CHAPTER 1

Critiquing Hegemony, Creating Food, Crafting Justice: Cultivating an Activist Feminist Food Studies

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the main goals of feminist and intersectional approaches to food studies
2. To summarize the scholarly contributions of women and women of colour to contemporary and historical food systems
3. To provide examples of how labour, community, and discourse are important areas of focus for intersectional food studies

KEY TERMS

agrarianism, food regimes, HBCU, hegemony, intersectional feminism, intersectionality, pedagogy, standpoint theory, sustainable agriculture

> Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.
>
> —Chimamandi Adichie

> What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.
>
> —Muriel Rukeyser, "Kathe Kollwitz"

INTRODUCTION

In the months in which I have been writing this, there have been rapid and profound challenges to the hegemonic order, the structures of patriarchy and white supremacy that shape the lives of people in the twenty-first century. These challenges include the Black Lives Matter movement, which continues to push for the freedom of brown and black people globally to live without fear of violence; the activism of refugees and immigrants and supporters in the face of increasing xenophobia and nationalism; the student-led movement to end gun violence; and finally, the #MeToo surge of feminist response to sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace and all manner of public spaces. These movements address all parts of our lives as people who are shaped by such constructs as race, gender, class, sexuality, and able-bodiedness.

Because food and agriculture are the domain in which I work and write, I think about these movements as they relate to labour: how the work of sustaining ourselves, the paid and unpaid labour of producing food, the emotional and caring work that many of us do to support our families, communities, and countries is tied up in these structures of dominance, most overtly reinforcing hierarchies of race and gender. Both activism and academic work on food and agriculture in the late twentieth century have centred on the desire to create a just and equitable food system, to respect the cultural and economic sovereignty of peoples and their agricultural and culinary output, and to have people's stories told, both in historical and contemporary contexts.

While there are many limitations, I argue that, in fact, if an activist food studies is a *possibility*, then an intersectional feminist food studies is a *necessity*. Labour, productive and reproductive, is our central concern: social labour creates food; food helps sustain and create people; food creates, supports, and challenges the culture and politics that emerge from these arrangements. We are tied together—and pushed into conflict—by the need for sustenance. Women, and more specifically women of colour and immigrant women, do the heavy lifting in this work.

Consider this: although black women of colour started the #MeToo movement, it was recently galvanized by the admittedly privileged women who came forward about sexual harassment in the entertainment industry. In response, Latina farm workers from the Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, women whose day-to-day lives involve precarious economic and health situations, wrote a support letter on behalf of their members, the 700,000 women who work in agricultural and food production, in solidarity with women in other professions.

> We do not work under bright stage lights or on the big screen. We work in the shadows of society in isolated fields and packinghouses that are out of sight and out of mind for most people in this country. Your job feeds souls, fills hearts and spreads joy. Our job nourishes the nation with the fruits, vegetables and other crops that we plant, pick and pack.... In these moments of despair, and as you cope with scrutiny and criticism because you have bravely chosen to speak out against the harrowing acts that were committed against you, please know that you're not alone. We believe and stand with you. (*Time Magazine* Staff 2017)

These women of colour have greater workplace vulnerabilities than other women and yet they offer solace, hope, and solidarity and point out how their labours are at the very heart of sustenance. They also demonstrate how intersectional and activist approaches should be inseparable.

Like many other fields in academia, food studies emerged from both intellectual and activist engagement in a landscape that raised questions about existing boundaries: between material and mental activities, between disciplines, between public and private actions, necessities and luxuries, self and other, production and consumption. Any area of social and material life worth exploring is one that is contested, challenging dominant discourses about how things are grown, produced, distributed, consumed, and wasted. It seems fitting that the interest in sustenance—growing and creating food—arises at a time when inequality is also consolidating, increasing, and yet being challenged.

