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Seeds Sown into Me: An Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry into the Leisure Experiences of one Community Gardener

by

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Dedication

For a father—to nourish what was willingly spread from one life to another.

For all I call family and for those who made me feel at home.

Abstract

This autobiographical narrative inquiry takes the reader alongside my familial stories of gardening and my lived experiences across three community gardens in Edmonton. By focusing on my experiences of gardening I demonstrate the power of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as an approach that tends to the descriptive and paradoxical dynamics of leisure practice by providing alternative narratives to dominant conceptualizations of gardening. The institutional, community and personal narratives of gardening that wove in and through my experiences of gardening are used to show how leisures are polythetic constructions situated in contexts with people, cultures and communities (Fox & Klaiber, 2006). As the narratives in this thesis illustrate, gardeners continually negotiate tensious landscapes and stories of gardening. To ignore the rich and multivariate experiences of gardeners amongst the meta-narratives of gardening is to silence the moments of discomfort, dissent and alternatives in the diversity of lives lived.

Table of contents

Seeds Sown into Me: An Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry into the Leisure Experiences of one Community Gardener

Research Proposal

Michael J. Dubnewick

Summary of Research

The cyclical renewal from winter to spring gradually changes the daily food practices of community gardeners. Anticipating the progression of seasons, community gardeners are enlisted in a myriad of duties from garden coordination and meeting sessions to planning and sowing seeds for the upcoming harvest. Gardens provide an avenue for urban dwellers to intimately link themselves to and with their communities through everyday sustenance practices. The rejuvenation of numerous community gardens across Edmonton provides a space for residents to recreate their relationship with food and leisure, however, variations exist towards how people interact and interpret communal gardening, from gardening as necessity to gardening as social activism and sustainable food production. As a community gardener, these varied experiences have focused my research on exploring how I experienced community gardening alongside diverse individuals, groups and communities and how these relations across contexts made me rethink gardening and leisure. Diverse accounts of how we leisure in community gardens provide a framework to understand how individuals, groups and communities experience community gardens and how leisure practitioners and programming can work with communities towards their needs. Previous leisure research has treated communal gardening as a homogenous practice (see Glover, 2003, 2004; Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005a, 2005b; Shinew, Glover, & Parry, 2004), leading to broad social psychological conceptualizations of leisure, as an activity chosen during free time, intrinsically motivated and separate from work or obligation unquestioned. By accepting this framework of leisure the rich and multivariate ways that leisure and

gardening can be, and is, conceptualized, supported and practiced across cultures, communities and people beyond dominant meta-narratives of leisure and gardening is obscured (Fox & Klaiber, 2006; Kelly, 1987). This research contributes to understanding how I experienced and made sense of communal gardening to shed light on how inclusive community processes and cultural food practices can be supported in diverse urban garden contexts.

This research examines the role community gardens as leisure sites have in fostering and restricting community processes by (a) providing thick descriptions of how I experienced communal gardening and what meaning it provided in my everyday life and (b) exploring the intersections between leisure and everyday food practices. Specifically my research puzzle utilizes autobiographical narrative accounts of how I experienced communal gardening across Edmonton. To achieve this I studied the relationship between leisure and everyday food practices in three community gardens in Edmonton, exploring my descriptions and experiences of engagement with community gardens and gardeners. Several methodological processes guided this study; these included:

a) narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and autoethnographical (Ellis, 2004) methods for descriptive and diverse narratives of my lived experiences of gardening;
b) juxtaposition of gardening experiences and space utilizing Lefebvre's scholarship (1991; 2004);
c) re-theorizing of dominant leisure conceptualizations through the study of sustenance (food) practices (Fox & Klaiber, 2006);

Dupuis (1999) argued, "reflexive knowledge, stories, and theories highlight not only the commonalities in experience but also focus on the fundamental contradictions and inconsistencies observed and being reported by participants" (p. 60). Both narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and autoethnography (Ellis, 2004) reflexively bend inwards towards our own experiences to interact with the experiences of others. Narratives "offer useful ways of knowing and provides for the creative construction of counternarratives capable of intervening in and disrupting dominant discourses" (Lashua & Fox, 2006, p. 274). Autobiographical narrative inquiries do not look to legitimize certain forms of gardening or leisure experience over another, rather, create spaces for gardening and leisure experiences to be associated with multiple meanings and interpretations that are lived and told. The use of narrative methods are vital in unearthing the "rich, multivariate, fluid, paradoxical, and contested nature of leisures and the different values interwoven within leisure by various cultures, classes, disciplines, and perspectives" (Fox & Klaiber, 2006, p. 415).

My participatory relationship with the Eco, Heritage and Circle community gardens has allowed me to conduct a comparative analysis of the three gardens in Edmonton to explore my interpretive and meaning making process towards diverse garden contexts. Fox and Klaiber (2006) argued "comparison provides a means to re-envision and re-hear data to solve theoretical problems" (p. 415). Thus, comparing experiences and meanings of gardening across sites provides description of how I experienced communal gardening and leisure in relation to a specific place and time. This will give leisure research insight into the various ways leisure is and

can be framed across cultures, communities and people beyond Eurocentric definitions. Lefebvre's (2004) *Rhythmanalysis* elucidates each community garden and its gardeners' rhythms, whether that is the peak time of use, meaning of gardening, types of food grown or any collection of rhythms. These rhythms are subjected to the simultaneity and grasp of several meta or external rhythms, their unity in diversity. Thus, *rhythmanalysis* alongside narrative inquiry are theoretical and methodological processes that portray how gardening practices are experienced in context. Specifically, how these varied experiences are negotiated, legitimized and supported within the wider social and cultural milieu of how leisure and gardening are dominantly constructed and interrelated.

The development of multiple voices, including the researcher, is vital for learning how leisure can be taken up from varied cultural contexts and worldviews. Then leisure practices, such as gardening, are not an oppressive force to creating inclusive communities, but rather are practices that embrace and nurture the multiple ways in which people make sense and meaning in their lives. If leisure is understood through Lefebvre and narratives then community gardens invariably support multiple narratives, meanings and purposes that can be part of the solution to several problems, from sustainable food production to social and environmental connectedness.

Project Objectives

This Master's research addresses two pressing needs within leisure and community processes. First, the project provides counter narratives to dominant leisure research that has treated community gardens as a homogenous experience.

Dominant leisure narratives have provided little attention to the plurality and diversity of experience and meaning of community gardening for those involved. Thick descriptions of how people, specifically myself, experience communal gardening attends to differences and similarities felt across class, culture, gender, ability, and context to demonstrate the polythetic nature of gardening experience. Detailed descriptions of experience and meaning illuminate the types of community processes that are occurring during everyday garden practices across contexts. Second, my research questions the assumptions that community gardens, as well as other leisure spaces and programs, are methods for developing community. Leisure research has focused primarily on the assumption that gardens build community because they are communal or public spaces shared by different groups of people working in the same space. This assumes the social connections and relationships formed in community gardens are inclusive processes across gender, ability, culture, and class. While Glover (2004) identified that community gardens can act as sites of unequal distribution and "access to the resources embedded in garden networks" (p. 157), little descriptive details were given to the day to day practices in that garden context that either deterred or supported inclusive community processes. Huber and Whelan's (2001) research in educational settings demonstrated how static constructions of community can impair the numerous and diverse accounts of community that are lived and dreamed on the edges. Thus, leisure research, like other disciplines, needs to seek out and understand how diverse people continually shape and are shaped by the fluid and ever expanding nature of community instead of defining stagnant boundaries of what community is and can be.

It is imperative for leisure research to explore meanings and experiences of leisure practices, especially across contexts and cultures, before assuming they facilitate inclusive community processes. For instance, if we do not understand how a group of Korean gardeners situate garden practices in their everyday lives and the meanings it conjures for them, we will not be able to identify how community processes may marginalize their leisure practices and inhibit inclusion/exclusion. Further, leisure practitioners and institutions (e.g. Sustainable Food Edmonton) are unable to support leisure needs across cultural contexts if there are assumptions that gardening, or any leisure we participate in, is a homogenous practice. This research examines the role community gardens as leisure sites have in fostering and restricting community processes by providing thick descriptions of how I experienced communal gardening and what meaning it provided to my everyday life in relation to the people and communities involved. This Master's research contributes to understanding how communities, through my lens, experience, use, and (re)create meaning from communal garden practices which sheds light on community processes of inclusion/exclusion in relation to specific spacetimes.

Context of Community Gardens

Rojek (2005) suggested that comparative and historical perspectives allow us to "analyse the immediate conditions of life and society against conditions that obtain elsewhere…[as well as] encourage us to analyse the vast differences between conditions of our lives and societies and those of earlier times" (p. 38). While communal garden practices have taken a variety of forms dating back to early

periods of human life, I will focus this brief discussion on modern and formally supported community garden practices in North America.

Many Indigenous peoples of North America are known as highly adapted gardeners with intimate links to the land. Notably the Hurons are known for cultivating swaths of corn, beans and squash, also known as the three sisters (Martin, 2000). The settlement of European immigrants in North America led to the oppression of Indigenous food and garden practices. Agricultural practices began to take new forms, productive capacities were explored and cultural food practices of Indigenous peoples deteriorated through the displacement of Aboriginal peoples from their land and restricting their way of life (Martin, 2000).

In the late 1800s, alongside the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), came the first politically supported investment in communal gardens (Martin, 1998). "Railway gardens," popularized by the CPR in 1890-1907, were promoted to demonstrate "the fertility of the land to potential settlers and the progressiveness and worth of towns" (von Baeyer, 1984, p. 3). The company provided stations with seeds, equipment and land for employees as well as the growing urban population to garden in a centralized location. The gardens were more than just a way of selling Canada's west; they also were a way of developing the 'right' kind of citizen. In von Baeyer's (1984) early 1900s history of Canadian gardens he captured the rationale of gardening from the editor of the *Canadian Municipal Journal* who suggested that:

> The man who has a nice garden is not the man who spends his leisure time at the nearest saloon, or in lounging idly with a pipe in his mouth, doing

> nothing, till some mischief turns up. The man with a nice garden is not the man who has to be discharged for beating his wife and neglecting his children. The man with a nice garden is a decent industrious man, who will bring up his children to be the best kind of citizen. (von Baeyer, 1984, p. 22)

Railway gardens were more than a demonstration of the agricultural capacities of the west but also a tool of assimilating new settlers as rail gardens conveyed the right way to act and be in society through the practice of gardening. The message was involvement in railway gardens meant you were a productive and responsible citizen who supported progress in your town and country. By 1912 railway gardens became a recognized entity. The CPR and the central horticultural authority began standardizing the railway garden across Canada (von Baeyer, 1984). Rigid rules of how gardens were to be conducted were laid out from fencing size and style to garden design by central authorities. The CPR began to reap the economic benefits of selling the west by showcasing the productivity of the land. It kept its hold on the market by transitioning the garden sites as places to be seen, not touched, privately, not publicly maintained and in unity with town planning from coast to coast. These procedures diminished the collective aspects of rail gardens and can be seen as homogenizing to garden practice.

The CPR "became Canada's head gardener" (von Baeyer, 1984, p. 14). Reflecting the practices of its English ancestors, the CPR both beautified and demonstrated values of what ought to be through garden practices. This approach to communal gardening established a hierarchy of what gardening was and should be in Canada. Rail gardens were constructed within English roots of beautification

and market economics of productivity. This left little space at the time to reimagine the diverse cultural practices that gardening and food had in relation to the multicultural makeup of early Canadian society.

The onslaught of World War I and II changed the role of community gardens in North American. Communal gardens were no longer viewed as a fruitful practice of beautification in urban centers; they were now an intricate piece of the puzzle in supporting the allied war efforts. With limited rations domestically and food crisis abroad, community gardens were a way of supporting food production in a time of need (Lawson, 2004).

In North America during World War I civilian gardening was a way of complementing domestic food production so more could be exported abroad; these efforts were called "war gardens," "food gardens for defence" or "victory gardens." Lawson (2004) claimed, "the war garden campaign grew into a national effort that involved government agencies, educational institutions, civic and gardening organizations, and local clubs" (p. 158). War gardens were viewed as a practice of patriotic necessity with war garden propaganda sprouting up everywhere throughout North America (see figure 1). As the advertisements demonstrate, with slogans such as "Will you have a part in victory?" or "Can vegetables, fruits and the Kaiser too," these gardens were represented as having causal effects to the war outcome, specifically through growing food. War gardens were marketed and promoted to all people in various venues and strategies (e.g. private, home, communal, school etc.), however, in many cases "experts encouraged community gardens instead of individual gardens because they reduced costs in time, labor, and

equipment; provided a centralized place for training; and promoted healthy rivalry between gardeners" (Lawson, 2004, p. 159). The war garden movement was primarily grounded in concerns of food scarcity. Urban gardening was promoted as a method that ensured victory by (1) alleviating the need for domestic vegetables allowing commercial producers to focus production on war efforts abroad, (2) reducing the consumption of scarce resources by easing transportation and food processing needs, and (3) providing stable food resources at home through canning and preserving techniques in case of further food shortages. Thus, much of the historical literature on the war garden movement suggests that food scarcity and aiding war efforts were the driving force behind it, with civic beatification and physical exercise as secondary.

Figure 1: Promotions of War Gardens

Source: Pack, C. L. (1919). *The War Garden Victorious*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, p. 1, 35, 129.

The end of World War I meant the end of the war garden campaign. While many argued for the continued support of community gardens, national and public cries for their benefits beyond food scarcity and war needs were met with little response (Lawson, 2004). The value of urban gardening as a publicly supported practice began to dwindle; gardens that were once productive were either struggling to survive or nonexistent. It was not until the Great Depression of the 1930s that urban gardening garnered public support again. At the time it was believed urban gardening would be a way of providing relief work to the massive amounts of unemployed. Fittingly, this period in urban gardening history was known as the "relief garden" movement. Lawson (2004) identified three types of relief gardens that emerged during this time:

> Public and philanthropic work-relief gardens that employed people to produce food that was distributed to institutions, subsistence garden programs that encouraged backyard and community gardens, and industrial gardens in which companies provided land and materials to previous employees. (p. 160)

The gardens acted as a type of "relief package" similar to other relief packages at the time for unemployed. While most relief gardening was voluntary there were instances of compulsory garden programs ringing true to the slogan "no garden, no relief." This style of support by government, public, and private agencies was viewed as a beneficial way of offering relief outside of monetary systems by allowing people to help themselves through the practice of urban gardening. Further, it was a

strategy that would mitigate idleness, which was seen as being a potential catalyst for social and public disturbance. Ultimately public officials ended support of relief gardens in 1937 after issues of individual profit from public provisions, as well as market contentions (adding to overproduction) with commercial growers and relief gardeners in favor of the food stamp program. With the system 'better' supporting people, relief gardens began to be seen within negative connotations as "welfare gardens" aimed at reducing poverty for individuals on the margins who were seen as lazy, disabled or elderly. Relief gardens thus had a dual purpose as an antidote for idle hands and a form of relief for the unemployed (Lawson, 2005). While the program did not last long it was seen as a method that provided a relatively quick band-aid to the economic and social hardships of the Great Depression.

Urban gardens once again demonstrated a value for public input in the "victory garden" movement of World War II. These victory gardens were not seen as having an impact on food security as they were inefficient compared to modern growing techniques, even though these local gardens accounted for 42% of the nation's (USA) vegetable production (Lawson, 2004). However they were represented as "part of the civilian war effort [producing] other benefits, namely, healthier diet, exercise, recreation, distraction from worry about loved ones in battle, and civic beautification in a time of limited mobility due to gas rationing" (Lawson, 2004, p. 161). Similar to the war garden campaign, victory gardens held strong sentiments and notions of patriotism. A video produced by the United States Department of Agriculture (1942) demonstrated this best. With the narrator emphasizing each phrase he announced "no work, no garden, get what this means,"

forcefully pausing before restating “no work, no spuds, no work, no turnip, no tank, no flying fortress,” heightening with the final statement “no victory.” With a quieter tone the narrator continued on, “bare that in mind all you victory gardeners,” before bellowing, “and work for victory!” as a quartet began to play in the background. Once again domestic communal garden efforts were represented as having strong causal links with war outcomes abroad (see figure 2). Further, victory gardens promoted communal garden spaces for the advantages of supervision, education and “friendly rivalry” between neighboring plots and gardens, this can be seen as a shift from more communal to individualistic conceptualizations of gardening. Pack (1919), a philanthropic donor to early startups of victory gardens and war gardens, went as far as stating that “genuine community gardening, where all available lands are surveyed and allotted to gardeners, hardly falls short of land conscription” (p. 79). This approach to communal gardening cemented its value in society as a significant contribution to war outcomes.

Figure 2: Promotions of Victory Gardens (Pack, 1919)

Post war community gardens have gone through continual resurgence and decline, with little prolonged political support or unified direction as in previous garden movements. However, in recent years a renewed interest in community gardens in North America, and internationally, has occurred. Revival efforts have commonly centered on dialogue that urban gardens promote sustainable food practices that benefit community development as well as the ecosystem and the local economy (City of Edmonton, 2012). Lawson (2004) suggested that contemporary community gardens have prospered in many forms, from local activism groups (e.g. Green Guerillas of New York City) to civic supported urban agriculture (e.g. P-Patch community garden program of Seattle). However, much of this literature and support framed community gardens as intricate pieces of local food practice that can facilitate social dimensions of community as well as providing alternative food networks that are sustainable while being socially and environmentally just.

