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"I've never had that": An Exploration of how Children Construct Belonging and Inclusion Within a Foodscape

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“I’ve never had that”: An Exploration of how Children Construct Belonging and Inclusion
Within a Foodscape

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

American consumer culture is often depicted as competitive and based on the acquisition of capital and status through goods or experiences. To date, researchers commonly exclude children from this conversation and therefore fail to wholly assess the impact consumer culture has on one's choices or behavior. This study adds to a growing body of literature exploring the experiences and agency of children within the broader consumer culture by examining how marginalized children from a lower socioeconomic background use food as a resource for belonging among peers. Observation and interview data collected during designated lunch and snack times at a summer program in Tampa, FL reveal that children co(construct) a reality all their own which allows peers a chance to belong and simultaneously acquire capital. This project contributes to the understanding of the role race, class, and emotions play for children within the American consumer culture, especially regarding food consumption.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

After talking about her brother's future party, she told us about her own previous birthday party. It was Hello Kitty themed and there were decorations. Her family and cousins were there. She went on to describe the cupcakes she had instead of a birthday cake. They also were baked and decorated in a Hello Kitty theme. I asked if they were chocolate or vanilla and she confirmed they were both. Regina spoke up and said, "I've never had that." Cinnamon Bun was a bit astonished by the fact that Regina never had a birthday party or themed birthday cupcakes, but was able to sense she was upset by missing out. Cinnamon Bun spoke up and reassured her that maybe she would be able to afford one this year (fieldnotes, 7/20/2017).

While it is common for researchers to gain the perspective of adults concerning food choices, behavior, or preferences, it is less common for researchers to seek the testimony of children. Children are often forgotten when critically assessing consumer culture (Cook 2008; Corsaro 2005; Corsaro and Eder 1990; Osowski, Göransson, and Fjellström 2012). One aspect of consumer culture is the consumption of food. Within sociology, food studies are increasingly being performed. While I am hopeful and optimistic about this growth, I wanted to perform this project by bringing the voices of children into the conversation.

Using a social constructionist framework, I explore what children have to say about food and do with food at a summer program in the Tampa Metropolitan area of Florida. I came to learn that children in this program have a lot to say about food and are "active creators of meaning" (Ludvigsen and Scott 2009). Through data collection, I began to internally ask the question: "How is food used or talked about in this space?" Throughout analysis, this question emerged into: "How is food used as a resource for belonging?"

A sense of belonging is not automatically felt among peers. Allison Pugh's ethnography (2009), *Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children, and Consumer Culture*, supports this idea. She observed and interviewed young participants from three different schools ranging in race and income level. She found that children constantly seek belonging among their peers and do so through consumption and the acquisition of popular items. With a desire to "fit in" and obtain particular symbolic items, parents must also experience the process of belonging their children strive to perfect. However, this process proves more difficult for the families experiencing a lack of resources or the right "script of belonging" to gain acceptance into peer groups. Pugh explains that "children together shape their own economies of dignity, which in turn transform particular goods and experiences into a form of scrip, tokens of value suddenly fraught with meaning" (2009, 7).

Throughout this project, I was often reminded of moments throughout my childhood that I had not thought of in years where, I too, at times lacked the resources and right "scripts of belonging." I recall entering my student ID in the middle school lunch line to "purchase" my food and fearing that the child behind me would notice on the computer screen that I received free lunch. Likewise, I remembered one afternoon I was in Winn-Dixie with my father and a classmate was checking us out. Before she scanned the last item, I told my dad I would wait for him in the car. I did so to avoid seeing her face the moment he used the plastic food stamp card to pay for our groceries.

Such memories concerning food consumption linger into adulthood. The food opportunities and experiences I had throughout childhood ultimately shaped me into the adult consumer I am today. This particular sentiment is echoed by Korean-American, David Chang, in his docuseries that recently aired on Netflix about food called *Ugly Delicious*. Chang is a well-

known chef and restaurateur. At first glance, I assumed his docuseries would merely discuss the food origins of popular food items without any criticism. However, Chang constantly provides personal reflections while exploring the history of food items. In one episode, Chang reveals a memory from childhood where his peers visited his home one afternoon and made fun of the Korean food his mother made (Chang 2018). While food is consumed for survival, we human beings also consume ideas about food and negotiate our feelings toward particular items constantly. Chang points out the embarrassment he felt as a result of his peer's laughter, but also points out the positive memories associated with his mother's cooking in this particular episode and makes known the complexity of food relationships and perceptions.

With consideration of consumer culture as a whole, our relationship with food is everchanging and the role our childhood plays in forming that relationship is under researched. Also under researched is how our peers and family impact that relationship throughout childhood. As I will make clear, the children I observed and spoke to appropriated knowledge concerning food from adults allowing them to (co)construct a reality all their own within this summer program foodscape that heightened inclusion and belonging.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

To set the backdrop for my research, I describe the way I rely upon a social constructionist framework. This is primarily supported by Berger and Luckmann's seminal work, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) which conveys that an individual or group(s) reveals the process of how knowledge, value, and meaning is constructed and associated with objects, ideas, or stories through interaction. My own analysis will specifically look at what shapes a foodscape and food interactions among children at the center where I collected data. To begin framing my project, I discuss the construction of capital before moving into a conversation on consumer culture. This discussion will communicate how children are often sidelined in consumption research and theory or not mentioned at all (Cook 2008; Corsaro 2005). While pointing out the need for the inclusion of children's voices, I also show the need for consumption studies or theory to conduct further research specifically exploring the consumption of food. Following this, I refer to literature uncovering how a child's home dynamics, kin networks, and peers all play a role throughout reality construction or the socialization process. This will lead into current literature exploring the construction of belonging or inclusion by children within particular spaces while making note of work highlighting the role emotions play in such constructions.

Self-Production and Production of Meaning

Drawing from Berger and Luckmann's work to inform my own, I focus on their discussion of socialization as well as the construction of and (re)production of reality. As they state:

Man's self-production is always, and of necessity, a social enterprise. Men *together* produce a human environment, with the totality of its socio-cultural and psychological functions. None of these formations may be understood as products of man's biological constitution, which, as indicated, provides only the outer limits for human productive activity (1966, 51).

Keeping in mind that self-production is a social enterprise, the formation of one's culture and understanding of society is also accomplished with others. For instance, the culture that individuals experience and come to internalize is constructed and (re)produced through interactions, rituals, and symbolic occurrences achieved between themselves and others, within various spaces (Bourdieu 1986, 1998; Collins 2005). Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" has often been used to describe the embodiment of such cultural and social knowledge or capital (1986). One's habitus is said to predict how they respond in social situations or their "sense of the game." While the term has frequently been used in fields such as sociology, anthropology, or education, it has received critique for being too deterministic and does not allow agency for individuals. Such a sentiment has been expressed by Anthony King noting, with respect, the reductiveness of the concept as well as its inability to allow social change based on the way it predicts that individuals respond in certain ways to maintain the dominant social structure already in place (King 2000). King is not alone in pointing out the ambiguity and rigidity of the concept, "habitus." Holt, Bowlby, and Lea (2013) also acknowledge that habitus is "a slippery concept" in their paper exploring the role emotions have in the "functioning of embodied social capital and habitus" among young people. They expand on the term by identifying a "convivial

habitus” among their participants in non-school settings due to their emotionally supportive friend groups or families. This “convivial habitus” differs greatly from the participant’s experiences at school where they had difficulty acquiring capital and maintaining social relationships.

Such social (re)productions of meaning and beliefs among peer groups or family members can cement expectations or even stereotypes relating to one’s sex, race or ethnicity, disabilities, or social class and can be accompanied by a perceived status. Based on a plethora of research, status is accomplished by gaining economic, cultural, social, symbolic and emotional capital (Allan and Catts 2013; Bourdieu 1986, 1998; Kamphuis et al. 2015; Krasny et al. 2013; Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2013; Parcel, Dufur, and Zito 2010). The dominant or more privileged classes or identities usually inform what is perceived as the favorable capital (Edgecomb 2010).

Referring once again to Bourdieu, he believed that “economic capital is at the root of all other types of capital... [and] at the root of their effects”; economic capital being described as material or monetary gains (1986, 54). While I have already touched on the construction and (re)production of culture, it is vital to discuss how one’s culture is translated into capital.

Cultural capital can be manifested in three different ways. One, the *embodied* state which refers to knowledge, traditions, or skills learned throughout socialization. Second, the *objectified* state, pertains to the material goods or items procured with symbolic meaning to a culture. This might include art, books, or instruments. The third type of cultural capital is in the *institutionalized* state. The acceptance or recognition of one’s cultural capital in an institutionalized or formal way can allow one to experience social mobility or further opportunities for economic capital.

Social capital refers to social relationships, memberships, or peer groups one is involved in. Access to particular networks or relationships creates the potential for increased resources and

connections that may simultaneously increase one's economic or cultural capital. The acquisition of social capital is commonly characterized as a competitive process, although Holt, Bowlby, and Lea argue that:

... social relationships are largely forged and maintained specifically because individuals are emotionally co-dependent and seek satisfying and supportive relationships and networks. Thus, contrary to dominant views of social capital, which (re)produce a narrow, strategic, and rational view of agency, we suggest that social 'capital' is, at heart, largely based upon emotional and affectual relationships that exceed rational agency. (2013, 34)

Holt, Bowlby, and Lea challenge Bourdieu's (1986) notion that "economic capital is at the root of all other types of capital" and their effects. Additionally, though Bourdieu's work is considered seminal in cultural studies due to his explanation of the various types of capital, he did not explicitly refer to the emotional aspect of relationships as "emotional capital." Prompted by Bourdieu's work, it was Helga Nowotny that developed the concept (1981). Described as emotional resources or knowledge, emotional capital is usually conveyed or passed on to individuals or groups one cares about and is typical of the private realm (Reay 2004). Emotional capital includes the way one cares for, loves, spends time with, encourages, or supports someone else. Eva Illouz has expanded significantly on the role emotions play in our daily social practices in her article "Emotions, Imagination, and Consumption: A New Research Agenda." Illouz calls on consumer culture scholars to "[inject] the notion of emotion in the sociology of consumption" (2009, 379). At the urging of Illouz, I will simultaneously discuss consumer culture and emotions by analyzing children's relationships with food and peers.