As a practitioner and perpetuator of the field, I have been interested in promoting opportunities and possibilities for an intersectional feminist food studies that centralizes and supports social change. Over the last two decades, I have explored this question by rooting it in aspects of my own narrative about being an activist and an academic whose interests evolved alongside the development of food studies, with my own engagement rooted in Western countries (Julier 2015a, 2017). As a feminist sociologist, I believe in reflexivity—the personal

is political—but I also know, from sociologist Dorothy Smith, that such a stance is just a starting point, a place where one begins to develop concepts and knowledge before starting to look at structural conditions and comparative experiences that shape those standpoints. The methods of inquiry that we use to analyze social and material life must begin at the everyday level of lives, but also attend to structures that shape them (Smith 1987). In 2005, I wrote the following conclusion to an article using intersectional feminist perspectives to analyze what was being said about food and labour, and what *counted* as food studies literature:

> I want to end by thinking about the scholarship on food and eating that I hope to see in the future. Most emphatically, it seems essential that studies of food and social life must explore how gender and race and class collide to create both the local and the global. Such research would focus on how specific food behaviors and roles regarding commensality are given gendered and racial meanings, how paid and unpaid food labor is divided to express gender and race differences symbolically, and how diverse social structures—not just families or ethnic groups—incorporate gender and racial values and convey advantages. These books would analyze the construction of such packages, simultaneously emphasizing the symbolic and the structural, the ideological and the material, the interactional and the institutional levels of analysis. Perhaps then, my appetite would be satisfied. (Julier 2005, 179–80)

Since that time, some of that work has been done and the activist and social change climate often has an insistent and strong focus on these issues. In writing about where we are now, it is possible that I juggle too many ideas: that is often the dilemma with intersectional work, that we have so much to tell and leaving out any thread weakens the analysis.

First, I tell a revised story about the parentage of food studies (a "fractured fairy tale," if you will).[1] Then I assert a pedagogy for the field that embraces material practice as well as historical and cultural analysis, but centring a narrative that is not about normative practices. And finally, I raise some issues for activists, practitioners, and community members in the world of food and agriculture who are pushing back to challenge those normative stories and encourage a revision of how we work, live, and create culture in the realm of agriculture and food. This will not do justice to all three of these threads, but at least establish that they are part of the woof and warp of a tapestry that others are also filling in.

THE FIRST THREAD: ORIGIN STORIES

In order to create a robust and activist food studies, we must raise the question: what is our origin story? Where did we come from? Knowing the lineage of this field helps us understand the paths we are on now, including what's been left out and what's been inscribed (Avakian and Haber 2005).

In comparison, one origin story for gender studies revolves around political action with the rise of second wave feminism, and simultaneously its critique by women of colour, queer women, and working-class women. Similarly, with African American studies, Chicano studies, environmental studies, and disability studies, there were social issues in the twentieth century, both at the micro and macro scale, that galvanized people politically and eventually pointed to the paucity of knowledge from the perspective and experience of people who have been left out of the conversation.

In this telling of the tale, policy, poverty, culture, and resistance to oppression are at the very core of why we need to examine food from a multidisciplinary lens. The study of food has existed prior to the existence of food studies—in anthropology, history, rural sociology, and comparative literature, to name a few. However, the birth of food studies was both politically and materially motivated to provide a new way of thinking about what had happened to these seemingly mundane daily activities.

Food has always been an area of intellectual inquiry. Anthropology, history, food science, rural sociology, nutrition, and agricultural economics are just a few of the scholarly disciplines to understand food as a category of analysis. But, as Bourdieu would have it, food studies emerged as a field when relations of power became more obviously embedded in the everyday experience of sustenance. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* devoted its first article to food studies in the United States in 1999, calling it "scholarship lite," with critics who claimed that since food is ubiquitous, it does not require a field of study (Ruark 1999). Since then, the critique has often been that food studies is "just another lens through which to examine oppression, sustainability, and multiculturalism" (Nestle 2014). But if we tell the tale a different way, perhaps in this story, the evolution of food studies and continuous pressure on a larger culture of inequality suggests that this is a strength, not a weakness. The story I would tell (and there could be other origin stories—I simply offer this as one option) goes as follows:

Once upon a time, there were two women nutritionists who stepped outside the confines of telling people what to eat and began critiquing the food industry, consolidated agriculture or agribusiness, and the government for its long history

of bad regulatory decisions that support the excesses and greed of corporate food production and global interference. In this story, Joan Dye Gussow and Marion Nestle are the activist mothers of invention. Gussow published critiques of the food system and its environmental impacts in the 1970s; her book, *Chicken Little, Tomato Sauce, and Agriculture* (1991), laid out arguments about consolidation, corporate control, and technology that have been demonstrated and reasserted by multiple authors in the ensuing decades (Boyers n.d.). Following her public policy critiques of the way food conglomerates influence nutrition and her aptly named book *Food Politics* (2002), Nestle birthed food studies within the public health and nutrition department at New York University and hired faculty specifically under that title. While other programs in gastronomy and agricultural food systems existed prior to that date, the formation of the NYU program in 1996 provided the gestation of academic food studies. In its earliest iteration, understanding food production as an intellectual and material skill was an important part of the program. For example, graduate applicants had to have a certain number of hours of experience in the world of food.

Simultaneously, but arguably with even less attention in academia, black women of colour also shape the important beginnings of food studies, often straddling the academic and practice. There are also godmothers and culture preservers, such as Vertamae Grosvenor and Jessica Harris, both writers, scholars, and practitioners who demonstrated the role of African Americans and Africans in creating, defining, and sustaining American foodways, challenging a dominant narrative about the paucity and unhealthiness of cuisines originated by people of colour (see Smart-Grosvenor 1970; Grosvenor 1972, 1990; Harris 1999, 2011). In 2007, Harris was the first occupant of the Ray Charles chair in African American material culture at Dillard University, the only historically black college or university (HBCU) to have an academic program focused on black culinary traditions and history. A decade later, the scholarly work of writers such as Toni Tipton-Martin, Psyche Williams-Forson, and Michael Twitty centrally situate African American contributions to food systems and build upon the germinal work of Harris and Grosvenor, who were early in the conversation about the complexity of southern foodways, race, and gender (see Tipton-Martin 2015; Williams-Forson 2006; Twitty 2017). Vertamae Grosvenor's writing, acting, and broadcast journalism often asserted the important heritage of black women's experience, influencing people from filmmaker and novelist Julie Dash to cultural icon Beyoncé. While the diasporic experience exists globally, the specific experience of enslaved peoples in the Americas provides one of the most important touchpoints in understanding how food and culture have travelled, transformed, and been shaped by colonialist relations of power.

It is not surprising that the long list of women and black women of colour who contributed important insights into food systems and food studies have often been rendered invisible in public discourse. In his conversion from culinary to political food writer, Mark Bittman went around the United States and gave multiple public presentations, using a PowerPoint presentation about reducing meat consumption that mirrored exactly what Frances Moore Lappe demonstrated in *Diet for a Small Planet* in 1971 (see Bittman 2011, 2016). While environmental studies, sustainability, and public health now claim territory in defining food systems, Harriet Friedmann's food regime concept is the grandparent of all our contemporary ideas about food systems (see Friedmann and McMichael 1987; Friedmann 1993). Similarly, while US southern food scholars are more explicitly uncovering their racial roots, in the 1990s Rafia Zafar started a wave of research documenting how African American women were early publishers of cookbooks, despite the frequent and ongoing appropriation of their recipes, skills, and knowledge (see Zafar 1999, 2007).

The feminist intersectional story about food studies also recognizes the artificial divides between agriculture and food. Even though Marion Nestle's critiques were heavily focused on global food production and policy (see Nestle 2002), the emphasis in food studies has often been heavier on consumption and cuisine than on production and agriculture. In this story, Joan Dye Gussow emerges as the *other mother* whose contribution to the sustainable agriculture movement is well documented, but whose insights have only recently been integrated into what food studies can and should do (see Boyers n.d.). Along with Kate Clancy, who has tirelessly defined, measured, and explored regional food systems for many decades, Gussow's work predates the popular writers[2] who ask the public to think about farming itself as the culprit for a bad food system (see Clancy [2012] 2016; Gussow 1991). Gussow's *This Organic Life* (2002), a memoir of both localized eating and the loss of her husband, predates the personal narratives of Michael Pollan and Barbara Kingsolver, who popularized the organic food confessional. Her own affiliation has been more with agricultural ethicists, who understand that how we grow food affects what we eat. This work is also born out of an activist concern for the food system and constitutes a long-standing and intense critique of the consolidation and industrialization of agriculture that was largely ignored outside the narrow reach of rural sociology and agricultural economics until *translated* for a ready public by the likes of journalist Eric Schlosser and chef Dan Barber.

