

Embodying Possibility and Nourishing Networks:
Process and Intersectionality in the Occupy Movement

An honors thesis for the Department of Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

This autoethnography explores the Occupy Wall Street movement from a range of perspectives, from the most theoretical to the most concrete and reflective. The first chapter frames the Occupy movement as a liminal, performative space in dialogue with anarchist theory. The second includes a wider variety of voices—participants, analysts, and theorists of the movement—in expounding upon what the Occupy encampments were like on a day-to-day basis and the meaning(s) they offered to their multiple constituents. Chapter Three explores the movement’s inherent intersectionality and capacity to bring together many issue-focused activists and networks. Grounding this discussion in my own background in food system activism, I use an extended case study of the relationship between the Occupy and food movements to demonstrate one such convergence, examining how these two movements have shared ideological, tactical, and even physical space. Finally, the last chapter offers an analytical reflection in which I look to my own life and surrounding environment in an effort to understand where and how we continue to see Occupy’s ripple effects. Throughout all four chapters, I challenge the commonly held criticism that Occupy lacked important outcomes. While acknowledging Occupy’s intrinsic complexities and tensions, I offer a more sympathetic understanding of the movement that deems its process-oriented approach a significant “outcome” in and of itself. I explore multiple discourses within and surrounding the Occupy and food movements in order to make broader statements about the value of liminal spaces, performative protest, and intersectional activism.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

A POLYVOCAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

But is there not a liberation, too, in recognizing that no one can write about others any longer as if they were discrete objects or texts? And may not the vision of a complex, problematic, partial ethnography lead, not to its abandonment, but to more subtle, concrete ways of writing and reading, to new conceptions of culture as interactive and historical?

(Clifford 1986:25)

In October 2012, I saw a one-man play about Occupy Boston called “No Room for Wishing,” written and performed by Danny Bryck. The show was entirely composed of the words of Occupiers that Bryck had interviewed or had conversations with; he adopted their personas in turn while chronologically depicting life at the Dewey Square encampment, from its inception through its eviction. In between these personas, he would write the first name (or pseudonym) of the next person he was about to portray with a thick, black marker on a large piece of craft paper. By doing so, Bryck reminded his audience that these “characters” were real people with names and identities. His play was thus a discursive compilation of stories through which the audience was able to gain a rich, intimate understanding of Occupy Boston that was at once specific and far-reaching—specific in its focus on particular people and the accounts they offered, and far-reaching in the range of experiences and emotions that these accounts collectively depicted. Bryck’s play honored the complexities and pluralities of Occupy Boston in a way that offering only one voice could not.

This is a very anthropological thing to do. It is my intention for this thesis to similarly offer a discursive representation of the Occupy movement that incorporates a number of voices. For years, anthropologists have been asking how to accurately and ethically portray episodes of culture, grappling with forms of ethnography. The critical turn of the discipline—around the

1980s—marked an especially concentrated time of asking and attempting to answer these questions, as exemplified by the 1986 volume, Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, edited by James Clifford and George Marcus. This volume is widely recognized as “enormously influential in changing writing styles and research practices and in the development of new experimental forms of ethnography”—such as narrative and collaborative ones (Zenker and Kumoll 2010:12). While the contributing authors do not agree on any one style or approach, all demonstrate the influence of post-World War II social movements (such as feminism, civil rights, postcolonialism, environmentalism, et cetera) on anthropology and their desire for the discipline to avoid essentialist, totalizing concepts of culture. This epistemological shift is variously called “reflexive,” “postmodern,” “deconstructive,” and “poststructuralist” by the authors in Writing Culture (Zenker and Kumoll 2010:1). While debates about how to actualize such forms of anthropology and ethnography are ongoing, suffice it to say that since the publication of Writing Culture and the critical turn in general, anthropologists have taken more seriously the need to position and implicate themselves in their work.

I, too, take seriously this need for self-positioning and have thus chosen to write this thesis in an autoethnographic form. It would be impossible to sufficiently distance myself from this material; indeed, the very reason I was drawn to write about Occupy, the food movement, and the relationship between them was that I was at once consumed by, involved in, and critical of these movements. Such a relationship between author and subject matter does not allow for distance—and I embrace that. As James Clifford notes, “Ethnographic truths are thus inherently *partial* – committed and incomplete ... But once accepted and built into ethnographic art, a rigorous sense of partiality can be a source of representational tact” (1986:7). In my own efforts to be “tactful” about my partiality, I have weighed my depictions of the Occupy and food

movements against the perspectives of many others. In doing so, my stories and experiences become completely embedded in those of others and in the broader social fabric of public life.

Recently, Jeffrey Juris, an anthropologist at Northeastern University who has studied and theorized about the Occupy movement, came to speak to an anthropology class here at Tufts. He spoke about the research process he adopted while studying Occupy, which involved him setting up and being a part of a team with graduate students doing participant observation at the encampments. This team approach helped him develop a more multi-faceted, dynamic understanding of the movement. All of the team members were involved (in their own way) with the movement, and were therefore able to reflect upon their own experiences and the experiences of others around them. This process was appropriately parallel to Occupy's own horizontal multiplicity (which will be discussed throughout this thesis). It also helped to distribute the voice of "ethnographic truth." As for this thesis, while I did not approach my research with a formal team, the process was comparably polyvocal. This thesis bears my name as its author, yet it is truly the collaborative product of many voices, ideas, observations, and lived experiences—or, should I say, a collaborative *part* of what will never be a finished product.

In this spirit of polyvocalism, it is important to introduce—just as Bryck did in "No Room for Wishing"—the cast of characters that has helped bring this project to life. These characters come to the stage of this project from various directions and play various roles. In September, after months of immersing myself in thought and action pertaining to Occupy and food, I began the extensive (and rather never-ending) literature review process. At the time, very few full-length books had been written about the inchoate, still-unfolding Occupy movement. I read Noam Chomsky's Occupy, part of the Occupied Media Pamphlet Series published by Zuccotti Park Press, and Todd Gitlin's Occupy Nation: the Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of

Occupy Wall Street. These two authors, both theorists of and participants in leftist social movements, offer significant historical insight regarding Occupy's roots as well as thoughtful analyses regarding the movement's successes and shortcomings. Reviewing Occupy-related literature naturally extended to an examination of works related to anarchist theory and practice. I read a number of pieces by David Graeber, an anarchist anthropologist who was very involved as an activist within Occupy. I also picked up a copy of We Are Many: Reflections on Movement Strategy from Occupation to Liberation at the Boston Anarchist Bookfair in November. This volume, edited by Kate Khalib, Margaret Killjoy, and Mike McGuire, is comprised of short pieces in which Occupiers relay their experiences and critiques of the movement. It served dually as second-hand fieldwork and a compilation of thoughtful analysis; I draw upon many of its contributors throughout this thesis.

I encountered other characters that were unpacking—as I was—the relationship between the Occupy and food movements by sifting through myriad blogs, YouTube videos, and other news-media sources. Eric Holt-Gimenez, the executive director of Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, wrote a piece for the Huffington Post that established the tactical differences between the two movements and how they could serve one another. Mark Bittman and Siena Chrisman both wrote about why the food movement should be concerned with the big questions Occupy brought to the fore surrounding economic systems and corporate control. Michael Pollan, journalist and author of The Omnivore's Dilemma, did not write explicitly about the food movement's relationship to Occupy, though he did write two analytical pieces about the food movement and to what extent it is, in fact, a “movement”—that is, a political one. Eric Schlosser, author of Fast Food Nation and another key figure in the food movement, gave a talk at Tufts in November in which he offered an evaluative critique of the development and current

state of the food movement. I make use of the interpretations of all of these authors and analysts in this paper.

Throughout the literature review process, I continued immersing myself in the worlds of Occupy and food activism. In September, I attended an Occupy demonstration in front of Monsanto's Boston-area headquarters in Cambridge where I met Eden, who ran the Free School University at Occupy Boston's Dewey Square encampment, and Joan Livingston, a long-time peace activist and dedicated Occupier with whom I have kept in touch. Once I got permission from the IRB to conduct formal interviews, I reconnected with Eden, who put me in touch with some members of the Occupy Boston food working group. My first two interviews were with Cora Roelofs, a new faculty member of the Tufts Community Health program and self-described "local food person," and Don Daniel, an activist and former Hollywood producer who is now politically involved in Winchester. Both were active members of the working group, and I owe the vast majority of my understanding of food logistics at the Dewey Square encampment to them. I am also grateful to Joan, whom I did formally interview at one point last fall, for her insights regarding encampment life and the degrees (and varieties) of political consciousness amongst Occupiers.

After learning from Cora and Don about the Unitarian Universalist involvement with food at Occupy, I decided to go to a service and community lunch at the Arlington Street Church—where Occupiers had use of the kitchen for a while—in order to see if I could possibly meet anyone who had been part of that connection. Following the service, I asked around and was ultimately introduced to Randy, a homeless man who had helped with the food tent operation at Dewey Square throughout the encampment. We ended up talking for almost two hours. This stumbled-upon interview was humbling, to say the least, and reminded me of similar

encounters that the Occupy encampments had facilitated so frequently between people of varying backgrounds—socioeconomic and otherwise. My conversation with Randy required me to be patient and broke down any previously held assumptions about from or with whom I would gather relevant information. His testimony was helpful for its content but even more so for its perspective, and I am so thankful he shared it with me. Similarly, I am grateful to environmental journalist Simran Sethi for contributing her outlook on the Occupy and food movements from the standpoint of a media professional as well as to Ben Ross for his insights as an Occupier and self-reflective student activist.

In short, some interviews were sought out and followed a fairly conventional ethnographic procedure while others were rather happenstance and more casual. Some are featured prominently throughout this thesis while others are merely sprinkled in. But all six interviews were important in contributing to my understanding of the discourses surrounding Occupy and to the polyvocalism that I wish both to analyze and celebrate throughout this thesis. Perhaps a more traditional ethnography would feature the voices of its interviewees more consistently and prominently than this one does. But this thesis purposefully strays from such conventions—especially considering that its topic is far from traditional. The six interviews I conducted served as six of many meaningful layers of the mixed methodology I adopted with this project, others of which could be labeled as “literature review” or “participant observation,” a standard practice of anthropology. While these labels are accurate, I prefer to think of the varied approach I have embraced with this project in much more basic, pragmatic terms. That is, I was curious about Occupy, the food movement, and the relationship between them, so I followed them wherever and however it made sense: sometimes online, sometimes at events, sometimes in conversation, and sometimes in books or journals—but all the time, relevant.

There are numerous other characters who contributed to the ideas and connections on the pages that follow, and I wish to acknowledge and thank them here. To my housemates, the Ladies of the Fort—Rachel Greenspan, Brianna Brandon, Tamara Masri, and Julia Evans—you have pushed me to think about physical spaces and the ways in which we can infuse them with value and use them to foster a creative, intersectional, activist spirit. To Maximus Thaler and all the residents of the Crafts House, I thank you for welcoming me into a world of alternative modes of exchange and sharing that prioritize love and connection over money. To Stella Benezra, Dani Moscovitz, and the rest of the Vagina Monologues cast and crew, I am in awe of your passions and talents and will forever be grateful for our shared journey of breaking down boundaries and performing ideologies across the Tufts campus. Other characters remain behind the scenes of this written piece but were nonetheless instrumental in helping me bring it to the page. Most particularly, I would like to recognize and thank Sam Cantor and Lexi Sasanow, for being thoughtful, dynamic, and compassionate people who urge me—whether knowingly or not—to simultaneously rejoice in and push back against this crazy world. I am also grateful to Mae Humiston and Perri Meldon for their comments on various bits of my writing throughout the drafting process, to Professor David Guss for reading this thesis, to Chloe Rotman for her friendship, and, of course, to my family for their love, support, and encouragement.

There is one other vital character that deserves the utmost recognition—or perhaps I should call her the stage manager. To my advisor, Cathy Stanton, I thank you for your guidance, patience, and support, for entertaining my extended metaphors, for helping me to untangle knotty thoughts, and for instilling in me a great passion for the discipline of anthropology. You have pushed me to simultaneously anchor my thinking in something(s) specific and reach toward the broadest questions I have been asking all along: What are my relationships with the Occupy and

food movements, and why are they so? What do these relationships say about me as an activist and about my attitudes toward structure and anti-structure, reform and revolution? In addition to helping me keep my eye on these questions, you have also encouraged me to stay focused on discourse and the particular ways in which culture and experience are produced. You have prompted me to look critically not just at language but at all forms of expressiveness, and to revel in the tensions that such observations may reveal.

And so, I end here with a two-pronged wish: that this thesis serves as a multi-layered contribution to the discourses surrounding Occupy, food, and the relationship between them, and that such discourses continue. What follows is a polyvocal, autoethnographic account of the Occupy movement and its relationship to the food movement. Each of the following four chapters offers a unique perspective of the Occupy movement, ordered from the most theoretical and abstract to the most concrete and personal. Along the way, the voices of the characters mentioned above (and others) are heard and dialogued with. This multiplicity of voices and perspectives is of the utmost importance. After “No Room for Wishing” ended, Danny Bryck came back to join the audience for a discussion about the show and about Occupy Boston in general. He offered his interpretation of Occupy Boston, then immediately opened the conversation in an effort to continue reflecting and learning. It is my hope that this thesis—already a collaborative, polyvocal production—similarly opens doors to further deliberation and discourse.

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Chapter One

OCCUPY, THEORETICALLY: SETTING THE (LIMINAL, ANARCHIST) STAGE

Following a call by Canadian-based Adbusters, a self-described “global network of culture jammers and creatives working to change the way information flows, the way corporations wield power, and the way meaning is produced in our society” (Adbusters), for a peaceful occupation of Wall Street, thousands of protesters descended upon Zuccotti Park in New York City on September 17, 2011. In the weeks thereafter, hundreds of occupations sprang up all over the United States and worldwide. A language was born: the “ninety-nine percent” took to the streets in search of change, in a system fiscally and socially dominated by the “one percent.” The occupations were characterized by direct, participatory democracy; decisions about the movement, its tactics and actions, were made at “general assemblies.” While these general assemblies may have varied slightly by location, the basic format was universal: facilitators maintained a “stack,” or queue, of speakers, ensuring that anyone who wanted to could speak (though larger occupations would often be forced to restrict this ideal, instead offering for representatives of working groups to speak on behalf of the group). All other participants in the general assemblies could demonstrate their opinions through specific hand and arm gestures, which allowed for understanding without interrupting the speaker. Decisions were ultimately made via consensus, though again, the exact process and what qualified as “consensus” may have varied slightly occupation to occupation. It is important to note that this consensus-based, participatory approach was not unique to Occupy; indeed, a number of social organizations and movements have utilized these tactics before. Still, from my research on the

Occupy movement, I have found that many “Occupiers” viewed Occupy as a sort of experiment in a different way of living, decision-making, and cooperating.

In this first chapter, I will set the stage for a broader conversation about Occupy, process, and the movement’s impact on other similarly aligned movements by framing the movement theoretically. I will seek to characterize the Occupy movement beyond the basic description above, exploring it as a liminal space that finds fundamental value in this “betwixt-and-between” positionality. In doing so, I will engage with David Graeber’s theoretical work on the development of an anarchist anthropology, elaborating upon how his work relates to the Occupy movement and my writing about it. Importantly, throughout this paper, I will be emphasizing that the Occupy movement was—and is—process-oriented.¹ That is, the movement embodies a theoretical approach *in the process* of being acted out. I will show how the concept of liminality applies to both the movement at large and its individual participants, and how such liminalities shape Occupy as a sort of alternate world. Throughout, I will seek to place myself within Occupy, drawing upon the work of David Graeber and Lila Abu-Lughod to demonstrate the importance of this self-positioning.

Positioning the Anthropologist

I recognize that mine is one voice of many. I do not propose that the picture I paint of Occupy is the only one possible. Other Occupiers, analysts, and critics—all participants of Occupy, in some way—may angle their canvas differently. It is necessary, then, to locate myself within Occupy, to explain how I came to be involved, what that involvement looked like, and

¹ While there are still decentralized networks of Occupiers working on direct actions relevant to the movement’s principal grievance of economic inequality, the occupations (encampments) themselves have all been shut down or have otherwise ended; as such, the past tense will be employed in discussing the encampments, while the present tense may be used in analyses of the continued decentralized activism.

how it was shaped by my own history before Occupy and before Tufts. Throughout fall 2011, when the occupations first came about, I found myself “on the fringe,” so to speak. Here and there, I spent time at the Boston occupation at Dewey Square, but mostly I felt as though I was dancing between skepticism of and sympathy toward Occupy’s ideals and tactics. The sympathy was certainly valid; I suppose I have been fairly left-leaning from a young age (though I did not always have the language to identify myself as such). I grew up in a rather homogeneously white, middle to upper-middle class town in Connecticut and, quite frankly, hated it. I knew that world was not the only one out there, that the homogeneity in which I was embedded was not characteristic of the world at large.

I moved in with my father a few weeks into my junior year of high school in order to attend the public school in his town—or city, really. In many ways, Danbury, though right next door to my hometown of Brookfield, represented the world I always knew existed. Danbury High School had almost three thousand students (thrice the size of Brookfield), most of whom spoke English as a second language. It was not assumed (unlike at Brookfield) that students would go on to college after high school, especially considering about a quarter of each entering freshman class would not even graduate. Indeed, there were hardly any assumptions made at all. The school had a nursery for students’ children, a junior ROTC program, solid athletics and arts programs, an on-site auto-shop, and a whole slew of elective courses that I would have never seen or heard of at Brookfield—funding perks from being one of the largest public high schools in the state, I suppose. Each student was a little fish in a large sea, walking (or swimming) an individual path. For me, it felt *important* to go to school there—my experiences there were real, and full. On a base level, I was “doing” much the same as I would have done at Brookfield, but I was doing it entirely differently. In every advanced placement course I took, for instance, I

wondered about the socioeconomic and racial breakdown within the class, why it was that the sampling of those students was not a true cross-section of the student body at large. I became curious about what types of conversations were being had by which groups of people, and what that said about their identities within the large sea.

I became more involved, both in and out of school. At Danbury High School, I assumed the presidency of the Key Club, a community service organization. I co-founded a soccer league for mentally and physically handicapped children. My senior year, during the 2008 election season, I volunteered at the city's Democratic headquarters, making phone calls in both English and Spanish to encourage residents to vote. Throughout all of this heightened involvement, though, I noticed myself asking more and more self-reflective questions: why was I doing all of this, and what difference did it make? What difference did I *want* to make? Is "community service" a unilateral effort, and if so, is that bad? What does "community" even mean, in this complicated world in which we live? How did political action fit itself into these ideas about community, and how did I come to align myself with the Democratic Party? These questions were non-stop, and they made me cynical, skeptical of the "better world" I was supposedly working toward.

This tangled headspace continued to characterize my time at Tufts, where my level of involvement has fluctuated quite a bit. I have been delighted to meet a number of peers tied up in the same sorts of knots, fundamentally dedicated to the ideas (or perhaps "ideals") of social change and betterment though seriously wrestling with how to achieve them. Of course, delight does not always translate to answers, and this wrestle has not been settled. As for me, I taught a civics class at Malden High School during my freshman year, immediately followed by a period of retreat, in which I heavily questioned classroom dynamics and what can be considered ethical

to teach. I went to Kenya during the summer of 2011 on a fellowship, doing case-study research for an organization providing a free, open-source communications platform that various NGOs and community organizations worldwide use. It was overwhelming, and I could not escape the politics of my young, white, female body walking around the streets of Nairobi enough to feel like what I was doing there was truly meaningful. Looking back, I think my time in Kenya and the process time that followed were the peak of my reflective, terribly unsure, nearly nihilistic frame of mind. I was reflective *almost* to the point of inaction.

So, I re-localized my focus. During the fall 2011 semester, I co-founded an on-campus organization called Food for Thought, a sort of food systems collective dedicated to complicating the conversations about food, where it comes from, and why that matters. My co-founder and I intentionally designed Food for Thought as a platform; we served primarily as facilitators, encouraging participants to lead discussions or various action-based initiatives. (It was only later that I would realize how appropriately parallel this was to the disorderly structure—or perhaps orderly anti-structure—that Occupy espoused). At the same time, I was taking a public anthropology course, through which I interviewed various immigrant entrepreneurs in Union Square, a neighborhood in Somerville, Massachusetts. Their stories were heartfelt and raw in ways that my education had only ever allowed me to imagine, instead of profoundly feel. Through both of these endeavors, I found myself more comfortable: embracing what was complicated, embracing storytelling.

It was during this time that Occupy came on to the scene. I think it is fair to say that Occupy occupied *me*. I remember going to that first general assembly in Dewey Square on September 30, 2011. Before the assembly got started, there was this sort of “buzz” feeling going around—lots of curious, agitated people (many of whom were around my age, I supposed)

waiting to see what would happen. The meeting finally began. The facilitator taught everyone about the soon-to-be-ubiquitous hand signals of Occupy; finger twinkles if you like something, an X made with your arms to block a proposal, a triangle using your thumbs and pointer fingers if you have a point of order to bring up. It was overwhelming. Most of that night is a blur. I remember joining a circle of folks who were—apparently—the “legal” team, dedicated to sharing information regarding the legalities of occupying a public park, of arrest, and of other law-related aspects of the encampment. I wrote down the phone numbers of the National Lawyers’ Guild and the American Civil Liberties Union on little scraps of paper and helped distribute them—“just in case.” In the moment, I recall feeling useful; soon after, I wondered whether I was simply getting fired up from the crowd. How did this young woman from suburban Connecticut come to talk so adamantly about the need to stand strong on proper arrest procedures (an issue I had never before taken on, nor knew much about)? I remember leaving feeling inspired yet frustrated, warm yet angry, hopeful yet unsure.