Consumer Culture and Children

To wholly understand this project, it's imperative for readers to understand where my research is situated within consumer culture theory. Pugh states that "consumption is a social practice, one in which people are communicating meaning to each other through goods" (2009, 14; Cook 2013). In America, where I collected my data, we consume goods and services constantly. Through consumption, consumers are able to acquire material goods or experience unique events, concerts, destinations, or services. My own research specifies how the consumption of food is a social practice. Similar to clothes, cars, phones, and beauty products, food can also be chosen and consumed based on its brand or creator. Name brand food products and "cool" restaurants or even breweries can act as a way to further one's status or at least put it on display (Johnston and Baumann 2015). The experience of a precise consumer destination can likewise imply that an individual can not only economically afford to visit a place, but they can also spare their time. While every human being objectively *has* time, not everyone can use it in the same way due to the consequences that may accompany that choice.

Thorstein Veblen wrote at length about how many individuals reach and uphold their status by the constant obtainment of items portraying their status and wealth through "conspicuous consumption" (1994). Veblen also describes how displays of status and wealth can be successfully shown through "conspicuous leisure" when individuals use their time towards "non-productive" engagements and try to distance themselves from work. Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* was published in 1899, however it can still describe how many people in our current consumer culture purchase items or services with the intention of showing others they deserve the respect afforded to a higher socio-economic

class. Despite one's income level or social standing, an attempt to demonstrate status or privilege can be made possible through the purchasing of certain objects or brands.

While Veblen's work is relevant to some consumption habits today, outlined above, Veblen relies upon the analysis of traditional rituals according to Colin Campbell (2013). Instead of consumption being strictly and inherently status-seeking, Campbell argues that "the spirit of modern consumerism" is based on *hedonism*. With a constant stream of "novel products" flooding the market, consumers' desires become easily satisfied. However, Campbell explains that this is a temporary feeling and before long an individual's reality will once again be overcome with daydreams and a desire for something different, "creating a longing for the new and the unknown" (241). Campbell also mentions that Veblen's portrayal of all consumers is not fair since many consumers are content with their status relative to that of their peers. Not to mention, Veblen's writing relates largely to the elite class and does little to consider the lived experiences of lower socio-economic class groups.

Since my own project looks at children coming from a lower socio-economic background, it is reassuring to know that consumption studies have not only addressed consumer practices among the lower socio-economic classes over the years, but they have slowly and increasingly considered children as well (Miller 1998; Edgecomb 2010; Ahn 2015). For this project, I rely heavily on Pugh and Elizabeth Chin's work to inform my own. While I have already touched on Pugh's ethnography, Elizabeth Chin's work precedes Pugh's. Chin's *Purchasing Power: Black Kids and American Consumer Culture* informs this thesis significantly due to Chin's illuminating findings on what it's like to be "poor, young, and black" in a wealthy society. Chin found that children would commonly choose to share their good fortune and invest in relationships rather than simply displaying class advantages when they arose:

Children in Newhallville often turned the consumer sphere to their own expressive and prosocial purposes, using shopping as a way to create connections to their family and friends, as a sphere of creative play, or a realm in which they could construct critical assessments of the world around them. The consumer lives of those from Newhallville show the complex ways in which forces of ideology, hegemony, and power can be bent – if only temporarily – into the contours of a particular life (2001, 178-179).

My own participants are primarily black and come from a lower socio-economic background.

Likewise, during the summer program, I observed a sense of agency among children in the way they construct the consumer sphere.

Since I concentrate on the consumption of food, I will borrow the concept of “foodscape.” Norah MacKendrick (2014, 16) describes a foodscape as:

...the places and spaces where you acquire food, prepare food, talk about food, or generally gather some sort of meaning from food. This is your foodscape. The concept originated in the field of geography and is widely used in urban studies and public health to refer to urban food environments. Sociologists have extended the concept to include the institutional arrangements, cultural spaces, and discourses that mediate our relationship with food. ... The institutional and organizational dynamics that contribute to a foodscape are often reflected in what kind of food is available.

MacKendrick’s explanation of the term strives to ensure that the inclusion of multiple spaces, places, experiences, definitions, and feelings associated with food are considered. While all humans require food to survive, *how* we eat, *what* we eat, *who* we eat with, and *why* varies immensely across foodscapes. As MacKendrick makes clear, foodscapes can be “classed and racialized environments” that reinforce social inequalities and further the marginalization of certain communities where food opportunities are lacking. Through its use, researchers may highlight both positive and negative outcomes of one’s location within a foodscape without perpetuating a deterministic view of communities or individuals.

Sources of Appropriated and (Re)Produced Knowledge

As already mentioned, through this project, I seek to provide more recognition of children in consumer culture research. Both Pugh and Chin introduce the perceptions and choices of children instead of assuming they are entirely informed and shaped by adults. Daniel Cook, establishes in a key article on the “missing child” in consumer culture research that children are not merely exploited actors (2008). Kids exercise agency in many ways that move beyond the well-known “nag factor”: they voice opinions, select, and find innovative ways to use consumer goods, and these include food. To introduce the child consumer as an “afterthought” in one’s writing or ignore them altogether is a detriment to not only consumption studies, but childhood studies (Cook 225). To adequately depict our consumer culture, researchers must be willing to completely depict actors within it and at every stage of the life course. Despite the fact that some individuals or groups reject parts of our consumer culture or avoid purchasing certain objects, it is a “virtual impossibility” to not consume in our society (Cook 225). The lack of research showing the power children have in our consumer culture can erroneously support the assumption that adults have complete control over children’s choices, preferences, and relationship(s) pertaining to consumer culture.

My own project aims to shine a light on interactions among children where adults, especially parents, are not generally present and therefore do not directly impose their control over children’s food choices, eating behavior, and food talk. In other words, I strive to reflect a child’s reality. Although reality construction is never complete for anyone, a child’s reality is arguably more susceptible to changes or influences. Primary agents of socialization, the parents or immediate family, are usually considered to have the strongest influence upon children and impact their level of cultural capital as well (Allan and Catts 2013; Kamphuis et al. 2015;

Oowski, Göranson, and Fjellström 2012). The relationships that forms between primary agents and children commonly create a sense of dependency towards the parent and an emotional bond based on the abstract love provided for them. This can be complemented by a “material culture of love” that is represented by tangible items given to or bought for loved ones (Miller 1998). In the realm of food, Hamburg, Finkenauer, and Schuengel (2014, 2) argue that food offerings or giving can be considered *empathic emotional regulation* by parents, which ultimately strengthens this sense of dependency. Pugh also found this to be true when adults discussed buying toys, paying for extracurricular activities, or even paying for private school (2009). All in all, primary agents of socialization are commonly considered to be “reliable” sources of both *love* and *knowledge* by children throughout the earlier stages of socialization. Less research has been conducted about spaces where parents are generally absent, such as school, clubs, and kids’ parties.

Beyond a child’s closest family members, cultural capital about food is obtained from extended kin networks and among peers. When examining how kin-networks or friend groups operate, Carol B. Stack’s ethnography, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*, is distinctly relevant to this project due to the demographics of my participants as well as the interactions observed at the summer program. Stack’s detailed ethnography of a black community within an urban area found:

Extensive networks of kin and friends supporting, reinforcing each other—devising schemes for self-help, strategies for survival in a community of severe economic deprivation. . . . I became poignantly aware of the alliances of individuals trading and exchanging goods, resources, and the care of children, the intensity of their acts of domestic cooperation, and the exchange of goods and services among these persons, both kin and non-kin. (1974, 28)

Stack's work suggests that economically and racially marginalized children in a community program might "look out" for one another and bond through conversations or interactions concerning food. Peter Adler and Patricia Adler engaged in participant observation of elementary school boys and girls for more than eight years (1998) and found that peer to peer interactions are important for a child's development and ongoing socialization, which is echoed by Corsaro and Eder's description of peer cultures (1990). Adler and Adler also pointed out that in observing interactions among children we can better understand how children's peer culture parallels and, at time, contrasts with, the adult world.

Extending outside the home, children spend much of their time at school, daycare, or (in this case) a summer program. Within these spaces, they have the opportunity to form networks, which can lead to the "acquisition of symbolic and cultural capital" (Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2012). This can also be extended to social capital and emotional capital. In their article "Capital at Home and at School: A Review and Synthesis," Parcel, Dufur, and Zito argue that capital collected at school is more frequent and peer cultures are a "source of reinforcement" (1990; 198).

Emotionality of Belonging Among Kids

Children's peer cultures function as spaces that can confer or deny a feeling of belonging. From a young age, children (re)produce ideas appropriated from adults that can work to exclude or include individuals (Yuval-Davis 2006; Kustatscher 2017). For instance, Yuval-Davis reviews various political projects in Britain that aim to create a sense of belonging among citizens despite their cultural, religious, linguistic, or historical differences. In this piece, Yuval-Davis describes belonging as a "dynamic process, not a reified fixity, which is only a naturalized construction of

a particular hegemonic form of power relations” (2006, 199). She found that certain forms of belonging are quite difficult to achieve for those with identities that are often marginalized or threatened, despite efforts to increase inclusivity and acceptance by the British government. For individuals that achieve a sense of belonging, she describes it as an “emotional attachment” that causes one to feel at home or safe (2006, 197). Contrastingly, when one’s sense of belonging is threatened by a homogeneous group or overbearing power structure, Yuval-Davis refers to this as a display of the politics of belonging. Relating to children, Kustatscher’s study takes place in a Scottish primary school where she examines the role emotions play among children with varying identities (2017). She found that emotions shape identities as well as a sense of belonging while contributing to the politicization of some individual’s identities within the space. This ultimately impacts social relationships within the primary school: the emotionality or politicization of a space due to varying identities is constructed by those occupying it and their perceptions are taken to other spaces once they leave.

