

Copyright

by

Natalie Lafaye Jones

2016

The Dissertation Committee for Natalie Lafaye Jones certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

**Eating While Young and Black: Food, Foodways, and Gentrification in Austin, Texas**

**Committee:**

---

Gregory Knapp, Supervisor

---

Rebecca Torres

---

Caroline Faria

---

Karl Butzer

---

Bjorn Sletto

**Eating While Young and Black:  
Food, Foodways, and Gentrification in Austin, Texas**

by

**Natalie Lafaye Jones, BA; MA**

**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**May 2016**

## **Acknowledgements**

This dissertation research was a journey, one that was exciting, challenging, and momentous as a first generation college and graduate student. I am grateful for a number of scholar-activist ancestors, local institutions, grassroots organizations, family, and friends. Thank you to my committee. My dissertation advisor, Dr. Gregory Knapp, first encouraged me to think beyond “food deserts.” Our conversations about food, culture, and education inspired me to translate my experiences in the classroom into action research with young people. I was humbled to have Dr. Karl Butzer’s feedback as both a teacher and committee member. His emphasis on stories and close attention to landscapes further inspired the narrative approach of the dissertation. Thank you to Dr. Bjorn Sletto for asking critical questions that reach beyond the dissertation, to the very meaning of activist scholarship. I appreciate the insights of Dr. Rebecca Torres, who encouraged me to consider critically what it means to do work on – or with – young people. Dr. Caroline Faria, joined the committee later with complete support and presence. Her constructive feedback pushed me to claim my voice and “speak truth to power.”

Since 2006 I have been processing (imbibing, truly!) the work of geographer Katherine McKittrick; her writings along with that of other radical women of color - Gloria Anzaldua, Ana Louise Keating, Patricia Hill Collins, Jacqui Alexander, Dr. Omi Jones, and Audre Lorde - nourished me while writing.

In early stages, the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center graciously provided a space to share this research through Food for Black Thought Symposia in 2012 and 2013. A Scholar Activist Summer Research Award from the

University of Texas-Austin Social Justice Institute provided invaluable funding. Dr. Tang continually advocated for this project and included Food for Black Thought in conversations about Austin. A Curriculum Innovation Grant from University of Texas Austin provided both funding and an opportunity to connect theory with praxis. Thanks to a scholarship from Foodways Texas, I completed oral history training with the Southern Foodways Alliance. Gratitude, too, for a scholarship to attend Critical Participatory Action Research training at the Public Science Project (City University of New York). This training was pivotal for this project and for the launch of Food for Black Thought.

Thank you to the youth and their families who shared their stories and knowledge in the course of this project. Deep gratitude to Monique Walton, who shared her film-making prowess to teach, guide, and edit the youth-directed film portion of this project. Max Elliott of Urban Roots made space for internship opportunities that helped me (re)connect with the earth, learn about local farming, and recruit youth participants. Leigh Gaymon-Jones co-created and facilitated these internships with her creativity and grace. Paula McDermott sent inspiring e-mails, shared local food events, and invited me to tea to talk about anti-racism and food work at just at the right times. Conversations with Edwin Marty, Donna Hoffman, Adam Williams, Toni Tipton Martin, Sarah McMackin (Oldways), Tameika Hannah, Jonathan Lowell, and Andrea Roberts (Texas Freedom Colonies Project), Sue Beckwith, and Tane Ward (Equilibrio Norte) kept me thinking critically about local food, history, and knowledge. The transformative work of Equilibrio Norte, Mamas of Color Rising, allgo, the Black Media Council, and PODER (People

Organized in Defense of Earth's Resources) kept me thinking about accountability and relationship before, during, and after the dissertation process. Meditation and movement with students and inspiring women kept me "rooted" throughout. Dr. Lyndon Gill, Rocio Villalobos, Alma Buena, and Shanya Cordis invited me to be all of me - holistic facilitator and activist researcher - without apology.

Toi Scott's transformative friendship constantly reminded me of the ancestors who walk with me. Ashante Reese sent heartfelt notes of encouragement. Tane Ward and Rockie Gonzalez reminded me that action is about relationship – and to have fun. A circle of Xicanas provided spiritual nourishment and shared their personal stories in healing ways – Dr. Brenda Sendejo, Dr. Alicia Enciso Litschi, and Maria Elena Martinez.

Thank you to my mother for celebrating this journey, even as so many aspects of it were new to her and the family. Gratitude to Tia Bettina for the college support which brought me to this graduate journey in the first place. My father encouraged me to continue while being true to myself. Dr. Kevin Thomas, my dear life partner, supported this project mind, body, spirit with flowers, reminders to go to yoga, and co-theorizing at the breakfast table.

**Eating While Young and Black:  
Food, Foodways, and Gentrification in Austin, Texas**

Natalie Lafaye Jones, PhD  
The University of Texas at Austin, 2016

Supervisor: Gregory Knapp

Austin, Texas is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States and, increasingly, a global food destination. The city's restaurants, urban farms, and food trucks have been widely featured in national and international media. This creative and sustainable food development is both a reflection of Austin's population growth and a catalyst for urban change, with implications for long-established residents of color. Among cities with a double digit growth rate, Austin is the only one to witness a decline of its African-American population. Historically concentrated in the urban core of East Austin, many African Americans have moved to suburban and rural areas (Tang and Ren 2014). Urban growth, gentrification, sustainable food development, and Black outmigration are familiar to cities throughout the country. Despite this dynamic context, food-related research tends to focus on what Black populations consume. Black health disparities motivate a focus on food intake and "food deserts" in current literature. This dissertation engages a critical participatory action (CPAR) research approach with Black youth ages 15-19 from who reside in East Austin to consider food through a social lens that takes lived

experiences with food and the restructuring of the food landscape into account. Youth co-researchers reside in Central East Austin, an area experiencing intensive economic redevelopment and gentrification. I begin by situating youth experiences in context, drawing attention to the impact of development on the local food landscape. Through participatory workshops, film, and interviews, the youth describe personal geographies of eating, shopping, growing, and sharing food. These geographies are broadly defined for this project to encompass the built environment as well as the identities, emotions, and memories the youth connect with food in their daily lives. By focusing on food from a social perspective, this project highlights counter geographies. Youth co-researchers disrupt stock stories about East Austin as a “food desert,” underscore diversity among African-American youth, and illustrate young people’s awareness of urban change. In closing, I offer best practices for engaging with young people in food work.



## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	x
List of Figures .....	xi
List of Maps .....	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: Methodology .....	20
Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework .....	47
Chapter 4: (Re)Making East Austin.....	91
Chapter 5: From Farm to Market .....	130
Side Item: Double Consciousness (Eating While Black) .....	159
Chapter 6: Favorite Meals.....	170
Side Item: Signifyin' with Soul Food.....	193
Chapter 7: Around the Neighborhood.....	202
Side Item: The Multiracial Plate .....	253
Chapter 8: Through Home .....	263
Chapter 9: Conclusion .....	299
Appendix .....	312
Bibliography .....	314

## **List of Tables**

Table 1:	Youth Workshop Topics .....	30
Table 2:	LBJ and Liberal Science and Arts Academy Comparison.....	232

## List of Figures

Figure 1:	Boutique grocer field trip .....	1
Figure 2:	Co-researchers at Food for Black Thought Symposium.....	20
Figure 3:	Participatory Video .....	34
Figure 4:	Film screening of East Side Food Stories .....	38
Figure 5:	Exploring Food and Urban Change.....	43
Figure 6:	Findings from <i>Access Denied</i> Report .....	101
Figure 7:	Easton Park .....	109
Figure 8:	Elan East .....	111
Figure 9:	Snapshot of ingredients.....	126
Figure 10:	Trina’s Food Diary.....	172
Figure 11:	Isaac’s Food Diary .....	173
Figure 12:	Sheila’s Food Diary.....	174
Figure 13:	Darrell’s Food Diary .....	175
Figure 14:	Eric’s Food Diary .....	176
Figure 15:	Brittney’s Food Diary .....	177
Figure 16:	Terek’s Food Diary .....	178
Figure 17:	Tonya’s Food Diary.....	179
Figure 18:	Darell’s Neighborhood Food Map .....	204

## **List of Maps**

<b>Map 1:</b>	Study Area in County Context .....	3
<b>Map 2:</b>	Study Area of Central East Austin .....	5
<b>Map 3:</b>	Central East Austin Zip Codes .....	99

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Film Scene:* We, youth co-researchers and I, sit at tables outside a newly-opened boutique grocer in East Austin on Manor Road. During the fieldtrip, each of the co-researchers received \$10 to purchase whatever they desired in the store. They purchased donuts, apple pie, and organic soda. As we debriefed, I asked if they thought their family members would go to the store. They responded no. They explained,

They'll try it, but then they'll take a look at the prices and just . . . [does not continue, and shrugs] – Chris

Yeah, like, my mom wouldn't have paid \$6 for that. – Kristina

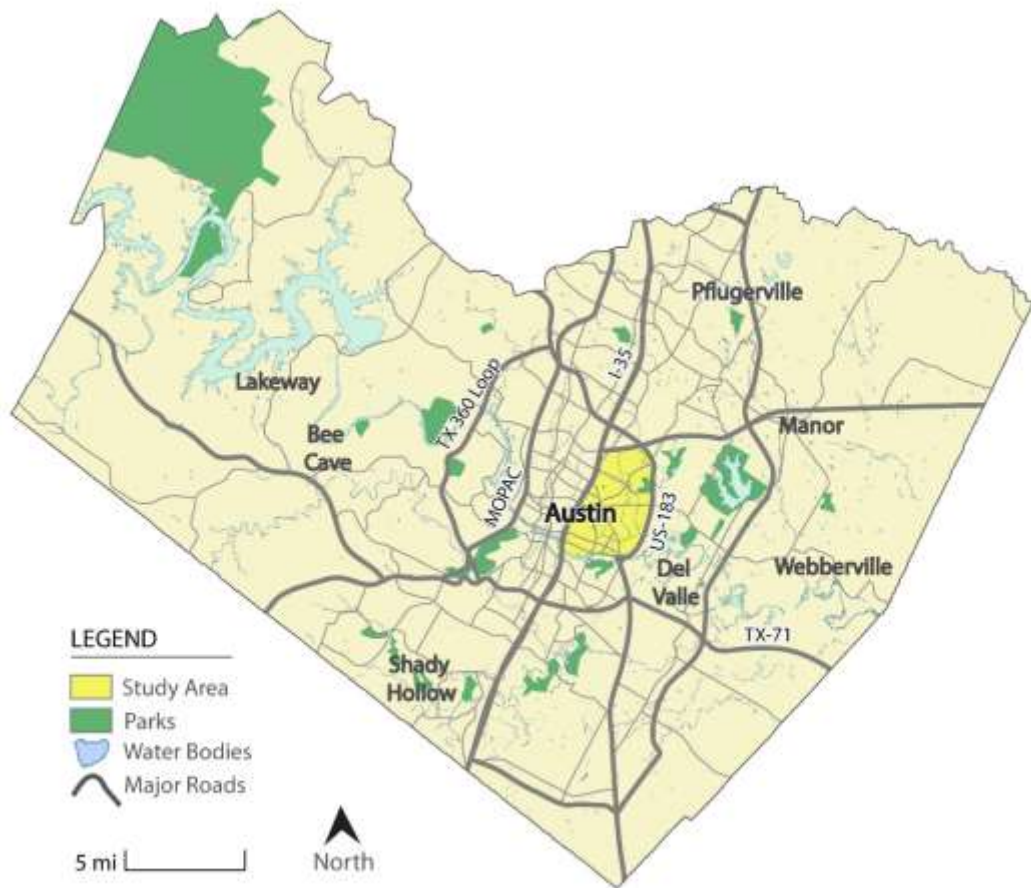
[Turning toward the shopping center across the street, which houses a laundromat and corner store] Like, we used to come here all the time with my family. Like wash our clothes there and eat tacos and stuff. And it used to be Latinos and Black people. And since we moved and as the years, like, moved on we saw it like decreasing. And, like, you used to see people walking up and down this [pointing to the street] right there. It used to be cars filled up over there, walking up and down, in and out of stores. Now it's just like, every place you walk in and it's a white person. And it's just like, it's really dying down over here. - Eric



**Figure 1 (above):** Boutique grocer field trip. Youth co-researchers at the boutique grocer during the field trip debriefing. The corner store Eric describes frequenting at with his family stands in the background.

As part of this project, youth-co-researchers went on a fieldtrip to this grocer. The visit was captured on film, along with interviews they later conducted with family members and neighbors. Our fieldtrip at the new store underscores the food landscape Black youth navigate in Austin, Texas, one of the fastest growing cities in the country and, increasingly, a global food destination. Between 2000 and 2010, the city's population grew 37 percent; by 2014, the population had increased from 790,390 to 912,791, just over a 15 percent increase. During the same time period, Austin's sustainable food movement has received national and international attention for both public and private initiatives.

The city boasts a commended sustainable food policy infrastructure, with a board committed to the issue and a Food Policy Manager; Austin claims more "for profit" urban farms than other major cities; its restaurants and food trucks have been widely featured on major television networks, magazine publications, and on-line media. According to a recent report, the impact of Austin's food economy is local, global, and virtual; the \$4.1 billion dollar impact of the sector rivals that of the city's celebrated music industry (TXP 2013). Both this population growth and sustainable food development hold implications for areas with predominantly poorer residents, many of them non-white. Eric, Chris, and Kristina reside east of the major I-35 highway corridor in East Austin, an area distinct in its social, economic, and environmental makeup compared to the western reach of the city (Map 1, below).



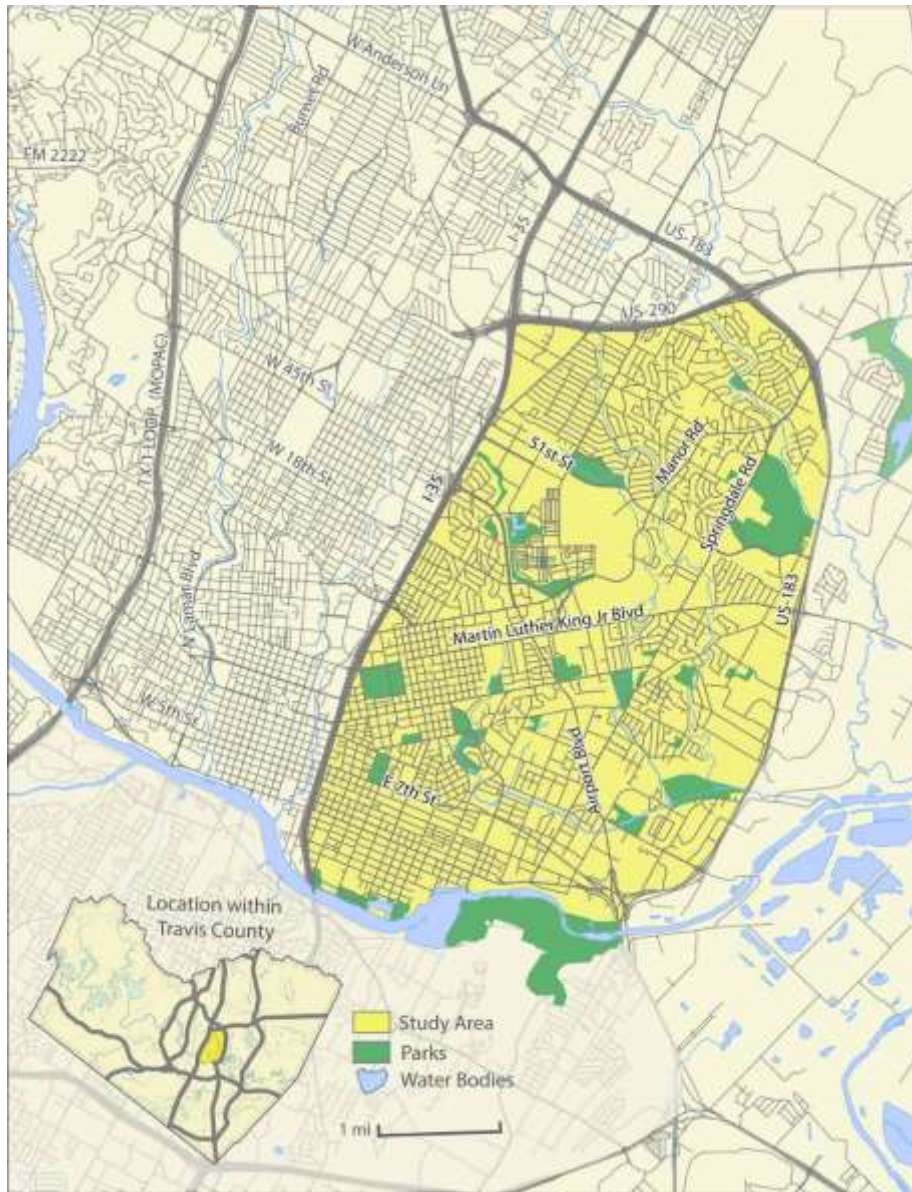
**Map 1:** Study Area in County Context. Map by Kaitlin Tasker

What is dubbed “East Austin” is both real and imagined. In 1928, urban planning situated services for residents of color in the area to incentivize the creation of a “Negro district.” Subsequent planning fostered local disinvestment rather than development for decades. By the 1980s, both retail and population had declined in East Austin. But the 1990s witnessed a shift, bolstered by Austin’s population growth and its “sustainability turn” (Tretter 2013; 2016). Once considered undesirable for development, East Austin

became desired because of its proximity to downtown and major highways and because of environmental concerns. The physical landscape of Austin encompasses the Balcones Escarpment and Texas Hill Country west of I-35, and blackland prairie east of the corridor. To the west, the rocky soil of the limestone terrain limits food production (farming and gardening); beneath this terrain lies the Edwards Aquifer, the primary water resource for residents, recreation, and farming throughout West and Central Texas. Efforts to protect water resources to the west within city limits, as well as fertile soils, have further encouraged development to the east.

Since the 1990s, East Austin has shifted from being a historically “undesirable” area for development to a coveted one, with a focus on housing and retail. Food has been at the forefront of both government food initiatives and private enterprise in the area. One effect of East Austin’s (re)making is the construction of food places with particular “tastes” in terms of food, values, and price, which do not necessarily meet the needs or desires of long established residents. Another effect is outmigration and displacement of poorer residents due to rising property taxes among other factors, especially in Central East Austin (CEA) where the youth co-researchers reside. Among cities with a double digit growth rate, Austin is the only one to witness a decline of its African-American population. Historically residing in the urban core, many African Americans have moved from East Austin to suburban and rural areas on the periphery (Tang and Ren 2014).





**Map 2:** Study Area of Central East Austin. Map by Kaitlin Tasker

For this project, the youth co-researchers, African-American teenagers ages 15-19, are among the remaining Black residents within Austin city limits. The turn of the conversation above, from a question about a food place to local demographic shifts, reflects what the youth shared throughout fieldwork. They witness impacts of outmigration and gentrification as they navigate the local food landscape; they navigate

the city's sociospatial legacies of segregation in their neighborhoods, at school, and where they work. In addition to living these legacies and transformations, they recall the past (Eric's family memories at the corner store and laundry across the street are a case in point) and compare with the present. The fieldtrip to the new boutique grocer revealed a stark contrast between incoming food development and outlets which primarily serve long-established residents, a contrast most evident to youth who reside closer to I-35. This is where urban revitalization has been concentrated per smart growth planning initiatives. Yet even youth who reside near the periphery of Central East Austin describe shifts where they live, and current development projects and the most recent comprehensive city plan position Central East Austin (and surrounding areas) as prime areas for growth. Given the emphasis on sustainable food retail and production, the interest in property and land throughout East Austin is likely to continue. What we observed at the boutique grocer foreshadowed the future food landscape throughout the area, should development continue on its current course.

Historic segregation, gentrification, outmigration, and displacement – all are characteristics of in other American cities. Austin's movement of African-Americans from the inner city to the periphery mirrors a shift underway since the 1990s in cities such as Houston, Dallas, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Detroit, and Chicago (Tang and Ren 2014; Frey 2014). During the Great Migration (roughly 1910 through the 1970s), Black populations moved from the South to Northern cities; within the South, African-Americans also migrated from rural to urban areas during this time. In the past two decades, African-Americans have been returning to the South as well as to city outskirts.

Though often described as “Black flight”, this language overemphasizes the ease of moving for African-Americans, while underemphasizing the conditions which spur outmigration in the first place. The challenge of finding housing, and of maintaining property values, for African-Americans is well-known. In some cases - in Austin and elsewhere – residents have been actively displaced for urban development (Cantu 2016). In others, declining neighborhood resources and schools as well as rising property taxes may play a role, both conditions promoted by racialized urban planning and development practices.

Despite the dynamic food landscapes Black youth and adults occupy, food research tends to focus on what Black populations consume (eat or buy) rather than on social context; research has not fully considered the urban context of African-American eating, shopping, sharing, and growing food as areas undergo rapid socioeconomic change. Stark health disparities inspire and inform the dominant approach to research on African-Americans populations and food. Based on how obesity is primarily measured, for example, Black youth and women are more likely to be obese compared to other populations; Black and Latino/a youth ages twelve to eighteen claim higher rates of Type 2 Diabetes compared to White children the same age (ASPE 2004; Bishop et al. 2005). Because of these disparities, young African-Americans and Latino/as are often the target population for research, interventions, and policy. Most academic research considers *what* youth are consuming in their immediate “food environments” at home or school, or within their neighborhoods. Research on “food deserts”, or areas with little to no access

to “nutritious, affordable” food within a given distance, frequently considers the relationship between where Black youth and adults live, food choices, and obesity.

What I refer to as a food-as-nutrition lens undergirds this dominant approach to studying Black communities and food. This lens emphasizes causality, measurement (of spaces, the built environment, and bodies), and individual behavior and lifestyle changes to promote health; biomedical baselines and measurements tend to be widely-adopted in this stream of research without critique, though measures such as the BMI are debated and socially-constructed in critical ways. Emphasis on individual “achievement” of wellness reflects healthism, the understanding that health is an individual responsibility without consideration of structural or environmental conditions which also impact wellbeing (for example, the effect of race/racism or environmental injustice). Social relationships and cultural practices may be noted, but with a focus on whether or not these connections promote or deter consumption of foods sanctioned “healthy” or “good”. In the context of the sustainable food movement central to Austin’s progressive local/global character, “good food” favors individual health; it is also produced ethically, certified organic, fair trade, and/or local.

In this dissertation, I practice a food-as-social approach. I situate the food access and food practices of Black youth in local/global context. This project devotes particular attention to how sociospatial legacies, social relationships and networks, identity, and cultural practices shape both the food landscapes they navigate and their lived experiences with food in the midst of urban change. In the course of research, this project became less about Black youth and food, and more about how young people experience

blackness as well as interpersonal connections through food. With this focus, I critically examine dominant food-as-nutrition approaches, related discourses (such as healthism, food deserts, and sustainable food), and how these discourses inform food development in East Austin. By understanding food as more than health, and health as more than food, I seek to center the youth and their lived experiences, rather than the foods they consume. This focus on their stories evokes countergeographies, as they offer personal readings of the built environment dubbed a “food desert” as well as inner geographies (their preferences, desires, and identities). This focus further underscores diversity among Black youth, often approached as monolithic in food-related scholarship.

Taking up this food-as-social lens does highlight what might be termed “healthy” food practices among Black youth, their families, and community members; this is one way this dissertation counters assumptions regarding what Black youth eat. However, my focus is not on “healthy” or “unhealthy” eating. In doing so, I shift Black youth from the “margin to the center” in this food-related study (hooks 2000). A food-as-social lens also expands the relevance of this project beyond the local. Though deeply place-based and context-rich, the conditions the youth co-researchers experience in East Austin are also unfolding elsewhere. Researchers describe gentrification in the Global North as well as South (Lees et al. 2015); anti-obesity campaigns maintain global reach, in the United States, other overdeveloped countries, and (increasingly) in Latin America (e.g. Fletcher 2014); and scholars and policymakers stress the presence of “food deserts” in the United Kingdom and Canada, among other nations, as well (Whelan et al. 2002; Karnik 2012). Young people elsewhere are experiencing displacement and living in gentrifying food

landscapes; they are also key target populations for anti-obesity and “food desert” interventions. More broadly, this dissertation sheds light on the food geographies of young, marginalized people who are experiencing not just local but global change; their stories, as well as the participatory methods used for this project, may resonate with other contexts where young people are experiencing urban change.

### **Contributions**

This dissertation contributes an understanding of Black youth food geographies from a qualitative perspective. A food-as-social lens highlights not only diversity among African American and Black/multiracial youth, but also the importance of food access beyond retail, thereby expanding definitions of “food access” to encompass food sharing, home gardens, public kitchens and other outlets – as well as *emotional* access to place. This project goes beyond spatial studies of food often undertaken from a food-as-nutrition perspective across disciplines, to encompass the inner geographies of young people.

I also build on and contribute to a cross-section of research in Geography, including black geographies, critical food geographies, children’s geographies, and feminist urban political ecology. Specific focus on Black geographies, here understood as scholarship focused on the experiences of African-American and diaspora communities, remains rare in the field. In a literature review of major Geography journals from 1911 to 1995, Dwyer (1997) notes increased focus on African-Americans in geographic scholarship after the Civil Rights Era, motivated by the dearth of research on oppressive conditions facing Black communities and by the potential for geographic tools and

analyses to combat spatial injustice.<sup>1</sup> Researchers applied statistical and spatial modeling to identify and predict patterns of segregation. Studies of Black material culture, including food, appear less frequently in geography's past. This pattern continues into the present, based on my review of articles published in the same journals from 1996 to March 2015.

In addition to an on-going focus on spatial distribution (now usually in comparison with other populations, using Geographic Information Systems), since 1996 black geographies scholarship has considered a broad range of topics from social memory in south (e.g. Dwyer 2002; Hoelscher 2003); the politics of naming streets and schools after Black figures (e.g. Alderman 1996; 2002; 2003; 2010); Black diaspora plant knowledge in the Americas (Carney 2002; Carney and Rosomoff 2012; Voeks 2007); and the resilience of Black-owned local institutions such as barbershops (Wood and Brunson 2011). In the past decade, literature has further reflected contemporary issues, including racial profiling of Black men, women, and children (Kurtz 2013); impacts of recent weather events such as Hurricane Katrina (e.g. Woods 2005); and mass incarceration of Black men (Gilmore 2007). In relationship with prevailing food discourse and development, Ramirez (2015) considers the impact of food-related revitalization projects for Black and other communities within the urban core. Among conceptual contributions, geographers propose Black geographies as instructive for building more sustainable,

---

<sup>1</sup> Dwyer (1997) reviewed articles in the following journals for the noted time period. The dates in parenthesis indicate the year established: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (1911); *Antipode* (1969); *Economic Geography* (1925); *Geographical Review* (1916); *The Professional Geographer* (1949); and *Urban Geography* (1980).

resilient, and cooperative communities (e.g. McKittrick and Woods 2007). These contributions note the strategies and cultural institutions Black communities have developed in the context of forced migration and displacements (gentrification among them).

While diverse in scope the Black geographies literature noted here shares an emphasis on Black agency, along with recognition of knowledge (of community organizing, food production, social/economic systems) and resources (food, businesses, social support) cultivated within/by Black communities. This dissertation follows in this geographic tradition, this understanding of Black communities as generative. At the same time, I bring attention to young African-American experiences. Most black geographies scholarship focuses on Black adults. If children are noted, they are noted in relationship to mothering, guardians, teachers or project leader; in other words, Black youth tend to occupy roles in adult lives, rather than being engaged as actors in their own right. Indeed, little qualitative research about young Black people appears to exist in the field.<sup>2</sup> This project expands geographic understanding of how African-American youth make sense of themselves and the world around them. By explicitly situating their experiences in the context of gentrification and local/global discourses, I follow the call from children's geographers to understand young people's lives as always already global in

---

<sup>2</sup> Exceptions that inform the methodology and focus of this dissertation include participatory action research with Black and Latino/a young women about gentrification in New York (Cahill 2007) and exploration of identity formation among Black/refugee youth in the United Kingdom (Valentine and Sporton 2009).



terms of their consumption and how they are enmeshed in broader social/economic processes.

Geographers have explored food in young people's lives from a food-as-social perspective, taking into account topics such as relationships, resistance, and cultural practices; however, I have not yet encountered similar research centered on the experiences of Black teenagers in the field. This is surprising, given the fact that young African-Americans are often the target population for food-related interventions and policy. This dissertation explores the experiences of a population often scrutinized by the very discourses critical food and children's geographers critique. Both of these subfields, along with black geographies, further inform the analysis of race/racialization, blackness, and identity threaded throughout this dissertation. Feminist urban political ecology informs my reading of how discourse, relationships between stakeholders, and policy shape the food landscape the youth navigate, while critical food studies similarly encourages "following the thing" to understand interconnections between spaces, places, and scales. By bringing these diverse subfields into conversation, I seek to shed light on food geographies of Black youth.

### **Research Questions and Methodology**

Two guiding questions inform this project:

- Q1) In what ways does local sustainable food policy restructure the urban food landscape in Austin, Texas, and how do global factors influence local policy?
- Q2) How do Black youth actively negotiate and produce the foodscape?

Regarding this second question, what food resources do Black youth access in

terms of growing, exchanging, sharing and buying? How do Black youth produce their own food geographies? And, in what ways do Black youth affirm, navigate, and challenge their varied subjectivities (age, gender, sexual orientation, race) within the food landscape?

To explore these questions, I applied critical participatory action research (CPAR) methods with Black-identified teenagers ages 15-19 who reside in Central East Austin. These methods included participatory workshops, filmmaking with youth, a focus group interview, and food life history interviews with youth co-researchers. Research also involved interviews with adults, among them parents/guardians, long-established community members, and representatives from local non-profit, retail, and policy organizations; in addition to these methods, I conducted discourse analysis and close reading of media articles, policy reports, and archival documents.

In the course of completing this project, an initiative I co-founded with my partner served as a forum for sharing with the broader public and as an opportunity to gain community insights. Food for Black Thought (FFBT) focuses on promoting critical education about the food system through the lens of Black experiences. The CPAR methods applied in this dissertation became FFBT events (such as the screening of the film the youth co-researchers directed at the first FFBT symposium); public feedback and engagement at FFBT events further informed this dissertation – particularly my understanding of local private and public food development. Given this synergistic relationship, I occupied an “in-between” position throughout the research process, one which balanced community organizing and scholarship, activism and research. At the

same time, I occupied “insider-outsider” status as a Black researcher focusing on the experiences of Black community members (though, as I later describe, other identity coordinates such as my older age, Black/Mexican-American multiracial background, degree, gender, and current middle-class status among others also shaped interactions in the field). Both of these – my in-between position and insider-outsider status – offered opportunities and challenges explored throughout the dissertation.

CPAR methods better allowed me to “witness” the countergeographies of the youth co-researchers, their families, and community members. In both African-American and Latino/a cultural practice, when people testify or *testimonio*, or share their personal stories, what is shared by the speaker or storyteller is understood as personal and political knowledge. The listener is an active receiver; by witnessing, their work is to (re)tell the story in relationship to their own lives, positionalities, and experiences (Huber 2009; Delgado et al. 2014). In the same spirit, CPAR methods continue into the discursive praxis of this dissertation. I describe the “data” gathered from among youth co-researchers as stories to emphasize storytelling. I also use the word “shared” rather than “stated” or “said” when citing conversations.

As the one who “writes up” the research, I come as someone who has witnessed and continues to process stories. This dissertation is part of that processing. Rather than concluding with solutions, I close with recommendations for how to witness black and young food geographies which center African-American experiences, history, and social networks; doing this, I propose, can inform community-building and policy that seeks to 1) identify community strengths, resources, desires, and possibilities while 2) actively

countering stock assumptions regarding Black communities, health, and food. These recommendations speak to community members building food efforts as well as to policymakers who may or may not be from communities they seek to serve. Food is an area of scholarship and policy (overly) committed to interventions. The purpose of this dissertation and methodologies is to, above all, to listen and pay attention.

### **Flow**

Chapters and side items make up this dissertation. Chapters might be considered the “main course”, writing that covers research structure, forefronts youth stories, and analyzes what they share. Side items, like sides on a menu, enrich the chapters by exploring recurring themes in depth; side items also engage the interpersonal dynamics in the field, my positionality, and interactions between the co-researchers themselves. CPAR places emphasis on research as relationships and on research as process; following this principle, the side items provide insight into the research process itself, while considering the ways dynamics shaped *how* the youth shared their stories and *what* they chose to share; moments captured in these shorter pieces revealed much about the youth, food, blackness, and Black cultures, while shaping my practices as a researcher, shopper, eater, and local resident. Critical children’s geographies critiques the treatment of young people’s lives as parochial and locally-bounded (Valentine et al. 1998; Ansell 2009; Aitken 2001). Following the call to contextualize young people’s lives, this dissertation intentionally moves from Austin in broader context, to the neighborhood to the home, understanding these scales as deeply interconnected.

Chapter 2 describes methodology, including a description of critical participatory action research (CPAR), project phases and timeline, and limitations. Chapter 3 delves into conceptual frameworks along with guiding concepts which emerged as salient in the course of research; a cross-section of literature, including children’s geographies, feminist geographies, black geographies, and feminist urban political ecology, informs these concepts, the shape of the dissertation, and my analysis throughout. In Chapter 4, I outline key historical moments, contemporary demographic trends, and discourses that are (re)making the East Austin food landscape where youth and their families reside – with implications for their food geographies as well as their residence in the area. This chapter provides the broader local-global context for the everyday practices explored in the chapters and side items that follow.

Chapter 5: Farm to Market describes fieldtrips with diverse youth from the Urban Roots farm to local area grocery stores in West and Central East Austin. Their grocery store ethnographies shed light on sociospatial differences in food access between different areas of the city while providing a sense of the broader grocery food landscape. The intersubjective approach of this chapter, with attention to the experiences of Black youth as well as their Latin@, white, Asian, and other peers, further contextualizes their food geographies and offers significant comparisons. The first side item, Double Consciousness, follows this chapter. Double Consciousness considers the impact of ethical consumption, healthism, and stigma – all emergent during the supermarket fieldtrips and throughout the research process – on how Black youth and other

community members perceive and describe food in their lives. I note how stigma and related self-surveillance is an important limitation of this project.

In Chapter 6: Favorite Meals, youth co-researchers describe, using their senses, the meals they most enjoy. This chapter directly counters the stigma around Black eating and foodways discussed previously, by focusing on embodied experiences with favorite meals; highlighting diversity of preferences and food practices; and honoring what the youth desire and pleasure about food in their lives. Among some (though not all) of these favorite meals are foods the youth co-researchers associated with “soul food”, Black and Southern eating and cooking traditions. When asked what kinds of foods they identified with (foods that represented “who they are”), co-researchers emphasized “soul food” options – even if they were not among their favorite meals or snacks. Following this chapter, Side Item: Signifyin’ With Soul Food describes how “soul food” acted as a kind of cultural currency which served to identify shared Black experiences, codify blackness, and build rapport; at the same time, language around soul food throughout the project, both body language and spoken language, underscored diversity of lived experiences. There was no fixed Black culture, blackness, or Black foods.

Chapter 7, Around the Neighborhood, begins to situate personal, lived experiences in neighborhood context, starting with food places (corner stores, school lunchroom, and fast food) in their daily lives. What I refer to as the “3 Ps” emerge, as the youth describe how proximity, price, and palate all play a role in why they access these places, what they eat or buy while there, and the personal background that shapes their experience, in terms of food preferences as well as racial/cultural identities. This chapter

engages the microgeographies as well as inner geographies, the social dynamics within a given place in addition to the personal preferences, identities, and memories the youth co-researchers bring to them. While focused on these local and micro scales, the youth experiences touch on spatial inequality and gentrification within the broader food landscape. Following this chapter, Side Item: The Multiracial Plate delves further into the inner geographies of the youth co-researchers. This side item explores their diverse lived experiences and the effect of my Black and multiracial positionality during the research process.

In Chapter 8, youth co-researchers describe their experiences with food “through home”. By understanding food *through* home rather than at home, this chapter emphasizes how where the youth live and their family relationships connect them with the food access, foodways, and identities they describe throughout the dissertation. Here, the youth and their family members describe home rituals, family traditions, and food practices – cooking, baking, and growing – transmitted from one generation to the next. As this chapter indicates, the knowledge is not only passed to the youth, but also adopted by them and put to use for themselves and their families; in some cases, the youth themselves share food knowledge with elders in their lives. Sociospatial legacies play a role in shaping what foods, relatives, and cultural institutions are near or far. In the Conclusion, I offer the aforementioned recommendations on how to approach Black/young food geographies, as well as future research paths.

## Chapter 2: Methodology



Figure 2: Co-researcher Share Out. Youth co-researchers described their experience making a participatory film about food where they live. September 2012 at the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center, Food for Black Thought Symposium. Source: Envision It Photography.

*Scene:* In fall 2012, the youth co-researchers and I share about the East Austin Food Project on stage, after a screening of a film they directed. As I relate my personal shopping experience at health food stores in Austin, the co-researchers turn to me. They ask, “Then why do you go there?” They continue with questions, poignant ones as they enact their power to ask questions back. In that moment, they blur the line between researcher/participant. By asking questions, they become not only youth involved in a project, but young people engaged in producing knowledge and documenting experiences. They defy the expectation that youth should be silent when adults speak, or in a setting where primarily adults are present.

As a methodology, Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) involves dynamic relationships during fieldwork that challenge conventional lines between



researcher and participant, self and community, scholar and resident. In the process, individuals involved become co-researchers who alternate between periods of inward reflection and outward action. Reason (2004) describes participatory action research as an “orientation to inquiry”, one that values processes such as dynamics between researcher/participants, as well as products such as journal articles or community reports. From this orientation, “success” is fulfilled not only by quality of data but by the development of knowledge and skills to critically analyze and address social, economic, and/or environmental issues.

While contextually-rich, CPAR is not limited to the issue itself – in scale or in scope. In line with critical scholarship, CPAR understands contexts as inherently multiscalar, such that the local, national, and global are nested, and such that global processes such as gentrification manifest across local contexts. This means the experiences and conditions of historically marginalized (and privileged) people can relate across space – and so too can efforts to address social issues. But these issues are not what sustain CPAR; instead, relationships and visioning do. In this dissertation, the focus is on highlighting the knowledge and experiences of community members, recognizing strategies already at work to foster community connection and survival, and envisioning practices moving forward.

Researchers have practiced PAR and CPAR with young people in urban contexts in the United States and beyond to explore a range of issues, including ones directly related to this research project: gentrification (Cahill 2000; Cahill 2006; Cahill 2007), cultural reproduction in the context of economic change (Katz 2004), mapping the urban

environment in East Austin (Montoya et al. 2007); and educational inequality (Torre 2008). Higgins et al. (2007) have explored identity at the “child/adult” border, youth perception of urban government policy about young people, and how young people perceive their rights in high school contexts using CPAR methodologies, often with youth as co-researchers as well as peer researchers (youth conducting interviews, surveys, and other methods with each other).

Feminist and children’s geographies intersect in CPAR with young people. CPAR builds upon feminist inquiry by emphasizing multiple knowledges and intersectional positionalities; the methodology explore how both of these shape research processes, its products, and findings. Critical pedagogy, especially as articulated by Paulo Freire (1972), undergirds CPAR’s interest in the transformative power of education to nurture conscientization, or critical consciousness of one’s positionality and prevailing social hierarchies (race/racism, patriarchy, classism, heteronormativity, among others). Both PAR and CPAR emphasize relationships, interrogate uses of power, recognize community knowledge, and envision possibilities for social change; the *critical* added to CPAR in this dissertation and in related literature emphasizes engagement with critical theory as well as critical pedagogy, both of which interrogate hierarchies such as race/racism, gender, and class in research spaces and in data, while seeking to forefront the experiences, knowledges, and voices of historically marginalized groups (PSP 2015).

I chose to practice CPAR in part because of my experiences in education as a former teacher and case manager; for 10 years prior to this research, I taught and counseled young people from historically-marginalized, predominantly low-income

backgrounds, primarily in non-profit settings. During this time, I had the privilege to teach, counsel, and coach young people who predominantly identified as Black, Latino/a, and Native American/Navajo in alternative education settings in New Mexico as well as Texas. This combined experience inspired my interest in research with teenagers and young adults – specifically research which recognized their experiences and insights as valuable for creating a more just and sustainable future.

In the scene above (Figure 2), youth co-researchers and I are practicing one form of action as we share back about the project in public space. As we did so, our interaction illustrated dynamics cultivated during the research process, a dynamic in which I not only acted as an interviewer but actively considered my positionality, experiences, and assumptions throughout – at times, prompted by youth co-researchers to “dig deeper”. In line with CPAR, these dynamics involved interrogating social dynamics in the room, sharing personal stories, acknowledging the broader context of the research, and grappling with social justice issue(s). We practiced power in different ways given our respective positionalities: me, from my positionality as an older adult/student/researcher, and the co-researchers as young people/students/researcher-participants. We shared stories through participatory activities and interviews described below, through which also considered the broader context of Austin. We grappled with food justice from the perspective of recognizing food experiences from a social rather than nutrition lens and by documenting food experiences in gentrifying East Austin, in the midst of steep African-American outmigration and displacement from the urban core.

This project dovetails with Food for Black Thought, an initiative I co-founded with my partner in 2012. Food for Black Thought, or FFBT, critically explores Black experiences with food to identify community resources, harness local food practices, and consider how these practices support community sustainability and resilience. In 2012 FFBT hosted its first symposium where the scene above took place, followed by another symposium in 2013 with speakers and community workshops. Today, FFBT has shifted to focus on education, training, and consultancy on food systems with a focus on Black experiences, past and present. We work with communities who approach us using CPAR methodologies. This dissertation and its process has been a foundation for FFBT: its methods and findings inform FFBT curricula, how we work with communities and groups, and on-going community-based research. FFBT has been a vehicle through which I shared about this dissertation and gathered further information about the local food landscape. A synergistic relationship emerged. Observations, stories, and interactions at FFBT events informed the approach of this project, while the methodology carried out for the dissertation shaped FFBT events.

This synergy between the dissertation and Food for Black Thought has also involved occupying an in-between space, one described well in reflections about “activist scholarship” and “intellectual activism”, which can be defined as research carried out from an explicit social justice perspective, often aligned with an organization committed to community empowerment and/or social change (Hale 2008; Collins 2012). The challenge, then, has been navigating tensions between scholarship/activism, research/service, self/community, and researcher/participant as these tend to be

understood within the academy. For this project, relationships between scholarship/activism, research/service, and so forth were not distinct: here, scholarship *is* activism in the sense of reclaiming stories, documenting counter-geographies, and understanding cultural food practices as social change; the research conducted also involves volunteering, public education, and other forms of service.

My positionality as a Black researcher focusing on the experiences of young Black people further shaped relationship dynamics in the field. I relate to the community focus of this project as a longtime Black Austinite (resident for 10 years) who grew up in a low-income home. As the youth-co-researchers point out above, I am a participant whose actions are subject to documentation, analysis, and context. At the same time, I come to this project as a graduate student from the University of Texas- Austin, an institution that does not necessarily feel welcoming to long established residents of color or young people (a point Kristina openly expressed during a campus visit), whose growth has also promoted displacement in East Austin in the near past. In addition, I have not lived in East Austin, and presently my current socio-economic status is middle-class. I tend to be afforded “expert status” based on my educational level as a PhD candidate alone. Indeed, my social capital as a PhD candidate provided me with grant funding to carry out the final phases of this project.

As Manzo and Brightball (2007) point out, CPAR methodology is an embodied and often emotional process in part because of its emphasis on relationships and social issues. Many of the methods described below literally involve *movement* with co-researchers (such as film or traveling throughout the city); the relationships themselves

and the connections with my own background proved emotionally moving. Studying African-American decline, displacement, and removal in Austin proved moving in and of itself; to articulate this project on the page, and to process local social and economic trends, required the “transformation of silence” as well as anger into action (Lorde 2007). In earlier phases of the project, action involved the symposia, relationship building, attending and presenting at community events, and filmmaking with the youth co-researchers; later in the project, action involved analysis, writing, and deep listening. We practiced deep listening as described by Keating (2007) as “listening with raw openness,” listening that involves respect for each speaker, an understanding that our understanding is partial, and acceptance of mutual vulnerability. This listening also involves allowing for silence as part of the exchange; it involves challenging ideas rather than speakers. Throughout, my opportunity and challenge has been to practice reflection and self-care, both for the sake of analysis and to sustain relationships. Researchers emphasize the importance of individual and group reflection with CPAR methodology. I found both crucial. Periods of reflection are also noted in the methodology below.

To navigate the intricacies of CPAR, I attended training on the methodology with the Public Science Project at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York (2012) as well as subsequent training with Undoing Racism in 2014. In that year I also participated in oral history training with the Southern Foodways Alliance at the University of Mississippi. Each of these enriched the qualitative methods carried out for this project. Each provided insight about how to navigate the “in-between” nature of CPAR research during fieldwork, sharing out, and writing.

## **Methods Overview**

This dissertation analyzes fieldwork carried out between June 2012 and November 2015 in five phases. Overall, twenty youth co-researchers participated in this research via workshops, interviews, and other participatory activities; some phases of research involved more co-researchers than others. I have changed youth co-researcher names in this dissertation to maintain confidentiality. Names of co-researchers who participated in the participatory video, however, are not changed in the film. The film is available to the public on-line, and these co-researchers participated in screenings of the film. The purpose of the film was to amplify local youth experiences and emphasize youth participation in filmmaking. Maintaining their names in the film serves this intention.

Research also included 10 interviews with adults ages 19 and over, among them relatives, long established community members and business owners, non-profit representatives, and policymakers. During the fieldwork period, I further conducted oral history interviews with African-American residents in Austin and East Texas about restaurant and farm histories for Foodways Texas, an Austin-based non-profit organization whose mission is to “preserve, promote, and celebrate the diverse food cultures of Texas”; these included interviews with former and current employees of the historic Nighthawk Restaurant chain (discussed further in Chapter 4), as well as interviews in a historic Black freedman’s community in East Austin (Shankleville, Texas). Occasionally, I refer to these interviews, where they provide rich context about Black social and cultural experiences with food.

In light of the proliferation of studies dubbed “participatory”, researchers emphasize the need to be transparent about the types of participation involved in CPAR projects. Kindon et al. (2007) offer up a continuum based on a compendium of research. Based on this continuum, this dissertation engaged with youth as co-researchers in multiple respects, via cooperation, through which youth received material incentives for their initial participation, and via co-learning, as the youth shared decisions in adult-initiated activities. Adults took part in this project primarily as interviewees and informants, rather than as co-researchers. Phases 1-3 took place under IRB #2012-02-0129. More recent Phases 4-5 took place under IRB # 2013-06-0056.

### **Phase 1: June 2012-August 2012 / Urban Roots Farm Workshops**

For this initial phase, I conducted participatory workshops with youth crew members at Urban Roots, a local urban farm and youth development program located in far East Austin. Young people apply to be farm interns at Urban Roots through their high schools in the Austin area; at the time, most of these high schools were located in East Austin, and the majority of farm interns identified as African-American and Latin@ (usually of Mexican or Mexican-American descent). Among farm interns, a small percentage identified as African, Indian-American, Asian, and white. The majority of the youth came from low-income households and attended schools with high use of free and reduced lunch, such as Eastside Memorial High School and LBJ High School.

The workshops I facilitated at the farm became part of my on-going relationship with Urban Roots. Starting in 2011, I interned with Urban Roots in various positions as an adult crew leader, curriculum designer, and fieldtrip facilitator. As an adult crew leader, I



had supported a youth crew leader, whereas for the curriculum design and fieldtrip facilitator I primarily worked with adult staff as I organized, scheduled, and facilitated farm visits. Urban Roots administration and I arranged for the workshops in 2012 to be part of another intern opportunity – a Program Evaluation Internship - at the farm. In addition to providing qualitative information for the non-profit’s program evaluation at the time, these workshops served as a research camp and as a recruitment process for future project activities. Familiar to CPAR methods, research camps provide an opportunity to build relationships between individuals involved in a project, cultivate shared language, and co-analyze key themes or issues at hand; during research camps, the process of interconnecting, the products created together, and analysis carried out part of what’s analyzed about the project as a whole (PSP 2015).

I chose Urban Roots as an initial research and recruitment site because of our relationship, the non-profit’s scope (primarily East Austin), its participatory approach with young people. Founded in 2007, Urban Roots was initially a program of Youth Launch. In 2013, the farm program re-launched as an independent non-profit (501 C3) organization. Based on a Positive Youth Development model, Urban Roots seeks to cultivate youth leadership through service. Youth farm interns cultivate skills such as team work, farming, and facilitation as they guide tours of the farm, plant and harvest, manage stands at local markets, and speak at farm events. At Urban Roots fundraising events, the youth actively create, manage, and share their stories. Similar youth programs throughout the United States, most notably the Food Project in Boston, Massachusetts and Grow Dat in New Orleans, take a similar approach, one in which the farm is a

conduit for youth leadership. Similar to CPAR, the success rests not on how many points of food are harvested, but more so on the personal and collective growth of young people.

Due to Urban Roots' approach, farm interns were familiar with participatory-style workshops carried out for this project in summer 2012. These workshops in summer 2012 involved written and drawn journals, as well as participatory diagramming, grocery store ethnographies, and sketch mapping about everyday food experiences. Journal topics (Table 1 below) ranged from the scale of the body to the neighborhood, while glimpsing the present, past, and future.

<b>Urban Roots Workshops: Journal Topics</b>
Food Diary #1: Favorite Meal
Food Diary #2: You Are What You Eat
Food Diary #3: You're the Teacher
Food Diary #4: Eyes on Community
Food Diary #5: Imagine Your Community
Food Diary #6: Grocery Story Ethnography

**Table 1:** Youth Workshop Topics. Weekly topics for workshops facilitated at Urban Roots Farm, Austin Texas in summer 2012.

In addition to individual sharing, workshops invited youth to share in a participatory group format. Diagramming in groups allowed all participants to contribute to drawings and charts; as a practice, diagramming offered an opportunity to co-produce and share knowledge about the food landscape (Alexander et al. 2011). Farm interns were accustomed to engaging with food issues, to actively sharing out, and to listening to each

other's experiences. Though the content of the workshops I facilitated differed, their familiarity with participatory work facilitated the practice of CPAR. Additionally, by the time I arrived, the youth had worked together as a group and on smaller teams for almost 3 months. Rapport and relationships had already been cultivated. At the same time, holding workshops on the farm also meant the youth were learning about and engaging with discourse critiqued in this dissertation.

For example, though I did not specifically ask the youth about “healthy” or “unhealthy” foods, these categorizations entered the conversation on a regular basis; at the Urban Roots farm, a focus is increasing access to “good” food for local residents. As discussed further later on in this dissertation, certain language about food and health is pervasive, and so this language may have been (and was) encountered off of the farm as well. However, the specific education the young people were receiving along these lines may have created certain parameters or affected responses while on the farm. This challenge further encouraged the creative diary approach to discussing food as well as intentional language (such as the lack of the word “healthy” or the phrase “food desert”). By doing so, I sought to co-create a space where the youth and I could share more openly about our food preferences, experiences, and knowledge.

Farm interns participated in these workshops as part of their daily work and training activities at Urban Roots; they received pay for every work day they attended, and the workshops were treated as part of their on-the-farm tasks. The workshops allowed me to gather preliminary information about how youth who primarily reside in East Austin experience food, social relationships, and identity. Because the interns represented a

racially and ethnically diverse population, I began to notice how experiences of Black youth compared and contrasted with those of their peers. At the last two workshops, I recruited self-identified Black/African-American youth for the second phase of the project, a research camp and project focused on participatory video in East Austin.

### **Phase 2: August 2012-December 2012 / Participatory Video and Research Camp**

Eric and Kristina, two youth from Urban Roots, participated in a participatory video project in August – November 2012. Eric’ friend Chris, a senior at another local high school, also participated in this phase. As part of the video-making process, the youth participated in a focus group, a research camp, video production training, and filmmaking. Most of this phase took place in a classroom at the local George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center. My choice of this location was intentional because of its location in East Austin and because of Carver’s historical role in food and farming. In the classroom, I included a mini-library of books about Black history, food, farming, and medicinal practices.

A professional facilitator and longtime community organizer who identifies as Latino facilitated the focus group discussion following the questions outlined in the Appendix (p. 317). He was familiar with holding space for dialogue using anti-oppression techniques (awareness of positionality of the interviewer, awareness of relationship dynamics within the room, and understanding of the historical marginalization of Black and Latino populations). I chose not to facilitate this focus group myself because of my longtime relationship with two out of three of the co-researchers; I sought to co-create a space where they could dialogue with a community member they did not personally

know free of my presence as someone who knew them and recruited them into the project. Following the focus group, the youth analyzed their conversation with me during our first group analysis.

During the following 2-week research camp, they shared their prior knowledge about local Austin history, learned about the development of East Austin past and present, and explored the changing African American demographics of the Austin area. We conducted a fieldtrip to the Austin History Center, where they identified local Black food history of interest to them. For another fieldtrip, I provided youth co-researchers with a choice between visiting two food places, Hillside Farmacy or in.gredients, to explore changes in the East Austin food landscape “on the ground”. Hillside Farmacy opened in 2012, a self-described “eatery and grocery” that serves an array of local foods produced by area farms. Located on East 11<sup>th</sup> street, the historical location was once the Hillside Drugstore, one of the area pharmacies available to local Black Austinites during segregation. In 2011, In.gredients opened to national and international interest as a “no-waste” grocer into which customers must bring or purchase bulk containers for items they buy. As discussed in Chapter 4, the store chose its location on Manor Road intentionally in East Austin to address lack of access in the “food desert”. Both are establishments reflective of sustainable food development in the area. Youth co-researchers chose to visit In.gredients. We captured their experience inside the store as well as our group reflection afterwards on film.

The last week of research camp, co-researchers learned basic film techniques with University of Texas-Austin alumna and filmmaker Monique Walton. In addition to

filming our group field trip to in.gredients, Walton also workshopped film ideas with the youth co-researchers. This phase closed with the youth directing and shooting remaining parts of the film. As directors for the film, the youth co-researchers chose the questions they preferred to ask as well as the film format. They chose a “man-on-the-street” format which involved walking and driving around their neighborhood, as well as visiting some of their homes, to gather interviews with community members and family members in East Austin. In the process of identifying questions and choosing a film format, the youth not only produced a product but also shared more about their experiences and analysis of food where they live.



**Figure 3:** Participatory video. Youth co-researcher (front) practices shooting a biography scene with filmmaker Monique Walton for the youth-directed film *East Side Food Stories*.

