University of Alberta

Pickles, Beets, and Bread: Examining Traditional Food Knowledge in a Rural Albertan Community

by

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Dedication

This is dedicated to Brenda and Frank Braun. Thank you for showing me what a fierce and uncompromising work ethic, a hospitable and generous heart, and a love of delicious food will bring me in life. I am truly blessed.

Abstract

The globalization and industrialization of the agri-food system over the past fifty years has been linked to declining knowledge and skills in the general population related to growing, preserving and cooking food. In rural communities, loss of this knowledge and associated culture and traditions has been further exacerbated by depopulation due to outmigration and the subsequent erosion of social and physical infrastructure. Counter to this trend of food deskilling, resistance to the globalized agri-food system is increasing and can be identified, in part, in the efforts of individuals working to maintain and perpetuate traditional food practices. This research focuses on a group of women and their children, based in a small rural community in Alberta, Canada, who are actively engaged in utilizing and mobilizing traditional food knowledge in the daily lives of their families and in their communities through the practices of gardening, cooking and canning. Qualitative research methods were used to gather relevant data which was analyzed using a social practice theoretical lens. Findings from the first study revealed four conditions influencing the continuation of these social practices among the research participants: the experience and history of scarcity, normative expectations, a close connection to family, and development of a community of practice. The second qualitative study looks at the specific practice of home preserving through a social practice theory framework. I test two premises set out by Shove, Pantzar & Watson (2012): first, social practices consist of three elements (materials, competencies, and

meanings) that are integrated when practices are enacted; second, that practices emerge, persist, and disappear as links among these defining elements are made and broken. Using the data collected from the research project I demonstrate how the integration of the requisite elements enabled canning as a practice to flourish during a certain time period. Conversely, I then explore how the disintegration of the elements contributed to the decline of the same practice in later years. By examining the connections and breakages in the links between materials, meanings, and competencies within the practice of canning I illustrate the essentiality of integration of elements in order for practices to exist.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Over the past fifty years, agriculture and food have undergone a radical transformation through changes in technologies and techniques, increasing standardization and processing of food, and the globalization of commodities and markets (Goodman & Redclift, 1991). The restructuring of food and agriculture has dramatically increased the social and spatial distance between production, processing and consumption, resulting in what some scholars have referred to as the "disembedding"(Wittman, Beckie & Hergensheimer 2011) character of "food from nowhere"(Fonte 2010). Consumers' adaptation to normative pressures for convenience, casualness, and speed, has significantly altered food habits, family life, and consumption rituals (Jaffe & Gertler 2006; Shove 2003) and resulted in food deskilling of the general population, usurping the long-held knowledge, skills, values, and cultural traditions surrounding the growing, preserving, and cooking of food (Bruckmeier 2006; Fonte 2010).

Amidst growing concerns over nutrition, food safety, environmental and economic sustainability, anxiety about the 'impoverished state of domestic cooking' (Short 2006) and the general deskilling around food-related activities has garnered significant public interest and academic inquiry in recent decades (Meah & Watson 2011; Griffith & Wallace 1998). While there continues to be a growing sense that procuring and preparing the freshest, healthiest, most sustainably sourced

food should be a top priority, mainstream agricultural commodity and retail foods markets, and existing government programs are failing to meet the socio-economic and environmental concerns of citizens, particularly in North America.

As a response to these and other food-related concerns, there is now a rebirth of interest in food-related skills - in the garden, the kitchen, and the cannery - as more and more people are attempting to take control of and learn about their food. (Wittman et al 2011; Click & Ridberg 2010; DeLind 2006). As one popular online food writer observes, "It's not about buying stuff these days, it's about making it (if you are middle-class, liberal, and white, that is). Homemade, from scratch, DIY, straight from the backyard, fresh-baked, artisan." (Matchar, 2013). Local food initiatives (farmer's markets, community gardens, community supported agriculture schemes, and local food restaurants) along with a relearning of traditional food skills (gardening, cooking from scratch, canning) are ways in which people and communities are trying to re-create meaningful relationships with food and rebuild resiliency in the food system in the wake of their concerns.

Rural communities in particular have felt the effects of agricultural restructuring most acutely: depopulation and eroding physical and social infrastructure continue to usurp the long-held skills, knowledge, and cultural traditions surrounding food (Epp 2001). Despite these impacts, most research on deskilling has focused on urban communities. There is a distinct lack of scholarly inquiry into the deskilling and knowledge loss

surrounding food in rural communities, and as such, my research is uniquely positioned to start this process of investigation.

Interestingly, even small, rural communities like Stony Plain, Alberta, where I conducted my research, have been purposefully seeking out ways that they can restore, teach, foster, and renew food and agricultural skills in their community. The Multicultural Heritage Center, run by the Heritage Agricultural Society in Stony Plain, has expanded and developed their community food programming to include 'Back to Basics' Days and demonstrations, devoted more space to community gardens and Master Gardener programs, and provide classes and demonstrations to elementary students to learn how to prepare local crab apple jams juices and jellies, and attend guided field trips to surrounding farms.

Despite the dramatic changes rural communities have faced over the last five decades, there are still people who continue to practice, teach, and use traditional skills related to food procurement, preparation, and preservation, long before it was ever popular to do so. More systematic sociological exploration of these communities, their skills, and how these skills continue to survive is a key question for academics and policymakers concerned with rural development and healthier, more sustainable food consumption.

Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to examine three specific food-related social practices – gardening, cooking, and canning (collectively called traditional food knowledge) – as reproduced among women in a rural Albertan community. Using qualitative techniques, I describe and

analyze two sides of the same phenomenon: the conditions for survival of traditional food knowledge in a rural community, and conversely, the reasons for decline of one specific practice, namely, canning in the same community. Both papers in this thesis use a social practice theoretical framework to understand persistence and change in traditional food knowledge practices.

My objectives are to examine the different factors that affect the formation, perpetuation, and disintegration of canning, cooking, and gardening practices among a small group of women in a rural location. Additionally, I will try to understand how traditional knowledge is passed on inter-generationally and the barriers to its transmission, while trying to understand and categorize changes I observe. More broadly, I will demonstrate the utility of social practice theory in studying traditional food knowledge and in the sociological exploration of food more generally.

Chapter two: Paper #1 ("Against the Odds") uses data collected from 15 in-depth interviews, participant observations, and a focus group to highlight four key factors that have contributed to the survival of traditional food knowledge practices among research participants. The target journal for this piece is Agriculture and Human Values, or, Food, Culture and Society.

Chapter three: Paper #2 ("Canning Linkages") uses the same data set to describe and analyze the elemental links between materials, competencies, and meanings to understand why canning as a practice was able to flourish in the last several decades. The latter half of the paper

examines the breaks in linkages between the same elements (materials, competencies, and meanings) to understand why canning as a practice has disintegrated. The target journal for this chapter is Rural Sociology.

Theoretical Guidance

Three major theoretical frameworks initially informed this study: traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), transformative learning theory, and social practice theory. By borrowing heavily from various tenets of traditional ecological knowledge, I was able to develop, describe, and use the term 'traditional food knowledge' (TFK) for my own research purposes. TFK, like TEK, tries to incorporate the importance of the long-held, temporal accumulation of skills and knowledge, passed down from generation to generation among groups (Berkes 1995). Three practices were chosen to represent TFK in my research: gardening, home cooking (from scratch); and canning. Based on themes from the literature, these three practices represent a significant amount of the mental and physical labour that is required when interacting with food. They also have the advantage of representing three distinct social practices that I was able to discuss and analyse throughout the research project.

Initially, part of the thrust of my inquiry was to study the role that food knowledge plays in the transformation of normative ideologies around pro-environmental food consumption, or pro-environmental behaviours more broadly. When transformative learning occurs, there are widespread changes in the learner, impacting the learner's subsequent experiences, enabling them to become more socially responsible and autonomous learners, while being critically engaged in a process of

reflection (Mezirow 1996). Several key studies (Kerton & Sinclair 2010; Lockie 2002) have looked at the consumption of organic food and its correlation with other environmentally friendly practices due to a transformative learning event. Scholarly interest in food and transformative learning has mainly focused on organic agriculture up until now, so I thought perhaps traditional knowledge and social practices around food might provide fertile ground for academic inquiry. After completion of the interviews, and much reflection on the data and themes I was finding, I decided to save transformative learning questions for my upcoming dissertation work and use the more clearly applicable social practice theory to interpret my data.

The theory that mainly informed and guided my research was based on the work of Shove, Pantzar & Watson (2012) and their exploration and practical application of social practice theory to pro-environmental governance and policy. They contend that social practices are made of three main elements – materials, meaning, and competency – and practices exist and stabilize when these elements are linked, and conversely, disintegrate when the links are broken. Using this framework I was able to analyze the linkages between elements to understand why TFK practices continue to exist among the women I spoke with. I focus on one particular practice, canning, in my second paper, and using an elemental analysis (Shove et al 2012), present evidence to demonstrate why canning was able to flourish at one point in time and then why it had declined as a practice from one generation to the next. Essentially, this was an attempt to characterize stability and change of canning, using my data.

By using a social practice theory approach I was able to move beyond the producer vs. consumer dichotomy often used in alternative food movement analysis and pro-environmental behaviour related to food. Instead the focus was trying to understand the emergence, persistence and disappearance of food practices to try and elucidate how policy makers, practitioners, and food activists might continue their promotion of particular food practices in the future.

Significance and Contributions to Research

The following study will be of interest to food activists and food policy decision makers, public health practitioners, social scientists interested in deskilling, those who seek to promote sustainable food practices, rural community developers. This research will allow the practitioners themselves, mostly women in this study, who have spent back-breaking hours pulling weeds, planting seeds, cooking meals, and canning to understand the forces against their practices and the forces within their kind that have allowed them to continue a practice they carried out long before it was ever popular or trendy to do so.

Most academic research on deskilling, alternative food movements and the sociology of food have tended to focus on urban populations. By contrast, my study focuses on a group of women from a rural population. The community that I studied is also novel in that it has a well-established community organization, The Multicultural Heritage Centre, that is increasingly focusing its activities on food knowledge, skills, and agriculture and it's connection to the heritage of the community. Moreover, the existence of another organization, the Stony Plain Women's

Institute, is distinctive because it has a strong core membership of women who possess traditional food skills, whereas most Women's Institute's are disbanding across the country.

These two organizations not only make my research site particularly distinctive, but because of the emphasis on food, heritage, and community service in the town (Town of Stony Plain 2013), I think Stony Plain is exceptionally well-suited for an investigation of how traditional food knowledge has been able to survive and flourish despite changes to the food system. This, in turn, contributes to the literature on deskilling and rural communities. Chapter two (Against the Odds) explores this in greater detail.

The second paper (Chapter Three: Making and Breaking Links) attempts to take a systematic, sociological look at the practice of home preservation and canning in Stony Plain. Little scholarly attention and systematic analysis has been given to home fermentation and canning in the social sciences (Click and Ridberg 2010) and so my account contributes to that body of literature.

Limitations of Research

This research is limited by several factors. First, though I was careful about my selection criteria for participants, this project examines a very limited representation of the rural population of Alberta. The sample size was small and relatively homogenous. All of the participants were Caucasian, in the same socio-economic class, and relatively the same age. All but one participant was female. Some of the conclusions made in this study may be time- and location-specific.

Another limitation was the inter-generational aspect of this study. I was only able to speak to two generations of family members, whereas to get a better picture of the types of changes that have taken place with food practices over the years, three or more generations would have been ideal, and possibly more accurate, including richer data and insights into familial traditions.

In an attempt to make my thesis manageable and finish in a reasonable time, I decided to omit any sort of gender analysis of my results. This was a deliberate choice, even though there is more than ample data to do so. I decided to focus on areas that I was most familiar with, namely social practice theory. It is regrettable that I did not choose to use a gender framework for this work, but my hope is that this data can be revisited in the future to do so, and I plan to pursue this with my dissertation research.

Reflections on Social Location

Growing up in a very rural, Mennonite, agricultural town shaped my research quite profoundly. In this setting, I experienced firsthand what a lot of my participants described to me in their interviews about maintaining massive gardens (to help feed the family), learning to cook from scratch at a very young age, and canning, canning, canning like crazy at the end of gardening season. Participating in particular religious and ethnic traditions as a child also brought me to the place that I am with my research today. These experiences provided me with an understanding and insight into my research on food practices among rural women that would not have otherwise been there and I think that has really enriched

this research for me. Additionally, it is not just the study of food and food practices in which I have taken a great interest. Many who know me also know that I am an avid cook and dinner party hostess, a semi-avid gardener, and a somewhat dilettante canner. Extending hospitality, giving and sharing generously, pursuing equality and justice while ensuring all are well fed are often expressed in my life through the ways in which I interact with food.

My current social place also contributed to the success of this study. I am a university educated, Caucasian female Canadian, and my appearance was likely non-threatening for participants. I was able to blend in with the local people and not appear as an outsider. Due to my experiences growing up, I was able to relay a sense of understanding about the amount of work required to garden, cook, and can regularly, express honest and mutual concern about deskilling and food, while also offering my own personal stories, experiences and insights on the subject matter. Often when I would share an experience, or talk about why I was doing the type of research I did, participants were almost immediately intrigued by me, because I was 'so young' and interested in these matters.

Given my background, passion and interest in food, along with my current social location in this study, there was also likely some bias in the interpretation of results. As a once-rural farm kid whose parents espoused many of the values, beliefs, and practices found in my interviews, I was likely to interpret the meaning, motivation, and traditions in a similar way that I experienced them. In addition, as I have

a background in environmental sociology, my 'ear' was probably trained to these fields, and the analysis is likely coloured by this in some ways.

In the following chapters I document, describe, and analyze the stories, memories, insights, and anecdotes given to me by women from Stony Plain who, despite changes in their own lives, and larger, global transformation in the food industry, continue to practice, share, and adapt their traditional food knowledge in the past, present, and into the future.

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Chapter Two

Despite The Odds: Understanding the Survival of Traditional Food Knowledge in a Rural Albertan Community

Abstract:

The globalization and industrialization of the agri-food system over the past fifty years has been linked to declining knowledge and skills in the general population related to growing, preserving and cooking food. In rural communities, loss of this knowledge and associated culture and traditions has been further exacerbated by depopulation due to outmigration and the subsequent erosion of social and physical infrastructure. Counter to this trend of food deskilling, resistance to the globalized agri-food system is increasing and can be identified, in part, in the efforts of individuals working to maintain and perpetuate traditional food practices. This research focuses on a group of women and their children, based in a small rural community in Alberta, Canada, who are actively engaged in utilizing and mobilizing traditional food knowledge in the daily lives of their families and in their communities through the practices of gardening, cooking and canning. Qualitative research methods were used to gather relevant data which was analyzed using a social practice theoretical lens. Findings from this study revealed four conditions influencing the continuation of these social practices among the research participants: the experience and history of scarcity, normative expectations, a close connection to family, and development of a community of practice. This study illustrates the relevance of a social practice framework for examining food knowledge and skills, and furthermore points to the potential of this approach for understanding and promoting pro-environmental behaviour and sustainable consumption in the food system.