Following my familiar trend of hesitant touch-and-go involvement, I continued to go to a few more general assemblies throughout that semester, but I did not write any more numbers down on scrap pieces of paper, nor hand anything out to people. Most of what I would call my “involvement” took place within my immediate community of Tufts University. I spent hours talking about Occupy with my friends and other students who spent far more time at Dewey than me. I often wanted to spend more time at Dewey, and admittedly, am still not sure to this day what held me back. I do know that I started to feel a separation between any time I spent at Dewey, and my “real” life—my day-to-day routine of going to class, doing homework, facilitating Food for Thought, exercising, et cetera. I was always at least thinking about Occupy, even if I was not physically there. At times, it drove me crazy; I wondered how I could be so

selfish as to be caught up in my studies, stuck on the hill of my ivory-tower elite university while what was going on at Dewey was so important, so resonant of my eye-opening experience in high school and subsequent community engagement. The activists at Dewey Square were standing (literally) against the race and class privileges that I had both enjoyed and struggled with throughout my young adult life. Why wasn't I joining them?

Here, then, is where I place myself within this conversation on Occupy, anarchism, and liminality: somewhere in between it all, confused but curious. Lila Abu-Lughod, writing around what has been dubbed the “critical turn” in anthropological theory, made a case for anthropologists to “position” themselves in their ethnographies (Abu-Lughod 1991). This critical turn, influenced by the various social movements (feminism, civil rights, postcolonialism, environmentalism, et cetera) of the post-World War II decades, emphasized anti-essentialism and the need to avoid universal, totalizing concepts of “culture.” Abu-Lughod’s critique, “Writing Against Culture,” was no exception. In this piece, she explains how anthropologists, by virtue of writing about cultures, have established these cultures as “others” to the anthropological “self.” This “othering” creates a hierarchical distinction between anthropologist and subject, which Abu-Lughod argues that anthropologists should combat by invoking strategies for writing *against* culture, against the notion that any culture is a neatly packaged, bounded, and separate entity. One such strategy that she proposes is writing “ethnography of the particular,” in which the author refuses to generalize, and instead focuses on stories of particular individuals, unpacking from this personal pivot point a relationship to the broader social environment.

Abu-Lughod’s ideal anthropological approach to ethnography is echoed, in some respects, by David Graeber’s work, [Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology](#). In this book, Graeber traces some historical bits and pieces of what could be recognized as an anarchist

anthropology, and argues for the importance of its continual development. He notes that anthropologists are perhaps the most uniquely positioned of amongst academics of all disciplines to imagine a world without oppressive social structures (such as, say, a central state), considering “anthropologists are, effectively, sitting on a vast archive of human experience, of social and political experiments no one really knows about” (Graeber 2004:96). In his argument, he also acknowledges that “anarchist social theory would have to reject self-consciously any trace of vanguardism,” by which he means the assumption that universities and other elite institutions are leaders in terms of the production of discussion, theory, and meaningful knowledge (Graeber 2004:10). Traditionally, anthropology has come from the academy. Professors and professional researchers decide upon a topic, do their fieldwork, and publish their findings. This has been the standard practice of anthropology. But what if, as David Graeber would (and does) suggest, anthropology pushed for more horizontalism in its contributors? Instead of one top-down voice of anthropology, is it possible to build an anthropology that blurs the line between author and subject, or, in Abu-Lughod’s terms, between self and other? Is it possible for ethically and authentically implicate themselves self-reflectively in their work, and for the discipline to become a more public form of discourse, rather than an institution-based compilation of written word?

More and more anthropologists—not just self-identified anarchist anthropologists like Graeber—have taken these question to heart since the critical turn. James Clifford, George Marcus, and the contributors to Writing Culture began thinking more analytically about how to *write* ethnography in the 1980s, and anthropologists have since continued grappling with not only this but also how to *do* ethnography. Extending strands of activism and public-mindedness within the discipline, various forms of “engaged” anthropology have been on the rise in the years

since the critical turn; many anthropologists are using their knowledge and methods to be collaborators, educators, activists, supporters, social critics, and generally distance themselves from the top-down anthropological approaches of the past (Low and Merry 2010). Indeed, the team-based approach that Jeffrey Juris adopted in researching Occupy reflects the methodological shift that some anthropologists have undertaken. This is especially appropriate for an anarchist-influenced movement such as Occupy, which, in its effort to hear all voices that wish to be heard, may invoke a similar spirit of horizontalism and genuinely inclusive discourse on the part of those studying it. Graeber himself has been both an active participant and theoretician of Occupy; I imagine he would encourage those writing about the movement to embrace such a spirit, too. Certainly, I have chosen to do so by implicating and positioning myself throughout this polyvocal autoethnography.

I am a sort-of Occupier, and a sort-of anthropologist (in that I am an undergraduate studying anthropology), but above all else, I am simply a person, contributing to a discussion in one of many possible ways. I come to this discussion as a liminal figure in my own right. I am a highly reflective person majoring in a deeply reflexive discipline, a discipline that does not always know its end goal and is constantly in the process of negotiating and renegotiating. I am a young adult figuring out my values, political and otherwise, completely unsure of what my life will look like a mere two months from now. In the meantime, here I am, writing about this complicated, inchoate, ever-evolving movement. It is easy to see the parallels between my life and the subject of this thesis, and thus how this all becomes so messy and difficult to write about in any sort of linear fashion. Perhaps I am drawn to write about Occupy for that very reason. Like many of my fellow anthropologists, I have come to see that history and culture cannot be studied, understood, or represented in a simple linear way, but that approaching them as if

uncovering complicated objects that shuffle around rather than neat ones that remain static can be a marvelously rewarding and inspiring task. As someone who has many moving parts in her own life, I embrace Occupy's complicated, shuffling objects.

Occupy and Anarchism

While Occupy does not explicitly identify with any one political theory, it has many anarchist characteristics—or, rather, it *practices* and *enacts* anarchist ideas. As David Graeber points out, anarchism has three basic tenets: self-organization, voluntary association, and mutual aid (Graeber 2004:3). On a base level, Occupy embodies each of these characteristics. The aforementioned structure of the general assemblies demonstrates how Occupy self-regulates and self-organizes. Moreover, the boundaries of Occupy are fluid; that is, participants in the movement may come and go as they please. There are no formal requisites for participating in the movement or its general assemblies, for self-identifying as an Occupier. Rather, people must simply make the choice to join forces with Occupy however they so choose, or, phrased otherwise, voluntarily associate with the movement. As for the tenet of mutual aid, the very physicalization of the Occupy encampments can be recognized as a demonstration of mutual aid; the encampments provided aid in the form of food and shelter. The provision of such resources served not only to help people meet their basic needs, but also to help the collective population of Occupiers maintain community while striving toward their broader goals and ideals. Later in this paper, I will explore food as one such resource to ground a more detailed exploration into this relationship between the physical and the ideological.

It is clear that Occupy is process-driven. David Graeber writes that “one must embody the society that one wishes to create” (Graeber 2004:7). The physical occupations were, quite

literally, embodiments of community, new social structures being practiced, talked and theorized about. They were an exercise in what Graeber has called “imaginative counterpower,” in that they stood ideologically “against certain aspects of dominance ... seen as particularly obnoxious and [became] an attempt to eliminate them from social relations completely” (Graeber 2004:36). These aspects of dominance most particularly lay in the concentration of wealth and power amongst this country’s most elite, and thus Occupy’s practices and norms sought to refuse any similar forms of power or dominance. It is precisely in this radical, embodied challenge to the structures and practices of contemporary society that I come to define Occupy as a social movement, one that seeks to transform and reorder society, even if it is self-consciously unaware, as of yet, what this new society would look like.

Occupy and Liminality

This point on transformation and reordering leads us to the concept of liminality, a term originally coined by Arnold van Gennep in 1909 (though his work was not translated to English until 1960) in reference to the second stage of rites of passage. He claims that all rites of passage follow three basic stages: separation, liminality, and reaggregation (van Gennep 1960[1909]). The idea of liminality remained somewhat untouched until Victor Turner reintroduced it in the 1960s and 1970s. Turner began by applying the idea of liminality to traditional ritual processes in small-scale societies, although he later came to believe that it was a characteristic of all kinds of “betwixt-and-between” moments, or periods of time, for that matter (Turner 1977:37). Turner argued that something phenomenological happens after the break from “normal” life, and before a liminary—or subject who undergoes a liminal experience—reenters the world, somehow changed. Liminaries pass through a realm unlike those from which they came or to which they

are going. This liminal passing stage is inherently transitional and unfixed (Turner 1969:107). In the traditional sense of liminality, there is a sense that the liminary is aware of the exit process; that is, the liminary's "personal liminality is still framed by the continued existence of his home society, waiting for his re-integration" (Thomassen 2009:22). When the notion of liminality is applied to societies at large, however, as Turner did later in his career, this exit-point certainty is rare, if not impossible.

When he shifted to thinking about how ritual and liminality functioned in complex modern societies, Turner introduced the concept of the liminoid, a sort of variation from the theme of liminality. Turner, writing in 1977, claims that "in complex societies today's liminoid is yesterday's liminal" (Turner 1977:46). What he means is that liminoid phenomena are not as "centrally integrated into the total social process" as liminal ones (Turner 1977:44); rather, they are produced and experienced by particular individuals or groups. Moreover, while liminal processes may have that clear exit point or resolution, liminoid ones are less certain of the reaggregation phase. This is because liminoid phenomena "are often subversive, representing radical critiques of the central structures and proposing utopian alternative models" (Turner 1977:45). Fundamental societal structures may be negotiated in during liminoid experiences, meaning that the framework for developing a resolution (or reaggregation) is susceptible to change. With regard to Occupy, we certainly see both liminal and liminoid properties in action. Or, perhaps more accurately, we see some hybrid of the two. On a basic level, suffice it to say that Occupy is a movement in continual flux, in a state of change, transition, and messing around with societal order and structure.

Trained in British structural-functionalism, Turner spent the early part of his career holding on to the distinction between traditional and modern. However, by the 1970s and early

1980s, he shed much of this older, hierarchical thinking about societies and social progression, particularly after he began an intellectual partnership with Richard Schechner, a founding thinker of performance studies. Schechner (1993) theorized about how various street protests, demonstrations, and festivals can be seen as a form of “direct theatre” that is reflexive, potentially transformative, and can invoke feelings of solidarity and community; in other words, such episodes of direct theatre are examples of liminality on the public stage. Both Schechner and Turner began to see the relationship between anthropology and performance. As Schechner points out, “the relation between ritual and theatre is dialectical and braided; there is plenty of entertainment and social critique in many rituals” (1993:58).

This duality of entertainment and critique is fundamental. In direct street theater, meaning and symbols are tossed into play. This can have multiple (but most often related) purposes. A 1968 demonstration against the Vietnam War, for instance, that took place during the Democratic National Convention was meant to be both “disruptive” of the convention and “constructive of a new way of life” (Schechner 1993:64). Other direct theater is less prefigurative and more about the meaning(s) of the spaces in which they are performed, as was the case with the newly-fallen Berlin Wall in 1989, where “people wanted to act out how totally things had changed” (Schechner 1993:69). Whether episodes of direct theater are intended to be acts of prefiguration or acts of reclamation, it is clear that they are always embodiments of imagination—of how the world could be, of the alternative. This imaginative quality makes for a liminal, transformative experience for participants. Yet, it is important to note that there is a range of results that may come from taking to the streets performatively. As Schechner notes, “Sometimes street actions bring about change ... But mostly such scenes, both celebratory and violent, end with the old order restored” (1993:47). This is crucial to bear in mind while

considering the impact of Occupy's physical encampments and performative protests, which will be discussed further in Chapters Two and Three.

Turner came to apply the relationship between performance studies and anthropological analysis universally, and use it as a basis to analyze in broader terms how performance, liminality, and transformation are inherent facets of all cultures. In line with this more broadly applied thinking, I find it possible—and useful—to recognize social movements (such as Occupy) as liminal, often performative spaces or ideas. To me, the cropping up of various social movements is like waves washing over the status quo, always undulating, peaking and flattening. Indeed, as Victor Turner himself noted,

It is as though there are here two major 'models' for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of a society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of 'more' or 'less'. The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals. (Turner 1969:96)

In the first model, society is at a restful status quo; in the second, the propellers of social unrest and change are turning. Turner recognizes that latter modality of social relations, in the liminal phase, as one of "communitas," which he defines as "social antistructure ... a relation quality of full, unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determinate identities" (Turner 1977:46). In communitas, people experience liminality together. They are seen as equals as social barriers are knocked down. Communitas invokes a tremendous feeling of togetherness and has "an aspect of potentiality; it is often in the subjunctive mood" (Turner 1969:127). It is a hopeful mood, holding on to the uncertainty of what is to come while valuing being in the present tense. Liminal spaces of communitas accommodate (rather than try to rationalize) paradoxes and pluralities.

It is my contention that the Occupy movement—especially the physical encampments—created a spirit of *communitas* and invited the diversity of its participants into a collective whole. Walking around the Dewey Square encampment, I could not escape an air that was different than the air I was formerly used to breathing. The way that people made an effort to talk to one another, to sit in a circle and focus on listening, to demonstrate their care and thank you for making it out to Dewey today even though it was cold—this was the development of a culture, a demonstration of the ideal of togetherness in the process of being acted out. Bjorn Thomassen reminds us of the importance of Victor Turner’s work in sharpening the focus of liminality toward a “processual approach” (Thomassen 2009:14). He is right, and Turner is, too; liminality is a powerful *process*. The Occupiers I met down at Dewey Square understood that (albeit not in such theoretical language). Recall the comment I made earlier about Occupy as an experiment in different way of living, decision-making, and cooperating. Most everyone I met down at Dewey either echoed this idea of Occupy as an experiment or emphasized the importance of the horizontal, egalitarian methods of consensus; that is, they emphasized the *process* of community-building itself, rather than specific outcomes of specific conversations. They were living in a liminal phase. They were living in *communitas*.

What *kind* of *communitas* they were living in is a more interesting question. Turner divides the concept of *communitas* into three types: *existential* or *spontaneous* *communitas*, which can be understood as the initial, transient spark or feeling of togetherness; *normative* *communitas*, in which, “under the influence of time, the need to mobilize and organize resources, and the necessity for social control among the member of the group in pursuance of these goals, the existential *communitas* is organized into a perduring social system;” and *ideological* *communitas*, “which is a label one can apply to a variety of utopian models of societies based on

existential communitas” (Turner 1969:132). It seems that the initial conception and birth of the occupations represented the moment of existential communitas. As Occupy developed a culture and system of process in its own right, it became a world of normative communitas. But from what I could see (and feel) at Dewey, there was always this desire to hold on to that initial, magical birth of Occupy—to the excitement, “newness,” and “differentness” of it all.

Politics of the Alternative

Turner points to a fundamental paradox about groups that create spaces of normative communitas. He writes, “while existential communitas is in feeling-tone a strive toward the universal, to an open society and an open morality, the normative communitas [these groups] achieve often separates them from the environing society” (Turner 1977:48). This has been one of my principal observations of the Occupy movement: it is so separate from day-to-day society. While it is true that the movement’s boundaries are fluid, there are boundaries nonetheless. After the first couple of weeks of the Dewey encampment, I noticed fewer and fewer people there just “passing through” or stopping by to check out what a general assembly was. By that time, you either knew the norms of the general assemblies and felt comfortable participating, or you did not. That is not to say that no one at Dewey would spend a few minutes explaining to you how a general assembly worked, or where the food tent was. The point is simply that by this time, an individual curious about these things would be stepping into a particular culture, and that is not always a comfortable or easy thing to do. So, while Occupy held on to ideals about changing the whole of society—tackling issues of income inequality and corporate control of government, above all else—it went about it by carving out a new fragment of society that was

conceived as an alternative to the mainstream. And to my ears, the mere word “alternative” points to a fundamental obstacle that social movements such as Occupy face.

It seems as though the leap from spontaneous to normative *communitas* has landed Occupy on the margins, pushed outside the bounds of mainstream society, where it is left to remain reflexive and process-oriented in a way that makes little sense to those inside the bigger, mainstream bubble. While the initial appeals and frustrations from within Occupy spoke to the masses, the processes by which Occupy has sought to manage them have been adopted and adored by few. Occupy was, and still is, working against the social structures to which we are accustomed. This anti-structure attitude is precisely what marks Occupy as anarchist in practice; it is constantly working against the norms—often structural—within our society. Of course, this brings us to ponder structure and anti-structure more carefully: when and how do these conditions come about? Victor Turner seems to suggest that societies fluctuate between periods of structure and anti-structure, between normativeness and working against the norm. Perhaps, then, it is possible to recognize the anti-structural energy of anarchism as a necessary dose of radicalism, to be taken every now and then for the purposes of recalibrating the status quo, shifting it this way or that, restructuring the societies in which we live to be (somehow) fairer and more just. Some anarchists may reject such an interpretation, as they would prefer to see themselves working to destroy structure permanently. Yet my own contention would be that to some extent, we will always have structure. To me, these concentrated episodes of “working against” are healthy renegotiations of what that structure could and should look like.

The difficulty with movements such as Occupy—and thus its questionable success, from an outsider’s point of view—is that not many people are keen on entering this anti-structural, liminal space, with all its accompanying ambiguities, particularly for an extended period of time,

and so it remains an alternative world to the normal one in which most people live. Arpad Szakolczai has noted that liminality implies “deep anxiety and suffering for all those entering such a state” (2009:166). Willingness to embrace the anxiety and suffering involved with *practicing* Occupy was a main distinguishing factor between those who spent a significant amount of time present and involved at Dewey and those who did not. Of course, there are other possible distinguishing factors here, too. Many people who would have liked to spend time at Dewey were not able to for logistical reasons, or otherwise chose not to because they felt somehow out of place (as will be discussed further in the following three chapters). Practicing direct democracy and the anarchist ideals of self-organization, voluntary association, and mutual aid is not an easy thing. It can be time-consuming, tiresome, and frustrating. Reaching consensus amongst hundreds of people takes a long time, and tensions run high. In the general assemblies I took part in, I remember wondering if I had what it took to be as committed as some of the Occupiers around me. The liminal phase is an intense one; it was difficult, emotional, and hugely philosophical. Ultimately, I have come to view Occupy as a work in progress that sincerely values this process of progress. It was—and is—a liminoid phenomenon, an optional space one could enter, “a break from normality” (Thomassen 2009:15), with no clear-cut objectives or exit path, but rather an exercise in messiness and togetherness. From my experience, it is only from within that space—within the alternative—that you can understand the value of its performative, imaginative, and transformative qualities.

Chapter Two

OCCUPY, PRACTICALLY: HISTORIES, RITUALS, ACTIONS, AND TENSIONS

In perhaps his most famous work, The Interpretation of Cultures, Clifford Geertz wrote, “Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental stance in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (1973:5). Culture is defined by experiences and by the “significance” we place upon them. It is discursive, ever-expanding, and tangled. The Occupy Wall Street movement, as an especially concentrated and performative declaration of significance, was particularly so. It was loaded with meaning and the interpretation thereof. However, as Geertz would suggest, there can be no one truthful declaration of significance regarding Occupy. Instead, we can only listen to the many voices contributing their interpretations of meaning. In this chapter, I will seek to do just that; I will untangle Occupy’s “webs of significance” by examining descriptions by many of its constituents about what the movement was like on a day-to-day level. In conducting this discourse analysis, I seek to understand some of the identity politics within Occupy; that is, where within Occupy’s “webs” particular individuals and groups positioned themselves, and why they did so.

While this chapter approaches Occupy as layers of discourse, it does so within a certain time and place—namely, what I will refer to as “Occupy Phase I.” This term refers to the period of time in which the physical encampments were alive and thriving. Moreover, while this chapter is largely comprised of others’ voices and interpretations, I will also draw on my own analysis and experience; thus, it is important to disclose that my direct contact with Occupy Phase I took place at the Boston encampment. Kate Khalib, the primary editor of We Are Many,

noted in her introduction that the Occupy movement had “geographical differences. For many east coasters, the issues at stake tended to be largely those of process and structure. For west coasters, especially folks in Oakland, the conversation tended towards actions and tactics” (Khalib 2012:2). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to corroborate or refute Khalib’s claim of geopolitical difference, suffice it to say that the Occupy movement I am talking about here has an east coast flavor.

History

It is important to first try to understand what, exactly, brought this movement to life. Noam Chomsky, a central figure in this and other leftist social movements, has called Occupy a response, “the first major public response, in fact, to about thirty years of a really quite bitter class war that has led to social, economic, and political arrangements in which the system of democracy has been shredded” (Chomsky 2012:54). In a January 2012 interview, Chomsky said the birth of the Occupy movement was a “much-too-delayed” reaction to “the neoliberal policies of roughly the last thirty years” (Chomsky 2012:62). Chomsky here refers to specific policies of a specific time period that have contributed to growing wealth inequality and economic volatility, but the use of the term “neoliberalism” is often not so careful or precise. Indeed, even within the discipline of anthropology, “very little attention has been devoted to specifying what ‘neoliberalism’ means,” despite a readiness to use the term in ethnography and social critique (Hoffman et al. 2006:9). In my experience engaging with the Occupy movement over the past year and a half, I have found that Occupiers and allies alike often substitute the term “capitalism” for “neoliberalism” in reference to what they dislike about the U.S. economy and society. Both of these terms run the risk of being bandied around in an all too non-specific manner, resulting in

the causal lumping of many societal or economic evils under their broad umbrellas. Still, the fuzziness around these terms does not negate the truth in Chomsky's historical observations. While Occupy never put forth a uniform, explicit stance against capitalism, it is a notable trend that the majority of its participants and sympathizers felt at least some discomfort with it—or, more accurately, with its visible end results (namely, egregious inequality). These participants varied in their rationale and motivations behind such discomfort and use of the term “capitalism,” but nonetheless, Occupy had a sharp anti-capitalist bend to it.