As in the case of youth participation at the Urban Roots farm, the participatory model in this case was one of cooperation; youth received a stipend of \$150 for their participation in the 2-week research camp and film-making. The end-product, called East Austin Food Stories, was first screened at the Food for Black Thought symposium in 2012 as part of the “action” component of this project. At the symposium, youth co-directors shared their experiences with food and their experiences making the film.

Haw and Hadfield (2011) emphasize the form and function of participatory video; just as there are various modes of participatory work, they point out, so too do participatory video practices vary. For this project, participatory video 1) generated youth participation, 2) facilitated reflection with youth co-researchers and community members, 3) highlighted marginalized voices, and 4) identified action items for further community-based research, particularly via Food for Black Thought. In addition, the youth learned how to storyboard and shoot a short film. As a participant-observer during the research camp and film process, I observed dynamics between myself and the youth co-researchers as well as among them, as well as how these dynamics and interactions shifted across space, place, and time. In this dissertation, the Side Items between chapters explore these dynamics in greater depth.

### **Phase 3: January 2013-December 2013 / Youth Interviews and Community Events**

At this time, I maintained contact with the youth co-researchers and reflected on the research process. In May 2013 I resumed “go along” and food life history interviews with youth co-researchers. For these interviews, the youth co-researchers included those who participated in the video-making process and some who did not. During individual “go

alongs” (Carpiano 2009), I traveled with youth co-researchers to the food places, spaces, and routes of their everyday lives. In health research, “go along” interviews with residents have effectively highlighted resources and perceptions in neighborhood context. “Go alongs” also allow for unplanned and unexpected interactions as the researcher and participant travel through the landscape. For this project, mobile interviews provided insight into the routes, social networks, and relationships that make up co-researcher food geographies. Furthermore, given the rapid change within the local food landscape, “go alongs” underscored issues of access and perception: food resources en route were variously active, closed, and renovated.

In addition to “go along” interviews, I conducted food life history (FLH) interviews with the youth co-researchers. Researchers have carried out these types of in-depth interviews to understand how broader issues of power and privilege play out in everyday life through the lens of food. Among feminist researchers, FLH interviews shed light on mundane dynamics of race/racism, gender, economy, and cultural reproduction at the micro-scale (e.g. Williams Forson 2006; Williams Forson 2011; Christie 2008; Counihan 2009). Similar to oral history methods, FLH interviews adopt an unstructured approach with open-ended questions that elicit stories; these interviews provided space for interviewees to share personal experiences, as well as to move between the past and present.

In addition to cultivating rapport with the co-researchers and community members, FLH interviews contextualized their food geographies; these interviews highlighted social and economic aspects of their lives in Austin, while highlighting how the material



foodscape has stayed the same and/or changed over time. Lastly, these interviews facilitated my understanding of how/if food traditions are transmitted from one generation to the next, and how these traditions play a role in the young people's food geographies at present. FLH interviews therefore broadened this project in a temporal sense. These interviews took place at a local coffeehouse and the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center located in East Austin.

I took part in community events as a facilitator-participant and as a participant-observer during this phase as well. These experiences deepened my understanding of the local Austin food landscape and provided an opportunity to share preliminary research. In spring 2013, Food for Black Thought hosted a community conversation about the book *Black, White, and Green: Farmer's Market, Race, and the Green Economy* (2012) with Dr. Alison Alkon. Alkon joined in the dialogue via Skype; the event, held at the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center in East Austin, shed light on the social and economic impact of farmer's markets in the Bay Area of California and how these compared with Austin. The event enriched my understanding of demographic shifts in urban cores elsewhere in the United States, particularly in other areas characterized as "progressive" and "green".



**Figure 4:** Screening of *East Austin Food Stories*. Monkeywrench Books in Austin, Texas, November 2012. Front from left to right presenting: Dr. Kevin Thomas, co-founder of Food for Black Thought, Naya Jones, Kristina, and Eric. Source: Author.

Also during this phase, we screened the East Austin Food Project film again, this time at Monkeywrench Books, a local cooperatively-owned bookstore with Left and radical political leanings. For this community workshop, the youth co-researchers again shared about their experiences making the film and joined in conversations at the event with local residents. From this experience, the questions asked by the (predominantly white) audience brought my attention to certain points to clarify for the dissertation as well as to the positioning of young people in public space. I also captured a sense of the intrinsic meaning of the film experience for the youth co-researchers; whereas for the research

camp they had attended as paid participants and co-researchers, in this case, as for the share back at the symposium the year before, they participated as volunteers of their own accord. Without incentives in place, the mode of participation (and relationships) shifted from cooperation to more co-learning at this point in the research process.

In October 2013, at the second Food for Black Thought symposium, I shared preliminary research about Black youth, food, and gentrification in Austin alongside colleagues who explore similar topics elsewhere in the country – specifically in Washington, D.C. (Broyles 2013). Along with sharing out about the research process, questions and comments gained from this experience provided insights regarding the national context of this dissertation.

#### **Phase 4: January 2014- December 2014 / Community Interviews and Engagement**

During this phase, I continued FLH interviews with long-established community members, non-profit representatives, and policymakers. Rather than conducting semi-structured interviews, I conducted these more in-depth interviews to build rapport and to better capture the connection between the individual's personal life experience with food and their current food work. Because of the on-going work of Food for Black Thought, many of these individuals were also very familiar with the anti-racist work I have been involved with in Austin. In some cases, FFBT had performed (and continues to perform) consulting work and co-created events with interviewees. I was in a position where through the community work connected with this dissertation, I found myself navigating a rather enmeshed positionality with stakeholders.

This involvement opened/eased my access with some stakeholders while complicating my conversations with others in part because of FFBT's vocal critique of the role food industry continues to play in local gentrification. FLH interviews allow for connecting and allow stories to arise which allowed for connection, rapport, or simply relationship building in ways that does not necessarily happen in other social or political settings involved in "food work" on the ground in Austin. Such interviews became particularly challenging to navigate after the urban farm code debate (touched on again in Chapter 4) which re-ignited gentrification as well as race/racism tensions within the city.

During this phase I also began to identify themes in the textual and visual information I gathered during the research process. While most of the materials gathered were interviews, others such as the participatory video and participatory workshop diagrams or diaries included visuals. I coded these materials using CPAR methodology, which involved deconstructing, analyzing, and contextualizing the materials as well as documenting my responses to the materials. The iterative reflection process carried out during fieldwork continued during analysis. For textual materials, I coded based on emerging themes; in this dissertation, these themes often organize the chapters. In addition to noting similar themes, I noted nuances between them as well as what might be called qualitative outliers. For visual materials, I similarly coded based on emerging themes, with attention to drawings and figures in co-researcher journals as well as to body language or embodied communication on video. For coding, I used Excel spreadsheets to organize ideas. I found this to be the useful method because of the interconnected relationships between multiple field sites (neighborhood parks, homes,

schools, for example) and between the youth themselves. Engaging with coding in this way allowed immersion in the stories collected; I felt better able to revisit individual stories and their relationships with each other, by reading them in tandem, coding them by hand, and logging the details into an electronic record.

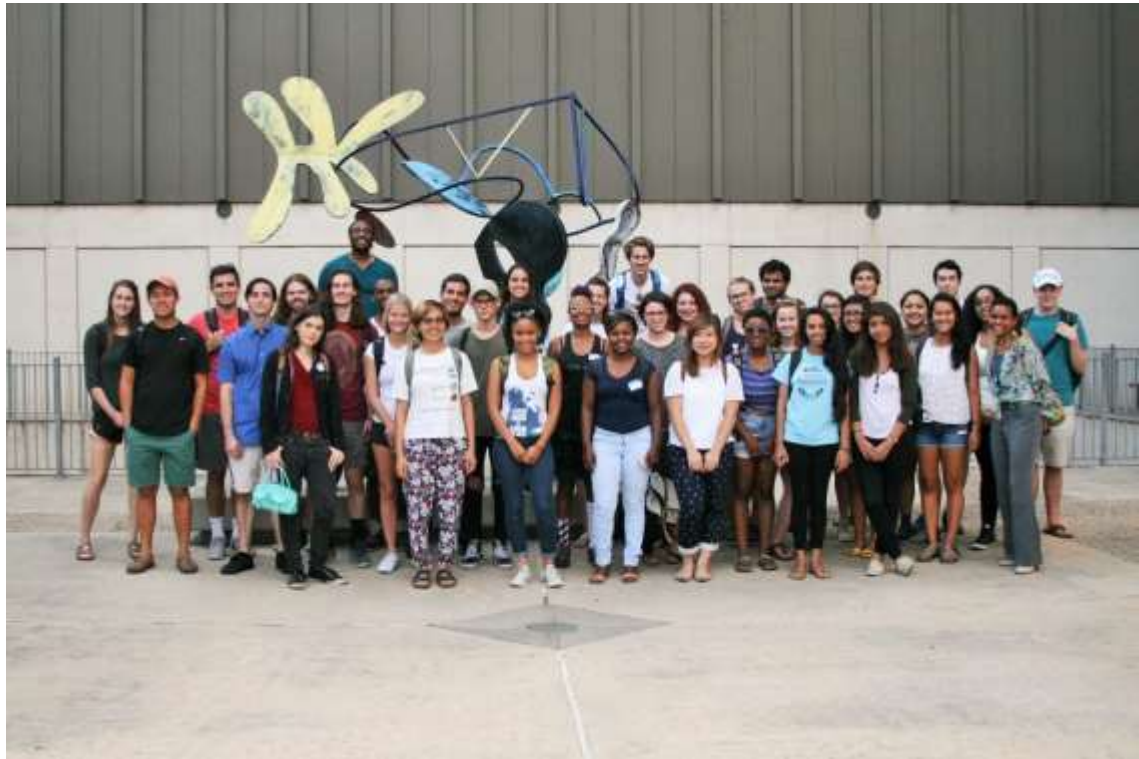
During this phase, I engaged in outward action by presenting at a Foodways Texas 2015 and by co-facilitating classroom visits at Huston Tillotson University focused on findings from this dissertation as well as observations regarding on-going community-based food work with Food for Black Thought. Again, these events elicited feedback which honed my understanding of local dynamics regarding food (particularly in terms of how local East Austinites were engaged in policy decisions involving them, how local stories were being documented, and the history of the area).

#### **Phase 5: January 2015- November 2015 / Writing, Analysis, and Teaching**

The final research phase focused on writing, on-going analysis of interviews and visual materials, discourse analysis, and teaching on topics directly related to the dissertation. During writing, reflection on my positionality informed how I wove the stories and analysis together. Specifically, reflection on my positionality as a researcher informed how this dissertation was written (chapters and side items) as well as the points of departure. Dissertating requires that I write this document alone in order to receive my doctoral degree. Ultimately, I am the one who wove the stories together here on the page, which involves on-going consideration of my responsibility and positionality as a researcher. From a CPAR perspective, I was already “in” this project and throughout the

writing process; while writing up, the question became how and when I entered the narrative explicitly with analysis or personal experiences.

For discourse analysis, I revisited historical documents, news media, and on-line videos regarding East Austin's past and present. Here, I coded each for their use and mobilization of language involving sustainable food discourse, including "healthy" vs. "unhealthy", "food deserts", "sustainable food" itself, and other recurring language; I also took note of relationships between stakeholders and flows of capital in terms of programs, projects, and development in East Austin. At the same time, we (Food for Black Thought) began teaching a course at the University of Texas-Austin on food and urban change. The course is funded by a Curriculum Innovation Grant from the university, which promotes the use of service learning and technology in the classroom. Both the format and the themes of the course helped me process more challenging aspects while writing – particularly how to describe the CPAR process, links between local and global food discourse, my positionality "in the field", and limitations of this dissertation project.



**Figure 5:** Exploring Food and Urban Change. Fall 2015 cohort, University of Texas-Austin. Source: Author.

The course practices a CPAR approach with undergraduate students; during the first semester, students explored their positionalities (race/gender/class among other intersectional identities); learned about the history of East Austin; shared back their knowledge of East Austin, food marketing, and critical race studies; identified different types of discourses or stories that inform the local food landscape, and considered how marketing (of food and of Austin itself) continued to shape area food geographies. In the case, the CPAR took place in a cooperative setting (the students who enrolled and remained in the course were also graded on the quality of their participation and analysis). As Sletto (2010) notes, the course further involved engaging with the unexpected when working with multiple actors; students conducted independent

fieldwork, completed interviews with community members, and experienced presentations from policymakers as well as grassroots organizers. While teaching this class, I revisited key themes and topics related to the dissertation; I also learned more about the economics of food marketing from my co-teacher and partner.

In addition, teaching the class offered an opportunity to practice CPAR again, albeit in a different setting. In the process, limitations of my dissertation research fieldwork became more apparent. For example, while two of the youth explicitly mentioned religion or church as important factors in their food geographies, I did not deeply engage with church settings in the course of this project; in part, this reflects my positionality as someone who did not grow up going to church. In addition, while building intimate relationships with the youth, I did not deepen relationships with parents or guardians to the same degree; while some of their experiences are included here, others are not. Adult voices from families are primarily included in the film (Eric's grandmother and family members), along with non-profit, business owners, and policymakers.

In certain respects, my teaching background facilitated workshop and research camp design during the project. But upon reflection my experience may have also hindered more organic exploration with the youth co-researchers during the project; my experience curtailed some of the "unexpectedness" that can make CPAR rich and complex. Though I previously taught in alternative education settings, my experience was still based on more "conventional" educational methods familiar to high schools, in which adults propose both activities as well as processing. For example, during the



filming process, following the fieldtrip to in.gredients, I encouraged the youth to process their ideas in writing. They preferred to talk out loud (and enjoy their food) instead. When I encouraged again, Kristina pointed out that the writing might be important for me, rather than for them. At one point, it became clear that the youth felt as if they wanted to “please” and express interest, but perhaps wanted to do something other than the activities offered. Specifically, the youth agreed they would be interested in a college talk with an undergraduate as they headed toward their senior years, but when it was scheduled they did not attend. Moments like these in the CPAR process bring positionality, power dynamics, and expectations to the fore. They urge further self and group analysis, and they are important to point out here in the spirit of acknowledging research as a “messy”, complicated process. These moments are also a reminder that participatory work is not free from challenging interpersonal or power dynamics, though it can seek to openly address them.

### **Closing**

In order to underscore the countergeographies of Black youth in East Austin, this project engages a CPAR methodology. This methodology informs the way in which the project was carried out, as well as how this dissertation is “written” up in the chapters that follow. By practicing CPAR, I also practiced shifting the experiences of historically marginalized young people from margin to center in the process of research – and then in the writing found here. This approach to food research with Black youth is a departure from how spatial and geographic studies are usually carried out. In prevailing food scholarship, policy, and intervention, teenagers of color are often positioned as target

populations; decisions are often made for or about them; and they are rarely “at the table” when programs are designed to address food in their lives. The following chapter outlines guiding concepts, theoretical frameworks, and empirical insights that further foster this shift. Taken together, these create a framework that centers the youth stories gathered via CPAR in context.

### **Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework**

My lived experiences as a teacher, my positionality as a Black/Chicana, works by Black feminists and children geographers – all inspired my initial attention to young people, identity, race, and place. Four points of departure took shape in the course of this research: food-as-social; the sociospatial construction of blackness; intersectionality, and young people as local/global actors. Woven together, these points constitute the overarching framework for this dissertation, a supporting structure that informs the dissertation's shape (chapters and side items), language, and analysis. This is a guiding framework rather than a rigid one, composed of frameworks and vantage points from a rich cross-section of literature; it emerged from witnessing the stories of the youth co-researchers, their families, and community members. In the spirit of critical participatory action research (CPAR), this framework also took shape as I wrote the dissertation. CPAR encourages attention to how researchers practice power in the field and discursively, emphasizing responsibility while writing and reporting out; this involved critical awareness of how young Black people, African-American communities, and their relationships with food tend to be situated in scholarship, policy, and media.

Described below, these four points of departure serve as analytical pathways that help me centralize the lives of young Black people and contextualize what they share. They assist with situating the experiences of young Black people living in East Austin, in local/global context. They specify *why* this centering of young Black lives – as a focus of the dissertation and in broader context - is a significant ontological shift. Indeed, I found these points of departure necessary to follow as part of discursive praxis because of

prevailing dominant discourse. Discussed throughout, racialized/spatialized readings of young Black people and food where they live are pervasive, so much so that they have become stock stories that preclude a richer study or understanding of food in Black lives. In *Storytelling for Social Justice*, Bell et al. 2010 identify different types of stories, or discourses, in a creative manner useful for this dissertation. They describe *stock stories* as a “set of standard, typical or familiar stories held in reserve to explain racial dynamics in ways that support the status quo” (p. 29). Stock stories perpetuate and normalize racial narratives; they often conceal, ignore, or distort the stories being lived, told, or archived by marginalized communities themselves.

On another level, stock stories deny that marginalized communities have stories or knowledge to share in the first place. Recurring stock stories about food and Black communities during this project surfaced in popular media, in policy, and in research. They served as a reminder: scholarship on black geographies takes place in a social context, one in which African-American populations and the areas where they reside continue to be racialized and pathologized. As this dissertation demonstrates, this racialization and pathology maintains intimate connection with food. At the same time, food is necessary for survival and integral to human/Black life. Food is a medium for cultural expression and identity, and a medium through which power dynamics are expressed – or challenged.

By centering the stories of young Black youth, this project identifies and challenges stock stories and turns attention to counter stories. Bell et al. (2010) refer to these counter stories in ways I adopt throughout the dissertation, as concealed, resistance,

and emerging. Concealed stories are often subsumed or sidelined for stock narratives. This description resonates with Scott's (1992) discussion of "hidden transcripts"; while public transcripts constitute "open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate", hidden transcripts encompass interactions beyond the knowledge or witness of those with greater social or economic privilege. While concealed stories and hidden transcripts may not be visible from a dominant perspective (or from what McKittrick calls "dominant geographies"), they constitute culture, communication, grassroots institutions, and interpersonal relationships from a subaltern perspective. What Bell et al. (2010) describe as resistance stories capture examples of direct opposition to oppression.

The last type of story, emerging/transformational stories, involves how marginalized communities and allies envision (and practice) a more just world. These are the visionary stories which acknowledge the historical and on-going challenges of race/racism among other social hierarchies – while seeking to acknowledge and foster human relationship. Emerging stories are not colorblind stories but ones deeply invested in social justice by facing injustice and re(imagining) the world. Each of these – concealed, resistance, and emerging – are powerful counterstories; they involve counter-geographies, or subaltern readings and uses of space and place. They are visionary in the sense that they build on wisdom from the past and present, to envision the future. In addition to concealed and resistance stories, emerging/transformational ones inspire this dissertation. Shifting attention to Black youth from margin to center, these stories move to the forefront.

While I critique and identify stock stories, I devote particular attention to the counter-geographies Black youth express about East Austin, food, and urban change. I refer back to these different types of stories and transcripts below and throughout. By engaging these points and stories, I intentionally shift Black youth from “margin to center” (hooks 1984). From this perspective, Black youth are knowledgebearers whose lived experience can provide insight into food and foodways in the context of urban change; their insight can shed light on need, desires, as well as possibilities for the future. Furthermore, because the conditions they are experiencing – social and economic marginalization, gentrification, and outmigration – are global, their experiences can provide insight into understanding the lives of young people in still other contexts.

Building on interventions in black geographies scholarship I consider how Black youth, their families, and the communities in which they live theorize, dream, feel, intuit, and create their present-day lives – as well as their futures. I propose that what young people share and envision here is not only applicable to Black communities or to Austin, but also to the lives of other young people or historically marginalized populations experiencing rapid social and economic transformation. As the social and economic conditions Black youth are living in Austin are global, so too are their insights. The following four points of departure help me bear witness to these counter-geographies: food-as-nutrition vs. food-as-social, blackness as sociospatial, intersectionality, and to be young/black.

## **1: Food-as-Nutrition vs. Food-as-Social (An Homage to Black Life)**

Spatial studies specifically related to Black/African-American populations and food have overwhelmingly focused on identifying and measuring the impact of “food deserts”, or the distance of residents from the nearest food retailers. Food desert scholarship specifically considers distance to “unhealthy” vs. “healthy”, and processed vs. “fresh” foods. Along with Latin@s and poor communities in general, Black young people and Black women figure prominently in this scholarship because of widely-documented health disparities, and because some findings have found “food deserts” more prevalent where African-Americans reside.

Because of the geographic character of “food deserts” – they involve space, place, distance, and time – they have become a popular topic for Geographic Information Systems and spatial analysis, carried out in geography as well as in other disciplines. Most “food desert” scholarship focuses on retailers such as supermarkets (Walker et al. 2010; Gordon et al. 2011; Taylor and Ard 2015), convenience stores (Mui 2015; Rummo et al. 2015; Song et al. 2009), smaller grocers (Short et al. 2007); and restaurants (especially fast food) (MacDonald 2007; Lucan 2012; Laxy 2015), with attention to their frequency within a given area, the content of foods sold, and (to a lesser degree) the cultural-relevancy of options given local demographics. Researchers also consider which outlets are readily accessible near schools, with emphasis on the clustering or prevalence of fast food options (e.g. Bryn 2005).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Studies focused on food environments and food deserts encompass a comprehensive, interdisciplinary body of literature. These citations serve as snapshots of the primary

Government policy actively advocates an environmental approach to food access with an emphasis on obesity prevention, defining what “food deserts” are, how they are measured, and criteria for funding major research. In 2008, the Farm Bill described a food desert as “an area in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominantly lower-income neighborhoods and communities” (Ver Ploeg 2009; USDA 2011). In 2011, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) released an interactive food desert locator map on line, to allow the general public, developers, and funders to identify census tracts with limited access to “affordable and nutritious” foods; the map project responded, in part, to the aforementioned Let’s Move Initiative. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) asserts, Having healthy food available and affordable in food retail and food service settings allows people to make healthier food choices. When healthy foods are not available, people may settle for foods that are higher in calories and lower in nutritional value. Thus, creating and supporting healthy food environments is an important part of public health work. (CDC 2015)

“Food desert” scholarship is predicated on what I refer to as food-as-nutrition discourse, which tends to focus on the nutritional contents of food. Food-as-nutrition discourse and related research further emphasizes 1) causality, 2) measurement (of spaces, the built environment, and bodies), 3) parameters of health as defined by

---

approach to spatial research focused on areas where low-income, predominantly non-white populations reside.



biomedical science, 4) analysis of health as defined by biomedical science, and 4) individual behavior and lifestyle changes. If social relationships are considered, they are noted in so much as they promote or deter people from consuming foods that are considered “healthy”. In the context of the alternative food movement that has gained momentum throughout the United States (in which Austin is arguably one of the cities on the “cutting edge”), individual health as well as the wellbeing of the planet renders some foods better than others.

In this dissertation, I refer to the alternative food movement as the sustainable food movement, to emphasize the link between alternative eating, producing, and consumption practices and broader sustainability discourse. Central to the sustainable food movement is an emphasis on ethical food consumption – and on increasing this consumption among low-income / communities of color. Johnston et al. (2011) describes ethical eating as “an overarching cultural discourse with numerous instantiations – organic, fair trade, local, cruelty-free and so forth - as well as an organizing logic linking individual commodity consumption with social and environmental transformation” (p. 295). Ethical eating discourses in North America tend to emphasize environmental or “green” issues and personal health, rather than social justice issues.

Johnston et al. (2011) suggest ethical eating is a cultural repertoire composed of practices, ideas, knowledge and awareness; they find that class, racial privilege, and culture mediate access to ethical eating as dominantly defined. This is not surprising given that ethical consumption is typically more expensive than mass- and industrially-produced food. Guthman (2003) further points out that ethical consumption may not

involve the reflexivity or knowledge assumed of the “good food” shopper, though it is assumed that ethical consumers are informed. In other words, the link between what is purchased and the social and environmental transformations as Johnston et al. describe may not be well-researched or fully understood. But what is communicated via ethical consumption is participation in sustainably-produced “good food”. To consume “good food” is bound up with assumptions regarding morality, reflexivity, knowledge, and health. If there is “good food” there is also “bad food” to be grown, bought, sold, or given: “In contrast to the fast food eater, the reflexive consumer [of good food] pays attention to how food is made, and that knowledge shapes his or her ‘taste’ toward healthier food” (Guthman 2003, p. 46).

Due to the weight of stock stories regarding Black communities and food, and due to the stigma they created for African-American youth and community members during this project, the implications of food-as-nutrition discourse requires deeper attention here. Food-as-nutrition discourse (and related sustainable food movement language) largely adheres to healthism. Healthism understands health and wellness as predicated on individual behaviors without considering historic, environmental, or social factors that impact health. Without considering context, promoting health focuses on shifting individual lifestyle behaviors, but not on addressing spatial injustice and structural issues such as racism which can impact physical and mental well-being (e.g. APA 2015; Wagner et al. 2011). Food-as-nutrition discourse further tends to render race biological in ways that do not consider how race is constructed or explore the impacts of *racism* or that treat African-American populations as monolithic rather than diverse.

Furthermore, spatial/food-as-nutrition scholarship in this vein tends to assume that proximity allows access, though a food outlet may be near but expensive, or near but unwelcoming for residents. A rich body of literature details racial profiling, for example, of Black consumers in retail outlets – including grocery and corner stores, discussed in further detail below. My review of scholarship indicates a tendency to approach Black populations 1) as lacking rather than resourceful, 2) monolithic, 3) distant from food rather than connected with it (via enslavement, family traditions, gardening, cooking), and 4) as wholly dependent on retail options (without community or grassroots food options). In addition, food-as-nutrition discourse takes up the findings, methods, and analysis of biomedical science without question. As a result, the discourse assumes the cultural supremacy of Western science, without considering how key measurements or concepts are constructed.

Critical scholars emphasize the ways in which science, and science related to food, is socially constructed. Nutrition guidelines are subject to influence from food industry as well as government entities (Nestle 2013). Body Mass Index (BMI) is the dominant measure used to determine overweight or obesity at national and international levels. However, whether or not this is the best measure is debated and controversial. In addition, the National Institute of Health continues to shift BMI categories, in 1998 and again in 2014, in ways that impact diagnoses, prescription of pharmaceuticals, and project funding guidelines. Critiques scrutinize the involvement of pharmaceutical companies on expert boards or as funders in making decisions which decide who is obese and who is not (Who's Fat 1998; Moynihan 2006; Guthman 2008; Guthman 2014;

Kirkland 2011). Both the scope and the constructedness of the BMI matters for this dissertation, because of the high rate of obesity among Black youth and adults according to the measure; in turn, anti-obesity funding, programs, and research tend to target these populations. Side Item: Double Consciousness discusses the implication of BMI-related research, as well as its relationship to “food desert” discourse, in greater depth.

Food-as-nutrition discourse such as “food deserts” and “obesity epidemic” rhetoric compose circulating stock stories about Black youth and food - and places where they live. As explored in Chapter 4, both of these discourses are stock stories with global scope, connected with broader discourses about sustainable and ethical food consumption across overdeveloped and (increasingly) developing contexts. In Austin context, this rhetoric continues to be mobilized by development and interventions which may perpetuate racialized dynamics and displacement, rather than address these issues for long-standing residents of color. Food-as-nutrition discourse emphasizes intervention, with particular assumptions about African-Americans and other historically marginalized populations. Among these assumptions are a tendency to understand poor and populations or color as lacking rather than resourceful; as monolithic rather than diverse; as distant from food processes rather than connected with them (via enslavement, family traditions, gardening, cooking); and as dependent on commercial food access with little consideration of other community-based food options or food sharing.

Furthermore, food-as-nutrition discourse is not only pervasive but internalized. As I carried out this project: Black youth and their parents, as well as other community members, assumed my focus was about the health of young Black people in East Austin.

Their assumption reflected how Black residents understand their “place” in food dialogue, how they have been placed by circulating discourses, and how East Austin is imagined. Despite shifting demographics, and despite falling mortality rates in the urban core due to these demographic shifts, East Austin continues to be imagined as a predominantly poor, Black, Brown, and sick area of the city in popular media and by city officials.

Herrick (2008) describes how the real and imagined division of West from East by I-35 renders East Austin “at risk”, a “strategic place of intervention to boost the city’s image as a healthy, and therefore good, place to live” (p. 2715). Such language plays a key role in the sociospatial construction of blackness in terms of how Black people are “read” and how places where they live are understood. This language maintains material impact, playing a role in how the built environments where Black populations reside are (re)made. As noted in Chapter 4: (Re)Making East Austin, this development overwhelmingly centers on “sustainable”, “local”, and “innovative” food, as the City of Austin crafts itself into a global food destination. The global marketing of growing cities like Austin reflects broader processes of globalization and connectedness between people and places.

Much academic and policy attention, then, is devoted to *what* Black youth and their families are eating. Much less attention is devoted to how they experience food through the spaces and places of their everyday lives. A food-as-social perspective begins to address this gap. Scholarship outside of current spatial research does approach food through this lens. In cognate fields of anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies, food

has long been the focus of empirical and theoretical study. From a food-as-social perspective, food is a medium through which culture and identity, knowledge and power, taboos and norms, are experienced, performed, transmitted, and practiced (see landmark works compiled in Counihan and Esterik 2012). Food forges reciprocity networks not only in the developing world as so often studied, but also in the overdeveloped world as well (Morton et al. 2008; Douglas 1975). Through food, people connect with people with whom they identify culturally, racially, or otherwise; through food, people also “eat the Other” (hooks 1992). Food also marks who is moral, ethical, or “in the know” – and who has the privilege to practice ethical consumption - as intriguing work by sociologists Johnston and Baumann (2015) points out.

Over the past decade, geographers have devoted increasing attention to food-as-social issues. Geographers underscore how food and food-related discourses move across space and scale – and contribute to the making of space and place. In relationship to this project, geographic scholarship from this perspective has considered topics such as how food connects distant people and places (Cook 2006); sociospatial dynamics of urban food access (Guthman and Short 2004); the role of food and food spaces in cultural reproduction (Christie 2008); how food-related discourse (good vs. bad food, healthy vs. unhealthy, ethical vs. unethical, “the obesity epidemic”) informs behaviors and practices in homes and schools – and how young people navigate, resist, and/or reframe these discourses (Valentine 2006; Metcalfe et al. 2008); the construction of such food and obesity discourses (Guthman 2008; Guthman 2011a; Guthman 2011b; Guthman 2014;

Kirkland 2011); and the social dynamics within food spaces such as cafeterias and urban gardens (Pike 2010; Wake 2008).

A food-as-social lens emphasizes food as a process, one that involves not only eating and purchasing food, but also growing, cooking, sharing, giving, and receiving sustenance. Furthermore, a food-as-social lens within and beyond geography draws attention to how sociospatial dynamics such as race/racism, class, gender play out *through* food; it draws attention to how people, young and adult, express agency, identity, and culture through food, and how food fosters social relationships. They underscore how these relationships constitute important spaces and places in people's lives. Geographers can show how food is also an earthbound resource, one that involves the cultivation of land and the domestication of food plants.

Though this dissertation devotes particular attention to human actors and social relationships, I write with the broad definition of food shared by geographer Rachel Slocum (2010) in mind: Food is “[a]ll the processes that make animal, vegetable or mineral into something to eat and then all that is involved in what happens next to bodies and societies” (p. 303). This definition encompasses the range of human practices noted above, from eating to sharing; it encompasses the social structures youth and their families navigate and alludes to the social relationships carried out through food. In addition, Slocum brings attention to non-human actors such as animals, vegetables, and minerals, factors people may manage but not “control”. These non-human actors shape Austin food landscape in important ways. (In part, arable soil in East Austin makes the land more desirable for sustainable and creative food development).

From both within and beyond geography, scholars also considered the specific role of food in Black lives from a food-as-social perspective. Through food – its cultivation, preparation and consumption – Black/African-Americans have reclaimed identities, resisted oppression, practiced spiritual activism, and supplemented foodstuffs and incomes. In *Black Hunger: Soul Food and Black America*, Witt (2004) explores the contested emergence of “soul food” during the Civil Rights Movement; Williams Forson (2006) considers race/racism, gender, and agency through an in-depth exploration of Black women’s relationships with fried chicken, past and present; and Tipton Martin’s (2015) most recent work considers the concealed history of Black women and cookbooks, noting how Black food knowledges have often been subsumed and/or appropriated. Among geographers, Guthman (2006) points out that food-related interventions and activism tends to focus on African-Americans in the context of food-as-nutrition work (described in greater detail below), while Ramirez (2015) explores how a Black-initiated food organization navigates histories of enslavement and oppression, creating potential emerging/transformational stories in the midst of urban change. Carney (2009) traces the cultivation of African food plants from West Africa to the United States via the transatlantic slave trade, noting their presence in diasporic, traditional dishes in the South and elsewhere today.

A food-as-social lens therefore reveals how current Black food practices and access are bound up with social and cultural legacies – legacies of oppression and agency. Key historical processes surface in this and related scholarship, including enslavement, Reconstruction, and the Great Migration. In this project, these historical



processes play a role in the very residence of Black youth and their families in East Austin, their stories of migration, and the practices, traditions, preferences, and stigmas they share through their food stories. They reside in East Austin at a time when the Great Migration that urbanized African-American populations for decades is, in a sense, coming undone throughout the country. Black residents in Austin's urban core, among other major cities, are migrating back to the suburban or rural periphery from whence they came, sometimes just one or two generations before (Tang and Ren 2014). In addition to contextualizing the food geographies of young people, their families, and community members, a food-as-social lens captures a sense of how past and present Black food geographies have been dynamic.

Given its scope, a food-as-social lens may indeed highlight community knowledge and community-based actions that can and do promote health. In the conclusion, I consider how this lens stretches definitions of health in ways that may better support on-going community wellness practices; the point of a food-as-social perspective is not to deny the health disparities African-American communities continue to face. However, my focus is not on "healthy" food or eating, but on the social dynamics and social relationships happening through food in the lives of young Black people in East Austin, as the city undergoes demographic change. Understanding food-as-social involves witnessing what food means to young Black people; suspending judgment about "good" and "bad" food, exploring the communities created through food over space, place, and time in their lives; and considering how they experience food in a rapidly

changing city. Through a food-as-social lens, I consider living Black food geographies in East Austin, a place often noted for Black and infrastructural death, rather than for life.

Which leads to the closing note for this point of departure. In an article titled “Life After Death”, Woods (2004) asserts, “Predictions of the death of impoverished and actively marginalized racial and ethnic communities are premature”. He continues,

Have we become academic coroners? Have the tools of theory, method, instruction, and social responsibility become so rusted that they can only be used for autopsies? Does our research in any way reflect the experiences, viewpoints, and needs of these residents of these dying communities? On the other hand, is the patient really dead? What role are scholars playing in this social triage? (62).

McKittrick (2013) similarly argues that if Black populations are consistently rendered dead or dying or “without”, they cannot contribute to understanding cities or space or “have a new lease on life” (955). In other words, this kinds of discursive and spatial practices render Black people and places lifeless, unable to be visionaries, changemakers, or knowledgebearers. This intervention is particularly important for this dissertation, because stock stories about gentrification or revitalization tend to describe areas of historic disinvestment as dead, dying, or decayed. During research, I encountered several media stories about gentrification that not only treated the process as inevitable in Austin (and in other cities), but also described gentrification as “bringing life” to areas of the city where there was once “nothing”. Reports in this vein reify the mapping of Black people and places where they reside as doomed or lifeless, and of particular concern for this project, lacking in human life, knowledge, or ingenuity.

As co-researchers share here, young black geographies in East Austin are not “just” marginalized landscapes of social or material lack; they are vibrant with counter-mappings, possibility, knowledge, innovation, and connection. With a food-as-social perspective, I follow the call of black geographies scholars to consider Black life, by devoting attention to human relationships forged through and despite the multiple oppressions Black populations continue to experience. By doing so, I focus on how young Black people are *living* with food in East Austin via social relationships, cultural practices, and social dynamics they navigate - and co-create.

## **2: Blackness as Sociospatial**

In this dissertation, I approach blackness as a sociospatial construction, attentive to the sociospatial legacies that shape the lives of Black populations and to the disciplinary context of this dissertation. This perspective understands “Black” and other racialized categories (“White”, “Asian”, “Latin@”, and so forth) are the legacy of colonial processes including the transatlantic slave trade, and European colonization of the New World. These processes (re)produced what would become modern-day understandings and practices of race/racism, a sociospatial hierarchy that privileges whiteness (white supremacy) and devalues non-white bodies (non-white inferiority). Transatlantic slavery, along with the construction of race/racism, was central to shaping the modern world socially and economically.

Colonial processes spatialized Black lives in ways that continue to matter today, by categorizing certain bodies as Black, ascribing particular characteristics to those bodies, and designating certain spaces/practices to the same. Scientific analyses and experiments

on reified racial hierarchies which emphasized Black inferiority. Such colonial/scientific practices were not only racialized but inherently gendered and classed as well, such that blackness was reified as enslaved/impoverished/without, and such that Black men and women were racialized differently depending on their gender, seeding racialized/gendered stereotypes that persist, including the hypersexuality, criminality, and in some cases inherent servility of Black men, women, and children. As feminist geographers point out, the discipline of Geography along with other fields of study, played key roles in European expansion, through which racial ideas traveled across space, place, and time.

In disciplinary context, this chapter and others challenge stock stories (re)produced through geographic/spatial scholarship about Black communities and food. In terms of sociospatial legacies, racial hierarchies forged through/during colonialism spatialized Black lives in an effort to manage and contain enslaved Africans and their descendants, a process of “containment” that persists into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Because these past and present spaces are linked – shaped by similar racial/spatial practices – I describe these historical spaces just below in some detail before moving into the present where Black youth and their families reside in East Austin. My brief discussion begins to consider how the “historical present” shapes Black experiences as well as how I approach the stories Black youth share in chapters that follow (McKittrick 2006).

McKittrick describes the “historical present” as the ways in which the past informs present-day geographies. The spaces and places Black populations occupy in the United States and throughout the diaspora are informed by colonial renderings of space and

place (which continue to inform dominant geographies today) and by Black countergeographies of the same. Historically, auction blocks, slave quarters, slave ships, plantations, and the Atlantic Ocean itself serve as example of spaces noted in black geographies scholarship. The Atlantic reappears as an important space, literally, figuratively, and spiritually, in cognate fields as well; in cultural studies, Gilroy (2000) famously refers to the Atlantic Ocean as “the black Atlantic”, noting the historical significance of this space as the site of the Middle Passage; a space crossed by enslaved Africans, Black sailors, and other Black travelers during the colonial period; and a space alive in the imaginary, collective memories, and arts of diasporic communities. Each of these spaces maintained an intimate relationship with food consumption, distribution, preparation, and production – with the food system. Crop plants traveled with the transatlantic trade between Africa and the Americas (and sometimes back again) as gruel for the enslaved and as goods; enslaved Africans and their descendants produced food crops for a European markets; and they were often tasked with preparing food as servers on plantations and in cities.

In addition to plantation fields, kitchens come to mind as historical food spaces where Black bodies were/have been managed, situated, or contained by dominant geographies. Historically into the present moment, images of Black people preparing or serving food to others persist in popular media and advertising. Within the spaces noted above, Black life and resilience was always present in the form of cultural practices and arts, community building, and social relationships, of which food was also part. Carney (2011) refers to the gardens of enslaved Africans and their descendants as “gardens of the

dispossessed”, spaces where Black populations in the American South cultivated food for themselves, for subsistence and in some cases for market; in these spaces they planted not only food but plants widely used as medicine (and poison).

While encompassing certain spaces and places, and particular configurations of both, the “historical present” is also about how Black geographies are lived. Because racialized, classed, and sexualized hierarchies continue to be organized spatially in particular ways, the present echoes the past in terms of Black oppression (and Black innovation); certain contemporary spaces and places evoke social memories of those past. Throughout this dissertation, spaces, places, and memories connected with this sense of the historical present recur throughout youth stories. *Where* Black communities reside, the conditions of their lives, the way in which they continue to be racialized, sexualized, and classed. Their relationships with food processes reflect sociospatial legacies – and so too are their daily, often under-considered or concealed, lived geographies. These intertwined legacies are evident in the inner and outer geographies of Black youth co-researchers and their families.

In this dissertation, “inner geographies” describes youth feelings, attitudes, and personal preferences. The historical present shapes attitudes toward certain food and food-related practices (such as gardening and “soul food”). Sociospatial legacies inform how youth and adults understand themselves as Black Austinites in relationship to West Austin. In addition, the historical present played a role in research dynamics, given the history of scientific monitoring and surveillance of Black lives and given awareness of stigma attached to Black food practices. How the youth and other Black interviewees

reclaim blackness shapes their inner geographies – feelings, attitudes, and preferences - as well. Spatial scholarship on Black communities and food tend to map African-American populations by indicating where they reside or work in relationship to other populations. Typically, these findings (re)capture racial segregation or legacies thereof where Black communities live. Yet as a lived experience, blackness is not only the experience of racial segregation or lack of access to retail markets. In the midst of the historical present, blackness is a living process, one that is negotiated, claimed, and performed in diverse ways. Black youth, their family members, and community involved in this project considered “Black/African-American” a racialized category, a social/political identity, *and* a cultural experience.

Scholars point to the slippage between race and culture in popular discourse and in scholarship, such that culture and race are treated as biological rather than as constructed, and such that these concepts are sometimes used to “stand in” for each other (i.e. Goldberg 1993) . In this dissertation, *culture* refers to shared cultural practices, collective memories, arts, beliefs, attitudes, customs, and ways of communicating between Black-identified people, practices transmitted between generations. These practices may have a relationship to diverse practices of African origin; for example, many of the food plants youth co-researchers connect with their identity originally hail from West Africa and were widely adopted in American Southern cuisine (Carney 2002; Carney 2011; Harris 2012). While acknowledging possible retentions, I understand Black cultural practices as syncretic, shaped by interrelationships with other racialized, ethnic, and cultural groups over time, on-going into the present; these combined cultural practices, which may not be

traced to “African” origins, are considered important expressions of identity and key “spatial strategies for survival” for both youth and their families (McKittrick 2006). From this perspective, building on the anti-essentialist critiques of cultural studies scholars, Black culture need not be traced to an African past; Black culture is contextual, ever-changing, and multiple. Like blackness itself, what the youth and community members consider Black culture is actively performed and negotiated.

The “outer geographies” Black youth navigate are (re)produced via dominant discourse (stock stories), neoliberal policies, and urban development, among other practices - with material impacts for Black lives in Austin and elsewhere. Though these practices are deeply social, political, economic, and historically-constituted, the spaces they produce are often naturalized as “Black” in a negative sense based on the bodies that reside, work, or visit. Encoded in these examples, and projected onto spaces where Black populations live, are stereotypes that read Black populations as dangerous, criminal, impoverished, and lacking in resources or knowledge (as defined by mainstream development or education). Examples include the “ghetto”, the “inner city”, “at-risk”, “the bad side of town”, or the “sketchy” side of town. Though urban cores are becoming wealthier, and in the case of Austin and other United States cities whiter, the word “urban” still codifies an area of poverty, crime, and predominantly Black/Brown residence.

These outer geographies are discursive and material. Language such as “inner city youth”, “urban youth”, and “at-risk youth”, for instance, have become code words for low-income, young people of color in media, scholarship, and policy. East Austin



continues to be described using terms such as these, and as with other gentrifying areas throughout the country, parts of East Austin are also read as “up and coming” or “revitalizing”. While this language (re)presents East Austin, the discourse builds on understandings of the area as (formerly) “troubled”, criminal, and lacking in life in the first place – and therefore in need of transformation. In addition, “food deserts” is fast becoming racial/spatial language as well. Scholarship, policy, and media highlight links between limited retail and impoverished communities. Though the measurement of “food deserts” is constructed and contested, a discursive connection persists between “food deserts”, low-income, and African-American and Latino/a populations.

This dissertation engages a feminist approach to urban political ecology to underscore how the outer geographies Black youth co-researchers and their families navigate are (re)produced. Urban political ecology grapples with “urban metabolism”, or the “representational, discursive, ideological, material, and biochemical constellations of uneven power relationships” that inform human-environment relationships in densely-settled urban contexts” (Heynen 2014, 599). From this perspective, UPE scholarship has focused on a range of issues, including topics related to this dissertation: gentrification (Sham 2012); obesity (Marvin and Medd 2006); the “obesity epidemic” (Guthman 2011a; 2011b); organic food (Alkon 2013); and hunger (Heynen 2006).

Like its political ecology cousin, UPE possesses emphasize class dynamics with explicit critique of capitalist political economy and neoliberal policy, from a primarily Marxist perspective.

Feminist approaches to UPE maintain a more intersectional approach, one in which class matters, but in explicit conjunction with gender/patriarchy and race/racism. FUCE further draws specific attention to how circulating discourses and practices become embodied, and to everyday human-nature relationships in public as well as “private” domains (like the home). A feminist approach to urban political ecology helps me trace the discursive and material “flows” which (re)create the food landscape where Black youth reside and go to school in East Austin, while also paying attention to their agency, their inner geographies, and the spaces they co-create. To more fully bear witness to these interconnected inner and outer geographies, I engage with feminist understandings of space as social.

Feminist geographers emphasize how space is socially constituted: power dynamics such as race/racism and sexism play out in how space is perceived, mapped, and used. This articulation challenges assumptions that space “just is”, emphasizing how space has been organized and conceptualized largely from masculine and Eurocentric perspectives. I particularly engage with how Massey (1994) understands space, as not only informed by historically-entrenched hierarchies (race/gender/class), but also by social relationships within a given space, across space, at a given time.

Considering space a “product of relations” highlights “a complexity of networks, links, exchanges, connections” from home and local, to global levels, at a time when distant places and people are increasingly connected via technology and trade. This also means there is a “multiplicity of space”, or the simultaneous unfolding of processes in different parts of the world, involving different people (Massey 1994, p. 17). Massey’s

sense of time and space being connected resonates with black geographies, past and present, as the discursive, spatial, and material conditions Black populations experience are (re)produced. Understanding space-as-social re-emphasizes how the sociospatial construction of blackness is dialectic, structured from within Black-identified communities through relationships.

### **3: Intersectionality**

Part of what lends a richness to the experiences of the youth co-researchers are their multiple identities. On an intimate level, understanding blackness as sociospatial also draws attention to the intersecting identities the youth negotiate and navigate in their food geographies. Above, I described the sociospatial construction of blackness as inherently intersectional: Black bodies were/are racialized differently depending on their gender, class, sexual orientation, and other categories. Hailing from Black feminist scholarship, an intersectional perspective emphasizes how identities are simultaneous and constitute each other. The scope and diversity of Black feminist work is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but for the most part Black feminism has involved witnessing and theorizing how Black women experience race, class, and gender. Black feminism considers what “multiple oppressions” and privilege mean for Black everyday lives, interpersonal relationships, and community building (e.g. Crenshaw 1991; Lorde 2007; Collins 2000).

Since the 1980s, intersectionality has become mainstream in feminist scholarship, though often with circumscribed meaning. For example, though race/gender/class has become the oft-cited triad in intersectional scholarship, Black feminists have long considered how other identities such as ethnicity and geographic location affect how

people are differently racialized, and therefore impact access to resources (or lack thereof). Furthermore, in Black feminist work, race/racism holds particular weight. How people are racialized impacts their experiences with other identities such as ethnicity, gender, or class. In other words, race is not simply another identity axis, but the foundation of all others. Statistics regarding Black populations in the United States bear out what K. D. Thomas refers to as the “weight” of blackness (personal communication, October 15, 2015). For example, across class lines and educational attainment, African-Americans experience higher rates of infant mortality, and diabetes, among other disparities (CDC 2015). Well-publicized cases of racial profiling again illustrate how occupying higher class status does not de-racialize; class does not guarantee reception at higher-end retailers or guard against erroneous arrest. Examples include racial profiling of figures such as Dr. Henry Louis Gates, and more recently, tennis star James Blake (Thompson 2010; Kaufman 2015). Blackness is expected to occupy certain spaces and not others. Specifically, blackness is expected to occupy racialized and classed spaces noted above (poor “inner city”, for instance).

Feminist geographers contribute a spatial and temporal perspective to intersectionality. Massey’s (1994) analyses of space and place noted above consider race/racism a key social category experienced in tandem with gender/patriarchy. Valentine (2007) considers geometries of oppression, or how race, gender, class, and other categories intersect through the different spaces people live over time; she offers an example of how intersectionality can be explored from a geographic perspective through life histories, an example which influences my conversation about the intersections the

youth co-researchers describe in their daily lives. From a Black feminist bent, McKittrick (2006) emphasizes how “dominant geographies” continue to racialize/sexualize/class Black populations, particularly women, in specific ways to maintain a broader racial/spatial order that keeps Black people “in their place” – and therefore sets the stage for Black countergeographies. Mollett and Faria (2013) urge an intersectional approach to resource access in feminist political ecology, noting, “[T]he subfield must account for race, racism, and racialization more explicitly” in order to understand the complex ways in which gender and race/racism inform natural resource access and development narratives” (118). Food requires non-human actors and natural resources such as land, water, and soil, and given the environmental narratives at work in Austin which preserve the west and develop the east, Mollet and Faria’s intervention draws attention to how intersecting identities can shape and inform food access as well as development in the city.

An intersectional, space-as-social approach also underscores how racial categories, among others, are not stable. Nor is blackness. After all, racial categories shift over time, on the United States census and in popular understanding; *how* racism manifests, and how blackness is experienced or expresses, changes over time depending on social, economic, and political factors (Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Omi and Winant 2014). Youth co-researchers and I performed, claimed, and connected with blackness in multiple ways, depending on where we were physically during fieldwork and who was present. An intersectional perspective sheds light on these diverse expressions of blackness and on diversity among the co-researchers themselves, challenging a monolithic representation

of young Black people. I practice an intersectional perspective to better witness nuances among their lived experiences. Throughout this dissertation, these nuances particularly surfaced in terms of gender and multiracial background.

Lastly, an intersectional perspective emphasizes how recurring topics in this dissertation - race/racism, identity, and blackness - are always relational.

Intersectionality complicates dualities - white/Black, male/female, young/old – by understanding these categories in (constructed) relationship. Though socially practiced as stark poles, in lived experience these relationships are much more complex. Some groups – like teenagers (discussed further below) and Black/multiracial youth – disrupt binaries by their very existence. But intersectionality reveals richness and diversity among young people with two African-American parents as well. Youth co-researchers practiced relationship with others who also identify as Black during fieldwork, and they understood themselves as always in relationship with non-Black young people in a physical sense (sharing cafeterias and neighborhoods) and in a conceptual sense (they often compared their lived experiences with those of young white or non-Black people). Youth co-researchers situated themselves, exploring their “place” racially, socially, geographically through the lens of food.

#### **4: Black Senses of Place**

Geographers explore how space is closely related with place, how the production of spaces involves the making of places imbued with meaning. Blackness as a sociospatial construction encompasses all of the above: understanding race/racism as social rather than biological, blackness as a lived experience, space as social, and black lives/spatial

experiences as intersectional. In doing so, this overarching point of departure invites an exploration of the significance of place in Black lives. Tending the place matters for this dissertation in multiple respects: food development in Austin explicitly involves “place making” by the city, gentrification involves remaking place, and nuanced consideration of how Black young people and adults experience place remains lacking in food-related scholarship. Here again, feminist and black geographies scholarship, along with the stories youth co-researchers and community members shared, guide my approach.

Massey (1994) pairs a social understanding of space (space-as-social) with a similar reading of place. Noting that place, in contrast to space, tends to be understood as stable, fixed, static, and feminine (“a woman’s place”); place tends to be connected, too, with discussions of home and homelands. Massey offers a conceptualization of place as a specific location in space, carried out through and informed by social relationships. In this sense, a place is a physical location catalyzed through connections, links, and interactions; and, because who is present at a given location shifts through time, place is more dynamic than typically rendered. This particular intervention shapes how I approach gentrification and Black senses of place. As Massey (1994) points out, gentrification tends to be discussed as if place is fixed, as though change has not happened before. In the case of East Austin where gentrification processes have perhaps manifested the most dramatic material and social change, the area possesses a long history of placement and displacement, business ownership and disinvestment, industrialization and farming. The “character” of East Austin so often mourned thrived there in large part because of racial segregation.

Throughout this dissertation, my critique of gentrification is not so much about a loss of “character”. I agree with Massey that the deeper issue involves social and economic processes which unduly impact - and sometimes forcibly remove – historically marginalized populations. A related issue is how such processes are viewed as inevitable. Often, statements about inevitability rest on political economy: capitalism is taken to be “the way things are”, markets unfold of their own volition, and therefore nothing can be done to address the processes at hand. This analysis cloaks the actors involved in making housing, real estate, and other markets what they are, as well as how capitalism is deeply racialized/classed/gendered in practice; this analysis also conceals the lives and work of actors who challenge development “as is”. Through a relational lens, place is dynamic – and so too are the social, economic, and environmental processes involved in making place.

At the same time, the black geographies mentioned above suggest *why* a more fixed “character” of place may feel urgent to preserve – at least among people of color. I share concern about maintaining some semblance of Black and Latin@ history or presence in East Austin. Aware of the rapid demographic shifts, I gather and document the food stories of Black Austinites who remain in the city and those who have migrated to the suburban and rural periphery to capture the present and preserve the past. In short, I am invested, to some degree, in the sense of place Massey critiques. But I am not alone in this investment, and efforts to “stay in place” or maintain “character” in East Austin may stem in part from the precarity of place for African-Americans. As McKittrick and Woods (2007) observe, “The history of black subjects in the diaspora is a geographic



story that is, at last in part, a story of material and conceptual placements and displacements, segregations and integrations, margins and center, and migrations and settlements” (p. xiv). Black populations have been/continue to be subject to migration, to forced migration and urban removal, and to making “choices” about whether or not to migrate due to fraught social, economic, and/or environmental conditions. The outmigration of Black Austinites from the urban core because of removal, rising property taxes, poor school quality, among other factors stand as a case in point.

Black geographies, then, have been/continue to be mobile, displaced, and dynamic. The historical present again becomes evident: contemporary migrations underscore how historical sociospatial practices, bound up with race/racism and other hierarchies, are still present – and how these practices lead to/inspire precarious and dynamic experiences with place. In the course of fieldwork, I witnessed how these experiences cultivated Black senses of place. Black youth and family members describe rural/urban migration and connections with the larger scale Great Migration of African-Americans to cities; these movements come up as the Black participants describe their relationship with (or distance from) practices such as farming or gardening. Their sense of place was multiple, stretched, and, in the context of East Austin, unstable; this lived sense of place contrasts with the dominant readings of place Massey describes (fixed, stable, uni-local). Meanwhile, this precarity of place seems to intensify a desire for a stable, more fixed sense of place (and home) in expressions of Black culture; the struggle to maintain an African-American Heritage District in East Austin seems to me very connected to a legacy of seeking and making place in Black music, art, and writing.