Drawing upon Arlie Hochschild’s concept of an economy of gratitude, which refers to the exchange of thank you’s and other acknowledgements of gratitude in relation to performance of household chores or tasks by spouses (2009, 6), Pugh (2009) uses the “economy of dignity” to describe the way children seek recognition and respect from peers within an “emotional landscape of consumption.” She continues by adding, “children together shape their own economies of dignity, which in turn transform several different economies of dignity—at school, at their afterschool program, and in the neighborhood, for example—where different tokens can become salient in the peer culture resident there (7).” As Pugh hints, these emotionally charged spaces can lead to reinforcing inequalities when someone does not have the right “scrip of belonging” or capital.

With my research, I strive to uncover how emotions are integrally connected to consumption and certainly to food or food experiences. In doing so, I will be highlighting the way children exclude or include their peers within a shared foodscape. Do they exclude other children who are not consuming relatively prestigious brands, items, or experiences as other researchers have found? (see Chin 2001; Ludvigsen and Scott 2009; Pugh 2009). By focusing on the connection between emotions and food consumption and food talk, I will be adding to the literature examining the role emotions have in our consumer culture and peer networks (Reay 2004). This is accomplished by including the voices and actions of children in consumption conversations. I went into this study expecting to find the type of competitive consumption illustrated in classic studies by Veblen and Bourdieu and applied to children in more recent research by Chin (2001), Pugh (2009), and Ludvigsen and Scott (2009). Did children in this low-income and predominantly Black community center engage in an economy of dignity in which certain foods and ways of eating became criteria for a sense of belonging? Or was something more complex going on that was more distanced from our images of competitive individualism?

CHAPTER 3:

SAMPLE AND METHODS

To explore the knowledge and meaning being associated with foods by children outside the confines of the family home, I engaged in a qualitative research study at a civic association in the Tampa Metropolitan area, which I will refer to as Caringdale Junior Civic Association (all names in this study are pseudonyms).

The Site

The Caringdale Junior Civic Association is a certified non-for-profit agency made-up of: a community garden, the Anything is Possible Center, and the Main Community Center. While the community garden is near the Main Community Center, the Anything is Possible Center is located a few blocks up the road. For the surrounding community, the Caringdale Junior Civic Association provides character and leadership development, engagement with the arts, and educational programs for children throughout the school year and summer. Since 1995, the association has been encouraging and inspiring young people to become caring and hardworking individuals that will one day give back to the community.

Around 2005, the association was able to secure grants and additional donated funds to renovate a historical church into the Main Community Center. This historic brick church happens to be nestled alongside a major highway and over the past few years both the Main Community Center and community garden have continuously been threatened by the highway's expansion. If the expansion is successful, the community would lose the Main Community Center as well as

its garden. Referring to the latter, if the community were to lose its garden it would also lose a resource for herbs, fresh produce, and even gardening knowledge to teach children either attending the afterschool program or accompanying their parents to take care of their garden plots in the garden.

Many of the achievements of the Caringdale Junior Civic Association have come as a result of the hard work put forth by the association's leaders and volunteers. Whether it be working in the garden, educating children, providing materials for events, or even writing and submitting grants, the association is made-up of many people that sacrifice their time to maintain it and its parts. By doing so, they are improving the neighborhood and helping families which altogether fosters a sense of community and increases connections among its members.

I have seen this sense of community first hand while helping other volunteers sand windows for the garden's aquaponic feature and attending events. I first became involved with the site over the course of approximately three years. I first became acquainted with the site during an Environmental Anthropology service learning course I took as an undergraduate in the fall of 2015. After the course was over, I continued my commitment by volunteering in the association's community garden. As I prepared to begin my graduate studies in fall 2016, I had an opportunity to assist in research at the same site with several professors at my institution. This research was conducted to assess the impact of the garden on community members. The garden not only provides food for community and garden members, but it is a place for children attending the after-school program to learn about growing food and plants. In the garden, children also learn about soil quality, organic methods of pest control, aquaponics farming with a small population of tilapia, and much more once or twice a week during the growing season.

Because Florida's weather gets hot, planting and growing does not occur throughout the entire summer.

Despite garden activities being halted for the summer, the program coordinators still make an effort to educate the children attending the summer program about gardening and the environment with lessons taught once a week by the garden manager, Debra. This is an ongoing initiative to get children excited about growing healthy food for themselves and the community, as well as learning where certain vegetables, fruit, and herbs originate. The program and association also teach children who attend this program entrepreneurial, business, and community service skills. For instance, at one of my follow-up visits, children were placed into groups to propose a business model. They were instructed to create a business, name, and a business plan or purpose. All four groups mentioned how they would give back to the community or employ community members as part of their business plan. Throughout my time spent volunteering or researching at this site, the objective has consistently been to shape children into successful and caring individuals that will positively impact others no matter their circumstances.

Since the children in the program come from a working class or lower-socioeconomic background, the program has little to no cost for parents and provides lunch to those registered for the summer program. These lunches were donated by Florida's Department of Agriculture and counselors would hand them out to children each day. Likewise, snacks were also provided for the children. During the first observations I performed, lunch came in a white cardboard box and always included a sandwich wrapped in white parchment paper which consisted of dark pink (almost purple) meat and cheese. This was usually accompanied by a small bag of whole grain goldfish, a cup of fruit, a bag of grapes, and a small plastic bag of juice or carton of milk saying

“cool cow.” For the last couple of visits, however, lunch was served in a clear plastic bag and included a small bag of pre-shelled sunflower seeds, whole grain pizza crackers, juice, Hershey’s chocolate milk, Craisins, and a circular container of white cheddar cheese (“gourmet spreadable cheese”). According to Kimberly, one of the counselors at the summer program, the clear bag was filled with “junk snacks” and should not be considered lunch. Kimberly had informed children to bring their own food if they did not want to eat the donated food. However, throughout my visits, most children did not bring lunch. One boy, Lucas, brought his lunch most days. Other students would bring snacks such as a bag of chips. On one occasion, McFlurry and another girl brought leftovers to be heated up in the microwave made available in the Center’s mini-kitchen.

As mentioned earlier, the program educates children on how to grow food and make healthier food choices. Yet, the program depends on the donated food from the Department of Agriculture to feed the children attending the summer. In other words, the food selection is out of the program leaders’ control, and despite the unpopular nature of these government provisions, program leaders continue to provide this food to the children due to the fact it is all they have available and many kids do not or cannot bring food from home to consume during lunch/snack times.

Methodological Approach

Following Charmaz (2002) and Howard Becker (1998), I pursued a grounded theoretical approach while collecting data through observations. This methodological approach was originated by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their study examining the process of dying in hospitals. In 1965, they published their findings in *Awareness of Dying* which then led to the

publication of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* two years later in 1967. Their 1967 publication outlined how they approached research using grounded theory and its purpose and benefits.

Grounded theory is best used for an inductive approach and does not seek to verify grand theory like many of the studies that were being performed at the time. Instead, by applying a grounded theory approach, the researcher builds theory out of data they themselves have collected. This led me to use grounded theory since my own project was an exploratory study with little published previously on the particular subject of marginalized children's foodscapes.

Altogether, more than thirteen hours of observation were completed during the summer of 2017. I primarily observed at the Anything is Possible Center where children were present from approximately 7:30 until 5:30 on weekdays. Due to my guiding research question concerning food, I only visited during lunch and snack times. Lunch time usually began at noon and snack time began around 3 or 3:30 in the afternoon. Throughout my observations, I would arrive early to make sure I did not miss lunch or snack time.

Keeping track of what I saw and heard was made possible by a notebook, pen, and my phone. When children uttered something I thought was vital to remember word for word, I would write it down in my notebook while observing. Since observations lasted one to two hours, I would record audio messages on my phone while driving home to ensure I didn't forget the order of events or who said what. Fieldnotes were completed the day of observation and allowed me to recall events and conversations more easily. At times, my internal thoughts or queries become part of my fieldnotes. As a result, my observations were processed through my own insights. No matter how hard a researcher may strive to completely abandon bias, she can never do so.

My own food history and memories cause me to interpret moments or interactions among children in a particular manner. This affects my analysis of fieldnotes as well. I engaged in open and focused coding as described by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011; 172-173). First, I read fieldnotes line by line and noted themes and wrote memos, as suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Then, I focused on the themes that seemed most significant and read fieldnotes once again to avoid missing data that seemed to support my major themes. It was throughout the phase of choosing my major themes where I began to define a framework for my thesis, which concerns the (co)construction of belonging within this particular space by children through food.

Sample

After all, the children that attended the Caringdale Junior Civic Association's summer program in summer 2017 are the focal point of this project. Many of the children who attended in the summer were also part of the after-school program in the previous school year (2016-17). This explains why, through past experience at the site, I already knew several of the children when I began my observations in Summer 2017. While observing snack and lunch times, the average number of children present ranged from thirteen to eighteen children. The group was almost evenly split between males and females. Nearly all children that attended the summer program were African American with the exception of two Hispanic children that were siblings.