Key words: traditional food knowledge; gardening, cooking, canning; deskilling; social practice theory; rural; Alberta, Canada

Introduction

Over the past fifty years, agriculture and food have undergone a radical transformation due to changes in technologies and techniques, increasing standardization and processing of food, and the globalization of commodities and markets (Goodman & Redclift, 1991). The restructuring of food and agriculture has dramatically increased the social and spatial distance between production, processing, and consumption, resulting in what some scholars have

referred to as the "disembedding"(Wittman, Beckie & Hergensheimer 2011; Novek 2003) character of "food from nowhere"(Fonte 2010). This has resulted in a deskilling of the general population usurping the long-held knowledge, skills, values, and cultural traditions surrounding the growing, preserving, and cooking of food (Bruckmeier, 2006; Fonte, 2010; Woods 2005) – what I define in this paper as traditional food knowledge. Further, consumers' adaptation to normative pressures for convenience, casualness, and speed, has significantly altered food habits, family life, and consumption rituals (Jaffe & Gertler 2006; Shove 2003).

This deskilling of traditional food knowledge has been exacerbated in rural communities due to rural depopulation, erosion of social and physical infrastructure, disintegration of long held social capital, and decreased political capacity, characteristic of many rural communities in Canada today. Agriculture, writes Roger Epp (2001), has been redesignated as a business, while much of rural Alberta is "in the grip of slow decline" (Epp, 2001 p. 304).

While larger motivations and intentions driving this study relate to questions surrounding long term sustainability of food, the environment, and rural communities, my research asks the following: how has traditional food knowledge in a small, rural, Albertan community emerged, been fostered, and survived despite drastic changes to the food system and the subsequent social and economic upheaval therein? This work centers on a group of women in a small Albertan community, who – despite rapidly changing and challenging sociocultural, technological and economic agri-food contexts – continue to maintain and pass on their traditional food knowledge of gardening, cooking,

and canning. This exploratory study provides a broad sociological analysis of the conditions required for traditional food knowledge to continue to exist.

Most researchers involved in studying the sociology of food emphasize the economic power of major institutional actors such as multinational corporations. Or, when these researchers discuss culture, their work is often in relation to consumers and consumerism. This paper tries to overcome this dichotomy by going back to the garden, the kitchen, and the social practices around food. I use what is dubbed as "the practice turn in contemporary theory" (Reckwitz 2002) to understand how traditional food knowledge has been utilized and maintained in a rural community. This approach heeds Shove, Pantzar and Watson's (2012) call to find ways of describing and analysing changing food practices while also accounting for more faithful, consistent forms of food skills reproduction. I seek to not only understand how practices shape and influence traditional food knowledge, but also attempt to show how using this theoretical approach in combination with a concept such as traditional food knowledge might be an important sociological contribution in the field of food studies more broadly.

Using qualitative research methods – participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group – I explored a few overarching themes: food practices and traditions, past, present and future; motivations and desires related to food practices; and inter-generational teaching and skills transmission. Four key factors run throughout my data, in the stories, observations, and memories of my participants. These factors were needed to foster and sustain traditional food knowledge practices and include: the experience of scarcity,

strong normative expectations, close connection or relationship to a family member, and a cohesive community of practice.

In the following section I present a literature review focusing on a social practice theory approach and what it means for the study of food; a brief definition and justification of the term "traditional food knowledge" in the context of this research; and a brief survey of other food studies being done in the field. Subsequently, I offer a short account of my data collection methods. Results are presented in four sections, each comprised of a key finding (experience of scarcity; normative expectations; strong familial relationship; community of practice) followed by some relevant discussion. I conclude with a brief summary on the contribution of a practice theory approach to the sociological study of food, and its implications for the future.

Literature Review

Traditional Food Knowledge: A Brief Definition

Traditional knowledge is a well-studied and documented body of thought. "Traditional" is usually interpreted as describing a process that is ancient and does not change; however, it can also represent dynamism in the way knowledge is shared and learned (Four Directions Council, 1996). According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), traditional knowledge is seen as knowledge that is generally

> …not produced systematically, but in accordance with the individual or collective creators' responses to and interactions with their cultural environment…. Traditional therefore does not necessarily mean that knowledge is ancient. 'Traditional' knowledge is being created everyday, it is evolving as a response of individuals and communities to the challenges posed by their social environment. *In its use, traditional knowledge is also contemporary knowledge.*
>
> (WIPO 2002:1)

Moreover, it does not perform a specialized function in society, but rather embodies cultural values as an element integrated into a vast and complex set of beliefs and knowledge that is held collectively and transmitted both orally and through common practices, from generation to generation (Fonte, 2010).

Examining traditional food systems of indigenous peoples gives an illuminating account of how knowledge and food are connected. Traditional ecological knowledge is knowledge held by indigenous people about their local environments. Fikret Berkes (1999) defines traditional ecological knowledge as "a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship between living beings with one another and the environment." (p. 56). Indigenous traditional food systems represent a social process of sharing culture that includes the sociocultural meanings, acquisition/processing techniques, use, composition and nutritional consequences for those who use the food (Kuhnlein, 1996). It is from this discussion and understanding – that knowledge is much more than a mere accumulation of information and facts, but rather a process lived out through experience, and passed from generation to generation, continually being readapted, reformed and influenced – that the notion of "traditional food knowledge" can be understood.

Borrowing from certain tenets of traditional ecological knowledge about indigenous food systems and the 'living' component of traditional knowledge, *traditional food knowledge*, then, represents the cumulative wisdom of many generations of people who have learned how to produce, prepare, store, and teach their skills in food provisioning. Traditional food knowledge also symbolizes the often unrecognized and undocumented work of these people

(primarily women), their temporally accumulated knowledge and the formal and informal sharing and education that ensures this knowledge is kept alive. This knowledge is dynamic and living and is continually being adapted by its custodians as their environments change. Its scope also goes beyond the technical skills required to procure food to include the specific cultural meanings and historical context that has shaped the particular types of food prepared and consumed within that community. Three broad traditional food practices were examined in this research: food procurement in the form of gardening; food preparation in the form of cooking; and food preservation in the form of canning. These represent three broad categories of social practices within traditional food knowledge and constitute the pegs upon which I hang the rest of the research.

Social Practice Theory

Social practice theory departs from traditional accounts that tend to primarily emphasize social norms, structure, symbolism or agency as the root of social problems, but instead describes the world as constructed and ordered by social practices (Johnston and Szabo, 2011). As Warde (2005) suggests, practices have a trajectory or history and that history is differentiated. 'Why do people do what they do?' and 'How do they do those things in the way they do?' are the key sociological questions concerning practices. The principal implication of a theory of practice is that the sources of changed behaviour lie in the development of practices themselves (Warde, 2005).

Generally understood, in the words of Reckwitz (2002),

> A practice is… a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood. To say that practices are 'social practices' is indeed a tautology: a practice is social, as it is a 'type' of behaving and understanding that appears at different locales and at different points of

time and is carried out by different body/minds (2002: 250).

It is neither individual behaviour nor societal structures exclusively that affect behaviours, but rather everyday practices like cooking, driving, washing, shopping or playing. As Giddens (1984) observes,

> [The] basic domain of study of the social sciences...is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time (Giddens, 1984)

In turn, the performance of numerous social practices is seen as part of "the routine accomplishment of what people take to be 'normal' ways of life" (Shove, 2004: 117). Practices are the source and carrier of meaning, language and normativity (Schatzki 2001). As Reckwitz (2002) argues, wants and emotions do not belong to individuals but – in the form of knowledge – to practices. Social life is a series of recursive practices "reproduced by knowledgeable and capable agents who are drawing upon sets of virtual rules and resources which are connected to situated social practices" (Spargaaren 2011:815). In this view, attention is diverted away from individual decision making towards the 'doing' of different social practices and the types of consumption they entail (Hargreaves 2011). Importantly, practice theory emphasizes that it is through these engagements with practices that individuals come to understand the world around them and to develop a more or less coherent sense of self (Warde A. , 2005).

Recent developments in systematizing theories of practice (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki et al., 2001) and its application to the field of consumption, including food, (Warde, 2005; Halkier 2011; Strengers, 2012) point out two distinct ways of understanding practice. *Practice as performance* (practice as

immediacy of doing) and *practice-as-entity* (practice as a block or pattern, embodied, materially mediated, shared meaning) both having a recursive and co-constitutive relation (Truninger, 2011). According to Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012) practice consists of three basic elements: materials (objects, infrastructure, tools, hardware, and the body itself); competencies (skills, know-how, technique); and meanings (social and symbolic significance of participation, motivational knowledge). Practice-as-entity is held together by these heterogeneous elements, which are linked by practitioners when practices are performed. In this way, practices exist, persist, or disappear when the links between these three elements are created, sustained, or broken (Truninger 2011). For example, preparing and partaking in a traditional Thanksgiving meal (that includes specific food dishes particular to a family or culture) will imply that one has the proper equipment to prepare the meal and physical ability to do so (the object); it will require some technical skills and know-how to cook the food properly and make things taste delicious (the competencies); and it will also entail the motivational knowledge, social, and symbolic significance of eating particular foods with particular people (the meaning). These meanings and emotions could be about evoking the memory of traditions past, or the desire to sustain family bonds and identity, or to ensure certain serving and dining practices are reflected and normalized within the family unit (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). An important point here is to note that meanings and emotions do not emerge from self-contained individuals, but rather 'belong to' the practice (Ropke, 2009: 2492).

Deskilling, and Food Social Practices

Anxiety over the 'impoverished state of domestic cooking' highlighted by academia, the media, and, most recently, celebrity chefs, has spurned countless analyses over the last decade. Generally speaking, scholars have suggested that the erosion of skills held by previous generations is due to the breakdown of traditional domestic divisions of labour associated with increased labour market participation by women, the effects of technologies, culpable both in deskilling and cooking in the kitchen, and distracting children from being in the kitchen to absorb tacit cooking skills (Short 2006; Meah & Watson 2011). Jaffe and Gertler (2006) argue that many consumers have lost the knowledge necessary to make discerning decisions about quality, including how a well-chosen diet can contribute to health, planetary sustainability, and community economic and social development. Additionally, they argue that consumers have also lost the skills needed to make use of basic commodities in a manner that allows them to eat a low-impact, high quality diet on a smaller budget. They attribute much of this deskilling to the fact that consumers do not have – and are systematically deprived of – the information, knowledge, and analytical frameworks needed to make informed decisions about their food. Recent studies on the practice and performance of domestic cooking have been challenging those discourses, arguing that cooking practices among different groups are much more complex than what was thought.

In their study of patterns of continuity and change in families' domestic cooking practices, Meah and Watson (2011) challenge existing discourse about the decline of domestic cooking, problematizing assumptions that earlier generations were supremely knowledgeable and virtuous in the kitchen. By studying three generations of families, they highlight the absence of linearity in

participant's engagement with cooking as they move between different transitional points through their life-course. To this end, they point out that individuals' practices are socially and culturally embedded, and are emergent from a range of life-course factors that temporarily or permanently rupture existing patterns or behaviours in the kitchen. Based on her research of cooking practices among Danish women, Halkier (2009) notes that the sociological discourse on cooking requires an empirical openness because of overlapping practitioner understandings of cooking. Cooking can be seen as a necessary burden or a chore (Lupton 1996), as routine work (Bove and Sobal 2006), as a skilled practice (Short 2006), as meaningful family integration (Holm 2003), or as a pleasurable pursuit (Hollows 2003). Therefore she suggests that, similar to Meah and Watson (2011), cooking practices are subtle processes of contextually organized and negotiated performances.

Studies also suggest that food meanings and practices contribute to family identity and domestic life (Valentine 1999). DeVault (1991) asserts that a reason for producing a household meal is to construct home and family around shared consumption practices. Family food consumption socializes moral values, duties, and valued experiences (Gullestad 1995). Food plays a role in the production and negotiation of family and family member identities. Additionally, food practices influence social reproduction. For example, Beoku-Betts (1995) suggests that the Gullah communities in the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina use food preparation and consumption practices to transmit cultural traditions, collective memories, and foster culturally prescribed skills related to self-reliance. Further, Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) found that in a Thanksgiving context that intergenerational transmissions of recipes, stories

about family identity, and serving and dining practices reflected class and gender norms. Food is implicated in contingent processes of social reproduction at the household level.

There is also increasing awareness of food in social reproduction that goes beyond the household. A resurgence of interest in local food production (Wittman, Beckie & Hergesheimer 2011; Gillespie et al. 2007; DeLind 2006), healthy home cooking (Short 2006; Oliver 2007), and the skills of canning and self-sufficiency (Click & Ridberg 2010) have seen exponential growth in the last decade. Changing expectations for food and agriculture have contributed to the rebirth and exponential growth of farmers' markets, community gardens, community shared agriculture programs, organic agriculture, and a myriad of other alternative food network schemes (Wittman, Beckie & Hergensheimer 2011). Scholars and food activists alike have been promoting and expanding the alternative food movement and its role in reshaping the agri-food industry more broadly. Canning and home fermentation, for example, are now being seen as alternative forms of food activism. In their study of practices and motivations for food preservationism, Click and Ridberg (2010) argue that preservation presents an opportunity to move alternative food practices away from consumer-oriented politics to a politics based upon relationships to self, others, and the earth, upholding the goals of the alternative food movement while subverting the capitalistic logic of the global agri-food industry.

In his study on deskilling and agrodiversity, Gilbert (2013) discusses the horticultural deskilling of British allotment gardeners and the important role of dedicated seed savers. He argues that the activities of devoted seed savers who save and circulate the seed of genetically heterogeneous varieties, similar to the

management of landraces in the global South, provide a superior model for attempts to safeguard vegetable diversity in the global North.

For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to examine three social practices: gardening, cooking, and canning, as crucial components that help to make up traditional food knowledge. By examining these three practices and how they are performed I have been able to identify some important conditions that supported the practice and performance of these activities.

Research Location

This project entailed original field research in Stony Plain, Alberta. Despite its close proximity to Edmonton, Stony Plain prides itself on possessing a small town atmosphere while retaining its deep cultural and agricultural roots. This is evidenced in many of the town's heritage organizations, festivals, murals, and community events (Town of Stony Plain, 2013). It has a well-established community organization called the Heritage Agricultural Society and a corresponding Multicultural Heritage Center. The organization runs a myriad of programs in the community, many of which have an agricultural or food focus. Additionally, the presence of the Stony Plain Women's Institute provided an excellent source of participants who are still actively canning, gardening, and cooking in the community.

Data Collection

Data collection involved qualitative methods and included participant observation, in-depth individual interviewing, and a focus group. Qualitative approaches are well established in the social sciences, and increasingly so in social practice theory literature (Hitchings, 2012).

The primary source of data production included in-depth, semi-structured interviews and contained open-ended questions following an interview guide. Section one asked participants about their gardening skills, practices, and traditions; section two asked participants about their cooking skills, practices, and traditions; and section three followed the same format except it focused on canning. Part of the research involved spending time in the community going to various community events, informal conversations, and participation in different community group meetings.

Criteria for selection in the study included three requirements. Participants had to live in Stony Plain or surrounding area and had to be actively participating in two of the three practices (gardening, cooking, canning). They had to have at least one child who was living in the community or surrounding area that either gardened, cooked or canned on a regular basis. Ten participants for the parent generation (aged 50 – 70) were selected, and five children (aged 30 – 40) of those in the parent generation also participated in an interview. All but one participant was female. Participants were all Caucasian, with varying Western European heritage. Socio-economic status was not considered when doing this research.

A focus group was held after the completion of the interviews. Prior to the focus group, the interview data was explored to generate ideas and questions for the focus group. The intent of the focus group was to generate answers to the unanswered questions stemming from the interviews.