Previous urban garden support paralleled significant movements or crises. Railway gardens came with the selling of Canada's west, war and victory gardens were promoted as a patriotic act during war times, and relief gardens were employed to offset the Great Depression, fear of food insecurity and rising unemployment. The modern community garden movement seems to take a similar path. In the last decade an increased awareness towards food production, the environment and the local economy has established a growing movement towards re-creating our relationship with food (Mair, Sumner, & Routeau, 2008). The rise of the Slow Food Movement and the increasing number of book and television outlets

that encourage practices of elite dining and 'buy local, think global' have situated everyday food practices as a way of addressing "existing injustices – social, environmental or socio-environmental – through the practice of communal gardening" (Milbourne, 2011, p. 954). Contemporary community garden movements have differed drastically in how they have been supported. While municipal, provincial and federal governments have crafted statements supporting local food sustainability (e.g. *Fresh*, the city of Edmonton's food and urban agriculture strategy), gardens have predominately been seen as community initiated grassroots projects by policy makers, with less formal local or state support. Community groups and members would either negotiate space in an existing garden or establish a new garden by engaging community members, finding and securing a viable site and developing garden guidelines (City of Edmonton, 2012). These processes nurture an ethic of individual responsibility for getting involved in community gardening with a predetermined assumption of what the meaning and purpose of gardening is in society and communities for people (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Contemporary Food Dialogue

Dominant meta-narratives of societal meaning associated with gardening have been established and negotiated over time. In recent years dominant garden narratives have recognized communal gardening as a practice that promotes the development of green communities by bringing people together to support sustainable food initiatives. Contemporary food narratives have garnered the attention of local policy makers; for example the city of Edmonton (2012) described five main opportunities to expand "urban agriculture" (community gardens are mentioned as a method within urban agriculture). The benefits suggested gardens foster (1) a stronger, more vibrant local economy, (2) a healthier, more food-secure community, (3) more attractive, vibrant and unique places, (4) healthier ecosystems, and (5) less energy, emissions and waste. Garden rhetoric, such as the city of Edmonton's *Fresh* strategy, privileges gardening that attends to sustainable food process through garden practices such as seed saving, heritage seeds, chemical and pesticide free organic gardening. These narratives assume meanings and outcomes that will be facilitated through gardening without questioning the diversity of garden use, meaning and experience that is outside of dominant narratives. In turn this has marginalized garden practices, communities and people that exist outside of this framework while legitimizing a specific form of communal gardening.

Legitimizing specific communal garden practices can be detrimental to recognizing cultural variances in gardens and with food. Community gardens or groups whose garden practices are established outside of dominant

conceptualizations will have problems negotiating space, being taken seriously and/or culturally supported. Food security, as defined by the World Food Summit, is said to exist when "all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (Government of Canada, 1998, p. 9). While numerous definitions exist in regards to food security and sustainability many centre on ideologies of access, availability, supply and utilization (Power, 2008). Power (2008) identified that dominant conceptualizations of food security were "developed in non-Aboriginal contexts; they do not take full account of the traditional food practices of Aboriginal people or Aboriginal conceptualizations of food security" (p. 95). Power advocated that "cultural food security" is another level of food security that acknowledges how food practices are vital to the maintenance, reproduction and survival of cultures. Specifically recognizing how traditional food practices of Aboriginal peoples across contexts holds "significant symbolic and spiritual value, [that] is central to personal identity and the maintenance of culture" (Powers, 2008, p. 96). Community gardens in diverse urban centres like Edmonton can be seen as intriguing sites of cultural sustenance for Aboriginal peoples as well as other cultures. Thus food practices can sustain cultural identities and practices for many groups, such as harvesting and growing buchu (garlic chives or Chinese leeks) for traditional Korean dishes (e.g. Kimchi). However, the dominant discourse of communal gardening has limited the scope and practice of gardening by assuming how it is experienced and what it means for local and global communities. By upholding a specific meaning of gardening, the model becomes adorned with

various privileges and benefits that cannot be accessed by those who depart from the dominant framework. For gardeners, such privileges can include access to secured land, resources, garden education, training and support from policy makers.

Numerous traditional food practices operate outside of dominant frameworks of contemporary community gardens. Caduto and Bruchac (1996) explain the complex relationship Aboriginal peoples have with the land and food, explaining:

> A garden in Native North America, is not just a place to grow food. Taking care of a garden is one of the most important ways that people become a part of the great Circles of Life. Every time we plant a seed, add compost to the soil, water a seedling, pull a weed, talk or sing gently to the plants or say "thank you" for the blooming flowers, we are giving a gift. In turn we receive knowledge, peace of mind, food for our bodies, a growing spirit of giving and a sense of having a full life. When we give this kind of close attention to plants we really begin to know them—their habits and the changes they experience. We notice the plants' enemies and problems as soon as they begin to attack, such as insects, disease, drought and other stresses. We see when the plants are doing well and when they are not. (p. 5)

Situating gardening alongside Aboriginal worldviews and ontologies brings a different meaning to the relation and experience of gardening as strategies to enhance local sustainability and food security. Understanding gardening through Indigenous and/or other cultural contexts is essential to leisure research at several levels. First, North American histories of communal gardening have largely left

cultural practices of gardening unheard and untold. Secondly, by legitimizing a specific model of gardening in North American society we have limited how leisure is conceptualized increasingly under dominant Eurocentric frameworks. If community gardens and leisure are to support diverse communities and peoples and not create further inequities, leisure research must attend to the numerous contexts gardens get taken up in and how they are practiced. In leisure research that means exploring and identifying how gardening is practiced and what meanings are evoked across different communities and across cultures. This adheres to Rojek's (2005) scholarship that stated:

> A comparative and historical method is the foundation of leisure analysis, especially in respect to location and context. If we approach topics in leisure simply from the position of our own time and space, our perspective will invariably be too narrow. We may acquire genuine insights into the leisure forms of our own culture. But in multicultural society a narrow perspective is a dog in a manger. (p. 39)

My research provides a cross-cultural context by comparing my experiences across three culturally diverse community gardens in Edmonton, while situating them within a specific time, place and social milieu in communal garden history.

Leisure research on community gardens has primarily focused on the maintenance, distribution, and reproduction of social networks in community gardens and across populations (e.g., Glover, 2003; Glover, 2004; Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005a; Glover, Shinew, & Parry, 2005b; Shinew, Glover, & Parry, 2004). Grounded in social capital theory (Putnam, 2000), gardens were presented as a

place where social interactions and bonds could be established in communities, developing norms of trust and reciprocity among garden members could then be collectively or individually used to achieve progressive ends. Glover (2004) suggested, "without social capital, community building would be impossible" (p. 144). Such a statement communicates a clear value of placing leisure research within such a neoliberal and non-decolonizing framework. The attractiveness within leisure research to incorporate social capital theory, according to Blackshaw and Long (2005), is that:

> [Social capital] places an all too often overlooked property of leisure to the fore. Always uneasy about relying on the economic contribution of leisure, here was a means by which it could be seen to contribute to regeneration. Leisure, whether sport, arts or socialising, does not have to be valued only because it can create employment, generate income or improve health, but because it brings different people together. (p. 6)

Even though social capital values bringing people together, it also reinscribes capitalistic frameworks, conceptualizing human relationships as capital or credit linked to specific self-serving and/or homogenizing aims. The aforementioned articles all focused on one community garden in its first year of establishment in a racially diverse and low-income community in St. Louis. Glover's (2004) research explored the distribution of social capital among garden members, stating that the extent of social capital across actors depends on the position they occupy. While Glover's research acknowledged gardens could be sites of inequal resource (social capital) distribution, it assumed that social networking and bonding is a primary

purpose and meaning in the garden and for its gardeners. This privileged an affluent Eurocentric conception of what gardening is—a voluntary grassroots organization that is "less about gardening than [it is] about community" (Glover, 2004, p. 153). Such a focus marginalizes groups or people who seek out and take up gardening not as an act of social connectedness and community transformation, but for other needs and/or desires such as sustenance, connecting to the land or sustaining cultural practices. Therefore groups or people not seeking social capital, even if they attempted, would be remised as their practices of gardening are outside the dominant framework of investigation. Consequently leisure research needs to explore how, if any, purposes and meanings across gardens and gardeners are related to social connectedness, environmental issues, sustainability, elite tastes, social activism, gentrification, food security, cultural food security and/or any other themes. By exploring the varied meanings and purposes across contexts to how gardening is practiced leisure can better understand how to support the processes and needs of communities, than possibly claim gardens provide specific outcomes related to leisure (e.g., creation of social capital).

There are several gaps within leisure research that my research will look to attend. First, leisure research has not explored how gardeners construct meaning and purpose from involvement in community gardens. Framing community gardens into homogenous practices of what is and how it occurs is problematic in exploring the fragile and fluid dynamics of community gardens across populations and space. Thus, investigation is needed to identify the varying and dynamic forms of leisures across diversity and context to highlight the polythetic nature of leisure research

grounded in historical and comparative data (Fox & Klaiber, 2006; Lefebvre, 2004; Rojek, 2005). Second, leisure research has not made any connections towards the relationship between food security and/or cultural food security and leisure practices in the garden. Glover's (2004) research even states that the community garden under research was an ornamental and flower garden with vegetable planting not allowed, limiting the dynamics of the research to identify links to cultural sustenance. Thus, leisure research needs to explore the multivariate ways gardening is taken up to maintain and reproduce Aboriginal and cultural histories through everyday food practices.

Theoretical Framework

My research investigates two theoretical levels. The first theoretical level focuses on how I experienced communal gardening and how gardening is relational to the diversity of communities. Specifically, this describes how I interpret meaning and purpose towards community gardens through the experiences that occurred in them and the relationships formed with the communities, groups and people. The second theoretical level is a process of re-thinking leisure outside dominant Eurocentric definitions of leisure. Comparisons across diverse community garden sites, using thick descriptions, provide alternative narratives to how leisures are culturally practiced and conceptualized through my experiences across gardens.

Kelly (1992) argued that leisure research has primarily focused on questions of what and where leisure occurs leading to a deficit in leisure scholarship that describes *how* similar activities vary according to their sociocultural context. For example, communal garden practices by a group of Korean elders, compared to a

group of Aboriginal people or a group of university students would differ drastically in how they may be done, what meaning they provide in their lives, and in the day to day interactions that occur. While gardening may look like an identical or homogenous leisure experience through practices such as turning soil, sowing seeds, watering and so on, these actions, while similar, hold many different meanings and rhythms. A seed planted by a Korean immigrant may be an act of cultural food security, while a seed planted by a university student may be an act of defiance towards global food production. However, without leisure research providing thick descriptions of experience and meaning across socio-cultural contexts leisure will be limited to concomitant assumptions of what leisure and gardening are and how they are connected (Fox & Klaiber, 2006). Narrative accounts that "show" rather than "tell," allow the reader to travel alongside the experiences *in* the garden (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ellis, 2004). Narratives evoke images and understanding of what it is like to be in the garden setting, while attempting to make sense of the garden setting within the broader social milieu. Howe (1991) claimed, "it could be that the intensive study of the particular, the leisure lifestyles of a few people, could provide new or deeper insights into leisure meanings" (p. 60). This suggests that the intensive study of a few community gardens, through my own lens, can lead to developing deeper insights into the meaning of gardening across sites and communities. Descriptive studies of gardens are vital to (a) examining how community processes occur *in* a specific garden, (b) identifying how diverse communities use and create meaning toward garden practices and how leisure can be supportive to such diversity, and (c) showing the

variance of garden practices over time in relation to the broader socio-cultural rhythms of what gardening is and how it could and is taken up.

Historical and current conceptualizations of leisure have privileged a western ideology of leisure focused largely on social psychological processes that interpret leisure (Chick, 1998; Fox & Klaiber, 2006; Kelly, 1992; Rojek, 2005). Fox & Klaiber (2006) argued that:

> By attending to a specific interpretation of leisure and an atemporal and ahistorical definition, leisure scholars and practitioners have obscured the rich, multivariate, fluid, paradoxical, and contested nature of leisures and the different values interwoven within leisure by various cultures, classes, disciplines, and perspectives. (p. 415)

Theoretically, my project takes up the discussion laid out by Fox and Klaiber by exploring the (different) values interwoven within community gardens, as leisure sites, by various cultures, classes, genders, disciplines and perspectives. Thus, my research focuses on exploring and critiquing what counts as a leisure experience and who gets to make the determination. The value of re-conceptualizing leisure is to include and take seriously alternative narratives and understandings of leisure and how they may or may not support diverse communities. If "leisures are tools or processes that humans happen to use to make sense of the worlds and cultures they inhabit…compositions that identify and give meaning to human behavior" (Fox & Klaiber, p. 420), then leisure research has an obligation to seek and describe diverse accounts of leisure experience so we can better make sense of their worlds in relation to our own.

Throughout Fox and Klaiber's (2006) article that critiqued dominant conceptualizations of leisure, the authors suggested the study of meal practices, stating that:

> Meal practices provide an exemplum for a comparative analysis of leisure, because they are pervasive and encompass varying values and aspects related to both ancient and current understandings of leisure. The systems of eating and meal practices among Romans, Greeks, Jews, and Christians had similarities as well as differences. The differences indicated struggles for identities and competing values as well as differences in location, religion, culture, and gender, among others. (p. 426)

I would suggest that garden practices provide a similar outlet for a comparative analysis of leisure. Systems of growing and harvesting have similarities and differences across cultures, histories, and social contexts. For example, the work of Fox, Humberstone and Dubnewick (in press) identified how Kānaka ʻŌiwi [Native Hawaiian] creation stories situate human beings as younger siblings to the *kalo* plant, and their model for the cosmos is predicated on the nourishment that comes from *kalo*. These practices of reciprocity with the earth resemble Native North Americans' connection to the land and food, as well as providing differences towards how western and Indigenous cultures conceptualize and receive nourishment from food.

I argue with others (e.g. Chick, 1998; Fox & Klaiber, 2006; Henderson, Presley, & Bialeschki, 2004; Kelly, 1992; Rojek, 2005) that leisure scholarship needs to question the dominant leisure meta-narratives. One way of doing this is by

comparing, exploring and redescribing phenomenologies of leisure in everyday life. Lefebvre (2004) stated that "our *scale* determines our setting and our place in the time-space of the universe: what we perceive and what can be used as a starting point for praxis as well as for theoretical knowledge" (p. 82). The dominant scale in leisure research has limited our framework to promoting a Eurocentric conceptualization and praxis of leisure marginalizing leisures across culture, space and time. Thus, North American understandings of leisure have become interconnected with capitalistic outcomes, such as creating dichotomies between work and leisure, where leisure is an activity that rejuvenates people so they can be more productive and efficient in relation to their work obligations. This leads to assumptions of what leisure is and what its meanings and purposes for society are. Wolfe and Samdahl's (2005) critique of leisure programming's efficacy in outdoor recreation demonstrated how leisure research and programming rarely questions and/or tests the assumed benefits and outcomes of our leisure pursuits. Leisure research has widely assumed positive benefits occur in community gardens, in the form of social networking, without providing descriptive details of experience that can show the contradictory and often negative processes that occur and are silenced. My research tests the assumptions of community garden research to consider the experiences of gardening in relation to the needs and vulnerabilities of different individuals and community groups through my own experience across gardens. Leisure research is in dire need of descriptive studies that highlight the different and similar dynamics of our leisure practices beyond broad concepts of

free time, free choice or activity labels, as a garden in an Aboriginal community will operate substantially different than one on a university campus.

Lefebvre's (2004) *Rhythmanalysis* provided a useful point of entry into examining how the rhythms of everyday life in community gardens are constructed across gardens and as a whole. Lefebvre posited, "everywhere where there is an interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm" (p. 15). Lefebvre explained that every organ in the human body has its own distinct rhythm, however, this individual rhythm must be situated within the spatio-temporal rhythm of the whole. The rhythmanalysist, thus would present that each community garden and its gardeners has a rhythm of its own, whether that's the peak time of use, meeting days, types of food grown or any collection of rhythms, but these rhythms are subjected to the simultaneity and grasp of several meta or external rhythms (e.g. meta narratives of gardening focus on sustainability, social activism and networking), their unity in diversity. Rhythmanalysis described the relationships between everyday practices and the spatio-temporal dynamics they take place in, such as the stillness of the Eco community garden on a Sunday morning or the bustle of the Heritage community garden on a weekday lunch hour. The researcher, or rhythmanalysist must:

> Be attentive, but not only to the words or pieces of information, the confessions and confidences of a partner or client. He [sic] will listen to the world, and above all to what are disdainfully called noises, which are said without meaning, and to *murmurs* [rumeurs], full of meaning—and finally he will listen to silences. (p. 19)

Rhythmanalysis is an approach to leisure scholarship that would put an all too needed sensual approach to the fore that guides the researcher through understanding the rhythms of his or her own body "in order consequently to appreciate external rhythms" (p. 19). Such an analysis invites rich descriptions of lived experience to be compared across sites/experiences with the researcher's attention to his or her own rhythms at the core, providing interpretive texts that would be unattainable through interviews or surveys. Garden practices, as well as other food practices, hold a wealth of rhythms that are experienced through our senses during practice. For example, a gardener may identify productive soil from a wet fermented odor that escapes its crevasses with each plunge of a shovel in the spring, or notice a need for organic matter when the soil runs through your hand like a sieve holding water.

A myriad of rhythms are experienced in the garden that has the potential of displaying the fragile and fluid nature of leisures and how they are conceived across space and time. Descriptive research on gardens across contexts provides rhythms that help ascertain rhythms related to leisure beyond problematic Eurocentric ideologies. Gardens, as well as other food practices, allow leisure scholarship to play with the paradoxical rhythms of leisure as a practice not always or exactly free choice, but sustenance. Sustenance is different yet not dichotomized towards work and varying across cultures, times and sites. Leisure scholarship becomes respectful to people's experiences of leisure through understanding different rhythms, especially across cultures and groups, such as how Native American people perceive life as rhythms related to the medicine wheel not work or capitalism (Caduto &

Bruchac, 1996; Fox, 2006; McDonald & McAvoy 1997). McAvoy and Shirilla (2005) demonstrated such rhythms through examining gathering activities of Indigenous peoples. These interviews found "many of the activities, especially those that may be called leisure activities like hunting, fishing, and berry picking, seem to be wrapped up in a close association with sustenance, gathering activities, leisure, family, culture and tradition" (p. 1). It is through intersections of culture, work, leisure, and sustenance that leisure research has the potential to show the multiple ways that people experience leisure across contexts. Adhering to and identifying with Fox's (2010) scholarship that states, leisures are:

> fragile, fluid, open dynamics among spatio-temporal contexts, mind-body-spirit relationships, and community/environment/universe interactions where all life can play with imaginaries, expectations, obligations, the what-is of life, and the range of identities and desires (both positive and negative) and potentially create what has yet or needs to become. This fragile dynamic or rhythm is vulnerable to oppression, hegemonic forces, political and economic ideologies, violence, and appropriation while providing potentials for expression, joy, happiness, relaxation, and being.

A comparative process of understanding rhythms of leisure explores, responds and respects how leisures extend beyond traditional or dominant ideologies to embody alternative ways of conceptualizing leisure across experiences and contexts. However, leisure research must first learn how to listen, invite and hear the stories of marginalised, Aboriginal, cultural groups and our selves.

Methodology

I have argued that leisure research on community gardens began with theory (see Glover, 2004; Glover, 2006; Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005a; Glover, Shinew, & Parry, 2005b; Shinew, Glover, & Parry, 2004), specifically social capital theory, while also accepting the meta-narratives of leisure as an activity that is freely chosen and intrinsically motivated. I suggest that leisure research needs to revisit how people and scholarship narrate meaning and purpose towards garden experiences beyond the assumptions of gardening's grand narratives. By beginning with my experiences in the garden my research will *attend to* and *attend with* the ways in which gardening emerges, is practiced and provides meaning across diversity. Narrative inquiry as theorized by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) provided a methodology that is first and foremost, a way of understanding experience.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated, "experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore educational [and I argue leisure] experience should be studied narratively" (p. 19). They placed narratives as both a methodology and phenomena of study, suggesting "narratives told [are] not always in the latent recalling of the experience but in the process of the telling or articulation and fabrication, which gives rise to a kind of embodied theory and understanding of experience" (Clandinin & Caine, 2012, p. 23). This process of inquiry is beneficial to my research, as well as leisure research in general, in several ways. First, narrative inquiry places the researcher into and at the heart of the topic, in this case embracing my role as a gardener and researcher in the process, and adding a critically reflexive layer that places my experiences as part of

the research texts and meaning making alongside the participants. Reid and Robertson (2005) argued:

> The telling of stories allows others to not only experience more of what the participants experience through leisure but also it enables the researchers to express their feelings on topics about which they feel passionate. As a method, narrative inquiry holds promise as a means to create new understanding of the leisure experience from both the participant and researcher perspectives. (p. 4)

Second, narrative inquiry is a descriptive and interpretive method that allows for a better understanding of the multiplicity of meanings gardens has for gardeners and communities. Clandinin and Connelly's metaphor of the lathe illustrated "the notion that a tool could be used by different people, at different times, in different contexts, all [providing] fundamentally different narratives" (p. 26). By thinking narratively my research looks to illustrate that a community garden could be experienced by different people, at different times, in different contexts, all providing fundamentally different narratives. In this way narrative inquiry is the ideal method for demonstrating the polythetic narratives and nature of leisure, especially across cultures and community garden sites (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Fox & Klaiber, 2006).

A comparative analysis across three community gardens in Edmonton re-describes how leisure can be conceptualized beyond Eurocentric meta-narratives to include narratives of everyday sustenance practice across context (Figure 4). Comparative analysis is necessary to open space for redescription and

reconceptualization of leisure from alternative frames. My research will use three separate lenses/sites that juxtapose the similarities and differences across my leisure experiences. Description of each site establishes the complexity and specificity of gardening practices and is used to compare across garden sites. In addition, the descriptions and comparison enable a re-description of meta-narratives of gardening and leisure. The narrative findings from each site and across sites as well as the redescription supports testing and deconstructing assumptions related to what is legitimized as leisure experiences.

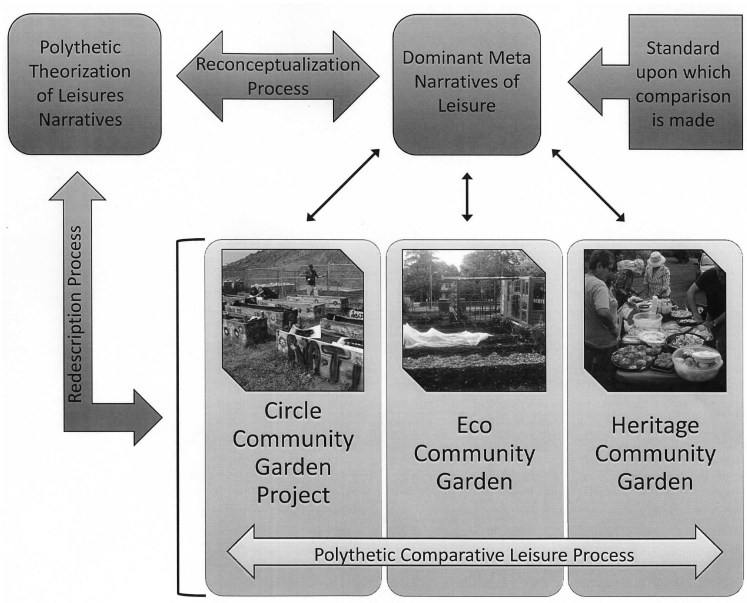

Figure 4: Diagram of Comparative Leisure Theory Process

Fox and Klaiber (2006) argued that "comparison provides a means to re-envision and re-hear data to solve theoretical problems" (p. 415). For leisure, traditional Eurocentric conceptions of leisure have limited or narrowed how leisure has approached historical or current events/practices. In this regard it is not surprising that leisure has made little to no connections towards sustenance or food based practices as legitimized leisure. However, garden practices provide an

exemplar to understanding the polythetic nature of leisure. Tending to diverse food practices in the garden can reveal how leisure practices are framed and practiced outside of established Eurocentric conceptualizations of leisure in everyday life. Cross-cultural comparison is necessary for situating garden practices and leisures within alternative frameworks and worldviews. Should leisure research reinforce concomitant assumptions of community gardens within Eurocentric ideologies of leisure, leisure spaces and practices will continue to be oppressive for cultures, groups and individuals who practice or perceive leisure within alternative frameworks or worldviews.

Three community gardens in Edmonton have been strategically chosen for the contextual diversity they provide, those being, the Eco Community Garden, the Heritage Community Garden and the Circle Community Garden Project. Vignettes from my first day at each of the gardens will be used to describe the gardens and the cultural/site diversity they offer to the project.

May 14, 2011, the Eco Garden: The summer before, I had walked past the garden several times, actually each week, basically everyday. Continually reading the sign 'Eco Garden, all ages and abilities welcome, garden hours Tuesday 6-8 p.m. and Saturday 10-2 p.m.' I waited till the following year, opting to sign up for the online listserv. I had recently received an update from a gardener stating that he would be at the garden for 10 a.m. to start the spring cleanup. I got on my bike just after 10 a.m. and made my way through the low-rise apartment lined streets. My knees chirped like the birds' overhead as I turned the corner onto the familiar tree lined street. Immediately I thought about the fresh soups and salads that awaited me in the months

to come. Several large houses with front porches and sunrooms sat opposite the garden, the garden was nestled beside an unused beach volleyball site, an older home and several well-established elm trees. The community garden had a short chain link fence surrounding its perimeter that maybe reached my midsection. A piecemeal looking tool shed/green house that must have been made out of at least a dozen old windows and doors stood in the back corner. As I made my way off the sidewalk to the garden a young man and his child greeted me with welcoming hellos from inside the fence. Within minutes of making my way into the garden several new faces tentatively entered the front gate. After we exchanged names, faculties and programs the young man acclimated us to the garden showing us the "hot house", compost, rain barrels and drip irrigation system. Immediately I grabbed a pair of gloves and a spade, drove it deep into the soil and was taken aback by the wet fermented odor that sprung up from the ground. Within minutes of turning soil we were reminded not too dig too deep, as it released the nutrients. We steadily moved along with little discussion, turning several rows. Dripping with sweat but feeling alive I reluctantly signed my name into the logbook that sat beside the seed saving catalogue and made my way home to eat lunch and rest my back.

May 4, 2012, the Circle Garden: After meeting with a community worker at a downtown coffee shop just after midday, we made our way back to the community centre and garden. Getting on my bike I arranged to meet her there. Arriving at the building I was greeted by a large eagle mural, fabricated with names, pictures and words such as 'Aboriginal' etched into its feathers. Piles of people congregated outside the building, many sitting or leaning upon the buildings façade, wearing layers of well-

used and torn clothing. The woman suggested I bring my bike into her office as we fill out the volunteer forms and check out the garden. Unwillingly I obliged, hoping this was not taken as a judging act to the people of the community. After filling out the forms, a group of us made our way to the garden, through the main hall, which acted as a multipurpose room, with a kitchen in one corner, offices along one wall and several foldable cafeteria tables sprawled throughout the space, and out the back door. The Circle garden sat in the shadows of a towering skyscraper on the outskirts of downtown. The garden was caged by temporary fence that loomed over my head; the fence looked miniscule compared to the mound of loam and construction material that sat on two sides of the garden. Standing outside the garden we waited as a worker attempted to open the chain lock; after several tries from each of us we finally made our way in. The garden was roughly thirty feet by thirty feet and contained sixteen raised beds wide enough to fit two to three rows that spanned the length of your wingspan. After spotting two rain barrels pushed to the corner I made my way over to inspect them; one worker immediately informed me that we had to get water from the nearby automotive shop using buckets, adding with a glimmer of hope that we may be able to get a hose in the near future. Quietly we stood amidst the construction noise; it did not take long before we left the garden and made arrangements for when we would be planting in the upcoming weeks.

June 5, 2012, the Heritage Garden: After setting up a meeting with the garden coordinator the week before, we were to meet at the garden for 4:15 p.m. I arrived at the garden a good twenty minutes earlier. Driving past several malls and communities, I made my way across the rail tracks and into an industrial area with a large high

school. From my discussion with the garden coordinator I knew the garden was adjacent to the school. From the street I could not spot it, however, I knew where it must be. I drove through the parking lot to its end where a multi purpose court stood, parked the car and got out. There was a small path walking beside the court that led to the garden. With a jump in my step, camera in hand, I went to each corner of the garden with a grin from ear to ear, noticing the pergola at the front with the words 'Heritage Community Garden' carved into the wood, the compost on the side, the metal shed near the back with the water hose and supply sitting close by. String and sticks were marked throughout the garden, with some gardens having small signs stating the garden owner's name. As I walked between the plots I looked around trying to identify what was being grown. I was amazed to see vegetables producing so early. I noticed many of the gardens contained beans, lettuce, chards, carrots, squash and some corn. However, there was one corner, about a third of the garden in which I could not identify a single vegetable. One looked like a young cabbage sprout that was green and purple with a hairy type texture; others looked like flat leaf chives. I wanted to taste them but did not want to invade people's privacy; I would have to ask later. Upon further exploration I found a seed packet draped over a stick in front of several closely packed rows identifying the broad leaf like chives as Chinese leeks, however, I was still unable to identify the cabbage like greens. I did know that a portion of the garden was dedicated to a group of Asian seniors, I had a sense this was it. The roar of a commercial transport train took over my senses as it rumbled behind me for the next couple of minutes. Shortly after its departure the garden coordinator appeared, apologizing for her lateness as she was stuck behind the train.

As the vignettes show there are several distinctions across and in gardens that made these three sites attractive to cross cultural research. First and most importantly each site has distinctly different types of users and cultures who take part in the garden. The Heritage community garden offers a mix of Asian seniors and non-Asian professionals who have plots at the site. As described, one section of the garden was dedicated to the Asian seniors as part of a relationship with a seniors association. The Circle garden is part of an area that is home to a large number of Aboriginal peoples, the community garden is part of a community centre in the neighborhood that looks to work with and for Aboriginal community members. Lastly, the Eco garden largely caters to a young affluent crowd, with many of its gardeners either studying at or alumni from a nearby educational institution. Thus distinct cultural and class demographics are explored when inquiring into how and what is gardening for diverse groups. The second area of difference is how the gardens are supported. Both the Eco garden and Heritage garden are initiatives connected to Sustainable Food Edmonton (SFE). While SFE does not provide financial support they do provide other support networks, such as education, resources and other opportunities to the gardens and its gardeners. The Eco garden is primarily supported through the nearby educational institution. Thus the vision and purpose behind the garden is based in organic, sustainable and ecological food practices being facilitated through the garden. The Eco garden is organized as a collective plot where any and all people are allowed to harvest, plant and take part in garden activities. Each year the educational institution funds one undergraduate garden coordinator who helps coordinate activities, meetings and events in the

garden. A portion of the harvest is usually donated to the Campus Food Bank, with much of the produce being consumed by gardeners. Heritage garden while supported through SFE and the City of Edmonton is primarily a grassroots community group. The garden is organized into individual plots where members pay a twenty-five dollar annual fee for a plot. Members are expected to maintain their plots to community standards as outlined by the Heritage community garden contract that outlines maintenance requirements and dates, donations (e.g. Grow-a-row, give-a-row), and organic practices. The Circle community garden is supported as a recreational program/initiative through the adjacent community centre, with no relationships with SFE or the City of Edmonton. All produce that is harvested from the garden goes directly to the community centre kitchen for members of the community. Garden facilitators (myself and several other community workers) maintain and open the garden, which is open to community members, throughout the week. The different support networks and dynamics in which these gardens and gardeners emerge allow for exploring how dominant community and garden narratives either inhibit or facilitate inclusive community garden processes across cultures and the multiplicity of purposes/meanings of gardening.

Giles and Williams (2007) highlighted the lack of self-narratives in leisure research, positing that it is “only in terms of our own experiences that we as leisure scholars can make sense of others' experiences” (p. 195). As a community gardener and researcher I use autobiographical narrative inquiry as an interpretive introspective method to understand how gardening has emerged in my life in relation to others. In this way autobiographical writing invites the reader alongside

the emotions and experience of being in the garden(s), evoking a response in readers to "feel and think about [my] life and their lives in relation to [my own]" (Ellis, 1999, p. 674). According to Ellis (1999):

> Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms—short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose. In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories impacted by history and social structure, which themselves are dialectically revealed through actions, feelings, thoughts, and language. (p. 673)

Autobiographical methods are used as the primary texts of my research as a way of making sense of my own garden experiences in relation to others and the broader social milieu. Autobiographical research provides the "opportunity to draw deeply on personal experience [facilitating] highly nuanced and evocative accounts of thought and action" (Anderson & Austin, 2012, p. 139-140). In this regard,

autobiographical narrative inquiry represents a method that attends to the descriptive, rich and complex details of how gardening emerges and what meanings it evokes for gardeners/researchers that other methods would omit. For example, the previous descriptive vignettes transport the reader to the garden, showing the differing cultural rhythms of each: affluence at the Eco garden compared to the cultural separations through vegetables between the Asian and middle class gardeners at Heritage garden. In this way narrative accounts are a lived method that can illuminate details about demographic and sensory distinctions that traditional reports, surveys, or census data omit.

Further, autoethnography prominently features identification with the sensual engagement of the body and emotions as a way of knowing (Anderson & Austin, 2012). Gardening, as well as other daily food practices, entails the use of our senses to feel, hear, taste, smell, and see as ways gardeners make sense of our worlds and our experiences in them. Thus, it is vital for leisure research to acknowledge and describe the sensual ways that researchers/gardeners experience and participate in their worlds. Anderson and Austin (2012) argued, by "opening an avenue for deeper integration of the self in the fieldwork enterprise, autoethnography can facilitate personal development and self-understanding at the same time that it promotes broader social scientific insights and analysis" (p. 141). As I struggle to make sense of gardening and how I personally interpret the meaning and purpose it has in my life, autobiographical narrative inquiry allows me to reflexively look inward toward my own garden experiences and outward to my relationships with other gardeners. In doing so I identify how different groups,

cultures and sites can assist, resist or broaden my own meaning making processes towards what the practice of gardening is and can be. Thus through understanding experiences of the self I am able to make sense of others experiences in relation to my own.

Both narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and autoethnography (Ellis, 2004) are beneficial methods to exploring the meanings and purposes of gardens beyond meta-narratives currently and historically tied to social movements. This research is not to critique or question if community gardens can add to local and sustainable food processes, but to demonstrate gardening practices in their complexity and multiplicity. While gardening can be framed as an everyday environmental practice, it is can also be framed as a way of connecting to family and culture, a practice of subsistence and much more. In this way both narrative inquiry and autoethnography are methods that highlight the polythetic nature of gardening through a focus away from the grand narrative of gardens, towards "the person [and leisure] in context" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 32). Clandinin and Caine (2012) argued:

> Narrative inquirers add both to public discourse, as well as to particular policies at any given time. While narrative inquirers do not generalize from the experiences of their [own or their] participants, they add to policy development by pointing out the complexities, contradictions, and inconsistencies often inherent in policies and their implementation. One of the significant contributions is frequently to the ways in which others understand the lives of people, in the assumptions and values they place on

> lived experiences, and making visible the silences, disruptions, and complexities inherent in people's experiences. (p. 19)

Therefore this research, using narrative methods, has the potential to describe how diversity is experienced in communal gardens, and leisure to better make sense of the worlds we enter as well as our own beyond dominant meta-narratives. Ultimately these findings give recreation and leisure practitioners vital information about local community groups involved with community gardens with the hopes of identifying how people make meaning of their experiences gardening, and how and where supports are needed to ensure community gardens work towards inclusive community practices.

Field notes obtained from May 2012 to October 2012 were the primary texts used in this research. Field notes were written directly after being in each of the gardens. My distribution of time among the gardens varied; on average I would be present at the Eco community garden between four to eight hours per week (combination of Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday weekly garden hours and off garden hours), at the Circle garden between one to six hours per week (Monday and Friday mornings), and at the Heritage garden between one to two hours per week (varied times). Initial notes consisted of hand written descriptions of what occurred in the garden with detail toward the emotions and feelings evoked. My focus was towards capturing the everyday mundane practices I experienced in the garden in relation to the context and people I encountered. The field notes were then restructured as interim texts that wove the field notes together into a working plot of my experience in the garden. Research texts developed from the continual telling

and retelling of my experiences in each of the gardens. My analysis centres on the place of self, as a gardener/researcher, in relation to the gardens involved (Eco, Heritage and Circle gardens) and the broader local and national gardening landscape. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated, "it is in response to the questions of meaning and social significance that ultimately shape field texts into research texts" (p. 131). My research texts were situated as a conversation within the current social and political discussions around community gardens as local sustainable food practices. The texts from this work placed myself within the history and contemporary conceptualizations of gardening in Canada and demonstrate how I negotiated, resisted and took up the meta-narratives of gardening over time and space. The multiple stories were pulled together and interwoven across one another, similar to how Paul Fleischman (1997) crafted his children's novel *Seedfolks*, where he described the meaning and role the garden provides for several community members and to their community. From the child who planted the first seed in the abandoned lot to the woman watching from her window, Fleischman tended to the soil of each story in a way that gave voice to the multiple meanings and purposes gardening can and does hold for those involved. For this research I tend to my own experiences using an autobiographical narrative approach into my journey of coming to and growing in the garden. This research provides the necessary groundwork for future research that will gather and co-create narratives of diverse gardening experiences across community garden sites and members.

Communication of Results

My Master's research is in the form of a paper-based thesis. The first manuscript has been submitted to *Leisure/Loisir* for their upcoming special edition on "Leisure and Food". As the lead author alongside Karen Fox and Jean Clandinin this paper explores, through a narrative lens, my journey to gardening and how my experiences at the Heritage garden challenged as well as reinforced dominant garden narratives as well as my own notions of what it means to garden and how. This adds to garden literature by exposing the multivariate ways gardening is taken up and supported. Theoretically it re-conceptualizes leisure outside of dominant Eurocentric frameworks by using everyday food practices to question broad constructs of time and work-life binaries. The second piece, also using a narrative lens, is an exploration into my experiences at the Circle garden. This paper examines my tensions, as a researcher and gardener, as I carried familial narratives and adapted to Indigenous garden narratives in the Circle garden. The purpose of this paper is to highlight how gardening, and leisure programming, can be a site of contestation and privilege when working with marginal and/or diverse communities.

My participatory relationship with each garden was established at the outset of the 2012 gardening season. As a gardener at the Eco garden for several seasons I talked directly to the garden coordinator and the educational institution that the garden was attached to before beginning my research in the community. With their approval I sent a community specific letter to the gardeners through the online listserv and communicated directly with members in the garden my research intent.

In the letter I outlined a small history of what led me to my research and my interests in gardening, how I planned on conducting my research and provided contact information. I followed a similar process with the Heritage community garden, directly contacting the garden coordinator and distributing an introductory letter to the members through their email notifications as well as directly communicating my intent with several gardeners. In both sites I acted as a participant throughout the season, gardening and helping where asked or where I could. I established a working relationship with the Circle community garden by contacting the volunteer services coordinator. I 'volunteered' to act as a "gardener in residence" with the community and would tend to and open the garden throughout the summer months. At this site I communicated my research interests directly with the community centre and several key individuals each of whom agreed to support my research project in exchange for a participatory relationship in the garden. With many community members not having access to email or the internet, direct interaction with community members who participated in the garden was my primary method of communication. The relationships built early in the research process at each of the gardens has given me the foundation for understanding that sets a potential stage for other approaches that are more participatory in the future. I have taken measures to protect confidentiality and anonymity of sites and members, using pseudonyms for each of the gardens and gardeners involved. I stress that this research is not at attempt to study others or narrate their perspectives of gardening. Rather it is a autobiographical examination of my experiences and meaning making in the gardens in relation to the community and

its members involved to explore how everyday food practices can aid in the process of re-theorizing leisure and gardening meta-narratives (Fox & Klaiber, 2006; Rojek, 2005).

Conclusion

Communal gardening and food practices operate as types of living stories. Gardening is a reflective and communicative action for people and communities to create and continually recreate themselves within a certain history and social context. Holding a variety of meanings, from social activism for sustainable food to securing and producing food that maintains and reproduces cultural links, gardening is a way of acting and making sense of life across diversity. Overarching assumptions towards what is community gardening and how it emerges across communities and people nourishes my research as I explore how diverse groups come to construct meaning and purpose from their experiences in relation to my own. Descriptive narrative accounts of how I experienced gardening, as a leisure practice, provide space for the creation of counter-narratives that can both intervene and interweave new understandings of what it means to garden, especially across cultures and contexts. This adds to the leisure literature by questioning dominant frameworks of leisure research to rethink leisure in terms of everyday sustenance and cultural practices outside of broad social psychological definitions. Thus, this research benefits community gardens and diverse communities by resonating alongside communities, groups and people to explore the multiples meanings of community garden practice. It is essential that we understand how gardening is practiced and what meaning it has in our lives so

leisure scholarship and practice does not assume we know how to support or make conclusion and/or assumptions to the role gardening plays in their lives, as well as our own. Future research can build from exploratory and descriptive data like this to better understand how to support diverse groups towards gardening and food as a culturally significant leisure activity.

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Tending to the Soil: Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry of Gardening[1]

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Tending to the Soil: Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry of Gardening

Early Blossoms: Coming to Heritage Community Garden

After crossing the train tracks embedded into the road I rounded the bend towards the high school. Turning into the congested parking lot of the high school I parked at its far edge adjacent to the basketball courts. I looked toward the expansive field in front of me and forced myself to take a few deep breaths. I barely noticed the sunken red gravel track creating an oval circumference around the misshapen field, or the low-rise industrial style buildings sitting before me. I managed to grab my small notepad and camera before checking the time, 3:45 p.m. I had fifteen minutes till Kim, the garden coordinator of Heritage community garden, was scheduled to arrive. Exhaling deeply, I looked toward where Kim had described the garden to be, near the end of the parking lot by a patch of elm trees.

I peered through the chain link fence that surrounded the basketball courts and spotted the garden's small tool shed and numerous stakes were visible poking out of the dark earth in the distance. I made my way down the well-trodden path all the while straining to read the words etched into the pergola at the garden entrance. Finally I read, "Heritage Community Garden." I smiled as my eyes darted to the three tiers of compost, water hookups, rain barrels, and other established aspects of the garden. I felt a permanency from the site that caught me off-guard. Feelings of hope for the other garden (Eco) that is part of my study coursed through my body as I thought "maybe communal gardens can be supported locally and in communities over extended periods of time." Excited with that thought I walked around the garden's perimeter, getting a glimpse from every angle.

Context of Community Gardens

In recent years community gardens have received increased attention from academics, community members and city officials. In Edmonton it is estimated that there are over eighty recognized gardens and numerous others that are not officially identified (see City of Edmonton, 2012). Leisure research focused on community gardens has primarily examined community gardens as sites that facilitate social cohesion in their community (Glover, 2003, 2004, 2006; Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005a, 2005b; Shinew, Glover, & Parry, 2004). Even though social cohesion is the frame through which gardens are seen, no studies have been undertaken that demonstrate how gardeners experience social engagement/disengagement in, and through, garden practices. Instead, research has largely asserted that community gardens promote positive community development and bring people together to reach defined goals. The outcome orientated social benefits of community gardening, under the guise of social capital (Putnam, 2000), have obscured the "rich, multivariate, fluid, paradoxical, and contested nature of leisures and the different values interwoven within leisure by various cultures, classes, disciplines, and perspectives" (Fox & Klaiber, 2006, p. 415). In doing so leisure research has treated gardening as a homogenous activity leaving Eurocentric definitions of leisure as an activity that is freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and separate from work or obligation unquestioned. This has limited how leisure is conceptualized to broad activity labels to explain gardening as well as reaffirm that social cohesion is established and maintained around homogeneity, not diversity or difference (Arai & Pedlar, 2003; Haluza-DeLay, 2006).

This article will explore the multiple ways gardening is taken up and experienced by Michael[2], one of the authors, in the Heritage (pseudonym[3]) community garden. The purpose of this inquiry is to (a) inquire into the lived experiences that occur in gardens through the use of autobiographical narrative inquiry methods (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and (b) uproot the assumed meanings and functions of gardening in leisure by attending to how Michael negotiated space within what might be seen as the meta-narratives of gardening and leisure created by the dominant discourses. We (Michael, Jean, and Karen) stress that this research is not an attempt to study others or narrate their perspectives of gardening. Rather it is an autobiographical narrative inquiry into Michael's experiences and meaning making in the gardens in relation to community, members and the broader social milieu to explore how everyday food practices can aid in the process of re-theorizing leisure and gardening meta-narratives (Fox & Klaiber, 2006).

Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is first and foremost a way of understanding experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The use of narrative inquiry to study the experiences of researchers and participants allows this research to shed light on the cohesive and comforting as well as the paradoxical and contested nature of community processes. Engaging in autobiographical narrative inquiry in this study offers the

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[2] The use of researchers' and participants' first names is integral to narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as a relational form of inquiry and experience.
[3] Due to confidentiality all names of gardens and people from this research are pseudonyms. The authors have used broad references to identify cultural groups to protect the anonymity of the gardens and gardeners involved.

possibility of disrupting the dominant discourse of community in leisure by posing alternative stories from multiple experiences lived in communities (Huber & Whelan, 2001; Lashua & Fox, 2006). The experiences of Michael in the midst of travelling to and between the stories of Heritage gardeners and his own stories will open up discussions around the meanings formed, and relationships built, in community gardens. This article will explore the movement of Michael across life stories of gardening, with family, and between his experiences in two community gardens (Heritage and Eco) to help understand the alternative stories in one garden (Heritage).

Moving into the Garden: Entering the Field

Unease set in as I cautiously stepped into the defined boundaries of the garden. Feeling like I had crossed a private boundary I went step by step between the plots, careful to look but not disturb. I gazed into each plot attempting to identify the seedlings. The tightly wound string held between the stakes kept me from getting too close. The woven strings marking boundaries resembled an attempt to keep people out. My actions mirrored my thoughts. With hands cemented to my side I tight-rope walked between the plots, responding as if I was navigating through a residential street where each household owned a small plot of land that was their individual and private space to maintain and to use at their own gardening discretion. I felt unwelcome in the visibly divided and marked space, unsure of my place within the group. I sat on a picnic table at the garden's perimeter questioning the "community" aspects of community gardens after discerning the space as an extension of the private sphere being further staked into new grounds.

Stepping into new spaces as a researcher and participant arouses certain anticipations. As both researcher and participant, unwelcome feelings pulsed through his body stiffening his torso as he walked through Heritage garden on that first day. The rigid and defined rows that were claimed by members with signs and stakes led Michael to question his place in the garden. The comforting thoughts of a participatory relationship with the garden and its members seemed a distant dream. The permanency envisioned earlier from the garden that permeated joy within him suddenly shifted. From permanent supports to permanent separation he observed the garden from its outer edge wondering how he would be involved and what type of garden he was becoming a part of. The private ownership of plots between hardened and weed-filled walkways hinted at a history of division in the garden to him. He hesitated to stay in the garden wanting not to encroach on the boundaries of any member's private space as he felt the institutional, social, and cultural narratives of privatized space and ownership mediate his own connection to the garden (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Michael, knowing he stepped into the midst of past, present and future stories being told and experienced in the garden and with its members, reminded himself of the garden's reputation as a site of diversity and multiculturalism as he sat on its edge.

Stories Planted in me Early: Experiences in Early Landscapes

I was reminded of my experiences that led me to community gardening. Three years ago I stumbled upon a garden on my way home from the university. For the next couple of months I took the same path home and read the same sign each day: "Eco Community Garden. Join us for garden hours 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. every Monday and

Wednesday, and 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. every Saturday; All ages and abilities welcome!" As enticed as I was, I opted for the listserv while intently monitoring the garden's transformation, from seedlings to stalks, on a daily basis. I stayed beyond its gated boundary happily looking in. It was not until the following gardening season that I crossed the waist high fence line and tended to the garden.

Bringing his own personal narratives as a son in a family of food raised in an urban setting and a growing scholar with an interest in diversity, Michael expressed an overall intimacy toward Heritage garden. The unease that arose when he stepped into the new space was eased by his past experiences of negotiating space in the Eco garden and his romantic notions that food could bridge all barriers. The numerous shifts Michael felt from ease to unease and welcome to private in such a short temporal period demonstrated how leisures are experienced as:

> Fragile, fluid, open dynamics among spatio-temporal contexts, mind-body-spirit relationships, and community/environment/universe interactions where all life can play with imaginaries, expectations, obligations, the what-is of life, and the range of identities and desires (both positive and negative) and potentially create what has yet or needs to become. This fragile dynamic or rhythm is vulnerable to oppression, hegemonic forces, political and economic ideologies, violence, and appropriation while providing potentials for expression, joy, happiness, relaxation, and being. (Fox, 2010)

I was pulled into a new world of gardening at Eco, filled with organic practices, political activism, and a communal (no plot) arrangement. It was not the same feel of gardening that I grew up with in my family and at my grandma's garden where beets,

cabbage, potato, and lettuce bunched together making indistinguishable rows as each weekend we tended and harvested where and what we could. Gardening was a practice of necessity in response to my family's lower economic status and immigrant history, whereas at the Eco communal garden, gardening felt different to me. While productive gains were accomplished, the everyday garden practices differed. Allowing vegetables to seed to practice seed saving techniques for the next growing season unsettled me. I was baffled till a gardener explained that planting and growing your food is just one step in the process, and that we need to examine and expand our entire food processes to include knowing where our seeds come from.

A new curiosity towards gardening sprouted out of Michael during his beginnings at the Eco garden. Initially he thought he knew what gardening was. He had experienced it as a child, but, in the context of Eco and Heritage gardens, what it means to experience gardening was embedded in different cultural and social narratives. The diverse stories of gardening he encountered were nested within different rhythms of gardening. Michael was bombarded with images, emails and representations of community gardens as a tool in creating healthy and green communities. There was a growing expectation that community gardening embodied a practice for citizens to actively engage in their community to build social networks and create alternative food networks in resistance to unsustainable global food processes. Michael began to feel that his processes of meaning making in the garden as a familial practice were being re-shaped among the evolving sustainability narratives of community gardens. His stories of gardening that were nurtured in early landscapes were shifting as he encountered interruptions in his

personal stories as he was confronted by and in the midst of different narratives of gardening. Rojek (2005) argued that the "assignment of functional goals by dominant groups elicits many complexes of action and reaction in which functions may be fulfilled or resisted" (p. 85). As Michael moved into the midst of the Eco community garden and the narrative functions of gardening as a sustainable food processes, he felt resistance and hesitation to how his stories of gardening would settle within the space. Eager to dig his hands into the soil and become a member of the gardening community he quickly learned and adopted the practices and discourses around what a gardener was in that space. By immediately immersing himself in organic garden practices and identifying with its links to resisting global food processes Michael had a plethora of resources available to him (e.g. garden coordinator, other gardeners, catalogues) to learn what it meant to be a gardener and how "it should" practiced. Michael's early experiences of gardening as a generational practice situated in his family's narratives of food were silenced as he conformed to and picked up the story of Eco community garden.

Leisure researchers have extensively used activity labels to explain leisure practices. Wolfe and Samdahl's (2005) research on challenge courses demonstrated the biases that restrict our understanding of leisure practices by using broad activity labels. They identified that no research on challenge courses provided details about the actual events or interactions that unfolded during people's experiences. Similarly, research on community gardens has primarily treated community gardening as a homogenous practice with a focus on the social outcomes with little descriptions of what the experiences of the gardeners were as they shaped and were

shaped by how particular gardens developed a "story of community gardens." Inherent in the broad activity labels associated with leisure is that the label coheres as any movement or action toward a specified pursuit. This research demonstrates that gardening is more than just a set of movements or specified actions that can be defined through activity labels. Rather gardening, as experienced by Michael, is dynamic and filled with complex mind-body-spirit relations that extend inward to the personal narratives and outward to external narratives to play with the range of experiences as a gardener. By thinking leisure research can simply know, see, and/or label gardening is highly problematic as it does not ground leisure scholarship in the process of how we are experiencing our leisures, but in the outcomes or benefits of what is assumed. Thus the activity label of "community garden" has been defined and largely represented as:

> Organized initiatives whereby sections of land are used to produce food or flowers in an urban environment for the personal use or the collective benefit of their members who, by virtue of their participation, share certain resources, such as space, tools and water. (Glover, 2003, p. 191)

However, by focusing on how community gardens can be measured or defined leisure scholarship often silences and simplifies how people create meaning and experience community gardens in ways that are contrary or complementary with dominant discourses and leisure practices (Kelly, 1992).

As Michael placed himself in the midst of the Heritage garden and moved between his memories of gardening as a child and his experiences at the Eco garden, he became aware of spatio-temporal rhythms of gardening mediated by meta-

narratives surrounding garden practices. In the Eco and Heritage gardens Michael's familial stories of gardening were interrupted and overlaid with new rhythms and narratives of gardening situated in green, healthy communities. The disruptions of Michael's stories across sites evoked a sense of unease for him, as his stories were not congruent with the stories of either site. Simply stated, the social expectations of gardening, narrated by the community and larger societal institutions (e.g. City of Edmonton, 2012), influenced how Michael could garden and how he was supported in community processes. By attending to disruptions Michael noticed the larger social, cultural and institutional narratives surrounding each garden site by resisting, picking up, and overlaying narratives alongside his. Grafting his experiences as well as others alongside of meta-narratives about gardening unsettled his (our) understanding of leisure.

Seasons of Change: History of Community Gardens

Historical narratives of Canadian community gardens have changed and developed over time influencing how gardening is a leisure practice. Understanding these changes supports a polythetic constituent of leisure beyond Eurocentric definitions (Fox & Klaiber, 2006). Fox and Klaiber argued that:

> By attending to a specific interpretation of leisure and an atemporal and ahistorical definition, leisure scholars and practitioners have obscured the rich, multivariate, fluid, paradoxical, and contested nature of leisures and the different values interwoven within leisure by various cultures, classes, disciplines, and perspectives. (p. 415)

A brief history of community gardening in Canada situates how gardens have been represented and how people, including each of the authors, negotiate these representations (see Lawson, 2004, 2005; Martin, 1998, 2000; von Baeyer, 1984 for a comprehensive history). Community gardens have largely been supported in response to social crises and citizen development (Lawson, 2004). The first institutionalized investment in communal gardens in Canada came alongside the construction and completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway. "Railway gardens" were seen as a way to sell the productive lands of Canada's West and as an everyday food practice that constructed the "right" kind of citizen, one who was not idle, but productive and industrious (von Baeyer, 1984). With the onslaught of World War I and II, gardening narratives suggested that patriotic citizens had the duty to plant a "victory garden" or "war garden." These gardens were represented as causal links to war outcomes by alleviating food shortages and as a domestic form of conscription. During the Great Depression and after World War II communal gardens were associated with a type of "relief" or "welfare" tactic for high levels of unemployment. They were seen as a method to alleviate idle hands and social unrest in a time of economic turmoil. Recently, community gardens have received considerable public attention and touted as positive grassroots movements that can initiate or facilitate social change (Amsden & McEntee, 2011; Mair, Sumner, & Rotteau, 2008) such as building healthy and green communities (Belin & Hunter, 2011). Even though contemporary community garden narratives have been studied and praised as an alternative or resistance to modern food processes and a way to address declining social cohesion in communities, these research narratives about gardening can also

be oppressive forces for experiences nested within a different story, history and meaning of gardening outside dominant narratives. If "leisures are tools or processes that humans happen to use to make sense of the worlds and cultures they inhabit…compositions that identify and give meaning to human behavior," (Fox & Klaiber, p. 420) then leisure research has an obligation to seek and describe how diverse groups of humans use and experience leisure to make better sense of alternative and dominant narratives about leisure and gardening. A historical panorama with specific narratives about both leisure and gardening beyond ahistorical normative perspectives resonates with Fox and Klaiber's critique that demonstrated how different people with different experiences differently construct leisure as a tool to understand and make sense of their worlds. Moving back to Michael's experiences at the Eco garden reminded us how quickly his experiences of gardening as a practice of cultural subsistence was easily written over or shifted amongst a community or institutional narrative that emerged from sustainable food narratives and over spatio-temporal periods. The challenge for leisure research and practice is understanding and finding ways to respectfully hold alternative leisure narratives alongside and with dominant narratives of leisure in a compassionate and curious space.

Pollinated by Family: Conversations of Coming to Gardening

Shifting sharply out of my reflections on gardening in ways I had grown up with and on ways it was practiced in the first community garden I came to know, I saw Kim arrive, my attention shifted, I leapt to my feet and made my way over to meet her. She apologized for her lateness, explaining how she had been stuck behind a train.

After a week of preparation, anxiety and email discussion I immediately jumped in with a question leaving little pause between hellos. "So, how did you start gardening here and how did you become the garden coordinator?" Just after I finished uttering the multiple questions I knew I had just bombarded her. To my pleasant surprise Kim proceeded, without apparent unease, to describe how her family initially involved her at the garden and how they now shared two plots side by side. She only became the garden coordinator after the previous one left and a replacement was needed. Kim then asked me about my involvement in the Eco community garden. I felt a shift in dynamics, from questions to conversation, from being the one who wanted to know to the knower.

Looking back I giddily spoke to my experiences with food, starting with how I was raised in a family where my father, mother, and brother were all chefs. As a child I was never interested in food the same way as the rest of my family. Kraft Dinner was my recipe of choice, however, my family always gave space and nurtured my processes in the kitchen and were supportive whether I boiled something from a box or made something that was passed down from generations by hand, with love. Even when I left home to pursue an undergraduate degree, food continued to be a staple that bound our family together over time. Sporadically I called home asking about dishes from my childhood, from my mom's rhubarb muffins to my dad's cottage cheese pirogues. Each time I felt as if I was learning about my family, our history, and my own experiences through food. I felt a parallel with Kim as we both were pulled into our families' food practices.

I continued to explain to Kim how it was not until three years after moving to Edmonton that I became a part of, and experienced, a community garden located near campus (Eco). She asked more about my role at the garden; I answered that I was a volunteer gardener among many; none of us had allotments or plots. She was curious about how work was done at the garden and involvement was sustained. I wavered, explaining the joys of not having specific duties or assignments but the difficulty of harvesting and maintaining the garden throughout the season with a transient and communal group. Desiring to learn more of her garden and her experiences, I asked her to show me around the garden and her plot. She twisted toward the garden and effortlessly made her way between the rows, before lifting her string latch at the entrance of her garden within a garden to welcome me in. Immediately she identified several rows of beans, a patch of varied tomatoes, carrots, herbs, squash, cucumber, and an attempt at something new with a grouping of corn. We both salivated as we discussed each vegetable and our experiences growing them. I pointed to the nasturtiums on her garden's edge stating how they were one of my favorites. She told me she had not planted them. Her plot neighbor had and she hoped they were not of a climbing or creeping variety. I was pulled back to the private sphere as the nasturtiums were seen as a symbol of impending encroachment upon individual space.

As Kim explained her story of coming to Heritage garden as a relational practice with and through family, Michael felt similarities towards his own stories of coming to community gardening. The stories Kim shared, as she introduced herself to Michael, resonated deeply within him, as he desired to share the generational

stories that brought him to gardening[4]. Michael looked to establish space as a researcher and member of the garden by demonstrating his sameness (Portelli, 1991) with Kim, emphasizing his own journey to food and gardening rooted in the familial connections that tended to and sustained its growth. Moments of shared leisure meanings (Arai & Pedlar, 2003) extended through their stories of coming to gardening and common growing experiences were vital for Michael to build relationships with the garden and Kim. However, moments of dissent or difference are equally vital to community processes (Fox & Klaiber, 2006; Glover & Stewart, 2006; Mair, 2006). As Michael was pulled back to the divisions in the garden, highlighted by what Kim saw as encroaching nasturtiums, he was reminded of the mixed feelings he experienced when he stepped into the garden. The protection of plot ownership brought a new dynamic to gardening Michael was not familiar with. Pudup (2008) argued that community gardens are increasingly designed as "spaces of neoliberal governmentality," where individuals take responsibility and adjust to the social and cultural narratives they are nested in (p. 1228). Michael began to wonder how the division of the garden into plots or allotments impacted the sociability (Kurtz, 2001) and communality across gardeners, and how much the plots promoted individual responsibility towards achieving established and assumed garden aims, goals and values.

There was a clear tension in the space; Michael felt the garden itself, and the gardeners in it, were continually negotiating private practices in public spaces. This

[4] The authors are attentive to how Kim and Michael create commonalities through shared experiences as white affluent Canadians being shaped with larger Canadian and western meta-narratives of gardening. These dynamics are vital to address as leisure research tends to and works with diverse cultures and frameworks.

tension was visible in the stakes and strings with entrances to individual gardens and in Kim's mention of the encroaching nasturtiums. This ongoing negotiation created a contentious relationship for Heritage garden members to settle the production of garden space while simultaneously operating in the private and public sphere (Longhurst, 2006). Mair (2006) stated that in all public spaces people continually negotiate their appropriate use across a wide variety of purpose and uses, concluding that open dialogue to the commonalities and diversity is key for inclusive community processes. As Michael listened to Kim he felt the dialogue across gardeners and towards diversity was buried beneath years of soil and divided between the rows. Slowly he began to feel the hardened earth between the plots as untended spaces, outside of their private domains, that did not look to bridge gardens or gardeners but create barriers between their diverse stories and lives.

Stories of Negotiating the Private and the Communal

As I struggled to adapt to the change in tone and conversation, I inquired about garden times and meetings. Kim took a moment, then with a growing smile, began to tell me of the "worker bee day" that happened a couple weeks ago. She described how she had never ordered compost before. This year she did. Giggles burst inside and out of Kim as she explained how, to her horror, a massive dump truck maneuvered its way down the path to the garden and dumped more compost than she could have imagined onto the grass. Kim joyously described how the next day all the gardeners somehow managed to work together to spread the compost over the entire garden. She pointed

to the yellowish spot of grass left by the compost pile, which she saw as a demonstration of how the garden had a great sense of community and teamwork.

Michael's position as a researcher at this moment resonated throughout his body. He sensed a push from Kim to represent the garden as a site of community, building relationships, teamwork, and productivity. Michael became worried of the single story (Adichie, 2009) being told to him as they walked through the garden. Specifically he questioned the outcome-oriented descriptions as manifested in Kim's reference to the cleared compost pile as appropriate measurements for explaining community. He did not want to discount Kim's representation of the garden but felt a need to see and hear more as he experienced alternative garden spaces alongside what Kim had storied.

Multiple Stories of Gardening

As we trod on the avenues between the plots, Kim described some of the other gardeners. She first described the longest serving gardeners and ended with the group of Asian gardeners who were allocated a section of the garden in compliance with a diversity policy of Edmonton. I attempted to make mental notes of the numerous descriptions of each gardener. I clutched my pen and notebook knowing I could not get it all, grappling at descriptions such as "good gardeners," "bad gardeners," and "guerilla gardeners." Astonished by the judgments that resonated from her choice of words, I listened to Kim describe the Asian gardeners as if they were a homogenous entity of "guerilla gardeners" who uprooted and planted in any unused space, pointing to the back of the garden as an example. Quietly holding my thoughts inward, my body coiled back as my gestures pressed forward. With no verbal prompts, Kim stated she

was a little judgmental and needed to work on it. Our conversation ended shortly thereafter as she invited me to the annual garden potluck in a few weeks. I assured her I would be there.

Bewildered by the description of the Asian seniors I attempted to scribble down my thoughts on a notepad in my car. Identified without name or recognition I wondered how the Asians sustained their place in a divided space and among differing/dominant stories of gardening. Further, I questioned what supports did Kim and other gardeners have in place to bridge and nurture the gaps in diversity as well as their similarities. Maybe community gardening practices have different diversity practices than the typical recreation ethic and community development. I put an asterisk beside my initial desire and notion that a community garden can be supported locally and in diverse communities over extended periods of time, solemnly adding, for whom and how? I left the garden that day with a foot dug into the dirt, not knowing its path or trajectory and firmly rooted in desires to hear more.

During Michael's conversation with Kim the assumptions of what appropriate garden practice, at the Heritage garden, became evident. The labels of good, bad, and guerilla gardeners implied a specific conception of what it meant to be a gardener in this community garden. The rhythms of the Heritage garden added a new layer and complexity to Michael's growing framework of what gardening was, how it could be practiced, and how people experienced gardening in community gardens. Using Lugones' (1987) concept of "playful world travelling" we reason that "to perceive others or come to see them only as products of arrogant perception and continue to perceive them that way, we fail to identify with them—fail to love

them—in this particularly deep way" (p. 4). Kim, positioned as the coordinator, opened Michael to her world (Lugones, 1987) of gardening where she ensured the maintenance and livelihood of the garden while balancing the multiple ways gardening was taken up and experienced in one space. As Kim noticed her choice of words to explain the gardeners at Heritage garden, Michael sensed a desire from Kim to re-story her relationship with him and the garden, from her previously voiced judgments, as a coordinator and gardener. Kim's reflective tone pushed Michael to sit in the midst of the diversity and difference occurring in the garden as well as look forward to how diversity and difference might be embraced in Heritage garden.

Glover's (2003) work showed how the narratives attained through interviews of one community garden resisted the negative narratives of the community as a source of illicit activity. His work suggested that community gardening was a grassroots effort that aimed to "reproduce civility and security, characteristic of mainstream society" in a lower income and racially diverse (predominantly black and white Americans) community (p. 209). Glover showed how the collective efficacy of a community can work toward a singular aim, while also cautioning readers to not take his story as "*the* community narrative for the neighborhood," rather read it as one story among many (p. 209). While Glover's work showed a community's resistance to negative narratives, these singular stories of community processes can be oppressive to the groups or people that operate under alternative frameworks in community garden and leisure spaces. There are several reasons why we (Michael, Jean, and Karen) caution against research that

attends to singular stories of leisure, specifically community narratives of gardening. First, they obstruct the multiplicity of narratives that are experienced by various gardeners even within the dominant one. By not identifying the multiple stories people come with and experience through community gardening, the leisure literature will further simplify the various experiences into broad activity labels and definitions. This can lead to conceptualizing gardeners as homogeneous or the development of smoothing stories that overlook differences and hinder our explanations of community processes as both coming together and moving apart. If leisure spaces, such as community gardens, are settings where democratic practices are practiced and reproduced (Glover, 2005b) then leisure research needs to pause and reflect, like Kim, and reimagine how we can hold and re-story the multiple narratives that occur in gardens and other leisure practices. By holding alternative narratives alongside dominant narratives leisure scholarship has a chance to open dialogue across actors, communities, perspectives, and theories, and possibly support leisure pursuits that create spaces of deep democracy (Mair, 2006). However, if research continues to primarily demonstrate dominant narratives of what is and how it is experienced, leisure will continue to create spaces of silence and stories of homogeneity. Fox and Klaiber (2006) similarly stated:

> Any time leisure conceptions privilege leisure connected to citizenship, socially sanctioned behavior, education, and freedom, it is haunted by the untold history of slavery, authoritarianism, colonialism, deviant leisure, class struggles, and alternative and resistant forms of leisure. (p. 415)

Adiche's (2009) personal stories established that telling and sharing singular stories until they become reality has unintended consequence of obstructing imaginations and abilities to hear alternative possibilities of experience. When stories of homogeneity or assumed meaning are used to verify theoretical concepts, such as social capital in community gardens (Glover, 2004; 2005a), there are stories or processes that are left silent, unheard and oppressed. Heluza-DeLay (2006) argued, "the concern with emphasizing "social capital" in heterogeneous situations where power differentials exist, is that it may reify existing structures and reinforce exclusionary practices" (p. 278). With community gardens operating in the public and private spheres heterogeneous situations are common and in many instances should be expected. By reifying certain group's or individual's access to the distribution of social capital, leisure research is at risk for identifying and promoting specific actors who willingly and readily accept the dominant narrative of gardening. Congruently, the narratives of other actors who garden outside of the dominant frame will be marginalized and silenced. Looking back to Michael's negotiation across the garden spaces it becomes apparent that by aligning with Eco's stories of gardening as a sustainable practice in resistance to global food processes, Michael masked generational stories of the past within himself as they became irrelevant and subsidiary to developing a community's story of sustainability. In adopting the Eco community's narratives of gardening Michael added another layer of complexity to his understanding of gardening, however, he also felt his familial stories being suppressed as he was subsumed in processes of homogenization. Concepts such as social capital risk legitimizing specific and

singular gardening narratives that silence alternative narratives and close opportunities for diverse conceptualizations about leisure.

Late Foliage: Tensions of Multiple Stories of Gardening

My hands gripped the bicycles handlebars in the uncharacteristic warmth of the mid September day. Droplets of sweat ran down my neck as I turned onto the grass and made my way towards the garden. I had not expected to see much as the day prior I was only able to salvage a small yield from our bumper crop of tomatoes at the Eco garden, and I had already begun prepping rows for next spring. As I approached the Heritage garden I was astonished by the number of plants still producing. Elated, I jumped off my bike and foregoing the kickstand in exuberance, propped it up on the picnic table. I darted in to the garden to get a better look. Pivoting my head side to side, I walked between rows, noticing varied levels of care in each plot. Many were picked over, leaving only remnants, such as the corn stalks or the oversized leaves of the zucchini plants. In other plots the plants looked as if they were dying to be picked as shriveled beans hung from vines. With several plots obscured by weeds that had overtaken the once blossoming rows of vegetables after being untended to for multiple weeks.

I recollected my first day at the garden and my conversation with Kim. I was reminded of how she described gardeners as good, bad, and guerilla. As I walked through the rows I began to see why Kim felt justified to use those labels. Within moments of stepping into the garden I identified plots that were sparsely maintained, with weeds crowding out crops and encroaching on neighboring plots. I noticed myself similarly labeling the plots creating a hierarchy of "good" and "bad" gardeners. I was

appalled by how quickly I moved into individualistic thought. I felt a delicate tension in the space that held individual styles of gardening for one's own productive gains and contributing to the garden practices sustaining community.

Michael probed deeper, questioning his assumptions of what gardening should be. He wondered how gardening could be supported in any capacity with the same type of compassion that his family had done with him, accepting all food/gardening practices with curiosity. Responsibilities for individual plots seemed to nurture a specific conception of what communal gardening should be, a reflection of western values rooted in individual and private citizenship. He worried that the Heritage garden assumed this relationship and meaning across differences of culture and citizenship status. In doing so, the garden had the potential to marginalize groups, such as the Asians, who gardened within a different cultural narrative instead of nurturing the multiple ways gardening is and can be across people and diversity.

Michael was reminded of his experiences of gardening with his grandmother as a child and as a graduate student near the campus. Taken together these different experiences demonstrated how gardening is a polythetic leisure practice, full of similar meanings and experiences across contexts while also holding stark differences (Fox & Klaiber, 2006). As he reflected upon his experiences and meanings across gardens, he saw the value of composing multiple stories to reflect the diversity within a similar context. Gardening should not be legitimized and supported by enforcing dominant meta-narratives of gardening or leisure; rather gardening should be recognized in the multiplicity of meanings experienced across

gardeners, gardens, and contexts to support inclusive and compassionate community processes.

Culturally Significant Vegetables: Cultural Stories of Gardening

Staring down at the weed-filled plots, then across to the freshly picked rows, and finally over to the still seeding Asian gardens, I wondered about the multiplicity of meanings that were experienced in this garden. With the sun peaking in the sky, I made my way over to the picnic table to eat an apple before heading home. Within minutes of sitting down the high school bell rang, signaling lunch hour. Steady crowds of students emerged and walked by the garden and myself as if we were non-existent entities. The bustle from the students heightened my focus on the garden, specifically towards the longevity and resourceful use of limited space by the Asian gardeners. Their use of the garden was so much different from the other plot owners and from my experiences at the Eco garden. I sat in awe as I looked at the staggered levels of seeding that allowed for the continual harvest of vegetables throughout the season. Some plots looked as if gardeners had attempted another seeding on top of the previous three, for some four, harvests that already had occurred. Many of these plots consisted of oriental style cabbages, either red or green leafed, sesame, buchu (Chinese leeks or garlic chives) as well as several other culturally significant vegetable varieties. The cultural preference to quick producing leafy greens was considerably different from the numerous plots that favored summer or fall crops such as zucchini, carrots, beans and tomatoes. As I looked at the productive capacities of the Asian gardens I was transported back to the small section of my grandmother's garden where we continually reseeded lettuce, chard and spinach throughout the season for a constant

supply of greens for everyday meals. I wondered if the garden provided a similar source of sustenance for the Asian gardeners at the site and how important it was for them to have access to culturally significant produce in their day-to-day lives.

Inspired by the thought of a continual supply of fresh lettuce, chard, spinach and oriental leafy greens I pondered introducing staggered seeding techniques to my own community garden and its members. I wondered how these garden practices could be negotiated within the dominant ecological narratives in place at Eco garden and if there would be resistance or support. We did not have individual plots, so I felt limited by what I could do, how I could plant and what we collectively could maintain. But I enjoyed the collective processes of turning beds together, starting seeds and sharing with each other. I scribbled the idea into my notepad as I put the thought aside.

The variation in vegetables across gardens and in the Heritage garden demonstrated a presence of difference in gardening to Michael. As he walked through the Heritage garden each plot constructed its own story of who it was through its plants. When Michael looked at the variety of vegetables he was reminded of his own beginnings where he gardened with his family and the importance of planting and having access to beets, chard and potatoes as an integral link to his Ukrainian heritage. As Michael transitioned to Edmonton the connections to local food and gardening practices at the Eco garden grounded Edmonton as a home for him. There was a similar sentiment, for Michael, to the Heritage garden; it was a site that held numerous cultural and familial stories of past, present and future through the process of growing traditional foods. In this way the Heritage

garden provided a place for people from differing backgrounds to imagine and create a world within their plot that was a representation of them, their home and a future they wished to live. While Michael questioned the social and cultural connections that occurred across gardeners at Heritage garden, he was encouraged by the garden's ability to give space and nurture the roots of cultural sustenance and growth.

Leisure research has yet to explore the intimate links that leisure and daily food practices have in maintaining, producing and sustaining cultural processes. A growing body of research has indicated food practices are central to the vitality of cultures and families (Beckie & Bogdan, 2008; Moiso, Arnould, & Price, 2004; Power, 2008; Raman, 2011; Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny, 2008). Leisure research has largely focused on social connections and networks developed through garden practices (Glover, 2003, 2004, 2006; Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005a, 2005b; Shinew, Glover, & Parry, 2004) and conceptualization of leisure and food linked to political and/or social change (Amsden & McEntee, 2011; Mair, Sumner, & Rotteau, 2008). Recently, Dunlap's (2009) narratives explored an intentional farming community to describe how communal meals and gardening are community specific practices inscribed with cultural knowledge that can challenge global food practices. While Dunlap's work does not compare across cultures, it does present a foundation to ground food and leisure as a culturally significant practice. As Michael admired the diversity of plants in the garden he wondered about the connections leisure had in supporting culturally significant food practices and how differing cultural food practices could contribute to the rethinking how leisure is conceptualized. Moving along Michael's

garden experiences in his past, present, and imagined future has shown how gardening can be, and is, a practice situated in contexts and stories of gardening that can both reproduce and resist dominant narratives of gardening and Eurocentric definitions of leisure. When gardening practices across cultures and experiences are explored in relation to established narratives of gardening, leisure research can move beyond broad definitions and into the multivariate experiences of gardening and leisure in context. A contextual narrative approach to leisure and gardening showed how Michael experienced gardening as cultural and familial, political and sustainable, inclusive and exclusive, and fluid but not dichotomous with work, sustenance, and unobligated time.

Sharing Seeds and Vegetables: Dialogue and Experiences for Diversity

I noticed one of the Asian gardeners make her way over to the garden from the nearby path; dressed in several light colorful layers with a well worn, yet appealing, straw strung hat and cane, she greeted me with a smile. I greeted her with a silent hello as she got closer to the garden. Having never met her before I quickly jumped to my feet and asked if she gardened here. In a controlled movement she turned her back to me, faced the garden and opened her arms in a wide swinging motion directed towards the plot near the shed. Her exaggerated motion indicated as if this ten by twenty foot plot was a vast expanse of land with limitless gardening potential. My body burst forward as I looked upon the space entangled by her joy. Gently she pulled me closer to the garden to show me just how big the boundaries extended. Amidst her joy, I pointed towards a vegetable in front of me and asked, "What is it?" She immediately responded in her language and stepped into the garden. Delicately balanced on a thin

plank, she bent down to grab the vegetable. In an effortless movement she made her way back along the plank and put the green in my hand. I nodded my thanks before ripping the leaf from the stem to give it a taste; I smacked my tongue at the rough texture and mildly bitter flavor. She smiled and directed me toward the stem indicating that it was the best part. Laughing, I curled the stem, put it in my mouth and was greeted with crispness. Noticing my delight she cut off several bunches of the vegetable before she made her way back to the shed for a bag. Grabbing my arm she took me to another patch of vegetables; I knew from the small English part on the label that she was showing me "Chinese leeks." Again she nimbly made her way onto the plank before she cut what looked like a shortened flat leaf chive. Calmly she looked up to me with leeks in hand and took a couple of deep breaths, as she implied with her hands that the leeks helped soothe and relax the body and mind. Again I thanked her before I accepted the gift. A deep breath of air sparked as I put the leeks into my mouth, the garlic chive like flavor opened my throat, nose and lungs in an instant. I chewed slowly as I took in several breaths, amazed by its subtle yet potent flavor. As I finished eating, she added a large handful of leeks to the bag. Before I left she insisted, with a goodbye hug that I take the bag of leeks and Chinese cabbage. Warm hearted I left the garden that fall day, and I thought again that food and garden practices could play a vital role in sustaining and sharing significant cultural practices and identities.

As I left the garden I was reminded of a saying that my father's colleague once told me, "Know your ingredient before you use it." It was a simple saying that meant you must first begin to understand the meaning of your ingredients, especially across

social and cultural contexts, before you can think about putting them on a plate, on the table or plant them in your garden.

The aphorism I was once told highlights the importance of food and leisure in context. For example, the planting of corn by Kim would tend to different meanings and experiences than corn planted at the Eco garden or by Aboriginal peoples. The meaning and experience of planting corn across sites and people are nested within contextual stories where the corn, the people and the community hold numerous narratives around the meaning and experience of its planting. Garden stories may range from experimental plantings or symbols of local sustainability to a celebration of traditional culture. Leisure research has largely assumed it understands or knows the ingredients of leisure by using broad activity labels and attending to Eurocentric definitions (Fox & Klaiber, 2006; Wolfe & Samdahl, 2005), rather then tending to the soil of the rich and multivariate meanings of leisure and food that sprout up across spatio-temporal contexts.

This research shows the importance of placing ourselves, as researchers, knowingly within the multiple narratives of the contexts around us to explore how they mediate experiences and relationships with leisure. Michael placed himself in the midst of institutional, community and individual stories of gardening to show how his conceptualization of gardening was challenged, supported, and reimagined across contexts. In doing so this piece calls readers to lay their own, and others, stories of food and leisure practice alongside his to create a diverse dialogue of experience across spatio-temporal contexts. Multifocal dialogue "about what counts as experience, who gets to make that determination, and how it is expressed enables

scholars to historicize experience and reflect critically upon its role and connection to leisure and other social forces and structures" (Fox & Klaiber, 2006, p. 418). Through narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), research can engage in everyday food and leisure practices to collaboratively present multiple narratives and problematize the broad conceptualizations of leisure, time, and activity and illuminate the complexity of, and alternatives to, theoretical and social outcomes of leisures.

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Gardening in Tension Filled Rows: Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry of Gardening and Space on the Margins

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Gardening in Tension Filled Rows: Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry of Gardening and Space on the Margins

Gardening Metaphorically Weaved

"Gardening in tension filled rows," offers a multilayered metaphor for the threads that weave this article. For observers of community gardens it is easy to assume that gardening is a relaxing 'labour of love' that soothes daily tensions. However "gardening in tension filled rows" may more aptly describe how communal gardeners experience the everyday. A careful attention to wind patterns, sun spots, disease, companion plants off in the distance, cultural narratives of gardening at home, across users and in the community, and much more sit on the margins of view when looking at the practice of communal gardening. These are the stories that tend to be missed when we simply state, or rely on the abstract representations of what gardening, and/or leisure, is. For leisure research "gardening in tension filled rows" provides a metaphor to reflect and pursue the complex, messy and often untold lived experiences of leisure in context. This autobiographical narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) unpacks my experiences as the "gardener in residence" (community garden coordinator position) at an inner city community garden in Edmonton known as Circle community garden (pseudonym). By setting the intent of "gardening in tension filled rows" I open the article to discuss how we as leisure researchers/practitioners are positioned in the midst of storied landscapes and how we experience and reflect upon moments of tension in relation to the space and people we engage with. The researcher, like the gardener, who experiences the tensions of gardening and embodies its complexity in the lived

experience (Simenson, 2005), is positioned to continuously attend to and negotiate the production of leisure space (Lefebvre, 1991) in a heartfelt manner.

Lefebvre's (1991; 2004) scholarship "examined the struggles over the meaning of space and considered how relations across territories were given cultural meaning" (Shields, 1999, p. 146). He argued that space is central to how we experience the world, and that every experience is always in tension through three interwoven threads of space. The first thread is *spatial practices* (or *perceived space*), these are the "routines and understandings which they serve to shape—in this case, the accepted and acceptable *spatial practices*" of communal garden contexts (Watkins, 2005, p. 213). Lefebvre's second thread is *representations of space* (or *conceived space*), these are the abstract symbols, codes and dominant conceptualizations of space that are shaped by the "rationalized/professionalized power structure of the capitalist state" (Shields, 1999, p. 164). *Spaces of representation* (or *lived space*), is Lefebvre's last thread, this is the concrete, reflexive glimpses of life as it might be lived, senses of liberation or what could be, the impossible possible, the underside or alternative to what exists. This thread is directly *lived*, differentiated from but always in tension with abstract conceptualizations of space; it is where the imagination and actions seek to change and appropriate, or possibly reify, the existing *spatial practices* and *representations of space*. Lefebvre's spatial triad woven through my own narrative threads at Circle community garden will highlight how I experienced gardening as always in tension to the multiple stories of gardening and leisure that were situated in the Circle community garden landscape.

I ask the reader to think of "tensions" in the manner Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Orr (2010) described; not as moments of volatility, deviant disruption or something to be smoothed over, but, moments that "live between people, events, or things, and are a way of creating a between space," a space which can exist in inclusive ways and is relational and fluid to the social and personal relations that leisure researchers/practitioners are presently in the midst of (p. 82). If taken up these ways moments of tension within everyday rhythms can provide opportunities to rethink previous, present and future actions in community spaces when we are wakeful to the stories we live by and the ones we step into.

This article specifically follows my experienced tensions as "gardener in residence" over the 2012 gardening season at the inner city Circle community garden. The garden started a year prior to my involvement and was a project initiated to provide productive/positive space and counter stories to the negative portrayals of the Circle community as a source of illicit activity and homelessness especially in regards to its prominent urban, Aborginal population. The produce grown would go directly to the Circle community kitchen to provide fresh and healthy food alternative for the community members. Thus this article follows my involvement in relation to the personal, cultural and institutional narratives that I encountered during the 2012 gardening season at Circle community garden.

Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry

Narrative methods have established strong foundations and breadth in a variety of disciplines, from education (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin *et al*, 2010; Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2003) to sociology (Richardson, 2013; 2011).

However, narrative methods in leisure research are only beginning to weave form. Several researchers have argued the potential of narrative for leisure research. Glover's work (2003; 2004) has shown and claimed that the meaning of leisure moments can be interpreted through stories shared by research participants. Giles and Williams (2007) argued, "that it is only in terms of our own experiences that we as leisure scholars can make sense of others' experiences" (p. 195). When I look to answer the question why narrative? I am drawn to the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who stated that, "experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience" (p.19). In this way leisure and leisure studies are a form of experience, and narrative ways of thinking and writing about experience are coherent with my own stories lived and told. Consequently,

> We cannot study experience narratively, that is, through narrative inquiry, without understanding experience as a storied phenomenon. The interwoven relation between narrative as phenomenon and narrative as methodology is central to our work and central to our understanding that narrative inquiry is relational inquiry. Narrative inquiry is the study of people in relation studying the experience of people in relation. (Clandinin *et al*, 2010, p. 82)

Therefore my own research places my stories of experience in relation to Circle community and its members, as well as in continual conversation with my own role as a leisure researcher/practitioner within larger meta-narratives of leisure and leisure provisions with marginalized communities.

Specifically, this paper will show the tensions I experienced as a leisure researcher/practitioner while at the Circle community garden over moments of the

2012 gardening season. Attending to the tensions within my everyday experiences as "gardener in residence" provides a reflexive way of negotiating and rethinking measures of accountability that flow through recreation and leisure spaces through dominant benefit-based or outcome-based leisure services models. Johnson (2009) articulated the need for researchers and the field of leisure to be more vulnerable, and in turn more diverse and complex, by using self narratives and reflexive work to confront "those power structures that are often supported and perpetuated by the ideas of a *normal* science (i.e., quantitative or post-positive) of the academy and the normal practices (i.e., white) of society" (p. 487 *original emphasis*). Sitting with these words I take an autobiographical narrative approach to show how I experienced tensions as a privileged, white, affluent, male at a community garden in a predominately low income, Aboriginal community.

Of central importance to this article was the concern with how could I best convey the everyday tensions that I experienced as "gardener in residence" and the rhythm of my relation with Circle community and its garden. Richardson (1998) aesthetically appealed to poetry, a particular form of communication, as well suited to capturing moments of mystery, epiphany and truth to the experiences of humanity. Similarly, I argue that poetic forms are uniquely positioned to capture moments of tension that we experience in the everyday. Metre, rhyme, repetition, and selective word choices become poetic devices that lend themselves to representing my ephemeral experiences in the garden. Cahnmann (2003) showed how poetic techniques, such as incorporating speech pattern across cultures, can act as a rhythmed resource to enhance the communication of one's experiences to that

specific culture, community and context. For myself, poetic form offered glimpses of the community and my relational experiences in it. Rarely engaged in extended conversations at the garden, the poetic form offered brevity while capturing the complexity and robustness of the space and the multiple lives shaping it (Edghill, 2009). Thus poetry is a mode of representation that I have thoughtfully chosen to highlight what I feel other forms of communication could not show (Faulkner, 2009), those being the everyday tensions of a community gardener in relation to a specific time, space, rhythm and practice. I caution the audience to take up and read autobiographical narrative inquiry and poetic representation as avant-garde methods of research, in the sense of being an innovative and experimental methodological gap to explore in leisure. Rather, I suggest researchers interested and those reading to seriously immerse and vulnerably place themselves and their stories in their research, and with mine, in relational ways to better understand the multiple ways in which leisure can be experienced and conceptualized (Fox & Klaiber, 2006).

"Native. Family. Love:" Early Threads of Gardening

Welcomed

By an eagle mural

Its vibrant feathers

Captured my eyes.

A backdrop to the people

Leaning against it.

I hesitate

Before routinely moving forward

Privileged, willing, and able.

Looming fence

Surrounds the garden

Lock and chain

Recite the combo

It opens for me.

Stepping in

Amongst the raised beds

Impermanent-

To the construction around

On the outskirts of downtown

In the shadows of wealth

Sat the Circle community garden

"Native. Family. Love."

Spray-painted on bed exteriors

Finding my place in the words.

I open the garden gate

To the world I have travelled to

A place I do not know.

Feeling,

I forced my way in.

Buckets of water

From a distance

Nourish the dry soil.

Empty buckets

Needing a refill

I journey back.

Hoping a path exists

Someday

One of the fundamental ways we experience the world is through spatial relations. Sharpe, Trussell and Mair (2011) argued that, "in terms of experience, our lives are spatialized, in the sense that they are lived out in space and, further, that these spaces contribute to our understanding of who and where we are in the world" (p. 2). Opening a special edition of *Leisure/Loisir* on "leisure, space and change" they argued that a deliberate spatialized lens adds to the polyphony of "leisures" (Fox & Klaiber, 2006) by investigating space as a "site for the (re)production of power through lived experiences, which are both positive and negative" (p. 6). It is these moments of stepping into the spatialized landscapes of Circle community garden as a leisure practitioner/researcher that drew me to unpack how my practices were part of a tentative process of tension in (re)producing leisure spaces.

From the outset my movement into and from the Circle community garden held a productive pace, tightly wound with the world of gardening, food and leisure that I knew. My early beginnings with food and gardening were woven through family ties that extended into the field of culinary arts. As a young teenager I had accrued enough hours in a wide range of kitchens, under the guidance of my family, to comfortably grasp and operate within commercial and my home kitchen settings. The words "hot behind you," did not belly a flinch to move, turn, or look, but to sit steady as it safely passed, similar to how a cyclist does not swerve to the words "on your left," or a golfer does not look up to the yell of "fore." A never ending productive pace came with the world I knew, to sit was to break, to eat was more of a constant nibble, to clean was usually my role. Similarly, this pace in our family layered itself in the garden. To my grandma's garden we would go, to pick, turn, weed, water, sweep, cut, hoe; there was always something that needed to be done, and without question or instruction I knew what I could do. Shields (1999) stated "such cohesion through space implies, in connection with social practice and the relating of individuals to that space, a certain level of spatial 'competence' and a distinct type of 'spatial performance' by individuals" (p. 162). I was in tune and comfortable with the social practices of food and gardening that were constructed and in my familial milieu. The everyday routines and conventions were intuitive; they flowed through me and embodied what gardening and food meant to me.

Tightly enmeshed in the *spatial practices* of familial food and gardening I experienced tensions in my own stories of gardening and food when I stepped into new landscapes (see Dubnewick, Fox, & Clandinin, In review, for added layers of

tension across gardens). After moving to a new city and community for university I found a community garden near campus (Eco community garden). Eco garden was designed as a communal site, with no plots or allotments, and was aligned with campus sustainability to foster positive environmental ethics through collective engagement in closed loop food systems, organic garden practices, and local food production for the volunteers involved. For the first several weeks of the season I went to the arranged garden hours. My level of "spatial competence and performance" to the everyday routines and social conventions at Eco garden was stiflingly absent (Shields, 1999). Mingling around the hot house (greenhouse/tool shed) discussing organic garden practices, political and/or social motivations and impacts of community gardening unsettled my own conventions of gardening. I retreated to off garden hours for much of the season to be comforted by the rhythms of gardening I was grounded in: pick, turn, weed, water, sweep, cut, hoe. I always had something to do and something to bring home to cook with. Over several seasons at Eco, and still to this day, I have created a patchwork tapestry of what gardening could be in that space as I sit in the midst of new stories of gardening situated in specific spacetimes.

Having spent the past several years of my life gardening in Edmonton on a picturesque elm tree lined street, with a plentitude of resources (e.g. water hookups, rain barrels, drip irrigation system, compost), and rows of well kept houses protecting the garden from the elements, I had constructed an image and idea of gardening. The supports in these spaces, at home with family and food and in Edmonton at Eco garden were abundant and fertile. Stepping into the Circle

community I was introduced to gardening with a different fit within the landscape. Juxtaposed amidst the concrete and dirt, neither of which held distinguishable differences to the soles of your feet, sat fifteen raised beds encompassed by a temporary construction fence that loomed well over eight feet tall. The fence felt miniscule compared to the towering commercial buildings and casino that were within walking distance. A sweltering heat radiated from the abandoned building, auto body shop and parking lot that immediately encompassed the garden, the soil in the raised beds evaporated to dust upon feeling its texture. As a young practitioner/researcher navigating unknown terrain alone I willingly drifted forward leaning on my pre-established frameworks about communal gardening and garden practice, what and how competence was demonstrated as a young professional, and as someone ethically and morally determined to produce for the organization and people aligned. In my productive, white, affluent, male pace I routinely passed by the vibrancy of the community and quickly found comfort through my own *spatial practices* of gardening and food; pick, turn, weed, water, sweep, cut, hoe. The path that I imagined existing prior to my active involvement at Circle community garden was full of being nourished by and nourishing Aboriginal food practices and the garden representing the community. However, as I became actively part of the Circle garden I rarely strayed, opened, or felt the rhythm of what was around, rather, I securely trod the routine path that I was used to, that I knew and could imagine of the garden space.

The poem “Native. Family. Love” was a reflection of this tension of gardening across spaces. In my early beginnings at Circle I continuously moved in my flurry

under the productive pace of gardening that I knew and found comfort in. I routinely cycled, walked and passed by the people of the community that were vibrantly welcoming me and showing me a sense of what life is in the words "Native. Family. Love" and those leaning against the eagle-depicted mural on the Circle community building's façade. A weaving of different spaces of community (Dunlap & Johnson, 2010) and gardening heightened my tensions of the garden being overlaid to the privileged stories of gardening in an abstract representation of me, leisure programming and the growing meta-narratives of what gardening is (sustainable, local, food production). My framework of *spatial practices* and *representations of space* derived from the prescriptive actions of dominant recreation programming, familial and Eco allowed my spatial performance of gardening at Circle to continue, but rooted in specific frameworks and practices (Watkins, 2005). My limited frameworks acted as both guide to operating in and calibrator to opening up to the moments of tension that are essential and always present when we step into any leisure space. In this way all leisure spaces hold multiple stories and practices and are not "containers for our lives," or an "achieved order…but also an order that is itself always undergoing change from within through the actions and innovations of social agents" (Shields, 1999, p. 155). This understanding of stepping into leisure spaces across spacetimes has much to offer leisure research. When we begin to acknowledge our stories of leisure, in this case stories of gardening, we are able to understand and reflect upon our limited frameworks as people and leisure researchers to the meta-narratives that have grounded us and at some level allow us

to operate across, take up, and sense the "dynamic, contested, paradoxical, and multi-faceted nature of leisures over time" and space (Fox & Klaiber, 2006, p. 426).

"Gardener in Residence:" Rigidity of Words Sown

Introduced as the "gardener in residence"

An unexpected role

Announced to the community.

Shifting senses

Change my posture

Questions come my way.

Garden established

A year prior,

To combat an image

And feed the community

A vision set.

Positioned

To uphold the space

Stories of gardening

From a distance

Compose the space.

Looming fence

Surrounds the garden

Stabilizing a story

Separate the community

Obstruct alternatives

Of what the garden could be.

I use the poem "gardener in residence" as a transition piece, for the audience to shadow my response as I was introduced as "gardener in residence" at Circle community garden. By inserting this poem I hope to use the experience as a platform to show and highlight how the position of "gardener in residence," storied at that moment as obstructive to alternatives, was ultimately the frame that allowed me to operate in the space as well as open up conversations for and attend to alternative *spaces of representation*.

It was the middle of May; I stepped across the garden's looming fence line just after 9:00 a.m. to a grouping of Circle community workers and volunteers. Moments after stepping into its defined space I was greeted by one of the non-Aboriginal workers with whom I had previously discussed my research, her vision of the garden and arranged my participatory involvement. Immediately after our hellos her voice raised grabbing the attention of the rest of the people. This is Michael our "Gardener in Residence." My inward thoughts quickly began to make sense of the defined role and my now shifted relation to the community, its members and the garden. A never-ending rolodex of associated meanings flipped through my thoughts after she uttered

the words: recreation practitioner, accountable, responsible, expert knowledge, professional, confident, leader, outcome orientated goals, productive, engagement…

The poem "gardener in residence" describes the associations I made to the newly appointed position at that moment and in that space, and how I experienced the role as limiting choices of alternatives to operate beyond the specific institutional narratives (*representations of space* and *spatial practices*) of what a leisure practitioner was in the Circle community garden space. As the position "gardener in residence" was appointed to me my inability to renegotiate or turn down the role brought an unnerving pressure to operate and move forward as I thought a "gardener in residence" should. Standing tall amidst the volunteers and workers I conducted myself in the productive paced manner that I thought I knew and expected from such a position. Pick, turn, weed, water, sweep, cut, hoe were the instructions I internalized and pursued, following the *spatial practices* of gardening that I had come to know and expect of myself. As I embodied the role of "gardener in residence" my framework to follow had shifted from researcher/participant/volunteer gardener to researcher/practitioner/expert knowledge/gardener in residence. Reminded by how I created a patchwork tapestry of *spatial practices* from gardening with family and at Eco I similarly wove the 'stories of gardening' (*representations of space)* of Circle community garden into *my spatial practices* as I moved forward as "gardener in residence." I knew from earlier conversations with the Circle worker who appointed me that the vision behind the garden project was to provide counter narratives to the negative images of the inner city community (see Glover, 2003 for a similar counter narrative community

gardening in marginalized neighbourhoods) and provide a better quality of life for the members of the community by offering a positive outlet, as well as providing fresh vegetables for the Circle community kitchen and its patrons.

These codified, abstract representations (*representations of space*) of the Circle community garden space linked to power structures and production of municipal regulations, recreation programming, and social service goals have often nurtured 'helping narratives' in relation to communities on the margin and populations at-risk, especially with Aboriginal people, to promote healthier and 'proper, well-rounded citizens' (Lefebvre, 1991; Fox & Klaiber, 2006). "Representations of leisure practice have always been part of the *moral regulation* of society;" Circle community garden has not evaded such practices as represented in their vision of the garden as a site to alleviate Aboriginal homelessness, health and addiction issues and support the growth of a specific type of citizen (Rojek, 2005, p. 87). Over time, community gardens in Canada, and abroad, have been significant spaces of moral regulation for nurturing the 'right kind of citizen,' through the right kind of garden practice (von Baeyer, 1984). This singularity, in regards to *representations of space*, of community gardening and leisure in the broader sense can limit leisure research to study and conceptualize leisures *spatial practices* and *lived space* through Eurocentric representations of leisure space (Fox & Klaiber, 2006). The rigidity of the *representations of space* in the objectives of urban gentrification, productive engagement, and food provision created what felt like a chasm to me between the adherence to the defined outcomes as "gardener in residence" and my heartfelt desires to nurture and seek out the alternative *spatial*

practices embodied in the words "Native. Family. Love." These meta-narratives of leisure and communal gardening, that I embodied several weeks later and share next, were and are the threads that are part of and open the dialectic to "between spaces" that sit between people, events or things (Clandinin *et al*, 2010; Lefebvre, 1991).

"One of Those Nice Guys:" Feeling Rhythms

A determined pace

Dictates the flow

Of water into each bucket

Back and forth I go

Absent to what else I carry.

You are "one of those nice guys."

Her response

To an overly cheerful hello-

Hinting at a history

Of similar meet and greets,

In and out we go.

Stifled by her tone

Wondering how to proceed

Amidst a slower pace

The unknowing helper

Buckets empty,

Beds fed.

I lean into the space

With an awkward grace

Taking a seat

Trying to feel the beat.

Following my appointment to "gardener in residence" my pace seemed to hasten over the next several weeks as I became grounded in the productive pace of my family and notions of being a competent young leisure practitioner. My patterns constructed to maintain a certain level of upkeep, arrive at 9:00 a.m. each Monday and Friday to open the garden gate and pick, turn, weed, water, sweep, cut, hoe, depart the garden a couple hours later depending on what needed to be done. It was a rhythm that sustained my involvement and the garden project through much of the season and brought a certain sense of cohesion to the *representation of space* with which I was entwined. I was painfully aware of my productive paced rhythm in relation to the slower pace of the community. Any onlooker, even at a distance, could pinpoint my purposed movements amongst the people and the community. As I looked through the garden's fence line my eyes rested on the small groupings of people scattered around, some resting, others conversing, and a couple with needles in hand; all usual sights by that time. As I stood alone in the fenced garden I felt a

disconnect to the rhythms that surrounded me, firmly comforted by the idea that food and garden practice could welcome and connect across any barriers I could or could not see. One of my early relational moments of tension between my role as "gardener in residence" and the people of the community came from the response of an Aboriginal woman to my cheerful and rolling like hello.

In a hardened 'fuck you' tone that heightened each and every one of my hairs she responded by identifying me as "one of those nice guys." She continued to walk by without changing her pace as my foot momentarily paused mid-step before once again hitting the concrete like surface. The overbearing weight of the buckets in my hands kept my productive purpose in mind until I reached the garden's gate. With noticeably shortened breath I loosened my grip as my eyes gravitated to my reddened palms. Slightly looking up I knew I had several more buckets to go. With the words "one of those nice guys" reverberating in my mind I picked up the buckets, kept my head down and trotted my familiar and now worn path to the auto shop for water, all the while questioning what it meant to be "one of those nice guys" in this spacetime and in relation to her and the community. I was only beginning to learn the mundane *spatial practices* of the community as evident by my overtly expressive and energetic attempt at a hello. Making sense of her response, let alone her tone, left me in wonder. Was I viewed as a one of those do-gooding social workers attempting to help and uplift their lives? Was her response as volatile as I deemed or a voice roughened by the street? Could she have been reaching out through her rhythms of life? Maybe it was a compliment…I always thought of myself as a "nice guy." The words' ambiguities that sat with me then still sit with me now.

After distributing the buckets throughout the garden and knowing all was done I sat with the words “Michael: gardener in residence” and “Michael: one of those nice guys.”

There was a certain level of relational coherence inscribed in the words “gardener in residence” than the words “one of those nice guys” during that spacetime. While the position “gardener in residence” carried tensions and reframed my position in relation to the garden and community it largely allowed me to operate in the *spatial practices* and *representations of space* of gardening that I knew. Being framed as “one of those nice guys,” while similarly tension filled, pushed me to rethink how my *spatial practices* and *representations of space* at the Circle community garden could be reframed in inclusive and exclusive ways to the storied landscapes that I was in the midst of, did not know, had not attended to or could not sense during that spacetime.

With my productive pace nearing its end, the phrase “one of those nice guys” still reverberated in my mind. I wondered how my actions in the space, my productive pace, were associated with the words and what I was (re)producing. As I lifted my head and looked around I felt a different rhythm to the one I carried, a slower pace, vibrantly colored in the eagle mural and on the raised beds tagged with the words “Native, Family, Love.” The Aboriginal woman’s words spoken across what felt like a chasm provided a moment of reflection for me to rethink how I shaped and was shaped by the Circle community garden space through the relations experienced. In an attempt to honour the spoken words that echoed across the chasm I mirrored what I could sense and see. A shifted rhythm grabbed hold of my

body as I looked to take a seat at the bench that stood in the heart of the garden. Placing the buckets to the side my body promptly erected itself to the squared, wooden bench. Stiff as the boards that supported me I sat for a couple minutes, primarily focused on the weeds I could pick and stuff I could do. Minutes felt like hours as I attempted to resonate with a world beyond what I knew. As the minutes approached the hour I gently began to lean back, the benches weathered frame creaked under my weight, my body flinching as the seat braced, exhale of relief, an opening to a new pace and rhythms felt (Lefebvre, 2004). I began to wonder how could this spacetime be different from the *spatial practices* and *representations of space* that were all too familiar. I felt reassured as I was reminded of my previous experiences across gardens and how I shaped and was shaped by the Eco community garden space through the organic, sustainable and political practices that were weaved alongside the familial threads that I grew up with and knew. It prompted me to imagine what the Circle community garden space could be if I rethought my role and relation in reciprocity to the people of the community.

Clandinin *et al.* (2010) reasoned that "tensions can only emerge from relationships," they are relational between the individuals' storied lives and actions which were enacted in the landscapes they live (p. 83). Relational tensions, as I experienced through the response "one of those nice guys," provided those between spaces for rethinking and reframing the *spatial practices* and *representations of space* that are to what could be in that spacetime. These ephemeral moments, if taken up in leisure research/practice in heartfelt ways, can move the field from concomitant conceptualizations of leisure and leisure experience to the rich and

multivariate "range of understandings, and thus actions with which we may engage in everyday life" and leisure (Watkins, 2005, p. 211).

"Wilted Sage:" Fleeting Threads

Open the lock,

Check the beds.

Space saved

From the beginning,

Noticing something new.

Cared for and transplanted-

White sage grew

Damp dirt

Hairy texture

Fragile form

Taking root?

I imagine the garden

Authored anew

Alongside stories sown

And ones attempting to bloom

Determined to see it grow

Watching water slip through

Sandy soil.

Like the cracked asphalt

That surrounds

Wilted in the seams.

A sage reminder

Of what the garden could be

If sufficient conditions

Were met

To manifest

Dormant seeds.

Over the next several weeks my mind-body-spirit moved in, out and through the Circle garden in a repetition that was open and willing to interruption and reconstruction. Slowly I became aware and attentive to identifying when I was slipping into my productive pace as water determinedly flowed into the garden beds, weeds were picked, plants tended and fence locked in record times. My everyday mundane actions remained similar but I began to feel the rhythm of the Circle community infusing me with slowing rhythms as I went about my routine, pick, turn, weed, sit, water, sit, sweep, cut, hoe, sit. My instincts guided me with each new personal encounter, some I knew to keep my head down, others just a simple nod, several referred to me as "Brotha," while the occasional slur acted as a gentle reminder of my position and privilege in the community. It was through these interactions with the Circle community I was moulded and gradually became

attentive to the world I had stepped into. As the summer peaked it was this attentive pace nestled within my everyday routines at the Circle garden that led me to pause and compassionately notice and wonder about the significance of the white sage plant to the Aboriginal community.

As I tended to each bed upon entering the garden I noticed and was surprised by the recently transplanted white sage plant. It was a sight I had not expected this late in the season even though the Circle community workers, including myself, had saved the space from the beginning. Upon seeing its fragile form alongside the established herbs in the raised bed, I began to wonder about the significance of sage to the community, specifically in regards to the maintenance and (re)production of Indigenous cultures. Through the traditional culinary lens of my family I knew sage as an aromatic herb used to compliment sausages and meats, primarily poultry; I had never planted or tended to it. I stretched my frame of reference in tension with the community as I stared at the sage, feeling yet again that a chasm sat between the symbolic meanings of the sage to the community and my relation to it throughout my life. I did not know the significance of sage in or across Indigenous cultures apart from popular notions that linked the sacred herb to *Indigenous spatial practices* of spiritual cleansing and medicinal use. I hesitated not wanting to overstep boundaries or offend but desired to support what was beginning to take form. My heartfelt desires to support the culture of the community through nurturing the sage plant manifested in the *spatial practices* I knew and could imagine. In this way tending to the sage was "in conjunction with, while not being completely constrained by, the strictures of the *representations of space* and the *spatial practices*

that have developed to provide the necessary cohesion and competence for successful social interaction" (Watkins, 2005, p. 213).

As if a new purpose grabbed hold of my body I picked up the buckets and made my way to the auto shop for water. Arriving back beside the bed I leaned over to feel the sage. Its soft leaves dangled in my fingers, shapeless and malleable to touch, its scent non-existent as I sniffed the air around and on my hands, its wilted form signaled its waning presence. In an attempt to catch and divert water I pushed some of the dry soil around to create a moat around the sage. I gently poured the water at its base, slowly it gathered on the soil's dried surface before bolting through. Unsure of how else to support it I continued to water the plants nearby, filling bucket after bucket, while intermittingly splashing small amounts of water at the sage's base. Over the next two weeks I became fixated on nurturing the sage, identifying with its spirit and feeling the connection amongst the words "Native. Family. Love." I added a couple extra visits to the garden to ensure it was thoroughly watered in the hopes it would survive the transition. After a heart wrenching two weeks of care, I knew the sage would not survive as it wilted in the seams of the dried and unfertile soil. The sage leaves outer edges crumbled to the touch in the weeks after its transplant. It was during this moment I felt as if I had let the community down as my expanded concept of care and responsibility, as "gardener in residence," entwined with Indigenous *spatial practices* and *representations of space* of the community only momentarily bloomed to fruition. Its dried figure acted as a reminder to the tensions of what the Circle community garden could be and

what always was in the process of being *lived* and negotiated at Circle community and in the garden.

It became more than just a plant or herb in that spacetime; it was a symbolic moment of reciprocity and transition from the Circle garden feeling like a representation of me to myself opening up and being part of the community in practices and representations of gardening foreign to my familiar narratives of leisure programming and gardening. My role as "gardener in residence" largely un-shifted in terms demonstrating competence, however, was reframed upon tending to the sage as I began to connect with the Indigenous community in competent and coherent ways. While a disheartening experience at that moment, the "Wilted Sage" poem offers a sage reminder to the difficulties of leisure research and recreation programming to open up, facilitate, and/or be attentive to honouring difference(s) amongst the fluid and shifting landscapes we enter and construct in the midst of our varied participatory research processes (Ryan & Fox, 2001).

A Tapestry that Honours Diversity

By sharing moments of tension that I experienced at Circle community my hope is not to create generalizable frameworks for leisure practitioners and researchers to follow as they step into the midst of their own leisure landscapes but to provide lived details of my own stories of gardening situated across spacetimes in relation to the Circle garden and Indigenous communities. The intent is that context specific (meaning space, time, and sociality) autobiographical narratives, such as my own, provide the reader and communities threads of transferability to compassionately rethink and reframe how leisure space is (re)produced in relation

to the multitude of personal, cultural and institutional narratives present (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In this way this research is to provoke and sustain polyvocal conversations (Fox & Klaiber, 2006) with other research and researchers who have inwardly gazed into the stories of the self in relation to people, communities and leisure (e.g. Brady, 2011; Fox, Humberstone, & Dubnewick, In Press; Dunlap, 2009; Dunlap & Johnson, 2010; Lashua & Fox, 2006; Johnson, 2009; Sparkes, 2012). As I showed through my experiences at Circle community garden there is a certain relational power as we become wakeful to the historicized and familiar rhythms, practices and narratives of self and leisure. In doing so, we as leisure practitioners and scholars, can attend to ourselves and the Eurocentric meta-narratives of our field as calibrators of tension, not in opposition to, but essential to identifying, opening up and supporting across diversity (Lashua & Kelly, 2008). This understanding of tensions across leisures suggests that everyday repetition, such as the productive pace of myself, has the potential to both support and honour diversity as well as reinforce Eurocentric hierarchies of leisure and leisure space.

As I have shown tensionality occurs across a range of encounters and in many forms. I purposely chose to highlight the small gestures that I encountered as a leisure researcher/practitioner to emphasis the significance of these everyday mundane practices in establishing trust with communities on the margins. Small gestures seen in eagle murals, heard in greets, or symbolically felt in plants are openings for leisure research and programming to be reciprocal and respectable to the hopes and meanings of a community. Responses that share our own narrative beginnings and purposely seek out and begin with the narrative beginnings of the

communities and people involved are necessary to nurture spaces and programs of trust. My experiences show how familiar frames of garden practice, when considered dynamic and open to (re)construction, are instrumental to supporting diversity across contexts. However, my experiences also demonstrate how overreliances on familiar frames of garden practice, when considered static and representative, is oppressive to diversity across contexts. I travel back to the intention set of "gardening in tension filled rows" to open and (re)construct concomitant conceptualizations of leisure in relation to how gardeners, specifically myself, more aptly experience leisure across contexts as always in tension to the multiple realities lived and experienced.

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Seeds Sown into Me: An Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry into the Leisure Experiences of one Community Gardener

Concluding Thoughts

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Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations

An *amuse-bouche* is an offering to prepare the guest before the meal. It is meant to provide a glimpse of what is to come, a taste of the chef. During my master's research I have come to view my research as an *amuse-bouche*, a taste of my approach to leisure research and a glimpse of what is to come. Beyond being a taste of my approach, this research is a taste of me, a sharing of my own stories and experiences of gardening across contexts and in relation to the community and people I encountered. While I consider this thesis a representation of my lived experiences of gardening across contexts, it also served to honour the flavours of communities, family, mentors, and people who nourished me along the way. Key to tasting any dish is knowing the ingredients in their sensuous forms and multiple meanings; I use this concluding section to identify the ingredients of my *amuse-bouche* to explain the palate of leisure research and what pairings it presents for the menus ahead.

The first ingredient of my *amuse-bouche* is autobiographical narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This ingredient acted as the base that brought life to my research puzzle and explored my lived experiences as a gardener/researcher across three community gardens in Edmonton. As shown in the two papers, this approach placed my experiences within a *three dimensional-narrative inquiry space* "as pointing to questions, puzzles, fieldwork, and field texts of different kinds appropriate to different aspects of the inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.55). For myself, my puzzles, texts and questions shifted as I stepped into diverse gardening landscapes where cultural practices made me pause

and gently reconsider the assumptions of gardening across my life in relation to what was present at Eco, Heritage, and Circle community gardens. I was propelled *backwards* into visceral memories, senses, and rhythms of gardening as a child with my family, and how these early experiences with food were paradoxically estranged from and coherent to the landscapes I was presently in. *Inwardly* I was drawn to ideas and hopes of food and garden practices as vital extensions and linkages to cultural meanings of families and communities. These heartfelt emotions were nurtured by living in a family of food, where intergenerational techniques were passed down and tables were always set; it was where I felt the pulse was always able to beat. As I saw glimpses of culturally specific forms of garden practice being taken up at Heritage and Circle community gardens, I felt as if I was a "world traveler" in Lugones's (1987) sense. Able to feel their pulses through their garden practices, I was invited alongside to taste Asian greens and tend to sage as I travelled into worlds of gardening that brought new meanings to my life and how I experienced and could imagine gardening. *Outwardly* I was hesitant on how to support and respect the multiple ways gardening was taken up across contexts and where my familial stories of gardening would be situated. Further, I questioned how cultural diversity across community gardens would be supported in leisure, especially when conceptualizations of leisure and recreation programming were often supporting homogenous and Eurocentric practices. I looked *forward*, sometimes starry-eyed, sometimes bleakly, to imagine how community gardening could be inclusive for the people and communities I stood alongside and for myself. My research was always rooted in those early instances of gardening at Eco,

Heritage and Circle that made me pause and gently hold my familial constructions of gardening alongside culturally diverse garden practices.

The second ingredient which acted as the spice or seasoning of my *amuse-bouche* was Lefebvre's (1991; 2004) scholarship. This ingredient, alongside autobiographical narrative inquiry, lifted the sensuous self to the fore through the everyday mundane practices I experienced across community gardens. Lefebvre's scholarship acted not as an abstract model, rather as a concrete reality of how I experienced myself as a totality in specific spacetimes and moments of the everyday. As my work demonstrates, and Lefebvre suggests, moments of tensions within everyday practice in communal gardens are not insignificant practices of (re)production; rather, if attended to and revealed they "could become the basis for reconstruction of human society" (Shields, 1999, p. 67). As I experienced at Circle garden, it was a keen attention to my everyday productive paced rhythms that allowed me to reimagine my relationship with the garden and the people of the community. This ingredient or approach to the everyday, space and time offered the seasoning to take what is seen as bland or just plain boring and draw out its richness and spice.

The last ingredient of my *amuse-bouche* is the scholarship, or more aptly described as the personal and theoretical guidance, of Karen Fox (Fox & Klaiber, 2006). This ingredient was the binder of my *amuse-bouche*; it was the ingredient that held it all together and tied it to the field of leisure. Using a comparative framework across community gardens and experiences of gardening in my life, I was given space to question my assumptions of gardening and leisure in relation to

the people with whom I engaged. Following Fox and Klaiber's (2006) critique of Eurocentric conceptualizations of leisure, I situated myself historically in the representations of community gardens over time and currently alongside the lived experiences of gardening to highlight the abyss that emerges in representing leisure and gardening through abstractions such as social capital or broad social psychological conceptualizations. Always wary of placing my own garden and food practices within traditional leisure concepts of intrinsic motivation, choice and free time, I provided glimpses that leisure is fluid and fragile to cultural construction, rich with necessity and subsistence, and open to contextual (re)construction.

Taken together these ingredients have nurtured my *amuse-bouche* and offer several contributions to the palate of leisure research. First, my work provides the rich, descriptive, embodied details of experience that are often lacking in leisure research. This has largely allowed leisure research as a field to move forward using Eurocentric frameworks of leisure. My research, by taking the reader alongside my experiences across community gardens, asks the reader to reimagine and redescribe their leisure experiences in relation to my own. Through my own paradoxical and tension filled experiences, I have re-described gardening beyond dominant conceptualizations of community building (social capital) and Eurocentric measures. By reflecting on experience I have opened space in my own research, and hopefully with others, to offer counter narratives embodied in lived experiences across leisures and communal garden practices. The value of this research is to honour, be respectful, and open space to diversity by contributing to post-colonial and Indigenous scholarship about leisure. Second, my work shows the power of

autobiographical narrative inquiry to provide counter narratives to meta-narratives of leisure research and recreation programming. Reflexive inquiry of the self provides a deeper understanding of the social worlds that we enter in leisure as well as providing the stories and assumptions of how that knowledge emerged through past and present experiences and in relation to the personal, cultural, and institutional narratives with which we resonate. This type of reflexive inquiry acknowledges, opens up and challenges the power structures that are often supported in detached and disembodied inquiries. Introspective methods provide lenses for researchers to pursue and ask how we are contributing to social justice in our research and to the relationships that are formed during the process. It is in these reflexive responses to my experiences in community gardens that I was able to question and reimagine how I can better hold space for diversity and notice what hierarchies I was (re)producing. Lastly, my research begins to weave the connections between leisure research and everyday food and garden practice. Specifically, I did this through sharing my own stories of food relative to the communities and people I encountered. Thus, this research may be seen as a beginning for intergenerational stories of food in leisure, situated in my own stories and experiences of gardening across my life and with the people that nourished them most.

As I imagine the menu and pairings of the future that have sprouted from this work, I am drawn back to a culinary lesson of my family that I feel is appropriate for the future of leisure research. I grew up in a family that never used cookbooks or recipes. This seemed odd when I was young as I lived in a family where both my

parents were chefs. It seemed only natural that recipes would be scattered in the kitchen, always out on the counter, and within ease of grasp. Yet that was not the case. They were hidden in bookshelves a couple rooms over where dust accumulated, rarely taken from their stacks, and if they were it was just for some inspiration or an idea. My beginnings with food, as nurtured by my parents, were always through the senses and embodied in everyday practice. I always sat nearby to watch, get an occasional taste test, and take in the smell of what was to come. Food was a journey of osmosis for me as I embodied the food practices with which I came in contact. It became readily apparent as a child I would never receive the same meal twice. I find comfort and laughter in this now as I have experienced how much one lentil soup can change depending on what was on sale, fresh from the garden, in the fridge, who is coming over, or how you felt like making it at that moment. I watched in amazement as I was fed variants of lentil soup over the years, some chili pepper based, other tomato and thyme based, all falling under what my parents called lentil soup. After a while I felt as if I did not know what lentil soup was; there seemed to be no constant through it all, except maybe that it had lentils; but even those changed, sometimes they were red and other times they were green. If you asked me now for my lentil soup recipe, I would probably have trouble narrowing down a recipe or even saying there is one.

I have recalled and retold various versions of this story to myself throughout my research process to remind myself of the multiplicity of any one dish. And how the joy I have found in cooking is not in following one recipe of lentil soup but in the recipe's ability to bend, adapt, change yet still sustain what I would call lentil soup.

For me the lentil soup is how I have come to construct what leisure is and could be: multivariate and changing to contexts and relations, and most of all without privilege and hierarchy from one lentil soup to the next. As my research has showed and as I argue now, there is a certain respect to diversity and multiplicity when we move beyond trying to reproduce or nail down a recipe of leisure (or lentil soup) and instead look to hold the multiple ways it can be created and nourished across contexts. It is essential that leisure research continue to move forward listening to the margins and honouring local, community, and Indigenous conceptualizations of leisure to better represent and support the numerous recipes that exist. I believe this approach can be done across any number of leisures, but for my personal and social justifications I have focused on daily food practices.

The field of leisure research has been largely unresponsive to issues of cultural food security. My research while not in direct conversation with these issues opens conversations around daily food and garden practices that leisure research has been reluctant to take up. I suggest moving forward that leisure research needs to seek out and describe formally developed systems of local food security (such as community gardening across contexts, “Mealshare” organization which started in Alberta, Sustainable Food Edmonton) as well as informal daily food practices (such as home gardens, meal practices at home, intergenerational food practices) on the margins that are experienced in everyday life through the relations, in all their positives and negatives, people have with food. With increased global and multi-perspectival focus on the impacts of our daily food practices, leisure researchers are obligated to join the conversation and play with how leisure

is connected to issues of cultural food security. One way leisure can actively engage in these issues is to explore diverse narratives of experience across leisure contexts (e.g. home garden, communal garden, farmers markets) to rethink how cultural practices are inscribed with food. If these cultural narratives of leisure/food experience are forgotten or left on the margins, leisure research will reproduce and support homogenous (Eurocentric) and oppressive conceptualizations of food and leisure programming across contexts. If leisure research seriously takes up issues of cultural food security through multiple perspectives, leisure research and programming has the potential to be inclusive and honour the diverse meanings of food and leisure across people, communities and cultures.

References

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