As Julie Guthman (2007) so aptly illustrates, there is a price to be paid, both in terms of scientific veracity and ownership of the discourse, when faculty choose to have students read these men as the founders and key practitioners of

an activist critique. Guthman (2007, 264) writes: "What is so painfully evident here and in many other of the new food books, is how food politics has become a progenitor of a neoliberal anti-politics that devolves regulatory responsibility to consumers via their dietary choices." For many of these white male writers, their early and most popular advice suggested that individualized change and consumer behaviour—what you consume, or "voting with your fork"—overrides a collective and political response. Additionally, the labour at the very heart of food system problems was ignored or hidden in all their work until activists began to push back on the question of food justice as something that can be achieved outside of general changes to labour systems (see Bovy 2015; Kliman 2015). In particular, food and agriculture as part of "development" in non-Western countries were often ignored, even as activism around land tenure, labour, and hunger occurred across Southeast Asia and Latin America. Whether coming at the problem as a journalist or chef, these writers presume an audience of elite consumers who stand outside the constraints of sexist and racist structures. Feminists in and out of academia have critiqued these books for the ways in which they ignore or minimize women's experiences, presume that farming is done by white men, and lack an understanding of the global impact of consolidated food and agriculture (Guthman 2007; Allen and Sachs 2007).

The publication of Arlene Avakian's edited volume, *Through the Kitchen Window: Women Explore the Intimate Meanings of Food and Eating*, in 1998 was a watershed in complicating the emergence of an intersectional food studies. Contributors included poets, activists, filmmakers, historians, and scientists and represented the most diverse collection of women's voices about food that was available at that time—and perhaps still, in some ways. In 2005, she coedited a new volume of feminist food essays with Barbara Haber, historian and former head of the Slesinger Library at Radcliffe, who was instrumental in preserving and asserting that cookbooks were literature and a pathway to understanding culture and history. The introduction to *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies* provides an invaluable survey of intersectional feminist themes and work within the field and were it not for that, I would be compelled to list all of those other scholars as significant characters in this tale (Avakian and Haber 2005). My own piece in that volume raised the following questions:

> What if we saw the construction of race and gender, of the "devalued Other" as a *defining feature* of both the production and the consumption of food? What if this insight were applied on both the large, commercial, structural scale and the intimate everyday scale of smaller communities, households, families, and partners? (Julier 2005, 164)

Indeed, in the last decade, I see changes in the scholarship that fits into the food studies pantry, an increase in pedagogy that addresses some of these issues, and most definitely an activism that is driven by the needs of workers, women, people of colour, Indigenous peoples, as well as differently abled and LGBTQ+ communities. The structures of power and inequality are still in place, particularly in the ways that economic capacity is consolidated and cultural value is structured through markets and neoliberal frameworks that create hierarchies of need. But challenges to those structures are ongoing and multifaceted and the story we tell of food studies that includes who we are and how we got here also needs to be multifaceted and have many chapters.

THE SECOND THREAD: PEDAGOGY

My idealized version of food studies (that is, the academic practice and teaching about food, agriculture, food systems, and culture) is one that is grounded in materialist practices and philosophies and helps create educated people who are able to engage in social change. I recognize that not all versions of food studies that live in academic institutions would openly embrace that ideal type, but having worked in and around the evolution of the field, I believe there are reasons to continue to assert it. Using my own experiences in creating and teaching in this program, I argue that grounding food studies in a material and experiential pedagogy is critical to its long-term utility and to addressing issues of labour.

I began thinking about these issues in trying to more explicitly connect intersectional theories to interdisciplinary work. In 2009, a group of scholars from a variety of disciplines, myself included, helped organize a round table at the National Women's Studies Association conference, with the backdrop of a revitalized and intersectional NWSA that had itself gone through a reckoning about race and inclusivity. We wanted to explore how our teaching on gender and food was intersectional and how the field of food studies was not as explicit about this as it could be. The title of the round table was "Food as More than Metaphor: Intersectionality, Pedagogy, Food, and Social Justice in the Feminist Classroom." In the panel abstract, we wrote:

> While the study of food has given rise to a growing interdisciplinary body of work, both research and pedagogy has been slow to fully embrace the theoretical and substantive insights of critical theories that interrogate the complex reality of intersectionality (McCall, 2005; Witt, 2001). Ivy Ken (2008) has recently argued that food ... "highlights how race, class, and gender are produced, used, experienced, and processed in our bodies, human and institutional." (NWSA conference, Atlanta, Georgia, 2009)

Immediately after this conference, I became the director of an interdisciplinary graduate program in food studies, housed within a School of Sustainability at a small college in western Pennsylvania. I was hired to develop this program, utilizing both our urban college in Pittsburgh and a newly acquired 388-acre farm and retreat that has become our new sustainability campus. Our educational mission is to train the students to be knowledgeable and skilled actors in the food system and advocates for change, although I have had to point out repeatedly that we don't tell them what to advocate. For the last nine years, my colleagues have been training cohorts of about 20–30 graduate students. This is not a huge number of people, but their impact has been significant, particularly in the Pittsburgh area, where many of them have stayed and had an impact on the local and regional food system. In those nine years, I have participated in countless round tables and academic sessions on food studies pedagogy, consulted for large universities and small colleges in their curriculum development for food studies programs, and listened to students and faculty to determine what skills, tools, knowledge, and theories they need in order to create a means of analyzing and affecting the food system.

We start by teaching about the history of agrarianism, colonialism, industrialization, the gender-race-class politics of food access and availability, and the cultural contexts that shape choices in these environments. We also teach the science and practice of food production, from agriculture to culinary, from foraging to fermenting, spending time in fields but also in the kitchen, the classroom, the slaughterhouse, the community bread oven, the food factory, the government offices, and, of course, the supermarket.

The main approach is to embed these explorations into specific classes that have some kind of application and skills acquisition. For example, in teaching greenhouse production, our agricultural faculty take students to different sites, urban and rural, to talk about the constraints and opportunities in a site, both agriculturally and socially. Students demonstrate techniques and run workshops so that they start to understand the limits of top-down education and training. One of the things we talk about is our own capacity to grow things since the university owns the land and any agriculture we engage in is thus essentially subsidized in terms of labour, supplies, and land costs. There are lower risks economically—and in terms of food security for our population—if we fail to grow something. Indeed, the trustees end up with maple syrup and honey more frequently than the students, staff, or faculty who work at the university.

In terms of classes and skills, we push to engage simultaneously in the conceptual and the practical. Students learn integrated pest management; how to

build a high tunnel; how to care for goats; how to ferment, can, cook, test soil, and market new products. They develop food guides for regions and for low-income budgets; they study and experiment with historical culinary traditions and argue about appropriation versus appreciation in their contemporary manifestations. They develop products using regional agricultural products and help small to mid-sized companies figure out how to market and support those food systems. They visit regulatory agencies, lobbyists, pesticide sales managers, organic certification agents, and corporate food producers to understand the perspectives and constraints that each of these groups experience in trying to get their version of a working food system, in the micro- or macrocosm of their work landscape. Students go on to jobs in antihunger work, in nonprofits designed to increase economic viability for local agriculture, in companies that would like to increase their sustainable practices or figure out what sustainable practices might entail. They start their own businesses and third-party certification groups focused on animal welfare or farmer-driven standards. They work for the US Department of Agriculture, Seattle Tilth, the Food Project, as journalists in print and other media, at large food corporations and small farm co-operatives.

These are critical thinking skills that shape all the practices we lump under the heading of food systems and food studies. So, when we look at the question of why service work is underpaid, we break down the skills of cooking and serving and caring and talk about what circumstances allow us to value or undervalue those labours. When we look at sustainable agriculture, we log hours in vegetable and animal production and can see why stewardship is more time consuming than resource extraction. Our goal is to make them articulate how and why certain practices make sense. Recognizing the political economy of food and agriculture demands that we help create practitioners who can take a critical and engaged (hands-on) stance in evaluating where we have been and where we are going as producers, consumers, and citizens in a global food system.

In short, their interests and capacities are very diverse, but the main concepts and perspectives that they share are the same. Whether the class is on food systems or sustainable meat or greenhouse production, the key questions are: how is this part of a larger system and in what ways is that system shaped by conflicting or consensual economic, social, material, and cultural goals? And, equally important, who benefits? How is power—and inequality generally—inscribed in these skills, practices, ways of organizing sustenance and social life?

Intersectional analysis is hard to do (Cho et al. 2013). Don't let anyone fool you—what often happens is that one dimension or axis of intersectionality is foregrounded instead of looking closer at the intersections—and this leads to

oppression. And so, being immersed in feminist and critical race perspectives, I find myself returning to older sociological analyses of inequality, particularly those that explore social class and power. The roots of the analysis are in the work of G. William Domhoff, who has explored the network of wealth, culture, and politics for many decades (Domhoff 2013). For Domhoff, there are four primary indicators of power: who benefits, who governs, who wins, and who shines? These questions originally framed Domhoff's analysis of the power elite, an early look at how those with privilege are able to leverage political, social, and cultural capital to maintain economic dominance. In exploring intersectionality, it is worth taking a more complicated analysis of class that understands power as a combination of cultural and social factors, with economic outcomes.

Domhoff's analysis of the elite is useful in thinking about agriculture and food practices, and of the questions he asks, "who shines" and "who benefits" work in almost every possible social problem related to food. Consider how the celebrity spokespeople like Michael Pollan, Mark Bittman, and Dan Barber all gain financially from books, often receive academic appointments at elite universities despite not having the usual advanced degree, and influence policy without the credentials that comparable women and people of colour need for equal influence. Most importantly, they can make mistakes and not lose status.

In a now-infamous article in the *New York Times*, Michael Pollan decried food television, suggesting that "we" should stop watching other people cook and go back to cooking ourselves (Pollan 2009). Many feminist writers jumped all over this, especially since Pollan quoted a US historian who suggested most of the fault was with women (more specifically white middle-class women) who got jobs in the paid labour force after World War II (Hernandez 2013). This had little to no impact on his publishing and credential as a spokesperson for change. Very recently, Pollan has begun including charitable donations as part of his speaking engagements. But this is at a time when he has benefited financially for two decades from speaking engagements and book publications. *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (Pollan 2006) is about to become a movie, and his family members have received collateral success (see Shaw 2015; Simeon n.d.). Former *New York Times* columnist, cookbook author, and critic Mark Bittman was recently taken to task by black farmers for promoting a land reform policy that was not developed in tandem with any farmers of colour (Bloch and Bonhomme 2017). The National Black Food and Justice Alliance responded not only to the Stone Barns conference organizers who chose to invite and assert Bittman's viewpoint, but

also to the media for framing the encounter to support the idea that white men are movement leaders (National Black Food and Justice Alliance 2017).

To focus on "who shines" and "who benefits" as part of the economic impact of this framing allows us to situate what happens when white male food celebrities blatantly benefit financially and symbolically in status from other people's work and lives, claiming to do so in the name of improving the world, but setting the parameters around what counts. The activities that have been christened an "alternative food movement" render all others invisible.

These circumstances are not unique to food studies, but the genesis of food studies as a field has contributed to a construction of knowledge that privileges white male perspectives, which is problematic. The fact that like many *studies*, food studies was part of a slowly emerging social movement around a contested field of knowledge and practice means that it has a relationship to lived experience and everyday life that is more visceral than some other academic fields. Certainly, the parallel to gender studies is about the embodied practice, the way the social constructions that shape our options are tied to materially experienced practices, like sex and dinner. And so it is incredibly important to acknowledge that we can be critical thinkers and actors about things that are both a source of pleasure and oppression. To want to know how to change something is not to devalue the aspects that are a source of sustenance—quite literally, materially, but also culturally.

I have repeatedly drawn parallels between my own emergence as a scholar of gender and eventually of food, the types of scholarship and pedagogy that I have supported and produced, and the way these fields have come to be in a reciprocal relationship with activism. My point is that as food studies evolves as part of academia, it will have many shapes and multiple life trajectories and my hope is that there is not just one right way, but that all the ways are inextricably tied to social change. At the same time, we cannot take for granted the relationship between the academic analysis of food, the grounding in material practices, and the lived, activist experience of fighting for a better food system.

THE THIRD THREAD: ACTIVISM

Here, I return to the parallels to the movements that brought women's and then gender studies to academia out of activism. Feminist responses to structural inequality and everyday sexism began to resonate as academic subjects when activists fought to bring them to public attention—and in studying gender movements, especially in the West, women from different class and race backgrounds

had always been involved in antiracist, antisexist activism, but much of the early attention and scholarship focused on white women feminists and their concerns. Sociologist Benita Roth argues that there were concurrent movements, often working toward gender equity while also concerned with antiracism and class oppression. At the same time, public perception and media constructions—and then subsequent scholarship—created a sense that there was a singular movement. She writes:

> There is sometimes an explicit definition of feminism as being about organizing about gender unencumbered by thinking about other oppressions. The feminist organizing of white middle class women in the US has been seen as a kind of model for feminist activism, such that a real feminist movement must be one that makes claims only on the basis of gender. (Roth 2004, 9)

Roth, among others, suggests that it is the media's portrayals that establish the narrative of a single focused movement—that subsequent scholarship was not sufficient to counter that impression. White feminists in and out of the academy bear some of that responsibility, and contemporary scholarship and activism speak to accountability and change. One key acknowledgement is that there were—and have been—multiple movements to challenging gender oppression, many of which have engaged simultaneously with disability, racism, classism, and heterosexism. But for a variety of reasons, as this activism is framed as a set of social problems, as it gets studied and supported within academia, it often gets reduced. Women's studies and feminism, both in and out of academic settings, needed to evolve, to be shaped more by transnational and anticolonialist perspectives, engaged with science, and attendant to a larger narrative about gender and sexuality. This has happened, but the struggle is not over.

When I look at food studies and the topics that have been resonant and important—and how they do or do not connect up to a social change agenda within or outside academia—I feel a cautionary tale. It was easy for movements for social change around food and agriculture to be reduced to single-issue topics championed by public figures of stature, usually white men and sometimes white women. How can we, as academics and activists and practitioners, prevent that from happening again?

On the one hand, the fact that mainstream activists and the media are now paying attention to issues of wages, autonomy, and satisfaction in food service industries, and economic viability and diversity among farmers, is important. However, those who are helping to contribute to both sides of that equation—to

the activism that helps bring about equity and change and to the academic treatise and studies that help build and promote appropriate knowledge—have a responsibility not to misrepresent this as a singular activity driven by popular media and individuals who have the symbolic capital to publish books.