QSR NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program was used to explore and code the data in search of themes, regularities, disruptions, and

insights. Themes derived from the literature were used to help sort and code the data as well. Results are often represented by direct quotes from the interviews.

Findings

Prior to the analysis of the data, I had several categories of interest based on the literature and my own experience, which included the role of family and the larger community, and how prior construction of societal normative expectations played a role in food practices. Some of the factors were also developed based on an emergent methodology as I used an iterative process of analyzing data and referring back to the literature to help interpret my results. Based on my research, I found that there were four influential factors that shaped and fostered the practices of traditional food knowledge: the experience of scarcity and going without; the strongly embedded normative expectations of how to procure, prepare, and preserve food as something you "just did"; the close relationships with and strong influence from family; and the influence and support of friends that made up their social networks and communities of practice.

Experience of scarcity and going without

The first condition (the experience of scarcity) is best described as what Shove (2002) calls an element of a practice. This element falls under the category of 'meaning' and is largely based on what Reckwitz (2002) describes as "motivational knowledge". The motivational memories, which have deep social and symbolic significance for the women, serve as a solid cornerstone for the basis of their traditional food knowledge practices and represent the profound social and symbolic significance of the myriad of participants' past experiences.

The experience of living off a limited income with large families to feed, and very restricted access to grocery stores or money to purchase food, left a profound and lasting mark on the skills, memories, and attitudes of most of the women I interviewed. As they were growing up and starting families of their own, many were often almost entirely reliant on the harvest from their gardens and their canning skills to sustain them through the harsh prairie winters. Moreover, for many of these women, the firm resolve to live off the land and 'make do' had been modeled to them from parents, grandparents, friends, and neighbours. Despite the fact that living conditions have dramatically improved over the course of their lives, the impact of these experiences was lifelong, and the results are still evident. The experience of scarcity, coupled with a primarily rural, agricultural upbringing, has culminated in very particular skill sets and a deep respect and appreciation for the abundance of food and how that food is used. In these cases, memory has been a powerful driver and sustainer of traditional food knowledge and its corresponding practices. One of the participants, a woman in her mid sixties whose family had experienced a post – war economy, notes,

> My mom always used to say, we're getting greedy, we don't look after one another, we are living in a very selfish society and this generation, I mean I came out of it [war], I knew what it was we experienced. They've [my children] never experienced going without, like we [my husband and I] would go without so our children could get what they needed…we're into this society where you've got to have everything, and we weren't raised that way, it just wasn't there (INT 7).

Another remarked,

> You'd have a hard time because you experienced poverty, you'd have a hard time seeing waste, throwing things out, a hard time not finishing your plate (INT 9).

Another woman, who grew up on a farm and then farmed her whole adult life, speaks of her memories of having little to eat:

> I think you had to learn to make do with what you had. That's the problem with people, they don't know how to make do with what they have. "Oh I haven't got nothing" and they cry. I remember sitting at the table and just having a bowl of potatoes and there was a whole table full of us [my family], and there was a bowl of potatoes and she [my mother] brought it and put it on there, and that was it (INT 9).

At times, the impetus for gardening and canning seemed to have traces of fear from the past. When asked if canning was a valuable skill to have nowadays, one lady remarked,

> Oh well, let's put it this way, those that don't know how to can and are instant buyers are gonna starve to death when hard times come (INT 5/6).

Often these practices were associated with gardening and canning, while cooking from scratch was the only way that food was prepared. Attitudes towards what was considered waste, and a strong aversion to wasting food, were evidenced in almost every interview of the parent generation. The idea that food should never, under any circumstances, be wasted or thrown away, created part of the impetus for canning, but also for cooking things like soups and stews because they tend to require the use of left-over ingredients.

> Well, I used to do 350 jars of stuff [canning] every year. And that got us through. I made a lot of meals from nothing. But I always had a good supply in my pantry. I used to make whole wheat bread and I would save all my potato water and all my vegetable water all week and I'd throw it into bread so that I got some nutrition in there for them [my children] (INT 8).

> I am not one to throw away; I will not throw it [food] away (INT 7).

Stories of thriftiness, simple and inexpensive cleaning tricks, ways to make the meat last for several meals, and savvy shopping skills were woven throughout many of the interviews.

> My aunt said that my grandma used to do anything and everything to make sure her five kids were fed, and my mom told me this, actually, when grandma would go down to the pantry to get a jar of peaches, she would take a quarter down and put it in the jar so by the time the next summer came, the money to buy the stuff for preserving was there. She didn't have to try and find it. And that would be like me: that would be something I would do (INT 8).

Finally, an acute sense of the paucity in the past and a strong connection to their heritage, their families, and past social milieu demonstrated the deep and lasting impact of their childhood and young adult years.

> Like somebody said the other day "We need a war," and I think, "No, we don't." But war does change things, you know, how you have to think on your feet to survive. You think that's how our parents grew up, both parents and grandparents came through two really ugly wars, so I think maybe that rubs off on you, too: your history, your family history (INT 9).

There is evidence of the many different elements (bodies, tools, infrastructure, social meanings etc.) but the motivational memory demonstrated here is significant and, I would argue, defining. It is also interesting to note that the motivation neither hinges on production nor consumption per se (as many sociological explorations of food do), but rather on a collective, shared, and poignant experience from the past. Schatzki (2010) notes that what people do has a history and a setting – to show that doings are future-oriented and both aspects are united in the moment of performance. This unification of past and future in current performances of gardening, cooking, and canning are exemplified well with this observation.

Normative Expectations: "That's just what we did"

The second condition (participants' normative expectations) logically follows and is inherently linked to the first. The socio-cultural and economic landscape (including the prevalence of scarcity in many of their lives) profoundly shaped how they were expected to procure, prepare, and preserve their food. This is not part of a practice in and of itself, but rather represents part of the framework or landscape for how certain practices emerged and evolved and the lasting implications this had on many of these women. In her work on sustainable consumption, Shove (2003) asks how technologies and technical systems relate to the transformation of shared expectations, norms, and practices in environmentally sensitive domains, while arguing that prior structuring of users' expectations has a significant role to play in how certain innovations take root, or what is deemed 'normal practice'. The same might be said for certain food practices: we can look at how collective expectation shaped what was considered to be "normal practice" with food. Some of the socio-technical and economic regimes and landscapes for these women that shaped their practice included the following: severely restricted access to prepared and processed food; a limited income; rural locality; plots of land for gardens; an abundance of readily available knowledge and mentorship from family members; ease of access to canning equipment and storage; and an economy recovering from war. For most of the women in the parent generation, having a garden, canning one's harvest, and cooking meals from scratch on a daily basis were essentially a given. Most of them had seen it modeled in their parents and grandparents, in addition to their own experiences of food scarcity, and for them there was no other way.

> Well, my generation, gardening was a bigger thing. And you know, you had your property and your house, and then in your backyard you had your garden, you know, so that's what I grew up with (INT 4).

> I remember my great grandfather and mom grew a garden. 'You don't have land and not plant it', was his attitude. I grew up seeing food growing and…what you couldn't grow you'd have to buy and preserve it because winter is long (INT 9).

> My mother and my grandmother always canned, my aunts, uncles, everything (INT5/6).

> I did a lot more canning when I was first married because it seemed the thing to do (INT 11).

As a result of these particular socio-technical and economic landscapes, there also came a unique sense of pride and satisfaction that was attached to being 'self-sufficient', which also perhaps perpetuated the desire to perform certain practices (e.g. having the largest tomatoes, pumpkins; preparing the best 'dills'; producing the most potatoes, onions, etc.; or always bringing the best pie to a community potluck event).

> Everybody in the community gardened, so if you didn't garden, you were the odd one. And I think sort of because everybody else did it too. [It] made you feel, well, ok, "I grew this" and you could brag. Bragging rights. "Well I grew bigger tomatoes than you!" One year I had thirty-six tomato plants and we were hauling them out by the wheelbarrow (INT 11).

One daughter observed her parent's behaviour and attitudes toward food preservation,

> I think they [my parents] canned because it was something that they learned from their parents and they felt that it was something that was important and needed to be done (INT 16).

The collective expectations were actualized, in part, by the influence of particular socio-cultural, socio-technical and economic landscapes, and strongly shaped by motivational memory. By acknowledging the existence and influence of certain normative expectations that were placed on these women (living off the land,

canning, being self-sufficient) and how those expectations manifested themselves (large gardens, cooking from scratch, taking pride in your harvest), we can see how inherently linked motivational memory and normative expectations really are. According to Shove (2012), this is how practices are able to persist.

The strong presence and influence of family

A close connection to family members and strong communities of practice serve to support the notion that practices require "changing populations of more or less faithful carriers or practitioners" (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson 2012: 63) and that these communities and social networks among carriers act as crucibles in which practices are changed, re-produced, and transformed, as containers that limit their diffusion and as conduits through which they flow (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). Without these relationships and social networks, many of the women may not be as actively gardening, cooking, and canning as they are today.

When asked about their memories, traditions, and habits around their food knowledge, both now and in the past, almost all participants had stories that inherently linked close familial relationships and positive experiences to the creation and perpetuation of their food practices. The desire to garden, cook, and can was fostered, in part, by the presence of a strong and influential 'food role model' in the family. The conditions needed to create, sustain, and extend not only the technical skills, but the appreciation and enduring desire for fresh, homemade, inexpensive, and unprocessed food were often created in the context of the home, together with a particular family member. For example,

> I first learned [to bake] from my aunt when I was 12. My mom never had time and never wanted to teach us, so my aunty did and anytime there was any kind of baking in my house it was because I made it. My whole

> family loved it, so I was like "well everybody likes it" so that makes you want to make more and more cuz [sic] everybody loves it. So I think that's probably why I got into it (INT 3).

> My oldest daughter…learned to cook mostly from her grandmother or [from] spending time with her grandmother. So she came home and said, "Let's make jam: I want to learn to make jam." So we made jam together. And so there's been a few things that we've made together that, now that she's older, she's had more of an interest in it (INT 4).

Two women (a mother and daughter), as they proudly displayed their four hundred plus jars of canned goods, boasted that they now have four generations of canners in their family. The mother has lived with her daughter for the latter portion of her life and the connection between them was both obvious and strong.

> Both of our granddaughters will help. Even our grandson, he's only ten, this last time Simon was peeling carrots and just lovin' it…so it's like a family thing. And then my husband will come home from work and he's in there like a dirty shirt…*we can as a family* (INT 5/6).

Two research participants, who are sisters, moved to Stony Plain from England over thirty years ago, but both fondly recall instances where special relationships were built with their grandfather over food.

> He [my grandfather] was always very easy to be around, I was very close to him…but you know if he was in the garden, I was in the garden with him. We'd come in and he'd make a pot of soup or something and it was always really good soup, and I'm thinking that's probably why I enjoy it to this day (INT 10).

When speaking about why she chose to do so much baking around Christmas time, one participant noted,

> Well, it's not for eating, it's for making something special and for keeping up Austrian traditions. It's something that you're proud of that you feel it's important to do that, and pass along because it's pride in your heritage and then because it makes you think of your parents. And it's also, especially the baking with my daughter, it's something that we would do together and it's just a bonding thing, and you have some wine and you make some cookies: it's just a good social thing, to pass on the

> tradition to the kids and the pride and the heritage. That has a lot to do with it (INT 14).

A well-spoken and articulate daughter of one of the interviewees describes food habits and practices as a connection to home,

> I think it's just different things that you learn how to make or just different traditions you have. If it's just how you celebrate Christmas or how you celebrate your birthday, what you cook for dinner, I think it's just things that you learn from your parents and then, it just becomes so natural, I think you just tend to do that yourself… it gives you that sense of home (INT 15).

These heterogeneous elements – bodies, tools, infrastructure, technical know-how, and social symbolism – are linked and culminate to influence and form the practices around traditional food knowledge. What is noteworthy here is the prominence of the familial relationships and the social and symbolic significance that it plays in contributing to the furthering of certain food practices.

Food knowledge and communities of practice

After participating in a few community events and being able to observe the interactions among the research participants in a larger social setting, it became obvious that the close social networks and the larger Stony Plain community were important nurturers and preservers of food knowledge. At one of the Women's Institute meetings, a large part of the evening was spent discussing thrifty and efficient ways of providing food for the local Christmas Craft fundraising bazaar that was being put on by the group. Some of the ladies also volunteered for the Multicultural Heritage Center's childrens' programs where grade four and five students were taught how to use local fruit (crab apples) to make jams, jellies, and butters. Several of the ladies volunteered at the local community soup kitchen wherein they would use their food preparation skills to make wholesome, nutritious meals for community members once a

week. The local Stony Plain Farmer's Market was also a place where some of the participants prepared and sold their baking and canning to members of the community, and their products were well recognized within the particular social circles of these women.

Besides these shared, larger community endeavours, many of the women talked of other social networks, friendships, religious groups, and community connections that augmented their abilities and desires to garden, cook, and can, both now and in the past. In fact, it became very difficult to speak of food without also speaking about relationships in any discussion that was had.

> I just heard recently somebody planted celery in this area and has done really well with having celery, so I think I'm going to plant celery next year. It's, you know, people that are around me that know how to garden, and have been gardening a long time – I'll just ask them questions (INT 4).

> Because of our religious group they would have, women would get together and learn basic skills of homemaking…that's where some of my gardening and my cooking and my canning skills would also come from, where we would gather together and learn some of these skills from other people (INT 4).

> We used to have a baking day before Christmas when a bunch of ladies would bake each of their favourite Christmas cookies. It was like a big bake day, everybody would bring their own ingredients for their thing and at the end of the day we would divide it all up (INT 8).

> We have close knit friends, they would always want recipes from me or they would come and celebrate the same kinds of things or take over our traditions. I think it has two effects: you either integrate things from that kitchen or from that household or from that tradition but also you become more aware of your own and you want to kind of show your traditions (INT 13).

This was carried through to some of the children, who recognized and relied on social bonds for some of their food practices.

> People come together around food and people like to kind of experiment and do different dishes or whichever else and you have a good dish and people like to know how to cook that so it brings people together as well.

> I don't know, I think that knowing how to cook or at least being willing to kind of experiment has a profound level of knowledge (INT 14).

As noted earlier, Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012) propose that the contours of any one practice depend on changing populations of more or less faithful carriers or practitioners. There are many reasons why individuals end up carrying specific practices and an important reason that emerged from this research was participation in a community of practice, where there is a voluntary desire to share information, supplies, and knowledge among like-minded individuals (Wenger 1999). Communities of practice are "groups of people informally bounded together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise" that "share their experiences and knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems" (Wenger & Synder, 2000: 139-140). In arguing that "practices are…the property of a kind of community created over time, by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise" (Wenger 1999 p. 45), Wenger arrives at the conclusion that community and practice constitute one another. Not all sharing of information and materials were to solve specific or acute large-scale problems, but were to help "solve" smaller and more ordinary dilemma's like: how to make celery grow; how to improve one's homemaking skills; or to make up for a shortfall in canning ingredients. These activities may seem inconsequential, but they all contribute to the continuation and habitual performance of traditional food knowledge in this community.