This alone, of course, does not explain why Occupy came about in the precise time and manner it did. There are a number of reasons that 2011 may have been particularly inviting of a movement such as Occupy. Almost three years after electing Barack Obama to the presidency, many Americans on the left were losing the sense of hope that had accompanied Obama's 2008 victory. They weren't seeing the “change” that Obama had promised on the campaign trail. They were tired of an economy that was slow to recover after massive public bailouts of banks and corporations in 2008. And they weren't the only ones. 2011 was a year of worldwide political protest and dissent. The birth of the Occupy movement “linked US social distress and protest to the pink tide in Latin America, the Arab Spring, and the pre-revolutionary struggles of the *indignados*” (Prashad 2012:18). The Arab Spring of 2011, a wave of uprisings, protests, and violent conflicts that erupted in the Arab world after the self-immolation of a Tunisian fruit vendor in December 2010, inspired thousands of civilians to take over the streets and make their message(s) heard. In February 2011, Wisconsin residents took a page out of the occupation book, staging a massive political action in which thousands of protestors occupied the Wisconsin state capitol in opposition to the so-called budget repair bill.

The original Adbusters call for a physical occupation of Wall Street gave a nod to “this fresh tactic, a fusion of Tahrir with the acampadas of Spain,” explaining that the beautiful, “pragmatic simplicity” of occupation was its ability to bring people together in the same physical space for the purposes of articulating their shared demand (Adbusters 2011). While the language sought to engage readers as participants in a conversation, it was by no means lacking in opinion of its own. The culture jamming authors wrote that once occupying Wall Street, “we shall incessantly repeat one simple demand in a plurality of voices,” citing the success with which protestors in Egypt proclaimed their single demand that Mubarak must go. The call for occupation ended with a request for readers to “[p]ost a comment and help each other zero in on what our one demand will be;” yet, just a sentence before, the authors declared a demand, writing, “Beginning from one simple demand – a presidential commission to separate money from politics – we start setting the agenda for a new America” (Adbusters 2011).

What does this tell us about Occupy? It certainly gives us a taste of the tensions within a movement that many criticized for having no demands. But it also shows us the reality that Occupy did have ideological underpinnings. While the movement’s end goal was not made explicit in its inception—and is still unclear—there were very clear aspects of the social, political, and economic environment in America that brought Occupiers together. Occupiers were, for the most part, in agreement on what they stood *against*, even if what they were *for* would never be settled. For instance, the Adbusters call also declared that it was “time for **DEMOCRACY NOT CORPORATOCRACY**” (Adbusters 2011, emphasis theirs). It claimed that Americans should start getting what they want, “whether it be the dismantling of half the 1,000 military bases America has around the world to the reinstatement of the Glass-Steagall Act

or a three strikes and you're out law for corporate criminals." These are not neutral suggestions. They are anti-military, anti-corporate, and wary of uncontrolled capitalist growth.

Perhaps the most successful and lasting amongst the visual and linguistic memes associated with Occupy is that of "the ninety-nine percent" and "the one percent." This dichotomization of everyday and the wealthiest Americans highlighted the one problem with which Occupy took the most issue: inequality, particularly fiscal inequality. Fiscal inequality was Occupy's major motivational underpinning, and the framing of this issue as one belonging to "the ninety-nine percent" allowed for individuals of varying political persuasions to identify with the movement. Perhaps some participants from the political left had long felt uncomfortable with growing wealth inequality. Perhaps others (be they from the left or right) simply felt vulnerable in the U.S. economic climate. Either way, Occupy's message was clear: *how could you deny* that there was a problem with wealth distribution? The public discourse quickly shifted toward one of financial inequality. Granted, the people most eager to engage this question *through* the Occupy movement—the movement's core, if you will—were a particular subset of the public, predominantly the ones who already had come to their subjective, more poignant assumptions of causality: that the neoliberal, capitalist policies of late had caused this explosive wealth disparity. Just as the Tea Party was successful in redirecting public discourse toward the issue of government spending a few years prior, Occupy's use of the ninety-nine percent/one percent dichotomy successfully seeped into public discourse, focusing its lens on fiscal inequality.

Occupy Phase I: Rituals of Participation and Structured Anti-Structure

One of the most interesting things about Occupy was that in its fight against inequality, the movement sought to be as egalitarian as possible in everything it did, down to the most basic of its operations; namely, the general assembly. A general assembly, as Nathan Schneider (2011) writes for the Nation, “is a horizontal, leaderless, modified-consensus-based system with roots in anarchist thought.” General assemblies—in essence, a style of meeting—took place regularly at encampments all over the country. These assemblies embraced, as Todd Gitlin (2012) calls them, “rituals of participation,” which were designed to enable any single Occupier to be as involved or engaged as any other. One or multiple facilitators guided general assemblies, but were not meant to be viewed as “leaders” (in the authoritarian sense). These facilitators were supposed to ensure everyone had equal opportunity to speak.

Most encampments utilized a progressive stack model, meaning that “everyone who wanted to say something was put on a list and encouraged to wait their turn. Traditionally oppressed groups and those who spoke less often were given more weight and bumped up in the stack” (Holmes 2012:154). Admittedly, I was skeptical of this affirmative action-style prioritization when I was first introduced to it. How could this possibly be regulated in a “horizontal” fashion? Doesn’t priority of any kind, whether ethically motivated or not, imply hierarchy? How does that fit into a supposedly egalitarian movement? While I found the progressive stack somewhat counter to the all-encompassing, inclusive “ninety-nine percent,” I also understood how it appealed to Occupy’s value (and my own value) of giving voice to historically underrepresented groups. It proved to be just one of many unresolved—perhaps impossible to resolve—tensions within Occupy and movements toward inclusiveness in general.

When I went to Occupy Boston's first general assembly on September 30, 2011, the facilitators began by educating everyone on the so-called "rituals of participation." There were ways for everyone to be involved in the assembly and indicate their opinions even while someone else was speaking. I practiced them all: "twinkles," or wiggling my fingers facing upward or downward would show that I agreed or disagreed with something being said (this is also called a "temperature check"). A "direct response" involved pointing my hands toward the speaker and moving them alternately; this would show I had an urgent response to some point being made. Making a "C" with my hand meant I had a clarifying question on content, a triangle signified the need for a "point of process" clarification. Moving both hands in a circular formation would encourage the current speaker to wrap things up. And then there was the block (sometimes referred to as a "hard block"): crossing both arms in an X formation above the head. This indicated a firm opposition to a proposal on the floor, strong enough that it would effectively halt the consensus process.

Another key "ritual" of Occupy was the use of the human amplification system, or the "people's mic." Because the use of proper sound equipment in public space tends to require a permit, the encampments avoided using it, instead developing their own people-powered amplification system. The assemblies were often very large, and it would have been impossible for everyone to hear one speaker without any sort of magnification. Cue the people's mic. Speakers would begin by saying "mic check," and anyone within earshot would repeat the phrase. This would happen once or a few times, until the speaker was confident that everyone was engaged and ready to be active listeners. Speaking full ideas was a tad trickier: speakers had to break up their phrasing, such that each clause or series of words could be repeated by the whole general assembly. (At times, in very large assemblies, it would take a few repetitions of a

phrase before everyone present had heard and said it.) The people's mic served the dual function of making sure everyone's ideas were heard fully and involving attendees in a more active way.

These rituals were not new to the Occupy movement by any means. Variations of the aforementioned hand gestures, for instance, have been a component of participatory meetings for generations. They played a big role in civil rights activism (Schwartz 2011). They have been seen in Quaker decision-making, the UK's tax justice movement, and various student protest movements, among others (Howker 2011). The human amplification system, too, emerged in social contexts prior to Occupy. Some say it first was used in the antinuclear protests of the 1980s; Todd Gitlin (2012:77) notes that anarchist organizer and educator Brooke Lehman recalls it being utilized in the 1999 antiglobalization demonstrations in Seattle. Regardless of their original roots, suffice it to say that these rituals of participation have been used in social movements before. As Jeffrey Haydu (2011) reminds us, the influences of ideas, tactics, and even individual activists can be felt across time and context. This sort of intersectionality will be explored further in the next chapter, which examines the relationship between the Occupy and food movements.

It makes sense that the movements that have embraced these tactics have been left-leaning. The left, as a general rule, advocates for bigger government than the right. These movements take the notion of bigger government further, to the point where *everyone* is involved in self-government (or "self-regulation," for the sake of using a term disassociated with the idea of government). This could be interpreted as the ultimate leftist government—that is, the biggest one possible. Or it could be seen as anarchism, since having everyone participate in the self-regulation process essentially equates to having no government at all. Todd Gitlin notes that a "kind of anarchism of direct participation has become the reigning spirit of left-wing protest

movements in America in the last half century” (Gitlin 2012:80). While Occupy did not explicitly self-identify as an anarchist movement, it was effectively anarchist in its practice of such “direct participation.” Cindy Milstein, a well-known and vocal anarchist from Philadelphia noted, “at all Occupies, the Occupiers acted like anarchists with a religious-like zeal from day one, even though most were and still are not anarchists” (2012:291). Contrary to a stereotypical notion of anarchism as chaos, Occupy employed a perhaps surprisingly structured model of organization, as seen through their “rituals of participation.” This model aligned with the three fundamental principles of anarchism David Graeber (2004) spells out: self-organization, voluntary association, and mutual aid. As Jeffrey Juris noted in his recent guest lecture at a Tufts anthropology course, “the movement wasn’t disorganized so much as organized differently.” In other words, the occupations, as evidenced through their general assemblies, utilized a form of structure that was symbolically and strategically counter to the dominant structures at play in the sociopolitical mainstream. They were, in essence, zones of structured anti-structure, environments of normative *communitas* where togetherness was felt and the collective social system honored.

As Milstein noted, it wasn’t just anarchists who readily adopted these simultaneously structured and anti-structured rituals of participation. While participants, observers, and commentators alike have various interpretations on who, exactly, the Occupiers were, the general trend was clear: Occupy was comprised of a predominantly liberal, young, white populace. It was “led” (despite claims of leaderlessness), as Juris noted, by students and young people with technological skills. Others have colorfully painted the who’s who of Occupy, too—some in more pointed ways than others, depending on their own political ideologies. Milstein, for one, called the mainstream Occupiers “liberalistas” (2012:298). An article from *The New Yorker*

claimed that the politics of the “ninety-nine-per-centers ... ranged from ‘Daily Show’ liberalism to insurrectionary anarchism” (Schwartz 2011). Others still claimed a more comprehensive, diverse sprawl of Occupiers. In We Are Many, published by anarchist AK Press, Ryan Harvey suggests the Occupiers “were a strange combination of anarchists, socialists, communists, progressive liberals, conservative-identified libertarians, and even some who identify as Republicans but see the hyper-rich as exploiters of the Republican values they identify with” (2012:127). While it is true that some right-wing folks were drawn to participate in Occupy, they were few and far between. More common were the homeless or otherwise marginalized individuals—who were not necessarily devoid of political ideology, of course—who came to the encampments in search of refuge, community, change, and hope.

In any case, the labels with which people came to the encampments were soon less important than their new one: “Occupier.” Soon enough, these people—from whatever walks of life they came—were amassed together in a spirit of *communitas*, bound to one another in their ritualistic ways of coexisting and decision-making. They formed “[u]rban tribes” (Gitlin 2012:64), which was reflected in the way people spoke about Occupy. Don Daniel, a film-maker by trade who was involved with coordinating food logistics for the Occupy Boston encampment, told me in an interview that the first time he went down to Dewey Square, he was “in awe with the feeling of love and brotherhood.” I, too, had been caught up in the euphoria of collective energy and horizontal leadership that first night of Occupy Boston. It seems that the rituals of participation and the sense of *communitas* they engendered helped participants to overcome—if only in feeling—the alienation that they had been feeling in the contemporary social and economic climate. And, indeed, the harshness of this climate likely made it seem all the more amazing that such feelings of community and togetherness could arise amongst strangers.

Life at the Encampments: Pragmatic, Political, Prefigurative... and Problematic

These rituals—the general assemblies and their accompanying hand gestures, the people’s mic—were just the centerpiece of everything going on at the encampments, which was at once much bigger and much more basic. The encampments were life forces, worlds of their own. There is a classic anarchist idea that goes: “build a new society in the shell of the old.” This is exactly what the encampments did. They took open spaces and turned them into “spaces of experiment [by] creating the institutions of a new society—not only democratic General Assemblies but kitchens, libraries, clinics, media centres and a host of other institutions, all operating on anarchist principles of mutual aid and self-organisation” (Graeber 2011). If you visited the Dewey Square encampment, the first tent you came across (most likely) was the information tent. There, Occupiers would be able to tell you about the day’s goings-on or direct you to a point of interest, say, the spirituality tent. There were also all the institutions that David Graeber mentioned—the food tent, where hot meals were served and cold snacks were often available, a library, a medical tent, and media and outreach stations. It was incredible to see how quickly it all took shape. The occupations became largely self-contained villages of values and expression; such self-containment, though, gave many spectators and skeptics the sense that they were worlds apart.

It was the task of the “working groups” to keep all logistical aspects of the encampments functioning smoothly. But there were other and more broad-based working groups, too. One such example from Occupy Boston was Free School University (FSU), which coordinated teach-ins, lectures, and skill sharing sessions on-site at the Dewey encampment. While FSU served as the mediating and planning body to schedule such events, anyone was free to propose one. These events ranged from being low-key conversations to large-scale, well-publicized lectures.

The FSU founded the Howard Zinn Memorial Lecture Series, which is still going on (to some extent) today. Through this series, renowned activists and thinkers such as Noam Chomsky and Vijay Prashad came to address the Occupiers at Dewey. These speakers drew a number of people to the encampment who were not full-time Occupiers but were sympathetic to the movement. This was, in a sense, a form of advertising endorsing the encampment's presence and the movement's ideals. Such sympathizers were the movement's second tier populace, the first being comprised of the most involved, often full-time Occupiers.

Let's return to this first tier for a moment, and the day-to-day life at the movement's heart: the encampments. Encampments across the country filled some very basic needs for people; namely, shelter and food. This was both pragmatic and deeply political. The encampments needed bodies to remain significant, and these bodies needed nourishment and shelter. So in came the tents, the donated foodstuffs, and the working groups to coordinate logistics of sustenance. But all of this was far more than merely logistical. It was symbolic, and in line with Occupy's broader themes of inclusivity amongst the ninety-nine percent. The encampments became home—or at least a place to share a meal and some conversation—for a number of homeless people, struggling drug addicts, and other individuals who had been pushed to the margins of society. In effect, the basic provision of food welcomed and adopted these people into the movement. Cora Roelofs, a faculty member in the Tufts Community Health department who was very involved with Occupy Boston's food working group, told me, "it was solidarity, not charity, as is the model here. Okay, yes, we're feeding you—we're feeding everybody. You're part of our movement. If you're here getting a meal, fine, but we want you to think of yourselves as being part of a movement."

Consuming food at Dewey meant consuming Occupy's values. It was a means of *participation*, perhaps the most fundamental of Occupy's often-vague values. Countless Occupiers have spoken or written about how important it was to simply *be there* at the encampments, to engage in this new way of being and interacting with one another. Time and time again, I heard variations on the theme "you don't quite understand it until you're there." Joan Livingston, for instance, an Occupier and long-time peace activist, told me that the encampments were home to a kind of sharing that "doesn't happen in real life," reflecting a sentiment of the encampments as worlds unto themselves. Participation, being present—these were vital pieces of the Occupy world, the Occupy process. A rejection of the status quo social process, in which people remain unheard (and often systemically ignored), Occupy created an open forum. This format can only be as successful as the people committed to it. As Brooke Lehman wrote, Occupy "calls us with a single unspoken but implicit demand: participate!" (quoted in Gitlin 2012:74).

In reality, this amorphous call for participation may have been a purposefully vague linguistic tool for getting people to start thinking about Occupy, have conversations about it, and (ideally) go to a general assembly. A much more solid framework for on-the-ground participation did exist, rooted by the aforementioned "rituals." Granted, this framework was still chaotic in its own right. It guided the messy, liminal space that was encampment life, providing (purposefully) the loosest and most egalitarian structure possible for transformation—of or to what, exactly, no one knew for sure. Occupy's framework enabled plurality—of perspectives, of voices, of backgrounds—and sought to thread it together into an interconnected canvas of solidarity and metamorphosis. Don Daniel put it perfectly: "diversity is the commonality." His comment reminds us of the pluralities and paradoxes that liminal spaces such as Occupy enable;

at Occupy, the “diversity” was allowed—even encouraged—to thrive rather than being resolved or figured out. Moreover, Occupy sought to take advantage of this diversity to make its message louder, to serve, as environmental journalist Simran Sethi explained to me, as “a big umbrella for putting it all together.” This can be seen in the Declaration of the Occupation of NYC, whose central message reads, “all our grievances are connected.”



This visual representation of the Declaration of the Occupation of NYC was “a collaborative effort, made with input from [the] Arts and Culture [working group,] other working groups and crowd-editing sessions at Zuccotti Park” (Eliano 2011).

A logical implication of Occupy’s claimed interconnectedness is that everything that happened “at” Occupy (particularly during Phase I, at the encampments) was significant. Randy, a homeless man who was very involved throughout the occupation, told me, “our message is everything we do.” Randy’s words, and the words of so many others, emphasize the value of *process* that Occupy upheld. Being at an encampment, upholding Occupy’s rituals of participation, and committing to a more horizontal organizing model were incredibly important acts—messages in and of themselves. The emphasis on process was at once political—or, as the anarchists would prefer, purposefully apolitical—and prefigurative. As Ryan Harvey noted, one

key characteristic of the Occupy movement was the use of “mass consensus and ‘lower-case d democracy’ as a central way of doing but also as a prefigurative model” (2012:128) for the society it sought to create. Richard Schechner (1993) sees the “street”—or, in this case, the squares and parks where the encampments located themselves—as a fitting place to prefigure such societal imaginings that otherwise cannot be envisioned, let alone manifested. Of course, not everyone at Occupy imagined the better society of tomorrow to be one in which general assemblies and modified consensus replaced government (though some were probably keen on such an outcome). It was not entirely clear what, exactly, Occupy’s process prefigured in terms of sociopolitical structures; what was prefigured, however, was the need to truly listen to people—*all* people—and engage in more collaboration.

Many people “from the outside,” as Joan put it, didn’t understand the level of importance Occupiers ascribed to the movement’s own process. All they saw was a complete lack of demands. But this lack of demands was intentional, or so say some scholars and social analysts who examined Occupy from a theoretical and strategic standpoint. As Todd Gitlin writes,

demandlessness was tantamount to inclusiveness. Moreover, in keeping with the movement’s anarchist, antiauthoritarian thrust, there was a strong sentiment that, as naturalist Gabriel Willow told a *New York Times* reporter, ‘Demands are disempowering since they require someone else to respond.’ Demands conferred legitimacy on the authorities. Demandlessness, in other words, was the movement’s culture, its identity. (2012:110)

Other scholars such as Noam Chomsky instead recognized the lack of demands as a byproduct of Occupy’s inherent complexity and multiplicity. In an interview in January 2012, Chomsky said, “if you investigate the Occupy movements and you ask them what are their demands, they are reticent to answer and rightly so, because they are essentially crafting a point of view from many disparate sources” (Chomsky 2012:56).

In a way, both of these scholars are correct—depending on which Occupiers they are talking about. The anarchists, who comprised a significant constituency of Occupy, were reluctant to place demands upon a body they recognized as illegitimate (government), while the more reform-oriented liberals were merely jumbled in the confusion of trying to weed out what the demands might possibly be. This, obviously, is an approximate generalization; in practice, there was no such cut and dried dichotomy. But in general, this dichotomy does speak to the different frameworks in entering the Occupy space. Occupiers came together with different grievances, different politics, and different visions for the future. Individuals clashed. Working groups clashed, both internally and with one another. Kate Khalib wrote that general assemblies were “jumbled, exciting, frustrating, at times painful and at times joyful” (2012:2). For many Occupiers—indeed, I would posit most—this was true of the whole experience, not just of general assemblies. Debates about what a better world would look like are heated and tricky enough; debates about how to achieve these different-looking better worlds are at least doubly complicated.

It proved difficult, and sometimes impossible, to resolve some internal issues within Occupy’s decision-making model. While Cora Roelofs spoke positively about the value of feeding homeless and other marginalized individuals, the reality was that Occupiers had different ideas about how to navigate the presence of these people at Dewey Square and maintain a strong sense of safety. Morrigan Phillips was one of many people who had a strong opinion on the matter. He writes,

The Dewey Square Occupation in Boston was, like so many Occupy camps around the country, consumed in conflict that revolved around the role homeless people played in the camp. Sometimes called “junkies,” other times called “trouble,” from the get-go there was little capacity within the camp to deal with these challenges ... What is more, the use of the police and criminal justice system was at times viewed as an acceptable option, without any larger discussion

of the role these forces play in the oppression and criminalization of homelessness. (Phillips 2012:144)

His precise opinion on the homeless and the criminal justice system aside, Phillips does a good job in pointing to the larger issue at stake: Occupy was ill-equipped to handle internal problems like these, problems that some felt threatened the safety of the encampments. People came to Occupy from a variety of backgrounds—from the impoverished and mentally ill to the young professionals and well-to-do college students—and had an accompanying range of opinions and theoretical utopias outlining what mental health, justice, and a world without sexual predators would look like. But this didn't get them any closer to dealing with on-the-ground, present-tense matters in an Occupy world that was no such utopia, much as people wished (and sometimes claimed) it were. Occupy's embodiments of a better world—of *communitas*—were not immune to the stresses and difficulties of maintaining them. *Communitas* has its limits; holding on to its initial energy even (or especially) as it becomes institutionalized is challenging, if not impossible.

