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“COOKING WITH LOVE”: FOOD, GENDER, AND POWER

by

MELINDA MILLS

Under the Direction of Cassandra White

ABSTRACT

This work explores the complex relationships between women, food, and power. Engaging the literature of feminist food studies allowed me to record the narratives and examine the experiences of women living in the United States. I take a close look at how women solidify and strengthen their social relationships to family and community through the use of food, or compromise and weaken these relationships through the denial or refusal of food, in the form of cooking or eating. I also consider both local and global contexts for understanding food, in terms of consumption and chores. Finally, I demonstrate how imagery of food allows women to participate in processes of commodification and fetishism.

INDEX WORDS: Food, Women, Power, Gender, Feminism, Feminist, Family, Colonialism, Colonization, Cultural food colonialism, Food adventuring, Culture

“COOKING WITH LOVE”: FOOD, GENDER, AND POWER

by

MELINDA MILLS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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2010

“COOKING WITH LOVE”: FOOD, GENDER, AND POWER

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May 2010

DEDICATION

To everyone I love, especially my Mom and Dad.

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First, I want to thank my committee, Dr. Cassandra White, Dr. Jennifer Patico, and Dr. Bethany Turner. Each one of them continues to inspire me and demonstrate how important the presence of young women scholars remains. I want to thank all of you for being such positive and powerful influences in my life. Dr. White proved to be a wonderfully supportive thesis chair and academic advisor. Throughout my academic career, I knew that I could turn to her for encouragement and enthusiasm. I so appreciate her being exemplary in her sweet and smart way, and I aspire to be similarly compassionate and academically sharp in my life.

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Since I did much of the reading and writing for this work while watching kids' eyes "glaze" over at a local coffee and doughnut shop, I thank everyone there for helping me see the lived example of food, family, and community. Thanks to you who introduced me to this space and for sharing in the experience.

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INTRODUCTION

Food and Feminism
Feeding the Body, Thinking the Family? (Thinking the Body, Feeding the Family)

This work emerged from an interest in understanding women's bodies and the disciplinary techniques that women engage in and that American society so often imposes on us. The relationship between bodies and food illustrates many of the tensions and negotiations that take place surrounding women's pursuit of the beauty ideal (Bordo 1993; Counihan 1999; Hunter 2005; Lindenfeld 2005). As a result, I wondered about the kinds of relationships that women have with food, given the persistent pressures to pursue an ideal image that often proves illusive.

I imagined that many women might have difficulty discussing food, given the steady regulation of body image and size. Instead, I found that women produced a variety of discourses, all of which contribute to the literature and offer new insight into old phenomena. The narratives that women produce about food show that they employ discursive and subversive strategies to negotiate expectations of how they should perform femininity. Pleasantly surprised by their voices and confidence, the women in my study showed their complexity and some contradictions: some women love food, eating and cooking yet worry about their weight, health, and appearance, while others reject traditional gender roles. They used food in a number of ways that filled them up, literally and figuratively. This work explores food as the fabric of their lives.

This work explores the impact of globalization on local and global cultures, and I examine women's experiences with and relationship to food, family, and community. I also consider the ways women negotiate their social location through eating and cooking, and discuss the kinds of connections that globalization inspires, such that what American women think about food reflects cultural values, as well as images and messages that proliferate in US society.

Beyond the Kitchen? Food Chores and the Persistence of Gender Role Expectations

> That households are considered the domestic domains in which women are expected to be better equipped to assume attendant responsibilities has been documented extensively. Existing literature elaborates on the traditional familial and gendered ideologies that strongly suggest that women manage the household, including food preparation and other unpaid labor tasks and 'acceptable female activity. (Trotz 2002:263).

The idea that food can be a source of empowerment or fulfillment suggests that contemporary cultural understandings of traditional gender norms may be changing. Existing literature suggests that, while gender egalitarian households in the U.S. are increasingly common (Brown and Miller 2002 a or b), gender asymmetries abound.

Additionally, in countries around the world, in various stages of development, the domestication of women takes place. Often, girls and women are denied educational and formal employment opportunities at the expense of being domesticated. Traditional gender ideologies guide this continued domestication, demonstrating how development can fuel dependency and construct women as objects, property, an "appendage" or accessory to men. Various political economies also illustrate how social institutions such as families and work are affected by the political and economic well-being of a nation. The current economic slow-down translates into an increasing number of men losing their positions in the labor force. Globally, the current political economy in the U.S. has not shifted gender roles so dramatically that men now easily assume domestic duties. They may default into these roles during this economic downturn, but future research would have to explore the permanency of these shifts in roles, and in gender ideologies themselves.

The recent election of Barack Obama has created a chance to push for policy changes regarding health, food, and fitness. While the political economy shifts, these policies aim to improve our nation's collective health. Michelle Obama has introduced and spoken about health

policies that address childhood obesity and encourage physical and nutritional health through sound diet and exercise[1]. Seeing the Obamas model gender egalitarianism to some degree, the U.S. population can observe how user-friendly policies can affect this desired change. Keane (1997) notes that these user-friendly policies make healthy eating (and the attendant advice contained within such policies) much more palatable and not "too hard to swallow" (Keane 1997:172).

Cohn (1997) posits that, rather than "being told what to eat," people should be encouraged to balance their food consumption, especially when trying to mediate medical illness or diseases. Policies must then be instructive but sensitive to the various meanings people attach to food. Bradby (1997) found this to be the case among British Asian women, who shared their understanding of nutritional awareness and their identification with their own (Indian) food versus other (British) food. Acknowledging the diverse cultural backgrounds within and across individuals in the nation would strengthen policy effectiveness and more likely help the national population achieve the collective goal of improved health and well-being.

Developing and implementing effective policy in part requires increased sensitivity to historical and contemporary social, economic, physical and other conditions that differentially shape people's lives and their access to food and healthy living. For example, Sydney Mintz (1997, 1985) discusses the political economy in his work, and points to the way people are colonized and commodified through the processes of conquest. As products such as sugar became valuable, the people who produced such products were arguably part of a system of exploitation (see also Mintz 1971). Rather than benefitting women and increasing their

1 See Project Hope The Childhood Obesity Project Child Obesity Policy Brief. http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/data/29/3/DC2/1

economic power, wage labor often suppresses or reduces it. Depending on the political economy, women of different class positions experience upward or downward mobility. Economic and other types of development unevenly benefit women. American women's participation in the formal labor force often reflects and reproduces their class position. Mostly American middle class women thus benefit from the introduction of jobs. Ironically, many of these middle class women also have more choice to hire a domestic worker, or opt to do the work themselves.

This is not to ignore women of other cultures who may also benefit from economic development or play a central role in economic decision-making within societies and cultures. For example, Brenner (1995) considered why Javanese women appear to dominate the household, and assume economic responsibility for the family.

Prior (2001) found that in Jamaica, many women as mothers asserted control over the household earnings brought into the home by men as fathers/husbands. Matrifocality in Jamaica meant that most women assumed an authoritative role, with men arguably decentered in the process (in terms of economic and household decision making). As Prior contends, "To be matrifocal a society must culturally value the role of mother—though not necessarily at the expense of fathers" (Prior 2001:375). Mothers are more salient than fathers in societies such as Jamaica, and they enjoy power in the home. Men often mitigate this power by expressing or enacting violence (see also Stone and James 1995; Shroff 2005).

In many places, men work to publicly maintain their authority while women work to maintain their autonomy (Menon 1995, 2001).

Though some women in Kerala, South India may articulate themselves using the dominant discourse, they create what James Scott (1990) calls a "hidden transcript," that reveals

"their private behavioral practices, at variance with their speech and actions in the public sphere." (Menon 2001: 352). According to Menon, women convincingly perform their submissive role in society, and appear to uphold traditional gender ideology. They are not, however, subservient or oppressed. Menon (2001:359) asserts, "Women's agency and their subversion of the dominant discourse are obscured" by a public image of docility and a private effort to resist patriarchy. They own property and enjoy degrees of autonomy. They deploy discourses that contradict themselves, yet they continue to privately and covertly challenge men's authority in part by pretending that men are the ones in charge.

Menon continues to explain that women's discourse "hides the fact that within their separate sphere women create a space from which they can resist male authority in subtle and silent ways. Their resistance is never articulated; it is a shared secret among women. To voice it would be to bring out into the open, to make public the contradictions within which they operate-contradictions which they accept as part of their everyday lives." (Menon 2001:359)

In both of these examples, Jamaica and South India, a power play exists that creates a paradox. In Jamaica, women must negotiate their power in the home, where they enjoy economic and decision making power yet remain largely economic dependent on men as fathers and husbands. Similarly, Nayar women in South Indian who feign submission to master the mask of respectable femininity demonstrate the dilemma of situating matrilineality within patriarchy. These two examples illustrate the power and presence of women in the home and at work.

The tensions that emerge for women who gain increasing confidence and capability from development programs that ensure their education, employment, and so forth mean that men feel motivated to maintain their hegemonic masculinity, rather than encourage women's autonomy.

Scholars have pointed to the increasing opportunity for women as a path to their independence, something that allows women to then make their own money and decisions. Ironically, the more economically independent women become, the more some men become violent towards them. The literature that engages and exposes these power paradoxes shows how women perform their gender appropriately and under the guise of acquiescence while secretly contesting it. By not explicitly confronting men's authority, the women do not jeopardize their autonomy but they also do not disrupt patriarchy much. "Instead they work around it, and in so doing perpetuate gender hegemonies" (Menon 360).

Couples in gender egalitarian vs. traditional households find great success and ease with making gender role decisions. Gender egalitarian couples tend to share domestic duties and housework, though food chores, or "meal planning, shopping, and preparation" is primarily done by women (Harnack, Story, Martinson, Neumark-Sztainer, and Stang 1998:995). Little attention has been paid specifically to food chore responsibility in households (with even less literature examining these gender role negotiations in non-heteronormative households and relationships).

One exception to this lacuna includes the work of Brown and Miller (2002a). They found that modern men and women share in these chores before and after childbirth; however, in gender traditional (heterosexual) households, women continue to do the majority of the food chores. The dearth of information on food chores in a variety of household arrangements must be addressed. Research that explores how gender role expectations and sexual identity get negotiated in heteronormative and queer relationships would contribute important and new perspectives on this topic. This work partially attempts, within an admittedly heteronormative framework, to address this void, while complicating current conversations about culture, food and feminism.

The domesticated dynamics of gender, power, and the performance of identity play out through the production or preparation, as well as consumption, of food. Examining these dynamics allows one to critically reflect on the tensions between structure and agency that exist between traditional gender role expectations and the functionalist private/public divide. Rather than endorse these functionalist notions of a woman's place as in the home, or in the kitchen, I suggest a more nuanced understanding of the home and kitchen as a place for women, their reproduction of labor, and the solidification of this gendered divide.

Urging this re-imagination of space requires some recognition, for example, of the ways women begin to feel creative, empowered, and connected to others, rather than bored, oppressed, and disconnected docile bodies toiling away their time and energy in encapsulating, perhaps suffocating kitchens. Furthering our understanding of women's position in terms of food preparation and consumption also involves attending to their intersectional social positions that add complexities to this discussion (Collins 2000).

Rather than resigning women to a reality of gender role expectations that imprisons them in or confines them to kitchens, Brown and Miller (2002a) encourage a closer examination and more nuanced interpretation. They urge readers to consider the agency that women assert in choosing to assume responsibility for food chores. Unlike the docile dutiful woman (Foucault 1977) who passively accepts her fate as caregiver and accommodates all others' needs before her own (see Wood 1995), many women report contentment and satisfaction in food shopping (see also Murcott 1995); they especially embraced the roles and responsibility associated with domesticity when they did all or the majority of the cooking (in a family) (Brown and Miller 2002a). Assuming food shopping duties simply complemented their cooking duties, rather than presented itself as a nuisance. In a sense, food shopping and cooking operate as complementary

tasks, getting coupled together to minimize the annoyance of wanting to cook food that another family member failed to procure.

Women in the US who shop largely control food consumption in their respective families, even while choosing food that meets various family members' dietary preferences or restrictions. This parallels what Wood (1995) found in British society. American women often express enjoyment over the autonomy and control they felt in assuming responsibility for food chores and shopping (Brown and Miller 2002a). Their enjoyment of shopping and cooking both converges with and diverges from their enjoyment of making key decisions for themselves and their families. That is, women who enjoy doing food chores may have a stronger aversion to other domestic chores, such as washing dishes or clothes, cleaning, and so on. Taking the reins when it comes to food chores also allows women to consider the preferences of their relatives (Wood 1995), while centering their own preferences.

Wood (1995) posits, "Given the gendered nature of food preparation and cooking, it is unsurprising that a recurring theme in the literature is the problematic relationship which women have with respect to food provision. Not only do women have to consider the need to accommodate family tastes and ensure variety, but they also have to square these with perceived nutritional requirements" (Wood 1995:59). Despite this discussion of the feminine imperative to prioritize the needs of others, updated discussions acknowledge how feminism encourages and allows women to prioritize themselves in the food provision process. This point then contrasts with what Wood asserts.

Under the guise of care and concern for others, these women gesture towards tradition while wearing a mask that deflects their feminism. Scholars have discussed similar issues of masquerades, the mask of womanliness (Riviere 1929), in which women deliberately use

strategies that ensure their access to privilege (through marriage, for example) at the possible expense of being oppressed. They may accept traditional gender roles as requisite and in exchange for the very home that some may see as both a blessing and a curse. For women in romantic relationships, this exchange entails one obligation for another (providing food for shelter, etc.; cooking for protection and provisions) or one pleasure for another. Murcott (1995) discussed this idea in her work, and other scholars have elaborated on metaphors of women and food, and sexual appetites/desires (Blend 2001; Bordo 1998; Curtin and Heldke 1992; Friedensohn 2001; Mora 1997). Since women and men both have a variety of physical, social, material, and emotional needs, traditional gender role arrangements benefits them differently. When facing actual or potential economic exploitation, women often embrace their agency to disrupt ideas of passivity and compliance, to contest and challenge potentially oppressive structures. So it is with women and food.

By appearing to accommodate family members' food preferences but prioritizing their own needs, women engage in subversive strategies that simultaneously uphold and undo tradition. That is, they maintain a façade of selflessness while secretly (or not-so-secretly) exerting power in the choices they make for their families, and really for themselves. The death of self among women in families and relationships so often discussed in the literature (Friedan 1966) ignores the feminist centering of self that restores this subjectivity (sense of self) and the value of women's work (both being and doing) in families and society. Women can employ a kind of "selfless selfishness" that works as an expression of subversive feminism (Lockford 2004). This subversive feminism makes space for women who want to rewrite their gender identity and perform their femininity in postmodern kitchens that no longer solely confine and constrict.

Thus, women who enjoy food chores may appear to embrace traditional gender roles and expectations. Before drawing such conclusions, one must pause to acknowledge the postmodern possibility of different interpretations that allow women to truly enjoy food chores outside of the constraints of duty and obligation. This postmodern moment offers an historical context in which to understand such complex, contradictory behavior and helps make sense of this paradox, so as to reconcile any inconsistencies between ideologies and action. In fact, these inconsistencies, when they manifest in disjunctures between what people say and do, encourage closer inspection.

Not Just Feeding but Nourishing the Family

Women's attempts to subvert hegemonic family structures and any perceived obligations in association are often compromised by notions that nutritional education and implementation in families are women's work (Wood 1995). In this role, women must make decisions about nutrition, a negotiation process that may alter their food choices for their families (Kurz and Johnson-Welch 2001). Brown and Miller (2002), for example, posit,

> Low-income women reported that the influence of husband's and children's preferences on food choice was substantial, making healthful alterations in food choice difficult (with father's preferences having the) strongest influence on family eating patterns…(For this reason), the person making food choices for a family must consider, among other things, resources, convenience, quality, and the needs and desires of family members in the decision….Responding to individual family member preferences was a requirement of the food preparer role, resulting in the mother deferring particularly to those of the husband as well as the children (Brown and Miller 2002:215).

Scholars point to the importance of equipping women with the information to properly feed and nurture their families (as a means of improving the health of the national population, as presented as the responsibility of women). Rather than impart the importance of nutritional information on adults (parents), public health policies get framed in ways that rests the burden of

responsibility on women. Expecting women to put policy into practice reproduces the patriarchal thinking guiding this assumption (that it is the responsibility of nurturing and nutrition is on women). Here, one sees how systems of oppression support and reinforce one another. The patriarchy, sexism, and heterosexism woven together in such public health policy communicate as much about normative families and traditional gender role expectations as they do about nutritional goals for a society.

While I see the importance of understandable and accessible nutritional information, I critique the underlying presumption that the dissemination of such information should be targeted towards women (as mothers or mothering). I support public health initiatives that work to improve health for everybody, or that issue an initiative (such as the Childhood Obesity Initiative) as a collective charge to accept and goal to aspire to or achieve. Nutritional information and facts about food should simply be as readily available for public consumption as the recommended food itself. Recent documentaries such as *Food, Inc.* offer this information in a visual media package, but I contend that more efforts should be made to make this information easy to obtain and understand, as well as a collective goal and responsibility for society. The dissemination of such information should not perpetuate essentialized notions of women as mothers (Chodorow 1979) and as solely responsible for food in families (see DeVault 1944).

Addressing national public health issues through the bodies of women also reinforces the gender dichotomy and differential responsibilities of food work, and the ideology that endorses and normalizes these divisions (Foucault). Holding women accountable for this nutritional implementation into families sets women up to potentially be scapegoated for any consequent lack of nutritional health and well-being among family members. These expectations operate as disciplinary measures, guidelines for families, as docile bodies (Foucault 1977), to follow.

Failure to follow these nutritional guidelines and advice often becomes the fault of mothers, not because of disobedient children or spouses (or otherwise).

Although proper nutrition remains contingent on geography, region, and other variables, while food choice is shaped by cultural and social forces (Leathwood and Ashley 1983), researchers find that women serve as "food role models" so to speak. This is generally the case for women's spouses or partners, but particularly so for their young children. This explains why some scholars advocate for nutrition communication in order to combat certain deficiencies (Nayak, Shahnaz, Vijayaraghavan, and Chandralekha 2001). That women are targeted as the appropriate gender (responsible party for the implementation of and care concerning nutrition) illustrates the impact of gender ideologies on behavior.

In their role as gatekeepers (Counihan 2004), women participate in the reproduction of gendered ideologies about women, family, and domestic labor. Their gatekeeping is mediated by desires to control food consumption, yet prepare food in a variety of ways. That is, women as gatekeepers not only deploy power through the purchases they make, but through particular purchases that affirm their identity, individually, relationally, and filially. Women engage in decision making regarding the interpretation and application of the information disseminated through nutrition communication (Nayak et al., 2001). Imparting this nutritional information translates into imposing different kinds of motherwork on women (Collins 2000; Short 2001, 2005). They must alter or edit their food menus, acquire new food items as a means of meeting nutritional needs, etc., and find themselves making decisions about the ease with which to acquire new foods. Thus, nutritional education must take into account the myriad considerations women make about food and its availability, affordability, and likeability.

Establishing nutritional education as women's work reifies the linkage between women as nurturing, caring bodies, or vessels that easily engage in reproductive and productive labor "naturally." I critique these naturalized and normalized linkages as a means of deconstructing gendered practices that people perpetuate often uncritically. Doing so also brings the foodwork that women do into focus, rather than allowing it to fall under detection and continue to go relatively unnoticed (until undone) and devalued.

Women, Food, and Relational Status

Discussions of foodwork and chores as the responsibility of women in relation to families must acknowledge that women of varying relational statuses may both experience and negotiate traditional gender role expectations differentially, as contingent on the composition of their relational lives. Typically, gender role negotiations among women are situated in the context of families, with little attention directed at the ways that being single may reframe women's relationship to food and others. For example, the power asymmetries that couples may negotiate differ from the negotiations that women may have with casual dates or partners, friends, or others.

The relational status of women shapes public perceptions and understandings of her respectability and femininity. In a way, single women are held to a different (lower) standard of womanhood, which arguably creates more freedom for them to do as they please. When single women spend countless time and energy on food and food chores, can we conclude that they possess traditional gender ideologies, have internalized patriarchy, or are docile bodies designed for domesticity? Is there room to suggest that single women do not suffer from the problem that has no name (Friedan 1966), but rather prefer to participate in the cult of domesticity, because

(versus in spite) of their singlehood? I explore some of the tensions around food chores for women of any relational status.

Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don't?

When scholars such as Brown and Miller (2002a) discuss women's agency, their attention to autonomy, control, and power distracts from the underlying tension of traditional understandings of gender roles and responsibilities. Within the confines of these gendered assumptions and expectations (that women should bare most, if not all, of the responsibility for food shopping, preparation, and clean-up), women who enjoy assuming these responsibilities deal with the double-edged sword of doing traditional tasks possibly in modern and postmodern ways. That is, from the outside looking in, a hegemonic interpretation of women who enjoy food chores and preparation reifies women's place in the kitchen, and in the private sphere more generally.

Looking beyond the kitchen requires a more oppositional reading of women and their relationship to food preparation. While many women eagerly embrace these traditional gender expectations, they also do so in subversive ways. Being subversive allows women to fulfill their obligations and appear appropriately dutiful and respectful of the social order of things (DeVault 1994). Yet, women may conceal their subversions under the guise of obedience or their ostensible complicity in reproducing tradition.

Such subversive behavior includes making food healthier, increasing its nutritional value, varying the actual types of food consumed in both the public and private spheres (in terms of ethnicity and culture), or altering the amount of food for others in both regulating and rewarding ways. Asserting their choices in the arena of the kitchen and the work of food preparation

restores some value to tasks devalued through their association with women. DeVault (1994) suggests that the normalization of food chores ("shopping, cooking, and serving meals") remains a relatively unrewarded and taken-for-granted task associated with women.

Applying skill to cooking, acquiring information about an assortment of recipes and ways of cooking, and demonstrating ability and creativity in food preparation complicates the conventional understanding of these activities as mundane and/or relatively meaningless. Instead, as scholars argue, cooking contains a complexity of meanings, which women shift as they engage in productive and reproductive labor. Cooking contains a currency that serves as cultural capital that women can activate to enhance their social value. The currency of cooking emphasizes skill versus innate ability. Women who gain power from cooking dance around the double-edged sword of reproducing biological notions of women as natural nurturers (Lorber 1994; Ortner 1974; West and Zimmerman 1994), while disrupting such notions by learning how to enjoy themselves cooking (and enticing others with this cooking). That women are associated with nature and pressured to be "culture keepers" who preserve and serve the family begins to answer the question that Ortner (1974) asks, "Is Woman to Man as Nature is to Culture?"