Conclusion

Undeniable changes have occurred in agriculture and agri-food industry over the last five decades. Rural populations have been the most severely affected by these changes, particularly when it comes to deskilling and

knowledge loss. Concern over deskilling is not just limited to rural communities; it is a growing concern among academics, practitioners, and the general public alike (Meah & Watson 2006; Novek 2003, Epp & Whitson 2001; Jaffe & Gertler 2006). The purpose of this research was to investigate some of these concerns by understanding the factors involved in perpetuating traditional food knowledge and its associated practices in a rural community despite significant barriers and changes in the food system. To do this I used a social practice theory framework, which, I argue, is a unique and under-utilized approach in studying the sociology of food. By situating this research within a social practice theory framework, I attempted to overcome the oft-used dichotomies of 'producer' vs 'consumer' to understand traditional food knowledge as a series of recursive social practices. Social theories like the one used in this analysis do not lead directly to prescriptions for action; however, they do allow for a particular way of understanding the world. This understanding is relevant because it presents a new approach to how policy agendas and problems are defined and framed, subsequently affecting how different kinds of intervention are deemed possible, plausible and worthwhile. For example, policy-making is typically informed by concepts from economics and psychology (e.g. theories of planned behaviour, models of rational economic action), but often untouched by developments in sociological theory (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012).

If we are to take seriously the recommendations from environmental social scientists seeking ways to develop and foster more pro-environmental behaviour (Spaargaren 2012; Ropke 2009; Shove 2003; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012; Warde 2005) taking a practice-based approach to studying food may be a helpful analytic. More specifically, looking at some of the defining 'elements' and

how they are linked to other defining 'elements' of a practice enables us to give a more convincing account of change and order. It also presents ways of describing and analyzing processes while accounting for more faithful, more consistent forms of reproduction (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012). An attempt has been made to do this through looking at the links between motivational memory and the normative expectations that existed when many of these women learned to cook, garden, and can. In addition to these cornerstone elements, we can also see how other elements – the technical know-how and skill; the objects and infrastructure (land, equipment, mentors); and the social and symbolic meaning (taking care of one another, pride, self-sufficiency) – come together to ensure and extend practices of gardening, cooking, and canning in a rural community. This may not translate directly into policy action, but it does highlight the importance of all three elements of a practice needing to be linked together to ensure that the practice is sustained.

If we are to look beyond the consumer vs. producer debate in the sociology of food, it is perhaps a fruitful exploration to understand how practices recruit and maintain other practitioners vis-à-vis communities of practice. In the research done here, it is perhaps most striking that significant familial relationships, friendships, and community networks served as important pieces in the creation and retention of practitioners who desire to garden, cook, and can. It is very difficult to talk about food, and all of its myriad components, without also speaking of relationships as well.

This research indicates that it is important to look beyond the market and the simple categories of production and consumption. Rather, it is useful to look a little further: at the home or community; how people/communities base

relationships (and subsequent skills) around food; how stories, experiences, and knowledge might be realized, shared, and then utilized to recruit practitioners into the practice. It may also involve looking at what current normative expectations are for food practices, how they were formed, and how they might be used to modify, re-make, or eradicate other practices. Rural communities in particular often have rich agricultural histories that may serve as a starting point for rekindling interest in traditional food practices or serve as a connecting point between past activities and present. Organizations like the Multicultural Heritage Center, for example, have programs like elementary school guided field trips to surrounding community farms, 'Back to Basics' days, a Farmer Appreciation Festival, and increasing numbers of gardening programs. They use the older generation of local people to teach, share, and inform the younger generation of community members. As Shove, Pantzar, & Watson (2012) point out, practices die out if links between their defining elements are broken, or if communities cannot recruit or maintain practitioners. This research shows that there are strong links between elements in the varying food practices and a strong community that sustains and reproduces those practices today. Important consideration must be given to the memories, stories, relationships, and traditions that mould and define food practices both now and in the future as food activists and scholars continue in their quest of creating more just and sustainable food systems for the future.

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Chapter Three

Making and Breaking of Food Preservation Practices in a Rural Albertan Community

Abstract: Amidst growing concerns over nutrition, food safety, the cost of a healthy diet, and the relationship between health and environment, anxiety about the impoverished state of domestic cooking and the general deskilling around food-related activities has garnered significant public interest and academic inquiry in the last decade. Mainstream agriculture commodity and retail food chains are failing to meet the concerns citizens are expressing about their food. This has contributed to a relearning of food related skills of procuring, preparing, and preserving food in and outside of the home. This return to more sustainable forms of food consumption is of great interest to sustainable consumption academics and environmental policymakers alike. This qualitative study looks at the practice of home preserving in a rural Albertan community through a social practice theory framework. I test two premises set out by Shove, Pantzar & Watson (2012): first, social practices consist of three elements (materials, competencies, and meanings) that are integrated when practices are enacted; second, that practices emerge, persist, and disappear as links among these defining elements are made and broken. Using the data collected from the research project I demonstrate how the integration of the requisite elements enabled canning as a practice to flourish during a certain time period. Conversely, I then explore how the disintegration of the elements contributed to the decline of the same practice in later years. By examining the connections and breakages in the links between materials, meanings, and competencies within the practice of canning I illustrate the essentiality of integration of elements in order for practices to exist.

Key Words: home preservation; social practice theory; deskilling; integration; sustainable food consumption; rural; Alberta; Canada

Introduction

Amidst growing concerns over nutrition, food safety, the cost of a healthy diet, and the relationship between health and environment, anxiety about the impoverished state of domestic cooking and the general deskilling around food-related activities has garnered significant public interest and academic inquiry in the last decade (Meah & Watson 2011; Griffith & Wallace 1998). Moreover, mainstream agricultural commodity and retail foods markets, and existing government programs are failing to meet the socio-economic and environmental

food concerns of citizens, while there continues to be a growing sense that procuring and preparing the freshest, healthiest, most sustainably sourced food should be a top priority among white, middle- class, educated peoples from the global North (Hayes 2010; Pollan 2008; 2013; Delind 2006). Food security, both domestic and overseas, also continues to be a source of distress as climate change, increasing debt, income disparity, and political instability threaten to topple the already precarious global food system (Urry 2011).

A response to these and other food-related concerns is a return to food-related skills: in the garden, the kitchen, and the cannery, as more and more people are attempting to take control over their food (Wittman, Beckie & Hergensheimer; Click & Ridberg 2010; DeLind 2006). Local food solutions (farmer's markets, community gardens, community supported agriculture schemes, organics, and local food restaurants) along with a relearning of traditional food skills (gardening, cooking from scratch, canning) are ways in which people and communities are trying to re-create and rebuild resiliency in the wake of the current food system. The sustainable production and consumption of food is becoming an important policy and environmental governance agenda item as well (Spaargaren 2011).

Scholarly research has focused mainly on the production (feasibility of more sustainably grown food products) and distribution networks (farmer's markets etc. – Wittman et al 2011), consumption (motivations for participation in the alternative food movement – Kerton & Sinclair 2010), and public health (nutrition, obesity, food scares and risk – Desjardins, 2013). Studies on deskilling have mostly been around domestic cooking and cooking from scratch, but have

not tended to focus on other food related skills like home preserving or gardening (Click & Ridberg 2010).

This paper focuses on canning as a social practice integral to food skills that can support food security in peri-urban and rural Canada. As Click and Ridberg (2010) note, very little has been written about food preservation in the social sciences. Scholarly work has tended to focus on studies that are primarily instructive, but not evaluative. Two major contributions to the social science literature are Shepherd's (2000) examination of the global impact of new developments in food preservation and Bentley's (1998) examination of the gender politics of the United States' food rationing campaigns during WWII. These works both demonstrate the cultural impact of food preservation, but the lack of contemporary studies on food preservation suggests there is more work to be done, especially given the resurgence and interest in this skill.

The renewed interest and desire to participate in home canning activities is part of a larger trend related to distrust of the global agri-food system and a desire to source and produce more sustainable and healthy food products. These types of activities are of great interest to environmental governance planners and sustainable consumption academics who are continually striving to understand how ordinary people understand, perceive, evaluate, and manage the connections between their lifestyle and routine practices (consumption) on one hand, and global environmental change on the other.

Elizabeth Shove (2003; 2012) and other social practice theory scholars (Warde 2005; Spaargaren 2011) are leading the way in what has been deemed the "practice turn in contemporary theory" by examining its connection to sustainable consumption. Food is a fundamental and crucial element of

consumption and the decline of knowledge and skills related to production, preservation, and cooking practices among the general public is worthy of further investigation. Much sociological research to date (see Domaneschi 2012 and Truninger 2011 as an exception) has not utilized a practice theory approach to understand behavioural change in food practices. Practice-based approaches attempt to overcome the dichotomy of producer and consumer that is often presented in the sociological study of food movements.

In this paper I examine the social practice of canning among women in a rural Albertan community. The older generation of participants in the study did not identify as being part of the alternative food movement nor is their canning a part of a type of food activism. Rather, they began canning in their childhood and young adult lives and have continued through to today. In this study I intend to test Shove et al's (2012) elemental practice theory: that social practices consist of three elements (materials, competencies, and meanings) that need to be integrated for practices to be enacted, and that practices emerge, persist, and disappear as links among these defining elements are made and broken. In this research I demonstrate that canning, like other practices, depends on a specific combination and integration of materials, competence, and meanings, and continues to evolve as these ingredients change. Using a social practice framework for analysis, this research generates novel insights about sustainable consumption of food. If, as Warde (2005) suggests, the "source of changed behaviour lies in the development of practices" (2005 p. 140) then understanding their emergence, persistence, and disappearance of the links across practices is of the essence.

In the following sections I provide a literature review focusing on social practice theory and an explanation of the relevant concepts (elements, materials, meanings, and competency) to my study. Next I lay out the details of the research location and data collection strategies. In my findings, I present the ways in which canning as a practice, was able to flourish, and then why it has declined, by using a social practice theory elemental analysis. A discussion about the usefulness and contributions of a practice theory approach and elemental analysis in the sustainable consumption of food concludes the paper.

Literature Review

Social Practice Theory

Social practice theory departs from traditional accounts that tend to primarily emphasize social norms, structure, or agency as the problem, but instead understands the world as constructed and ordered by social practices (Johnston & Szabo, 2011). 'Why do people do what they do?' and 'how do they do those things in the way they do?' are the key sociological questions concerning practices. The principal implication of a theory of practice is that the sources of changed behaviour lie in the development of practices themselves (Warde, 2005).

Generally understood, in the words of Reckwitz (2002),

> A practice is thus a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood. To say that practices are 'social practices' is indeed a tautology: A practice is social, as it is a 'type' of behaving and understanding that appears at different locales and at different points of time and is carried out by different body/minds (2002, p. 250).

It is neither individual behaviour nor societal structures that exclusively affect behaviours, but rather everyday practices like cooking, driving, washing, shopping or playing. As Giddens (1984) observes:

> [The] basic domain of study of the social sciences ... is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time. (1984, p.140)

In turn, the performance of numerous social practices is seen as part of "the routine accomplishment of what people take to be 'normal' ways of life" (Shove, 2004, p. 117). Practices are the source and carrier of meaning, language, and normativity (Schatzki 2001). As Reckwitz (2002) argues, wants and emotions do not belong to individuals but – in the form of knowledge – to practices. Social life is a series of recursive practices "reproduced by knowledgeable and capable agents who are drawing upon sets of virtual rules and resources which are connected to situated social practices" (Spargaaren 2011, p.815). In this view, attention is diverted away from individual decision making towards the 'doing' of different social practices and the types of consumption they entail (Hargreaves 2011). Importantly, practice theory emphasizes that it is through these engagements with practices that individuals come to understand the world around them and to develop a more or less coherent sense of self (Warde, 2005).

Further, Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012), contend that social practices consist of elements that are integrated when practices are enacted. These three elements include: materials, competencies, and meaning. Practices emerge, persist, and disappear as links between their defining elements are made and broken. In Reckwitz's (2002) terms, the elements of a practice – those of which a 'block' is made – are linked in and through integrative moments of practice-as-

performance. They argue that by paying attention to the trajectories of elements, and to the making and breaking of links between them, it is possible to describe and analyze change and stability without prioritizing either agency or structure. This approach to visualizing practices is by no means entirely comprehensive, but it does give us the tools to start critically and thoughtfully analyzing 'what is going on' (Warde, 2005) and how changed behaviours emerge.

The first of the three elements, as articulated by Reckwitz (2002), Schatzki (2002), Ropke (2009), and finally Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012) is understood as things or 'materials'.

Materials encompass things like objects, infrastructures, tools, hardware, and the body itself. Ropke (2009) notes practice theorists agree that materials should be treated as elements of practice because, according to Schatzki (2002) practices are "intrinsically connected to and interwoven with objects" (2002 p. 106).

Know-how, background knowledge and understanding are crucial whether in the form of practical consciousness (Giddens 1984), a deliberately cultivated skill, or more abstractly, as shared understandings of good or appropriate performance in terms of which specific enactments are judged (Shove, Pantzar, Watson 2012). For the purposes of this analysis, the ideas are lumped together to encompass multiple forms of understanding and practical knowledgeability and are referred to as 'competence', the second element of a practice.

The third element of any given practice is understood as 'meaning'. This includes mental activities, purposes, beliefs, emotions, moods and motivational knowledge representing the symbolic significance of participation in a practice at

any one moment. For example, the elements of meaning when driving a car have been associated with Westernization, youth, masculinity, social class, and rebellion, all of which are defined and constituted through their participation in the practice of driving.

The main premise of this research is that practices exist when elements are integrated, and that practices disintegrate when links among elements are broken. Through an analysis of the social practice of canning, I demonstrate what can be gained by analyzing the persistence and eventual disappearance of practices with reference to the changing relationships between the elements of which they are composed. To illustrate the importance of linkages between elements, let's look at the example of preparing and partaking in a traditional Thanksgiving meal (that includes specific food dishes particular to a family or culture). Participating in this implies that one has the proper equipment to prepare the meal and physical ability to do so (the materials); it will require some technical skills and know-how to cook the food properly and make things taste delicious (the competencies); and it will also entail the motivational knowledge, social and symbolic significance of eating particular foods with particular people (the meaning). These meanings and emotions could be about evoking the memory of traditions past, or the desire to sustain family bonds and identity, or to ensure certain serving and dining practices are reflected and normalized within the family unit (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). If any one of these elements does not exist or changes substantially (no knowledge of how to properly cook a turkey; food allergy to cranberry sauce; death of grandparents who ensured the tradition continued) the practice of eating a Thanksgiving meal will be changed.

Research Location

This research took place in Stony Plain, Alberta (see figure 2.1). Despite its close proximity to Edmonton (population 1,230,000) (Statistics Canada 2013) Alberta's Capital City, Stony Plain prides itself on its "small town atmosphere" with deep cultural and agricultural roots, evidenced by the town's heritage organizations, festivals, murals, and community events (Town of Stony Plain, 2013). It has a well-established community organization called the Heritage Agricultural Society and a corresponding Multicultural Heritage Center (MHC) that serves as a museum and local archive and runs a myriad of programs in the community, many of which have an agricultural or food focus. Another organization, the Stony Plain Women's Institute, is committed to community service and "raising the level of homemaking to the highest possible level" (Plum Coulee Women's Institute 1966 p. 2). The Institute and the MHC served as referral agencies for this research, providing lists of potential participants for this research from their membership.

Figure 2.1. Map of Alberta

Methods

This research was exploratory and utilized the following qualitative research methods to gather data: in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus group and participant observation.