McKittrick (2011) contextualizes Black senses of place from a geographic perspective, writing, “The complexities of black geographies—shaped by histories of colonialism, transatlantic slavery, contemporary practices of racism, and resistances to white supremacy—shed light on how slave and post-slave struggles in the Americas form a unique sense of place” (949). Connected with Massey’s understanding of place as a locus of social relationships, a Black sense of place is not “a steady, focused, and homogenous way of seeing and being in place”; just as black geographies are dynamic, Black perspectives about place are, too (McKittrick 2011, 950). Therefore, while I emphasize concerns about conditions rather than “character” when discussing gentrification, I am sensitive to how Black residents, including myself, theorize, describe, and understand place in their daily lives.

Read together, McKittrick and Massey invite attention to relationships through places – and to relationships between them. Both spatial scholarship on food and food-as-social research tend to treat food places as discrete and bounded, rather than as connected; most research focuses on specific places like home, school, or fast food restaurants individually, rather than in spatio-temporal relationship. “Food desert” and food environment research does take the broader neighborhood “food environment” into account, as researchers consider the different options accessible within a given distance from where youth and adults reside. Food environment scholarship and related policy importantly considers the food landscape – the spaces, places, and routes within a given area. Both also begin to consider how food places interrelate in people’s lives. However, as the focus remains primarily on the food and nutrition, this approach tends to elide

social relationships happening at/through food places, or on social food sharing or networking happening beyond retail.

Attention to the social aspects of food remains limited, though these relationships may inform “food choice” in key ways and, as noted in the following chapters, powerfully shape food access and experience. Relationships between parents and guardians and children tend to be considered in terms of how adult food choices impact the physical health of young people, but little attention is devoted to how food, cooking, and shopping knowledge is transmitted from one generation to the next – nor is it assumed that this knowledge may be beneficial for household relationships or for health. Foods chosen may relate to individual identity, cultural identity, or other collective identities with whom people connect (or want to connect) (Douglas and Isherwood 1996). Other underexplored relationships include connections between store owners and customers as well as the role of a food place in maintaining intergenerational bonds – examples from the youth’s experiences. Furthermore, because of their emphasis on retail, food desert and food environment recommendations tend to focus on bringing in retailers or renovating present ones, without consideration of how both of these actions can perpetuate displacement of the very residents policies intend to serve.

A broader spatial/temporal geography remains to be witnessed, one that understands food-as-social and understands *place* as socially constituted. Doing so not only underscores relationships, but also testifies to the mobility of young people. Youth co-researchers do/can visit more than one place in a day or other given span of time, and sometimes their presence at one leads to their presence at another. Relationships may

make particular food places accessible and/or preferred; this is more so, perhaps, the case for the youth co-researchers because while they possess some autonomy, they remain somewhat dependent on the social and economic resources of their parents or other adults. Understanding place as social produces a more geographically connected narrative that allows for a better sense of how food geographies are lived. To present more of a connected narrative, the following chapters pay close attention to relationships between food places in the youth co-researcher stories (farms/markets, fast food/restaurants, school/home). I consider how the food places in young Black people's lives (school, convenience stores, farms, and markets, home) exist through relationships and how these different places relate to each other.

Tending to a Black sense of place urges attention to both inner and outer geographies, absence and presence, in young people's food geographies. Spatial scholarship on Black communities and food tend to map African-American populations, indicating where they reside or work in relationship to other populations, or in relationship to resources; typically, findings denote racial segregation or legacies where Black communities live. Yet as a lived experience, blackness is not only the experience of racial segregation or lack of access to retail markets; following the point about concealed, resistance, and emergent Black geographies, blackness is also a living process, one that is negotiated, claimed, and performed in diverse ways. Blackness has become both a lived experience and an identity, and Black youth, their family members, and community involved in this project considered "Black/African-American" a racialized category, a social/political identity, *and* a cultural experience.

In addition, the absence of food places where low-income, predominantly communities of color live is often described in a commercial sense (i.e. food desert) from a dominant/stock story perspective. However, black geographies, and in this case food geographies, are not only commercial. What remains under-witnessed is how Black communities understand changes in the food landscape around them. (Among exceptions are the work of Lemon 2015 and Grier et al. 2014. Interestingly, both involve scholarship and film, literally witnessing black geographies and shifting the gaze). Tending to a black sense of place, then, means witnessing how young Black people *feel* about food where they live, grappling with how their experiences with food are embodied, and considering both material and intangible aspects of their food geographies. Youth co-researchers described places they imagined (West Austin); they mentioned the transformation of food places from one outlet to another at their schools and in their neighborhoods; they describe food places that no longer exist. As in the case of other rapidly changing Black and marginalized communities in overdeveloped countries (e.g. Brown 2009), absent places figured into the co-researchers' food geographies; absence and re-placement of food places marked social and economic transformations underway in Austin and worldwide.

### **5: Black Youth as Local/Global Actors**

The four points of departure explored above highlight Black inner and outer food geographies. Co-researchers involved in this project are also a specific group of African-Americans as young people in high school. They are not quite considered children and are not quite adults; decisions tend to be made *for* them or *about* them, rather than to

involve them. They occupy a liminal space between childhood and adolescence as they are imagined, understood, and practiced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century United States and other overdeveloped contexts. As a point of departure, holding Black youth as local/global actor brings into focus topics touched on below: the construction of adolescence, the experience of adolescence for Black youth in the United States, and why these matter for their food geographies.

Children's geographies contributes in-depth exploration of how childhood and adolescence are constructed, how these categories spatialize the lives of young people, and how young people negotiate them. Deeply connected with feminist work, in many respects the subfield echoes and builds upon insights already noted above: space as a social construction, the role of science/culture in shaping social categories, and intersectionality. Aitken (2001) notes, "Scientific responses not only influence but also embody social cultural shifts" (29). What is considered childhood and adolescence, and what is deemed appropriate in terms of education, employment, activities, and food for young people, reflects ever-changing social and economic practices. Though childhood and adolescence tend to be treated as commonsense categories, scientific and cultural norms (re)define what they are. In the current moment, scientific studies and popular discourse understand teenagers as biologically and socially liminal, as between childhood and adulthood. Younger children are often rendered "wild" and in need of taming; teenagers are considered "wild" in a volatile sense, based on the hormonal changes taking place within their bodies (Valentine 1996).

Adolescence is often described as a time of discovery, exploration, and rebellion, a life stage designated for (wildly) pushing limits. However, as the youth co-researchers share, teenagers are expected to bear greater responsibility in the home, at school, through work; they are expected to “know the rules”, internalize them, and follow them. As teenagers, youth co-researchers experienced different degrees of autonomy, but most were able to navigate space and place independently and therefore better able to experience food on their own terms than younger children. Geographic scholarship on young people from a food-as-social perspective primarily focuses on pre-teen children. While this work importantly underscores the construction of childhood, social dynamics among children, and their agency, teenagers ages thirteen to nineteen arguably occupy a much more liminal space with a tension between “hand holding” and autonomy, with greater mobility as well.

Though acknowledging adolescence as constructed, the impulse here is not to deny biological changes which take place as young people develop or as people age. Critical children’s geographies consider how these changes are socially and scientifically rendered, and normalized; the underlying question is how social construction of adolescence impacts young people’s lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. From the physical layout of lunchrooms and classrooms, to how they are cared for and/or surveilled, to the types of foods considered best for their development, teenagers navigate spaces structured for them by adults. These spaces are imbued with pervasive ideas and expectations regarding youth/adolescence. Spatial practices more often discipline, surveil, police, or exclude young people instead of engage young people, practices often couched in the language of

care. In the past decade, geographers have taken “care” to task in provocative ways (e.g. Bosco 2007; Pike 2010; Bartos 2012; Aitken 2001).

Not considered biologically mature or socially experienced (enough), teenagers such as the co-researchers in this project are rarely invited to take part in decisions that impact their daily lives – at home or in terms of policy. Despite the fact that young people compose a large demographic of urban dwellers – despite how youth shape cities through their presence, consumption, and interactions – they continue to be largely absent from urban scholarship, planning, or policy on local and global levels. Since its launch in 2002, a major impetus for *Children’s Geographies*, the landmark journal for the subfield, has been to recognize, amplify, and support youth presence in scholarship and decision-making. Skelton and Gough (2013) remark on the persistent “absent presence” of young people in urban geographies scholarship, noting, “Although young people are ubiquitous in cities, often with very visible and vibrant presences, they are relatively absent from the academic work that attempts to understand, decipher and explain the city” (p. 456).

### *Young People as Global*

This absent presence is stark because young people are not only involved in local urban settings, but are enmeshed in global processes, consumers on a global level, and in many respects drive global culture. They are materially involved in the global economy and culture through clothes, the Internet, and music, among other channels, as explored by a number of feminist and children’s geographers (Massey 1998; Valentine et al. 1998; Valentine and Holloway 2002;



Maira 2004). Valentine (2000) observes, “Young people now have independent entry into social and cultural life (through) consumerism, fashion, leisure and so on and as such are now confronted with many of same risks and choices as adults; they are exposed to the same media as adults and addressed as economic actors (for example by advertisers) in a way that they were not before” (p. 258). While confronted with these consumption choices and exposed to similar economic actors, young people again experience liminality; they typically have limited social or economic autonomy to act on these choices, what is considered appropriate for them is contested, and the choices they do make are subject to judgment by adults in their lives.

Young people *matter*, and so do their positionalities. The youth co-researchers for this project are more likely to consume foods from different parts of the world on a regular basis because of their general lack of access to locally-grown products or produce; they have easy access, too, to fast food chains with a global presence (McDonald’s, for example). They are enmeshed in global food processes in their local experiences. In addition to being globally connected to distant places and products via consumption, young people are also enmeshed in global social/economic processes. In a landmark multi-sited study of young people in a Sudanese village and in New York City, Katz (2004) examines how economic restructuring on a global scale impacts the local lives of young people similarly, in disparate places. Katz explores how current policies - specifically divestment in public schools in the Global North and shifts to export-oriented, cash-crop agriculture in the Global South - impact social and economic opportunities of marginalized young people.

In a similar fashion, gentrification and discourses about food (such as “sustainable food”, “food deserts”, and “the obesity epidemic”) represent local/global processes; gentrification is affecting the lives of Black Austinites and people elsewhere. Akin to Katz, my point here is not ignore differences between contexts; my point is to note how the experiences of young African-Americans in gentrifying East Austin may relate to those of other young people in overdeveloped and developing countries. By understanding young people as global actors, I approach young Black lives in broader context and in relationship with their global peers. Yet African-American youth are not often approached as actors in research or in policy, at local or global levels. Here, a return to intersectionality comes into play.

*To be Young/Black*

The intersection of youth and blackness brings with it certain practices of racialization and particular statistics of note for this project. If young people generally are excluded from scholarship, decision-making, and planning, Black youth are excluded in racialized respects, and arguably more so if they come from low-income households. Statistically, the intersection of youth/blackness is connected with aforementioned health disparities across class status (for example, Black girls are more likely to be considered obese, for example, based on current obesity measurements (CDC 2016). Young Black people are also more likely to suspended or expelled from school; are more likely to be sent to adult prison rather than juvenile court; and are more harshly punished for drug offenses (ACLU 2015). Via what scholars call the “school-to-prison pipeline,” and more students of color (particularly Black and Latin@ youth) are channeled into the justice

system for minor infractions or perceived misconduct, especially when schools adopt zero tolerance policies (Heitzeg 2009; Osher et al. 2002). A recent study suggests Black girls are more harshly punished in schools than their peers (Crenshaw et al. 2015).

In addition, Black teenagers tend to be rendered “wild” as children’s geographers note of young people in general, but through a racialized/classed lens that understands them as always already deviant and dangerous. Children’s geographers note the decline of public space on a global scale, noting fewer places for young people to “hang out” beyond the home, school, or other institutions designed for them; they further note surveillance of young people in the public spaces which do exist. For Black young people, this surveillance often takes the form of racial profiling, and as increasingly highlighted by the media, this profiling can lead to serious and/or fatal consequences where youth live, work, and go to school - and in the routes between these places. Examples provide a better sense of the social context young Black people navigate in Austin and elsewhere.

The shooting death of Trayvon Martin in 2012 illustrates the juncture between racial profiling and food geographies. A neighborhood watchperson fatally shot Martin under controversial circumstances in Florida, leading to closer examination of “stand your ground” laws, gun control, and racial profiling nationwide. Kurtz (2013) considers how Martin’s shooting death in a gated community involved the “social production of multiple spaces” – including ghettos, gated communities, and certain articulations of home (spaces to be defended). Given the intertwined racialization of bodies and space, Kurtz and other geographers point out, Black youth are assumed out of place in gated or

suburban contexts (see Kobayashi and Peake 2010). Martin had just visited a convenience store for snacks, and altars made of Arizona Iced Tea and Skittles proliferated on-the-ground and on the Internet to protest the circumstances of his death.

Related examples illustrate surveillance of Black youth while playing or skateboarding in their neighborhoods, in convenience store parking lots, and while waiting for buses (e.g. Whitaker 2014; Botelho et al. 2014; Neyfakh 2015). Examples hail from Austin, as well (Solomon 2014; King 2009; Coutts 2014). Each of these well-publicized incidents involved young Black/multiracial boys and young men, and research does suggest Black boys tend to be assumed older (and dangerous) by authorities (Goff et al. 2014). However, the intense focus on Black boys/young men has come under scrutiny. Growing research and media highlight similar surveillance of Black girls and LGBTQ youth of color (Crenshaw et al. 2015). Many of the instances noted above, some well-publicized and others under-documented, have fueled Black Lives Matter protests throughout the United States. This dissertation is being written as young Black people are at the forefront of this movement, which highlights violence against African-American/Black residents and demands accountability.

Food geographies of Black youth – spaces, places, and how they move between them - in East Austin take place in this broader social context, one where intersections of blackness, youth, gender, and class are read in specific (concerning) ways. Returning to inner geographies, this means noticing where youth co-researchers feel unwelcome or safe, surveilled or “free”, and why. This also means expanding definitions of access. Typically, food access is considered proximity to resources: if it is near, it is accessible.

However, this assumes that what is nearby is welcoming, a space where Black youth and their families experience minimal or no surveillance. A rich body of research describes the surveillance of Black/African-American and non-white consumers in retail settings (e.g. Gabbidon 2003); this research explores not only how people experience surveillance, but how that surveillance may impact how, when, and where they shop.

Expanding meanings of access is also important here, because of potential links between gentrification and surveillance (Kellogg 2015). As areas undergo demographic shifts like those underway in East Austin, so too do norms, behavioral expectations, and police shift in ways that can lead to profiling and/or diminished “felt access” for established poorer/residents of color. Access, then, is not only about outer geographies in terms of proximity; access involves inner geographies – welcome or exclusion, belonging or not, identifying or not. I witness how the youth co-researchers live access in a felt sense, to again highlight their embodied and multidimensional experiences with blackness, youth, and food in a changing city.

## **Closing**

Black geographies will play a central role in the reconstruction of the global community.

- McKittrick and Woods (2007, 6)

Children’s geographies are integrally linked to social reproduction, but the places and practices of children’s everyday life are rarely considered a dynamic context for understanding social and material transformations” – Aitken (2001, 123)

These five points of departure balance attention to structure and agency, inner and outer geographies, local and global processes. They emerged from my interest in (re)telling Black geographies in a multi-scalar, more embodied way; they emerged from

the stories the youth shared; and they further took shape in the course of the critical participatory action research methodologies carried out for this project. By centering Black youth, I follow on the call in children's and black geographies to understand young people and Black populations as local/global actors. Above, Aitken echoes a sentiment shared among critical children's geographers, arguing that because of their "place" in the world – liminal, subject to social and economic change, autonomous to a degree - young people's experiences illuminate transformations. Similarly, Black geographies scholars understand Black Diaspora populations as visionaries who can offer insights because of their historic and on-going experiences with space and place "on the margins".

Because Black youth researchers occupy a liminal age category, precisely because they are racially and economically marginalized, and because they are enmeshed in global processes, they are always already visionaries with a unique perspective on food through a social lens. Guided by the above points of departure, this dissertation contributes to a food-as-social understanding of food in young Black people's lives, a deeper understanding of their lived experiences from a geographic perspective, and a richer expression of their lived, diverse experiences with food in a changing city.

## Chapter 4: (Re)Making East Austin

“[O]n the other side of 35, would be East Austin. That was where the Black people lived. You go north or you go west, you had Caucasians . . . Some of the pretty very well off people lived West, like Westlake and some of those places. That’s where most of the successful people lived. And so many of the Hispanic people and Afro-Americans got all their employment in the yards, and housework, and so forth in the North Austin or West Austin.” – F. Young, interview, February 2013

A lifelong resident of Far East Austin, Mr. Young remembers the geography of the city in the 1950s. What he recalls –predominantly Latin@ 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets, Black East Austin, and a whiter, wealthier West – reflects the city’s geography from the 1930s to the recent present. Comprehensive urban plans, zoning practices, restrictive covenants, and responses to the physical environment – these played a role in making what is now I-35 a social and economic divide. Today, rapid growth and gentrification are (re)making Austin with particular impacts for long established residents of color in East Austin. The city’s African-American share of the population, once 15% and primarily concentrated in East Austin, comprised just 5% as of 2010. African-American residence continues to shift from East Austin to the periphery, to suburban areas such as Round Rock and Pflugerville, and to rural areas such as Manor and Bastrop (Demographic Trends 2015).

Why Black residents who leave settle *outside* city limits, rather than moving to other parts of the city proper, is not fully understood. Tang and Ren suggest quality of life for African-Americans in Austin may be one important reason for resettlement on the periphery, including school disparities, distrust in police, and limited employment or entrepreneurship opportunities – for Black residents across socioeconomic lines. The establishment of the African American Quality of Life Unit in 2008 reflects growing

concern for disparities and lack of opportunity facing the local Black population (AAQOL Report 2008). Among reasons why African-Americans leave, rising property taxes and development in East Austin are at the forefront. Once an area of disinvestment sidelined by developers and municipal services, East Austin has become a prime location for development, instigated in part by local sustainable food enterprise and policy. In 1991, the City of Austin labeled itself the “Live Music Capital of the World”. Increasingly, Austin promotes a local, sustainable, and boutique food industry, fashioning itself into a global “edible” destination.

Though often couched in sustainability discourse, local food development and policy continues to challenge the social and economic sustainability of poorer, long-established residents of color. Recent development tends to support the economic status, needs, and “tastes” of incoming, predominantly white and wealthier residents; without explicit anti-gentrification measures in place, redevelopment of areas of East Austin that does engage local residents may not ultimately serve long-established community members – a pattern seen throughout Austin and in other cities undergoing rapid demographic shifts. As the experiences of the youth co-researchers illustrate throughout this dissertation, this shift is no longer confined to the urban core nearest I-35 (between 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> streets, for example) but evident as far East as Highway 183, stretching northward toward Rundberg. Youth co-researchers navigate an area of Austin experiencing rapid socioeconomic transition, where the food landscape is not only transforming but increasingly celebrated for its “revitalization.”



In this chapter, I highlight key historical moments and policies from 1928 to the present which have (re)made East Austin. While focused on this specific area of the city, the history of East Austin provides insight into city-wide sociospatial dynamics. Historically, planning East Austin has been critical to the vision of the city West of I-35 and elsewhere – whether this involved designating East Austin a non-white area, framing it as a less environmentally-sensitive frontier, or reimagining East Austin as a creative (food) destination. This stretch of the city is often planned *onto*, and stock narratives tend to approach the East Side as lacking a rich food history among residents of color; the common description of East Austin as a “food desert” reifies this narrative. Here, I devote specific attention to Black geographies of food in the area – food retail, foodways, and production – less noted in accounts of the Austin food landscape. While an in-depth history is beyond the scope of this project, my intent is to provide a broad sketch of sociospatial dynamics in the city, East Austin history and its (re)making, and of related discourses. This chapter provides context for the everyday practices of cooking, eating, shopping, and growing food shared by youth co-researchers in the chapters that follow.

### **1928-1950: Making Black Austin**

Prior to 1928, African-Americans resided throughout the then Austin area, on both sides of what was then known as East Avenue (Figure 6, below). In addition to residing east of the avenue, African-Americans lived in communities settled after Emancipation, including the freedom colonies of Clarksville, Wheatville, and Brackenridge all located west of the main thoroughfare. In North Austin, the Hancock family farmstead became the cornerstone of Duval, a small Black farming community, after the Civil War (Sitton

and Conrad 2005; Texas Beyond History 2015). In 1928, city officials hired a private engineering company to draft a comprehensive plan and zoning map. The resulting Master Plan proposed a “negro district” east of East Avenue to address the “race segregation problem”, the problem being how to maintain racial segregation (Koch and Fowler 1928, 57).

Koch and Fowler further recommended that “all the facilities and conveniences be provided in this district as an incentive to draw the negro population to the area” (p. 57). Adopting the plan, the city provided municipal services such as sewage, electricity, and trash pick up to African Americans in East Austin; Black residents outside of East Austin, such as in Clarksville or other freedom colonies, were denied services. In the 1930s, city government concentrated services for Latin@s near Cesar Chavez, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets (leading to the “Hispanic” enclave Mr. Young alludes to above).

Private covenants, or land-use restrictions employed by developers further fostered local racial/spatial segregation in Austin. Tretter (2012) emphasizes, “[P]rivate forces of discrimination also ran alongside municipal efforts and seemed to have had a critical role in restricting the residential mobility of non-white minorities” (p. 5). Racial covenants designating parks, housing, and other resources “for Whites only” existed prior to 1928; they increased after the city implemented its first comprehensive plan. Progressive maps of the covenants suggest “no African descent” designations west of East Avenue as early as 1894, with an expansion throughout the area and north starting in 1918 (Sounny-Slitine 2012). Federal laws reinforced racial covenants and local segregation. For example, the Federal Housing and Loan Corporation produced recommendations for

lending in the 1930s. In addition to providing financial assistance, the Housing and Loan Corporation rated neighborhoods for mortgage risk. On a realty map produced by the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1935, the areas in East Austin where African-Americans and locals of Mexican descent resided were labeled as such; they had already depreciated in market value. Tretter (2012) argues,

While the city was not as segregated as it would later become [in the mid-1930s], the HOLC map may have driven out financial opportunities for non-white peoples in these areas, encouraged spatial segregation, and even undermined the capacity of East Austin to maintain the quality of its housing stock.

The city also located “undesirable industry” in East Austin. In 1955, city planning expanded zoning into South East Austin for industrial use. Industrial zoning rendered property less desirable or profitable for development. Because the zoning was mixed with residential use, Black and Latin@ populations lived near industrial pollution harmful to community health and detrimental to local air, water, and soil resources – conditions which would later receive national and international attention via the activism of People Organized in Defense of Earth's Resources (PODER), EAST, and other local organizations described in greater detail below. By the 1950s, construction of Highway I-35 (formerly East Avenue) was underway as part of the launch of the interstate highway system at the time. The highway further created a physical barrier between West and East Austin along former East Avenue. As in the case of other highways in the United States, the thoroughfare reinforced racial/economic segregation, spurred urban sprawl, fostered

“white flight” from the urban core, and designated boundaries of what would later become the “inner city” – a concentrated location of disinvestment within city limits.

In the midst of segregation, Black businesses and organizations did exist and thrive. In East Austin, several contributed to the local food landscape as service providers, retailers, and cultural institutions. Founded by Johnny Holmes, the Historic Victory Grill opened in 1945 as a bar and music venue and expand into a restaurant in 1949. The grill became part of juke joints across the South and the Midwest known as the Chitlin’ Circuit where Black artists performed. On Manor Road, musician Robert Shaw owned a barbeque and grocery store called Stop n’Swat; the store was originally located in Clarksville before relocating to East Austin in the 1950s ([eastendculturaldistrict.org](http://eastendculturaldistrict.org)).

Among institutions, masonic lodges and churches – some of which pre-dated the 1928 plan - were most likely important sites of food practice. Mount Bonnell, a Prince Hall Grand Lodge, was established in Central East Austin in 1908; founded in 1873, Mt. Zion Baptist Church has been located in East Austin since 1948; Ebenezer Church started in a local home before being built on 11<sup>th</sup> street in 1885; and Mt. Sinai began in a home at Chicon and Manor in 1889. Though further research is needed here to understand the specific food access and foodways institutions like these have supported in East Austin, research documents a long history of fraternal orders and churches as sites of pooling and sharing resources, including food, with community (Nembhard Gordon 2014). Churches claim a tradition of recording parishioner recipes; in fact, a 2015 newsletter for Mt. Zion announced the near completion of the church cookbook ([Mt.zion.com](http://Mt.zion.com)).

East Austin also hosted Travis County Negro Extension services at 1154 Lydia Street. Connected with Texas A&M Prairie View, the extension office offered demonstrations on farming, gardening, and agricultural technology. Local Black growers, both youth and adult, participated in food and livestock events like the one shown below, a snapshot of the 1949 County Food and Livestock Show in Rosewood Park (Figure 7, next page). This, among other archival photos from the same time period, depict Black growers, youth and adult. In addition to consuming, cooking, and selling food, Black residents of East Austin (and more broadly Travis County) produced food in gardens and farms.

### **1960-1980: The Un-Making Black Austin?**

Though segregation concentrated African-Americans and other non-white populations, this also meant Black populations of different class statuses and educational backgrounds also cultivated community and resilience. Community cohesion helped support the social, cultural, and financial wellbeing of East Austin, despite limited municipal or private development. Researchers propose that in Austin (and in cities elsewhere throughout the United States), desegregation laws paved the way for increased social and geographic mobility among wealthier African-Americans who provided services, started businesses, and taught in schools. The East Austin Black History Project notes, “There appears to be a watershed historical moment that dates to the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Acts of the mid-1960s . . . as public desegregation becomes the law of the land many Black families and businesses slowly begin to abandon Central East

Austin” (2015). When wealthier African-Americans out-migrated, so too did key social and economic resources.

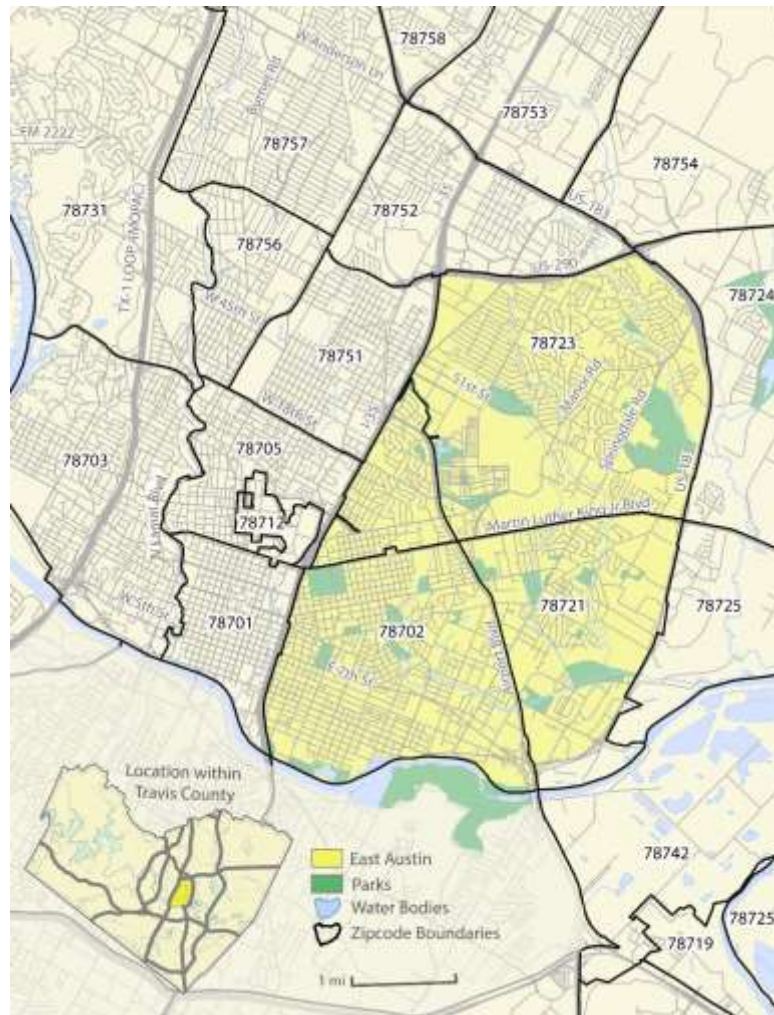
Meanwhile, predominantly Black and Latin@ areas remained subject to limited municipal support and racialized urban planning. Busch (2015) provides a snapshot of East Austin as of the 1960s:

Infrastructure on the Eastside was practically non-existent; most residential streets remained unpaved into the 1960s and 1970s, and flooding remained a major concern well after that. Municipal investment was also scant. East Austin had far less park space than any other area of the city, as well as problems with street lights, garbage collection and informal dumps, and poor sidewalks.

Previous city plans sited services in East Austin to incentivize the Black district; during segregation municipal funds supported the construction of high schools and other resources. Yet later descriptions of the area reveal on-going sub-standard services not unlike conditions in predominantly Black areas beyond East Austin – areas historically refused services. For example, Clarksville, one of the historic freedman’s communities in West Austin, lacked sewers, parks, and paved roads until the 1970s (HLC 2013).

In addition to disparate municipal services, some East Austin residents increasingly faced displacement. By 1966, the University of Texas-Austin cleared one thousand acres for development in the area; 250 of these acres were located in Central East Austin where predominantly African-Americans lived (Busch 2015). More than a thousand residents were relocated in the 1960s, plus more in the 1980s, as the university expanded. In 1981, residents in the Blackland neighborhood (the location of Stop n’ Swat once owned by

Shaw) resisted university expansion by forming the Blackland Neighborhood Association. The non-profit, dedicated to buying property and building affordable local housing, would eventually compromise with the university in the 1990s to stem development (Busch 2015, BNA 2015). This story of land retention in East Austin, however, is an exception rather than the rule.



**Map 3:** Central East Austin Zip Codes

By the 1980s, populations in East Austin were socially and economically vulnerable to land speculation. The poverty rate was on the rise, and by 1990, the poverty rate in East Austin would be 52%. While some historic cultural institutions remained in East Austin, particularly some key plays in the food landscape such as churches and certain restaurants, others shut their doors. While other parts of Austin witnessed retail growth, East Austin continued to witness retail decline. The food retail landscape reflected limited options for residents who remained. By 1995, the area claimed only two supermarkets and 38 convenience stores. A report published by the Sustainable Food Center found both of the major stores were smaller than those located elsewhere in the city, and one was more expensive, while low-income residents primarily depended on more expensive convenience stores with limited options (SFC 1995). Figure 8 provides a snapshot of key findings.

<p>East Austin Food Retail Landscape   1995 Snapshot</p> <p>Two supermarkets in East Austin</p> <p>Both smaller, and one more expensive, than similar stores in other parts of town.</p> <p>High reliance on convenience stores for low-income shoppers.</p> <p>Many residents take taxis to buy food at the supermarket.</p> <p>All convenience stores carried alcohol; 18 carried milk.</p> <p>Wholesale grocery companies rarely serve these smaller stores, which forces owners to charge higher prices and offer limited selection.</p> <p>20 agencies distribute emergency food on the Eastside.</p>
--

**Figure 6:** Findings from *Access Denied: An Analysis of Problems Facing East Austin Residents in Their Attempts To Obtain Affordable, Nutritious Food*, Sustainable Food Center, 1995



During this same time period, the population of East Austin declined. A report on Central East Austin provides insight. In this area, the population decreased by 17.6 percent from 1980 to 1990. Given the high rate of owner-occupancy homes at the time, this population decrease signals the outmigration of longstanding residents, as well as loss of property passed down between generations (SFC 1995). Central East Austin increasingly housed non-family households – single individuals without children – as further indication of a demographic shift underway; the area once included a greater proportion of family households than other areas of Austin (Wilson et al. 2007). Within this decade of decline – in infrastructure and population – the City Council adopted the Austin Tomorrow Plan. First fully adopted in 1979, the plan considered Central East Austin a desired growth area. Once sidelined and stigmatized as *undesirable*, East Austin development became desirable and increasingly framed as an environmental imperative from the 1980s through the 1990s.

But to read the history of East Austin through the lens of retail, employment, and markets alone excludes other “spatial strategies for survival” such as food sharing, selling plates “under the table”, or public kitchens. More research is needed to understand, for instance, how churches maintained food practices such as cooking and baking, growing food or providing food pantries during this time period; how/if local residents shared or sold food with each other in neighborhoods, on a regular basis or during special events during this time period. In other words, despite (and perhaps due to) disinvestment in East Austin during this period, important food practices were taking place in ways that have yet to be fully considered.

Among retailers, the Nighthawk Restaurant played a central role in shaping the food landscape of Austin and in spurring Black food development during this time period. Almost since its opening in 1932, Night Hawk restaurants practiced racial integration of its work force; owner Harry Akin was the first to desegregate a local restaurant, open to serve all patrons. Akin would later become Austin's Mayor from 1969-1971. African-American employees who worked at the restaurants during this time, as well as those who joined Nighthawk later in the 1960s-1970s, went on to initiate and manage food places of their own.

Frank Young, quoted above, worked as a manager at Nighthawk Restaurants locations in Austin and other Texas cities. He continues his relationship with food today with small-scale farming in Far East Austin. Young cultivates vegetables and raises chickens for eggs, for subsistence and for sale; most of his customers are Black and Latin@ residents in the area. Longtime Austinite Roy Lee Nunn started as a busboy at the restaurant before coming Head Chef in the 1960s; more than twenty years later, he opened three of his own restaurants, called the Soul Kitchens, in East Austin – one on Chicon, another on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and, farther east, a location on Webberville Road (interview, September 12, 2013). Hoover Alexander, who began as a dishwasher at Night Hawk Restaurants as a college student and then as a manager, would later own one of the few Black-owned restaurants that remain in East Austin (Hoover's Cooking).

### *The Launch of Whole Foods*

While retail declined in East Austin from the 1960s to the 1980s, it continued to grow in other parts of the city. The two decades closed with the landmark launch of Whole

Foods Market in West Austin. Though sited west of I-35, I propose that Whole Foods' opening set the stage for Austin's global food image and marked local commitment to sustainable food – both of which would help (re)make East Austin in the decades to come. Whole Foods opened in 1980, the result of a merger between two health food stores in Austin. Self-branded as “the world's first certified grocer”, Whole Foods emphasizes ethical consumption, the understanding that social and environmental issues can be addressed via the marketplace. Johnston (2008) describes ethical food consumption as a repertoire, one that involves knowledge and practice. The knowledge involves an understanding of environmental, social, and health trends, while practices involve consuming local, organic, “sustainably-grown”, and/or fair trade foods. Ethical consumption is a cornerstone practice of the sustainable food movement: when consumers buy products grown according to organic, sustainably-grown, or other “green” guidelines, they support specific kinds of food production, land development, and land use – locally and abroad.

Along with a selection of “conventionally-grown” and processed products, Whole Foods sells products aligned with the sustainable food movement. In the past 25 years, the store has arguably moved from engaging in ethical consumption to *influencing* what this consumption looks like on a global scale - in terms of food system practices, natural food retailers, and charitable-giving. Today Whole Foods claims more than 430 locations in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada (Whole Foods 2015). The store's current headquarters located in downtown Austin serves as a high-end grocery store for locals and as a tourist destination.

Nor is Whole Foods only known to immediate downtown residents or tourists. Among East Austin residents interviewed, the store was taken to be synonymous with “organic” food that is “better for you”. During the film project the youth co-researchers asked residents and family members in their neighborhood if they would like a Whole Foods in East Austin. They elected this question of their own volition, a question which implied Whole Foods as a higher quality, “healthier” food alternative, compared to options readily available where they live. Neighbors and family members the youth interviewed agreed Whole Foods was a “better” option, while also characterizing the store as expensive and “organic” as lacking flavor. Few of the youth co-researchers or residents described personal experience with the store; only one of the co-researchers had visited Whole Foods with her grandmother, and another visited for the first time as part of a fieldtrip (described in Chapter 5: Farm to Market).

Critiques of Whole Foods call into question how organic, healthy, or ethical its business practices and products are (e.g. Maloney 2006; OCA 2011). For co-researchers and interviewees, however, Whole Foods represented its brand as the “nation’s first organic certified grocer” (wholefoods.com). The Whole Foods brand is pervasive, even if located beyond an easy distance for participants. Furthermore, the co-researchers’ question about Whole Foods - as well as their characterization of the store - touches on pervasive discourses related to ethical consumption, sustainable food, and healthism.

### **1990 to the present: Remaking East Austin**

From the 1990s to the present, sustainable food impulses have been shaping what infill, revitalization, and renovation looks like in gentrifying urban areas throughout the

United States – in Austin as well as in parts of Brooklyn, Harlem, Oakland, and Washington, D.C. (e.g. Greenspan 2013; Yee 2014). In East Austin, sustainable food development unfolds in the midst of on-going gentrification, Black outmigration, and city-wide population growth. By the 1990s, Austin’s population and span had increased dramatically. Between 1940 and 1990s, the population increased from 90,000 to 470,000, and the unincorporated acreage grew from 30 square miles to 225 square miles. What Tretter (2013) calls Austin’s “sustainability turn” parallels Austin’s growth and underscores its socioeconomic disparities.

In 1992, concerned residents formed the Save Our Springs Coalition in response to development plans for the Barton Springs Watershed in West Austin; the organization expanded into an alliance with other activist organizations in 1997, whose combined efforts continue to focus on protection of Barton Springs and the Edwards Aquifer and curb development in West Austin. During the same time period, Chicano/Latino residents formed PODER (People’s Organized in Defense of Earth’s Resources), to address environmental injustice in East Austin – the effect of extensive industrial zoning in the area. Twenty out of 26 landfills in the Austin area were located in East Austin as of 1992 (EPA 1992). Residents also lived near a 35-year old fuel storage tank facility operated by oil corporations. PODER and EAST, a coalition of African-American neighborhood associations, successfully advocated for removal of the storage tank facility in 1993 (PODER 2015). Both streams of activism were impactful, though their impacts again illustrate legacies of segregation in Austin.

Environmental efforts to protect West Austin resources further encouraged East Austin development, as have ordinances and policies related to the Austin Tomorrow Plan first fully adopted in 1979. Of particular interest here, these included the creation of Smart Growth zones in 1998 and the implementation of S.M.A.R.T (Safe, Mixed Use, Accessible, Reasonably Priced, and Transit-Oriented) Housing Guidelines. A national planning movement, Smart Growth seeks to curb sprawl and maintain natural resources by concentrating commercial and residential development in central cities; implementing smart growth means revitalization of inner-area neighborhoods, rerouting (and reframing) of transportation, compact urban growth, and an emphasis on centers which (seek to) support social, cultural, and economic exchange (Burchell et al. 2000). Critics point out how growth must happen somewhere, with implications for residents, businesses, and infrastructure which already exist in core areas. Infilling (building in vacant lots), restoring existing structures, providing funding for new and improved public services, improving community amenities – all practices recommended by Smart Growth – tend to raise property values. Rising property values and associated taxes make redeveloped areas unsustainable for current residents, spurring displacement.

In Austin, Smart Growth has meant preserving West Austin water and environmental resources, while primarily focusing growth downtown and east of I-35. Smart Growth Zones delineated in 1998 designated a Drinking Water Protection Zone, a Desired Development Zone, and an Urban Desired Development Zone within city limits. The environmentally-sensitive water protection zone occupied most of West Austin, while the Urban Desired Development Zone spanned into Central East Austin as well as to a strip

of the urban center west of I-35. The broader Desired Development Zone reached eastward beyond the urban core, as well as north and south of the downtown I-35 corridor (Tretter 2013; Clark Madison 1998).

As of the 2010 census, East Austin areas located within designated “desired development zones” had already experienced demographic shifts. Both the Black and Latin@ populations decreased from 2000-2010, by 27 % and 9.3 % respectively; the white population increased by 40% (Castillo 2011). In terms of infrastructure such as loft construction, home renovation, food retail, the most dramatic changes have taken place closest to Ladybird Lake and I-35 – though, as the youth co-researchers share - the material landscape continues to shift on the edges of this area as well.

City-approved policies such as the S.M.A.R.T Housing Policy have played a role in reinvestment, particularly via the construction of local lofts, in East Austin. Aligned with smart growth planning, S.M.A.R.T provides waivers for development fees on vacant lots in new and existing subdivisions, for both large-scale and infill construction. An application and certification process, S.M.A.R.T-approved projects must meet city guidelines emphasized in the acronym regarding safety, mixed-income, accessibility, reasonable prices, and transit. The stated intent of S.M.A.R.T is to “stimulate the production of housing for low and moderate income residents of Austin” (S.M.A.R.T. 2015, 4). However, the impact of the policies may be increased, rather than less, displacement of lower income households in East Austin.

Between 1996 and 2004, East Austin witnessed a “surge” in upscale loft development (and associated rising property values) from 1996 to 2004, with an increase

of 126 percent of building permits compared with 35 for the city overall; forty two percent of permits issued in East Austin participated in S.M.A.R.T. At the time, S.M.A.R.T housing policy required reservation of nine housing units for projects, for families living at or below 80 percent of the area's median family income; only 4 percent needed to be "reasonably priced" while others could be sold at market rates (Wilson et al. 2007). Given the high poverty rate of the area, much of the newly-constructed housing was not financially accessible for long established residents, or for incoming residents of modest means.

During this same timeframe, the Austin Revitalization Authority (ARA) (re)envisioned Central East Austin as an "urban village" of mixed-use development, dubbing the East Side the "East End." In addition to "signifying a continuum between downtown and a more general coming together of the central city", the name harkened back to what the area neighborhood was called before institutional segregation (Busch 2015). This symbolic link to a reimagined, harmonious multiethnic past also resonates with the emphasis of smart growth development on cultivating diverse social interaction via the built environment. Some advertisements for new lofts or developments in East Austin feature what appear to be predominantly white (younger) people, as depicted in Figure 11 below.





**Figure 11:** Easton Park Billboard. Though the development is located in East Austin, this billboard was situated in West Austin as of September 2015. Source: Author

Still other advertisements intentionally depict or reference racial or other types of diversity. Johnson (2012) refers to this hyper-diversity as “an advertising moment of integration,” in which “the representation will show various racial and ethnic groups as equals, with similar interests and preferences, and with no conspicuous domination of one group by another” (p. 72). If advertisements for the new developments do not visually represent this diversity, coded language references this diversity. For instance, the website for the East End Flats re-dubs the area “Austin East” with an emphasis on how the area currently “oozes with culture, history, diversity, creativity, and life” (EEF 2015). In this case, the African-American history of 12<sup>th</sup> street is implied, particularly via references to jazz and blues music; these references further imbue the flats with a sense

of “sharing space”. New ventures throughout East Austin reference the areas past in their descriptions, names, or other cultural markers. By maintaining these echoes of the past, new development offers consumption of a “hip”, authentic East Austin, one where the social “other” is present, without necessarily being physically present (Zukin 2008).

In Austin, longstanding socioeconomic disparities challenge the multiethnic vision espoused by smart growth planning. Though smart growth planning emphasizes diversity (or at least the consumption of it), the question is how/if the impact of such practices enable longstanding residents to stay in Austin or poorer and middle-income residents to move there. A related question is if lower income residents of color who reside in Desired Development Areas are themselves desirable inhabitants – and if so, what anti-displacement or anti-gentrification steps are/will be taken. Residents in areas marked for revitalization and redevelopment have long broached the same concerns throughout East Austin (e.g. Powell 2013; Ross 2014). Their concerns are based, in part, on trends witnessed in Austin: thus far, past and current planning practices have not produced sustainable conditions for low-income residents of color.



**Figure 8:** Elan East. Lofts on Manor Road constructed by Greystar Properties in partnership with Big Red Dog engineering. The website for the development reads, “Boutique-style living has never looked so good. With a fresh, modern take on apartment living, meet *Elan East*—Austin's newest address.” November 2015, Source: Author

When community members have improved their neighborhoods through collective action, their efforts have rendered areas more desirable for development, thereby comprising their ability to stay. The environmental justice efforts of PODER and EAST, mentioned above, are a case in point. The most recent Imagine Austin plan states, “The Holly Power Plant was decommissioned in 2007. Since then, the surrounding area has seen reinvestment” (Imagine Austin 2015). This language conceals actors. The activism of PODER and neighborhood residents pushed for the closure of the plant due to health

issues in East Austin, while the city has played an active role in promoting local reinvestment.<sup>4</sup>

While the most recent Austin comprehensive plan, Imagine Austin, does not describe itself as a smart growth initiative, it offers a similar vision “for how the city can grow in a compact and connected way” (Imagine Austin 2015). The plan further emphasizes sustainable food development in a manner that underscores persistent social and economic wealth gaps within the city; this development encompasses food access and health disparities, local food production and boutique enterprise. At the same time, Austin is receiving national and international press for its growing food scene. Below, I consider the growth of sustainable food development in East Austin in its myriad forms, the food foci of the Imagine Austin plan, and the implications of both for the food landscape where youth co-researchers and their families reside.

*(East) Austin Food Goes Global*

In tandem with environmental concern for local natural resources and concurrent with smart growth, Austin has been the site of increasing sustainable food development. The Sustainable Food Center was founded in 1993, a local non-profit focused on building the local food system and access to “nutritious, affordable food” (SFPB 2015). Engaged in

---

<sup>4</sup> The Imagine Austin plan reframes the removal of the tank farms mentioned above as part of Austin’s progressive environmentalism: “The health of Austin’s urban environment was also a concern and was reflected in the closing and relocation of the ‘Tank farm’ (a large gasoline storage facility) in 1993 and the decision to decommission the Holly Power Plant in 2007” (IAP 2015). This retelling conceals the community activism of PODER and EAST in bringing these facilities to the attention of the city and industry, while reinforcing Austin’s progressive character.

the broader food landscape of Austin, SFC hosts farmer's markets, community gardens, and cooking classes; in East Austin, its programs include community gardens at local elementary and middle schools and the MLK farmer's market. In 2007, Edible Austin Magazine established "Eat Local Week". The magazine's intention is to connect readers with Central Texas "local growers, retailers, chefs and food artisans—enabling those relationships to grow our healthy and vibrant local food economy"; Eat Local Week seeks to promote locally-owned food establishments and raise funds for food-focused non-profits. As Eat Local Week suggests, by 2007 Austin local, artisanal, and boutique efforts had proliferated. In some cases long established residents of color have retained ownership of the buildings and lease out the spaces to incoming entrepreneurs; for the most part, however, retailers retain new ownership and management.

In 2008, the city council established the Sustainable Food Policy Board to provide recommendations regarding accessibility of "safe, nutritious, locally, and sustainably-grown food at reasonable prices for all residents" to the City and Travis County Commissioner's Court (SFPB 2015). The ordinance established a thirteen-member volunteer board; representatives could include individuals affiliated with retail food industry, consumer interest groups, the health care and wellness community, the emergency food program community, the local agriculture industry, soil and compost producers, the food or nutrition education field, the non-profit food organization community, the for-profit food industry, and the food manufacturing industry.

Establishment of the board (again) placed Austin on the cutting edge of the urban sustainable food movement. News of the board reached other Texas cities such as

Houston as well as others around the nation. One article reported, “Houston Tomorrow, Houston-Galveston Area Council, Urban Harvest, and Texas A&M Sea Grant are exploring the creation of such a food policy council in the Houston region” (Natts 2008). Based in Baltimore, Maryland, the John Hopkins School of Public Health mentions the board among model policies for sustainable food development. Significantly, Sustainable Food Policy Board members do not have to be city residents, further reflection of Austin’s desire to learn from other cities and programs throughout the United States and beyond. As Austin situates itself as a food city globally, it does so in explicit relationship with other major cities such as Houston, Portland, Seattle, and Phoenix. Since the adoption of Imagine Austin in 2012 and its implementation – and following the hiring of a Food Policy Manager in 2014 - city commitment to a local food system has continued to expand; its focus on sustainable food encompasses issues related to health and hunger, agricultural production and retail.

Recommendations from the board in light of this dissertation include those related to the urban farm code and the hiring of a Food Policy Manager; both underscore the board’s scope as well as its power to influence important decisions regarding food access and development in Austin. In 2013, debate regarding the board’s recommendations for urban farming drew city-wide and national attention, while competing visions for East Austin development came to the fore. Some longstanding East Austin residents, most vocally organizers with PODER and the Govalle/Johnston Terrace *Neighborhood Contact Team*, opposed board recommendations that would allow urban farms between one and five acres to operate in the area; raise and slaughter chickens, rabbits or fish on

site; and host events with a special permit (Gandara 2013). Opposed groups argued that poorer residents of color residing in East Austin were not involved in the recommendations process; highlighted how expansion of the urban farm code could further encourage gentrification and displacement (by encouraging land purchase in East Austin for farming-related business and events); and called for urban farm businesses to be designated commercial with due regulation. Opponents further emphasized the lack of urban farming in West Austin and their potential proliferation in East Austin.

Opposition galvanized a counter-effort among farmers and supporters to “save Austin’s urban farms”; proponents emphasized a need to support local food and farming, in an effort to grow the economy as well as food access. Reflective of Austin’s on-going socioeconomic divide, opponents were primarily residents of color, while farm owners and proponents were predominantly white. The heated debate underscored how food is central to development visions – and concerns – in Austin, while re-emphasizing the central place of East Austin in the process. Given the development plans and environmental concerns of the city, such an urban farm ordinance would greatly impact neighbors, property values, and traffic in East Austin.

In 2014, following a recommendation from the SFPB, the city hired its first Food Policy Manager, Edwin Marty. Housed in the city’s Office of Sustainability, this management position focuses on four goals: 1) increasing local food production, 2) increasing consumption of locally produced food, 3) decreasing food insecurity, and 4) protecting natural resources. These goals are consistent with ethical food consumption and production, as well as with local smart growth planning initiatives. Numbers one,

three, and four directly relate to development in East Austin and other development zones where food security remains a primary issue among low-income residents. Since the adoption of the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan and the hiring of a Food Policy Manager, city actions have expanded to include a pilot of neighborhood food system planning in the Rundberg area in North Central Austin.

The strategic approach for this process clearly states alignment with Imagine Austin and the 30 year city plan, with an emphasis on “an affordable and healthy community by providing a safe transportation network which integrates physical activity into life”; though centered on transportation, a survey of the local food system has been incorporated in this plan to address the affordability and health in the area in partnership with professors and graduate students from the University of Texas-Austin (Restore Rundberg). Importantly, the Rundberg area is within the Desired Development Zone set forth in earlier urban plans; the challenge will be managing redevelopment of the predominantly low-income, predominantly marginalized documented and undocumented community without fostering further displacement. How this project unfolds is significant here because of the intent to replicate the planning project in other parts of the city.

Officially adopted by the City Council in 2012, the Imagine Austin Plan continues the focus on development east – with a particular interest in growing local food economy in the form of retail and restaurants, gardens and farms. Though similar to past plans in terms of its smart growth principles, the planning process has involved more community engagement and transparency. For collaborative planning, the city implemented many techniques used in participatory methodologies, including mental mapping, starting in



2009.<sup>5</sup> Framed as the city working “in partnership” with community members, the plan’s interactive website identifies how many community members participated in these different events, outreach in “low participation” neighborhoods”, and a host of other public forums; the plan even documents virtual engagement, noting the number of “likes” on Facebook, Twitter followers, and e-mail subscribers. (This includes an Imagine Austin Meetup group featured on the website, and composed primarily of 406 planning professionals called “imagineers”).

According to the Imagine Austin website, “more than 18,500 ideas” from Austinites informed the final plan and its recommendations. Though impressive in its virtual and on-the-ground methods of community engagement, participation demographics remain unclear; for example, how many individuals from “low participation” neighborhoods were engaged, whether or not long-established residents were involved. Social characteristics (such as racial background, ethnic background, gender, or socioeconomic status of participants) are not noted. These are relevant questions, especially as the plan continues to focus on revitalization where predominantly low-income populations of color reside. Food is an area of particular concern, and diverse stakeholders are referenced and called upon throughout Imagine Austin.

---

<sup>5</sup> Starting in 2009, related events encompassed a launch party for the plan, a series of four community forums, community presentations, focus groups, and a community conversation/meeting in a box to highlight/brainstorm key concerns; events also included two community meetings to discuss relationships between existing plans and new visions (between, for example, current neighborhood plans and Imagine Austin, and the preferred growth and Future Land Use maps).

As Biudiuc (2015) points out, though food is not its own priority in the plan, food issues are addressed throughout. The eight priorities for the plan include a healthy Austin, creative economy, mobility, CODENext (collaborative revision of the land development code), water, environment, affordability, and workforce. Imagine Austin connects with food and food development for three of these priorities (healthy Austin, creative economy, and environment). The goals of Healthy Austin directly relate to on-going Community Health Assessments and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHA/CHIP) processes managed by the city and Travis County. Both Imagine Austin and related CHA/CHIP reports emphasize access to community gardens and “healthy food” options, especially in areas designated “food deserts” primarily located in East Austin and other predominantly low-income areas of the city. Imagine Austin places further emphasis on local consumption of local and sustainably-produced foods, in support of maintaining natural resources; in line with preserving most land and water resources west of I-35, the focus continues to be development toward the east.

In terms of creative economy, the plan prioritizes creativity in the form of “live music, festivals, theater, film, digital media, and new creative forms” (IAP 2015). However, food is increasingly situated as part of Austin’s creative identity as well. On the heels of the Imagine Austin Plan, the city commissioned market research on the local food economy; the report measured the impact of Austin’s food economy at \$4.1 billion, with national and global reach. Based on social media analysis, “It appears that the majority of the discussion on the Austin food scene now takes place outside Austin, and that interest spikes in and around major Austin tourist events and/or mention of Austin

food in other media” (EFSR 23). Austin’s food landscape is increasingly discussed beyond the city itself. In fact, the report suggests food is on par with the broader music and creative sector (\$4.3 billion in annual economic activity).

As further testament to food’s growing supremacy as a cultural marker for Austin, the wide-reaching SXSW conference has steadily increased its food programming since 2013. First envisioned in 1983 by Austin locals to “bring the outside world to Austin for a close-up view”, the conference held its first event in 1987 with just 700 participants; today SXSW registration numbers over 84,000 participants from around the world (ABJ 2015). Local and global food figures prominently in festival events. Janzen (2015) writes, “What started in 2013 as a makeshift outdoor food court featuring *Top Chef* winner Paul Qui’s selection of local food trucks transformed into a proper conference last year with panels from notable chefs, food journalists and podcasters.” In 2015, SXSW food events expanded to include 30 panels on food enterprise, technology, writing, eating, and more. The conference continues to both reflect and craft Austin’s local economy – as well as its global image.