Dealing with this double-edged sword entails negotiating a variety of mythologies regarding dirt and domesticity (see Ward, Haug, and Mertes 1992), and women's presumed inherent ability to provide sustenance and care for others before themselves. On the one hand, women are contradictorily constructed as clean, pure, and virginal, yet contaminated, filthy, impure, and dirty (see Douglas 1966; Ortner 1974). These contradictions intensify along racial lines, with white women presumed to possess the former characteristics, and brown and black women presumed to posses the latter. These presumptions begin to explain historical patterns in food preparation among women, and contemporary trends that situate women of color in

positions of servitude in predominantly white employers' homes (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). On the other hand, women as "nurture" are naturally equipped to do food chores and assume domestic duties (despite existing fears of women contaminating food with their bodies) (see Curtin and Heldke 1992). Since purity remains racially synonymous with whiteness, the construction of the feminine becomes a racial project organized around whiteness, as contrasted with the "Other." Curiously, these socially constructed contrasting distinctions ignore the history of racial mixing and the collision of "purity and danger" through colonial and neo-colonial projects and practices.

In this work, I explore this potential, as empowerment, expression, creativity, and more. Recognizing how women may feel emboldened by their culinary skills, regard it as a currency or capital (Bourdieu 1974), produces or acknowledges the production of a discourse more complex than the one that views women doing domestic and food chores as an imprisoning obligation or duty. Inness (2001a) neutralizes the racial differences between women as responsible for domestic duties and the preparers and servers of food. She posits, "Even today, cooking is one of the domestic chores that continues to be most stubbornly associated with women, despite changing gender roles" (Inness 2001a:3-4).

Such gender asymmetries seem the residue of functionalism (Hesse-Biber and Carter 2005), the theoretical perspective that endorses and reinforces the gendered (public/private) divide. More specifically, within the private sphere, men and women negotiate responsibilities as related to race, income, occupation, professional status, culture, and other social positions. As a result, these negotiations can be quite tenuous, such that the kitchen and the home as a site of power (both empowerment and disenfranchisement).

Social Location, Status, and Food Choice: A Matter of Taste?

Issues of race, class, and gender, as well as the social construction of time, impact women's experiences with food provisioning. "Managing work and family responsibilities is more challenging for lower income families who cannot afford to "buy time" by hiring household or childcare help or eating out as often as higher income people" (Jabs and Devine 2006: 192).

Being able to "buy time" then influences woman's relationship to one another, but also their relationship to family, food, and labor. Dealing with time scarcity often means that women without the resources make poorer health choices and turn to fast food and other conveniences (microwavable means) to shave time off of food preparation.[2] Mennell (1985) and Land (2005), among others, address convenience from the perspective of consumption, noting how much modern time-saving devices create consumer demand. The consumption of time-saving technologies translates into more expense, which would counter time saved if the consumers had to work more to afford such conveniences (see Ritzer 1996).

When Betty Freidan (1963/2001) lamented the drudgery of domesticity, she made several critical oversights. Not only did she myopically and exclusively focus on the metaphorical imprisonment of middle-class white women, by extension she neglected to acknowledge the constraints that working class and women of color faced as they entered the public sphere out of necessity, as a means of surviving a racist, sexist, and classist society. Friedan failed to acknowledge how the second wave of feminism allowed middle class white women to flood the formal labor market and increase their labor force participation in ways that put parameters on

2 Because people increasingly turn to fast food and snack food as a means of speeding up the process of consumption, it is interestingly to note the gendered patterns of power at play in home kitchen versus public ones in eating establishments. The feminization of food provisioning in the private sphere contrasts with the masculinization of food provisioning in the public sphere. Women like Martha Stewart muddy this dichotomy but her presence and presentation of "perfect domesticity," both undermines and emphasizes this.

the same for working class white women and women of color (Hesse-Biber and Carter 2005). As others have pointed out, Friedan crafted an argument on the disciplinary and imprisoning effects (Foucault 1977) of the domestic domain (Friedan 1963/2001). However, she did not elaborate on the liberatory potential that the private sphere possessed/offered women.

As women continue to engage in the emotional and reproductive labor of contemplating food menus, in terms of domestic consumption and food preparation, they must make decisions as possibly constrained or eased by social class. As Patricia Short (2005) argues, mothers at the margins make decisions in ways that work to ensure survival, as well as the satisfaction of family members' needs. They manage multiple tasks and responsibilities on limited resources and time, employing various strategies to manage the food and time scarcity in their everyday realities. Short posits, "Motherwork at the margins is labour-intensive, conflictual, urgent (often critical), and always emergent; the study revealed that housework, care-work, and financial management of households were all done in contexts that were constrained by limited resources and financial dependency" (Short 2005:207).

Nestle (2000, 2002, 2003) reiterates this point, and illustrates how changes in family life to more frenetic paces (longer work hours, women managing multiple shifts, etc.) can create similar changes in diet and food consumption based on availability and ostensible excess (in portion sizes). Generally, consumers view this as a "bargain," neglecting to consider whether the costs to their health outweigh any financial incentives for "buying in bulk." Thus, a tension remains for women wanting to make healthier food choices or introduce a variety of foods to their families, consider others' food preferences, and make these decisions in financially affordable and practical ways. In addition to trying to enhance health through food preparation

choices, women also use food preparation to serve other purposes, including having some leisure time.

Women often prioritize the needs of others, with mothers facing the challenge of personal sacrifice for the happiness of their children and spouse. As a result, women employ numerous strategies to manage scarce resources. Limited money and time impact food choices and inspire new survival strategies. Women may rely on "fictive kin" or close friends "like family" (Stack 1974; Collins 2000). They may swap "secrets"- recipes, coupons, places to purchase food easily and affordably (where the "good deals" are; what times and places to shop with the greatest of ease and speed, least amount of crowds).

Some women even engage in community cooking, sharing the responsibility of food chores with neighbors in order to strengthen communal bonds and social ties (Counihan 2004). Lukanski (1998) argues that people prepare food "with the expectation that it will be shared. Daily meals are with the immediate family or companions; on holidays, with an extended gathering of friends and relatives. In the sharing of food, the sense of community is continually defined and maintained" (Lukanski 1998:113).

Transforming food choices into communal celebrations and opportunities to build familiarity and memories, and deal with time scarcity (by spending time with multiple people all at once) allow women to engage in kin work as well. As Micaela di Leonardo (1987) explains, "kin work…takes place in an arena characterized simultaneously by cooperation and competition, by guilt and gratification. Like housework and child care, it is women's work." (Leonardo 1987:448). Because women are expected to engage in kin work and food work, many feel responsible for rituals, ceremonies, and celebrations organized around the everyday and the holiday. In some cultures, women are even expected to approach food work from an aesthetic

perspective, ensuring that food feeds physical and visual appetites. Attending to the look of food is important, for instance, for Japanese mothers who make "obentos," or lunch box meals, appear artistic, attractive, and intricately arranged, contrasting food elements in color, texture, and more (Allison 1991). Paying attention to the presentation of food parallels some Japanese women's presentation of self, as dutiful and good mothers who construct culture while being constructed by it. Next, I will discuss how women handle their expected obligations and responsibilities.

Carving Out and Craving Time for Self in a Time of Time Famine

When Janice Radway (1984) urged readers to reconsider their understandings and potential prejudices about women who read romance novels, she invited people to recognize the complexity of meanings attached to this activity. While people often perceived "reading the romance" as women's selfish indulgence and investment in utopia as glamorized and romanticized in this genre of books, Radway revealed a much more textured interpretation of these women. She found that women reading the romance do so for a variety of reasons, including being able to secure some solitary time to pursue their own pleasures.

Many frown upon the activity of reading romance novels, discarding the reading as indicative of dissatisfaction in women's romantic relationships; the absence thereof, or a desire to escape the monotony of such relationships. This type of hegemonic interpretation of the act of reading the romance overlooks the ways in which women employ their agency to enjoy some free time and relaxation that takes them away from the responsibility of their reproductive and productive labor.

In a time of time (and money) scarcity, women search for spaces to secure some solitary time, relax, and pursue their own pleasures. Just as women indulge themselves in romance novels, they too indulge in culinary creations. Numerous parallels exist here, since both

activities are feminized and normalized. A more subversive reading shows how women use the time to read in ways that echo their time in the kitchen- as an escape from others, an excuse for "me-time" that is granted since it fits with traditional gender role expectations. As a result, women who find food and food chores fun can use the kitchen in a selfishly indulgent way that allows the women relaxation, at the risk of reinforcing that they love to cook or feed others because of some innate qualities.

Women who cook and enjoy spending time and energy with food preparation are asserting their agency. They are actively carving out the space and time to discover and rediscover their talents; to connect or re-connect to their culture, community, family, and more; and to possibly showcase their culinary abilities- something they are presumably inherently equipped to do successfully and easily, but is not necessarily the case. In these instances, women in kitchens want others to recognize these creative efforts as distinct from perceived innate abilities to prepare meals.

Conveniently Inconveniently Food, Time Scarcity, and Food Choice

Increasingly, convenience foods compromise the integrity of women's creativity, as women shop to save time, money and energy. At various stages of food provisioning- "from food acquisition through to cleaning up"- women weigh the costs and rewards of doing things themselves, instead of "having help" along the way (Bava, Jaeger, and Park 2007:486). Having help alludes to the power asymmetries between women. Rollins (1987) explored this, for example, in her book of the same name. It was in this book that she examined the interpersonal dynamics created in the intimate space of the home. Others have looked beyond these issues of maternalism and gender relations across race and class to consider how these different social locations of women complicated our understanding of food (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).

Women undermine the mythological innateness of cooking when time scarcity prompts or forces them to turn to conveniently inconvenient food for themselves and their families: they may microwave, "drive-thru," offer nutritionally suspect food to family for its low cost and high convenience. This move might be understood as a rejection or refusal to be a woman, or a good woman, a negligence/neglect of female duties and family members, a form of instant versus deferred/delayed gratification. Often, the foods that offer families (women) convenience also compromise health and well-being. Public health initiatives could address these issues.

You Are What You Eat and What You Don't: Cultural Food Colonialism or "Eating the Other"

In an area of globalization and McDonaldization (Ritzer 2003), the chance often arises for the sharing of food across many literal and metaphoric borders. This cross-cultural consumption can signal reciprocity and accommodation, or cooptation and colonization. People engage in all sorts of consumption, with culture and food blending to allow for what Lisa Heldke (2003) considers "cultural food colonialism." Heldke (2001:177) draws connections between her "adventure cooking and eating as strongly motivated by an attitude bearing deep connections to Western colonialism and imperialism." She likens her "culture hopping in the kitchen" to the "explorers who set out in search of ever 'newer,' ever more 'remote' cultures they could co-opt, borrow from freely and out of context, and use as the raw materials for their own efforts at creation and discovery" (Heldke 2001:177).

Scholars such as Kalcik (1984) contend that such discovery and exploration allows people to learn about others. She posits, "Americans must eat the foods of all their ethnic groups, Americanizing them in some ways, because by this act we perform the sense of our national ethnic identity. By ingesting the foods of each new (immigrant) group, we symbolize

the acceptance of each group and its culture" (Kalcik 1984:61). Others would argue that Americanizing other cultures "doubly colonizes" the other through assimilation and consumption.

To such scholars, the term "cultural food colonialism" marks the practice of "consuming the Other," and reflects the result of attempts, typically among whites, to "spice up" their vanilla existence (hooks 2003; see also Bhabha 1994; Julier 2005; 1984) or escape the banality of whiteness (Roediger 2002). Heldke (2001) argues that cultural food colonialism becomes evident or manifests in multiple ways, including in cookbooks. These texts "speak to the food adventurer's never-ending quest for novel eating experiences—where novelty is also read as exoticism, and…they turn the ethnic Other into a resource for the food adventurer's own use" (Heldke 2001:177). Heldke defends food colonialism by pointing to her desire to play and respectfully learn about other cultures. In escaping some imagined ordinariness, white cultural food colonizers sometimes fetishize and colonize the culture and experience of "the Other" (Deck 2001; hooks 1998, 2003; Narayan 1997; Williams-Forson 2006) as a means of affirming their moral authority and racial, cultural, and national superiority.

For example, hooks (1998) discusses the "commodification of Otherness," describing it as "so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture" (hooks 1998: 181). Hooks problematicizes this process of "eating the other," and draws attention to the ways in which whites maintain their privilege while exploring their fantasies of difference. She posits,

> Difference can seduce precisely because the mainstream imposition of sameness is a provocation that terrorizes…. To make one's self vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one's mainstream positionality. When race and ethnicity become commodified as

> resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relation with the Other. (hooks 1998: 183).

Though hooks (1998) explores this idea of "eating the other" through examples of sexualized experiences and social interactions, the metaphor fits. Her ideas help demonstrate the linkages between patriarchy, food, and the commodification of women, women's bodies, and "different" cultures. The convergence of these things means that connotations between women and food provide partial explanation for the curious and often colonizing consumption patterns that exist in this country. Perceptions of women as "their sex" strengthen sexist ideas that present women as fragmented parts, objects of sexual desire and a collection of bodily parts often described similarly, as parts analogous to animals. This dehumanization and objectification of women solidifies sexism, maintains women's association with food, and validates traditional gender ideologies that fail to sufficiently interrogate these patterns.

Comparably, Narayan (1997) discusses the ways in which those with more authority and superiority engage in neocolonial culinary practices by which they fabricate and then authenticate foods through their domination. Thus, the British concocted curry in such a way that the product was unrecognizably recognizable (That is, the British constructed the Indian through curry). Asian Indians in Britain were not too quick to complain, through, since the rising popularity in what is "known" as curry (as different from what *is* curry) draws an interest that generates money, while colonizing India and Indians over and over again. This is an interesting move in that it seemingly implicates Asian Indians in the neocolonial project as well, in a kind of auto-Orientalizing manner (Yan and Santos 2009). By creating curry that proves more palatable to the consuming audience with the greatest interest in the spice blend, Asian Indians begin to participate in the process of their own culinary colonialism conquest. They do

so at the expense of being consuming under the guise of authenticity and with the benefit of profiting from this cultural culinary consumption of the "authentic" Other (Lu and Fine 1995)

But what of "the Other" in these instances? If the Other is dutifully and diligently at work crafting self (Kondo 1990) by cooking food, how do we make sense of the food that she (as Other) creates? How do we move away from the fetishism of groups and colonization of cultures when, as Psyche Williams-Forson (2006) explains, lingering and persistent associations between groups of people and food remain? For example, Williams-Forson (2006) shows how fried chicken became associated with and linked to blacks, to the degree that, like the curry made in Britain (not "made in India"), blacks could exploit their position of exploitation. Seeing a profit in the prejudicial assumptions of others enabled some black entrepreneurs in the South to serves chicken and other items from a paradoxical position on both sides of commodity fetishism (Marx 1967/2000).

Williams-Forson (2006) detailed the social construction of blacks as "exotic specimens" whose food preparation of fried chicken (and other Southern foods) enabled many whites to consume "deliciously different" foods (Williams-Forson 2006:71). She also accounted for black people's agency in this, providing examples of the ways that blacks "took their [white customers'] money and laughed [their] way to a better material existence" (Williams-Forson 2006:71). Thus, fried chicken served as a source of capital, as realized through commodity racism (McClintock 1995), since black business people profited from the perpetuated stereotypical associations of that food with blacks. At once, food liberates and oppresses.

Looking at discourses and practices regarding food and race facilitates an understanding of commodity fetishism and racism, while illustrating "how food demonstrates the various ways

that power operates in our lives. Food, as politics, is subtle and unexpected because it is not seen as a tool of opposition but as a necessary substance (Williams-Forson 2006:69). She continues,

> Thus by studying how food operates in people's lives, and how certain foods have meaning, we begin to appreciate people's connections to those foods. We also grasp how a food as insignificant as chicken holds evidence of the ways black people disrupted the hegemonic cultural assumptions that tried to define them. And we see how ordinary people—perceived as subordinated and subjugated—challenged the dominant ideologies that sought to control them (Williams-Forson 2006:69)

Participating in this commodity fetishism facilitates the dispersal of food and power globally by at least introducing "the Other" onto a global menu, albeit in problematic ways. This participation also does little, in some ways, to dismantle a racial, cultural, national hierarchy that centers Western whiteness while swallowing up difference in one big bite. That is, this process of culinary colonialism creates what has been described as "the illusion of inclusion" (Gallagher 2004; Collins 1998). This illusion serves as a symbolic gesture, evidence that all foods are not marginal but meaningful, enjoyable, and equal.

You Are What You Eat and What You Don't: Food Refusal and Control

Scholars have documented the disciplinary mechanisms that many women impose on themselves in their quest to control both body and size (Thompson 1994). This literature explores the impetus for disciplining the body. In many of these instances, women feel that, in a patriarchal society that devalues or undervalues them, they can regulate their appearance, if little else.

Food control could be about both a distancing of self from the gendered, feminized space of private kitchens (and the home, by extension); as well as a strategy to acquire social and cultural capital through the regulation of food. Both operate as disciplinary practices or

mechanisms that conceal the vast array of choices women make as stewards of food preparation and that mask the motivations behind their behavioral practices.

Acknowledging or recognizing that food control serves as a part of the consideration of food preparation is one strategy that ensures social and cultural capital. Since women do most of the food shopping, they can assert some agency through the selection of food to be consumed at the point of purchase and by those for whom she is shopping. Ironically again, the agency that women can experience through this process—selecting food that suits her own preferences and needs (for herself and family or others)—is also undermined by social pressures that link food shopping to women. This solidified connection then cements women as consuming subjects (Kowelski-Wallace 1997).

Paradoxically then, people are as much what they eat as they are what they do not eat. Interestingly, women often gain social and cultural capital from not eating, if such practices ensure their successful pursuit, achievement or approximation of the beauty ideal (skinny) (Hunter 2005). An irony emerges, then, in that women as family-oriented and responsible for food preparation must negotiate their own quest for food control with consideration to their families or significant relationships. Perhaps women's efforts and attempts at food control have as much to do with a purposeful pursuit of the "beauty ideal" as with escaping the other "room of her own" (Woolf 1929) —the kitchen and the domestic obligations women are expected to assume.

In my research, I work to show the persistent struggle between structure and agency. This tension leaves women to decide for themselves how to express themselves and experience enjoyment of food preparation, all while making these choices sometimes under great restraint-traditional gender ideology, budgetary limitations, lack of transportation, unavailable food

resources (or other types as well). Future research should illustrate how globalization complicated the task of food provisioning and preparation for women exposed to a buffet of choices. Looking at the linkages between women, food, and gender, thus, would be more complete with the consideration of culture, ethnicity, and nationality.

Potential Contributions

I envision my research adding to the extant literature by offering more complex ways of seeing food adventuring and colonizing practices playing out. I want to show how women of various social locations participate in a consumer society where "consuming the Other" (hooks 1998) becomes multidirectional and multidimensional. Doing this research then serves as my attempt to decenter whiteness, by asking whether food adventuring and colonizing practices can apply to non-white women. Because of the exploratory nature of this research, I hope to show the sociocultural value of all foods, irrespective of its relation to or position in a racial hierarchy. Exposing women's patterns of food choices, and their displays of cultural capital will help demonstrate the anthropological significance of food in women's lives in ways that move beyond gender traditional role expectations of feeding the family.

That a variety of cuisines are available here in Atlanta at relatively affordable prices makes this research relevant in both regional and localized ways. The culinary landscape of this city suggests that what constitutes Southern cuisine, for example, remains quite stable and yet is destabilized by the creativity and ingenuity of chefs playing with their food. The sizable presence of new and old immigrants, especially as concentrated in certain areas and neighborhoods, has influenced the types of foods offered, and demographically shaped the kinds of consumers making these food purchases. Understanding these regional and local nuances should provide some contextual cues for situating the behavior that the respondents describe, to

fully grasp how their food choices and consumption habits perpetuate or exemplify colonialism or simply smack of an adventurer akin to a kid in a candy store.

This work is of anthropological significance in its acknowledgment of how food makes the world go ‘round. In drawing inspiration from Sidney Mintz (1985) Carole Counihan (1997, 1999), Lisa Heldke (2001), among others, I posit that the political economy, coupled with the contemporary racial hierarchy, assigns differential value to food. The ways people come to consume one another through food relates to these historical and contemporary systems of valuation. I hope my research reveals some of the complexity in these practices of consuming the Other, pointing out paradoxes that exist in a society, for example, that encourages women not to eat but to eat the Other. That these seemingly conflicting sociocultural behavioral expectations put women in an interesting position where we are rewarded for not eating (if that ensures one sufficient proximity to the beauty ideal), as well as eating “exotic” cuisines and edible delights that act as a currency.

In particular, Counihan and Van Esterik’s (1997) reader, *Food and Culture*, provides a sound anthropological foundation from which to develop and conduct my research in this area. Their reader includes contributions from Mintz, whose article abbreviates what he elaborates on in his longer work, *Sweetness and Power*, published in 1985. When coupled with Carole Counihan’s (1997, 1999) discussion of the symbolic significance of food in social relations, I can see how their work and my own owes an intellectual debt to semiotic scholars such as Levi-Strauss (1997). I intend to build on this and other existing anthropological work to show how complex and contradictory food practices among women in the US can be, such that women as Other consume the Other, without having much awareness of their role in this colonialism.

Praxis Implications and Potential Applications

My proposed research suggests that major structural and minor individual changes must occur if women are to establish healthier living in relation to their food colonizing and adventuring practices. While food colonialism is generally framed as negative in its "equal opportunity eating" (Abrahams 1984), fetishizing, or Orientalizing of "exotic Other" cuisines, it is possible to reframe and reconsider the potentially positive aspects of food colonialism. For example, the broader consideration of this work relates to women, food choices, and health. Perhaps having a variety of food choices, however problematic in terms of power dynamics, enables women to maintain healthier lives.

Finding out how women incorporate "the Other" into their daily lives may prove helpful in introducing more food choices in a variety of setting. I think, for example, of the food choices available in the vending machines at my workplace. The quintessentially American options may benefit from being replaced by alternatives that are more reflective of the school's diverse population, while possibly proving healthier as well. Symbolically, having a more "international" assortment of available food choices in a vending machine communicates the value of people as related to the food products with which they become associated. Such internationalized selections of food may mean that women are making healthier choices, not necessarily engaging in food colonialism. In order to understand the possible applications of my work, I intend to ask respondents to talk about their solutions to negotiations of food, power, and health.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study involves exploring women's relationship to food, their body, and health. In drawing a diverse sample, I hope that one contribution of this work will be to

show how women of different classes and racial groups make food choices, attach meanings to food, food chores, and food sharing; engage in food work; possibly discipline their bodies through nutritional eating , food intake restriction, or physical fitness (whether regular or modified/intensified to meet established goals), and understand their relationship to food as a reflection of their social location. I also explore the contradictions between discourses and action that women produce in presenting themselves as healthy to mask potentially unhealthy lifestyles, food choices and nutrition.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Edible Desires, Embodying Difference, Eating the Other
Consumption and the Cultural Construction of Food

In order to explore my central research question about women's relationship with food and eating, with a focus on women's role in food colonialism/adventuring, I will conceptually rely on symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969, Goffman 1958), new racism (Collins 2005) or colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2003) and the contemporary racial hierarchy, commodity fetishism (Marx 1867) and the commodification of the Other (hooks 1998; Howes 1996), and Orientalizing discourses (Said 1978) as related to food colonialism (Heldke 2001). Fusing these theoretical frameworks will enable me to examine how much of women's relationship to food and eating is demonstrated through food colonizing or adventuring practices.

