consumers of Food

Interested in sustainable, local food systems? Have you attended a Farm Folk/City Folk event?

Karen Rideout, a PhD Candidate at the UBC Faculty of Land and Food Systems is working with Farm Folk/City Folk and a similar organization in India to conduct a study to examine how relationships between producers and consumers of food can help build a more healthy, just, and sustainable global food system.

If you are interested in participating in an interview about your experiences with Farm Folk/City Folk and their events, or if you would like more information about the study, please call Karen Rideout at [number] or email her at [email address].

If you complete an interview, you will receive a copy of the Farm Folk/City Folk book, a beautiful collection of stories, recipes, and photographs that is a tribute to the fresh, local food of British Columbia and the people who grow it.
Appendix B: Article Presenting the Study in the FFCF Newsletter
On the farm spring is in full bloom. Grass at my window the cherry blossoms hold the promise of pies and jam and smoothies. Yesterday Harjinder, Parvinder and Manjit harvested a spring salad for our first official restaurant delivery of the year. Kathleen, my daughter and I, picked bags of mixed mints, garnishes and flowers. I love the spring salad with its wild chickweed, daisies, dandelion and Claytonia (miner’s lettuce). It’s a celebration of diversity. Everything that has overwintered or re-seeded and beginning to grow or transplanted and needs to be pinched-off to encourage it to branch out, goes into the early mix. Overwinterting white and purple kales, purple side-sprouting broccoli tips and purgant arugula mixes with tender new beet, chard, magenta green and orach leaves, licorice flavoured chervil and fennel and lemony bok Choi. Purple and yellow lls (Johnny Jump Ups) are growing in abundance this year and, sprinkled liberally throughout the “greens”, sing an ode to spring.

Every Easter weekend city folks came out to the farm to work, play and welcome the season. Kaz and her visiting Japanese friends picked up the pruned branches from the orchard and I made “rooster” soup and egg noodles the way my grandmother taught me. Lori made spinach soup with the leeks and nettles and the children followed the clues left by Barry the Bunny around the farm to the special place their baskets were hidden. The damp sand in the sandbox was perfect for castles and roadways and the trampoline was in perpetual motion.

On the path between the sandbox and the trampoline, the children stopped to help me weed out the grass and remove the rocks in the newly designated kid garden. Half of the garden is in raspberries and the other half is for peas and carrots.

My grandsons Schille (7) and Lliam (4) love to rough and tumble with Jason, their dad. Jason started his training in judo and then went on to become a dancer. He plays with his sons with grace and agility, much of the same way he shapes bread or drives tractor. Only the play these days takes on a modern twist. The dad is the evil monster Trans Far, seeking out to destroy healthy children; powerful because of the support he receives from the giant corporations. The healthy kids run and giggle and hide and transform themselves into dinosaurs (this is their favourite part) because now they are immune to the monster.

Spring is also the time for planning. On March 16 & 17, the Board of the BC Food Systems Network met at the Sylvia Hotel in Vancouver for their annual planning retreat. With Cathleen Kenny (the founder/coordinator of the network) relocated in Ottawa, we are on our own. 12 of the 15 board members, from all across BC, gathered to discuss the coming year. Our work balances food policy with grassroots programming, but we started the weekend focusing more on who we are than what we do.

February 18th was the final session of 5 strategic planning workshops for Glen Valley Organic Farm Cooperative. A core group of dedicated city and farm shareholders came together to define the Vision, Mission and Goals for our cooperatively owned 50 acre farm. Throughout the difficult but empowering process, I looked for the common themes that unite all shared farms. I will take what I have learned to apply it to the many other Community Farms who are going through a similar process. The word is out. FarmFolk/CityFolk (FF/CF) and The Land Conservancy (TLC) are working to network existing community farms, secure new farms and lend support to farmers to farm the land. A steady stream of phone calls and emails on “how can I donate my land” or “where can I find land to farm” are coming in to Ramona from TLC and myself. Each situation is both unique and similar. By taking the best practices from the many and diverse shared farms, making templates and sharing stories we can support the creation of many more joint farming ventures. Although the situations vary, most landowners want to assure that their land will continue be farmed rather than developed and most of the new farmers are choosing farming as a honourable occupation.