Questions of how to handle contentious issues pointed to the problems of the leaderlessness that Occupy valorized. Occupiers were staunchly opposed to hierarchy and dedicated to their horizontal practice, so much so that some decisions were never made. Some issues were permanently tabled, lost by the wayside. But obviously, Occupy didn't just “happen” magically. Despite the movement's cultural rejection of the term “leader,” it is impossible to deny that there were some key organizers behind it. Some faces became more recognizable than others, be they frequent facilitators or principal members of working groups. If you found yourself at an encampment and had a question, you would turn or be directed to certain people. These are leaders, whether they have a label or not. Individuals on media teams around the country felt comfortable—“autonomous”—enough to post whatever they deemed

appropriate on the occupations' Twitter feeds, effectively speaking on behalf of masses of people. But as soon as more difficult decisions needed to be made, this autonomy was dispersed from the individual to the whole. There was tremendous gray area between what was acceptable to do as an individual and what needed to be decided within the general assembly, and this caused a great deal of frustration for many Occupiers. A number of people I have spoken with stopped going to general assemblies because they either witnessed too much authoritarian power, or were too frustrated with how long and exhausting the consensus process was, often with no or undesirable results. Again, we see here the fragility of the normative *communitas* Occupy embodied and the difficulty of maintaining spaces of liminality, which are, by definition, transitory. Shared discourses and preached ideals of togetherness and collective action only went so far; in practice, such egalitarianism was much more difficult to keep up.

Nonviolent Direct Action: the "Battle of Theatrics"

As has been made evident thus far, the encampments were a direct action in and of themselves. They were forms of discursive expressions, like many others tangled in Occupy's "webs of significance." There were other forms and tactics of expression tangled in these webs, too. While easily dismissed as ridiculous or pointless, it should not be ignored that Occupiers spent significant time and energy crafting signs dedicated to their cause(s). Some of these signs were especially witty or poignant; I remember one from Occupy Boston that read, "I can't afford my own politician so I made this sign." At the New York City encampment, Occupiers took the boxes from donated pizzas and crafted "a collage of hundreds of cardboard signs" with slogans, demands, and drawings on them (Schneider 2011). They were rarely anything fancy, but they were resourceful and meaningful for the Occupiers. Like so many facets of Occupy, this

“qualitative quilt” of pizza-box signs rejected the more formal expectations of the elite they were spurning (MacPhee 2012:29).

Occupy also utilized marches as a tactic of protest. These marches were often directed at certain egregious institutions or businesses, such as Bank of America or Verizon Wireless. Some were spontaneous, while others were planned and advertised in advance, such as the student march that took place in Boston on October 10, 2011 and brought together hundreds of students. Often times, marches were planned in conjunction with other organizations with similar ideologies to those of Occupy. Perhaps the largest march throughout Occupy Phase I was the October 5, 2011 march in New York City. Between ten and twenty thousand protestors marched throughout the financial district, many of whom were members of the thirty-nine (or more) organizations and unions that took part. These included MoveOn.org, itself a highly decentralized network of progressives and activists, and Transport Workers Union Local 100, whose president, John Samuelson, had encouraged the union’s 35,000 bus and subway workers to march (Boyle et al. 2011). This march, despite how well attended it was, received shockingly little attention from the mainstream media—a common trend for Occupy demonstrations, regardless of size. It was largely peaceful until evening time, when “scuffles” broke out and a number of young demonstrators were arrested while attempting to push through barricades blocking off Wall Street and the Stock Exchange (Boyle et al. 2011). This detail, too, was barely noticed by mainstream media sources.

Even when such sources did pick up stories about Occupy demonstrations, the portrayal of any violence involved tended to be skewed. As Todd Gitlin writes, “When the police shoved demonstrators, clubbed them, and gassed them, the scenes of the action were dubbed ‘violent clashes,’ as if nonviolent demonstrators were responsible for police attacks” (2012:39). But

these encounters did get plenty of direct coverage through Occupy's use of livestream, which allowed the movement's second tier sympathizers to catch a glimpse of what was really going on. Gitlin argues that each episode of police violence served as an effective "recruiting poster" for Occupy (2012:32). Whether or not they were truly successful in drawing previously uninvolved people to the encampments is impossible to discern; nonetheless, it is clear that they did heighten awareness of systemic problems Occupy positioned itself against, such as police brutality and the denial of civil liberties. Not long after the encampments started popping up all over the country, a video of police officers pepper spraying nonviolent, seated student protestors on the UC Davis campus went viral. In the video, witnesses to the incident started chanting, "Shame on you! Shame on you!" at the police officers. The divide between the anti-structural Occupy "self" and the police state "other" was made clear.

Digital and social media played a huge role in facilitating communication among and between the various physical protests and encampments and the movement's first- and second-tier constituencies. Jeffrey Juris describes Occupy's relationship between online and physical spaces as one representing a "logic of aggregation" that is "shaped by our interactions with social media and generates particular patterns of social and political interaction that involve the viral flow of information and subsequent aggregations of large numbers of individuals in concrete physical spaces" (Juris 2012:266). Contrary to "networking logics" that allow for more complex exchanges of information, Occupy's "aggregation logics" were based more on individuals spreading snippets of information—and fast. Groups like Anonymous, a loosely associated "hactivist" community, functioned as a key node in this communication system and worked to build the bridge between street protest and online presence by sharing videos like the one from

UC Davis—with additional video editing embellishments—on their YouTube page and through Twitter.

Anonymous had an interesting relationship with Occupy from its inception. Just prior to the beginning of the New York City occupation, they posted a video on their YouTube page. In typical Anonymous fashion, a computerized voice spoke as ominous music played in the background of purple-gray images of skyscrapers and people marching through the streets. The voice said,

Hello citizens of the Internet. We are Anonymous. On September 17, Anonymous will flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades, and occupy Wall Street for a few months. Once there, we shall incessantly repeat one simple demand in a plurality of voices: we want freedom. This is a nonviolent protest. We do not encourage violence in any way. The abuse and corruption of corporations, banks, and government ends here. Join us. We are Anonymous. We are legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Wall Street, expect us. (TheAnonPress 2011)

The video, while “not encouraging violence,” gave its viewers a feeling of power and strength. It was a battle call of sorts, even if the battle was meant to be ideological rather than physical. Coming from an anonymous voice, and available to anyone who wanted to watch, it was clearly intended to give viewers a feeling that they could be part of the masses taking over a corrupt world: there was going to be power in numbers. The video was, essentially, a technologically mediated call for *communitas*, which is somewhat ironic, considering the physical occupations bred the value of connection and togetherness—not anonymity.

Still, anonymity and the notion of power in numbers were ongoing themes for certain cohorts of Occupiers. Anonymous is well known for wearing Guy Fawkes masks to demonstrations, and several other anarchist groups often did so, too. The Guy Fawkes mask has a long history, but is now seen to be a symbol of postmodern anarchism (Call 2008). Most recently, this symbol saw a resurgence in political popularity with the 2006 release of the film

“V for Vendetta,” an interpretation of the groundbreaking 1981 graphic novel by the same name written by Alan Moore and David Lloyd. In the film, the sea of Fawkes faces is a “nomadic, perpetually mutating postmodern symbol, impossible for the state to nail down” (Call 2008:156). In real-life protest, the Fawkes faces hide otherwise identifiable ones. They offer protection and solidarity, a collective identity of Guys, and thus are an emblem of incognito dissent that is threatening to the state. Similarly, the anarchist tradition of the “black bloc” achieves the same collective anonymity. A black bloc is a tactic in which a group of demonstrators wear all black clothing in order to appear more uniform, and therefore be indiscernible to police forces. Most occupations—certainly those in New York City and Boston—had a consistent black bloc presence. Rather ironically, tactics like the black bloc and wearing Guy Fawkes masks mirror the facelessness and lack of transparency that practitioners see in the police state (and deem problematic). The uniformity they present, like that of the police state they oppose, is thus unstable and troubling in many ways.

On the whole, Occupy Phase I remained nonviolent on the part of the protestors. As Todd Gitlin has pointed out, “Occupy’s thousands hardly ever resorted to violence themselves, and, therefore, continued to win the battle of theatrics” (2012:53). Granted, this depends on which scorekeeper you talk to; not all Occupiers approved of the black bloc, seeing it as more suggestive of violence than necessary, while others wanted to be more confrontational than was collectively deemed acceptable. And these are just (some of) the conflicting views from within; they don’t even take into account the range of perceptions held by “outsiders” regarding the efficacy of the Occupiers’ theatrical demonstrations. Nonetheless, it is a plain and literal observation that the Occupiers took to the streets and made them their own. For them, the street was the stage in the truest Richard Schechner sense. Their political direct theater was dually “an

exposure of what is wrong with the way things are and an acting out of the desired hoped-for new social relations. It's war, all right, but also fun (what Turner called 'spontaneous community'): a dreamed-of utopian 'state' in both senses of the word" (Schechner 1993:88). The horizontalist rituals and performative protests felt like a sort of "utopian theater" (Schwartz 2011).

Occupy took advantage of new media technologies such as livestreaming to bring this street theater to audiences all around the world, essentially inviting them not only as attendees but participants in their own rite. Since one had to consciously seek out these livestreaming sites (as opposed to turn on the TV for mainstream media coverage), such sites drew participation largely from that second tier of Occupy sympathizers. Still, it was a valuable and novel way for people to feel that they were a part of the movement, offering solidarity from behind their screens. It was also, like so many aspects of Occupy pointed out thus far, a symbolic rejection of how dominant systems function—in this sense, the media system. Mainstream media was rarely covering Occupy in a way that felt honest to Occupiers or second tier supporters. Thus, people could turn to the livestream (in addition to myriad Facebook pages and Twitter accounts) in order to circumvent misinterpretations endorsed by conventional media. Don Daniel tuned in to the livestream for coverage of the May Day 2012 demonstrations in New York City. With livestream, he said, "I really know what's goin' on." He noted the major difference between the livestream and television news coverage, the latter of which failed to duly recognize the massive numbers of people involved in the day's demonstrations. Don chose which theater to attend, and in doing so, offered his solidarity to the Occupiers.

The Unresolved Tensions of Occupy Phase I

Many Occupiers and second tier supporters praised the movement for being so inclusive of people of color, the homeless community, and other historically marginalized populations. In October 2012, I attended Danny Bryck's one-man play about Occupy Boston called "No Room for Wishing," with which I began this thesis. The show is entirely composed of the words of Occupiers that Bryck had interviewed or had conversations with; he adopts their personas in turn, all while chronologically depicting life at the Dewey Square encampment, from its inception through its eviction. Bryck embodies a former prostitute, homeless men, people of color, and struggling addicts, choosing quite consciously to highlight some of the voices that have been pushed to the fringe of society in order to represent a movement that praised itself for trying to make them louder. In a similar vein, Vijay Prashad rejects the critique of Occupy as homogenous, citing offshoots such as Occupy the Hood and the "ubiquitous presence" of hip hop within Occupy (2012:16).

But the reality was that the encampments were largely white-dominant spaces. The Occupy Research and DataCenter noted this. The group was formed with a few distinct goals in mind, one of them being to "identify, document, and challenge race, class, gender, sexuality, age, disability, and other inequalities reproduced within movement spaces" (Schweidler et al. 2012:69). They created a survey—the Occupy Research General Demographic & Participation Survey (ORGS)—which was publicized and made available online between December 7, 2011, and January 7, 2012. While methodologically imperfect, the survey gathered responses from 5,074 Occupiers. Eight out of ten respondents (81% to be exact) were white (Schweidler et al. 2012). This is not likely to be the precise statistic, but even as a ballpark estimate, Occupy's whiteness was obvious. Moreover, Occupy as a white-dominant space was not a static problem.

As Joel Olson (2012) notes, white people steering the movement's wheel perpetuated the problem of people of color being disengaged. Who defines the terms of the movement is important in determining who is going to be a part of it. As he writes, "When people of color have to enter a movement on white people's terms rather than their own, that's not the 99%" (Olson 2012:46). In other words, the fact that Occupy began as a movement comprised mostly of white people served as a self-fulfilling prophecy, inhibiting people of color from feeling welcome or valued as equals.

While Occupy's racial breakdown was problematic, it was often recognized as such amongst Occupiers and was a consistent topic of discussion and debate. There was significantly less attention, however, given to class breakdown. Janaina Stronzake, a contributor to the We Are Many volume, took issue with this, suggesting that a primary requisite for occupation is "recognizing that you belong to the working class" (Stronzake 2012:120). That is, without embodying true class struggle, an occupation is "reduced to nothing more than an occupation [and] tends to end without changes to social reality or to the people that were involved" (Stronzake 2012:121). This is one way in which we can see the overly-inclusive claims of being part of the "ninety-nine percent;" in actuality, there is a range of lived experiences and levels of socioeconomic comfort within that ninety-nine percent. The occupations, like many previous social reform movements dedicated to resisting oppression, did not come out of the working class—at least not solely the working class. Indeed, a number of the key organizers and movement initiators were students and young people with at least some degree of privilege. Prior to Occupy, these people occupied a different world than those of the working class poor. As Morrigan Phillips, who was involved with Occupy Boston, observed, "The society that Occupiers are working to defend never included the poor in the same way" (2012:138).

Beyond race and class issues, a number of scholars and activists have highlighted other difficulties within the movement. One of the biggest of these difficulties was a lack of tangible outcomes, which is closely tied to a lack of understanding surrounding what the movement hoped to achieve. When interviewed on the Late Show with David Letterman on October 12, 2011, Bill Clinton gave some advice to Occupiers, saying, “They need to be for something specific and not just against something because if you’re just against something, somebody else will fill the vacuum you create.” Philosopher and social critic Slavoj Žižek feels differently. A few weeks after Bill Clinton offered his advice, Žižek wrote for the Guardian, “Yes, the protests did create a vacuum—a vacuum in the field of hegemonic ideology, and time is needed to fill this vacuum in a proper way, as it is a pregnant vacuum, an opening for something truly new” (Žižek 2011). While he recognizes the need to ultimately make specific demands, Žižek also sees the value in taking time to do so. He sees the delay as a tactic of its own; Occupy’s refusal to make demands, to engage in dialogue with the political system it deems problematic, builds tension and makes the movement an “ominous and threatening” terror (Žižek 2011). Granted, he says this as someone who is clearly sympathetic to the movement’s values—who is to say whether the powers that be actually see the camps of protestors as threatening?

There is no denying the simple fact that Occupy Phase I did not produce major, significant outcomes—at least in terms of the broader social structures against which it stood. This lack of outcomes came as a result, some would say, of “process fetishism.” Some scholars and Occupiers have criticized the movement for being too attached to its horizontal rituals of participation. This attachment, they say, ended up being a blockade to the effective achievement of outcomes. Occupiers learned the hard way that making large-scale change through a consensus-based decision-making model is not so easy. Occupier Andrew Cornell writes, “we

need to develop more complex and realistic views of what consensus can and can't do. We need to de-fetishize it, so that we stop attributing powers and significance to it that have never been demonstrated in the actual practice of social movements" (2012:172). Randy, the homeless man I spoke with, expressed similar frustrations with Occupy's process. He commented, "You can't talk about 'what is property?' in a stack." The egalitarianism practiced through Occupy's framework of consensus and general assembly was well intentioned, but perhaps too idealistic for achieving real change.

Occupiers—particularly those who remained the most involved throughout Phase I—held tightly to the movement's purity, form, and process. To them, Occupy needed to be its own unique entity altogether. There was a sort of "co-optation phobia," as Todd Gitlin (2012) coined it, a tension between wanting serious change and refusing to navigate that change through existing (political) structures. Gitlin, at a lecture at the Tufts undergraduate campus on March 6, 2013 about the Occupy movement, said that this co-optation phobia was a "grave error" that often "turned a victory into a defeat." The fear of co-optation was true on the whole, but not all Occupiers had the same level of fear as others. Yes, many Occupiers were uncomfortable and irritated when MoveOn.org began using Occupy's ninety-nine percent meme in their mass emails to subscribing progressives. But others thought this was a wonderful thing, a step toward making Occupy's message bigger and farther-reaching. Ultimately, as with much of the Occupy process, a "no" overrode a "yes," and thus the voices against co-optation of Occupy's message largely succeeded in keeping the movement as protected and autonomous as possible.

So, was Occupy a "fringe" movement? A movement for "radicals" only, a movement that completely rejected all aspects of "the system?" The word "radical" often came to be associated with Occupy, both from within and from the outside. At times, Occupiers applied this

label to themselves defensively; I recall seeing a sign that read, “It’s not radical to want love, equality, and compassion for our fellow humans.” This sign certainly indicated a level of awareness of possible criticisms aimed at so-called radicals. Other times, though, radicals sought to reclaim the word. Jonathan Matthew Smucker, an Occupier who self-identifies as a “radical,” seeks to do so in a positive sense—not one that is associated with an ineffective and unimportant “fringe” of society. He was keenly aware that the relationship between Occupy’s radical core and its broader base of supporters had the capacity to be both “one of the biggest strengths *and* biggest vulnerabilities of our movement” (Smucker 2012:248). He warns radicals not to push themselves too far away from dominant culture, noting, “The big danger is that radical subcultures caught in this pattern of emphasizing how different they are may, over time, start to even prize their own marginalization” (Smucker 2012:249). Whether or not all “radicals” (or the correlated, albeit imprecise, term, “anarchists”) would agree with Smucker is impossible to tell; I imagine many would be reluctant to accept this criticism. After all, much of the feeling of *communitas* and solidarity stemmed from their location on the outskirts of mainstream culture, from the act of being *against*. What would their identity become if they inched closer to dominant culture? Would they be at risk of accepting it, of being co-opted by it? Just as Occupy fetishized its own process, it appears the movement’s more radical cohort also fetishized their “alternativeness.”

All of these critiques, both from within and from beyond, point to the one most fundamental and unresolved tension within Occupy: was Occupy reformist or revolutionary? Did it seek to work within the system or outside it? Did it seek to make structural changes for all or create alternative structures for those who wanted them? The reform versus revolution debate came up time and time again, and was never resolved. Everyone had a different interpretation of

what the movement was, what it was doing and what it should be doing. Noam Chomsky has said, “we are nowhere near the limits of what reform can carry out. People can have the idea of a revolution in the back of their minds if they want. But there are very substantive actions that should be taking place” (2012:60). He saw the opportunity for Occupy to serve as the platforms to set these actions in motion. Cornel West, on the other hand, spoke to the New York City delegation, telling Occupiers, “Don’t be afraid to use the word ‘revolution.’ This is the American Fall, inspired by the Arab Spring” (quoted in Gitlin 2012:79). Whether you were in the reform camp or the revolutionary camp, the fact you shared the same physical camp was deeply meaningful. Everyone wanted the world to be a better place. Some wanted a different, new world altogether. But the common thread was there: *wanting*.

The reform/revolution split had tactical implications. Reformists were eager to channel Occupy’s energy politically and create real change for the ninety-nine percent. Revolutionaries wanted change, too, but their end goal was (and, one might argue, always is) unclear. They reveled in the prefigurative modes of being and doing that Occupy embodied, and celebrated these spaces in defiance of prevailing establishments. The correlations became evident (though, again, imperfect): anarchist revolutionaries were more likely to engage in highly performative protest that demonized—or at least “otherized”—institutions of the state, most notably the police. They celebrated Occupy’s horizontalism, though occasionally they were frustrated with how inexperienced some Occupiers were at it (Milstein 2012). The liberal reformers were frustrated, too—but more with the feeling that Occupy wasn’t *doing* anything that would have a real impact. In the midst of Phase I, Colin Asher (2011) wrote that the “space itself engages people’s imaginations, but nothing will be settled here, not even the meaning of what is happening, and the participants won’t be able to define it.” This was the case moreso for the

liberal reformers—those still attached to society’s guiding structures, however flawed they may be—than the revolutionaries, who were more accustomed to their amorphous prefigurations and comfortable with being uncomfortable.

All of these tensions made for a movement that was characterized by inspiration and doubt, ideas and conflict, hope and fear—all at once. It is no wonder that Occupiers, second tier sympathizers, and outsiders alike have difficulty coming to any sort of objective understanding of what Occupy Phase I *was*. The move from opposing systemic inequality to being as egalitarian as possible in the act of opposition resulted in rituals of participation that were often uninteresting, frustrating, or otherwise too confusing to penetrate. Many Occupiers found these rituals to be an essential message of the movement themselves. Others bemoaned their futile nature, and frequented the encampments less and less. Second tier supporters were often supportive of Occupy’s ideological underpinnings, but could not—for whatever logistical or tactical reasons—commit to consistent participation in the general assemblies or living at the encampments. Many outsiders remained critical of the movement as a whole, for its seeming pointlessness and lack of manifest results. Occupy Phase I was, in a word, chaotic. Nonetheless, the encampments were concentrated zones of spirited passion, of solidarity, of *communitas*, and of transformation, and some of this spilled over into the movement’s post-encampment life.