What is less explicitly stated in the local food economy report is *where* more food development does/will take place within the city. Similarly, the Imagine Austin Plan understands East Austin as a primary development area, without explicitly noting its significance in addressing key issues of food insecurity, creative economy, and growth. In East Austin, two more or less distinct “streams” of sustainable food development are shaping the food landscape in social, material, and economic ways. They primarily involve but are not limited to the public health/government programs noted above,

private enterprise, and non-profits. Though focused on discrete target groups or customer bases, they often share ethical food consumption values, a factor which allows them to synergize and partner (sometimes in ironic ways).

One development stream I will call *humanitarian* focuses primarily on improving food conditions, including access and eating behaviors, in the area; its “target population” includes historically marginalized populations in East Austin and in other predominantly low-income neighborhoods. Non-profits, public health and government programs, and social enterprise efforts tend to be involved in this development. The other development stream I will call *creative* focuses primarily on innovative food economy; its target population includes primarily incoming, predominantly white (and younger) Austinites with social and economic capital – and its population is understood to be creative as well, as consumers and innovators. Creative development tends to be carried out by private enterprise and developers, in the form of real estate projects, restaurants, boutique retailers, corner stores, or other locally-owned food outlets. Private food industry and the city government maintain, for the most part, a synergistic relationship: city policymaking, funding initiatives, and industry research increasingly focus on how to amplify Austin’s local food economy. Austin’s creative food economy is renown on national and global scales: *Southern Living Magazine* mentions the city’s thriving food scene, Franklin’s Barbecue appears in a Chase Sapphire commercial (featuring celebrated Chef Nobu), and Anthony Bourdain’s “No Reservations” television show on the Travel Channel spotlighted the city. Each exemplify the rising reputation of the Austin’s innovative take on food.

Both development streams – one primarily humanitarian, and the other primarily creative - interconnect in ways that (re)make East Austin. These categories are loose; for example, there are certainly humanitarian efforts that are creative in the sense of involving residents in local food enterprise, and there are creative enterprises which intend to address social issues. However, city patterns of rapid, racialized, and segregated growth complicate attempts to merge the two – as do dominant discourses related to healthism and food deserts. In other cases, non-profits frequently partner with private enterprises such as boutique grocers and high-end restaurants located in East Austin to fund their programs. In other words, programs which are working with long established residents in the area benefit, in part, from the business of incoming residents; at the same time, the presence of these retailers supports rising property values, higher taxes, and potential displacement. Private enterprise has been positioned as a food insecurity and food access solution in East Austin, despite the potential for enterprises to perpetuate, rather than stem, displacement. Three examples of efforts to address food access issues in Austin via private enterprise or by connecting the development streams provide insight into this challenge as well as prevailing discourse.

When in.gredients first opened in East Austin on Manor Road, the small grocer emphasized its location in a “food desert”: “in.gredients will also serve as the Eastside’s first exclusively healthy food store. Being close to Austin’s food desert – where corner stores selling highly-processed food are sometimes used as grocery stores – helped determine our location” (in.gredients 2011). The “no-waste” grocer sells all products in bulk to maintain a package-free environment; customers bring in their own containers to

purchase. News about ingredients – both its no-waste approach and its intentional “food desert” location reached national and international media. To date the store has been featured in *Forbes* magazine, *The New York Times*, the World Wildlife Fund website, and Think the Earth (Japanese site), to name some of its prominent press.

In the Rosewood area, another small grocer (Rosewood Community Market) opened in 2013, first as an LLC and then as a cooperative. PeopleFund, which provides loans for underserved small businesses, provided funding for Rosewood’s launch. In this case, too, the designation of East Austin as a “food desert” informed the chosen location: “[O]ne prominent reason Rogers and his co-manager, Elizabeth Nowrouz, started Rosewood in that location was because the neighborhood that it serves was considered a ‘food desert’ according to the USDA, or an urban neighborhood “without ready access to fresh, healthy and affordable food.” . . . That means in East Austin’s recent history one of the foodways [access to supermarkets] has shut down, and Rogers is out to change that” (Cella 2013). The market opened its doors adjacent to Rosewood Courts, historical, public housing complex currently owned by the city’s Housing Authority.<sup>6</sup> In an effort to serve area low-income residents, the market accepted food stamps and offered 10% off discounts to maintain affordability. During the Food for Black Thought Community Food Survey in 2013, the market served as a survey location and agreed to provide store incentives to survey participants; the number of surveys revealed a growing relationship

---

<sup>6</sup> Rosewood Courts claim a longstanding local history as the first public housing designed for African-Americans in the City of Austin in 1939. Housing Authority plans to redevelop the complex into a “mixed use housing project with modern amenities” have met with resistance from historic preservationists and anti-gentrification stakeholders (e.g. Tuma 2016; [www.preserverosewood.org](http://www.preserverosewood.org)).

between Rosewood and the local community – as well as a desire for the products on site. After making moves to transition to a cooperative enterprise, the market ultimately closed.



**Figure 9:** Snapshot of in.gredients. Located on Manor Road. As of 2015, the store celebrated “3 years of community, zero waste, and local food” according to its website ([www.in.gredients.com](http://www.in.gredients.com)). Photo source: Author

In both of these cases, the stores offered an alternative to “conventional” convenience stores located directly across the street from them, by selling items in line with ethical consumption as well as more fresh fruits and vegetables. Yet options at in.gredients, as well as the prices, better serve incoming residents; based on personal communication with staff, the grocer does not engage long established residents as initially desired.

Rosewood grappled with how to make a profit, maintain low-prices, sell ethical goods, and serve what it described as two markets (low-income, long established residents and wealthier, incoming residents); after an attempt to reframe the store as a cooperative, the market closed its doors in 2015. Ingredients no longer emphasizes its location in a “food desert” on its website or in media reports. Both the store and Rosewood Community Market underscore the challenge of private enterprise addressing local food access issues in the context of gentrification.

A third example highlights the use of food desert language by private developers. In 2013, Pegasus Planning and Development held two “community workshops” titled “Food Deserts: East Austin: What Can Be Done To Help”. Focused specifically on bringing architecture, engineering, interior design, and other professionals “to the table”, the workshops asked a series of provocative questions on its social media advertising:

What would your ideal grocery store look and feel like? Is this possible in East Austin? What would need to happen? From the ground up? What are model cities doing to encourage small grocers in new mixed-use developments, similar to how we incentivize public housing?

As a firm, Pegasus Development focuses on revitalization of downtown areas, commercial corridors, and historic neighborhoods. In this case, Pegasus carried out the workshops in partnership with local businesses as well as non-profits. The workshop claimed an impressive cross-section of support. Yet while framed as a community workshop, the individuals welcomed to the table were formally-educated professionals, in an area of the city where long established residents are often unemployed and generally



have less formal education. Though interested in efforts “from the ground up”, residents most affected by the lack of food retailers in the area were not invited to envision possibilities for their neighborhood.

Efforts to bridge the social, economic, and geographic disparities in Austin through food development ultimately serve incoming residents rather than long-term ones – and appear to perpetuate rather than stem displacement. Economically, anti-displacement measures could involve community land trusts and community development corporations (such as the aforementioned Blackland Community Development Corporation); inclusionary zoning is also offered as a potential measure, though the reservation of housing for some low to moderate income residents can, as with S.M.A.R.T Housing in Austin, also perpetuate displacement (MAPC 2015).

Still other strategies are noted in the early Sustainable Food Center report *Access Denied* (1995) regarding food access in East Austin, among them food buying clubs and grocer coops with the opportunity for group purchasing; both could support food access, community wealth-building, and resident resilience. Indeed, the latter cooperative economics have taken place in Austin via organizations such as Blackness, and in ways not necessarily documented. Nembhard (2015) charts a long history of African Americans pooling resources to access resources, boost social cohesion, build community wealth, and sustain property. However, these are not initiatives currently mobilized or supported by mainstream development stakeholders. Many of the latter actions do require collective action and organizing among communities themselves. They also suggest if there is a role for development stakeholders who reside outside of the neighborhood or

desire to address local issues, their role may best support community-based actions already taking place rather than creating new ones.

Assumptions regarding historically marginalized populations, play a central role in not envisioning a creative economy among poor, low-income communities of color – and in not supporting it; unexamined stock discourse about food access and foodways in these communities is replete with assumptions about where people of color eat, what they eat, and how they access food in their daily lives. Stock discourse emerges in the Imagine Austin plan. For example, the Healthy Austin Priority included in the Imagine Austin Plan and aligned with CHA/CHIP goals maintains a healthism perspective, one in which health is individual and changing lifestyle behaviors is the key way to prevent disease. Some examples of healthism in the plan include the Healthy Austin Program, which will “reduce chronic and diet-related diseases and risk factors by coordinating access to community and health services, local and healthy food, physical activity, and tobacco-free living. This priority program seeks to create places where people can easily walk, bike, play, and find nearby healthy food options and healthcare” as well as to encourage “successful formation and patronage of healthy-food retail establishments, such as farmers markets, community supported agriculture, corner and neighborhood stores, and supermarkets, throughout the city—with emphasis placed on underserved areas” (IAP 2015).

Again, the focus on food environments here may appear to diverge from healthism; the Imagine Austin Plan adopts what might be called the “environmental turn” in food access research. As noted in the Conceptual Framework chapter, however, the food

environment approach tends to emphasize individual responsibility without attention to historical context or structural inequality. From the food environment perspective, then, the ultimate responsibility lies with the individual to make “healthier” choices. Again, this critique does not debate a relationship between food and physical health; but this critique does consider food *one* aspect of health. Other factors – such as environmental justice, police surveillance, stress, and trauma – continue to be overlooked when considering health disparities among Black and Brown communities despite their link with physical wellbeing; given the history of East Austin described here, all deserve further attention. With healthism comes certain racialized/classed understandings of Black health and foodways as well as stigma, addressed in following chapters.

One further effect of both healthism and related “food desert” discourse is the positioning of historically marginalized communities as recipients rather than as innovators. In the development practices noted above, divisions are constructed between experts/community, incoming/long-established, creatives/non-creatives. Often these divisions are implied. Throughout the Imagine Austin plan for instance, Austin’s growing population is labelled creative, young, and innovative, in line with the city’s overarching identity; Long-established residents of color and the areas where they reside, in contrast, are framed as *recipients* in need of creativity, motivation, and change – rather than as changemakers themselves. On-going events related to the Austin plan continue to frame the community in this way. A recent event about “eco-apartheid” appeared to disrupt stock stories or relationships; however, the questions asked on social media about the event asked how to engage community members in areas with low participation. This

question alone suggests community members from these areas may not be in the room, and that something must be done for them or about them, rather than with them.

Food desert discourse further encourages these assumptions (and development), by focusing on what retail or knowledge (“healthy” eating, cooking, or growing food) needs to be brought into Austin. In terms of knowledge, established East Austin residents tend to be positioned as lacking knowledge, even if they express a desire for “healthier” food options (e.g. Easter 2015). In terms of retail, both private enterprise and public health efforts in the city continue to focus on adding retail options or on shifting the options available within stores in East Austin. Yet, as explored above, any place-based effort faces a shifting customer base; the store may not serve the local residents it intends, while the location may face displacement given the challenge of serving a bifurcated market, rising property values, and other factors related to gentrification. Furthermore, place-based efforts can potentially perpetuate gentrification if anti-gentrification measures are not in place.

### **Closing**

Via urban planning, food policy, and related food development, sustainable food discourse and related practices shape the social, economic, and material “lay” of the food landscape in East Austin. As the experiences of the youth co-researchers reveal, these impacts include but are not limited to the foods available where they live, food options in local schools, the types of food places located next door, job opportunities (or lack thereof), local social and health programs (which may re-stigmatize Black eating practices), and cost of living. They materialize in health initiatives, programs offered,

and foods available in schools and neighborhoods; they materialize in gardens, retailers, and other establishments; and their presence both responds to – and perpetuates – local urban change.

In East Austin, the food landscape where the youth co-researchers live, go to school, and work has always been dynamic. Now in the midst of sharp population growth, steep Black population decline, the (re)presenting of East Austin as a desired development area, and the rise of Austin on the global food radar – it is not only dynamic, but transforming rapidly with implications for low- to moderate- income residents of color who remain there. The everyday food practices of the youth co-researchers, their families, and community members connect intimately with the broader food landscape described in this chapter – as well as its sociospatial legacies. In the following chapters, I explore their lived experiences with food in East Austin from a food-as-social perspective. By focusing on local knowledge and practices, social networks, and creativity around food in the lives of Black youth, the chapters map a countergeography of food in an area often described as a “food desert” – while highlighting practices which support community resilience in ways social, economic, and cultural in the midst of urban change.

## Chapter 5: From Farm to Market

*Question: If there was one question you could answer about food in East Austin, what would it be?*

*Response: I would want to know why supermarkets in East Austin receive left over food from other stores; why other stores in the area get good food. - Eric*

I first met Eric on the Urban Roots farm where he worked as a youth farm crew member. Located in East Austin, Urban Roots is a non-profit dedicated to teaching leadership skills to youth through food and farming. In addition to learning how to harvest and grow food, youth crew members sell food they cultivate at local farmer's markets, donate to area shelters, and participate in regular workshops focused on organic farming, health, and community-building. Youth work on peer-led teams, guided and supported by youth who have been in the program at last one year. In summer 2013, I returned to the farm after two prior internships. My past experience provided me with an intimate understanding of the farm's community-based, youth-focused approach. As a Volunteer Crew Leader, for example, my first engagement with the farm centered on supporting one of the youth crew leaders; my work was not to facilitate, teach, or guide, but to be a resource for the youth leader, a high school senior on the cusp of graduation. As a Curriculum Intern I guided tours on the farm for children and teens, charged with cultivating activities accessible (and fun) for young people.

When I returned to facilitate regular food and food justice workshops with the youth crew members, Urban Roots placed even greater emphasis on recruiting high schoolers from diverse high schools and from varied racial/cultural backgrounds. Eric, an

African-American youth from a local predominantly Black/Brown high school, was one of the (how many) young people who identified as Black/African-American, African (refugees from Sudan), Latin@/Mexican-American, Indian, and white. Black and Latin@ youth composed the major part of the group, while the other populations claimed 1 or 2 representatives among them. And, while most of the youth hailed from East Austin high school, some of them attended charter/alternative schools in the area. If it weren't for Urban Roots, the youth might not "share space" through the intimate processes of working together, eating together, or learning together because of the persistent social, economic, and geographic divides in Austin. Because Urban Roots intentionally creates a "contact zone", the farm space offers a unique opportunity to understand the food geographies of black youth in context and in relationship to those of other young people their age.

Torre (2009) describes a "contact zone" as space through which individuals of diverse social locations actively share in interaction; in this space, individuals from diverse identities and backgrounds are intentionally brought into relationship. Torre discusses the "research camps" familiar to critical participatory action research as a kind of "contact zone", describing an example of The Opportunity Gap Project which brought together 13 youth from schools from wealthy and "underprivileged" school districts to discuss education disparities in New York City, to express concerns, explore tensions, and identify solutions to problems they found most problematic; the project explicitly engaged issues of power, privilege, and oppression within and among populations within the city - and among participants.

While Urban Roots does not function as a research camp in the same vein, the effect of the farm space is a contact zone. Farm facilitators address issues such as poverty, hunger, and health disparities; the farm engages facilitators to explore issues of inequality in the food system; staff engage in training to deepen their understanding and knowledge of race/racism and the food system; and at least one staff member participates in an anti-racist white reading group. For this anti-racism group, participants explore issues of privilege and hold each other accountable, while maintaining on-going relationship with organizers of color in the Austin area. Themes on the farm, staff education, and the presence of diverse groups can promote “contact zone” dynamics. Torre (2009) describes how such zones reframe expert knowledge, complicate identities, and give rise to new (unexpected) alliances; to these dynamics still other, more inward ones, might be added such as occasion for discomfort, self-reflection, and recognition of one’s own social location (i.e. the varying degrees of privilege and oppression youth bring with them into farm space). Urban Roots youth possess personal knowledge of the food landscapes in their neighborhoods, schools, and homes. They bring skills that reflect their intersectional lived experiences, such as bilingual language skills.

Community guidelines, norms, and shared language are fostered on site at the farm, Urban Roots maintains a multi-spatial presence. With a yearly goal of 30,000 pounds of produce, the farm donates 40% of its harvest to local soup kitchens and food pantries and sell the other 60% at farmers’ markets. Youth share the food they grow at the soup kitchens, food pantries, and local farmer’s markets. They occupy multiple spaces through their farm employment, and the food they cultivate is sold at grocery



stores throughout the city. This movement between spaces allows youth to enact their diverse knowledges throughout the broader food landscape; for example, Elliott recalls how some of the Spanish-speaking youth, who tend to be shy at the farmer's market downtown, provided much needed language and cultural connection at the MLK Street market where the stand sells to a large Spanish-speaking/Latin@ population (interview, February 2014). Through movement beyond the farm, they navigate the local food landscape of Austin together; they encounter, as a group, the broader local social and economic dynamics that undergird the farm itself and the city - legacies of segregation, gentrification, and demographic shifts among them.

This “contact zone” effect, intersectional identities the youth bring to the farm, and the segregated city space the youth travel draw into sharp relief the food geographies of Black youth compared with their peers. This chapter joins groups of youth crew members on fieldtrips from the farm to the market. For this summer workshop, the youth acted as co-researchers who explored three different grocery stores in the Austin Area: City Market (now Alan's), Wheatsville-Guadalupe, and Central Market-Westgate. Two of the markets reflect logistics as well as Urban Roots' mission, values, and partnerships in the Austin-area. Urban Roots pre-arranged for grocery store tours at Wheatsville and Central Market-Westgate. To this shortlist we agreed upon City Market because of its proximity to the farm and its location in East Austin; in the course of the fieldtrip, Black youth described the most familiarity with this store.

Though these food places were not chosen based on where youth typically shop for groceries for/or with family members, their ethnographies also share about the stores they usually frequent. Youth co-researchers compared stores visited and their regular markets, even when they were not prompted. In small racially/ethnically diverse groups (described as teams below), they responded to 8 ethnographic questions after the visits, in both a university classroom setting in the University of Texas-Austin geography department and on the Urban Roots farm. Following response and debrief, we closed with the short interactive discussion about Austin history - a discussion which began to explore Eric' question above in greater depth. Below, I explore youth co-researcher observations and analyses of the stores we visited, with particular attention to how black youth food geographies "show up" in relationship to their peers. To situate Black youth experiences, I indicate the racial and ethnic identification of the youth co-researchers when their names are first mentioned in the narrative. Their experiences countermap the local food retail food landscape from the perspective of their embodied experiences.

### **City Market: A Question of Quality and Convenience**

During the fieldtrip to City Market, the team who reported back included more Black youth as well as Latino/a members compared to others; City Market was also the place where most Black youth described shopping with their mothers or grandmothers. Eric regularly travels to the store for his grandmother; because of the proximity of the store to his house, he can easily walk or bike there.

Our group experience was immediately met with resistance from store manager, who pointed out that no backpacks were allowed in the store. The manager promptly informed

us that backpacks would need to be kept at the front of the store during our tour. As one youth would later point out, perhaps this was an indication of theft within the store. When we asked for a tour, the manager flatly said no. Youth observed what they perceived to be a lack of friendliness among cashiers as well, with mixed levels of the same among customers themselves. The youth were careful to make a distinction between lack of friendliness and reserve:

The cashiers were not as friendly. The other customers were very reserved and quiet and left to themselves. – Terek (Black and multiracial)

No, [they are not friendly] they do not greet you, people who shop in the store are quiet and reserved. – Tonya (Black)

From the front of the store we made our way first to the produce section. Just before the produce section some of the Mexican-identified youth noticed a table of agave and Mexican products; they shared how to cook with these. One of the youth described how her grandparents owned a store in Monterrey Mexico where they sell the same products. Throughout the store the youth took note of fresh fruits and vegetables familiar to Mexican cuisine. In contrast, the Black youth shared a different experience. Youth and their family members would not know how to make these items, they shared. Sheila stated, “My grandma would not know how to make these foods.” Tonya shares,

From my observation, it seems like a older Hispanic person would shop there.

They cater to a lot of generic brands as well as Mexican brands. I would not expect it due to the store name City Market.

Tonya implies that perhaps the name might be different based on what the store stocks.

Still other co-researchers noted a difference between the majority of the products and the people present. Sheila and Terek describe who the store caters to in this way:

[The people there were] African American and Hispanic. Not a lot of people.

Didn't expect to see a lot of African Americans because the store has a Hispanic vibe. – Sheila

Latinos (mostly Mexicans); low income customers. The products are catered to Mexicans but when I go I usually see only Black people. – Terek

What the youth noticed speaks to demographic trends in other areas undergoing urban change. In a study of corner store food access in the Bay Area of California, Short and Guthman (2004) find the locations tended to target Latin@ customers even if the area remained predominantly African-American by selling products connected with Latin@ cooking. In certain respects, the line between Latin@ and Black food preferences may be drawn too decisively here; the authors assume certain products such as beans are not also incorporated into meals prepared by African-American consumers. As noted in this dissertation, Black consumers may also come from multiracial/multicultural backgrounds and identify as African-American *and* Latin@, and they have an intimate relationship with Latin@ food traditions.

When the youth co-researchers describe their favorite meals (Chapter 6), many of the options that make their mouths water indicate cultural exchange with Latin@, particularly Mexican foodways. Indeed, Pilcher (2015) documents Latin@ influences in

American eating (and food production) more generally. In the field site of the article (California) and in Texas, Latin@ populations have maintained a historical presence, shaping what people eat and sell; in other parts of the country, African-American adoption and re-creation of tamales, a Mexican heritage food, have traveled from the Mississippi Delta to Chicago and California via migration from the South (SFA 2015). In short, though items at City Market appeared to target a Latino/a market, African-American shoppers may have been cooking or eating the same foods as well.

However, Short and Guthman (2004) bring up an important point about the cultural dimension of access, and in the case of this City Market visit many of the African-American youth did describe a gap between what their family bought and prepared, and what was available. Guidelines for food security emphasize not only access to “healthy” or “fresh” foods, but also to culturally relevant options; our fieldtrip and related scholarship illustrates how a food place may differently meet the needs, desires, and food knowledge of populations who share geographic space (Short and Guthman 2004). As a result City Market and other retailers may offer wide-ranging food access for one group but limited access for another, an example of differential access situated along ethnic and/or cultural lines.

In addition to a potential lack of culturally-relevant options, the youth co-researchers and I noted expired packaged items and rotten produce at City Market. For some, these products colored the entire experience of the store. Tonya noted,

I think the foods are well packaged and look good enough to buy as well as the

vegetables but they need to make sure the fruits and vegetables stay presentable. City Market has some what good quality but not as good as my usual grocery store. Maybe because they have lower income or the lack of taking care of their projects.

Isaac, an African-American co-researcher, similarly described store quality as “not good”, “when it came to the perishables”, but that the store’s canned options were more attractive. In contrast Eric, who frequents the store on a regular basis compared to other team members, critiqued the store as “nasty”. He added, “Some of the food isn't fresh, most of the fruit were molded”. His family, he described mainly purchased packaged or processed goods from the store, rather than perishable items.

Compared to the other grocery stores visited, City Market - frequented by most of the Black youth - was the only one where the co-researchers observed moldy or expired food products. Critical marketing scholars consider how the goods people purchase and what is available to them is bound up with a sense of self and personal identity; broader social structures such as race/racism and class shape not only where retailers such as food places are located, but also what people consume and how (Shankar et al. 2009; Cherry et al. 2009; Harrison et al. 2015; Thomas 2013). Douglas (1996) considers how consuming goods is a social practice. In a consumer society, to consume is to foster social relationships and meet social obligations. Taking these interventions into account, what food places offer reflect their socio-economic geography (demographics, the local real estate market, planning and zoning processes) as well as the extent to which they value shoppers – socially and economically. Options reflect this value or lack thereof,

communicating to shoppers like the youth co-researchers and their guardians their “place”

When the youth theorized why poor quality foods might be available at City Market, they explored connections between condition of foods, race/racism, class, and place. Terek shared,

I usually go to the organic section in HEB or Whole Foods. The quality of the food was better in those places, it probably has to do with race and income level of the customers. [He continued] They probably decide based on who lives in that area and what they eat, how much they are able to spend.

Sheila, another African-American co-researcher, offered a comparison based on her personal experience at her regular grocery store:

City Market has some what good quality but not as good as my usual grocery store. Maybe because they have lower income or the lack of taking care of their [products].

Read together, Terek and Sheila theorize the interconnections between markets, consumption and place. They consider the difference race and class make. Both of them primarily frequent other grocery stores, grocery stores with better quality products than what they encountered at City Market. While Terek accounts for more structural issues (perhaps being in a low income area determines what shop owners stock), his comment also suggests individual actors: store managers actively “decide”, making decisions based on demographics and retail operations. Sheila points out how these same actors may not

“take care of their products”. Who “they” are is more ambiguous in this statement, and rather than attempting to figure out the “they”, its ambiguity can offer insight.

If the “they” is read as customers, her comment brings to mind culture of poverty discourse which understands low income behaviors as inherited, inoculated by the situation in which people live; if her comment is read as store managers, similar to Terek’s point, store managers are choosing not to take care of the products they sell; and if her comment is read as employees, their work does not involve managing products closely to maintain sustained quality. Sheila’s ambiguity allows for an even greater understanding of the store as a peopled establishment, rather than as a monolithic one representative of the capitalist market at work; at the same time, the ambiguity touches on how low quality products do not just link up with lesser value of local residents – but with assumptions about the character of low income communities.

Shortly after our store fieldtrip, the City Market on Airport Boulevard changed ownership from Kroger, Inc. to Arlan’s Market Inc., a small, family-owned grocery store chain that continues to expand beyond its original location in South Texas. In addition, Arlan’s purchased two other City Market locations in the Austin area. The fact that the retailer in this area is a smaller-chain grocery store rather than a larger one reflects supermarket patterns in low-income areas. Larger chains tend to open in wealthier areas; the stores do the same in other overdeveloped contexts laboring to address “food desert” issues (such as in the United Kingdom). In wealthier areas, the stores are more likely to make a profit and experience less food waste, among other factors that will help them thrive, if following the conventional grocery store approach (Wylie 2015).



In 2011, major grocers agreed to open or expand 1,600 supermarkets or convenience stores in areas lacking them by 2016 as part of the Partnership for a Healthier America spearheaded by First Lady Michelle Obama. Reports indicate only 602 new or renovated grocery stores have opened in areas designated “food deserts” (PHA Report 2014). Future research will reveal the reception of Arlan’s Market as well as the maintenance of the store, whether it continues the differential access noted by youth co-researchers, and if it ultimately stays open as one of the few options on Airport Boulevard immediately accessible to local residents, many of whom are African-American and lack access to personal transportation to drive elsewhere.

### **Wheatsville: The Limits of Exploration**

*I saw things that you would expect to see at any store, milk, eggs, bread. The usual. But there is also a lot of unusual things. There were duck eggs, quail eggs. Wheatsville also has a cheese island that was all the cheese at it. – Liz (Latina youth co-researcher)*

Of all the stores visited, youth expressed the greatest curiosity and desire to explore at Wheatsville, a locally-owned cooperative. Compared to both City Market and Central Market (below), Wheatsville is a small-scale, full service market and consumer-owned cooperative. At the time, the store claimed only one location in Austin; it has since expanded to another location in South Austin. The store describes its model as “persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically controlled enterprise” (wheatsville.coop.gov). Most of the store customers are member-owners who cultivate

and identify the common needs of the cooperative. Both of the adults who visited the store with the youth teams – myself and staff from Urban Roots – were member-owners.

Upon entering the store, a compact yet extensive produce section greeted us. As Amber noticed, “everything was labeled sustainable or organic”, including products harvested by the youth themselves. In an on-going partnership, Wheatsville sells Urban Roots products youth crew members help produce; periodically, the cooperative donates a portion of member spending to the local farm youth project. In line with the “local food” focus of Wheatsville and Urban Roots, youth witnessed how food grown in Austin, was also being sold in Austin. In the large-scale, industrial food system produce may travel up to 1500 miles to market (cuesa.org). The tour emphasized an example of local food system, as they witnessed food they cultivated and harvested for sale in the city where they live.

What became immediately clear, however, was a social, economic, and geographic distance between the lived experience of the youth and what they encountered at the store. The store is located West of I-35 and is not within walking or easy biking distance from the different parts of East Austin where most of the youth reside. While the youth were intimately involved in the production, they were not so in terms of consumption. Among the team that reported on this store, most identified as Latino, two identified as white, and two identified as African-American. Among the Black and Latino youth, none shopped regularly at Wheatsville; for all, this was their first time visiting the store. Jeremy, an African-American co-researcher, described “knowing what to expect” based

on experiences at similar establishments, though these were not part of his everyday food experience.

While the store was not a home store to most youth, this lack of everyday connection underscored contrasts with their usual grocers as well as deep differences between options available in West Austin, compared to East where the majority of the Black youth reside. Multilayered aspects of distance (social, economic, geographic) rendered the store a site of exploration for youth co-researchers: in part because of their lack of familiarity with the store (and with the cooperative model), their ethnographies demonstrated a sense of curiosity. Yet while the other store visits also showed curiosity, the Wheatsville visit elicited something more – a sense of not just curiosity, but *discovery*. A close look at the tour reveals how the framing of Wheatsville as the purveyor of “good food” played a key role in this sense of discovery.

We began the tour in the aforementioned well-stocked and diverse produce section and made our way to the bulk section. Here the general manager met the group, described the cooperative framework of the market, and launched our adventure with a key point: the manager emphasized what he “always tells people”, that Wheatsville is focused on selling “good food”, not “cheap food”. With reference to “good food”, the manager echoes the broader sustainable food and health food movements. The framing of Wheatsville as a “good food” outlet begs deeper attention because of the ways in which the concept speaks to and reifies the multilayered distance I noted above (social, economic, and geographic), particularly in the context of a tour with predominantly youth

of color from primarily low-income homes. Furthermore, this framing played a key role in setting the conditions for exploration and discovery – with bounds.

As scholars of food and food systems point out, the concept of “good food” signals a broad, sometimes contradictory “repertoire” of consumption practices that involves consuming organic, fair trade, local, and/or cruelty-free, among other labelled foods (Johnston et al. 2011). Dominant ethical eating discourses in North America tend to emphasize environmental or “green” issues and personal health, rather than social justice issues, and eating along these lines is often – as the youth co-researchers note at Wheatsville, more expensive. As noted in Conceptual Frameworks, the good food/bad food dichotomy “others” populations like co-researchers and their families who may not consume “good food” for social, economic, and geographic reasons – and because “good food” may not be flavorful to them. Fast food is perhaps the epitome of “bad food”, and fast food figures prominently where Black and Latin@ co-researchers resided in East Austin. Some Black youth counted going to fast food places or mainstream chain restaurants with friends and family among their favorite food memories.

In short, as most of the youth co-researchers of color navigated Wheatsville and its focus on “good food”, they claim easiest access and preference for foods that do not necessarily align with the ethical eating repertoire. Indeed, during the tour they experienced a discourse which inherently stigmatizes many of the foods they eat and enjoy. This disjuncture between their everyday access and what they encountered at Wheatville seemed to heighten their sense of exploration in the store as well as the potential for surprise. They were fascinated by novel foods they had not encountered

before; they were surprised to recognize what might be called snack or heritage foods given the “good food” framing of Wheatsville. Amber wrote, “There were some food items I didn't expect to be there like duck eggs or like some candy (I saw angry bird candy).” While the quail and duck eggs were surprising because she and other youth were not used to seeing them being sold in a grocery store, the candy appeared to surprise her because it was familiar. Armando, another Latin@ youth, was surprised to see organic tortillas sold at Wheatsville, perhaps because they are a heritage food item or because they are not necessarily associated with “good” eating.

While such snack and what might be called heritage foods surprised the youth, the items also reflected a family-friendly environment. Compared to City Market, the youth noticed more customers overall, especially families with parents, children and teens. The youth co-researchers also noted intimate, close relationships among the employees. Jose shared, “The interactions I saw of Wheatsville and their customers were friendship because when I looked at people ordering their food I saw smiles and I heard laughter between the customers and employees.” To this Armando added, “I saw that they talked to each other, smiled, and always helped the customers out.” The intimacy of the tour, the smaller size of the store, and the social interactions youth noticed among employees at the store, also seemed to contribute to the youth’s sense of exploration at Wheatsville.

The youth also noticed how most customers did not seem to share their racial or cultural backgrounds. Black youth co-researchers described seeing “older white women” (Darell); Isaac observed “people of every age, and I saw mostly Caucasian” but also noted a few African-Americans were present. The youth also noted differences in quality

between Wheatsville and their home super markets. Sharing again, Darell noted, “The quality is better than my normal store I go to”, while a fellow Latina co-researcher, Audre, observed, “They seem to have better freshness and quality than my nearest HEB. They seem to take items down if they're not sold within a few days.” Audre implies that, as in the case of City Market, she might come across goods that are expired or close to expiration where she usually shops. Together these observations – of shopper demographics and disparate quality – express social and economic distance. While the Wheatsville tour engaged the youth, and while the youth were able to engage with the products and the people, for most the store was out of reach.

For one co-researcher, Wheatsville was a regular part of her life. Emily, one of the white-identified youth, wrote about her experience going to store since age 6:

I like Wheatsville because it's clean and familiar and I trust the products. The employees are friendly and all the hippie health food stuff my family likes is stocked there. They have things like tempeh, mochi, coconut yogurt, chia seeds, and all that. Everybody who works there is really nice and pleasure[able] and it smells good and you can have the BEST MEAL for under \$5. It is beans and rice with cheese, salsa, and nutritional yeast and a Mexican coke (99 cents!!) which is great. Got mad love for Wheatsville.

Emily's appreciation for the market stems from its familiarity, its cleanliness, and its “hippie health” values. She demonstrates knowledge of foods aligned with the “good food” concept in terms of the focus on nutrient-dense foods, or superfoods, especially those from beyond North America, including imported coconuts and chia seeds from

Central America; tempeh, a soybean cake, hails from Indonesia. For Emily, the cosmopolitan selection of foods makes Wheatsville a place to explore. Her experience of “good food” at the grocer reveals another contradictory aspect of ethical consumption: how the focus on healthy foods can also mean non-local origin of goods – maybe another aspect of ethical consumption about how the focus is on local foods but they can come from afar. Her journal also reveals how familiarity has helped her create an affordable snack (one that might be called Tex-Mex, that again includes products from another country, in this case Mexican soda). In this case, access to “good food” is an opportunity to innovate, to create something that is affordable for her budget as a teenager as well as for her family. Yet again, her experience as unique among the youth from the farm; further food diaries revealed her access to still other, more expensive organic establishments in East Austin, in contrast to the aforementioned favorite fast food places of most Black youth working on the farm.

In spring 2014, two years after the Urban Roots fieldtrip to Wheatsville, I attended the Austin Co-Op Summit as a participant observer. Held annually, this conference focuses on the local cooperative economy; cooperative enterprises from throughout the Greater Austin share their experiences, insights, and next steps. There, the same manager who guided us on the Wheatsville tour presented the store’s successes and challenges. Among successes were growing member-ownership and the opening of a new location on South Lamar, in Austin’s hip 78704 South Austin zip code. Racial/ethnic diversity was one of the challenges Wheatsville expressed, in terms of both hiring diverse employees

and in terms of member-owner diversity. These concerns underscored how the social, economic, and geographic distance made clear during the tour, is likely to persist.

The same zip code where Wheatsville opened up its newest location, 78704, is known as the hub of “Keep Austin Weird”. This stretch of North Lamar, increasingly lined with expensive lofts, is predominantly white and wealthier compared to surrounding zip codes. Wheatsville’s locations mirror the socioeconomic geography of Austin; its new opening indicates where there is a growing retail activity in addition to a demographic that will most likely support the enterprise, one that seeks “good food” and is willing/able to pay higher prices for everyday and occasional items at the cooperative.

#### **Central Market: Fresh & Don’t Touch**

*They seem to have better freshness AND quality than my nearest HEB. They seem to take items down if they're not sold in a few days. – Audre (Latina)*

*The quality in the Central Market was more fresh. The way they make sure how their produce is getting to them and how old the food is. In normal supermarkets like HEB and Fiesta they don’t have things like this. – Nick (Indian-American)*

During the visit to Central Market, youth again enjoyed a tour of the store led by an employee guide. Their reflections afterwards consistently compared Central Market to their home HEB grocers or to international purveyors (Fiesta); although Central Market is an HEB brand, the youth identified more differences than similarities between their home markets and the store they toured. Indeed, the youth did not identify the stores as part of the same corporate grocery store chain, and the tour guide Amanda focused on Central Market’s offerings without drawing relationship to the overall HEB brand as well. At



Wheatsville, the social, economic, and geographic distance the youth describe/the tour unveiled has much to do with the location as well as the type of cooperative enterprise the store is. In the case of HEB-Central Market and “regular” HEB stores, corporate marketing actively distinguishes between its branches which offer “unmatched selection of domestic and imported goods” and its stores which abide by the long-established mantra “here everything’s better”. Central Market positions itself as a specialty market, a point Nick picks up on when he describes how the market demonstrates fresher items than “normal” grocers like its HEB cousin. A Google Plus page for the market reads, “At Central Market, we're really into food. With hundreds of cheeses, thousands of wines, acres of produce, and aisles of experts, we make it our mission to help you experience food in a whole new way. Plus we think beyond the plate, with cooking classes, live music, and more at every location. So come fill a basket with your favorites, and fill your head with ideas.”

In addition to the food-related experiences Central Market offers, the expanded social media presence further situates the market as a direct competitor to Whole Foods, the nation’s leading organic grocer with its corporate headquarters in Downtown Austin. Whole Foods’ target market is the “connected”, wealthier, ethically-inclined, health-focused consumer as well. Shortly after opening, the store was quickly dubbed “an amusement park for food lovers” and “became one of the city’s most popular tourist destinations” according to the Central Market website. In comparison to Central Market, HEB stores serve primarily low-to-middle income consumers (predominantly Black and Latino families in East Austin), promising quality service and goods as one of Texas’

oldest grocery store chains. Though HEB has long carried an organic selection at its regular outlets, the youth identified gaps between what they experience at their typical HEB and what they encountered at Central Market.

“Freshness” emerged as a recurring theme among in the youth co-researcher ethnographies. This may be because our tour lingered near the seafood counter where the guide described, in depth, how a special seafood tracking system documents where the fish or other seafood items were caught, their journey to market, and how long this journey took; Amanda, our guide, shared how customers could track/follow the journey of their seafood choice on-line. As Darell, an African-American co-researcher points out, “[Central Market] makes sure how their products are getting to them”. At the same time, the youth pointed out how the store seems to take down expired products and maintain freshness. Their comments strongly imply the lack of fresh foods, and the presence of expired or older goods, at their home markets. Audre’s comment further distinguishes between quality and freshness: “They seem to have better quality AND freshness than my nearest HEB” (capitalization hers).

In their observation of customers at the market, the youth described a wide-range of ages and primarily white-identified customers. In comparison to Wheatville, they noticed individual shoppers rather than families, and they theorized how the “freshness” they observed might relate to price of products, the values of the market, and the values of the customers themselves. In their analysis, attire of individual shoppers plays a prominent role. For example, Maya, one of the Latin@ co-researchers, witnessed

A lot of women, younger to middle age. A little more wealthy, very fit, workout clothes . . . They can be fancier, very health conscious, can afford more, and its worth it to pay more for those things. Care about where their food is coming from.

Audre similarly proposes the customers are “willing to pay a few extra dollars for “fresh, diverse food,” noting international options available at Central Market. She highlights how the customers appear to be “physically fit”. In both of these reflections, the youth co-researchers draw a connection between the cost of products in the store, the product selection, and the attire of the customers. Jeremy’s comment draws on similar visual and product cues, while making a more concrete link, drawing a stronger connection between consumption and identity. Among the Black youth co-researchers, he writes that customers seem to be “older and maybe white both male and female and lots of money”, adding that they are “healthy and like fresh things.” The customers choose to buy items framed as healthier and fresh; therefore they are healthy themselves.

Youth reflections paint a consumer portrait that mirrors that of the ethnically conscious consumer described by Johnston et al. (2011), Guthman (2009), and other food scholars. Furthermore, the youth emphasize *choice*. The customers are *choosing* to purchase items, *willing* to pay more money, and *like* fresh things. This reading resonates with how ethically conscious behavior tends to play out: as an individual choice. This portrait captures a market and demographics which do not resonate with most of their experiences as a youth team; the portrait underscores their social, economic, and geographic distance from Central Market, this time in the context of a store that is part of a chain many of them actually frequent. The absence of a store like Central Market, and

the presence of “normal” grocers with questionable quality where they live, underscore uneven access to what the youth describe as “fresher” foods. Such distance complicates the opportunity to choose.

Darell broaches access, offering, “All the foods they got there was fresh and they were super pricey too. But it all made sense because of the freshness they had”. His comment brings to mind the ways in which youth connected quality, freshness, and cost at City Market, revealing an understanding (and an expectation) of the capitalist market. The fact that fresh food must, should, or will cost more is taken as a matter of course. Again, this understanding/expectation begs attention because of its implications for him and his family, as a Black youth from a low-income home, who resides in a predominantly low-income area of the city.

Youth reflections raise further questions. To what degree did the whiteness of the customers render them always already “healthier” to the youth? Would Black consumers carry the same healthy connotation for them? In other words, in what way do their observations not only describe the store, but also touch on representations of “healthy” (and who has access to healthy) food in their daily lives? To what degree is a store like Central Market, the products sold there, and the attire the people were wearing always already identified with white and/or wealthier consumers by the predominantly non-white youth because of the stock stories about health and wellness in the United States?

As with Wheatsville, the youth shared a sense of exploration in Central Market: in this case theirs was an adventure in “freshness” as we toured the ample produce section, seafood buffet, and specialty packaged goods, and abundant salad bar. Youth had

opportunities to taste samples throughout the store. But while youth ethnographies of Wheatsville described “friendship” and “families”, less socially-intimate terms (“polite” and “nice”) punctuated their descriptions of Central Market. They noted what might be called another form of distance - interpersonal distance - within the store. The tour guide, they noted, did not introduce the group to employees working behind the specialty counters, even as we stood in front of the counters as a tour group.

Maya wrote, “They seemed polite/slightly uptight like when passing us in the aisles”. In a similar vein, the youth described not feeling “in touch” with the products. As Audre described, “The unwritten rule would be not to touch something unless you were buying it”. Jeremy also notes, “They were more nice [compared to at his home market] and I felt like I should not touch anything.” Jeremy further questioned if the tour guide’s warmth was genuine, noting, “She acted a little too excited to do this [tour].” Though friendly, the youth understood the tour/experience was not meant to be a hands-on and some questioned the welcome. The youth expressed this, despite the fact that “they let you taste thing[s]” and “they had it to where you could see and reach everything unlike HEB” (Jeremy).

At Central Market, items were within reach, but seemed untouchable; people were in proximity, but seemed disconnected. The layout of the store may have amplified this sense of disconnection and distance for some youth team members. Three of the team members found the store to be well-organized with “sections for everything” clearly labeled (Amber). But two co-researchers found the store “confusing”. Maya shared, “It’s

huge and has so many different sections”. She added, “I’ve always thought it was kinda confusing.” Audre seconded this opinion:

It’s very organized in all departments of the store. It was easy to find stuff. But the layout of the store was like a maze. You had to walk all through the place just to get to another part of the market.

During the tour, the guide did not clarify an intention for the layout. An on-line press kit, however, describes the design at length. According to the kit, the “a serpentine flow and full-view, European-style layout” invites customers to experience food with all senses, greeting customers with “the energy color and aroma of coffees, hot baked breads, vegetables, fruits and herbs – some locally grown and others from as far away as Tanzania” (centralmarket.com). The layout seeks to be an adventure; more specifically the layout presents a European adventure.

Indeed, when Central Market first opened, press releases highlighted its “European-style” bakery as well. Guthman (2009) calls attention to europhilia in the alternative food movement, pointing to its focus on European diets and ways of cooking. Here, this observation can be extended to store design. Though there may be foods from Tanzania, they are exhibited within the context of a European market, bringing to mind exploration of far-off lands by European explorers. Company press releases highlight the “European-style” bakery as well. With the exception of hatch chili peppers from New Mexico, Central Market has extended its celebration of Europe to its thematic “Passport” program as well, designed to transport customers abroad via their palates. Since 2011, the Passport has primarily featured European countries with the exception of Brazil (2013);

others have included Spain (2011), France (2012), Brazil (2013), Italy (2014), and Greece (2015). Even in the case of Brazil, the country's people, culture(s), and traditional cuisine maintained an outsider perspective; one Passport article emphasized Brazilian wine, devoting particular attention to Italian/European settlement in the country.

Following Guthman and Du Puis (2010) one might ask what type of European market shapes the store design, since various markets exist on the diverse continent. The dishes and products Central Market chooses to represent countries further reflect how Europe is imagined by the store, consumer "tastes" (literal and cultural), and marketing decisions beyond the scope of this dissertation. What particularly draws my attention here are added examples of distance, this time in a geographic and cultural sense. None of the youth identified with European heritage during the tour or during the research workshops; none described previous travel to Europe (or Brazil) before. Though the store endeavors to bring shoppers to Europe, and to engage shoppers in European exploration abroad, the "confusion" of the layout for two team members suggests something was lost in translation. The coded design and themes signaled incoherence rather than adventure. Since the tour, the Central Market location has changed its layout at the original location we visited as a group. Perhaps Audre and Amber were not alone in their observations.

Since the fieldtrip to Central Market, HEB has launched another organic brand, HEB Organics, available at the non-Central Market located closer to youth and their families. In news media, the chain expresses a desire to provide "affordable organics" to a broader consumer demographic. Yet while the creation of HEB Organics may have expanded the accessibility to organic foods, its advent also preserved the distinct, specialty character of

the Central Market brand. Distinction between the two brands, maintained by the same corporate entity, is sustained; multiple forms of distance persist between the “home” markets of the youth in East Austin, and Central Market in West Austin.

### **Debriefing**

*There aren't as many grocery stores in the East Side.*

*There isn't as many [stores] in the West.*

*The South is evenly distributed.*

After our grocery store tours, we returned to Urban Roots farm for discussion. During this de-brief, the youth co-researchers reflected on a map generated using Google Maps, which displayed the distribution of stores in Austin. Just above are the observations the youth made. To further explore why the distribution might be fewer on the East Side or to the West, with more stores in the central stretch of the city, I told what Bell (2010) might term a “concealed” story about Austin’s past; this story focused on the 1928 segregation plan (described in greater detail in Chapter 4) I refer to this story as concealed here, because most of the youth indicated that the history was new to them but informs the food landscape they live on a daily basis. They had not encountered this history in their schools, at the farm, or in their everyday interactions with neighbors, family, or peers.

As we processed the Google Map and the history, some of the youth began to make connections between the past and the present; they began to situate themselves in the historical present. Maya asked pointedly, “What? They don’t think we deserve good food because we’re Mexican?” She suggested the group write Michelle Obama about the disparities between local stores. Maya wanted action. While the other youth co-



researchers did not respond with such direct anger or action (some became very, very quiet), the group did express surprise at the persistence of I-35 as a socio-economic boundary.

With the written ethnographies, the youth shared/harnessed/excavated descriptive information and observations, particularly through comparison with their “home” markets. They shed light on the differential access and quality experienced by Black, Latino, and White youth. The discussion fostered further interaction between youth and myself as an adult co-researcher. I witnessed how, in performing the “ethnography” exercise, the youth moved almost immediately into the space of a distant rather than embodied or engaged observer in comparison to the debrief conversation. As Emily put it, “I’ve been going to Wheatsville all my life, and so it’s funny to approach it as an “objective” observer.

Though I did not stress objectivity, the co-researchers claimed it. During the debrief discussion, we moved into a space without pen and paper analysis as a boundary or medium; we discussed in a setting familiar to them (the farm), one where they continued to build and create relationships with each other. In this space, the youth expressed themselves verbally and engaged (or disengaged) with their bodies in the conversation. Now, we contextualized the store tours in history and in geography (maps); in the process, we further contextualized our personal lives – as young people and adults - in the historical present of Austin’s food landscape.

Among Black youth co-researchers, the farm-to-market visits highlighted stark differences between the food retail landscape they access individually and with family.

Their observations mapped the geographic scope of their food experiences. Like their Latino/a peers, they described familiarity with stores East of I-35. Most of the Black co-researchers regularly shopped at the only East Austin store we visited during the fieldtrip, City Market. This store provided poorer quality goods in terms of expiration date and freshness, and a store that appeared to lack culturally-relevant options for them. The youth ethnographies begin to shed light on their personal food geographies, on their food preferences and routines. The following side item delves into the food messaging they receive, process, and resist as they navigate eating, shopping, and buying food.

### **Side Item: Double Consciousness (Eating While Black)**

Film scene: Basketball court at the Andrews School Park in East Austin. During their man-on-the-street interviews, the youth co-researchers stop a young man named Darrion.

Kristina asks, “What kind of food did you grow up with?”

“Neck bones, pork chops, collard greens. You know, you know,” Darrion responded. He continues, “I wasn’t raised around the vegan type or the, you know, just never just raised to eat healthy. But we know about it. Salads. Salads, all the vegetables, of course. It was just never raised, I mean, it was just never enforced.”

In this scene from the youth-directed film, Darrion reflects a common response among Black participants in the course of this project. He describes foods familiar to his lived experience; his description of “soul food” dishes reflects the conversation shared previously, as do the gendered dynamics involved. He follows his description with a comparison with what he defines as “healthy” food, such as “salads” and “all the vegetables”; he indicates that he and “we” (his family) know about these foods and perhaps associated food places, but do not consume them. Specifically, he shares that eating these foods was not “enforced” within his family. His use of the word enforced is particularly interesting, providing a sense of “healthy” foods being associated with rules, regulations, or guidelines within – and perhaps from outside – home.

In the classic analysis *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois defined double consciousness as “the sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt or pity”. In the course of research double consciousness emerged in two related ways. Double consciousness revealed awareness of being a Black research subject for a project on food,

one linked to health due to prevalent healthism, and therefore understood in relationship to the ways Black people's food experiences are reproduced in scholarship, media, and popular culture. Double consciousness also signaled an astute awareness of how the data about the Black community might be used, understood, or disseminated – and of potential impacts for the Black population.

Double consciousness surfaces in Darrion's response at the beginning of this Side Item. In the film situation, he feels compelled to describe "healthy" foods even though they are not a direct part of his lived experience; he further uses the word "enforced", a word that signals the regimen discipline and corporeal control healthism promotes. Other participants illustrated the same, revealing perceptions of "soul food" as "bad" (yet cultural), and other foods as "good". Their responses reflect the broader contemporary food movement as well as an understanding of how Black "subjects" tend to be positioned in food work. When we described the film to interviewees, youth co-researchers and I simply noted that we were exploring food in the Black community. With still other Black research participants, interviewees, and the general public, I used a similar description. Yet the project was often interpreted by Black and non-Black participants, as well as the general public, as one focused on health, healthy eating, or healthy foods.

### *Historical Context*

To a degree, this assumption demonstrates the time/context of this project. In the past fifteen years, documentaries such as "Food, Inc." (2009) and "Forks Over Knives" (2011) promoted widespread critique of industrialized agriculture, animal production practices,

and genetically-modified foods. In popular books, scholar/activists such as Michael Pollan (e.g. 2006; 2008; 2013) link declining human physical as well as mental health and social well-being, environmental degradation, and the global food system; in *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*, Nestles (2007) considers the ways in which food corporations and major food industries such as dairy, beef, and pork shape the food pyramid and nutritional guidelines widely adopted for health and food policy.

While these resources grapple with a globalized food system and genetic technology unique to the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, they build on earlier health movements “seeded” as early as the 1920s in Europe and the United States. Critiques of large-scale industrialized agriculture peaked in the 1960s and 70s; during this counterculture moment, the concepts of “holistic” and “natural foods” gained broader currency in social movements – as well as in the marketplace (Guthman 2004). Within the Black Civil Rights Movement, activists mobilized multiple mediums – including cookbooks, religious institutions, and community education - to emphasize dietary liberation through eating “fresh” and “healthy” (e.g. Gregory 1974). Prominent Black chef/activists such as Bryant Terry follow in this tradition today, with a focus on preparation of “healthy” heritage foods and dishes (Jones 2015).

Historically to the present, the dietary and farming methods advocated by this sustainable food movement have challenged processes and products of the industrial food system. However, critical food and health scholars note, the movement can also affirm the very economic system which renders industrial production of food cheaper and

efficient, and processed foods plentiful. Furthermore, critical food and health scholars deconstruct the ways in which “health”, as promoted through the sustainable food movement, resonates with state articulations of morality, productivity, and citizenship. The 21<sup>st</sup> century alternative food movement, observes geographer Julie Guthman (2011), promotes and demonstrates healthism. From the 1980s forward, healthism scholars engage Foucault (1980) to point out the ways in which early capitalism involved overt “control and suppression of the body” by the state and industry to increase production; corporeal control and body monitoring, Foucault argued, takes less obvious forms in the contemporary age.

Scholarship explores how advertisements and media affect perceptions of health and dis-ease among young people and adults (e.g. Dorey and McCool 2009). Feminist scholars critique the ways in which media, research, state, and medical discourse construct health issues, such as the “obesity epidemic” (Guthman 2010; Kirkland 2011). Through media, images, and discourse, specific understandings of health - such as optimal foods, weight, or exercise practices, gain currency. Such understandings become the standard of health for all populations, regardless of racial/ethnic background, body shape, family history, or class status. Biomedical research consistently validates, measures, monitors, and defines health; because of its cultural supremacy, the Western medical system plays a particular role in shaping and promoting how health is understood and how food is understood in relationship to health.

## *Deconstructing Obesity*

Biomedical research and tools are products of complex social and economic interactions. For one, medical research grapples with unequal racial/gender representation in its studies; most studies involve White men for drugs or treatments made available to the general public. In 1993, the National Institutes of Health adopted measures to better ensure and promote “inclusion of racial minorities and women” in research projects; in 2001 the NIH expanded these measures to require specific details about how interventions may differently affect people of different genders and racial/ethnic backgrounds; and in 2014 the institute has called for more research with female animals in clinical trials to better address women’s health (Harris 2014). These measures have been taken because of a lack of diversity in clinical trials, on both humans and animals. Of concern for this dissertation, findings that inform health baselines such as the Body Mass Index (the primary measure for obesity) and the definition of “healthy” food may be treated as generalizable to all populations; they may be taken up as such in scholarship, in media, and by public health programs. However, African Americans may not be represented in clinical trials, as physical bodies or in terms of their lived experiences.