At FarmFolk/CityFolk, we are planning to increase the supply and demand for a local food system by supporting both an East Local education project (partnership with Your Local Farmers Market Society) and by creating Community Farms. Last year we invested in staffing and infrastructure to build a foundation. This year with a group of dedicated and highly skilled volunteers, we want to grow. Our goal for the next two years is to increase our core funding by $50,000.

Yet, it seems we have been saying NO all year: no to the Terminator Seed, GMO’s, and...
We are pleased to publish the following two articles submitted by FarmFolk/CityFolk volunteers. Members and interested parties are welcome to submit articles. If they meet our requirements we will publish them. We can also provide assistance and guidance to volunteers for their submissions.

Genetic Codes as Information: The Philosophical Debate Over Patenting Corporate ‘Innovation’

While consumers worry about the health impacts of GMO foods and environmentalists fret about the threat to biodiversity that GMO crops may provide, farmers face yet another threat: the patents on seeds held by large biotech companies. The twenty-first century emergence of transnational agribusiness has witnessed a growing profit imperative that prevails over a basic human right: the ability to grow and consume sustenance essential for human survival. Patent protection means control of the global food supply is diminishing in the hands of individual farmers and increasing into the hands of transnational corporations. This transfer of control over the lives and livelihoods of farmers worldwide, begs the question of whether there is any place for morality behind market operations that can prevent transnational assaults on social rights.

Conventionally, one links patents to inanimate inventions or products, the idea being that if you invent something entirely new or novel, you could apply for a patent. The patent would provide you with ‘ownership’ of your invention. As the holder of this patent, people legally could not steal your invention and pass it off as their own. As the inventor, you would make money off of royalties that others paid to use your product. This financial incentive, it is assumed, would stimulate creativity and foster innovation. It was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that the patent protection has expanded into the realm of living organisms in agriculture. Large biotech corporations have been granted the right to patent their innovations in genetically modified seeds. And increasingly, companies are patenting non-GM seeds as well. These companies are granted patent protection for future generations of seeds, thus preventing farmers from saving seeds from year to year.

The rationale for seed patents lies in the fact that large agriculture companies have invested such vast sums of money into research that they have to be both protected and rewarded financially for their contribution to science. But the fact that corporate practices of patenting seeds is viewed by many as an offense to the very basic fundamentals of life deserves a philosophical discussion that examines ethics and morals, not just science and money.

If a patenting requires an item to be a new or non-obvious invention, then the case of patents on genetically engineered food crops begs the question of whether manipulating an already existing organism will lead to novelty. Because biotech companies are drawing on already existing resources and manipulating existing life forms, are genetically modified organisms ‘new’ or simply modified versions of existing products? Likewise, biotech companies are not the first ones to genetically modify organisms (though they are the first to be rewarded patents). The complex process of natural selection that has contributed to the evolution and domestication of seeds has been occurring for the past 10,000 years by farmers throughout the world.

Since the inception of agriculture, human beings have been appropriating nature as a condition of our continued existence. For thousands of years, farmers have been domest-icating, breeding and evolving native plant varieties to suit modern agriculture. In doing this, contemporary agricultural practices have the potential to feed our world’s population, even though over half of humanity currently lives in urban areas and will never in their lives

continues page 4...

Growing Communities:

Research with FarmFolk/ CityFolk and Navdanya

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to FarmFolk/CityFolk’s members. I am a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems at UBC, and over the course of the next year I will be working with FF/CF to complete my thesis research. I will also be working with a para-farm organization in India called Navdanya (www.navdanya.org). Some of you may have heard about Navdanya’s work through its founder, seed activist Dr. Shiva. Navdanya supports biodiversity by preserving traditional crops and one of the ways they do this is by connecting small farmers who grow and save the seeds with consumers who buy the traditional foods.

My study is called Growing Communities: Connecting Growers and Consumers of Food. The research is based on the idea that as the food system becomes more and more industrialized, we know less and less about our food—where it comes from, what’s in it, how it was produced, and what’s happened to it along the way. It’s very difficult to make healthy and sustainable choices about what we eat if we are distanced from our food system. This distancing is a double-edged sword too. As many of you know, there is a huge physical distance between where food is grown and where it is consumed. Most food eaten in Canada travels at least 2500 km before it is eaten. There is also a growing conceptual distance between us and our food in terms of knowing what we are really eating and the power to make real choices. What appears to be huge choice in the supermarket is really an opportunity to select from a number of products chosen for us by the large corporations that control the food industry.

There are a lot of health problems associated with the way we eat in Canada. Heart disease, diabetes, cancer, obesity, the list goes on. Farmers, too, aren’t faring well. Small and medium farmers are struggling to make a living from the land, and usually need off-farm income just to pay the bills. Farmers struggle to keep the land in production, and those who want to begin farming face huge challenges. Shockingly, the very people

continues page 4...
We're Seeking Nominations for our Board of Directors

FarmFolk/CityFolk's Stewardship Team (Board of Directors) is looking for folks to nominate as Directors at this year's AGM. Board positions are open to all FarmFolk/CityFolk members. We are particularly seeking folks who have experience in business/marketing, Membership, Development and Volunteer Management. Either way if you would like to volunteer on our Board and have your name added to the ballot list, please contact our Chair, Page Dampier.

Thank you.

Karen Rideout

...Communities, continued from page 3.

who grow our food frequent food banks because they often can't afford to feed themselves. None of these problems are new, and they continue despite years of healthy eating policies, health promotion campaigns, and various rural development programs by federal and provincial governments. Sadly, very similar health problems are starting to happen in many developing countries, particularly those with an emerging middle class. As incomes rise, people eat more Western-style processed foods and chronic disease rates go up accordingly. In these industrializing countries, small farmers' livelihoods are at risk as they compete with larger industrial farms and the pressures of global food corporations.

I believe that in order to make real change in the way we feed ourselves, and ultimately to our health and the health of our agricultural communities, there needs to be some fundamental changes in the way we think about food. We have to start celebrating food and make it a priority in our day to day lives. That means knowing where it came from, who's grown it, and what's happened to it along the way to our kitchens. It means taking time to buy, prepare, and eat food, and it means doing it together as a community. I'm talking about building relationships and re-connecting the people who grow food with the people who eat it, exactly the kind of work that FarmFolk/CityFolk does every day.

The purpose of my research is to examine how organizations such as FarmFolk/CityFolk and Navdanya are working to re-connect producers and consumers of food as a means to build a more healthy, just, and sustainable global food system. I will be studying how both organizations work to build these relationships, and why they choose the strategies they do. I will also be talking with some of the producers and consumers of food who participate in FarmFolk/CityFolk's activities to find out what motivates them to become involved in this process and how it impacts their lives. You may see me at events such as Feast of Fields, Seasonal Sustainability events, Incredible Edible Tours, and other

Eat Local events throughout the coming season. I will be looking for volunteers interested in talking with me about their experiences with FarmFolk/CityFolk's work.

I will also be traveling to India this summer to learn more about Navdanya's work and the lives they connect. I'm hoping that both Navdanya and FarmFolk/CityFolk will be able to learn from one another as a result of this project. They work in very different places, but deal with incredibly similar issues. By looking for the connections between both organizations' work, I hope to gain some insight into some of the broader global issues that affect the way we eat, and how better to promote the healthy, sustainable, local food systems we all want.

If you’d like to get some more information about the study, or if you would like to participate, you can reach me by email at karen_rideout@yahoo.com or by telephone at 905-519-5904.
Appendix C: Poster Displayed in Navdanya Office to Recruit Potential
Consumer Participants
Growing Communities: Connecting Growers & Consumers of Food in India and Canada

Interested in sustainable, local food systems? Have you attended a Navdanya event?

Karen Rideout, a PhD Candidate at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada is working with Navdanya and a similar organization in Canada to conduct a study to examine how relationships between producers and consumers of food can help build a more healthy, just, and sustainable global food system.

If you are interested in participating in an interview about your experiences with Navdanya and their events, or if you would like more information about the study, please call Karen Rideout at [number] or email her at [email].

If you complete an interview, you will receive a copy of Navdanya’s book, *Bhoole Bisre Anaj — Forgotten Foods*, a celebration of Navdanya’s work to preserve traditional food crops.
### Table A1. Summary of revisions to interview guide

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<td>14 August 2007</td>
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<td>22 August 2007</td>
<td>All questions re-ordered for better flow. Question 1 (connections between health, social justice, sustainability): removed question and worked into interview as a whole (question was awkward)</td>
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<td>21 September 2007</td>
<td>Question 2: changed wording and added historical component Question 4: deleted question about food costs (not getting rich info from previous interviews) Added question about major impacts of distancing Question 6: added more detailed power questions Question 7: changed wording</td>
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<td>4 November 2007</td>
<td>Changed order of questions</td>
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<td>6 December 2007</td>
<td>Made minor wording changes for clarity Removed headings/groupings by topic</td>
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<td>7 December 2007</td>
<td>Converted multiple guides to single guide for all groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 December 2007</td>
<td>Made minor wording changes for clarity Linked questions and grouped under major research questions Simplified questions and added probes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 February 2008</td>
<td>Made minor wording changes for clarity</td>
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Semi-Structured Interview Guide – Staff/PastStaff (22 August 2007)

Demographics

1. Name
   Time working with organization
   Role within organization
   Main activities/responsibilities within the organization

Distancing/Commodification

2. Have you experienced changes in food culture over time?
   Have you noticed that people are becoming more or less connected to where their food comes from?

3. Do you see value in building relationships that shorten the distance between people who produce and consume food?

   INDIA: How have Western ways of eating been spread to India as it has industrialized?

4. Do you face resistance from people when they find that local food costs more than some items in the grocery store?
   How do you respond?

5. Do you think society puts sufficient value on food and the people who produce it (e.g., with respect to time and money)?

6. Do you see imbalances in the level of control or power exercised at different levels of the food system?

Activities/Motivations

7. What are you doing to re-embed people in the food system (to build relationships between producers and consumers of food)?
   What strategies do you use? What do you hope to accomplish though these activities?

8. How do you try to influence policy? What kinds of policy? How did you choose these strategies? What do you hope to accomplish this way?

9. What is your organization’s relationship with larger institutions, such as corporations, policy makers, governments, popular culture, etc.?
10. How do you see your work contributing to a healthier, more sustainable, or more equitable (just) food system? 
How do each of these concepts relate to the food system? To each other?

**Successes/Challenges**

11. What impacts do you see resulting from your activities?

12. What do you view as major barriers to your work? What would need to change for you to achieve complete success? How would this situation make the food system better, and why in your view has it not yet happened?

**CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS VERSION**

All questions re-ordered for better flow.

#1 – question regarding connections between health, social justice, sustainability removed and worked into interview as a whole (question was awkward) (see Question #10)
Semi-Structured Interview Guide – Producers (22 August 2007)

Demographics

Name
Age
Sex
Time working on this farm
Time farming
Full time or Part time
Farm size and structure

General

Do you see a connection between health and the food system?
Do you see a connection between social justice and the food system?
Do you see a connection between sustainability and the food system?
How are these things connected to each other?

Activities/Motivations

How did you first get involved with FF/CF / Navdanya?
What has been your involvement with this organization and what kind of involvement, if any, do you expect in the future?

Has your interaction with FF/CF / Navdanya influenced your knowledge/beliefs/behaviour in any way? How?

Do you try to engage with consumers or potential consumers of your products around food system issues? How?

Distancing/Commodification

Have you experienced feelings of disconnection from the people who consume the food you grow?

Do you see value in building relationships between people who produce and consume food?
What will it take to rebuild them?

What impact do supermarket chains or central distribution networks have on your operations?
How have Western ways of eating been spread to India as it has industrialized? (INDIA)

Successes/Challenges

Is there a sufficient local market for fresh produce and products?
What would you do differently on your farm if there were more market for these foods?
What can/should be done to enhance the markets for these foods?

Do you face resistance from people when they find your food costs more than some items in the grocery store?
How do you respond?

Do you think society puts sufficient value on food and the people who produce it (e.g., with respect to time and money)? Why is this a problem?

Do you see imbalances in the level of control or power exercised at different levels of the food system?
Who has too much control? Who doesn't have enough?
What are the impacts of this?

Do you feel that FF/CF / Navdanya is shortening the distance between producers and consumers of food? How?
How do you feel that they could better engage other producers in their work?
What impact do you feel their work is having on consumers? On farmers?
What does distancing mean?

1. What kind of changes in the way food is produced, prepared, or eaten have you witnessed over time?
   PROBES:
   - in your experience, or in mainstream culture
   - between your grandmother and you/your children
   - sense of disconnection or loss of knowledge
   - more or less than in past
   - which sectors of society (middle class, poor, elite)

2. What is the value of food in your culture?
   PROBES:
   - Value with respect to time and money for growing, shopping, cooking, eating
   - reactions to higher prices for local/organic food
   - knowing where food comes from, how it was produced, what’s in the package…
   - too much or too little attention

Why is distancing a problem?

3. How important is it to know where one’s food comes from?
   PROBES:
   - minimizing the distance between production and consumption

4. How does distancing (not knowing) in the food system affect people or society?
   PROBES:
   - health
   - sustainability
   - social justice: farmers lives, poor people, workers, etc.
   - culture, spirituality
What causes distancing?

5. What has led to the sense of disconnection between the production and consumption of food?
   PROBES:
   - related to industrialization? …government policies? …corporate power? …social/cultural context?
   - imbalance of power?
   - impact of supermarket chains or central distribution networks?
   - sufficient structures for local food systems to thrive (e.g. markets, distribution, supply)?

How are organizations and stakeholders trying to de-distance the food system?

6. What are some strategies to bring production and consumption closer together?
   PROBES:
   - policy or advocacy work
   - education
   - building relationships
   - challenges
   - how to facilitate

Why do people want to de-distance the food system?

7. How did you first get involved with your organization?
   PROBES:
   - initial motivation
   - past/current/future role
   - why food is important to you

What are some of the expected impacts of the de-distancing activities of these organizations?

8. What are some of the real or potential impacts of your organization’s efforts with respect to connecting producers and consumers of food?
   PROBES:
   - influences your own knowledge/ beliefs/behaviour

What can food system advocates in Vancouver and Delhi learn about distancing?

9. What is your organization’s relationship with other stakeholders dealing with food
system issues?
PROBES:
- NGOs, policy makers, public, corporations, etc.
- ways of working together
- value of partnerships between stakeholders

10. Other than through your organization, how are you working to minimize distance in the food system?
PROBES:
- own family, friends
- talking to people
- other organizations

CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS VERSION:

Minor wording changes for clarity.
**Questions linked to and grouped under major research questions.**
**Questions simplified; probes added.**
Semi-Structured Interview Guide (27 February 2008)

Demographics:

NAME:
AGE:
SEX:
EDUCATION:
PROFESSION:
MARITAL STATUS:
CHILDREN:
ADDRESS/CONTACT INFO:
CASTE:

What does distancing mean?

