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Examining the Overlooked Complexities of School Lunch: An Investigation into the Juncture of Food, Schooling, and the Developing Adolescent

Eleanor Kane
University of New Hampshire, Durham

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Examining the Overlooked Complexities of School Lunch:
An Investigation into the Juncture of Food, Schooling, and the Developing Adolescent

By

Eleanor Kane
Bachelor of Arts, University of Pennsylvania, 2009
Master of Public Affairs, Brown University, 2014

DISSERTATION

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This dissertation was examined and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education by:

Jayson Seaman, Associate Professor of Recreation Management and Policy

Paula Salvio, Professor of Education

Erin Sharp, Associate Professor of Human Development & Family Studies

Cliff Brown, Associate Professor of Sociology

On November 12, 2020

Approval signatures are on file with the University of New Hampshire Graduate School.

DEDICATION

For Theo, my favorite lunch buddy

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ABSTRACT

School lunch is a universal experience for students everywhere and yet remains largely understudied by educational researchers. This dissertation explores school lunch through the lens of adolescent identity theory, with the purpose of investigating the unarticulated and overlooked complexities inherent in the lunch block, from issues of the developing sense of self, to social and cultural meanings surrounding food, and consequences for social reproduction. I used a combination of ethnographic observations and narrative interviews at a rural New England high school, focusing on participants' daily habits, food practices, and choices during the lunch block. Through this, I established the normative routines of the cafeteria and examined the ways in which participants deviated from these norms. I also investigated the complex intersection of adolescent development with matters of food, social class, peer relations, and individuals' increasing maturation and autonomy. Through this study and review of the current literature, I argue that school lunch plays a multifaced role in students' lives. Not only does school lunch provide daily nutrition and a break from the classroom, but moreover serves as a site where adolescents navigate their social world in ways that inform and prepare them for their adult lives. For the field of educational research, understanding the role the lunchroom plays in this forming social and self-awareness is consequential to grasping the complexity of the period of adolescence.

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the intersection of identity theory, the developmental period of adolescence, and the student experience of school lunch. Through ethnographic observations and narrative interviews, I examined this juncture as a way to best understand how food practices shape and reveal identity processes in this foundational period of life.

This introduction serves two purposes: first, to situate the overarching concerns of this study regarding adolescence, identity development, and school lunch so as to orient readers to the research questions and purpose of this study. Second, this introduction provides a synthesis of the three manuscripts that comprise this dissertation and offers a series of concluding thoughts that serve to discuss the overarching contribution of these manuscripts as a whole to the field of educational research.

To begin, I introduce the purpose and main concerns of this study, then lay out my research questions. Following this, I introduce each manuscript and discuss the contributions of each to educational scholarship, especially as pertains to matters of identity formation in adolescence. In the concluding section of this introduction, I provide a final discussion of the ways in which food and identity interact during the period of adolescence and discuss the points of intersection of the three manuscripts with each other. Readers are encouraged to return to the introduction as they peruse the dissertation, as it offers a discussion based upon the findings and research contained in each manuscript and can be best appreciated after reading all three.

Purpose of this Study

My overall research focused on the intersection of identity, adolescent development, and food in schools. In schools everywhere, food plays an important but often under-articulated role. From vending machines to the cafeteria, food shapes the very course of the school day through the break for lunch, quite literally fuels academic pursuits, and for many students, school lunch

represents a third of meals eaten on weekdays. For food insecure students, school lunch is an even higher percentage of their food over the course of the week, as well as a reliable and stable promise of a meal (Gunderson & Ziliak, 2010).

While students everywhere experience this universal constant of food in schools, in high schools in particular, food plays a significant role due to the unique developmental tasks that occur throughout the adolescent life stage. During their teenage years, individuals transition from the dependency of childhood to the independence of adulthood and begin forming their sense of self, or identity (Erikson, 1968). The adolescent years are characterized by hormonal changes and puberty, an increase in risky behavior, a time of increasing orientation towards the future, decreased parental monitoring and more time spent outside of the house, increased autonomy with the opportunity to learn to drive and access independent transportation, the growing importance and concern with peer relations as parent and child roles are renegotiated, a developing interest in sex, the exploration of sexuality, and the advent of romantic relationships (Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011). Among these changes, food becomes a domain where youth can exert autonomy, make their own decisions about what to eat, when, and how much, and create their own rituals, habits, and practices both with their peers as well as individually. During this time, youth explore and develop habits separate from the childhood dependency of having food provided by a parent and yet prior to the complete independence of the food practices of adults who live away from their families and perhaps have children of their own. With access to their own money and transportation, adolescents begin to have the burgeoning independence and ability to engage with food with fewer restraints than their younger selves.

This engagement with food and food practices serves as an important - and inescapable - interaction with culture and society. From deciding what foods to eat, to a meal's preparation, to

the manner of consumption, individuals cannot eat without engaging in the process in ways that are culturally imbued with meaning, so that while the act of eating may be specific to each individual for any given meal, each choice as to how to go about it exists within a greater cultural context. Daily rituals surrounding food do not occur in a vacuum but rather arise as a result of the cultural and societal contexts of individuals, and practices surrounding food become the way in which these are enacted and embodied (Wills, Backett-Milburn, Roberts, & Lawton, 2011). For adolescents forming their developing identity, these choices and interactions with food are especially consequential as they explore their expanding independence and autonomy.

Despite the increasing freedom and control over their lives, and eating habits in particular, adolescents are still constrained by the commitment of schooling. Schools are fundamentally formative to a developing adolescent, both as a site where youth spend a considerable portion of their waking hours, as well as a location that exposes them to messages about broader patterns in society and culture (Eccles & Roser, 2011). During the school day, adolescents have the opportunity to interact with their peers, and during the lunch period in particular, they are free from the rules of the classroom and the roles that are more circumscribed around school-based identity models (e.g., Eckert, 1989).

As such, school lunch exists at a juncture of the adolescent period of growth, identity formation, cultural food practices, and the institution of schooling. In this dissertation, I approach food as symbolic and emblematic of cultural and societal meanings and messages in youths' ongoing development of the self. Through this, I explore the ways in which food and identity form a mutually constituting relationship that both informs identity processes as well as enacts and represents identity. A key feature of this work is positioning schools as an institution of great import in adolescent lives for its unique role in exposing youth to socially circulating societal

messages as well as being a site of cultural learning, and lunch within that framework as free time during which food is eaten.

Research Questions

This study asked the following research questions:

(1) What is the current state of recent educational research on food in schools?

(2) What does an analysis of the topics covered in these articles demonstrate about the nature of the field of research?

(3) How do students experience food during the school day?

     a. What are the daily habits, routines, and norms surrounding food?

     b. What choices do students make surrounding food during the school day?

(4) How do students explain and describe their experiences of food?

(5) How do the stories students tell about food provide evidence that food functions in a way to both reveal identity and inform it?

The first two questions guided the literature review for this dissertation, titled *Food, Identity, and Adolescence: Towards a New Model of Educational Research*. The third question and its two subquestions were the concern the second paper *Navigating the Shared Understanding of Normative Cafeteria Practices: Adolescent Identity Development, School Lunch, and the Consequences for Social Reproduction*, in which I focused on my ethnographic fieldwork and daily observations of the cafeteria. The fourth and fifth questions steered the final paper *Narrative Representations of Identity Development: Food's Dialectical Role in Adolescent Lives*, wherein I examined the confluence of food and narrative identity during the period of adolescence.

<p style="text-align: center;">**Manuscripts Comprising this Dissertation**</p>

Below, I introduce each of these manuscripts and expand upon their individual contributions to educational research as well as how they work in concert to articulate the main concerns of this dissertation, how food practices and adolescent development interact with identity.

Manuscript A: Food, Identity, and Adolescence: Towards a New Model of Educational Research

In this literature review, I examine recent scholarship into school lunch, beginning with Weaver-Hightower's 2011 article 'Why Education Researchers Should Take School Food Seriously'. After investigating this scholarship, I present an argument for a new approach that positions school lunch at the juncture of the developing adolescent, the youth's relationship to the institution of schooling, and the societal and cultural messages learned during the lunch period, arguing that the field is already moving in this direction, scholars just need to articulate the underlying fundamental principles. This in turn will lead to more focused, deeper, and significant research findings and topics of inquiry.

Contribution to the Field of Educational Research

This paper contributes to the field of educational research in the following ways. First, it expands upon Weaver-Hightower's 2011 paper, following up on his call for additional research by exploring studies conducted on food in schools since 2011. Through this, I found a significant number of articles both citing Weaver-Hightower's paper as well as expanding the scholarship on food in schools in a diversified and exciting number of areas: nutrition, health, school gardens, curriculum, student experience, policy initiatives, etc., which show the growth in this field. This paper's second contribution to educational research is the proposition of a new model of research

for studying food in schools. I argue that there is a currently unarticulated undercurrent of the concern of the significance of the period of adolescence to the subject of food in schools. Therefore, I contend that the field is already moving in this direction through the recent studies conducted and that by embracing the field of identity theory and integrating it with adolescent development, scholars will be better positioned to fully align their scholarship with the concerns and needs of these youth. This is especially pertinent for studies on curriculum development or policy initiatives, as siloing the topic of development and identity as separate from food does a disservice to the comprehensiveness with which these studies could be conducted. This holds similarly true for studies on health, nutrition, obesity, and body image, as understanding the particular developmental tasks of adolescence and the forming concept of identity can better serve scholars and practitioners in both understanding as well as aiding the youth they work with.

Contribution to this Dissertation

Previous research on food practices during adolescence demonstrates multiple intersections with concerns of identity theory. While underarticulated in this field of scholarship, emerging from the literature reviewed in this paper are windows into student experiences in the school cafeteria as well as purchasing food from outside establishments, student perspective on food habits, and the growing attention to curriculum interventions and health studies. This paper situates identity not only as an enduring and forming sense of self, but also the way in which individuals interact with food practices in school, their individual biographies, their self-perceptions, and their imagined futures, and brings these concerns of identity to the important and unique period of lunch during the school day. Eating habits, food preferences, purchasing choices, and engagement with curriculum around health are prime opportunities for individual expressions of identity as adolescents choose how and in what way to interact with these

moments during the school day. The findings of this review, which recount previous research and point towards a new model for studying food in school, articulates the importance of the school lunch period and the significance of individual's forming identity during the developmental period of adolescence.

Manuscript B: Navigating the Shared Understanding of Normative Cafeteria Practices: Adolescent Identity Development, School Lunch, and the Consequences for Social Reproduction

In this paper, I draw upon Blommaert's (2015) concept of chronotopic identities to examine the ways in which participants understood the routines and norms of the lunchroom. In their interviews, participants provided a normative description of lunchroom practices: the lunch line, choosing a table, where social groups typically sat, and accepted rules and behaviors during lunch. While participants shared this overarching understanding of what occurred during lunch, they also recounted the ways in which they each individually differed from this norm. In this way, they presented a duality of a 'normal' ideal that contrasted with their individual choices, exemplifying the way in which each participant interacted with social norms, and understood, appropriated, and also rejected social behaviors.

Contribution to the Field of Educational Research

The importance of this research hinges upon the particular life stage of adolescence. As the transition from child to adult occurs, the practices that youth learn in the lunchroom later translate to habits and ingrained food practices as adults. Other scholars have studied the eating behaviors of adults, but this link to how those behaviors inform adolescence has not yet been fully investigated, especially concerning this intersection of food, identity, and schooling. This paper investigates how the 'adolescent cultures' within schools (Garner, Bootcheck, Lorr, &

Rauch, 2006) both inform and constrain adolescents' developing sense of self through the coping strategies and self-understanding each individual employs. Understanding this navigation of social norms bears consequence for adolescents' developing physical health as well as their growing understanding of social class and how they fit into our world's socioeconomic stratification. During adolescence, food practices become a way in which youth enact modes of being, both representing themselves to others as well as working to inform their own sense of identity. The class concerns, health consequences, and social interactions of adults layer upon the foundations and practices developed in adolescence and this paper traces how those form in the lunchroom.

Contribution to this Dissertation

While Manuscript A recounted previous research on food in schools, this manuscript provides an empirical investigation into the daily routines, norms, and social/spatial situations students face during school lunch. In this way, Manuscript B picks up where Manuscript A left off, taking up the call for a new model of studying food in school among educational researchers and examining student experience and perspective. This paper reveals the identity practices at play during school lunch, as students bring their own individual biographies and choices to the myriad of available social options during the lunch period. In this paper, I argue that these matters of *choice* are indicative of the recreation of middle-class values of making 'smart choices' as modeled by students' parents and practiced during school lunch. In this way, adolescents are gaining dexterity in making choices, and are able to do so because of the uniquely social nature of school lunch, absent the rules of the classroom and exposed to the adolescent society of their peers. In this way, school lunch transcends the simplicity of a meal

and instead serves students as a site of social learning, an opportunity for self-expression, and a setting for the rehearsal of choice that sets the stage for their emergence into adulthood.

Manuscript C: Narrative Representations of Identity Development: Food's Dialectical Role in Adolescent Lives

This paper focuses on the narrative interviews I conducted, reporting findings on the ways in which participants enacted modes of narrative representation to exercise agency around food practices. For some participants, an autobiographical look backwards over their lives allowed for a reflective awareness of their own aging and maturation into the role of teacher or expert that their parents had previously occupied. Others struggled with such autonomy and differentiation, instead continuing to position their parents as the family's premier cook or the one responsible for providing food. Similar relational positioning occurred when recounting stories of food with their friends; in contrast to the teacher/student or expert/novice relationship used in narratives about parents, peers were often spoken of in terms of equals or teammates. Through these types of narrative events, I analyzed and reported on how youth used narrative stories to describe and reflect on their experiences with food and the ways in which that illuminated their concept of their present self and a representation of their past self.

Contribution to the Field of Educational Research

This study illustrates the role that food plays in the transition of the child to the adult and the particular transitionary nature of adolescence. While scholars have studied various aspects of adolescent development, food remains an understudied topic, especially as it pertains to growing sense of self and forming identity. This study can inform practitioners concerned with health, eating habits, body image, and peer relations around food in understanding the way in which adolescents simultaneously are recipients and dependent when it comes to food, as well as

independent and autonomous. Youth inhabit both of these roles, switching between these dichotomies at home and with peers. In this way, approaching the topic of food with adolescents is best done taking this duality and complexity of identity formation into account.

Contribution to this Dissertation

Like Manuscript B, this paper answers the call for a new model of research from Manuscript A by focusing on the interaction of food and identity through narrative interviews. In this paper, adolescents take a historical look back at their food practices, habits, and individual biographies and through these, reveal their own perspectives and their sense of self. This paper provides a similar, though distinctive, approach to this new model as found in Manuscript B, with a more biographical perspective on participants' lives. Through this narrative approach and the ethnographic approach in Manuscript B, readers can appreciate the different entrances into issues of identity around food practices during adolescence and understand how each is revealing in its own way. While Manuscript B focused far more on the school day and the adolescent as *student*, this paper positions the period of adolescence across the life course as its own stage of development, with the role of *student* as a particular position they occupy, but distinct from their role as child, teenager, and peer.

Conclusion

Through these three papers that comprise my dissertation, my research fills a notable gap in existent literature. While food in schools has been addressed, as has adolescent development and identity formation, I took the unstudied step of combining these fields in examining students' daily experience of food in schools. Below, I offer a concluding synthesis of these three manuscripts, outlining the contribution of each, re-articulating the intersection of food, adolescence, and identity, and then positioning that intersection in the unique setting of school

lunch. Finally, I outline opportunities for future research, as this dissertation contributes a first step towards a new model for studying food in schools, but this important and consequential topic should continue to be examined by educational researchers beyond the contribution of this one study.

Contribution of Each Manuscript

While each manuscript of this dissertation served its own, unique purpose in examining a certain facet of identity as pertains to food practices during adolescence, the manuscripts also exist in concert with each other, forming a fuller illustration of the concerns of this dissertation when taken as a whole. Manuscript A, the literature review both recounts recent scholarship into the field of food in schools while also introducing a new model with which to engage with this complex and important topic. Manuscript B engages with adolescent understandings of 'normative' rituals and practices in the cafeteria and sheds light on how individuals react to and engage with this adolescent culture, thereby enacting the same societal messaging that they will encounter in adulthood. Finally, Manuscript C illustrates the polarity and conflict inherent in the period of adolescence as these youth transition from children who are dependent upon others feeding them to the adults they will become with autonomy over that very process. Reading these manuscripts as an interconnected illustration into identity formation around food practices, the latter papers serve as a demonstration of the model proposed in Manuscript A. I argue that while scholarship on food in schools has grown in the past decade, the field could benefit from the organizing framework of identity theory, which would deepen and structure this consequential and important research. Taking up this proposition, the second manuscript focuses on the adolescent in their role of *student*, while the third positions food practices in adolescence as a transitionary development in the life course. Together, these manuscripts examine different

aspects of the confluence of identity and food, but the intersection of this faceted approach points to the significance of studying food in schools through the lens of identity theory, which I turn to next.

Identity, Food Practices, and Adolescent Development

Throughout this dissertation, I argue the food practices and identity are deeply entwined. Individuals literally consume the cultural connotations of a particular food and through this act of eating simultaneously represent and reveal themselves to others. This extends from not just eating a meal, but to food practices that include shopping choices, food preparation, decisions about various ingredients, and social interactions surrounding meals. During adolescence, individuals undertake these interactions with food during a time when they're forming their sense of self, imagining their futures, and differentiating from their family of origin. This particular stage of adolescence therefore is a unique time in which to undertake a study of food practices and how it relates to the self. Adolescence serves as this transitionary life stage in which youths' worlds broaden to include the ability to work and earn money, access to transportation, increased time with peers, and the independence to obtain food and cook for themselves. While these particulars might differ based on individual families and circumstances, the maturation and transitionary nature of adolescence holds constant for youth everywhere.