Symbolic interaction theory allows me to show the centrality of food as a commodity, but also as cultural capital, in this society. I can use this theory to explore the various meanings attached to food, in order to understand the differential values attached to food and the people creating and consuming the food, publicly and privately. Looking at the various meanings of food should illustrate how food signifies more than sustenance, nourishment, or nutrition. I utilize the contemporary racial hierarchy to analyze how participants produce discourses that reflect and reproduce this racial hierarchy that privileges whiteness (and white ethnicities by extension), or refute or resist this hierarchy.

Another advantage to using symbolic interaction theory relates to its utility in explaining people's interactions with one another. Within the contemporary colorblind frame, people are perceived as race-neutral, ethnicity-free (optional until chosen). When coupled with neoliberalism, this illusive perception of reality facilitates the practice of food adventuring and colonialism. That is, in a capitalist society where people are encouraged to connect to one

another through their consumption practices, they relate to one another through commodities. In this work, I take a look at how contemporary consumer society commodifies "woman native other" (Minh-Ha 1989) as the Other. This engages the work of Simone de Beauvoir (1989) and Gayatri Spivak (2006) by considering how women of different racial and ethnic groups are constructed as an Other. I extend this Othering process by couching it in a Marixst framework that demonstrates how women are commodified but also participate in the commodification of o/Others. By being food adventurers, women may find the consumption of various foods enjoyable, pleasurable, and even empowering, in ways that the literature has already acknowledged. I intent to contribute to the extant literature by asking if women of various racial and ethnic groups can "consume the Other" by being adventurous. Can we apply the same term to women of different social locations or do food adventures take on different flavors and textures depending on who is doing the consuming and from what standpoint? This work serves to complicate the concept of food colonialism, inviting a potentially broader application of the term and more complex understanding of who can be a food adventurer or colonizer.

The work of Patricia Hill Collins (2005) and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) are helpful in offering a context for food practices such as adventuring and colonialism. Both argue in their respective works that the contemporary racial landscape is such that the contours of colorblindness seduce people into thinking that racism is a thing of the past. Both show how this post-Civil Rights Movement colorblindness stems from perceptions of progress and the realization of racial equality, despite evidence of persistent inequality in this country and globally. Bonilla-Silva elaborates a theory about the stratification of American society taking on a triangulated Latin-Americanization. In this model, the contemporary racial hierarchy, the US population reflects three groups: whites, honorary whites, and collective blacks. Whites

collectively possess the greatest access to power, privilege, and resources, while honorary whites are typically treated as "like white" because of their social, cultural, and/or physical approximation of whiteness. Collective blacks lack the type of access to power and privilege as the former two groups, and thus are deny or blocked from many opportunities. In this thesis research, I will consider the possible connections between the food consumption patterns of people and their respective position in the racial hierarchy, as well as the perceived position of the food as a commodity with differential value (related to the social value of the people producing the food). Investigating and establishing patterns of a kind of "food hierarchy" emerging in the lives of the participants may support my suspicion that people's food practices reinforce a racial hierarchy.

I suspect that people may also produce discourses that speak to this hierarchy as the participants deploy some examples of food adventuring as a currency or to activate capital, while normalizing other food practices as taken-for-granted or unsurprising. An example of the discursive practices of reinforcing a racialized food hierarchy involves the different charges attached to someone saying "Let's try Thai tonight," versus "Let's try Soul Food" or "Let's Eat Kenyan." While the "someone" certainly shapes the possible interpretations of each suggestion, an important distinction exists between the options that have everything and nothing to do with food. This distinction (Bourdieu 1984/2007) makes food a matter of taste (Heldke 2001), and arguably in a racial hierarchy assigns more or less value to food based on characteristics or properties beyond popularity, quality, and pleasure. It is in this way that food comes to signify many things, and the multiple meanings attached to food begin to take shape. Attending to the discourses the participants produce in their narratives during the focus groups and interviews will help demonstrate the different values arguably attached to food and the people typically

associated with that food. Considering these discourses will also help to illuminate differences in food adventuring and food colonialism.

While scholars have attended to the ways in which women "feed the family" (DeVault 1994), striving to find a balance between work and family (Nippert-Eng 1995, 1996), fewer scholars have focused on how globalization impacts the process of feeding the family (more often focusing generally on cultural dislocations and dispersions as a consequence or characteristic of globalization- see Tomlinson 1999). In their discussion of the anthropology of food and eating, Sidney Mintz and Christine DuBois (2002) do discuss movement and migration, as related to people in the process of globalization. They observe, "Anthropologists have more commonly recognized peoples on the move—migrants, refugees, and colonizers—as agents of change" (Mintz and DuBois 2002: 105). This observation provides a useful starting point from which to begin talking about the ways in which women are implicated in the process of globalization, in ways that both reproduce and challenge gender divisions and colonizing practices.

Scholars have noted the ways in which colonizers influence the dietary choices of the "colonized" in specific contexts with less work focused on colonialism at the level of abstraction [one exception includes Lisa Heldke (2001), who introduces the concept of "cultural food colonialism"]. Thinking about colonialism in its abstraction enables "tackling colonialism from a different angle" (Mintz and DuBois 2002: 105). Doing so enriches current understandings of the ways in which women colonize one another by consuming the "Other" through the food choices that they make, in kitchens of their own, or in restaurants and other venues.

In this proposed work, I hope to show how women negotiate their "cultural food colonialism" (in a variety of ways that attempt to allow agency, while sometimes simultaneously

undermining agency. I also suggest that while white women are often portrayed or understood as signifiers of cultural food colonialism, non-white women (Western and non-Western) also engage in a process not quite akin to but similar in ways to cultural food colonialism.

For non-white women, perhaps the process appears more like cultural cooptation than colonization, but the negotiation of power around issues of food as mediated by social positions remains more important than the naming of the process. Lockwood and Lockwood (2000) explored dynamic foodways that the mix of the mainstream and the margins, so to speak, inspired a kind of culinary fusion or fluidity that resulted in a new community palate. Their research suggests that the presence of ethnic groups shapes the choices of cuisines available, making the investigation of gender, food, and power that much more complex.

As the margin makes its ways into the mainstream via its "ethnic" cuisine, there emerges a tenuous relationship in which the food becomes symbolically equivalent to the people producing it and vice versa (i.e., the food is spicy and therefore so are its producers). The qualities that are associated with foods are then associated with the people who prepare the food. Once the food is consumed by others, it undergoes a cultural co-optation, and is consumed as a cliché (something predictable, recognizable, stereotypical) under Western eyes (Mohanty 1991).

By logical extension, as the food is consumed, so too are the producers of the food (hooks 1998, 2003; McClintock 2000; Narayan 1997; Steele 2000; Willis 1995). In this process, the Other (the margin) is not only being consumed, but arguably being incorporated (if only on a symbolic level). Consuming the Other enables the comforting "illusion of inclusion" without fully incorporating the marginal into the mainstream (Collins 1998; Gallagher 2004). It is this struggle that I attend to in this work, since the processes of production and consumption of food are at once seemingly arbitrary though necessary, yet highly charged and provocative spaces of

power negotiations and articulations (of power, but also of identity, nationality, loyalty, and authenticity).

Finally, I will consider to what extent processes of cultural pluralism and curiosity looks colonizing, but a closer look might result in a different interpretation. In critically interrogating relations of power as related to food choices and commodity fetishism (Marx 2000), I remain cognizant of the nuances at play that recognize the agency of women of various groups, careful not to colonize women through misinterpretations of their food preparation and provisioning practices.

These nuances move away from essentializing narratives while drawing out important details about how women of various social groups differentially experience food consumption and preparation. As globalization facilitates a time-space compression generally, not everyone experiences this process similarly. For some women, globalization means increased mobility (Appadurai 1997). With that increased movement comes the circulation of ideas, commodities, people, and more. Appadurai (1997) makes this point in his work, as does Mintz and DuBois (2002) in theirs. The latter borrow from Miller (1997), Long (1996), and Sobal (1999), positing, "Not only do peoples move across the globe, so also do foods." (Mintz and DuBois 2002:105).

As Appadurai articulates, one could think of globalization in terms of interlocking "scapes" that account for this mobility. For women feeding the family, globalization simplifies and complicates, facilitates and disrupts. By providing women with greater varieties of products, and diverse people whose presence waves of immigration partially explain, globalization offers up people and products as resources from which women can learn how to cook. This learning involves aspiring towards a global culinary literacy that enables women to display their cooking expertise by preparing foods that mark this international insight.

Flexing one's international food preparation muscle allows women who feed their family to do so in ways that are considered new and different. Some scholars see women's efforts to produce the "exotic" as a means of displaying knowledge and activating cultural capital. Serving up that which is new and different enable the display of knowledge from women to operate as an indication of their "insider knowledge [of the Other] from the outside."[3] This display suggests that women preparing dishes not indigenous to their culture have gained insight into other cultures.

Women actively access this insight by preparing foods that impress others, because the process of neocolonial commodity fetishism (McClintock 2000; Steele 1997; Willis 1995) facilitates the colonizing of food. That women's ability to prepare "new and different" dishes allows them to activate cultural capital demonstrates how people relate to one another through commodities and objects obtain social and cultural value, and how women have access to that value when they produce and consume objects.

Bourdieu (1984/2007) contends that eating extends beyond the functional and practical to symbolize a performance reflective of gendered classed selves and expressive of self-identity (see also Finkelstein 1998). James (1996) echoes this sentiment, positing, "in the context of an increasingly (global) international food production-consumption system and a seemingly 'creolized' world, food still acts as a maker of (local) cultural identity. If food is literally for thinking about identity- 'you are what you eat,' 'one man's meat is another man's poison,' and so on – then does the confusion of culinary signposts…signify the loss of the markers of distinctiveness which separate Others from ourselves?" (James 1996: 78). She continues,

3 Dr. Bethany Turner made this observation (12/02/08) about the multiple positionalities possible for women to occupy in relation to one another and to food.

"Consumption practices are seen here therefore as precariously flexible, rather than fixed and constant, markers of self and of identity." (James 1996:78).

Finkelstein (1998:203) asserts that people's public display of food during dining out exemplifies the extent to which food is much more than "the immediate gratification of appetite, desire and whim.... The styles of human exchange and social relations cultivated through the practice of dining out, and the nature of civility they express, vividly reflect bourgeois values: namely, the importance given to one's physical appearance, the concern with respectability and the other's good opinion of oneself" (Finkelstein 1998:203).

Bourdieu (1984/2007) elaborated on the ways that cultural capital works to establish high culture and low culture. While people typically aspire to achieve high social status and thus attempt to activate (high) cultural capital, increasingly globalization also makes the consumption of the Other and of low culture a curiosity (thereby making its consumption, not incorporation, a sign of status). That is, the Other does not necessarily assume a higher status, and others do not necessarily confer this status onto them. This illustrates in part what some have referred to as the Latinization of America (Bonilla Silva 2004). Scholars who support the Latinization of America thesis (see Gallagher 2004; Yancey 2003, among others) argue that whites occupy the top position in the racial hierarchy nationally (but their domination takes on global forms), while blacks are placed at the bottom. An intermediary group, called "honorary whites," consists of lighter-skinned Asians, Latinos and Native Americans. With whites as a group in a position of power, they can enjoy privileges that are not as immediately accessible to members of the other two groups.

If we apply this racial lens to this discussion of neocolonial commodity fetishism, cultural capital, and women's involvement in food preparation, we begin to have a frame with which to

analyze the food choices women make. When women decide to try new dishes, they may do so as a means of asserting this power and privilege vis a vis their group position in terms of race, but also gender, class, nationality, culture, and sexuality. Women who decide to experiment with dinner guests, as Lisa Heldke (2001:175) describes in her own experience, "sometimes…get paralyzed with indecision." While women have a variety of foods to choose from, these choices are inflected with power differentials on the basis of these different social positions or locations. That is, for some women, food choices can feel more like constraints, while for others it liberates. Arguably, the constraints some women experience, others might envy for the simplicity that economic despair or instability mandates. Conversely, women may envy the elaborate array of food products that, for example, many middle and upper class white women have the financial means to acquire, regardless of any actual desire to make this food acquisition.

Thus, food, food choice, and food consumption implicate women in a curious quandary where one women's liberation often means another's oppression. Heldke (2001) grapples with this dilemma in contrasting her mother's predictably simply yet enjoyable meals with the nerve-wracking overly complex ones she dreams up in her head (which seldom satisfy upon execution). Instead of sticking with old standbys (standards), Heldke felt compelled to create culinary dishes beyond the usual repertoire. She abandoned the familiar (characteristic of her mother's style of cooking) to embrace the "exotic." In doing so, she perpetually faces the harrowing and frenetic experience of pouring over endless cookbooks, trying to craft the perfect meal. "I've sketched out five possible menus, each featuring foods of a different nationality, most of them consisting of several dishes I've never cooked before." (Heldke 2001:176).

She continues,

> After years of adventurous eating in graduate school and now as a professor, I have come to be seriously uncomfortable about the easy acquisitiveness with which I approach a

> new kind of food, the tenacity with which I collect eating adventures—as one might collect ritual artifacts from another culture without thinking about the appropriateness of removing them from their cultural setting. Other eating experiences have made me reflect on the circumstances that conspired to bring such far-flung cuisines into my world (Heldke 2001:175)

(i.e. eating [at restaurants] the food of people whose homelands are under siege, whose residents are starving, facing political turmoil, etc.).

Travelling/Migrating Through Food

Heldke poignantly and critically reflects on the power differentials embedded in food production and consumption. She considers how globalization has provided her with various food choices she enjoys at the expense of dislocating people and their products from their homelands. Her awareness of this neocolonial arrangement does little to eradicate the all-too-familiar configuration of white women consuming and being served by the Other. Though she dubs her "penchant for ethnic foods—particularly the foods of economically dominated cultures" as "cultural food colonialism." (Heldke 2001: 176-7).

Heldke suggests that women who consume unfamiliar food do so for multifaceted reasons, not all negative. She indicates that her involvement in cultural food colonialism is also a form of play, a practice that hooks (1998) might interpret as vanilla whiteness spicing up itself at the expense of Otherness. That Lisa Heldke interprets her own experiences as potentially problematic reinforces the racial divide that I mentioned earlier. She does this by reaffirming the familiar as Western, American, and White. In this way, she colonizes the Other through her discursive productions, as well as her patterns of consumption.

Irrespective of the knowledge she gains, knowledge that has more currency when embodied by the right bodies, Heldke constructs the unfamiliar as un-American and authentic.

Her sifting through cookbooks parallels gazing at atlases, in consuming recipes and images of the Other that facilitates being transported or travelling through food to far away places. Little does she discuss by way of assimilation, questioning the authenticity of exoticism in foods prepared by the Other who identifies as American. I wonder if and how her perception of "eating the Other" might shift, should her perception of the Other shift as well? Because the Other also presents not always an authentic version of food but often ones manufactured and made palatable to particular palates, Heldke may simply be engaging in the consumption of simulacra (Baudrillard 1995/2002), which remains politically charged, but at least recognizes the agency of the Other in preparing delectably different dishes.

Lu and Fine (1995) discuss these simulacra in the space of Chinese food restaurants. The performative nature of being served involves the symbolism of ethnicity on display for others to consume along with their meal. Lu and Fine (1995) argue that ethnicity has become a commodity for sale. "Significantly, many of the transactions by which ethnicity is made 'real' are economically grounded" festivals, restaurants, art galleries, clothing outlets, and musical venues. Ethnicity often becomes a marketing tool, part of an entrepreneurial market" (Lu and Fine 1995:535). As such, customers are served up their version of authenticity, not the ethnically authentic version of food which itself possesses no singular authenticating ingredient. Instead, typically, American customers, and their imagination of the Other, as informed by images and (mis)representations, are catered to, and buy into the Others' fabricated presentation of their culture and corresponding cuisines.

This point links us to that of Devasahayan (2005), who examines women's agency in cooking. Much like the agency of Chinese restaurant owners to make decisions that enhance their economic and social success and good standing, Devasahayan demonstrates how women

activate their agency and display their cultural capital as a means of publicly presenting themselves in particular ways. In "Power and Pleasure Around the Stove," Devasahayan (2005) contends that women are both producers *and* consumers of food. Not only do women provide and prepare food in a gender subjugated way from a position of servitude, as service work to others, primarily men (DeVault 1991, 1997), but they often derive pleasure and individual gains from cooking as well. These personal gains, she posits, enable women to:

> achieve their own ends. In such a case, women who cook and serve meals are not necessarily mere "producers" in the production of goods, implying at their role in cooking is carried out as service work for others. For many, food is a tool they themselves creatively "consume"—in a symbolic sense—as it can be manipulated according to the wishes of these women, and cooking is conceived as a means for creating their identity as women of a specific class rather than as a chore that is dutifully fulfilled. Thus in cooking, it may be said that "producing" is a way of "consuming." In other words, through giving of themselves in cooking, women are securing gains for themselves. (Devasahayan 2005:3).

If women are producer-consumers, then we must consider the food choices they make in producing food to be consumed. What guides these choices and do these choices mitigate "women exercising power and achieving pleasure in the everyday practice of cooking?" (Devasahayan 2005:3). That is, how does deciding to produce certain foods enable women to consume in ways related to these personal gains?

In applying Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, we can view women's roles as producers and consumers through the lens of distinction. What marks women as cultured, sophisticated, or worldly shifts historically and arguably on the basis of a racial hierarchy and global world system that value certain societies and groups over others. The benefit of this system of differential value relates to the ways in which people can access this value through their participation performing their acquisition of cultural capital. "As such, the 'self' is constantly incorporating the 'Other'; and in the arena of food provision and preparation by

women, the motivational impetus directing consumption is a collective rather than an individual concern." (Devasahayan 2005: 4)

The food choices women make reflect social values and the social construction of the self. Contingent on society, these values vary, as do the construction of identity as geared toward individualism or collectivism….Women's orientation to these values impact her participation in food preparation, as an expression of her individuality, and/or her relationships to others, her sense of community and collectivity. The process of food preparation then allows women to establish or solidify these social relations, as well as perform their gender identity (Butler 1990).

In addition, women perform various other identities in the process of food provisioning. "The food one chooses to buy, prepare, and consume classify the consumer, to paraphrase Bourdieu. When a 'convenience' food is incorporated into everyday diets, it 'classifies' its consumers in a specific *habitus*, which facilitates the making of group distinctions (Bourdieu 1984:6)." (Devasahayan 2005:5).

Because food not only nourishes but serves as a social marker of class status (or aspirations perhaps), women assert their gendered, classed identities through the role as producer-consumers. Producing and consuming certain goods reifies class distinctions or differentiations and demonstrates to others class positions (and aspirations). Thus, shopping at specialty goods stores, gourmet shops and eateries, or displaying middle class stability affirms one's position in the socioeconomic hierarchy.

For example, "Dining at plush restaurants, buying food at supermarkets and upscale food distribution outlets, and purchasing highly-priced convenience foods are ways for a consumer to claim affluent social standing…and the mark social boundaries between class strata"

(Devasahayam 2005:5). Interestingly, Devasahayam (2005) discusses the consumption of Western foods in ways that parallel people's tendency towards "eating exoticism." I discuss this more later, but turn next to a brief discussion of travel and transport in the exotizing of food and people.

Food to Transport, Food as Travel

Many memoirs or literary collections explore women's navigations with food toward a more authentic sense of self. These navigations enable women to travel towards their family heritage and history, and encourage them to embrace what they often work to escape (see Avakian 1997, 2005). In escaping their symbolic ethnicities (Waters 1990), many women deny themselves participation in food preparation or production. They also negate knowledge they possess regarding food preparation of various meals. Coming to see their symbolic ethnicity as significant, they are able to attach meanings to meals that they actively distanced themselves from previously. In doing so, women who navigate towards their ethnicity allow themselves to reclaim this part of their identity, culture, and family life. This type of food preparation, of the familiar, allows women to re-associate themselves with the familial, and to celebrate their cultural heritage and home rather than center and prioritize the process of assimilation.

In preserving family traditions, these women exalt the value of family and recognize the solidifying fortitude of the women cooks in their family life. Others prefer to reject the familial tradition, choosing instead to "plunge into outlaw cookery." (Friedensohn 2005:241). This involved doing the "dirty work" of preparing food oneself, rather than allowing others to do so. This related to choosing the canned version or the "safe, sanitized product" versus the "real thing." As Doris Friedensohn (2005:241) explains,

> With time, I would do the honest thing….Cooking meant taking charge of a piece of my life which I had left, until graduate school, largely in my mother's care. It meant

> claiming control over matters touching on health, sensuous pleasure, social relations, and – of course – identity. Once the culinary "shoulds" and "should nots" began falling away, a vast playing field appeared before me –in which I could be athlete, artist, umpire, and audience: the game of cooking was about imitation, invention, and improvisation; it was about glorifying the ordinary and domesticating the exotic.

Domesticating the exotic often entailed relying on curry or other spices considered unusual to add flavor and flare to previously boring dishes. Doing so gave women on the outside of the cultures that produces these spices to gain more currency than would the women from within. The contradiction of food consumption and preparation as currency emerges as some women are able to appear sophisticated and cultured in their patterns of food preparation and consumption. Yet, other women are not able to transcend their Otherness, and thus do not reap the social rewards related to food and sophistication. Instead, these women may reify their Otherness, and cement the racial hierarchy and global positioning through their food preparation and consumption.

In domesticating women and promoting capitalism, food companies enticed women to purchase conveniences to ease their workload at home; during what Arlie Hochschild (1985) dubbed, "the second shift," women craved conveniences to lessen the burden of being creative day after day. Ads encouraged women to buy certain products, with the consumption of these products promising women economically affordable and enjoyable meal options. For example,

> Campbell's ads wanted women to live in fear of social embarrassment in order to get to alleviate women's fears that cooking with convenience foods could be evidence of selfishness or callousness. They assured women that cooking their soup was a sign of love and highlighted several factors, including the soup's variety, quality, value, and health benefits…. The Campbell Soup Company proclaimed that their soups made it possible for women to please their families by serving a varied diet year round. Ads for some of the more exotic soups stated, without reservation, that these were soups "no home kitchen could produce." To produce variety, women needed Campbell's soups. The pressure for variety in cooking created more work for women. It was no longer enough simply to cook for a family; to demonstrate their love, women had to provide a varied menu. (Parkin 2001: 57).

The advice doled out by companies undoubtedly sought to encourage capitalism and consumption, but also promoted creativity in ways that sometimes seemed like creative colonization.

> Modern and convenient, packaged foods also constituted a black canvas upon which they busy woman could still imprint her individual whim. A woman whose cupboard was chock-full of cans might also grow her own herbs with which to doctor them without seeing a contradiction. As Mrs. Atrochi put it, "The secret is spices, not time. You can add curry to mushroom soup…. I find cooking very creative." Here, the home cook followed the lead of cookbook authors who recommended "spiking" prepared foods to dress them up. American women tinkered with recipes to their own liking, turning spring scallion soup into clam soup with the twist of the wrist, or transmuting baked chicken into chicken stroganoff with a container of sour cream." (Weiss 2001: 219).