For my research, I primarily focus on the food talk, choices, and stories of seven of the participating children (see Table 1). I chose to focus on these seven children because they were most often present at the center and spoke to me the most during lunch and snack times, which is displayed in my fieldnotes. These children were between the ages of six and eleven. Four were

females and three were males. As one can see in the table showing the profile of my main sample, McFlurry and Cinnamon Bun were the only children interviewed and therefore were the

Table 1. Profile of Main Sample*

Pseudonym	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Sex	Siblings in Program
1. *McFlurry	11	African American (“I love myself”)	Female	CB and Owen
2. *Cinnamon Bun (CB)	10	African American (Haitian and Spanish)	Female	McFlurry and Owen
3. Regina	8	Latina (white)	Female	Lucas
4. Lucas	7	Latino (white)	Male	Regina
5. Owen	9	African American	Male	McFlurry and CB
6. Julian	~8	African American	Male	n/a
7. Nora	~6	African American	Female	n/a

*Participants 1-2 were the only children that were interviewed for this study.

only ones to choose their pseudonyms. Although these pseudonyms have a food theme, neither of the children were instructed to choose food related names—perhaps they could tell from my line of questions that food themes were of particular interest to me. The rest of the children were given more popular human names as their pseudonyms to avoid reducing them to food items. Additionally, McFlurry and Cinnamon Bun were given an opportunity to define their race at the end of their interviews. McFlurry described her race as “I love myself” and avoided the application of labels to herself. Alternatively, Cinnamon Bun was unsure of how to explain her race. She hesitated before saying that her grandma is Haitian and Spanish, but that her sister is “kind of Chinese.” I have conveyed their responses in the table above.

This relates to my own positionality; I am a white female that is 10-14 years older than my participants. As an older white researcher, I was aware that some children might be hesitant

to talk with me due to my age or race. As previously mentioned, all of my participants were African-American with the exception of two Latinx children. Yet, due to my past work with the association, several of the children were already familiar with me. This, I believe, made it easier for me to gain the trust of the children attending the summer program. Additionally, when talking to children, I allowed them to completely discuss their opinions or share stories they thought were important. I avoided cutting them off and acknowledged parts of their statements to convey that I was truly listening to them.

Fostering a sense of trust was something I tried to extend into the two interviews I completed with Cinnamon Bun and McFlurry. Again, I believe my past involvement with the association helped me accomplish a rapport with both interviewees since I had met them before this project began. These interviews were approximately thirty and fifty-six minutes long and throughout each interview I used a guide with questions already formed to guide me (Appendix A). However, I did not limit my questions to only those found in the interview guide. Based on the responses of my interviewees, I would ask them to expand on certain points made or explain a particular experience as if they were reliving it. As mentioned by Robert S. Weiss, picking up markers “dropped” by interviewees can allow a researcher to unveil nuances they had not yet considered (1994). Picking up markers during my interviews allowed them to become more like a conversation and built rapport, which can be seen throughout interview transcripts.

Much like the coding of my fieldnotes, I performed open and focused coding throughout my interview transcripts by highlighting important segments with various colors for differing themes. Themes established throughout the coding process of my fieldnotes were kept in mind at this stage of the project. Once again, I also included memos while coding. This made it easier to

distinguish which themes were the most salient since the children I spoke with had so much information to share relating to food.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

While all aspects of the conversations among children about food were fascinating to hear while I sat with them during snack time and lunch, in light of previous research on children and belonging, I became particularly interested in the question: how does food become a resource for belonging among these children? To date, there are no studies discussing how belonging is accomplished around food by low-income and racially marginalized children's peer cultures. After reviewing the data, two connected themes emerged from both observations and interviews that allow me to explore this question further. The first main theme I call *Constructing a Foodscape: Capital in a Summer Program*. I noticed that the children I observed (co)construct the Center's foodscape. In this section, I will highlight the knowledge and meaning or value being associated with food by children in the program and how these constructions allow the children to gain a sense of belonging with peers, family members, and even the larger consumer culture. My second theme relates to the trading and distributing of food items by children. I have titled this theme *Un/Desired Food Allocations*. In this section, I explain what children do with desired and undesired food and expand on how their reallocations connect with social and emotional capital of themselves and other kids. Both sections are primarily supported by interactions I observed and food talk I overheard, yet I will also refer to my interviews with two children who describe in greater depth their relationship with food as well as how this relationship impacts their relationships with others. Altogether, these themes represent two

angles on the food reality and on the maintenance or acquisition of capital among children attending the summer program.

Throughout my analysis, I use Berger and Luckmann's (1969) social constructionist perspective to refer to the children's (co)construction of reality; in this case, the reality is precisely pertaining to food and is also referred to as their *foodscape*. However, I will also refer to the "interpretive reproduction[s]" of social, emotional, and cultural capital by children (Allan and Catts 2013; Corsaro 2005; Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2012). Although my study is exploratory, it examines the ways in which children talk about, interact with, and connect with others and with the larger communities through food. This is important information to gather if we would like to better understand how young people experience food and navigate through and within consumer culture. Also, it is an example of how children (re)produce information to construct a reality where they can, at times, serving as the gatekeepers of food information selectively passing along knowledge among the mass media, school, program, friends, and family.

Despite being roughly 10-14 years older than most of the children, I tried to make these children's reality my own by paying close attention to their food stories as well as their knowledge of edible items, such as its flavor, consistency, names, or smell. This was accompanied by what this knowledge meant to them individually or what it might mean to others. Food knowledge and meaning, which I will discuss in my first analysis section on constructing a foodscape. This helped children decide what to do with items they received from counselors or food brought from home. I did not observe the children when they received these donated food items for the very first time, so I am unable to offer information about their first reactions. However, I was able to learn what they currently thought and knew about the food being consumed in this space. I also learned some of their thoughts about food consumed at

home or in eating establishments. This was sometimes accompanied by how certain food items or experiences made them feel. Altogether, my findings will show that food is not merely something that is eaten; food interactions are often accompanied by various memories, emotions, and stories.

Constructing a Foodscape: Capital in a Summer Program

As expected from reading the research of both Chin (2001) and Pugh (2009), I found that children used a consumer good, in this case food, as a means for vying for their own belonging within the group. But I also found something that I had not anticipated: the children I studied also used food as a scrip for helping their peers to feel a sense of belonging in the group. In this analysis section, I will expand on two aspects of these processes: First, how children used scrip about food to enable themselves to feel they belonged; and second, how children leveraged their food knowledge as scrip to bring other children into a feeling of belonging in the group. What emerges is a more complex picture of children's "economy of dignity" than the one put forth by Pugh in her award-winning book *Longing and Belonging*, one that paints children as more altruistic and socially inclusive than popular images often portray them.

Contrary to the competitive nature of our current consumer culture and how Americans are characterized as very individualized, the children attending the summer program did not seem to be competing, nor stigmatizing one another (Cook 2013; Kustatscher 2017). Ultimately, this impacted the decisions made in reference to food items as well as reactions to food stories shared among the children. After spending time at the summer program, it became apparent to me that the children were aware of their socio-economic status and experiences resulting from it, which allowed them to display an emotional maturity at times when responding to their peers.

Coupled with their socio-economic status, is that most children shared a marginalized status within the larger society. The status and identities of these children shape their food experiences and food talk which warrants closer examination.

While all of my participants were African American, with the exception of two children that were lighter skinned Latinx, neither race nor ethnicity were explicitly brought up by the children. However, race should be mentioned in any sociological discussion and it is clear that this program aims to educate students not only on basic math or reading skills, but also on the history of African American historical figures. This is conveyed by the posters hung on the walls of the center featuring and celebrating African American historical figures with a short biography, the periodic table, and math/grammar charts. Also, there were quite a few flags suspended from the ceiling representing places such as the United States, Florida, South Africa, Jamaica, and several African countries.

Though not directly referred to in the context of food, gender was certainly embodied, enacted, and occasionally enforced in ways that lived up to the norms of society, whether in terms of the way that girls dressed compared to boys, friend groups that formed dividing girls and boys, or conversation topics (e.g. girls discussed makeup, boys discussed basketball or video games). For instance, on my final observation, several children had split my hair into multiple sections for each of them to braid. Lucas, a young Hispanic boy, joined in the braiding. While doing so, McFlurry told him, “You can’t play with hair, you’re a boy!” Lucas quickly responded, “I can too!” She didn’t reply, but instead looked on. After about five minutes, all of the girls began to scold Lucas for not being gentle enough, causing him to give up on braiding and walk away. Just as adults reinforce boundaries, children interpret actions or behavior shown by adults and apply it in their own lives. McFlurry learned at some point that it is unacceptable for boys to

braid hair and the other girls braiding hair followed her lead. While gender is always an important feature of all facets of social life, conversations that reenacted or challenged gender normative behaviors were not as frequent as the other findings I will discuss in the following subsection.

Constructing Belonging and Inclusion in a Foodscape

Despite the fact that race and ethnicity and gender were not blatantly introduced by participants as being linked to food through my observations, social class was. My impression was that because the young people attending the program come from a lower socio-economic background, they are familiar with how to approach situations resulting from a lack of resources or money (Chin 2001; Edgecomb 2010). I knew from my earlier work at the site and through conversations with counselors and association leaders over the years that many of the children's parents cannot afford the full price of fees for the program—the prices must be discounted if their children are to participate. In fact, the program fees were completely waived for some children.