This is particularly applicable in terms of food practices, as children are dependent on a caregiver or parents to provide food, while adults have the autonomy and independence to procure their own food. As Erikson writes, identity formation during adolescence "begins where the usefulness of identification ends. It arises from the selective repudiation and mutual assimilation of childhood identification and their absorption in a new configuration, which, in turn, is dependent on the process by which a society… identifies a young individual, recognizing

him as somebody who had to become the way he is and who, being the way he is, is taken for granted" (Erikson, 1968, p. 159). In this way, we can understand food practices in adolescence as this *reconfiguration* of childhood practices in the home, in which adolescents become aware of food in a new way. As adolescents leave behind the rote performance of behavior in identifying with the food practices of their home, they gain the ability and opportunity to create their own food practices. Food practices in adolescence therefore becomes an opportunity for the rehearsal and preparation of adulthood, independent of the family of origin but without the full autonomy that adulthood brings. Participants in my study highlighted this transitory nature of adolescence, such as Fiona's mother sending her to the counter at Wendy's to advocate for her improperly prepared Frosty, or Cora and her father cooking tacos together. Participants also demonstrated their forays into individualistic food practices, such as Cora cooking meatballs on her own or Hailey stepping out from under the parental monitoring of her food allergies to advocate for herself to teachers and friend's parents.

Even while adolescents transition towards this developing independence, their time, social interactions, and daily routine are constrained by the fact they spend so many of their waking hours in school. Next, I turn to the importance of schooling, as highlighted in my manuscripts, and the unique intersection of school lunch with these concerns of adolescent development and youths' forming identity.

The Uniqueness of School Lunch and the Intersection with Adolescent Development

The institution of schooling plays a significant role in adolescent's lives, as a site of cultural learning, a place for the transmission of societal messages, and the simple reality that school dominates youths' time and attention during adolescence. In this dissertation, I highlight the distinctive role of school lunch within this overarching institution of schooling, as a time

separate from the concerns of the classroom, offering freedom to socialize away from the constraints of the learning.

However, while school lunch exists apart from the rigidity of the rest of the school day, it is not a simple or uncomplicated time, and in fact is quite the opposite. As I demonstrate in my studies, this is due to a number of key features of school lunch that shape identity formation: 1) the opportunity for social interaction, 2) the intersection of food choices, 3) the negotiation and navigation of the lunchroom's social/spatial organization, and 4) considerations of daily habits. I will begin by discussing these before turning to an examination of the ways in which these key features of school lunch intersect the overarching framework of identity development that I argue is so consequential to understanding food in schools.

The opportunity afforded for social interaction during school lunch exists due to the nature of the lunch period as a time away from curricular concerns and the business of the classroom. However, during high school, the lunch period and the social interaction within also intersects with the particular life stage of adolescence. While children in elementary school are free to socialize with peers during lunch, it is during adolescence that youth become more concerned with their surrounding peer society, differentiating from their parents and orientating towards social relationships with their own age group. School lunch affords a time and space for this to occur within the school day, where youth are eating not only with their friends, but their schoolmates who comprise a peer group formed by the rigidity of school districting, enrollment, or other, greater forces such as these. As such, while students may have control over who they sit with and speak to, school lunch requires social mixing and exposure to others not necessarily of an individual's choosing. In this way, school lunch exists separately from a meal in the family home or a meal with friends, necessitating interaction with a larger, predetermined peer group; at

the same time it exists separately from the school day due to its relative freedom and leisure and therefore functions as a unique experience for adolescence in the course of their daily lives.

The second key feature of school lunch, that of food choices, exists in a similarly unique positioning due to the nature of the institution of schooling. Different a meal at home or outside of school, the rules, behavior, and often the food itself is determined by the school. Even for students who bring their own lunch, schools dictate whether a microwave is available and other small, though consequential decisions that shape the meal. For students who eat the food provided by the school, while they are in control of the physical act of eating, they have no influence on the available options. As I returned to through this dissertation, given the societal messages imbuing food, the act of eating both informs identity as well as reveals it to others, and given these constraints of schools, the lunch period provides a degree of autonomy away from youth's households for this meal while also constricting available options of behaviors within the school's own rules and expectations.

The third unique aspect of school lunch is the social/spatial organization and the individual navigation of communally understood norms of behaviors. As participants in my study reported, the routines that determined the flow through the lunch line, seating at tables, and entrance and egress from the lunchroom were tacitly agreed upon by all students. Within this, each participant reported an individual negotiation of this social/spatial organization, from cutting the lunch line to adhering to the unspoken, but rigid, seating arrangement around the room. While meals at home or a meal at a restaurant all have their own norms of behaviors, school lunch is a meal consumed in the presence of peers and schoolmates; though monitored by faculty and cafeteria staff, the high school lunchroom is in many ways the providence of the students themselves. At a time in life when youth are orienting towards their peers and also

envisioning their eventual futures, navigating the social/spatial norms of the lunchroom is an important and consequential occurrence during the school day.

Finally, the formation of daily practices and habits occur during school lunch in a way that is unique to this particular meal and social opportunity. In this dissertation, I take up Annette Lareau's (2011) conception of daily practices as the way in which individuals absorb information about social class, socioeconomic stratification, and how they themselves fit into society. These daily practices in the lunchroom are the fabric of the lunch period: unpacking a lunch box, paying for one's hot food, selecting a drink, scrolling through a phone while eating. And yet, as mundane and banal as these daily practices are, they weave together to form the intersection of the individual, the rituals of school lunch, and comprise the interactions around food that I argue reveal identity to others while also constituting it for the self.

These four unique features of school lunch provide focal points for the intersection of the developing adolescent and the juncture of identity formation. Individuals bring their own biographies, family histories, and the practices learned in childhood to the school lunch period. Across the participants in this study, each revealed the particular ways they approached seating arrangements, food choices, daily habits, and peer interactions. For some, like Hailey, this negotiation hinged on decisions around food due to her allergies, while for others such as Becca and Gabby, their main concerns were acceptance from their peers and conformity to the overarching societal norms. The ethnographic observations I undertook for this study allowed access into the daily routines of participants as they navigated school lunch, shedding light on the available options and the choices each participant made. By combining this ethnographic work with narrative interviews, I was able to access participant's justifications for how they interacted with and prioritized each of the unique features of school lunch. Cora was only concerned with

her food choices as a consequence of social interactions, worried that as she wavered between two hot food options, she was holding up the line. Danny's daily habits included regularly cutting the lunch line and policing attempts by freshmen to sit at the senior's table. No two participants prioritized or maneuvered through these four aspects of school lunch in the same manner, instead individually approaching these features in their own way, according to their own values, and aligned with the person they were in the midst of becoming.

These decisions, negotiations, and routines during school lunch hinge upon the developing sense of identity that this dissertation is concerned with. School lunch is an important and unique time during the school day, and in high school, it occurs at a developmentally significant stage of one's life. This study demonstrated how the overarching application of identity theory to school lunch and adolescent development reveals the reconfiguration of childhood roles into the rehearsal and dexterity of social navigation that adolescents practice as they grow towards adulthood.

Opportunities for Future Research

Through this study on food in schools, I seek to better inform not only the field of educational research, but also the teachers, practitioners, and policy makers engaging with the all-important topic of food, adolescence, and the complex intersection of these during such a dynamic and important life stage. This study is but a first step towards a more cohesive, and therefore consequential, study of food in schools. While above I highlighted four unique features of school lunch, these can be expanded upon in future studies to investigate other axes of concern, such as diet, food insecurity, body image, or eating disorders. Investigations could focus on the intersection of identity, as youth ask who they are and who they might become, and disordered eating habits, especially during the adolescent years. Likewise, a study of food

insecurity could examine how that experience shapes and informs youths' developing self concept. In addition, studies such as these can provide a model to reframe research into curriculum interventions, health education, nutrition, obesity, and the physical development of the maturing adolescent body.

The study of food in schools is an exciting and propitious avenue of research for educational scholars. Underpinning this dissertation is the simple fact that everyone eats, and to do so during adolescence within the school day is complicated, significant, and revelatory for students, researchers, and anyone concerned with the developing youth.

FOOD, IDENTITY, AND ADOLESCENCE:

TOWARDS A NEW MODEL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

School plays a unique role in students' lives, serving as a site where students spend the majority of their waking hours, form peer relationships outside of their families, and gain exposure to lessons and teachings concerning not just curriculum, but also their place within society (Eccles & Roser, 2011). These aspects of schooling occur not only in classrooms but also another important, common part of the school day: school lunch. Often overlooked and understudied by educational researchers, the lunch period represents a block of time in which students are not bound by norms of classroom decorum or engaged in learning and instruction. As such, lunchtime is a critical and pivotal part of the day for students, for while the basic task of lunchtime might be eating, it more fully and wholly serves as a site of cultural and societal transmission that in turn impacts each individual student's forming identity.

School lunch accounts for a large portion of youth's time spent eating; for students who eat regular meals at home, school lunch represents up to a third of their food consumption per day, and for students from food insecure homes, it can be their only regular meal throughout the week (Gunderson & Ziliak, 2010). Scholars such as Marcus Weaver-Hightower (2011) and Susan Laird (2008) take up this importance of school lunch, arguing that it plays a central role in the experience of schooling and as such, impacts schooling as a whole. In *Why Education Researchers Should Take School Lunch Seriously,* Weaver-Hightower (2011) argues that food not only underpins the basic business of academic learning, but also that research on food can provide insight into academic attainment, school policy and politics, social justice learning, environmental concerns, teaching and administration, and student health. Likewise, in her 2007 Philosophy of Education Presidential Address, Laird argues that because food underpins youths' growing societal awareness, there should be greater attention to coeducation around food pathways and a reconsideration of the way in which food is discussed and taught in schools. In

these ways, school lunch is a common, shared experience for students, and also a site where social differences profoundly affect individuals' sense of self, and as such, it is a pivotal, fundamental, and salient part of schooling.

In this review, I examine recent scholarship into school lunch and call for a new approach to research that positions school lunch at the juncture of three important phenomena: the developing adolescent, youth's relationship to the institution of schooling, and the societal and cultural messages learned during the lunch period. In doing so, I apply the lens of identity theory to the current field of research into school lunch, as defined by Erikson (1968) as the individual's enduring internal sense of self-sameness and the continued recognition of that self by others in the community. After that, I examine the role that the intersection of home life, school context, peer interaction, and influence from society plays on the daily experience of school food for high school students. Through this, I argue that adolescent identity theory is a useful integrating concept for educational researchers who have already studied aspects of food in schools, as the field lacks a coherent framework in this area of scholarship.

Scope and Aim of this Literature Review

In numerous studies, researchers have investigated food among adolescents in the fields of pediatrics, sociology, psychology, nutrition, and health. While recounting the details of these studies are beyond the scope of this paper, the significance of these numerous studies and scholarly attention are of note in establishing how consequential food is to developing youth. Food serves as not only a nutritional basis for child and adolescent growth, but is also a marker of socioeconomic class, physical health, and mental wellbeing, affecting nearly every aspect of youths' lives. As such, it is all the more important to understand how food functions within schools, intersecting with the maturing adolescents' growth and development.

In his 2011 article, Weaver-Hightower calls for educational scholars to conduct additional research into food in schools. While other scholars such as Laird have drawn attention to the importance of food in schools, none have done so with the same attention to the nature of educational scholarship in particular, as distinct from the fields of policy, nutrition, health, or any other. Therefore, I based this review around an examination of the impact of Weaver-Hightower's 2011 article in studies of education specifically.

This review is not intended as an exhaustive examination of all literature concerning school lunch, but rather an investigation on the literature on school lunch that rides in the wake of Weaver-Hightower's seminal article. As such, I do not attend to prior important works on school lunch such as Barry Thorne's *Unpacking School Lunchtime: Structure, Practice, and the Negotiation of Differences* (2005) or Susan Levine's *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program* (2008). To the degree that I draw from Susan Laird's *Food for Coeducational Thought* (2008), it is in service of supporting her 2018 paper *School Lunch Matters: Encountering the New Jim Crow and the Anthropocene* and the scholarship of Rice and Rud (2018). Additionally, I did not seek to exhaustively review the entire history of literature surrounding school lunch for this review; Weaver-Hightower did this work in his 2011 article, in which he reviewed the extant studies of school food to that date. Therefore, this paper focuses more narrowly on the impact of Weaver-Hightower's paper and recounts the current areas of inquiry his article spurred.

The rationale for this review comes from the basis of centering on specifically educational scholarship and the opportunity to investigate school lunch through the lens of the intersection of youth and schooling. In this way, the developing adolescent can be positioned in their role as a *student* in particular. That specificity centers on what Weaver-Hightower called

the 'everyday nature of school lunch', drawing upon the notion of *daily practices*, the taken for granted routines that shape development in powerful ways, schooling as a developmental context, and the field of adolescent identity formation. Through this, I illustrate the mutual relationship between adolescent identity development and food in schools, with one informing the other in a mutually reciprocal cycle as the adolescent plays out identity processes on food while simultaneously embodying and displaying the symbolic and cultural meanings food holds.

I approach this inquiry through two research questions: (1) What is the current state of educational research on food in high schools? and (2) What does an analysis of the topics covered in these articles demonstrate about the nature of this field of research?

Methodology

To answer the first research question, I searched educational databases ERIC and PsychINFO for studies published from 2012 to 2019. I followed Boote and Beile's methodology for literature reviews based on their 12 criteria including depth of synthesis, quality of analysis, methodological clarity, and significance to the scholarly field (Boote & Beile, 2005). Search terms included school lunch and food, filtered by adolescents, adolescence (13-17 years old), high school, secondary education, secondary school students, and high school students. I also included the 48 articles citing Weaver-Hightower's work, as found through a search of the University of New Hampshire's library, as well as *Educational Dimensions of School Lunch: Critical Perspectives* (Rice & Rud, 2018) with a foreword written by Weaver-Hightower. Combined, this totaled 119 sources.

To analyze the connections between these articles and chapters, and to answer the second research question, I coded each article or book chapter in nVivo by the main areas of inquiry. These included: nutrition, obesity, policy, curriculum, daily experience, student opinion, food

insecurity, free and reduced lunch, food access, environmental concerns, school gardens, body image, school performance, socioeconomics, and eating disorders. Articles that included more than one main focus were coded in both areas, such as investigations into school gardens and nutrition, or policy interventions and obesity.

Findings

Five main categories of inquiry emerged from the 119 works reviewed: (1) Familial influences on eating habits in schools, (2) Peer and social environment effects on eating practices, (3) External influence on food purchasing choices, (4) Health education and curriculum interventions on eating habits, and (5) Student and youth perspectives on school food environment. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage breakdown of these categories as well as the total number of articles.

Figure 1
Percentage and Total Number of Articles by Topical Category
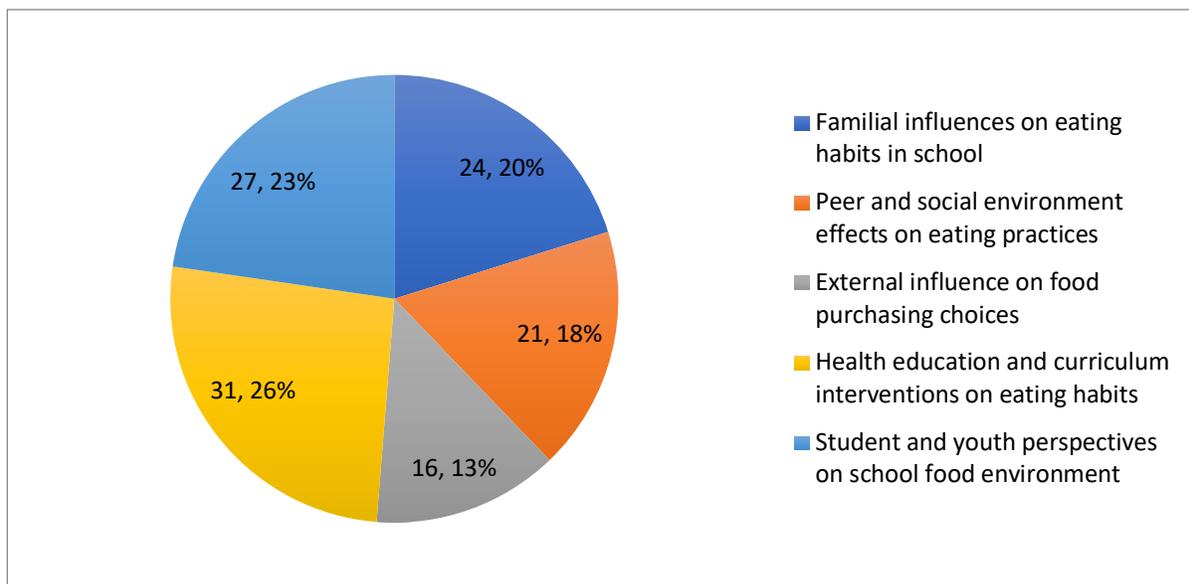
Of these five categories, studies that examined school lunch through health education and curriculum interventions on eating habits comprised the greatest amount with 31 articles, representing 26% of the 119 sources reviewed. Articles that investigated school lunch through

external influence on food purchasing choices were the least numerous, representing 13% of the sources, or 16 total articles. The other three categories fell within this range, with 27 sources investigating school lunch through student perspectives, 24 examining school lunch through familial influence, and 21 looking at school lunch through the effect of peer and social environments. No one category overwhelmingly dominated the results, nor were any largely underrepresented. Within the field of research on school lunch since the early 2010s, these five categories fairly evenly represent the main areas of inquiry scholars have undertaken. Below, I discuss these findings in more detail, recount the current scholarly discussion on food in school, and then present an argument for a new lens through which to approach this research: that of adolescent identity formation.