Just as American women are encouraged to aspire to have a "kitchen of one's own" (Parkin 2001), so too must women of other groups negotiate this gendered ideologies, but often as compounded by issues of race and nation (as differentially marked, stigmatized until fetishized). To preserve their cultural norms and values, and reproduce traditional gender role expectations, parents of Puerto Rican women, for instance, instilled in them the importance of cooking. The mothers highlighted the significance of cooking as a community adhesive, with food the glue that keeps the collective cohesive and collaborative. To achieve this, "Parents attempted to reconstitute homeland communities and values in the US as 'authentic' cultural and gendered spaces. This meant that parents expected children to uphold traditional notions of gender. Young women, for example, were to act as symbols of cultural authenticity and purity" (Toro-Morn and Alicea 2003:202).

Often mothers socialized their daughters by sharing stories of life in the homeland; they strategically relied on these rhetorical devices and oral histories to pass along gendered cultural traditions. These stories, while often nostalgic, and a bit idyllic, involve matriarchal figures as signifiers of comfort. The linkages between cultural authenticity, comfort, women and home are

fortified discursively and behaviorally. Hearing romanticized depictions of home as paradise, and narratives the authentic acceptance and attendant comfort that comes from experiencing those cultures appeals to new immigrants "searching for home abroad." The sense of belonging and easy embrace of people meant to feel "'Othered' in US society" (Toro-Morn and Alicea 2003: 202).

Home (here and abroad) facilitates "familial and geographic ties" to identities. "Home is represented as a refuge from the hostile, alien Anglo world outside the barrio and represents as well the preservation of culture and stability essential to the protagonist's development. Home is constructed as a very private space of Puerto Ricanness, in contrast with the strange and public space of Anglo life" (Toro-Morn and Alicea 2003: 202).

Many new immigrant women choose to cook in multiple ways (see Sen 2005; Avakian 2005, among others). The very act of food preparation allows women to express themselves through their culinary creations; this same sense of freedom and creative expression can also present a quandary for these women, as they may resent and want to resist the traditional gender role expectations thrust upon them as women. In addition, new immigrant women may assert their agency by choosing to make foods that do not remind them of their homelands. Doing so may disconnect them from social, cultural, and familial ties and further any alienation they experience in a racist, sexist, society such as the US. Furthermore, deviating away from culturally familiar, if not "authentic," creations also suggests an engagement with assimilation and can be read as such on the surface.

Upon deeper inspection, an alternate interpretation can be produced. New immigrant women may resist preparing culturally specific or familiar foods as a way of distancing themselves from the gendered asymmetries and differential expectations that they experience as

burdens and obligations, not opportunities at liberation. In this way, refusing to cook, or refusing to cook particular familiar foods marks a subversive resistance to gendered expectations, as informed by culture and constructions of home.

Refusing to assume these gendered responsibilities also gives women some flexibility and autonomy in choosing herself (themselves) over family, and domesticity. Having this autonomy allows women to free themselves from food preparation that reminds them of the gendered subordination and colonization they know well. This autonomy also allows them to make *other* indulgences, and focus their efforts and energies elsewhere- in work, hobbies, etc., not solely in the home and/or cultural preservation or communities/homelands.

For many women food is a metaphor and reminder of home- a vehicle for transporting (relocating/dislocating) them to other cultures/or their own/or ones that they've never known but have imagined. Food also is a vehicle for telling stories of one's real and imagined home. Positively, this reconnects people to their homes (near and far), enabling them their transnational ties and validating such global identities. Problematically, food also allows for the fabrication (not imagination) of home, such that people co-opt, rather than connect to, cultures not their own. That is, a white woman advised to prepare Thai food as a culinary adventure and departure from her norm, might imagine that culture through food. However, the extent of her knowledge of and familiarity with Thai people and culture makes the difference between her appreciation of Thai food and her culinary colonization of it (see Heldke 2001, 2003 for more).

As Toro-Morn and Alicea (2003:202) explain, "There is a desire for sameness and a secure place that provides nurturance." Despite this, women of various groups crave something unusual, something exotic. While this craving may be problematic in its reliance on or reproduction of power differentials, women wanting difference in their food preparation and

consumption suggests that not all culinary exploration constitutes cultural food colonialism. Furthermore, the ways in women are encouraged or discouraged to engage in cultural preservation illustrates their role in cultural colonialism to a large extent. Rather than cast all women's culinary creations as colonizing, I urge for a more complicated reading and interrogations of the motivations that women have for cooking and "consuming the other." When guided by genuine curiosity and a desire to learn, consuming the other is much less charged than when motivated by a desire to acquire currency for consuming the Other (hooks 2003; Narayan 1997). My research works to develop discussions about the reciprocal ways that women's roles as producers and consumers of food can be colonizing and liberating. Until then, our understandings of neocolonial commodity fetishism and cultural food colonialism focus myopically on certain groups of women, without extending the lens of inspection to a variety of women.

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In order to answer my research questions, I conducted focus groups consisting of women 18 years or older of various racial and cultural backgrounds who currently reside in the U.S. The focus groups allowed me to ask questions to women who indicated that they had an interest in participating in a study related to food. Each woman confirmed her willingness to participate in the research project by signing a consent form. The focus groups lasted about 1-2 hours, and generated data for my consequent analysis. I recorded each focus group and transcribed them verbatim. Then I conducted a close examination of the narrative produced by the women utilizing grounded theory methods (GTM) (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin).

Each meeting took place in a quiet location at a local university. Although I did not monetarily compensate the women, I did offer light refreshments. Doing so seemed to relax them a bit, and many engaged in casual conversations that set a similar tone for the focus groups. The women would often begin chatting with one another as they shared in the food, and this prompted them to talk to each other. Food then served as the perfect segway into the focus groups, as it facilitated conversations and interactions.

For each focus group, I attempted to create a racially and/or culturally heterogeneous composition, and achieved this goal with some success. Only one focus group contained women who racially identified as white, with one of the participants complicating that white identity by claiming Hispanic heritage. In all, eleven women identified as white, seven as black and two as Asian. None of the women identified themselves as new or recent immigrants, though many offered narratives to show their negotiation of a “hyphenated” identity on their way to “becoming American” (Danquah 2000).

While I initially planned to conduct 4 focus groups consisting of 5 women, I ultimately conducted 6 groups consisting of 3, 2, 6, 2, 3, and 4 women respectively. I imagined that the proposed sample size would have allowed me to hear a range of stories, comparing and contrasting the experiences of the women participants. The proposed sample size differed from the actual sample size as the result of scheduling conflicts. Having previously conducting some focus group research, I knew that the very topic I intend to study, women's everyday lives, might also interfere with or interrupt the research (when women's responsibilities conflict with scheduled interviews or focus groups). This most often occurs when the multiple responsibilities of the respondents prevent them from participating in a focus group as scheduled.

To be courteous to the women present for the focus group, I conducted the focus groups as planned (rather than reschedule them); while I ideally hoped each focus group would consist of 5 women, I realized this would not always be the case. I contend that the information shared in smaller focus groups is as important as that generated in larger focus groups. I would also argue that smaller groups actually facilitated a more in-depth conversation, prompting the fewer participants to elaborate more, offering more in-depth and detailed accounts, responses, and explanations. In these more intimate focus groups, I gathered richer information and "thick description" (Geertz 1973) as the women could craft their narratives, giving their voices and experiences more texture and depth.

In the focus groups, I posed questions from the focus group guide (see Appendix), centering the inquiry and discussion largely on their experiences and relationships with food (preparation, consumption, chores, etc.). At the beginning of each focus group, I established ground rules for the women to follow. These ground rules involved a request for the participants to participate as actively as possible, without domination of or disrespect to anyone present

(Kirsch 1999; Smith 2000; Twine 2000). Posing various questions for the participants to ponder allowed them to respond specifically to different topics, while framing their responses in relation to their own personal experiences, perspectives, and ideas.

At the start of each focus group, I encouraged each participant to share as much as proves comfortable for them. I also invited participants to add information that they felt was relevant, especially if the information extended and enhanced any topic of conversation. Along these lines, I also encouraged participants to pose questions to the group, in order to address any voids or obvious omissions in the questions I asked (or neglected to ask) of the focus group. Doing so acknowledged that the participants brought their own unique contributions to the conversation (Reinharz 1992). Encouraging active participation potentially empowered the women in the focus group who felt that their individual and collective voices were central, important, and significant (Reinharz 1992).

Indicating to the women the importance and centrality of their voices demonstrated my interest in their experiences, while illustrating the value of their interaction with one another. This iterative process exemplifies the importance of employing symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969) as a theoretical framework. As the women interacted with one another, they likely jogged one another's memories and inspired ideas (Berg 1989). Their interaction with each other may have operated as a shared experience, but also a springboard from which to introduce new ideas or make contrasting observations. The focus group format highlighted both similarities and differences among women of various backgrounds. This method proved useful in that way, and also in showing the nuances in women's experiences with food and gendered negotiations of power. The synergy that I have witnessed in focus groups convinced me to use this method because I felt that women would produce and share valuable knowledge with one another.

Indeed they did. The few friction-filled spaces in the focus group allowed the women to express their points of view in ways that showed how their particular intersectional subject positions (Collins 1990) uniquely shaped their experiences with food. During the focus groups, I encouraged the women to explore these experiential differences among the participants, paying attention to patterns and ruptures in patterns that emerge.

The structure of the focus groups facilitated conversations about food, and generated discussion of other topics as well. Creating the space for women to discuss these matters with others who may share their experiences and perspectives allowed women to see patterns in their lives. The conversational interactive style of the focus group worked to make them comfortable enough to share information in ways that they might not in a more intimate setting.

Qualitative researchers, such as Bruce Berg (1989) and others, suggest that focus groups and interviewing encompass the dramaturgical. Coincidentally, Berg presents a typical standardized interview that investigates diet history in his work. He explicates the importance of attending to the symbolism of words, urging the researcher to attend to communication style, question wording, question order, and more (Berg 1989). He also describes the dramaturgical interview as one involving the researcher making efforts to build rapport with respondents. Berg highlights the importance of appearance and impression management, in addition to the importance of attending to the details of the questions. His discussion is instructive in reminding researchers of the many dimensions and dynamics at play in the dramaturgical interview. His ideas support my choice to conduct focus groups that facilitate this iterative relationship between researcher and respondents.

Since I will be utilizing symbolic interactionism as one part of my theoretical framework, I believe the focus group format allowed me to understand the various meanings the women

assign to food. Because food holds so many meanings for people, it is a potential source of pleasure and pain (Counihan 2004). Given this, focus groups that focus on food can enable women to explore some of that pain, possibly sharing experiences that parallel and echo the others. The focus group format also intended to allow women to celebrate their relationships with food, regarding their ability to control food and weight, cultivate culinary skills and sharpen their cooking abilities, and otherwise wax nostalgic over their food memories, especially with regards to their favorite foods (often ones that remind them of particular family members, friends, or significant others). It is these memories and more that constitute the data that I analyzed, interpreted, and discussed.

I posed a variety of questions to the focus group participants, including questions that dealt with gender roles and the negotiation of traditional gender expectations. I also asked the women to describe their eating and cooking habits, to gain a sense of their relationship with food, family, and friends. Because I requested personal information from participants, I tried to keep the focus groups conversational. Because the social pressures to conform to the group may be intensified in the focus group setting, some of the women may not have comfortably contributed information. Throughout each group, I remained cognizant of the pressures that they might have felt to produce socially desirable results.

Rather than avert the effects of social desirability, I tried to encourage participants to share with others only what they felt comfortably expressing in a group research setting. My awareness of social desirability also prompted me to pay attention to discontinuities in each woman's narrative, such that I considered all of the information regarding a person, especially data that appeared conflicting, contradictory, or complicated. Rather than discard the data as inauthentic, I acknowledged the theoretical contributions potentially embedded in the discursive

practices around social desirability. I hope that, in future research, I can more closely and fully explore the disjunctures between what women say and what they actually do. Such disjunctures are certainly not unique to women, but I think they would be particularly interesting regarding matters of food, gender identity, performance, and power.

Because the focus group required respondents to publicly discuss their experiences with food, I only ensured confidentiality, not anonymity (O'Reilly 2005). Focus group participants were encouraged to respect the privacy of others once the focus group meeting ended. However, the focus group format precludes me from guaranteeing complete confidentiality. I asked that focus group participants not share the information generated during the focus group with others outside of the focus group setting.

To protect the identity and privacy of the respondents, I present the data as patterns and thus do not personally identify any respondent(s) on any written documents or in academic presentations related to this research. Rather, respondents were requested to use a pseudonym when signing the respective consent forms. This served as an additional measure of confidentiality, should someone breach the secured files and violate their privacy. All of the consent forms were kept in a locked file, along with the audio taping of the focus groups. The taping was transcribed verbatim to enable a grounded theoretical analysis of the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Grounded theory methods (as outlined by Glaser and Strauss 1967) require a line by line analysis of the transcripts during the open coding process, such that I could identify categories with which to conduct constant comparison in the axial coding stage of analysis. This constant comparison allowed me to complicate the categories, dimensionalizing them in terms of indicators and properties. This process enabled me to see the connections and disconnections

between categories, in order to begin mapping out the emergent theory. Finally, it was during selective coding that the core categories (play, performance, and em/power/ment) emerged. Identifying the core category/ies highlights the emergent theory and the major theoretical contributions of the research. Typically, this core category congeals all other categories, has robust explanatory power, and logically maps out the patterns of human behavior in the social environment (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Generally, a researcher comes to identify the core category once theoretical saturation has been achieved. Thus, grounded theory method helped me to engage in a coding process in which I fractured and analyzed the data during the open coding process, established linkages between and the properties of emergent categories during the axial coding process, and identified a core category during the selective coding process.

During the focus groups, I noted the salient and lucid elements of the respondents' accounts. While possibly creating a distraction or detracting from the attention that the participants deserve, writing notes provides an additional information gathering and processing strategy. By simultaneously recording and writing notes about the focus group, I ensured that the information communicated and shared during the process was gathered fully and accurately recorded. Taking notes and analyzing the data with grounded theory methods also enabled me to code the data, looking for and identifying emergent patterns, themes, and theories. While I did not monetarily compensate respondents for their time or energy, I felt that offering respondents the opportunity to share their experiences provided potential benefits, along with any intrinsic rewards that participants may possibly experience from their involvement in this research.

Benefits

For this research, I expected women to see their participation in the research as beneficial for a number of reasons: some would simply enjoy sharing their experiences with other women,

while others would feel empowered by this sense of sharing and similarities in experiences; some of the women would not have other avenues of expressing themselves, and might find that the focus group provided them with different ways of expressing themselves.

Specific to the focus groups, still other benefits existed, including women being able to hear from other women how they feel about food, food chores, and food rules. In focus groups, a kind of synergy can unfold, inspiring women to share their stories, by building off of and contrasting their experiences with that of the other focus group participants. During focus groups, a sense of solidarity can emerge, such that the women come to see how gender organizes their everyday lives similarly, across and in spite of their differences. I felt that this happened on more than one occasion.

Possible Drawbacks

The potential drawbacks to this research related to ethical considerations and other issues. Many of the topics of discussion appeared relatively neutral in charge, but may have caused any of the respondents some distress. In an effort to alleviate and minimize this stress, I invited respondents to share only the information that they were comfortable disclosing. This voluntary disclosure gets at another (previously mentioned) methodological consideration- social desirability. Because talking about food can be a source of pleasure and pain, respondents may have produced discourses that sound good, or seem consistent with what they believe are my expectations for them. Under the anthropological gaze, respondents often wear a mask that prevents them from presenting a more “authentic” self or revealing uncomfortable truths about their relationship with food, body, and health. As a researcher, I was aware of the power asymmetries that pressure people into providing socially desirable responses. I tried to achieve the goal of obtaining more accurate answers to questions by keeping the tone of both the focus

groups and interviews conversations. I encouraged respondents to provide honest and thoughtful responses, in an attempt to minimize responses constructed more for my benefit and less reflective of the respondents' realities.

Limitations of the Study

Group Dynamics as Constructive or Conflictive?

Though the focus groups can produce a synergistic dynamic, they can also be conflictive. Establishing some ground rules with and for the participants helped deflect some of the divisiveness and minimize disagreements. The respondents in the smaller focus groups were more in conversation with one another. This structure allowed them to complement each other, and at times, to contrast their own experiences, to highlight the differences. While I found this contrast beneficial, the respondents may not have felt similarly. They may have self-censored their responses for fear of offending other participants, I found the contrast useful in clarifying the differences in the women's experiences; that is, the contrast added depth and nuance to the women's experiences.

Because some of the women knew one another (to various degrees) prior to their participation in the focus group, their friendship or acquaintance often helped the discussion feel more conversational (Blum 1999). This familiarity facilitated the discussion by allowing the women to support one another's perspectives, or to diverge from them.

Gender Bias?

Given the research design, I only recruited women for this study. Some would see the exclusion of men an expense incurred at the purposeful inclusion of women. To this charge, I would respond that much of the recent anthropological work on food chores, rules, and negotiations center around women. My study attempts to extend this literature by examining

power asymmetries and relations among women. I suggest that the depth of understanding and wealth of information gathered in this study should deflect the limitation of having only women participate in this research. This limitation opens up the option for others to focus their investigations of food on men.

Another potential limitation of this work relates to the regional focus. Because I drew my sample from the local Atlanta population, I obtained results and saw patterns emerge that do not necessarily reflect women's experiences worldwide. However, the regional focus compromises generalizability, prohibiting me from drawing such conclusions. Instead, I limit my discussion of the themes that emerged in my sample, being careful not to apply these patterns to a broader national and/or global audience. While the patterns of behavior that I observed and found in my investigation may in fact occur globally, the regional parameters around my sample prevent me from drawing such conclusions.

Since the results are not generalizable to the general population, what this study lacks in reliability, it makes up for in validity. The depth of information that each respondent provides offers insight into the everyday experiences of women who must manage often contradictory and competing social roles, gendered expectations that empower and imprison, and the demands of a continually neocolonizing globalizing capitalist patriarchy (hooks 1981; Sandoval 2000).

Should I conduct future research in this area, I will consider drawing a sample of women and men, in order to illuminate any differences that may exist as related to gendered power asymmetries and the differential expectations in place that celebrate, but do not mandate men's roles as primary caregiver, nurturer, food preparer (versus gatherer), and cleaner. Having a gender-balanced sample would also enable me to do comparative analysis, highlighting the similarities and differences within and across gender categories and subject positions. While I

would still employ snowball sampling and advertise my research with flyers and through word-of-mouth, I would also consider trying to recruit non-college populations rather than rely solely on a convenience sample.

Finally, I intend on attempting to publish this work as an article, potentially submitting it to anthropological and sociological scholarly journals such as *Food and Foodways*, or *Gender and Society*. I have previously presented some of this work as a theoretical piece, and hope to present the findings of this proposed work in the near future. Publishing and presenting this work will allow me to engage the wider academic audiences who offer critical feedback and support, often suggesting ways to improve and strengthen the work, and otherwise offer ideas and perspectives I may not have considered when discussing, presenting, or writing up my findings.

Praxis Applications

At the inception of this inquiry, I was motivated by a desire to understand women's relationships with food and family. Conducting this research prompted me to consider the broader benefits and applications. As Kozaitis (2000:45) urges, "A liberal, humanistic code of ethics informs our work: People always come first." In writing this work, I hope that the narratives of the women help other women, by validating their relationships to themselves and others.

FOOD, CONSUMPTION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN THE U.S.: PLAY, PERFORMANCE, AND POWER

As Avakian and Haber (2005:vii) describe, "food, a constant and necessary presence in human life," proves a useful place to "investigate the complexity of women's intersecting social identities." Because women in the US must negotiate the expectation that they will assume responsibility in the domestic sphere, they may embrace, reject, or challenge these expectations as they see fit. They may choose to cook, eat, and do food chores in ways that shape their lives and reflect their values. In some combination, they may embrace some expectations while rejecting others.

Though a few women in the sample rejected what they saw as oppressive gender role expectations, most expressed great interest in and enthusiasm for cooking. They did so in ways that empowered them and asserted their agency. In many instances, the women viewed cooking as a time for celebration, self-expression, indulgence, and creativity. Some spoke of the aesthetic beauty of food, different than the task or chore of cooking. For some, prepping food to look good or be aesthetically pleasing held greater esteem or value than actually preparing food during cooking.

Participants even poked fun at themselves for not liking cooking, but loving to microwave. One quipped, "I don't cook. I microwave." They enjoyed the convenience of such technology on their everyday lives, a point supported in the literature (Brown and Miller 2002). Many women craved the ease and simplicity of popping something from one box (packaging) into another (microwaving). Relying on convenience foods and technologies eased food preparation, curbed stress, and countered tendencies to indulge in various foods. Convenience foods also translated into less cooking for those who preferred microwaving over cooking.

Those who enjoyed cooking as an "art" versus an "act" acknowledged the scopophilic dimensions of food (Mulvey 1975; Pollock 2003). They could appreciate the effort involved in creating different dishes or creating food to look visually interesting and enticing. A few noted the extent to which they replicated these efforts, in terms of spending hours searching for recipes, shopping for ingredients, and altogether orchestrating the performance of food, gender, and culture.

Women who embrace traditional gender expectations may be as playful as women who reject these expectations. In my research, I found that women who enjoyed cooking did not necessarily lament or resent doing these food chores (Brown and Miller 2002; DeVault 1994). Instead, they employed great creativity in their approach to cooking and caring for others. They played with recipes, altering them to the likes of their family and friends. Being playful with food meant that the women could show their skill at adapting recipes for others. This action gestured or signaled the caring of others, and allowed the women to feel a sense of pride in tending to the needs of others. They understood food as a celebration, and prided themselves on being able to flexibly accommodate everyone's requests at parties, family gatherings, neighborhood get-togethers, and other functions (see Prosterman 1984 for more on food and celebration).

For example, Paris described the deliberate way women members of her family embraced cooking and cared for others. "I like to buy the groceries. When I go (food shopping, I get to pick the good and make it the way I want…(But) I take requests, set the table, serve the food…If someone has an appointment, I make their food first." This strategy ensured that Paris purchased and prepared enough food to satisfy the preferences of her family. Taking requests humanized

and personalized the cooking, making it more personable and meaningful, less mechanical. Many women felt fulfilled in this role.

The manipulation of recipes meant that women could flex their culinary muscle and remind others of the regard they should have for the women who nurture and nourish them. Many of the respondents saw cooking as a culinary art. They imagined themselves in this role, and deployed evidence of food as cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Seeing food not simply as fuel but as artistic expression, a currency, the respondents who spoke of food in this way signaled their status and knowledge of food. Women from both working and middle class backgrounds made these displays, working to show how much their *tastes* had to do with their social position or the (upward) mobility they experienced, mobility that enabled them to enjoy certain kinds of foods. Many respondents noted that they spend a lot of money on food, and do not mind doing so. They spent money on food with the expectation that the food would prove pleasurable, provide an opportunity to strengthen ties with significant others, and introduce them to new flavors and excite more edible desires. The women who viewed food as an experience or activity also were likely to describe food as festive, and about family and celebrations.