One such example from my own findings relates to a pair of children that often came to the center to retrieve the donated food during lunch time only then to immediately leave. Some of the children would chat with them as they made their way to get food. I assumed they were siblings, one male and female, most likely between the ages of seven and ten. As an outsider, this seemed odd. However, neither the children nor the counselors *publicly* commented on their visit or found this to be strange. I stress the word “publicly” because one child explained to me (without me asking) why these children came and went so quickly:

Regina returned with her food after waiting in line. After the boy and girl (most likely siblings) also received their food, they walked back out the door and left. Regina watched

them leave then turned to me to say that they get free lunch. “I have to pay for my snacks and lunches,” she stated before making another attempt at the maze in front of her. Her tone and facial expression made it seem like a matter-of-fact explanation for why they came and left so suddenly rather than a malicious comment on the reason the siblings came and went.

These siblings came the next day as well during the pizza party while everyone was lining up for pizza. They knocked on the door to be let in before walking over to the kitchen area. I didn’t hear them say anything. They seemed very excited for pizza by their animated facial expressions. Again, the children in the program did not point out how these two showed up just for food, which implies that all the children are well aware of their reasons for visiting—to eat. Despite their showing up only to get food, the two children were not subjected to any obvious shaming tactics and I did not detect negative comments or laughter from their peers. The children present did not stigmatize these siblings, nor did they do so to other students who receive free or reduced lunches/snacks at the program. How the children learn this information of who is paying and who is not was not made clear to me. Yet, they are keenly aware of the time of day that these two siblings are likely to arrive to receive food.

Food talk and the sharing of experiences when food was present occurred frequently, and I interpreted it as a way of bonding with others. It was made obvious during my visits that rituals such as birthday parties and food outings are considered exciting and important events. Chin’s (2001) and Pugh’s (2009) findings also reveal how special birthday parties are and the ways in which class is visibly exposed. While discussing birthdays one day, Cinnamon Bun, Lucas, and Regina each told me their birthday as well as some of their family members’ birthdays, which was an impressive display of memory. Cinnamon Bun continued by telling all of us about her mom’s recent birthday. She and her family went to Red Lobster with her mom’s friend. This friend drove them to the restaurant in a red Camaro. Afterwards, they all went to get peach

cobbler at Wal-Mart. It was made clear through Cinnamon Bun's body language and tone that the entire experience was a happy and enjoyable one, possibly even exciting. It was not uncommon for Cinnamon Bun or other children to mention the restaurants that they attended to other children. In fact throughout interviews, Cinnamon Bun (CB) expanded upon how important such outings were to her:

Interviewer: So you like going to Bahama Breeze?
CB: Um hm. They're pretty good.
Int: Yeah.
CB: And it has really creative people and amazing people there. They like... They do tricks with fire and things like that.
Int: Oh! Okay.
CB: And there's fancy people there.
Int: Fancy people? What do you mean?
CB: Like, oh... Like there'll be... Sometimes there'll be professional people there like...
Int: Okay.
CB: Like sometimes there... Sometimes they'll like be, I forgot the man's name, he do magic tricks and he'd be on TV. I remember I watched a video of him, me and my sister, he do magic.
Int: Okay.
CB: Yeah.
Int: That sounds like fun though. So you... So you get to see some pretty fancy people when you go to this place?
CB: Yeah.
Int: Is that why you like it or do you like the food the most?
CB: I like it because the food. I like it because of... It's... It's really creative and a fun restaurant.

While visiting Bahama Breeze, Cinnamon Bun not only gets to eat food she enjoys, but she gets to see “fancy” or professional people” and “tricks with fire.” She distinguishes herself from the people who perform and dine at the restaurant which indicates that eating outside the home is not simply another way of obtaining food, but it is a way to have the same experiences as the “fancy people” also dining at Bahama Breeze.

At a later date, Cinnamon Bun conveyed the same sense of excitement when she began to tell Regina and I that her mom was planning a party for her younger brother, Owen.

She informed us that his birthday was in September (she had mentioned this on a past observation as well). After talking about her brother's future party, she told us about her own previous birthday party. It was Hello Kitty themed and there were decorations. Her family and cousins were there. She went on to describe the cupcakes she had instead of a birthday cake. They also were baked and decorated in a Hello Kitty theme. I asked if they were chocolate or vanilla and she confirmed they were both. Regina spoke up and said, "I've never had that." Cinnamon Bun was a bit astonished by the fact that Regina never had a birthday party or themed birthday cupcakes, but was able to sense she was upset by missing out. Cinnamon Bun spoke up and reassured her that maybe she would be able to afford one this year.

Cinnamon Bun, realizing the disappointment in Regina's voice and expressions, tried to inspire optimism within the young girl. This emotional capital displayed by Cinnamon Bun works in favor of Regina and ultimately maintains their social relationship (Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2013). The realization that another child perhaps feels left out due to a lack of resources or never having experienced something as symbolic as a birthday party with treats can inspire not only an individual effort toward inclusion, but it can cause a collective one. Just as children ignored the circumstances of visitation concerning the siblings, Cinnamon Bun was cognizant of Regina's emotional response to never having a birthday party of her own, and she replies in a way that encourages hope for a party of her own this year. This another demonstration of how the process of belonging is made possible at the Center due to the emotional knowledge of those present. Even when children without comparable levels of economic and cultural capital were invited into the fold they are afforded dignity and a sense of belonging.

This is contrary to the politicized identities of children described by Kustatscher. The children in this program did not commonly compete nor expose one another due to their

identities or experiences relating to class, race, or ethnicity. I believe that because the children have similarly marginalized identities, they do not engage in the same type of power dynamics that might be present with more affluent respondents in other studies (see Yuval-Davis 2006; Kustatscher 2017). Living in a poor community seemed to make these children less competitive.

Instead of children “performing belonging” for their own sake, it appeared that inclusion was being performed by children who were considerate of other children’s emotions. When considering the moment between Regina and Cinnamon Bun, Regina has experienced the emotional disappointment and sadness related to missing out. Additionally, she is aware of the siblings’ class statuses and does not “out” them or publicly comment on their lack of funds to afford the food available through the program. This leads me to believe that as a result of the children’s classed experiences and knowledge that not all can afford food due to their social status, children act differently in this setting based on a collective understanding that many of their parents cannot always afford birthday parties, pizza parties, or even the cost to attend the program and receive lunch and snacks. This sense of emotional understanding and “[shared] values” enables them to belong and bond within this space as well as create a peer network that actively strives to ensure others are included.

Concurrently, this gives the children in this foodscape more emotional and social capital than they might have elsewhere due to their similar class and racial identities (Allan and Catts 2013; Kustatscher 2017). The center insulates them from the competitive consumerism that has been featured in research on the middle classes (e.g., Pugh 2009). While I have already mentioned the fact that race was not explicitly referred to by my participants, I cannot accurately depict the space without pointing out that my participants were not racially diverse. This is vital to consider in relation to capital of any kind and how power operates within and across spaces

(Kustatscher 2017). The Center where my observations took place was not inherently competitive based on my observations. Contrarily, the peer culture operating within this space was supportive and children “[looked] after their own” much like the participants in Carol B. Stack’s (1974) and Alan and Catt’s work (2013). As demonstrated by Holt, Bowlby, and Lea (2012), emotional capital gained through nurturing relationships encourages the acquisition and reproduction of social and cultural capital as well. For these kids, they did not typically experience stigmatization due to their class or ability to purchase particular types of food or brands. This is unlike the children participants mentioned in other pieces of literature (Ludvigsen and Scott 2009; Pugh 2009)

Food Preferences, Expectations, and Behavior

Expanding on the topic of capital, cultural capital was displayed in children’s descriptions, knowledge, and portrayals of food items or consumer destinations such as restaurants or grocery stores. Children had the freedom to tell me how they disliked one food item more than another through diction, expressions, or body language. When asking about food preferences, every child took advantage of their opportunity to tell me what they did or didn’t like about particular food(s).

The most disliked item the children received was the sandwich wrapped in white parchment paper donated by the Department of Agriculture. While it was not common for children to actually eat the sandwich, one boy named Arthur took a bite of his sandwich during lunch time and made a face of disgust before setting it down. Then, he reached inside of his mouth to take out the part he bit off. “Not good?” I asked. He shook his head and started to take it apart; he ate the salami and some of the ham. On my very first visit, before observing any

reactions to the sandwich being served, both counselors, Kimberly and Robbie, made it clear that the children were very vocal about their negative opinions about this sandwich:

“I want to know what types of foods they eat and like or dislike,” I said. Kimberly chuckled and made a face, then told me to follow her so she could show me what they eat. “This is the box,” she said. It was a large brown cardboard box filled with multiple circular objects all wrapped in white parchment paper. Picking one of them up, she unwrapped it to show me. Inside were circular sandwiches. The bread looked hard and the meat was a dark pink-purple color. She explained that students were instructed to put any unwanted food inside this box; day after day it became filled with the sandwiches wrapped in white paper. “They hate these. They tell us every time they eat lunch.” Yet, Kimberly made it clear that the food was donated and that the kids have been told to bring their own lunch if they want to eat something besides what they receive for free. I wondered how many parents could afford to send food every day of summer camp. ... The male counselor, Robbie, who had been quiet for most of my time there continued to talk about the donated food, “I wouldn’t want to eat it either.” His statement was ended by a laugh.

Vocalizing which food they liked or disliked most was important for the children, as it enabled them to bond around a common dislike. But they also expressed their preferences and dislikes to adults, including me. While offering their opinions on food, children spoke about items from the program as well as food they ate when they were not there. On my first visit, the female counselor Kimberly asked if I would like to go ahead and explore what the children thought about food by asking them questions. I preferred to wait until I knew the children a bit more before doing so, yet Kimberly was asking the children to sit down and listen to me before I could complete my response, and so I felt I should go ahead and ask them.