The primary source of data came from in-depth, semi-structured interviews (n= 15), conducted face-to-face in participants' homes. Ten interviewees were selected from the parent generation (ages 50 – 70) and five were children (ages 30 – 40) of the older generation. Participants selected from the parent generation were either currently practicing seasonal canning or had done so within the last ten years and were residents of Stony Plain or surrounding communities, including Edmonton. The children's generation did not need to be actively canning because the research looked at how practices

were sustained or broken inter-generationally. The participants were predominantly female, with the exception of one male from the younger generation. All participants were Caucasian of Western European descent. Interviews were digitally recorded, ranged from 60 to 90 minutes in length, and were semi-structured, using a question guide, but interviewees were asked to include any information on any topic they felt was relevant to the research. The interviews were structured in three parts, beginning with open-ended questions about their gardening skills, practices, and traditions; section two asked participants about their cooking skills, practices, and traditions; and section three followed the same format of the previous two sections, except it focused on canning. While the focus of this research is specifically on canning, the canning component of the interview was part of a larger study examining all three practices.

A focus group was held in Stony Plain after the completion of the interviews. Six participants from the research project were able to participate in the group. They were selected based on availability and their contributions during the original interview. Questions explored during the focus group were based on preliminary analysis of the interview data, along with the researcher's notes and observations. The intent of the focus group was to explore themes stemming from this data in more depth, as part of a discussion among participants. The focus group was digitally recorded.

The research also involved spending time in the community and going to community events (e.g., annual Valentine's Day Tea, Stony Plain farmers' market, Women's Institute meeting). After participation in these events, I made

numerous journal entries that documented my observations, questions, and insights from the experience.

QSR NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program, was used to code and analyze approximately 345 pages of data in search of themes, patterns, and insights. Themes derived from the literature were used to help sort and code the data as well.

Findings

Similar to other practices, canning is shaped by three interrelated elements: materials, meanings, and competencies. In the following sections, I examine how canning has evolved as these elements and the connections among them have changed, from one generation to the next. I do this not to provide a detailed or coherent history of canning, but to demonstrate how examining social practices have evolved among a group of individuals situated within a particular social and cultural context.

Canning: Making Links

There is no doubt that drastic changes have occurred in North American home preservation habits, food consumption practices and women's participation in the labour force during the last sixty years. Technology, industrialization, and historical events have impacted home food practices. These explanations provide an important, but broad analysis of how the practice of canning has changed. It does not, however, account for why canning was able to flourish for a certain period of time, or what links current canning practice has to the past. My research suggests that a focus on the social practice of canning itself and all of the inter-related elements therein, and not just the broad structural components that have affected it, provides a different, more nuanced

picture. Of utmost importance in this work is the idea that social practices are not comprised of individual components but require a synthesis of elements to be sustained. A key contribution of this work is that social practices and problems related to sustainable consumption might best be understood as integrated problems, or bundles of practices that are composed of different but related parts.

From a social practice framework, canning can be viewed as an outcome of its elements and resulting linkages among the older research participants when they were teenagers and young adults growing up in a rural community between the 1940s and the 1970s.

Gardening, Canning, and Waste: How we take care of our family

Many elements of canning during the time when participants were in their childhood and early adult years were inherently linked to the practice of gardening. The only way a person was able to can was if she were also able to grow the food. A large proportion of the women, especially during their childhood and young adult years, lived on very limited incomes and consequently had limited access to store-bought food. Living in a rural community, gardening and canning were inextricably linked with one another, often as an economic necessity.

> My mom and dad always had a garden. In fact, I don't remember them ever not having a garden…when I was growing up that was the thing – and then you canned when it came the harvest time.
>
> *-Multicultural Heritage Center employee, active gardener and canner*

> Necessity, survival, because you had to, that's why I gardened. There wasn't a lot of money.
>
> *-Retired farmwoman, retired canner*

> I grew up seeing food growing and you know, what you can't grow you had to buy from as local a place as possible, and then preserve it because winter was long.
>
> *-Home preserves business owner/operator, mother*

Having homegrown garden produce was an essential material element for canning. Similarly, having the land or space to plant a garden was a crucial material aspect. Most research participants either lived on farms or in the Town, with significant land for garden plots. "You didn't have land and not plant it" was a comment made by one woman who, despite her advanced age, still actively gardens and cans for her family and also volunteers teaching children to make jams and jellies with fruit picked from trees in the community.

Connected to the notion that growing one's own garden was important for survival, was the marked aversion many participants had to wasting food. This attitude and associated behaviours primarily stemmed from early experiences during childhood and young adulthood that were marked by limited financial resources and access to store-bought food items. Food was never wasted because it was often scarce. This equates with what Reckwitz (2002) calls "motivational knowledge" and represents the profound social and symbolic significance of the experiences many participants had. These memories and experiences of scarcity played a significant role in shaping the motivation of these women to can. Not using all of the food you produced was simply not an option, because survival literally depended on it.

> You'd have a hard time because you experienced poverty, you'd have a hard time seeing waste, throwing things out, a hard time not finishing your plate.
>
> *-Retired farmwoman, retired canner*

> If our jams and jellies don't turn out, I said "no we don't have to redo them" because its good on pancakes, ice cream, waffles, depending on what

> it is, you can glaze a ham with it. You know, there's multiple -- everything we make has multi-use.
> *-Retired homemaker and mother, avid canner*

> I am not one to throw away; I will not throw food away.
> *-Home daycare owner, mother, active gardener*

Now we can begin to piece together these *materials* and motivational forms of *meanings* and how they link to the *competency* of these women and their ability to can. These women all possessed the technical knowledge and ability to preserve fruits and vegetables, and some were experienced in canning meat. One mother and daughter who lived (as well as canned) together, described the range of foods they canned:

> Everything. Jams, jellies…apple juice, crab apple juice, apple butter, canned coleslaw, stewed tomatoes, salsa…saskatoons, zucchini relish, bread and butter pickles, dill pickles, sweet n' sour chokes, beet relish, beet jelly…My mom used to can potatoes, and she used to can lettuce.

It was obvious there was an implicit understanding of why canning was an essential practice. This understanding, according to Shove et al (2012), falls under the broader elemental category of 'competency' because it is not enough to just have the skills to be able to do something, there is a combination of understanding and practical knowledge that exists in order for a practice to flourish. Again, the understanding described here is directly related to the economic circumstances and material conditions that many of these women faced. It was understood that canning was necessary in order to survive the winter and to have access to homegrown produce and enjoy its taste.

> Basically we lived on an extremely limited income, so canning was the best way, the only way to preserve food, so, when it was plentiful enough, in the spring, summer, and fall, we canned up everything we could and that helped get us through the winters.
> *-Homemaker, avid canner*

> I mean we were four children and then much later there was a fifth, so, she [my mother] didn't have a lot and she canned and I did the same thing. You know, you knew how many jars of each thing you had, you knew how many meals you were gonna have and that's how it was calculated.
> *-Home preserves business owner*

> So you would use what you had in your garden and can it, so in the winter you had something that's home grown and that you didn't have to go buy. So it was a real necessity and just also tradition, my mom canned things, so I did too.
> *-Daughter, avid canner*

Surviving the winter and ensuring the health and wellness of their families all link to a greater sense of duty and responsibility many of the participants felt. The symbolic significance of having shelves full of canned goods was a symbol of provision and care, and carried great meaning for them.

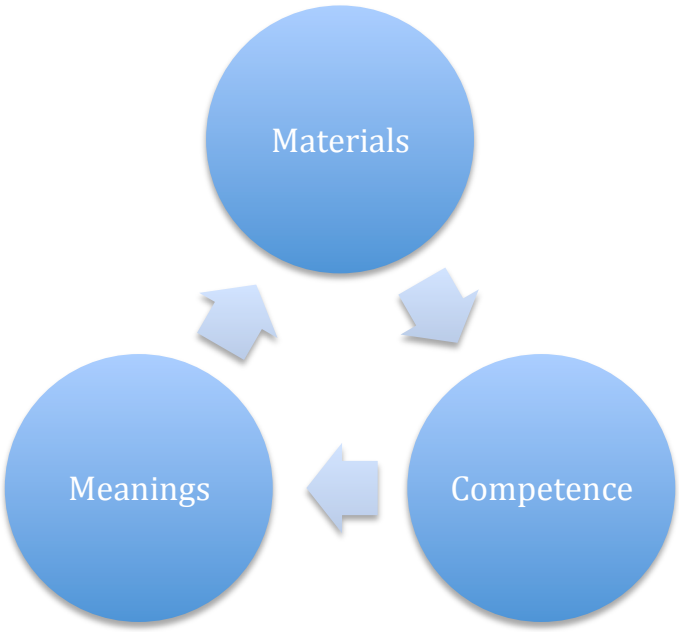
> You know there's a certain degree of satisfaction seeing my jars all lined up and they've all popped. I can go through them and I can say "I did that" and then I think "now I have food for my family"…it doesn't matter what happens, I can go and reach for that [food] and my family's got something to eat.
> *-Multicultural Heritage Center employee, mother*

One lady referred to herself as "Super Mom" to describe all the things she felt she needed to do for her kids as they were growing up.

> Well I used to do 350 jars of stuff [canning] every year. And that got us through. I made a lot of meals from nothing. But I always had a good supply in my pantry. I used to make whole wheat bread and I would save all my potato water and all my vegetable water all week and I'd throw it in bread so that I got some nutrition in there for them [the children].
> *-Retired X-ray technician, mother*

Having access to land and garden produce played an important part in creating and continuing the social practice of canning, but it is not just the materials alone that were needed to perpetuate the practice; understanding the meaning and motivation behind having a garden and how that garden produce was to be used are equally as important pieces.

Materials: garden produce to can, land to grow a garden, canning equipment (jars, canner, lids), government support (cookbooks, Department of Home Economics), time, selective access to food, limited budget



Meaning: attitudes about how one uses their land, normative expectation of participation, seen as duty to take care of and provide for your family, connection to your ancestors, provision for the winter, strong desire to not waste any food

Competence: technical know how of how to produce food to can, skills to can a variety of different food products, readily available sources of information (people, cookbooks), understanding its necessity for survival

Figure 2.2 Elements of Canning among Parent Generation

Canning and Community: Accessible information, knowledge, and support

Another set of materials, meanings, and competencies related to the parent generation of canners (those aged 60+) is the ways in which knowledge and information sharing fostered canning. During the 1930s all the way up until

approximately the 1980s there was a significant amount of government infrastructure and support for home gardeners and preservers (Glenbow Museum Archives, 2013). Several of the research participants spoke of the various canning books, magazine articles, and other assorted resources provided to them, for no cost, from both the federal and provincial department of agriculture. Additionally, the presence of the Alberta Home Economics Association, a part of the nearby University of Alberta, also existed to be a source of information and conduit for information sharing among home gardeners and preservers.

Several women spoke of receiving cooking and canning books as well as information pamphlets in exchange for coupons provided by the federal department of agriculture. The only cost was the price of the postage. Yellowed with age, dog-eared, and littered with handwritten notes, they proudly showed me that they still use them today. One retired farmwoman spoke of the presence of the local "district home economists" and "district agriculturists" (both provincial employees) that used to be located right in the town of Stony Plain.

> They let you know whether there are courses, they could teach you if there was anything to know about canning or gardening, or if there was some disease on a plant - they could find out for us. You could just go to the office and they could give you all that kind of information because they had the background to go and find it out.

These materials – tools (information pamphlets, books), bodies (district home economists), and infrastructure (government systems to support homemaking) – existed when these women were at the height of their canning activity. One might argue that it is not difficult to access this information currently, given the existence of the Internet, however, what has been gained in volume (information) has been lost in specificity and intuition. For these women

of the older generation, however, information gathering and sharing occurred solely through the use of physical objects and relationships and social networks.

The link between social and physical infrastructure and the ability to can (and all the requisite skills therein) is fairly evident. It carries a strong relation to the previous discussion of the motivational features and associated meanings tied to canning – those that include not wanting to waste food for fear of throwing away needed and difficult to access calories, which was ultimately tied up in how you took care of your family and your duty to do so. Prolific access to knowledge and information, readily accessible tools and infrastructure, and strong motivational and symbolic meanings make it easy to see how the social practice of canning was able to flourish during the time when many of the parent generation research participants were young.

This then begs the question: what has changed? Why has the practice of home canning declined so significantly since its peak in the 1950s (Bentley 1998)? Previous research points to changes in technology, including the introduction of the freezer (Shove, 2003), the breakdown of traditional domestic divisions of labour associated with increased labour market participation by women (Goodman & Redclift 1991), and the prevalence of increasingly imported and manufactured food (Jaffe & Gertler 2006). These factors can be traced to widespread societal changes resulting from the industrial revolution and the modernization of the food system. However, this research utilizes a social practice lens to look at changes in practice at the individual level, within a rural community context. In what follows I examine the breaks in linkages between canning's defining elements to understand, perhaps in a slightly different way, why change has occurred.

Canning: Breaking Links

It stands to reason that if we view practices as ongoing integrations of elements, we need to consider what happens when requisite connections are no longer made. Why has the practice of canning declined among the children of an avid canning generation in Stony Plain, Alberta?

Garden space, freezer space, and the demise of canning

While the availability of fresh produce has increased substantially, home production has not. As mentioned previously, an essential material element for canning was the availability of abundant garden produce. All participants from the younger generation lived in the town of Stony Plain or Edmonton, in new development houses, townhouses, or in condos, many of which did not have ample room for a garden or contained by-laws prohibiting the planting of certain types of gardens.

> I think the main issue right now specifically is people are buying up houses that have no space for a garden. Condos – no space for a garden. Green spaces are being used for condominiums that have no gardens, no yards. I think that's the main problem with being able to grow food; you have no space to do it.
> *-Multicultural Heritage Center employee, son*

When asked why others her age do not garden and can, one daughter answered,

> Unfortunately a lot does have to do with your living accommodations -- if you're living in a rented spot you can't necessarily plant a garden, not have a yard or anything like that.
> *-Healthcare receptionist, daughter*

> It's just hard in the city to have a garden.
> *-Occupational therapist, daughter*

Four of the five participants from the younger generation did not can, nor did they possess the technical capabilities to do so. Obviously this is not the sole reason that canning as a practice has disintegrated, as location choices are

evidently part of a larger rural to urban shift that has been taking place across Canada and Alberta for many decades. However, the role that material objects like access to land and garden space play in perpetuating a social practice is one that should be considered. Even basic canning equipment, up until a few years ago, was difficult to find in the surrounding area of Stony Plain.

> There for a while you couldn't buy any canning jars. Did you notice about five years ago, you couldn't even find canning jars because people would always be asking me for lids. Now you go to Walmart and you've got canning jars all over the place in fall.
> *-Retired farmer, retired canner*

Additionally, with changes in technology and living space, primarily with the widespread prevalence of the deep freeze, along with the accessibility of wholesale foods and grocery stores, other material components of canning have also been altered. This is not new or surprising, but was mentioned several times during the interviews.

> I think now it [canning] is probably not as important as it was for our parent's generation because we have things like Costco, so realistically, I can just buy a deep freeze and put fruit in the freezer. But I don't think you even have to do that anymore because we have the convenience of Costco where we can pretty much get everything all year around.
> *-Occupational Therapist, daughter*

The Decline of Government Support

And finally, the type of large-scale government endorsement of gardening and home canning, evidenced by substantial resources and infrastructure, such as government funded canning publications and "district home economists" in the community, no longer exists. The last government canning publication was released in the 1980s (Canada Canning Cookbook, 1984) and most of the government's support for home economics in rural communities disappeared then, too.