What the activist movements of this moment tell us—whether they are about food or something else—is that the old narrative cannot stand in for a means to change. Pollan has argued that it takes someone from a background with some cultural and economic capital to be able to draw attention to what's going on (see Johnson 2013). Similarly, when chefs of colour critique the system that elevates certain food, certain ways of dining, and in particular the training of certain kinds of chefs, the pushback is that they are opening doors for others. They *helped out* a lot of people *on the way up*. While it's always good to put your money to good use supporting those who start without it, the current moment calls into question this whole trajectory, the entire approach to considering what is culturally and economically important. If you put food producers of colour at the centre of your analysis, as the main characters in the story, the story changes.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, there are three categories of analysis that are key to feminist food studies: First, centralizing labour, both paid and unpaid. Any study of food must focus on the way we think about and support people's labour in creating, growing, cooking, distributing, serving, and disposing of food. It cannot be an add-on. Some of these are skills that everyone should have, regardless of whether they use them. Ideally, as a society, we teach written literacy and basic math to everyone and do not assess whether this is a good idea based on the amount it's used. While it seems disingenuous to think that everyone should grow and cook their own food, as a society we lose something when the skills involved in those processes are removed and not taught to a wide range of people. To know how plants and animals grow, how they are transformed by cooking, fermenting, preserving, and how to re-establish the conditions to do it again—are highly significant skills that all people should have whether they choose to exercise them or not. Knowing how much or how little work it takes to produce the things one consumes is a necessary precondition for making moral and ethical arguments about whether we as a society, community, or individual need to be consuming those items.

Second is to teach about and focus on community—not necessarily as a predefined entity or a rhetorical device, but based on how a community defines

itself and how we define ourselves as part of smaller-scale and larger-scale (global) communities. Consider how transnational migration has shaped racial-ethnic identities, creating new ones where old ones are finally feeling imposed and outdated, and creating opportunities for shared cultural knowledge. The push for local and regional is powerful and necessary, but we are increasingly and always part of a global community as well, and it is reactionary and dangerous to insist that all relationships that foster sustenance have to happen in your own backyard. How community is enacted is often intertwined with food.

Third is to focus on discourse—who defines the debate? Who has a say in it? Who promulgates the ideas? So much discourse in everyday life is about how people need to educate themselves to eat better. What would it look like to tell the food stories of people without judgment? How can we look at these issues as encompassing both pleasure and oppression, luxury and necessity, convenience and care? How do we talk about the desire for a better society and the actions we take to make it so? I am most aggrieved by the mistaken belief that it's okay to characterize this as a *movement* in the singular, without history or complexity, led by some white men writing books, giving talks, and providing *rules* for eating, and someone telling you that the kitchen and the farm are now free of the oppressive qualities that made a commercial food system and unequal treatment in the paid labour force more attractive than servitude or housework. In both food and feminism, I believe there are really good reasons to engage in reclaiming control—over our bodies, over our material and economic generative capacities, over what we grow, eat, and consume—and over our ability to define ourselves beyond binaries. Certainly, for me, one great example of that within feminist movements has been newer histories like Benita Roth's (2004) *Separate Roads to Feminism*, which explores black and Latina activism as concurrent and coequal with white second wave feminism. As Beverly Guy-Sheftall (1995) summarizes, activism through an intersectional lens means engaging in an emancipatory vision and acts of resistance among a diverse group who attempts to articulate the complex nature of our experiences and the interlocking nature of oppression and struggle. I think our main job is to get more people engaged in naming, practising, and telling about how they believe we should sustain ourselves and others—and do it loudly and with political power.

NOTES

1. Fractured fairy tales were originally a creative and silly retelling of classic fairy tales as animated on the *Rocky and Bullwinkle* cartoon in the 1950s. Since then, authors have taken on classic tales and reworked them, for example, the retelling of the three little

pigs told by the wolf. These are often humorous, but they also can employ signifiers that upend expected hierarchies.

2. Indeed, although Pollan and chef Dan Barber occasionally credit Joan Dye Gussow for raising these issues before they did and she is generally in support of their work, at another Stone Barns event, Gussow moderated and asked both authors, "Are you both out of touch with the average eater?" when she noted the cost of the meals they both supported (www.epicurious.com/archive/blogs/editor/2008/01/elitism-in-the.html).

READING QUESTIONS

1. What global actions, beyond the ones cited in the article, can you pinpoint that demonstrate how women and people of colour are defining social change and food justice?
2. What material skills from agricultural or culinary practice do you consider to be important for people to master in order to understand the labour demands of a food system—and why?
3. What intersectional tools would you use in order to explore a contemporary food or agriculture problem?
4. Why does the author compare gender studies to food studies? Can you think of a different or better comparison to another academic field?

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