To keep it simple, I stated that I wanted to learn more about what they knew or thought about food. “What do you all like to eat? Or what do you usually eat at home? Anything, tell me anything about food.” At this moment, a hand went up belonging to a Hispanic boy. Calling on him, I asked for his name and what he wanted to tell me about food. His name was Lucas, and he excitedly told me “I like everything.” This made all the other children giggle and a few more hands go up. On the opposite side of the group, I called

on a girl appearing to also be Hispanic named Regina. One of her favorite foods was pasta. I inquired about who she usually eats her pasta with and she explained that she eats with her family, but that eventually her mom goes up stairs and her sister comes home later to eat after work. She seemed very sure of herself while speaking. The next person I called on was a shy African American girl named Cinnamon Bun. She liked all fruit like watermelon, blueberries, and especially strawberries. She mentioned that they were “healthy.” A smaller African American boy near her, Owen, agreed. They were brother and sister. I remembered Debra talking about a boy named Owen who ate everything that grew in the garden. I asked him if he was the same Owen that Debra (the garden manager) talked about that liked beets so much. He nodded his head and smiled. However, a few of the children said there were two boys named Owen in the room. Pointing out the second Owen, I asked him if he also like beets. He nodded too and said he liked to eat everything (just like Lucas). After my questions, I still wasn’t sure which Owen Debra was referring to, but it was exciting to hear that both liked beets! Another African American girl sitting next to Cinnamon Bun then raised her hand to say that she was McFlurry and that her siblings, Cinnamon Bun and the first Owen, all enjoyed fruits and vegetables. Another girl named Monica added how much she liked fried chicken and many other children agreed by shouting things like: “oh yeah,” “me too,” or “I love chicken.” Calling on another African American boy, Carter, he stated he liked green beans a whole bunch.

Every time one of the children made a statement about food, other children offered their own opinion about the food mentioned. This was accomplished through facial expressions, noises, or yelling out what they thought. For example, most of the children desired chicken enough to vocalize or physically express their agreement with Monica. Additionally, the siblings that spoke up about their food preferences not only agreed with one another, but sometimes spoke for one another. It was important for McFlurry to clarify who her siblings were and that they all enjoyed fruits and vegetables. This occurred after her siblings, Cinnamon Bun and Owen already mentioned their preferences of fruits and vegetables. Food became a topic around which children bonded as a group.

Overall, this particular moment was intriguing for the children and despite some seeming quite shy, each person who raised their hand to speak smiled during or after their statement about food. In fact, several children continuously enjoyed telling me their food preferences. Regina, for

instance, asked me why I was at the program observing one day. When I told her I wanted to find out what kind of food they were eating at the program or ate in general, she took the opportunity to tell me once again what she ate by questioning, “Can I tell you what I eat?” I told her “of course” I want to know. Her eyes widened and she raised her voice to say she liked pasta and Chinese food. Then, she got a bit more serious and told me “drumroll please... (I began to drum on my legs) pizza!” Lucas, her brother, was standing nearby at this point and jumped into the conversation to also tell me his favorite things. His favorite fruit was pineapple and he loved noodles and sugar biscuits from Ming Garden. Both children made sure I knew what type of foods they liked. Even when he was not originally a part of the conversation, Lucas joined in to tell us his opinion. It’s clear that he did not want to be left out and that he believed his favorite foods are worth hearing about. While these examples display the agency of children in deciding their own preferences, it also highlights how food talk can act as a means of connection among the children in this group or even myself, an outsider genuinely expressing an interest in what they each have to say or the experiences they’ve had. Through food talk, social connections are not only created but they are maintained (Osowski, Göranson, and Fjellström 2012)

Something as simple as connecting over a shared fondness for French fries occurred with Cinnamon Bun, Regina, Nora, and Lucas. One day, somebody brought up Checkers restaurant. Regina informed us that she really liked Checkers but couldn’t have their buns (flour allergy). I told them I liked the fries and Regina’s face lit up and she proclaimed, “Ohhh, me too!” Cinnamon Bun immediately agreed while Nora (the youngest child in the program) nodded her head up and down furiously. This talk was followed by lunch time where Cinnamon Bun and Nora continued to talk about Checkers and other places they like to eat. This was a common occurrence between the two girls. During my visits, Cinnamon Bun and Regina were almost

always sitting next to one another and would talk. I recall one lunch visit where they bonded over their appreciation for the Craisins given to them by the program. Regina seemed to really like her blueberry Craisins. Cinnamon Bun agreed she liked blueberries and went into a conversation about how much she liked smoothies with fruit in them. She liked to have kale, spinach, and bananas in her smoothie too. I asked if she also liked strawberries in her smoothie and she smiled. “Yeahhhhh,” she said while still smiling.

As previously mentioned, it was very common for children to either convey their opinion of food through their facial expressions, as Arthur or Cinnamon Bun did, or make statements about an item. While the approval or disapproval of food items was demonstrated, such opinions of particular food behavior was also made clear by some children. This occurred when an older girl (probably twelve) sitting next to Cinnamon Bun at a lunch time was telling a story about her cousin who had been playing with his food at a family gathering: “My cousin made a mess with their food and it was so gross. Then, my other cousin picked up a piece of chicken then dropped it and said, ‘I lost my appetite.’” All of the children laughed at the table and McFlurry made a face of disgust.

It became clear that McFlurry had her own critical expectations concerning food behavior. This was made apparent when she frequently made comments to her younger sister, Cinnamon Bun, about the way that she ate her food. One example was when she told Cinnamon Bun, “stop talking while you’re eating.” After commanding her to do so, Cinnamon Bun got quiet and somewhat embarrassed as she looked down at her plate. One can assume that McFlurry might have learned such behavior by being expected to live up to them herself. Her forcefulness towards her sister may seem harsh, but it can be translated as making sure her sister is following the rules which have been imposed by adults and perhaps asserting her role as the big sister who

is acting like her mother. Throughout interviews, these same sisters told me about rules that their parents enforced at the dinner table. For example, Cinnamon Bun (CB) described rules at the dinner table.

- Interviewer: Okay. So whenever you're sitting down to eat or if you're just eating with your family, do they have certain guidelines or rules with...with eating?
- CB: Hm. When we eat, we have... yeah, but... When we eat... When we go to the table, my mom says no phones and she says...and she said we need to talk at a...a level, a level where she can't hear our conversations.
- Int: Oh, okay. So she... So she wants you to talk when you're at the table...
- CB: Yeah, just at level one.
- Int: So is this a new rule that she has started having you do, or has this been a rule for a long time?
- CB: A rule for a long time.
- Int: Yeah. So you usually have to hide your phones when you go to the table?
- CB: My sister...
- Int: Ha...ha...
- CB: That's my sister. Because every time she go to the table, she has her phone. My dad be like, didn't I tell you don't bring your phone to the table? And then she'll try to hide it.

Similarly, Regina corrected me one day when I referred to her food as a snack: "Well, it's not snacks. It's lunch." I laughed and said I was sorry for making the mistake. Children come to learn when it's appropriate to eat, talk, use the bathroom, and more. This is primarily accomplished through parents, but as Regina and McFlurry make clear, sometimes rules learned from adults can be appropriated by children (Corsaro 2005; Osowski, Göranson, and Fjellström 2012). Such regulations I observed were primarily enforced by girls at the Center, which mirrors a finding in a study performed by Maracek and Arcuri who found that girls frequently monitored one another's eating behaviors (1995).

Relating to expectations of eating behavior, all of the children easily recognize when it is time to eat certain meals, as expressed by Regina. The children in the program kept track of time

and knew when it was time to eat. When planning to observe during lunch or snack time, I would always arrive early. Before the established lunch (noon) and snack (three) time, most children began to wash their hands on their own without being told to do so and would constantly ask Kimberly if it was almost time for lunch or snack time. After being asked multiple times, she would finally give in to their questioning and instruct them to start lining up. I too was asked almost every visit “what time is it” or “is it almost lunch?” On one particular visit, all of the children became restless as the clock inched closer to noon:

Lucas asked again for the time. I told him and looking back up from my phone, I made eye contact with Owen from across the room. He maintained eye contact and lifted his left hand up then pointed with his right finger down at his wrist. He too wanted to know what time it was. I mouthed 11:58, signaling the eight with the fingers on my hand. He smiled. These kids certainly kept up with time when it got close to lunch. Lucas asked once again what time it was before taking his seat. I told him 11:59. Regina asked me to repeat the time before exclaiming, “It’s lunch time!”

As I watched this occur during every lunch and snack observation, it seemed as though the children strategically asked about and announced the time. This particular strategy of asking what time it was or announcing that it is lunch time usually worked to the children’s advantage by hinting to the counselors that they were ready to eat. However, on one occasion, children asked Kimberly what time it was so many times that she told the children lunch would be postponed for ten minutes. She hinted that this would teach them patience.

I wondered if the children continually ask this question simply because they are hungry or if they looked forward to lunch and snack times as opportunities to interact with peers without constant intervention by adults. As previously seen with the visiting siblings, keeping track of time for some is important because they can receive a free meal that is likely unavailable at home. Since most of these children require program fees to be waived, their parents may not be

able to provide food in the morning before arriving at the Center. One child, named Julian, complained to the intern, Sylvia, about not getting to eat breakfast all week. Despite the food goals of this program, to inspire healthy eating choices among children by teaching them how to grow their own food and avoid “junk” food, they continue to provide the donated food from the Department of Agriculture to ensure all children in the program are fed Monday through Friday; even when this food includes items high in sugar or lacking nutrients. This has to do with the association’s own lack of funds and resources within the larger foodscape.

After the children line up for lunch and receive this donated food, the counselors also take the time to eat or glance at their phones causing the expected food behaviors or rules that are normally enforced by adults to become relaxed. This was confirmed by the youngest girl in the program, Nora, as she pretended to be a bird:

From the left side of the room, I could hear laughing from one of the older girls. She was staring at Nora from her angle in the room next to the high-top table. Nora was seated at the farther table with sunflower seeds in front of her and had arranged them in a very particular way. Sylvia, the interning counselor, was next to her not really paying attention and instead stood up to walk over to the kitchen. Nora had laid out napkins onto the table and poured 2-3 bags of sunflower seeds onto the napkin creating a neat mound of seeds. The girl laughing began to recruit others from within the room to take a look at Nora’s mound. At first, Nora was paying no attention to their laughter but was pecking the mound like a bird to pick up the seeds with her mouth. She didn’t use her hands except to make sure no seeds were brushed onto the floor beneath her. After a few pecks, she became aware of the older kids openly laughing at her. Yet, she smiled at their laughter and kept on pecking at her mound. . . .Most of the children had finished eating by this time. Nora seemed to finish pecking at her seeds too. She grabbed the napkin with a handful size of seeds left in it and walked over to the trash can, carefully trying not drop a seed. I think one of them fell on her shirt because she looked up at me (the trash can was not far away from my seat and she noticed I was watching her) and loudly said, “it’s a seed.” One of the older boys was standing in the doorway of the bookshelf room and asked Nora if she was a bird now and yelled “cacaw” loudly so most of us could hear him. The same girl who recruited others to watch Nora corrected him by saying Nora was a real bird. Nora said nothing to them and smiled as she sat down next to Sylvia.

At a later observation, I observed Nora eat like a bird again. She had chosen not to sit at the tables. Instead, she was kneeling on the ground in front of a foldable chair, treating it like a table. Much like the past observation, she spread out a few napkins on the chair and poured a couple of packets of sunflower seeds onto them. I watched her to see if she would peck at it like last time. At first, she was using two fingers to pick them up and put in her mouth, but then she pecked at it to pick up a few with her mouth. She alternated a few more times between pecking and picking up before I turned away. What made this moment different from the last time Nora pretended to be a bird was that no crowd formed around her. Yet, she continued to peck. Even when children walked past her to throw trash away nobody made a comment this time. They accepted Nora's eating habit and did not shame her nor point out her actions to others. Nora's bird act is not only tolerated, but it is seemingly encouraged by her peers. Without someone enforcing strict eating rules or behavior, Nora has a creative space to imagine herself as a bird. Although others did not engage in this creative form of play, Nora appears to be pleased with herself while pecking at her pile of seeds.

Un/Desired Food Allocations: What Children do with Un/Desirable Food Items

As expressed in my discussion of the children's foodscape, children (co)construct and display food knowledge and meaning while attending the summer program. In this section of the thesis, I expand on how the kids' characterizations of certain food items and brands are evident in the way children trade or distribute food items. Such actions reveal the value each child seemingly associates with particular food items based on preferences and taste. Additionally, these actions demonstrate the agency of children regarding food choices as well as showing with whom they are willing to share. Such instances were observed at snack and lunch times throughout my time

spent at the summer program and contribute to our understanding of the meaning-making process around food.

I refer to these processes as “un/desired food allocations” since each child’s plan for desired or undesired food items they receive through the program or bring from home varies. Despite the various intentions of the children, all main types of food allocations included trading and distributing and occurred at every snack and lunch time I observed. Snacks and beverages that were especially liked by the children were small plastic packets filled with apple juice, Craisins, and chocolate milk. Most, if not all, children disliked the sandwiches (as described in the previous section). Almost all other items were eventually acquired by another child instead of ending up discarded in the cardboard box where unwanted food was thrown away. After the children have completed all food allocations, the pile of food they are left with is something I refer to as a “food pile.”

Trading

The first method of allocation I began to notice while observing children throughout designated snack and lunch times was trading. Almost every single child completed some type of trading during lunch or snack time. Children would sometimes announce food items they did not want. For instance, during one visit, an African American girl yelled: “who wants my strawberries?” Yet, this usually did not occur without a young person first trying to exchange them for another item they desired. It was quite common for certain children to continuously trade materials with the same people. Knowing which items were desired by certain individuals was beneficial for children also desiring a particular item. If another child did not have anything worth trading, children would normally give it away, which I will elaborate on in the next

subheading. As noted in my fieldnotes, the milk and fruit was given away to others or traded to acquire another item. When considering trades involving milk, chocolate milk was more desirable than white milk.

Distributing

The next allocation I made note of was the distribution of food items by children in the summer program. For this discussion, I only refer to the distribution that occurs after children have received their food from the counselors in the program or have begun to open food brought from home. While I have previously mentioned that simply giving away food did occur, it was less common for children to distribute or share food items when they did not expect another item in return. Yet, it occurred nonetheless. For instance, one young African American boy I refer to as Julian brought his own bag of chips with him (will be inserting image here):

I could see on Julian's bag of chips that they were a brand called Takis. Julian's bag was larger than Carter's and he offered it to the other boys around him. ... While doing so, Julian (still holding the Takis bag and smiling) said to Owen, "One more, that's all you get."

In his interaction with those he is sharing chips with, Julian has control over the moment. He has something that others desire and he is aware of this as he eventually tells another child that he cannot have any more. While such a covetable snack is worth sharing, Julian is mindful that he must save enough for himself. Having possession of the bag and its contents gives him the power to have a larger portion of the Takis chips. However, he can also decide to equally divide the contents of the bag with each person he shares with. Such behavior is not only authoritative, but it is adult-like. Yet, the fact that he is sharing with not just one but multiple people is a testament

to his knowledge that sharing is important to maintain a relationship with those around him – an investment in his social network (Stack 1983; Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2013).

Another example of food giving occurred between Cinnamon Bun and Nora. If you recall, Nora displayed her appreciation of sunflower seeds by acquiring enough to make a seed pile and eating them like a bird. In my observations, Cinnamon Bun also collected sunflower seed packets. Whether or not she was saving them for herself or for someone else is unclear, but she chose to share one of her sunflower seeds packages with Nora:

I diverted my attention to the food in front of Cinnamon Bun. Cinnamon Bun's final food pile included: 3 pizza snack bags, and 3 packs of sunflower seeds. She took one of her three packs of sunflower seeds and threw it to Nora across the room. I surmised that they must have established before the food toss that Nora would get a sunflower pack.

These negotiations occurred frequently among multiple children. A few exchanges I observed were apparently so commonplace and taken-for-granted that they did not even require words between the two parties. I assumed some of these negotiations took place so often that words were no longer required to complete the trade. Or, both were so familiar with the trading process in general that a simple facial expression initiated the exchange. Through her acquisition of sunflower seeds she is able to share one with Nora, someone she considered a friend. Such acquisition of food I call a food pile. Some children put in more effort than others to amass a larger or more specialized food pile.

On one such day, Regina's food pile became so large that she referred to it as a "double lunch." Her final food pile included: 3 juices, 3 chocolate milks, 3 strawberry packs, 2 pizza snack bags, and 3 packets spreadable cheese. Regina turned around and said directly to me, "Look at all my food.... Did you bring your lunch box?" I told her I did not. She kept talking and then asked, "Want some? These are actually really good." She was eating the bag of strawberry

Craisins and I told her I wasn't hungry. ...she turned her body towards me in her seat and put up her hand next to her mouth and made the signal for a whisper. She told me, "I have enough food to last two days." In her acquisition of the food items, Regina becomes excited by her food pile. She invites me to partake in eating some of her pile which is one strategy of expanding her social capital. Despite the fact that I am an adult and white, Regina (a Latina) shows me acceptance through the food offering (Bourdieu 1986; Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2013).

Regina was not the only child who tried to use Regina's pile as a resource to inspire a social relationship. Regina's brother Lucas came back up to Regina and asked her to save him a chocolate milk after looking in the box of unwanted food. Even though it was not his food, Lucas turned around and asked if I wanted something from Regina's pile. I told him I was fine and he walked away.

If Regina couldn't give away her stockpile, what was she planning to do with it?

Cinnamon Bun answered my question for me:

While eating, Cinnamon Bun blurted out, "she's saving some for home." ...I then noticed Regina bagging up her food pile in sequence, much like playing a game of Tetris. I commented on how much food she had and she filled me in that it was not just for her. She was saving some of it for her mom and siblings. One of the wheat pizza snacks she was planning on giving to her cousin. After filling up one bag she picked up her second bag of pizza snacks to investigate what ingredients were in the snack.

For Regina, saving her food is a purposeful act. Her intention is to not only save food for herself, but to give it to others, specifically her family members. This particular incident reminds me of Chin's (2001) and even Stack's (1983) findings. Chin takes kids shopping at the mall where they can spend twenty dollars. Most of them buy gifts for family members and as Chin states: "gift-giving was a powerful way for children to strengthen, transform, or maintain relationships with

those around them” (2001, 139). Similarly, Stack mentions how her participants maintain kinship networks by sharing when they have enough to do so. Both participant groups are made-up of lower income African Americans. Whether a picture frame (gifted to Chin by a young boy on the shopping spree) or an offer to choose a food item from a food pile (in my sample), we see how the act of giving symbolizes a way of solidifying another person’s membership in their network

Additionally, Regina acknowledges that someone at home will want the items she is saving, and she has taken the initiative to provide these edible gifts to her cousin, siblings, and mom. Beyond that, she takes great pride in her food piling and does not seem to care when Cinnamon Bun points out that she plans to take it all home. Additionally, Regina and Lucas both ask me if I would like anything from the food pile which implies that the brother and sister are familiar with sharing.

Another moment worth mentioning concerned a conversation between Regina and me in which shared how the giving of a non-food item can enable her to remember a food event. This occurred throughout the pizza party on the last day of the program and my final observation. Regina, sitting to my right, told me to “look.” She was lifting her slice of pizza with one hand and presenting her cup with the other. She still had the pizza slice sticker on her cup and was facing it towards me. Being aware that it’s important to act excited about or at least acknowledge what kids make a point to show you, I smiled before saying, “whoa, that’s cool!” She told me I shouldn’t put a pizza sticker on pizza because then I would eat it and it’s not real food. I laughed and told her she was correct. Regina then took a sip of her punch before setting it back down on the table. She looked at me, then back at the cup. Peeling the pizza sticker off, she looked at me and told me she wanted me to have it to remember the pizza party. I thanked her and told her I’d put it in my notebook so I’ll never lose it. While not necessarily deemed an act of distribution, it

is an act of giving. Regina seems to be keenly aware that sharing her acquired food items or pizza sticker will evoke a particular emotion from another individual (in this case, referring to me) or even cement a memory shared with the individual.

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

At the Anything is Possible Center, I observed how children's food experiences and food talk seem to provide a shared space where children can use food and other kinds of talk as a means of inclusion and belonging. Such non-competitiveness is often depicted as an anomaly in our larger consumer-oriented culture which tends to encourage the purchasing of items for oneself (and at times others) as a means to happiness. The children attending the summer program did not seem to commonly compete, stigmatize, or shame one another (Pugh 2009; Ludvigsen and Scott 2009).

The process of constructing belonging within this summer foodscape was reciprocal and the children's methods of "fitting in" demonstrate that children in general establish rules and norms of their own separate from those of adults (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Ludvigsen and Scott 2009; Pugh 2009). At the Center, it was not common for adult counselors to impose harsh rules or closely monitor children during lunch and snack times. This allowed students to have the time and space for conversations around food and other things that were important in their world. While adults normally impose various rules on children and are a primary socialization force in children's lives, some rules and instruction are shaped and vary by location, culture, language, and ideologies. Rules nuanced by culture, may create differentiation among children which can lead to stigmatization based upon race or ethnicity, gender, or class; sometimes individuals may even experience stigmatization based on the intersection of numerous demographic factors. Such stigmatization can result in institutionalized forms of inequality related to particular identifiers

(Yuval-Davis 2006; Kustatscher 2017). Of course, children can either perpetuate or challenge the behavior and beliefs of what they have been taught throughout socialization by parents or their extended kin network as they grow older and are exposed to various individuals, groups, or organizations (Corsaro 2005; Alan and Catts 2014; Bourdieu 1986). It became clear to me while observing at the summer program that the participating children displayed agency of their own by (co)constructing a foodscape or reality with peers. With consideration of literature pointing out how some children shame peers based on receiving free/reduced lunch or food brought from home (see Ludvigsen and Scott 2009), within this space, it was uncommon for peers to inflict shame or guilt upon other students.

When assessing my data, it was absolutely necessary to consider the socio-economic background and race of the children attending the program. Much like the participants in Carol B. Stack's and Chin's work, the children "[looked] after their own" (1983; 2013) and seemed to be working to expand their social network by treating their peers with care. Their treatment of others (co)constructed an environment at the program that was focused less on class hierarchies or problems stemming from their identities compared to other peer cultures or environments depicted in other contexts. Unlike Kustatscher's (2017), Ludvigsen and Scott's (2009), and Pugh's (2009) findings, the children did not commonly one-up one another or compete to display status by food ownership, experiences, or knowledge. In fact, children frequently made a point to include others in some way much like those mentioned in Chin's work (2001).

Belonging is possible even without economic capital or a shared personal experience at particular food destinations. Children gained emotional capital through the supportive relationships put on display throughout my observations. Altogether, this simultaneously can

allow for the acquisition and reproduction of social and cultural capital as well (Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2012).

Implications

The consumption habits children learn at a summer program are (re)produced within other foodscapes and can ultimately encourage a variation of practices among peers. I would urge those exploring food consumption habits to include a discussion of emotions and extend this to consumption studies as a whole. As Illouz (2009) demonstrates, emotions are at the root of our consumer culture. The desire to belong or be accepted is a feeling I would argue all of us have felt repeatedly in our lives. We can no longer assume that all consumers are inherently status-driven or hyper-competitive, nor that economic capital has more allure than other forms of capital (Veblen 1899; Bourdieu 1986). As I have shown, emotional and social capital seem more important in the talk and actions of these children than the display of economic capital through brands, which has been portrayed in past studies (Ludvigsen and Scott 2009; Pugh2009).

This project is also an expansion on work by Stack (1983) and Chin (2009) exposing the ethnocentrism in consumption literature. If we as researchers are to adequately assess relationships being formed through consumption, it requires a look at all consumers. Without such consideration, we not only fail to adequately depict consumers as a whole, but we ignore the agency of consumers that are already marginalized. Without the representation of people of color, this can (and has) led to assumptions about communities of color.

My project presents a positive depiction of a foodscape occupied by children of color. Yet, it also highlights how the program these children attend lack the resources to provide the healthier food options that counselors and association leaders so often speak about. Though the

philosophy of the program is contradicted by the type food being provided throughout the summer, this gets at a larger issue of what food is handed off to summer programs or lunch rooms to ultimately end up in the stomachs of children. In the case of the Caringdale Junior Civic Association, the food being provided is donated by the Department of Agriculture. Once again, MacKendrick has made it clear that foodscapes can be “classed and racialized environments” that reinforce social inequalities and further the marginalization of certain communities where food opportunities are lacking (2014). The association truly works toward providing healthier food options by teaching children how to plant, grow, and harvest food in their community garden. I convey such a contradiction because in order to remedy the problem of “junk” food being provided to children or a lack of funds to help programs such as these, we must consider multi-faceted solutions without assuming that these communities are not already striving for a better lifestyle already.

By completing this project with children at the center of the conversation, I join other childhood researchers like Cook (2008; 2013), Corsaro (2005), and Peter and Patricia Adler (1998) inviting researchers to think more seriously about the voices of children. Rather than implying that childhood is simply a stepping stone towards adulthood, I would urge researchers to acknowledge the differences of the two but also understand that they are connected by time. One segment of the life course impacts the other. Just as Chang and I have memories that have lingered into adulthood, I predict that moments experienced by the children at the summer program will be remembered in the years to come. Children are agentive beings as much as adults and they have the power to (co)construct spaces—even to the point that they appear to be an anomaly in comparison to the larger consumer culture, which the children in my project show.

Limitations

Due to organizational changes and the fact that the surrounding area was in a moment of transition, it was sometimes difficult to schedule observations or ensure that children and counselors would be in the normal observation spot. Additionally, it was difficult to obtain consent from parents to perform interviews. The program offered a drop-off service at the end of the day to get students home which made it difficult to speak to parents directly. Additionally, based on conversations I had with the children, many parents were very busy working two or more jobs throughout the week. Consequently, this study is weakened by a shortage of interview data.

Future Research

In the future, I would like to obtain more interviews to compliment observations and gain more information about the “home” and parents. I believe this could be helpful to see the exact knowledge, language (such as diction), behavior, and habits that are being appropriated by children and then (re)produced.

Also, adding to the sociology of food, I would like to explore the process of belonging for children and adults with food allergies or sensitivities (gluten, peanuts, soy, etc.). For instance, what difficulties do they face in striving to belong in groups or spaces that are not always considerate of such allergies and sensitivities? I think such research could also benefit those with allergies/sensitivities and perhaps shed a light on their experiences within the broader context of our consumer culture as a whole. The end result I would hope for is to improve the quality of experience for those that might fear visiting certain places due to a lack of awareness or consideration that I assume is currently present in the majority of consumer destinations.

Additionally, I would like to explore the food experiences of adopted children. Two of my participants, Regina and Lucas, were siblings and adopted. I am curious as to whether or not this greatly impacts their process of belonging when relating to food and the process of creating family dynamics, rituals, or rules. Such a question is worth future exploration and the answer would most likely depend on when the children were adopted and what food memories are already in place. After all, children can learn an assortment of methods for resourcefulness.

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APPENDIX A:

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CHILD

1. Thinking about yesterday, can you tell me about what you ate during the day beginning with when you got up? Would you describe this as normal for you? If not, how did what you ate yesterday differ from what you would normally eat?
2. Are there particular rules that your family has set for you about meals and snacks? Can you describe these guidelines? Have they changed at all in the past few years? How do you deal with them?
3. Who tends to be the most involved in making meals and snacks for you in your house? Can you tell me how she/he is involved, like does this person shop, cook, both? Do you get to have a say in what foods you end up eating? How? Do you ever go along to shop for food?
4. Is there any food that you like to help shop for or help cook? Describe your favorite ways of helping or working with food.
5. Are there any TV shows or internet sites that have to do with food that you like to see? Have you ever wished you could make something you see on TV or on the Internet? What happened with that?
6. Do you ever get to go out to eat? Where do you go most often? What do you order? What do other people in your family usually order?
7. Can you tell me about 2-3 of your favorite meals? Are these meals something that you get to eat very often? Are there particular foods that you ask someone to make for you? What are these?

8. Are there particular foods and snacks that you used to eat that you do not eat anymore? How come? Are there particular foods or snacks that you used to not eat and now like to eat? Can you describe these snacks and food?

10. Are there any times when you have hidden some food from other people in your family so that you could eat it later?

11. Can you tell me about the last new food or snack that you ate? How come you tried this? What did you think about it?

12. What would be a perfect day of eating for you? What choices would you make about food and snacks?

13. Are there any foods that your family eats that are traditions that were handed down from older relatives? What are they? What's cool/uncool about them?

14. What are your favorite things to do when you go to the Rec Center? Are you in any activities there? Do you bring snacks to the rec center?

Demographic Information

1. Gender
2. Age, Year in School
3. Who lives in the home?
4. Race/Ethnicity (What race and ethnicity do you consider yourself?)
5. Can you describe your parent's (or parents', caregiver's) job?