A few opened up their homes regularly (ritualistically) to neighbors, family and friends because they loved to cook, create, and share. They indulged themselves in food from a creative angle and experimented with a variety of spices, seasonings, cooking techniques, etc. They boldly forged new recipes, daring to make certain food combinations often with blind ambition. Mostly, their bravery resulted in new culinary treats that pleased themselves and others. Occasionally, the experimentation created disappointing results but was instructive to the women who saw cooking as an art, an evolution of themselves, and their investment in food, family, and community.

Rather than an admonishing, “Don’t bite the hand that feeds you,” many of the women reported using food to establish and maintain their authority in the household or in communities. They enjoyed the power at play in the kitchen and home, among family and friends in the neighborhood. Some focus group participants noted that they observed the power of their mother’s cooking. They attempted to replicate this (perception of) power in their own way, on their own terms.

Performativity and Pleasure

In both the focus groups and in their everyday lives, the women engaged in a performance of identity (Butler 1990, 2004). Food for many of them was central and organizing, a solidification of social ties (to their families and communities). In the expectation that they were to perform various roles, women actively engaged in this performance, indulging others and presenting themselves as they preferred. The women who did not like to cook presented themselves as such. They unapologetically announced to me and others their steady disinterest in food preparation and food chores. They knew that this presentation of self might adversely impact the way others viewed them (as “not very good women” or “Southern women”) but this imagined perception exerted little pressure on them, or did little to change their active participation in food chores. Instead, they became known as women who did not like to cook, even if they *knew* how to cook; this distinction was highlighted in the focus groups (knowing and doing are two different things).

Several of the women who enjoyed cooking commented on how much food was a part of their identity, their sense of self. Women who enjoyed cooking appeared to enjoy the performance of cooking- entertaining and presenting oneself in a particular way. Finkelstein

(1998:213) points to the proliferation of images and messages in the "entertainment and recreation industries" to partially explain the hyperreality of appetites. Finkelstein contends that that people have literally and figuratively invested in the "promises of appearances" and perform their enjoyment as they see reflected in representations (culture and society) (Finkelstein 1998:213). While I do not think that the pleasures of food preparation and entertaining are solely "manufactured" as Finkelstein (1998) suggests, I do agree that women who enjoy entertaining are guided by many motivations, both intrinsic and extrinsic.

Enjoying entertaining others through food affirms hegemonic and respectable femininity, while validating the efforts and talents of women who cook well, or "with love." Geis (1998) extends this discussion by noting the extent to which food preparation nourishes and satisfies the need for the "theatricalization of appetite" (Geis 1998:217). This theatricality of food preparation and consumption transforms dinner guests into quasi-"audience" members, with the women again evoking an entertaining role.

Not only has the "spectacle of consumption" ensured that food preparation is a performance, but our participation in the process is also performative (see also Butler 1990). We often experience pleasure from this performance of food preparation and consumption, in both visual and visceral ways (Geis 1998). Even eating operates as a performance, embedded with meanings, just as is food preparation for public consumption in any number of settings. A few scholars (see Warde 1997, for example) argue that most people do not see food as self and identity. Scholliers explains, "Many people eat, and watch others eating, without any judgment. They care about sufficient, affordable and familiar food, and they are not preoccupied with visual signs of fashion and categorization. Also, most people would not be able to decipher codes

related to food, and would not know or care" about what some might consider fancy foods (Scholliers 2001).

Others scholars contend that what people prepare for others says a lot about the kind of cultural capital people possess and work to display. This acquisition and activation of cultural capital differs considerably from what people consume or eat when alone or in the privacy of their own homes (Madison and McFarlin 2009). That is, people will put food on display to create a spectacle of their cultural capital, to demonstrate that they know how to host, and what is "good to eat" (Harris 1998).

For example, one focus group participant admitted that, while she might enjoy eating a frozen pizza or "Lunchables" every once in a while, she would "never serve that to guests" or publicly purchase such products in their presence for fear that they would perceive her as childish and immature. Another designated "Kid Cuisines" as one "go-to" food that she keeps private, perhaps because, as she described, "It's basically grease and fat in a box." She also acknowledged that she often buys cereal for the prize in the box, and admits, "But I would never tell anyone that's why I'm buying it." Madison and McFarlin (2009) echo the point that people's private food consumption can differ dramatically from their public consumption of food.

While some women in the sample unabashedly shared the pleasure they experience in food (eating, cooking, thinking about, planning, etc.), others appeared more aware of their presentation of self. As the comments above illustrate, women make food and consumption choices differently, depending on the way they want to present themselves publicly and privately. The very discourses that women produce about food capture their consumption patterns and ideologies about food, gender, and power, only to the extent that they are willing to share. That is, women may engage in a socially desirable presentation of self. They may do this

to appear accommodating of traditional gender roles, to look like a superwoman who multitasks with ease and without complaint. They may wear a mask of womanliness without really wanting to present their femininity in this way. They may want to conceal darker truths that may potentially damage the self image they try to project and preserve. Social and cultural pressures may exert themselves on women in ways that regulate what women will say about their roles in society and within their particular families.

Editing their narratives into a neat and tidy package may be one way that some women achieve this goal. Another strategy some women may employ involves discursive disjunctures: that is, doing one thing and saying another; or saying one thing and then another. In either situation, inconsistencies emerge that disrupt the logic of a narrative. However, these inconsistencies are indicative of some of the emotional, ideological, and actual (physical) labor women endure to make sense of and feel satisfied by the roles that they choose or that they may feel are chosen for them. Kozaitis observes, "A discrepancy between *real* and *ideal culture* characterizes…all human collectivities" and contends, "We do not always do what we say or say what we do" (Kozaitis 2003: 45). Often, what people do not say is more telling than what they do. This holds true for the women to which it applies in my sample. The contradictions between "doing" and "saying," as related to food, are also instructive in the reminder that respondents sometimes feel pressure to produce particular narratives or appear a certain way. If these pressures mimic the social, cultural or other pressures that they feel in their everyday lives, these contradictions partially reflect, and prove useful in our understanding of, the women's everyday realities.

That some of the women in the sample shared examples of some of the foods they preferred others not know about shows that some women edit self-censor themselves. The

performative aspects of identity prevail in multiple settings: the home; in public spaces and places, such as work, school, and so on; and even in the focus groups. The women's performances are raced, gendered, and classed. They reflect realities shaped by varying intersections and different social locations. The performances tell stories about the women's aspirations, identities, and experiences.

This shows that women's choices and their presentation of self reflect raced, classed, and gendered inflections. They consider what to eat (or not), what to say they eat (or not), what to say they eat but do not, what they should eat (but do not), etc. Women's narratives then tell what they eat, cook, and prepare in relation to what they can afford, what they aspire to, what class position they imagine they occupy, and more.

Imprisoning Performance?

Very few of the participants viewed their performances around food, gender, and power as a prison. One outspoken respondent, Susan, adamantly rejected traditional gender role expectations and expressed great ambivalence about food, in relationship to her roles. She viewed cooking as a man's means of controlling women and confining her to his expectation for her domesticity. The kitchen and cooking became a boring space and task respectively, associated not with the freedom towards creativity but the burden of obligation. The duty carried a certain weight, and a particular charge for some of the Southern women in the sample. "It's such a Southern woman thing to cook, and to cook well. I don't want that to be me." This respondent clarified that while she can in fact cook, she seldom enjoys it, and often employs the company of family and friends to entertain (distract?) her while she is doing any food preparation (which they are fully aware she will abandon, if she gets too bored). Susan's

comment capture Avakian's (2001:113) sentiments: "Cooking can sometimes keep women in 'our' place and sometimes help us out of a place." Avakian contends that cooking facilitates mobility, explicitly in relationships, and implicitly in identities.

Rather than passively embrace this role or refuse to resist the anticipatory socialization Susan receives (or women as always already "mother"/wife/caregiver), she actively challenged this feminine imperative. She saw little benefit to being complicit in a controlling relationship with food and men as regulating her roles and responsibilities. That is, she knows that being dutiful to what she sees as an oppressive gendered discourse may mark her as an inappropriate Southern woman, yet she willingly takes this risk (disregards the disqualification).

Another white woman, Brittany, held similar views. She noted growing up in a family where food was unappealingly bland and unexciting. As a result, she felt indifferent to food. Thus, she did not find much interest in food, and often allowed her children to visit friends' houses where food was central and celebrated. By proxy, then, she engaged in similar practices of building and supporting community by encouraging her children to socialize with others in the neighborhood.

Some even expressed both excitement and ambivalence, a combination that signaled the sense of choice and constraint in women's lives. One white woman participant explained that she enjoyed cooking, despite (or perhaps because of) growing up with a mother who did not cook. Her mother's class privilege afforded her domestic help. Implicitly, having a mother who did not cook prompted Jackie to cook. "I *like* to cook, sort of. I don't mind it. I like baking more than cooking." Another white respondent, Laura, concurred: " I enjoy cooking, most of the time. Obviously there are days when I don't want to, but I enjoy it. It's kind of like de-stressing,

and I love to eat. It's kind of like, a treat! I get treated for—it's fulfilling or gratifying. You put all of this time into a meal and then you get to enjoy it."

In contrast to the indifference and ambivalence of these few women, many more expressed excitement about cooking. In the following section, I discuss food as an indulgence, and as a celebration (Counihan 2004).

Performance and Power

> "I try new combinations of things, make new recipes all the time. I'll add some of this, a little of that. For example, I love salad. I make all kinds of salad: steak salad, like Philly cheesesteak salad, taco salad, I can put anything on a salad and turn it into a meal. I love to experiment, make new things." (April, a black African American woman in her 30s)

The time, energy, and expenses women invested in cooking translated into various forms of power. While one could interpret the women's enthusiasm for food chores and cooking as delusion, acceptance of traditional gender roles, false consciousness, or more, I contend that the women possess a lot of power in their families. Perhaps during their courtships (for those married or partnered participants), these women lacked the power they described in their role as "big mama" or in charge of these food chores. (This "big mama" role took on many variations, but ultimately meant that people respected the women when it came to all things cooking, and their culinary capabilities were consumed despite or because of these dominant discourses of women's place in the kitchen.) They (re)gained power by persisting in the playful and performative aspects of this role.

April reveled in the whirlwind of attention she received when whipping something up in the kitchen. "They surround me like a pack of wolves. What are you making tonight?!" Her culinary skills were so successful as to garner more status than the tradition typically accommodates. That is, a woman who cooks follows tradition meets expectations; a woman who cooks well has talent, and therefore gains status and special attention. Her duty becomes ability,

talent when executed well. Murcott (1995) suggests that women are taught that the home is the place for "proper meals" and that they are responsible for providing them. Preparing these meals demonstrates the pleasure some women experience in assuming this responsibility.

As Susan, a black African American woman in her 20s described, "You can tell the difference between cooking and cooking with love. Cooking with love means that the food is well-seasoned and delicious, tended to (in order) to show how much the person cares." According to Susan, cooking with love was just that- an expression of love. The reward of the attention women receive for cooking with love sometimes puts them right where they want to be, while unfortunately reinforcing that this is also right where women "belong." Abarca (2001) notes the importance of "emotions towards…family with the offering of food [and] connects the gesture of self-giving as a communal act for women's emotional expression. Self-giving here becomes a communal act of showing gestures of love through plates filled with food" (Abarca 2001:127). Cooking with love creates a double-edged dilemma: being or gaining respect for cooking delicious food while being expected to always cook with love. Finding power and pleasure in food chores makes gender wars seem a power paradox.

For some of the younger married women, the tradition operated at the level of expectation. They felt obligated to cook for themselves and their spouse (I imagine this might differ among women who did not identify as heterosexual). Where hegemonic femininity, the cult of domesticity, and the problem with no name meet, women experienced their gender and food chores as a prison. Others found a kind of freedom in food.

The women described the men as ones who did not venture into the domain of domesticity designated for women. Some feigned an absence of cooking skills, or actually possessed little knowledge of food preparation. Instead, the married women assumed these

duties; for the single women who lived at home, they fell into 2 groups: those who enjoyed their mother's cooking and those who helped their mothers cook.

The former group did not explicitly state that they did so as to not usurp the power, status, or authority of their respective mothers, but in interpreting their narratives, this seems more likely than a self-infantilization. That is, the women who lived at home as young adults had to negotiate this "adultolescent" (Tyre 2002) stage and its potentially tenuous power struggles and role ambiguity. Negotiating food and power relations between women seems a delicate dance, with mothers, daughters, sisters, and other female relatives working in collaborative and conflicting roles to secure status and attention for their dominance of domesticity (see Borello 2006).

For some of the women who lived alone, they appeared to have some greater autonomy when it comes to cooking. Some even foreshadowed a diminishment in autonomy upon the eventual coupling they imagined, internalized, and expected for themselves in the future. One noted that while she had her freedom and independence, she tries to expand her cooking repertoire by being as adventurous and curious as possible. She explained, "I like to try to cook new dishes. I never make the same dish twice." She wanted or hoped to acquire enough experiential knowledge of cooking to look at her pantry and available ingredients, and throw something together. At the time of our focus group, she felt she lacked this expertise and hands-on experience. Challenging herself to strengthen this skill presented itself as more of an option while she was romantically unattached and uninvolved. Entertaining friends also allowed her to strengthen her culinary skills and display them to her friends (see Counihan and Van Esterik 1997). Doing domesticity on her own terms did not ensure docility (Foucault 1977). Instead, it empowered and allowed for the culinary education of many of the women in my sample.

A few single women who lived at home with their families (immediate and/or extended) echoed these sentiments, with the themes of freedom of expression and experimentation central in their narratives. One black African American woman, Paris, noted how much she enjoyed cooking and creating new recipes or variations on dishes. She expressed great pride in these skills, a pattern I noted was generally more pronounced and vocalized by the black women in my sample. A few of the black women seemed quite vocal about or excited about creating culinary dishes. Their voices conveyed the centrality and significance of food in their lives, as well as the importance of celebrating food in ways that many of their ancestors were denied, socially and economically (Williams-Forson 2006). These gendered, raced, and classed narratives differed from the white women in the sample but echoed that of the Asian women who also spoke of the significance of her ancestors, cultural community, and the centering and valuing of collectivism.

Consistent with the literature on the topic of women, food, and hegemonic femininity, many of the white women voiced concern about food in terms of caution. While they too celebrated food, they also expressed anxiety about food, as related to weight, appearance, and health. While a few of the black women articulated similar concerns, they also noted that food was a way of showing love, so you ate because you could and to show gratitude, "that you are grateful." Thus, body image issues were raised by women across racial group, but the discussion differed and varied- appearing more disconcerting for some of the white and Asian women and less so for the black women.

Some of the same women who expressed concern about disciplining their desires for food also spoke of the disadvantage of their group position. Thus, another paradox emerged, as embedded in these contradictory discursive practices of having "too much" and "not enough" (or about desiring yet denying oneself the pleasure of food). Women of various races had to grapple

with the guilt of having more (in terms of material goods, social status, and so forth. As I noted earlier, women produced disjunctured discourses of "doing" (food desires) and "saying"(discourses). These disjunctures captured the complexity of considering women, food, power, and performance.

Sacrifice and Privilege

The themes of sacrifice and privilege surfaced in tenuous relation to one another in many focus groups. Across racial groups, the women expressed the pressures they felt exerted on them by family; they felt pressure to see food as a pleasure, privilege, and reward, an acknowledgement or indication of success, a symbol that signified success, yet the women were not to get too indulgent with food, as that practice could be seen as indulgent, excessive, and evidence of lack of discipline, appreciation for food, and gluttony. (Counihan 2004) Thus, food had to be kept in balance then or indulged for particular (collectivistic) reasons- to observe milestones/birthdays, graduations, etc. and as part of a family's everyday rituals (Counihan 2004)

Collectivistic eating (for family- the strengthening of social ties and celebration) was approved and encouraged; individualistic eating was discouraged. Eating alone or with individualistic indulgence was seen as a practice that would weaken family ties. These connotations to food consumption sometimes interfered with some of the women's individual efforts to achieve a healthy/ier weight, and with their tastes, as they differed from their family. The women as adult daughters had varying degrees of autonomy and control over their diet, with many pointing to various health problems in their families shaping the food choices they make (good and bad). Much of the family and gender socialization the women received encouraged

them to assume traditional gender roles, even if this departed from the more egalitarian roles their respective mothers might have enjoyed/experienced.

Counihan (2004) discussed the importance of balance in Florentines' lives in the 20th century. She posits,

> Eating the foods they desired made people feel good and they celebrated this feeling…Florentines approved of this love of food, but they also believed in a sense of measure and disdained excess consumption…. Excess consumption destroyed desire and pleasure…uncontrolled gluttony was bad because it destroyed the pleasure of eating. Measured behavior guaranteed that foods would retain their delectation. A second reason why Florentines disapproved of giving in to excess desire was because it broke the balance between desire and control that Florentines valued, and as a result made a person fat (Counihan 2004:180-181).

Some of the women noted that their roles in being responsible for food empowered them but also the heightened awareness of the importance of bringing healthy foods into the home and trying to discourage the consumption of unhealthy food at the stores, and thus in the home. Many succumbed to various temptations in food, and struggled to assemble a life that successfully managed their various roles in a balanced way (See Nayak et al, 2001; Kurz and Johnson-Welch 2001:11-12).

Jackie (a white middle class woman) noted the ways her husband would try to subvert and challenge the healthy eating she incorporated into her cooking, by buying junk food. Many of the women shared in the experience of having to shop in order to curb the candy and other junk foods that family members craved. They did so mainly to ensure that only or mostly healthful foods versus "beer and apple pie" entered the home. Seeing or knowing about other family members' health issues, or having ones of their own, motivated many of the women to adopt healthful eating and cooking habits. Several reported growing up without an adequate roadmap for healthy living to follow. With mothers who chose or did not cook or cooked poorly,

respondents began cooking in their young adulthood as a means of improving their own families' health and avoiding illness.

In various cultures, women have to learn how to share food to show love, without doing this to an unhealthy extreme (Counihan 2004; Chernin 1990). At its extreme, or in excess, this involves having to lose weight resulting from investing in this idea that "food is love." For some, food and its association with family was the glue that made family stick together; rejecting food meant (was often perceived as) neglecting/rejecting family/family time. The women who tried different diets to achieve healthier living did so with the support of their families, not at the sacrifice of family time but personal indulgence or unhealthy habits. They also noted how good cooking and being healthier felt, even if done in moderation.

Reese, a middle class white woman, remarked, "When I eat healthier, I just feel better about myself." Another woman of similar social location, Hannah, said, "When I was doing Weight Watchers, I lost like twenty pounds. And I guess it was empowering because, especially when you're cooking, you have full control of what's going into your body, and that's pretty empowering…. Especially when you start to actually count calories, and realize what some things *do*, then, and then you start learning about all different kinds of foods, and what does what, that can be empowering. And then you choose, more specifically, what you eat and what you need." Thus, dieting, while typically understood as the denial of food, negation of self or need, and the disciplining and regulating of the body, also empowered some of the women in the sample. "Dieting as empowering" offers another paradox, in that women who diet often have the means to eat discipline themselves and discourage food consumption to achieve various ends (health, an ideal beauty and body size, etc.), while those with less means to healthy foods and choices may feel disempowered by the disciplining of their food consumption and bodies.

Evidence exists to suggest that working class women feel pressured by the beauty ideal that prevails in the U.S., and deploy various strategies to achieve their goals (see Thompson 1994).

In terms of privilege and sacrifice then, women were and are encouraged to sacrifice for others, despite their respective positions of privilege. They were obligated to themselves and others. If health was their priority, they had to introduce this to family members in strategically subtle ways, not ways that disrupted the families' rituals, celebrations, and cultural traditions.

Scholars cite women as the ones able or positioned to introduce nutritional value into family meals (see Nayak et al 2001; Wood 1995). They neglect discussions of the family's reactions to (i.e. resistance) to this nutritional implementation. While some women in the sample made a concerted effort to be nutritionally wise (taking vitamins and supplements; moderating sodium, sugar, and fat; and so on), others talked about nutrition and diet in terms of their thinking about food. Paris said that for dinner, she always thought and planned to serve "2 veggies, a meat, and a dessert"). Within focus groups, debates emerged around the class aspects of being nutritionally conscious. Hannah and Reese concurred that fresh fruits and vegetables cost more than other foods. Jackie agreed, pointing to the frozen (versus fresh) vegetables she and her husband eat to save money.

In another focus group, April posited, "It's more expensive to buy organic foods; it's expensive to eat healthy, period." Sarah respectfully disagreed, sharing, "It *can* cost more to eat healthy, but you have to know where to go. It might require you to shop for some things here, and other things there, but you can make it work. My mother tells me where to go to get what. I find that really helpful." This feminist moment exemplified the power of focus groups for allowing multiple, conflicting voices to exist, and for women to help one another through

consciousness-raising and strategy-sharing maneuvers. Notably, no strong pattern of concern about nutrition and cost emerged along class lines.

Overall, the women's narratives suggest that, amidst the expectations that they feed their family, women find empowerment and agency in the creative liberatory potential of producing foods in a plethora of ways that primarily suit their fancy and that of their families they may feed. Women thus satisfy their own appetites for food and life first, and then that of their families. Even if they present others as their "true" priority, they center themselves in their narratives and reflections. The pursuit of perfection (Bordo1999) and a healthier lifestyle, at the expense of pleasure produced around food and family, remain in the realm of responsibilities the women care for and attend to, a point that Chernin (1990) reiterates. Pressures from various sources (work, family, friends, culture, school) often encourage women to present a mask of accommodation, even subordination, but many women still find a pleasure in food.

FOOD TECHNOSCAPES: TECHNOLOGIZING AND FETISHIZING FOOD

Given the technological advances that globalization created, people can create a hyperreality (Baudrillard 1995; Finkelstein 1998) that may be far more appealing than the routine of their everyday lives (de Certeau 1984). Some may turn to the television or the Internet in order to validate the mundane, escape reality, or elevate it to something more than ordinary. In many ways, these technologies then may distract people from their lives, transporting them away from reality. Conversely, people may rely on contemporary technologies to enhance and enrich their lives, heightening their physical, edible pleasures by indulging in visual pleasures. Avakian and Haber (2005:viii) suggest that scholars focus more pointedly on understanding "the dailiness of the cooking and serving of food, these most mundane activities, [as the] most valuable asset." Advocating for feminist food studies involves working the intersections to gain greater insight about food, gender, and power. I attend to these intersections by considering how globalization and its attendant technologies influence women's relationship to food and food chores.

In this chapter, I explore the technoscapes (Appadurai 1994) that allow women to possibly strengthen their relationship with food and food chores via the fantasyland of food at play in the contemporary landscape of visual culture. First, I want to focus on the technoscapes of food that I enjoy indulging in from time to time, and then I want to shift my attention to how the focus group respondents included and related to various technologies of food in their own lives.

Always having had an interest in food, more in terms of baking and cake decorating than in cooking, I recall stumbling upon the then-new Food Network in the mid-1990s. This channel fascinated me personally, and I remember being intrigued and curious about the demand for such programming. Just as the news had become a 24-hour media event, so too has food. I was

pleased that other people's interest signaled the popularity and collective pleasure in food, eating, and cooking, and would certainly ensure popularity and thus longevity of the network (and eventually other media that focused on food).