> They [the government] figured, 'cut the government agricultural funding'; they thought they were spending too much on agriculture. And actually I talked to one government official and he said, "I was instrumental in getting rid of the district home economists" and he says "that was the worst mistake I ever made".
> *-Retired farmer and community newspaper columnist*

Many of the material elements specifically available in the community no longer exist, and many of the parent generation of canners lament this loss. They also lament the loss of skills related to gardening and canning in their children's generation.

> Mostly what's changed, the younger generations, even my daughter's generation doesn't can. It's forgotten. Like, too much instant stuff.
> *- Great grandmother, avid canner*

> I think there seems to be a lot of money around now and kids don't seem to worry about what they have to spend on food. There are still farms and people still do it [canning], but as the farming community dies out, those are skills that will be gone.
> *-Retired X-Ray technician, canner and baker*

It should be noted that this elemental analysis is not linear in fashion; there is not any kind of direct, causal link between the lack of access to land and gardening plots, absence of governmental support, and the diminished capacity of people to can. The pieces I have been discussing are interconnected and mutually influencing and are part and parcel of larger trends and social practices that exist. However, what this analysis demonstrates is the utility of using elemental concepts in capturing the dynamic aspects of social practice, while also demonstrating how a systematic exploration of transformative processes and phases of stability might help us better understands change.

Canning as a practice may not have the same prevalence it once did in rural Canadian communities, but it still exists, albeit in slightly different form, and on a much reduced scale. Practices like canning depend on specific

combinations of materials, competencies, and meanings, but evolve as these ingredients change, as illustrated by this research using a social practice lens. The goal here is not to provide a comprehensive and detailed history of canning in rural Canada, but to examine how canning as a practice has evolved and transformed through looking at links between the elements. The previous section identifies how linkages were broken and how canning as a practice was destabilized. In the next section, by examining the evolution and transformation of canning, there is some elucidation as to how canning, in some ways, has remained stable.

Canning: Evolution and Transformation

Some of the physical objects and materials required for canning have not changed much over the years, however, several women still use a particular type of reusable glass lid for most of their canning that is not commonly found today. These glass lids have been passed on by their mothers and grandmothers, reused by subsequent generations.

> One lady said "you know you can't buy glass lids anymore?" And then I said, "I must have three thousand of the things". I use my glass lids and my rubbers as backup. We never got rid of the original mason lids. And now rings only last two years, but I've got ones that my mother used; they're seventy years old. As long as they're not rusty, you can still use 'em. You can't reuse these [referring to snap lids]. Like every year we throw those away and use new ones.
> -*Retired homemaker, avid canner*

When canning was done out of necessity and income was limited, buying new lids every year was not an option. Glass lids were used and reused. Now, however, glass lids are expensive and difficult to find, but disposable metal snap lids are not. These lids are specifically designed for a one-time use only. What may appear to be a minor point is indicative of a wider shift or transformation

that has happened, not only within the practice of canning, but as part of a trend of throw-away consumer culture (Schor 2010). Perhaps it could be argued that this shift is related to certain skills and competencies related to canning: knowing when a jar is sealed (with snap lids there is an audible indication that the jar has sealed, with glass lids there is no so certain conditions that signal a proper seal is made). The ability to take care and preserve materials (lids) for future uses is unnecessary now, too, thus part of the ethic of conserving is thereby lost.

Canning in the past was inextricably linked to home gardening and food gathering. Gardens were planted to ensure there was food, and canning was done so that food would not be wasted. It was expected that every woman who had land would grow and preserve that food. However, for some, canning (and gardening) now represents something more of a novelty in which only a certain demographic partakes. Canning is no longer done for survival, but more for pleasure, for the sake of continuing a family tradition, or because of an aversion to highly processed and commercialized food.

> A lot of my friends that I have, do garden. They're very yuppie-ish and that's why they garden because it's kind of in-vogue right now.
> *-Multicultural Heritage Center employee, Son*

> Gardening hasn't necessarily been carried on as something you need to be able to sustain yourself, so it's become one of those pleasure things for people…just to enjoy it. We can survive the winter if we don't grow our gardens, whereas before, seeing my grandmother's generation, well they needed that garden so that they'd have [canned] food to live throughout the winter.
> *-Cancer Care Receptionist, Daughter*

Several participants gardened and canned because of health-related anxiety over highly processed and industrially manufactured food. Often this unease was borne out of concern for their children and families.

> I just hate the thought of my children ever eating processed food. Like I don't even keep Kraft Dinner in my house - that freaks me out. I signed up for a bunch of these baby sites and they email you every week. One article was like "just go to the store and read on the back of the jar of baby food and see what's in it!" And I did that, and I was like "are you kidding me? I'm not feeding my son absorbic acid!" So at that point, they never ate a jar of any of that stuff again because I was concerned about all the stuff they put in it and where it came from.
> *-Stony Plain Farmer's Market Baker, Daughter*

> There is no unpronounceable "stuff" in my canning. I use the old Agriculture Canada canning book because it's not promoting the use of pectin and dyes and chemicals and that's what I wanted.
> *- Home preserver business owner*

Not all of the younger generation interviewed were motivated by the same things, nor does canning carry the same meaning. For the younger generation, there has been a significant shift in the symbolic meaning and motivational knowledge of canning. It is a deliberate and intentional choice, precipitated by certain societal trends, health concerns, or for relaxation and leisure. Interestingly, some participate in canning because of the influence of family traditions, or as an activity done with parents or elderly grandparents, or to be in keeping with their spiritual beliefs and worldview.

> I don't think any of my friends really do things like that [canning], they might do it more with their grandma, like, "I'm canning with my grandma this weekend" or "I'm canning with my mom this weekend."
> *-Occupational Therapist, Daughter*

One mother noted,

> I can remember a couple of years ago I had my nieces and nephews with me and my children and I said, "okay I've got all these pears, we're going to can them" so I got them involved in helping me to can all the pears because I didn't want to do it all by myself.
> *-Multicultural Heritage Center Employee*

Canning, in some cases, is a very familial activity.

> Both of our granddaughters will help. Even our grandson, he's only ten, this last time Simon was peeling carrots and just lovin' it…so it's like a

> family thing. And then my husband will come home from work and he's in there like a dirty shirt…we can as a family.
> *-Great-grandmother and grandmother*

Through spending some time cooking and canning with her grandmother, one woman was inspired to start doing things herself. She recalls saying to her mom, "I want to learn how to make jam", and so she and her mother made jam together and she has been doing it ever since. When asked why she gardens and cans, one daughter responded,

> Because we had a garden growing up that we took care of, and its something that's faith affiliated – believing that we can be self-sustaining, being able to have vegetables and canning that you put your work into. Like, we can in a time of plenty to be able to care for ourselves when there isn't a time of plenty, and then I'm able to pull on [draw from] those stores. I also enjoy it.
> *-Healthcare Receptionist, Daughter*

The symbolic meanings and motivational knowledge behind canning differs significantly between the parent and child generation. Though some of the children continue to can, it was obvious that it was not to the same extent, nor did it encompass the variety and scale of their mother and grandmother's generation. Doing one batch of dill pickles and ten jars of jam was considered to be "a lot" of canning for her daughter, one mother whimsically observed. Another daughter was only able to can what was given to her by neighbours, colleagues, and friends. She preserved all the excess apples (in various forms), but that was the extent of her canning that year. The volumes are typically smaller (e.g., 10-15 jars a year by the daughter vs. 350 jars a year by the parent) and the variety of food products (pickles, jams, relishes, juice, salsa, meat) has been narrowed to primarily jam and pickles. As all of this demonstrates that canning as a practice has both substantially decreased and significantly

transformed. However, despite these differences, those who still participate in this practice have acquired the requisite skills and competencies to preserve food and often want to can because of the sense of accomplishment and satisfaction it brings, similar to their mothers and grandmothers. As one daughter notes,

> Its very enjoyable once the work is done to see your cans all lined up on the shelf and you can say, "Yup, I made that. They look good and I can't wait to eat it."
> *-Daughter, Health Care Receptionist*

This is perhaps a vital link that has carried the practice through, even though canning now looks very different than it did before. As each element changed (simultaneously and iteratively) so too did canning.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this paper I have used the example of canning to develop and explore the accuracy of two propositions put forth by Shove et al. (2012) – social practices consist of elements that are integrated when practices are enacted, and that practices emerge, persist and disappear as connections between defining elements are made and broken. I used three broad categories of elements, specifically materials, competencies, and meanings to discuss the making and breaking of links. Instead of analyzing the lives and ambitions of the canners themselves, I have taken the elements of social practice and their connection as the central topic. An important contribution of this research is that it demonstrates the necessary integration of elements in order for a practice to endure. Social practices are not just comprised of individual components – it is the combination of interrelated elements that enables practices to exist and flourish (Shove, Pantzar & Watson, 2012).

John Law (1992) talks about "heterogeneous engineers," who use pieces from the social, the technical, the conceptual, and the textual to make equally heterogeneous products: scientific products, institutions, organizations, computing systems, economies, and technologies. Anthropologist Appadurai (1986) writes on the social lives of things, emphasizing the constructive, constitutive work involved in attaching and detaching symbolic meanings as material artefacts acquire and lose commodity status. The point here is that an integration of multifarious parts is necessary to create the whole.

Evidence from this research demonstrates how canning as a practice was able to succeed and perpetuate in the community among the parent generation of canners. Land, ample garden produce, and necessity were vital to the skill development and ability of these women to can fruits, vegetables, and meat. The normative expectations around taking care of one's family, the experience of scarcity, and the strong aversion to waste perpetuated the practice, while the infrastructural supports provided them with easily accessible knowledge and tools. Put simply, practices that exist do so because material elements and those of meaning and competence are linked together, through the process of doing.

Precisely because of these interdependencies among the three elements, when links are broken, practices disintegrate or transform. As people continue to move from rural to urban locations, the ability to produce sufficient quantities of fruits and vegetables to can in volume diminishes. Government supported resources for home food preservation has entirely vanished, perhaps contributing to changing norms and expectations around canning and food preparation in the home more broadly. Finally, the meanings and the significance behind canning have changed because people know that they no

longer need to do it for survival; this in turn affects views on waste and consumption, as well as what it means to take care of one's family.

Those of the younger generation that continue to can do so because of different motivations, meanings, and, to a large extent, the materials. For some, instead of canning being done as a matter of survival and necessity, and as a routine behaviour, canning is now more reactionary and a way to avoid additives and preservatives found in all processed food. For others, it is about spending time with family and carrying on traditions or upholding faith-based values.

Now, what of the broader questions posed at the outset of the paper? How might this analysis be understood in the larger context of environmental governance and sustainable consumption of food? To begin, this research indicates that problems of sustainable consumption are best understood as integrated problems, or bundles of practices that are composed of requisite parts. For example, understanding childhood obesity as strictly a problem of overconsumption of the wrong types of foods and lack of fitness, leads to solutions like banning pop machines and enforcing mandatory physical education classes. Or, it leads to tools like overly detailed food guides and technical information about the dietary components of this or that food. Both solutions, either those that advocate an imposition from above (banning pop machines) or ones that rely on individual awareness through education (food guides), have been shown to be weak predictors and catalysts for lasting behavioural change (Shot 2001; Heiskanen et al. 2005). If policy makers and researchers alike were to analyze and understand childhood obesity as a series of recursive and reproducible practices each containing several essential parts of

which overconsumption and low fitness were only a part, would governance and policy look different? If intervention were to take place at the nexus of the linkages between defining elements, how would things change? How has overconsumption, for example, been stabilized and routinized among children? Or conversely, what has destabilized certain healthy eating practices and high levels of physical activity? What essential linkages might be used or developed to foster and perpetuate different types of practices related to nutrition and exercise? How might practitioners introduce more sustainable ways of 'doing', 'saying', 'knowing', and 'thinking' to address this and other related problems (Spaargaren 2011)? To answer these questions, a breakdown of the problems and the practices into their essential elements is a useful starting point. This research has demonstrated that understanding the centrality of linkages and necessity of integration is crucial to characterizing stability and change. It should also be noted that this analysis does not privilege structure or agency, but rather seeks to understand how both influence and are implicated in stability and change of practices (Shove, Pantzar & Watson, 2012).

If there is a different framing of the central problem and practices are taken to be the central units of analysis, and those practices contain inter-connected elements that depend on one another for continuity, different solutions may begin to emerge. We may even look at how the practice of canning, as a form of sustainable food consumption, may be supported, given the growing interest it has garnered. Using my research as a starting point, the breaks in the linkages indicate that perhaps, on a policy level, more garden space and arable land should be made accessible, in new housing developments and condos within the city, so that more produce can be grown and then available to

can. More garden space in the city alone, however, will not promote the practice of canning. There needs to be other elements present as well if it is to succeed: motivational knowledge, sufficient competency, and some significance beyond just wanting to 'try it out', for example. Canning supplies could be more readily available in key stores, or available to order on-line. This would inevitably bolster more local food production as well. Focusing on the role of family and the importance of positive relationships around food is also of import. The influence of elders in teaching and nurturing skills around food preservation is significant, and the role they play could be more celebrated by media and by community adult learning courses that tap into their skills and knowledge. Having readily accessible people who have the knowledge and skills to can, but also the desire to teach and mentor others, similar to what the district home economists did, might be another way to support, facilitate, and normalize the practice of canning. The key for the future will be orchestrating these suggestions so that they overlap and link together, that they are not done in isolation, and can be used to build upon one another. Solutions will likely not come solely from the introduction of new technologies (appliances that make it easier, faster, more convenient to can), or from education campaigns about the unhealthy additives and preservatives that are in prepared foods. While both top-down and bottom-up approaches have their merits, it is more likely that sustainable and lasting solutions will come from a more complex analysis and understanding of stability and change, like that of a practice theory approach. It will also require a better understanding of all the necessary parts required to sustain a practice and that a fruitful integration of all necessary elements will be required for creating sustainable change.

It has been the purpose of this paper to demonstrate the usefulness and novel approach an elemental analysis within social practice theory might bring to the area of environmental governance related to food. A social practice framework lends novel insights into the essentiality of integration, demonstrating that practices need all the requisite parts to flourish. Additionally, it aids in understanding how practices can be understood as opportunities for creating socially responsible, sustainable and long-term change in food consumption patterns.

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Chapter Four

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine traditional food knowledge in a rural Albertan community. The objectives of this study were: to examine three different social practices associated with traditional food knowledge - gardening, cooking, and canning - in the community of Stony Plain; to understand the conditions shaping survival of this knowledge; and finally, to describe and analyze the reasons for decline of one of these practices, specifically, canning. Social practice theory, based on work done by Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012), was used as the analytical framework. All three objectives were achieved by employing qualitative techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and a focus group in the town of Stony Plain, Alberta.

As societal expectations for food and agriculture grow and concerns over deskilling, disembedding, and loss of knowledge continue to occupy research agendas and public policy, research on food knowledge and skills, particularly in rural communities is timely and relevant (Epp 2001). How that research is done is also important. Social practice theory continues to gain momentum in understanding, characterizing, and analyzing pro-environmental behaviour change and sustainable consumption (Spargaaren 2011; Shove et. al 2012). It has served as a useful framework for this research because it provided a lens with which to understand persistence in food practices, and also why it has changed. This work will be of interest to a diverse range of stakeholders: academics and public health practitioners interested in nutrition and food skills; community service organizations focused on promoting and fostering different types of food

activities (community gardens with new Canadians, educational and non-governmental organizations that teach basic cooking skills etc.); food policy makers; and food and agriculture sociologists.

