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A New Discourse on the Kitchen: Feminism and Environmental Education

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Popularised feminist discourse has devalued daily cooking and implicitly defined it as work that reinforces women's second-class status. In an era of climate change linked to industrialised foods and disease epidemics caused by the modern Western diet, kitchen work has acquired political importance. Daily cooking must be understood as public, as well as private. Neither feminist theorists nor environmental educators have integrated cooking in the kitchen, specifically, into discourse. By examining two local foods activist groups, we measure one site where feminists value cooking, and we develop a feminist theory of gender-inclusivity. Based on our survey, feminists who cook with local foods are only beginning to ideologically integrate feminism and sustainable foods cooking; however, we argue that in practice, the connection is strong and that it is time to conceptualise a new discourse on the kitchen for a feminist-environmental theory of cooking.

The Kitchen as a Site for Feminist and Environmental Theory, Activism and Education

In the rural US community of Macomb, Illinois, a significant and measured number of feminists and activists for women's issues are supporting local movements for sustainable foods. To avoid an industrialised diet and to enjoy the most pleasurable flavours and aromas, many feminists farm and grow vegetables in their gardens, and cook locally sourced foods. Some feminists, such as the Australian scholar Juanita Elias, as well as the feminist media, have addressed the need to care for the environment and support women farmers and farmworkers.[1] There remains, however, a dilemma for those invested in sustainable foods: if one is to eat locally sourced or unprocessed foods, she or he must spend time and energy in the kitchen 'cooking'[2] from scratch, and the household must make time to sit and eat. This 'kitchen time' is problematic for theoretical and practical reasons, as most feminists in the rural Midwestern United States work for pay and have various 'after-work' commitments that leave them little time or creative energy for cooking from scratch, or for even the simplest process of washing, chopping, and applying heat; this requires patience, care and attention, especially when done in

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sufficient quantity and variety to make a group meal. When one also factors in time to wash dishes, it is fair to say that cooking may be 'simple', but it is not 'fast'. Contemporary mainstream theorising about kitchen work does not provide a framework in which cooking is political and might be an essential aspect of the feminist agenda. Environmental education literature also tends to omit the kitchen. Because the 21st century faces a food crisis that is harmful to human health as well as the environment,[3] it is time to acknowledge and harmonise the tensions between cooking and a popularised, Friedan-based feminist theory of the 20th century. We may then share a feminist discourse on the kitchen in formal and informal educational settings.

The motivation for this paper arose when the authors noticed that many of the participants and leaders of the local food movement in one rural Midwestern community were also feminists who took for granted that cooking is an essential link in the chain of a sustainable foods system, but did not conceptually integrate 'feminism' and the 'kitchen'. As professors who teach 20th-century 'second wave' feminist theory, we know that while there are plenty of theorists who encourage women to focus first on paid work (Betty Friedan, 1963, being the most renowned), there are virtually no theorists in the contemporary 'canon' who specifically endeavour to integrate the kitchen (as one aspect of food justice) with feminism.

It is important to recognise our appreciation for Friedan's contribution to feminist theory and real women's lives. It was her work, along with that of other 'second wavers', that opened professional and political doors for women of subsequent generations. We are building on second wave feminist theory, which has provided grounding from which to begin a feminist discourse on the kitchen. We do not want to fall into the historical trap that Brunsdon (2005) identified in which women make other women the 'other' through 'disidentity' (p. 112). Our theory is primarily motivated *not* by a critique of Friedan, but as a response to our historical context of human health crises and climate change, which is different from Friedan's theory focus. Our thesis, that if you eat you 'cook' or make some other working contribution to the meal, requires the primary breadwinners (traditionally male) to pull their weight in the kitchen. After reading Friedan's 1977 reflection on men's cooking, we think Friedan may very well have appreciated kitchen work more if it had been routinely gender-inclusive. Additionally, even in the 1960s and 1970s, when how we eat was not so urgently linked to climate change and human disease, Friedan may have appreciated our call for men and children to dedicate more time to the kitchen.

When Freidan (1963) and others encouraged women to do more in 'public', they inadvertently devalued kitchen work and defined the 'feminist' as she who did not identify as housewife or was uncomfortable with full-time domesticity (Brunsdon, 2005). When Friedan returns to occasional cooking in the late 1970s, she defends herself — 'I'm not announcing public defection from the women's movement' — as if cooking and feminism were incompatible (1977). She concludes her 1977 reflection by consciously allowing herself to cook: 'We women had to liberate ourselves from the slavish necessities, the excessive drudgery and guilt related to cooking in order to be able to now liberate ourselves from an excessive need to react against it. As for me, I've come out the other end of women's liberation — to make my own soup.' Friedan eventually makes peace with cooking, but she doesn't have a crystal ball to foresee the 21st-century urgency of cooking as a question of health and environmental justice that is consistent with overall feminist principles. The 1963 'get-out-to-work' approach was an effective and important way of naming the discontentment a significant number of women felt and, though many women were already working for pay, encouraging women to work in the 'public'; but it stopped short of deconstructing the boundaries between public and private, and calling men, or the primary breadwinner, into the kitchen.

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In a two-part argument, we maintain that life balance requires that 'public' and 'private' be deconstructed and reconceptualised as gender-inclusive, and that feminists are now living in a current context of global, food-related issues not known to earlier theorists, and therefore a new set of feminist theories must emerge that respond to contemporary circumstances.[4] 'Separate spheres' must be integrated. By surveying the practices and beliefs of feminists who are active in one particular local foods movement, we confirm our hypothesis that feminists are well represented among those who cook, but do not connect feminism with cooking.

We focused on two groups that will be discussed in detail below: the Barefoot Gardens (BFG), a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and the Food Initiatives Group (FIG) of Macomb, Illinois. Australian researchers, as well as others, have shown that these CSAs share many of the qualities of community and children's gardens that have been shown to educate and enhance learning in a broad variety of ways (Köse, Gener, Gezer, Erol, & Bilen, 2010; Lekies & Sheavly, 2007; Libman, 2007; Malone, 2006; Monroe, Andrews, & Biedenweg, 2008; Walter, 2012). Like community gardens, neither FIG nor BFG regularly constitutes a formal educational site, yet they are the kinds of environmental places that Australian scholar Walter (2012) calls 'public pedagogy' (p. 2). This research is a process of educating ourselves theoretically and politically, and discussing our findings in both formal and informal settings, such as the college classroom or CSA harvests. We are engaged in what Walter and others call *concientización,* which shares roots with feminist consciousness-raising (Clover, 2002; Walter, 2012).