Though I was one of the first of my friends to publicly acknowledge and admit to watching the Food Television network consistently, many others caught onto the trend and eventually became fans as well. One even recently expressed her frustration when her local cable company temporarily cancelled the channel; no longer could she watch (versus cook) her favorites. Her comments demonstrate the intricate web of technologies surrounding food. A comment posted on a social networking site, relayed and then supported by "friends," communicated her love of looking (at food), not cooking. That is, she missed simply watching cooking rather than actually cooking or engaging in food preparation herself. It is this technological web that fascinates me and makes me reflect on my own love affair with food and the food imagery so prevalent in today's media.

My own interests in culinary arts offer up partial explanation for my fascination with the Food Television network. With hopes of attending the Culinary Institute of Arts put on the backburner for academic pursuits, I fully realize that one reason I enjoy watching this network so much has to do with the way I can vicariously enjoy cooking through the careers of others (whether they are professionally trained chefs, entrepreneurs, or casual cooks who caught lucky breaks in open competitions searching for the next American chef). In some way, then, I am able to live out my dream through others, fully in my imagination. Rather than reflect with regret, I can appreciate the hard work and dedication of others, all the while enjoying the insight into a lifestyle I once anticipated for myself.

Yet another reason I indulge so fully in this network has a lot to do with the visually appealing and tempting imagery that prevails. While watching thus makes me complicit in this globalized kind of food fetishism, I do so knowingly but unrelentingly. Besides, watching is not the same as cooking is not the same as eating. Though I can see how well-executed recipes should look, I know that there is far more involved in the process than my eyes can see. The preparation and effort involved in creating various recipes sometimes seems almost dissuasive, and in those moments, I surrender to the visual pleasure. At other times, I find some shows simple and straightforward, so much so that I gain a certain confidence that reminds me, "I can do that."

In many ways, I think this is the magic of the Food Television network: it inspires awe and prompts people to produce their own culinary creations. Doing this secures audiences who may be a little discouraged or tentative about cooking intricate or elaborate meals, but will ambitiously try to make meals that may not involve many ingredients or cooking equipment (beyond the typical or usual). This combination of awe and encouragement means perhaps that people keep watching and engaging media foodscapes to maintain their inspiration and test their own abilities. Recent movies, such as *Julie and Julia*, have documented this desire to test one's culinary capabilities. The film captures the self-imposed culinary challenges the protagonist (and people in general) experienced in attempting to execute a different recipe a day for an entire year. The film demonstrates how much food, relationships, and culture have been woven into the fabric of our lives, informed by and informing these representations. The popularity of food imagery illustrates the extent to which food continues to operate through contemporary technoscapes that inform our imagination, interactions, and identities.

That these various technoscapes converge to form a complex web for communicating about and visually consuming food and cultures supports observations that a shift in consumer culture has occurred. This shift means that "everyday people" are increasingly investigating recipes from a variety of pages online; posting home videos on websites such as youtube.com to demonstrate what great cooking show hosts (versus cooks?) they would make; talking about food in one way or another online; watching representations of food on television or the Internet; and actually cooking for fun, creativity, and self-actualization.

With food constructed as a kind of hobby, the parameters of cooking can largely by ignored. Even though people can increasingly take their technology with them, cooking and doing food chores continues to occur largely in private spaces. As a result, women may be disrupting discourses about domesticity by admitting, as my friend did, that they implicitly enjoy watching food television more than actually engaging in food preparation. Women further disrupt gender discourses intended to discipline them through the discouragement of their exploration. Ironically, women may rely on these technologies to affirm their domestic femininity, or conversely, to shake what they perceive as perpetual aprons strings anchoring them to the kitchen. In the case of the former, they may rely on the technologies to cultivate their culinary knowledge. In the case of the latter, they may rely on the technologies to research restaurants to explore, street vendors to seek out in places near and far, shops to browse, and so on. Admittedly, much of the technoscapes of food reinforce traditional gender expectations even as women negotiate and try to transcend them. As Kowaleski (1999) contends, women as consuming subjects are perfectly acceptable, if not encouraged as such in the public sphere. Women who venture out to satisfy their edible desires may also encounter tensions regarding the regulation of women's food consumption. Thus, many women must confront the contradictions

of domesticity, discipline, and desire. The various technologies that draw women out of the home and the kitchen pull them into patterns of consumption that colonize and liberate.

When women take their technologies with them, on local or global travel, they may attempt to engage in a subversive kind of feminism. In fact, the technologies of food may inspire such travel in the first place (i.e., shows like "No Reservations" and others come to mind). Thinking of food as transport and as travel can be useful in literal and metaphorical ways. For women who explore their social worlds through food, they may be crossing many borders, interacting with a variety of people, and gaining knowledge of self and others, food, culture, and more through the process (Heldke 2001).

The dilemma with the consumption of food-related visual culture relates to the reinforcement of traditional gender expectations for women's domesticity. That is, this consumption often occurs at (but is not limited to the) home (i.e., watching television), and encourages audiences to cook, also typically at home. While the technologizing and fetishizing of food tempts all sorts of audiences, it is interesting and important to consider how much the visual representations are designed to promote traditional gender expectations and contain women within the home, even if at her computer or elsewhere. The images are quite seductive, and suggest a kind of warm and fuzzy fulfillment that perhaps eluded previous generations of women. The imagery is quite effective then in presenting possibilities for the realization of such satisfaction.

The depiction of dinner parties or small intimate gatherings signals to audiences the ease of replication, without the reality of the emotional, physical, and financial investment accurately or adequately depicted in the representations. Nevertheless, women throw dinner parties of their own, intending to entertain as a way to possibly strengthen and solidify social ties. Again, an

irony emerges in which women come to interact with others largely through a domesticated role in the private sphere. Thus, the contradictions continue: while cooking liberates, it can also confine; while watching inspires, doing requires. Women audiences are left to sort through the kinds of costs and benefits to their visual and ideological consumption of the imagery that circulates in the global food technoscapes. Fortunately, the very technology that reinforces tradition also allows women to participate in producing discourses that support or contest gender expectations.

Domesticating Taste, (Disrupting) Discourses of Domestic Femininity, and Discovering Your Inner Cook (Thinking Food Differently)

The trend towards domesticating social life has involved an increasing interest in home and self improvement channels, websites, and information intended to celebrate the home and the creative self. As people continue to make these investments, they search for ways to appear innovative and interesting to themselves and others. By domesticating themselves, they work towards polishing up themselves and their homes (see Gelber 2000). This process of domestication relies on and reproduces the spectacles of society (DeBord 1990), prompting people to make themselves and their material possessions sexier and more enviable to others. This domestication directly connects to food in a growing number of ways. Television channels such as the Home and Garden Television Network (HGTV) and the Food Network have made tending to the home something spectacular. The culture industry turns out imagery that seduces as it circulates, convincing its consumers to literally and figuratively buy into the imagery.

Arguably, the foodscapes that the media circulates and promotes shapes our collective sense of taste. That foodscapes play with domesticity suggests that our tastes are domesticated. The foodscapes continue to inform our perception of distinction, and in a way destabilize these

distinctions by making the imagery (but not necessarily the experience) accessible to mass audiences. Interestingly, then, the foodscapes visually consumed by audiences give people a kind of cultural capital they can activate as currency in conversation and in cultural life in general. The visual literacy that foodscapes enable blurs the line between the haves and have-nots.

The current technological landscape connects to food globalization in new and interesting ways. That people watch the Food Network but can admit to not cooking or liking to cook suggests something different about this historical moment. Women, like my friend and others, are producing discourses that deviate from traditional gender expectations. They appear to do so with ease and in the absence of the guilt that riddled many women in previous generations. That these discourses go public in a way that elicits support and solidarity also suggests something new in social and cultural life.

So it is that women can embrace or reject the gender expectations of domesticity and docility outlined for us. Instead, women can create scripts and discourses that reflect who they are and what they want from their lives, more on their own terms. The technology changes the way that women participate and produce these discourses and express themselves. The technology also facilitates the food fascination and fetishism, enabling women to like to watch food preparation, without necessarily liking to cook. That is, the technological web connects people to various sources- television, internet, etc. and these technologies converge to create a nexus of information and titillation. A person can watch their favorite cooks on television, some of whom are professionally trained chefs, all of whom have been celebrities with varying degrees of success and familiarity to American audience members. Viewers can secure recipes from their corresponding webpages or websites, create these recipes, discuss them online- in blogs,

social networking sites, and more. This experience is a relatively new one, but increasingly common and growing in popularity.

But why do some people watch the Food Television network and boldly admit to watching versus cooking, while others are able to "discover their inner cook"? (Lauer 2009)[4]. How did food become so spectacular as to inspire as much, if not more, watching than cooking? In my estimation, the popularity of the Food TV Network relates to the popularity of other channels that "celebrate and domesticate" while paradoxically globalizing the experience. Shows such as Anthony Bourdain's *No Reservations* demonstrate the strain between promoting world travel on one network (The Travel Channel), while cautioning it on another (Cable News Network, among others). The show centers on French chef, Bourdain, a resident of New York City, who travels to various locales, employs "native experts" to help him navigate foreign terrain for local flavors and in search of "exotic" tastes. While Bourdain's edgy style of acquisitiveness (Counihan 2004) exemplifies the theme of food colonialism that permeates this and similar shows, his presentation of self as fearless traveler who endlessly explores other people's cultures partially through food encourages the colonizer in all of us.

Bourdain deploys the privilege attached to his various hegemonic identities in ways that women viewers of various social locations may encounter some resistance in doing. For the women viewers inspired and interpolated by Bourdain (Althusser 1977), they may internalize his acquisitiveness and explore food and culture through travel. Doing so would disrupt discourses of hegemonic and respectable femininity (see Guano 2005) and allow these women to articulate a different kind of feminism in food and cultural exploration. Such explorations might motivate women to engage in thinking about food differently, as objects that hold meanings which vary across time and space.

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4 Lauer made this observation during the televised 2009 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City.

Shows like “No Reservations” and others converge to offer a variety of images of food, and help to shift meanings that people attach to food. As Carole Counihan (2004) has discussed in her work with Italians in Florence, food and families connect across meanings of solidarity, cohesion, and unity. Sharing food solidifies the boundaries of family (who is considered family or welcomed as such) and works to strengthen these family ties. Food affirms family and preserves cultural heritage. Counihan (2004) contends that food can be viewed as an appreciation of the old, a respect for tradition. She also discusses why some Italians saw food as a celebration, and that every day is a holiday, a reason to celebrate as expressed through and/or with food. Counihan’s point departs from that of Janice Williams (1997), who found that some British people indulge more while on holiday and reportedly “never eat like this at home” (Williams 1997:151). While similar sorts of self-control and balance were discussed as important, Italians emphasized food and celebration more in their everyday lives, while British people preserved their indulgence until they broke with the everyday on holiday.

The celebration connects to my earlier point in this way: the technological web or technoscapes encapsulated by the Food TV Network, etc., makes food fun, makes “every day a holiday” (Counihan 2004:180), a party. While food might maintain the meanings we attach to it in terms of cultivating intimacy, ensuring familiarity, and securing tradition, the new technoscapes and television shows allow us to attach new meanings. With food preparation presented in its virtual forms, audiences sit back, seduced and sedated by the simulacra (Baudrillard 1995). As viewer consumers, audiences easily embrace the food fetishism as play. This brings the “party” theme to life.

And while audiences are aware of the virtual reality, they often embrace the play-scapes that correspond to it (see Appadurai 1994 for more on “scapes”). When watching an episode of

Rachael Ray's "Thirty-Minute Meals," for example, audiences can watch a "girl next door" woman create a "delicious meal" in "just under thirty minutes." The virtual reality masks the multiple tasks (and the many people) required to put the actual episode together, and the more than 30 minutes required to plan and purchase items for this meal. Yet, audiences are drawn in--hook, line and sinker. Ray has steadily enjoyed success, branching out from there to her own television talk show.

Other shows on the Food TV Network similarly seduce audiences. The basic framework of each show is guided by a desire to show people how to cook relatively simple meals with easy-to-follow steps and recipes. The seduction is furthered by the behind-the-scenes assistance and production we do *not* get to see- the amount of food used in each segment, for each recipe, the number of people ("sous chefs") involved, the lighting, etc. But the question really remains, Do we *want* to have this backstage pass? My sense is that people prefer the front stage presentation (Goffman 1958) of prettily and easily put together dishes prepared by some professionally trained chefs and amateurs alike (stay-at-home moms).

In the front stage presentation, we only get exposed to the shiny, crispy crunch of food, the warm hues of intimate kitchens, the relaxed and casual conversation, and the coaching tone of instruction, as if to simulate the kind of on-on-one training we might receive at the likes of the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), French Institute, or elsewhere. The Food TV network has taken our mothers' recipes but eliminated or minimized the mothering nag of obligation and instruction. We are left instead with younger, peppier, sexier (?) versions of both men and women. This, I contend, is what makes these shows popular and what inspires people to discover their inner cook.

The culture industry (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944, 1979) convinces people to consume materially and ideologically. This promotes capitalism and the globalization of food as people see shows about different foods and want to easy gain access to these items (and even the people who produce and embody this "difference"). By demand, corporations such as Wal-Mart have responded, offering a variety of "ethnic food aisle" items (e.g., Taste of Asia) and products. Increasingly, people are purchasing items for at-home cooking, and also eating at different "ethnic" restaurants.

Many of the focus group participants offered narratives to support my earlier point about women, consumption, and notions of respectable or hegemonic femininity. They acknowledged the extent to which they incorporated technoscapes of food in their lives, and expressed great excitement about the Food TV Network, Martha Stewart, and other related representations of food and hegemonic desirable domesticity. They had their own preferences and indulged them, while avoiding the shows they found less desirable (i.e., "Down Home With the Neelys"). Some commented that they enjoyed being able to see what a dish *should* look like once prepared. Knowing was half the battle, and they could anticipate the results of their own culinary efforts with less anxiety. The imagery of finished products (fully cooked or prepared meals) made the process *look* easy. But the respondents were not fooled by this transparent t/ease. They joked that 30-minute-meals take "more like an hour" to assemble. Nevertheless, the knowledge of what/what the dish should look minimized this difference.

Many of the respondents recorded recipes that they hoped to cook someday. Some admitted this often never happened but the desire to cook, to be creative, was evident in the women's narratives. They wanted to cook, with all sorts of encouragement prompting them along the way. They could look at the corresponding websites if/once they decided to cook. The

women noted how empowering cooking was, and how enjoyable watching cooking proved. They expressed emotions that seem largely contradictory for their generation and within a heterosexist framework- they do not mind cooking, and often look forward to cooking when entertaining friends in their homes. As Ohnuki-Tierney (1993:3) posits, "Food plays a dynamic role in the way people think of themselves and others… Food tells not only how people live but also how they think of themselves in relation to others." With "food as a metaphor of self" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993:3), women wrap themselves up in representations and presentation of self.

Abarca (2001:127) contends, "Cooking…is not an obligatory performance but rather a celebration of our own affectionate and creative expression." Food chores related to a party or celebration are arguably bound to feel less laborious, less of a chore, when done as a "special occasion." This is what Jackie asserted: "I make meals fancier for my friends. I like doing that for them." Such a perspective shifts the potential drudgery of food chores in everyday life, allowing it to dissipate into enjoyment. Others echoed this: "In my family, if you feed somebody, that is the ultimate sign that you love them… Anytime my friends come over, it's 'What do you want to eat? Eat this! Eat that!' I don't know why, it's just a big thing in my family. That's just how you show you love them, and that they are welcome" (Hannah). Scholars point to the ways women gain a sense of themselves through food preparation for others. Douglas posits, "Meals are for family, close friends, honored guests. The grand operator of the system is the line between intimacy and distance" (Douglas 1997:41). Scholars show how important interactions are to people's sense of self. Many of the women in my sample described how applicable this is to their lives; they care about their presentation of self and certainly understand themselves in relation to others.

An alternate explanation suggests that the women who felt favorably about the Food TV Network may have envisioned (imagined) themselves as chefs on their own show. In this imaginary technoscape (Appadurai 1994), the women could transport themselves away from the occasional boredom of their reality—cooking for themselves, their spouses, partners, or immediate and extended families- to the playscape fantasy food land where they are the celebrity chefs they see on television (and possibly in person- visits to Atlanta by Bobby Flay, Paula Dean, Alton Brown; access to their restaurants). The consumption of imagery and ideologies blurs the virtual and the actual (reality). This blurring inspires the women respondents, as viewers, to cultivate a kind of false consciousness but one that enables them to attach new meanings to old expectations regarding women, femininity, and food chores.

Through foodscapes, old tasks create new identities or differentially shape women's sense of self- they transform themselves from "boring housewives" into "entertainers" or women who entertain; they feed themselves in a utilitarian way but impress others with their cooking capabilities. They are crafting selves (Kondo 1990) who possibly make culinary magic.

Curiously, at first blush, the contradictions emerge, but upon closer inspection, they make perfect sense. While the images on the Food TV Network would seem to reinforce connections between women, food, and home, many male chefs are centered on the network (as they are in social life- see Ferguson and Zukin 1998). The presence of men disrupts and reinforces the feminization of domesticity, since men who are trained as chefs (masculinized men) hold more social value than men who cook (feminized men). The men may also be centered in these culinary cultural representations in ways that are heterosexually appealing to a presumably female audience.

The women on the shows erode the connection between women, food, and home (private) by being on television (public yet private). Their presence in a makeshift or pseudo-home creates a paradox since the home is a simulacrum (Baudrillard 1994), a set design. The women, then, are at home, in public. Thus, they are getting paid for their domesticity and culinary expertise. I contend that this compensation signals to women respondents (and viewers in general) that women deserve to be compensated and rewarded for what has traditionally been seen as "women's work." Because the culture industry and the imagery on television and other media have an aura (Benjamin 1968) that seduces and entices viewers, it is not surprising that many of my respondents seem to have also fallen under that spell.

Conversely, the imagery might reify that women belong in the kitchen. The imagery goes a step further in supporting this ideology by suggesting that women who take the time and energy to invest in domesticity could cultivate cooking skills similar to any of the women spotlighted in a show. That many focus group participants both publicly and privately idolized or admired women celebrity chefs and ostensible queens of domesticity implies that these women may feel affirmed in their gender traditional roles, without completely seeing the value of women's work with regards to food and foodwork.

In addition, the Food TV Network makes every meal a party, a veritable celebration. This theme has woven its way into various show titles (i.e. Paula's Party, etc.) and confirms what Carole Counihan contends, many people think of food as festive, a celebration, that every/day is a holiday (Counihan 1994:180). Food operates as a kind of fantasy and in our culinary imagination: food is festive, fun, family, and friends. Often, focus group members expressed their enthusiasm for food, and their enjoyment from the empowerment they felt learning to cook

as a choice rather than a requirement; their emotion signaled the significance and centrality of food as a solidifier of social ties, within families, communities, etc.

For example, Reese shared her sentiments about being single but looking forward to her family time: "During the week, I generally eat by myself, but I go home every weekend and eat with my family. I have a big family so it's really fun to go home. I don't know; it's crazy because there's so many of us. And we just have so much to talk about, and laugh about. I really like mealtimes with my family." As Murcott (1997) cautioned, we should not think of family meal times as a mythical thing of the past. Instead, she noted family members' busy schedules as a potential source of conflict that interrupted and interfered with family meal time. Scheduling in mealtimes can be seen as both an intensification of and challenge to the chaotic pace of life. Nevertheless, family time maintains a symbolic significance, as Reese expressed in her excited anticipation and appreciation of her family meals.

Enjoying family time and enjoying food chores should not automatically suggest that women who like the televisual food technoscapes embrace traditional gender ideologies. Reese explained, "I watch Martha (Stewart). I love Martha. She's my idol, and it's so horrible to say, because people-- But when I tell people that, they're like, 'Oh, you wanna wear an apron and cook for your man.'… She's not even married. She's single and she's…She does all of these things in her life. She has a farm, several businesses. I just think she's awesome." Others in this focus group shared in the celebration of Martha, her creativity, enviable entrepreneurship, and inspiration to women.

Contemplating these culinary dreamscapes (Appardurai 1994) enables women as viewer consumers to reimagine their roles, or simply imagine themselves as "the next Martha." Their consumption of images and ideologies allows them to see themselves as competent, qualified,

and curious, even if also obligated. They express great pride in themselves and satisfaction about their efficacy in cooking and trying to cook.

For example, Jackie (a white woman with Hispanic heritage) shared her love of the imagery that circulates in the food culture industrial complex. " I *love* the Food channel. It's my secret obsession." She also noted the sense of personal gratification she realized with every new recipe she successfully attempted: "I like trying new things and seeing if I can actually do it." Watching others cook on television cultivated this curiosity and inspired her to experiment beyond her easy or "go-to" recipes. Seeing how she could complicate her easy dishes into something fancier also enhanced her sense of self.

Despite describing her relationship to food as a "love/hate" one, she loved learning how to cook more than she hated having to cook. This very "love/hate" dimension of cooking complicates women's relationship to food chores, the people they may cook for, and the ideologies themselves. Even the term "food chores" suggests something undesirable or something to be avoided, rather than an enjoyable, refreshing, rewardingly indulgent experience. The contemporary culinary technoscapes made food fun in ways that equipped women with skills versus chores.

Some admitted to simply being better cooks than other household or family members, and this distinction gave them a sense of pride, efficacy, and accomplishment. In fact, many actively discouraged and dissuaded family members from being or "helping" in the kitchen, neglecting to ask for assistance with the exception of "really busy days." These women were not colonized, but in fact colonized the kitchen, claiming the space and the art of cooking for themselves. They turned to partners or other family members mostly when they felt burdened by their multiple responsibilities; then, and only then, did they make requests for the help. Often,

after tasting the way meals turned out, they regretted doing so, noting that those helping were "not very good" cooks.

Employing their agency allows women to challenge traditional gender expectations and feel empowered by their identities as people who create through cooking. These identities may have previously been masked by Second Wave Feminism's hegemonic discourse on women's oppression (and what would create liberation) but appear as something new in the sincere way many of the women in these focus groups embraced cooking and saw television as an affirmation of their cooking selves and inspiration for experimentation and ingenuity. April, a black African American woman, expressed the most obvious jubilance and pride about her identity and role as a cook in her family. She enthusiastically elaborated on the ways she concocted new dishes: "Let me try this with a pinch of this, some of that." She emoted the significant and centrality of cooking in her life, and the importance of cooking and creating recipes her way.

Perhaps an alternate explanation involves Louis Althusser's idea of interpellation (1971). Most of the white-identified respondents who spoke enthusiastically about the Food TV Network shows mentioned white women among their favorites. Jackie mentioned that she liked Rachel Ray, for the conceptual ease and simplicity of 30-minute-meals**5,** and Paula Deen, because she is Southern which is where this respondent resides. Deen amused the respondent. In trying to follow this logic, I asked if she enjoyed another show, "Down Home with the Neelys." The respondent quickly commented that she enjoyed neither the show nor the "banter between the two…. Them as a couple annoys me." As a small example, this disinterest in one of a few shows to feature black people could be interpreted as a "failed interpellation" (Althusser 1971) in raced and gendered ways. The respondent may see herself in Rachel (Ray), Paula (Deen), or Giada (De

5 The respondent commented that in Ray's show, she assembles ingredients swiftly and implicitly, magically, since she "throws it all in the pan, and 'Tada.' I like that, because it's more practical."