Considering the Body Mass Index (BMI) specifically, the measure tends to be treated as a stable, accurate one. Developed by Adolph Quetelet in the mid-1800s, the Body Mass Index divides one’s weight by the square of one’s height to determine underweight, overweight, or obesity. However, the BMI is but one way to measure weight, as a measure based on research with a limited demographic (primarily white

participants) and does not account for differences between men/women or body shapes (Guthman 2011; Guthman 2014; Kirkland 2011). BMI terminology and thresholds have also shifted over time and continue to do so, further underscoring how the measure is both subjective and constructed.

In 1988, authorities lowered thresholds for the overweight and obese categories, creating more people who were fat(ter) and therefore at risk of diseases correlated with weight, such as diabetes and heart disease. Obesity thresholds shifted in part to acknowledge overall gains in weight and body changes in the population, but scholars also critique the involvement of pharmaceutical companies in determining this shift. Grants from pharmaceutical companies funded the International Obesity Task Force dedicated to the prevention and management of obesity. Of concern here is how the medicalization of obesity boosts pharmaceutical profits, as well as how relationships between biomedicine, the state, and industry define health/obesity on a global scale – in ways replicated at national and local levels.

More recently in 2006, and in direct relationship with young people, a committee created by the American Medical Association and federal agencies began to consider a shift in terminology for childhood weight, such that children and teenagers in the 85<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> BMI percentiles be designated “overweight” (rather than “at risk” for the condition) and at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile termed “obese” rather than “overweight”. Some public health scholars expressed concern about this shift, noting that the BMI may not be the best measure, BMI cut-offs are arbitrary, and that this shift could over-diagnose young people leading to unnecessary treatment (Moynihan 2006). By 2010, the committee



finalized their recommendation. Following this recommendation, the National Center for Health Statistics and the Center for Disease Control began adopting the terminology for its reports on national public health.

The BMI bears particular significance in the context of this dissertation because of how Black/African-American young people and their families are positioned in the “obesity epidemic”. Based on current obesity measures, 37.9% of Black men over age 20 are obese, while 57.6% of Black women are obese (CDC.gov); African-American women are more likely to be obese compared to any other racial/gender group, and Black girls are considered to be particularly at risk (minorityhealth.hhs.gov). As mentioned, First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move campaign highlights that 40% of African-American children are obese (letsmove.gov). Obesity among African-Americans has received widespread scholarly attention, intervention funding, and news coverage. Widely-publicized statistics, based on the BMI, support the dominant food-as-nutrition narrative that stigmatizes Black health and eating. Hence the assumption that this dissertation project focuses on “healthy” eating, both among Black participants themselves and among the general public. This stock story further assumes that African-American youth and their families lack food knowledge in terms of cooking, growing, and shopping for sustenance. In a study about “soul food” traditions among African Americans, Byars (1996) suggests African-Americans may not be as open and honest about what they are eating because of the stigmas attached to Black eating practices and foodways.

How the “obesity epidemic” has been mobilized to address Black/African-American health reflects healthism. Healthism in research and interventions perpetuates a

focus on individual or household lifestyle behaviors, and in the case of food, on eating, shopping, gardening, and cooking habits, rather than on systemic social issues (racism/sexism/class), potential health risks posed by industrial food production or the use of particular chemicals, or on bias within the medical system itself (such as late or mis-diagnosis of cancer among Black women). Though studies increasingly take spatial matters into account with attention to “food deserts” or the “food environment” of homes, neighborhoods, or schools, the focus ultimately remains individual or family behaviors. These are considered the sources of change. As Kirk and Colquhoun (1989) note, this kind of environmental focus highlights “the possibility of other health-threatening factors beyond an individual's sphere of action, such as geographic location, environmental pollution, living and working space, poverty and stress”, but “its sharp focus on free will and determination nevertheless makes it less tenable to see such factors as pertinent.” In other words, more recent scholarship has the potential to understand health – and food – more systemically and broadly, but does not necessarily do so.

### *Navigating Double Consciousness in the Field*

I explore healthism in depth here, because it provides critical context for this project as well as insight into the “double consciousness” I encountered among Black participants, youth and adult. After recognizing this pattern among participants, I shared my food identity only when necessary or as the topic arose in conversation, because mainstream vegetarianism maintains deep ties with healthism. To identify as vegetarian, then, is to pass judgment. My interactions with Black participants often involved informal connecting during and outside of research camps or semi-structured conversation,

through which participants and I shared about our lives; ultimately, my food identity as a vegetarian was not a secret. Aware of double consciousness, I shared how my vegetarianism stemmed from personal health issues, rather than from a belief in vegetarianism as a healthier or proper way to eat. Still, my food identity routinely compelled participants to share their knowledge of “healthy” or “good food”. I began to understand how even the smallest actions – such as the snacks supplied during youth research camps – impacted our conversations about food.

Furthermore, the research process itself incited double consciousness. Given pervasive healthism discourse about “good” and “bad” food, the concept of food itself lends itself to self-surveillance and self-awareness. In this case, however, I propose that the double consciousness Black youth researchers, among others, expressed during this project had much to do with how African-Americans have been approached by scholars and in scholarship. Black populations in the United States have not only been positioned as unhealthier, but racialized as such. History from colonialism to the present yields a long, documented story of experimentation on/with Black bodies because of assumed anomaly, lack of wellness, or questionable physical, mental, or intellectual firmness. Perhaps the most well-known example of experimentation on the Black population is the Tuskegee Experiment, or the “Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male”. Between 1932-1972 the United States Public Health Service offered treatment to Black men with syphilis; 600 men initially participated, some with syphilis and some without. However, participants were not actually provided treatment, even after Penicillin was identified as an effective treatment for the disease. In 1972, condemnation of the study in

the press led to study closure, followed by a class action law suit in 1974 on behalf of participants. In 1997, President Clinton issued a public apology on behalf of the nation (CDC 2015).

Scholars consistently note the challenge of recruiting Black participants for research, a reluctance researchers connect in part with a history of unethical research practices briefly noted here. What some researchers call “conspiracy theories” regarding experimentation on Black bodies in the United States and abroad persist among African-Americans. Theories encompass a wide range of themes, from the intentional infection of Black populations with viruses such as HIV/AIDS, to the introduction of drugs into predominantly Black communities (such as crack cocaine), to suspicion regarding contraception (e.g. Bohnert and Latkin 2009; Harris 2009; Thorburn and Bogart 2005).

As a researcher, I am intimately familiar with these narratives, because they also circulate among my family members. Black populations may not be fully aware of specific details regarding experimentation on Black bodies, in part because related studies and institutions may require exclusive access. However, what might be called oral history or collective social memories of experimentation - transmitted between family, neighbors, and social networks – importantly testify to an on-going sense of oppression and surveillance among African-Americans. They signal distrust in the Western medical system, the state, and the relationship between the two. This distrust is not unfounded.

Though I did not struggle to recruit participants, perhaps because of our shared identity coordinates, these oral histories and social memory did surface in the course of research. For example, one mother asked me to change her child’s name and not use his

image in association with this project because of concern about how “they” might perceive a project focused on Black youth and Black history. Here “they” signaled the state, the government, and white people or those with social power more generally. Both expressions of double consciousness – awareness of Black stigmatized foodways and awareness of the research process – surfaced in this project, and both shaped what Black project participants shared about food in their daily lives.

## Chapter 6: Favorite Meals

*Food Diary #1: “Write about your favorite meal using as many of your senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, sounds) as possible. You can draw pictures along with your description too. Feel free to use the back of this sheet or to add another sheet of paper”*

During the first workshop at the Urban Roots farm, I invited the youth to describe their favorite meal with all of their senses. The prompt, shared above, also invited them to share the setting, where they usually eat their favorite meal, and the people typically with them as they do. In the diaries, both their inner and outer food geographies begin to emerge. Their openness breaks from the “unhealthy” vs. “healthy” dualisms and appears to shed – or at least release – double consciousness. These diaries describe their immediate built environment, including retail access beyond supermarkets described in Chapter 5. In line with scholarship about fast food density and consumption in Black neighborhoods, the youth mention eating out or frequenting fast food establishments (Williams et al. 2012). Also in line with findings, they describe eating at home with family as well as frequenting convenience stores. These diaries connect deeply with home. Home is the central site where the favorite meals tend to be eaten, or if the meal is eaten out, it tends to be enjoyed with family. In these case, eating out still carries a sense of home because of the people involved.

Where the diaries collected for this project differ is their attention not to specifically “healthy” or “unhealthy” foods, but instead to foods young people enjoy. The diaries

highlight how the youth co-researchers take pleasure in food, especially meals they enjoy most. From this perspective, the inner geographies the youth bring into the material environment come forth: how the youth *feel* about the foods and the food places they describe, the meals they look forward to, and the memories they forge for themselves/with others in the process. This side item highlights the favorite meals of eight Black-identified youth co-researchers who also worked as farm interns at Urban Roots, starting with favorite meals while eating out and convenience foods, and closing with home-cooked meals. I continue the pattern of moving from the broader landscape to the home to maintain a sense of the youth in contact, again contrary to “parochializing” their daily lives. To emphasize youth voices, their diaries appear first, followed by discussion of themes among them.

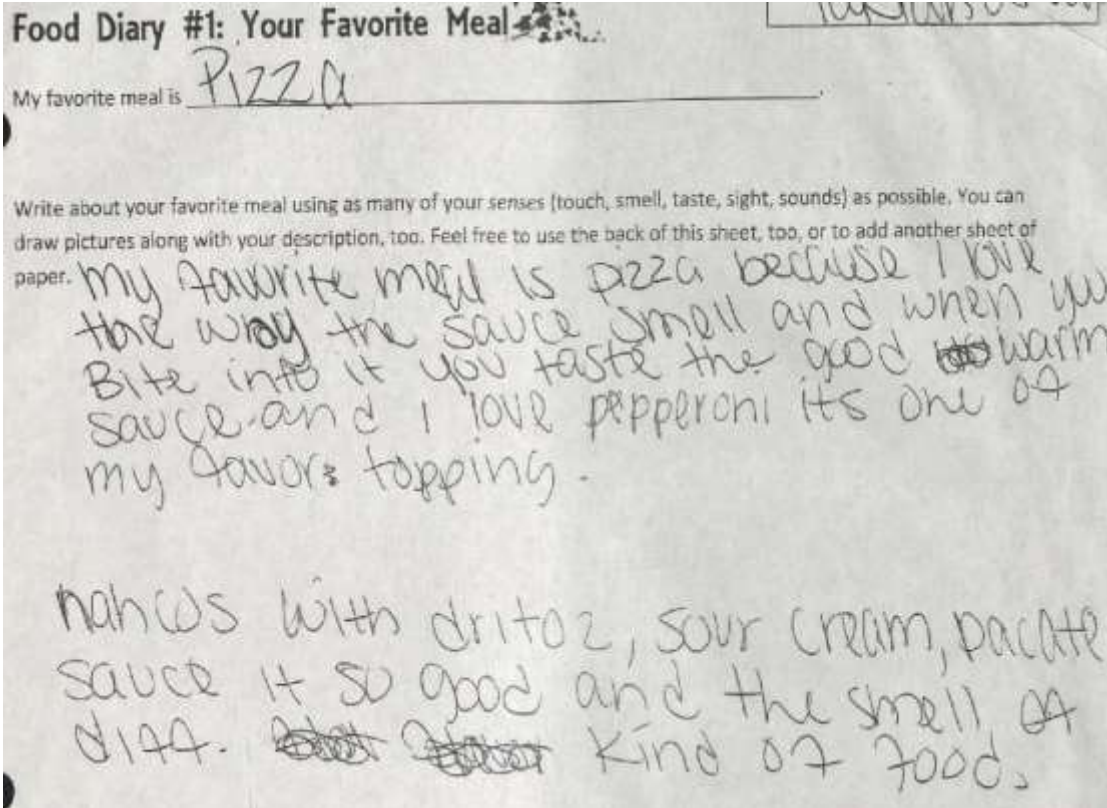


Figure 10: Trina's Food Diary



## Food Diary #1: Your Favorite Meal

My favorite meal is

Pizza

Write about your favorite meal using as many of your senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, sounds) as possible. You can draw pictures along with your description, too. Feel free to use the back of this sheet, too, or to add another sheet of paper.

When I touch pizza it is greasy and soft. When I eat pizza it taste like cheese and paradise. When I smell pizza my mouth start to drool. When I taste some pizza I hear the sound of crunch, crunch.

Imagine the setting for your favorite meal. Who do you usually eat this meal with, and where?

The setting I eat pizza's at the most is Mr. Gattis and I usually eat pizza with my mom.

Figure 11: Isaac's Food Diary

# Food Diary #1: Your Favorite Meal

My favorite meal is Cheeseburger // fries

Write about your favorite meal using as many of your senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, sounds) as possible. You can draw pictures along with your description, too. Feel free to use the back of this sheet, too, or to add another sheet of paper.

Cheeseburgers are so good just thinking about them makes you water at the mouth. They smell awesome you can literally smell the meat and melted cheese. The buns are soft and the meat has crisp on the edge. The cheese taste is much better melted and the meat tastes cheesy and meaty. The buns like a tanish color, brown meat, yellow cheese, and brown crispy fries.



Imagine the setting for your favorite meal. Who do you usually eat this meal with, and where?

Family @ mic Duncans

Figure 12: Sheila's Food Diary

## Food Diary #1: Your Favorite Meal

My favorite meal is Breakfast Tacos

Write about your favorite meal using as many of your senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, sounds) as possible. You can draw pictures along with your description, too. Feel free to use the back of this sheet, too, or to add another sheet of paper.

It is soft and smell when ~~it's~~ there cook with all type of breakfast foods. The taste is good that's why I like it. It's ~~white~~ soft tacos with breakfast food in it.

Imagine the setting for your favorite meal. Who do you usually eat this meal with, and where?

I mostly eat breakfast tacos when I walk to school because it's a taco stand

Figure 13: Darell's Food Diary

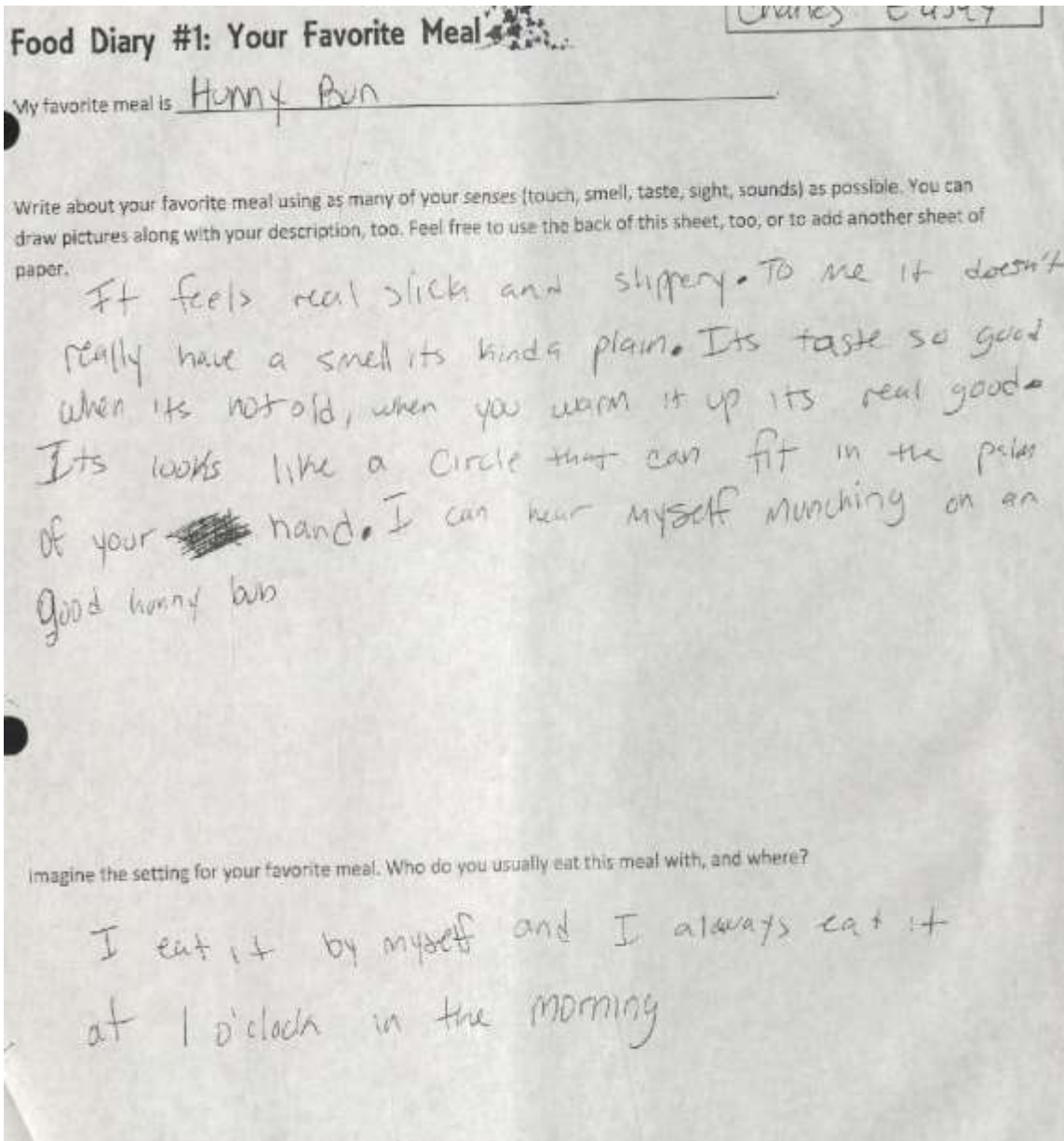


Figure 14: Eric's Food Diary

**Food Diary #1: Your Favorite Meal**

My favorite meal is majority of what my mom cook.  
Crab leg, Nachos

Write about your favorite meal using as many of your senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, sounds) as possible. You can draw pictures along with your description, too. Feel free to use the back of this sheet, too, or to add another sheet of paper.

my favorite meal is hot wings, but I love every meal my mom cook. It smell good. the chips from the nacho's is cruch and she put turkey meat, with taco season and cheddar streed chise. so it be so chese. and good.

Love food!

Imagine the setting for your favorite meal. Who do you usually eat this meal with, and where?

with my mom and brother's at home

Figure 15: Brittney's Food Diary



**Food Diary #1: Your Favorite Meal**

My favorite meal is Stuffed shells

Write about your favorite meal using as many of your senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, sounds) as possible. You can draw pictures along with your description, too. Feel free to use the back of this sheet, too, or to add another sheet of paper.

white shells stuffed with turkey, pasta sauce and spices.  
Smells like pizza but when you bite into it has a juicy consistency unlike any other food you've tasted.

Imagine the setting for your favorite meal. Who do you usually eat this meal with, and where?

I usually eat this with my family at the dinner table.

Figure 16: Terek's Food Diary

**Food Diary #1: Your Favorite Meal** Date

My favorite meal is stuffed shrimp / cajun shrimp over rice

Write about your favorite meal using as many of your senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, sounds) as possible. You can draw pictures along with your description, too. Feel free to use the back of this sheet, too, or to add another sheet of paper.

My favorite meal is simple but tasteful. You use fresh shrimp and ~~sete~~ saute them in a mixture of butter and spices and place them on a bed of cooked rice. The smell is to die for if you enjoy spicy food, it is messy and so good to where you lick your fingers everytime. It is a dual red color blending with the bright whiteness of the rice.

This meal I like to eat by myself due to the fact I love to reflect and treat me. The sizzling sound of the shrimp and the steam coming from the pan makes me proud to be able to accomplish such a dish.

Imagine the setting for your favorite meal. Who do you usually eat this meal with, and where?

I normally eat this meal with either my father or by myself. It would take place at my father's living room or my bedroom. Somewhere where there is a tv.

Figure 17: Tonya's Food Diary

## **Reflections**

These youth diaries reveal diversity among the youth participants, including key themes and outliers. Among the four shared themes are embodied bliss (shared through/via different textures, they describe their favorite meals as 1) a medium that transports them somewhere or to a different state of being (embodied bliss), 2) ready-made (finger foods) vs. home-cooked meals, 3) playing with food, and 4) eating primarily with family. In addition to these, Darell uniquely describes eating en route, rather than at a specific establishment or venue, a seemingly small difference which expands the concept of youth food geographies and illuminates the mobility of young people in the food landscape.

### ***Embodied Bliss***

Throughout their descriptions, their favorite foods awaken their senses/engage their senses in such a way that the food simultaneously brings them into the present and beyond the present, into their bodies and out of their bodies. They describe bliss in the sense of happiness, merriment, and a state of grace; their journals bring to mind ecstasy in the root sense of the word, as their food experiences take them out of their bodies/the present while making their embodied experiences all the more potent and vivid.

For Isaac, the greasy, soft, and cheesy make of his favorite pizza makes him “drool” and he hears the sound “crunch, crunch”. His sensory experience transports him to “paradise”. For Tonya, the smell of Cajun shrimp over rice is “to die for if you love spicy food”; she uses a figure of speech (“to die for”) to communicate how her most treasured dish brings to mind giving one’s self over to another state of being (the afterlife). Her



figure of speech draws attention because of how she juxtaposes a vibrant description of her body and the meal (life), with death. She describes vividly the red color of beans against the “bright whiteness of the rice”; she recalls the “sizzling sound of the shrimp”. She captures a range of sensory experiences available to the physical body while at the same time dramatically referencing its end. This juxtaposition emphasizes not only how delicious this dish tastes but also how transformative it feels for her.

Both paradise and death evoke a sense of mystery and the unknown. To some degree, the youth imply, their favorite meals inspire an indescribable experience. As they imagine their favorite meal, they invite the reader to imagine with them (and to taste the dishes for themselves). Hyperbole serves best. In other cases, the youth co-researchers may not specifically name paradise or death but still refer to uncertainty. For Terek, for example, Stuffed Shells may smell familiar (like pizza) because of the sauces and spices, but its consistency is “unlike any other food you’ve tasted.” Terek similarly takes up an air of mystery, referencing a novel sensory geography that does not quite seem like part of this world, beyond the realm of typical, physical, mundane experience. In still other diaries the youths’ diction reveal a similar sense of wonder and imagination. Brittney’s favorite nachos are “so cheesy and good”. Eric does not just describe the Hunny Bun, he *beholds* the “slick” and “slippery” bun that “looks like a circle that can fit in the palm of your hand”. For him, the Hunny Bun is a fulfilling meal. His diary wonders at the potential of something so small being so immensely satisfying.

Senses work in concert to create the embodied geographies the youth describe. Recalling smells prompts Isaac to “water at the mouth” and “drool.” A combination of

smells make Nachos with Doritos savory for Trina. In fact, “just thinking” about Cajun Shrimp Over Rice makes Tonya’s mouth water. How the food feels to the touch and to the tongue matters, too. Sheila’s favorite meal of Cheeseburgers and Fries from McDonald’s includes melted cheese, and while the “buns are soft” the “meat has crisp on the edge”. The contrast in texture only enhances the overall tastes and smells of the experience for her. Sauces or sauce-like textures figure prominently in the youth diaries, as pizza sauce, pasta sauce, picante, or butter. Each time, these serve to enhance the aroma, taste, and consistency of their favorite meals.

### *Playing with food*

Whether fast food or a home cooked meal, most youth describe their experience as a playful one where they literally dirty their hands and fingers. In fact, most of the foods are hand-held or can involve eating with hands, including breakfast tacos, the cheeseburger, the hunny bun, pizza, and nachos. In some of the diaries, eating with hands is not only part of the experience but pivotal. Isaac better grasps the greasy and soft texture of pizza by holding it; Darell appreciates how soft breakfast tacos are to the touch. Eric’ favorite Hunny Bun is “slippery” and “slick” on his fingers. In each of these cases, the foods are unpredictable. How the grease will flow or how the cheese will melt, how the eggs and “breakfast” foods included in the taco will arrange themselves, is uncertain. Each can be mobile, carried around the restaurant, around home, or between home and school. Beyond this measure of control, the youth describe handheld foods as (deliciously) messy. The language they use to describe their food experiences

communicates mystery, bliss, wonder – and play. Their favorite meals, the youth share, do not just taste good. These meals are fun for them to manage, to eat.

Curtis et al. (2010) discuss the mutual construction of childhood/youth and “proper” food: certain foods are considered playful and fit for young people (and therefore more subject to adult supervision) than others. What adult/guardians consider acceptable meals and snacks, they note, can be very different from what young people label a “meal”; in fact, in a sense young people are expected to make food choices that are less “healthy” and perhaps more “fun” and entertaining. Simultaneously, parents navigate dominant health messages about nutrition and obesity on a regular basis, through schools, public health programs, and media; scholars note how parents, guardians, and teachers negotiate these messages, sometime performing “healthier” eating in front of young people, while snacking on less “healthy” food elsewhere (e.g. Petherick and Beausoleil 2015).

Some of the hand-held foods highlighted by youth co-researchers, particularly pizza, have become emblematic of young people “hanging out”. These are foods teenagers are expected to eat and enjoy. The co-researchers’ sense of play extended beyond “young people” foods. Terek and Tonya disrupt notions of what youth eat and enjoy, as they share dishes that might be considered more “adult” in terms of ingredients, preparation, and how they are (expected to be) eaten. They disrupt assumptions, too, about what Black youth eat and about (lack of) cooking knowledge among Black youth and parent. Both of them describe pasta dishes, and for both sauces and spices make the entrees playful. For Terek, the sauce contributes to the consistency which makes Stuffed Shells a novel experience unlike other foods. For Tonya, Cajun Rice with Shrimp is “messy and so good

to where you lick your fingers every time”. In addition to adding flavors the youth enjoy, the sauces make home cooked entrees messier. With sauces, contents like pasta are less easily contained on the fork or spoon, or even in the mouth. Again, part of the joy seems to be not knowing what will happen next as the sauce, pasta, and spices combine.

Tonya expands the meaning of playing with food. In addition to using her hands and enjoying the messiness of her meal, she is the only one who describes cooking her favorite dish by herself, for herself. She uniquely includes a recipe for making the meal, demonstrating her intimate knowledge of the dish. Cooking the meal, she describes, is one way she makes time for herself: “I like to eat by myself due to the fact that I love to reflect and treat me.” She considers the meal an accomplishment, noting, “The sizzling sound of the shrimp and the steam coming from the pan makes me proud to be able to accomplish such a dish”. Not only does Tonya enjoy the food itself, but she also savors the cooking process as a creative one; she creates the dish, and she creates time for herself. Tonya’s diary resonates with how adult Black women interviewed for this project and related work describe playing with food. Eric’s grandmother, for instance, similarly emphasizes cooking as an enjoyable activity that relaxes her and allows her to express herself; she speaks proudly of being able to cook up any kind of steak to a tender item, no matter its quality. In advertisements, cooking/foods are often put forth as treats for one’s self, as a kind of momentary escape from the stresses of life. Playing with food from what might be called an “adultist” perspective alludes to treating one’s self, down-time, and culinary creativity.

At least two forms of play take shape in the co-researchers' food diaries: play and playful foods that may be expected of young people (pizza, for example), and play as self-time (uniquely shared by Tonya). Read together, these responses express the in-between social position the youth occupy as young people who are not quite children and not quite adults.

### ***Eating out/in with family***

Whether the youth describe eating fast food, at restaurants, or at home, they typically describe eating with family. Their responses resonate with other qualitative research focused on young people and food: eating at home or with family outside the home remains common; for this reason, some scholars note connectivity between the home and neighborhood environment, describing how what young people eat can be very connected to a myriad of food outlets available (or not available) (e.g. Watts et al. 2015; Ding et al. 2012). In the case of the favorite meals, for Isaac and Sheila eating out with family is integral to the experience. Isaac savors pizza with his mom at Mr. Gatti's, a food place where customers can sit down and eat together or order out. Mr. Gatti's might be considered a fast food restaurant compared to the others mentioned in the focus group exercise, and the locations in East Austin have smaller dining rooms for a few individuals or families, rather than a restaurant layout with a deeper/more expansive capacity. Sheila shares how she eats McDonald's with her family, using embellished letters that provide a sense of fun, celebration, and enjoyment at the well-known fast food establishment. In both of these cases, the comfort of being with close family members contributes to the

favorite meal. Who the youth are consuming pizza, cheeseburgers, and fries with, matters.

Isaac and Sheila make a key point. As noted before, most spatial research studies how Black youth and adults access food in neighborhood context, with particular attention to issues such as distance and transportation; these studies also focus on access to fast food restaurants with specific attention to how or if the prevalence of fast food restaurants is associated with high rates of obesity in predominantly low-income neighborhoods (e.g. Fraser et al. 2012; Marlow 2012; Chen et al. 2013). Results from these studies remain inconclusive, but such research is already impacting local health and sustainable food policies in Austin. As noted in Chapter 4, the Health and Human Services department attempted to place a moratorium on fast food restaurants along the Airport Boulevard corridor; this is a corridor near where most of the youth sharing in these journals/research reside. Isaac and Sheila, along with youth who participated in the focus group, reveal the significance of having a sit-down place for families to engage not just in eating food, but in a food experience; price and proximity matter, but fast food places also offer an option for families to eat together affordably (expanded on in the following chapter). Their diaries bring attention to Black desires so often overlooked in other studies, including a desire to eat with family outside the home for connection. The youth experience a sense of home with close family members, while outside the home, as they enjoy their favorite meals.

Further study could reveal if the youth prioritize this desire, or if the parents do, and how/if parents' working schedules, transportation, budget, and other key factors make it

more convenient for them to go to a food establishment nearby (fast food) rather than far. What I want to emphasize here is a desire to enjoy a meal out together, at least on occasion, with close loved ones. In addition to price and proximity, family emerges as an important factor in favorite meals. Terek, Maarkeeta, and Tonya demonstrate a similar connection with family from the home space/as they eat their favorite meal at home. Terek and his family eat Stuffed Shells together at the dinner table, while Brittney loves “every meal [her] mom cooks.” Hot wings, nachos, and crab legs are among meals she eats with her mom and brothers at home.

Tonya especially enjoys eating Cajun Shrimp Over Rice by herself or with her father, in her bedroom or in the living room where there is a television. She takes her favorite meal into a variety of settings that share her meal and accessibility to entertainment or media. Tonya’s favorite meal “micro-geography” suggests that even when she does enjoy her meal alone, family is in close proximity at home. When other youth do describe eating alone, they again enjoy their favorite foods at home where family may be near, or en route between home and school (Darell, discussed in more detail below). Eric “munches” on his Hunny Bun in the early hours of the morning at a house where he lives with his sister and his grandmother; Darell purchases a breakfast taco after he leaves his grandmother’s house.

In all of these cases, consuming with family (or alone at or near home) was a source of enjoyment as youth described their favorite meals. But the strong presence of family or home also underscores the in-between social and economic space the youth occupy. Not quite children and not quite considered adults, they are subject to the decisions of their

guardians who provide transportation and housing, and they may be the primary shoppers or buyers of food. By eating meals alone Tonya, Eric, and Darell in particular demonstrate autonomy but may also negotiate home space and time as it relates to meals. Where are they able or expected to eat within the home? When is it considered appropriate for them to eat or purchase, in Darell's case, food alone and consume it alone? These questions can be extended to youth who enjoy favorite meals with family. Is eating with family, either within the home or outside of it, an expectation?

Since each of the youth earn part-time income from Urban Roots, they may contribute to purchasing ingredients for home-cooked meals or ready-prepared meals. Yet such contribution does not necessarily translate into decision-making ability/agency in family context. Trina writes elsewhere, "My mom ask what we want, but get whatever she wants to eat". In addition, lack of transportation mediates how/where they practice their agency. The youth did not have access to personal vehicles at the time of the journal writing. They traveled with their guardians and family members by car, or individually or with others by bus, foot, or bike. What they eat, where they eat, and where they purchase necessary ingredients, leaves them largely dependent on (older) others.

Further research is needed to understand the fine details of negotiation and household expectations for these youth co-researchers. Scholars who have focused on negotiation, food, and young people have primarily focused on younger children of elementary or middle school age. Teenagers may enjoy more mobility in the food landscape; as Darell's eating en route (below) reveals, they are not always with guardians and do not always eat in spaces designed for young people – such as at home or at school. Nor do young people



always eat at specific places such as fast food places or restaurants. Constructed as somewhat autonomous, teenagers may create food places, wherever they find themselves.

### *Eating en route*

Darell demonstrates the autonomy granted teenagers as the only co-researcher who describes eating alone, *en route*, on the way to school. He describes eating his favorite meal, breakfast tacos, “when I walk to school because it’s a taco stand”. While traveling on foot, Darell is without a chaperone or guardian. He has an opportunity to choose his route, to visit taco stands and other food establishments on his way, to decide if he wants to eat a breakfast taco or not. From his description, he chooses to eat while in motion; other co-researchers eat at a table or in front of the television, more or less “in place”. For Darell, his favorite food setting is not a fixed place in the built environment but a familiar thoroughfare instead. His favorite food place is ephemeral, as a taco stand that could easily shift locations. Darell brings attention to youth mobility, ephemeral geographies, and the significance of places in-between. Each remains under considered in research about young people’s food geographies.

While mobility research increasingly draws attentions to the ways in which young people move in urban context, it has yet to fully consider how movement matters when it comes to food. When food is the focus, however, it tends to be from the “obesity epidemic” perspective. Youth may be, for example, followed along with a GPS and log what they ate in order to design anti-obesity interventions or reduce obesity (Carrel et al. 2014; Yin et al. 2013). Such a focus excludes young people’s food experience *en route*, *between* places; however, these studies disrupt the tendency to study children and youth

“somewhere”, and specifically where they are expected to be - in schools or at home.

Mobility studies draw attention to how young people also inhabit spaces in-between, and teenagers, may have more autonomy to do just that/to do. Writing about young people and mobility, Skelton and Gough (2013) call for greater attention to youth as “social and spatial agents” in cities; youth, they note, “not only *in* the city, they note, but *of* the city” (p. 457).

Darell’s morning journey demonstrates his social, economic, and spatial agency, as well as his active involvement in all of these within the urban landscape. His purchase of a breakfast taco at the stand is a commercial transaction, one that economically supports a local food truck. While food stands and trucks do have the capacity to be mobile, his morning ritual suggests that his favorite “spot” tends to remain in place, perhaps in part because of “regulars” like himself. Lemon (2015) describes food trucks as mobile catalysts that incite intimate social interaction between racialized populations and cultural exchange; in a study and film set in Columbus, Ohio, Lemon documents how a predominantly Black/African-American community negotiates a new taco truck on Columbus’ East Side. Food trucks in Columbus and in Austin mark continue to mark demographic shifts in American cities – marking Mexican/Latin American immigration as well as the rise of mobile eateries associated with the alternative food movement (and hence wealthier, whiter populations).

Darell’s favorite meal sheds light on ephemeral food geographies. In the context of rapid gentrification, the food geography of East Austin is always already ephemeral as demographics shift, new ventures renovate older buildings, or as previous establishments

are dismantled to make way for fresh planning ventures. In this particular case, Darell charts an ephemeral microgeography. As a mobile, young food consumer he encounters the taco stand on foot, on a route that he could shift – or that could be altered – on a day-to-day basis. The taco stand itself is mobile. Both he and the taco stand connect because they are both “on the move”; because of their mobility they share in economic, social, and cultural interaction, interactions that contribute to a spontaneous sense of place.

### **Closing**

Together the favorite food diaries map a concealed story, one which disrupts stock stories regarding Black youth, their “tastes”, and their food geographies. The diaries also diverse from stock approaches to studying their relationships with food and place. Co-researchers are not only consuming home-cooked meals with what might be considered “healthier” or “less processed” ingredients, but they are also cooking meals. While they do eat and purchase fast food, they do so with their families in a manner that grants these places personal meaning for them.

From a food-as-social lens concerned with Black life, the diaries draw attention to the desires, senses, and intimate experiences of young Black people; they underscore interrelationships between people and places which make “food” possible in the youth co-researchers’ daily lives. This embodied focus further highlights diversity of food experiences among African-American youth and their households. As the youth share what they enjoy about the smell, taste, look, and feel of their favorite foods, they reveal their particular preferences, households, and palates. Some of them share similar “tastes” and households, while others vary. Their experiences are anything but monolithic.

By highlighting senses, desires, and relationships, the diaries shed light on Black youth diversity, life, and social networks. Focus on who the youth consume and cook food with – on relationships – begins to outline key social relationships, relationships which offer material resources (food) as well as other forms of sustenance (emotional support, time with family, bonding). The following chapter maps how these relationships and youth identities unfold through convenient food places around their neighborhoods: corner stores, fast food and family restaurants, and the school cafeteria.

### Side Item: Signifyin' with Soul Food

*Film Scene:* The youth co-researchers and I continue “man on the street” interviews for the film. The journey takes us from Kristina’s neighborhood to Dottie Jordan Park on Loyola Lane, a park with picnic tables, a playground, and a basketball. The co-researchers interview a few fellow teenagers who are playing basketball and two younger boys. From there, we continue to Eric’ grandmother’s house where the youth interview his grandma, mother, sisters, and aunts. We close at another local park to debrief. The youth directors choose to begin with this question: What kind of food did you grow up with? The final version of the film captures the responses dynamically, moving between interviews, between spaces, and between people to highlight strikingly similar responses:

“Soul food. . .” (Youth at basketball court)

“Soul food. Ham hocks, neckbones, chitlins, collard greens, black eyed peas” (Eric’ aunt)

“Oh all kinds of food. Split pea soup, egg custard, all kinds – like fried green tomato cake. I grew up with country stuff, so you know.” (Eric’ mother)

“. . .corn bread, chicken, you know what I’m sayin’, all the good stuff. Black eyed peas. That’s on Thanksgiving, though, you know.” (Youth at basketball court)

Behind the camera, the co-researchers (the youth, the filmmaker, and I) responded to these replies with verbal and embodied affirmation. We nodded our heads, smiled, laughed, and offered “umm hmms” as interviewees described what they defined as “soul food” or “country food”. The phrases “you know” (Eric’ mom) and “you know what I’m sayin’” (one of the youth playing basketball) were invitations to affirm a shared experience with food as fellow Black-identified people. Through that affirmation, the co-researchers and interviewees established a shared experience of history, culture, and Black racial identity through food. Through that same affirmation, we also participated in the performance of blackness. We *signified*, a practice in Black oral communication and literary traditions through which individuals share “multiple levels of meaning

simultaneously through wordplay, misdirection, and wit” (Florini 2014). Signifyin’ can take multiple forms, including but not limited to innuendo, the use of metaphor or irony, or teasing a person or situation; as this story affirms, signifyin’ can also involve “speaking” with other parts of the body beyond the tongue, with the hands or eyes. Communicated through codified language, language spoken, written, embodied, and in the age of social media even “tweeted”), the practice of signifyin’ refers to, cultivates, and assumes a shared Black culture.

In addition to fostering a sense of connection and a sense of humor, signifyin’ carries still other significance. Literature critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr (1989) writes, “Black people have always been masters of the figurative: saying one thing to mean another has been basic to black survival in oppressive Western cultures”. Signifyin’, then, can be considered a product of the historical processes and conditions Black communities have experienced, emblematic of the historical present. To signify underscores creativity and agency harnessed within/through structural conditions. As this clip above suggests, signifyin’ requires creative imagination on the part of the speaker and the listener. The encoded message is only understood, and the wit or irony only appreciated, *if* the receiver grasps the underlying meaning or experience at work. When the message is “caught,” only then is a connection made.

In this project, co-researchers and other interviewees used “soul food” and “country food” to describe specific food plants, ingredients, and dishes interviewees (and we as interviewers) linked to a shared Black/African-American heritage. “Soul food” and “country food” represent codified language, while the foods each interviewee lists

emerges as a kind of recipe for blackness: if one has eaten, consumed, known, and digested these foods –ham hocks, collard greens, chicken, black eyed peas - one not only knows “soul food”, but one may also know something about being Black in the United States. Indeed, the concept of “soul food” bears historical and cultural weight. Several food plants often named among “soul food” dishes traveled via the transatlantic slave trade to the Americas, where they were cultivated for export by enslaved African laborers and domesticated in “gardens of the dispossessed” (gardens of enslaved Africans and descendants) for subsistence and profit (Carney 2010).

Among the food plants noted by interviewees in this story, collard greens, yams, and black-eyed peas were domesticated in West Africa, transported the Americas during European conquest, and widely adopted in Southern/American cuisine. The rise of the phrase “soul food” during the Civil Rights Movement marks yet another significant historical moment. During this period, “soul food” became a popular phrase in both the celebration and critique of African American cuisine. For some key activists of the period, “soul food” expressed Black power, pride, creativity, and nourishment. For still others, Black liberation required culinary revolution. Elijah Muhammad of the Nation of Islam dubbed “soul food”, “slave food”, while comic-turned-health advocate Dick Gregory published a guide on “cookin’ with Mother Nature” to promote a return to the vegetarian roots of soul food (Witt 2004).

During fieldwork, I witnessed how the term “soul food” still circulates, so much so that interviewees assumed the youth and I consume it, know its contents well, and cook related dishes. Yet like blackness itself “soul food” is a floating signifier, a code

without an agreed upon meaning or single referent (Hall 1997). Interviewees suggest the instability – or perhaps better put, the versatility - of both “soul food” and blackness, when they follow the concept of “soul food” with a list of specific food items. In addition to providing description, these lists clarify for the listener, suggesting the term may hold different meanings. Together, the signifyin’ and lists do other important work. During filming, interviewees immediately assumed we identified as Black/African-American because of our phenotypes and perhaps because of the focus on Black communities.

Both our physical appearances and focus situated us as Black, and specifically, as African-American. But not all of the interviewers/co-researchers claimed intimate relationships with “soul food”. Eric, for example, expressed intense dislike of chicken, often considered a “soul food” meal (his dislike incited more signifyin’, as shared in Chapter 7: Around the Neighborhood). As another example, two of us grew up in multiracial homes with mothers who were Chicana/White (in my case) or Black/Chicana (in Kristina’s case). Our mothers, the primary food preparers and procurers in our homes, did not necessarily grow up with (only) “soul food” traditions (more in Side Item: Multiracial Plate).

When I nodded in affirmation as interviewees described childhood “soul food” meals, I was recalling rare occasions when I enjoyed my grandmother’s collard greens, home-made macaroni and cheese, and peach cobbler; I was recalling academic readings, popular media (such as the movie “Soul Food” directed by Tyler Perry), and past fieldwork on Black gardening and foodways in the United States and Mexico (Jones 2008; Jones 2015). I signified from this place of knowing, rather than from extensive



direct experience. But what proved salient in the moment was not *where* my knowledge came from. What mattered was that I could claim relationship to “soul food” or blackness at all. Because though the youth and I experienced rapport with interviewees, we still did so from behind a camera in the role of co-researchers; we were welcomed in intimate spaces (homes) and intimate moments (basketball playing or visits with elders), but we occupied a position of analysis, research, and observation. Our responses from behind the camera could make or disrupt rapport, cultivate or compromise connection. The practice of signifyin’ revealed that physical appearance did not necessarily inspire immediate connection. By signifyin’ *back*, I clarified my relationship to/with blackness as it was being co-understood at that particular space, place, and time. I cultivated connection with interviewees by engaging in this way, and the youth directors did the same. We communicated our understanding of the historical, social, and economic contexts referenced by two words: *soul food*.

### *Getting Oriented*

In the course of this project, I signified with Black parents, youth, long-established residents, and policymakers who participated during interviews and workshops. Signifyin’ yielded *orientation* in the field, moments of connection and alignment. I connected with youth co-researchers and with interviewees through performances of blackness, aligning myself with a sense of shared identity and history. At times this alignment was conscious; more often than not, the alignment was unconscious and made itself known during self-reflection. Whether participants ‘read’ me as Black – phenotypically and culturally – played a role in how I was received. My other

constitutive identities – Chicana, woman, growing up working class, education – subsequently deepened, enhanced, or restricted orientation; for example, I experienced greater ease of access with Black women than with Black men, youth or adult.

On one hand, orientation fostered comfort, rapport, and access for me as a researcher. Orientation also describes my inward sense of connection with research participants and their families. To this project I bring experience navigating the Austin food landscape as a Black woman, and I come from a low income, working class background. Both my current and past experiences inform my interest in this project, and continue to inspire my community organizing and training around food issues in the broader community. Certain shared experiences, such as growing up food insecure or recalling the hardship of enslaved or sharecropping ancestors, were painful to revisit. Witnessing the financial struggles of youth and their families was challenging, because of my care for them but also because of personal memories. But this, too, was the power of orientation. While being mindful not to overidentify or project my experience onto the youth and their families, I brought not only a shared sense of identity but also empathy to this project.

On the other hand, I became aware of how orientation without critical analysis or awareness could subsume difference; signifyin' might honor similarities and what is perceived as "shared", but disregard expressions, memories, or stories of blackness that did not suit the narrative being cultivated. What experiences or knowledge did I assume as a Black researcher interviewing Black participants, and what did they assume about me? Because of assumptions, did I take any responses for granted? In what ways did the

assumption of our blackness as researcher impact how Black participants responded about their food experiences growing up? In other words, was there an attempt, in that moment, to perform what is expected of Black youth or adults in terms of food?

This latter question is particularly salient given the spaces we moved through for the filmmaking – a basketball court alive with Black youth, a park frequented by Black residents, the home of a Black grandmother (Eric’s grandmother); throughout this project, I moved through spaces with a Black past and present. I moved where blackness as a social construct was already being negotiated when I arrived as a researcher; I entered spaces in East Austin where, due to historic segregation and on-going sociospatial inequality, participants reside in a predominantly Black and Latin@ part of the city. In other words, my body, my research setting, and my participants all maintained connections with blackness as a construct and as a material reality.

In an article fittingly titled “You know what I mean”, Ochieng (2010) describes her experience as a researcher of African descent, focused on families of African descent in Northwest England:

When I felt that families, in their narratives of specific healthy lifestyle subjects, were making assumptions with the expectation that I would understand (“You know what I mean”), to reduce limitations and not to give my own interpretation I deliberately probed, encouraged, and explored the issues further and enabled them to explain their own stories (p. 1729).

While I made an effort to remain self-aware, this dissertation also explores moments in the field where I may not have probed, encouraged, and explored at the time.

In this dissertation, I recapture moments when I may have signified back, without delving into the implied or unsaid. I unpack how participants and I may have performed or assumed a monolithic understanding of blackness; I consider where my questions may have catered to a shared sense of blackness that is honored by popular media and imagination, while not giving difference its due attention. For example, in this same film interview, one of the youth playing basketball also describes eating a “syrup waffle sandwich”. “Soul food” maintains a longstanding history, continually (re)produced in the Black and American cultural imagination; it has become a marker for blackness. This young, Black-identified male described a creative, playful meal outside the boundaries of how Black cuisine is typically imagined. Beyond simply being a different kind of meal, his description was a disruption – a disruption in the seriousness of our conversation, and a disruption from the shared narrative of soul food. Through his lived experience of blackness, waffle sandwiches are also part and parcel of what it is to live as a black, young, and male in East Austin.

Jones (2012) writes, “[W]hen Black representations crack monolithic understandings about Black lives, such representations are actually liberatory rather than suffocating” (p. 255). My challenge as a Black researcher has been to recognize when a shared blackness is perceived, assumed, or performed, without (re)presenting it as totalizing; what is shared also possesses nuance. My challenge was to pay close attention to diversions from what appeared shared or collective; these diversions represent the fullness of black experiences, too often circumscribed in representations of blackness and in studies of Black youth and their families. In still other cases, Black communities

themselves have promoted circumscribed understandings of blackness to promote unity. Yet monolithic representations (re)produce racial stereotypes, fuel discrimination, and inform racial profiling; monolithic understandings of blackness beget public health interventions that fail to consider diversity within and among Black communities; and these same representations give rise to exclusion within Black populations themselves.

This dissertation builds on Jones' (2012) contention: blackness can be “liberatory rather than suffocating” when Black populations express blackness in ways that do not fix or stabilize this lived experience, but celebrate the myriad ways blackness unfolds. Moments of orientation, signifyin', and reflection reframed my research question from being about a study of how Black youth experience food in changing Austin, into an exploration of how youth live food through blackness, in the context of urban change. Reframing opened up space for the agency, cultural production, diversity, and creativity of Black youth and their families; at the same time, reframing maintained my awareness, as a Black researcher conducting research with Black community members, of blackness as simultaneously imagined and lived, historically-constituted and broadly expressed through – and with – food.

## **Chapter 7: Around the Neighborhood**

On Eric's map of food places, he describes places where he buys or receives, grows or consumes, food. His house (mi casa [sic]), a nearby grocery store (City Market), fast food restaurants (Mc Donald's and Jack In the Box), and a convenience store (Best Stop) come to mind; he shows himself without a personal vehicle; he navigates this food landscape by foot or on a bike. While these modes of mobility limit his range to places nearby, traveling quite literally "close to the ground" provides him with intimate knowledge of his immediate food landscape. During a go-along interview, he detailed which fast food restaurants hosted specific discounts, on which days. He shared rumors about certain establishments (he heard from his sisters, for example, that one of the fast food places put rat poison in the food, and since the knowledge came from someone who had worked there, he believed its veracity – and it gave him pause before going there). What he shared was a spatial and temporal map, one drawn together/sewn together through relationships. Eric' map is similar to that of fellow Black youth co-researchers:

McDonald's - I like the food there, even though I know it's not healthy. HEB - me and my family has to drive about 5 to 8 minutes to HEB. City Market - it takes about 11 to 12 minutes to get there from my home. Subway - it may be healthy for you but also unhealthy. Jack in a Box. Churches, Corner store. Golden Chick - I like to eat there. (Brittney)

In my neighborhood I go to get food from somebody house that sell Frito Pie and Burgers. I can just walk there I travel outside my neighborhood and go to Cici

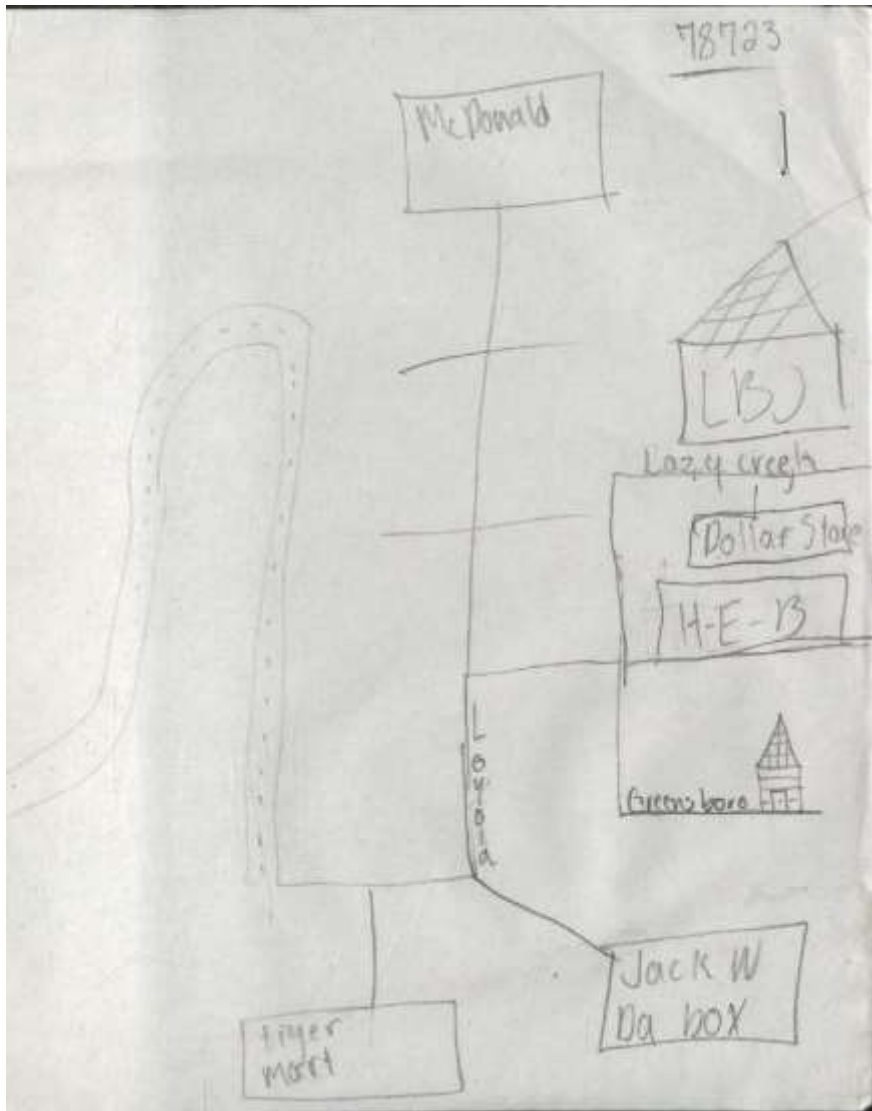
Pizza, McDonald's, Taco Bell, and I can also go to the corner store and get food.

(Trina)

There is a lot of fast food around even HEB is not that healthy and they have lots of junk food too (Jeremy)

Jack in the Box, Subway, Sonic, KFC, China Kitchen, Pizza Patron, HEB, corner store, McDonald's, City Market (Kristina)

In these written and visual depictions of food near where they live, youth co-researchers describe retail and non-retail options; they highlight fast food restaurants and corner stores, major grocery stores as well as other people's houses ("I go to get food from somebody house that sell Frito Pie and Burgers", Trina). Interestingly, none of the youth co-researchers noted the school cafeteria in their diaries. Only one co-researcher, Darell, included food at school (LBJ High School) on his map of food in his neighborhood (Figure 21, next page), in addition to fast food retailers, a dollar store, a corner store (Tiger Mart), and a major supermarket (HEB). However, the focus group interview and informal conversation revealed the cafeteria as a place where they eat as well as navigate social identities including race, gender, and class.



**Figure 22:** Darell's neighborhood food map.

By inviting co-researchers to explore a broad scope of food as relationship in their lives – buying, sharing, receiving, and growing – the diaries highlighted social relationships and interactions mediated through/by food. They shed light on the social and economic dynamics of their households as well as their neighborhoods; they provide insight into how they access food. Again, though the youth were not asked to categorize



“good” and “bad”, “healthy” or “unhealthy” food, they do so of their own accord, again indicating their understandings of what consists of healthy/unhealthy and good/bad food options. This scope further brings into focus food resources underconsidered in geographic scholarship related to Black food access, such as neighbors selling food and family members sharing food; in interviews, the youth further described growing home gardens (and the challenges their families faced doing so).

Scholarship on food access overwhelmingly focuses on retail options; exceptions consider how food sharing supplements access to both food and social support, in both urban and rural contexts, especially among low-income households (Quandt et al. 2001; Brown 2012; Alkon et al. 2013). Food sharing is understood as a cultural practice and social support from a Black feminist perspective; researchers and community organizers emphasize how food is part of “othermothering”, or traditions of caring for other people’s children in Black communities (Collins 1986).<sup>7</sup> Women often play a central role in feeding not only their immediate families but extended community as well. Through social networks, churches, homes, salons, barbershops, and other sites become food places.