The next sections include the summary of findings, which examines the practical and theoretical findings that have become apparent as a result of this study. Suggestions for future research and final remarks will follow.

Summary of Findings

Significant changes to the agri-food system over the past fifty years has been linked to declining knowledge and skills in the general population related to growing, preserving and cooking food. Rural communities have felt this loss of knowledge and associated culture and traditions more acutely than urban ones. Depopulation because of outmigration and the subsequent erosion of social and physical infrastructure has created significant barriers to the continuation and flourishing of traditional food skills. Counter to this trend of food deskilling, however, there are individuals and agencies working to maintain and perpetuate traditional food practices. By utilizing elemental analysis of social practice theory (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012), in this research, I have identified and described some of the conditions that have successfully helped to perpetuate traditional food practices in Stony Plain, Alberta. These four conditions included: the experience of scarcity and going without; strong normative expectations; close connection with family members; and the development of a community of practice around food.

The experience of feeding large families on a limited income and with limited access to grocery stores left a profound and lasting mark on the skills, memories, and attitudes of the women who were interviewed. The stout and

firm resolve to live off the land (planting large gardens) and 'make do' was modeled to them from parents, grandparents, friends and neighbours as a part of their rural upbringing. These experiences have been a powerful driver and sustainer of traditional food knowledge practices, and can be understood in the elemental analysis as 'motivational knowledge' (Reckwitz 2002). The ties of gardening and self-reliance held significant meaning for the research participants.

There were also strong normative expectations that shaped everyday food practices. Physical, economic, social, and environmental structural conditions, such as rural locality, limited income, restricted access to grocery stores, large plots of land for cultivation, ease of access to information and knowledge about gardening and canning, and an economy recovering from war, contributed to the larger socio-technical landscape within which certain collective expectations about food were shaped. For most of the women of the parent generation, having a garden, canning one's harvest, and cooking meals from scratch on a daily basis was essentially a given. According to Shove (2003) normative expectations are considered to be strong determiners of whether or not a practice is able to persist.

When asked about their memories, traditions, and habits around their food knowledge both now and in the past, almost all participants had stories that inherently linked close familial relationships to the source and motivation of their food practices. The desire to garden, cook, and can was fostered by the presence of a strong and influential 'food role model' in the family. The prominence of the familial relationships and the social and symbolic significance

that it plays in contributing to the furthering of certain food practices was noteworthy in this observation.

Finally, the larger community, including its social networks, religious groups, and community associations, augmented and fostered the abilities and desires of the research participants to garden, cook, and can. There are many reasons why individuals end up carrying specific practices, and an important one in this analysis is the influence of the communities of practice around food.

The first research paper (Chapter Two: Against the Odds) revealed four conditions that influenced the continuation of traditional food knowledge practices among the research participants in Stony Plain. The second research paper examines the opposite phenomenon: why certain food practices have diminished and disappeared. Through focusing specifically on one practice, canning, this paper first highlights why canning was able to flourish for a period of time in the lives of the participants, but then goes on to describe why it declined later on. This too, is done through a social practice theory framework, looking at the making and breaking of links between the elements of a practice (materials, competencies, and meanings) subsequently enabling it to flourish (make links), or decline (break links).

It was found that canning as a practice was able to flourish because of the requisite connections made between each link. Materials, such as ample access to land and garden space, ease of access to canning equipment, government-supported infrastructure, and other readily available sources of information contributed to the high skill level and competency of the women who canned. They canned a variety of fruits, vegetables, and even meat during the height of their home preservation activities. Additionally, the social and symbolic

significance of what it meant to can and why it was important to can also perpetuated the practice. Having experienced scarcity, not wanting to waste, and the fulfillment found in taking care of ones family via food preparation and storage were important meaning elements that contributed to the practice of canning.

Over time, though, many of these links between elements were broken. Four of the five younger generation participants did not can, and the one who did, chose not to can in the same way or by the same scale in which the parent generation of canners did. Breaks in the linkages of elements include: rural to urban migration and the decreased availability of land to garden, the increased difficulty of finding and affording canning equipment, the cessation of government supported infrastructure for home preservation activities, and the increasing availability of processed and manufactured food. The meanings and motivations behind canning have also changed; canning is done now as a reaction against the unhealthy additives and preservatives in food, or as an activity done with grandma to uphold familial traditions.

Both of the two research papers attempt to characterize and understand stability and change of food practices through a social practice lens. This is done at a time when there continues to be complex societal concerns over the environmental, economic, and social sustainability of food, and the continuous deskilling of people and communities around growing, cooking, and storing it. Using a social practice theory analysis does not offer a clear-cut, prescriptive resolution, but if the source of changed behaviour lies in the development of practices, then understanding their emergence, persistence, and disappearance is of the essence (Warde 2005; Shove et al 2012).

Areas for Future Research

This study has shed light on areas for further research. First, as mentioned in the "Introduction", a thorough gender analysis or the role that gender plays in perpetuating and/or diminishing food practices would provide an even more nuanced understanding of behavioural change in this arena. Women in particular are starting to reclaim domestic sites - the kitchen, the garden, the cannery - as a form of resistance and political activism against the global agri-food system, and as places that define and shape their feminism (Wiebe 2013, Hayes 2010). Understanding the history of traditional food practices, how they have been fostered and mentored by these women, and the links they have with contemporary food practices may be important topics for further feminist and sociological research.

Second, it may be fruitful to explore the differences across diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds: what role does culture play in perpetuating or diminishing certain food practices and traditions? Are the conditions needed to sustain and promote certain food practices similar or different from what my research has found? It would be interesting to compare different ethnically based rural communities (e.g. Ukrainian, Mennonite/Hutterite, First Nations, Croatian, Francophone) to understand the role culture and ethnicity play in: a) intergenerational knowledge transmission; b) priority given to food knowledge and skills; c) how traditional food knowledge is perpetuated (or not); and d) reasons for decline of a practice.

Third, using an elemental social practice theory analysis could be effective in understanding and analyzing activities, behaviours, and practices among the alternative food movement. Understanding all the elements -

materials, meanings, and competencies – and their links, both across practices, and with past practices, might shed light on how policy and community programming might foster and promote more forms of sustainable food consumption. Characterizing stability and change are key pieces in responding to complex challenges within the food system (Shove et al 2012). By understanding what linkages have stabilized and even expanded more sustainable food practices may play an important role in changing behaviour to reflect greater environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

Concluding Remarks

In this research I have explored both the key factors that have led to the continuation, but also the decline of traditional food practices in the rural Alberta community of Stony Plain. In the first paper, 'Chapter 2: Against the Odds', it was clear that in order to understand the persistence and resilience of traditional food knowledge practices it was imperative to look beyond dualistic categories of production and consumption, to places like the home and the community, how relationships are formed around food, and how stories, memories, and traditions are ways in which practices 'recruit practitioners' into the practice.

'Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Links', took a closer look at one particular traditional food knowledge practice: canning. This chapter documents the essential linkages and delinkages that enable or prevent canning from flourishing, and why it diminished so significantly between generations. As noted earlier, it is important to not only understand the structural barriers that limit or constrain certain practices from continuing, but also the breaks in linkages among a practice's defining elements, the materials, meanings, and competencies.

The future of food is unknown. On the one hand there are complex challenges: climate change, environmental degradation, health risks and scares, farmer debt, and eroding infrastructure for rural, agricultural communities (Goodman & Redclift 1991). On the other, however, there has been a rebirth and exponential growth of alternative food movement activities (e.g., farmers' markets, community supported agriculture schemes, local food restaurants) and a strong resistance to the current food status quo (Wittman, Beckie & Hergensheimer 2011). Women (and men) are taking back domestic food sites as places of opposition and resistance to the global agri-food industry and are returning to traditional skills and practices that have, in some cases, almost been forgotten. Documenting, describing, and analyzing traditional food practices that continue to thrive, despite significant barriers and dynamic changes, is an important part of a growing movement that seeks to foster, promote and retain a more just and sustainable food system.

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Appendix A

Interview Study Methodology Timeline

Interview Study Methodology Timeline

Study Stage	Date
Write and revise research proposal	November 2011 – May 2012
Apply for grant funding from ADRN, CHEF, Catherine Donnelly, Faculty of Extension	April 2012-August 2012
Initial Meeting with Executive Director of Multicultural Heritage Centre	January 2012
Initial Contact with community residents at Valentines Day Tea	February 2012
Proposal Meeting and Approval	May 2012
Acquire Human Ethics approval	July 2012
Attend Stony Plain Farmer's Market to recruit participants	August 2012
Presentation at Stony Plain Women's Institute to recruit participants	October 2012
Conduct Interviews	August 2012 – December 2012
Conduct Focus Group	December 2012
Transcription of Interviews	September 2012 – February 2013
QSR NVivo Training	March 2013
Theme analysis and coding	January 2013 – February 2013
Write thesis	March 2013 – June 2013
Presentation of Results to community	April 2013

Write and Revise Research Proposal

I was given the opportunity to write a research proposal as a final project for my graduate class RSoc 555 for Dr. Krogman. From this submission I was given helpful feedback to improve my proposal. In the winter term of that year, I took an Independent Study with Dr. Beckie, wherein I deepened and strengthened my literature review and overall proposal.

Apply for Funding

Since my research was not attached to any specific project in the REES department, I had to seek out my own research funds. During the spring and summer of 2012 I applied, unsuccessfully, to a number of different funding bodies. In August 2012 I was granted a small amount of money from the Faculty of Extension to cover my research costs.

Initial Meeting with Locksley McGann, Judy Unterschulz, and Naomi Krogman

When I was trying to determine which rural community I would like to do my research in, Naomi Krogman (my supervisor) had an academic connection with one of the board members at the Multicultural Heritage Centre (MHC) in Stony Plain, Alberta. She arranged a meeting with him (Locksley) and we invited Judy Unterschulz, the Executive Director of the MHC. During this meeting we introduced my research and asked if it was possible to partner with the MHC. This partnership was to include: the MHC helping to recruit participants, attendance at some community events by me, and perhaps a presentation at the end of the research to the MHC

community. Both Locksley and Judy were open and enthusiastic about participating in this project, so it was decided that I would work in Stony Plain.

Initial Contact in Community at Valentines Day Tea

Several months after our initial meeting at the MHC, I was contacted by the museum manager to see if I would be interested in attending their annual Valentine's Day Tea. The organizing committee thought that my research was well suited to this event. I attended the Tea and was able to introduce myself to many women, and from there established some key contacts that would further aid my research in the summer. I met the president of the Stony Plain's Women's Institute and through her role as president, I was able to recruit several participants later on. Immediately after the Tea was over, I tried to document, in detail, my experience and observations from the event for my reference later on.

Proposal Meeting and Approval

After editing and revising my proposal through the two courses I took, I submitted my proposal to my supervisory committee. It was approved with some adjustments required.

Acquire Human Ethics approval

Despite some significant delays in the Human Ethics approval process, the project was approved by the University of Alberta Ethics Review Board mid-August with some minor revisions required.

Attend Stony Plain Farmer's Market

In order to recruit potential participants, I decided it might be a good idea to talk to people at the weekly community farmer's market. Those in attendance would be interested in gardening, cooking, and canning whether they were vendors or consumers. During this time I talked to several community members, handed out letters of initial contact and retained some contact information. In the end, only one of the people I spoke to was willing to be interviewed.

Attend Stony Plain Women's Institute for Presentation

I was invited by the president of the Stony Plain Women's Institute (who also happened to be a volunteer receptionist at the MHC) to come and give a brief presentation about my research at a monthly meeting in Stony Plain. I gave a 20-minute presentation to these women, and then asked for volunteers for the study. 5 women approached me after the meeting was over to express interest and provide contact information. They were given a letter of initial contact and from there I was able to set up interviews with each of them. During, and immediately after the meeting I wrote copious amounts of notes of my observations and experience for reference later on.

Conduct Interviews

During the summer and fall of 2012 I was able to recruit 11 women and 5 of their children to participate in my interview. This recruitment was done through a variety of means. One participant was from the Stony Plain Farmer's market (through personal contact), two were employees of the MHC (who expressed interest in the study and fit the criteria), three were Stony Plain residents recommended to me by a MHC employee (through informal exchange of canning information), and the rest were from the Stony Plain Women's Institute (they spoke to me after my presentation and provided contact information). During the interviews I asked the participants if their children would be interested in participating and so I was able to obtain contact information for the children that way. Recruiting the children was done through phone and email, and 4 were able to participate.

The interviews were semi-structured and approximately 90 minutes in length. They were done in the participant's home at a time that was convenient for them. All of the interviews were either in or just outside of Stony Plain. The first section of the interview was devoted to talking about gardening, second was about cooking, and finally it concluded with questions around canning. Participants were asked to share stories and memories, as well as describe their traditions and habits around food procurement, preparation, and preservation (see Appendix B for interview script). As a small token of appreciation, each participant was given a $15 gift

certificate for the MHC. The MHC was chosen because they were an extremely valuable asset during my research and because they are an organization supporting local artists and community projects – it seemed like the perfect fit.

Similarly, the interviews with the children were done in the home, at a time that was most convenient for them. Many of the same questions were asked, however, the children were also asked to reflect on the biggest barriers they faced when it came to gardening, cooking, and canning. Additionally, I asked them to reflect on their own experiences growing up and how things have changed in their lives with regard to food practices.

Conduct Focus Group

From the interview data I did some initial analysis of the broad themes and areas that I thought needed more elucidation. I developed a list of questions and discussion topics to explore in the focus group (see Appendix B for Focus Group Script). From the group of 15, I selected 8 people to participate. Those 8 were chosen based on age, socio-economic demographic, geographical location, depth of knowledge and eloquence, and employment. I wanted to have as diverse group as possible. Of those 8, 6 were able to make it. The focus group was held in a conference room at the MHC, light refreshments (including home made pie from the MHC restaurant) were served. The focus group took just over 3 hours. My supervisor, Dr. Mary Beckie, volunteered to help facilitate since I had not held a focus group before. Her presence and insight was a valuable asset during this time, and she was able to help shape the discussion in a way that was fruitful for my research. At the end, there was a prize draw, containing 3 different gift certificates for various local businesses, each worth $100.

Transcribe Interviews

The transcription process was ongoing through the interview stage. I would strive to complete an interview transcription between 2 and 3 weeks after the actual interview. I was simultaneously interviewing and transcribing during the fall of 2012. There were approximately 400 pages of text in total. The focus group was not transcribed, but instead inserted directly into NVivo where the audio could be coded.

QSR NVivo Training

Due to the fact that I had never worked with NVivo before, and that my supervisors and departmental colleagues did not feel confident enough to teach me, I took a brief introductory training seminar online for NVivo 10. It gave me the basic skills to utilize NVivo for organizing and coding my interviews.

Theme Analysis and Coding

I used an emergent methodology for my coding and analysis. I read each interview script several times looking for patterns and categories related to the literature I had read. This resulted in over 30 themes or nodes (see Appendix C for full list of nodes). There was a lot of overlap in the initial coding stages, but eventually many of them were collapsed into larger themes. For example 'influence of children', 'spousal influence', 'economics', and 'community involvement' were all put into a larger theme of 'stages of life'. The themes were then re-examined to ensure they were a parsimonious representation of the text. Since I am a very visual person and find exercises like 'mind mapping' and 'chart making' very useful, I was simultaneously taking themes and ideas from the literature and 'big ideas' from the coding and trying to 'fit' them together through visual representation. It was a very iterative process wherein I would code and then go back to the literature, and then code again, until I felt I had reached data saturation. It should also be noted that throughout my research process, I kept a 'research journal' and would jot down thoughts, ideas, and questions after interviews, or take notes from a particularly interesting journal article. This was a helpful process, and later enabled me to decipher what I would focus on for my thesis chapters.