Larentis), but not Gina (Neely). That is, Jackie may relate more to the white women who appear on the Food Network than women of other racial and cultural backgrounds. That Jackie likes Paula Deen's kind of Southern but not Gina Neely's kind of Southern suggests that Jackie connects more with white women than black women. This "failed interpellation" also occurs to some degree in Jackie not mentioning liking any of the network's shows with Latina women. In this way, Jackie reaffirms the network's hegemonic whiteness, in her enjoyment of Southern whiteness but not Southern blackness.

This observation reinforces the extent to which many of the women in my focus groups (over) identify with the women on television, and enjoy imagining themselves as central "characters" in their everyday lives. Notably, the interpellation did little to promote the kind of food adventuring that Lisa Heldke (2003) discusses extensively in her work. Instead, I observed some affirmation and appreciation for the centrality of white ethnic cuisines. That is, Italian and (white) Southern foods solidify that centrality and normalcy of whiteness as "vanilla" (hooks 1998, 2003). That many white respondents neither commented on nor noted any enjoyment in watching any of the shows with black cooks or chefs suggests a reluctance to embrace that which is constructed as the "Other." That the majority of women, when discussing dominant imagery, did not note the more marginal shows and respective individuals, illustrates how the contemporary racial hierarchy assigns more value to whiteness and its (presumed) attendant culture than other races and cultures. The reinforcement of such racial ideologies also offers partial explanation about the behavioral practices of audiences who internalize the hegemonic imagery. Examining the focus group participants' eating out habits in part attempts to establish any connections that exist between their own ideologies, identities, and interactions with others. That the representations inform the "ideal" ideologically, and then materially and behaviorally,

the discourses that women produce when talking about the representations of people they love following as fans speaks volumes about the ways the racial hierarchy shapes perception and reality.

This maneuver also reminds us that a racial hierarchy remains, in which co-opting the Other "as resource" (Heldke 2003) is optional but desirable only as currency, not liability. That is, the racial hierarchy suggests that Down Home With the Neelys, Big Daddy, etc. (Al Roker?) offer little in the way of enviable recipes to showcase to significant others or special friends. Instead, the racial hierarchy that exists in society transfers to the representations on television, and gets mapped out to make (black) Southern food (BBQ and Soul?) and Big Daddy's undesirable and intolerable. This racial hierarchy plays out in the kinds of discursive practices that people deploy when talking about various foods and restaurants in and around Atlanta. In the following chapter, I discuss in ethnographic detail my experiences in sampling the local color and getting a taste of the flavors of the South. I attempt to show how these discourses reinforce the racial hierarchy and the power asymmetrical relations surrounding food, as experienced here in Atlanta.

The food fetishism that the popularity of the Food TV Network and other media sources have influenced women in the US in a variety of ways. While many women still see food chores as punishment, everyday obligations not easily deflected onto others, others increasingly articulate narratives of empowerment, entertainment, and enjoyment about food, especially when prepared for others. I argue that the increasing imagery of food as spectacle supports the association with celebration (beyond consumption). The women have a number of women chefs/cooks of various generations (their own age, as well as younger and older) to emulate (or not). They speak in ways that express their enthusiasm for food, and their loyalty to and love of

celebrity chefs. They constitute part of a growing fan base of viewers consumers of these television networks, and they willingly participate in the culture industry surrounding food. They weave the images they see and enjoy into the fabrics of their everyday lives. The women find these shows instructive, but not in an altogether obligatory way. The shows do not smack of the distaste that gender socialization (from mothers to daughters, for example) creates. Instead, they facilitate alternate interpretations and expectations, thereby allowing women to be authors of their lives in ways that converge with and depart from women's experiences of other generations.

Foodscapes arguably enhanced many of the women's performance of roles, identity, and culture. These technologies appeared to influence the way women imagined themselves, as the boundaries between real and hyperreal blurred (Baudrillard 1998). Implicitly, the food technoscapes may have allowed some women to feel a part of an imagined community of "celebrity chefs": talented women grounded by their own family ties and mapped out in their imaginations. This imagined community (Anderson 1990) offered new possibilities for women who invested in their identities around food. In reality, these technoscapes continue to support such imagined communities but also reproduce women's role in the family and in kitchens, if somehow, sometimes on their own terms.

GEOGRAPHIES OF FOOD: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF ATLANTA'S LOCAL FOOD CULTURE (FEEDING EDIBLE DESIRES IN A GLOBAL VILLAGE FINDING EXOTIC IN THE SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY)

In mapping out the culinary scene in Atlanta, one must provide a brief history of the geography of race, ethnicity, nationality, and class in the city. Persistent patterns of residential segregation manifest themselves in interesting ways, with Interstate 20 (I-20) informally demarcating divisions in social location and position. This invisible dividing line generally separates the "haves" from the "have nots," though proposed and actual changes in transportation, gentrification and other housing issues, city redevelopment projects, and more have created new patterns shaping the socio-cultural landscape of the city. Nevertheless, the white and/or wealthy tend towards the northern parts of the city, with people of color and/or in poverty inhabiting the south side. The line not only draws attention to the dance between race and class, but some of the tensions in navigating the invisible but tangible line.

With its rather robust restaurant scene, Atlanta hosts several superstar chefs, and seems to host a variety of venues that cater to our international palates. In my observation, Atlanta's food scene provides the perfect excuse for people to engage in food adventuring and explore what a column in local alternative magazine, Creative Loafing, calls "Ethnic.city." This appropriately summarizes Atlanta, with places like Buford Highway appealing to a vast array of groups. New immigrants- not only Asian of different ethnicities- from a number of countries visit shops and restaurants along the corridor. Perhaps they are searching for some reminder of home, some familiarity, or something completely different.

In the case of the latter, I often observe what looks like food colonialism. Customers of social locations or positions that differ from those of the employees or staff of the places they patronize can be identified as food colonists because of this visible difference. However, the

label only applies when those customers emphasize that difference, or announce the importance of the distance between groups as to highlight how "unusual" or "exotic" they find the local favor on Buford Highway. Thus, food colonists enjoy being exposed to this exoticism and view the international corridor as their literal and figurative transport to what they see as another (social, cultural) world.

I have witnessed this food colonizing both up close and at a distance. Discursively, I know many people personally or by proxy who see Buford Highway as a place to satisfy their curious palate. They travel to food places along the highway, searching for this satisfaction in whatever their preferred (insert ethnicity here) culinary forms. Having spent a substantial amount of time in the city, I have visited various restaurants along the highway, where I encounter people who appear to be food colonists consuming a meal and experience recommended to them by friends. That is, they seem to make a spectacle of the whole encounter, since that is how I imagine food colonists think: encountering the "Other." They embody a sense of entitlement, a privilege that allows them safe travel to encounter this "Other," and outwardly express an excitement about discovering authenticity. The combination of these factors converges into a palpable glee, contentment that the "Other" has been met and then consumed. The food colonists I have observed wear these encounters like a badge of honor, a (false) sense of accomplishment. They search for authenticity and want their experience authenticated and approved by the "natives" before they can transform their food tourism into currency.

Recently, for example, I went into Lee's Bakery, a Vietnamese business located on Buford Highway, and witnessed this food colonizing posture and practice. Two middle-aged white men were placing their order, while one elderly Asian man waited patiently to pay for his order at the register. I waited to be served, and watched a black man enter the store, purchase

several loaves of bread, and then leave. Everyone except the white men remained friendly but relatively quiet. One of the men in particular talked constantly, comparing the bakery to others in the areas, asking for the server's stamp of approval. From what I overheard of the conversation, the white man wanted some affirmation that he was buying "authentic" Vietnamese food, and that doing so made him different. That the white men were in search of this stamp contrasted with the behavior (motivation?) of the others. To me, this questioning exposes a potential food colonizer, in that someone curious about another's food and culture might ask, "What's good here?" in the politest form, versus some variation of the inquiry, "Do you have the best Vietnamese food?" The qualitative difference between the two relates to two different kinds of taste: one literal and the other social/cultural. Wanting to taste the flavors of another culture or region of the world is one thing; wanting to taste some specific "authentic" version of food that has probably been adapted to the social and geographical landscape and people is something altogether different.

Admittedly, I often wonder if I have become a food colonizer, or if I (like others) am a food adventurer who enjoys the exposure to different tastes, traditions, cultures, practices, and interactions. That the food adventurer does not take the same pride in the pilfering through of another's culture, I reflect on my behavior as qualitatively different, in some limited but important ways. In various academic circles, I have been encouraged to and resisted becoming a food colonist. This introduction to, and my consequent refusal of, cultural food cultures suggested that I had so much to explore and so little time in which to conduct such explorations. Others met my refusal and resistance to participating in cultural food colonialism as indicative of my provincial upbringing (How was I to know better, since I was born and raised in such a small

place, the island of St. Thomas?) (see hooks 1998 for more discussion of constructions of the Other as "primitive").

By virtue of birth, I was implicated in cultural food colonialism from many directions. On the one hand, I was recruited as a (presumed) willing participant, yet expected to put my own culture on display for consumption (as people would often ask, "So, what did you eat back home?" Telling them about the American foods I grew up on never prompted them to reflect on the colonialism I was highlighting for their analysis (their own and the histories of colonialism that still shape social relations throughout the region). I never seemed to have satisfactory answers to these sorts of questions, and often wondered how to communicate, in polite conversation, that as a "native" of St. Thomas, I always felt like a cultural outsider or interloper (since both of my parents were born elsewhere). How do you talk about what foods from "home" you like when you cannot claim full membership in that "home"? How should I reconcile being perceived as a native local expert while abroad, despite lacking the requisite cultural belonging in St. Thomas to give my authenticating stamp of approval?

On the other hand, I remained suspicious of cultural food colonialism because of my close proximity to its processes. Numerous friends in college would invite me to dinner at restaurants I could only imagine, but I had a harder time imagining what I might eat politely in public (What if I cannot find anything I recognize or like on the menu? What if I try something and don't like it? What does Thai food even *taste* like?). In many ways, I was resisting what I saw as participation in some already-agreed upon contract of assimilation (since I registered this behavior as American, or "Everyone eats ethnic. It's the American thing to do."). Ironically, then, as a new immigrant who did not comfortably identify as American (though legally I am),

Caribbean (by birth and paternal heritage), or Canadian (maternal heritage), I remained suspicious of such eating habits, for years.

During graduate school (in New York and Atlanta), I discovered the extent to which people freely fed themselves on whatever their hearts desired, and did so with what seemed like little regard for the effect that cultural food colonialism creates. In Atlanta, this cultural food colonialism plays out in a variety of ways, some of which encourage more colonization and others of which encourage more benevolent food adventuring. Many ethnic markets exist to serve as veritable culinary playscapes or playlands for the food curious and the colonizer alike. It is in these local markets that a variety of people can find a taste of home or encounter the "Other." They can find comfort in familiarity of flavors, faces, and more or fetishize new foods.

The mix and energy offers up something new to the city's assortment of big box stores. Sadly, the introduction of one Wal-Mart to the Chamblee neighborhood ensured the rapid demise and inevitable death of the International Farmer's Market at the intersection of Peachtree Industrial and Chamblee Tucker Road. While other neighborhoods have avoided the onslaught of similar big box stores, the various markets in the city seem to struggle for inclusion and full valuation in a city "too busy to hate." Tensions, for example, have emerged in parts of the city where signage of such stores exists in two languages (English, respective Asian language). All of these political, social, and cultural tensions serve as the backdrop upon which to understand food politics in Atlanta. These tensions also begin to illuminate and connect to my point about food colonialism in a racial hierarchy. In the next section, I will provide ethnographic examples of the ways these tensions and power asymmetries play out here.

The city center houses the mainstream supermarkets (Kroger, Publix, Walmart to a lesser degree), with the major roads home to huge groups or numbers of new immigrants extending

outward from this epicenter. That the majority of these markets have emerged along Buford Highway and on Ponce, and to the South- in Forest Park, offers little surprise. Instead, the locations connect to the populations they arguably were built to serve (among other willing consumers), as well as a city that configured itself along racial, class, and national lines. When one considers the geography of food, then, these social hierarchies become evident and raise interesting questions about where "ethnic" markets can exist, and also what constitutes as "ethnic" in the first place. Casually dubbing Buford Highway "International Highway" again reaffirms the invisibility, centrality, and significance of whiteness as a perpetual point of reference. The "international" is contrasted with the domestic, the national, the American. Such casual and seemingly benevolent characterizations of space then reproduce hegemonic constructions of space. It also affirms who is American and who is "Other." By way of food, then, the "Other" is positioned in such a way as to offer a destination to which one goes, travels to explore the "Other" first hand, in one's food colonizing days. The destinations are in close enough proximity to be titillating and invigorating to the colonizer, but not so much as to dissuade.

Enter the southern part of Atlanta: notably, little attention is directed at the south side of Atlanta. This inattention accommodates some exceptions, with high(er) end restaurants like *The Pecan* operating as "honorary" examples of soul food/southern food done right (white?). This accommodation reinforces the racial hierarchy and legitimates the veritable absence of attention that this part of town receives. One might imagine my surprise and the silent vindication I felt in discovering, while house sitting last summer in one of these neighborhoods, the number of restaurants in existence in the area. A now defunct Thai place, and an under-renovation Jamaican restaurant, a Thumbs Up diner, Corner Tavern, 2 cupcake bakeries, ice

cream/sandwich shops, pizzeria, pubs, and other restaurants clustered around their respective city's (Tri-Cities) public transportation stop. If I had not house-sat, I would never have know that such a plethora of good restaurants existed in the area. In fact, in looking at various dining guides (i.e., Atlanta, Fall 2009; Dining Out: The Great Restaurant Guide of Atlanta), I found fewer than a handful of restaurants listed below the dividing line of I-20. One of the ones mentioned included a family-owned restaurant with three locations around the city (Midtown, Decatur, and College Park). Beyond that, so few were noted, it is not surprising that I sadly fell into this way of thinking about the south side of the city.

Not only do these hierarchies play out in terms of geography but also in terms of cost, currency, and cultural capital. Given the current racial hierarchy (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Gallagher 2003), and these geographies, the restaurant's location plays a huge role, I contend, in its popularity and success. It also affects food costs and the prices people are willing to pay – as based on the perception of the potential acquisition of currency or "cool" by way of consumption (consuming the "Other"). Take, for example, cupcakes which sell for $3-$4 at places like Highland Bakery but are $2-$3 at E'van's Bakery in East Point.

Casual conversations with various people also reveal interesting ideologies about cost, culture, and the price to pay people to sample culture through food. I argue that cost incurred by the consumers reflects a racial and cultural hierarchy linked to social value of groups. The hierarchy frames people's perception of others and their purchasing, colonizing, and adventuring habits. That is, someone might refuse to pay $7 for collard greens, but not flinch at paying more than that for a green salad. Similarly, a person may pay $3 for a Vietnamese sandwich and think of that as a deal/steal, or pay $10 for what they might see as a "fancy" version of that sandwich. In these ways, I see the racial and cultural geographies of Atlanta shaping the value of property

and people, such that similar food items churn through the food industry with completely different values and costs. Socially, groups risk a greater cost, at the expense of being colonized. The “cheap eats” in this “ethnic.city” may make “exotic” foods more easily accessible economically, but is there a social costs to suggesting or signaling culture “Others” as such? Does presenting “ethnic Other” cultures as cheap devalue its costs and ease its consumption materially, thereby facilitating cultural food colonialism? What is the resolution to sharing food cultures without encouraging the colonialism of them, or a devaluation and fetishism of the people who create or claim these cultures?

GEOGRAPHIES OF FOOD: PART TWO (YOU ARE WHERE YOU EAT?) CULTURAL FOOD COLONIALISM OR CULTURAL EDUCATION/EXPLORATION?

Shopping in Atlanta

> "I honestly thought it was only going to be Asian people there, and that it would be this crowded market, but it's actually this big grocery store, like a normal one. It just has different foods and packaging, and there were all types of people, all races, all genders, everything." (Reese, a white American woman)

> "I like ethnic foods, especially Thai. And I love rice. Any kind of rice." (Jackie, a white woman with Hispanic heritage)

To Eat In or Dine Out: That Is the Question

It is important to situate the discussion of food consumption, in terms of dining out, in the context of an historical moment that has been described as an economic recession, or downturn, at best. This current economic climate has influenced consumer spending habits, and suggests that people are more likely to eat at home than dine out. Interestingly, many paradoxes emerge in a capitalist society that is facing this economic crisis: people want/work to save their money, yet turn to food as a comfort.

One part luxury, one part necessity, food takes on various meanings in an urban landscape that is a cultural mash up. The women respondents of my focus groups made observations that endorsed these contradictions and paradoxes. For example, many spoke of the ease and convenience of eating out, despite compromises to their financial and physical health (in decline or less-than-optimal). They noted how full they felt, and how they both enjoyed this feeling of satiety and loathed the feelings of guilt that frequently followed. Others ate out on occasion, to celebrate birthdays or graduations, or for a get-together with friends. Few described eating out as "a differentiated experience" (Martens and Warde 1997), or one in which they distinguished themselves from, and as better than others (see also Bourdieu 1984). In these experiences, they often learned a different set of expectations for behavior, customs, etc.

Some of the women realized that, in order to improve their health (as opposed to their appearance), they had to create their own meals. Opting to eat in instead of dining out proved easier on their finances, and their bodies. Feeding themselves healthier foods required them to heighten their nutritional education and praxis, increase attention to food information and enhance their culinary skills (Brown and Miller 2002; Leathwood and Ashley 1983; Kurz and Johnson-Welch 2001; Nayak, Shahnaz, Vijayaraghavan, and Chandralekha 2001; Wood 1995)

Equipping themselves with this knowledge gave them "the tools" to transform their lives into ones with healthier, stronger, enriched bodies. This knowledge empowered them, but made eating out a delicate balancing act. Since many of the women expressed concern about maintaining a healthy weight, they relied on the knowledge they cultivated through cooking and nutritional education to achieve their goals. They rarely framed their aspirations for healthier living in terms of dissatisfaction and disordered eating (see Bordo 1997; Bruch 1997; Brumberg 1997; Massara 1997), but rather in terms of their ability to achieve a particular way of living.

Many felt they could indulge in food and face the consequences later, or they could continue their healthy/healthful choices (sometimes at the scrutiny of friends or significant others who saw them as "too/healthy" or a "healthnut"). They devised their own set of food rules, for fun and play, such that they allowed themselves what I call "food flexibility." Having this food flexibility meant that those who indulged still set boundaries or employed strategies (food rules) to regain a sense of control and moderation (sensibility) to their food consumption. Perhaps they indulged at one meal or for one day, but then denied themselves food at others to achieve a balance. Some also adjusted their indulgence through an increase in exercise and exertion.

Ironically, despite their own intermittent indulgences, some of the women sometimes scrutinized their friends' choices, noting the calories or fat contents of "every kind of food there

is." Eating and eating out was related to weight (adequate, normal, over) and implicitly and explicitly addressed in the narratives of my respondents. Eating out thus was a bit contentious as women negotiated that space between honest and nice: whether to publicly express such scrutiny or swallow it to spare their friendships and protect their friends' feelings.

Reese noted how observant she became after educating herself about nutrition. "I don't obsess about it, but I just try to hit the same number of calories each day. I just try to be balanced, so if I eat something for lunch that has a lot of sodium, then I'll eat a dinner that is better for me- vegetables or fruits. I've definitely learned the calorie count of almost everything. I don't punish myself if I go over or under (calorie counts)… I feel bad for the people around me, because, when they order stuff, I know the calorie count of every food, and I'm like, 'Oh, my God.' I mean, I don't say anything, but I'm still like, 'Oh, my God, I can't believe they're eating that. Do you know what you're eating?'…I have actually said that to a couple of people and they always say, 'I don't care. I don't care.' But you know, sometimes for some people, you know, they don't have to care because sometime later on, they'll go for a run or whatever, and they balance it. But for people who the next day they're telling you, 'Ugh, I really wish I could lose weight,' well, then I'm like, 'Well, you just ate that double cheeseburger the day before, so don't say that you don't care if you do.'"

Reese's comments captured the contradiction of the public consumption of food. Where food and friends meet at the corner of good times and a celebration, the same intersection disrupts sociality and a sense of community. Spending time with friends for sociality then gets compromised by some women's desires to discipline the diets of themselves and others. Doing so may give these disciplining women a false sense of superiority while destabilizing the sociability of the group.

For other focus group participants, eating out was about a different type of scrutiny: ensuring that everyone ate enough but not "too much." Doing the latter meant that such individuals were not observant or respectful of cultural traditions of sacrifice, and the necessity of sharing equitably. Neglecting to do so would be frowned upon and easy to do in the "family style" restaurants chosen in part because it enabled the practice of this communal sharing and sacrifice. Thus, eating "too much" was understood in relational, not individual terms. Eating more than one's "fair share" signaled disregard and disrespect for the collectivist traditions that people should observe during meal sharing. Darra Goldstein (2010), editor of food magazine, *Gastronomica*, described sharing as the "giving of ourselves, celebrating or commiserating together, breaking bread or news, reaching out across borders." To do otherwise sometimes compromises the very communal bonds members are attempting to strengthen.

Goldstein noted the irony of people's sharing in times of scarcity and in the context of competition. Her comments suggest the importance of social ties outweighs the significance of centering or prioritizing one's needs over others. One Asian American respondent, Victoria, highlighted how she and her friends internalized and practiced the imperative to share, finding it generally easy to do as everyone in the group grew up with this cultural expectation. Eating out solidified these cultural group ties and strengthened the friends' sense of loyalty to one another and their respect for cultural heritage. "My parents always remind me of what people in Vietnam do not have, that we have to sacrifice here. They don't want me to adopt the ways, American culture." In thinking about the porous quality of culture, and the meanings of "American," I see Victoria's comments as a way to acknowledge that "each national cuisine bears the traces of trade, travel and, increasingly, of technology, so that food could more correctly be said to be constitutive of global rather than local cultures (Mennell 1985, Mintz

1985)" (James 1997:73). That is, the term American does not envelop her, as her parents see it, and she must not assimilate by surrendering her own cultural heritage.

Victoria's observations show how cultural hybridity exists and gets situationally incorporated and acknowledged such that she is not considered by them as American but considers herself so to some degree. As James (1997) suggests, food creolization begins to account for this cultural hybridity, though hybridity may erode, but not eliminate, hegemony. For example, "the consumption of traditional British fare may be the new high-status distinction, in contrast to the more readily available take-away, ersatz dishes of southern Europe, China and India which anyone can consume. Authenticity, after all, must have its price" (James 1997:84). In ways that parallel British creolization, American creolization reflects both hegemony and hybridity.

At the same time that they regulated themselves and one another for the sake of cultural preservation, the group used food and eating out as a way to challenge cultural expectations and loyalty. They often chose to abandon their tradition by eating out in places that did not serve traditional foods or observe their cultural practices. Rebelliously choosing to eat non-Asian foods (usually Italian, or something "different") or foods was understood by their nuclear families as indicative of assimilation, a "shifting off to a different culture." Certain foods then were viewed by parents as a kind of gateway drug, leading their adult children down the path to abandoning one's authentic Asian identity and adapting (undesirable) American ways.