11. What kind of changes in the way food is produced, prepared, or eaten have you witnessed over time?
   PROBES:
   - in your experience, or in mainstream culture
   - between your grandmother and you/your children
   - sense of disconnection or loss of knowledge
   - more or less than in past
   - which sectors of society (middle class, poor, elite)

12. What do you think about the value people place on food?
   PROBES:
   - with respect to time and money for growing, shopping, cooking, eating
   - reactions to higher prices for local/organic food
   - knowing where food comes from, how it was produced, what’s in the package...

Why is distancing a problem?

13. What is the value of knowing where one’s food comes from?
   PROBES:
   - minimizing the distance between production and consumption

14. How does distancing (not knowing) in the food system affect people or society?
   PROBES:
   - health
   - sustainability
   - social justice: farmers lives, poor people, workers, etc.
What causes distancing?

15. Why is there a sense of disconnection between the production and consumption of food?
   PROBES:
   - related to industrialization? …government policies? …corporate power? …social/cultural context?
   - imbalance of power?
   - impact of supermarket chains or central distribution networks?
   - sufficient structures for local food systems to thrive (e.g. markets, distribution, supply)?

How are organizations and stakeholders trying to de-distance the food system?

16. What are some strategies to bring production and consumption closer together?
   PROBES:
   - policy or advocacy work
   - education
   - building relationships
   - challenges
   - how to facilitate

Why do people want to de-distance the food system?

17. How did you first get involved in food system issues?
   PROBES:
   - initial motivation
   - past/current/future role
   - why food is important to you

What are some of the expected impacts of the de-distancing activities of these organizations?

18. What do you see as some of the real or potential impacts of stakeholder efforts with respect to connecting people to their food?
   PROBES:
   - influences your own knowledge/ beliefs/behaviour

What can food system advocates in Vancouver and Delhi learn about distancing?

19. What is your relationship with other stakeholders dealing with food system issues?
   PROBES:
- NGOs, policy makers, public, corporations, etc.
- ways of working together
- value of partnerships between stakeholders

20. Other than through your organization, how are you working to minimize distance in the food system?

PROBES:
- own family, friends
- talking to people
- other organizations

CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS VERSION:

Minor wording edits
Appendix E: Inductive Coding Framework
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<td>CHAPTER THREE – Research question 1</td>
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<td>Disconnection</td>
<td>DISCONNECT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Education/teaching</td>
<td>EDUCATE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| 251 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>SUB CODES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VALUES</td>
<td>How people think about food. This code deals with individual level values (e.g., wanting to accumulate lots of stuff, but not spending money on food)</td>
<td>Entitlement/greed/status/consumerism Time/convenience Nourishment vs fulfillment Money/cheap food Sacred/respect for food</td>
<td>ENTITLE CONVENIENCE NOURISH MONEY RESPECTFOOD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTIV</td>
<td>Motivations for resistance that are not related to some concept of respect or sacredness (very few people/comments)</td>
<td>Environment Social justice Personal health</td>
<td>MOTIV-ENV MOTIV-JUST MOTIV-HEALTH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTIV</td>
<td>Motivations for resisting distancing that relate to some deeper connection to food and sense of respect or sacredness</td>
<td>Spirituality, religion Food traditions, memories Connection to land, food, others through food Celebration Respect for food Care for food and others Interconnectedness of everything</td>
<td>SACRED TRADITION CONNECT CELEBRATE RESPECTFOOD CARE INTERCONNECT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER SIX – Research question 4**

| COMPARE | This code relates to all the things that are notably different (or surprisingly similar) about the resisters in India and Canada. This may be a chapter, or be worked in throughout and in the conclusion | Elitism, servants Nostalgia Nutrition transition Stage of development Constructing demand Food safety, hygiene, purity, adulteration Organic or sustainable agriculture Language (overt vs subtle, ways of describing) Concepts of local | ELITE NOSTALGIA DEVELOP SAFETY ORG/SUST LANGUAGE LOCAL |