Write Thesis

I chose to write two publishable papers in hopes of getting at least one of them accepted into a peer reviewed journal. For the two papers, I tried to look at two sides of the same phenomenon. The first paper discusses the uniqueness of the Stony Plain community and how social practices of gardening, cooking, and canning were able to survive and flourish in the

community. The second paper looks at why the specific social practice of canning has disintegrated and changed, specifically among the children's generation.

Presentation of Results to Community

I was also given a very unique opportunity to present the results of my research back to the community. The Stony Plain Women's Institute was having their 100th year anniversary celebration this spring, and asked if I would give a talk on what I discovered during my research. I was happy to present to them, but struggled with how to present what I had learned to a non-academic audience. I thought the presentation went well, but later I received feedback indicating that I had underestimated my audience and could have added a few more layers of complexity to my explanation and analysis for them. It was difficult to hear this criticism, but I learned an important lesson about communicating research to a wide variety of audiences.

Appendix B

Letter of Initial Contact

Letter of Initial Contact

August 1, 2012

RE: Letter of Invitation to Participate in Study

Dear _____,

I am a Master's Student in the department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology at the University of Alberta. The project I am doing is a research study entitled *Traditional Food Knowledge in Rural Canadian Communities.*

In this study I hope to conduct one interview with participants with each interview lasting from 60-90 minutes. Additionally, I would like participants to come together for a focus group meeting that would be scheduled between or after interview times. The focus group would last between 1.5 and 2 hours duration. The overall time frame for the interviews and focus group meeting will be over the next two to three months. Your participation is a time for you reflect and articulate what traditional knowledge, skills, and values you posses when it comes to producing, cooking, preserving and consuming food.

If you are interested in participating in this study or learning more about it, please contact me for more details. I can be reached through email at **jabraun@ualberta.ca** or by phone at **780 964 3851**. If you wish to contact my supervisor, Dr. Mary Beckie, she can be reached at mary.beckie@ualberta.ca or by phone at 780 433 1466.

This study is still pending approval by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board but should be approved sometime in the next few weeks. Information can be obtained from the Ethics office by calling 780 492 2615.

Thank you for your consideration into this matter!

All the best,

Jennifer Braun

Appendix C

Letter of Consent

Letter of Consent

Dear participant,

You have been invited to participate in a research project entitled: *Traditional Food Knowledge in Rural Canadian Communities.* Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any and all questions you may have.

Researcher Name and Affiliation: Jennifer Braun, Master's candidate in Environmental Sociology, Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology, University of Alberta, phone: 780 964 3851, email: jabraun@ualberta.ca

Supervisors: Dr. Mary Beckie, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, phone: 780-492-5153, email: mary.beckie@ualberta.ca.
Dr. Naomi Krogman, Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology, University of Alberta, phone: 780-492-4178, email: naomi.krogram@ualberta.ca.

Background and Purpose of Study: The main purpose of this study is to gain insight into where traditional food knowledge exists in a community, how it is utilized, how it is passed from one generation to the next, the barriers to passing this knowledge on and how this knowledge might be promoted and understood in the future. Additionally, I would like to explore the types of social practices that you participate in when you utilize your food knowledge. In the coming weeks and months, I hope to meet with you for an interview to discuss your food knowledge, traditions and customs at a location preferable to you. Although I have prepared some questions, I hope to keep our meetings "conversational" in order that we may dialogue about issues and ideas as they arise in the interview. The interviews will last from sixty to ninety minutes. The interview process will be your time to answer questions, offer suggestions and share stories. The interviews will be digitally recorded then transcribed. I will be the only person transcribing the data unless I hire someone. If I chose to enlist the services of a transcriptionist, he/she will sign a letter of confidentiality to protect your identity. Copies of the transcripts will be given to you for review should you wish to add, delete or modify them. As well, during the interviews, if you wish to shut the recording off you are free to do so.

Participation in Focus Group: If you are interested in participating further, there will be an opportunity for you to be involved in a focus group with other participants of the study. This is not a requirement of your involvement - you have the right to decline participation in this group and this will not affect your compensation or your data being used in the study. The focus group will be a one time meeting with 8-10 participants and will last approximately 60-90 minutes. It will take place in Stony Plain and a light meal will be provided. Again, this is optional.

Potential Benefits: In return for the time you are investing, this study may assist you in reflecting upon and assessing the traditional food knowledge you posses, its value to yourself, your family, and more broadly, your community. The research also has the potential of informing future community development programming in the area of food and agriculture. Finally, it may also help to inform and shape food related activities at the Multicultural Heritage Center in Stony Plain, Alberta.

Potential Risks: There are no known foreseeable risks in this study.

Confidentiality: Each interview session will last from between 45 minutes to two hours. As a means of confidentially protecting your identity, pseudonyms will be used in the research writing. Additionally, each waiver of consent will be numbered and stored separately from the digital audio files. You will be given ample time to review the transcripts to ensure they accurately reflect your thoughts. You are also free to delete, add, or modify them as you see fit. If the interview location is not conducive to tape recording, I will make notes and then share these with you. Additionally, as required by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, the

data collected from this research will be kept and securely stored at the University of Alberta, Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology in Dr. Naomi Krogman's office (515 General Services Building). It will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for a minimum of five years after the completion of the study.

Because the networks surrounding the Multicultural Heritage Center are so small, and because Stony Plain is a town where people are familiar with one another, it is possible that you may be recognizable to others based on what you have said. I will do all that is possible to ensure your rights to anonymity, including use of pseudonyms and making abstract your stories, if this is something desirable by you.

The results of the study will be used in my Master's thesis and possibly in other publications or at workshops and conferences. In any public use of the data generated from the study, I will respect your wishes and use only the agreed-upon quotes and information.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions you feel comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with the research team. You may withdraw from the research for any reason, right up until the interview or up to seventy-two hours from the time of the interview. If you withdraw from the research project at any time, any data you have contributed will be destroyed at your request.

Compensation: You will be given an honorarium of $10 (in the form of a gift certificate) for the Homesteader's Kitchen restaurant in Stony Plain to compensate for the time you spent being part of the study. If you withdraw from the study before the interview, you will not receive your honorarium. However, if you withdraw during the interview, you will still be given the honorarium for your time.

Questions: Please feel free to ask me any questions concerning the research project at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided if you have any other questions. The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have concerns about this study, or questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided and have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in this research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

_____
(Name of Participant)

_____
(Signature)

_____
(Date)

_____
(Researcher Signature

Interview Script

Appendix D

Interview Script

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Interview Script – GARDENING
General

1. Please tell me about yourself. What is your background (for example, ethnicity, family, employment, relationship to agriculture and rural communities [now and in the past]).
2. What is your relationship to the MCHC?
3. Tell me about how you obtain food to feed yourself and your family.
4. Do you shop from particular places or people consistently? Where? Why or why not?
5. How much of the food you prepare comes from your garden or your friends and family giving it to you?

GARDENING

1. Do you garden? How big is your garden?
2. What do you grow? Why do you chose these foods?
3. What do you do with your harvest?
4. How do you garden? (organically, community garden, with others etc.)
5. How long have you been gardening?
6. Who taught you how to garden?
7. How did they teach you?
8. Tell me about some memories you have learning to grow a garden.
9. Why do you think they taught you?
10. Do you think being able to grow your own food is an important skill to have? Why or why not?
11. Who has been influential in your thinking about this? (TV, family, tradition, community)
12. Where has most of the knowledge you have about gardening come from?
13. In your opinion, how does growing your own food, if at all, come from your culture or ethnic background?
14. Tell me about the practices that historically have been practiced by your ethnic/cultural group.
15. Do your children know how to garden? Who taught them?
16. Tell me how you taught your children about gardening. How were they taught? Modeled behaviour? Intentional teaching?
17. Do any of your children garden now? Why? Why not?
18. What are the main reasons you chose to teach your children how to garden? Conversely, why didn't you make a point of teaching your children how to grow food?
19. What were the biggest obstacles or reasons you faced with regards to teaching your children how to garden? (time, energy, interest, money)
20. How do you think those obstacles have changed since you learned how to garden?
21. Do you think there is value in the knowledge you possess and the practices you embody around gardening? Why?
22. Around food production?

Future/Community

1. How do you learn new improvements to your gardening?
2. Do you have many others who you feel share your gardening knowledge? Know more than you do about gardening?
3. How has gardening changed among people like you, would you say?
4. How will your knowledge carry on to others? Do you think your knowledge about gardening will be carried on in others? In what way?
5. What are the biggest causes of people gardening differently than what was done when you were younger?
6. What needs to happen for your knowledge and those traditions/values/gardening practices to be kept alive? Should it be kept alive?

7. What are the most important reasons, in your view, for traditional knowledge to carry on. Is there some type of program or assistance that you feel might help keep your traditional knowledge alive?
8. What role, if any, has your community played in your learning new ways to expand your traditional knowledge about gardening?
9. What have been the most influential events or ideas that have contributed to your desire to garden?
10. Have their been other changes to your life or your practices around food because of your interest in gardening?
11. How has gardening impacted other ideas, other practices, (what you eat, how you prepare food, where you shop etc)

COOKING

General

1. Given your background, what kind traditions are typically associated with your culture/ethnic group/faith?
2. Tell me about your habits of preparing food in the summer, fall, winter, spring
3. Tell me about meals that you have often
4. Why do you cook these particular meals?
5. What are some of your other traditional meals?
6. Did a family member or significant other teach you how to prepare these meals?

Meals and Traditions

1. Do you cook? Do you cook 'family meals'?
2. What do you cook?
3. If someone asked you what kind of skills and knowledge you have when making a meal, what immediately comes to mind?
4. Why do you cook? (besides the obvious reasons to eat)
5. Who taught you how to cook?
6. Can you recall any memories or instances when you were either taught how to cook something, or you learned how to cook something?
7. Why do you think they taught you?
8. How often do you prepare a family meal? (per day would be interesting)
9. What kinds of food do you prepare for these family meals?
10. What are some traditions you have kept with regards to cooking and having a meal with your family? (i.e. favourite meal on a birthday, Sunday dinner, saying a prayer)
11. What are some customs/habits you have when eating a meal together?
12. Have those traditions changed from when you were growing up? Why do you think those traditions have changed?
13. Did you teach your children how to cook? Was it intentional? Why or why not?
14. How did you teach them to cook? Modeled behaviour, observation, teaching...
15. Do your children cook now? Do they cook in a similar way to what you do? What skills sets that you have do they now have, and Not have? What are some of the practices you have around food saving, storage and preparation that you see in your children, and some of the practices you don't see in your children? (using leftovers, getting bread to rise, preparing favourite dessert for a special occasion)
16. Are there skills sets of yours that you think are going to be lost in most of the next generation? Why or why not?
17. Has some of what you have learned going to be lost in future generations? How do you anticipated it changing?
18. Do you think cooking a meal (relatively) from scratch is an important skill to have?

19. What customs/habits/practices surrounding preparing and consuming a meal should be passed on to future generations (if any)? Why?
20. What has been the strongest influence on you and your cooking abilities/interests/habits/practices? (T.V., food scares, health etc)
21. Does your food knowledge/skills/play a part in the health of other community organizations? (MCHC, church)

Future/Community

1. 1. What future do you see with yours, and people like you, and your cooking knowledge?
2. Will it be kept alive?
3. How do you see it changing? What are the biggest causes of that change?
4. What needs to happen for your knowledge and those traditions/values and practices to be kept alive? Should it be kept alive?
5. Is there some type of program/new knowledge/assistance/recognition that you feel might help keep your traditional knowledge alive?
6. What role has your community played in your interest/ability/skills with regards to cooking?
7. What resources would help you?
8. How has your knowledge/beliefs/practices influenced other areas of your life? (The way you eat, what you make for our family, where you buy your food)?

CANNING

1. Do you can any of your own food?
2. What do you can?
3. Why do you can those things?
4. Where do you get the food that you can?
5. How long have you been canning?
6. Who does the canning? Does anyone help you?
7. Describe the canning process to me.
8. Who taught you how to can? Can you recall any memories about this?
9. When you can, or when you learned to can, were there any other activities that went along with this? (sharing the end product, having a meal together, picking the produce beforehand, getting help from a mother in law/mother etc)?
10. Why do you think they taught you?
11. Do you think canning is an important skill to have? Why do you say that?
12. What have been the heaviest influences on your desire to preserve your own food?
13. Did you teach your children to can? How did you do this?
14. What are the biggest reasons you taught/or didn't teach your children to can?
15. Do your children can things now? Why or why not?
16. Tell me about the traditions you have around canning (certain time, certain way, with certain people etc.)
17. Do you share what you can? With who?
18. Has your ability to can affected other areas of your life (what you eat, how you eat it, where you get your supplies, the desire to make more of your food from scratch-on your own etc)

Appendix E

Focus Group Guide

Focus Group Guide

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Welcome/Introduction
   (Everyone go around stating in 20 seconds OR LESS
   1) name 2) where you are from 3) favourite meal your mom or dad cooked for you when you were at home

2. Go over ground rules and Go over Agenda.

3. Short icebreaker –
   -Partner up: what would the world look like if no one knew how to cook? Grow a garden? Preserve food without harmful additives and preservatives?

4. Quick go-around and share back with the group.

5. Ritual/Social Practices and Food

Think about how you learned to cook, garden, etc. Think about all the rituals and things you did around food.

-Are there more, less, or about the same amount of rituals around food now than there were when you were living at home? (in the context of your family) Why do you think that is? Is there anything being lost or gained by this?

-What are the biggest, most observable changes in ritual/tradition from when you were growing up, to raising a family to now.

-Is it important to continue and also create traditions around food? Why?

-What benefits are there to rituals around food? What kind of constraints are there?

SMALL GROUP
-If you could go back in time (or in the future, for those of you who don't have kids) what three traditions or values would you try your hardest to pass along and maintain in your family? Why?

8. Disconnects in Interviews
All of you said that being able to grow your own food (albeit basic), cooking a simple meal from scratch, and even being able to preserve your own food is absolutely an important skill to have.

-Why then, do you think, given this expressed value in having broad food knowledge (as it reflects the values of your generation) is it that these skills are being lost, forgotten or unused in large majority of your kid's generation?

-How do you think your kids would answer this question?

9. Food and Life cycles/Stages of Life
-How has your relationship to food changed throughout the stages of your life?

-What have been the life changing events that have influenced your relationship to food?

-How have other adults (spouse, relative) or children reinforced your cooking skills? Gardening skills? Canning skills?

REFRESHMENT BREAK

10. The Future
-Does the way you think about food, prepare food, act around food have an impact on your friends, the larger community?

-Speculate on the food life you want and the food life you get (due to other constraints). What are the differences?

- Do you think your knowledge and your set of values and practices surrounding food is valuable, worth keeping alive, and something that will make your community, even the world, a better place to live?

-If so, what needs to happen? How can we take the best and most useful tidbits of your traditional food knowledge, and the rituals and social practices, and things that can't be written in a cookbook and ensure their survival?

-what role can community organizations, the university, the government, the local community play in fostering, facilitating and promoting the knowledge you bear?