This chapter and the next explore the microgeographies and inner geographies of the food places youth describe, with close attention to social dynamics, relationships, and interactions which make these places - and the food they eat or grow there - meaningful.

---

<sup>7</sup> Thinking of the Black/multiracial youth of Africa-American and Latino/a descent, an extensive literature documents how *comadrazgo* (or comadres) in Latino/a communities similarly extend kinship to people beyond biological family; providing social and financial support, as well as access to key resources such as food (Jones 2008; Christie 2008).

Attention to microgeographies opens up attention to identities, social interactions, and structural social/economic dynamics as they manifest where youth consume, buy, grow, and receive food. As revealed below, attention to microgeographies also glimpses the broader landscape of “Eating While Black” in East Austin and in the city overall; the youth, unprompted, consistently compare where they live to their knowledge (and visions) about other parts of the city and its periphery. Here, inner geographies continues to encompass the emotions, identities, and cultural background(s) the youth process they navigate the food landscape.

In this chapter, I devote attention to the relationship between microgeographies and inner geographies, focused on food places of convenience in Black youth’s lives. The corner store, fast food restaurants, and school cafeterias - these are the food places located in close proximity to youth and their families, ones they easily reach by foot, bike, or car. These are also food places emblematic of their (limited) autonomy as they can experience the corner store and fast food by themselves or with friends or, in the case of the school cafeteria, experience lunch beyond direct guardian or parent supervision (though, as explored below, their lunchroom experience is supervised by other authority figures and informed by policies crafted by adults). I focus on these food places because they also figure prominently in current food-related scholarship, policy, and activism: corner stores, fast food restaurants, and school lunchrooms are consistently sites of study and intervention, often informed by the food-as-nutrition approach. While often considered from the standpoint of nutrition or obesity alone, few studies consider these

spaces through a food-as-social lens, highlighting the role of these food places in relationships and identity in young Black lives.

### **At the Corner Store**

“This is about the best store here. I mean, I come to it all the time. I get everything I need here. I would take this place over a grocery store, me personally. Because I can come get milk here, I can come get eggs here. I come and get a lot of things here, actually. I mostly come here for my grandma, though. My grandma pays her lottery and she tells me to go get stuff for her. . . [G]ive me a bike and I’m good. I don’t mind walking, either.” - Eric, interview

Nuggets, wings, barbeque, burritos, egg rolls, breakfast tacos, *pan dulce*. Bright signs on the Best Stop Food Mart advertises an eclectic offering of prepared foods. Items advertised reflect the store’s clientele. Primarily African-Americans and (and increasingly Latin@s) reside in the area. Options on the shelves include the “staples” Eric describes here (milk, eggs), as well as quick “ethnic” snacks. Eric has lived in his neighborhood for ten years. For him, the store has become more than just a convenient one-stop-shop to which he can easily walk or bike: it has become a “locus of relationships” (Rose 1996). The store manager knows his name. Eric and best friend his best friend make the trip often. When he runs an errand for his grandmother, he helps her navigate the neighborhood because she no longer drives. She accesses food (and entertainment) through her grandson.

Furthermore, the food he brings home from the convenience store or from the nearby grocery store becomes a way for her to do much more than simply provide meals

for her family. In the youth-directed video, Mrs. Brown showed her favorite cookbook on camera (Paula Dean's *Southern Cooking Bible*) as she noted cooking as a way to express her creativity. She specifically noted the importance of this outlet given her limited physical mobility. In addition to cooking for her family, she regularly cooks for local homeless shelters. A visit to the corner store for Eric, then, is a way he maintains, sustains, and grows relationships with those closest to him; it is a way he helps nourish the literal "hand that feeds him", so that she may in turn provide sustenance to Eric, his sister, and a broader scope of community. For Eric, the corner store is a place where he sustains close relationships with the store owner, friends, and his grandmother.

When describing the corner store in her neighborhood called Manor Food Mart, Kristina similarly noted hot convenience foods (in this case fried chicken) and relationships. Inside her preferred convenience store a Chicken Stop serves fried chicken, liver, gizzards, burritos, and fish. Many of the items noted on the menu were among foods described as "Southern", "soul food", or "country food" by youth and their family members. The store also vends household cleansers and personal care items, as well as milk, energy drinks, and liquor. The store also stocks non-perishable food items. A sign posted outside indicates that Lone Star cards (food stamps) are accepted, another warns against loitering.

Located near Eric' preferred corner store, Manor Food Mart serves a predominantly Black and Latin@ consumer base (and a multicultural array of food options) in East Austin. When I visited the store, a young man entered and said to the store owner, "Hello kinfolk", indicating the same sense of close relationships among

some of the regular shoppers and the store owners/managers. At the counter I also spoke Spanish; this was not intentional, but upon reflection I realized speaking the language did not take the shop owner by surprise suggesting perhaps a confluence of diverse bodies and languages in the course of social interaction within the store. These interactions brought to mind the intimacy Eric' noted in his own store relationships; however, Kristina underscores relationships in a slightly different way.

Kristina's description of her experience of the corner store near her home sheds light on how she articulates identity and food, blackness and Mexicanness. She (re)defines boundaries between racialized groups, both groups with which she personally identifies. Her experience sheds light on the way her inner geography informs her reading, palate, and experience with a convenient food place. Among the hot food items, she recommended the fried chicken from the corner store, an option that was "pretty good but lacked seasoning". She speculated that this lack of seasoning was due to the fact that a Mexican woman was preparing the chicken. In the context of on-going conversations among the research group, her comment implied the fried chicken would be more flavorful if prepared by a Black/African-American (woman) instead.

Her comment brings to mind the politics of food and authenticity. In an autoethnographic piece, Forson (2006) considers how her husband (of Ghanaian descent) prefers when other Ghanaian relatives or community members cook his favorite African dishes. She relies on a social network of women to provide the Ghanaian dishes he prefers. Forson proposes authenticity is at issue here: her cooking is not seen as authentic because she is preparing the meal as an African-American woman, and not as a Ghanaian

with deep connections to the customs, cultural practices, or historical traditions of the country. The body performing the cooking, shopping, and seasoning influences the flavor of the food, making dishes more or less “authentic” or “properly prepared”. From Kristina’s perspective, Latina preparation of fried chicken – implicitly and explicitly understood as “soul food”/African-American cuisine by Kristina, other youth, and adults in the course of the project – may follow the recipe. But it will only be (really) delicious and palatable if a Black woman, and specifically an African-American woman, prepares it.

Fried chicken emerged as a thread –a signifyin’ joke – throughout the research process, beginning with Eric’ confession that he did not prefer it during the first focus group conversation among co-researchers. Below I meditate on this signifyin’, which sheds light on the social and cultural understandings of fried chicken at work among Kristina and her fellow co-researchers. The signifyin’ further illuminates Kristina’s ever-shifting inner geography as a corner store visitor; her interaction below sheds light on how she understands blackness and how she relates to blackness through the lens of fried chicken. Returning to the focus group conversation, Chris “outs” Eric’ dislike of chicken, and Kristina responds with surprise:

Eric: [T]here’s food you were introduced to when you were little. But then there are other people who look at your skin tone and assume that you eat this, or they assume that you eat that, but in most cases you don’t even eat those foods.

Chris: He doesn’t like chicken.

Kristina: You don't like chicken?

Eric: No, I don't like chicken.

Kristina: Wow.

Later in the conversation, Kristina re-inserts fried chicken (and Eric' dislike of the dish) into the conversation after the group has already moved on to other topics:

Eric: Some people have their likes and dislikes. I have my likes and dislikes. I'm sure everybody else does.

Kristina: You don't like chicken.

Eric: Okay, you know what? [Group laughter] We'll come back to that chicken thing later.

Kristina: Umm hmmm. He hatin' on the chicken.

In these excerpts, Eric proposes a relationship between consumption of particular foods, race/racism, and identity; he considers a relationship grappled with in scholarship (e.g. Titus 1992; Forson 2006; Jordan and Gilmore 2012) and more recently taken up in media. In November 2014, the Melissa Harris Perry Show on MSNBC asked a panel of speakers from the Food Network, academe, and journalism, "Why does some food have negative racial stereotypes in America?" The conversation ignited broad press and social media attention. In Austin, the conversation further inspired the first annual Soul Summit in July 2015 spotlighted African-American foodways, culture, and identity. Hosted by Austin-based chef and writer Toni Tipton-Martin, the summit included renowned Black chef activists, among them Michael Twitty, Bryant Terry, and Tandra Raye Stevenson.

In the focus group conversation, the youth co-researchers identify their understanding of food stereotypes and cultural practices through the lens of fried chicken. Chris brings up Eric' dislike of chicken knowing its longstanding (stereotypical and lived) association with African-Americans. Kristina's "Wow" emphasizes the very point Eric puts forward; his answer elicits surprise because of his blackness, and blackness is historically, socially, and stereotypically bound up with fried chicken. Furthermore, Kristina signifies as she plays on this link *and* performs its connection: she deliberately returns the conversation to Eric' dislike of fried chicken (after the conversation has moved on), she uses specific language (he hatin' on the chicken), and she incites laughter. Eric' dislike of chicken disrupts any monolithic or specific understandings of blackness that may be assumed in the focus group space. As Kristina and Chris "work" the chicken-blackness connection, they engage humor in a way that deepens a sense of relationship between the co-researchers – while acknowledging difference among their experiences as young, Black-identified researchers.

This exchange highlights how Kristina herself processes blackness, identity, and food; her comments to Eric resonate with those about fried chicken at her local corner store. She not only enjoys fried chicken but also understands it as related to her (Black) identity. As a Black and Mexican young woman who has grown up consuming, shopping for, and preparing a "variety of foods". In response to Eric' comments about how people think certain foods link up with certain identities. She observes,

Like people would think I eat Mexican food because I'm Mexican. I do, but that's not the only food I was raised upon – like soul foods, Southern foods, and fried



chicken. So I was raised around variety of foods, not just one particular type of food.

Here Kristina emphasizes her Mexican heritage, identifying assumptions people might make about her food experiences and geographies because of her Mexican “roots”/background. She, too, disrupts a monolithic understanding of what Black young people consume, this time stretching understandings of blackness (and Mexicanness) to include different “type[s] of food”, and to even share space. For her, however, these identities may share space but remain bounded, separate identities. They share one body (hers), a household, and a table in her everyday life, but they are distinct. Again, she affirms this point when she identifies fried chicken as better tasting (and perhaps less authentic?) when cooked by Black, rather than non-Black/Latina, bodies.

Kristina’s experience illuminates the ways in which food places can be settings through which young people perform and explore identities. Here, the corner store becomes a place where she identifies blackness and Mexicanness; here, she claims cultural knowledge and situates herself. As Valentine (2007) and Massey (1994) note, how identities are experienced vary between contexts, depending on *copresence*, who or what is sharing space. Here, in this case who prepares the food informs how or if Kristina partakes – or if she decides to purchase something else at the corner store on a given day. Her inner geography – in this case her understandings of race and culture (and to some degree gender) – shape how she interacts with food(s) at the corner store.

Kristina’s corner store experience indicates how corner stores (and other food places in the youths’ lives) were not only sites of interaction with others, but also places

where they interact with themselves as they process and experience their place in the world. Kristina brings into the store an inner geography that is both shaped by and interacts with the dynamics of the food place. Her experience at the store encompasses much more than the exchange of money for specific goods; her relationship with the place is one of a young, Black and Mexican woman who is processing her “place” in the world. As the paragraphs below and the next chapter further describe this is not a fixed place but a location that shifts for Kristina, in some cases through her own conscious “experiments” as a Black/multiracial young person.

### **Reflection**

In food-related scholarship, corner stores and convenience stores tend to be studied through the food-as-nutrition lens. They are also primarily studied in areas where low-income primarily reside; this trend persists, though corner stores do exist in middle and upper class neighborhoods and, in fact, have become a particular aspect of boutique development in gentrifying areas, including in East Austin. In part, the focus on corner stores in low-income neighborhoods Black/Brown stems from the scarcity of supermarkets and the prevalence of small grocers there (e.g. Short, Guthman, and Raskin 2007). Health disparities facing African-American and Latin@ populations further motivates attention to corner stores where these populations live, as do concerns about the “obesity epidemic.”

Based on these concerns, most food-related spatial research on corner stores focuses on the nutritional value of available foods at these food places located so frequently near “vulnerable” populations (see, for example, Martin et al. 2012; Lent et al.

2014; Rummo et al. 2015). Such work explores the microgeographies of corner stores in a material sense, and understanding “what” is accessible at nearby corner stores is important for gauging food access, available options, and cost. However, most scholarship in this vein also makes implicit or explicit judgements regarding “good” or “bad” food. Focus on the built environment alone (proximity and products offered) can elide key processes that inform (and shape) not only *what* people buy at corner stores but also the *meaning* of the food place for local residents. For youth co-researchers, the microgeographies of the food place in a social sense (relationships with family, interactions with/treatment by store staff, ability to frequent the store alone) and their inner geographies (palates, preferences, identities) matter. Together, these intimately connected geographies make the corner store not just a resource but a place imbued with meaning.

### **In the Cafeteria**

Eric: The school cafeteria food goes like – I mean, the food’s good –

Chris: It went down hill –

Eric: Yeah, it was great in elementary. [Kristina laughs] It was though. In middle school it started going down.

When asked “what was good about elementary school food”, Eric explained,

Eric: Nothing was wrong with it. I think, ‘cause like elementary schools they want – Chris guess they want them to like want to come to school. Not just because of school but partly they want you to come to school. Then like middle school they

stop holding your hand so much, and in high school you're on your own. (Focus group interview, July 2012)

During the focus group and one-on-one interviews, the school cafeteria emerged as a place where youth interact primarily with their peers. Here they connect with each other through/with food, beyond the direct supervision of their parents or guardians. However, as this exchange between Eric and Chris underscores, adult supervision, rules, or regulations constitute the space. In the context of “obesity epidemic discourse”, food available in public school cafeterias and vending machines are subject to increasing public and political debate in United States and in other overdeveloped countries (Serrano 2013; USDA 2016), with rising conversation in the Global South.

First established in 1946 as part of the National School Lunch Act, the public school lunch program in the United States provides free and low-cost meals in state-funded schools, non-profit institutions, and residential child care centers. In 2010, Michelle Obama advocated the Heathy Hunger-Free Kids Act, which instituted major changes to the free lunch program for the first time in 15 years. Current standards require schools to make more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other foods supported by “the latest medical science” to “enhance the diet and health of school children, and help mitigate the childhood obesity trend” ([www.gpo.gov](http://www.gpo.gov)). Participating schools receive cash subsidies and foods from the United States Department of Agriculture for every meal served, so long as lunches and afterschool snacks adhere to federal requirements.

The ways in which the federal government contracts with corporate agriculture to supply the NSLP, and how corporate interests shape school food, is beyond the scope of

this dissertation. However, the point bears mentioning to better situate the public school cafeteria of the youth co-researchers experience in the broader food landscape of the United States (Zipperstein N.D.; Nestle 2007). Black/African, Latin@, and Native American youth from low-income homes are more likely to purchase or receive lunch and snacks through NSLP; they are more likely to attend “high poverty schools” where more families are eligible for the program. In 2012-2013, when the youth co-researchers shared their cafeteria experiences, the National Center for Education Statistics noted “a higher percentage of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students attended high-poverty public schools” compared to students who identified as Pacific Islander, multiracial (one or more race), Asian, or white. Across the country, Black youth from low-income homes consume lunches and afterschool snacks mandated by federal policies which, in turn, represent decision-making processes made by interconnected government, agricultural, and scientific representatives.

Private industry also converges on cafeteria space. In part due to school budget cuts, schools sign agreements with corporate sponsors who provide funding and supply their products in vending machines or as school lunch options (Nestle 2003). As the youth co-researchers share below, in addition to what Eric calls the “regular lunch line”, they also have fast food options such as Pizza Hut. The presence of certain fast food purveyors on certain campuses compared to others, in West versus East Austin, serve to reproduce sociospatial disparities within the city.

A recent news dispatch in Austin also reveals how agreements are not only made with large corporations or major fast food chains; in some cases districts contract with

small catering companies dedicated to providing farm-to-school lunch menus. O. Henry Middle School in West Austin purchases its school lunches from Revolution Foods, a vendor headquartered in California. This was a parent-led initiative, as “parents decided they could pay an extra \$1 per meal, and the [Austin Independent School District] decided they could afford to pay the difference for the students who eat a free and reduced lunch” (Broyles 2015). O. Henry Middle School is located in wealthier West Austin rather than East Austin where predominantly low-income families reside; paying an added \$1 for lunch may not be an option for East Austinites. In addition to shedding light on the general public school lunch landscape, this snapshot of an area pilot program (again) underscores disparate resources available in West compared to East Austin.

Socioeconomic disparities, particular understandings of health and obesity, complex economic and political relationships, and notions of childhood and adolescence inform the lunchroom. Scholarship on geographies of young people have long explored the lunchroom experiences of younger children. Valentine (1996) considers how children are either seen as wild and in need of discipline or well-behaved and compliant. Within her analysis she considers the school lunchroom, a space centered on disciplining and ordering children’s bodies - as well as what goes into their bodies. The wild child shuns proper food choices and will, as parents claim in this article among others, “eat what they will”. Pike (2010) explores lunchtimes in four British primary schools with attention to social interactions between children, “lunch ladies”, and teachers; here, class and gender mediate how staff and children enact power. The title of the article (“I don’t have to listen to you! You’re just a dinner lady!”) captures the lunchroom dynamics. The children practice power

by defying both the rules and the care lunchroom ladies provide; as women from predominantly working-class backgrounds, they are expected to manage lunchroom behavior yet do not occupy the same social/economic privileged adult role as teacher in the eyes of children – or from the perspective of teachers themselves.

Drawing attention to the lunch box itself, Metcalfe et al. (2008) consider what lunch contents and children’s cafeteria practices suggest about discourses of care, surveillance, and health promoted at the national level. They conceptualize school as a place where children exist beyond the home, separate from family, where young people can create and continue peer relationships of their own volition. As an “artifact”, the lunch box is taken up as a locus point where home, school, child, and parent interact through its contents, and via the negotiations surrounding it. These negotiations “scale up” from the lunch box to broader media and state level discourses about children, food, and health.

In these studies, researchers explore microgeographies of the school cafeteria in connection with broader social and economic transformations; they draw attention to how young people experience designated lunchtimes in the context of on-going attention to and regulation of food in school. Though these studies center on younger children and primarily do so in United Kingdom context, they bring attention to the ways in which intersecting relationships – between people, policy, and things - constitute the cafeteria. For this section, I follow the youth’s conversation about the lunchroom space with a similar focus on social relationships and dynamics. Below, I follow their conversation as it unfolds. They begin, unprompted, with the broader cafeteria geography of the city; guided by the focus group

interviewer, they describe how this broader geography manifests in their micro-scale (and inner) experience of their high school lunchroom.

### *Mapping Food on Campus*

In Austin, Texas context, public high school lunch rooms are regulated by the bodies and policies mentioned above. Non-profit and city government entities also actively work with high schools to cultivate gardens on site and provide (as in the case of Urban Roots) farm-related job opportunities. Local efforts accord with national goals, which focus on increasing fruit and vegetable intake and mitigating obesity, as currently measured, among young people. The youth co-researchers observe the outcomes of these concerted policies and efforts in their school lunches and snack options. When asked about school lunch, Kristina shared how vending machines were also convenient:

Kristina: Just like – like fast food out in the community, convenient. I mean, like, the vending machines are more convenient too within school, too, because you know you can just get a bag of chips or something before you go off to practice. You know or a drink. But they're trying to put healthy stuff in the vending machines now like water and orange juice and apple juice –

Eric: I bought some apple juice and that was good.

Kristina: Apple juice is good too but I mean you can tell that they're changing it around. A lot of people are not eating healthy. But I mean, like, the not so healthy foods are actually more cheaper than the healthy foods. So it's more convenient to get not so healthy foods than the ones that are more healthy and more expensive.



Like Whole Foods. Their food is more expensive than actual HEB stores within the community. So, yeah. (Focus group interview, July 2012)

Throughout the many observations that stand out here, the lack of youth voice or engagement in shaping the food landscape of their school is apparent. Kristina notes how “they’re trying” to change vending machine options; she and Eric are subject to those changes. Their responses to the quote “healthier” available snacks proves mixed. On Kristina’s part, she notes how the changes satisfy two of the 3 Ps (proximity and palate) but are not necessarily affordable. From her perspective, the effort to include more “healthy” options can actually make “less healthy” ones more desirable because of their cheaper price. The changes both she and Eric observe reflect local response to the Healthy Hunger-Free Act of 2010, which led to Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines. These guidelines mandate “healthier” options beyond school lunch, such as in vending machines and snack bars as well for schools that offer free and reduced lunch. Meanwhile, Kristina’s response to the options – and the decision-making process she outlines - underscore challenges to “healthier snacking” and eating on school campuses. With wit, a piece in the Wall Street Journal recently reported, “The School Lunch Program With an Unappetizing Report Card” (Kelly and Stier 2015).

This exchange between Eric and Kristina sheds light on the broader political/economic context of food on their campuses; national-level decisions (influenced, too, by global concerns about obesity among children and teenagers) influence their local-level experiences. They also describe ways in which these otherwise structured food experiences, become their own. For example, when asked about lunch Kristina considers

the vending machine an alternative: if lunch options are not to her liking, she may choose to explore the vending machine instead. Federal law understands vending machine options as snacks, while for her they constitute a fulfilling meal. None of the youth described taking their lunches to school. Unlike primary schoolers by Metcalfe et al. (2008), they were not subject to compliance with their parents' or guardians' food standards via pre-determined options from home; in these cases, to "finish your lunch" is also to obey guardians and to communicate your "good behavior" as a child/young person. In comparison, the youth co-researchers were free to choose their preferred lunch. Furthermore, they suggested the ability to eat where they liked and access food where they chose: they could exercise physical mobility during school lunch. Unlike in descriptions of lunch with younger children, as teenagers the youth co-researchers described a greater degree of agency during their lunchtime experience overall.

### *Enacting Adolescence*

Their relative Freedom recalls Eric' theory that school lunch is less palatable in high school because "you're on your own". His response again relates to the autonomy granted teenagers ("they stop holding your hand"), sharing a kind of continuum of care. As younger children, he suggests, school lunch is provided with greater care to inspire elementary schoolers to attend; the care devoted to lunch parallels the care children are considered to require. By middle school, lunch taste and quality started to decline and so too did the "hand holding"; by high school both carefully crafted meals and direct care are reduced in his theory. He implies that school lunch is only one aspect of life where teenagers are counted upon to make decisions for themselves, to take care of themselves.

This continuum captures well how childhood and adolescence are constructed, and Eric's thoughts outline how these constructions impact the material lives of young people (through the lens of food, in the cafeteria as a food place in their everyday lives). Care (and lack thereof) draws my attention here: how care is expressed (or not) for children compared to teenagers in the cafeteria as a food place. At the beginning of this section, Eric suggests care (or lack thereof) expressed through food options. He continues, with attention to food preparation:

Eric: And then, like, the lunch lines, you know Johnson High School? Well they used to have – before they changed the name – a Pizza Hut line and a Panda Express line.

Chris: For real?

Eric: Yeah. The stuff's still there. They took out the Panda Express but the Pizza Hut's still there. But like some of the meat in the Chinese and regular line it's like it's good but they don't, like, they don't took it all the way. You break it open, and it's still pink in there. (Focus group interview, July 2012)

Here, lack of care manifests in poor cooking of the food, even when more palatable options *are* available. I want to meditate on care because of the role it plays in shaping the cafeteria as a food place, in terms of its options, its service, and how adolescence is constructed. Critical children's geographies consider how care is bound up with certain ideas about childhood and youth: young people must be "cared for" and "cared about" to develop into proper eaters, consumers, students, and citizens (Valentine 1996; Aitken 2001; Aitken 2008). *What* is proper accords with dominant understandings of childhood or

adolescence, understandings bolstered by mainstream theories of development. School lunch policy, with its concern for young people's well-being speaks to how care can manifest; youth resistance to the new lunch guidelines underscores, along with work by other children's geographers (e.g. Pike 2006), how that care can be resisted, questioned, or brought to task by young people.

Eric takes care – and the construction of adolescence – to task. Rather than revealing a *lack* of care for teenagers in public school lunch context, Eric's comment sheds light on how teenagers tend to be cared for in contradictory ways. The “hands off” manner focused on certain matters (food guidelines and options) compared to others (limited supervision, allowing agency to choose, offering fast food as well as school lunch options).

#### *Mapping the Austin Cafeteria Landscape*

K: [I]t also depends on the school you go to. Like, 'cause I used to go to Hendrickson High School and their food is different from LBJ food. Like they have little pizza boxes that you can buy and it was – it was nice. But it was more expensive, though to buy, the more – the salad and stuff.

I: Like Westlake they have a Chick-Fil-A at their school. They're really lucky.

As Eric takes care to task, he also begins to compare cafeterias in the Austin area. Kristina and Chris join in comparisons as they “place” their experiences in broader sociospatial and economic context. Importantly, these comparisons emerged organically in the course of the focus group interview; in other words, the interviewer did not ask the co-researchers to consider anything but their personal school experiences. Unprompted, the youth discuss their experience with or knowledge of cafeterias in other parts of the city;

the conversation unfolded as a kind of knowledge share, as they noted similarities and differences between each other's schools, near to them in East Austin, and schools in West Austin, distant from them.

Their conversation further emphasizes how young people possess experience/knowledge of food landscapes beyond their immediate experience; spatial food research, because of its emphasis on material food access rather than on social dynamics, tends to zoom into only day-to-day experiences with sustenance. Yet distant food places may impact the meaning “near” food places have. Eric mentioned, “Like they don’t cook ‘em right. And some food they go in the back, throw it in the fire, wait a few minutes, and then take it out. It’s ‘cause they’re lazy. I mean it’s a ghetto school, but like – [finish not completed]” (focus group interview, July 2012). In the same conversation, Chris described West Lake high school as “lucky” as the co-researchers consider the range of lunch options available there. The cafeteria becomes emblematic of the broader landscape of their neighborhood and of the uneven food landscape of Austin.

What is available in the co-researchers’ cafeterias, and how the food is prepared, underscores the opportunities and access available to them (or not). Aitken (2001) notes, “Places are important for young people, because these contexts play a large part in constructing and constraining dreams and practices” (p. 20). As the co-researchers process their socio-economic situation in East Austin, compared to West of I-35, they understand their immediate conditions as “less than,” as “ghetto” or unlucky. These terms are inherently comparative. They forefront differences in race and class privilege between

West and East Austin. These same terms urge attention to how the youth understand themselves in this uneven sociospatial context.

In past teaching experiences and in the course of this project, I have witnessed young people use the term “ghetto” to describe something or someone that lacks class, refinement, (formal) education, quality, monetary value; in effect, that something or someone lacks cultural capital. Each of these are based on dominant standards of what is considered high class, socially acceptable, or “making it”. Populations with greater social and economic privilege set these standards and institutionalize them, and they enjoy greater access to resources considered classy, acceptable, or successful; in United States context, whiteness, maleness, and wealth are the most privileged identities. In other words, someone or something that is non-white, non-male, and indicative of poverty is predisposed to be described as “ghetto”: the term is deeply racialized and classed. The term is also geographic, as it references disenfranchised neighborhoods where predominantly low-income residents live; the slang underscores how spaces become naturalized as always already poor/Black/dangerous in everyday conversation. Typically, describing something as “ghetto”, as Eric uses the term, is pejorative – though this is not always the case. In a study of dynamics among African-American girls in a high school, Brown (2012) notes how “they give new meaning to ‘ghetto’ talk, as a valued ‘comfort zone’ with familiar others” (p. 36).

The fact that “ghetto” can be used in forms other than the negative makes Eric’s description all the more pointed. In line with its pejorative use, he deploys the term to emphasize the (lower) socio-economic and cultural status of his school – and the cafeteria

becomes emblematic of that status. In his case, Chris notes differences in race/class privilege across Austin by describing West Lake high schoolers as “lucky”. I want to propose, too, that Chris is speaking to the students being “lucky” overall; he is referencing not only the varied fast food options West Lake students enjoy, but also perhaps the resources to which they have access. School lunch again proves emblematic of social and economic limitations in East Austin compared to opportunities in West Austin. As with standards noted above, of course, these limitations and opportunities are mediated through/by uneven social structures. Westlake High Schoolers are not simply “lucky” by chance: options and opportunities at West Lake High School reflect the overarching race/class privilege of the school, area neighborhoods, and far West Austin more generally. Chris understands this privilege as fortunate and its benefits desirable.

I meditate on these comments because they glimpse the inner geographies of Eric and Chris as youth co-researchers. They process “where they are” in the city, in both a physical and social sense. They indicate how they navigate - and digest - discourses about the predominantly low-income, predominantly non-white spaces where they consume lunch, go to school, and connect with peers (Eric); they begin to express what a “lucky” lunchroom landscape (and neighborhood landscape) might look like (Chris). At the same time, they begin to map how the broader lunchroom landscape of the city relates to their everyday cafeteria experience, and vice versa. Their conversation leads into how the youth theorize social and economic transformations in Austin, and how these “show up” in their everyday cafeteria experiences.

*Social and Economic Transformations*

Eric: It's the budget.

Kristina. Yeah.

Eric: I see budgets, like, they're going down.

Kristina: Since there's more, like the population is building and we have more people here than we've ever had.

Eric: Growing like crazy now. My neighborhood's full of bikers now.

(Focus group guide): Bikers as in motorcycle or bicycles?

C: Like bicycles with little flash lights. And then people walking their dogs in the day.

Eric first characterizes these demographic shifts by activities – bike riding and dog walking; later in the conversation, he and Chris both identify these bodies as white:

Chris: Like a lot of white people by my house too now.

(Focus group guide): Did you say white people [to Eric]?

Eric: Yeah mine too now. It used to be a little bit of African Americans and a lot of Mexicans. And then the Mexicans started moving out and now the white people started moving in. And now since they've started moving in they rebuilt one of my [what] house, and then at the end of the street they're fixin' to put like a whole new street right there. (Focus group interview, July 2012).

During the focus group, the co-researchers moved from discussing uneven geographies of the city to how these social dynamics play out in their specific lunch rooms. This shift unfolds as they theorize, again unprompted, about city-wide social and economic



transformations, and how these manifest in the cafeteria; their comments engage race/racism, class, and culture. They attribute changing (or lacking) lunch options and conditions to the transformations noted above: white people and an increase in the Mexican population. Their comments reflect demographic shifts documented by the recent census (COA 2016): an increase in the white population residing in the urban core, an increase in the Latino/a population in Austin, and a decrease in the African-American population. The youth describe these urban changes as more than movement or displacement of bodies. With the incoming of white residents comes different activities in the neighborhood (bikes, dog walking). With more people moving in, the physical infrastructure is also changing (new streets and houses being built).

Social and material shifts also manifest at the micro-scale in the lunchroom. These shifts are happening, the youth reveal, in places that are already socially dynamic - and in some cases already beset with tensions, connections, and ruptures. Kristina observes, “Like there’s a lot of Mexicans that are coming down here now, and so they’re starting to be overpopulated too. Like the schools.” The co-researchers continue,

Kristina: So there’s a lot of Mexicans going to like Winn Elementary and going to LBJ and not many too many Black people at LBJ. I mean there is but mostly Mexicans. And you can tell. Like they have like their own section. Like it’s kind of like separated. Like African Americans, Mexicans, whites, everybody sits within their own race. Since they’re comfortable sitting with their own race.

Chris: Like LBJ they separate it ‘cause like they have LASA [the Liberal Arts and Science Academy]—

Kristina: Yeah, LASA.

Chris: And they have regular LBJ. And most of the like white kids they go to LASA, and my friend told me that they would have separate lunches –

Kristina: Yeah they do.

Chris: Or like they would sit in other areas. And Mexicans would sit in other areas. And like you always see the Blacks always together. Same thing with sports, too.

Kristina: Yeah, ‘cause they’re comfortable with their own race.

In the lunchroom, broader social and economic transformations of the city converge with the two processes Kristina and Chris outline here; these two processes work together to construct the cafeteria as a diverse lunchroom space where the youth co-researchers not only consume food but perform relationships through/around food. Chris points out institutional processes and practices, specifically the separation of “regular” LBJ students from Liberal Arts and Science Academy - LASA - participants within the same school building for classes, lunch period, and other activities. Kristina highlights peer-to-peer relationships, proposing that she and other students choose to sit where they feel most comfortable, a comfort she attributes to being of the same “race”. An exploration of both of these – the institutional and the peer-to-peer – provide insight into the microgeographies and inner geographies of the cafeteria in the co-researchers’ everyday lives. Below I meditate on both, devoting close attention to how these processes help shape how and where the youth eat during lunchtime, the relationships they do/do

not make, and racial/cultural understandings they navigate and develop in the cafeteria as a key food place in their lives.

### *I. Institutional Processes: Separate and Unequal*

Chris touches on a separation that remains hotly debated in media and in scholarship. He refers to as “regular LBJ” and LASA (the Liberal Arts and Science Academy), two schools – one a regular public high school (LBJ) and the other an elite magnet school (LASA) which occupy the same building in East Austin. Originally launched at Johnson High School in 1987, the Liberal Arts and Science Academy merged with LBJ’s Science Academy in 2002. In addition to maintaining separate academic classes (outside of fine arts and athletics), each campus possesses its own faculty, administrative staff, and teachers.

Today LASA is a nationally-recognized public school. To attend the Liberal Arts and Sciences Academy, prospective students complete a process similar to college admissions, including exam testing and competitive interviews. As Chris and Kristina imply, contrast between LBJ High School and LASA is stark (Table 2). Most LBJ students identify as Black/African American or Latino/a, with 0.9% enrollment of white students. Students enrolled in LASA primarily identify as white, Asian, and Latino/a; only 3.1% of the student population is African-American. These statistics reflect trends in Austin Independent School District overall. Tobada (2015) notes, “Though the students in the Austin school district are largely Hispanic and poor, the district’s prized magnet schools are mostly filled with white students from more affluent families.”

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>LBJ High School</b>	<b>LASA</b>	<b>District</b>
Total Enrollment	819	962	20536
Demographics	Black 39.6% Hispanic 58.9% White 0.9% American Indian 0.0% Asian Pacific Islander 0.0% Two + Races 0.7%	Black 3.1% Hispanic 22.3% White 54.1% American Indian 0.1% Asian 16.2% Pacific Islander 0.2% Two + Races 4.0%	Black 8.7% Hispanic 60.4% White 24.8% American Indian 0.2% Asian 3.4% Pacific Islander 0.1% Two + Races 2.4%
Economically Disadvantaged	87.8%	16.6%	63.0%
English Language Learners	15.0%	0.0%	27.4%
Special Education	11.5%	0.6%	10.0%
Accountability Rating	Improvement Required	Met Standard	Varies by campus

**Table 2:** LBJ and LASA High School Comparison. Accountability rating determined by scores on state-mandated tests. LASA’s rating includes distinctions in Reading/English Language Arts and Math. Source: Austin Independent School District School Report Cards, 2012-2013.

Though LASA's statistics accord with AISD trends, in other magnet programs or "exam schools" like it across the nation, Black youth tend to be "overrepresented" by comparison (Finn and Hockett 2013). Low magnet enrollment by Black youth in Austin may reflect, among other factors, the city's decreasing Black population, lack of outreach to Black families, and lack of preparation for the rigorous application programs or academics magnet programs involve. In the context of the lunchroom cafeteria shared by LASA and LBJ, these disparities are stark. The campus has been critiqued as racially/economically segregated in local as well as national reports (Swartswell and Jukam 2013; McGee 2015). As Chris shared, students enrolled in LASA attend a different lunch time than "regular LBJ" students; in addition, LASA classes occupy the upstairs of the school, while LBJ students attend school downstairs. A recent dispatch by a former LASA student. observes,

Before the two schools became independent entities there was a margin of flexibility in class enrollment and interaction between the schools. The structure today, however, with LBJ exclusively on the first floor and LASA on the second, allows little interaction between the two student populations.

In this article, former principal of LBJ Patrick Patterson, who oversaw the separation, notes the detrimental changes, notes "The district shouldn't maintain this current state of affairs. It's almost like forced segregation" (Haight 2014).

Kristina and Chris consider how these institutional processes promote social dynamics (and tensions) manifest in the school lunch room. As youth who identify as Black/Mexican and as African-American, and as students in "regular LBJ" courses, they

are among those who consume lunch separately from LASA. They attend classes on the second floor. Theirs is the school that “needs improvement” according to Texas Education Agency standards. Their comments, again, suggest an awareness of broader dynamics while grappling with their “place” within those dynamics. Read together with Eric and Chris’s comments about the availability of options beyond East Austin, one wonders how consuming lunch as the social/economic “other” shapes their inner (and internalized) geographies. How does consuming lunch in such a food place inform how the youth racially/culturally identify – and the advantages or disadvantages they correlate with different identities? How do they see themselves and their neighborhood? What are they processing about whiteness, blackness, and other racialized processes? What do interactions that constitute this food place encourage them to value – or devalue – as Black youth?

In comparison, though Eric’s school no longer houses a magnet school, East Side Memorial does host an international school. In this case, as in the case of LBJ and LASA, East Side Memorial and the International High School share the same physical structure. However, students of the international school represent an alternative, not elite, population. Eligible students must have been in the country less than one year and should not have attended school in the United States; three campuses in the school district – their home high school, Lanier High, and East Side Memorial – serve as language level assessment centers for the school. Only students who are determined in need of assistance are permitted to attend the school. Once enrolled, international students primarily attend courses with other English Language Learners on the East Side Memorial campus.

During lunch, however, they share immediate space with other East Side Memorial High School Students.

Within this shared space international and non-international students may share identity coordinates. Students who attend East Side Memorial are predominantly Black and Latin@ (primarily non-white); like their non-United States born counterparts on the campus, they come from predominantly low-income homes. Furthermore, given the dynamics of Austin and its growing Latin@ population, I would suggest that some of the Latin@ students at East Side Memorial are first or second generation Latino/as themselves who maintain cultural linkages – linguistic, food, activities, and so forth – with their families across international borders. My point here is not to collapse the experiences of newly-arrived youth of color and United States-born youth of color. I draw out these potential connections mainly to underscore how, in comparison to the LBJ/LASA campus, East Side Memorial and International School students share in differing degrees of social/economic marginalization, and in some cases overlapping identities as well as geographies.

The institutional practice of sharing lunch, then, cultivates a multiracial and multicultural lunchroom where the students may share certain identity coordinates; since they occupy a shared space the potential for connecting and communicating exists. Eric observes,

International [School] is like for people from different states different countries, across seas and stuff. So like when you see us – you'll see some International with their own school in a little corner, but then you'll see International with - but then

again you'll see us with just, it's just each table is a different race. Each table. And then like in the courtyard, in the courtyard, you'll probably see like a crowd of Mexicans and then one Black. Then sometimes a crowd of Black with one Mexican and a white dude.

Though institutionally international and non-international students occupy different academic tracks, having the same lunch hour means they may gather in the same spaces (within the cafeteria or in the courtyard) – as well as with each other. His account also suggests primarily separate groupings of international and non-international students, with further distinctions drawn between the latter. He depicts tables with distinct African-American, Latin@, and other populations eating together (an observation shared by Chris and Kristina, explored in greater detail below); he points out some interracial and intercultural interactions in the cafeteria or outside during lunch.

Eric maps dynamic social interactions, and institutional processes do not seem to create the same degree of polarization apparent at the LBJ/LASA campus. This may be due, in part, to the fact that the non-International students at East Side Memorial share certain social and economic barriers with the international peers. A recent incident, however, does suggest the multiracial and multicultural space possess tensions. In April 2015, a fight among at least 15 students broke out in the shared cafeteria in the morning hours. At the time, one security guard was posted in the lunchroom; supervision was limited due to a designated staff development day. The guard briefly left to find a student, and the fight ensued. One report described the incident as a fight between “Hispanic” students from East Side Memorial and the International School; all reports, including the



school district's statement, describe the incident as one that involved students from both schools. Though this fight did not take place during lunch, its site within the cafeteria is significant - as a place where youth are able to practice some degree of agency, express themselves with some Freedom, and act on tensions or connections partially informed by the very structure of the institution itself. Here is a space where differentiated school populations come into regular (sometimes uneasy) contact.

Co-researchers' reflections about institutional processes bring to mind Massey's (1994) description of co-presence as a process through which a sense of place is created, as social interactions bring diverse people and ideas physically together at particular sites or locations. By sharing space and place, Massey proposes, identities are constantly (re)formed, places continually (re)defined. East Side Memorial exemplifies co-presence, as international and non-international students negotiate shared cafeteria space. Though the youth do not share physical space during lunch with LASA students (or during most of the school day) in an intimate sense, they define their lunch space in relationship to students who occupy the same building. There is a sense among the youth of always already experiencing co-presence: they understand themselves in opposition to white(r), wealthier young people.

### *Cafeteria (Dis)Connections*

I sit mostly with African-American[s] I mean like, yeah. But I mean I talk to like anybody and everybody within the classroom. But then when it comes to eating lunch, I mostly eat lunch with people who I'm familiar with and who I talk to on an everyday basis (Kristina, food history interview, October 12, 2013).

Kristina brings attention to how youth cultivate a sense of place with/among peers, where they *are* at lunchtime. She suggests that high schoolers at LBJ sit with their own race because “that’s who they’re more comfortable with”. Comfort during lunch for Kristina is explicitly connected with racial and cultural identification; it is about sharing a similar identity with those at the table. She also defines lunch as different from class outside of it, perhaps because of the freer movement and autonomy she can experience compared to the class setting and because of the lack of structured assignments or teacher presence. After all, at lunch, she can choose to sit with who she pleases. Yet she navigates her own journey with racial identity and racial dynamics; both inform how she navigates this everyday food place. In a related conversation, Kristina describes:

But, I mean, like, when I was a junior, I would hang out with Mexicans a lot. ‘Cause I guess I was still trying to find who I was as a person and who I was comfortable hanging with. But then as I started hanging with them I kind of felt left out a little bit. Because their primary language is Spanish, and I don’t really speak Spanish. I speak English. So I kind of felt left out because they would always speak Spanish, and I’d be like, “What are you saying? What are you saying?”

Kristina extends beyond racial labels alone to consider cultural cues, particularly language; from an intersectional perspective, she identified with the other students racially, but felt unable to connect more deeply because of her lack of Spanish-speaking ability. The types of activities her Mexican friends preferred also underscored difference and created

boundaries. For example, at lunch and in school, her Mexican friends talked about going to soccer games, while she is more invested and interested in football. Her inner dialogue considers cultural exchange or compromise: “So it was kind of like well, “Should I go to a soccer game with y’all? Or should y’all come to a football game with me?” As in the case of the fried chicken at the corner store, Kristina may bring her blackness and Mexicanness figuratively to the table in the school cafeteria; however, these identities emerge as bounded for her and, at times, compete in her lived experience.

Kristina describes well her personal discomfort as she navigates her “place” in the lunchroom. Her actions also potentially cause discomfort for others, by disrupting the lunchroom rituals both she and Chris allude to above (the very rituals which contribute to the social experiment she carries out by sitting at the “Mexican” table). In their experience, students at LBJ tend to sit with their own “race”. She captures a sense of how sitting outside of these presupposed boundaries can disrupt, by sharing her own reaction to the choice of one of her Mexican friends to sit with a predominantly Black student. She recalls,

I was like, “Where are you going?” And he was like, “Well, I’m going to go sit with my friends.” And I was like, “Oh on the other side”, or whatever. And he was like, “Yeah.” And I was like, “Oh, you must be on the wrong side.” And he just started laughing. [Freedom laughs in the background. Kristina has a smile in her voice.]

As Kristina “calls out” her friend for sitting at a table that does not align with his racial identity,

she does so with a sense of humor – both in the moment and in the telling – that again brings signifyin’ to mind. The word “sides” references the racial configuration of the lunchroom, along with its expectations, tensions, and how Black and Latino students share space - yet do not. In signifyin’ fashion, Kristina refers to this and more, and her listeners (and I as a witness) construct meanings from what remains unsaid. Her comment elicits laughter from her friends (both her friend from the story and Freedom) in part because of shared, implied knowledge: all understand the separation into different groups that she refers to. I want to propose, though, that the playful way Kristina notes these social interactions (or lack thereof) is important. Her playfulness serves to emphasize how these boundaries are performed, and perhaps, not as certain as they seem to be; her wit marks how such boundaries can be approached playfully, rather than from the perspective of “self segregation” or “racial tension”.

Indeed, the boundaries, while making lunch a challenging space for her to navigate as a Black/multiracial young woman, do not emerge as particularly problematic or impermeable in her reading of the place. Instead, she underscores a sense of (playful) possibility, both in terms of how identities may be performed and in terms of what connections are made. She continues to sit with people who identify as African-American, though she continues to feel what she calls a “connection” to Mexicans, and does not really “fit in with the Blacks that go to LBJ”; connections can be made and unmade, and still felt even if she does not sit with Mexican students. Further questions might consider if what Kristina decides to eat differs depending on who she sits with as she navigates her racial/cultural identity in the school cafeteria.

In his case, who Eric eats with reflects the multiracial and multicultural landscape of the East Side Memorial High School cafeteria. He shares,

They end up being like – maybe it would probably end up being like me and my friend [Name]. And then it be like three Mexicans and two white dudes. We just be at the same table, just spittin’ it up (focus group interview, July 2012)

Eric witnesses a boundary most clearly drawn between International Students and non-International students; his observations are also implicitly gendered. He sits with other male-identified students, and he moves into specific language – “we just be” and “spittin’ it up” – that signifies the close relationship and bond he has cultivated with his friends there; the language evokes a sense of intimacy and also shares language he may use with his friends; he creates a sense of place through the language he uses to describe his lunchroom experience. For him, what matters most is “who you most like chill with in school”; for him the classroom and the lunchroom are more intimately connected spaces where he reconnects with friends. Lunch is a time to cultivate relationships – and to cultivate shared language. Much like Kristina signifies in terms of her humor, touching on a shared understanding of the racial dynamics of the space, the words “spittin’ it up” signal a shared language, too.

Eric begins to explore the lunchroom as a place for personal relationships and bonding, where he not only sits where he feels comfortable but also where he is cultivating relationships that appear to stretch beyond the lunch room hour. Chris amplifies attention to emotions, specifically, moving beyond who he “chills” with, to

who he is feeling connected with/getting along with at the moment. His experience introduces emotional connections, as well as aspirations, into the conversation:

Mine is [where he sits in the cafeteria] – depends on how my day goes. If I'm mad at someone or they're mad at me, I won't go sit next to them. I'll go sit next to a different friend. Depends on who I hang out with after school, and what kind of activities you're in during school, and the type of friends you make. While you're there.

Chris's reflects on how he situates himself. Earlier in the focus group conversation, he described seeing himself as "a boy that's tryin' to like do something with his life and go somewhere. Like make it out the East Side. Make it to like a good college. And I have to work hard to get what I want" (focus group interview, July 2012). How he navigates the cafeteria reflects his life aspirations. For him, the school cafeteria is a place where he practices choices that, however small, might have a bigger impact. He understands the East Side as a place to escape; he sees opportunities elsewhere. For him, lunch is one venue where he practices making choices that however small might have a bigger impact. He understands the East Side as a place to escape; he sees opportunities elsewhere. Lunchtime dynamics, then, carry some weight in terms of his internal wellbeing and his external path. Lunchtime dynamics, then, carry weight in terms of his internal wellbeing and his external path. Lunch, then, is not only about relationships, but about strategic relationships with specific types of friends, including their school activities and their actions. How the conversation continues further emphasizes how this is important to other youth co-researchers as well:

Kristina: So, like, you don't want to hang out with somebody that don't support your decisions or what you're trying to do in life. So you wouldn't want to hang out friends like that, 'cause you know they're not being the best supportive friends you need about now.

Chris: I think it depends on, like, who you are. Like if you want to surround yourself with kids who do bad things like you would do bad things with them. Or if you want to make something out of yourself you would hang out with kids that like motivate you and -

Kristina: Support your decisions in life.

### *Reflections*

Youth experiences highlight the high school cafeteria as a food place where they explore, perform, and perpetuate racial/gender identities. In the cafeteria, they cultivate relationships that make them feel comfortable and supported; they foster relationships which not only allow their present well-being but also support their future aspirations. In doing so, they also describe how/where they choose to move in lunchroom context. Their experiences and observations underscore inner geographies at work (self-identification and emotions) as well as social interactions, and lack thereof, within the lunch room; both shape how they experience the cafeteria as a food place in their daily lives. At the same time, the co-researchers theorize conditions (such as lunch offerings) they experience as high schoolers in East Austin, "placing" their experiences in local context. West Austin, though socially, economically, and geographically distant, remains near.

## **Eating Out**

Focus Group Interviewer: So, you all mentioned fast food restaurants. Is that something that you go to on a regular basis?

Kristina: Umm hmmm. I go to Short Stop.

Eric: I go to Mickey D's, just 'cause of the dollar drinks.

Chris: Jack in a Box.

Kristina: Mc Donald's. Jack in a Box is right over there. There's Jack in a Box, Sonic

Chris: Sonic –

Kristina: McDonalds, Popeyes, Long John Silver's –

Chris: Waffle House –

Chris: Waffle House. So they're everywhere. McDonald's is every corner.

McDonald's is everywhere. (Focus group interview, July 2012)

When asked about their favorite meals, the youth shared memories of fast food and restaurants as well as memories of home-cooked meals. During a focus group session with three youth co-researchers - Kristina, Chris, and Eric - a broader scope of the fast food landscape in East Austin emerged from their experiences. In some respects, their description of this landscape resonates with language used to designate the area a “food desert” (and used by developers to “redeem” the landscape) explored in Chapter 4. They note several fast food options; their responses come forth as a kind of litany of fast food places. They emphasize a prevalence of fast food (this was not emphasized by the focus group facilitator).



Later in the project when the youth directors chose which questions to ask local residents, they specifically asked, “Do you think there are a lot of fast food places in East Austin?”, and why the respondents/video participant thought this was so. As discussed below, they also align fast food with lack of healthy options, despite the fact that this project does not/did not use healthy/non-healthy language. Youth co-researchers were not alone in seeing fast food as over-prevalent where they live; city-wide initiatives such as the moratorium along the corridor reflect similar concerns (Miller 2013). Scholarship has found an inordinate amount of fast food places located in low-income areas and that fast food restaurants. One study, for example, found fast food restaurants located where predominantly African-Americans reside are 60% more likely to advertise to young African-Americans compared to white neighborhoods (Ferdman 2014). Youth responses to fast food where they live shed light on the concentration of fast food restaurants (and as the youth share below, specific types of fast food places) in the area.

Yet points previously emphasized are worth noting again. Fast food composes *one* aspect of the youth food geographies; indeed, the youth and their parents noted cooking at home as well as eating out as shared in “Favorite Meals” and in the “Farm to Market” chapters, as well as in chapters that follow. Simply because youth are in proximity to the fast food restaurants does not mean that is their only/primary food resource. Based on a comparison of fast food intake among children and teenagers from 2011-2012, a recent study conducted by the Center for Disease Control suggests that across income levels children in the United States eat roughly the same amount of fast food, noting, “No significant differences in caloric intake from fast food were noted by sex, poverty status,

or weight status” (CDC 2015). Furthermore, health disparities throughout Travis County for the Black population persist across socioeconomic class and geography. Keeping these points in mind, the remainder of this section refocuses attention on relationships and place, to understand the meanings and interactions that constitute these establishments for youth co-researchers.

*Fast Food as “Bad” But Convenient*

Eric: I live like right in the center of fast food restaurants and like supermarkets. I live right in the middle. So, you can just be like, “I can just go straight over there and get whatever I need.” Or like just fast food. Junk food. Nothing to eat but junk food.

Kristina: So it’s like more convenient just to go. ‘Cause I have an HEB right down the street, and so I can just walk there. I mean it’s convenient. And there’s a lot of fast food restaurants like what Eric was saying. Like Pizza Hut, Sonic, all these type of restaurants that I can easily just go to and get a meal without it being healthy. (Focus group interview, July 2012)

When asked if they had easy access to food where they live, the youth co-researchers Eric and Kristina responded with the thoughts above. Their responses emphasize the prevalence of fast food places where they live, and their responses are telling in at least two other respects as well. They conceptualize food access in ways that simultaneously accord with and disrupt similar conversations in scholarship, public health campaigns, and activism. In each of these spheres, a focus on food access either implies or explicitly means access to certain *kinds* of foods (and to certain food places).

Specifically, “good food” access encompasses less processed items that are organically or sustainably grown and fruits or vegetables.

Kristina and Eric understand fast food restaurants as access to *food*; in their experience, fast food places provide convenient and flavorful sustenance. Without prompting, however, they also categorize the places around them as “junk food” or “unhealthy”; this language reflects stock conversations around food access. The youth engaged in this focus group conversation are not alone. In his food diary, Jeremy described the food in his neighborhood as, “There is a lot of fast food around even HEB is not that healthy and they have lots of junk food too”; Brittney noted that she enjoyed McDonald’s “though its not healthy” and that in addition to other food places there is a “Subway – it may be healthy but also unhealthy”. Again, the food diary question, as in the focus group conversation, did not introduce these categorizations of food, yet they persisted in the youth responses.

In the side item *Eating While Black*, I considers how these internalized understandings of “good” and “bad” food messaging are bound up with healthism, as well as with the historic/contemporary positioning of Black populations as public health targets. Here, I focus on these responses because despite these readings of the fast food landscape these places continue to figure into their everyday lives. They describe three Ps (proximity, price, and palate), all of which are mediated through/experienced through their social relationships. Chris’s response to the question “do you have easy access to food where you live” notes how the 3 Ps work together to inform the choice to consume at fast food places:

Or, I think it depends on transportation. If you want to go to a fancy restaurant, you've gotta go out your way. And it depends on how much money you have. If you have five dollars, you're gonna go to a fast food place and eat. Or, if you have like twenty dollars, you're gonna wanna go out to eat somewhere or something. And I think it just depends on where you're at and how much you have and how to get there.

Later in the conversation, when asked what the youth thought about fast food where they live, Chris continued,

I think it's bad. Like the area where it's at, I think it's bad because a lot of the people don't have money for other stuff, and they just get fast food places for their family. Or if they're on their last dollar, they would just go to a fast food place. You get more for your money.

Eric added,

“[T]hat's why McDonald's hasn't been close to be shut down yet. Because people like that, they don't have enough money to support for that time. They have to go to McDonald's or Jack in A Box just to have support for their families. (Focus group interview, July 2012)

In Chris's response, what makes the food geography “bad” here is, implicitly, the contents of the food itself; but it is also “bad” because of the limited options for group meals. Eric agrees, noting that fast food places may be a way people “support their families”. When the youth further discuss the prevalence of fast food restaurants, they place these in relationship with restaurant chains marketed as “family friendly”. Picking

up on Chris's point about having to "go out of your way" to eat at a fancy restaurant, Eric and Kristina noted,

Kristina: "I think it's the area. Within the area it's like more convenient restaurants and more foods. 'Cause like you don't really see a lot of restaurants around the area I live in – mostly like fast food restaurant. Like we would have to go out of our way to actually have to go to a nice restaurant like Olive Garden or Texas Roadhouse, which is out in Pflugerville. It's nowhere near where I live. So, you have to drive further out."

Eric: Some good restaurants are like way out there. Like Elgin.

Kristina: Yeah, that's kinda out there. (Focus group interview, July 2012)

Of interest, Olive Garden and Texas Roadhouse, which both co-researchers describe as "good restaurants", are both national chains designed for family celebrations or gatherings. Olive Garden's tag line reads, "Stop by today and enjoy family dining", while Texas Roadhouse boasts how its one goal is to, "[G]ive your family a place to go for great food and good times at a fantastic price" ([olivegarden.com](http://olivegarden.com); [texasroadhouse.com](http://texasroadhouse.com)). The conversational move to sit-down, family-friendly restaurants is key here, because what emerges is not so much a comparison between fast food and "nice restaurants", but a sense that they are two types of food places where families can dine together. Again, the youth emphasize relationships. Recalling the favorite meal food diaries, some of the meals the co-researchers described involved family visits to fast food places.

I want to suggest, too, that this conversational move is important, because fast food tends to be framed/thought of only in terms of nutritional value and not in terms of the experiences youth and their families may be seeking or having together there; whether the place was chosen because of price, proximity, or palate, what the youth bring to mind is a greater need to understand the *meaning* of the place – and, specifically, how their relationships imbue the place with that meaning. The co-researchers do not understand fast food restaurants as bounded, disparate sites within the food landscape. Instead, the flow of their conversation insists on understanding fast food in relationship to other types of food places. The youth offer up theory: if fast food places did not exist where they were located, if social interactions did not manifest as they have/do in Austin, some other restaurant might take its place. They further begin to map the broader city-wide food landscape beyond their immediate, everyday local geography. Kristina references cities beyond Austin city limits (Pflugerville), while Eric notes Elgin, Texas a rural community east of where the youth reside. Chris contributes to this mapping a more detailed description of the fast food landscape within Austin city boundaries, noting,

Because I think the further you go out, like if you were to go to like West Lake, you'll see less McDonald's and like more, like, P Terry's and other fancier places. And like the more you come toward East or North, you'll see McDonald's and more fast food places. (Focus group interview, July 2012)

Chris outlines a map similar to the one discussed in Chapter 4, this time from the perspective of fast food geography in Austin. He speculates fast food places correlate with predominantly low-income, predominantly non-white populations. Chris further

highlights nuances *between* fast food places, providing a better sense of the broader Austin food landscape in the process. To the national chains noted by Kristina and Eric, Chris notes that P Terry's, a locally-owned fast food establishment, is also located outside East Austin. Indeed, P Terry's markets itself as a more upscale fast food place, a family-owned diner that serves familiar options (hamburgers, fries, and shakes) with a focus on local and "pure" ingredients. The menu also features vegan and vegetarian options. As a testament to P Terry's alignment with the "good food" or more ethical food movement, the restaurant started selling its vegan and vegetarian patties at Whole Food grocers in the frozen section in 2015. To date, all of its locations exist West of the I-35 corridor.

Chris uses the words "I think" here, signaling that he is theorizing about fast food geographies beyond the scope of his immediate experience. As an athlete among the youth co-researchers, he brought some contact with far West Austin, such as West Lake, from playing basketball at other schools; his journeys Westward also put him in greater contact with the social and economic landscape of the city. Yet what is key here is not so much the "accuracy" of his thoughts, but how he begins to scale up in analysis beyond his immediate local experience in the first place to capture a greater sense of unevenness in the city, and how the conversation about fast food becomes a source of this expansion. Fast food, among the youth co-researchers, links up not only with family relationships but also relationships between different parts of the city, touching on Massey's observation about how places are defined in relationship to each other, how they constitute each other. The youth offer up a sense of food places as connected across space

and distance: development (or lack thereof) in one area of the city, directly relates to development elsewhere. Furthermore, the fast food conversation leads to theorizing among the youth about the very social interactions which inform/shape the food landscape, which locate food places where they live. Kristina theorizes,

But like as you said everybody can make a change within our environment and have more, not healthy foods but more variety of foods within our community, instead of just having like fast food restaurants. Like, I think they should put more out there for African-Americans instead of just fast food restaurants. That's more convenient, but still like cheaper for us to afford, instead of like restaurants being way far out and just having more fast food restaurants within a community, within a[n] area. So kinda expand more. (Focus group interview, July 2012)

Kristina captures tension between agency and structure. She notes how “everybody can make a change within our environment” while at the same time stating “they should put” more non-fast food places within the area. “They” here suggests someone from outside the community and that “they” does not include her or her neighbors among those with the ability to construct the broader landscape. Her comment is also the first in the conversation to describe East Austin or their neighborhoods as predominantly African-American, therefore explicitly linking the presence of fast food restaurants with racial dynamics (as well as with class, as she notes the need for options that are still affordable). Last but not least, Kristina’s point somewhat disrupts the categorization of “good” and “bad” foods, advocating instead for not only “healthy” foods but variety. Her emphasis is on the ability to choose from a broader range of food,



an emphasis that connects with her argument that individuals have the capacity to change the environment around them.

### **Closing**

In the lives of the youth co-researchers, food places of convenience provide food access as well as meaningful food experiences. At each of these food places, the 3 Ps matter: price, proximity, and palate determine what the youth choose to eat. Both convenience and access prove multifaceted; the most convenient food places appear to be those which answer to all 3 Ps, in addition to offering rapport with others. Their experiences are not limited to the built environment, determined by that environment, or necessarily centered on the food itself. Social interactions profoundly shape why they choose certain food places, their comfort there, and how they interact with others.

The youth co-researchers capture a range of “the social,” from family experiences and to the awareness of sociospatial inequality and urban change in Austin’s food landscape. As they map the material, built geographies they navigate, they reveal how they negotiate racial, cultural, and ethnic identity through food as Black and Black/multiracial teenagers. In the following, Side item: The Multiracial Plate, I move closer to “home”, to how diverse Black experiences with food and family influence youth identity, food preference, and food knowledge. This side item also moves closer to home in another sense, as I explore how my positionality as a Black/multiracial researcher informs this reading of food and home. The Multiracial Plate opens up to in-depth discussion of youth food experiences in Chapter 8.

### **Side Item: The Multiracial Plate**

Your dad's mother, on holidays and stuff, she would make chitlins and hogmaw, and the whole bit. The whole "soul food" thing. I had never heard of it in my life, and I was kind of leary about – I never did eat it, I have to say, because I don't eat parts of animals that I just don't know about. So I had to be nice enough, but, you know, just kind of decline from eating that kind of thing. . . I have to say, his mother was an awesome cook. That was - that was real food. She cooked some real food. – Donna Thomas, Author's mother (Food life history interview, October 2015)

While I nodded my head in affirmation as participants described "soul food", and as participants identified particular dishes with blackness, I claim limited experience with what interviewees labeled Black, country, and soul cuisine. In my family, as among most of the youth co-researchers, women have been the primary cooks, gardeners, preparers, servers and shoppers of food. My mother and her adoptive mom, my paternal grandmother and aunts, all worked full time while managing food needs of their respective households. Portrayals of "soul food" emphasize the prominence of Black women in the kitchen; through the kitchen, Black women do/are imagined to not only cook but also manage family and community relationships, transmit food and cooking knowledge to children, and prepare food for immediate family – as well as neighbors (discussed more in Chapter 8: Through Home).

As a Black woman and a non-Black mother, the kitchenspace and table at my house unfolded differently. My mother identifies as Chicana (Mexican-American) and white. Adopted at an early age, she was raised by a white couple from the Northeastern United States. Her immediate food history encompassed dishes her adoptive mother prepared and ingredients the low-income family could afford. She remembers her father

making orange julius, and she recalls her mother's homemade spaghetti and love of coffee milk; her father contracted polio at an early age, and he walked with a limp. His disability made it challenging for him to find and maintain work; she remembers her mother and father purchasing government cheese and powdered milk with food stamps. She resided in rural areas until her teenage years, where she also harvested fresh fruits from nearby farmland and worked on farms for spending money.

My mother learned how to cook what she calls "soul food" and "real food" from my dad's mother, my grandmother. She describes this learning experience as an initiation of sorts into her roles of mother and wife as dominantly conceived – as caretaker, food provider, and hub for husband/children.

### *Expanding Blackness*

Recruitment posters for this project invited Black-identified youth to apply and attracted young people with two African-American parents as well as youth with one non-Black parent or guardian. Under-representation in food research along with my lived experience guided my decision to include young Black/multiracial co-researchers. In this dissertation, the experiences of Black/multiracial youth challenge monolithic readings of Blackness used to, as McKittrick puts it, "fix" and "know" Black experiences. Their inclusion opens up discussion about racial/cultural diversity *within* families, while situating blackness in relationship with other populations where youth co-researchers experience food. Their presence here further emphasizes how families need not be Black and multiracial to experience complex food geographies or interracial/intercultural exchange.

Whether or not a Black youth is multiracial matters for still other reasons through the lens of food. Scholarship on food and plant knowledge suggest how parental backgrounds in terms of race, class, and gender inform what young people consume, what cultural foodways they learn, and what knowledge they then share and transmit with peers or their own children. This dissertation, scholarship, and my personal experience emphasize how the intersectional background of women especially makes a difference because of their roles as primary food and health providers for families. Food knowledge a mother and other women relatives bring to the table is shaped by their racial/cultural background and history. How parents have been/are racialized impacts their past food geographies but also their present ones. Their experiences therefore shape those of their children for whom they cook, shop, and prepare food. A mother's combined experience of race/class/gender, among other subjectivities, shapes her access in the broad sense of the word: the ability to easily travel to/from food places, and her ability to navigate them with emotional and physical ease – or not.

For a Black young person with a non-Black mother – the case for the Black/multiracial youth in this project – their experiences with food may involve other cultural foodways beyond dishes celebrated as African-American cuisine; they may access different outlets because of their mother's ability to do so because of her own racial/cultural heritage. Again, their experiences expand understandings of Black food experiences, while emphasizing how Black food geographies are always already more complex than stock narratives. Below, I share some of my personal family history to shed light on my positionality as a researcher and to underscore the relationships

Black/multiracial food stories can bring to the fore. This personal food history further shares migrations and geographic (dis)placements found among all youth co-researchers.

### *Personal Food History*

When my mom met my father, she not only tasted traditional Southern/Black cuisine but also encountered the lived experiences of black people intimately for the first time. She describes my grandmother's cooking as an initiation into both a Black family and motherhood. She remembers,

[My grandmother} definitely cooked soul food and smothered chicken with rice which was out of this world. She cooked everything from scratch, and it was absolutely incredible. I remember the smothered pork chops and the smothered chicken with rice and the green beans cooked with bacon and onions. It was mouthwatering. (Food history interview, March 2013).

From watching my grandmother cook, my mother honed her "soul food" cooking skills. She learned recipes for smothered pork chops and green beans with bacon and onions, dishes she later cooked for my father and me. At the same time, she put into practice strategies she learned from her personal food history. I grew up, as she grew up: on primarily boxed and canned foods that were non-perishable, convenient, and affordable. She creatively re-crafted "soul food" recipes from a pre-packaged and canned foods. Living in a low-income, working class neighborhood, we experienced lack of access to food retailers. The closest grocery store, my mom recalls, was a dimly-lit establishment with expired products on the shelves. I remember this grocer, along with a convenience store, being the closest outlet to where we lived.

My mother navigated this food landscape as a low-income multiracial woman who “reads” as white; she tends to be categorized as white, rather than as Mexican or Latina. Growing up, she describes feeling comfortable among white peers and family because “that was all she knew”. Her whiter skin eased her comfort and bolstered her sense of belonging with the community around her, but her ability to “pass” was/continues to be tenuous. Other children questioned “where she was from”, reading her phenotype as not quite white enough because of what she calls as “Hispanic”: “At one point I looked really, really, really Hispanic . . . with straight dark hair, dark eyes, and darker skin”. At age 38, my mother met her biological family for the first time, an experience which expanded her food story (and mine) to include Chicano/Mexican-American foodways and food histories from rural West Texas.

My father also claims rural Texas roots, from the Eastern stretch of the state known for its historical production of cotton. His sister, my aunt, describes how they grew up on “food from scratch” including collard greens, sweet potatoes, walnuts from trees, and pies – “soul foods” often mentioned by youth co-researchers and other Black participants. She recalls how my great grandmother tended a vegetable garden, as well as raised pigs and chickens, in Dallas, Texas. My great grandmother most likely carried on food production knowledge from growing up in a sharecropping and farming family in deeply segregated East Texas.

In certain respects, my paternal family reflects the broader story of the Great Migration among African-Americans from the mid-1900s through the 1970s, when Black families moved from the South to other parts of the United States, from rural to urban

contexts; spurred by environmental distress (the boll weevil), racial violence, oppression, and lack of employment, African-Americans sought better socioeconomic opportunities in cities and suburbs (Tolnay 2003; Wilkerson 2011). By the 1970s, Blacks represented a primarily urban population. In this case, my great-grandmother relocated from rural East Texas to Dallas; via marriage into the military, my grandmother then moved to the Western Coast of the United States as well as Hawaii.

The food geography of my Chicano/a family members similarly involves migration, history of racialized food production, and rural beginnings. As a teenager and young adult, my *abuelito*/grandfather worked as a migrant laborer throughout the Midwest and Western United States. He describes learning English while working in agricultural fields with other Chicanos and more recently-arrived Mexican laborers. Rankin, where he was born and still resides, is a small, once-booming oil town of about 800 people today. How long *los Armendarez* and *los Lozano* have resided in Rankin and West Texas remains uncertain; they may have been among early settlers in then New Spain, who became Texas residents through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Rankin boasts only one convenience store and gas station. Due to lack of business, restaurants have long closed their doors.

To access a grocery store or supermarket, my *abuelito*, aunts, and uncles must travel 20 miles to the nearest larger town or major city. Their experience reflects lack of commercial food retailers in rural areas, often described as rural food deserts by scholars (Lucan et al. 2012; Smith and Morton 2009; Hubley 2011). While lacking convenient access to a supermarket, for example, my *abuelito*'s sisters invite him to family meals or

deliver home-made tamales, enchiladas, and tacos to him. With their help, he accesses ingredients for his favorite dishes, pork chops, *caldo* and what he calls “Manny’s Tacos”. He also receives frozen and cooked meals from a delivery service similar to Meals on Wheels. Since meeting her biological father, foods my mother first tasted when she moved to Texas – *caldo*, *tamales*, and breakfast tacos among them - possess new meaning for her.

### *Food Geographies On the Move*

My personal food history underscores urban-rural geographies evident in the lives of both youth with two African-American guardians and those with one. Like many of the youth, parents, and grandparents interviewed for this project, I am just one generation removed from rural relatives who tended home gardens or produced crops; like many participants, my family history involves fairly recent rural-urban migration. A comprehensive body of literature explores how migration impacts the access and transmission of food knowledge and foodways among more recent immigrants to United States; though I have not found similar studies of African-American/Black migration and movement (beyond the transatlantic slave trade), this literature suggests the importance of continuity between people and lands in maintaining, sustaining, and reviving relationships with food.

While also reflecting this mobile geography, Black multiracial youth further underscore the complex racial/cultural relationships migration has involved. In addition to navigating food through multiple racial/cultural subjectivities within their own families, Black youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century largely reside in racially diverse urban and peri-



urban areas. In cities undergoing gentrification, urban Black youth share neighborhoods, grocery and convenience stores, and school lunchrooms with youth of diverse racial/ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In the Austin context, Black and Latin@ youth have long shared physical geographic space in neighborhoods and at school in East and South Austin. Perhaps because scholarship on Black youth and food tends to focus on the household scale, or specifically on Black youth within a given area of the city, research tends to present them as separate from exchange with other young people and adults from non-Black backgrounds. Including Black/multiracial youth in this project draws attention to multiracial dynamics within Black families, while underscoring long-standing (and sometimes fraught) food relationships between African-Americans, Latin@s, and other racialized populations.

### *Placing Blackness*

Black/multiracial youth shed still further light on how blackness is lived. In my personal lived experience and among the Black multiracial youth who participated, blackness emerges as inclusive of racial/cultural diversity. To identify as Black did not exclude, for example, Guatemalan or Chicana heritage. Their self-identification reflects the “one drop rule”, which originated as a legal principle designed to maintain racial segregation in the American South; in the 1920s, states throughout the South (including Texas) adopted legal stipulations which determined that any person with “one drop”, or the slightest trace, of African/African-American ancestry was Black, and therefore subject to circumscribed privileges, resources, and rights (Khanna 2010).

Kristina and Terek described experiences with racial ambiguity, oft-noted in mixed-race scholarship; depending on the spaces they occupy, they have been variously considered “fully” Black, “part Black”, or of a background constitutive of African heritage (such as Puerto Rican with darker skin and a particular hair texture). This situational ambiguity does not negate blackness. In fact this ambiguity seemed to reify their blackness. Their blackness that impacted not only how they identified but also how others identified *them* as navigated the food landscape (for example, Kristina’s cafeteria experience in Chapter 7: Around the Neighborhood). The experiences of Black/multiracial youth provide further insight into how blackness is locally sociospatially organized and understood, most significantly by the youth themselves. Along with Black youth who share two African-American parents, their experiences emphasize that while blackness is constructed, its material impacts powerfully shape everyday food geographies.

## Chapter 8: Through Home

My neighborhood growing up, it was very. . . I was really close to my neighbors, because as a little girl my grandma raised me. I wasn't really with my mom, and so, like I would live at my grandma's house with my uncle. And I was really close to my uncle, so we would always go outside, and play, and have mudfights, and jump on the trampoline. And, just, you know have fun. And we would hang out, with like, the kids up the street because my grandma's friend lived up the street. So we would always go up there and watch movies. And have fun. And ride our bikes. And go to Jack and a Box, you know like fast food restaurants around the neighborhood. So, that's something I liked to do as a kid. We were kind of, you know, free. But we had a time curfew when we came home.

– Kristina, interview

When co-researchers shared about food practices, rituals, and knowledge carried out where they live, they mentioned home as a physical site as well as feelings associated with “home”. Kristina touches on home as site and feelings through home in her memory just above. The physical house where she resided growing up belonged to her grandmother, where she was close – literally and emotionally - to her uncle and her neighbors. This home site carries meaning for her because of social connections she fostered there; the home site gathers meaning through the practices she engaged in with others, including play, movement around the neighborhood, and trips to fast food restaurants. Kristina connects this homeplace with a “free” feeling: she remembers Freedom in terms of mobility and a sense of being emotionally carefree. Home for her connects with her inner geographies – her emotions, memories, and preferences – through the intimate relationships of her life.

Her description resonates with how geographers increasingly approach *home*, as a “material and an affective space, shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions” (Blunt 2005). Critical geographies of home

understand this place as “material and imaginative”, a site through which individuals and families express home, power, and identity; it is an “inherently multi-scalar” space through which broader social and economic processes manifest (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 22). Interpreted from this perspective, Massey’s (1994) writings about home and place come to mind. Massey proposes an approach to home which honors how dynamic, complex, and changeable “home” can be. Home can be understood as forged through social relationships that are always in dynamic connection with each other, and always in connection with broader social structures such as a race/racism, sexism, and class. In other words, home exists as a place, because social relationships make its physical structure possible – and because social relationships endear the place with meaning.

Interventions from critical home geographies and Massey challenge dominant discourses about home as a fixed (happy or pleasant) place; they allow – and indeed emphasize - that it is necessary and socially just - to consider home through the lens of social relationships to capture more complex narratives. Blunt (2005) note how tensions, negotiations, and exclusions that take place in the home can make peace or disrupt it. Negotiations at home can reflect broader patterns of power: “keeping the peace” may involve silencing the voices, needs, and desires of women while amplifying those of men in domestic space. Assumptions of “home as haven” impact policy related to violence in the home and homelessness. Such policies can have direct material consequences in terms of resources available – or not – to address home-related issues (Bricknell 2012).

In the context of this chapter, the above insights guide my attention to different types of social interactions at home and feelings about home – through the lens of food.

Some of the social relationships described below take place among family members while others stretch to incorporate neighbors and local community members in need; some of the feelings connected with home were like Kristina's – free, happy, and content – while feelings of disgust for particular foods or tensions in the kitchenspace also come to the fore. From the perspective of the framework, honing in on these social relationships is key not only to continue humanizing Black youth experiences with food, but also because of the ways in which Black homes have been stigmatized in media, policy, and scholarship.

Black/African-American households have often been rendered the antithesis of the “ideal” American home or family. This is due in great part because the ideal is racialized and gendered in specific ways: the ideal home/family assumes a white, two-parent, heteronormative (suburban) household. Consideration of how this ideal is socially constructed deserves attention at the beginning of this chapter, because Black youth and their families experience home – and food through home – in a context which continues to assume their dysfunction. Furthermore, most of the Black youth co-researchers interviewed for this project hailed from “non-ideal” single mother (or grandmother) households; I step carefully into their homespaces aware of the assumptions made about single motherhood. Last but not least, this social construction deserves attention because of how it may have impacted the ways youth co-researchers (re)presented food through home in their daily lives *because* of the weight of stigma. Understanding this construction ultimately sheds light on lived stories sidelined by stock narratives of the

Black home – while also bringing attention to the significance of “home” given the history of black geographies.

*(Re)Visiting Black Homes*

The controversial Moynihan Report (1965) presents an explicit example of the ideal home while presenting Black home life as the antithesis. Sociologist and Assistant Department of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan composed the report, which urged policy attention to “breakdown” conditions of the Black family. Asserting “the family is the basic social unit of American life”, the report implied that “family” meant a two-parent, man-woman, nuclear household; the report compared Black families with the “stability” of white, heterosexual, nuclear families. This stability, Moynihan argued, bolstered the social and economic mobility of these families. In contrast, the “pathology” of matriarchy practiced through single, female-headed households among low-income Black families in particular was the source of socioeconomic disparity between Black and white households; this matriarchal structure negatively impacts Black men and Black children. As children and youth grow up with single, female-headed households, they are more likely to repeat male displacement and to be involved in crime according to the report.

The report points to historical factors which have forced the Black population into a “problematic family structure” (such as enslavement and violence against Black men during Reconstruction). In conclusion, this structure is “out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole.” (Department of Labor Website). It is significant that Moynihan was also a sociologist, as the report indicates the way in which the Black home has been (and continues to be) studied from

the perspective of a “culture of poverty” in scholarship. As noted previously, a “culture of poverty” perspective emphasizes how individual behaviors and household practices perpetuate poverty with little or no consideration of historical or current systemic processes which support impoverished conditions; such scholarship privileges certain understandings of family, success, or progress (in the case of the Moynihan Report, for example, the white middle class family served as the explicit norm)

Policy and scholarship in the vein of the Moynihan Report bolster ideals about home, family, and households that in turn inform welfare, labor, and other government programs – with material consequences for low-income families that seek/receive public assistance (Quadagno 1996). Still other consequences involve stereotypes connected with home and Black mothering. The Moynihan Report reflects “controlling images” of Black women as “mammies”, “matriarchs”, and “welfare queens” which circulate in popular and policy discourse (Collins 2000). Each of these controlling images has a direct relationship with home – and with food. Historically, Black women served white and wealthier families by taking care of children, preparing meals, and cleaning house, during and after enslavement; images of the “mammy” has figured prominently in food advertisements, most famously for Aunt Jemima’s pancake syrup. Stereotypical Black matriarchs “reign” in the home, where one of the ways they manage family is via cooking. Finally, the “welfare queen” image misuses the system in order to buy more items (including, perhaps, food) for the home and to stay at home rather than work. As the Moynihan Report suggests, such positioning of Black women also relates to the understanding of Black children and youth as “at-risk”.

In “culture of poverty” discourse and among controlling images, Black historical experiences in the United States make an appearance. This history is oft cited as a cause for dysfunctional (single parent, women-centered) Black homes. Stereotypes (re)present, to some degree, the historical social/economic positioning of Black homes and families. When approaching Black homes through food, history also deserves attention because of how African-Americans have experienced historical and on-going displacement. McKittrick (2011) describes “a black sense of place” in reference to how Black populations have been subject to movement and removal since the transatlantic trade to the present. Placements and displacements, forced and “voluntary” migrations, have made sustaining a physical site called home a challenge; in Black American popular culture, and in Black artistic and social movements, identifying home as a physical site and in an affective sense has been a consistent theme.

Critical and feminist geographies of home take to task the need to “fix home in place” and the conceptualization of home as haven or belonging. Yet black geographies past and present invite nuanced attention to why home – site and affect – may be so important for historically displaced, historically marginalized Black communities; as noted in Conceptual Frameworks and previous chapters, African-Americans have not been privileged to experience home in either sense of the word with ease due to interrelated processes of segregation, outmigration, and gentrification. In addition, contextualizing black geographies draws attention to how home may be multi-sited in a physical or felt sense due to migrations.



Taken together, critical geographies of home and attention to black geographies shapes how I approach food *through* home in this chapter. Rather than writing about food “at” home, I will write *through* home to emphasize how social relationships, networks, and practices constitute where youth co-researchers live. With this phrasing, I also intend to show broader socioeconomic and sociospatial shifts in Austin manifest via food, through home. Writing the words *through home* further serves to position home as a multiscalar space already interlinked with local to global processes. By approaching home in this way, I actively counter the stigmatization about Black home/family/motherhood while considering how youth experience food through home. I devote particular attention to food practices carried out through what Christie (2008) refers to as kitchenspace.

Christie approaches the kitchen as an indoor/outdoor space based on in-depth interviews with women in Central Mexico; in her ethnography, the space is both a “cultural archive and a laboratory” (260). A similar understanding of the kitchen as an indoor cooking and eating space with a garden extension emerged in this project as well. With this understanding of kitchenspace in mind, I begin with *The Dish*, exploring how youth linked particular dishes with home, family, and racial/cultural identity. Then, I consider what youth shared about food through their homes *Inside the Kitchen* and *In the Garden*. I close by exploring food practices carried out *Under the Table*, when home kitchens transformed into a vending spaces. I draw on food life history interviews with youth co-researchers, participatory video, and food diaries.

### **The Dish: “You Are What You Eat”**

*I eat fried chicken with mashed potatoes and macaroni (Darell)*

*Fried chicken and spicy cabbage by my mother. Spicy greens. BBQ wings/ribs/brisket.*

*Spicy shrimp over a bed of rice. (Tonya)*

*Black eyed peas, cabbage, dressing. (Trina)*

*We do a seafood bash. Homemade hot wings. Chicken, rice (sweet)greens, Dressing. Sweets. Turkey. Ham. (Brittney)*

When asked which foods express their identities in their Food Diaries, youth co-researchers primarily identified dishes often linked with African-American cuisine and “soul food”. They consumed these dishes with their families through home or with extended family in still other homeplaces beyond Austin city limits. In the Side Item: Signifyin’ with Soul Food, I explored how “soul food” can function as a kind of cultural currency, a way of connecting as Black-identified researchers and co-researchers, a way of articulating blackness in that moment, at that specific time and place. In this chapter, “soul food” reappears as dishes the youth explicitly connect with “who they are” as Black/African-American young people and with home. In addition to consuming these foods with family at their physical site of home, the dishes seemed to represent “home” in terms of heritage and belonging to a collective group.

Their experiences with “soul food” dishes underscore home as a place with temporal food rituals. Though the youth connected “soul food” with home in these ways, these dishes did not compose their usual fare – or their favorite meals. Among the youth

co-researchers, only three named “soul food” cuisine as typical or regular meals. Isaac shares, “Soul food express me because it's in my culture and also my family usually eat it most of the time”. His specific naming of “soul food” invites readers to imagine what this might include, and points to the prominent position of “soul food” in the popular imagination. Kristina describes consuming some “soul food” items on a regular basis (such as fried chicken and greens), alongside Mexican cultural dishes through home. Recalling her grandmother’s cooking growing up, she shared, “Like she [her grandmother] would maybe do fried chicken, and then she would make tamales”. Today, her mother still calls her grandmother, asking if she will prepare fried chicken for the family.

Darell and Tonya also mention consuming heritage dishes on a regular basis. Sheila’s description of foods with which she identifies combine “soul food” items with still other dishes or snacks: “Cheeseburger, pizza, yogurt, pecan pie, fried chicken. Foods we eat as a family.” However, most of the youth co-researchers primarily consumed “soul food” on special occasions with immediate and extended family, at their home sites or those of their family members. Furthermore, whether consumed on a regular basis or infrequently, “soul food” items rarely figured among the youth co-researchers’ favorite meals. Only one co-researcher included what might be considered a “soul food” item as both a favorite meal and a food with which she culturally/racially identifies.

In short, the youth co-researchers described enjoying soul food; they connected the dishes with family, home, heritage, and nostalgia - but consume it rarely; their favorite meals included other foods – and along with them, perhaps, still other tastes,

smells, and textures. The temporal rhythm of “soul food” for most youth co-researchers - consumed and cooked on social occasions – may have to do with the time necessary to prepare the heritage meals. Sweet or spicy greens, for instance, often simmer for hours or overnight to prepare to taste. The meals also involve multiple bodies in the kitchen. The time, effort, and cost involved in preparing these dishes suggests their dedication for special occasions rather than for everyday family meals. Part of the ritual of preparing “soul food” is not only consuming with family members but also preparing an abundance of food with family. Though they do not eat these dishes daily, they identify with them (and the home rituals attached to them) despite their irregular frequency.

Youth co-researchers similarly described primarily women relatives – mothers, grandmothers, and aunts – cooking “soul food” dishes through home and for larger, extended family gatherings. For example, Tonya is careful to note that “fried chicken and spicy cabbage” is prepared by her mother. Kristina’s mother cooks Mexican as well as “soul food”, which Kristina defines as “green bean casserole, fried pork chops, chicken fried steak, gravy, ribs, anything like that”. Her grandmother, who identifies as Mexican can also cook select “soul food” items, particularly fried chicken (though her other dishes are “not so good” or to Kristina’s preference).

Though the kitchenspace may be constructed as a “woman’s place” (Massey 1996), it is not a space without agency or resistance, joy or creativity. Forson (2006) describes how Black women, past and present, have expressed creativity and entrepreneurship through cooking fried chicken, a much stigmatized “soul food” dish. Again, Eric’ grandmother appreciated her kitchenspace as a creative outlet. Kristina

described her mother expressing creativity for family meals, trying different types of foods and combinations for dinners. When men were noted, they prepared meat dishes. On holidays in Freedom's house, for example, the women prepare the sweets and side dishes while "the boys" prepare the main dish, the turkey:

In holidays, my family gets together and we start cooking. The girls handle the uh – the baking. I would always bake – uh – cake and pies. And the boys – they would stick to the – the action of the main dish -- the turkey and all that. So other than that, we don't really get together and cook other than that though. . . That's why holidays are, like, special.

Kristina recalls visiting family in East Texas, where her grandpa barbeques and family cooks chitlins, also known as chitterlings (pig intestines):

Cause I'm also kind of from Nacogdoches out in East Texas, so like my grandparents they, like every year Thanksgiving they cook pig feet, hog maw, all this type of stuff I do not like whatsoever and it stinks just like pig feet and chitlins every year for Thanksgiving.

Such a gendered division of labor in cooking – in terms of women preparing and eating non-meat while men cook meat dishes - is well-documented in scholarship. In gender studies, scholars point out the connection between masculinity and meat, noting how meat tends to be considered more nutrition-dense, hardy, and "primitive", and therefore better suited for men in terms of their assumed appetites, bodily needs, and capacity for labor (Christie 2008; Ruby and Heine 2011; Rozin et al. 2012). Not all family stories placed men in the position of cooking meat, however. When interviewed

for the film, Eric's grandmother spoke with pride about her ability to make less expensive meat tender. In response to whether or not she would prefer a Whole Foods in her neighborhood, she responded:

I'm not really a big Whole Foods person because they want to make everything sky high. It's like you go to the store, and you buy a high grade meat. This meat is supposed to be high grade like a T-bone steak. It's supposed to be good – what you call that thing, New York strips, that's supposed to be high dollar beef. But, I can go to that store and buy me a seven steak or a rump steak and I can make that meat just as tender as you would that T-bone steak, if you knew how to cook it.

Youth co-researchers describe consuming the dishes with their family, watching them being prepared by (women) family members, and taking part in preparation themselves. They are literally digesting knowledge – social and material – about practices maintained in their family as they engage in food practices passed down through generations and among African-American community members. From the perspective of black geographies, “soul food” dishes become a way the youth locate themselves within their family, cultural, and collective history; the presence of particular dishes, such as Cajun seafood for example, may locate Tonya's family in Louisiana or the Mississippi Delta. These dishes also communicate a shared geography among youth, a geography with their family members and with other African-Americans. Many of the food plants and animals involved possess a long history of cultivation and preparation in the Deep South during enslavement; they are emblematic of the transatlantic trade, with ingredients connected with Europe (pig, for example) and with West Africa (greens, for instance). Christie (2008) captures well the multifaceted knowledge shared through kitchenspace:

Kitchenspace is at once a cultural archive and a laboratory. It is a place where women nurture and educate children, transmitting recipes, organizational forms, food preferences, and a particular vision of life from one generation to the next (260).

### **Inside the Kitchen**

We just eat different food at different times. Depends on who, uh – whose turn it is to pick the dinner. We all just go with that, and just eat it. Because it will be like – my favorite’s lasagna, so we would always eat lasagna but everybody else would always be like “Freedom when it’s your turn, you always eat lasagna!” And I was like “But it’s my favorite. I like lasagna.” And then we would have macaroni and cheese one day, and then baked chicken the other – so yea.

(Freedom, interview, October 2013)

Rituals carried out for daily meals or for meals beyond “soul food” both resonated with and contrasted with heritage dishes. Freedom’s experience with food through home presents a case in point. During her food life history interview, she described her favorite food (lasagna) and shared that she did not identify with specific foods because of her background; rather, she identified more with other foods she enjoyed. In her house, she has the opportunity to savor her favorite meal frequently, since family members take turns choosing the meal for the evening; her parents, her sister, and her brother each play a role in shaping the evening meal. Both her father and mother take part in cooking, and so does she:

[M]y Dad cooks and my mom cooks so – everyone in the house actually cooks except for my brothers. They're not really a cooking fan. But me and my sister – let me back up on that. My sister, she cannot cook, she can't cook. So it's just me my mom and my dad who cooks the food actually.

On holidays, when her family partakes in “soul food”, decisions and gender play out quite differently. As noted above, women prepare certain foods for these special occasions through her home and with her family, while men prepare others. There is a sense, too, among Freedom and other youth co-researchers that they have less of a role in deciding what foods are cooked or consumed at “soul food” celebrations. In fact, while the youth described observing the process, they did not describe taking part in food decisions on these occasions. On a daily basis Freedom's home food experience demonstrates shared cooking and decision-making responsibility across gender – as well as across age groups. A closer look at cooking for these meals might reveal practices divided according to gender or age. For example, are there parts of the lasagna meal her mother cooks, and others her father prepares? What kitchen tools are youth allowed to use or implement, compared to parents? Based on what Freedom highlights here, what is clear is her familiarity with a kitchenspace predicated on shared responsibility.

While there is shared responsibility, there is also negotiation. Freedom was among one of the few youth to describe her family's shopping experience in detail. Food rituals carried out at home extend to her family's experience at the grocery store. Her description again relates a process that intentionally involves the whole family, while also highlighting limits placed on her range of choice as a young person within the household:



When we go down the spice aisle – (sighs)—it’s a whole bunch of spices, my parents be like “look for black pepper and yellow lemon” or something like that. And I be like,” Ok let me – let me look, let me look. It’s like – like fifty different spices. And I’m going down the aisle, I be like, “like I cannot find it,” and by the time they get there they be like “Freedom it’s right – it’s right there in front of your face!” I be like “Oh, I found it!” So that’s how it usually goes. But then we do walk down past the juice aisle and soda aisle and we be like “can we get some soda?” and they be like “probably – like, not really, no, you can’t.” But usually uh – my dad he lets me uh, gets a couple of sodas every now and then.

Freedom’s reflection importantly extends the understanding of kitchenspace to include the supermarket, specifically a bulk store (Sam’s) that better suits the needs and budget of her family of seven. Her shopping experience involves purchasing ingredients for family rituals and enacting still other intimate (and humorous) relations with family members through the store setting. Here, too, she offers a sense of how food knowledge and transmission works in her family.

When consuming and preparing daily meals through home, she witnesses gender relationships that are not as clearly defined as during “soul food” holidays; she learns dishes by choosing which she prefers to consume and by preparing other family choices alongside her mother and father. When shopping, she explores the aisles and finds, with family, specific spices; in the process, she is exposed to ingredients and location within the store. Food knowledge transmission involves recipes as well as knowing where and how to procure the proper ingredients. At the same time, she attempts to negotiate juice

or soda. Her parents' response again transmits knowledge, this time regarding boundaries and, perhaps, specific ideas about which foods are healthy vs. unhealthy choices. Her negotiation identifies her place within the family as one with some negotiating ability; her presence is integral to cooking, preparing, and shopping rituals.

Freedom's situation was an exception among co-researchers, in part because hers was one of the few families with both a mother and father residing in her household; again, most of the youth lived in homes with a single mother or grandmother with fewer "bodies" sharing the same residence, and with at least some meal times when their guardian was not present due to working hours. In these cases, youth were placed in the care of older siblings or relatives through home, or, if the oldest child, cared for their younger sisters and brothers. In these cases, too, the gendered practice of cooking more firmly situated women in the kitchenspace, cooking meals for the family, (at times) shopping for ingredients, and transmitting food knowledge.

When youth resided with your grandmothers, as in the case of Eric, shopping at times became their responsibility. As mentioned before, Eric frequented Best Food Mart as well as City Market (now Arlan's Market) to shop for ingredients his grandma cooked for meals. Youth co-researchers described differing degrees of choice and responsibility in terms of cooking, shopping, and preparation through home; as they did so, they described negotiating activities as well as food knowledge. Interestingly, young women in particular described learning – or choosing not to learn – food knowledge through home; only one of the male youth co-researchers, Eric, described partaking in kitchenspace directly, and in his case through shopping and gardening, rather than via

cooking or baking. In the following sections, youth negotiate food knowledge they encounter through home. As in the case of “soul food” and everyday meals, their encounters shed light on gendered and intergenerational relationships; these snapshots also highlight the inner geographies of the youth co-researchers in terms of their food knowledge and skills, their preferences and desires.

*To Receive or Not To Receive: Negotiating Food Knowledge*

[M]y grandmother would come over and make tamales. I kind of seen how they did it. Kind of something I didn't want to participate in. But, after, it was good. Once it was all nice and cooked. Like the process, wasn't really something I wanted to be a part of.

In Kristina's family, part of her everyday cooking ritual is cooking among family members, for family members. As a child she witnessed this when her grandmother came over to her house to make tamales; today she continues to witness this ritual when her mother calls her grandmother, asking for “fried chicken” or other dishes. She shares, “My mom will call up my grandma and be like, “Can you cook us some fried chicken? Can you cook us some fried chicken?” She'll be like, okay.” These rituals position Kristina as the recipient and consumer of food prepared by women in her family through home, in the past into the present. They also position her as a receiver of food knowledge. In the quote above, her comment recalls Freedom's negotiation in Sam's Club: she makes clear her lack of desire to learn at least one dish she has witnessed prepared among women in her family. Though Kristina did not want to participate she witnessed and recalled some specific details, sharing, “It was – I'm not for sure, but I know she put something in the

blender like pig or something. I don't know exactly what she put in a blender, but like, it wasn't appealing. So, yeah.”

Her comment brings to mind her reaction to chitlins/chitterlings as well, another food she connects with cultural heritage and “home”, but that she would rather not prepare and/or consume. Through her sensory experience with these foods – the sounds, the smells, the visuals – Kristina makes a decision not to take on this particular food knowledge. Food knowledge she does receive and choose to continue is cooking fried fish. She shares,

[Fried fish is] something I've kind of learn how to do since my mom sometimes don't like to cook. So I would have to get up, go to the kitchen, and figure out what I want to cook. And instantly I'm thinking of fish, because it's easy, it's quick. All you have to do is cook the side dish to go along with the fish.

In Kristina's experience, the cooking knowledge that appeals to her takes the form of a quick and easy dish, one she learned to cook from her mother, and one that she, notably, also connects with her African-American heritage. Her share also illuminates her cooking responsibilities through home: when her mother prefers not to cook, Kristina (the eldest daughter) takes on this role in kitchenspace. By taking on this role, she practices food knowledge she has observed and learned from women in her family; she becomes, in turn, the practitioner and transmitter of home food ritual practices for younger sisters and brothers. This is a very different role from the one Kristina typically occupies. Like most youth co-researchers, Kristina was accustomed to receiving food and being cooked for, rather than to cooking food herself. Practicing this food knowledge – fried fish

preparation – arises out of expectations for her as the oldest daughter; her share reflects, too, how single mothers who labor outside the home may lack the energy or time to do so when they arrive home from work. In other words, Kristina did not begin cooking through home from a personal desire to do so; household conditions and needs required her to do so. However, her share again invites a nuanced approach to kitchenspace, one that in this case takes into (intersectional) account Kristina’s youth. Kristina performs cooking duties in a gendered space, socially constructed for women; she undertakes these duties as an eldest daughter based on her mother’s household expectations; and she is placed in a position of cooking in addition to school work and afterschool activities. Yet the experience need not be onerous alone. In fact, Kristina describes enjoying cooking fried fish and a desire to improve her practice. Further research would reveal how Kristina even made fried fish “her own”, adding her own spices or other ingredients; it would reveal how she managed or balanced her school responsibilities as a high school student, with her cooking role as a sister and daughter.

Freedom’s experience with baking through home indicates how food knowledge may be shared and modified by young people. In her case, she describes a situation when she chose to enact food knowledge she learned from her father and grandmother. She describes learning baking from her father through home:

Well, you see, my mom always worked when I was little and my dad took care of me so he was always, he was always the one, uh, baking stuff so I learned baking from him . . . So he would always bake around me and I would be like “hey –

cake is my favorite, I wanna learn how to make some cake. “ So he would teach me how to make cake.

Freedom shares a personal desire to learn cake baking from an early age. Again, her kitchenspace reveals gender relationships that differ from “soul food” cooking in her family, from broader social norms, and from descriptions youth shared for this project. Her father taught her how to bake and was also a primary caretaker for her, her brothers and sisters, growing up. From her grandmother, she asked to learn how to bake from scratch. She recalls,

Well when I was little my grandma, she used to always make this home cooked cake – I forgot what it was. But, uh, it was like – she just put flour and eggs and, uh, some other kinds of material – ingredients in there. And I was just thinking, “Huh, I wonder how she does it by scratch like that because there’s no box, no ingredients, you just have to know by the top of your head. And I’m like “Ok, let me see if I can do this.” It didn’t – it didn’t work out. But, uh, I actually had her teach me how to do it.

Because the baking from scratch did not meet her standards, Freedom has decided to “stick to my cake boxing” for the time being. As in the case of Kristina’s experience observing cooking in her family through home, Freedom’s baking journey reveals a lineage. In her case, this lineage includes both men (her father) and women (her grandmother); her father learned baking from his mother (her grandmother); and now Freedom serves as a practitioner and transmitter of baking knowledge. Though she does not consider herself the best cook in her immediate family, she identifies herself as the

most skilled baker. Here, two kitchenspaces are linked – that of her home residence in Austin and that of her grandmother in Houston – through the ritual of baking and the transmission of baking knowledge; her family’s geography suggests a multisited experience of home. Her modification of a family tradition to suit her kitchen strengths highlights how food knowledge may be transmitted through home to young people – and transformed. She chooses to cook from the box based on personal preference, pairing the family baking tradition with modern convenience. Freedom makes known the ability to shift family rituals, and for youth to make them their own.

In their interviews, Kristina and Freedom begin to position themselves not only as practitioners of food knowledge, but as knowledge bearers who can/do have skills, practices, and processes to share with their peers, younger relatives, and other family members. Scholarship tends to position young people as recipients of knowledge alone, without considering how the youth themselves negotiate transmission of knowledge and/or how they continue home traditions. In the case of gardening, Eric’ experience with food production through home brings further attention to the position of youth as potential knowledge bearers – even, in some cases, for older generations. His story (re)presents food knowledge practices as mutual and shared, rather than as unidirectional (from elder to youth); at the same time, gardening through his home glimpses longstanding histories of food production among African-Americans.

### **In the Garden**

We had okra, potatoes, and sweet potatoes. We didn’t have a plow, so we dug them up with a, you know, the old people showed us how to how to plant ‘em.

But we could take a spade fork and go from a angle and go in like so, and you wouldn't puncture the potatoes. And overturn 'em, and you could see the potatoes and pick up the potatoes from the dirt. - Ms. Rosetta Brown

Ms. Rosetta Brown, Eric' grandmother, moved to Austin from Hutto when she was a young woman. In Hutto, she grew up tending a garden. Above, she describes crops her family cultivated in the garden (okra, potatoes); she describes, too, how she harvested potatoes. In the youth-directed video she embodies this memory, as she folds her hand as if clasping the handle of a spade and twists her wrist. Later in her interview, she makes clear that to garden was not only a regular practice, but an *expected* one for community members old and young in her community when she was a child. She continued,

And I see some of these kids now that stand up and talk to people and things. Oh girl, you'd get slapped 'til the middle of next year. You don't do no back talkin'. If someone tell you, "Come on here we're fixin' to go out here and dig up these potatoes in the garden. You gon' go out there and you gon' dig. . . pick up that grass, and shake up that dirt off that grass, and put that grass over there in the bucket. That's what you do. And then you watch them plant it, and then it's amazing to get back. And they give you some seeds to make your own little garden. And you get back and you watch your own stuff grow.

Mrs. Brown's comments underscore how important gardening was for survival in addition to – or in lieu of – access to local grocery stores. Their experiences also emphasize the rural background of African-Americans in the United States. Three youth co-researchers described grandparents who currently lived in rural areas or who had



moved to Austin from rural areas; as shared, on my father's side, I am two generations removed from sharecropping in rural East Texas myself. Though characterized as an "urban" population in part because of high Black settlement in cities during and following the Great Migration from the South (roughly 1910-1970s), Black American populations have a near and long relationship with food production – during enslavement and post-enslavement. Despite this history, Black home gardens, past and present, remain all but absent from considerations of food access in scholarship. In the growing Black food movement, however, allusions to long-standing environmental and agricultural knowledge are often central to how efforts position themselves. The Black Urban Farmers and Grower's Conference, the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, and our own efforts with Food for Black Thought occupy this vantage point.

Attention to this history of agricultural and garden production is pivotal because of the knowledge elders may pass down to younger generations – and to knowledge exchange between them. In Eric's case, his grandmother learned from elders in the community where she grew up. While Eric worked at Urban Roots, for example, the non-profit built a garden in the Browns' backyard. Eric, the grandson, connected the family with a resource which in turn provided a space for the cultivation of food in an area where the closest supermarket (City Market, described in Chapter 5) carried limited fresh food options, and perhaps few culturally relevant options, for the household.

For Mrs. Brown, the garden offered an opportunity to harness and share knowledge she cultivated as a child and teenager. She stated, "Like, they dug this up back here and we had a garden out there in the back. We had tomatoes, we had okra, we had

green beans.” In the garden, they planted some crops with which she was intimately familiar from her childhood. Eric, who expressed a love for farming and agriculture throughout this project, was able to contribute knowledge he learned on the farm, and transfer it to their home garden. His connection with food production at Urban Roots and at home appeared to increase his awareness of edible foods growing throughout his neighborhood. During his go-along interview, for example, he described plants such as bananas growing in neighbors’ yards. His description underscores home gardens not typically acknowledged in East Austin, among long-established residents of color.

At the time of the interview, Mrs. Brown and Eric no longer maintained their home garden, though both described wanting to revive the practice in the near future. Two other youth co-researchers described the same: their families had started home gardens but the plots were no longer maintained. In describing their experiences with gardening through home, the youth co-researchers pointed to practical barriers as well as emotional and cultural reasons why they prefer *not* to carry on the practice of growing food themselves.

#### *Practical Barriers to Gardening*

I mean like my mother tried to garden but it didn’t work – it kinda – it didn’t work out. You see she kinda doesn’t know how to garden, because she kind of buys plants, right? But if they’re – if they’re alive, it’s – it’s gonna die. (Laughs). It’s gonna die. So she tried to make a garden but the whole – the whole thing didn’t work out. It kinda just faltered – it died away. That’s why I can’t really

garden myself , cause – I’m just like her, I just kill plants. Its not – it’s not gonna work out. So yea. - Freedom

Freedom points out, in contrast to the knowledge sharing clear/apparent at the Browns, a lack of t necessary knowledge and/or resources to sustain home gardening. Gardening emerges as an activity her mother desires to practice but struggles to maintain. Based on Freedom’s note about herself (her note that “I just kill plants”), I asked if she *wanted* to garden. Her response outlined practical challenges her family faced as they attempted to produce food through home:

FW: Oh no! Oh no! That’s difficult. It’s a lot of work. . . It’s too much work, you gotta be in the hot heat, make sure you garden and water you plants every day but that would take up a lot of water so – my parents – we used to water our – the grass all the time, but then, the water bill got too high, and we was like, “Nope, that’s when we gonna stop it”. ‘Cause I, we used to have the best, uh, yard in our neighborhood. But then the, uh, water bill got high and we was like “nope. Can’t do it anymore.”

Freedom’s conversation presents the decision to stop gardening not only as one based on ability or knowledge, but on cost of water. She further connects the garden with the broader conversation/discussion about upkeep of the lawn. More than food production was sacrificed when her family stopped watering the garden and the grass on a consistent basis. The aesthetics of her home in the suburban landscape also suffered / was also at stake, aesthetics to which she contributes importance. Linked with/tied in with her

description of her neighborhood feeling like “home” because of its pleasing exteriors, Freedom’s comment carries weight in several respects. Many food access projects in Austin (and other cities) focus on teaching families how to garden; her comment addresses cost of water as a significant potential barrier for larger families and/or families with lower incomes. Furthermore, she clarifies how homeplace for her is a tended space, one that is nurtured not only within the home but outside of it. She also expresses, I think, pride in her house and in her neighborhood, a pride not often attributed in stock stories of East Austin.

*Historical Roots, Historical Present*

Like, working at Urban Roots kind of gave me a feel on how gardening is. So, after experiencing Urban Roots, I felt like I wasn’t interested in gardening or having anything to do with gardening. Even though it is more healthier to grow your own foods than to purchase processed foods – but the process of like growing your own food is much more expensive. I guess? Maybe. Because you have to buy all the ingredients to grow everything, you have to have a space for the garden, you have to make sure you keep with it. So, it’s a lot of work. So I kind of see why people don’t really garden as much, because it takes more time to grow your own food than just go right down the street and purchase exactly what you need, and cook it.

While Kristina did not maintain a garden through home, she shared very strong opinions about food production based on her experience growing food with a local food non-profit. In stark comparison to Eric, who very much enjoyed farming and gardening –

and all the more after working with the non-profit – Kristina expressed a distinct dislike of gardening. Similar to Freedom, she would prefer not to garden through home (or elsewhere). Her comment expands on practical barriers to gardening such as buying “ingredients for everything”, the time gardening may involve, and the option to purchase food “down the street”. In her contention that growing food is healthier than buying purchased foods, she communicates messages learned, perhaps from working at the farm and, as mentioned earlier, from pervasive messaging regarding healthy vs. non-healthy foods. Similar to other youth engaged with this project, Kristina described rural relatives, some of whom raise livestock and cultivate crops in East Texas. This is a legacy she would rather not to continue. For her, food through home is typically purchased and cooked, or eaten outside the home with family – and this is what she prefers.

To these practical barriers and preferences, Kristina added still another point. She mentioned feeling “like a slave” when farming. Guthman (2008) reveals similar comments among Black youth involved in farming/gardening outreach in California. This article explores how undergraduate students enrolled in the Community Studies course Guthman teaches at University of California-Santa Cruz experience six-month field projects with local food justice organizations. When Black/Latin@ youth engaged at the organizations are less than enthused about organic food or about “putting their hands in the soil”, the students express disappointment. “Putting hands in the soil” is Guthman argues, one of the discourses on which food justice efforts rest: “This rhetoric is often voiced with an enthusiasm that betrays the presumption of a universal desire to tend the

land” (p. 435). Yet Guthman’s students describe how Black and Latin@ youth sometimes express sentiments similar to the ones Kristina shares just above. Guthman notes,

As my student described it, the African American chaperone, as well as the youth, had scowls on their faces as they left for the field trip. In talking to the youth later, she learned that they resented the expectation to work not only for free, but for white farmers (p. 435).

At issue here is the racialized history of food production in the United States – and lack of acknowledgement of that history. In the case of Guthman’s students the farmer was white; in Kristina’s case, the farm staff were multiracial though the director of the organization is a white-identified male. Similar comments persist for projects with Black/African-American leadership as well (Ramírez 2015). Kristina, along with the youth noted here, bring racialized food production history to the forefront. Their comments underscore how Black and Latin@ bodies have long composed the American agricultural labor, in terms of enslavement, migrant labor, and prison labor. For African-Americans, this racialized labor is bound up with plantation economy, during and after enslavement. During enslavement most Africans and their descendants labored agriculture; after the Civil War and the legal end of enslavement, Reconstruction (1863-1877) witnessed a curtailing of Black freedom in ways that also involved working land for little to no pay, such as sharecropping and imprisonment. In the South, prisoners supplied physical labor for lumber, agricultural, and other tasks that involved intensive (often dangerous) physical labor for private enterprises and for the state, whose interests often interlinked as Southern states industrialized their economies (see Blackmon 2009).

By connecting with this labor past, Kristina and other Black-identified youth underscore *present* racial dynamics. Their comments resonate with the conceptualization of the historical present: socially, Black bodies have borne the weight of intensive labor in the United States; this social position has been naturalized, such that Black people are expected to labor or be in service to (white) others and Black people have been considered physically (and biologically) suited for such labor. While food efforts may not *intend* to perform these racial dynamics, without acknowledging this history – and without addressing the pervasive, interconnected issues of race/racism/class/land/labor – such efforts perpetuate these racialized dynamics. One impact is what the youth describe. They feel discomfort or upset when asked to perform (historically racialized) labor, in (historically reminiscent) conditions.

Rather than simply collapsing the past and the present, Kristina harnesses a kind of collective social memory because of her awareness of on-going social and economic, anti-Black oppression. The historical present, then, informs the food projects and practices in which they take part. The spatio-temporal connection drawn here between past and present, plantation and garden, give a sense of Black youth's inner geographies as well. In addition to personal memories, preferences, and cultural identity, these inner geographies may encompass collective social memories which act as anchors for that cultural identity. Here, enslavement is that anchor.

### **Under the Table**

[W]ell my mom also does plates. During-like mostly on weekends she makes plates and stuff. Like some days she might have like – might do like salads, or she

might do fried fish, macaroni and cheese, and green beans, or something like that.

And she sells them. (Co-researcher, food life history interview)

In some cases, the kitchenspace transformed from one dedicated to serving close and extended family, to an entrepreneurial space through which mothers sold food to their social networks. Two of the single mothers, for example, sold plates to family, friends, neighbors, and other customers. Both mothers worked outside the home in addition to cooking plates; they vended home-cooked meals to supplement family income. Their “public kitchen” practices involved the youth co-researchers in multiple respects. Youth co-researchers were beneficiaries of added income, kitchen helpers, and assisted with shopping; as observers, the youth co-researchers also witnessed food knowledge again practiced through home, this time through cooking and preparation, as well as through the sharing and vending of food with the broader community. These efforts mattered economically for these two households and in terms of social relationships through the home: cooking plates involves time, energy, and labor of the parents as well as the youth. Because their efforts unfolded “under the table” – not as registered businesses, and not according to requirements of the local health department - I share their experiences anonymously.

### *Nourishing Community*

Mostly, it's like, my mom's friends. Or like her close – like sometimes my relatives buy them. Or like my mom's – or like my mom's – ‘cause like my mom knows a lot of people, like, at barbershops. Like friends that she's known for a long time. So they usually don't have a problem with buying my mom's plates



‘cause they know my mom can cook. So they would call her like every weekend, like, “Are you cooking? What are you cooking? Can you do this, can you do that?” So usually my mom – but it gets exhausting too cleaning up the kitchen and not always making enough money for what she spent. – Youth Co-researcher

A social network the youth co-researcher’s mom has cultivated over time in Austin requests her plates and helps support her family. Again, more than sustenance changes hands, and more than food travels between home kitchenspaces and businesses, on these occasions. The co-researcher highlights cultivation of trust; friends and community members who request dishes trust her mom can cook food worth paying for, while her mom trusts her efforts will be reciprocated in the form of currency. Of particular significance, too, is *what* her mom cooks well. In further conversation, the co-researcher shares how “soul food” figures prominently among the foods described, including “fried fish, macaroni and cheese, and green beans”. This spread again emphasizes “soul food” as desired fare, while touching on diversity of tastes and preferences among the (predominantly African-American) population her mom serves (salad). Her mother receives requests, then, not only because “she can cook”, but also because she carries on cooking and preparation practices of cultural significance.

These practices flavor and inform the dishes themselves, and they also extend to the way in which her mother receives and accepts cooking requests. Sharing and vending food through kitchenspace emerges as a shared cultural practice her mom upholds. Indeed, the practice of Black diaspora women cooking for social networks beyond immediate family is well-documented in scholarship (Collins 1986; James 1993;

Williams-Forson 2010); Black feminist scholars point to food and cooking as one way Black women have practiced “othermothering”, or sharing in care for children or families beyond their immediate household. Cooking for community, and fostering a sense of kinship through food, represents as a local, under-the-table institution. Here, the youth co-researcher’s mother upholds this practice. In the process, her mother acts as a community cook, entrepreneur, and cultural ambassador.

The fact that her dishes engage spaces such as barbershops emphasizes the significance of her role. Barbershops maintain social, economic, and cultural importance in African-American communities. In addition to wide-ranging appearance as a cultural setting in pop culture and children’s books, a rich body of literature explores how mentorship, intergenerational relationships, political conversations, social commentary and debate, knowledge transmission, and more take place through barbershops – a space where primarily Black young and older men gather. In a study of barbershops in the context of urban change, Wood and Brunson (2011) consider the role these places play in community resilience. They find customers travel from outside the immediate area; the shops claim a geographic reach well beyond walking distance or a five mile radius. This reach highlights both local demographic shifts (the Black population increasingly lives beyond the urban core, as in Austin) as well as sustained social and economic networks; these networks, Wood and Brunson point out, may help barbershops as Black-owned businesses thrive and survive demographic shifts. Because of their importance, public health scholarship and interventions have approached barbershops as sites for community education (Luque et al. 2012; Linnan et al. 2014). Davis (2013) refers to the barbershop

as a “ritualized space of health and healing” with specific attention to food and foodways which take place there.

Returning to East Austin, as the youth co-researcher’s mother practices a local institution of community cooking, she nourishes at least one other local institution in the process via the barbershop. As in Missouri, area black-owned barbershops in East Austin are located in urban areas undergoing rapid demographic shifts. In this sense, the reciprocal relationships fostered between the youth co-researcher’s mother and local barbershops may be nurturing social and economic resilience in ways that have yet to be fully engaged in scholarship or activism. Further research is necessary to understand how under-the-table social networks, linked with friends and with key local institutions, contribute to a sense of identity, relationship, and resilience through food.

### *Dimensions of Labor*

Balancing cost of food ingredients with amount charged, however, can be challenging. Furthermore, the amount of labor which goes into making places is extensive. The youth co-researcher shares, “So usually my mom [cooks the plates] but it gets exhausting too cleaning up the kitchen and not always making enough for what she spent”. To help with the labor of cooking plates, and to help transform the kitchenspace into a community space, her mom engages “friends” (also women) and her daughter. The youth co-researcher helps with shopping and cleaning up:

So most of the times we go to Sam’s if my mom’s cooking or something. She gets like big packages of seasoning, or like the foam plates you get at the corner store, where you can close up. You know, that . . . [I’m] definitely a part of the cleaning

part. I don't really like working in the kitchen with my mom because she gets really irritated and mad and, like, when I'm in the way. So I kind of don't bother my mom when she's cooking. Usually she'll have a friend come over and help her, and I'll clean up the kitchen when she's finished. Usually that's how it works.

In addition to capturing a sense of the labor – at times unpaid or underpaid – involved in making plates, the co-researcher touches on internal home dynamics involved. The process can be stressful for mother and daughter. When tensions run high, the kitchenspace becomes one of conflict, and conflict instigates particular roles. The youth co-researcher may choose to be – or be told to be – outside the kitchen while her mother cooks, but she returns to help after the dishes are prepared. Though a seemingly small shift in bodies, space, and time, cooking for community incites rituals different from everyday family meals in ways that matter. For the latter, the daughter is not only more likely to be allowed into the kitchen, but is also utilizing it to cook for herself or for family. For everyday meals, she may be more directly involved in harnessing food or cooking knowledge, and in applying this knowledge; in contrast, for community meals, she processes other knowledge – such as cleaning, shopping, social connecting, and other skills outside of cooking itself.

The tense interactions between mother and daughter noted here also reiterate issues of gender and labor. As in the case of “soul food” cooking in particular, young and older women labor in kitchenspace through the co-researchers home for community meals. Here again food through home emerges as a complex process through which women express creativity and cooking abilities through labor that can be demanding.

## **Closing**

Through home is, in a sense, where the food geographies of the youth co-researchers begin. Previous chapters explored their food experiences in urban farms, supermarkets, corner stores, school cafeterias, and more; each of these connect with the place youth call “home”. In this chapter, “home” describes the physical place where youth reside as well as their family of origin; it encompasses relationships between generations, between places (Austin and other cities in Texas), and between community members (with friends, people who buy plates, and residents in need). Home shapes their interaction with the 3 Ps – proximity, price, and palate – in intimate ways. The physical location of their homes means they are closer to some food places and further from others, including food retailers, family members, and cultural institutions. What they consume through home shapes the foods they prefer, purchase, and seek out beyond home. What they learn about cooking, baking, and gardening they sometimes practice for themselves and their families; if they learn outside the home (as in the case of Eric and gardening) they practice through home as well. What is often rendered “private” space in dominant geographies – the home and the kitchen - becomes “public” here, as youth co-researchers and their guardians cook for community members beyond immediate family.

In comparison with other food places explored throughout this dissertation, the broader food landscape – with its sociospatial legacies and demographic shift – may appear less explicit. When describing their typical grocery stores or their school

lunchroom experiences, the youth co-researchers compared their lived experiences with those of young people in other parts of Austin. These conversations segued into urban change. When describing food and foodways practices through home, they did not reference these comparisons or emphasize these shifts. Rather than taking center stage, the food landscape shapes the social and cultural context in other ways. Social, economic, and political processes explored throughout this dissertation undergird, for example, the places to which youth and their families have immediate access for family and community meals; the non-profit resources in the area, and the remaining concentration of fellow community members, families; and the existence of cultural institutions where they eat, share, and grow food. Through home, the youth experience the broader food landscape of East Austin.

## Chapter 9: Closing Thoughts

This dissertation began with a scene from *East Austin Food Stories*, as youth co-researchers and I visited a newly-opened boutique grocer. During that visit, they broached themes evident throughout this project: demographic shifts in their neighborhoods; the importance of the 3 Ps (proximity, price, and palate) for them and their families; inequalities between West and East Austin, and increasingly, within East Austin itself. For the co-researchers included in this project, their food geographies encompass the oft-cited locations of home and school; but they also include urban farms, routes between school and food trucks, convenience stores, and home kitchens turned public.

Food is also a way they mark how they identify their individual and collective selves as young Black people, especially explored/noted in terms of their racialized and cultural experiences. While they similarly identify as Black/African-American, their experiences make clear that young Black youth are diverse; they claim diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, food memories, households, friendships, food responsibilities, and more. What they consider Black cultural practices are not fixed or static, but very much negotiated through food and the language they use around food. Nor are the foods they eat on a regular basis necessarily attributed to blackness or African-American cuisine; and nor are their favorite foods all representative of what may be labeled “unhealthy”.

The youth share food geographies that counter stock stories in multiple respects, regarding lack of access to food in low-income areas, what young people eat, and their

knowledge of cooking, buying, and growing food. But their experiences are not devoid of the stock stories. As McKittrick notes, dominant geographies and black geographies subsist; as Bell et al. note, concealed, resistance, and emerging stories are always already in relationship with dominant narratives. Stock approaches to historically marginalized areas such as East Austin bemoan, for example, proliferation of fast food there. The youth co-researchers do note a proliferation of fast food where they live, a pattern notice, take to task, and theorize. In addition, cost does matter for them as young people from low income homes; price can be a hindrance. They and their families are concerned with budgeting along with the other pillars of the 3Ps – proximity and preference – when accessing food in their daily lives. Furthermore, though none of them have spent extensive time in West Austin, this part of the city often served as a foil to their lived experience without my prompting. They are aware that East Austin has/continues to experience inequality – and they are aware of its correlation with geography east of I-35, with race (predominantly Black/Latin@), and with interrelated issues of class.

What the youth co-researchers share are concealed, resistance, and emerging stories – concealed stories about their food access, food sharing that can be read as resistance in a landscape lacking food retail, theorization about the food landscape where they live, and what changes they would want to see (Bell et al. 2011). What is counter about their stories, however, is not the historical context, the built environment, or the challenges low-income homes face. The difference is how these are lived, read, and understood when their stories are moved from margin to center compared to stock narratives about young Black people, food, and the places where they live. Their



experiences shed light on concealed, resistance, and emerging food stories, on the subaltern experiences of the food landscape in East Austin. These are stories often unassumed, undocumented, or hidden from view (hidden transcripts). Key historical and contemporary issues noted throughout this dissertation – from historic segregation, to the “historical present” as it were, do not *determine* lived experiences in East Austin but instead create conditions Black youth and their families navigate, negotiate, resist, and reframe on their own terms. Therefore, their experience with fast food and restaurants is about eating meals with family. Their budgets mean shopping together as a family in creative ways, sharing food, and cooking for community; their emphasis on what is nearby has meant on-going relationships with stores, particularly at convenience markets. Their sense of racial/spatial difference between West and East leads them to theorize about issues of race, space, and place – and to consider what it means to be Black and young in the eyes of society (double consciousness), and process what eating while young and Black means to them.

Furthermore, they are understanding their “place” as young Black people at a dynamic moment in East Austin, where urban change maintains specific implications for them and other long established residents of color. This project has underscored shifts in the East Austin food landscape, likely to continue under the implementation of the Imagine Austin plan, and as the city’s food scene attracts (and fosters) global attention. Some of these changes appear more explicitly in their stories than others (for example, the shifts in options in the school vending machine, the change in neighbors over time and the recognition by Eric of changing practices and buildings where he lives); for one

of the youth their neighborhood has not much changed where they live (Freedom). Indeed in part because of infill development and smart growth initiatives, appears to be more immediate near major travel/transportation corridors closer to the revitalizing downtown. Their stories serve as a reminder that urban change is not uniform, but is taking place differently throughout East Austin. What the youth share encourages a food-as-social approach to addressing issues related to food access in low-income, predominantly Black areas such as East Austin.

## **7 Recommendations: From Margin to Center**

This dissertation advocates an approach to food work – in terms of food access, food ways, and food enterprise, which tends to the everyday lives of local residents. The Critical Participatory Action Research methods I have engaged seek to interrogate power relationships (within/during research and within the food landscape). Rather than offering recommendations regarding policy, what comes to the forefront by engaging these two in tandem is the need for more critical attention to discourse, dialogue, and assumptions that undergird food-related work. Just as the inner geographies of Black youth beg attention, so to do the inner dimensions of food work: the way in which policy making, interventions, and community organizing gather information, apply that information, and approach African-Americans in relationship to food; and critical analysis of stock stories regarding Black communities, food, and areas where African-Americans reside. Food research and related development tend to focus on outer dimensions such as outreach or

reconstruction of the built environment, but shifting Black youth from margin to center involves reflection – individual and organizational – on what the work is made of.

The following seven recommendations speak to individuals and organizations involved in food work focused on food access, food ways, and food practices in Black communities. They reflect the scholar/practitioner orientation of this project and particularly highlight strategies for community-building and engagement for contexts undergoing demographic shifts and (re)development. Statistics regarding African-American outmigration indicate gentrification and displacement in urban cores throughout the United States; while they come from local, context-rich CPAR research, they may resonate with other parts of the country. These recommendations may also prove useful for communities where they have migrated, in rural or urban areas. Research has yet to explore the food access or experiences of African-Americans who have migrated from urban cores. How or if community and family food networks stretch, persist, or continue (as in the case of the youth co-researchers connecting with family elsewhere) remains a question. Lastly, the urban change and sustainable food development (re)making East Austin is happening elsewhere worldwide. These recommendations for approach and method may serve still other contexts where historically marginalized young people reside in food landscapes affected by rapid urban change.

Recommendations for individuals and organizations involved in food-related work:

- 1) Ask youth

Ask young people how they feel about food where they live, what they imagine or desire in their neighborhood, and practices they already perform. Youth continue to be marginalized in food-related research and decision-making about them; rather than expecting young Black people to come to the “adult table”, practice allyship by asking to join theirs (Scott 2013).

1) Nurture intergenerational exchange

Recognize and create opportunities for intergenerational knowledge exchange around food stories, food access, foodways, and practices. Some spaces, such as churches, homes, and family gatherings, are already spaces where generations interact; as this dissertation underscores, Black youth as well as adults possess knowledge regarding food shopping, cooking, and production.

2) Honor the historical present

Black food practices and access are bound up with social and cultural legacies, as are the lived experiences of Black youth. These histories are not necessarily documented and may require speaking with local community members to learn about local and broader histories of food, foodways, and settlement, or gathering the histories as part of food work. The historical present involves key processes such as enslavement, Reconstruction, and the Great Migration, processes which shape the very settlement of Black youth and their families in East Austin as well as food practices, traditions, and stigmas.

3) Anti-displacement Measures

Incorporate anti-gentrification and anti-displacement measures into food efforts; as noted in this dissertation, sustainable food and food access efforts tend to follow ethical consumption guidelines which meet the “tastes” (and pocketbooks) of incoming, wealthier residents rather than long-established, poorer ones, thereby supporting gentrification, outmigration, and displacement of locals who might prefer to remain.

4) Build on/with community networks

Following on recommendation #3, recognize and support social networks which already exist that support food access, foodways, and food enterprise; these can support community cohesion, which in turn support food access. Networks can also act as an anti-displacement measure. Incentivize community food practices already in place; based on this dissertation, these typically involve women who work jobs in addition to cooking for their family as well as other community members.

5) Expand understanding of “health”

Food is more than health, and health is more than food. Understanding food as multifaceted draws attention to the significant role the social plays in food access, preferences, and practices. Understanding health as multifaceted counters healthism while drawing attention to the ways social relationships may support wellbeing

6) Reframe “access”

In food access work, “access” tends to be understood as proximity, in terms of time and distance. While time and distance mattered for co-researchers, so too did comfort, familiarity, culturally-relevant food options, and social connection.

#### 7) Practice witnessing

Witnessing the experiences of community members reframes their food practices as personal stories, connected with personal and collective histories, identities, and practices. In the process of witnessing, the stories of Black youth are not only centered but, in the spirit of testifying and *testimonio* noted in the introduction and emphasized throughout this dissertation are considered instructive. CPAR methodologies in tandem with a food-as-social perspective can promote witnessing. Though not without its challenges or its own dynamics (Kindon et al. 2011 note how CPAR is itself a practice of power), this approach does actively address history, sociospatial legacies, systemic inequality, and discourse. All of these tend to (re)marginalize Black youth.

### **Future Research**

This dissertation suggests several paths for future research involving Black youth and food, food and outmigration, alternative and cooperative practices, and global interconnections. Future research suggestions include

- *Black youth and food landscapes*. More research is needed to understand how young people from historically marginalized groups navigate their identities through food, in different settings of their daily lives. Though food interventions focus on Black and Latino/a groups via anti-obesity, gardening, and other

initiatives, the lived experiences of young people with food, again, tend to be assumed or narrowly considered via a food-as-nutrition lens. More research is needed to understand, for example, how Black youth learn about “healthy” vs. “unhealthy” foods and the impact on their identity (as well as self-image); how other identities not explored in greater depth in this dissertation (such as sexual orientation) matter in terms of food access and experiences; how Black youth create relationships among each other and across groups through food; and why Black youth may associate certain foods or practices with blackness, compared to others. In the context of a growing Black sustainable food and alternative food movement in the United States, it would be interesting to see how/if youth are engaged in these ways, why, or why not. There is much focus on adults in the Black sustainable and alternative food movement as well, without attention to how Black youth may be/are reframing these movements to be more culturally-relevant or engage histories – or to how intergenerational work between generations might support this.

- *Urban gardening among African-Americans in low-income areas.* Programs in Austin and elsewhere focus on teaching African-American and other historically marginalized populations about gardens; this dissertation touches on Black gardening practices carried from rural generations to the city, and between generations in urban context. Again, the youth also mentioned gardens and food plants in their neighborhoods, among neighbors as well. These can be read as spaces of guerrilla urbanism: spaces not surveilled by zoning, currently

unaccounted for in interventions deployed by local sustainable food efforts, and conspicuously absent from maps of community gardens in Austin (Hou 2010). Their role in food access and foodways in areas dubbed “food deserts” remains overlooked.

- *Social, economic, and environmental implications of Black community food practices.* What is the community-based food economy among low-income Black youth and residents? Who is involved, in terms of racial/ethnic background, gender, and age? In what ways might these practices foster not only food access, but social relationships and resilience in the context of gentrification? This countermapping of “under the table” food systems can give a better sense of the different ways in which people experience food access while noting its impact. Note: there are challenges to this mapping, because part of its potency/power comes from being unmapped by dominant geographies. However this mapping could focus more on relationships and community dynamics, rather than on specific gardens, farms, and individuals.
- *Post-migration food access and practices.* Further research is needed to understand what happens when/if families do outmigrate in terms of their food access, foodways, and food experiences. There is some evidence to suggest, for example, that certain areas are devoid of food retailers where Black people move to in the Greater Austin Area, particularly in the case of rural destinations such as Elgin, Manor and Bastrop. How are people accessing food in these areas if faced with limited retail options? What foods are / are not available? Does outmigration



change transmission between generations and intergenerational experiences with food? Some of the youth mention traveling to/connecting with foods they connect with their identity in other cities. How/does outmigration change food access and learning about foodways for young people, when they move away from family or neighborhoods?

- *Global relevance.* Compare the experiences of Black youth in Austin or another area undergoing gentrification, with that of another city in the United States; or local contexts might be situated in relationship with gentrifying areas in other overdeveloped countries. Again, in the spirit of Katz (2004), the idea here is not to collapse the experiences of young people in different places, but to bring attention to how global economic processes and discourses related to anti-obesity campaigns, food deserts, and sustainable food development impact material lived experiences, environments, and cultural practices on the ground across space.

## **Closing**

Many of the youth co-researchers who participated in this project continued on to college; some applied to food internships in other parts of the country; and still others have recently graduated. Kindon et al (2007) describe critical action research as always in process, with relationships cultivated and products shared along the way. This dissertation is a snapshot of one part of an on-going research/practitioner and scholar/activist journey focused on Black experiences with food in the context of urban change. The stories the youth co-researchers shared, and the process carried out with them, continues to inform Food for Black Thought. The initiative my partner and I co-

founded at the beginning of this dissertation has grown to include workshops on race, food, and Black food access with teenagers as well as young adults; in 2014, we had the opportunity to facilitate a youth workshop in New Orleans, another city experiencing similar food and redevelopment dynamics, still very much experiencing the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The youth-directed film, *East Side Food Stories*, will soon include a study guide that can be utilized by organizations, classrooms, business owners, and policymakers as they (re)consider their approaches to sustainable food work.

## **Appendix: Food Life History Interview Guide**

Three thematic areas inform these interview questions asked of youth co-researchers and adults for the project.

- experience of food access (A)
  - experience of urban space (S)
  - experience of identity (I)
1. Please share your name, where you were born, your age, your racial identification, and your gender.
  2. Tell me about your neighborhood like when you were growing up? (S)
  3. What is your earliest memory of cooking food? (I)
  4. What is your earliest memory of eating food? (I)
  5. What is your earliest memory of growing food? (I)
  6. Describe your experiences with food in your neighborhood when you were growing up. (S/A)
  7. What role do you feel your racial identity has played in your experiences? (I)
  8. What role do you feel your gender played has played in your experiences? (I)
  9. Describe how other aspects of your identity shaped your food experiences. (I)
  10. What stories do your relatives or neighbors tell you about food? (S/A/I)
  11. What stories do your relatives or neighbors tell you about gardening? (S/A/I)

12. What stories have your relative or neighbors tell you about sharing or selling food? (S/A/I)
13. When I say the word food, what person in your life comes to mind? (A)
14. When I say the word food, what place comes to mind? Why do you think that place comes to mind? (A)
15. If you eat lunch at school, what is it like eating at school? (I)
16. What is it like eating where you eat most often? (S/I/A)
17. Tell me about a time when you experienced easy access to food. (A)
18. Tell me about a time when it was hard for you to get food. (A)
19. Tell me about your favorite place to share a meal with someone else.
20. How is food in your neighborhood the same or different from when you were growing up? (S/A)
21. Describe a plant you know how to grow. Who did you learn about that plant from? How do you grow it? (I/A)
22. Tell me about a dish you know how to cook. (I/A)
23. Tell me about your family's experience with farming or gardening. (I/A)
24. What does identifying as Black or African American mean to you? (I)
25. Describe what you feel are "Black" or "African American" foods. (I)
26. Tell me about a dish you feel reflects your racial or cultural identity. (S/I)

27. Tell me about an experience at one of the stores you go to most.
28. What do your family tell you about their experiences growing up?
29. How do you think your identity shapes your food experiences today?
30. Tell me about a food place in Austin you've heard about, but have not been to.  
What have you heard about this place?

## Bibliography

Aitken, S. (2001). *Geographies of Young People: Morally Contested Spaces of Identity*.

Routledge: London and New York.

Aitken, S. (2008). Global Crises of Childhood: Rights, Justice, and the Unchildlike Child.

*Area* 33(2): 119-127. doi: 10.1111/1474-4762.00015

Alderman, D H. (1996). Creating a new geography of memory in the South: The

(re) naming of Streets in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. *Southeastern*

*Geographer*, 36(1), 51-69. doi: 10.1353/sgo.1996.0014

Alderman, D. H. (2003). Street names and the scaling of memory: The politics of

commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr. within the African-American

community. *Area*, 35(2), 163-173. Retrieved from

<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/20004306>

Alderman, Derek H. (2010). Surrogation and the politics of remembering slavery in

Savannah, Georgia. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 36, 90-101. doi:

10.1016/j.jhg.2009.08.001

Alkon, A. (2012). *Black, white, and green: Farmer's Markets, race, and the green*

*economy*. Atlanta, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Alkon, A. (2013). The socionature of local organic food. *Antipode*, 45(3), 663-680. doi:

10.1111/j.1467-8330.2012.01056.x

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). (2015). What is the school to prison pipeline?

Retrieved from <https://www.aclu.org/fact-sheet/what-school-prison-pipeline>

American Psychological Association (APA). 2015. Physiological and Psychological Impact of Racism and Discrimination for African-Americans. Retrieved from [www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/ethnicity-health/racism-stress.aspx](http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/ethnicity-health/racism-stress.aspx)

Austin, S.B., Melly, S.J., Sanchez, B.N., Patel, A., Buka, S., & Gortmaker, S.L. (2005). Clustering of fast-food restaurants around schools: a novel application of spatial statistics in the study of food environments. *American Journal of Public Health*, 95(9), 1575 – 1581. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2004.056341

Bartos, A.E. (2012). Children caring for their worlds: The politics of care and childhood. *Political Geography*, 31(31), 157 – 166. doi: [10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.12.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.12.003)

Blackland Community Development Corporation (BCDC). (2015). *Who we are*. Retrieved from <http://www.blacklandcdc.org/who-we-are/>

Bosco, F. J. (2007). Hungry children and networks of aid in Argentina: Thinking about geographies of responsibility and care. *Children's Geographies*, 5(1), 238 – 247. doi: 10.1080/14733280601108171

Busch, A. M. (2015). Crossing over: Sustainability, new urbanism, and gentrification in Austin, Texas. *Southern Spaces: A Journal About Real and Imagined Spaces and Places of the US South and Their Global Connections*. Retrieved from <http://southernspaces.org/2015/crossing-over-sustainability-new-urbanism-and-gentrification-austin-texas>

- Byars, D. 1996. [Traditional African American foods and African Americans](#). *Agriculture and Human Values*, 13(3): 74-78. doi:10.1007/BF01538229
- Carney, J. (2002). *Black rice: The African origins of rice cultivation in the Americas*. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press.
- Carney, J. A. & Rosomoff, R.N. (2011) *In the shadow of slavery: Africa's botanical legacy in the Atlantic world*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Cook, I. (2006). Geographies of food: following. *Progress in Human Geography* 30(5): 655-666. doi: 10.1177/0309132506070183
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241-1299. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/1229039>
- Bell, L. A. (2010). *Storytelling for social justice: connecting narrative and the arts in anti-racist teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Blackmon, D.A. (2009). *Slavery by another name: The re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York, NY: Anchor.
- Bishop, J., Middendorf, R., Babin, T. & Tilson, W. (2005) ASPE research brief: Childhood obesity. Retrieved from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/aspe-childhood-obesity-white-paper>
- Botelho, G., Almas, S., and Hostin, S. (2014, February 17). *CNN News*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2014/02/16/justice/florida-loud-music-trial/>



- Broyles, A. (2013, October 8). Food for black thought: race, food, and gentrification. *Austin 360*. Retrieved from <http://www.austin360.com/weblogs/relish-austin/2013/oct/08/food-black-thought-race-food-and-gentrification/>
- Cahill, C. (2000). Street literacy: Urban teenager's strategies for negotiating their neighborhood. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3(3), 251-277. doi: 10.1080/713684375
- Cahill, C. (2006). "At-Risk?" Fed up honeys re-present the gentrification of the Lower East Side. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 34(1/2), 334-363. doi: <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/40004763>
- Cahill, C. (2007). Doing research with young people: participatory research and the rituals of collective work. *Children's Geographies*, 5(3), 297-312. doi: 10.1080/14733280701445895
- Carrero, J. & Johnson M. (2016, February 10). Family of unarmed Texas teen shot by cop calls for 'fair' investigation. *NBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/family-unarmed-texas-teen-shot-cop-calls-fair-investigation-n515906>
- Carpiano, R.M. (2009). Come take a walk with me: The "Go Along" interview as a novel method for studying the implications of place for health and well-being. *Health & Place*, 15(1), 263-272. doi: 10.1016/j.healthplace.2008.05.003
- Center for Disease Control (CDC) – Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. 2015. *Healthy food environments*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/strategies/healthy-food-env.html>
- Christie, M. E. (2008). *Kitchenspace: Women, Fiestas, and Everyday Life in Central*

- Mexico*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- City of Austin (COA). (2008). *African American quality of life report: Addressing community needs together*. Retrieved from <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/edims/document.cfm?id=125797>
- City of Austin (COA). (2015). *Top 10 Demographic Trends*. Retrieved from <https://www.austintexas.gov/page/top-ten-demographic-trends-austin-texas>
- Counihan, C. M. (2009). *A Tortilla Is Like Life: Food and Culture in the San Luis Valley of Colorado*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Coutts, S. (2014, August 18). It's not just Ferguson: Austin's problem with police brutality. *RH Reality Check*. Retrieved from <http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2014/08/18/just-ferguson-austins-problem-police-brutality/>
- Crenshaw, K., Ocen, P., & Nanda, J. *Black girls matter: Pushed out, overpoliced, and underprotected*. African American Policy Forum. Retrieved from [http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/sites/default/files/uploads/BlackGirlsMatter\\_Report.pdf](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/sites/default/files/uploads/BlackGirlsMatter_Report.pdf)
- Davis, O.I. (2013). Barbershop cuisine: African American foodways and narratives of health in the Black barbershop. *International Journal of Men's Health*, 12(2), 138-149. doi: 10.3149/jmh.1202.138
- Deen, P. (2011). *Paula Deen's Southern Cooking Bible: The new classic guide to delicious dishes with more than 300 recipes*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Dougland, M. & Isherwood, B. (1996). *A world of goods: towards an anthropology of*

- Consumption* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dwyer, O.J. (1997). Geographical research about African Americans: A survey of journals, 1911-1995. *The Professional Geographer*, 49(4): 441-451. doi: 10.1111/0033-0124.00090
- Environmental Planning Agency (EPA). (1992). Brownfields assessment demonstration pilot. Retrieved from <http://nepis.epa.gov/>
- Fletcher, M. (Producer). (2014, February 16). Can Mexico's health program help the US lose weight? *PBS*. (Podcast). Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/can-mexicos-health-program-teach-u-s-lose-weight/>
- Freire, Paulo. (2000 [1970]). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Gabbidon, S.L. (2003). Racial profiling by store clerks and security personnel in retail establishments: An exploration of 'Shopping While Black'. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 19(3), 345-364. doi: 10.1177/1043986203254531
- Goff, P.A., Jackson, M.C., Allison, B., Di Leone, L., Culotta, M., & DiTomasso, N.A. (2014). The essence of innocence: The consequences of dehumanizing Black children. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 106(4), 526 –545. doi: 10.1037/a0035663
- Goldberg, D.T. (1993). *Racist culture: Philosophy and the politics of meaning*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

- Gordon, C., Purciel-Hill, M., Ghai, N.R., Kaufman, L., Graham, R., & Van Wye, G. (2011). Measuring food deserts in New York City's low-income neighborhoods. *Health & Place*, 17(2), 696-700. doi: 10.1016/j.healthplace.2010.12.012
- Gilmore, R. W. (2007). *Golden gulag: Prisons, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalizing California*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Gilroy, P. (1995). *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Guthman, J. (2003). Fast Food/Organic Food: Reflexive Tastes and the Making of 'Yuppie Chow'. *Social and Cultural Geography* 4(1): 45-58. doi: 10.1080/146936032000049306
- Guthman, J. (2008a). Bringing Good Food to Others: Investigating the Subjects of Alternative Food Practice. *Cultural Geographies* 15(4): 431-447. doi: 10.177/1474474008094315
- Guthman, J. (2008b). "If They Only Knew": Color Blindness and Universalism in California Alternative Food Institutions. *Professional Geographer* 60(3), 387-397. doi: 10.1080/00330120802013679
- Guthman, J. (2011). *Weighing in: Obesity, food justice, and the limits of capitalism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Guthman, J. (2014). Doing justice to bodies? *Antipode*, 46(5), 1-19. doi: 10.1111/anti.1017
- Haight, A. (2014 June 11). Sever years later, LBJ High School still not seeing the

- benefits of split. *The Daily Texan*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailytexanonline.com/2014/06/10/seven-years-later-lbj-high-school-still-not-seeing-benefits-of-split>
- Hale, C.R. (2008). *Engaging contradictions: Theory, politics, and methods of activist scholarship*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Harris, J.B. (2011). *High on the hog: A culinary journey from Africa to America*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
- Haw, K. and Hadfield, M. (2011). *Video in social science research*. New York, NY and London, UK: Routledge.
- Heitzeg, N. A. Education or incarceration: Zero Tolerance policies and the school to prison pipeline. *Forum on public policy: A journal of the Oxford Round Table*, 1-21. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ870076.pdf>
- Herrick, C. (2008). To the west and east of Interstate-35: obesity, philanthropic entrepreneurialism, and the delineation of risk in Austin, Texas. *Environment and Planning A*, 40, 2715 – 2733. doi: 10.1068/a4048
- Heynen, N. (2006). Justice of eating in the city: the political ecology of urban hunger. In Heynen, N., Kaika, M., & Swyngedouw, E. (eds.), *In the nature of cities: Urban political ecology and the politics of urban metabolism* (pp. 129-142). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Heynen, N. (2014). Urban political ecology I: The urban century. *Progress in Human Geography*, 38(4), 598 – 604. doi: 10.1177/0309132513500443
- Hill-Collins, P. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, 10<sup>th</sup> edition*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hill-Collins, P. (2012). *On intellectual activism*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University

- Press.
- Hoelscher, S. (2003). Making place, making race: Performances of whiteness in the Jim Crow South. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 93(3), 657-686.  
Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1515502>
- hooks, b. (2000). *Feminist theory: From margin to center* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Hubley, T.A. (2011). Assessing the proximity of healthy food options and food deserts in a rural area in Maine. *Applied Geography*, 31(4), 1224-1231. doi: :10.1016/j.apgeog.2010.09.004
- Johnston, J. & Baumann, (2015). *Foodies: Democracy and distinction in the gourmet foodscape*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johnston, J., Szabo, M., & Rodney, A. (2011). Good food, good people: understanding the cultural repertoire of ethical eating. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11(3), 293 – 318, doi: 10.1177/1469540511417996
- Karnik, S. & Kanekar, A. (2012). Childhood obesity: A global public health crisis. *International Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 3(1), 1-7.
- Katz, C. (2004). *Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Keating, A. (2007). *Teaching transformation: Transcultural classroom dialogues*. New York, NY. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kellogg, C. (2015). 'There Goes the Neighborhood': Exposing the relationship between

- gentrification and incarceration. *Themis: Research Journal of Justice Studies and Forensic Science*, 3(1). Retrieved from <http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/themis/vol3/iss1/10>
- Khanna, N. (2010). "If you're half Black, you're just Black": Reflected appraisals and the persistence of the one-drop rule. *Sociological Quarterly*, 51(1), 96-121. Doi: 10.1111/j.1533-8525.2009.01162.x
- Kindon, S., Pain, R., & Kesby, M. (2008). *Participatory action research approaches and methods: Connecting people, participation, and place*. London, UK: Routledge.
- King, M. (2009, May 15). Eastside police shooting: One man dead, one wounded. *The Austin Chronicle*. Retrieved from <http://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2009-05-15/782129/>
- Kirkland, A. (2011). The environmental account of obesity: the feminist case for skepticism. *Signs*, 36(2), 463-485. doi: 10.1086/655916
- Kobayashi, A., & Peake, L. (2000). Racism out of place: thoughts on whiteness and an antiracist geography in the new millennium. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 90(2), 392-403. doi: 10.1111/0004-5608.00202
- Kurtz, H.E. (2013). Trayvon Martin and the dystopian turn in US self-defense doctrine. *Antipode*, 45(2), 248-251. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8330.2012.01057.x
- Laxy, M., Malecki, K.C., Marjory, L., Walsh, M.C., Nieto, F.J. 2015. The association between neighborhood economic hardship, the retail food environment, fast food intake, and obesity: findings from the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin. *BMC Public Health*, 15(1), 1576-1586. doi: 10.1186/s12889-015-1576-x

- Lees, L., Bang Shin, H., & Lopez-Morales, E. (Eds.). (2015). *Global gentrifications: Uneven development and displacement*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Linnan, L.A., D'Angelo, H., Harrington, C.B. (2014). A literature synthesis of health promotion research in salons and barbershops. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 47(1), 77–85. doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2014.02.007
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press.
- Lucan, S.C. & Nandita, M. (2012). Perceptions of the food environment are associated with fast-food (not fruit-and-vegetable) consumption: findings from multi-level models. *International Journal of Public Health*, 57(3), 599-608. doi: 10.1007/s00038-011-0276-2
- Luque, J.S., Ross, L., & Clement, K. (2012). Qualitative systematic review of barber-administered health education, promotion, screening, and outreach programs in African-American communities. *Journal of Community Health* 39(1), 181-190. doi: 10.1007/s10900-013-9744-3
- Macdonald, L., Cummins, S., and Macintyre, S. (2007). Neighbourhood fast food environment and area deprivation – substitution or concentration? *Appetite*, 49(1): 251 – 254. 10.1016/j.appet.2006.11.004
- Maloney, F. (2006, March 17). Is Whole Foods wholesome?: The dark secrets of the organic food movement. *Slate*. Retrieved from [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2006/03/is\\_whole\\_foods\\_wholesome.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2006/03/is_whole_foods_wholesome.html)
- Manzo, L. and Brightbill, N. (2007). Towards a participatory ethics. In S. Kindon, R.



- Pain and M. Kesby (Eds.), *Connecting People, Participation and Place: Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Martin, K.S., Havens, E., Boyle, K.E., Matthews, G., Schilling, E.A., Harel, O., & Ferris, A.M. (2012). If you stock it, will they buy it? Healthy food availability and customer purchasing behavior within corner stores in Hartford, CT, USA. *Public Health Nutrition* 15(10), 1973-1978. doi: 10.1017/S1368980011003387
- Massey, D. (1994) *Space, place, and gender*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Massey, D. (1998). The spatial construction of youth cultures. In Skelton, T. & Valentine, G. (eds.). *Cool places: Geographies of Youth Culture*, 120-129. London & New York: Routledge.
- [http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/407/transcript\\_407.pdf](http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/407/transcript_407.pdf)
- McGee, K. (2015 February 25). Tensions rise as school board discussions turn to race. KUT.org. Retrieved from <http://kut.org/post/tensions-rise-school-board-discussion-turns-race>
- McKittrick, K. (2006). *Demonic grounds: Black women and the cartographies of struggle*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. (Eds.) (2007). *Black geographies and the politics of place*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Media Education Foundation (Producer). (1997) *Race, the floating signifier: Featuring Stuart Hall* [Film transcript]. Retrieved from Miller, T. (2013 November 13). Austin, Texas considers banning fast food chains near schools

- New York Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/austin-texas-considers-banning-fast-food-chains-schools-article-1.1524743>
- Mollett, S. & Faria, C. (2013). Messing with gender in political ecology. *Geoforum* (45): 116-125. doi: [10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.10.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.10.009)
- Montoya, M., Russo, S., & Sletto, B. (2007) *East Austin Environmental Justice Project: A Community Partnership*. Retrieved from [http://www.soa.utexas.edu/files/gis/AAG\\_Poster\\_corrected.pdf](http://www.soa.utexas.edu/files/gis/AAG_Poster_corrected.pdf)
- Morton, L. W., Bitto, E.A., Oakland, M.J., and Sand, M. (2008). Accessing food resources: rural and urban patterns of giving and getting food. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 25(1), 107-119. doi:
- Moynihan, R. (2006). Expanded definitions of obesity may harm children. *British Medical Journal*, 332(7555), 1412. doi: [10.1136/bmj.332.7555.1412](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.332.7555.1412)
- Mui, Y., Lee, B.Y., Adam, A., Karmats, A.Y., Budd, N., Nau, C., and Gittelsohn, J. (2015) Healthy versus unhealthy supplies in food desert neighborhoods: A network analysis of corner stores' food supplier networks. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 12(12), 15058–15074. doi: [10.3390/ijerph121214965](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph121214965)
- Natt, W. (2008). Austin approves addition of sustainable food policy board. *Houston*

- Tomorrow*. Retrieved from <http://www.houstontomorrow.org/livability/story/austin-approves-addition-of-sustainable-food-policy-board/>
- Neighborhood Housing and Community Development – City of Austin (NHCD). (2008). SMART Housing Policy Resource Guide: Smart, mixed use, accessible, reasonably priced, transit oriented. Retrieved from [https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Housing/Application\\_Center/SMART\\_Housing/smart\\_guide\\_0708.pdf](https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Housing/Application_Center/SMART_Housing/smart_guide_0708.pdf)
- Nembhard, J. G. (2014). *Collective courage: A history of African American cooperative economic thought and practice*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Nestle, M. (2007 [2002]). *Food politics: how the food industry influences nutrition and health* (revised edition). Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Neyfakh, L. (2015). Chicago cop charged with first-degree murder. Slate. Retrieved from [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/crime/2015/11/laquan\\_mcdonald\\_chicago\\_police\\_shooting\\_involving\\_officer\\_who\\_fired\\_16\\_shots.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/crime/2015/11/laquan_mcdonald_chicago_police_shooting_involving_officer_who_fired_16_shots.html)
- Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). (2013). *Diabetes: A national plan for action*. Retrieved from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/diabetes-national-plan-action>
- Omi, M. & Winant, D. (2014). *Racial formation in the United States* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Organic Consumers Association. (2011, May 19). OCA's response to Whole Food's Alibi on Why They Are Selling GMO Tainted Foods. Retrieved from <https://www.organicconsumers.org/essays/ocas-response-whole-foods-alibi-why-they-are-selling-gmo-tainted-foods>
- Osher, D., Coggshall, J., Colombi, G., Woodruff, D., Francois, S., and Osher, T. (2012). Building school and teacher capacity to eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 35(4): 284-295. doi: 10.1177/0888406412453930
- Partnership for a Healthier America (PHA). (2014). *Annual Progress Report*. Retrieved from [www.progressreports.ahealthieramerica.org](http://www.progressreports.ahealthieramerica.org)
- Pike, J. (2010). 'I don't have to listen to you! You're just a dinner lady!': Power and resistance at lunchtimes at primary schools. *Children's Geographies*, 8(3): 275 – 287. doi: 10.1080/14733285.2010.494867
- Powell, C. (2013). Colony Park: Can Austin transform a community without displacing it? KUT.org. Retrieved from <http://kut.org/post/colony-park-can-austin-transform-community-without-displacing-it>
- Wilson, R.H., Rhodes, L., & Glickman, N. J. (project directors). (2007). Policy Research Project on Business and Community Development in East Austin. *Community change in East Austin*. Retrieved from [http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/archive/pubs/pdf/prp\\_160.pdf](http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/archive/pubs/pdf/prp_160.pdf)

Public Science Project. (2015). Retrieved from <http://publicscienceproject.org/principles-and-values>

Quadango, J. (1996). *The color of welfare: How racism undermined the war on poverty*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Quandt, S. A., Arcury, T. A., Bell, R. A., McDonald, J., Vitolins, M.Z. (2001). The social and nutritional meaning of food sharing among older rural adults. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 15(2), 145–162, doi: 10.1016/S0890-4065(00)00023-2

Ramirez, M. M. (2015). The elusive inclusive: Black food geographies and racialized spaces. *Antipode*, 47(3), 10.1111/anti.12131

Rose, G. (1996). *Feminism and Geography. The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Ross, R. (2014 April 14). The next new neighborhood: City and residents plan a sustainable Colony Park. *The Austin Chronicle*. Retrieved from <http://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2014-04-04/the-next-new-neighborhood/>

Rozin, P., Hormes, J., Faith, M., & Wansink, B. (2012). Is meat male? A quantitative multi method framework to establish metaphoric relationships. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (3), 629-643. Doi: 10.1086/664970

Ruby, M.B. & Heine, S.J. (2011). Meat, morals, and masculinity. *Appetite*, 56(2), 447–450. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2011.01.018

Rummo, P.E., Meyer, K.A., Boone-Heinonen, J., Jacobs, Jr. D. R., Kiefe, C.I., Lewis,

- C.E., Steffen, L.M., Gordon-Larsen, P. (2015). Neighborhood availability of convenience stores and diet quality: findings from 20 years of follow-up in the coronary artery risk development of young adults study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(5): E67-E75. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2014.302435
- Serrano, J. (2013 July 16). Students to see healthier snacks in 2014. *The Texas Tribune*. Retrieved from <http://www.texastribune.org/2013/07/16/students-see-healthier-snacks-2014/>
- Short, A., Guthman, J., & Raskin, S. (2007). Food Deserts, Oases, or Mirages? Small Markets and Community Food Security in the San Francisco Bay Area. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 26(3), 352-364.
- Sitton, T. & Conrad, J.H. (2005). *Freedom colonies: Independent Black Texas in the time of Jim Crow*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Skelton, T. & Gough, K.V. (2013). Introduction: Young people's im/mobile urban geographies. *Urban Studies*, 50(3), 455 – 466. doi: 10.1177/0042098012468900
- Sletto, B. (2010). Educating reflective practitioners: learning to embrace the unexpected through service learning. *Journal of Education and Planning Research*, 29(4), 403-415. doi: 10.1177/0739456X10362771
- Slocum, R. (2011). Race in the Study of Food. *Progress in Human Geography*, 35(3), 03-327. doi: 10.1177/10309132510378335
- Smartswell, N. & Jukam, K. (2013 May 3) Even schools created to promote integration

- are racially segregated. The Dallas Morning News. Retrieved from <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20130503-even-alternative-schools-created-to-promote-integration-are-racially-segregated>
- Smith, C. & Morton, L.W. (2009). Rural food deserts: low-income perspective on food access in Minnesota and Iowa. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 41(3), 176-187. doi: 10.1016/j.jneb.2008.06.008
- Solomon, D. (2014, May 13) Killing An Unarmed Black Man In The Line Of Duty. Retrieved from <http://www.texasmonthly.com/the-daily-post/a-grand-jury-indicted-a-retired-austin-police-detective-for-killing-an-unarmed-black-man-in-the-line-of-duty/>
- Song, H.J., Gittelsohn, J., Kim, M., Suratkar, S., Sharma, S., & Aniker, J. (2009) A corner store intervention in a low-income urban community is associated with increased availability and sales of some healthy foods. *Public Health Nutrition*, 12(11), 2060 – 2067, doi: 10.1017/S1368980009005242
- Sounny-Siltne, A. (2012). *Racially restrictive covenants in Austin, Texas*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k6x0BQxb68>
- Southern Foodways Alliance (SFA). (2014). *An Introduction: Hot Tamales and the Mississippi Delta*. Retrieved from [www.southernfoodways.org/interview/hot-tamales-the-mississippi-delta/](http://www.southernfoodways.org/interview/hot-tamales-the-mississippi-delta/)
- Sustainable Food Center (SFC). (1995). Access denied: An analysis of problems facing East Austin residents in their attempts to obtain affordable, nutritious food. Retrieved from <http://sustainablefoodcenter.org/about/reports>

- Tang, E. & Ren, C. (2014). *Outlier: The case of Austin's declining African American population*. Report for Institute for Urban Policy and Research Analysis, University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved from <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/iupra/files/pdf/Austin%20AA%20pop%20policy%20briefFINAL.pdf>
- Taylor, D.E. & Ard, K.J. (2015). Food availability and the food desert frame in Detroit: an overview of the city's food system. *Environmental Practice*, 17(2): 102-133. doi: 10.1016/j.healthplace.2010.12.012
- Texas Beyond History. *Rubin Hancock Farmstead*. Retrieved from <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/rubin/>
- Tolnay, E. (2003) The African American "Great Migration" and beyond. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29(1), 209-323. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/30036966>
- Torre, M. E. (2008). Participatory action research and critical race theory: fueling spaces for *nos-otras* to research. *The Urban Review*, 41(1): 106-120. doi: 10.1007/s11256-008-0097-7.
- Tretter, E. (2016). *Shadows of a sunbelt city: the environment, racism, and the knowledge economy in Austin*. Atlanta, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Tretter, E. (2012). *Austin restricted: progressivism, zoning, private racial covenants, and the making of a segregated city*. Report prepared for Institute for Urban Policy and Research Analysis, University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved from <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/21232>



- Tretter, E. (2013). Contesting sustainability: 'SMART growth' and the redevelopment of Austin's Eastside. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(1), 297-310. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2427.2012.01166.
- TXP Inc. (2013). *The economic impact of Austin's food sector*. Austin: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.austintexas.gov/>
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). (2015) Food Access Research Atlas. Retrieved from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). (2016). *Tools for schools: Focusing on smart snacks*. Retrieved from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/tools-schools-focusing-smart-snacks>
- Valentine, G. (2000). Exploring young people's narratives of identity. *Geoforum*, 31(2), 257-267. doi: 10.1016/S0016-7185(99)00047-0
- Valentine, G. (2007). Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography. *The Professional Geographer*, 59(1), 10-21. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9272.2007.00587.x
- Valentine, G. & Holloway, S.L. (2002). Cyberkids? Exploring children's identities and social networks in on-line and off-line worlds. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 92(2): 302-319. doi: [10.1111/1467-8306.00292](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8306.00292)
- Valentine, G. Skelton, T., and D. Chambers. (1998). Cool Places: An Introduction to Youth and Youth Cultures. In *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. 1-34.
- Ver Ploeg, M. (2009). *Access to affordable and nutritious food: measuring and*

- understanding food deserts and their consequences (Report to congress).*  
Retrieved from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/ap-administrative-publication/ap-036.aspx>
- Voeks, R. (2007). *Sacred leaves of Candomble: African magic, medicine, and religion in Brazil*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Wagner, J.A., Osborn, C.Y., Mendenhall, E.A., Budris, L.M., Belay, S., & H.A. Tennen. (2011). Beliefs about Racism and Health Among African-American Women with Diabetes: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 103 (3), 224-232. PMID: 21528110
- Wake, S. J. (2008). 'In the best interests of the child': Juggling the geography of children's gardens (between adult agendas and children's needs). *Children's Geographies*, 6(4): 423- 435. doi: 10.1080/14733280802338122
- Walker, R., Fryer, C.S., Butler, J., Keane, C.R., Kriska, A., & Burke, J. G. (2011). Factors influencing food buying practices in residents of a low-income food desert and a low-income food oasis. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 5(3): 247-267. doi: 10.1177/1558689811412971
- Whelan, A., Wrigley, N. & Warm, D. (2002). Life in a food desert. *Urban Studies*, 39 (11), 2083-2100. doi: 10.1080/0042098022000011371
- Whitaker, M. (2013, December 2). Charges dropped against teens arrested at bus stop.

- MSBNC News. Retrieved from <http://www.msnbc.com/politicsnation/were-teens-arrested-bus-stop-profiled>
- Who's Fat? New Definition Adopted. (1998, June 17). Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/9806/17/weight.guidelines/>
- Wilkerson, I. 2011. *The warmth of other suns: The epic story of America's Great Migration*. New York, NY: Vintage Press.
- Williams, J.D., Crockett, D., Harrison, R.L., and Thomas, K.D. (2012). The role of food culture and marketing activity in health disparities. *Preventive medicine*, 55(5), 382-386. doi: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2011.12.021
- Williams-Forsen, P.A. (2006). *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power*. Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press.
- Williams-Forsen, P.A. (2011). Other Women Cooked for My Husband: Negotiating Gender, Food, and Identities in an African-American/Ghanaian Household. In *Taking Food Public: Redefining Foodways in a Changing World*. New York, NY: Routledge. 138-154.
- Witt, D. (2010). *Black Hunger: Soul Food and America*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wood, P.B., & Brunson, R. K. (2011). Geographies of resilient social networks: The role of African American barbershops. *Urban Geography*, 32(2), 228-243. doi: 10.2747/0272-3638.31.2.228
- Woods, C. (2005). Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans?: Katrina, trap

- economics, and the rebirth of the blues. *American Quarterly*, 57(4), 1005-1018.  
Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/40068327>
- Wylie, I. (2015, February 11). How Supermarkets Choose Where to Open . . . And Where to Close. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from  
[www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/feb/11/how-supermarkets-choose-where-open-close-tesco](http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/feb/11/how-supermarkets-choose-where-open-close-tesco)
- Ziperstien, R. (2012). School Food, Inc.: The contracting of America's national school lunch program and its nutritional consequences. *Cornell Policy Review*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.cornell.edu/policyreview/2012/03/15/school-food-inc-the-contracting-of-america%E2%80%99s-national-school-lunch-program-and-its-nutritional-consequences/>
- Zukin, S., Trujillo, V., Frase, P., Jackson, D., Recuber, T., & Walker, Abraham. (2009). New retail capital and neighborhood change: Boutiques and gentrification in New York City. *City & Community* 8(1), 47-64. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6040.2009.01269.x

## Vita

Natalie (Naya) Jones was born in San Antonio, Texas on January 18, 1982. Her family includes generations of Texans and Tejan@s from both West and East reaches of the state. Naya's African-American and Xicana/Mexican-American heritage inspire her research, activism, and entrepreneurship. She graduated from the University of Texas-Austin with an MA in Latin American Studies in December 2008. After returning to teaching and working with youth in non-profit settings, she returned to the university in 2011 to pursue a PhD in Geography. While completing the PhD, Naya cultivated two organizations focused on community resilience. She thrives at the crossroads between academia, activism, and holistic wellness (trauma-informed yoga therapy, meditation, energy work). With her life partner Dr. Kevin Thomas, she is co-founder of Food for Black Thought, an initiative that creates action education resources for communities committed to socially just, cooperative, and culturally relevant food systems. As founder of Rootwork, Naya facilitates holistic wellness programs with an emphasis on populations that experience systemic stress. Through these organizations, she has consulted for non-profits, university classrooms, city government, and professional organizations. Writing, reading, and potlucks keep her inspired.

### Connect:

E-mail: [geonaya@gmail.com](mailto:geonaya@gmail.com)

### Websites:

- Food for Black Thought | [www.foodforblackthought.org](http://www.foodforblackthought.org)
- Rootwork | [www.root-work.com](http://www.root-work.com)