Discussion

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 investigated the state of scholarship on food in schools since Weaver-Hightower's 2011 article. Aligned with expanding attention nationally and internationally as scholars continue to investigate the role that food in schools plays for youth, 119 educational studies were published since the early 2010s. This outpaces the results from Weaver-Hightower's own review in 2011, in which he found that education studies that did include a focus on food did so by only broadly reporting rates of free and reduced lunch as a stand in for socioeconomic status. In contrast, the studies published since 2012 that I reviewed above show a greater attention to the depth and complexity of the subject of food in schools, which I expand on below.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 examined the nature of the scholarship into food in schools since Weaver-Hightower's call to action. The five topical categories demonstrate that to understand educational research on food in schools is to take into account the intersectionality that home life, peer relations, school context, available and offered curriculum, and student perspectives have on students' daily experiences with food. As the above findings reveal, scholars are not approaching the topic of food in schools by discrete research inquiries, such as obesity or nutrition, but instead have begun to use a multifaceted approach that encompasses the complexity of youths' lives. Below, I present a closer examination of the contexts that influence food practices and eating habits.

Familial Influences on Eating Habits in School

Apart from school lunch, adolescents also eat with their friends and family, and they eat at home, at restaurants, at grocery stores, and at others' houses. 24 articles fit into this category, which demonstrated that, outside the school cafeteria, the home is often the most influential place where individuals first learn about and experience food. An example of the research into this topic is Ohri-Vachaspati's (2014) article, which investigated the influence of parental perceptions about food on students' nutrition choices. She found that students whose parents regarded school lunches as nutritious were more likely to choose school meals, demonstrating a link between familial food practices and adolescents' choices and behaviors. This paper illustrates how youth absorb lessons from their families and enact that knowledge in a setting away from the home. Family practices influence adolescents' habits as youth integrate norms and values into their own choices.

These familial influences bear significance on the study of food in schools by calling attention to the link between youths' home-life and their choices when they act independently away from home. One marker of adolescence is increasing autonomy and differentiation from parents (Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011). While lessons surrounding food are initially learned at home, youth are able to enact their own decisions while eating autonomously outside the home where choices are structured by the food schools provide and/or what students bring from home. Therefore, school lunch provides a snapshot of eating behaviors as informed by home practices, with school both affording and constraining youths' particular choices. As I argue later in this review, incorporating the consideration of adolescent identity formation will further refine this research by grounding the period of adolescence and the choices of individual youth in their own particular developmental context both at home and during school. Youths' food practices serve as both expressions of identity, revealing their identity to others, as well as informing their solidifying sense of self, and school lunch sits at the juncture of food practices, schooling, and youths' increased orientation towards peer relationships. Grounding this scholarship in concerns around identity would provide a more comprehensive frame for understanding familial influence on school eating habits.

Peer and Social Environment Effects on Eating Practices

In addition to family impact on adolescent food choices, 21 articles demonstrated that social and peer experiences influenced youths' eating habits. For example, Milam, Jones, Debnam, and Bradshaw (2017) examined the influence of stress within the school environment on obesity and investigated how factors such as bullying, school connectedness, physical safety at school, and student perception of school climate affected students' body mass index. These factors were positively associated with obesity, particularly among female students. This study

demonstrates the influence of social status on eating habits, and how social relationships, students' social standing, and their perceived place in the social environment shapes and forms the context within which students experience food and form their eating behaviors.

Like the influence of adolescents' home life on their independent food choices, so too do peer and social environment affect how adolescents eat, especially for meals eaten at school. Within schools, adolescent cultures form, regulated through peer ostracization and ridicule, and each individual develops their own way of coping and navigating these shared, societal norms and behaviors (Garner, Bootcheck, Lorr, & Rauch, 2006). Adolescent identity, or sense of self, plays an important but unarticulated role in this matter, shaping youths' self-perception while also simultaneously being the self-representation that each youth enacts towards others. In their role as student, peer, friend, and social actor, youth are constantly learning, forming, and developing their social self in an ongoing process of identity formation, which should be more fully and articulately integrated into the scholarship on peer relations and school lunch so as to best serve scholars and practitioners utilizing this research.

External Influence on Food Purchasing Choices

Of the articles reviewed, 16 sources examined studies on food and food practices in schools by focusing not on familial influence or peer and social relations, but on schools' geographical location. In an example of this scholarship, Beaulieu and Gaston (2012), Seliske, Pickett, Rosu and Janssen (2013), and Wills, Danesi, and Kapentanaki (2016) all investigated the effect of school proximity to food retailers, especially fast food establishments, on student eating behaviors during school lunch. Findings showed that students prefer purchasing food from outside retailers, even in cases where food was available to purchase from vending machines and the cafeteria. This suggests that despite the option to stay in school to eat, youth showed a

preference towards eating at an outside establishment. Contributing factors to this choice

included the lack of dietary and nutritional guidelines for outside food establishments compared

to school cafeterias, and also that these businesses form a relationship with the youth that

positions them as agentive consumers who are able to use their autonomy and independence in a

way school cafeterias do not satisfy. As such, scholars who used this approach positioned food in

schools as a function of the context of a school's location, neighborhood setting, and external

factors that shape and change the way in which students choose to eat throughout the day, as well

as their opinions of the availability of food in schools, and even their perception of themselves as

consumers. These external factors are all important influences on developing adolescents' sense

of self, or identity. Through this, though unarticulated in these research studies into this topic, are

concerns around that identity development as well as the transitionary nature of the life stage of

adolescence from a child, dependent on a parent to bring them to a favored food establishment,

to an adult with the autonomy and independence to eat wherever they like. Foregrounding these

concerns in educational research would better serve scholars in making these links to

development, identity, and adolescent food practices.

Health Education and Curriculum Interventions on Eating Habits

The most prevalent research approach to food in schools, totaling 31 sources reviewed,

focused on curriculum and policy initiatives. Per this approach, Raiha, Tossavainen, Turunen,

Enkenberg and Kiviniemi (2012) evaluated how an intervention on nutritional health impacted

students' nutrition knowledge and therefore eating habits. Similarly, Cvjetan, Utter, Robinson,

and Denny (2014) studied the confluence of students' eating choices and body mass index as a

function of school nutrition climate. In a third study, D'Adamo et al. (2016) examined the effect

of nutrition education around cooking with spices and herbs on diet quality and attitudes about

healthy eating. The studies that use this approach highlight the role that schools play in nutrition and health education, working to shape eating habits and food practices. For young children, knowledge about food and nutrition comes from the home and family and it is not until school age that youth encounter nutritional curriculum.

Schools function as a site where youth are exposed and socialized to cultural norms, both through peer interactions as well as curriculum, rendering schools an important institution in youths' lives (Eccles & Roser, 2011). For concerns surrounding food, schools then serve as sites where mores and standards about food, nutrition, dietary habits, and eating attitudes can be learned about outside the home. Adolescents must choose the ways they incorporate what they learn at home with what they learn at school and therefore, health education and curriculum interventions serve to influence the developing adolescent as they begin to make choices about what they eat and why. As such, using identity as an integrating framework can help shed light on educational research into food, by grounding studies in the framework of the developing adolescent and food practices, as well as the cultural importance of the institution of schooling on youths' lives.

Student and Youth Perspectives on School Food Environment

A final way in which scholars approached the topic of food in schools was to examine student perceptions and opinions. 27 sources used this line of inquiry. In an example of this approach, Payan, Sloane, Illum, Farris, and Lewis (2017) investigated students' understanding of fruit and vegetables, the relative costs, quality, and individual motivation to purchase them. Cassar (2018) also examined student perception, interviewing youth about the availability of fresh, healthy food and how it affected classroom attention and engagement. These studies reveal students' understanding of the societal function that food serves, in that food is imbued with

societal meaning. Food represents more than an edible substance, and instead each item in the lunch line or available drink is steeped in layers of particulars both tacitly and implicitly understood, from its price, how nutritious it is, how good it tastes, if it is a favorite item or strongly disliked, its routine availability or special status, as well as cultural connotations such as food surrounding holidays or birthday celebrations. For students, food in schools was viewed through the lens of their own understanding, as informed by their familial backgrounds and what they learned at home. Research into this area can be aided by foregrounding issues of identity and doing so would ground such research in the field of adolescent development and better serve scholars in communicating youths' thoughts and perspectives around food.

Scholarly Conversation on Food in Schools

Another contribution to the field of literature on school lunch is not simply empirical findings, but also the work of scholars such as Susan Laird, Suzanne Rice, and A. G. Rud, who have continued the conversation and elevated the discussion from empirical research to one of reflection and deeper deliberation. Below, I recount the work of these scholars and examine their ongoing contributions to the field, highlighting areas of tension, concert, and opportunities for ongoing inquiry.

One main area of agreement among these scholars is the way in which school lunch is so entwined with the school day; lunch does not stand apart from the affairs of the classroom or curriculum, but instead is knit into the very fabric of schooling. As such, these scholars call for this interlaced nature of school lunch to form the starting point of any scholarly inquiry into school lunch. Weaver-Hightower (2011) argued that school lunch permeates every part of the school day, not limiting its importance to that of learning or nourishment, nor suggesting that it should be simply studied as its own subject of curricular importance. Rather, it serves as both a

basis for the business of schooling and an interwoven facet that suffuses through every aspect of schooling, in a way he terms 'ubiquitous'. In a slightly different way of articulating this same concern, in Laird's *School Lunch Matters: Encountering the New Jim Crow and the Anthropocene* (2018), she positions school lunch not as a necessary happening during the school day in order to nourish children sufficiently so they can continue to learn, but as education in and of itself. She maps out nine ways in which curriculum intersects naturally with school lunch: health and nutrition, choices about healthy living, social table manners, the connection between food and the environment, sensory aesthetics and personal taste, the learned skill of food preparation, encounters with students' greater communities, service learning, and curriculum interpretation. This paper follows upon her earlier work (Laird, Food for Coeducational Thought, 2008), which also regards food as an important aspect of education.

Growing out of the way that Laird and Weaver-Hightower position school lunch as fundamentally entangled with the business of schooling, Rice and Rud's book of collected essays, *Educational dimensions of school lunch* (2018) takes this approach a step further. Rice and Rud pull from Weaver-Hightower and Laird's work calling attention to school lunch as not just an interruption of the school day's schedule, but a 'phenomenon' in and of itself, and an educational one at that. In their view, and the view of the authors of the collected essays, school lunch affects all aspects of students' lives from health to emotional development to morality. Moreover, these effects are not constrained to the school day or even one's years in school but have continued effects over the life course.

Laird, Weaver-Hightower, Rice and Rud's work, and the authors within the edited volume, *Educational Dimensions of School Lunch* (Rice & Rud, 2018), expand the topic of school lunch from a simple act of refueling and nourishment to a consequential part of schooling

in its own right, one that extends into the rest of an individual's day and into their future lives after they have completed their schooling. Weaver-Hightower argues for more empirical research, while Rice and Rud take a more philosophical approach towards school lunch, one that Laird first laid the foundation for in her 2007 work and followed up in 2018.

However, none of this conversation includes concerns of adolescent identity formation, which in this review I argue would serve as an important unifying concept that would scaffold existing scholarship and deepen future studies. Paula Salvio comes closest to attending to the specific period of adolescence in her paper *Eating Democracy: School Lunch and the Social Meaning of Eating in Critical Times* (2018), which is included in *Educational Dimensions of School Lunch*. In this paper, as well as her previous paper *Exercising 'The Right To Research': Youth-Based Community Media Production as Transformative Action* (2013), she draws upon D.W. Winnicott's (1964) *The child, the family and the outside world* and ties food choices for adolescents as 'part of the familiar', where the food itself represents social identity, local pride, feelings of belonging, and personal taste. In this way, meaning of "the social world outside of the self" pervades food for individuals, and notably, for adolescents (Salvio, 2018, p. 77). While Salvio does not apply adolescent identity theory to her work, she articulates concerns of youths' social identity, belonging, and neighborhood identification and ties it to the consumption and meaning of food in a way that merits additional attention. It is this juncture that I turn to below, arguing that identity provides a metatheoretical framework could lend a useful, integrating structure to the field of educational research into food in schools, deepening and expanding current and future scholarship.

A New Approach to Research on Food in Schools

Above, I reviewed the various approaches researchers took in studying food in schools, both in empirical studies as well as the ongoing scholarly conversation around food in schools. The amalgamation of these approaches suggests that food in schools is multidimensional, spanning home life, peer relations, student perspective, school context, and circulating curriculum. While this research has contributed important findings about distinct aspects of food in school, the current field of literature also represents a scattered constellation of focuses lacking a center of gravity that would help educators understand the broader implications of how food is organized in school and how students experience it. Therefore, as I argue in this review, it is at the nucleus of these above approaches that scholars can more fully understand the role of food in schools. This can be done by adopting concerns from the field of adolescent identity formation, which I turn to next.

In the following section of this paper, I argue that the existing research on food in schools already deals with aspects of identity formation, even though it is not articulated as such. I go on to synthesize the findings of this review within adolescent identity formation theory, the concept of schools as a developmental context, and a discussion of food's societal role. After doing so, I argue that food in schools can best be understood as an ongoing mutual negotiation of identity, in which food plays an important constituting role in identity.

Adolescent Identity Formation

Identity formation is the main developmental task of adolescence. During this life stage, youth develop into the adult they will become, solidifying a sense of self that is internal and enduring as well as recognized by others (Elkonin, 1972; Polivanova, 2006; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013). In this way, identity exists in a dual state, located

within the individual and also as a perception of that self-sameness and continuity by others, or, as Erickson writes, "a process 'located' *in the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture*" (Erikson, 1968, p. 22).

The context in which adolescents undertake this does not occur in a vacuum nor, while it is an individual process, is it undertaken without external influence. Instead, identity development can only be understood by taking into account the interplay of the individual and their specific social and cultural setting. This setting becomes the resource individuals draw upon to create conceptions of who they are and who they might become. As such, identity cannot be understood without placing the individual within a particular socio-cultural context, as identity forms and is formed by interaction with the world around oneself (Erikson, 1968; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Therefore, the environment surrounding the individual is a key aspect of their developing sense of self, and schools in particular play a unique role as a developmental context for adolescents.

Schools as a Developmental Context

Vygotsky (1994) argues that one's surrounding environment, or context, is comprised of unique factors, distinctive to one's own circumstance and background and informed by the social situation and historical era. As such, the interaction of an individual with their environment creates a unique experience, one that shapes and impacts the forming individual, which thereby is what constitutes it as a context for development.

Following from Vygotsky's work, schools are socializing institutions that play a significant role in the lives of all youth. Schools can be understood as an environment, or developmental context, in which societal learning is both enacted and adopted. As institutions, they are fundamentally formative to a developing adolescent, both as a site where youth spend a

considerable portion of their waking hours, as well as a location that exposes them to messages about broader patterns in society and culture that become internalized to form their sense of self (Eccles & Roser, 2011).

It is within schools that students adopt what Wortham (2005) terms 'models of identity'. He provides the examples of the 'resistant black male' or 'loud black girl', though these can also be extrapolated further than racial typecasts into commonly understood roles such as a 'teacher's pet' or 'class clown'. He defines these as socially circulating categories of identification that are disseminated in the broader cultural environment and played out in the local context of each school, where youth 'collude' with these models to reify them both as cultural categories and as personal identities. These categories of identification are inextricably linked to the experience of schooling as the two are mutually constituting: the business of schooling is not simply academic, but is intertwined with the social reality of how youth understand themselves and each other, shaped in and through the emotional experiences governing how they make meaning of specific circumstances.

This combination of schools as the site of cultural exposure as well as the way school context contributes to adolescent development renders schools as uniquely, fundamentally significant in adolescents' lives, at a period in time when they are learning about themselves and their place in society. With this understanding, I will next turn to an examination of the way in which food functions to circulate societal meaning, before turning to a discussion of the unique nature of food in schools.

Food's Societal Role

Eating entails a process that is culturally and societally imbued with meaning, so that while the act of eating may be specific to each individual for any given meal, each choice as to

how to go about it exists within a greater cultural context. Bourdieu's theory of habitus provides an understanding of food as a way to understand an individual's relationship to society. As Karl Maton (2012) writes of Bourdieu's theory, "habitus focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances, and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others" (p. 51). Wills et al. (2011) apply this concept of habitus to the practices that surround food, arguing that food provides a lens to analyze cultural interactions through rituals of habitus. Linking the theory of habitus to food practices allows us to conceptualize the daily rituals of eating as embodied acts of culture. These can be understood as adhering to principles of vegetarianism or veganism, shopping locally, choosing brand-name products versus generic, as well as regional and cultural influences on recipes, food preparation, and ingredient choice. All of these carry their own connotations, such as the difference between carrying a reusable Whole Foods shopping bag versus a disposable one from Wal-Mart, or the understood difference between a burger made with imitation meat, beef bought in a grocery store, or grass-fed, pasture raised beef bought from a local farmer – as well as the more broadly implicit cultural awareness of a burger as a typically American type of food.

In this way, daily rituals surrounding food do not occur in a vacuum but rather arise in and through individuals' cultural and societal contexts, and practices surrounding food become the way in which these are enacted, embodied, and incorporated as aspects of identity (Wills, Backett-Milburn, Roberts, & Lawton, 2011). During adolescence, youth develop their identities through daily engagement in the world around them, and there is no more basic interaction than the fact that everyone must eat. As such, food exists at the intersection of the self and greater society. Food both teaches the adolescent about society, as well as serves as a medium for them

to make their own choices regarding who they are and who they choose to be seen as. In this way, food is interactional, constituting identity while also its expression.

Food in Schools

Due to the role of food as embodying culture and society, as well as the importance of the institution of schooling in youths' lives as a site for cultural and curricular learning, food in schools occupies a particularly unique place at the crux of individual development, the experience of schooling, and food as cultural embodiment. The articles and book chapters reviewed in this paper point to the way in which youth enact personal, individual choices around food, choices that are informed by the youth's life experiences and the way in which they interact with society. During the school day, students undertake eating habits and practices in an institution that already circulates lessons about society and culture, among their peers, and with autonomy outside of their homes and away from their families. How adolescents at school interact with food is shaped by how they understand themselves, the meaning they make of their familial circumstances, the context of their schools, and their interpretation of peer and social relations; all of these are inherent to their self-concept and their emerging identity. Therefore, it is through understanding the relationship of identity, food, and the developing adolescent that educational research can truly most comprehensively study this topic.

Food in Schools and Adolescent Identity

At the juncture of the institution of schooling, societal understanding and messages about food, and the developing adolescent, youth make choices about what food to eat, develop their perspectives on food environments, and interact with peers, parents, and teachers around food. The role of food in schools should be seen not only as an interaction of peer relations on eating behavior during lunch, or parental influences on food choices when the youth is out of the home,

but rather the confluence of all of these factors, an integration that would improve the current field of literature as it would open scholarship to these concerns. In this view, food in schools both embodies societal meaning and messages for the student, so that they are quite literally consuming those meanings when they consume the food, while food also serves as a way to represent themselves, their values, their personal histories, and ongoing biographies whenever they eat. As such, food and identity interact in a dualistic, mutually constituting process with each other, in which identity is enacted *by* food and *upon* food. For the developing adolescent, food in schools is a fundamental part of not only the school day, but their growing and maturing sense of self, both internally and in how they present themselves to others.

Above other daily interactions with society and culture, eating is personal. Adolescents have the autonomy and developing sense of self to form their own opinions and habits around food, and schools provide a unique opportunity to do so outside of the familial home. Students spend a large amount of time in school and the food therein comprises a significant proportion of their opportunities to eat. Laird and Weaver-Hightower have already laid the groundwork for the understanding that food in schools is not a simple matter of nutrition, social influences, curriculum, or policy; the next step to take is integrating identity formation as a leading activity of the life period of adolescence and the unique position that the institution of schooling plays for students. Foregrounding identity in studies about food in schools would allow the field of educational research to better approach the topic by placing each individual in their own developmental context and position the student as undertaking a process of identity development. Doing so will lead to not only richer studies that can delve deeper into integrating this fundamentally important aspect of adolescent development, but also better illuminate findings so as to best design interventions for schools, youth workers, and policy makers

The field of scholarship on food in schools is beginning to head in this direction and employing a model of identity as intrinsically combined with choices around food could account for the mutually constituting relationship of the individual, their context, and the food they eat. While none of these papers reviewed above explicitly discuss identity, bringing identity forth as a leading analytic lens will continue to strengthen educational research in this important topic.

Furthermore, it will help youth workers, school administrators, teachers, and parents better utilize research to help youth through complex concerns around nutrition, body image, eating practices, and ongoing health concerns that arise in adolescence and follow individuals through their lives. The studies reviewed above already point towards the importance of food and its repercussions on living a healthy life for a developing individual; including concerns of identity can only serve to strengthen current and future scholarship.

Conclusion

In recent years, educational researchers have increasingly focused on the subject of food in schools. This review of that literature found that in addition to a strong focus on nutrition and obesity, most papers situated the individual in their societal context, thereby implicitly centering studies of food as studies of adolescent identity development. In this paper, I provided an argument for more explicitly bringing this focus to the forefront so as to most comprehensively position educational researchers to investigate food in schools. To study food in schools is to also study individual context and circulating messages about society; food cannot be understood separately from this. The field is already trending towards this approach, and this paper seeks to articulate this latent characteristic of current research so as to better frame future research.

NAVIGATING THE SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF

NORMATIVE CAFETERIA PRACTICES:

ADOLESCENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT, SCHOOL LUNCH,

AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

During the life stage of adolescence, individuals mature from the child they were to the adult they will become. A number of developmental changes mark this transition, including a burgeoning interest in sex and romantic relationships, a differentiation from parents and a greater orientation towards peer relationships, increased autonomy and independence, as well as the physical and hormonal changes that puberty and maturation bring (Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011). Among these key developmental tasks of adolescence is also the formation of an enduring sense of self, or identity. This sense of identity constitutes not only the self-concept of the individual, but also the ways in which they reveal themselves to others and the continuity of others' perception (Erikson, 1968). Through this forming sense of self, youth orient towards their imagined future, leading to consequences for their life trajectory such as alignment towards higher education and their eventual socioeconomic class. As such, adolescence is a consequential and unique developmental time in one's life, with many of the experiences of this life stage informing and shaping individuals' future to come.

In this paper, I examine the process of identity formation as it occurs in the school cafeteria. In investigating this often-overlooked aspect of the school day, I argue that the practices around food, social habits, and peer interactions that students undertake in an often subtle and banal manner are a foundational process of negotiating culture in a way that informs their sense of self. I go on to argue that not only are these youth negotiating cultural acts around eating, they are doing so in a way that reinforces class values learned in the home, values that are also echoed among their peers and mirrored in their school culture, and thereby orienting themselves towards their own eventual socioeconomic and social class future. I draw upon Blommaert's (2015) notion of chronotopic identities to highlight the unique *time* of the lunch period and *space* of the cafeteria, delving into the specific routines, norms, and behaviors therein.

I also employ the framework of 'adolescent culture' as articulated by Garner, Bootcheck, Lorr, and Rauch (2006), and their argument as to how each school has its own set of behavioral norms and values as produced by the society of adolescents that comprise the student body. Finally, I use McLean and Syed's (2015) paper on master narratives and society's shared cultural understanding of what it means to live a 'good' life according to agreed upon norms to tie the adolescent culture to the adult world that high school emulates. Through this, I examine the ways in which school lunch serves as an understudied site of social reproduction for youth, focusing on the notion of middle class *choice* as set forth by Matusov and Smith (2012).

Review of the Literature

In this review of the literature, I first introduce adolescent identity theory before turning to the unique role schools play in adolescents' lives. Next, I discuss the culture that exists within a school, and then link this culture to the practices and routines surrounding food, especially those of the lunchroom. Finally, I turn to schools as a site for social reproduction, examining the ways in which schools as an institution expose students to circulating messages about society and their place therein.

Adolescent Identity Development

Adolescence is a period in life when youth grow from the child they were and orient towards the adult they will become. During this time, they form a sense of identity that is both the enduring, unique self-concept an individual holds as well as others' reciprocal understanding of that self (Erickson, 1968; Elkonin, 1972; Polivanova, 2006; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013). Per sociocultural identity theory, identity forms through interactions with the greater world as youth draw upon circulating social models to create concepts of who they are and who they might become (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Therefore, identity can be

understood not as a static self-concept, but a dynamic process that the individual undertakes in concert with their surrounding world and community.

This dialectic nature grounds identity in the negotiation of daily practices as adolescents are exposed to societal and cultural ways of acting and comport themselves along these available options. Vygotsky (1994) argues that this interaction of the individual and their environment provides a unique experience that shapes the forming adolescent; this experience is singular for each individual as it is informed by their personal backgrounds, social and cultural role, and historical era in what is termed a developmental context. In this way, each individual becomes the product of their interactions with the environment around them. For adolescents, schools serve as one of these environments, rendering them an important site for development.

Schools as a Developmental Context

Schools as an institution play a unique role as a developmental context for adolescent identity formation. Youth spend a considerable amount of their waking hours in schools and are exposed to messages about society and cultural ways of being (Eccles & Roser, 2011). Through everyday moments in schools, youth become socialized to messages about the nature of the world around them and their place within. Accordingly, as adolescents form their sense of self, schools and the school day plays a major contextual role in their lives. Through their individual interactions with this context, youths' daily experiences both inform their identity as well as provide a means for identity's expression, mutually constituting identity in a dialectical cycle.

For adolescents in particular, schooling represents a time and space to interact with their peers. As Garner, Bootcheck, Lorr, and Rauch (2006) argue, each school has its own 'adolescent culture' with particular values and norms. The structure of these cultures varies from school to school; the authors highlighted six models that differed as to the predominant influence of 'prep'

social status versus 'jock' and the inclusion or exclusion of students who found themselves outside of either grouping. These cultures are regulated and enforced through peer influence, including social ostracism and public ridicule, and each individual student develops their own strategy for coping with the overarching weight this culture wields in their lives. As the authors point out, these cultures within schools are formed in part through the fact that adolescents are obligated to participate in schooling whereas adults enjoy more autonomy in selecting the institutions with which they engage; however, instead of rendering schools' cultures as separate from the adult world, these cultures in fact reflect the same social forces adults also experience, often exaggerating or magnifying circulating cultural messages.

In this way, the institution of schooling and participation in adolescent culture helps shape the developing adolescent and does so in a manner that both reflects and incorporates aspects of the greater cultural world outside of the school. Within this, the lunch period in particular serves a unique and consequential role. School lunch interrupts the class schedule as students and teachers alike pause in the work of learning and teaching. When examined closely, this pause contains multitudes: eating, socializing, time spent on phones, a chance to break free of the rigidity of the class period, and the opportunity for students to behave and interact with a freedom and independence not available during class time. On the other hand, school lunch still falls within the structure of the school day, as students remain subject to school rules, are served food determined by the cafeteria, and interact with their schoolmates. Even for those students allowed to leave campus, the timing and duration of that break is predetermined by school policy. For these reasons, the lunch period is unique when compared to the rest of the school day and bears consequence for a school's adolescent culture, and an individual's self-concept, peer

interactions, and the ways in which adolescents are forming their understanding of their place in the greater scope of the cultural, adult social world outside of school.

School as a Site for Social Reproduction.

During high school, adolescents not only orient themselves towards adulthood, but do so in a way that is informed by the socioeconomic status of their household of origin. Scholars such as Penelope Eckert (1989) have demonstrated how schools serve as a site where youth align to their eventual socioeconomic class and societal role as an adult. In Eckert's *Jocks and Burnouts, Social Categories and Identity in the High School*, she argued that high school students sort themselves onto a continuum of social groups, one which spans the spectrum of working class and middle-class norms and corresponds to the class status of their home. As she writes, those who fall into the 'jock' category embody "an attitude–acceptance of the school and its institutions as an all-encompassing social context, and an unflagging enthusiasm and energy for working within those institutions" (p. 3). In contrast to this "cooperative" approach to schooling, 'burnouts' were categorized as having an "adversarial" relationship to their schools (p. 3). This results in a cultural split, which as Eckert argues, reflects in turn the cultural split between middle and working class households; in her research, she finds that students' social alignment with these groups reflect their household's social class and that "the jocks and burnouts cooperate to maintain the hegemony of the American class system in the school" (p. 5) as youth recreate the circulating social messages of the adult world within the social relationships of high school. This process of social identification spans all aspects of the school day, from students' use of their lockers, to teacher interactions during class periods, and also, significantly, the opportunity for peer interaction and freedom from curricular concerns during the lunch period.

School Lunch: Time and Space

To understand the unique characteristic of school lunch, I draw upon M.M. Bahktin's (1981) concept of chronotopes and Blommaert's (2015) work linking them to identity. Chronotopes are a specific and distinct relation of time and space. Accordingly, we can understand the lunchroom being a place and the lunch period being a time. Here we see this dynamic interplay that forms the basis of chronotopes; the lunchroom can be used for eating lunch but also study halls, a large gathering space, as an auditorium, and more. The lunch period can be spent having lunch, but also meeting with teachers, in the guidance office, staying late at a class, or missing lunch due to detention. Yet, when the lunchroom and lunch period exist in collaboration with each other, the understood product becomes the hallmarks of school lunch: a lunch line, lunch boxes, tables filled with students, talking, eating, arguing, laughing, gossiping, and using phones. During this time, adolescents are freed from their role of 'student' in that they are not pupils in a classroom engaged in the act of learning; likewise, any faculty present are not instructors of curriculum, but monitors of lunchroom behavior. Despite this, while youth are eating and interacting with each other in the characteristics of any midday meal, the very fact that this lunch occurs at school inherently separates it from the practice of eating at home on a non-school day, since youth still remain in their role as deferential to the authority of the teachers and constrained by school rules regarding behavior. In this way, the lunchroom and lunch period serve as a chronotope: the spatial and temporal product that is school lunch.

Blommaert (2015) takes up this idea of the interplay between time and space and applies it to the individual experience by conceptualizing that each individual exhibits their own identity during each chronotope they inhabit. While there are understood norms of behavior in each time and place, the particulars vary among individuals. Viewed in this way, chronotopic identity

becomes the specific set of behaviors an individual displays given a certain context of time and space. Blommaert uses the example of professionals during the workday wearing suits and ties and performing their hierarchically structured roles of 'boss' or 'assistant' for their company; he contrasts this with that same group outside of the office for happy hour, where ties and suit jackets are discarded and the conversation turns to small talk. The company's boss may no longer be regarded as the leader when it comes to drinking or telling jokes, and the most competent at socializing at the bar might be less than competent in their professional role. For the case of this paper, Bloommaert's example can be translated to a youth taking on the role of student during the time of the school day and the physical space of their school.

These identities that youth collude with as students are especially pertinent for the developing adolescent. As Wortham (2005) argues, schooling intertwines with the social reality of self-perception among youth. He terms these 'categories of identification' and offers the example of the 'loud black girl' and 'resistant black male', though this can be extrapolated also to examples such as the 'teacher's pet', the 'class clown', and per Garner, Bootcheck, Lorr, and Rauch (2006) and Eckert (1989) the 'prep', the 'jock', or the 'burnout'. Through these understood social roles, the negotiation of socially circulating messages during school lunch becomes apparent: students who are loud and break rules, those who sit with and befriend the teachers, and the table full of the popular students versus those who keep to themselves during lunch. During the chronotope of the lunch period, how youth choose to act become examples of identities taken up during this time as individuals navigate what they perceive as the cultural norms of that specific time and place.

The culture and society within high school serves as a smaller microcosm of adult society, existing in parallel and reflecting in an exaggerated way the larger world (Garner,

Bootcheck, Lorr, & Rauch, 2006). As such, in the parallel adult world, these 'ways of being' can be understood as ways of interacting with master narratives, which McLean and Syed (2015) define as a shared, cultural story that shape values, behaviors, and beliefs. Master narratives exist on an overarching and broad societal scale, outlining ways in which an individual leads a good and proper life in a society.

For the purposes of this study, I focus on adherence to that good and proper life as upholding and recreating middle class norms, specifically that of the proliferation of *choice*. Matusov and Smith (2012) argue that a modern, choice-based middle class has emerged, in which individuals in the middle class make 'smart choices' in order to live a successful life; in this way, middle class adults raise their children to make good choices in terms of behavior, peer relations, effort in school, and health. Adolescents learn these lessons at home, and upon entering school and inhabiting their role as a student, they have the autonomy outside of their family of origin but within the structure of schooling in which to practice enacting these choices and collude with various social roles as they form their developing identity.

In this study, I investigated the commonly understood norms of the lunchroom and how each participant negotiated those norms. Through daily practices, food habits, interactions with their peers, and adherence to the adolescent culture of the school cafeteria, adolescents both demonstrate their understanding of communally held norms while also navigating those norms on an individual basis. The result of this is an ongoing interaction with matters of *choice* as these youth are socialized into becoming adults familiar with cultural understandings consistent with modern, middle class values.

Conceptual Framework

I approached this study through a constructivist framework, operating under the idea that findings would be guided by participants' understanding and perspective of their experiences. I was less concerned with absolutes and truths than how participants framed social situations and negotiations of their daily habits, and how they presented themselves at odds or in concert with their understanding of normative actions. My findings and analysis relied heavily on their own beliefs and perceptions and the way in which they described those. Consistent with Vygotsky's (1994) and Erikson (1968), this positions youth as key informants on their own experiences that constitute and reveal identity in the dialectical nature of this forming sense of self.

Methodology

Methodological Approach

This qualitative study combined ethnographic surveys with narrative based interviews. I drew my design for my ethnographic survey from the work of Fetterman (2010), Spradley (1980), Spradley (1979), and Lofland and Lofland (2005), focusing on a unit of analysis of person in context, wherein both the individual participant and the surrounding environment operate as one holistic unit. These works focused my observations on participants' 'social situations', i.e. how each participant interacts with the context around them. For the areas of narrative inquiry, I drew from the works of Georgakopoulou (2015), McAdams and McClean (2013), Ochs and Capps (1996), and Fivus, Habermas, Waters and Zaman (2011), focusing on the participant as the narrator of each episode relayed, in which they position themselves, the setting, other characters, and their own language use and choices as a projection of themselves both into the past as well as a representation of their imagined future self. In this way, they represented themselves as characters within their stories, members of a social group, and

individuals apart from who they are in the moment of storytelling. Below, I outline my research

questions, the school where the study took place, and the participants, before providing a

rationale for my research design. Then, I discuss data sources and analysis, before turning to a

report of my findings.

Research Questions

The following research question and sub-questions guided this study:

1. How do students experience food during the school day?

    a. What are the daily habits, routines, and norms surrounding food?

    b. What choices do students make surrounding food during the school day?

Rationale for Research Design

I used a combination of ethnographic survey methods and tools from narrative inquiry.

Choosing ethnography as a way to investigate the experience of food in schools allowed me to

not only document the daily routines and practices of students, but to do so in a way that

addresses the 'emic perspective', i.e. the understanding of the participants themselves

(Fetterman, 2010). My research design was aimed at understanding participants' perspectives on

their food practices, as well as contextualizing those practices within the broader understanding

of food habits and culture among the student body.

The study occurred at Norris High School (pseudonym), a rural high school serving

students in grades 9-12 from multiple local towns. Norris High School is in the rural Northeast

and while representative of such schools in similar settings, the population of the area and

therefore the student body is racially, religiously, and socioeconomically homogeneous. As such,

while the participants of this study exemplify the student body of many rural secondary schools

in northern New England, this study cannot attend to issues surrounding the greater variation and

diversity found in other educational settings and geographical regions. Rather, this study focuses on issues pertinent to the normative, middle swath of high school students that the participants do represent, and from there extrapolation towards the middle class in general.

I interviewed 9 participants: 1 freshman, 2 sophomores, 4 juniors, and 2 seniors. The guidance department identified interested students and upon returned consent and assent forms, I met with each student before beginning interviews to discuss my research design, aims, and scope, and to answer any questions they had. I held interviews in the guidance office conference room. Selecting these informants served as an entry point into the reasoning behind eating habits and food practices, as well as to establish the broader landscape of the normative functioning of food at Norris High School. Conducting interviews informed by narrative inquiry allowed me to gain insight into their decision making in day-to-day circumstances. I captured this aspect of my inquiry through interview questions aimed at eliciting the types of stories that participants tell as they outline the ways in which they interact with the world around themselves and the sense and meaning they make from their circumstances (McAdams & McLean, 2013). By conducting interviews with a narrative component, I was able to analyze relationships between individual self-conceptions and socially circulating models of identity.

Data Sources

Across my approach to this study, I did not investigate the enduring or singular sense of identity of each participant, and I did not seek to make claims about what constitutes their identity. Instead, the unit of analysis of this study is participants' interaction with food, peers, and lunchroom routines, either as reported during interviews or seen during my observations.

Ethnographic Observations

Norris High School has four, twenty-two minute lunch periods per school day. From January through May, I routinely attended several lunch blocks per week. I observed between two and four lunch periods, for a total of forty-four to eighty-eight minutes each visit and stopped when my data had reached a point of saturation. During these observations, I recorded field notes and talked with teachers, administrators, students, and lunchroom staff. My aim was to establish what constituted 'normal' behavior within the lunchroom: i.e. what students understood to be ordinary and standard for this period of the day.

After several weeks of observations, I began discussions with the school counseling department to identify student participants. Through the school counselors, I distributed consent and assent forms to be sent home with students. Once these forms were signed and returned and I met the participants, I began observing them more closely during their lunches. As l already understood the established daily routines of the student body during lunch, I was able to more specifically observe how each participant acted, their food practices, and their individual habits. Specifically, we discussed what they preferred to eat, where they sat in the cafeteria, if they talked with friends, completed homework, listened to music, or spent time on their phones. This highlighted both the ways in which they conformed to or departed from the patterns and conventions of the room. Data and observations were triangulated with student interviews and informal discussions with staff and administrators to best understand the details and particulars of what I observed.

Interviews

Student interviews served two purposes: first to expand upon lunchroom observations, and second to provide participant perspectives on the role and functioning of food in their daily

experience of school. I interviewed each student three times for thirty minutes, using a tape recorder so that I could afterwards transcribe each interview. Interviews were semi-structured, wherein I made sure to cover the same areas of inquiry with each student, while also allowing the conversation to unfold naturally as students revealed personal details or examples that were unique to their own biographies or circumstances. The first interview focused on school lunch and daily cafeteria experiences, while the second focused on eating with friends, both in school and out of school. The final interview focused on the topic of food at home and eating with family members. During the second and third interview, I also returned to the topic of school lunch, asking about recent lunches and any specific instances I had observed in the cafeteria, in order to elicit their own telling of these events from their perspective.

Data Analysis

Following Fetterman's (2010) position that ethnographic data analysis is an iterative process beginning with the first series of observations and continuing throughout fieldwork in tandem with data collection, I began writing memos and reviewing my field notes while my initial observations were underway. I coded interview transcriptions and field notes with nVivo through three cycles (Saldana, 2015). The first was descriptive coding, as I categorized observations and interviews by daily practice or eating habit, such as *bringing food from home, lunch line, paying for food, eating at a friend's house*, etc. Following this, I coded the data using in vivo coding, pulling phrases from interview transcripts that represented participants' perspectives. These included: *makes me feel normal, this is our food, holding up the line, we do nothing,* and *my food*. Finally, I sorted codes by origin and learning of food practice, whether they were derived with peers, learned at home, or arose from the participant themselves, as well

as by the origin of the food itself: provided by parents, provided by the school, or obtained by the participant.

Findings

This section addresses the research questions: How do students experience food during the school day? What are the daily habits, routines, and norms surrounding food? What choices do students make surrounding food during the school day? The findings demonstrate that students' main experience of food straddles two axes: (a) youths' normative understanding of the lunchroom and (b) their individual negotiation of that normative expectation.

Below, I will focus on two areas in which students articulated lunchroom norms and discussed their own deviations from them: (1) the routines of the lunchroom and lunch period and (2) shared social-spatial understandings. After this, I present an argument for how identity serves to mediate students' experience and actions during lunch and review the consequences for this through the lens of social reproduction.

The findings demonstrate that all participants shared an understanding of the norms, habits, and routines of the lunchroom, most particularly among the sequence of events involved in procuring food and finding a table, as well as the spatial layout of the cafeteria seating as governed by social group and grade level. While all participants agreed on the general structure and norms of the lunchroom, they reported individual navigation and negotiation of these norms. Below, I report on my observations regarding these routines and then turn to participants' own accounts of their experiences during the lunch period. Through this, I establish the intricacies of these shared norms and practices. In the next section, I then delve into individual variations of these norms, both as recounted through my observations as well as participants' own tellings of how they navigate the shared standards of the lunchroom in their own particular ways.

Normative Routines of the Lunchroom

These findings center on the patterns and practices of entering the lunchroom, acquiring food, finding a table to sit at, eating, and cleaning up to leave. In this section I also report on the established seating patterns that all students understood and agreed upon as the fixed norms of spatial organization in the lunchroom.

Daily Routine

Lunch began with the bell signaling the end of the previous class period. Students entered the lunchroom one of two ways, either through an exterior door or by a staircase that led to classrooms directly upstairs. Upon entering, students who brought their packed lunches from home would choose a table, while the majority of students formed a line that stretched the length of the room along one wall. Tables were circular, with ten seats at each one, and laid out in the same arrangement each day. Proceeding through the lunch line, students would select their drinks, hot food or sandwiches and salads, and then progress to the registers. They had the choice of paying with cash or with their student lunch account by entering their PIN. From there, they would step beyond the registers and many students would pause, looking around the room as they selected their table. Some would stop and wait for a friend who was still in line behind them or find someone already seated to join. During the lunch period, most students remained at their tables, only occasionally rising to either purchase more food, use one of the available microwaves, or visit with students at another table. Some students completed homework, many spent time on their phones either individually or sharing their screen with a friend, while others sat and talked. Faculty monitors walked through the room, quieting students if they became loud, and reminding them to keep their tables tidy and clean. When the bell rang at the end of the

period, students rose en masse, throwing their food and containers in the trash and filing out of the room for their next class period.

When asked about the ordinary flow of the lunch routine, students described it in general terms, often using second person to recount the commonality of actions, patterns, and habits. Many of them laughed at the banality of the question: to them, how the lunchroom works is so ordinary as to be unnoticeable. Gabby, a senior, recounted the routine:

"Ok, well it can be very crowded, it's a lot of people because it's like a line that you go through and around to get your food and there's like a big display of food so you can pick from um a lot of different things. There's the like main course that they usually have, and they have like other things that they have every day that you can pick. So, you walk through and you're kind of shuffling slow and everyone's deciding on what you want and then you pick it and you continue to walk through and then that's where you actually purchase your food. There's two ways to purchase your food, you can um use your account which you have your PIN that you put in and so that's your account with your money or you could also pay in cash, so once you have that then is the next stage, you have to find where you want to sit [laughs] … so you get your utensils you um if you bring cold lunch you use the microwave or whatever you have to use, and then you just sit down you get about twenty to twenty two minutes and yeah that's basically how lunch works."

Gabby's description was echoed by other participants in varying levels of detail, and across all of them they shared this account of either bringing their own food from home or navigating the lunch line, choosing a table, eating, and cleaning up afterwards. Participants

understood these actions as a shared, established, habitual routine in their day and most highlighted the fact that this routine was uninteresting, pedestrian, and existed as a banal part of their day.

General Understanding of Where to Sit

In addition to the normative routines of the lunchroom, participants shared understood modes of interacting with other students. These centered around how the lunchroom is organized and stratified by grade, extracurricular activities, and social standing. Observations corroborated this rigidity. The far end of the lunchroom, furthest from the lunch line and closest to the windows, was noticeably louder than other areas. I quickly learned that this was where the seniors habitually sat, both because of the relative distance from staff and faculty and separation from underclassmen, as well as the exclusivity of the view out the windows. While not labeled or otherwise marked, the table used by teachers was the one closest to the cash registers and lunch line. Participants reported a shared understanding of the cafeteria's seating arrangement. Seniors sat in the back near the windows, freshmen sat along the left wall, and juniors and sophomores sat in the middle. While most tables were filled, a number nearest the lunch line and closest to the faculty table were more sparsely populated by students who sat by themselves, either on their phones, completing homework, or listening to headphones. Throughout the course of my observations and interviews, as I learned the grade level of each participant and their general habits during the lunch period, I began to notice that they sat near or at the same tables each day. They corroborated this fact in interviews, explaining to me the way in which the layout of the cafeteria was unspokenly structured.

Participants reported on the rigidity and fixed nature of seating, especially as organized by social group. As Becca described, "there's a lot of like, to stereotype, jocks near the windows

and very much like the art kids and the theater kids and like, not necessarily people who are like super energetic sitting in the middle of the room." This shared understanding of social groups was further exemplified by Emily's description, as she went on to explain that, "so like what we call quote unquote hicks they have their table in the corner and like usually like the um mixed sports kids sit up against where the doors are, and then like the druggies sit in the corner on that side." Hailey's description of the lunchroom extended the concept of this socially understood arranged seating, highlighting the incredulity that arose when it was challenged:

> "When I was a sophomore, in the like, they were freshmen, they sat like towards
> the end, and it was like the juniors and no then it was the seniors and the juniors
> in the middle, so it definitely like the wall space is supposed to be for the older
> kids but the sophomores like, the freshmen my sophomore year kind of like took
> the area so we were like woahhhh, they're got some guts here coming in and
> changing the social status."

Hailey's account points towards the enduring nature of this spatial organization. This stratification of the lunchroom remained constant during my observations and as one of the senior administrators explained, these groupings around the room had been the same as far back as he could remember.

Individual Navigation of Lunchroom Norms

Study participants reported that while there was this overarching structure to the lunch period, they themselves negotiated this structure in ways that often differed from the understood standards.

Navigating the Daily Routine

One of these experiences that varied from the shared perspective of the norm came from navigating the lunch line. Cora, a junior, recounted: "I have a problem with making decisions, like they'll serve burgers and hot dogs at the same time and they were selling orange chicken and stir fry at the same time and my brain's like Cora pick one, there's people in line, I'll just grab both, Cora what are you doing, I don't know, and there goes all my cash." Her example stands apart from the broader, normative routine in the lunchroom: none of the participants identified inability to make a decision or managing spending habits as one of the typical actions in the lunchroom, and while Cora views her peers as navigating the line with ease, she finds herself stymied by so many choices. This anxiety over the lunch line was shared among other participants as well, such as Becca's preference to use her PIN account instead of paying with cash, because she feels it is quicker and she does not have to wait for change, avoiding having to 'hold up the line'. In contrast, Danny reported an attitude of ease and confidence in her navigation of the lunch line. She said, "I will go get in line, get food, or cut like 12 people in line because I can do that, I'm a senior nobody's going to say boo to me." She reported no concern over what food she chose, if she was inconveniencing others, or any particular regard for the generally understood social order of the process even as she undermined it.

Another personal navigation that students made is their food selection. Fiona and Gabby both expressed self-consciousness over their choices, sharing a perception that others were judging their eating habits. As Gabby said,

> "The other day um, they had whoopie pies and cookies and I was like I don't
> know, I kind of want both, should I do it, and my friend's like just do it, and I'm
> like fine and I like grabbed both of them and I was like I really don't want people

judging me that I'm like eating both even though I saved one for a snack like later on, but I'm still like I don't know, I guess people are going to be like wow, look at her, she's grabbing two like big things, but it shouldn't matter as long as I'm eating something."

In this moment, Gabby reports feeling different and notable, drawing the attention of peers and attracting judgment. Fiona shared this same experience as differing from what she felt was 'normal', saying "everyone eats like grilled cheese, like certain soups, like I'm over here with like some full course meal, not like something tiny, like a little sandwich, I'm like I've got like three drinks, I've got all of this right here [laughs]." Hailey echoed this sentiment of feeling different for what she ate due to severe food allergies. Her mother and the school permitted her to eat the cafeteria's pizza and she reported that it "Makes me feel normal" to do so, as for that singular lunch, she could fit in with her friends and enjoy the same food, normal routine, and ordinariness of the lunch block. Through their divergent behaviors, participants highlight the differences in viewing themselves as outside and apart from ordinary and deviating from the normality of their peers. They stick out, in their own minds, navigating the time and place of the lunchroom in a different way than how they perceive their peers do and their normative understanding of how it is appropriate and fitting to act.

Participant Navigation of Choosing a Table

While students agreed upon the general spatial organization of the lunchroom, only some colluded with the agreed upon structure. Despite the convention of sitting with one's grade or social group, some participants chose to sit alone. Becca routinely would sit by herself and use the lunch period as an opportunity to draw. Fiona would as well; as she reported, she would rather sit by herself than with students she did not know particularly well. When faced with the

choice to sit alone, Cora preferred to sit at the teachers' table. On the other hand, Ian recounted only sitting alone once, and in that case to finish his homework, as he routinely sat with his classmates or friends from the soccer team.

Following the lunchroom's norms, Abby always sat with her friends, if not at the same exact table, then in the same part of the room – and as a freshman, that was against the left-hand wall, demonstrating a compliance with the generally held understanding of the norms. Danny also colluded with these norms: as a senior, she deterred underclassmen from joining her table, saying: "I mean there's those weird freshman that try to become friends with us, I'm like leave us alone, we don't want to talk to you, go make your own friends." These two participants both understood the conventions of the seating arrangements and also worked within the bounds of them, reinforcing these norms through their chosen daily practices.

Not all students observed the rigid hierarchy of seating in the same way. As a senior, Gabby was in the same position as Danny when underclassmen approached her table and yet made an entirely different choice of how to handle the situation. She explained, "Sometimes like freshmen come sit with us if they don't know where to sit, or if their tables overflow and they'll like, sit into the table next to them and just like face them, we're like, it's ok, there's an empty seat, you can take it." Her response was wholly different to Danny's and in breaking down the barriers of grade level and seating arrangements, Gabby abandoned the very structure of the lunchroom spatial organization that she herself had described to me as commonly followed. In this way, while all participants in the study agreed on the commonly held norms of social-spatial organization in the lunchroom, interviews with them demonstrated how each approached these norms differently.

Above, I laid out the normative expectations and instances where individuals differ from these. Next, I will expand upon Blommaert's theory of chronotopic identities and present an argument that identity mediates students' experience of food during the school day, and in doing so contributes to social reproduction.

Discussion

In this discussion, I reexamine this study through the lens of pertinent scholarship regarding adolescent culture and developing identity, and I argue that food practices in schools are fundamentally important to the developing adolescent and their self-concept. I go on to argue that for this study specifically, middle class values and norms are being practiced by these participants, and in doing so, I draw upon Matusov and Smiths' (2012) case for choice as a pivotal characteristic of today's middle class. Therefore, as the high school cafeteria plays such a consequential role in the process of identity formation, the lunchroom can be understood as a site for social reproduction.

Identity Development and Food Practices

In this study, I used the concept of the *time* and *space* of the lunchroom as its own chronotope to investigate how individuals navigated food practices at Norris High School. All participants reported a shared understanding of cafeteria norms, and while some participants chose to uphold these social norms, others undermined them. Participants presented the lunch block as a homogenous space where everyone acts the same, and yet in individual reports, they describe how they each choose to act, thereby juxtaposing their individual choices with the overarching structure of norms and group routines. The two seniors in this study, Gabby and Danny, reported different experiences in the same time and space: where Gabby follows the flow of the lunchroom, Danny interrupts it, and as Gabby subverts the strict social-spatial organization

of the room, Danny works to uphold it by rejecting attempts of underclassmen to sit with her. They each navigate these decisions based on an interior and solidifying sense of self: Gabby positions herself as warm, welcoming, and genial, while Danny is oppositional, antagonistic, and unapproachable. For her part, Fiona's interactions in the lunchroom are underpinned by insecurity and anxiousness. Hailey's navigation of the lunchroom centers on attempts to feel 'normal' with her peers despite the constraints of her allergies. In this way, while participants all engage in the shared time and space of school lunch, each individual arrives with their own set of concerns, their own habits they employ, and their own set of values and principles they enact. Therefore, navigating the lunch period is not as simple as any of them present: lunch is not a matter of forming a line, acquiring food, sitting down, and eating, but rather the confluence of their individuality with the greater societal structure around them that they must navigate. In this way, school lunch serves as a locus for both identity development as well as identity enaction; participants are constantly choosing what actions to take, as informed by the available choices around them, and thereby representing themselves to others through their demonstrated decisions.

Understanding the way in which school lunch functions as a site where individuals navigate greater cultural influences is consequential for the study of the period of adolescence, as identity formation is a key developmental task. At a time in life when adolescents are asking themselves 'who am I?' and imagining their futures, they are aware of not only larger societal messages of adult society, but in a daily manner engaging in the mirrored and more immediate culture that exists within their schools. Youth both contribute to this peer culture as well as participate in it and through this, work to understand who they might be and how they fit in with those around them. Gabby and Danny demonstrate this participation as well as their own

individual approach to social norms in their differing reactions to underclassmen sitting at tables understood as belonging to seniors. As youth mature towards adulthood, these experiences serve to shape their self-concept as they emerge towards the adult they will become. The process undergone during school lunch will be repeated through their lives: meals with coworkers, at family gatherings, socially and romantically, and celebrations to mark important life milestones such as weddings. Gabby and Danny have already established and illustrated their choice in the moment described above and while they will continue to grow and mature from their high school selves, they provide an example of the different ways individuals can choose to interact within the same time, space, and circumstance.

School Lunch as a Site for Social Reproduction

As scholars such as Eckert (1989) demonstrated in *Jocks and Burnouts: Social categories and Identity in the High School*, through youths' relationship with schooling, they recreate their family's social class as their own eventual future. My study, like Eckert's, positions school as a central site for learning social roles and participating in the surrounding cultural world, one that mirrors, reflects, and is modeled after the adult world; however, I more specifically examined the particular role of food practices in this process.

Food practices are one factor that stratify social classes (Wills, Backett-Milburn, Gregory, & Lawton, 2009). As children tend to replicate the same values and practices surrounding food that their parents hold and exhibit, they thereby recreate this same social stratification in their own daily habits (Lareau, 2011). In the process of aging from child to adolescent, individuals gain the independence and autonomy to enact their own choices around food. School serves as a site for adolescents to explore this autonomy in their role as a student, bound by the conventions, norms, and routines of their schools, and yet with the developing

maturation of their age. Understanding how this process plays out in the lunchroom is critical for understanding this developmentally significant time in youths' lives. The lunch period is not a benign or banal interlude to the school day, but in fact a multilayered, consequential, and uniquely important place and time where adolescents engage with their peer cultures and learn the processes they will enact as adults.

Class Values and Food Practices

One major enaction of the processes demonstrated in my study is that of colluding with middle class norms and values around personal choice. In capitalistic culture, individual consumer preference becomes an inherent expression of the self. Furthermore, participation in the modern middle class is a matter of making 'smart choices' (Matusov & Smith, (2012). The examples Matusov & Smith offer is of parents modeling choosing public versus private education or finding a house in a 'good' neighborhood, thereby setting their children up to become middle class adults also able to make these 'smart choices' mirrored in their parents' own image. The participants in my study reported their own navigation of *choice*, in which they all understood the overarching, normative routine of the lunchroom and yet each individually negotiated their own place within it. From choosing whether to pay with their PIN or cash, to whether to adhere to the strict though implicit seating arrangement, or the simple decision over which dessert to select, participants framed their lunchroom experiences as an ongoing process of sorting through available options and making the best choice possible from among them.

With the freedom of being away from their household during the school day and not under parental oversight, school lunch allows an independence for adolescents to practice their autonomy of choice. However, even in doing so, they remain bound by the structure of their school, with its overarching rules and encompassing culture. As Garner et al (2006) write, these

adolescent cultures are often a reflection and even an exaggeration of adult culture. The same activities of negotiating social meanings that adolescents explore in the school lunchroom are rehearsals for processes they will undertake as adults, and it is during this transition from childhood to adulthood that adolescents explore and solidify their self-concepts in relation to those processes. This is particularly pertinent when the matter at hand is not just the social navigation of the lunchroom, but also food practices and eating habits. For the adults these adolescents will become, the process of making choices around food are ever present. Cairns, Johnston, and MacKendrick (2013) demonstrate an example of these choices in their paper *Feeding the 'organic child', Mothering through ethical consumption*, in which they report on the powerful normative expectations of mothers to feed their children 'clean' and nutritious food. As the authors argue, choices such as feeding a child organic food bear inherent messages about the type of mother one is (a 'good' one in this case) and moreover what social class that mother belongs to (a higher socioeconomic status). What is ostensibly a choice about which apple to purchase during a routine grocery store trip becomes laden with cultural meanings that bear consequences for class status.

It is these circulating meanings that adolescents first begin to explore during the process of identity formation, and school lunch serves as an important, consequential site for that undertaking. In orienting towards their futures, adolescents draw upon shared understandings about the type of person they might become. As McLean and Syed (2015) write, these commonly held conceptions, or master narratives, are stories shared by collective, cultural understanding and guide values, beliefs, and behaviors. These master narratives exist at a societal level, and individuals consciously and unconsciously internalize or resist their guiding norms. McLean and Syed argue these narratives outline the ways in which to live a 'good life' as

mutually agreed upon by the greater culture; in this way, feeding a child organic and healthy food can be viewed as a 'good' way to mother, while those that either reject or do not participate in these practices can be seen as failures as mothers.

For adolescents in the school cafeteria during lunchtime, the shared norms and understandings of the routines and layout of the lunch room hold these same values: normative actions involve standing in line, completing the process of purchasing food (or unpacking food brought from home), and selecting a table that aligns with established standards of who sits where. As participants described, they each individually navigate this process, negotiating the overarching cultural practices in a way that both reveals their developing self-concept as well as establishes it. They face choices every time they enter the lunchroom: allow underclassmen to sit at the seniors' table, eat two desserts or one, or choose between having orange chicken or stir fry.

Through this, we can understand the multifaceted role that school lunch plays in students' lives. Not only is it a site of nutrition, a needed break between the rigors of the classroom, and a time to socialize with their friends, but moreover the *time* and *space* of school lunch becomes layered with cultural and societal meanings that adolescents constantly navigate. This negotiation of how they will individually choose to negotiate the world around them plays out throughout their adult lives and understanding the role the lunchroom plays in this forming cultural and self-awareness is consequential to grasping the complexity of the period of adolescence.

While this study attended to concerns of middle-class students, understanding the unique role of school lunch in the lives of developing adolescents can be extended to investigations of adolescents facing food insecurity, or on the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, those attending private, preparatory secondary schools. This study establishes the process of identity

formation as it occurs in the school cafeteria and as such, opens the possibility for further inquiries into this consequential and important topic.

This research would not only extend the field of educational studies, but also bear significance for school administrators, teachers, parents, and youth workers. Issues of identity, behavior, social reproduction, and future orientation sit below the ordinariness and banality of school lunch, even as complex processes of adolescent development are played out in the day to day, nearly invisible practices that arise during school lunch.

Conclusion

School lunch brims with processes of identity formation, interactions with societal meanings, and decisions about how one enacts cultural norms. Participants in this study revealed a broadly held common understanding of the time and space of school lunch, with established notions of what constituted the ordinary routine and what comprised a normative experience. However, they also revealed that despite these widely held norms, the confluence of individual background, personal perception, and particular biographies led to them interacting with these norms in unique ways. Through these daily habits and routine food practices, individuals both form their sense of identity and reveal it; this dialectical pattern of identity holds true for school lunch, where acts around food combine with societal meaning and individual choices.

Viewing school lunch in this way allows scholars to understand this period of the school day as both contributing to adolescent identity as well as constituting it. Students understand the differing modes of social actions they can undertake, and from them, they choose how they themselves will act. In this way, school lunch is a site of primary importance to the study of developing youth, as it exists at the intersection of the institution of schooling, the forming identity of the adolescent, and the freedom of the individual to express themselves

within the confines and in communication with the greater student body. Further research into this area can draw upon the mechanisms of identity processes at work here, shifting school lunch from an understudied, less examined part of the school day, to one consequential to understanding the period of adolescence and the many variegated meanings, actions, and decisions encompassed in the lunch period.

NARRATIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT:

FOOD'S DIALECTICAL ROLE IN ADOLESCENT LIVES

The life stage of adolescence is bookended by childhood dependency, where children partake in household practices and routines set forth by parents or guardians, and adult independence and autonomy, with the freedom and ability to decide one's individual preferences, habits, routines, and norms (Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011). During this transitionary time, youth develop their sense of self, or identity, through daily interactions with the world around them: at home, at school, during extracurricular activities, and with their peers (Erikson, 1968). One recurrent and important daily practice is food preparation and consumption, which sets the stage for physical and nutritional development and also bears consequence for social reproduction (Wills, Backett-Milburn, Roberts, & Lawton, 2011; Lareau 2011).

This paper draws on narrative identity theory to investigate how adolescents navigate their developing sense of self through food practices. Employing adolescent identity theory and narrative identity analysis, I report on how youth position themselves narratively to illustrate their sense of agency and differentiation from their parents and food practices at home. Through this, I argue that adolescents simultaneously exercise agency procuring and preparing their own food, while also passively receiving food from their households and school as they negotiate identity practices and explore their developing sense of self. In turn, this navigation of their growing autonomy versus the dependency of not quite being an adult both informs and illustrates the transitive nature of adolescence, shedding light onto this developmentally significant period of life, setting the stage for their transition into adulthood, and bearing consequences for social reproduction.

Adolescent Identity Development

Adolescence is an important life stage during which individuals form their sense of self (Erikson, 1968; Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011). Young children lack the developmental capacity for

the self-reflection needed to question their relationship to parental and household values and practices. In the teenage years, youth begin to reflect over their childhoods and look ahead to their futures. McAdams and McLean position this past reflection and future orientation as way of understanding one's life autobiographically, writing that during this life stage, an adolescent "reconstructs the autobiographical past and imagines the future in such a way as to provide a person's life with some degree of unity, purpose, and meaning" (2013, p. 233). In turn, by adulthood, individuals have gained the autonomy and self-concept that allows for identification with a specific set of life-choices. It is during the stage of adolescence, that individuals begin to question the tenets of their household and surroundings as they investigate and reflect upon the different options for the adult they are growing into. As such, youth emerge into adulthood with a more clearly reconciled sense of self than when they entered their teenage years (Erickson, 1968; Elkonin, 1972; Polivanova, 2006).

This sense of self that forms during the exploratory period of adolescence is termed 'identity'. In Erikson's (1968) work on identity theory, this concept of identity encompasses both the internal sense of self-sameness of the individual, as well as the continued recognition of that self by others in the community. In this way, identity exists dialectically, spanning both the concept of the self as well as the interaction of the self with others. I will discuss this enaction of the self in communication with others below, through the lens of narrative identity theory.

Narrative Identity Theory

Narrative identity theory describes an individual's sense of self that is constructed in the present, while informed by events of the past and projected into an imagined future (Ochs & Capps, 1996). This theory of the self draws upon the socially circulating importance of narration, as individuals naturally organize life experiences into stories. The telling of a life story is a

socially derived skill that originates with the cultural primacy of literacy, a value transmitted

through parental practices of storytelling, reading, and reminiscing that imbues the consciousness

in infancy. As individuals age, they continue this propensity towards representing the self in the

same narrative mode (Fivush, Habermas, Waters, & Zaman, 2011). Through this, individuals

grow up both enacting and internalizing modes of narration and learn to use storytelling to

recount day-to-day experiences as well as organize their biographical sense of self that assembles

past memories into a cohesive autobiographical arc. This integrated understanding of one's life

not only incorporates an understanding of the past-self into the present-self, but also serves to

instill meaning and unity in a concept of self-sameness over time (McAdams & McLean, 2013).

In the act of narrating one's story, individuals draw upon culturally circulating

biographical forms. Successful narration relies not only on the narrator's ability to create

meaning through mutually understood modes of story-telling, but also the listener's ability to

recognize those meanings (Wertsch, 2008). In this way, narratives are always interactional

between the narrator and the audience and serve not only as a way to understand oneself, but also

represent that self to others. This paper investigates how these modes of narration can be used to

represent adolescents' developing sense of self in terms of food practices and habits.

Food and Adolescent Identity Formation

Food practices can be understood as any of the acts involving acquiring, preparing, and

consuming food (Wills, Backett-Milburn, Roberts, & Lawton, 2011). These practices are imbued

with social and cultural meanings across the broad variety of types of cuisines, methods of

cooking, and habits and rituals around eating. This can include adherence to diets such as

vegetarianism and veganism, the socially ingrained meaning of carrying a reusable Whole Foods

shopping bag versus a disposable one from Wal-Mart, or cooking family recipes reminiscent of

immigrant backgrounds that are passed through generations. While seemingly trivial, it is through such banal daily practices learned in the home that individuals absorb information about social class, socioeconomic stratification, and the way in which they themselves fit into society (Lareau, 2011). This process is especially important during the life stage of adolescence, as youth form their self-concept and orient towards their futures. Examining the role of food in adolescents' lives affords researchers an opportunity to investigate the way in which these daily practices around food contribute to, and are indicative of, identity formation, particularly as it relates to processes and categories of social reproduction.

This is especially pertinent to understand, as during the transition from child into adult, adolescents gain newfound autonomy and the independence to create their own food practices and eating habits separate from their family, though prior to the more complete self-sufficiency of adulthood. During this time, youth come to understand themselves, their role in society, and orient towards their imagined future, either that of higher education or a vocational pursuit (Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011). In this paper, I present four participants engaged in this transition and then argue that understanding this navigation and negotiation of adolescent roles in respect to adults, parents, and the presence of schooling in their lives serves to illuminate this important transitionary life stage as adolescents lay the groundwork for food habits that will bear consequences for their future health, nutrition, social interactions, eventual participation in their socioeconomic class, and bear consequence for issues of social stratification.

Methods

This study combined ethnographic observations with narrative based interviews. For the former, I drew from the work of Fetterman (2010), Spradley (1980), Spradley (1979), and Lofland and Lofland (2005), while I based my investigation into narrative identity on the work of

Georgakopoulou (2015), McAdams and McClean (2013), Ochs and Capps (1996), and Fivus, Habermas, Waters and Zaman (2011) for the areas of narrative inquiry.

The following research questions guided my inquiry:

1) How do students explain and describe their experiences of food?

2) How do the stories students tell about food provide evidence that food functions in a way to both reveal identity and inform it?

Below, I discuss the research design, including participant selection and the research site, as well as methods of data collection and analysis.

Participant Selection and Research Site

In this study, I interviewed 9 participants from Norris High School (pseudonym), a rural school serving grades 9-12: 1 freshman, 2 sophomores, 4 juniors, and 2 seniors. I worked with the guidance department to identify interested students and met with each participant upon their returned consent and assent form to answer any questions, describe the scopes and aims of my research, and to explain my research design.

I observed the lunch periods in the cafeteria over the course of several months. Norris High School has four lunch periods per day, and I attended each of these, taking field notes and talking with students, teachers, and administrators. Once I had identified study participants, I observed them during their lunches, which allowed me to ask questions about their choices and experiences during our interviews. I held these interviews in the conference room of the guidance department.

The nature of the demographics of the school district and the surrounding region resulted in a study with a homogenous sample in terms of racial, religious, and socioeconomic diversity. While Norris High School is representative of a rural high school in the Northeastern United

States, and the participants in turn are representative of the student body, the demographics of this region precipitated a study that does not represent the greater variation across schools and individuals elsewhere. However, this study still attends to the concerns of schools such as this one and provides a valuable window into narrative identity development in regard to practices surrounding food.

Data Collection

For the purposes of this study, the primary data sources were narrative-based interviews. Additionally, I used ethnographic observations to establish the normative landscape of school lunch and observe participants interacting with their peers. This ethnographic data was especially useful in triangulating stories participants told about happenings during lunch, as well as providing more details from which to investigate additional lines of inquiry during interviews.

I held three, thirty-minute interviews with each participant, which I tape recorded and then transcribed. The focus of the first interview was participants' experiences of school lunch. The second interview primarily centered on food with friends, while the third was concerned with food in the home. These interviews were semi-structured, which allowed me to cover the same general topic areas with each participant, while also allowing for specific focus in areas that pertained more pertinently to each participant.

Analysis

I followed Saldana's (2015) guidelines for coding and analysis in nVivo. First, I used descriptive coding to categorize eating habits and daily routines of each participant in categories such as *bringing food from home, lunch line, paying for food, eating at friend's house*, etc. Next, I applied in-vivo coding to the participants' responses, yielding codes such as *makes me feel normal, this is our food, holding up the line, we do nothing,* and *my food*. After this, I organized

codes by narrative structure, identifying those that positioned the participant as an individual narrator (first person singular, *I, me*) or as part of a larger social whole, (first person plural, *we, us*). Finally, I organized these codes by social grouping, whether the setting of the narrative occurred at home, with family, with friends, or at school.

Findings and Discussion

Findings revealed the way in which participants drew upon narrative modes to represent their developing sense of self around food practices and illustrated the transitionary nature of adolescence as they navigated growing autonomy and independence around food practices. Participants demonstrated the transition from a child-like state of dependence on adults to procure food to a growing independence, as revealed through narrative forms by casting themselves in various roles, from student and learner, to expert, to uncertain chef, to anxious and then enthusiastic eater, as they navigated power roles and autonomy. Participants reflected on their past and current selves and employed narration to illustrate their navigation and negotiation of food practices both in the home, in school, and with friends. Consistent with Matusov and Smith's (2012) work on the modern middle class and matters of *choice*, participants also demonstrated the ways in which they interacted with our consumer-based society, reenacting messages about these values learned in the home and assimilating them into their developing sense of self in a way that bears consequence for not only their future socioeconomic position, but also issues surrounding social reproduction.

This section begins with Cora and Fiona's interviews, both of which concern the parent/child power dynamic and their own role in exploring and expanding beyond their role of child. Hailey's interviews straddle both this topic of growing into the role of self-advocate from the dependent child she was as well as her developing autonomy over her own food choices.

Finally, Gabby's stories take up a thread of peers, a shared school culture, and how she undertakes different strategies to fit in.

Cora: Food with her Father

Cora told a series of stories centered around food and her parents, particularly her father. Below, I present three stories she told, the first surrounding cooking with her father, the second eating at a restaurant with him, and the final cooking on her own. In these stories, she positions herself in various ways: in concert with her father, as a student of his, and finally as being the one to provide him food. Through these, I demonstrate the ways in which she narratively represents herself in her negotiation of power dynamics around food and the role those experiences play in embodying her sense of self, as well as the way in which she absorbs values and social messages from her father and adopts them into her developing identity.

In the first story, Cora recounts cooking dinner with her father and problem-solving expired chicken:

"We got chicken, we were going to make tacos, or I forgot what we were going to make with the chicken, we ended up making chicken tacos. The chicken was expired and we didn't die while eating it, it was expired and it was even good, it came out delicious and none of us got food poisoning...Yeah I was like eh chicken's like a few days old, me and my dad were sitting around it, well we probably want to eat it and if we ride together we die together? Yeah, let's go. And it was delicious."

In her narration, Cora represents herself and her father as 'we', sharing a joint experience and acting as dual agents. Her story highlights the peril and threat caused by the expired chicken, and that she and her father overcame the danger together. In her telling of the tale, it is the 'ride

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or die' nature of their partnership that provides the bravery and daring necessary to overcome the challenge before them. She positions them as the story's protagonists and the victory as a joint success. In this way, she aligns herself with her father, not as parent and child, but as teammates and equals. In the transition that adolescence serves in the course of the life stage, moments like this are significant in that Cora does not recount this tale as one in which she serves a subservient role of child to her father, but rather positions herself as comparable to her own parent. In this way, she both models her actions after her father's example, while also equating herself to him, thereby demonstrating the ways in which she assimilates the choices and values of her father into her own food practices.

However, she does not cast this role of her father's equal as permanent or enduring, but rather, temporary. When recounting a meal at an Indian restaurant with her father, Cora dispenses with that collaborative stance, instead positioning her and her father as colleagues and partners but this time with a clear demarcation of their individual selves and the power differential of parent and child.

> "My dad's like, hey guess where we're going, we're going to House of India, I'm like hell yeah! I usually rely on my dad to order and he gets tiki masala, he gets naan, he gets this thing I don't know what it's called but it's deep fried ball of potato and there's some peas in it and you can like pour some spicy sauce on it. It's delicious, but I really like exotic foods, Japanese places, Mexican, anything uh exotic, I always enjoyed. I'm always open to new foods, when my dad took me to that Indian food place, I went thinking man, everything's going to burn, it didn't, but I still went in with like no holds barred man... yeah, I'm always willing to try new things."

In this story, Cora positions her father as her mentor, providing guidance, knowledge, and experience in the unfamiliar Indian restaurant. In turn, she situates herself in the role of novice or student, subordinate to his worldliness. This second story echoes the same plot as the first, in its arc of uncertainty and ultimate victory, but she dispenses with the partnership she established earlier and instead reverts to a child/parent dynamic. Still, her representation of herself remains adventurous and fearless: the risk of overly spicy food only spurred her on. She establishes herself as someone 'willing to try new things' and 'always open to new food', though reliant on her father for his direction. By positioning him as the expert, she can then observe his ordering habits, which in turn establishes by example how she might act in a future scenario where she is the party most familiar with the available choices. In this way, he not only inhabits this role of mentor over what food to order, but also the very act of ordering itself, selecting choices from the menu and taking the initiative to pick from among available options.

Through these two examples, Cora illustrates the navigation of parent/child roles, stepping into the more adult role of her father's equal in decision making about the chicken while also comfortably retreating into the more passive role as the recipient of food her father orders for them. Cora swaps between these roles as she negotiates her own positioning in reference to her father's greater wisdom, experience, and his role as her parental authority.

Cora's third narrative is a story of cooking by herself. In contrast to the two stories above, it is not a tale of success or even learning. Instead, she tells of a failed attempt at making meatballs, drawing upon the figure of Gordon Ramsey, a celebrity chef with an exaggerated temper, to illustrate her own anger and frustration.

> "I don't grill but I'll use the stove, like I was uh, one time [my dad] was gone and I
> was really hungry and was like craving a meatball sub so I took on the task of

doing it myself, it didn't, it came out alright but it was a lot of mess when I was hungry for myself, I texted him, he said I'm not in the mood for it, so I've already started, I dirtied one pot making just enough for me and then he later texted me you know what I want some too. I'm like grrr alright, time to dirty a new pot and make sure which ones are cooked and which ones aren't and then it like, I accidentally turned it up too high and the sauce started boiling and it hit me, it hit my hand. Have you ever watched Hell's Kitchen before, it sounded like Gordon Ramsey was in my kitchen as soon as that tiny bit of hot sauce dropped on my hand. I like cooking it's nice and relaxing it's [in quotes] relaxing, it's [roaring sound] like I can hear Gordon in my head [in British accent] it's bland, it's undercooked, I love Gordon he's great."

In this story, Cora began by positioning herself in contrast to her father, who regularly grills steaks for the family. Left to prepare her own food, she chose to make meatballs, a meal she had mentioned in previous interviews making with her father regularly on weekends. In this instance, she took the initiative to cook it by herself. She presents a twist in the plot (being asked to cook extra for her father when halfway through the meal) and a mistake on her part (overheating the sauce). Here, she interrupts the plot of her story and sarcastically calls cooking relaxing, indicating it is anything but, and unlike the previous two instances where she emerged victorious, she instead describes her own downfall, being reduced to a 'Gordon Ramsey'-esque state, which the audience to the story can understand as angry at being thwarted. This story of failure stands in contrast to the two above of overcoming obstacles; from the context of other details she provided, she has successfully cooked meatballs with her father present, but in his absence, she not only failed to do so, but positioned herself with the rage and frustration of

Gordon Ramsey. Cora draws upon the listener's own understanding of who Gordon Ramsey is, thereby integrating his character into her representation of herself. This sets up a triad of characters: herself, her father, and Gordon Ramsey. Through this, Cora positions herself as separate from her father (who can cook meatballs without incident) and aligned with Ramsey, who reacts with rage and anger to mistakes. The listener comes to understand Cora's own self-conception and through this lens: the simultaneous occupation of a self who is unlike her parent (who can cook competently) and instead like another adult. She remains aligned with adulthood and does not represent herself in a childlike role, but steps away from her affiliation with her own parent. In this way, Cora exists not as her parent's child, but a separate individual also positioned along an axis of adulthood.

Across these stories, Cora employs commonly understood plot structures, character roles, and known references to a famous figure to communicate her perspective on her relationship to food practices. In turn, she positions herself as a partner to her father, a student of her father's, and an echo of a famous chef. Through this, these stories evoke a picture of her developing sense of self, as told and enacted by her narrative choices, highlighting her navigation and negotiation of the transitionary nature of adolescence as she works to understand herself and the shifting role of this life stage.

In doing so, she also demonstrates not only the food practices taught by her father, but also the societal values surrounding them; her father demonstrates taste preference and choice at the Indian restaurant, the initiative of preparing a home cooked meal, and the decision to eat the chicken regardless of the expiration date. I will turn to a fuller discussion of food practices later in this paper as I discuss middle class social reproduction and how these ways of being are

learned in the home and adopted and assimilated into the actions of adolescents during this transitionary life period.

Fiona: Negotiating Parental Control and Food

Fiona's narratives on her experiences with food centered on navigating parental influence and control. Her first story focused on how close relationships in her life included rituals of sharing and providing these foods, especially in reference to acts of permission from parents. In the second, she describes eating out with her mother and siblings, and her mother's encouragement that Fiona advocate for herself. Both illustrate the dependence Fiona situates herself with in terms of food, as well as her struggles with her growing autonomy.

In her first narrative, Fiona recounts having a friend over to her house and her friend's excitement over what Fiona described as 'junk food'.

"Her mom is like a health guru and stuff, she eats like the freshest tomatoes and stuff like that. She came over to my house for like the first time and she looked at our cabinet and like you know, me and mom, we love chocolate, so it's like swiss rolls and we got all these chocolate desserts in there and she's like 'what, what is this?' It was so funny too, 'cause that was the first time she ever tried like a chocolate treat, like a swiss roll or something, we ended up eating the whole box... Like every time my mom gets them, we're like oh my gosh, it's our food, this is our food. She's like, 'these are so good, why [is] my mom hiding me from this miracle?'"

In the first part of her narrative, Fiona sets her friend's mother apart from her own family and their eating practices. Fiona positions her house as a space where chocolate treats are not only present, but allowed and even encouraged; in contrast, the 'health guru' aspect of her

friend's mother is considered 'other' and foreign to Fiona's own experience, as divergent a reality as Fiona's house is for her friend. In this way, Fiona sets up a juxtaposition of her mother's choice for what food to stock in the house with the choices of that of her friend's mother. As a result of this difference, Fiona can position herself in the role of an expert; while her friend is asking what the swiss rolls are, Fiona not only is well acquainted with them due to her mother's shopping habits, but ready to share. Their consumption of the whole box begins a tradition for them, and as Fiona describes it, her language shifts from 'me' and 'her' to 'we': a fusing of experience and a camaraderie over this shared treat. The two girls are a joint, partnered unit and Fiona presents them as oppositional to the two mothers: Fiona's mother is the one that provides the swiss rolls, and her friend's mother is exhibited as 'hiding' them from her friend. However, the agentive triumph of her friend's discovery and Fiona's own expertise is constrained by this positioning: no matter how victorious a narrative it is, of friendship and learning and teaching, they do not have complete authority over their own food acquisition or consumption. Rather, that still remains controlled by their mothers' purchasing decisions.

This intersection of agency and constraint emerged in Fiona's second narrative, in which she ate with her mother and siblings in a restaurant where Fiona's order was improperly prepared. Her mother encouraged Fiona to rectify the situation, which Fiona undertook unwillingly.

> "I thought we were going to Dairy Queen or something, but I was like ok, I don't get like one of those milkshake thingies, but you know that's alright. So, we like pulled up to Wendy's and I'm still excited cause I like their chicken and like we went in and we ordered, and my mom was like super hangry, so it was stressful. But I don't know, I usually order the same thing every single time, so my mom

just, she still asks but I don't know why, I'm like as much chicken as possible with

a medium fry and a medium chocolate frosty, that's all I order and my brother and

sister will get kid's meals like with a sandwich thingy or something, my mom will

get like a similar thing. And yeah, my mom is like, I don't know, she was super

stressed out and they forgot my frosty and she was like really angry about it. I'm

like mom calm down it's fine, so she's like go up there and get your frosty and I'm

like ok. So, they ended up giving me the wrong one again and then she got really

mad and then she made me go up there again and I'm like, it's ok I really don't

care. They're like 'oh here we were supposed to give you a medium chocolate

frosty', I'm like ok. It was really awkward for me to like [laughs] I don't know, it's

always awkward to like tell people like oh you got my order wrong [laughs] I

don't know I'm just a weird person though."

Fiona's story opens with her disappointment with the restaurant her mother chose. While

Fiona has choice over her own food, her mother does the ordering for her. When her frosty is

forgotten, Fiona positions herself in the role of pacifier, trying to assuage her mother's stress and

anger over the mistake. In Fiona's telling, her language escalates as she describes her mother's

instruction to get her correct frosty, from 'she's like go up there' to 'she made me go up there';

similarly, Fiona narrates her own past self as being 'like ok' and in the second instance, 'like it's

ok, I really don't care.' Through this, she juxtaposes her own awkwardness and presented

indifference against her mother's anger and increasingly firm directives. Simultaneously, she

presents her discomfort with her mother's insistence that Fiona advocate for herself; while Fiona

is satisfied with the discrepancy in her order, her mother is trying to set an example of how to

properly act when one's food is incorrectly prepared. Fiona does not present herself as an active

agent, but rather a recipient of her mother's decisions and a passive player in the story's plot. She rejects her mother's choices of how to act, but then couches this in calling herself a 'weird person', leaving the meaning making aspect of the story as excusing her reaction as abnormal; someone else may have shared her mother's view of the proper recourse for her improperly served meal, or if Fiona herself were not 'weird', she would have navigated a negotiation with the staff without the awkwardness she felt. In this way, Fiona remains in the deferential role of child to her mother's role of parent, and while she critiques her mother's actions, she does not step outside of her mother's insistence nor rise to be an independent actor. Fiona's negotiation of the transition of adolescence into the autonomy of an adult falters at this step and she refrains from embracing the uncertainty and risk of moving beyond her more comfortable child-like role.

Hailey: Allergies, Agency, and Normalcy

Hailey's accounts of food centered on her experience with severe allergies. Over the course of our three interviews, she narrated the growth of her agency in understanding her allergies and taking over the responsibility of caring for herself from her parents. In doing so, she narrates the ways in which she followed her parents examples for how to advocate for herself, speaking up to waiters, friends' parents, teachers, and cafeteria staff on behalf of her needs, taking the model she learned in the home and assimilating it into her own practices around food. She also integrated another important aspect of the period of adolescence into her stories: not just the transition from child to adult, but the increasing orientation towards peers and the growing importance of peer relations during this life stage.

In the first story she told, she reflected on eating at restaurants with her family when she was younger and described the first time she was tasked with explaining her allergies to the waiter:

"It's a lot easier now which is interesting cause I can ask people the questions that
I know to be important that my parents have like taught me. Definitely when I
was younger, I would listen to them talk about my food allergies to like waiters
and stuff like that so one day I think it was like my eight year old birthday when
we went out to some sort of restaurant, they were like ok, Hailey, why don't you
tell them about your food allergies? And I told the waitress and she like
understood and she was sweet about it. I really remember that just because it was
my first attempt in like advocating for myself about something that made me feel
safe."

Hailey's story highlights her growth and transformation as she aged; it's a tale set in the
past as she reflects back on her younger self, juxtaposing that against her present self. She begins
the story in the place of a child deferring to her parents, listening to them as she would to a
teacher or other authoritarian figure in her young life, and learning from them the language to
use to discuss her allergies. With this model and at their urging, she steps into an agentive role,
trying out the position of being the one to explain her own needs. Her venture is successful: she
'advocated' for herself and created for herself that same sense of safety her parents had
previously been responsible for.

The second instance she recounted occurred two years later on a school trip. In this story,
she tells about another successful negotiation of stepping into the role of being the one to
advocate for the severity of her allergies, demonstrating a continuation of the same agentive acts
she undertook previously:

"It's definitely gotten a lot easier, I'm able to advocate for myself a little bit more
and I actually like, can, being five I didn't know like what things meant on labels

but now being like, ever since I was like ten going to Washington DC kind of like really advocate for myself when my parents weren't there um because I was fourteen hours from home and I, like obviously I packed some extra food with me just like in my luggage, there was like granola bars. There was an incident where kids like had an allergic reaction from things, that was like, that was a scary moment when like the school didn't do their research and kids had an allergic reaction and I was like thank God I didn't, cause I chose not to eat it because I, it was like a sandwich sub and it had like bread and I was like, usually bread isn't a good thing when you have a nut allergy not knowing necessarily because it can have nuts in it, it can be made on a machine that has been like used with nuts you could be cross contaminated really easily and people don't really necessarily like realize, they think it's just your everyday bread and I'm like it could have like pieces of nuts in it, it could have like an almond flavor, it could have all these things in it and that's what happened. There was nuts in the cookies and no one told him that and it was nuts in the bread so I chose, I was like no, I really don't feel comfortable eating that, I mean it looks good, but I mean bread isn't usually safe for kids that have nut allergies and they were like no no, you're fine and I'm like I'm just going to eat a granola bar that I brought from home."

This story again reflects Hailey's success in navigating her food allergies, and in this instance, that victory comes as a result of her own conviction, rather than relying on an adult to voice support for her. Whereas when she was younger and her parents guided her through the role of self-advocate, here she explains how she takes on that role on her own in the face of pressure from others. She characterizes the other student as a victim of his own ignorance, and

the school as irresponsible; in contrast, she characterizes herself as knowledgeable, confident, and self-reliant, as she had packed her own separate food. Based on what she learned from her parents, she made the right choices in order to stay safe.

In her third story, Hailey narrated the first time she slept over at a friend's house. She explained that when she was younger, her parents would either feed her a meal before she left home, or not send her to a friend's house during mealtime. At an older age, she was allowed more freedom, as she explained:

"I slept over at my friend's house one night and it was my first sleepover at her house. And her mom was funny, she was like 'I don't want to feed you something that will like make you sick or anything 'cause I don't want to go to the hospital.' And like we were able to like figure it out together, like reading labels and just um like making sure everything was clean and I was able to like eat food. And now I'm standing here today, so we did it together, it was really fun, we made like I think it was like a pizza and maybe like French fries and popcorn, like movie stuff um, just to hang out that night."

Again, Hailey tells a story of overcoming odds through her own skill and knowledge. She took the initiative to play the role of the 'teacher' and 'educator' of food allergies, explaining to a friend's parents the intricacies of what she could eat. She positions them as a team, recounting that 'we did it together' in preparing dinner. While the adult in this story saw the allergies as dangerous and possibly leading to a hospital trip, Hailey holds no perception of that same danger in her own telling. Instead, she found such nervousness 'funny', juxtaposing her own comfort and confidence with understanding ingredient lists and crafting a meal. This growth is one such dimension of adolescence, as Hailey moves from the dependency of a child towards a more equal

status with adults in her life. Another important facet is the importance of peer relations, which I discuss next with Hailey, and then also with Gabby in the following section.

Another story Hailey told was about eating in the school cafeteria. In this narrative, instead of the juxtaposition of adult and child roles, Hailey describes the friction of fitting in with her peers. In it, Hailey positioned her own packed lunch as healthy and safe, but also a social barrier, as school lunch had often been for her. When she was younger, she had to sit at a table reserved for students with allergies; now in high school, she often feels that same awareness of abnormality.

> "I asked [the lunch staff] a couple times like 'oh, is this safe for me to eat?' I get the pizza sometimes, cause if I have like extra money in my account and my mom approves it and stuff I can get pizza and that's really good, cause that's like really really good for me to have, I enjoy eating it, it makes me feel like normal. Also they make me, one of the lunch ladies during my study hall came over to me and was like, 'I made you a nut free brownie tray', so they sell me nut free brownies, so I just have to be like can I have the nut free brownie, and they take one and it's like pre wrapped in the back, no contact with nuts, then they'll just go like yeah here you go, and I can eat brownies and they're probably one of my favorite desserts to eat so they're really good, um, so that, just made me feel like normal."

This narrative centers around an arc of communion (McAdams & McLean, 2013); while her allergies keep her separate in so many ways around daily food practices, in these two instances she makes the choice to purchase food that allows her to act the same as her peers. Twice, she articulates that it 'makes me feel normal', wherein she can blend in with her friends and schoolmates, feeling an affinity with the established norms of the lunchroom. She again also

recounts navigating authority figures: her mother must provide permission for her to eat school food, and the lunch staff must give her the confirmation that the food in question is safe for her. Through this, she cements her characterization as a member of her peer group of schoolmates, and her parents and the staff as 'other'. The normalcy she seeks is among her peers and the society of the other adolescents around her. In this way, Hailey simultaneous navigates the power differential of child/adult as well as the 'adolescent culture' of her peers (Garner, Bootcheck, Lorr, & Rauch, 2006). This culture created among youth in the lunchroom consists of mutually understood values and norms of behavior, and due to her dietary constraints Hailey has been subjected to feeling like an outsider to this society of peers. The ability to assert herself and her emotional need to eat cafeteria food bridges this gulf and she appreciates opportunities to negotiate a period of normalcy among her schoolmates.

Her final narrative was a similar tale of communion, though this one with a friend outside of school. Here, her friend serves as the authority figure, rife with knowledge she passes along to Hailey.

> "Sarah and I we were out watching a movie late at night and she's like 'have you ever had these things?' and I'm like 'no I've never had a Cumberland Farm Freezie what's that?' and she's like 'alright get in the car we're going.' So we literally drove like five minutes and got a Freezie and I'm like 'ok what do I do what do I do' and she's like 'ok I'll show you' and we built a Freezie together and I had my sip and I'm like 'this is good' and she's like 'I know', so that's like what we would do together, especially when we're out like at night, like watching movies, if we go out for a movie we both like know it's Freezies time."

Here, Hailey recounts no self-consciousness about her allergies, nor does she include any events in this story of checking ingredients or fear for her own safety. Instead, she frames the tale as a moment of unity with her friend, where she is not discomforted by not knowing what a Freezie is, but instead eager to learn. The event serves as a bonding experience for them and the beginning of an ongoing tradition. Here, we see Hailey begin to create her own food practices with a peer, a step of adolescence in which she independently initiates habits and preferences away from her parents, establishing herself as separate from them and an autonomous actor around this food ritual.

Through the stories Hailey tells, she represents herself in her past, younger self as well as her current and future self. Her audience can observe her growth and maturation as she comes into her own, advocating for her allergies and navigating concerns over safety. By her final story, her allergies are back grounded to the enjoyment of a night with her friend, whereas they figured prominently in her experience of food practices previously in her life. She has adopted the roles formerly occupied by the authority figures of 'teacher' and 'educator', stepping into them herself as she grows towards the adult she is becoming. During these years of her life, she navigates concerns of adolescence in regards to not just the power differential of parent/child or adult/child, but also the growing orientation to her peer group, exploring her own agency in forming food habits on her own, away from other adult intervention in a way that she would not have been able to previously. This move towards adulthood and the transitionary nature of these episodes she recounts illustrate a picture of the change that adolescents continually navigate and the way in which food practices both constitute this change as well as illustrate it. Furthermore, she also demonstrates the ways in which she learned from her parents such values as advocating for herself, making careful, smart choices, and taking initiative, from the first time she explained

her allergies to a waiter, up to creating her own Freezie. In this way, Hailey recreates her parents' behaviors around food as her own, which are practices that she will carry forward into her own adulthood.

Gabby: Social Anxiety and Food

Gabby's stories centered around her uncertainty, apprehension, and perception of others judging her when it came to choosing, eating, and preparing food. In this way, Gabby negotiated some of the same concerns as Hailey in her endeavor to cope with peer culture and navigate the complications of the social meanings and connotations of eating habits and food practices.

In the first story she recounted, she describes her nervousness in choosing a dessert during school lunch:

"The other day um, they had whoopie pies and cookies and I was like I don't know, I kind of want both, should I do it, and my friend's like just do it, and I'm like fine and I like grabbed both of them and I was like I really don't want people judging me that I'm like eating both even though I saved one for a snack like later on, but I'm still like I don't know, I guess people are going to be like wow, look at her, she's grabbing two like big things, but it shouldn't matter as long as I'm eating something."

In this narrative, Gabby positions herself as overcoming the difficulty of not just making a choice, but also dealing with the anxiety of perceived assessment by her peers. She characterizes her friend as an enthusiastic sidekick, encouraging her when she hesitated. Despite her eventual decision to take two desserts, Gabby's story is not one of clear victory; the meaning she makes of it represents her ongoing struggles reconciling her perception of herself as she navigates the choice she wants to make versus the self she wishes to represent to others. She

understands the social and cultural connotations of a person who takes two desserts as worthy of judgment and hints at shades of gluttony, greed, and overeating, even as she works to assure the audience that she is none of those things, in fact saving half of her food for later. Through this, we see her working to create a narrative that atones for the actions of her past self while trying to present herself positively in her current setting.

When asked later about eating indulgently, she presented a contrasting situation. In the following, she did 'pig out' in the parlance of the students I interviewed, but the setting allowed it:

> "For like volleyball season we went out to Olive Garden and stuff and it was like fun 'cause it was a lot of eating together and then like we didn't really care cause Olive Garden has like the endless breadsticks and the salad and stuff, so like we were all like into it, so it's not like we're like 'oh I don't want anything', but it's also cause we were like a really close team so we were really comfortable, or like when we had team sleepovers like we would just eat whatever."

Comparing these two narrative events, Gabby represents herself to the audience (me, the interviewer) but also includes the fictional/narrative audience within her story: that of the rest of the lunchroom in the first episode and the lack of audience in her second. In the lunchroom, the ever-watching cast of schoolmates exists as a specter, ready to pass judgment on her food selection. Her friend provides encouragement but does not join her in taking two desserts. In contrast, at the Olive Garden and with her team, that audience evaporates; when everyone engages in this act of indulgence, it is no longer illicit but in fact becomes a sanctioned way to bond more deeply with friends. In this second narrative, she switches into first person plural: the *I* becomes the *we* and she no longer stands apart from her peers, but instead among them.

Gabby's narratives illustrate a crux of adolescence: the forming of a peer society as separate from one's family of origin. All schools have 'adolescent cultures' and all individuals that comprise the student body must employ individual strategies to navigate that culture successfully (Garner, Bootcheck, Lorr, & Rauch, 2006). In Gabby's stories, we can see the adolescent self-intersecting that role of student and school culture participant, as she seeks to understand herself, her role in her school's greater society, and the various choices she can make. Through narrative analysis, we can also observe the way in which she then represents this process to the listener, trying to paint herself in a positive light and employing reasoning and excuses for the amount she ate in each given situation. As she moves toward adulthood, she will continue to navigate these types of decisions around food, balancing her own personal desires against 'acceptable' practices as defined by the culture of peers around her.

Identity Development, Narrative Representation, and Food Practices

Narrative tales of food practices provide an entry point into understanding how individuals draw upon modes of self-representation to convey their experiences to an audience. Through this, these stories illustrate the represented past of the narrator as told by their present self, providing a reflection both of the younger, former self, and the current storyteller. In adolescence, this juxtaposition serves to illuminate the developing sense of self youth explore during this time period as they take lessons and practices found in the home and begin to enact them with more independence and individuality.

On the axis of individual growth of food practices, children exist at one end with parents in the role of food provider, while adults exist on the other, independently procuring their own food. In the narratives provided above, participants articulate the complexity of this growth. Hailey creates a cohesive autobiography as she retrospectively looks back over her life and

provides a story that fits across her lifespan, from a child needing the protection and safety of her parents, to the first steps towards navigating her allergies for herself, up to a freer, more adult exploration of her world around herself. In contrast, Fiona does not represent herself with this same separation from her mother, instead remaining in the role of child with her parental figure as the provider of food. For her part, Cora's tales are ones of victory only when working in partnership and concert with her father; left alone, her story takes a downward spin, devolving into frustration, anger, and failure.

Participants' stories also show the increasing differentiation from parental influence and orientation towards the developing peer society adolescents form during this life stage. Gabby works to negotiate this stage of growth, for faced with the ability to make her own choices about how much to eat, she becomes mired in self-consciousness and uncertainty. Hailey struggles with what it means to have abnormal dietary restrictions during this time in her life, grasping at any opportunity to 'feel normal' and participate in the practices her peers routinely enjoy. Fiona and her friend share the ritual of eating swiss rolls as an ongoing tradition. These practices are important to participants no matter their individual struggles, as they seek to form a close affinity with their peers through the shared ritual of building a Freezie or bonding at a team dinner at the Olive Garden.

As adolescents continue to grow towards the adults they are becoming, practices surrounding food and eating serve as a base of transactional experiences with the world around them. Individuals learn about food practices in the home from their parents, explore them during the school day and with peers, and will carry these experiences into adulthood. As such, food plays a pertinent, unique role in youth's lives. Adolescents view it as representative of messages of the broader culture and society around youth, such as Cora understanding Indian food as

'exotic' or Gabby understanding sweets as indulgent. Youth also develop the ability to interact with food on their own, such as Hailey stepping into the role of teacher and expert on her allergies, or Fiona and her friend forming their own bonds, rituals, and relationship over sweets.

Food Practices and Social Reproduction

Participants' stories demonstrate how food practices intertwine with self-concept and illustrate the complexity of the period of adolescence. Narratives around food therefore provide an important entry point into the exploration of processes of identity and serve to make plain the transition from a child in their parents' household to an independent and autonomous individual in their own right. Understanding this transitionary time of adolescence in reference to food practices bears weight and consequence for the study of development. Teens' bodies are still growing and maturing, and food plays an important role in health and nutrition, both in the immediate term of adolescence as well as long term consequence for physical well-being. Additionally, food practices such as table manners, dietary preferences, and social habits all carry significant underpinnings of social mores and norms; the increasing orientation towards their peer groups during adolescence is only a first foray into the greater social world, where meals with colleagues, potential employers, romantic partners, and more, can act as significant markers or turning points in life. The groundwork for these moments, as well as healthy practices and good nutrition, is laid during adolescence.

It is this very groundwork that adolescents draw from as they become adults, bringing food practices learned in their childhood homes and enacted individually through to their future lives. In this study, participants were representative of a middle class, rural population of high school students and in that way, reflective of the generational transmission of middle-class values as their parents raised these youth to participate in middle class culture.

As Matusov and Smith (2012) argue, participating in today's middle class is an exercise in choice making: public or private school for children, which neighborhood to live in, what career track to enter. In turn, middle class parents work to imbue their children with the ability to make 'smart choices' so that they too can earn middle class status as adults. Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik (2015) make a similar argument, linking this to food practices through an examination of dinnertime conversation and the verb 'want', shown in examples such as asking children if they want more of their cereal, their chocolate milk, or their preference for applesauce over rice; they go on to argue that these negotiations are the basis for instilling the autonomy that is essential to culturally rewarded entrepreneurism and individualism. These same practices are instilled in the participants of this study: Hailey learning to advocate for herself and her allergies, Gabby making choices regarding which dessert to choose, and Fiona's mother attempting to engender persistence and a dogged negotiation over her Frosty. In this way, parents both model as well as instill lessons of consumer preference in their children as a way of raising them to be successful middle-class adults, modeled after themselves.

Therefore, the research in this paper serves not only the field of educational research, adolescent development, and food studies, but also sheds light on the interplay of food, identity development, and social class reproduction. Scholars such as Annette Lareau in *Unequal Childhoods* (2011) have already examined daily practices in the home as a site of transmissible understanding of one's social class and standing in the greater societal world; by linking identity development and food practices, this study lays the groundwork for future investigations to take up this same vein of inquiry in terms of food, eating, diet, and the cultural connotations of food practices. The participants in this study demonstrate concerns indicative of the modern middle class, leaving open the question for how food practices and identity processes work for food

insecure students or upper-class youth who may not be engaged in this same exercise of middle-class social reproduction.

In addition to this open avenue for continued scholarly attention, this study also contributes to the field of research for youth workers, teachers, school professionals, and parents. Understanding the role of individual identity and the forming sense of self in adolescence will assist anyone working with youth in navigating complicated issues such as health, body image, nutrition, future goals, and the complexity of daily high school life during such a transitionary developmental period.

Conclusion

In this paper, I presented findings on narrative interviews with adolescents on the subject of food. Through narrative analysis and the analytic lens of adolescent identity development, I explored these findings as a way to understand how youth use narrative structure to explain their relationship to food practices. The narratives I presented in this paper illustrate the ways in which youth navigate food practices during this life stage, employing lessons and practices learned in the home with increasing autonomy, absorbing messages from their parents and drawing upon them in their own independent application. Youth undertake this at a time when they are exploring their self-concept and working to determine their identity. As such, practices around food can be viewed as one area in their lives in which they both enact these practices as evidence of their identity, as well as be shaped in turn by these practices as a way of informing identity. Food therefore becomes dialectical in the role it inhabits in youth's lives, representing and enacting identity simultaneously.

Understanding this allows a lens through which to approach food practices among adolescents; it is at this life stage that individuals are exploring and beginning to cement habits

that they will carry into adulthood, and therefore all the more consequential to understand the

process by which this occurs.

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APPENDIX A:

IRB Approval

20-Dec-2018

Kane, Eleanor English, Murkland Hall 71 Warren Rd Barrington, NH 03825

University *of* New Hampshire

Research Integrity Services, Service Building 51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585 Fax: 603-862-3564

IRB #: 6790
Study: Food Insecurity and Academic Outcomes: The Mechanisms and Processes of Social Categorization and Models of Identity
Approval Expiration Date: 27-Oct-2019
Modification Approval Date: 20-Dec-2018
Modification: Change in research site to Coe-Brown Academy, and target population to any current student

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved your modification to this study, as indicated above. Further changes in your study must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to implementation.

Approval for this protocol expires on the date indicated above. At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a report with regard to the involvement of human subjects in this study. If your study is still active, you may request an extension of IRB approval.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the document, Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects. This document is available at http://unh.edu/research/irb-application-resources or from me.

Note: IRB approval is separate from UNH Purchasing approval of any proposed methods of paying study participants. Before making any payments to study participants, researchers should consult with their BSC or UNH Purchasing to ensure they are complying with institutional requirements. If such institutional requirements are not consistent with the confidentiality or anonymity assurances in the IRB-approved protocol and consent documents, the researcher may need to request a modification from the IRB.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact Melissa McGee at 603-862-2005 or melissa.mcgee@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson Director

cc: File
Seaman, Jayson

01-Nov-2017

Kane, Eleanor English, Murkland Hall 71 Warren Rd Barrington, NH 03825

University *of* New Hampshire

Research Integrity Services, Service Building 51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585 Fax: 603-862-3564

IRB #: 6790
Study: Food Insecurity and Academic Outcomes: The Mechanisms and Processes of Social Categorization and Models of Identity
Approval Date: 27-Nov-2017

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Expedited as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 110.

Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol for one year from the approval date above. At the end of the approval period, you will be asked to submit a report with regard to the involvement of human subjects in this study. If your study is still active, you may request an extension of IRB approval.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the document, Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects. This document is available at http://unh.edu/research/irb-application-resources. Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson Director

cc: File
Seaman, Jayson