Occupy Phase II: “From the Encampments into the Heart”

The evictions began with that of Zuccotti Park—the origin and epicenter of the Occupy movement—in November 2011. Soon after, other cities followed suit, and police forces cracked down on the encampments. Many Occupiers resisted, sometimes facing arrest; others were ready to move on from the high tensions that the encampments fostered. In late December 2012,

over a year after the original Zuccotti Park eviction, what was once dismissed as a paranoid conspiracy theory became recognized by the Occupiers as true: the police, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security worked “for and with banks to target, arrest, and politically disable peaceful American citizens” (Wolf 2012). The evictions were often violent—and then, all of a sudden, Occupy Phase I was over. There was little coverage of the way it all went down. Occupiers and second-tier sympathizers aired their pleas of injustice, insisting on their freedom to assemble, but no one was listening (or at least no one who could or would do anything about it). Using videos of police violence as a recruiting device no longer made sense; for what would viewers be recruited? Occupy needed time to re-strategize and reorganize, now that their central meeting points were taken away.

Some say Occupy was “over” once the encampments were gone, while others are adamant that it is still going strong. Plainly put, some form of Occupy movement still exists today—what I refer to as “Phase II”—though it is a mere shadow of everything that Occupy Phase I embodied. Occupy Phase II has continued in the form of decentralized working and affinity groups tackling particular issues and coordinating specific actions. Different cities see varying levels of activity, and on the whole, far fewer people are involved. It remains difficult for Occupiers to adhere to the movement’s horizontal ideals now that they are not in constant physical contact. While online networks and sporadic actions continue, Jeffrey Juris reminds us that “places, bodies, face-to-face networks, social histories, and the messiness of offline politics continue to matter, as exemplified by the resonance of the physical occupations themselves” (2012:260). It is my contention that, more important than the structures and functions of Occupy Phase II, the ripple effects—or “resonance”—of Occupy Phase I continue to be felt in our public discourse, cultural memes, and in other social movements. Don Daniel said that Occupy has

moved “from the encampments into the heart.” I would agree and add that judging by my own experience, the conversations and tensions initiated during Occupy Phase I are ongoing and being taken more seriously by more people. Occupy, having always been comprised of people from various backgrounds, continues to demonstrate its intersectionality in Phase II. Its ideological underpinnings can be felt in other social movements and activist circles. In the following chapter, I use the contemporary food movement as a case study to examine Occupy’s intersectionality and present “radicalizing” effect, tracing this effect from the handling of food at the encampments to our shifting discourses about food and food systems today.

Chapter Three

A CASE STUDY OF INTERSECTIONALITY: OCCUPY AND THE FOOD MOVEMENT

Occupy Phase I saw people all over the country jump into the liminal pool of encampment life. I was not one of them. I remained on the outskirts, sticking my toes in Occupy's water but never really sure if I wanted to get wet. It wasn't until January 2012, after the majority of the encampments had been shut down, that I dove in to the deep end of my own liminal pool: I took a semester off from school. Retrospectively, I realize that I owe much of this decision to the questions that Occupy left unanswered—questions so big and so important that sitting in a classroom for four yet another months, doing some variation on the same thing I had done my whole life, seemed utterly nugatory. Why was it that I didn't spend more time at Dewey, even though I was displeased with the status quo around me? What was the world that Occupy wanted? What was the world that *I* wanted? How was I going to achieve it? It became clear to me that I needed to step out of my “student” shoes for a while and ask these questions while more directly in contact with the society I wondered so much about. I wasn't expecting answers, per se; I just needed a break from my framework of thinking to at understand, if nothing else, that I was in it in the first place.

During that time, I thought a lot about what it was, exactly, that had so intrigued me about Occupy. In the process of asking these questions, I realized that I was living out some of the answers by engaging with alternative systems of exchange and value. While I did not pay rent anywhere during the first three months of that time, my little suitcase and I found happy temporary homes amongst friends all over the country. I offered my company and cooking in exchange for a couch to sleep on, or even just a patch of space on the floor. Meanwhile, I was

becoming more entrenched in some of the Occupy Phase II activism and discourse. Just a few days into my blank canvas of exploration, on January 31, 2012, I went down to New York City for a demonstration on behalf of the Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA) et al. v. Monsanto lawsuit. OSGATA, along with a grassroots coalition of family farmers, agricultural organizations, and seed businesses, filed the case to challenge Monsanto's patents on genetically modified seeds and the company's ability to file lawsuits against small farmers who (unknowingly) wind up with these patented seeds growing in their fields. The demonstration afforded me the opportunity to begin to think about and experience Occupy from the perspective of a movement in which I was already entrenched: the food movement. It was the first of many events, lectures, and conferences related to Occupy or contemporary food activism (or the convergence of the two, as was often the case) that I attended during that nomadic time. I hopped between Boston and New York City frequently, before traveling to Kansas for a conference I helped plan on food and faith, and ultimately to Colorado where I worked on an organic farm for the summer.

Whenever I was in the Boston area, I stayed at the Crafts House, which is technically an on-campus housing option at Tufts that effectively operates as an independent cooperative. The "crafties," as the residents are called, divide responsibilities in order to run the on-campus craft center and cook dinner every day at six o'clock p.m. These dinners are open to anyone who chooses to walk in the door. On more than one occasion during my extended stays there, a homeless man with limited speech capabilities whom I would place in his early sixties came for dinner. Once, he slept overnight on one of the living room couches, stirring up some contentious debate amongst crafties about the need to be safe and comfortable in the house. (Ultimately, it was decided that he was more than welcome to come for dinner and hang out for a while, but he

was not allowed to stay overnight). I began to see the Crafts House as a sort of Occupy encampment in itself: a space that pushed back against the individualist mainstream, that sought to abide by the community values it developed and endorsed within its walls. I was particularly struck by the way that the Crafts House daily dinners facilitated conversation, ideas, and a sense of connection—in much the same way, I imagined, as the sharing of food at the Occupy encampments. It was the love, lifestyle, and *food* shared with me at the Crafts House, in combination with my heightened connection to Occupy Phase II, that provoked my thinking about the ways in which Occupy and the food movement overlapped—both ideologically and materially.

The Occupy movement was, and continues to be, inherently intersectional. It brought together people from all different backgrounds, including activists from a variety of movements that share many of Occupy's foundational tenets. As Mark Bittman (2011) writes, Occupy's "roots are in the populist, suffragist, labor, civil rights, women's, anti-war, environmental and even food movements." This chapter demonstrates Occupy's intersectionality through a detailed case study of its relationship with the food movement. I begin by explaining what I mean, exactly, by the term "food movement," identifying the wide array of food-related activism currently going on in the United States and spelling out its perhaps surprisingly deep roots. I then look closely at the food at Occupy Boston's Dewey Square encampment, unpacking how the organizing and serving of this food both exemplified Occupy's broader egalitarian values and made a conscious effort to connect with the preexisting alternative food networks birthed by the food movement. Last, I consider some of the food-related activism of Occupy Phase II in order to highlight the impact—strategic and otherwise—of Occupy Phase I and the movement as a whole.

The Food Movement: A Contemporary (and Historical) Effort to Reconnect

So what exactly do I mean by the “food movement?” I use the term as an all-encompassing one that refers to the variety of organizations and markets that have emerged in recent years (approximately the past two decades) seeking to forge alternatives to the dominant industrial food system. As Cathy Stanton writes, “by the start of the twenty-first century, various strands of critique, activism, and alternative practice were coalescing into a diffuse and vocal movement centered around the ‘relocalization’ of food supply and exchange” (2012:236). The American public has become increasingly concerned with the food it is eating and where this food comes from. These concerns are also inextricably tied to the corporatization of the food system, and are voiced from within the food movement as such. More and more people are skeptical of “Big Ag,” a term often employed to represent the collection of immensely powerful and profitable companies that have steadily gained monopolistic control over the food supply in the United States since the end of the Second World War.

Rejection of Big Ag’s market capitalist power can be seen through the enormous increase in the number of farmers’ markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms (Stanton 2012:236). Both farmers’ markets and CSA seek to eliminate supply chain intermediaries and re-establish connection between producers and consumers, who are eager to “buy local.” As David Gainsboro writes, the food movement is “a collection of seemingly disparate initiatives that are altering the way consumers think about, shop for, and eat food, inciting them to push back against globalization and the estranging food procurement systems in the U.S.” (2010:10). These initiatives are many. Michael Pollan (2010) notes that the food movement’s “many threads of advocacy” include

school lunch reform; the campaign for animal rights and welfare; the campaign against genetically modified crops; the rise of organic and locally produced food;

efforts to combat obesity and type 2 diabetes; “food sovereignty” (the principle that nations should be allowed to decide their agricultural policies rather than submit to free trade regimes); farm bill reform; food safety regulation; farmland preservation; student organizing around food issues on campus; efforts to promote urban agriculture and ensure that communities have access to healthy food; initiatives to create gardens and cooking classes in schools; farm worker rights; nutrition labeling; feedlot pollution; and the various efforts to regulate food ingredients and marketing, especially to kids.

That is *a lot* of threads. But they are all connected, most particularly in their intent to push back against the status quo industrial food system and to regain autonomy of choice and knowledge.

While this particular food movement is relatively new, its attitudinal underpinnings are not. Clearly, one of the most basic motivations of today’s food movement is the feeling of wariness and skepticism aimed at market capitalism—the distance (both physical and felt) it creates between production and consumption and the removal of consumer autonomy that it causes. Anti-capitalist sentiment is nothing new, and can be seen in food activism throughout US history. Jeffrey Haydu points out that both the Grahamite health food movement of the 1830s and the early organic food movement of the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, were responses to “commercialization and technological change as they affected food” (2011:467). The responses themselves were not identical, but both repudiated industrialized, high-tech food markets. While hesitation toward capitalist growth can be seen throughout history, often in movements largely unrelated to food systems, it is particularly interesting to explore this hesitation and its accompanying episodes of pushback in terms of food, often dubbed our “most intimate commodity.”

To begin, let us consider more extensively Jeffrey Haydu’s discussion on William Sylvester Graham and the 1830s movement for dietary reform. Graham and his followers advocated a simple, vegetarian diet of minimally processed or spiced foods. They believed such a diet was the key not only to good health, but also moral reform. The ideas took hold primarily

amongst an “urban, relatively young, middle class” during a time of significant reform: “the evangelical Second Great Awakening and its auxiliary temperance movement were in full swing; the abolitionist movement was getting underway; and the election of Andrew Jackson marked a democratic upheaval in electoral politics” (Haydu 2011:468). As Haydu (2011) points out, upsurges in social movement activity and protest create favorable conditions for diffusion. In the case of the 1830s and Grahamite ideology, it is clear that the broader social fabric—or “ambient culture,” as Haydu (2011) calls it—of temperance and the evangelical revival diffused into the natural food movement endorsed by Graham. The Grahamite diet of minimally processed vegetarian foodstuffs was “an antidote to social, spiritual, and physical corruption” (Haydu 2011:462). This diet was a strategy for avoiding sexual promiscuity or inappropriateness, which were believed to arise from a diet rich in meat and spices.

Grahamites also observed the ways in which “rapid growth of cities and spread of market relations distanced consumers from the sources of their food” (Haydu 2011:467). They sought to remediate this distance by consuming the most healthful, wholesome food possible, avoiding modern food products and processing technologies. This was set in a complicated time of growth and nostalgia (Lears 1981:4-7). Agriculture was expanding into the American midwest and west, just as conservation efforts and a tourism industry were emerging. Transcendentalist ideas and a Romantic ethos were prevalent, viewing nature as being separate from—and, indeed, superior to—the ever-industrializing society. Writings such as Henry David Thoreau’s Walden, or Life in the Woods, published in 1854, echoed these ideas, generating wistfulness for a “simpler” time. Meanwhile, new food products and farming technologies kept developing, as industrialization continued to characterize the era. In the 1840s and 1850s, the usage of factory-

made agricultural machinery and the development of commercial farms (particularly of wheat and corn) rose hand in hand (USDA 2000).

In 1887, the passage of the Hatch Act saw the creation of agricultural experiment stations all across the country. This was soon followed by what is known as the “golden age” of agriculture—roughly the period between the turn of the century and World War I—a time when farms were prosperous and prices were high. Yet, these developments and high points were taking place in a tumultuous, up-and-down economic climate. Following a Gilded Age characterized by laissez-faire economic policy, the US suffered a financial crisis in 1893 that resulted in a multi-year depression. In 1907, yet again, the economy suffered a panic—albeit a less damaging one. These years were ones characterized by a rise in the US financial sector. This uncertain economic climate was one of a number of factors giving rise to the first back-to-the-land movement in the United States; as Dona Brown writes, “In the 1910s, back-to-the-landers had feared nationwide economic crisis” (2011:8).

More broadly, the Progressive Era (roughly the 1890s through 1920s) was a period of great social reform efforts. The decade of the 1890s was “the decade of the Homestead and Pullman strikes, the march of Coxe’s army, and the agrarian revolt of 1896” (Faulkner 1951:370). Farmers and laborers were beginning to feel the unjust effects of laissez faire policy, and they sought greater government regulation for uncontrolled markets and greed; they wanted to keep big (agri)business in check. Young women, many of whom had been educated in women’s colleges but were unwelcome in the work force, sought to contribute to public life by educating immigrants on “proper” ways of American life. Meanwhile, investigative journalists known as “muckrakers” were contributing to the discussions and efforts surrounding labor, industrialization, and immigration through publishing exposés and fiction dealing with these

issues. Perhaps the most notable of these works is The Jungle, a novel by Upton Sinclair published in 1906 that exposed the horrendous treatment of both animals and workers in Chicago's meatpacking industry. This novel, albeit originally intended by the author to highlight the immense struggles that working class immigrants face, ultimately contributed to the formation of the regulatory Food and Drug Administration due to the concerns about food safety that it instigated (Constitutional Rights Foundation 2008).

A few decades later, the 1930s also saw economic difficulties and subsequent efforts to address food and farming issues, this time on the federal level more so than municipally. This decade, of course, was that of the Great Depression, following the stock market crash of 1929. A number of economic programs collectively known as the New Deal were sanctioned during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first term of presidency. Amongst these was the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), which for the first time in American history offered direct support payments to farmers. At the time, the AAA offered payments to farmers to *reduce* production; the goal was to produce less food in order for prices to be reset (higher), after an abundance of commodity crops had flooded the market and drastically reduced prices (Stanton 2012:184-185). The policy was a controversial one, as many could not understand why the government would look for ways to raise prices when so many people did not have enough money—or food—as it was. Nonetheless, the legacy of AAA and other New Deal programs remained clear: the government had provided “relief, recovery, and reform” to a severely struggling economy—the implication being that it would do so again if need be.

Some people sought to forge their own security during this time, unsure whether the government programs would deliver results. Yet again, as in the Progressive Era, the 1930s saw an increase in back-to-the-landers. Those who fled for the land this time “were prepared for

worse: chaos, violence, the end of capitalism or of democracy” (Brown 2011:8). In this time of renegotiating fundamental structures and creating new ones, establishing subsistence independently (or trying to, at least) through homesteading or farming seemed the only viable option for some people. Morale was not high, no thanks to the dramatic weather conditions of the 1930s, which included severe drought and the “Dust Bowl” that arose in part because of farming practices that stripped rather than conserved soils.

The back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s had motivations beyond merely economic ones. As Brown writes, these new homesteaders “added entirely new concerns to the old list: pollution, scarcity, and an overcrowded planet” (2011:8). The broader context is important to consider here. The 1960s and 1970s were dense decades in terms of social movements’ activities. With the publishing of Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring in 1962 and Francis Moore Lappé’s Diet for a Small Planet in 1971, environmental concerns were on the rise, as was the promotion of a vegetarian diet. Anti-war, feminist, and pro-civil rights activism pushed against the structures of white- and male-dominated power in the U.S. (and many other places, for that matter). The New Left, critical of corporate capitalism, emerged. Discomfort with what many saw as an overly-materialistic culture pushed some—particularly young people—to form a counterculture. This counterculture was “more focused on lifestyle than on ‘serious’ politics, more a cultural trend than a social movement, and more a form of withdrawal than a quest for social change. By the late 1960s, however, the New Left and the counterculture overlapped significantly” (Haydu 2011:473), bringing a newly political consciousness to food reform and small-scale farming efforts.

This overlapping has a lot to do with the individuals and relationships within the New Left and the counterculture. As Haydu reminds us, “Where networks among activists are more

dense (either by virtue of the multiple movement affiliations of individual activists or the overlapping campaigns of organizations), cross-movement diffusion is more likely” (2011:463-4). There was a lot of spillover amongst and into the general cluster of movements described above. One such movement that benefited from these overlapping networks was that of organic food production and consumption. After World War II, raw materials from weapons were repurposed into chemical fertilizers. Through 1970, agricultural technology innovation led to “greatly increased yields, and more specialized, capital-intensive farms” (USDA 2000). Drawing on the ideas of organic pioneers Albert Howard and J.I. Rodale and neo-agrarians like Wendell Berry, the organic food movement of the 1960s and 1970s rejected such technologies and the corporatism that went along with them (Stanton 2012:186 and Belasco 1993:70-75). It promoted “natural” foods over “artificial” ones. Organic foods were sold at co-ops, which “deliberately served as nodes for local activist communities—a function best illustrated by the co-op bulletin board and the co-op newsletter, with their postings for political meetings, feminist carpenters, spiritual consultants, and health food remedies” (Haydu 2011:474). There were thus many connections between the organic food movement of the 1970s and other social and political movements of the time.

Today’s food movement is similarly intersectional, bearing relationships with many other spheres of activism. Many participants, analysts, and critics alike prefer to recognize it as *multiple* food movements. Others reject the very notion that there is such a phenomenon as the “food movement” in the first place, questioning whether the emergence of alternative food production and procurement systems are deserving of the title “movement.” Michael Pollan (2012) explains that President Barack Obama has always had the following attitude toward the food movement: “What movement? I don’t see it. Show me.” Even Pollan admits to using the

term “food movement” liberally, hoping “to help wish it into being, by sheer dint of repetition.” Of course, we could wonder whether any era of food and farming activism previously described is truly deserving of the term “food movement.” Did any era see noteworthy change? Did the Grahamites, for instance, fundamentally change or alter the dominant, industrializing food system? Or did they simply provide an alternative framework for consumption? I recognize the importance of questions like these, but I do not feel that such “politics of the alternative,” as I call them, are sufficient logical grounds for the preclusion of the singular term “food movement.” This collectivizing term unites all strands of contemporary food activism and discourse, even if “by little more than the recognition that industrial food production is in need of reform because its social/environmental/public health/animal welfare/gastronomic costs are too high” (Pollan 2010).

That is not to say that the critics wary of lumping together these strands of activism and discourse are wrong. Much of their reasoning has to do with who, exactly, is involved in the so-called “food movement.” Eric Schlosser, at a November 27, 2012 talk at Tufts, spoke gravely about the reality that the food movement has, for the most part, failed to reach out and build alliances with people that “may look different than its leaders.” Here, Schlosser is pointing to the (unfortunate) reality that today’s food movement is predominantly a white and middle- to upper-class one. A number of critics have called the movement elitist, noting that lower class individuals do not have the resources to afford organic or local food as do their middle or upper class counterparts. These are valid and crucial criticisms—noticeably, not too dissimilar from some directed at Occupy—but I would argue that the food movement has become increasingly self-aware and self-conscious of these criticisms and is acting upon them. As such, instead of parsing out particular consumption patterns as one movement and the rise of urban gardens in

low-income communities as another (to use two of many possible examples), I prefer to place both of these under the “food movement” banner to highlight their similarities (rather than differences) as well as their self-reflective discourses.

When considering the complicated history leading up to today’s food movement, it is helpful to consider the one uncomplicated, linear piece: heightened industrialization, globalization, commodification, and corporatization of the American food system. Each of the eras of food activism described—the Grahamites of the 1830s, the back-to-the-landers of the Progressive Era and of the 1930s, and the organic advocates of the 1960s and 1970s—was a contextually derived response to these forces. Today’s particular emphasis on buying and eating “local” is a direct pushback to the very long food chains that have resulted from these forces. Going “local” is a concrete, palpable way to fight back against dominant capitalist systems. It is especially interesting, then, to explore the relationship between the food movement and the Occupy movement, the latter of which explicitly fulminates against such dominant systems. In the following section, I explore the ideological rationale for the intersection of these two movements, which largely lies in the balancing of their respective approaches.

Occupy Wall Street and the Food Movement: Bringing the Two Together

In October 2011, Campaign for America’s Future sent out a warning to one of their email lists explaining, “Mayor Mike Bloomberg just said he’s going to use the police to effectively end ‘Occupy Wall Street’ Friday morning.” The email encouraged readers to call Mayor Bloomberg and demand that he respect First Amendment rights by not evicting the occupation. It was forwarded to the NEFOOD listserv (where I saw it), which is sponsored by the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, on Thursday, October 13. About twelve hours later,

someone responded rather nastily, declaring that the promotion and protection of Occupy Wall Street was not an appropriate discussion for the NEFOOD listserv. This person told the original sender to “cut it out” and get their “message” across “some other way.” The series of responses to *this* email was fascinating. Not fifteen minutes later, someone responded with hyperlinks to two articles that claimed to show the “direct link between the Occupy and Good Food Movements.” An hour after that, someone noted, “OWS and our local and regional food webs are many of the same folks, rolling in the same circles. These paths will be crossing more often as the days go by.” A couple hours later, Wendy Godek, a PhD candidate in Global Affairs at Rutgers-Newark whose research is on the food sovereignty/security law in Nicaragua (where she currently lives), provided a well-written response articulating many of the reasons these two movements’ paths may (and should) cross. It is worth quoting at length. Godek writes,

...the themes and concerns being presented by protesters of the Occupy Wall Street movement are not new – they have been voiced at protests worldwide for over a decade (some of you may remember Seattle in 1999 or Cancun in 2003 when a Korean farmer committed suicide in protest of unfair policies that were disproportionately harming small and medium-sized farmers – Via Campesina was there both times). 50% of the almost 1 billion hungry people in the world are farmers. Land grabs by large corporations and banks, commodity market speculation on agrifood products, [and] biofuel production have all recently contributed to weakening the position of small and medium-sized agrifood producers and have contributed to food crises around the globe and corporations and Wall Street have their hand in all of these practices and are profiting at the expense of the lives of many. The food movement has an intrinsic role to play in transforming an unjust, inequitable, and ecologically destructive system that benefits a few at the expense of the vast majority. Food is fundamental and our food systems are not working for us. The US food movement is part of this broader movement ... and share[s] the common goal of all the protesters – a more just, equitable, and healthier world.

As Godek shows, the food movement has a vested interest in identifying and tackling the systemic injustices that perpetuate a problematic food system and the many other social, economic, political, and environmental problems tied to it.

The Occupy movement gave the food movement an opportunity to become more public and politically engaged. Consider the aforementioned critiques of the food movement that question whether or not it is justifiable to even call the recent attention given to our food system a “movement.” Michael Pollan (2012) notes that the so-called food movement “has so far had more success in building an alternative food chain than it has in winning substantive changes from Big Food or Washington.” Pollan recognizes this food chain as a form of “soft politics” which, while valuable, does not ultimately bring about major changes. Eric Holt-Gimenez (2012) similarly acknowledges that the principle tactic of the food movement has been to “actively construct” the alternative food system it desires, be it through community gardens, CSA programs, organic farming, or other means. Importantly, though, Holt-Gimenez recognizes that “this combination of strategy and tactics only addresses individual and institutional inequities in the food system, leaving the structure of the corporate food regime intact.” This, he argues, is where Occupy comes in: “By openly protesting the excesses of capitalism, Occupy does address this structure. This is why the convergence of Occupy and the food justice movement is so potentially powerful.” Occupy is an anti-structural movement of protest, and the food movement is one of construction—of creating new structures. I would posit that successful social movements—and, as Victor Turner would argue, healthy societies—require each of these two legs to stand on, implying that both Occupy and the food movement would be better served by joining forces.

A number of food movement participants and analysts alike came to see the importance of the two-legged approach, too, and recognized the opportunity that Occupy afforded: to address the big, underlying, economic and systemic problems that affect the food we eat and its journey to our plates. While Occupy originally “grew out of anger at the outsized power of

banks ... the uprisings have evolved into a kind of running challenge to the way power is concentrated in *all* aspects of our economy” (Philpott 2011)—including the food industry. Such direct protest is often missing from the construction-oriented initiatives of the contemporary food movement, despite being aptly identified, felt, and lamented. Occupy was a way for the food movement to get politicized, charged up, and active—not just in its peripheral markets, but center stage at its causal roots. Occupy paved the way for food activists to understand that in order to “change the food system, we need systemic change in financial institutions, regulation, corporate influence; we need a shift in power” (Chrisman 2011). It condemned the (economic) foundation upon which the industrial food system stood.

Feeding People, Fueling the Movement(s)

Occupy Phase I sought to establish connection. Its participants and supporters were long dismayed by the distance they felt between themselves and the huge institutions that held such power over their lives. Fittingly, the encampments bridged that distance, re-establishing and re-localizing a sense of relatedness amongst many who identified themselves as belonging to the 99%. They were physical spaces to mediate emotional grievances, solid responses to vexation aimed at amorphous fiscal omnipotence. As one Critical Legal Thinking blogger writes, “while the free movement of capital exists as an invisible abstraction, occupying a place is exceedingly concrete, a visible presence at the spaces of hope” (Taskale 2012). In order to maintain this concrete space of hope, there were some logistical pieces that needed to fall in to place, most notably the provision of food. As Joan, the peace activist, playfully put it, “you can’t march on an empty stomach.” But food at the encampments was far more than merely pragmatic. Food is both material and social, and can therefore provide eaters with a grounded sense of place. At the

encampments, food was a means of localizing connection. People provided food for one another and ate together, sharing conversation and ideas in the process. It was a true neighborly experience of *communitas* and togetherness. Food was shared with anyone who wanted it or needed it, in line with Occupy's values of inclusivity and solidarity spelled out in the last chapter.

The provision of food was certainly attractive for many homeless or otherwise marginalized individuals. Importantly, food also drew in activists and organizers from the food movement community who saw the connection between their work and Occupy's message. This was one of the numerous intersections of networks that Occupy facilitated. As I came to learn, many food system activists felt compelled to bring their networks and knowledge to Occupy. They often joined the encampments' food working groups, looking for ways to apply their issue-focused background to the all-encompassing efforts of Occupy. In the midst of the Zuccotti Park encampment, the New York Times ran an article highlighting the motivations and efforts of some of these people; Robert Strype, 29, joined the movement out of anger about factory farming and the genetic modification of vegetables, while Ani Ferrara, 24, came with the explicit purpose of pushing "the sustainable-food side of things" (Gordinier 2011). Food was just one of the many "connected grievances" that Occupy brought to the fore.

Occupy Boston's food working group sought to bring some of the values espoused by the contemporary food movement to the plates at the Dewey Square encampment. I learned a great deal about the workings of Occupy Boston's food working group through my interview with Cora Roelofs, a new faculty member with the Tufts Community Health program and self-described "local food person" who has been a member of the Green Party since 1986. As Cora told me, the food working group wanted to sustain the movement "not necessarily with the food

bank type of food—donated trash food, highly processed or whatever.” Instead, they sought to “take advantage of the existing political networks that already existed in the alternative food movement.” For her part, Cora often garnered produce donations from farmers across the state and in Vermont, to be delivered either directly to Dewey Square (if they could be consumed raw) or to volunteers connected to the movement that would use the donations to prepare hot meals. Cora and other members of the food working group wanted to serve the Occupiers fresh food with a low carbon footprint—not that processed junk that Big Ag has been subsidizing, shipping across the country, and feeding Americans for decades now. How hypocritical it would be, after all, to consume the food produced and promoted by the very corporations Occupy stood firmly against! So in came donated fruits and vegetables from all over the Northeast. Some produce donations would go directly to Dewey, others to “suburban kitchens,” as Cora called them, where they would be converted into hot meals and then transported to Dewey.

It was hard work to coordinate this more ethical form of donation, and even harder to see its results sometimes being thrown to the wayside—literally. Cora told me that she had gone down to the encampment and talked with the people running the food tent in order to take careful note of the restrictions the encampment faced. Occupiers there told her that they didn’t have the means to prepare hot food and that they couldn’t see what they were doing when they prepared food in the dark. The next time Cora went down to Dewey, she brought several headlamps in addition to a slew of mesclun greens, thinking this would help those working the food tent prepare salads and other healthy foods in the evening. Unfortunately, a few days later, she went back to discover those precious greens “rotting in the corner.” There was no organized system for managing donations of fresh food (or any food for that matter). Like everything about Occupy, food was handled with the prevailing trial-by-fire attitude. Sometimes this resulted in

magnificent salads for all, and sometimes it didn't—but everyone did the best they could with the resources they had, always striving toward the movement's ideals. It's true, the Occupiers probably ate far more donated pizza than homemade carrot soup; the priority was keeping people fed, even though this didn't always happen in the exact manner that the food working group envisioned.

Still, the solidarity and support shown to Occupy through food donations was astounding. People comprising the movement's second tier of supporters dropped off non-perishables or homemade baked goods daily. Food working groups across the country helped to coordinate donations from local food establishments; because of Cora's outreach efforts, for instance, the Middle East restaurant in Cambridge donated food on multiple occasions. Down in New York City, local restaurants “experienced a strange uptick in phone calls and online orders, many of them coming from other parts of the world” (Gordinier 2011). People were demonstrating their solidarity from thousands of miles away, enacting the “logic of aggregation” that Juris (2012) sees operating at this intersection of physical occupation and a far-flung, technologically-mediated network of solidarity. Managing food at the encampments was chaotic, to be sure, but it was a chaos birthed of love and good intention. Giving food, sharing food—these were just some of the many ways people added value to a movement that was fundamentally seeking to renegotiate our systems of value.

The difficulties of developing organized food systems at the encampments speak to the movement's intrinsic pluralities. As we have seen already, people came to Occupy with many different flavors of roughly similar ideals. Accordingly, not everyone was equally well versed in food systems issues. While these issues were of great importance to those involved with the food working group, they were significantly less relevant to the majority of Occupiers. On the

ground, most Occupiers were relying on food donations for sustenance; from whom they came or how they got there was largely extraneous. Most Occupiers were otherwise engaged with their own working groups and direct actions anyhow. Nonetheless, the development of an alternative food system at the Dewey encampment was an important endeavor for those intimately involved. Many members of the food working group were not able to participate regularly at the Dewey Square encampment itself; thus, coordinating and providing food was their way of expressing solidarity and support. But even within this group, disagreements occurred and organizing efforts fell apart. Sifting through the Google group archives of Occupy Boston's food working group, I found a number of seemingly unfinished conversations—requests for cooking or delivery assistance that remained unanswered, proposals for compost and waste management that were never resolved, ideas about what to do with the group's budget in times of surplus that were never agreed upon, etc. Decisions were often impossible to achieve given the difficulties of adhering (or, in actuality, attempting to adhere) to Occupy's consensus process via online forum.

There were other disparities and points of disconnection with regard to the food working group, too. The group was doing many things at once: communicating and coordinating online, organizing donations and serving food on the ground at Dewey Square, and meeting sporadically in person at the encampment's food tent—sometimes rather spontaneously. In-person participation differed greatly from virtual (Google group) participation, with many members involved in only one of these mechanisms of function and not the other. While the former was often disorderly, hectic, and focused on moment-to-moment situations, the latter was a space for systems thinking, for sharing ambitious goals about how to streamline the food operation at Dewey. Online, working group members also used alternative food system networks—to which many of them were already connected—not only to assist the encampment, but also to benefit

one another. Fair Food Farm posted to the group, for example, offering their pasture-raised pork at a wholesale discount. In theory, I imagine that most working group members would have loved for *this* to be the sort of food served regularly to the encampment at large; it just wasn't always possible. Building solidarity and community, however, *was* possible.

There were many disparities between ideals and pragmatism. The owner of Metro Pedal Power, Wenzday Jane, had worked on the issue of waste management. She was picking up the compost from Dewey Square for a while, but eventually, it became too messy and too logistically inconvenient for her to do. People often had moments of inspiration or motivation to accomplish a particular task or project, only to lose steam or run into hurdles, either resulting from personal stress or the regulations at the encampment. But the values remained the same: we feed everyone and we source the most ethical food possible. One of the major disparities between the preached ideal and the lived reality that I encountered has to do with that first value of feeding everyone. While Cora spoke about how important it was to “connect to very disadvantaged people through food,” this sentiment was not always echoed by those receiving their plate of food. During my conversation with Randy, for instance, he told me that most people within the homeless community pay little attention to the lofty egalitarian values involved with feeding people. For them, food is food. As Randy told me, there is a prevailing attitude of “if I don't get mine, there won't be enough.” His comment led me to appreciate the lived experiences of the homeless and chronically underfed; while the movement demanded equality and symbolized this demand through food provision, those advocating for equality the loudest were most often not the individuals with a history of empty bellies. Occupy's most active participants and reformers tended to be those in a comfortable socioeconomic position—a similar disparity that the food movement faces.

This is not to undermine the good intentions of the food working group's operations, of course. It goes without saying that religious groups, community organizations, non-profits, and government bodies have been providing food aid of some form for a long, long time. Oftentimes, as in Occupy's case, the provision of food is linked with some other social issue or ideology. Food Not Bombs is one example of this; it was started in 1980 by anti-nuclear activists and now "recovers and shares free vegan or vegetarian food with the public without restriction in over 1,000 cities around the world to protest war, poverty and the destruction of the environment" (Food Not Bombs). It is a loose network of geographically based autonomous groups, with each of these groups run in an anti-hierarchical fashion. Like Occupy, the Food Not Bombs movement claims leaderlessness. The Boston "chapter" of Food Not Bombs actually started the food tent and operation for the Dewey Square encampment. They have a house in Allston where many of its active volunteers live and where the twice-weekly meals they serve in the Boston area—one on Fridays in the Boston Common, and one on Sundays in Central Square—are prepared. The meals served in Boston are completely vegan (not just vegetarian), a common ideological offshoot of anarchism (Milstein 2012). As "veganarchist" Brian A. Dominick points out in his zine, *Animal Liberation and Social Revolution*, anarchists "embrace all struggles against oppression," be they human struggles against corrupt power or animal struggles for liberation (1997:17).

The mechanism of foodstuffs "recovery" that Food Not Bombs uses has a strong relationship with anarchism, too. There is a strong "do-it-yourself" ethos within anarchist circles (Milstein 2012). In terms of food, this often manifests in finding ways to provide for oneself in ways that go against the grain, that fight hierarchical power and even supply chains; one such way to do this is dumpster diving. Dumpster diving is almost exactly what it sounds like: going

through dumpsters (often right next to grocery stores) in order to collect all of the food that has been discarded. This food often has just expired that day, or is otherwise deemed unfit to sell. Perhaps the bell peppers have blemishes on them, or the plastic seal of the chicken breast was opened. For many anarchists, the act of collecting this food is an act of defiance. It is a refusal to participate in oppressive economic markets, a middle finger at our wasteful consumerist society, and a means to transform what would otherwise be waste into something nourishing, both nutritionally and meaningfully. The Food Not Bombs house does a lot of dumpster diving, both for their own residents' eating needs and for the meals they serve in the Boston area. The majority of the food they contributed to the Dewey encampment came from a dumpster or was made from whole ingredients that came from a dumpster. This points toward yet another tension within Occupy's complicated web of values and priorities regarding whether or not dumpstered food is "good" food. Certainly, Food Not Bombs thinks so. But some food that comes from a dumpster may very well be that "highly processed" junk that Cora spoke about. While considered "junk" food on the shelves, does this food get a pass because it would otherwise have been waste? Is a squash from a dumpster that is prepared into homemade soup better than a bag of Doritos from a dumpster? Different people involved with food logistics at Dewey Square held different opinions toward these questions, which reminds us of the variety of values that came to Occupy's table.

Besides the Food Not Bombs house, there were other vital "suburban kitchens," to use Cora's term again, intimately involved with supplying food to the Dewey Square encampment. Most notably, the Unitarian Universalist religious community in the greater Boston area played a huge role in food provision. The ideological alignment of Occupy and Unitarian Universalism is not surprising; Occupy's value of inclusivity is integral to this religious community's views. As

the website for the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations declares, “Unitarian Universalism is a liberal religion that embraces theological diversity; we welcome different beliefs and affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person” (Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations). It is a progressive religious institution whose members are predominantly left-leaning and often engaged with social justice issues. So when Occupy came on to the scene with its pitch for equality, the Unitarian Universalist community jumped on board. Churches around the Boston area organized non-perishable food drives and coordinated particular days to cook a hot meal for the Occupiers. Don Daniel, the former Hollywood producer, got permission from his church in Winchester to use several five-gallon hot thermoses, and he organized a small group of volunteers to help him cook hot soup once a week. Cora filtered some of the produce donations she had acquired to the Unitarian community to which she was connected, such that other people could help cook. It was a fantastically complicated series of overlapping networks; certain individuals were involved at the food tent itself, others participated in the food working group’s online discussions, some cooked at their church once a week, and others still built bridges between all of these networks. Importantly, these overlapping networks existed because of preexisting connections between particular individuals in them.

Because of these networks and the individuals that served to merge them, the food working group was able to use the Arlington Street Church kitchen for a long time. Unfortunately, as the saying goes, all good things come to an end; at one point, the food working group was told they could no longer utilize the kitchen. Apparently, as Cora informed me, an oven had been left on once and there “hadn’t been good clean-up” on a number of occasions. There were also, she told me, issues with a man named Frank who—despite Occupy’s supposed lack of leaders—was “running” the food operation at Arlington Street Church. Cora explained,

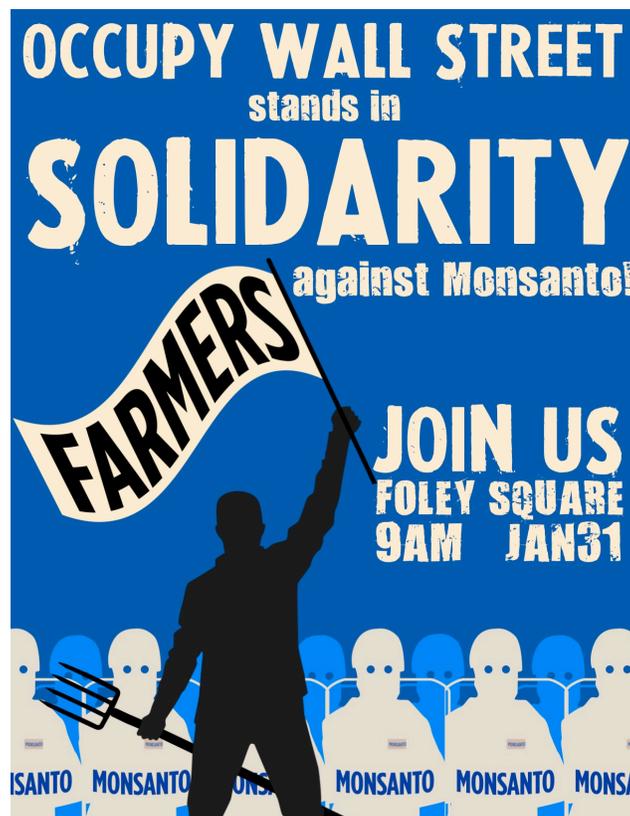
“when we tried to have food meetings, Frank was passive aggressive—and he’ll admit all this, he knows that he had these problems. Occupy had many people who were both positive and negative influences, and Frank was definitely one.” The problems with the kitchen and the person managing it were too many for the church to deal with. Still, they remained supportive of the movement; after the Dewey encampment was evicted in December 2011, general assemblies were held for a while in the church’s community room downstairs. When I went to a service around Thanksgiving time 2012, there was a box labeled “Occupy Sandy donations” where people could donate non-perishable foodstuffs and other goods to the decentralized Occupy-born hurricane relief efforts. The broader Unitarian Universality community in Boston remains supportive of the movement, too. Occupy Boston continues to have general assemblies (albeit far less frequently), which are held at yet another Unitarian Universalist church, Community Church of Boston. Don’s church in Winchester is still hosting events related to the movement and the issues of fiscal dominance it aroused.

In sum, food at the Occupy encampments was—as tends to be the case with food—so much more than simply nutrition. It was a means of celebrating and enacting Occupy’s egalitarian ideals. It was a way of forming community, of sharing conversation and ideas with one another. It was an avenue by which many second-tier supporters of the movement to show their solidarity by literally helping to sustain the movement. The logistics were by no means simple, and great ideas were often confronted with too much stress and too few resources. Regardless, food working group members—many of whom were already connected to alternative food systems, the Unitarian Universalist community, and Food Not Bombs—found purpose in the process of figuring out how to feed people “good” food, despite a range of perceptions of what constituted “good” food. The fusion of communities and networks would, as

we will see in the following section, continue to have a “radicalizing effect” on both the food and Occupy movements in Occupy Phase II and beyond.

The Flavorful Fight Surrounding GMOs and Other Phase II Food Activism

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I first became entrenched in Occupy Phase II activism and discourse when I attended a demonstration on behalf of the OSGATA et al. v. Monsanto court case on January 31, 2012. I did not know a whole lot about the case, and had no idea what to expect, really. I traveled down to New York on a whim, after coming across this picture circulating on Facebook:



This picture (available publicly) fits well within the family of graphics and visual media that Occupiers have produced. It embodies both strength and solidarity. It is also strongly suggestive of the bodies that Occupy stands against (note the mock Monsanto army in the background), though emphasis is placed on the inclusive words “solidarity,” “farmers,” and the plea to “join us.”

Food Democracy Now! helped to organize the event and was promoting it as a “Citizen’s Assembly”—a more overtly political spinoff on the Occupy “general assembly.” In choosing to attend, I hoped to help make a powerful stand against Monsanto’s corporate bullying and meet some interesting people. I knew some sort of demonstration was going to be taking place outside of the courthouse in Foley Square as a symbol of solidarity and support for the plaintiffs, who were claiming that there was no way to ensure Monsanto’s patented genetically modified (GM) crops stayed out of their fields. They were not seeking monetary compensation, but rather a promise for court protection from any future patent infringement lawsuits initiated by the company. This particular hearing, as I learned, dealt with Monsanto’s motion to dismiss the case altogether. When I got to Foley Square around 9 a.m., I saw a small crowd of people—perhaps numbering about forty—gathered around a large circular statue. I started mulling about, looking at some of the signs that people brought and getting a feel for who had shown up. There were many young people in their 20s and 30s, for sure, but I was fairly surprised to see that a good percentage of attendees were older than that. More and more people trickled into the square, and I chatted with a few folks who were handing out a newspaper called “Saving Seeds” that is based in Maine.

Soon enough, the energy shifted, and everyone at Foley Square got closer together. By this point, there were easily two hundred demonstrators in attendance, and a number of people were filming and taking pictures. The action was starting. Someone from the Occupy Wall Street food justice working group explained that they had collaborated with Occupy Big Food to put together a timeline of the “atrocities” Monsanto had committed from 1901-2011. They had printed the dates and described the “atrocities” on plain white paper and mounted these sheets on black construction paper. We, the collective body of demonstrators, were asked to hold these

signs and stand in a circle on the outer edge of the statue. I volunteered to hold up a sign, and joined in on what was quickly becoming a performative protest. We became a spectacle. We stood dually as individuals and together—holding up one sign each yet collectively making visible a largely hidden history of the emergence and dominance of Big Ag. Occupiers and food activists alike had surrounded the statue in Foley Square, putting themselves and their messages on display, as seen in these two pictures:



Photo credit (both): Robert Christine (Facebook name). The photo on the left shows some of the many potato sack signs brought to the demonstration, as well as a back view of the line of people representing the timeline of Monsanto’s “atrocities.” The photo on the right is a front view of a portion of the timeline.

Other demonstrators who were not part of the physical timeline held up signs—often painted on potato sacks or drawn on cardboard—with messages like “farming is direct action,” “keep our food open source,” and “the revolution grows” (with the “ows” in “grows” painted in a different color, to emphasize the role of Occupy Wall Street).

People gathered in the front of what was roughly the middle of the people-powered timeline to hear from some noted speakers and collectively share opinions, ideas, and hope. Environmental journalist Simran Sethi educated the demonstration about genetic engineering, and what makes Monsanto’s practices different from “natural” breeding techniques that have been done for thousands of years. Permaculture expert Andrew Faust spoke about the

importance of this court case for maintaining our autonomy of choices and rights when it comes to food. Occupy working group members, urban gardeners, farmers, and concerned consumers also made their voices heard, reiterating the importance of that day's hearing and the need to fight corporate control over our food system. It was an exhilarating parallel: listening to these passionate voices while the plaintiffs were within a block or two of us making *their* voices heard at the same time. After several speakers, the rally dissipated into a more open gathering, during which people took pictures and video, talked with one another about the court case or their history of involvement with food production and activism, and, of course, shared food. It was understood that everyone would reconvene when the plaintiffs arrived after the hearing.

Once the plaintiffs were within sight walking toward Foley Square, everyone started cheering loudly and picked up their signs again, pouring their support and appreciation onto the farmers and the Public Patent Foundation lawyers that represented them. Another mini-rally began. Using the people's mic, lead lawyer Dan Ravicher updated the crowd on what had happened. There was not a whole lot to share, as Judge Naomi Buchwald would not hand down her decision on whether or not to dismiss the case until as late as March 31, but Ravicher assured us that the plaintiffs delivered strong arguments and were looking forward to hearing the decision. Jim Gerritsen, an organic seed farmer from Maine and president of lead plaintiff OSGATA, spoke next. He berated companies like Monsanto for creating potentially dangerous seeds that “trespass” onto organic fields and contaminate the crop. Dave Murphy, one of the founders of Food Democracy Now!, echoed the sentiments of both Ravicher and Gerritsen, and expressed his gratitude for all of us who had come out to show our solidarity and support. On and on the speakers went—mostly other plaintiffs, farmers who had traveled from all over the country to be at that hearing—deploring the power that Monsanto holds and the threats to our

food supply it represents. But all speakers, and indeed the audience, too, emphasized the hope felt within that crowd, that community.

The Citizen's Assembly was not the first time that Occupiers and food activists converged in a physical space. In early December 2011, after the Zuccotti Park encampment had gotten evicted, some New York City-based working groups organized a Farmers' March, which was really more a daylong series of events than just a march. It began with a community gathering featuring prominent food activists, farmers, and speakers, continued on as a march "celebrating abundance," and culminated in a seed exchange and "solidarity circle" in Zuccotti Park (according to the Facebook event page). The familiar Food Democracy Now! endorsed the event, referring to Occupy Wall Street as their "allies" on their website. I recently looked through a few YouTube videos of the day's events and noticed some familiar faces that I had seen at the OSGATA et al. v. Monsanto demonstration. Jim Gerritsen was one of them. The farmers march was actually the driving motivation for his first-ever trip to New York City (fooddemocracynow 2011). In his speech to the community gathering, Gerritsen said, "I want to make sure it's clear to everyone here: this Occupy movement has become the conscience of America. Farmers in America support this movement. They see that the system is not working and it's gotta be corrected for our kids." He talked about the role of corporations in our "broken" food system and received cheers from the crowd as he explained the OSGATA et al. v. Monsanto case.

Events like the farmers march are simultaneously political and performative. They are political in building momentum and support for the OSGATA et al. v. Monsanto court case, and they are creative in their precise tactic or form of protest. The seed exchange that took place at the end of the farmers march was performative and emblematic in a way typical of Occupy: it

took something dominating and turned it into something beautiful. It reclaimed the idea of “exchange.” Exchanging stocks is an abstract form of acquiring fiscal power, an act of which Occupy has always been inherently wary. But exchanging seeds is deeply meaningful, an innovative form of resistance. Seeds provide the basis of sustenance and life. To exchange them freely amongst one another—with no interaction with larger institutions or companies—is to provide for one another in a way that fundamentally rejects market capitalism. The seed exchange was a means of localizing connection and localizing food, simultaneously ritualized and pragmatic. As with many Occupy demonstrations, though, there was a discrepancy between how meaningful this was for the individuals involved and the perceptions held by people who weren’t. For the latter, the seed exchange may have looked like nothing more than a huge cluster of people talking. But it was more than that, and it cannot be understated that the nuanced and dramaturgical tactics of protest that Occupy espoused served as inspiration for issue-focused networks such as the contemporary food activists.

As we have seen thus far, corporate control over seeds and the patenting of genetically modified organisms were hot-button issues in Occupy Phase II, particularly in New York. The issue with GM foods was about more than the corporate control of technology; it was also about the control of *knowledge*. While the FDA deems genetically modified foods to be “substantially equivalent” to their unmodified counterparts, the biological and health effects of such technologies remain largely unknown. Independent organizations like the Institute for Responsible Technology have come out saying that there are, indeed, adverse health effects linked with the consumption of GM foods, such as fertility problems and heightened risk of developing allergies (Institute for Responsible Technology). But for the most part, only those who are already involved with food systems issues are accessing this information—and actively

choosing to do so. The safety of GM foods is an issue many people know little about. It is not surprising, then, that Occupy would want to draw attention to this issue, as it is inextricably linked to corporate control not only of technologies but also of information. Occupy's dedication to inclusivity and fairness necessitates equal access to knowledge, especially when it comes to something as intimate and vital as food.

While there are a number of organizations and grassroots campaigns seeking to get legislation passed that would require the labeling of genetically modified foods, Occupy jumpstarted other creative strategies to get this information out into the consumer conscience. A few members of Occupy Wall Street's food justice working group started an initiative called Label It Yourself. Instead of waiting for governments to label mysterious food products, Label It Yourself has a collection of resources that people may use to guerrilla-style label foodstuffs in grocery stores themselves. As their website states,

Label It Yourself (#LIY) is a decentralized, autonomous grassroots campaign born out of our broken food system. We have been asking corporations and our government to label food products so we can make educated decisions about what we eat. Our requests have been ignored and so we are taking matters into our own hands. (Label It Yourself)

The website contains a guide with information about what is appropriate and necessary to label, as well as some label designs available for download and a link to the LIY Tumblr, where users can submit pictures of food products they have successfully labeled. It is, in appropriate Occupy (and anarchist) style, a completely do-it-yourself initiative.



GMO WARNING

This is one of many labels that #LIY has available for download on their website. It speaks to some of the controversy surrounding possible aggression within #LIY's guerrilla-style campaign. Simran Sethi, for instance, finds labels like these "off-putting." She told me, "they don't achieve what that effort has potential to achieve, which is increase awareness, instead of increase alarm."

In Boston, too, some food-related events have taken place under the Occupy banner. I found out on Facebook about a direct action on September 24, 2012 in which Doo-Occupy, a group of Occupiers who rewrite the lyrics to well known doo wop tunes and sing them to get their message(s) across, was going to "serenade" Monsanto. The plan was for attendees to meet outside of Monsanto's Boston-area headquarters (which is in Cambridge, not far from Kendall Square) and, with the guidance of Doo-Occupy's main writers and singers, sing in opposition to Monsanto and the proliferation of GM technology in the food system. I decided to go. As I was nearing the meet-up address given on the Facebook event page, I found about a dozen people who looked as though they were getting organized for something. Sure enough, these were the folks I was looking for. I slowed down as I approached to see what the deal was, and a middle-aged woman asked if I wanted a flyer with information about what was "in my food." I told her that I was actually hoping to participate in the direct action, and she responded excitedly, telling me that they were in the process of figuring out the exact plan and pointing to a gentleman who

could give me a “genetically modified corn hat” to wear. It was a bizarre, crafty adornment, but I put it on anyhow. No person would look at me wearing that hat and say, “Look at that genetically modified food she is wearing on her head!”—another disconnection between the process from within and the perceptions from beyond—but it was a fun way to feel that I was a part of something.

There were only about fifteen of us. I was by far the youngest, which came as a surprise to me at first. But I soon realized that these principally middle-aged people I was “protesting” with were likely retired, semi-retired, or perhaps unemployed. They had time to spend planning and performing protests on a Monday morning, a logistical capability not many students or young professionals have. I met Joan, the peace activist whom I have mentioned a few times in this paper, as we were walking towards a grassy area alongside the Charles River, complete with informative, flashy signage and costuming. The group of us stood in that area for a while, displaying our signs to passing cars and pedestrians. We got a few supportive honks and shouts, but that was about it. Soon, we decided to head over toward the front of the building where Monsanto is headquartered. It was time to “serenade” Monsanto. About half of the group stayed behind to keep up the visual display for cars and passersby. I went with the singing group. Adam and Ariel, the two principal Doo-Occupiers, pushed along their rolling sound system—a stereo, microphone, and speakers to project—as the rest of us followed behind.

The security guard outside the building where Monsanto is headquartered was eyeing us in a manner that was somewhere in between suspicious and curious. Adam and Ariel were just about to lead us in a rendition of Doo-Occupy’s song “GMOs” (to the tune of “ABC” by the Jackson 5) when two police officers approached us to tell us that if we were going to be on the sidewalk, we had to leave room for other pedestrians to walk and we had to keep moving. We

agreed to these guidelines, and rather organically formed a sort of conga line. Ariel and Adam were at the front, singing into the microphone and playing the accompanying musical track, while the others of us followed along with our sheets of lyrics in hand. One repeated lyric in the song “GMOs” goes like this: “GMO / biotechnology / can’t be good food to eat / GMO, get them out of the food we eat!” It was rather strange to hear these passionate, pressing words translated to an upbeat pop song, but then again, that’s the sort of reclamation that Doo-Occupy looks to achieve. As Adam said, “We have a serious message and we wanna put it out in a fun way.” He said to his supposed audience at Monsanto, “We’re thinkin’ about what you’re doin’ and we hope you’re thinkin’ about what we’re doin’.”

While this was a reasonable, politely stated request, I remain unconvinced that it was taken seriously. It’s hard to believe that the higher-ups at Monsanto were concerned about the cluster of eight people (more or less) outside their headquarters dancing and singing about the evils of their technologies. This demonstration didn’t penetrate the consciousness of the general public, just as the Label It Yourself initiative has failed to do so, as well. The Doo-Occupy demonstration, in particular, was a completely contained event. While it was meaningful for those who participated, it did not result in any changes regarding the use of genetic modification technologies, nor did it open up a conversation between Occupiers and representatives of Monsanto. It did not even seem to result in any wider public awareness about issues of genetic modification, a perhaps more feasible potential outcome of public demonstrations like these. It existed as a performance, a break from reality for participants to relish in and enjoy, only to ultimately return to the status quo. While Label It Yourself may have had slightly more success in at least generating discussion amongst consumers, it is still a marginal pushback against a dominant system—in that case, of the control of knowledge surrounding the contents and make-

up of foodstuffs. Again, it seems unlikely that consumers will see a label on their packaged food warning them of possible GMO content and suddenly transform their purchasing and eating habits. If consumers do not know what GMOs are to begin with, what would spark concern that food “may contain” them?

Small, theatrical, and thematic actions like the Doo-Occupy demonstration and the Label It Yourself initiative have been commonplace throughout Occupy Phase II. Sometimes, efforts have been made to connect many disparate actions like these surrounding a particular issue through a national (or international) “day of action.” February 27, 2012—or “F27”—was one such day. F27 was also known as “Occupy Our Food Supply.” The following was a blurb sent around to many decentralized Occupy and food activist networks:

Occupy Our Food Supply is bringing together the Occupy, sustainable farming, food justice, buy local, slow food, and environmental movements for a global day of action on February 27, 2012. Inspired by the theme of CREATE/RESIST, thousands will come together to creatively confront corporate control of our food supply and take action to build healthy, accessible, just food systems for all.

Here, we see the intersectionality that Occupy claims. Occupy is a movement of many movements, joining together in solidarity and on common ground. While Occupy has been contested for its questionable efficacy, we must credit the movement for, if nothing else, its influence on discourse. As Schechner (1993) notes, performative enactments of possible alternatives—such as those Occupy embodied in Phase I—can have real-life effects under certain circumstances. In Occupy’s case, the effect may have been more discursive than anything else, shifting the way activists think and talk about the interconnectivity of issues. Language like that of the above blurb showcases how specific causes are all related, the logical ramification being that all of these causes are *important*.

The notion of simultaneously “creating” and “resisting” is an interesting one, too, that reminds us of Eric Holt Gimenez’s notion that social movements stand on two legs: one of construction and one of protest. Occupy Phase II, in connecting with the more creation-oriented food movement (and other related movements), expanded from the mainly resistance-oriented work of Occupy Phase I. The decentralized, creative actions on F27 varied from place to place, but all contributed to a collective resistance against the corporate food industry. Occupy’s championed value of “solidarity” was critical. Spreading information about F27 via social media built up this feeling of solidarity, even (or especially) for those who were unable to participate in the actions. The spaces in which Occupy acted were no longer confined merely to the encampments; as such, events such as those connected to F27 may have been more accessible to more people even while they were paradoxically less visible to the public at large. Outreach and promotion of F27 may have reached broader audiences, also thanks to more merging of networks and ideas, than direct actions that often came up spontaneously at the (isolated) encampments.

Food as Plural, and What Happens Next

Cora told me, “what Occupy did was radical: having people eat together.” Her words have stuck with me, as I continue to consider the impact of Occupy Phase I on the movement’s Phase II activism and in broader discourse and activism. I have come across a number of Occupiers who observed this “radicalizing” effect, which does not surprise me. As someone with a background in the food movement and its discourses, I was—and am—inclined to think about the effects of Occupy in terms of food. It would be difficult to deny the joy and value that people felt while consuming food at the encampments; doing so was a collective expression of *communitas*, an embodiment of egalitarianism. As Ben Ross, an Occupier and fellow Tufts

student, put it, “I would eat that food for the symbolic value of participation.” Of course, “that food” came loaded with a plurality of values and politics that appropriately correlated with those of the Occupiers. Some foodstuffs came from a dumpster, others from a farm, and others still donated by supportive pizza establishments. Different food carried different meanings for multiple constituents, but this was the sort of multiplicity that the liminal encampments enabled. Above all else, food was a means of sharing—not just nutriment but conversation and ideas. This sharing stood in stark contrast to the individualist, distant relations represented by the governing society. The Occupy Boston food working group sought to connect the dots between today’s food movement and Occupy’s far-reaching ideologies through the development of its very own alternative food system. It was by no means perfect or easy, but it was a valuable process for those who took part, and evidence of Occupy’s inherent ability to bring together many issue-focused movements with similar ideological underpinnings.

Some speak of the Occupy movement in the past tense, suggesting that the movement ended when the encampments were shut down. Ben is one of them. He feels that the use of the word “Occupy” in connection with the Phase II activism like that I described earlier in this chapter is does not feel “authentic,” that it is merely another form of “branding.” I do agree that it would be wrong to equate the experiences and actions of Phase I and Phase II, and accordingly it may be misleading or confusing for both to be held together under the title of “the Occupy movement.” Still, it cannot be denied that the Occupy movement has continued in some capacity. The New York Times ran an article on February 7, 2012—over two months after the Zuccotti Park encampment was evicted—that discussed the *OSGATA et al. v. Monsanto* court case and the accompanying demonstration. In it, author Julia Moskin writes that the case “is part of a debate that is coming to life around the country, in court rooms and Occupy sites, in board

rooms and online, with new petitions, ballot initiatives and lawsuits from California to Maine.”

The inclusion of “Occupy sites” here gives legitimacy to the idea that the movement has not disappeared (especially considering the prominence of the New York Times as a publication). In the next and final chapter, I will consider more deeply the ripple effects of the Occupy movement—that is, to what extent, where, and how we see it today. I will look to my own life and my surrounding environment at Tufts to explore the movement’s “radicalizing” effect. By examining examples of horizontal, performative activism in practice, I suggest that there is a correlation (not a causation, necessarily) between the pervasiveness of Occupy discourse since the encampments and the distinct increase in nuanced forms of protest at Tufts and elsewhere.

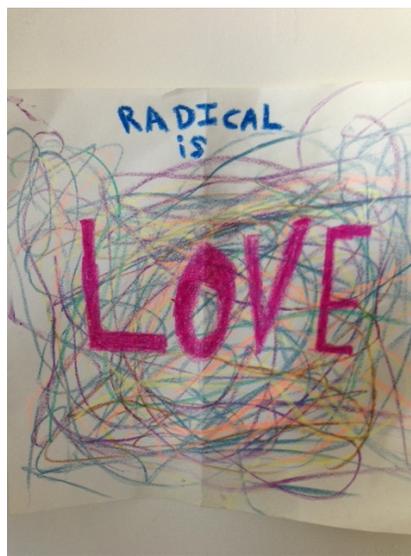
Chapter Four

OCCUPY THE RADICALIZER, OR “THIS IS NOT A CONCLUSION”

At the beginning of this semester, I found myself in my living room on a Friday evening around 9 p.m., sitting quietly and looking over at my housemate, Julia. I was one of maybe thirty-five people sitting closely together, doing the same thing. Some were close friends of mine, others complete strangers. We all nibbled on the delicious dishes that were brought potluck-style and looked intently toward Julia, who explained the idea that inspired her to gather us together as we were. She wanted to talk about words—what words mean, how they carry that meaning, and how we can manipulate and develop context around such meaning. To keep the conversation relevant rather than abstract, my housemates and I had decided upon one word to talk about in particular: radical. To kick off the discussion, Julia asked us to repeat the word “radical” over and over again until she stopped us. Suddenly, the silent room around me burst into a chamber of sound, syllables shouting and phonemes blurring together. And then, a minute later, the noise stopped as abruptly as it had begun. Julia and I began to facilitate the conversation. She jotted down notes on a huge piece of craft paper we had mounted on our wall as I maintained a “stack,” so to speak, of people who wished to offer their insights. All the while, I was astounded at how unbelievably respectful people were. Those who spoke did so with clarity and mindfulness to others who had offered their insights before them, while those who remained silent maintained a high level of engagement in the form of, as one attendee and friend called it, “active listening.”

Part of the email sent out about the potluck and discussion read, “Perhaps then we will refer back to the word’s original meaning or perhaps we will come out of a Friday meeting with

a whole new language; who knows? We don't; but the process sounds fun.” When I think back upon that evening, the word “process” jumps out at me, and reminds me of the process-oriented approach that Occupy preached and embodied. At the beginning of the discussion, Julia and I emphasized that we were not expecting any particular outcomes to arise from the discussion; instead, we were going to see where it took us, relishing in the questions rather than dwelling on the answers. We facilitated what turned out to be a roughly horizontal “meeting,” though the meeting lacked a particular political agenda. It was a compelling, new, and different style from the outcome-oriented, resumé-driven one common to our “normal,” day-to-day lives; I imagine that this format of being and conversing was much of what was so magical and consuming about Occupy. After about an hour of conversation, people began to get fidgety, so Julia and I wrapped things up by encouraging everyone to continue thinking about words—the word “radical” in particular—and whether our understanding of how we build meaning with and around words changed at all that night. We invited people to stay at our house, to continue to share food and ideas, and to express themselves with any of the art supplies we had lying around if they wished.



One attendee of the “radical” potluck and discussion who was very involved with Occupy and the Dewey Square encampment drew the picture above. It now adorns the walls of our living room.

I can hardly explain the warmth and wonder I felt that evening. How did it all happen? How did thirty-five college students come together on a Friday evening, cook delicious and elaborate meals for one another, and engage in some of the most respectful, critical discussion I have ever witnessed? I would posit that it has a lot to do with the still-reverberating ripple effects of the Occupy movement, which may be especially noticeable in the environment in which I am situated—that is, amongst a predominantly left-leaning student body within a private, elite university that propogates the importance of “active citizenship.” There is evidence to suggest that Occupy, despite all of the criticism it received for demonstrating no viable solutions or outcomes, did impact the consciousness and discourses of the public. As I noted in Chapter Two, for instance, Occupy shifted political debate toward one of income inequality and wealth disparity in much the same way as the Tea Party successfully shifted it toward one of government spending just a few years ago.