Victoria explained: "Most of my friends are Asian. They'll only eat Chinese, Vietnamese. That's how I test the boundaries. [I think to myself] 'I'm more American. I'm more cultured than you. I go eat at Italian restaurants. I eat everything, so I know more things than you.' I feel that's rebellion. 'And I'm showing you how cultured I am.'" The tug-of-war

emerges between cultural preservation and being cultured. As this focus group participant observed, there is a currency in her familiarity with a variety of foods, dining out rituals and the middle class habitus (Bourdieu 1977/1984) that informs the kind of etiquette expected in public food consumption. "We don't want to deny our culture; we have to do etiquette. We can't be sharing off our plates." She adds, "Even tipping I know about." She says this to differentiate herself from others in her cultural community who may not know the whole host of expectations imposed on diners. Saying so distinguishes her from others who neglect to tip well, and her knowledge and practice of tipping well gives her class and distinction (Bourdieu 1984).

Ohkuni-Tierney (1993) posits, "Bourdieu's emphasis on the *distinction* of taste in food lies in its mediation between the class and gender, on the one hand, and the body, on the other: 'Taste, class culture turned into nature, that is, *embodied*, helps to shape the class today…the body is the most indisputable materialization of class taste.' (Bourdieu 1984:190)" (in Ohkuni-Tierney 1993: 117).

Interestingly, by eating out with other Asian American friends, this respondent creates the appearance of cultural preservation through group composition; that is, she maintains a culturally and ethnically homogeneous social circle, so she appears to be actively preserving culture. However, her narrative clearly suggests that she engages in cultural resistance as well. For her and others, then, foodscapes offer some space for agency where second generation Asian Americans are negotiating their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, and trying to find some balance between being Asian and being American.

In addition to this rebellion, the group would use their eating out as a display of social class. Though not explicitly indicated from what source, they acquired American cultural capital by habituating their tastes (Bourdieu 1984) and assimilating their tongues. They began to buy

more and more expensive meals. Victoria drew a direct connection between *Ace of Cakes* (which make designer cakes that sell for a minimum of $500), and her own consumption practices and habits. "Oh, we'll spend $75 on a cake, to show we've made it." Others corroborated this point, giving examples of the expense they unflinchingly incur and display for themselves and others to show that they have made it. Ironically, the honest discussion of this expense itself becomes part of the display of cultural capital, but shows that eating out is a complex process, indicative of progress, discipline, celebration, solidarity, sacrifice, and indulgence, all on display.

Another paradox emerges here, in that respondents spoke of the spectacle (DeBord 1990) of celebrating and rebelling, which contrasted with the practice of sacrifice and saving. The respondents did not resolve these contradictions but revealed them to show the tensions between food practices of family and friends. For many respondents, family promoted saving and sacrificing in ways that friends undermined by eating out (even if their choices of venue reflected budgetary considerations). For others, family promoted celebrations, and spared little expense for each opportunity to be in each other's company. Still others were able to celebrate and save by sharing food, along with the responsibility of cooking and food shopping.

In this last instance, respondents reported, one person in a community or neighborhood would volunteer their backyard or house for a gathering, with neighbors and friends asking what they could bring. April observed, "Sometimes people will ask, 'Do you need this or that?' or they will say, 'I can bring this (utensils, paper products, etc.)'." No one person bears the burden of the expense singularly, unless they so desire. In those cases, they announce that ("I got this."), though guests are still welcome to bring food, if they like. The reciprocity expressed in sharing keeps the costs minimal for the individual and the benefits high for the community.

Other kinds of reciprocity, such as cultural reciprocity, were harder to find evidence of, given the reasons prompting people to eat out. I did, however, find evidence of culinary and cultural education taking place among some of the respondents. Eating out is not only about consumption and cultural capital, but culinary and cultural education, or "knowing by eating." This departs from "eating the Other" (and the entitlement embedded in this act) and the kind of knowledge that food colonialists think they possess through these experiences. Instead, a few participants noted their intent in eating out in places that served "international cuisine" or food that they could not cook at home.

Acquiring experiences that translate into higher awareness and cultural sensitivity could be used as a kind of distinction designed to mark a person as informed and knowledgeable. I contend that the display of distinction among cultural food colonists and those trying to acquire a cultural education differs. As Martens and Warde (1997:146) describe,

> It is expected that such people will be able to talk articulately about foods and restaurants, even when they are little interested in the topic, since it is a part of the cultural capital required in some circles (Erickson 1991). The consequent danger is that the articulate project on to others their own impressions, to the extent that it is not considered worth talking to other people, or believing what they say, or asking about their sources of enjoyment, because this is already deemed to be self-evident.

A cultural education contrasts with cultural food colonialism in that the latter involves more "culinary postures" (Appadurai 1988: 9) to others, gestures intended to signal familiarity with a variety of foods. Some scholars contend that eating out is a curiously private experience in a public place. I see cultural food colonialism as a way to publicize this arguably private experience in order to activate or access cultural capital. In this way, cultural food colonialism diverges from cultural food education in that the former seems more about public displays of distinction while the latter appears less so about that and more about personal empowerment through cultural awareness and exposure. While both cultural food colonialism and education

place value on various cultures, colonists also appear to deeply value the act or acquisition of culture through consumption, while people wanting cultural food education see value in the process of learning about or being exposed to culture through the people who produce the experience and the meal to be consumed.

Getting a cultural education then means that, for the respective respondents, they learned about food, culture, class, and loyalty. That is, many women in the sample were actively encouraged to expose themselves to other foods and cultures, but not to the extent that they jeopardized their sense of integrity. As I mentioned earlier, cultural education and exploration had its place in these women's lives, but only in moderation, as a cultural excursion, not a final destination. Many echoed each other in acknowledging the sense of belonging and betrayal they had to negotiate while navigating various foodscapes. To summarize, Paris observed, "You have to stick to tradition at home. (To do something different) It's a break with tradition. It'd be like I'm selling out, to adopt another culture's ways. (In her mother's voice): 'And you know, you weren't raised like that. You can *know* but don't forget where you came from.'"

Cultural Loyalty, Belonging, and Betrayal

For many participants, food serves as a status symbol and signals upward mobility. Some of the women used food to show cultural loyalty when they and their respective families ate at restaurants that supported their own racial, ethnic, or cultural groups. Dining out confirmed an investment on literal and figurative levels (in terms of identity, loyalty, and commitment to a particular disaporic community). Departure from this expectation compromised this commitment, and prompted the suspicions of others. Paris clarified, "If I suggest that we try something new, (some of) my family would ask, 'Why would you want to eat that?' If I cooked an Asian dinner, they would be blowed (sic) away. They'd be like, 'What is *wrong* with you?'"

This respondent explained, "It's the idea of letting go, of disowning…disowning their heritage is a no-no….They think trying something else is 'selling out.' Their sense of loyalty is broken."

Food symbolizes belonging and so the consumption of "the Other" was discouraged, as this practice was seen as a dilution or dissolution of social ties and authenticity of identity. Because food was so often used to strengthen family ties, introducing "something new" or wanting foods that deviate from the norm was viewed as a potential threat that would weaken these ties. Curtin and Heldke (1992:11) contends, "We stand in *participatory* relationships to what we choose to count as food, and that to neglect such testimony endangers our health…. Our connections with food partially define who we are…We are defined by our relation to the food we eat." As Paris described above, cooking and then eating Asian food would signal to significant others confusion about self, an abandoning of self.

Despite meeting resistance from family members to experiment or explore the culinary landscape that is Atlanta, this respondent noted that she learned to be both culturally loyal and curious of other cultures at the same time. Paris later continued, "Eating out isn't frowned upon. My mom, she likes for us to taste everything. She wants us to try Asian cuisine, Italian, Spanish, everything. Like about four times a month we eat out, but it's not American. It's something *different* (emphasis hers). (In her mother's voice) 'Don't say that you don't eat Spanish cuisine. Don't say that you don't eat tacos,' or you know, "You've never tried it so you're gonna try it, and *then* if you don't like it, you can say, "Well, I don't like it." But you're gonna try everything so that you can know everything about food.'" Her mother advised, "'You need to know how to cook, and get an education. You'll be better able to get a husband.'" While the advice reiterates traditional gender role expectations, this respondent resists and reproduces tradition through food. "I started cooking, increasing the difficulty over time. Now I'm a pro. They (family)

know that if I'm cooking, then I must be happy with them." Implicitly, she is happy with herself and that illustrates the agency embedded in this gender traditional equation.

April and others shared similar stories of family socialization regarding food and culture. They spoke of the ways that others (usually mothers) encouraged them to experiment with eating in ways that were tempered by an instilling of cultural and racial pride. In contrast to the women who felt policed or pressured by expectations for cultural belonging and "purity," others more easily enjoyed cultural explorations. They incorporated these explorations into their lives without compromising their sense of cultural belonging.

As Curtin and Heldke (1992) contend, "Eating is like childbirth in the way it threatens a sense of self as absolutely autonomous. A fetus is part of a woman's body, but it will become separate. Even when separate, though, the child remains related to the mother physically and emotionally. The mother's body is food for the child." (Curtin and Heldke 1992:9). With woman as mother (Chodorow 1979; DeVault 1997), the respondent illustrates the reciprocity and sharing involved in food consumption, and the importance of loyalty and belonging established to cement the commensality in families. Ohnuki-Tierney (1993:119) contends, "Commensality and sexual union are the fibers that weave human relationships into a tapestry of culturally meaningful patterns." Smith (1889/1972) echoes this sentiment, pointing to the union between people who share meals and the alienation between those who do not.

In this chapter, I showed how laden with meanings food is, and how many women work to build and maintain their families and communities through food sharing. Sharing and saving remain complementary and competing characteristics around food for many women, and food nourishes people individually and relationally or communally. As Curtin and Heldke (1992:11-12) posit, "We are what we eat socially…politically…symbolically and spiritually." Knowing

this helps us see the importance of food in crafting self and community, as well as understand why crossing boundaries around food become critical to some people's growth and hybrid identities or group positions.

While some women willingly accepted social pressures to conform to the cultural expectations outlined by family members, others employed various strategies to resist these cultural expectations. They more actively challenged the hegemonic cultural forces around them, and instead opted for more cultural hybridity in their lives. Incorporating a wide array of foods, or simply including a few new (different) ones into their lives allowed many women to contest cultural boundaries. Choosing to consume food outside of the established cultural parameters often placed these women out of bounds, but allowed them to metaphorically poke holes in the parameters, to make food cultures more porous and accessible.

CONCLUSIONS: MY KITCHEN IS A WONDERLAND?

The women's narratives show the complexity of meanings and dynamics around women and food. Many women produced discourses that illustrated how identities around food allow women to perform traditional and contemporary (more egalitarian) gender roles, to be playful with these performances and with their ways of eating, cooking, and preparing foods, and to enjoy self-empowerment through eating, cooking, and doing food chores. Women discussed the ways they experienced, acquired or rejected their power in the kitchen and families, where food glues and strengthens social ties.

Some women resisted traditional gender role expectations, refuting and rejecting food chores for themselves and others. Many felt empowered through this very rejection of this requisite hegemonic domestic femininity. Others embraced domestic femininity, but on their own terms. Making their own rules allowed these women some agency against the otherwise oppressive kinds of obligation embedded in gender tradition.

Globalization influences ideologies and practices. In this way, I attempted to illustrate the intertextuality between technologies of food as encapsulated in the media, local and global geographies of food, food practices, and sense of self. This intertextuality involves imagery of food to circulate and seduce women, perhaps to create a false consciousness (that traditional gender roles do not oppress) but also to inspire, empower, and educate. In my sample, I found evidence that women have an ambivalent relationship with food- as an obligation. This love/hate relationship pertained mostly to the perception of obligation to others. Women reported reinterpreting or adjusting this obligation to a role that better fit and empowered them and their sense of self.

Equipping themselves with culinary knowledge empowered women, and the foodscapes validated many women's love of food and cooking. If only in their imagination, these women implicitly internalized the celebrity chefs they admired on television. While some of them idolized these "celebrities of domesticity," they found themselves grappling with the reality of the quandary- to be domesticated, contained, or regulated but choosing to do food chores and cook. This matter allows us to see how contemporary feminisms allow women to be empowered by food and food chores in ways that should *not* necessarily be interpreted as false consciousness. Instead, the women's voices demonstrate a new dynamic in domesticity. The dilemma, however, remains, in that women who enjoy food and food chores may find that, unless they become some exception to the rule, they are un/intentionally complicit in the system that oppresses and colonizes them in the kitchen.

Women can use their culinary knowledge as currency and that currency allows women to gain and regain power but reproduce traditional gender roles, whether they realize it or not. Fortunately, most women have some awareness that their love of food and cooking can do this, but the pleasure of thinking about and shopping for food, cooking, eating, and feeding themselves and others seems to outweigh the consequences of crystallizing this connection (between women, kitchens and cultures).

Global technologies allow women to contest and reinforce boundaries around culture and families as they cook to follow tradition and at other times to intentionally disrupt or deviate from it. The women's narratives gently remind readers of the porosity or permeability of culture. Eating out allows a culinary education and further critique of cultural boundaries. Eating out "differently" demonstrates that cultural food colonialism is not the only interpretation of cultural border crossing where food and women are concerned. That is, I found as much support for

cultural food colonialism as I did for culinary education. I also found a lack of evidence to support a sincere cultural reciprocity or exchange, where perhaps culturally mixed groups cooked or ate at culturally varying establishments. Thus, cultural boundaries were largely reproduced and regulated, with white ethnicity being normalized and largely invisible as the perpetual referent, and "ethnic" foods diversifying and spicing up the "ordinary" (read: normal, American, whiteness).

Evidence of cultural food colonialism was arguably not strong because participants relied on color (culture) blind discourses to talk about "ethnic" foods in ways that reinforced a white cultural centrality and that marginalized the "ethnic Other." Relying on these discourses does not make the practice of cultural food colonialism any less colonizing, but it does make its detection much more difficult. Pressures to present their socially desirable selves as non-colonizing may have prompted many of the women in the sample to evade questions of cross-cultural food consumption.

Despite their efforts to produce neutral discourses, many of the women incorporated the Other into the places where they shopped for food, and/or dined out, and food that they cooked. They partially fetishized food as "different" within a safe distance of that difference. That is, only a few participants mentioned food consumption of particular groups or regions, i.e. the Caribbean or Africa cultures, or the black diaspora in general. For most of the women, that "difference" became synonymous with Asians, a group that many race scholars consider "honorary white" (Gallagher 2003, Bonilla Silva 2002). Future research should revisit these emergent patterns to see if and how the contemporary racial hierarchy plays out socially and culturally to influence practices and understandings of cultural food colonialism.

Future research should also look more closely at these friendship and family networks, attending to their racial, ethnic, and cultural compositions. Such research might focus on micro-level interactions and discourses produced around food and culture to understand if and how borders are being crossed, in what contexts, and under what conditions by which actors. Alternatively, future research could also consider the emergent and existing blogs, food markets, fairs, festivals, and various new technologies and geographies of food that affect women and men of various social and cultural backgrounds.

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APPENDIX A: ETHNOGRAPHIC FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Gender Roles and Responsibilities

What do you see as traditional or typical things that women do?

Do you see cooking and shopping as "women's work"?

How do you feel about this "women's work"?

Do you see food shopping, cooking, and cleaning as caring for others? A chore? Both?

Food, Cooking and Shopping

Do any of you enjoy food shopping?

[Talk about the places you like to food shop: when, where, etc.]

Do you ever resent food shopping?

Do you enjoy cooking? Who do you enjoy cooking for (yourself and others?)

[Talk about the foods you like to prepare: for yourself? Others? On occasion?]

Ever resent cooking? Find it an obligation to others?

Are shopping and cooking important to your sense of self? If so, in what ways?

Do you feel a sense of control or autonomy when shopping for and preparing foods?

Does food empower you in any way?

Does food dis/connect you to family, friends, community?

Consuming Food

What is mealtime like for you? Shared with others? Solo? In what settings? (school, work, home)

What do you think of as a "proper meal"? Do you eat many "proper meals" versus a "snack"?

In preparing a “proper meal,” do you pay attention to various details, including how you will serve the meal to others?

What are some of your favorite foods to eat?

Do you have rules about the foods you do or do not eat? (how much/little, how frequent)

Do you deny yourself your favorite foods? Why or Why not?

Do you skip meals? For what reasons? (lack of time, lack of cooking skill, no initiative to cook for oneself, other reasons?)

Does your economic status impact the kinds of food you eat? Where you eat? When you eat? Whether or not you dine out?

Do you find yourself eating for nutritional purposes? Pleasure? Stress? Satisfaction?

How does cost figure into the food choices you make?

How do you decide what foods to prepare, when taking others’ preferences into account?

If in a relationship, who decides what to eat for a meal? How do you decide?

How does the saying, “You are what you eat,” apply to you, if at all?

In what ways are you what you eat? What you cook?

Nutrition

Do you take vitamins or nutritional supplements?

How often do you exercise, if at all?

What types of activities do you enjoy?

How often?

Media Messages

How do you feel about the skin you’re in?

How does the media make you feel about yourself (your body)?

What messages (positive, negative, neutral) do you get about who you are?

What messages do you find in the media to which you can personally relate?

Do you watch shows specifically related to food (preparation), such as that on the *Food Network*? What do you learn from watching these shows?

APPENDIX B: ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW GUIDE

Can you tell me about your relationship with food? With your body? With healthy living?

Probe for information about food intake restriction, pressures to be skinny or lose weight, comfort and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the body

How do you feel about your body?

What types of comments do others make about your body?

What types of food do you enjoy?

What food preferences or dislikes do you have?

What childhood memories do you have regarding food?

Do you think of particular foods when you think of your family (of origin)?

Do you have fond memories of family and food? Please specify/elaborate.

How do you manage food preferences (what you like to eat) in your daily life? In your relationships?

How do you balance, if at all, what you like to eat with what you think you should eat (or not eat)?

Do you find it easy to eat what you think you should eat?

What food chores do you do? Do you share the responsibility of food chores with others?

What foods do you purchase (including where, when, and why you buy food; how much you spend on food)?

What foods do you consume (publicly and privately)?

What foods do you not consume (and the reasons regarding those choices)?

What does food means to you?

What foods do you prepare for others (i.e., for friends, a party, etc.)?

What reasons do you have for making these food choices (family, etc.)?

What food concerns (if any) you have (also regarding religion, culture, and social expectations); and what memories or associations you attach to various foods.

What are your nutritional attitudes and choices? How does this inform the foods you eat?

Do not eat?

What changes would you make to your life to improve the quality of your health, individually?

What changes would you like to see take place structurally, in society?

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

Georgia State University, Department of Anthropology

Informed Consent Form for Focus Group

Title: Women, Food, Body, Health and Power: Exploring the Connections

Principal Investigators: Dr. Cassandra White and Dr. Melinda Mills

I. Introduction/Background/Purpose:

You are invited to be in a research study because you expressed an interest in talking with other women about food. The aim of the study is to study how women of different backgrounds relate to food. This study looks at women's experiences with food. We hope to do so by having women talk about their lives in focus groups. A total of 20 women between the ages of 18-80 will be asked to be in this study. We plan to conduct 4 focus groups. Each involves asking a group of 5 women to talk about food. The focus group will also have topics about how women make, eat, and choose food.

We will meet in the focus groups for 1-2 hours to talk about food issues. You will be asked to come to only one focus group, which will take 1-2 hours of your time. As a follow-up, you may be asked to keep a food diary and do an interview and survey. We will videotape and audiotape these focus group meetings.. This will allow us to study the individual and group responses, as well as the interactions among the women during the discussion.

II. Procedures:

If you decide to do the focus group, you will be asked to give information about yourself that helps us get to know you. Possible places for the focus groups may be rooms on the campus of Georgia State University in the Department of Anthropology or the Department of Sociology. You will be asked to talk with and respect the other women in the focus group, and us, the researchers conducting the focus group. We will set ground rules for conduct at the start of each focus group. Your main interaction will be with other participants and the researchers.

We plan to do these focus groups over the next 6 months. You are being asked to be in only one focus group, which will meet one time for up to two hours. In the focus groups, we will ask each young woman to share experiences and ideas about their relationship to food. We hope to learn more about how women think about food and use food as a reward and punishment. Your input in our discussion is very important to us. We want to hear what you have to say.

You may be asked to talk about one or more of these topics: what foods you buy (such as where, when, and why you buy food; how much you spend on food); what foods you eat or what foods you do not eat (and the reasons for these choices); what food means to you; what foods you make for others (i.e., for friends, a party, etc.) and reasons for these food choices; what food concerns you have (also about religion, culture, and values); and what memories you attach to foods.

III. Risks:

It is possible that being in this study may cause you distress. You may feel not feel comfortable with some of the questions. The ideas you express may differ from other women in the focus group. Because of this, we will set ground rules for the discussion. This is to make sure that everyone (participants and researchers) feels respected and listened to. While you may politely disagree or challenge others, you may not disrespect others in the focus group. If you feel that the focus group has created stress, we will give you information on counseling services. You are responsible for any of the costs of these counseling services.

IV. Benefits:

You may or may not benefit directly from being in this study. These include how you feel about making and eating food. The benefit may be that you enjoy talking to young women of diverse backgrounds about food. We hope to learn more about how women relate to food, do food chores, and reward or punish themselves with food. The study may help us think of ways to improve women's lives.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop being in the study at any time. Whatever you choose, you will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled. Also, we also have the right to end the focus group, but this will not cause you to lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

VI. Confidentiality:

We will try to keep your personal data private. Your privacy will be kept to the extent allowed by law. We will use your initials, rather than your name, on study records. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally on any written documents.

Because this study involves focus groups, we cannot guarantee complete secrecy. In each focus group setting, we will ask everyone to respect the ideas of everyone present, but we cannot ensure that what is shared in the group will be kept private (by the other people in the group). We will ask all the participants not to share what is discussed in the focus group outside of the research setting.

The audio and video taped focus group will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. We will be the only people who will have access to the tapes. The tapes will only be used to get an exact report of what was said. Any audio and videotapes of you will also be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. The tapes will be kept in a private archive, until destroyed once data collection is complete.

VII. Georgia State University Disclaimer:

If you have any question about this study, or believe you have suffered any injury because of participation in the study, you may contact Dr. Cassandra White at 404-413-5150 or cwhite@gsu.edu, or Dr. Melinda Mills at 404-413-6534 or socmam@langate.gsu.edu.

VIII. Contact Persons:

Call Dr. Cassandra White at 404-413-5150 or Melinda Mills at 404-413-6534 if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner, Institutional Review Board (IRB) Compliance Specialist, at the Office of Research Integrity, which oversees the protection of human research participants, at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

IX. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio and video taped, please sign below.

_____ _____
Participant Date

_____ _____
Principal Investigator Date

_____ _____
Principal Investigator Date

Date Consent Form was approved by Georgia State University's Institutional Review Board: