Digging Through Urban Agriculture with Feminist Theoretical Implements

Abstract:

This article considers the value of using tools from feminist theory to explore the efforts of urban agriculture initiatives that practice to some extent outside the formal economy. Such a lens looks beyond the presence of women in specific projects to the value, extent, purpose, and principles of these projects' efforts. These community-based food initiatives strive to provide alternatives to dominant food production practices, but their efforts are often constrained by limited access to financial, labour, time, and political resources. Despite parallels between their work and what has traditionally been dubbed "women's work," the feminization of urban agriculture initiatives in Canada has received little attention in the academic literature. In this article, I revisit a case study of Durham Integrated Growers (DIG), an umbrella organization supporting urban agriculture projects, practices, and values across Durham Region, Ontario. This case study represents one of several conducted through Nourishing Communities Research Group to explore the potential of food systems groups working in the social economy to benefit local communities and the environment. This earlier research on DIG revealed themes involving the need for community expertise to be recognized, the role of public policy, the effects of relying on unpaid labour, and the centrality of building community. By exploring these themes within feminist framings of knowledge, work, power, care, and community, I find many areas where DIG's work could be seen to be better understood through feminist theoretical lenses. Although more study is required on a broader range of community-based food initiatives, this research suggests that a feminist theoretical lens may provide a useful resource for illuminating and revaluating the practical, educational, and relational efforts of those working in them.

Introduction/Background

From 2015 to 2016, I investigated Durham Integrated Growers for a Sustainable Community (DIG) as one of several case studies in the Social Economy of Food project undertaken by the Nourishing Communities Sustainable Local Food Systems Research Group (Nourishing).[1] Nourishing researchers worked with a range of food initiatives that operate in the social economy and involve informal economic activities. That is, these initiatives' goals extend beyond economic ones to include social and environmental ones and their

[1] The case study reports are available at: http://nourishingontario.ca/the-social-economy-of-food/case-studies-subversions-from-the-informal-and-social-economy/

economic activities include under-recognized ones, such as forms of bartering, unpaid labour, and self-provisioning. The case studies explored the ways in which these social economy initiatives contribute to marginalized groups and the environment, with specific regard to fostering community resilience, social capital, prosperity, innovation, and connections across difference. This Nourishing research has brought more attention to and met some of the needs of food initiatives in the social economy by complementing the case study reports with participatory action research projects, webinars, articles, videos, a visioning workshop, and a related follow-up report.

I have found it curious, however, that the various activities (mine included) of this broad project subtitled "Informal, under-recognized contributions to community prosperity and resilience" have virtually disregarded gender dynamics and the broad feminist literature regarding informal work and its impacts. I contend that applying feminist theoretical tools to urban agriculture initiatives like DIG may deepen an understanding of them. In the following pages I consider the applicability of such tools to DIG, less as a collection of gendered individuals and more as a cohesive, multi-layered organization. One reason for this feminist, organization-focused reading of DIG is that it may be at least as important to consider the *what* of feminization as the *who*. For instance, Leah Vosko (2000) illustrates that feminization pertains to more than the *presence* of women when she describes the feminization of paid work - and men's increasing position in it. Swanson (2015) has given much thought to exploring the feminine without essentializing people, dualizing genders, or dividing groups. She determines that, "it is practical to acknowledge and celebrate the feminine both in traditional meanings and through a contemporary understanding of feminine as characteristics that are not the sole domain of women" (Swanson, p. 99). A second reason for this reading of DIG is to respond to a shortage of scholarly material on the feminization of urban agriculture organizations, especially in Canada and North America. And thirdly, I wanted to investigate what I suspect is an implicit, under-articulated feminine coding of urban agriculture that may be keeping these forms of food production undervalued, underfunded, and marginalized.

This article begins with an overview of DIG and the literature on intersections of food-growing and gender. From there, I turn to the DIG case study themes in succession, describing them and considering them in the light of feminist theoretical tools including situated knowledges, standpoint theory, intersectionality, social reproduction, and ethics of care. Rather than taking a deep dive into the extensive history and debates surrounding such tools, my more modest goal is to demonstrate how considering their application to urban agriculture studies may constitute a worthwhile project.

I should note that in 2017, after the DIG case study was completed, I joined DIG's board of directors. However, I take full responsibility for this article and do not purport to speak on

the board's behalf. As a current post-doctoral fellow for Nourishing, my thinking has also been greatly informed by the opportunity to closely study the other Nourishing case studies.

DIG

DIG works as an umbrella organization supporting urban agriculture projects, practices, values, and policies across Durham Region in southern Ontario, Canada. Its mission states that it "supports local community food production and food security" (DIG, n.d.). DIG's work traverses municipal and urban-rural boundaries, extending to all eight of Durham Region's local municipalities while also focusing on the region as a whole. This broad geographic scope shapes DIG's view of urban agriculture. Although urban agriculture is often simply equated with the establishment of community gardens in cities, DIG views it as encompassing all parts of the food system (producing, processing, and distributing local food) both in and around cities and towns (Martin, Drummond, and Znajda, 2016). Indeed, DIG supports community gardens, urban farms, orchards, pollinator gardens, and community food social enterprises.

DIG's purpose is to contribute to a healthier, more resilient community through a stronger, more sustainable food system. Towards this goal, the organization shares knowledge and skills, offers technical assistance to local urban agriculture projects, helps projects develop partnerships and funding, promotes sustainable practices and the value of local food, conducts research and policy analysis, and advocates with government. Its programs include yearly garden tours, trips designed to educate people about the food system, "Table Talk" community workshops, the "You Grow Durham Fund" for new community projects, and community presentations. Any urban agriculture project in Durham Region can become a member of DIG. Member projects operate independently, seeking DIG's assistance as necessary. Through a participatory action research component of the social economy research, DIG also collaborated with Nourishing and the Durham Food Policy Council to conduct, analyze, and report on a scan of municipal policies affecting urban agriculture across Durham Region (Martin, Drummond, and Znajda, 2016).

Overall, main themes revealed in the DIG case study include: "the recognition of community expertise, the role of supportive and restrictive municipal policies, the benefits and pitfalls of relying on unpaid labour, [and] a focus on fostering community" (Martin, 2016, p.4). Among social economy organizations, which emphasize human relationships and non-mainstream economic activity (McMurtry, 2004), such themes may be predictable. I believe, however, that these themes also suggest a current flowing through social economy work, particularly urban agriculture, that lends itself to a feminist analysis.

Gender and the *who* of food growing

While my intent is not to emphasize the ways in which urban agriculture plays out differently among *individuals* along gender lines, the following short overview of literature on gender in food production provides a backdrop for my analysis. Despite some authors having explored the ways in which gender dynamics occur within urban agriculture projects (e.g. Buckingham, 2005; DeLind and Ferguson, 1999 regarding Community Supported Agriculture; Parry, Glover, Shinew, 2005), less scholarly material has applied a feminist lens to these initiatives at a project or organizational level.

Agriculture in general continues its longstanding reputation as the domain of men regardless of the roles that women have occupied on the farm and in the farm home (Brandth and Haugen, 2010; Chiappe and Flora, 1998; Moyles, 2018). On a global scale, women's farming produces about 40% of food globally (Sachs and Campillo, 2014). Moyles (2018) contends that it feeds most of the world's population and contributes to families, communities, and "the public good" (p. 253) while, like women's work more generally, remaining largely invisible, undervalued, and missing from statistical accounting. In fact, according to Brandth and Haugen (2010), "conventional rural masculinities are rarely dismantled" (p. 426) and in fact, "no matter what [farm] women do, their discursive placement as the farmer's wife is dominant and overshadows other definitions of woman" (p. 426).

Moyles (2018) provides an example from Canadian history of this gendering of food production: during World War ll, the federal government encouraged more women into farm work by using the term "farmerettes" (p. XVII) to soften this labour's masculine coding. While their sisters headed to the factories, over a million women moved into the fields. Similarly, in urban areas, women were encouraged to grow victory gardens for their households' sustenance. However, the reluctance to identify women as actual farmers persisted, and their massive contributions, both rural and urban, to the nation's wartime food production remains absent from most historical records (Moyles, 2018).

Today, women worldwide face disproportionate barriers to material and educational agricultural resources (Sachs and Campillo, 2014). In Canada, even as women constitute an increasing proportion (28.7%) of farm operators (Statistics Canada, 2017), they face continued challenges, such as general lack of faith in their abilities and a shortage of family land, equipment, and knowledge handed down to daughters (Moyles, 2018).

From an urban agriculture perspective, Parry, Glover and Shinew's (2005) findings on gendered divisions of labour in community gardens strongly resemble such divisions found in the domestic realm. That is, domestic labour also relies heavily on women's cognitive work,

project oversight, and delegation to men (DeVault, 1991; Fox, 2009; Martin, 2018; Miller, 2011) and those involved tend to still discount gender as a factor in such divisions (Beagan etc. 2008; Brady, Gingras, and Power, 2012; DeVault, 1991; Tronto, 2013). Brandth and Haugen (2010) found a similar arrangement of "catering, cleaning and caring" (p. 434) work among heterosexual couples who had transitioned from farm operations to farm tourism businesses. In fact, these couples were encouraged by their guests to demonstrate traditional gender divisions. At the same time, urban agriculture may, however, exhibit more flexibility in gender relations than conventional agriculture does. For instance, community gardens have shown, not only traditional gender roles but also the initiation by and leadership of women (Parry, Glover, Shinew, 2005).

Gender and the *how* of food production

Researchers have found that *who* grows food can significantly affect *how* food production occurs. Exclusion from farming resources and support has led women in Canada to turn to certain practices such as agricultural education, small-scale and less physically demanding farming methods, the support of other aspiring young or female farmers, creative means to secure land and to produce food, and production-centred political change efforts (Moyles, 2018). Small-scale farming also tends to be a practice of women, particularly marginalized women, on a global scale (Sachs & Campillo, 2014).

A gendered organization is also revealed in the philosophies underlying production. For instance, Moyles (2018) asserts that, "The efforts of women farmers tend to be localized: feed the family, feed the community, and steward the land" (p. 254). She finds that these women are generally guided by a love of the land, animals, plants, seeds, and agricultural tasks, as well as the desire to create better futures and greater financial security for their families. In accounting for a male tendency to assume control over agricultural resources and a female tendency to focus more on the needs of family and the common good, Chiappe and Butler Flora (1998) point to women's naturalization as nurturers and men's separate naturalization as strong and rational beings. In particular, these authors notice women farmers prioritizing "quality family life" (p. 387) which focuses on health and time with family, something the women said was facilitated through alternative agricultural methods. These farmers also valued "spirituality/religiousity" (p. 390) and "honouring of nature" (p. 390) shown through incorporating a holistic approach and caring for the earth.

Within the context of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA),[2] DeLind & Ferguson (1999) discovered a tendency for men to focus on new friendships, skill development, and self-improvement while the women in their study centred more on tranquillity, holistic approaches, responsibility to the farm, and opportunities for community-building, especially through social responsibility and democratic approaches. Generally, the women "were less willing to isolate issues, separate functions, and minimize feelings" (p. 196), focusing instead beyond, often broadly beyond, their own needs. This collective and other-focused orientation may constitute not only an alternative approach to food production, but a necessary one. Indeed, through investigating a CSA farm, Sumner, Mair, and Nelson (2010) discovered that culture and the relationships built with the community not only *contribute to* alternative agriculture initiatives, but also help *to sustain* those initiatives and their ability to provide people with food. "Culture" here was evidenced through "civic engagement, community and the celebration of local food" (p. 58).

Through its emphasis on care and relationship-building, urban agriculture appears to be positioned several paces closer to the home kitchen than to conventional agriculture. In fact, Hondagneu-Sortelo contends that, for the Latino immigrants she studied in Los Angeles, community gardens formed versions of

> hybrid-domestic places where basic social reproductive activities of food production, meal preparation, and eating occur, where children are nurtured and protected, where the sick are healed and as sites providing inviting places for moments of leisure, socializing and for quiet individual reflection (p. 26).

Overall, the literature reveals that women continue both to play a substantial role in agriculture and to experience barriers there to access and recognition. At the same time, some of the qualities they bring to it are ones that are central to more alternative forms of agriculture, such as urban agriculture.

Methodology

The DIG case study itself was based on DIG's written materials, participant observations, and interviews with key informants. It revealed themes of: "the recognition of community expertise, the role of supportive and restrictive municipal policies, the benefits and pitfalls

[2] Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) refers to a farm marketing strategy whereby farmers share both the bounty and risks of an upcoming growing season with their customers by selling them produce shares ahead of the growing season. The farmers then distribute their harvests to their customers in the form of weekly or bi-weekly produce boxes during the growing season. Because CSAs may be located in rural or urban settings, and may incorporate conventional and alternative farming methods, as a category they straddle the boundary between rural agriculture and urban agriculture.

of relying on unpaid labour, [and] a focus on fostering community (Martin, 2016, p.4). In this article I draw on multiple strains of feminist scholarship to reconsider the case study through feminist theoretical tools such as situated knowledges, standpoint theory, intersectionality, social reproduction, and ethics of care.

Results

1. The recognition of community expertise

The first theme to emerge in the case study of DIG is the organization's need for its community-based expertise to be recognized and valued. At the level of urban agriculture projects in Durham, knowledge is developed as people work together to determine the best paths forward for their communities' own food-related health, social, and environmental priorities. DIG encourages this process, providing support and guidance as needed but also respecting each group's need to make its own decisions and mistakes. At the organizational level, the exchange of knowledge is also central to DIG's work, developed through its connections with gardeners, community members, established networks, researchers, and government representatives. In practice, DIG shares knowledge through newsletters, workshops, manuals, presentations, reports, its website, and social media.

Overall, DIG is well-positioned to convey urban and near-urban producers' experiences and concerns to municipal representatives. At this point, its vision and mission have been endorsed by the Region (but not the remaining eight local municipalities yet) and DIG has used its municipal policy scan to advocate with municipal representatives. However, the organization finds that municipalities often overlook the knowledge developed by community members in favour of the presumed expertise of municipal staff or authorities from outside the region. For example, some municipalities do not see the value of community gardens in rural areas despite the presence of several vibrant ones in Durham. Rather, they view these gardens' food-producing roles as redundant in agricultural areas instead of considering other possible social and environmental benefits.

Gaps like this might be diminished if DIG could provide more compelling evidence of its impact. So far, a lack of data-collecting resources and DIG's arms' length relationship with projects has impeded the organization's ability to collect data around, for example, amounts of food grown, people fed, or friendships developed as a result of each community garden. Such evidence might provide DIG with more leverage when it comes to the attention of municipal governments.

Nonetheless, the president of DIG's board of directors is clear on wanting DIG's work to be taken seriously as she shows in discussing a draft of promotional materials for the organization:

> We are not a network of gardens, we are a collaboration of urban ag and food related projects. […] References to gardens will not help us get funding for the kinds of things we want to do – like support trips to educate, develop new experts through Table Talks, fund new garden start up and renewal projects at established gardens, mentor, develop materials and offer workshops, find funding for commercial urban ag projects, advocate with municipalities, partner with municipalities, organizations, individuals and entrepreneurs, symposiums etc. I think it [the promotional material] might paint us a little too much as just nice people with gardens not people out to make a difference." (Mary Drummond, personal communication, July 9, 2018)

The disconnect between community expertise and lack of recognition has led to several problems. First, DIG has found that local municipalities simply lack sufficient information about urban agriculture to provide to the public - as discovered during the search for information during the policy scan. Second, this gap can result in municipal staff making policy or project decisions that are not informed by local community members. For example, some local municipalities seem to focus more on initiating new projects rather than on sustaining existing ones or drawing on community collaborations and knowledge to help realize community visions. Third, this non-reliance on community-based knowledge may diminish DIG's credibility and legitimacy as a citizen-led group, something that can affect DIG's ability to attract funding. Conversely, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (2015) identifies the value of community-grown knowledge through its recommendation for municipalities to "Identify, map and evaluate local initiatives and civil society food movements in order to transform best practices into relevant programmes and policies, with the support of local research or academic institutions." (Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, 2015).

The legitimacy and value of diverse origins of knowledge, especially those rooted in lived experience, have a long history of attention in feminist theory. Post-structural feminists in particular denounce the positivist view that a single knowledge can be accessed through human rationalism, often to the exclusion of female and marginalized viewpoints and cultural and historical perspectives (Gannon and Davies, 2012; Strega, 2005). Indeed, Hartsock's (1989) concept of "situated knowledges" (p. 28), speaks to the potential validity of partial or subjective knowledge. She explains that they "do not see everything from nowhere but they do see some things from somewhere" (p. 29). She contends that such an approach to knowledge can, not only foster understanding between different groups, but also illuminate power relations so that they can be analyzed.

Some feminist scholars promote a theory of standpoint (e.g. Hill Collins, 2009; Smith, 1999) which Hennessy (1993) defines as "a 'position' in society which is shaped by and in turn helps shape ways of knowing, structures of power, and resource distribution" (p. 67). For

instance, Hill Collins (2009) argues for the validity of black feminist knowledge that originates from the perspective of Black women, their lived experience and ensuing wisdom, and its transmission through such means as narrative and oral tradition.

This feminist theoretical basis for legitimizing multiple, often undervalued perspectives and lived experience could prove useful to urban agriculture initiatives, both for building confidence to defend their perceptions and for the encouragement to consider all internal perspectives. Admittedly, poststructuralism's "fatal political flaw" (Strega, 2005, p. 214), a susceptibility to dilute knowledge through limitless viewpoints, could pose a challenge for municipal governments lacking the resources or political tenacity to consider numerous outlooks. However, organizations such as DIG position themselves as intermediaries, helping to bridge the gap between growers and municipalities through exploring, gathering, and synthesizing projects' concerns and then transmitting them to municipal governments. In addition, this perspective from feminist theory could remind researchers of the value of emphasizing on-the-ground perspectives and recognizing the differences within and between initiatives.

2. The role of supportive and restrictive municipal policies

Related to the need for community knowledge to be validated is the second DIG case study theme: the role that municipal policies play in supporting or hampering urban agriculture. DIG's role as an intermediary between urban agriculture projects and municipal governments has emerged partly because of a community need to find, understand, translate, adhere to, and influence local policies. Because urban agriculture projects can take years to become well-established, they require ongoing support in policy to do so. Supportive policies can attest to the value of projects and help to make their work possible and fruitful. On the other hand, restrictive policies, such as those around insurance, product sales, drainage, signage, and water, despite their rationales, can challenge the feasibility of some of these projects. Likewise, the *absence* of relevant policies, such as those around edible front yard gardens, greenhouses, rooftop gardens, and urban farms, can leave community groups uncertain of their rights and leave their work unvalidated and subject to municipal staff discretion (Martin, Drummond, and Znajda, 2016).

Knowledge from the ground is crucial for informing policy. For instance, a municipal definition of urban agriculture that includes only urban sites or community gardens can impede policy support of, for example, rooftop gardens or projects in small towns. A cycle is at play here whereby that which is not imaginable, understood, or valued by policy makers is not protected in policy and that which is not supported in policy remains difficult to realize on

the ground. Because those participating in urban agriculture projects may be more committed to nurturing and unearthing root vegetables than municipal policies, DIG works on both fronts: to bring features of urban agriculture into the light and to advocate for policies that can support them (Martin, Drummond, and Znajda, 2016).

Once again, feminist theory may prove useful for considering organizations like DIG. Feminist theorists have thought deeply about the linkages between everyday conditions and political and discursive structures, a bridge reflected in the adage coined during second wave feminism, "the personal is political." Feminist standpoint theory, discussed earlier, is not limited to recognizing the perspectives of people in the everyday, but it also traces the ways that structures such as policy relate to those everyday experiences. For example, the authors in Luxton and Braedley's (2010) collection, *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life* do exactly this, charting the relationships between the quotidian and the neoliberal structures and discourses that deeply affect it. Standpoint theorist, Dorothy Smith (1999) notably recommends tracing the ways in which people's daily experiences are influenced by "ruling relations" (p. 49), defined as

> that internally coordinated complex of administrative, managerial, professional, and discursive organization that regulates, organizes, governs, and otherwise controls our societies [...] it is organized in abstraction from local settings, extra-locally and its textually mediated character is essential [...] and characteristic. (p. 49)

Not only is it important for community knowledge to be validated at the municipal level, as discussed in the previous section, but it is important to recognize how policy content and language impact community initiatives' work on the ground. Understanding urban agriculture organizations like DIG involves understanding the parameters within which they operate. A standpoint theory perspective can help show that the capacity of urban agriculture projects hinges to a great extent on the content and language of government policies, both of which can expand or contract what is possible on the ground.

3. The benefits and pitfalls of relying on unpaid labour

The third theme from the DIG case study regards the benefits and challenges of maintaining an unpaid workforce. DIG's volunteer working board of directors is directly supported by other volunteers specializing in areas such as promotions and website design. Among DIG's member projects, the work of coordinating and maintaining the projects is also unpaid, as is the work of project members. On the one hand, the choice to avoid hiring staff has allowed DIG to operate on a smaller budget and to avoid investing much time and effort into grant proposals or employment-related administration. This choice may also contribute to a more intentional workforce where workers participate for reasons

other than income. Recognizing the need for members' increased incomes and validation, however, DIG is looking at ways that projects and their members can earn money to help sustain themselves from the food that they produce or process.

The actual option for individuals to engage in unpaid labour in the community can, in fact, be both constrained by and produced through one's own or one's family members' paid work. For example, participating in a garden project for no pay requires disposable time resources made available through income from elsewhere and time free from other obligations. As an example, Mary Drummond traces her own allocation of substantial volunteer time back to the opportunity provided through the income from her partner's full-time job. Conversely, individuals' own employment, like Mary's part-time employment since her partner's retirement, can leave them with less time to devote to such endeavours.

An intersectional analysis may be a valuable tool here for exploring the work of urban agriculture. The profile of any urban agriculture initiative reflects a blend of characteristics such as gender, age, ability, caregiving responsibilities, ethno-racial-cultural background, employment status, and income. It suggests, for example, who is available, who can afford to participate, who can participate unencumbered by other caring responsibilities or by unmet accessibility needs, who feels welcome, who cares to participate, and sometimes who is expected to devote more time and effort. Consideration of the intersections that affect participation may enrich understandings of urban agriculture by offsetting uncritical and ideological readings of participation or non-participation. That is, it can serve as a reminder that participating in urban agriculture activities may not be practical, feasible, or expected for everyone. In doing so, it may not only lead to recommendations for making urban agriculture projects more inclusive, but it may also help to guard against sweeping assertions about the potential of urban agriculture projects. Instead it may reveal the necessity for greater state- and other structurally-based interventions around issues such as food insecurity, biodiversity, and social inclusion.

Feminists' work on social reproduction and caring labour may also advance understandings of urban agriculture. Social reproduction "encompasses the work that must be done in order to ensure that people at least survive and ideally thrive and develop, as well as to ensure that the economic system is perpetuated" (Bezanson, 2016, p. 26). This form of labour often remains unpaid, feminized, and devalued. It contrasts with ostensibly real work, that which is compensated with wages and usually occurs in the public realm. Social reproductive work also goes largely unrecognized in social policy (McKeen, 2004) and capitalist systems (Acker, 2006), although it is vital to both.

I would argue that DIG's work to nourish individuals, families, communities, and eco-systems is, in fact, a form of social reproduction, a way to meet essential needs while, in some ways,

upholding the dominant political-economic apparatus. DIG's patchwork of unpaid labour, combined with donations, memberships fees, and fundraising evokes women's social reproductive role as household "shock absorbers" (Bakan and Stasiulis, 2005, p. 24) for resource shortages. That is, over time women have used resourceful, often informal methods to ensure that household members' needs are met (Little, 1998; Luxton, 1980; Luxton and Corman, 2001), a responsibility that has been intensified with the advent of neoliberal policies and logics (Bezanson, 2006; Neysmith et al, 2012). Projects like community gardens similarly make inventive use of available resources, providing participants with some padding against household food insecurity and social exclusion. Still, DIG experiences pressure from municipalities to expand the number of community garden plots, reduce garden waitlists, and contribute more produce to food banks. In a similar vein, feminist scholars have found women's unpaid caring labour to be treated within and outside the home as infinitely expandable (Bakan & Stasiulus, 2005; Bezanson, 2006; Braedley, 2006; DeVault, 1991; Luxton & Corman, 2001).

The deprecation of social reproduction has roots in claims to nonresponsibility. Tronto (2013) describes the stance of "privileged irresponsibility" (p. 103) that assumes that certain social or economic contributions exempt some people from participating in care work and from considering their own dependence on it. For instance, Acker (2006) points to both social and environmental "corporate nonresponsibility" (p. 9) as foundational to capitalism and its gendered and racialized inequalities. She explains that, by segregating people and devaluing and hiding caring work, the organization of capitalism permits its beneficiaries to absolve themselves from responsibility for people's basic needs. Similarly, male nonresponsibility for caring work and domestic labour has been well documented (Kershaw, Pulkingham, and Fuller, 2008; Tronto, 2013) and assigned many justifications (Beagan et al., 2008; Brady et al. 2012; Tronto, 2013). Furthermore, Riches (1999) questions the Canadian government's ongoing nonresponsibility for its international right-to-food obligations (Riches, 1999). While urban agriculture offers many benefits, including an expansion of the possible, a lens of (non)responsibility for social reproduction reminds us that the "somebody" referred to by DeVault's (1991) homemaking participants in expressing "somebody's got to do it" (p. 109) is not just anybody. In essence, it may help urban agriculture researchers to zero in on the tension between the value of alternative economies and absolution of state responsibility.

DIG's substantially unpaid labour is a valuable and constrained resource that makes possible almost all of what the organization does. However, considering DIG's work through a lens of intersectionality and as a form of social reproduction, complete with shock-absorbing and seemingly expandable activities, may help to raise questions around responsibility for social and

environmental well-being. In doing so, it may provide a reminder of responsibilities of the state and corporations for protecting the well-being of their citizens, workers, and planet.

4. A focus on fostering community

In the previous section I considered urban agricultural work as a form of caring labour and social reproduction. Here I look at it more as a collective ethic as I explore the fourth DIG case study theme, a focus on fostering community. The well-documented social value of urban agriculture projects includes community dimensions such as the promotion of social capital, community building, social inclusion, and civic engagement (Santo, Palmer and Kim, 2016; Winne, 2008). In fact, some have found community gardens to centre more on growing community than growing food (Parry, Glover, Shinew, 2005, Winne, 2008).

Although there are limits to who can or will participate in urban agriculture-related activities, DIG and its member projects bring people together across differences such as gender, age, culture, income, and ability. Diverse inclusion is promoted through means such as low or sliding membership fees, diverse project locations, and accessible garden plots and pathways. In addition, as Mary Drummond points out, urban agriculture projects by their very nature help to level playing fields since, for example, everyone in a garden is affected by rain, droughts, pests, or frost.

Community develops throughout DIG in many ways. For instance, community garden settings lend themselves to exchanges of knowledge, skills, seeds, and plants. Projects also provide benefits like events or food for growers' families, local schools, food banks, community centres, churches, local businesses, and other groups. As an organization, DIG cultivates relationships with municipalities, businesses, colleges and universities, and the Durham Food Policy Council. I would suggest that DIG shows how urban agriculture's potential for community-building also extends beyond its own circles in its own place and time. That is, through activities such as awareness raising, orchard growing, pollinator support, and composting, the organization helps to provide for human and non-human entities today as well as into future seasons and generations.

While the previously discussed social reproduction lens situates caring labour as a support for capitalist economic and political systems, an ethics of care perspective focuses on the interrelatedness of and interdependencies within broadly defined communities (Neysmith et al., 2012). For instance, Tronto's (2013) "feminist democratic ethic of care" (p. 29) views people not only as existing within relationships, but also as all providing and receiving care in their lifetimes. Swanson's (2015) "ecofeminist ethic of care" (p. 96) expands the circle to reveal the interdependence of all life on Earth. On the ground, urban agriculture projects reveal a focus on building relationships among individuals, communities, and nature. They

also show a dependence on factors such as weather, pests, regulations, and the personalities of their membership. Mary Drummond explains,

> an organization that's representing gardens and wanting to really listen and be what gardeners need has to be as flexible as gardeners are. You really never know what's going to happen in a garden project. You just have to go with it and be ready to respond or reprioritize.

This quote speaks to the vulnerability that interdependence requires. There is vulnerability both in depending on and being depended upon by (human and non-human) others. This sort of commitment-without-control constitutes a key characteristic of the kind of caring labour evident in urban agriculture, a kind that is similar to that of parents and care professionals. Although the current political climate leaves little space for discussions of care, essentially relocating it even further from what Smith (1999) refers to as the "main business" (p. 37) of capitalism, a focus on care is necessary in all forms of leadership (Swanson, 2015; Tronto, 2013). In fact, Tronto (2013) contends that determining how to care for society's members is crucial for solving obdurate global problems like terrorism. Indeed Swanson (2015) contends that, "Only in caring is there hope for humanity, and a healthy future on this planet" (p.101).

Reflections on community-building in urban agriculture may benefit from considering ethics of care, and the interrelatedness, interdependence, and vulnerability that they can expose. Such considerations can help to locate urban agriculture projects, and their approach to care, within broader systems. In an era of hyper-individualism, anthropocentrism, and adversarial politics, such a focus may prove useful for the massive tasks of mending damages to environmental, political, and social systems.

Discussion

Through this article, I consider the applicability of certain feminist theory tools for exploring urban agriculture organizations such as DIG. This analysis emerged from the recognition that: feminization encompasses more than the presence of women; there is little scholarly work on the feminization of urban agriculture organizations themselves; and a feminine coding of urban agriculture projects may be hindering their potential. By venturing beyond an emphasis on gendered divisions of labour/philosophies *within* such initiatives, I have tried to shine more light on the social positioning of these organizations themselves.

In the end, I believe that feminist theoretical tools may be quite applicable to the study of urban agriculture organizations. For instance, the DIG case study first demonstrates that the community-based voices of urban agriculture projects and their members may be

overpowered by those with more political influence. Feminist theory's situated knowledges and standpoint theory can help to recentre and validate the voices and perspectives of those who may be underrepresented. Standpoint theory may also support the second theme of the DIG case study, the importance of municipal policy context for the success of such projects. Standpoint reminds us of the role that the content and language of political structures play in delineating the potential of such initiatives and so it serves as a caution around assessing their impact independent of their political context. The third case study theme, the heavy reliance on unpaid labour, can benefit from intersectional and social reproductive lenses which demand attention to *who* is doing and affected by the work to meet urban agriculture goals. Specifically, these lenses encourage the exploration of who does, who can, and who should take responsibility for sustaining individuals, communities, and ecosystems. In addition, a social reproductive analysis asks how such initiatives help to sustain existing political-economic structures. The final case study theme discussed here, the focus on building community, can benefit from an ethics of care perspective which raises questions about interrelatedness, interdependence and vulnerability- and urban agriculture's position and contribution therein.

This article represents an exploration of one set of feminist theoretical tools as they pertain to the themes of one organization. However, understandings of urban agriculture could benefit from diving deeper into feminist theoretical history and debates as they may pertain to a range of urban agriculture organizations.

Conclusion

Farming has a long history of being painted as a male endeavour regardless of women's efforts in it. These efforts by women have been found to focus more on community, small-scale production, and feeding those around them, all of which are consistent with urban agriculture. Considering organizations like DIG through a feminist theory lens can deepen the study of urban agriculture and highlight ways in which they too may be feminized. I hope that the application of feminist theoretical tools can help to unearth and revalue characteristics that, through their traditional attribution to women, have lamentably been devalued or suppressed and, in doing so, can raise both the profile and appreciation of urban agriculture.

References

Acker, J. (2006). *Class Questions, Feminist Answers*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers Inc.

Bakan, A. and Stasiulis, D. (2005). *Negotiating citizenship: Migrant women in Canada and the global system*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bezanson, K. (2006). *Gender, the state, and social reproduction: Household insecurity in neo-liberal times.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Brady, J., Gingras, J., & Power, E. (2012). Still hungry: A feminist perspective on food, foodwork, the body and food studies. In M. Koc, J. Sumner and A. Winson (Eds.), *Critical perspectives in food studies* (pp. 122-135). Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.

Braedley, S. and Luxton, M. (2010). Introduction: "Competing Philosophies: Neoliberalism and the Challenges of Everyday Life." In S. Braedley, and M. Luxton (Eds.). *Neoliberalism and everyday life* (pp.3-21). Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press.

Brandth, B. and Haugen, M.S. (2010). Doing farm tourism: The Intertwining practices of gender and work. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* 35*(2),* 426–446.

Buckingham, S. (2005). Women (Re)construct the Plot: The Regen(d)eration of Urban Food Growing. *Area,* 37(2), 171-179. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.cat1.lib.trentu.ca:8080/stable/20004446

Chiappe, M.B. and Butler Flora, C. (1998). Gendered elements of the alternative agriculture paradigm. *Rural Sociology* 49:183-209.

Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs,* 38(4), 785-810.

DeLind, L.B. and Ferguson, A.E. (1999). Is this a women's movement? *Human Organization*. 58(2), 190-200.

DIG. (n.d.) *What we do*. Retrieved from: http://www.durhamdigs.ca/what-we-do/

Gibson-Graham, J.K. (2006a). *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A feminist critique of political economy.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gibson-Graham, J.K. (2006b). Imagining and Enacting a Postcapitalist Feminist Economic Politics. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 34(1/2), 72-78. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.cat1.lib.trentu.ca:8080/stable/40004733

Hill Collins, P. (2009). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment.* New York: Routledge.

Kershaw, P., Pulkingham, J., Fuller, S. (2008). Expanding the subject: Violence, care, and (In) active male citizenship. *Social Politics* 15 (2), 182-206

Little, M. (1998). *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The moral regulation of single mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Luxton, M. (1980). *More than a labour of love: Three generations of women's work in the home.* Toronto: Women's Educational Press.

Luxton, M. and Corman, J. (2001). *Getting by in Hard Times: Gendered labour at home and on the job.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Martin, M.A. (2019). Digging through urban agriculture with feminist theoretical implements. Canadian Food Studies, 6(3), 88–107.

Martin, M.A. (2018). *"At least I can feel like I've done my job as a mom": Mothers on low incomes, household food work, and community food initiatives* (Order No. 10822702). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2046825164). Retrieved from http://proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/2046825164?accountid=9894

Martin, M.A. (2016). *DIG (Durham Integrated Growers for a Sustainable Community): A case study*. Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, Wilfrid Laurier University

Martin, M.A., Drummond, M., and Znajda, S. (2016). *Digging for a Just and Sustainable Food System: A scan of municipal policies influencing urban agriculture projects across Durham Region.* Available at: http://www.durhamdigs.ca/resources/

Matchar, E. (2013). *Homeward bound: Why women are embracing the new domesticity*. New York: Simon & Schuster

McKeen, W. (2004). *Money in their own Name: The Feminist Voice in Poverty Debate in Canada, 1970-1995.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated

McMurtry, J.J. (2004). Social Economy as Political Practice. *International Journal of Social Economics,* 31(9/10), 868-878.

Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. (October 15, 2015). Retrieved from: http://www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Milan-Urban-Food-Policy-Pact-EN.pdf)

Moyles, T. (2018). *Women Who Dig: Farming, feminism, and the fight to feed the world.* Regina: University of Regina Press.

Neysmith, S., Reitsma-Street, M., Baker-Collins, S., Porter, E. (2012). *Beyond Caring Labour to Provisioning Work.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Parry, D.C., Glover, T.D., and Shinew, K.J. (2005). 'Mary, Mary quite contrary, how does your garden grow?': Examining gender roles and relations in community gardens, *Leisure Studies*, 24(2), 177-192, DOI: 10.1080/0261436052000308820

Riches, G. (1999). Reaffirming the Right to Food in Canada: The Role of Community-Based Food Security, Graham Riches. In M. Koc, Mustafa, R. MacRae, J. Welsh, L.J.A. Mougeot (Eds.), *For hunger-proof cities: Sustainable urban food systems.* Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

Sachs, C. and Patel-Campillo, A. (2014). Feminist food justice: Crafting a new vision, *Feminist Studies,* 40(2), 396-410.

Smith, D. E. (1999). *Writing the Social: Critique, theory, and investigations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Statistics Canada (2017). *2016 Census of Agriculture*. Retrieved from: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/170510/dq170510a-eng.htm?HPA=1

Strega, S. (2005). The view from the poststructural margins: Epistemology and methodology resistance In L. Brown and S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches* (pp. 199-235). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Sumner, J., Mair, H., & Nelson, E. (2010) Putting the culture back into agriculture: civic engagement, community and the celebration of local food*, International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, 8(1-2), 54-61, DOI: 10.3763/ijas.2009.0454

Swanson, L.J. (2015). A Feminist Ethic That Binds us to Mother Earth. *Ethics & the Environment*, 20(2), 83-103. Published by Indiana University Press.

Tronto, J. (2013). *Caring Democracy: Markets, equality and justice*. New York: New York University Press.

Vosko, L. F. (2000). *Temporary Work: The Gendered Rise of a Precarious Employment Relationship.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Winne, M. (2008). *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the table in the land of plenty*. Boston: Beacon Press.