Occupy has also pushed institutionalized liberal groups to adopt more radical tactics (Cherkis and Grim 2012). MoveOn.org, for its part, seemed to be “taking its cues from Occupy Wall Street” last year (Harkinson 2012), when it spearheaded a campaign known as “the 99% Spring” along with “around 60 progressive nonprofits and major unions, including the AFL-CIO, the Teamsters, Greenpeace, the Working Families Party and Van Jones’ Rebuild the Dream organization” (Lennard 2012). The initiative focused on “nonviolent direct action training and teach-ins on income inequality and Wall Street malfeasance” (Lennard 2012). Naturally, some Occupiers were angered by this co-optation. But others were flattered and delighted to see the conversation and tactics that Occupy initiated reaching beyond the movement’s Phase I encampments. Either way, it is clear that Occupy had a significant impact on political discourse and activist tactics. In the sections that follow, I offer a more intimate account of Occupy’s

impact by examining how many aspects of the movement and ideas it molded continue to play out in my life. I recognize that this is a small scale on which to build any conclusions. I do so carefully with the intention of being reflexive and placing more emphasis on the “auto” in “autoethnography,” rejecting the notion—as many anthropologists writing around and since the critical turn have done—that I am fully separate or distinct from the material about which I write. It seems to me this is not only an intellectually sound approach, but also an important one that resonates with the ideals of a more activist-oriented anthropology that positions itself within the settings it studies.

The Value(s) of and in Spaces

My house is affectionately known as “the Fort,” and the potluck discussion described above was the first of a semester-long series of events that my housemates and I have dubbed “Fridays at the Fort.” I should note that I live with four other Tufts students, all of whom are women. Four of us study Anthropology, and one studies Philosophy. Right before the semester started, we had a house dinner during which the idea for Fridays at the Fort came up. We had spent the entire previous semester living comfortably together, though not spending all that much time together. The five of us had been entrenched in our own worlds, supportive of one another’s distinct interests but without the time or energy to merge them as much as we may have wanted. Thus, the idea for Fridays at the Fort was born: we wanted to commit to hosting an event every Friday, and create a space for sharing with one another and the broader networks of friends and communities to which we were connected. We envisioned workshops, potlucks (success!), concerts, open mics, craft-making, movie screenings on our projector, and more. A friend of ours helped us decorate some quarter-sheets to distribute that contained a short

description with the nuts and bolts of the Fridays at the Fort vision, and how to join the Google group.

One of the lines of this description read, “we are your open venue, every Friday this semester.” Again, a flashback to Occupy: what can be said about the use of space, and how certain uses build meaning and galvanize action? This semester, at the Fort, we wanted to take advantage of the distinct yet overlapping passions and knowledge backgrounds that the five of us bring to the table. We saw an opportunity to use our house as a space to mediate those intersections. It was not until that first potluck that I understood what this really meant, both to me and in terms of the world in which I was (and am) embedded. After a year and a half of thinking about Occupy, talking about Occupy, writing about Occupy, and struggling to compose coherent pieces of writing about the pluralities of Occupy, I suddenly realized that I was *doing* Occupy. At that potluck discussion, I saw the convergence of networks and groups of friends who had not known one another before. Our living room was our very own encampment, a living, liminal space. The space turned into one that carried meaning and memories. It fostered connection. We had set out in our occupation of the living room with distinct intention, a different framework from any with which we had previously entered into the space.

The Friday following the “radical” discussion and potluck, our “open venue” enabled the Consent Culture Network here at Tufts to host a “*consensual* dance party” before Winter Bash, an annual student event that is essentially the college version of prom, held at a hotel in downtown Boston in the beginning of spring semester. The Consent Culture Network, a recently formed group that addresses issues of rape culture and consent amongst the Tufts community, was planning a flash mob to be performed at the dance for the purposes of educating attendees on how to be “informed bystanders” and encourage others to make positive, healthy, and safe

sexual choices. One of my housemates is very involved with the group, and suggested that we host the pre-Bash event as that week's Friday at the Fort. My housemates and I excitedly agreed. That night, the Network and other various allies came over, learned the lyrics to the flash mob song, and got a brief tutorial on how to be an informed bystander (probably a reminder rather than a first-time lesson for most in attendance). Thanks to the stenciling and spray-painting efforts of my housemate, Rachel, participants adorned themselves in t-shirts that read "CONSENT IS SEXY" or "GOT CONSENT?" Everyone collected their things—including paper bags filled with condoms taped to cards explaining what consent is and is not, to be handed out at the dance—and off they went.

I mention the Consent Culture Network because of their particular focus on space, and on creating "safe spaces." I have noticed a distinct increase within my surrounding environment in the use and application of the term "safe spaces" recently; while it would not be fully accurate to identify Occupy as the *cause* of this shifting discourse, I have no doubt there is a correlation (and indeed, many Occupy encampments did have tents or booths dedicated to dispersing information about safe spaces). The idea behind creating safe spaces is to ensure that all parties involved in a meeting, conversation, action, or social event feel comfortable to express themselves as they wish and to feel supported in doing so. It is, more or less, a language of intention. While it is outside the purview of anyone's ability to ensure that everyone around them feels "safe" all the time, it is conceivable for a group to develop a framework—a language—for how to communicate and act such that people feel as safe as possible. This framework also offers people a set of vocabulary to express if, when, how, or why they may be feeling unsafe, and an avenue to remediate the issue.

Discourses surrounding “safe spaces” are self-reflective, similar to those dealing with issues of process that Occupy brought to the fore. I mentioned in Chapter One that Occupy—especially the encampments—had “boundaries” to participation. Another way to understand these boundaries is a willingness to learn and speak the Occupy language: if you were not willing to engage in that language, you likely did not feel welcome in the Occupy world or understand it. This, of course, is parallel to the way that safe spaces require all those inside them to frame their expression using certain anti-oppressive, LGBTQ-friendly language. The development of such discourses can invoke a tremendously wonderful, welcoming feeling for those taking part. But just as it may feel uncomfortable to be in a foreign country surrounded by people speaking a different language, it may be confusing, awkward, or difficult to penetrate discourses with which you are unfamiliar. This is a paradox I have noted throughout this thesis: “alternatives” that seek to be inclusive (in contrast to the entities they stand against) often end up creating new kinds of borders or exclusions. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize the power of solidarity and community that arises within these spaces, impervious as they may appear to alienated (or, in the case of Occupy, skeptical) outsiders.

Performing Ideologies

In February, I performed in a student-run production of Eve Ensler’s The Vagina Monologues. I performed a monologue entitled “They Beat the Girl Out of My Boy... Or They Tried,” which speaks from the perspective of a transgender woman looking back upon her physically and figuratively transformative journey. Two fellow seniors, Dani Moscovitz and Stella Benezra, co-directed and co-produced the show, and a third senior, Sam Jaffe, volunteered her time as the stage manager. Prior to Vagina Monologues, I had not been particularly close

friends with any of these three young women. We ran in similar circles, but our paths simply had not crossed all that frequently. Then, last fall semester, Dani and Stella posted information about auditions for the show, which had not been put on since our freshman year. I knew I wanted to audition, not just for the chance to perform (a seldom-practiced and semi-secret passion of mine), but also for the unique opportunity it presented to fuse socializing with activism. I was excited about the prospect of spending time rehearsing with what would undoubtedly be a cast of amazing, courageous young women, all while working toward the greater goal of sparking dialogue on campus about gender and sexual violence.

From the get-go, working on the production was a collaborative process. While Dani and Stella were the official directors, they encouraged all of us (the cast members) to be fully engaged in offering direction suggestions and tips for one another. None of us were especially well-trained actresses. But that didn't matter—in fact, it was part of the message. We didn't want to put on a formal piece of theater that would be performed and then be over; we wanted to put on a show of voices and of stories that would live on in the form of conversation and heightened understanding surrounding issues of gender and sexuality. The goal of the production was not to produce some static piece of art for people to look at; the goal was to include the audience, to implicate and involve them in the broader purpose. I am reminded now of Brooke Lehman's remark about Occupy, and how she saw the one demand of the movement being to "participate!" We, the cast and crew of the Vagina Monologues, wanted much the same thing. We wanted our audience not just to watch, but to think and reflect—in other words, to participate. Any performance that blurs the line between a visual text and social context is a liminal and thus potentially transformative one; the Vagina Monologues, conceived with the specific intent of blurring these lines, was particularly so.

The Vagina Monologues was so more than just the two performances on that weekend in February. During fall semester, Tufts students who were not in the cast (and some who were, too, including myself) formed a “VagTeam” to help with promotion, fundraising, and event planning. One tech-savvy member put together a website, www.read-our-lips.com, which became a sort of open forum journal of stories, poems, ideas, and pictures surrounding the themes of gender and sexuality. We put on very successful and well-attended open mic event, filled with spoken word, poetry, original music, stand-up comedy, and more, all surrounding issues of gender, sex and sexuality, and identity. In the spring, we held an event called “Vulvapalooza” in the campus center, which featured booths with other like-minded groups, creative stations where you could “paint your own orgasm,” and a performance by the all-female step team, Envy. One VagTeam member held a party during which she invited people to cut off chunks off her hair in exchange for a small monetary donation toward Vagina Monologues; she did this until her head was completely shaved. Another screen-printed sexy logos and empowering words on to a couple hundred pairs of underwear, which were sold at Vulvapalooza and the performances. A few other artistic members of the VagTeam put together an eighteen-page “zine” using content from the website. Leading up to the show, we employed some performative (and rather scandalous) advertising tactics: moaning in the dining halls, a silent parade of the library, and plenty of “v-a-g-i-n-a” chanting around campus.

It worked. We sold out both shows, and in all, raised over \$7,000 for the Transition House in Cambridge, a domestic violence agency that provides emergency shelter, transitional and supported housing, and youth prevention and education. To me, though, the dollar amount—while wonderful—is the least impressive outcome. More significant is the extent to which Vagina Monologues infiltrated the campus consciousness. Not everyone on campus

attended the performance, of course, but my supposition is that the vast majority of students at least knew that it was happening. The Vagina Monologues, along with all of the events and publicizing, gave people something to think about, or even just something to look up on Wikipedia while procrastinating in the library. A “debrief” conversation was held at my house the weekend after the performance as one of the Fridays at the Fort. Of all the Fridays my house has hosted this semester, this was one of the most meaningful to me. Members of the cast and VagTeam came together along with audience members and friends to unpack some of the more controversial aspects of the show. Yet again, there were no real “answers” reached, but it was a time and space to be together and reflect—something I am coming to recognize as a valuable and, indeed, critical component of activism. This process-over-product attitude was present in the reflexive anthropological theory of the critical turn as well as feminist theory and activism of the time and subsequently. It seems the echoes of this theory and praxis continue to reverberate.

Sam, the stage manager, was quoted in the Daily as saying that the show received “a lot of attention from the activist community that already existed at Tufts” (quoted in Arnesty-Good 2013). Her use of the term “activist community” is especially noteworthy, and speaks to what I see to be an increase in the amount of groups that are experimenting with horizontal and performative practice. The Consent Culture Network’s flash mob described earlier is one example, but there are many others. Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), which explicitly states that it is organized horizontally, recently put on a week of events called Israeli Apartheid Week. Amongst the myriad panels held, speakers hosted, and films shown, SJP members staged a “direct action” on the stairs by Tisch library. In this action, members silently acted out a scenario in which Palestinians were denied entry through checkpoints; once denied, they sat along a wall, each wearing a kuffiyeh that covered their face. It was a solemn, powerful, and

heavy scene. The newly formed Tufts Divest group also recently engineered a rather in-your-face direct action. They imposed on an information session for prospective students, pretending to be pre-frosh and aggressively asking questions about why Tufts invests in certain companies that they deem unethical and exploitative. By asking these questions in that particular environment, Tufts Divest put a lot of pressure on Tufts, which, like any private university, is always trying to appease potential students and boost its reputation.

These direct actions were all highly creative, well thought out, and planned in a collaborative fashion. Again, while I hesitate to assume causation, it is reasonable to believe that the rise in these forms of activism may bear some relationship to the Occupy movement and its accompanying discourses. Or perhaps we may simply recognize more broadly that the discourses and tactics of activist work are shifting; whether explicitly tied to Occupy or not, organizations and initiatives dealing with issues of social justice in this country may be re-energizing. Whichever came first—Occupy or a new jolt of energy—it seems clear that there is a greater societal awareness regarding the interconnectivity of issues. Boundaries are being broken down, and this is reflected through specific methods of protest like those at Tufts I described. Vagina Monologues, the Consent Culture Network's flash mob, Students for Justice in Palestine's checkpoint reenactment, and the Tufts Divest information session interruption all challenge the status quo through a style of performative protest that implicates its audience—often mere passersby—and asks for some reciprocal response. Organizer versus follower, performer versus spectator, activist versus layperson—all of these dichotomies are being challenged through embodiments of values and ideas. This is a fundamental feature of anti-structural, liminal spaces and tactics. Such physicalizations also bring into question the meaning(s) of the spaces in which they are performed. Going to the theater is a captivating

experience, but a purposeful one. Being surrounded by a performative protest, on the other hand, is not purposeful. Thus, when performance enters spaces in which it is typically not, it is especially potent. Performative protests have capitalized on this recognition for a long time, and activists have deemed it savvy to expand the “street” about which Schechner (1993) theorizes into other diverse “non-street” spaces.

From a Dumpster, with Love

In Chapter Three, I discussed the ways in which dumpster diving represents a defiance toward our wasteful, industrialized, capitalist market food system. Presently, when I think of dumpster diving, one person comes to mind: Maximus Thaler. Maximus lives at the Crafts House and is a dear friend of mine. He has become incredibly passionate about dumpster diving in the time since I have known him. During one of my extended stays at the Crafts House last spring, I joined him for a dumpstering excursion—my first. We went to the dumpster that Maximus typically goes to, which is right behind a grocery store. It was around midnight when we arrived. We approached the dumpster, and I became nervous upon noticing that it had a fence around it. But the fence did not have a lock on it, and Maximus assured me that people dumpstered there “all the time.” So we pulled back the fence and walked in. That was when I got the real dumpstering lesson from the expert himself. Maximus showed me how to develop some semblance of organized system when going through a dumpster, how to pick out what was good to take and what was not, where to put the “real” trash (as opposed to the “trash” we would later consume) while you were digging through the dumpster—and how to do all of this at lightning speed.

I couldn't believe how much food we were collecting. In actuality, Maximus was doing most of the collecting; I was too busy staring in amazement. I remember thinking that he looked like a little boy, joyously jumping through his dumpster play land. Though he was a seasoned dumpstering expert by that point, he was clearly on an adrenaline rush (perhaps that was inspired by the need to move quickly and avoid police interaction). As he rambled on and on about how ludicrous it is that the "system" allows for so much waste that shouldn't even be waste in the first place, all I could think was this: he is celebrating. Maximus is celebrating, reveling in the excesses of a broken food system. Maximus hates money, but loves food. More than that, he loves *feeding* people. To him, feeding people is an incredibly intimate, beautiful, even sexy act. To do so in a way that reclaims his agency and choice in deciding what food is "good" to eat and what food is "bad" to eat, Maximus pushes back against the dominant food and economic systems that seek ultimate control. He consumes "good" food produced by the "bad" system; this is the sort of paradox that boundary-smashing liminal spaces enable. The duality of reclamation and celebration parallels what so many people experienced at the analogously liminal Occupy encampments. Challenging the simplest things—from what food we consume to what functions are meant to take place in public spaces and parks—can undoubtedly yield inspiration.

Maximus has been dumpstering and cooking for the Crafts House for some time now, but he has recently taken his passions for dumpster diving and feeding people to a new level. He has started a project called the Gleaners' Kitchen, a so-called "underground restaurant and grocery store" of entirely dumpstered food (Thaler 2013). He recently started a Kickstarter campaign to raise money for a physical space to continue this project over the summer. He explains the project in detail in the Kickstarter video, and his words are worth quoting at length. He says,

The Gleaners' Kitchen is taking on an ambitious summer project. We hope to create a public space where all forms of value can be exchanged freely. We imagine a 24-hour café decorated with dumpstered flowers and cheap art where people hungry for a different world can come and exchange ideas. There will always be coffee and tea and warm lentil soup. Meals will be served every day, with special events on the weekends. We imagine concerts, poetry readings, academic lectures, and craftivist workshops, all facilitated by the preposterous amounts of free food our society has somehow forgotten. Art will be everywhere; it will be shared as freely as the food. No one will leave the Kitchen without a bit of cardboard in their pockets and a bag of vegetables for their table at home. (Thaler 2013)

A mere ten days after launching the Kickstarter campaign, Maximus reached his \$1,500 fundraising goal. He has also garnered a (quite frankly) shocking amount of attention from news and media sources; he was interviewed on WGBH, offered the opportunity to publish an alternative cookbook, and written about in the Huffington Post, TIME Magazine, Non Profit Quarterly, and Boston.com, amongst others.

It will be interesting to see where the Gleaners' Kitchen goes from here. Will media attention hinder original intention? Or will Maximus and the Gleaners' Kitchen stay true to their roots, feed people with free food and love, and perhaps change public awareness surrounding systemic food waste in the process? Then again, if they are successful in the latter part, will that ultimately lead to less food waste, and thus no way for the Gleaners' Kitchen to continue fulfilling their promise of abundant free food? Is it possible that the project will get shut down because of the legal ramifications of dumpster diving? Only time will tell us the answers to *these* questions, but we do have one answer, and that is to the question of why Maximus is taking this project on. He wants to renegotiate our systems of value and the rules that govern our relationships with economic power, with one another, and with food. He says so himself in the Kickstarter video: "We believe that in order for something to have value, it need not be sellable—only usable." Maximus want to "make new life out of the trash" (Thaler 2013).

As for me, I remain caught up on the dilemma of systems change. That is, dumpster diving does not actually alter the functioning structures of the food system that creates egregious food waste to begin with; rather, it celebrates in this system's excesses (or, to use another word, failures). Of course, I think this celebration is important and wonderful; indeed, this semester, I have been partaking in it frequently. But it is only sustained by the system being broken. Yet, as Eric Holt-Gimenez (2012) reminds us and as ritual and performance theory help us to understand, social movements need two legs to stand on: construction and protest. While those two categories are neither perfect nor mutually exclusive, they are helpful tools with which to think about systems. Perhaps the big take-away is that *all* aspects of food activism that push back from the homogenizing, controlling food system—be it through lobbying for political and systemic change (protest) or through actively creating the alternative (construction)—are important. In some senses, lobbying for change actually could be seen as a constructive approach, and creating the alternative system as one of protest. Clearly, then, these approaches are intertwined. We need them all. As Cora Roelofs told me, what she learned from Occupy was that “a thousand flowers blooming anarchically—that’s what social change is. It’s not about having one big organization where everybody is following one course ... it’s biodiversity in the field of the food movement.”

The Big Questions

Working on this project has urged me to think about my relationship with Occupy and some of the most fundamental questions it raised, which, as it turns out, are not so dissimilar from those questions of shifting systems just mentioned or the questions that people have been asking since the rise of a market society in American and elsewhere. As discussed in Chapter

Two, one of the major, unresolved debates within the Occupy movement was whether it was (and is) reformist or revolutionary. While Occupy as a movement remained unsettled, I have come to realize where I stand: I am a reformist. To me, the reform versus revolution debate and the structure versus anti-structure tension go hand in hand. While revolutionary energies are captivating and inspiring, I personally find it hard to feel them completely, as I simply cannot shed the notion that structure does and will always exist. Perhaps I do not have the prefigurative capacity that revolutionaries do—or the trust that such shapeless imaginings will actually come to fruition in a way that is viable. That is not to dismiss the efforts and ideologies of revolutionaries as unimportant. In fact, I think quite the opposite is true. Victor Turner writes that we will always have *both* structure and anti-structure—and, indeed, that we should. While complete anti-structure makes it difficult to accomplish anything, complete structure would be too rigid and controlling. Therefore, the anti-structural energies and efforts of revolutionaries is critical. Societies need anti-structural pushback, or else their leaders will become too consumed in their static structures and potentially neglect the will of the people.

Because I recognize the value and even need for “pushback” in a variety of forms, I am sympathetic to anti-structural or revolutionary ideas. For my part, the experiences I have had engaging in intentional, horizontal (or quasi-horizontal) spaces have been compassionate, comfortable, and empowering ones. The way in which I see activism being renegotiated in my surrounding environment at Tufts gives me tremendous joy and hope. These structures—or, rather, structured anti-structures—are designed to level the playing field of involvement amongst participants, thereby enabling all participants to feel equally valued and respected. Moreover, they breed self-reflectiveness and solidarity within groups, both of which are very empowering feelings.

While these spaces and groups are important and I advocate for their existence and relevance, I do so only on a relatively small scale. On a larger scale—say, amongst a few hundred people at a general assembly in Dewey Square—horizontal processes become so convoluted that they lose their meaningfulness, and thus may be a disincentive for participants to stay involved for the greater cause. Horizontalism and anarchist theory are thus magnificent tools for getting us to think more consciously about what *kind* of structures we want and the ways we can facilitate the best, most democratic relationships within them. But ultimately, the reality is that horizontalism is asymptotic: you are never quite going to reach what you are aiming for. While the process of trying to achieve it can feel empowering and valuable, this process should be a *tool* for mobilization, rather than the end result itself.

Ultimately, I have realized that I did not feel comfortable committing myself to the Occupy world and way of being because, quite frankly, I didn't understand it. Occupy seemed so intent on being the alternative despite its messages aimed at society at large (of which I was supportive). In the food movement, by contrast, my choices and activism penetrate mainstream structures more deeply. While I am not pulling the rug out from under the industrialized, globalized food system in one fell swoop, I am not ignoring that it exists. I engage with this system more directly through the choices I make of what to put in my body. While the food movement, like Occupy, is self-reflective, it is self-reflective in a way that does not inhibit it from acting and making changes—systemic changes, even if just in one cafeteria in one middle school in one town. The food movement functions as a decentralized network of activity; it pays attention to process, but does not blind itself by it. Occupy, on the other hand, got itself lost. Perhaps going forward, if we used structures of anti-structure such as those that Occupy

espoused as tools to think *with* instead of tools to think *for*, we can make some real systemic change.

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