Our intent is to illustrate how feminist theory written before the era of climate crises and diet-caused disease epidemics is not adequate for 21st-century feminists, and to initiate a dialogue about how feminist theory might evolve to integrate cooking and a reconceptualisation of the kitchen as political and community-based, as well as 'domestic'. As will be seen in our survey of men and women in the Macomb, Illinois local foods movement, feminist practice precedes feminist theory and belief: 74% of the survey participants who cook also identified themselves as feminists, but most respondents (83%) did not associate cooking and preparing local foods with feminism. In this survey, there is a gap between feminist identity and beliefs about the valuable time spent dedicated to sustainable food. The beliefs manifest in the survey seemed to say: 'I am a feminist, *but* I cook.' A solid feminist discourse on the kitchen, however, might support the belief that: 'I am a feminist, so I want to make the political choice to contribute to the equitable production of consciously and ethically prepared daily meals — healthy food and environment are good for women and everyone else.'

Today, any branch of feminist theory and environmental education that devalues or ignores cooking risks contradicting the values of human and environmental health. Feminist theorist and activist Charlotte Bunch (1979) says that feminism is an 'entire worldview or *gestalt*' (p. 9) and that feminist theory 'provides a basis for understanding every area of our lives' (p. 9). Feminist theorists and activists may be tempted to prioritise food last — after work, activism, relationships, and leisure time. This approach may have been consistent with feminist theory before the age of environmental and health crises, but now, if feminist theory is to be a seen as a worldview, it must be consistent with environmental and human health.

Feminist theory may inspire us to integrate cooking into our daily routines. Writing before the crises of climate change and human health, Bunch (1979) says, 'a solid feminist theory would help us understand present events in a way that would enable us to develop the visions and plans for change that sustain people engaged in day-to-day political activity' (p. 7). A useful theory provides grounding for activism. When feminists and environmental educators look for inspiration to cook after a taxing day of work (paid or not), we will need theories that are meaningful to validate kitchen work.

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As feminists who face the daunting task of confronting many systems of privilege and inequality (sustainable vs. industrialised food being one of them), we struggle to find the time and energy to cook. As Bunch says, theory is a source of sustenance for political activity. A strong discourse on the kitchen will reveal that daily cooking with a conscience is activism.

A Recent History of Feminist Discourse on the Kitchen

While feminists from Wollstonecraft (1792) to Chodorow (1978) have theorised about domesticity, Friedan's (1963) ground-breaking book, *The Feminine Mystique*, especially impacted English-speaking countries, and particularly motivated educated women in the United States and England, and, as Australian scholar Henderson documents, Australia (Henderson, 2007; Hoby, 2010). Referring to middle- and upper-class educated homemakers, Friedan argued that the division of labour devalued daily cooking and defined private food preparation as work that intrinsically reinforces women's second-class status (Friedan, 1963).

By identifying domestic life as dissatisfying and the public work of men worthy of attainment, Friedan's theory reflected and reified the historical mainstream devaluation of women's domestic work. Freidan verbalised women's desire to do valued, paid work outside the home as an escape from what she saw as the drudgery and lack of creativity found in domestic work. As mother and wife, her job was to feed others, and cooking was perceived only as a product of domestic domination, not as an action that involves choices that link one to the public world and environmental activism.

Friedan's theories remain current with theorists like Bennetts (2008) and Hirshman (2007), who espouse the ideas that women who opt out of the workforce are making a foolish economic choice and wasting their talents, and that in order to fulfil their potential as human beings and to contribute to their country's leadership, women should reject domesticity and enter the 'public' world of work. In reality, however, few women fully left the domestic world and, when women accepted the additional work of a job outside the home, this remunerated work did not become a cure-all: it has paid women much less than men (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009), has offered women work in which (unlike the kitchen) they have very little creative control, and has contributed to a current time bind (Hochschild, 2001), as well as the often stressful pace of everyday life.

In her ground-breaking work, *The Second Shift*, Arlie Hochschild (1989) argues that the tension between the gendered division of labour, the lack of time, and the importance of kitchen work, has increased. Given that cooking is an integral link between sustainably-grown foods and nourishing meals, environmental educators and feminists must advocate for more positive understanding of the kitchen.

One goal of this article is a call to revalue the traditional work of the kitchen, identified as woman's work, and to conceptualise the kitchen as a site where environmental education is most personal and everyday. In this way, kitchen work dissolves the false binaries 'nature/human' or 'indoor/outdoor' and replaces them with an understanding that what we put into our bodies is what we become. Barrett (2005), Di Chiro (1987), Gough and Whitehouse (2003) and Suavè (2005) have identified the need for a greater influence of feminist discourse on environmental education literature. Likewise, feminist theory lacks a discourse on the kitchen that supports cooking as empowering, socially valuable, or politically influential. The time for these connections has come.

Currently, research in feminist food studies emphasises the diverse and sometimes contradictory experiences of women in the kitchen. Scholars have already shown: women's cooking has in certain contexts been socially viewed as a highly valued and

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pleasurable task, and in those cases has increased women's power in relationships and their status in community (Avakian, 1997; Counihan, 2004; Jenkins, 2005); and in other contexts, cooking has often been associated with drudgery, confinement to the home and lack of choice (Carroll, 2013; Deutsch, 2011; Inness, 2001; Schenone, 2003). Australian food studies scholar Supski (2007) says the kitchen is a place where women 'conform, disrupt, and resist dominant discourses that seek to define their identities' (p. 5). Countless women have written about the pleasures, empowerment and tensions they have found in kitchen work (Avakian, 1997; Fussell, 1999; Kalish, 2008; Newton, 2013; Reichl, 2010). A theoretical discourse on the kitchen must reflect these narratives.

In the 20th- and 21st-century 'industrialised' or 'developed' world, work that is gendered as feminine is more likely to be devalued than it is to be highly rewarded. A feminist discourse on the kitchen argues that 'women's work' is relevant to all who wish to be independent and teach and learn about the environment. Kitchen work is important, regardless of sex, and can be valued consistently in our current cultural climate. Women's work in the kitchen becomes simply valuable work.

The Need for a New Discourse on the Kitchen for Environmental Educators and Feminists

We advocate a theory of feminist cooking that identifies the kitchen as a socially and politically transformative site (Di Chiro, 1987, p. 15) for theorising and practising feminist theory and environmental education. Cooking with unprocessed or non-industrial foods dissolves the constructed binaries between 'humans and nature', 'man and woman', and 'indoor and outdoor'. Currently, feminists approach cooking ambivalently in regard to theory and daily practice. Similarly, environmental education scholars have neglected the kitchen as a site for the practising and theorising of environmental education. Since the beginning of the feminist 'second wave', many feminists have cooked — though they may have struggled to integrate cooking into their own theories of feminism. For example, from a clearly feminist perspective, Avakian (1997) edits a frequently cited collection of women's memoirs about food. Avakian writes about being surprised with her own interest in food and cooking, and why it became important to collect women's stories about food and cooking. Using language like 'rejection of cooking' and 'unexpectedly became a cook' (p. 2), and highlighting the conflicted feelings women often have about food and cooking, Avakian defends herself, as if feminists are not supposed to be interested in cooking.

The conflicted discourse for feminists is: 'I can be dedicated to daily kitchen work, but lose credibility as a feminist, or I can appear consistently feminist, but have little time for the kitchen.' Barrett (2005) identifies similarly conflicting discourses in her role of environmental educator: 'I can be a strong canoe trip guide but lose currency as a woman, or I can rank highly as a woman and have little credibility as a guide' (p. 85). Environmental educators currently work within a discourse that pits science against kitchen work, which is 'feminine, soft and subjective', while lab or field science is 'masculine' and based in 'hard facts'. There are conflicting discourses surrounding men's work in the kitchen as well. These conflicting discourses make it difficult to advocate the kitchen as a necessary site of environmental education and feminist practice.

Contrasting with the 1960s and 1970s, we currently live in an era of human disease epidemics caused by the modern Western diet, and an era of rapid climate change, to which the industrialisation and shipping of food contribute substantially (see Lappe, 2010; McKibbon, 2007; Pollan, 2006; Shiva, 2008; who have synthesised the interdisciplinary scholarship on the causal link between industrial food, climate change, and disease). Physicist and ecofeminist Shiva (2008) says, 'The globalised food system is

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causing destruction at every level … distinctiveness, quality, nutrition and taste are no longer in the equation' (p. 123). Environmental and human health are two of the 'levels' Shiva is referring to. Ronald and Adamchak (2010) say, 'If we continue with current farming practices, vast amounts of wilderness will be lost, millions of birds and billions of insects will die, farm workers will be at increased risk for disease, and the public will lose billions of dollars as a consequence of environmental degradation' (p. ix). While Ronald and Adamchak emphasise environmental degradation, Sachs (1996) addresses human health questions as well. Speaking of the 'privatization, commercialization, and capitalization' of agriculture, Sachs says, 'the long-term degradation of soil and water and the immediate health effects of this degradation may produce serve problems for rural people. Highly mechanised, specialised, and chemically dependent agricultural systems pose particular (health) problems for women' (pp. 64–65). The theme of Barndt's entire work (2008) is women's resistance to the unsustainable and toxic global food industry. We must discuss the kitchen in light of these 21st-century circumstances.

The conclusions of the above-mentioned food studies experts ring especially true to us. As residents of the rural Midwestern United States who would prefer to buy food from producers we know and trust, we are disheartened to see ourselves literally surrounded by monocultural fields of corn being grown for cattle, high fructose corn syrup and other highly processed additives to food. We commute next to cornfields in our daily routines. Very little of these extremely fertile fields is used to grow nutritious food for humans to eat. And while we are fortunate enough to live upstream, we know that the chemical fertilisers applied to the cornfields around us poison the water of those living downstream. We would prefer to be surrounded by sustainable farms that provide nourishing food for, and can be held accountable to, the immediate community. For interdisciplinary perspectives on food and agriculture in and around Macomb, Illinois, see Sadler, McIlvaine-Newsad, and Knox (2013).

Today, the costs of *not* cooking are clearer than they were when Friedan wrote the *Feminine Mystique,* or when environmental education emerged in the early 1970s (De Chiro, 1987). In the 1960s, feminists did not encourage women or men to factor in a health crisis or climate change when making decisions about cooking, and it would have been ineffective to do so at that time. Currently, as local food movements endeavour to combat decline in nutritional and environmental health, women and men have come to recognise that working in the kitchen with healthy, fresh and sustainable ingredients is too important to be neglected.

Popular U.S. feminism has conceptualised preparing delicious and healthy food as an obstacle to women developing their full potential, as if what we eat had little connection to women's wellbeing, or cooking were not a social, economic, or political act. Feminists in the kitchen have faced what Barrett (2005) calls conflicting discourses. To resolve these contradictory discourses between feminism and cooking, one must take into account such ideas as self-sufficiency, the historical expertise women have exercised in the kitchen, and the need to care for the earth and preserve the food supply for future generations of women. While eco-feminists (Shiva, 1989) have addressed the need to support small farmers (often women) in order to reduce the impact of industrialised foods on the environment, they have not fully addressed the need to support people who cook in order to protect human health as well as the environment. Cooking at home must be valued for the human and environmental health it supports.[5]

Practice as the Basis for a New Discourse on the Kitchen

We offer one picture of what feminist-environmental cooking might look like: in the past decade, Macomb, Illinois has seen the birth and continual growth of a local food

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movement. This movement is composed of people who eat local foods, promote them to the public, and who recognise this practice as political, social, and environmental choice. They grow vegetables, buy food at the farmers' markets, join CSAs and community gardens, and organise to start cooperative markets. FIG has demonstrated the culinary possibilities in two annual dinners, one that showcases gourmet dishes prepared from local foods, and another that is free and open to the public, with the goal of demonstrating how anyone can cook with local foods. Both events have been highly successful, with the second achieving an integration of social class.

Many members of FIG and BFG are conscious of the fact that involvement with local foods, in addition to being environmentally friendly, means producing an affordable meal that is not otherwise accessible. For example, no local restaurant in the area regularly serves organic or locally grown foods. Even in more urban areas, such restaurants are expensive. When one compares eating locally at home to eating out 'locally', the economic value of producing one's meal becomes clear: most restaurants in the United States do not serve locally sourced foods, and when they do, it often costs more. Rural 'locavores' know that the only affordable way to eat sustainably grown and prepared foods daily is to 'do it yourself'. Feminism, environmental education and the intentional use of locally grown foods may come together more clearly in a CSA or group like FIG. We turn to these two groups as sites for exploratory study as we develop, through the lens of feminism and environmental education, a new discourse on the kitchen.

Feminists in the local food movement of this particular rural community practise cooking regularly. Importantly, these feminists live in various arrangements — from single people and students living together, to same-sex couples and traditional nuclear families. Feminists often fulfil central roles in organising and cooking local foods for public dinners. In a FIG celebration dinner in honour of local foods (free and open to the public), for example, over half of the planning committee consisted of Women's Studies faculty. Our survey confirmed that many supporters of the local foods movement in this particular rural Midwestern community are feminists. This movement is not simply about social activism, but about daily lifestyle choices, and it requires that people not only grow and/or purchase local foods, but allot time to preparing them. How might theory serve as sustenance (Bunch, 1979) for these feminists and informal environmental educators who cook?

Part of the explanation lies in reworking what Hochschild (1989) calls the 'second shift'. Cooking is valuable work, even if one is not paid to do it. If the 'primary breadwinners' (traditionally men) contribute their share to the production of the meal (shopping, gardening, cooking and cleaning), the burden does not fall disproportionately on women. While studies show that in two-income families with children at home, women still do far more of the childrearing and housework than men, contemporary husbands do more than twice as much as those of the 1960s (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006). Striving towards labour sharing as opposed to division, women, especially in households where each partner works full time, must continue to expect men and other members of the household to put in their fair share of work at home. And, although less gendered than it once was, women still do the majority of cooking at home (Szabo, 2013; Wallop, 2009). Currently, outsourcing of cooking (such as restaurants) and the use of processed foods accommodate busy schedules (Woodruff & Kirby, 2013), both serving to alleviate some of the gendered nature of the kitchen. But this result is not necessarily intentional. There is considerable expectation, however, that an intentional movement toward home cooking may not be as gendered as the U.S. kitchen landscape of the past, or as the more mainstream experience today.

It is also very important to recognise that, conceptually, the kitchen has not been identified as a place where social or political activism occurs, and therefore what

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happens there has been largely ignored by both the feminist movement and environmental education. We argue that the kitchen not only serves as a necessary link between the two, theoretically and in praxis, but also has been denigrated or ignored in large part because theorising has not insisted upon its focus.

We explore the value of the kitchen for its importance to the environment and human health, and as a means of independence and the less gendered component of this home cooking movement. Similarly, we investigate the degree to which there exists a communal nature to home cooking in the participants: Is it the intentional practice to include all household members in the meal preparation? The authors practise what we preach: We are consumers of food who have come to realise that what we put in our bodies is directly linked to personal and environmental health, and we put in many hours researching, selecting, processing, and cooking healthy, homemade food, and our families are active participants. Simultaneously, we are feminists socialised in perspectives that devalue domestic work while esteeming public work. We have come to reject the limitations of this paradigm for ourselves and encourage others to take a new look at cooking as a feminist act. Many social critics (e.g., Astyk, 2008; Berry, 1996; Kingsolver, 2007; McKibbin, 2007; Planck, 2006; Pollan, 2006; Waters, 2008) implicitly or directly do the same and argue that promoting local foods is a healthy, socially responsible act, and they make a public case for cooking with local foods. There are similar patterns with those identified as feminists involved in the local food movement of our particular rural Illinois, Midwestern community, although they may not have clearly identified the link between feminism, environmental responsibility, and cooking. A clearly developed theoretical discourse on the kitchen is imperative.

The Survey: A Pilot Exploration of Two Local Food Groups

To confirm the connection between a feminist worldview, orientation towards cooking with local/sustainably-produced foods, and a commitment to local education and activism, we conducted a pilot survey of two local foods groups. The survey is an illustration of current attitudes from a small group of individuals likely to be reflective of the tensions produced by previous feminist theories (emphasis on paid work and status in the private) and more current food concerns (manifested in activities such as membership in CSA or FIG; e.g., breastfeeding, cooking). Though not generalisable, our survey is useful in its ability to provide context for the work of local food production and feminist activism and for illuminating the intersections between feminism and cooking as environmental activism and the kitchen as a site for environmental education.

BFG and FIG are sites of learning, sharing, community activism, and *concientización* within the community (Köse et al., 2010; Lekies & Sheavly, 2007; Libman, 2007; Malone, 2006; Monroe et al., 2008; Walter, 2012). BFG shareholders exchange information about gardening, cooking, and food justice. For example, when a potential corporate hog farm threatened the health of local rivers and streams, BFG was the site of petition signing and letter-writing. It is also a time of recipe exchange. BFG also hosts two yearly potlucks, which provides yet another way for the community to share information about how to cook with local foods. FIG maintains a listserve that keeps members informed about local foods and the politics surrounding them, and has hosted community dinners that promoted recipes for locally produced foods.

In response to the Australian scholar Malone's (2006) analysis of researchers as activists, we, as researchers, are integrated into our topic: we have been active in BFG and FIG, as well as in our own kitchens. Though we did not complete our survey, we are friends, colleagues, and teachers of those who did. Because we seek to learn from our own participation in local foods movements and cooking, we are the 'researched' as

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well as the 'researchers'. We sought to respond to our own conceptual needs, and then share the results with our peers who already practise both feminism and cooking.

Survey development stemmed from feminist and environmental literature, our experiences as teachers of feminist theory, and also as community members intimately familiar with the group to be surveyed.[6] Local food activism as a movement in this particular rural community is rooted in FIG and BFG. We emailed the survey to approximately 30 members of FIG and 70 members of BFG. Some members belong to both, and duplicates were eliminated. Participants were asked to complete the survey and mail it back to the primary researcher by postal mail. This was done to allow for anonymity in responses, although mailing the survey surely reduced the response rate. Of the total surveyed, 31 members responded.

The survey included several demographic items, as well as other elements that were created to ask about attitudes and practices that are often associated with feminists, and/or feeding families of all types and communities. For instance, respondents were asked about the surname they might have adopted if married, their children's surnames, whether they breastfed or bottle-fed their children, and childcare. We asked about their attitudes toward the accommodation of breastfeeding in the workplace, and whether or not they considered themselves feminists. A set of items also asked about their behaviours in relation to their own cooking as well as family members' involvement in the cooking process, and about the extent of their use of local foods. Finally, we included several questions about their opinion of relationships between feminism and using local foods, cooking and kitchen work.

The findings support the original query: there are many feminists in this particular local food movement, but they do not necessarily connect feminism with the kitchen; for there is no integrative discourse on the kitchen. We advocate a *concientización* that cooking might be understood as part of full human expression. Feminism and cooking with local foods may be part of the same value system. This value system might have as its core a fundamental belief that men and women are first, humans with diverse interests and capabilities, and second, they are wage earners, daughters, sons, mothers, fathers, and so forth. Because the CSA/FIG survey participants have interests and areas of expertise both in and outside the home, they can cook with local foods without being reduced to 'the cook', or take care of children or elderly parents without being reduced to 'caregiver'. They can work for remuneration without being reduced to 'breadwinner'. Kitchen work is not perceived as tying them to femininity or confining them to the home, as it was for many women of Friedan's era. Our study shows that local foods' proponents take pride in their cooking.

Our study shows that much of the participation and leadership in the local food movement comes from women who lead lifestyles for which feminists like Friedan advocated and fought, and from men who do their full share of housework and childrearing. We note that in addition to identifying themselves as feminists, BFG/FIG members often engage in behaviours and hold attitudes that we think of as feminist. For example, they believe: the workplace should accommodate breastfeeding (the first local and unprocessed food; 89%), partners often share domestic responsibilities (81%), and both parents should take care of children (79%).

While most of our respondents cook with local foods and identify as feminists or practise feminism, when directly asked about the relationship between feminism and sustainable food they generally did not see the connection. Given that feminists have not developed an empowering discourse on the kitchen, this result did not surprise us; rather, the results made us conscious of the fact that this disconnect is where the *concientización* must occur. Participants are very close to becoming aware of the connections between cooking and feminism: they often view food choices as political acts (74%)

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TABLE 1: Frequency of CSA/FIG Responses to 'Using Local Foods' Survey Items

Do you …	Females Yes	Females No	Males Yes	Males No
Cook with seasonal foods	24	0	6	1
Shop at your local farmer's market	22	2	7	0
Grow a garden	13	11	2	5
Participate in a CSA group	20	3	5	2
How often do you cook?	Females		Males	
Rarely to never	0		0	
Only for special occasions	1		1	
Two or three times a week	5		1	
Most days	11		4	
Every day	7		1	
Bulk cooking once a week	0		0	
How often do you cook from scratch?	Females		Males	
Rarely to never	0		1	
Only for special occasions	1		1	
Two or three times a week	9		2	
Most days	10		2	
Every day	3		1	
Bulk cooking once a week	0		0	

Note: CSA = Consumer Supported Agricultural.

or 'socially responsible' acts (90%). From a feminist theoretical perspective, 'socially responsible' and 'political' are nearly synonymous; for, if the 'personal' is political, the 'social' is as well. For historical and cultural reasons, however, it has been difficult for feminists to conceptualise the personal as political when the kitchen is the space in question. We speculate that the lack of a discourse supporting a feminist appraisal of the kitchen is at the root of this confusion. Quite possibly those identifying as feminists who cook might more consciously articulate and recognise the connections when feminist theory and the feminist movement support such a lifestyle.

A New Discourse on the Kitchen: Integrating Values of Environmental Education and Feminism

There are many ways to practise cooking that may be integrated into feminist discourse and environmental education. We consider pleasure, history, value, systems of privilege and inequality, and the integration of femininity and masculinity. We maintain that a discourse that serves feminism will also serve environmental education.

While the urgency of our argument is based on human and environmental health, we also emphasise pleasure. The kitchen is also about the cook pleasing herself or himself. Women's cooking has often been tied to pleasing and caring for others (Hollows, 2007, p. 41). In a feminist way of cooking, people cook for their own pleasure and may share that pleasure with others. Referring to rushed schedules, dieters, and picky eaters, among other factors, Julia Child says *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* is for the cook who is not concerned about anything 'that might interfere with the enjoyment of producing something wonderful to eat' (Beck, Bertholle, & Child, 1969, p. 13). In Child's vision, the

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TABLE 2: Frequency of CSA/FIG Responses to 'Feminist Related Attitudes and Behaviors' Survey Items

	Females Yes	Females No	Males Yes	Males No
Do you consider yourself a feminist?	19	4	4	3
Were any of your children breastfed?	13	2	4	0
Were any of your children bottle-fed?	3	12	0	3
If you are married, what did you do with your last name when you got married?		Females		Males
Dropped it and took my spouse's		5		0
Hyphenated it with my spouse's		2		0
Kept it as it was		6		4
Other		2		0
If you are married, what did your spouse do with his or her last name when you got married?		Females		Males
Dropped it and took my spouse's		1		0
Hyphenated it with my spouse's		1		0
Kept it as it was		12		4
Other		1		0
If you have children, what are their last names?		Females		Males
The father's		11		3
The mother's		0		0
Both names hyphenated, father's first		1		1
Both names hyphenated, mother's first		0		0
Other		1		0
For Households where both Male and Female Heads Work Outside of the Home:				
Who undertakes the tasks of mealtime?		Females		Males
We generally complete the task equally		12		2
I cook and my partner cleans		2		0
My partner cooks and I clean		1		1
I usually do it		1		1
I do it all		0		0
My partner usually does it all		0		1
We eat out a lot or heat up food in the microwave, and therefore there is little clean-up		0		0
Who undertakes the tasks of cleaning up after a meal?		Females		Males
We generally complete the task equally		9		3
I cook and my partner cleans		3		0
My partner cooks and I clean		1		1
I usually do it		2		1
I do it all		0		0
My partner usually does it all		1		0
We eat out a lot or heat up food in the microwave, and therefore there is little clean-up		0		0

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TABLE 2: Continued.

	Females Yes	Females No	Males Yes	Males No
Do children have a role in cooking and clean-up?	Females		Males	
Child(ren) help with both	7		0	
Child(ren) help with cooking	1		2	
Child(ren) help with cleaning	6		1	
Child(ren) have a minimal role in cooking and/or clean-up	1		1	
Child(ren) have no role in cooking and clean-up	2		1	
There are no children living at home in this household				
Who cooks the majority of meals for children in your household?	Females		Males	
Mother	6		2	
Father	2		1	
Mother and father	5		1	
Children	0		0	
It's a family affair	3		0	
We eat out a lot or heat up food in the microwave				
Who do you believe should take care of children?	Females		Males	
Both parents should share the job equally	11		4	
The mother should stay home and take care of them	1		0	
One parent, it doesn't matter which, should stay home and take care of them	1		1	
The mother, regardless of whether or not she works for pay, should do most of the childrearing	0		1	
Does the mother in your household (if there is one) participate fully in childcare?	Females		Males	
Yes, she takes most or all responsibility	4		0	
Yes, equally	9		3	
Minimally	0		0	
No	0		0	
It depends on the task	0		1	
She is a single parent	0		0	
Does the father in your household (if there is one) participate fully in childcare?	Females		Males	
Yes, he takes most or all responsibility	0		0	
Yes, equally	10		3	
Minimally	0		0	
No	0		0	
It depends on the task	2		1	
He is a single parent	0		0	

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TABLE 2: Continued.

	Females Yes	Females No	Males Yes	Males No
Should the work place accommodate mothers who are breastfeeding and/or pumping?	Females		Males	
Yes, all workplaces should provide mothers and private place for this purpose.	20		4	
This is not the employer's responsibility: women should make their own arrangements	0		0	
No, nursing mothers should stay home.	0		0	
Other	2		1	

liberated (feminist) home cook enjoys her or himself without worrying about whether or not others will be pleased. Though Child's labor-intensive style of cooking may not be practical to engage in daily, a feminist way of cooking would value the home cook's pleasure and enjoyment. Sustainably grown foods that are unique, not wilted from traveling thousands of miles, and are at the height of flavour, are probably the most pleasurable with which to cook. When teaching about the environment in the kitchen, pleasure is a goal.

One component of this new discourse is that cooks and educators learn about women's historical expertise, be it cooking or other. Since the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, women have comprised most of those who have worked in home kitchens (Carroll, 2013; Kalish, 2008; Shapiro, 1986). We must take advantage of that knowledge now, while the opportunity to learn from people who cooked before the mass industrialisation of foods began in the 1940s is still available. Unfortunately, there has been little awareness of the kitchen as historically important, and cooks often did not write down or save writings about the home kitchen. Nevertheless, histories of cooking are becoming more frequent and better documented, though they do not routinely employ gender as a lens for analysis; for example, Wilson (2013) writes a history of cooking from the perspective of tools. A female homemaker is implied in Carroll's (2013) documentation of the evolutions of snacks and meals in the United States. Importantly, Shapiro (1986) chronicles the influence women 'reformers' had on women's cooking as a 'scientific' endeavour in the early 20th-century United States.

At the same time, an integral component of a feminist discourse on the kitchen that will serve environmental education is a gender-inclusive value of food and cooking that is good for the environment and humans, both locally and globally. Choosing foods that are locally grown supports both small farmers (of which women make up a comparatively larger percentage) and a more healthy future for our communities. A feminist discourse on the kitchen clearly emphasises the importance of gender-inclusive expectations of all members of the functioning household: if you eat, you cook (or some variation that is suitable and equitable). People living alone are not exempt — they must cook for themselves or organise meals with others. This gender-inclusive perspective emphasises individual and group autonomy and self-sufficiency, while still holding in high regard the domestic work and knowledge of women.

The solution is not for women to embrace the traditional expectations of femininity and renounce paid work in order to devote all of their working hours to the garden and

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TABLE 3: Frequency of CSA/FIG Responses to 'Feminism and Local Foods' Survey Items

Do you:	Females Yes	Females No	Females Don't know/ no view	Males Yes	Males No	Males Don't know/ no view
Do you consider yourself a feminist?	19	4		4	3	
Think of cook and preparing local foods as a political act?	16	6	1	7	0	0
View eating local foods as a socially responsible act?	21	2	0	7	0	0
Think of cooking and preparing local foods as a feminist act?	4	16	3	1	4	2
View cooking and/or providing food for a family in general as a feminist act?	6	13	3	1	4	2
		Females			Males	
View women's cooking and other kitchen work as anti-feminist?						
Yes		1			0	
No		10			2	
I have no view		0			0	
It depends on the circumstances and freedom involved		13			5	

kitchen. Nor is it for female environmental educators to focus on the kitchen while male educators focus on the 'rugged outdoors'. Rather, the integration of feminist and environmental discourses with daily cooking requires a *recognition of the value of cooking and domestic work* and *an insistence that those who eat labour over meal preparation*, regardless of gender. In much the same way that Freidan-based feminism stood for equality of place in the public sphere, a new discourse on the kitchen stands for equality of place in the kitchen.

In our reconceptualisation of the kitchen, a situation in which a woman hires another woman to prepare a meal at home is not likely. Responsibility for cooking would not fall on one person (traditionally female). In rare cases where all adults in the household are too busy to cook or are unable to, it could be consistent with a feminist discourse on the kitchen for one of these adults (not based on gender) to pay a cook. We would not assume the cook would be a woman. The cook must be paid well, trained in safety,

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and, as always, the kitchen must be safe and properly ventilated. Hired cooks must be regarded with equality and privilege.

In this rural town of Macomb, Illinois, hired home cooks are extremely rare, if existent at all, although the concept is intriguing. This town largely consists of middle-class professionals and the working class. Here, there is no evidence of home chefs or hired cooks. A babysitter (full or even part-time nannies are extremely rare in the rural Midwest) is often requested to prepare food, although it may be precooked, and would rarely be food from scratch. Under our guidelines that 'if you eat, you cook (or some variation that is suitable and equitable)', even if that babysitter warms and serves a frozen pizza, the children must assist as they are able: they can get the pizza from the freezer and take it out of the box, set the table (including a place for the babysitter). Older children can put a salad together or wash raw vegetables such as carrots. Finally, all can pitch in to clear the table and wash dishes.

The fact that the hired cook (in this case the babysitter) is invited to sit down to eat with those who have hired him or her is important to a feminist discourse on the kitchen. In an egalitarian community, the main 'cook' must enjoy the status of inclusion. In some contexts around the world today and historically, the 'cook' does not eat until everyone else has finished, or the cook eats in the other room. In a feminist way of cooking and eating, the main 'cook' must be encouraged to partake of what he or she has made with others. That said, other arrangements might also be consistent with a feminist worldview; for example, the cook might want to take food home. This choice would be similar to the community kitchens where people come after work to assemble casseroles and other dishes to bring home. In this case, we do not necessarily eat with those with whom we cooked. In the end, feminists will have to evaluate the fairness of hiring cooks on a case-by-case basis.

A resurgence of old, traditional understandings of good food must be integrated into contemporary knowledge about sustainable foods and infused into a discourse that integrates feminist thought and environmental education. It needs to live not only in a subsection of feminist and environmental thought but be inherent in our understanding of the representation of femininity and masculinity in all facets today. While cooking is a *human* undertaking that many women have traditionally excelled in, we need to envision the kitchen as a site that integrates femininity and masculinity. To recognise traditional women's work in the kitchen as important political work for the 21st century, we must 're-vision' what has been previously relegated to the private, domestic world associated with reproduction in the family. A significant number of households have already been practising a gender-neutral appreciation for the kitchen. All contributing members of society should re-vision kitchen work as necessary for human evolution and environmental care. In a system of privilege and inequality, as much as men (usually white and middle- to upper-class) may have defined our institutionalised understandings of science and medicine, we need to recognise women as real and potential experts, and must also shift our discourse on the kitchen to encompass the potential for skill, understanding, and expertise that is gender-balanced; for example, 'male and female,' 'haute cuisine and daily meals', 'farming and cooking', and 'indoor and outdoor' are integrated.

If one is to have a home that nurtures the people and environment in and around it, then those who live in that home should invest 'sweat' (as opposed to just money) into daily meals. Thus, what is central to a feminist discourse on the kitchen, and also to relationships and the health of humans and the planet, is that the adult or adults of the home, with the help of children and all as they are able, directly contribute to the production of mealtime. Importantly, this idea applies to living arrangements that are conventional or not, and to those who live alone or with others.

To argue for a conceptualisation of kitchen work as environmental and feminist practice, we must wed feminist theory with a practical understanding of daily life. Sauvè (2005) has discussed feminist environmental education in the context of an 'ethics of responsibility' (p. 25). We consider gender-inclusive cooking in the context of rights and responsibilities. Historically, it is women's 'responsibility' to cook and men's 'right' to eat a home-cooked meal made with fresh foods. What if we understand the time and energy it takes to prepare a meal of sustainably-grown and prepared food as a human right for males and females?[6] What if we value human and environmental health in such a way that we believe that all humans who are able have a responsibility (Sauvè, 2005, p. 25), as well as a right, to cook? We must also consider diverse food traditions. As People's Grocery director Nikki Henderson (2007) says:

> *People being able to choose foods that create health for them is super, super important. We call that 'cultural appropriateness' because our focus is people of color and low-income people, and we know that different ethnic communities, because of their cultural backgrounds, eat different foods. So for us, it's more than just health. Being able to maintain your grandmother's special dish, or being able to cook your husband that food that your dad always made for you that you really loved, are things that are not to be trifled with, and that need to be protected.*

In other words, cooking is part of the human right to cultural identity and belonging. This topic is important and must be more fully integrated into a feminist/environmental discourse on the kitchen.

The right to cook means nothing if we live in an economy that requires us to dedicate most of our time and energy to paid work that leaves us exhausted. To truly have a right to cook, men and women in the United States may need a shorter workday, like the practice in France, where time for preparing and eating dinner is more stable and highly valued. The current workday may pay us enough to be able to buy processed and semi-processed 'foods', things that come in large amounts of packaging and can be heated up quickly. This way of eating exacerbates the industrialised food system and is harmful. In order to enjoy cooking on a daily basis, men and women may need to spend less time in paid work and more time in the unpaid work of the kitchen. In the United States, this shift may require an overall change in the way the economy creates jobs. We need the time to prepare fresh food, rather than the money to buy industrial 'foods'. Alternatively or simultaneously, a shift to cooking may require a reorganisation of 'free time'. Currently, our social system supports multiple activities that occur outside of the home and often at dinnertime, which make home cooking more difficult. Environmental educators and feminists must advocate for social and economic systems that allow all humans to obtain or grow sustainable foods and to have the time to prepare and enjoy them.

A political understanding of the kitchen rooted in one's *right* to cook provides a theoretical basis in which to conceptualise cooking as a feminist act. If women and men are aware of the fact that their right to the kitchen is compromised by a rigid economy and an industrialised food system, they may understand the lack of kitchen time as something that inhibits them from expressing the fullness of being human. Anything that limits women from full humanity is a feminist issue. It is a man's issue as well.

If the right to cook is political, it is also public. The last framework in which to conceptualise a feminist discourse on the kitchen is the dismantling of the binary construct of the public and private spheres. Even as we employ terminology of the home, as in our call to revalue the work of the home, we recognise that 'home' and 'domesticity' are social constructs that must be deconstructed. The activities and decisions of the

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home are often political, and therefore 'public'. We hypothesise that promoting alternative spaces for cooking and eating meals might help us to reconceptualise the nature of daily cooking as gender-inclusive. Gender-integrated community kitchens might provide a space in which cooking is valued not only for the end result, but also for the opportunity for community-building, creativity, teaching, and learning. These spaces, such as community kitchens and potlucks or healthy school bake sales, might be understood as spaces in which men, as well as women, display their skills and creativity.

Participants in our survey are beginning to make the connections between the political nature of food and the gendered and feminist issues at the heart of cooking with sustainable foods. A feminist discourse on the kitchen must integrate the ideologies of the right to healthy food and time to cook, sit down and eat, the political repercussions of making choices about food, and the feminist values inherent in a slogan 'all who eat shall cook'. Each component of the theory of food outlined above is personal, in that it resonates with each individual about her/his daily experience, but is also political in terms of gender discrimination and social/environmental responsibility. This discourse is missing from scholarly literature.

We hope to initiate a process of balancing diverse feminist perspectives on the kitchen into a new discourse. No single discourse satisfies the needs of all women. It is impossible to encompass all perspectives. We offer one perspective: our specific data and theoretical references are focused on the white, middle class — the particular sustainable foods movement we study is composed mostly of this group. Our central text of theoretical reference, the *Feminine Mystique*, is written by and for middle- to upper-class women of the early 1960s. We recognise this perspective as valuable but limited, and welcome more and diverse perspectives towards a feminist discourse on the kitchen. As more diverse perspectives are incorporated, the discourse will be more useful to environmental educators and feminists.

Given the 20th-century history of U.S. feminism, it could seem contradictory that some feminists are in the kitchen and view this time as a personal and political act that is consistent with feminism. In fact, we believe that when women cook with traditional and local foods and do so with other members of the household, it is a *feminist act* and a necessary one. When they do it in community, it is a movement of social justice. Now we need to encourage others, give voice to this trend, and find a place within a feminist perspective for the value of cooking and the kitchen.

Conclusion

We argue that a robust theoretical discourse on the kitchen must inform current theories and practices of environmental education and feminism, but we add that this discourse must be conceptualised through feminist theory and environmental education. Working towards a holistic discourse in which these perspectives inform each other, we offer a new discourse on the kitchen that dissolves the binaries in traditional environmental education and second wave feminist theory. The harmony of diverse perspectives through a theory of the kitchen is of the utmost importance for everyone: it is much more than an environmental educator's issue, a woman's issue, or a fringe issue that 'some groups' are interested in. Sustainability and instilling the act of cooking food with value is life giving and life preserving for all.

Endnotes

[1] Australian scholar Juanita Elias (2011) says women's contribution to agricultural production is 'drastically undervalued,' and that in areas of the world that depend on women to grow food, if women farmers had equal land rights and better incomes,

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everyone's lives would improve (p. 403). Janet Lee introduces *Women Worldwide: Transnational Feminist Perspectives on Women* (Lee & Shaw, 2011, p. 1) with an immediate recognition of women's role in producing the world's food. Vandana Shiva (1989) is one pioneer of the movement to support women farmers. From a feminist perspective, Barndt documents women farmworkers who grow tomatoes. Mainstream feminist journals have placed feminism, food, and women farmers on their covers and inside special issues—see *Ms. Magaine's* Summer 2010 issue (featuring 'Women Take Back Food') and *Bitch Magazine's* 'The Food Issue' (2014).

[2] By 'cooking' we mean preparing food for eating.

[3] Many studies have made a link between industrial foods and modern, diet-caused disease epidemics. Nutrition scholar and feminist Marion Nestle (2007), for example, is an unbiased authority on this question.

[4] Our call for a feminist discourse on the kitchen for the 21st is not intended to deny any of the various feminist attitudes towards cooking since the beginning of the first wave of feminism. While Laura Shapiro (1986, p. 222) has distinguished the 'scientific cookery movement' from the feminist movement of the turn of the century, Shapiro acknowledges that suffragists believed that housework (including cooking) should be taken seriously. The second wave attitude towards cooking was different from that of the first wave.

[5] Our current U.S. dietary crisis will not resolve itself unless we change the way we obtain and prepare food. Western diet-induced diseases, mainly diabetes and heart disease, have reached epidemic levels in the United States in recent years. Type 2 diabetes, which used to be associated with the elderly, is now a disease of youth (Kleinfield, 2006). The same is said for kidney stones, which, because of diet, are forming more frequently in children (Tarkan, 2008). These diet-induced diseases often lead to other health problems, such as Alzheimer's, which is also on the rise (Grady, 2006). In addition to an increase of Western diet-caused diseases, U.S. Americans have grown overweight, are getting shorter (Komlos & Lauderdale, 2007), are projected to live shorter lives than the previous generation (Ezzati, Friedman, Kulkarni, & Murray, 2008), experience declining quality of our life, and suffer additional side effects from pharmaceuticals used to treat disease. There is no diet in the history of human evolution that is similar to our modern diet of packaged foods. In addition, the first industrialised food humans consume is infant formula, which many studies have proven to be inferior to breast milk.

[6] Scholars from various disciplines have studied the topic of access to affordable and fresh foods as human right. The Slow Food movement emphasises eating as an agricultural act. Generally, the literature focuses on farming and gardening (see Shiva, 2008; Slocum, 2011; Barndt, 2008) and less on the 'kitchen' process of preparing the food for eating. Cooking per se has not been sufficiently examined in terms of human rights. Though it is not within this scope of this paper to focus on cooking as a human right, as we continue to work towards a feminist discourse on the kitchen we must explore this topic more thoroughly.

Keywords: feminist theory, environmental education, cooking, gender roles, kitchen, sustainable foods, activism

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