MEALTIME EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES: AN ETHNOGRAPHY FROM THE CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Allied Health Sciences (Occupational Science).

Chapel Hill
2018

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ABSTRACT

Ashley Elizabeth Mason: Mealtime Experiences and Activities: An Ethnography from the
Children's Perspective
(Under the direction of Ruth Humphry)

This dissertation reports findings from a 9-month collaborative ethnographic study of

children's mealtime experiences and activities in two different settings. Methods included

conversations and interviews, participant observation, photo elicitation and drawings or

collages to explore the children's mealtime experiences and activities and their meanings at

school and home. I used the transactional perspective and Vygotsky's activity theory to view

children's experiences of mealtime activity in both settings. The children's perspective about

their mealtime activities and experiences was highlighted in the findings as they navigated

the complexity and situational nature of mealtime activities daily. The children underlined

three main focal points: (1) social interaction is essential to mealtime; (2) meals are complex,

situationally-based moments imbued with sites of social learning; and finally, (3) boundaries

are tested and pressed through exercising agency while engaging with others during

mealtime.

I suggest the following as implications for occupational science: the need to explore

more occupations in-depth from populations other than the White middle-class adult female;

the importance of inviting children to become more active and ascertain more power in the

research process; and the importance of framing children's mealtime practices as a social endeavor through which 'appropriate' behaviors and actions are observed, learned, and practiced over time through a variety of environments. Future lines of research are related to examining mealtime practices in other child populations and exploring other child occupations closely.

To my family, especially my husband, Joshua, and my daughter, Aubrey: Thank you for your love and support throughout this process. I could not have done this without you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my dissertation committee for all of your guidance, support, and feedback throughout this process. More specifically, I would like to thank Ruth Humphry for her time in reading endless drafts of this study, Nancy Bagatell for pushing me to think critically about my work, and to Glenn Hinson for his patience and shared interest of studying small details. I am also grateful to my friends and peers whose support and time have been paramount in completing this study. Finally, I want to extend my sincerest thank you to the children, their families, and the Three Streams staff who participated in my study for their time, insight, and food. I could not have done this without you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOTA   American Occupational Therapy Association

CDC   Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

IRB   Institutional review board

NCES   National Center for Education Statistics

OS   Occupational science

OT   Occupational therapy

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When I was a child, I remember being frustrated when extended family members or adults would not take me seriously when they asked my opinion or asked me questions. They did not value my voice or my perspective even though they were the ones who asked me questions in the first place. I carried this knowledge with me when I began working with children and their families with feeding difficulties as an occupational therapist. I learned that parents were frustrated with their children not eating particular types of food. They also never asked their children the reason why. When I asked some of the children I worked with about why they did not want to eat particular types of food, they were able to give me valid reasons. We were able to work through those issues based on what the children reported. In other words, I learned the child's voice is an important perspective to consider.

More specifically, as a pediatric occupational therapist, some of my focus was on assisting children with feeding difficulties through a variety of interventions due to a number of concerns including limitations in physical capacity (e.g., holding and scooping with a spoon), picky eating, and negative behaviors (e.g., refusing to eat for particular members of the family). In hindsight, most of what I learned as a young therapist in primarily medically-based settings was to focus on improving the physical capacities and how to manage the 'behaviors.' The parents of the patients with 'behaviors' often were not a part of the therapy session (based on parent preference) and were only 'taught' about how their child 'performed' with a non-family member (me) at the end of the session. In other words, the parent or social community and the child's natural environmental where s/he eats food were

removed from this intervention and the child's behaviors and food intake often improved. The parent and child went home to practice and no progress was made, or there was *very* slow improvement. With years of experience in this field and with a focus on feeding, this pattern became frustrating and stressful not only to me, who really wanted my patients to improve, but also for parents who were concerned about their children's health and well-being related to food.

One day, I was granted permission from my boss to complete a home evaluation at my patient's home who had feeding difficulties but was not progressing at home *or* in therapy. I noticed within about two minutes of my visit what part of the issue was – the family's home was *chaos* (to me, but normal to them). The kids were running around the kitchen yelling; the television was on in another room; there were toys *everywhere* – the kitchen, the front room, and the living room; and the cat was getting into something he should not have been. In this environment my patient's mother served my patient and his sister lunch (where the food was not placed on the plate like she and I discussed at the end of one of her son's therapy sessions). I was completely unaware of this aspect of the family's home environment, which was not reflected in the clinic or my therapy sessions. This was *normal* to my patient and his family and I learned to work with them through these contexts and his eating improved remarkably.

While I was aware of the social and environmental influences on occupations from my occupational therapy training in college (American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), 2002), this experience emphasized the importance of how powerful they can be during mealtime. This is not to say that practicing feeding in a medical setting or an 'unnatural environment' should not occur or that the parent should never leave the child's

side during therapy sessions. Instead, it highlights the importance of attempting to understand the child's entire situation when intervening in a part of her/his life with the intention of improving a part of daily experiences.

Later as an occupational scientist, I held onto the knowledge that understanding the child's perspective is important, and my thoughts were validated when I learned that not only in my experiences were children's voices not heard, but the children's voice was also underrepresented in research across disciplines (e.g., Humphry, 2005; James, Curtis, &Ellis, 2009). I also learned that there was a gap in the literature with understanding many daily occupations in-depth (Hocking, 2009) and no studies examined occupations in more than one setting. Since, occupational science (OS) research can inform the discipline of occupational therapy (OT) through uncovering this more in-depth understanding of occupation (Clark et al., 1991), I chose to study children's mealtime occupations at school and home in-depth with hopes to generate more understanding about the mistakes I made as a clinician. Finally, I chose to study children's mealtime experiences from their perspective to provide them a voice to describe their everyday experiences.

Meals are a part of everyday life because humans require a form of nutrition to survive. However, even though meals (and food) are important to humans to continue to live, there is little in-depth knowledge on how mealtime occupations unfold, especially with regard to children's experiences and perspective. Further, there is no research about how children's mealtime activities occur in different settings. While most mealtime studies on families and children (at home or at school) provide important outcomes and findings, they fail to fully describe in-depth everyday experiences, behaviors and activities, especially from

the child's perspective. Thus, it is necessary to explore how some children experience mealtime occupations through two familiar contexts they engage in daily, home and school.

In this qualitative ethnographic study, I examine mealtime and food-related occupations and experiences of third and fourth graders living in North Carolina within the home and school environments. Additionally, I reveal the complexity of children's mealtime experiences from their perspective in both settings. At home, the children's perspective is the viewpoints of the children consultants relating to mealtime experiences with family. However, at school the children's perspective includes not only the primary children consultants, but also the behaviors and experiences of their peers during lunchtime. The findings emphasize the importance of social connection, social learning during mealtime practices, how children exercise their agency, and the differences in how a meal can look and feel so different when compared between two settings.

Definitions

I align my construct of *experience* to the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition, "a practical knowledge, skill or practice derived from direct observation of or participation in events in a particular activity" ("Experience", 2018). *Mealtime* as a construct is considered a time when a meal is being consumed. This is compared to snack time, which is when a smaller amount of food is consumed between meals. I consider *mealtime activities* as a broader term that encompasses setting-up for the meal, serving food, eating food, interacting with others and cleanup. At school, I include lining up and waiting in the lunch line as part of lunchtime. *Food-related activities* include menu-planning, grocery shopping and preparing meals. I used the following methods to gather information about children's mealtime experiences at home and school: interviews, photo elicitations, drawings, and participant observation with field notes. This project is significant because it enhances and brings new

understanding to current trends in literature by focusing on children as primary consultants. It highlights the occupations and experiences of a vulnerable group of individuals (children) in multiple contexts. Finally, we can begin to understand how the presence and influence of others shape how children experience mealtime in a particular context based on a specific situation. Thus, the findings have implications that can add to existing mealtime literature in sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology and education due to the social nature of mealtime, the relationships that evolve during mealtime, the type of food consumed with groups of people, the culture of children's mealtime, and how lunchtime unfolds at school.

Theoretical Framework

In knowing what I know about the social nature of mealtime, I took a social constructivist stance where social processes give rise to knowledge (Gergen & Gergen, 2007). Reality is viewed as socially created and interpreted and focuses on reason, knowledge, emotion and morality that reside in relationships of the community members and consultants, not in the participant's mind (Daly, 2007; Gergen & Gergen, 2007). These relationships are responsible for co-constructing the individual (Gergen & Gergen, 2007). Interpretation is embedded in the meanings the consultants and community members have about language, activity and cultural symbols over time (Daly, 2007; Gergen & Gergen, 2007). Further, there is an assumption that meanings are constructed through social interaction and are co-constructed, not only by the community members in their social worlds and contexts, but with the researchers as well (Daly, 2007). Thus, my study findings provide an understanding of the broader patterns of how meaning is constructed—or more specifically, how children construct meaning around meals, mealtime and food in North Carolina at home and school.

Transactional perspective. Drawing on John Dewey's pragmatist theories of action, the transactional perspective, a metatheory, examines the relationship between an individual and her/his occupations as they transact through the environment (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). It also considers social, cultural, geographical, political, historical, temporal, and biological components of situations and how a person engaged in occupations functionally coordinates with her given environment (Dickie, Cutchin & Humphry, 2006). I selected this viewpoint because it not only compliments components of activity theory (described below) and addresses the importance of contexts, but also places emphasis on occupation within a given situation and environment. Further, this perspective, when coupled with ethnographic methods, allows for a more complex understanding of the community members, consultants and researcher within the study (Bailliard, Aldrich, & Dickie, 2013). Therefore, my study seeks to expand the discourse of mealtime by examining the mealtime occupations, perspectives, and experiences of school-aged children through multiple contexts, highlighting a group of voices that has rarely been provided the power to be heard.

Cultural activity theory. The theoretical framework guiding this study is based on Vygotsky and Leont'ev's work on activity theory. Overtime activity theory has been enhanced by others (e.g. Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Hedegaard, 2009; Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 1994) who emphasized the importance of shared activity in a child's developmental process. Miettinen (2001) described the cultural activity theory as human action where cultural artifacts, signs, and tools (e.g. rules, objects and norms) mediate the relationship between the individual and the environment. The outcome is the particular activity that is mediated by the other components of the model (See Figure 1.1 below). This relationship between the individual, objects, community, tools, rules, environment and division of labor

(e.g., particular community members who engage in which types of actions using which tools) is constantly changing and co-evolving within an activity system, or more accurately, collective activity systems (e.g. home and school). An activity system is considered the unit of analysis where the system and the collaborator's perspectives are used (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). In this case, the systems are the families, schools and communities of children. Since activity systems are dynamic and ever changing, they are also influenced by the subjects' creative potential to redefine and construct the object; thus the object of the activity shapes and directs the action (Engeström, 1999; Foot, 2014).

Figure 1.1. Cultural Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987; Miettinen, 2001)

Figure 1.1. Cultural Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987; Miettinen, 2001). Diagram showing a triangle with "tools and signs" at the top, "Subject" at the left, and "Object / Sense, meaning" on the right leading to "Outcome", with "Mediating artifacts" in the center, and "Rules," "Community," and "Division of labor" along the bottom.
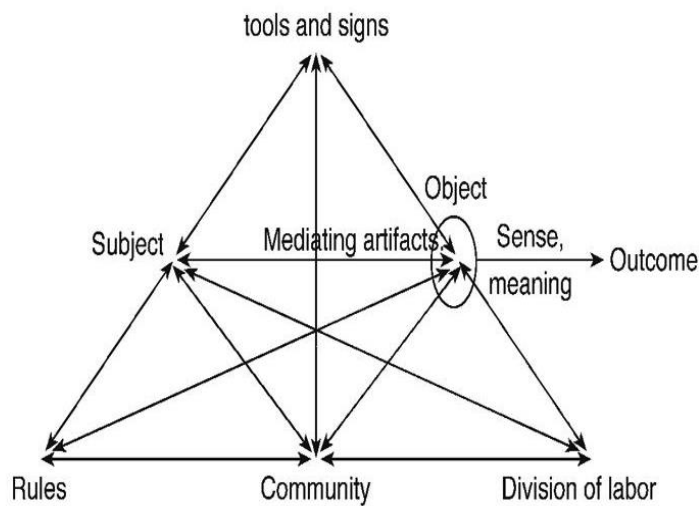
(Source: Engeström 1987, p. 78)

Further, while activity theory might appear to occur outside of the subject (or consultant), the piece that is not as easily seen in this particular model is the internal process that happens within the consultants as the situation occurs. This transpires through Vygotsky's belief that mental processes derive from a social origin (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992). That is, in order to understand the mental functioning in individuals, it is important to focus on their social and cultural processes. Further Vygotsky argued that individuals use

their 'inner speech' to plan and regulate their action inside their mind, which also derives from the individual's "mastery and internalization of the social process" (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992, p. 549).

Theoretical lens to view children, occupation, and context. I used my abovementioned theoretical framework and the following theories collectively as a lens to inform my understanding of what was going on in my research with the children. Additionally, these theories helped inform my approach to the data collection process.

Child development theories. Rogoff (2003) suggested child development could best be understood by studying community practices. Children learn and develop through observing and participating in practices, which are also changing simultaneously (Rogoff, 2003). Rogoff's approach builds on the cultural activity theory, where continued change occurs in the child across contexts (e.g., social, cultural, historical and physical) throughout her development. Within a similar vein, Mistry & Wu (2010) described community characteristics that interact with family and individual practices where children develop expertise in navigating multiple cultural worlds. Children embody cultural characteristics of family and community, which occur through interpenetrating relationships between the person, biology and culture (Mistry & Wu, 2010). Corsaro (2015) adds to this idea of embodiment by suggesting that children appropriate, interpret, and translate what they've learned in their different social worlds, which are reproduced in different social and environmental contexts.

Similar to the above social scientists outside of occupational science, Humphry and colleagues (Humphry, 2002, 2005, 2009; Humphry & Wakeford, 2006, 2013; Humphry & Womack, 2012) and Lawlor (2003, 2012), viewed child development and the development of

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occupation as socially constructed and culturally developed. Humphry (2005, 2009) suggested development could be understood by examining the contexts through which children make sense of their world and create meaningful practices within their immediate environment. She also emphasized the equal importance of studying the child, the occupation, the social context and the situation as inseparable elements. Both Humphry and Lawlor explored how children experience activities that are co-constructed with others, how children make sense of these experiences and how occupations change. Lawlor suggested sociality and action were interrelated and that actions of children were directed towards establishing emotional connectedness. Intersubjectivity produced collective actions and shared learning endeavors and emphasized the "we-ness" of a situation that included both context and the material world (as cited in Lawlor, 2003; 2012).

In using child development theories collectively, this lens emphasizes how children are actively constructing their occupations and own interpretations of reality. It suggests not only that culture and context are important components of how children engage in occupations, but also that sociality and the presence of others within the given context is necessary as children participate in occupations (e.g. mealtime). I used this lens to understand how and why children engage in mealtime occupations in different contexts and how they interpret and create meanings of food-related and mealtime occupations within those contexts.

In summary, the transactional perspective and activity theory framed my thinking in that they emphasized the importance of the relationships between the child, the contexts, the mealtime occupations and the environment. This results in an understanding that experiences and occupations are complex and situationally-based. The use of the child development

theories suggested that how children learn and engage in activities occurs through observation, practice and doing with others. Therefore, I expected that the children in my study engaged in mealtime activities in a similar way.

Importance of Studying Mealtime Activities and Different Contexts

Children, like all human beings are required to eat or consume food to survive. Since children require assistance to prepare, obtain, serve or cleanup food, they most likely are in the presence of adults, siblings and peers when they eat. Further, meals involving school-aged children can occur in different contexts throughout the course of a given day, meaning that the child experience different social influences and understandings depending on the context of the meal.

Examining children's mealtime activities in different social and environmental settings are essential. Fleer and Hedegaard's (2010) approach to understanding child development suggested that children learn and navigate more than one social context daily. Therefore, each context contained similar and unique ways of carrying out and engaging in activities. For example in my study, depending on the setting during mealtime, the child could expect differences in how the meal was served, how he or she interacted with others, what he or she ate during the meal and who was expected to clean up after the meal. In better understanding the similarities and differences about how children's mealtime activities are experienced, we can get a better grasp on the variation and complexity of mealtime across settings. Further, in learning how children navigate different social communities and settings while eating, practitioners that work with children and families can better pinpoint interventions strategies if function with eating in a particular setting occurs. Finally, no studies exist in occupational science that examine similar occupations within two different settings.

Research Question

   Therefore, my research question, informed by the preceding theories, was the following: How do children in North Carolina experience eating and mealtime activities in different environments such as home and school?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to emphasize the importance of studying school-aged children and mealtime occupations from their perspective, I provide a brief discussion of how children have been represented historically in research and the direction of children as active participants (and consultants) in research. I follow this by reviewing the existing literature on mealtime and meal-related occupations and activities (e.g., at home with families or at school with peers) within and outside occupational science. Finally, I discuss the evidence supporting the need for studying children and their meal-related occupations and experiences.

Children in Research

Children have traditionally been studied as objects in research (Corsaro, 2015; Levey, 2009) through the ways in which they participated in various activities as small actors in an adult world. In fact, when involved in research, children and their voices and experiences were underrepresented and underemphasized (Humphry, 2005) leading to a subordinate lens through which children were viewed and studied (Corsaro, 2015). For example, children were viewed as inferior to adults and unable to make sense of their world without adult interpretation (James, 2013). More recently, however, children have been invited to become participants and consultants in research so scientists and the world at large can have a better understanding of how children experience and navigate their world from their perspective (see for example James, Curtis & Ellis, 2009). Since children are experts in their own worlds and their collective action affects society as a distinct group of people, there is merit in

studying their perspectives (Corsaro, 2015; Tisdall, Davis & Gallagher, 2009) and occupations.

Mealtime Literature

Children, mealtimes and related occupations have been studied in one of two contexts: at home with family *or* at school with peers. First, literature on family meals within and outside occupational science will be discussed. This will be followed by a brief examination of research on mealtime within schools.

Family meals. A great deal of literature has focused on family and meals, namely families with children, but has primarily been described from the mother's perspectives and/or through the researchers observations (e.g. Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeValut, 1991; Douglas, 1977; Visser, 1991; Ochs & Kremer-Stadlik, 2013). Meals studied within the family context are viewed as a routine, a ritual or a routine *and* ritual and have been described as culturally and ecologically determined (Fiese, Tomcho, Douglas, Josephs, Poltrock, & Baker, 2002). While they are considered common in frequency amongst most middle class families, meals and related mealtime occupations are also distinctive and unique between families (Fiese et al., 2002). They provide a sense of group membership and are appropriate for examining the interaction between the individual and the family and how the individual affects the family within the United States (Fiese et al., 2002; Fiese, Foley, & Spagnola 2006).

Family meals are considered an important social and moral learning opportunity where eating and feeding not only occur, but where relationships can be modified or reinforced (Ochs & Shohet, 2006), and knowledge can be socially constructed through communication and sharing stories. Accordingly, learned social behavior and food preferences are acculturated at the dinner table (Bourdieu, 1984; Visser, 1991). Furthermore,

variations in mealtime can also account for variations in socioemotional, academic, and language child outcomes (Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). Thus, children participating in meals and mealtime occupations are shaped by unique social, cultural, cognitive, behavioral, moral, and interactive features within the family meal.

  Mealtime studies within occupational science. Mealtime research within occupational science has focused primarily on families and utilized mostly qualitative methods. Articles that examine different aspects of meals or daily family mealtime occupations with children include the following: the contexts of meals with family (Evans & Rodger, 2008); difficulties and differences of families with children with disabilities during meals (Franklin & Rodger, 2003; Marquenie, Rodger, Mangohig & Cronin, 2011; Suarez, Atchinson, & Lagerwey, 2014); and the social interaction between family members (Bonsall, 2014). Other articles focused on general family routines and only mentioned that family meals and occupations occurred (e.g. Bagby, Dickie, & Baranek, 2012; Boyd, Harkins McCarty & Sethi, 2014).

  Many of the articles within OS used the caregiver, mainly the mother, as the 'family voice' to describe the family's occupations and mealtime perspectives. Only a handful of studies considered using additional family members as participants in their study (e.g. Bonsall, 2014; Koome, Hocking & Sutton, 2012). Most studies that focused on routine, daily family meals, and mealtime occupations were qualitative, with one exception (Winston, Dunbar, Reed & Francis-Connolly, 2010). In addition, all the qualitative studies used one to three interviews or focus groups to gather their data, whereas only three studies (Bonsall, 2014; Bundgaard, 2005; Franklin & Rodger, 2003) used other types of methods (e.g., observation and visual methods) in addition to the interview. Finally, in all the studies, family mealtime occupations were not portrayed in enough detail to describe the sequence of

how the meal unfolded or to highlight the roles of the family members during dinner (e.g. who set the table, who prepared dinner, who served dinner, etc.).

    Mealtime studies outside occupational science. The literature on family meals and mealtime outside OS is vast and includes perspectives from psychology, anthropology, nutrition, public health, medicine and nursing. The studies used diverse methods, including quantitative (e.g., randomized controlled trials and surveys-based studies), qualitative (e.g., interviews, observations, and ethnographies) and mixed methods procedures (e.g., surveys, interviews and observations). The topics of family mealtime literature also span a broad range, including behavioral nutrition (e.g. Bauer, Hearst, Escoto, Berge & Neumark-Sztainer, 2012; Boutelle, Lytle, Murray, Birnbaum, & Story, 2001), how families and family members without disabilities prepare for and experience mealtime (e.g. Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991; Devine, Jastran, Jabs, Wethington, Farell, & Bisogni, 2006; Douglas, 1977; James, Curtis & Ellis, 2009; Neumark-Sztainer, Wall, Fulkerson & Larson, 2013; Ochs & Beck, 2013; Tubbs, Roy & Burton, 2005) and language socialization during meals (e.g. Aronsson & Gottzén, 2011; Mondada, 2009; Paugh & Izquierdo, 2009).

    While much of the literature has traditionally focused on middle class families, there has been some mealtime research that examines low-income families and their mealtime routines (e.g. Devine et al., 2006; Tubbs et al., 2005). Like the OS literature, a majority of the studies relied on a caregiver's response to describe the family meal routines and perspectives. Most of the literature on family meals is exclusive to studying parents with children living with them and omits families without children and families with adult children. Finally, the only meal that appears to be considered as the 'family meal' is dinnertime.

School meals. In most Western societies, mealtime for children is not only experienced in the home with families, but also in schools with peers. Therefore, it is necessary to examine literature on how meals are experienced at school. According to Valentine (2000), school consists of two worlds: the formal school world of rules, objectives, goals and order; and the informal world of children and their peers, where they are able relax and interact with each other. Lunchtime is where the formal and informal worlds collide, the order of the lunch lines mixed with the relaxed disorder of eating with peers and friends (Valentine, 2000). Corsaro (2015) also noted that school-aged children mark friendships by sharing routines. Since mealtime at school can be considered a routine, it is important to consider not only the eating practices each child brings to the table from home, but also how the presence of peers and their eating practices alters the mealtime experience.

Research on school meals. The few qualitative studies on school lunch were from a child's perspective. For example, Thorne's (2005) study of school lunchtime noted that, when school-aged children were no longer under the watchful eye of adults in classrooms, they created their own rules and norms during lunchtime. More specifically, Nukaga (2008) and Thorne (2005) found that children built cultural practices and social relationships through begging, trading, sharing, and bartering. Children accessed their own and different social circles by using food as currency (Nukaga, 2008). In spending more time with peers, children acquired skills to successfully position themselves in multiple worlds amongst peers and at home.

While Thorne (2005) and Nukaga's (2008) examples of qualitative school mealtime studies displayed essential components of social context during school lunchtime, they left some gaps to fill in this area of study. For example, although one author used a diverse group

of children to study, she did not explicitly include the children's' voices in her discussion (Thorne, 2005). The other focused on experiences and shaping identities of a specific ethnic group during school lunchtime (Nukaga, 2008). Neither study focused on the performance, participation *and* meaning making of occupations and social interactions during school meals.

Outline of the Remainder of This Study

I constructed my dissertation to follow a more traditional ethnographic outline. Therefore, in Chapter 3, I defend my reasons for selecting an ethnographic methodology to study children's mealtime activities and experiences and also describe the methods I used to gather data. I conclude the chapter with a description of my analysis and interpretation. Chapter 4 provides a richer description of the consultants and their social communities. I outline the consultants' findings in Chapters 5 through 7. Within these findings chapters, I provide sharp details of mealtime, where in real life this detail typically flows with ease unnoticed. I slow down the different aspects of mealtime in each setting and invite you to pause. The moments that I highlight are where important aspects of mealtime occur. In fact each moment carries its own different but significant meaning that underscores the importance of the situated nature of mealtime. While at times it may seem like there are too many micro-moments, I hope my intent is clear. In Chapter 5, I address social interaction and how the children emphasized the importance of connecting with others during mealtime in each setting. In Chapter 6, I present how the children exercise their agency and social power by testing and pressing boundaries in the form of norms during mealtime. In Chapter 7, I discuss how the children highlighted family mealtime practices as part of forming an understanding about how they 'do mealtime'. I also include a discussion section in each findings chapter as it pertains to the particular setting or topic examined. Finally, in Chapter

8, I provide a discussion to bring the findings together and to answer my research question. I also include contributions to occupational science and discuss my reflections on the children consultants and their power throughout this particular research process. I complete Chapter 8 by suggesting this study's limitations, discussing future implications for research, and offering a brief conclusion about children's experiences in mealtime occupations.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative literature and research describing meals, food-related activities and mealtime within and outside of occupational science (OS) often focuses on family dinnertime, leaving the primary perspective and experiences of the family to be explained typically by the mother or other caregiver (e.g. DeVault, 1991; Evans & Rodger, 2008; Ochs & Kremer-Saldik, 2013). While there is a growing body of research that studies school lunches and food from the child's perspective (e.g. Nukaga, 2008; Wills, Backett-Milburn, Gregory, & Lawton, 2005), no studies examine the child's perspectives and experiences of mealtime at both home and school. Further, the quantitative studies on mealtime appear to focus on the amount of time spent together during dinnertime, contents and nutrition of meals at home and school, and amount of food waste in schools. These become statistics that describe a population, but little is learned about the nuances of what children actually do from their perspective. Thus, there is a gap in the literature that requires a more in-depth look at children's mealtime activities and experiences from their perspectives.

The ultimate purpose of this study was to generate more research about occupations, specifically mealtime occupations, in OS due to the current lack of knowledge of how occupations are experienced within different populations (e.g., minority groups including children; Hocking, 2009). In other words, it is important to understand how occupations are experienced by populations other than middle class adults in Westernized countries (Hocking, 2009, 2013). Furthermore, Dickie (2003) and Hocking (2009) stress the value in generating knowledge where occupations will be grounded in more than just the occupational

scientist's personal experience or speculation on how occupations should occur. It is vital to examine mealtime from the child's perspective, because she or he is learning to form and practice mealtime behaviors and actions through different contexts. In other words, we can learn how mealtime practices are learned and take shape through different contexts. The collective voices of children and their food practices at home and school can also assist in explaining their immediate social cultures of home and school and the relationship between these two environments. Thus, in studying children's mealtime occupations and experiences, ethnographic methodology fit with the nature of the study, is making a contribution to OS, and is filling a gap in the literature.

Turn of Events

Before moving on to my research questions, I would like to address an issue that came about during my recruitment process and throughout the nine months of data collection. My intent was to explore rural children's mealtime experiences, and potentially those of children living in low-income households. I hoped to uncover differences of what researchers and scientists alike did not know about rural low-income children and their mealtime activities. However, two things happened. While the area that I that I targeted for recruitment in North Carolina was considered 'rural' one to two years prior to beginning data collection, the rapid growth of the area changed the setting to a suburban fringe town. Thus, while I conducted my study in a small town with plentiful countryside, it was no longer considered rural. Further, three of four of my participants were from households with incomes considered to be in the upper middle class range. Therefore, my research questions shifted to address this demographic.

Research Design – Ethnographic Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand and examine the mealtime and food-related activities, cultural experiences and perspectives of third and fourth graders living in rural North Carolina within different social and environmental contexts of school and home. In essence, I was following the third and fourth graders at school and home to gain an understanding of what types of mealtime occupations they engage in and how they make meaning of those occupations in both social spheres. Therefore I was looking at mealtime occupations as the 'thing' linking the two social and environmental contexts together. Ethnography is approached with the intent to interpret and describe the culture of a particular group of people (Spradley, 1980; Wolcott, 1990) with emphasis on the context(s) and situations that surround them (Wolcott, 2008). By the researcher immersing in a local group, ethnography seeks to better understand social practices through observing and participating in those practices for a period of time (Laurier, Miller & Zech, 2017). Ethnography helps researchers understand practices, experiences, meanings and "knowledges of particular people in particular places" in everyday situations (Laurier et al., 2017, p. 1). Since I decided to learn about children's mealtime activities and experiences and how they construct meanings about these activities in two different social and environmental *contexts*, I deemed ethnography a good fit for this nine-month study.

Ethnographic studies require adequate time in the field and a broad approach to methods (e.g. informal interviews and photo elicitation) to provide insights into social norms, behaviors and experiences (Wenger, 1998, 2008) and how participants make sense of these actions (Wolcott, 2008); it is a way of engaging (Hinson, personal communication 2017). The framework for conducting ethnography is considered loose because it is difficult to predict a culture and to know what people will do and how they will act within a given

situation. In other words, how people act is based on their particular experience through a given situation (Bailliard, Aldrich & Dickie, 2013). The intent, then, is to capture the experiences of people in their everyday contexts, search for meaning, and provide insight into cultural or family practices and behaviors through the eyes of the participants and researcher (Weisner, 2014).

Working in collaboration. In traditional methodology for ethnography, the researcher ultimately takes responsibility of the written interpretation and portrayal of the particular culture being studied, which can create a power differential. Since children are considered a vulnerable population and are often awarded less power in adult-child relationships (Christensen, 2004), I wanted the children in this study to work with me throughout the research process with mutual engagement as "consultants" by using components of collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2005). Therefore, I created the initial research idea and completed components of the analysis on my own (Levey, 2009). However, I engaged in some child collaboration with encouraging them to ask each other questions about mealtime and elicited some primary analysis and interpretation from the children.

Since I intended to give them more power, the children *consultants* (which I call them throughout the remainder of this dissertation) and I had a responsibility to exchange dialogue and interpret this dialogue to the best of our abilities in both directions (Lassiter, 2005). In hindsight, our bond ended up as more of a reciprocal relationship. This is where I felt that I needed to give the consultants something in return instead of having mutual engagement throughout this research endeavor (G. Hinson in Lassiter, 2005). In fact, as an attempt to attract working class families when recruiting consultants (which ultimately backfired), I

offered each family a total of $125 in grocery store gift cards and an additional $30 total

worth of school supplies to the consultant if they completed the entirety of the study. While

this was admittedly only partial reciprocation for their time, I was hoping that it would make

involvement in this project more enticing or an incentive. Given the timeframe I worked

with, unfortunately the incentive did not pique the interest of working class families in the

way I imagined. In fact, three of the four consultants I recruited lived in households with an

upper-middle class income.

Children in ethnography. Children and childhood have been studied through

ethnography for nearly a century. However, for most of that time, the focus was on children

from non-Western developing cultures (James, 2001; Levine, 2007) and countries where the

children were objects (observed, but indirectly involved) or subjects (interviewed with more

direct involvement) of study and subject to the Western researcher's analysis and

interpretation. More recently, children have been included as consultants in research within

Western countries (see for example Ergler, 2011; James, Kjøholt & Tingstad, 2009; Prasad,

2013). Finally, including children as consultants (in collaborative ethnography) entails not

only their involvement in the data gathering process, but also their assistance with

formulating questions, gathering their own data, analyzing, and at times assisting with

writing results (Levey, 2009).

Finally, children are not absent of culture in any social world or context (and neither

were my consultants). Therefore, I also gathered information from family members, peers

and school staff through observations and interviews; I refer to these participants as either

community members or community. I also refer to the consultants' classmates as another

community.

Transactional perspective and ethnography. Finally, I viewed this ethnography through the lens of the transactional perspective, highlighting patterns of culturally valued action and the relationship between the child and the activities in a particular situation through a particular environment (Dickie, Cutchin, Humphry, 2006; Humphry, 2002, 2009). The emphasis with this perspective is on the relationships, the activities (or occupations) and the situational contexts (e.g., social, physical, temporal, historical, political, etc.). Ethnography allows the researcher to look at a whole situation and to foreground the multiple influences occurring or transacting during that particular (mealtime) situation (Bailliard et al., 2013). In using the transactional lens and ethnographic methods, I gained some understanding of how the consultants lived and experienced their mealtime activities at home and school through observation and conversation. Through these shared experiences during mealtime, I began to understand and learn the tacit information exchanged in both of these contexts through how the consultants interacted with their social worlds (Bailliard et al 2013). The interactions and relationships that the consultants and I formed throughout the study provided data that was co-created from our experiences together.

Researcher Background and Bias

I am a White, middle-class female who has been a pediatric occupational therapist for over 12 years. I have worked mostly with children and their families in an inpatient pediatric rehabilitation hospital, a pediatric outpatient rehabilitation clinic, and most recently, early intervention. My primary clinical and intervention foci involved assisting families and their children with eating and feeding difficulties, traumatic brain injuries, chronic pain, developmental delays and neurological dysfunctions, to potentially improve how they engage in their daily activities at home, school and the community. Since my emphasis in practice and research is primarily on children and families, I believe it is important to accentuate the

children's perspectives in their daily life activities, experiences and occupations, given that children are one of the primary client bases for occupational therapists. Also, I have been comfortable working with children and quickly establishing rapport in a clinical setting, which may have been helpful with establishing rapport with the consultants.

On the other hand, my consultants and their family's comfort levels were often more difficult to put a finger on as my study progressed (especially since I never asked them about their level of comfort with me and their participation in this study). Even though we were generally from the same social class (three consultants were from upper middle class and one from lower middle class), I noted in my observations that there were some potential differences in comfort level. For example, there were racial differences between the Black families (those of Q and Candace) and myself. Historically, when White researchers "study" Black families, those families have been concerned with the hidden intent of the researchers, with how the findings will be distributed, and with the practices of informed consent. This distrust found validation, for example, in the Tuskegee Study, where hundreds of Black men agreed to participate in a White-run study for decades, but never received informed consent or proper medical treatment despite having syphilis, a commonly treatable disease (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2017). Another example is Henrietta Lacks, whose cancer cells were used by doctors and medical companies for decades without her knowledge or permission (The Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2018). Since this issue does exist, I present examples of how I could best interpret the comfort levels of the consultants and their family members.

Q was excited to see me and hugged me when I came to his home for his family to sign consent forms. However, the first few times I ate with him at school, he was nervous

and 'stiff.' He attempted to make awkward conversation with me. After I went to his home to observe a dinner, he was more comfortable with me tagging along with him at school. Candace was shy when I came to their home for them to sign consent forms and often when I visited her at home for dinners. However, in school she was excited to invite me into her group where she and her friends called me "Mom" and "Auntie." Both Q and Candace's families were kind and inviting, often asking me about the health of my infant daughter, who had recurrent ear infections throughout the fall and winter. My first observation with Q's family was a little awkward because I was not eating with them; thus my presence and the idea of 'watching' them most likely contributed to this awkwardness. During my first dinner with Candace, her Nana took the time to proudly show me how she prepared dinner for Candace. The only times that race was discussed during my observations was with Candace's Nana. The first instance was when I had dinner with them on the evening of the presidential election. She asked me whom I voted for and appeared satisfied with my answer (Clinton). She confided that she was scared of what would happen to Black people if Trump won. I nodded and agreed, but did not have more to add. In a second instance, Nana was describing one of the local restaurants they tried once. During this particular dinner, Sharon, the third member of the household and friend of Nana's was also eating dinner with us.

> Nana said she assumed it was Italian (restaurant), but it turned out to be really heavy and greasy Southern cooking. Nana said shaking her head, 'Nobody eats like that anymore. The cornbread was even greasy. It was like my mother's or grandmother's cooking, all fried food.' Sharon agreed. Nana added, 'I figured there must be all Black people in the kitchen to make food like this. (She laughed) Then I looked around at the servers and they were all White!' Sharon and I laughed.

Therefore, while race was raised, no overt clue told me that the difference in our race strained our researcher/consultant/participant relationship. However, I noticed that the other consultants, while nice and accommodating, might have been counting the minutes down as

dinner came to an end. Once Kat and her brother cleared the table after dinner, Kat's mother asked me on more than one occasion, "Did you get everything you needed?" I took that as my cue to leave. I find it interesting that their parents were kind, yet still wanted to create boundaries for our relationship and perhaps model this to their children. In contrast, Nana and Candace often invited me to stay longer and I found I had to find an excuse leave at a reasonable hour, especially since Candace went to bed so early. However there could be multiple reasons for families asking me to stay longer or leave based on what else they needed to do that particular evening.

In the schools, I also did not notice an overt concern with my race and potential position as an authority figure as a researcher with the consultants' classmates, who were a variety of races and ethnicities. Often White, Black and Hispanic students I had never spoken to before ran over to hug me after they recognized I was in their classroom to eat with their classmate. I noticed some classmates kept their distance, a practice that I attributed to their personality, their comfort level with a strange adult in their classroom, or the possibility that they were uncomfortable with a White researcher engaging with children from different races and ethnicities.

Setting

I chose the town Three Streams (a pseudonym for the town involved in the study) based on the location of the rural area. I was interested in rural children because so few studies focused on this population, especially rural school-age children who provided their perspectives on their experiences. The school was situated in a "rural fringe" area located about 45-50 minutes away from a larger city consisting of over 400,000 people (Census Bureau, 2016). One small city, approximately six miles away, and a town less than five miles from Three Streams had populations of over 14,000 and 6,000 respectively (Census Bureau,

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2016). "Rural fringe" is the census-defined name describing a "rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster" (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2006). An urbanized area is considered an area containing 50,000 or more people, and an urban cluster is an area that consists of at least 2,500 people, but less than 50,000 (Census Bureau, 2010a). Three Streams consisted of fewer than 1,000 residents (Census Bureau, 2010b).

Finally, while the Census Bureau labeled Three Streams Community as "rural," the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) labeled Three Streams Elementary school as a "suburban: midsize" school (NCES; 2017). Suburban - Midsize was defined as an area with at least 10,000 but less than 50,000, where the number of people working in the area meets or exceeds the population of the area (NCES, 2017). This label is confusing since NCES uses the same definitions as the Census Bureau to define the school district and the community. The explanation for this discrepancy from the national and state databases is that Three Streams was considered to have a low concentration of rural population, thus potentially representing more of a suburban-esque town (Census Bureau, 2017). Also, this designation aptly depicted how living in Three Streams appeared, a small town that was once considered nothing but rural farmland became the fringe of suburban sprawl.

Data regarding the demographics of Three Streams Elementary School from 2014-2015 indicated a population of less than 500 students with 45% White non-Hispanic, 28% African-American, 23% Hispanic, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% two or more races (NCES, 2017). This is compared to the demographics of the town, which were approximately 62% White non-Hispanic, 31% African-American, and 7% Hispanic (Census Bureau, 2010b). Interestingly, there is a fairly large discrepancy between the percentage of White

children at Three Streams Elementary and the town (approximately 15% less White children). Similarly, there was also about 16% larger Hispanic population in the school compared to the town. I believe this discrepancy has to do either with the rapid change occurring in this particular area of North Carolina, where an influx of Hispanic families have moved in and perhaps a similar number of White families have moved out. Or there is the possibility that a larger number of Hispanic families live inside the Three Streams School District but outside Three Streams borough lines.

The average household income for the town was under $55,000, with 70% of the households earning between $25,000-75,000 (Census Bureau, 2016). Thus, what also drew me to this town was the increased likelihood of having children from low-income families participate in this study. In fact, 68% of students in Three Streams Elementary School qualified for free and reduced lunch due to living in a household considered to live below the federal poverty line (North Carolina Public Schools, 2017). Top employment positions in this area included manufacturing (33%), education and health services (26%), waste management and reduction (9%), professional, scientific and technical services (8%), and wholesale trade (7%) (Census Bureau, 2016). Further, approximately about 3% of people living in Three Streams work in Three Streams, and about 60% travel between 10-50 miles to work.

The town was home to a manufacturing plant that served the surrounding states and was responsible for many of the local jobs, along with those at Three Streams Elementary School. Three Streams was also host to an annual rodeo along with multiple fundraisers such as pancake breakfasts and spaghetti dinners for various community groups, including Rotary Club and Boy Scouts. There was not much in the way of a "downtown" to this particular area. A lone post office was nestled along one of the more frequently used roads within

Three Streams. There were a few gas stations and a car wash close to a major interstate highway. A couple of diners and fast food restaurants (e.g. Dunkin Donuts, McDonalds) were scattered on the roads closer to the major highway. Three Streams was less than two square miles and was nestled in between other boroughs that had plenty of countryside with working farms (up to 80 acres) and other forested areas. All the families in the study technically lived in Three Streams, but their homes were located close to a small neighboring city, Roselake (a pseudonym).

Under five miles away from the consultants and their families, Roselake consisted of over 14,000 residents (Census Bureau, 2016) with its own schools. Roselake had a small city size, but a nice downtown vibe, complete with main streets and small shops. It had multiple restaurants, fast food joints, grocery stores, big box stores, an outlet mall and a store that sells products in bulk. There was less countryside here and more housing development sprawl. In fact, on the shared borders of Three Streams and Roselake, what was once countryside was now being used for building new neighborhoods for houses, townhouses and apartment complexes. Thus the rapid growth from Roselake as well as from the other surrounding cities appear to be contributing to this change in demographic and has defined the occupational profile of the area.

Political demographic. Since this study took place during the heated 2016 election, it is also worth noting that while the state of North Carolina was considered a conservative state, the county that Three Streams was located in voted almost 73% Democratic (North Carolina State Board of Elections & Ethics Enforcement, 2016). Three Streams shares the county with a nearby university, where there were typically more liberal voters. However, given the many signs on front lawns boasting support for the conservative party, as well as

multiple local news stories concerning White students wearing the Confederate flag to school, it was difficult to assume that most Three Streams voters were liberal. While the amount of conservative support in this area was hard to put a finger on, especially because Three Streams was such a small community, there was no question that this area was politically charged both during and following the presidential and state election, similar to the rest of the nation. Some of the participant family members and peers of the consultants were very forthcoming regarding their political choice and opinions regarding the elections, while others made no mention of the events surrounding the political climate in their small rural town.

        Three Streams Elementary School and lunchroom. The Three Streams Elementary School was situated in the middle of Three Streams Borough. Upon entering the school, there was a large entrance area and straight-ahead was the lunchroom where you could see some of the lunch tables through the windows. The left wing of the school held the pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and fifth grade classrooms. Immediately to the right was the main school office. To the right of the office was the other wing of the school that held classrooms for the first through fourth graders. The right wing was designed as the letter "H" with a top hat (as one of the fourth graders had explained to me). The longer lines of the "H" held the first and second grade classrooms. The short line of the "H" was the media room and library and connected the two longer hallways. The "top hat" was where the third and fourth grade classrooms were located along the back hallway to this wing of the school. The four third grade classrooms were on the left half of the hallway and the four fourth grade classrooms were on the right (see Appendix A).

The lunchroom was at the opposite end of the long hallway from the third/fourth grade hallway. Upon entering the lunchroom as the consultants did, the office was to the left, outside of the lunchroom. The temperature within the lunchroom was often similar throughout the year, but during the winter months, sometimes it felt colder in the large open room where some students wore their winter jackets to lunch. It was a large rectangular room with the ceiling over 15 feet high and fluorescent lighting. There were approximately 20 beige-speckled rectangular lunch tables and each of the student tables held approximately 12 students. This included the majority of the tables with individual black circular stools for each student, as well as the three or four tables with bench seats. This resulted in the consultants and their peers facing each other while seated at the table and eating their lunch. Two of the trashcans were placed on wheels in the middle of the lunchroom, close to the tables, and two extra were resting near the far front right wall in the event they were needed (see Appendix B).

The floors consisted of a white speckled tile that can be found in many large public spaces. The three beige-painted cinderblock walls were a dull contrast to the wall of windows. The window wall often had colorful construction paper decorations taped on it based on the season. A few signs were posted on the cinder block walls including three or four copies of the lunchroom rules, multiple posters near the lunch line encouraging "healthy eating" (e.g., adding vegetables and fruits to your meal; how healthy food can make you strong; food pyramid), and a large banner-type sign that advertised the school using Domino's whole wheat crust for pizza Fridays. There were two flat-screened televisions mounted high above the entrance and exit of the lunch line, but they were never in use when I was present. In comparison to the often-crowded walls of the classrooms (i.e., posters,

rules, reminders), there were few distractions on the lunchroom walls. The visual appeal of the lunchroom was not welcoming or comforting to me. It felt more like a required space that fulfills a need (e.g., a large area to feed a large number of children).

Lunch, for students who did not bring lunch from home, was served at the right side of the cafeteria. The line started in the far right corner and was behind walls that separated the lunch line from the seating area of the lunchroom. The students moved through the line left to right and emerged through the double doorway area to the seating area where the class tables were situated in rows (See a map of the lunchroom in Appendix). Each of the classes was allotted two tables where one table was labeled 'nut free' which is where the students with nut allergies were expected to sit.

A low-income population and school lunch. As I mentioned earlier, what drew me to Three Streams was the increased likelihood of having children from low-income families participate in this study. Approximately 68% of students qualified for the national free or reduced lunch, indicating many families were living at or just above the federal poverty line (North Carolina Public Schools, 2017). Thus, the school was eligible for and participated in the Community Eligible Provision, a federal universal free meal program, because of the number of children (over 40%) requiring assistance to pay for school food. In this case, Three Streams Elementary provided free breakfast for all children regardless of family income. However, for lunch even though some families still received free and reduced lunch based on their income, the other families with higher income were required to pay full price for school-prepared lunches.

Pilot Study

A pilot research project was conducted in order to learn more about doing research in schools to inform the study. By conducting the pilot study, I wanted to determine which

school-aged children would be most appropriate for my proposed study (e.g., which children had the ability to describe what they were experiencing and perhaps have some reflection on that experience). I also wanted to hone my observation skills by spending time with the children during lunch and recess to determine what to focus on during observations and interactions at school. In gaining access to a school, I intended to develop some form of rapport, familiarity and credibility with the school principal and staff simply by being present and observing different classes. This study, entitled "Interactions and Activities of Children Surrounding Lunchtime in School," consisted of observing interactions of students in first through third grade just before, during and after lunchtime in Three Streams Elementary.

The findings of the study included a noticeable difference in behavior and social interaction across the age range of students--whereas third graders were more deliberate with their choice of a lunchroom seat (e.g., saving seats) and interactions with their peers, first graders were more inclusive and less specific about whom they interacted with at lunchtime. Another notable finding was that topics discussed during lunch included not only participants' families and activities of other family members, but also other parts of the school day such as recess in all grades. Thus, the students often conversed and engaged each other in discussions about occupations at lunch. Finally, I found social interactions (e.g., very social versus very quiet students) as well as the processes of the occupation (e.g., the order in which the food was eaten) varied greatly between students within a given classroom and across classrooms. Since this pilot study was based entirely on teacher interest and participation, the ages of my participants included only first through third graders. The findings and my experiences with the school and the students informed my dissertation study

with regard to participant inclusion and exclusion, as well as teacher interest in supporting

the studies with their students.

Inclusion Criteria

The final participant and consultant inclusion criteria for this study were as follows:

(a) the child must be attending third or fourth grade; and (b) the child and families must

speak English. Fourth graders were initially not included in the pilot study due to lack of

teacher interest. However for the dissertation study, fourth graders were included later within

the inclusion criteria because I assumed, based on the above developmental literature, that

they would also have more reflective and deliberate activities during lunchtime with peers

and at home with family.

Recruitment

I determined that the school would be the best way to target age-specific children, in

case local community events or churches did not have the number of children I was looking

for in the study. Despite having prior connections with the Three Streams Elementary

principal and the school board's Institutional Review Board (IRB) with my pilot study, it

required two months of interaction before obtaining approval from UNC's IRB and the IRB

for Three Streams Elementary. The formal IRB submission process was initiated in early

June 2016 and I was approved by the end of July 2016 to begin recruiting students and

families in August. Initially, only third grade classrooms were targeted due to the

information learned from my pilot study and to a particular third grade teacher who was

interested in assisting me with this dissertation study. However, after I obtained permission

from the IRBs to conduct my study with third graders, I learned that this teacher had moved

to fourth grade and that three new teachers would be occupying classrooms in the third grade

hallway. After a meeting with the principal to discuss study specifics, both the principal and I

contacted the third grade teachers about my study via email. In addition to having three

teachers new to either this school or position in the school, and since the teachers were not

given the choice to participate this time (but reluctantly consented), my study and I were not

warmly accepted into the new third grade 'family.' In fact, the lead third grade teacher was

clear early on in telling me that if it were up to her, she would not have me conduct my study

with the third graders this year due to having three new teachers, two of whom had never

taught at this school. I thanked her for her honesty and time and ensured that I would disrupt

their schedule as little as possible. Thankfully, our relationship improved throughout the

duration of the year. I was also fortunate that the two younger teachers were very enthusiastic

and excited to participate in this study from the beginning.

The principal also suggested that I attend a couple of parent night events that occurred

in late August, a week before school started, and early September, just after school began.

The first event was created so the parents and students could meet their teacher prior to the

upcoming school year. The second event was an opportunity for the parents to learn about the

curriculum for that year. I was provided a table that was set up in the third grade hallway

where I could hand out informational flyers and answer questions from both the students and

parents. Since both events had most likely no more than 50% attendance with regard to

classes and classrooms, in October I followed up by sending home informational flyers to

each third grade student and encouraging enrollment with the consultants' friends when

possible. I enrolled three third grade students by the end of September 2016, but was not

successful with obtaining any more consultants. Thus, I amended my IRB to include fourth

graders. After contacting the fourth grade teachers and informing them of the study, I was

able to distribute informational flyers to the fourth grade classes through homerooms in mid-

January. I had one final consultant enroll in my study near the middle of February 2017. Thus, I had four primary consultants, three third graders and one fourth grader.

To enroll the consultants and family members, I travelled to each family's home. This enabled me to get an idea of the child's home environment and where to go for my first dinner with each family. There were three reasons for this initial contact: to provide the children and family members slightly more comfort while signing consent forms and getting to know me in a comfortable and familiar environment (since I had barely exchanged a couple sentences with them during our first meeting at school); to have them ask any additional questions about the study; and to give the child consultants a chance to lay eyes on me one more time before I was to eat lunch with them at school. The enrollment and consent/assent form visit was recorded as a participant observation with field notes (see Appendices C-F for specifics). In order to protect identification of the consultants and other community members, the location, school, consultants, family members, school staff and peers were given pseudonyms. The consultants were given the opportunity to create their own pseudonym for the study.

Consultants

My consultants were as follows: Q Peterson, a small-statured, inquisitive eight-year-old Black male; Candace McDonald, a slight-framed, sweet Black eight-year-old female; KittyCat Jones, an averaged-sized, talkative eight-year-old White female; and Kat Walker, the lone fourth-grader who was a bright 10-year-old White female with an average frame. All but one consultant lived in a single-family house within a dual parent upper middle-class family and had at least one additional sibling. Candace, an only child, lived with her biological grandmother (who was also her foster mother) and her grandmother's female friend in a two-bedroom apartment with a lower middle class household income. Since the

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household income of my consultants collectively does give an accurate representation of household incomes in Three Streams and since Three Streams is no longer considered rural, there is less emphasis on the rural and economic pieces and more emphasis on the experiences of middle class children living in a small town. Further information about each consultant is offered in Chapter 4.

Based on the large amount of data I had from the four consultants at the end of February from both contexts a better idea of how lunchtime at school and dinner at home was occurring, and a lack of interest from additional consultants, I decided to stop recruiting after Kat enrolled. My total time spent with each consultant ranged from about six to nine hours at school and about three to ten hours at home for dinner throughout the year. Since I was able to enroll two children from Black families and two children from White families, there was a little diversity with regard to race and family constellations. While four consultants may be considered a 'small sample,' the quality of our interactions (conversations and time spent eating together) provided me with plenty of data to provide a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the consultants' mealtime activities and experiences at home and school.

These four became my key consultants throughout the study, however, their classmates provided information through their actions during lunchtime. While I did not formally interview the consultants' peers, I participated in lunchtime with many of the students. They helped add depth and richness to the consultants' mealtime situations and experiences as they interacted with each other.

Methods

I used the following data gathering methods during my fieldwork: participant observation, interviews, photo elicitation and drawings/collages. While the photo elicitation and drawings are not typically some of the first methods considered when designing an

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ethnography, I used these two methods more as a means of assisting the consultants to generate more communication and understanding regarding how they perceived and experienced mealtime activities at home and at school. Below I describe each method and provide specifics on how each occurred.

Participant observation. Participant observation enabled me to learn about the activities and perspectives of the community members and consultants in the study (Kauwlich, 2005; Wolcott, 2008). Therefore, I participated in each of the consultant's mealtime activities at home and school. I gathered data first with the children at school during lunch in order to establish good rapport and to be accepted by them and their peers. My initial participation with the children at school (depending on whom he/she had for a teacher) included meeting him or her in the classroom prior to lunch, walking next to them down the hallway to the cafeteria, quietly sitting next to the consultant and waiting for them or their peers to invite me to participate. Christensen (2004) suggested this technique in order to provide time for the children to invite you into their conversations and their world. I brought my lunch from home (e.g. gluten free turkey sandwich, carrot sticks, popcorn and an apple) and ate next to the consultants. I was mostly silent during lunch, attempting to remember conversation topics or watching how the consultants engaged with each other. I often did not speak unless the consultants or community members engaged me in conversation.

Since I wanted to ensure both the families and consultants were comfortable with my presence at home, the consultants and families defined and revealed the aspects of their mealtime activities they felt comfortable showing me. I had hoped to go along on either a grocery-shopping trip or out to a restaurant the families but was never asked. Therefore, I

did not participate in those aspects of the children's mealtimes or food-related experiences. I also told the families that they did not need to make me dinner during the participant observations. In the end, one family did not make me dinner and the other three families insisted on making me dinner even after I revealed having a gluten allergy, which they were not used to cooking for. During the dinners that I ate with consultants, I was usually eating at the dinner table with their family members. The one exception was with Q and his family. They followed my request not to cook for me and I sat in a chair just off to the side of their dinner table. I remained silent unless I was engaged in conversation or if someone was telling me a story.

As a note, remaining fairly silent was awkward initially with the families. I noted their discomfort in their body language and uncomfortable longer silences during dinner. This resolved once one of the children made a silly remark or changed the subject. At school, while the students were aware that I was an adult sitting with them, most of them continued to talk to each other and basically sometimes ignore the fact that I was present. There were a few student informants who were not in the study, but often engaged me in conversation especially if the consultant was eating or talking to a friend.

Participant observation sessions occurred approximately one to two times per month with each child from September 2016 to May 2017. Each lunchtime observation lasted approximately 45 minutes. The dinner participant observations lasted between one and two-and-a-half hours. The number of participant observations included 6-10 school lunches for each consultant and three to four dinners per consultant for a total of 9-14 observations total per child consultant. The parents and teachers were each notified in advance of the observations, primarily via email, phone or text message. Most of the parents reported liking

the idea of knowing the certain days when I was to 'hang out' with their child at school. I also contacted the teachers ahead of time to confirm that a particular day worked for them, or to learn if there was a schedule change and that I needed to come in at a different time. Therefore, the parents and teachers received at least two to six days notice for a school mealtime visit; the scheduling for home mealtime visits occurred at least 6-14 days in advance.

I took as many mental notes as possible during my time as an observing participant in both contexts. When I had the time or the chance to take notes while the consultant and their peers were finishing up class assignments prior to lunch at school, I jotted a couple notes on my small pad of paper. I noticed in my pilot study that children are very curious and those that could read easily become distracted by what I wrote down instead of continuing to engage with friends at lunch. Also, from what I gathered from the families from my first visit with them to sign consent forms, they were not comfortable with me recording bits of information about them as they spoke. I recorded key phrases and ideas following my observations using a small notebook, made notes on my structured observation sheets (See Appendix G for samples), and audio recorded a more detailed account of my experiences with the child consultants. Depending on the context and place of my consultant, my written fieldnotes were completed while I sat in my car in the parking lot at the school after lunch or down the road from the consultant's home. I recorded the audio notes as I drove from Three Streams back to my home. The conversations that I referred to in my fieldnotes were approximations of how I remembered them occurring during the observation. Within the field notes, I created rough drawings of the classrooms, kitchens and dining rooms, noting where people sat at the table at home and school and listing the types of food consumed at

lunch and dinner. This information provided additional insight to social interactions and the general idea of how the physical contexts/environment was set up for each consultant at home and school.

As Clifford (1990) explained, notes about the 'field' are enmeshed with reading and writing before, after and outside the research experience. The line between the field and notes and even analysis becomes blurry. The fieldnotes were my impressions of how the consultants experienced mealtime based on my participation with them through a given environment. While the notes serve the purpose as a shorthand account of what has occurred during a particular day, how the consultant described the activities, and the decision to include certain events and omit others, it is also the very first form of analysis (Clifford, 1990). Through informal conversations (interviews), I determined whether my impressions of the consultants' experiences and activities were in fact congruent with what I recorded in my fieldnotes or not.

Brief conversations (informal interviews). I refer to my interviews as *brief conversations* because the verbal exchanges for clarity between the consultants and I lasted for short amounts of time. Interviews provide a frame of reference for a child's experiences and different perspectives within the community regarding a child's mealtime. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by me. In order to increase their comfort level with me, I waited until after the second participant observation to begin our audio-recorded conversations at home and school. All of the lunchtime interviews with the children occurred as soon as possible after lunch, which also happened to be their recess time. Setting up interviews after lunch provided me the chance to obtain the child's specific narrative and experience from that particular lunch or food related activities. I provided each child

opportunities to ask me questions and assist me in guiding the interview related to food or mealtime occupations in a more specific direction; however, often they had no questions or nothing to add. In hindsight, perhaps this was one of the signs that I needed to more carefully explain what I was hoping to achieve with this dissertation. The recess conversations were almost all conducted in the child's classroom (while her/his peers were outside) or the media center on indoor recess days and lasted between 6 and 15 minutes. Each child consultant participated in three to seven school interviews. One issue I did run into was the lack of willingness for the students to have a dialogue or discuss my questions about lunchtime because our talking time ran into their recess time with their friends. About half of the time the consultants were distracted or interested in finishing up the interview as soon as possible so they could join up with their peers. In listening to the recorded conversations, I noted that the distracted conversations often yielded little detail despite my probing. I ended up asking similar questions (from previous interviews) in later interviews to ensure the consultants gave full and descriptive answers to the best of their ability. Also, the sight of the audio recorder intimidated Candace and Kat. Thus, I offered each of the children opportunities to color in a coloring book that had different pictures of food while we talked and made better attempts to hide the audio recorder. This assisted with some of the concern with the recorder and, on occasion, yielded smoother interviews.

The consultants also participated in approximately three to five interviews total in their homes. These interviews included descriptions of their mealtime experiences, their drawings/collages, and the photos they took related to mealtime. At times, the consultants encouraged a parent to be present during the interview; at other times they were complacent with talking to me while their parent either prepared or cleaned up dinner. Interviews took

place in a quieter environment either before or after dinner, in a formal dining room, kitchen

or bedroom. The parent often suggested an appropriate place for the interview, whether or

not they were invited by their child to listen to what unfolded.

Caregivers, siblings and school staff (i.e. teachers and cafeteria personnel) were

invited to participate in an interview at their convenience closer to the end of the study. This

was done deliberately in order to ensure rapport was established with everyone. The family

interviews ended up occurring in more of a group conversation, for those who chose to

participate. Family member participation with the interview varied between just one

caregiver to as many as all family members. It occurred at my final participant observation

dinner with each family. I gave the consultant the opportunity to speak in another room out

of earshot of caregivers, but all child consultants chose to participate in their single

interviews with at least one parent present. The consultant interviews were conducted prior to

the family interviews so as to not skew or influence their own answers to similar questions.

The multiple family member interviews were conducted closer to a group interview format,

although there was a lot of talking over each other and corrections being made to each others'

responses during the interviews (see Table 3.1).

I also conducted individual interviews with one third grade teacher, one fourth grade

teacher, and four members of the cafeteria staff. A group conversation was conducted with

the remaining three third grade teachers based on schedules and time commitments (see

Appendix H for interview examples).

Finally, consultants participated in a final interview, which was conducted at each of

their homes. I made it clear to the families that I only wanted to interview the consultants

and not to participate in another dinner with the family. The content during this final

interview included discussing any loose ends or topics regarding mealtime at home or school and to confirm or correct information that I had gathered and interpreted about the consultants collectively regarding their mealtime activities. I grouped the statements by context for home and school. After explaining what I was hoping they could do, each child took this role very seriously and corrected me when they thought my statement did not match their perspective.

Table 3.1. Interview Breakdown

People	Number of Interviews	Interview Location	Approximate Length of Interview
Consultants	4-7 interviews between September 2016 and May 2017	Quiet classroom or media room	6-15 minutes
Consultants	3-5 interviews between September 2016 and May 2017	Quiet room at home (i.e. formal dining room, kitchen)	12-30 minutes
Family members (parents and/or siblings)	1 – (group interview if more than one family member participating) before/after the last dinner observation	Quiet room (e.g. sitting area, kitchen)	30-45 minutes
Teacher (Ms. Jenkins; Ms. White)	1	Ms. Jenkins' classroom; Ms. White's room respectively	40 minutes
Teachers (Ms. Parker, Ms. Spencer, Ms. DeMarco)	1 –group interview	Ms. Parker's classroom	35 minutes
Cafeteria staff (3 workers and 1 manager)	1 interview each	Loud cafeteria	3-12 minutes each

Photo elicitation. Photo elicitation allowed me to expand on questions and allowed the children to discuss another dimension of their lives (Bugos et al, 2014; Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). Following the first dinner with each family, I provided disposable cameras to each consultant and asked them to take pictures of home mealtime occupations over a two to three week period. Each child was provided a handout with the same instructions and examples of what I was looking for (e.g. their participation in breakfast, lunch and dinner activities, grocery shopping, eating out, cooking with family, etc.). My hope was to give the consultants another way to express mealtime meaning and activity at home that might not be covered through our conversations and spark other ways at getting at this topic. While I would have liked to have pictures from school as well, I decided against it due to privacy concerns (for the consultants' classmates) and the possibility of creating additional distraction at the school. After all the 24 pictures on the roll were taken, the consultants returned the cameras to me. I had the pictures developed and then either prior to or following my third dinner with each consultant, I interviewed the child about the pictures as we looked at each of the pictures she/he had taken. The interviews, which lasted 15-25 minutes, were audio-recorded and transcribed. Once the pictures were scanned as a back-up document, they were given back to the consultants to keep. See Appendix I for the Photo Elicitation Instructions.

Drawings/collage. Using drawings or collage provided me with another child-friendly way to understand the child's perspective (Leitch, 2008; McCormack, 2002). I asked the child consultant to draw or complete a picture collage of one or more mealtime activities. I gave each child two pieces of white construction paper and provided them with printed instructions to create a drawing or picture that represents mealtime at school and another drawing or picture on the second piece of paper that represents mealtime at home. The option

of using picture collages was used in case the child did not want to draw. One child opted to use a picture collage from pictures on the computer and glued them on a piece of paper. During the second dinner observation, before we ate dinner, I interviewed the consultants about their drawings or pictures; the interview was audio recorded. This form of data collection did not always result in what I had expected. I thought that this project would yield drawings of friends at the lunch table and families at the dinner table. Instead, the consultants opted for drawings of food, explaining that it was difficult to draw people or places. Consequently, I received more images of food than of scenes from lunch and dinner. See Appendix J for the drawings/collage instructions

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is being aware of personally engaging and observing in activities in the field with your consultants. It also assists with identifying culturally constructed practices that are taken for granted while gathering data (Liong, 2014). I referred to these notes as I continued to interpret and analyze the different aspects of mealtime with the consultants. I often wrestled with my role as the researcher and the one assumed to be in "power" throughout this study. Below I discuss some of the constant difficulties I experienced with being a researcher, but also wanting to be a participant observer.

Reflections about the study. How to depict the children in this study was in theory one of the easiest to do (e.g., let the kids lead), but the most difficult in practice. I felt constantly aware of how my roles played into and affected the child's activities and actions. My goal was to have the child as the main voice in the study, for the child to assume a role of power almost equal to mine. I noticed that after at least three lunches with all of the consultants, they were more comfortable with my presence and acted as though I was not there. However, I found it increasingly difficult to maintain the child's voice while

conducting interviews and gathering explanations about their experiences of mealtime. Few of my interviews with the consultants were actually long soliloquies providing examples and explanations for their mealtime. I often asked multiple variations of a question in order to get an answer I deemed "complete."

None of the children were interested in what their peers thought about lunch or dinner; nor were they interested in asking peers about their dinners and lunches at school with regard to providing additional information for my study. While I encouraged the consultants to interview each other and their friends about mealtime, they had no interest in assisting me with gathering data. Thus, there was no collaboration between consultants during this study. Whether this was due to the fact that my interest and topic choice was not controversial enough to begin a mealtime revolution of sorts and that the child consultants did not have difficulty eating food (physically) or even worried about where their food or meal would come from, the concept of eating food with other people was not enough for them to appear to want to take more interest and a role in my study by asking each other questions. Otherwise they collaborated with me to some degree during the data gathering process and initial analysis process. However, their direct input and involvement were less than I hoped.

My identities and relationships in each context were different to a degree. At school, I was with the child during lunch. After about two or three lunches, the children and their peers were more comfortable with me sitting with them. I made this assessment based on their casual check-ins with me, how they ignored me (which is what I hoped for), and their invitations to join conversation with their friends. I felt as though I was always an imposter at the school: not really an adult, but not a child either. I wanted to see myself as more of a

student, while the children and their peers saw me as more like someone's mom or "Aunt." After my first observations, despite my improbable hopes of fitting in like a student, the best I could do was be an adult that the consultants could trust and continue to increase their level of power. The teachers did not interfere with my interaction with the students. However, they acted as though I was an extension of the school staff, as if my presence at the table alone was helping to enforce the rules at school lunchtime. I will say at times my presence definitely sparked some creative efforts to get me to notice the peers of the consultants at the table (e.g., one girl trying to fit an entire pouch of applesauce in her mouth at once; a boy drinking from the milk carton without using his hands). I did not correct the behavior of the other students, unless a teacher instructed me to. Actually, all the consultants were proud to have me with them, as if my presence made them 'stand out' and emphasized the fact that they were special. One of the peers of the students looked at my school-required name badge with the consultant's name printed on it. She sighed and said to me, "Someday my name will be on that sticker." In that way, the consultants had more social power amongst friends, but not necessarily within my study. The consultants and even the teachers looked at me for instruction on what I wanted or expected of them.

In the consultant's home with her/his family, I was definitely considered more of an 'adult' as opposed to a peer of the consultant. The family members treated me as an adult and often attempted to engage in adult-based conversations, discussing my family, my study and even politics. The consultants enjoyed my attention as another adult who was interested in what they were doing, but typically did not ask me questions about myself. I was, again, in charge, but also a guest of the home. At the last dinner, I noticed more of a bond with all of the family members, but none of our relationships continued after the close of the study.

Despite my ongoing concerns with my roles as a researcher, I determined to stop gathering data once I was able to observe and understand more of the nuances with the children at school and the families at home regarding mealtime and when the data yielded no new information (Dickie, 2003). Thus, the amount of data collected and the quality of data gathered appeared sufficient to answer the research questions.

Analysis and Writing

I followed my projected timeline after wrapping up data gathering with my consultants. Since I analyzed my data as I was gathering it, I was able to member-check (for lack of a better word) with a general preliminary analysis with my consultants prior to completely ending the data gathering process. The consultants took this job very seriously and provided either confirmations or small corrections to my very preliminary findings. I provided the final gift cards to the families and the consultants as a way of thanking them for completing the study. I finished data collection by May 20, 2017. From that time until about July 10, 2017, I converted fieldnotes into documents and organized my thinking. I began the iterative process of analyzing, writing, thinking, interpreting and writing after this date, using version 8.3 of Atlas.ti to code my fieldnotes and interview transcripts, and using open coding strategies as outlined in Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland (2006). The drawings and standard observation notes (e.g. maps on where the consultants sat at the table at home or in the classroom) that I completed after the observations were ultimately used to assist in explaining nuances in the data. The consultants' drawings, collage and photographs were used to explain (or further implicate or ground) the findings in my study. I loosely separated this information into written 'chunks' on a Microsoft word document.

During and following the phases of data collection, I also analyzed the data separately within the specific contexts at school and home as well as across contexts to determine if

there were any glaring similarities or differences between or across both social contexts. The analysis process was iterative in that it required me to read and examine the data, think about how certain components fit or did not fit together, write about these thoughts or components, and then re-read and re-examine the data, thinking and writing multiple times throughout the course of analysis. I discussed findings or topics that appeared to be prevalent and important within the mealtime scope with my committee members. I drew out tables and graphics to further capture my ideas and interpretations.

As I analyzed my data, I gained deeper understanding of my relationships with the consultants and their relationship with mealtime activities. Furthermore, the experiences that I shared with my consultants helped highlight reasons why they chose to talk about some topics while not sharing others. Given that I discussed the general findings with my consultants in our final interview, asking them to read portions of my analysis or interpretation did not seem worth our time. Thus, this collaborative ethnography shifted to more of a traditional ethnography. However, through my data analysis and interpretation, I strove to fairly represent the consultants' mealtime experiences and activities.

CHAPTER 4: CONSULTANTS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Most of the contents within this section are descriptions of the consultant's communities from home and school, although I also discuss the consultants in more detail below. I consider the communities as the groups of individuals that directly influenced the consultants on a daily basis such as family members at home and classmates and teachers at school. While the consultants' local community (Three Streams), state (North Carolina) and country (United States) also influenced the consultants' activities, I chose to place more emphasis on their immediate (and daily) communities of home and school, where the evidence of their influence was more apparent in my findings. The four consultants were my primary sources of learning about mealtime from the children's perspective. However, their classmates and family members served as additional participants who helped create the situations and bring the experiences to life.

In spending a fair amount of time with the consultants, I must admit that I grew attached to each of them. Without getting too sentimental, I present a more detailed description of the consultants, their families, their friends, and classmates based on their classrooms. For example, Q and KittyCat were in the same classroom so they are described first, followed by Candace, the final third grader, and then the very last, but not least, Kat, the fourth grader. As a final note, I encouraged the consultants to choose their own pseudonyms, which are used below.

Q

Q Peterson was the first consultant who was enrolled in my study. He was an inquisitive 8 years old black male with a sweet smile. He was initially a shy boy who was slow to warm up to adults and peers alike. He was very bright and preferred to follow rules and instructions. He received higher than expected grades for his age. As I got to know him, I learned that he was well spoken, very opinionated and did not back down if peers or adults challenged his beliefs. Once Q was friends with a group of peers at school, he engaged them in long conversations and competitions. Q was average height for a third grader and was on the thinner/smaller side for weight. He dressed according to season in t-shirts, shorts, jeans or sweaters with sneakers. He kept his hair very short. Q played football for a community team in the fall and occasionally played basketball with friends during the winter and spring.

Peterson home and family. Q and his upper middle class family lived in a modest two-story home with similar houses nearby with multiple cul-de-sacs. The homes were placed fairly close together in this neighborhood, which was about a mile from the larger town of Rosewood. When I first visited them, the neighborhood looked strange because there was nothing but empty land just past their cul-de-sac of homes. However during my time with him, this land behind their family's home became construction sites for new homes.

Q's mother, Lisa, was a lawyer and traveled about 40 minutes to her job in another larger town. Lisa was a slight woman in her forties with average height (around 5'4"). She either wore her hair in a perm or in small three-inch braids around her head. Lisa elicited a little light energy to the family, gently kept conversation moving and laughed easily. Q's father, Jerry, worked from home as a computer consultant. He was a tall (at least 6'2"), broad soft-spoken man in his mid-to late forties who was quick to smile. Jerry was a quiet but kind

man to me and his family members. Q also had an older brother, Jake, who attended the Three Streams Middle School as an eighth grader. Jake was taller (about 5'11) and involved in participating in school sports all year long. He also participated in band as a percussionist. I heard him practicing sometimes as I left the house after dinner.

KittyCat

KittyCat Jones was a friendly white girl who was also eight years old when she enrolled in the study. She had medium length, slightly wavy thick brown hair that hung somewhere around chin-length. She typically dressed in t-shirts and jeans with sneakers. She had a good sense of humor, marched to the beat of her own drum, and was generally accepted by her peers. She received mostly "A's" in school. KittyCat's personality made her seem like she was willing to try new activities and foods and did not back down from a challenge. Socially she was mature enough to handle more grown-up types of tasks (e.g., help figure out how to clean up a mess in the cafeteria), but did not get drawn into grown-up type social problems (e.g., boyfriends). She played pretend, made up games with friends and played with dolls. KittyCat was also involved in a local afterschool all-girls running group with peers, and occasionally participated in afterschool programs during the week.

Jones' home and family. KittyCat lived with her middle to upper middle class family slightly further out into the country, another three or four miles west from Q and Candace. She lived in a modest two-story home at the end of a road and cul-de-sac with two other houses. There was nothing but field and forest across the street from her house. At nighttime it was very quiet and dark with no street lamps to produce artificial light.

KittyCat lived with her parents and older sister. Her mother, Melissa, who was in her forties, was a friendly, funny and talkative woman with a Southern accent. She worked for her family's church. She had shoulder length very dark brown hair and a medium build. Her

father, Joseph, was a tall (at least 6'4"), witty middle school science teacher, also in his late forties. He had long thick brown hair that was always pulled back into a loose ponytail that hung to the middle of his back. KittyCat's sister, Hannah, a junior at Three Streams High School, also resided in their home. Hannah, a tall (5'9"), thin brunette with long, thick wavy hair, participated in Honors Band and ran Cross Country for the local high school. KittyCat also had an older brother, William, who I never had the chance of meeting because he was away at his first year of college. The Jones' talked about William during dinner conversations throughout the year.

   Ms. Jenkins and Ms. Powers. KittyCat and Q's homeroom teacher was Ms. Jenkins, the lead third grade teacher. She was a blonde white female in her late twenties or early thirties, with an average height and build. Ms. Jenkins had been a third grade teacher at Three Streams Elementary for three years and had the most teaching experience in the third grade at this particular school. Ms. Jenkins was direct, but kind to her students and very friendly and supportive to her colleagues. She taught math and science to half of the third grade students. Ms. Powers, Ms. Jenkins's teaching assistant, also worked in Ms. Jenkins's classroom. Ms. Powers was a white female with thick brown wavy hair that grew past her shoulders and appeared to be in her mid-to-late forties. Ms. Jenkins described Ms. Powers' job as a way to help her with organizing and grading papers so Ms. Jenkins could lend more of her time to help the other three new third grade teachers acclimate to life at Three Streams Elementary. Ms. Powers also assumed the role of the behavior enforcer. She corrected the third graders' behavior in the lunchroom more frequently than the other third grade teachers.

Q and KittyCat's classmates. There were twenty students in Q and KittyCat's class with only five boys. First I describe the peers that Q primarily interacted with in this class. Then I will follow with whom KittyCat typically interacted with during lunch.

At the beginning of the year, Q and I ate off by ourselves at a vacant corner of a class table in a kind of awkward silence scattered with brief conversation as we ate our lunches from home. I believe this occurred mostly because he did not have any close friends in his homeroom at the beginning of the year. As a result, Q brought books with him and read for parts of lunch. Sometimes he lent an ear to some of the more talkative females in his class who filled the table around us (e.g. Jenny and Natasha). Jenny was a petite white girl with plastic purple glasses and a big personality who talked about anything and everything. Natasha, a mettlesome tiny black female with her hair fixed in braids with small colorful beads, also sat next to us early on. She attracted and created negative attention and did not interact with a solid group of peers in a positive way.

However, halfway through the year, Q hung out more consistently and sat with the boys in his class during lunch. He spent time speaking to Gabe, the class lunch card collector, about different subjects such as how to dig through the center of the earth. Gabe, a sturdy Hispanic male with dark hair, interacted with the rest of the group of boys in the class in one way or another. The group included Taylor, a white athletic male with brown hair, who was the class clown and a popular kid; Malik, a black male who was little more rowdy than the rest (but still was endearing to his peers and teachers); Matthew, a solid white boy with a buzz hair cut who had a competitive streak; and James, a smaller, blonde white boy, Matthew's closer friend and apparent side-kick. Closer to the end of the year, Q bought lunch from school more often, just like his male companions.

Even though KittyCat was in the same class as Q, their paths and friends at lunch rarely crossed. I can recall only one lunch where Q and KittyCat sat within two classmates of each other at the same table. Kitty Cat was fairly more consistent with engaging the same peers throughout the year. She sat next to Stacey, an "old best friend" (since first grade), who brought her lunch from home most times. They sat in the same area of the same table every day, even though they did not stand next to each other in the lunch line, since KittyCat bought her lunch from school. KittyCat also sat with and spoke more frequently with her friend, Mariana during lunch and sometimes with Mariana's friend, Jasmine, both of whom were Hispanic. KittyCat usually spoke with and played with her friends at lunch.

Ms. Parker. Ms. Parker was one of the newest and most inexperienced third grade teachers, only having graduated the year before. She had long wavy brown hair past her shoulders and was in her early to mid twenties. She had a thin frame and was average height. She and Ms. Jenkins traded classes (and students) daily throughout the year. Ms. Jenkins taught math and science whereas Ms. Parker taught reading and writing. The students switched classrooms in the middle of the day. During the second half of the year, the students switched classrooms eight to ten minutes before lunch. This schedule switch was to make the afternoon transition easier on the students and teachers.

Candace

Candace McDonald was a kind and polite black eight-year-old female. She was shy during our first meeting in her home, but quick to warm up once I saw her at school. She was a thin girl of average height who wore glasses with a rectangular, dark purple plastic frames and a dark band to keep her glasses from falling from her face. At first, Candace had cornrows with braids in her hair with different colored beads adorning the ends of the braids each week. The beads clicked together as she walked or as she shook her head in approval,

disagreement or joy. As the year progressed, she omitted the beads but kept her hair braided or styled every few weeks, a more grown-up type style. She wore stylish clothes, but not too trendy, and her clothes, shoes and hair were color coordinated. She engaged in lively conversations with her peers during lunch at school, but was a quiet student who received average grades. Candace told me very few stories from beginning to end. She had difficulty with sequencing and explaining procedural information. When I asked her to describe something, she laughed and answered that she would forget something even if her Nana just said it. "Sometimes my Nana says, 'Tell me this…' So I say okay, and this and then I forget!"

McDonald/Stuckey/Brenner residence and family. Candace lived in a two-bedroom apartment within an apartment complex that was half a mile from—and considered within the same area as—Q and his family. She lived with her "Nana", her actual biological grandmother and foster mother, who was divorced and in her fifties. Nana and Candace have lived together for all but one year of Candace's life. "Nana" (i.e., Dory Stuckey) was a taller (5'8") kind black woman who wore silver framed oval glasses and a simple silver eyebrow ring. She was quick to laugh or joke. Nana was employed for wages, but never told me in what capacity. Candace also lived with Nana's "friend," Sharon Brenner, a black woman, also in her fifties or early sixties. Candace referred to Sharon as "Auntie"; however, at school Candace and her friends also called me "Mom" and "Auntie". Additionally, in my conversations with Sharon, she never referred to Candace as her niece. Therefore I do not believe Sharon was related to Candace in a traditional familial way. Sharon was very talkative and teased Nana and Candace often. Sharon worked for a neighboring town's transit service. Candace's family's household income was considered within the lower middle class.

Ms. Demarco. Ms. Demarco was Candace's homeroom teacher and the reading and writing teacher for the other half of the third grade at Three Streams Elementary. Ms. Demarco was a white woman with dirty blonde hair and in her late forties or early fifties. She dressed in dressy casual clothes, typically khakis with blouses or sweaters and long sleeve shirts. Ms. Demarco was a no-nonsense teacher and was very *by-the-book*. She recited rules and regulations and asked her students to do the same. She was also very stern and sharp with the students. While I was eating with Candace, it felt like Ms. Demarco was *always* watching us and always suspicious of *all* the students. It almost seemed like she was waiting for someone to do something wrong so she could reprimand him or her. In that way, there was an underlying tense vibe that threaded its way through our lunches, yet it relaxed as my time at the school progressed.

Candace and her peers. I was surprised how quickly Candace and her friends accepted me into their group. They called me "Auntie" or "Mom" the first day and those were my names for the whole year. Candace and her peers called their friends "cousins" and discussed more adult-like topics like their boyfriends and You Tube videos. Candace sang and danced as she ate with her friends and I rarely saw her finish the lunch that she brought to school.

Candace and her friends did not sit in the same seats for lunch everyday. Depending on whether Candace brought her lunch from home or bought lunch at school with cash, she sat where her group of friends sat or wherever there was an empty seat near them. She spoke with Ebony, a taller (5'5") black female with a darker complexion and beautiful long braids in her black hair, who was one of the ringleaders of the group; Ta'nya, a stocky and spunky black female with a lighter complexion who, according to Candace, was "bossy"; Justine, a

thin black female who was kind to Candace, but made it obvious that she had a best friend, Amelia; Amelia, a white girl with shoulder length light brown hair, who went along with the crowd; and finally, Cara, an Asian girl with dark, shiny shoulder length hair, who shared her food from home with the group. A few other students from Candace's class also talked to me while Candace was carrying on with her friends: Judy, the self-described class clown, was a sturdy white girl with light brown wavy hair and always ready to perform an act or a joke; and Chuck, a funny Asian boy who showed me how he ate many lunches without using his hands. There were approximately 20 students in Candace's class and about six boys in this group. I interacted with most of the girls in one way or another throughout the year.

Ms. Spencer. Since a similar classroom "switch" occurred with Mrs. Demarco and Ms. Spencer's class, Ms. Spencer led Candace's class to lunch during the second part of the year. Ms. Spencer was a white female with straight light brown hair that brushed past her shoulders. She appeared to be in her mid-twenties and dressed in a casual style with khaki pants and pretty flowery blouses or flowy tops. Ms. Spencer's demeanor was the epitome of an elementary school teacher. She was generally soft spoken, and kind to the students. She was stern when it was absolutely necessary, but never yelled at the students. She was also very helpful and supportive of my research project from day one.

Kat

Kat Walker was the lone fourth grader in the study. She was a white girl with medium length thick brown hair that hung just past her chin. Kat was a kind, quiet and inquisitive person, who received higher than expected grades in her classes. Her teachers described her as one of the brightest students in her fourth grade class. She wore t-shirts and jeans or t-shirts and leggings with sneakers to school. Kat already knew that she wanted to be a veterinarian when she "grows up" and already had her sights set on one of the best national

veterinarian programs in the country that also happened to be in North Carolina. Kat enjoyed reading but was also involved in a local afterschool all-girls running group and participated in martial arts at least once a week throughout the year.

Walker family and home. Kat lived with her upper middle class family in the furthest location from the school and three to four miles north from all the other consultants in the study. While she still lived in Three Streams, her family's home was located in a neighborhood that was in a quiet forest with slightly more land between each property. She and her family lived in a spacious ranch-style home with multiple tall trees scattering their front and back yards and a dirt gravel driveway.

Kat's mother, Erica, was a white woman in her mid to late thirties with medium build and height, dark brown frizzy hair. She worked from home fulltime for a company that edited research papers. She was kind, fairly quiet and observant. Kat's father, Larry, worked at a nearby university cancer center, where he ran a lab that researched different cancer treatments on lab mice. He had dark blonde to light brown hair, was about 5'10" and was in his early forties. When the family was together, Larry brought a little more lightheartedness to the family dynamic, gently teasing his kids or wife. Kat also had a younger brother, Justin, a kindergartener with dark brown hair and large, dark curious eyes. He also participated in martial arts at the same studio as Kat. The family also loved animals. They had three adult cats and three fish. They were also raising a rescued puppy they adopted, and were fostering five very young kittens until they were big enough to adopt out.

Ms. White. Ms. White was the third grade teacher with whom I had a decent relationship previous to the study and who I initially hoped to use as a third grade gatekeeper, until she moved up to fourth grade. Ms. White was a white female with shoulder length

brown hair and a personality that put you immediately at ease. She was average height and build and in her late twenties. She had a calming effect with her students, yet clearly emphasized the importance of respect for not only her as the teacher, but the students and their peers as well. Kat went to lunch with Ms. White, her reading and math teacher, although she had homeroom, math and science with Ms. Goldstein. Ms. Goldstein and Ms. White worked together and traded students daily similar to the third grade students and teachers. There were also two other teachers that taught the other half of the fourth grade class who worked together.

For lunch, Ms. White and Ms. Goldstein allowed their classes to share four tables so that the students had the ability to sit with and speak to students from another class. However, since the fourth graders had so much work to do in a given day, one of the tables was designated as the quiet 'school work table'. Fourth graders were expected to work on assignments that they had not finished in class and were not allowed to talk to each other at this table. The students were handed assignments either in the classroom before lunch from Ms. White, or in the lunchroom from Ms. Goldstein. If a student was caught up on their work, they could sit anywhere at the other three tables. If they had work to do, they had to finish their work at the schoolwork table and then they could move to another table once they were finished. Kat remarked that she worked at the schoolwork table about two to three days a week on average.

Kat's classmates. Some days Kat ate with her friends at school; other days she sat and read by herself; and still others were spent mostly at the schoolwork table. Kat was very deliberate with whom she sat when she had the choice. For example, she spoke well of her friend Talia, a short, freckled female with long straight brown hair and a very talkative

personality. Then there was Violet, a female friend with curly strawberry blonde hair, with whom she would have science discussions. The other friend she sat with was Tim, a portly boy who was picked on by other classmates and did not have many other people to sit with. Kat was frequently telling her friends information about different types of animals and science. She was kind to her classmates, especially those who got picked on by their peers, but at times she was slightly aloof socially. Additionally, she was wary and kept her distance from the 'popular' kids.

Since the Three Streams community was fairly small, the consultants at the very least knew of each other, but did not directly interact with each other in my presence. Above I have described the school, consultants, families, teachers and peers in more detail in order to set the stage for the presentation of the consultants' and my findings. Below is a figure summarizing consultants, family members and classmates.

Figure 4.1. Consultants and Their Communities

Consultants and Family Members	School Teachers and Classmates
Q Peterson: - Jerry (father) - Lisa (mother) - Jacob (older brother in 8th grade) KittyCat Jones: - Joseph (father) - Melissa (mother) - Hannah (older sister in 10th grade) - William (older brother in college)	3rd Grade Ms. Jenkins (Science and Math teacher) Ms. Parker (Reading and Writing teacher) Ms. Powers (teaching assistant) Classmates: - Jenny - Stacey - Natasha - Mariana - Gabe - Jasmine - Malik - Matthew - James
Candace McDonald: - "Nana", Doris Stuckey (grandmother) - Sharon Brenner ("Auntie", Nana's friend)	3rd Grade Ms. Demarco (Writing and Reading teacher) Ms. Spencer (Science and Math teacher) Classmates: - Ebony -Cara - Ta'nya - Judy - Justine - Chuck - Amelia

Consultants and Family Members	School Teachers and Classmates
Kat Walker: - Larry (father) - Erica (mother) - Justin (younger brother, kindergarten)	4th Grade Ms. White (Writing and Reading teacher) Ms. Goldstein (Science and Math teacher) Classmates: - Talia - Tim - Violet

CHAPTER 5: CONNECTING WITH OTHERS DURING MEALTIME

Just Another Day…

Below I present an example of how the consultants and their peers, or the students, connect with each other on a typical day at the lunch table to provide a taste of what will be examined in this chapter. I chose this particular account because the students were using multiple ways to interact with each other.

> Today I was eating lunch with Candace and her friends in the noisy cafeteria. Miles, one of Candace's classmates was sitting to my left. Candace sat across the table from me. She opened her soft purple lunchbox and examined its contents. Candace and her friends Cara and Justine also brought lunch from home. Justine sat next to Candace and Cara sat next to her at the end of the table. The three girls compared what they brought for lunch and noticed they all had similar flavors of bagged juice, Capri Sun! They 'clinked' their juice bags together, pushed the straw through the pouch, and began taking small sips of Capri Sun in unison. Ebony, Candace's friend sat to my right with her school lunch: chicken nuggets and diced peaches. Then Cara pulled out a blue cylindrical container of vanilla cookie sticks called 'Yan Yan' that came with its own vanilla frosting dip. She opened the tab. Cara looked at the stick which had a fortune written on one end, and an elephant on the other. She read her fortune aloud and then dipped her stick into the white frosting. She offered a stick each to Justine and Candace. They quickly took a stick, read the fortune, and dipped the stick in the frosting. Ebony asked Cara if she could have one. Cara nodded and offered the container in her direction. Ebony selected a stick and looked at her fortune, 'It's your lucky day' and her animal, 'goat'. 'Alright!' she exclaimed. She showed the fortune to the girls who nodded in response. She dipped her stick in the frosting. After she finished her vanilla stick, Ebony began drinking Candace's Capri sun, which was in the middle of the table. 'See, Candace and I share these. She gets the first half and I get the second half.' I nodded. Ebony continued to drink and squeeze the liquid completely out of the bag until it was a smashed, wrinkly mess.
>
> The girls continued to eat and share the remaining Yan Yan from the container. Then Candace suddenly wore a desperate expression on her face where it looked like she wanted to tell me something. However, she made it clear that she did not want to say it aloud in the cafeteria. Justine quietly asked Candace if she could tell me. Candace nodded quickly. Justine stood up out of her seat and rushed over to me. She whispered in my ear, 'She likes a boy!' Justine ran back to her seat next to Candace.

'Great!' I responded, making eye contact with Candace. Candace smiled sheepishly.

'He's in Ms. Spencer's class. His name is David. He's right over there.' Candace pointed in David's direction. 'He's in that striped shirt.'

'Cool!' I said.

She smiled and then said, 'You know Justine likes somebody.'

'Great!' I said.

Cara abruptly changed the subject by offering her fruit gummies to Candace. Candace excitedly took them. 'You don't want them?' Cara shook her head no. Candace looked around for Ms. Demarco to make sure that she was not looking in her direction before she quickly snagged the bag of fruit snacks. Candace opened them and then began distributing them to Justine, Cara and Ebony after Ebony held out her hand silently asking for a gummy.

Ebony told me that Candace and David were like 'two halves of a heart.' She held her left hand up in a half heart shape, 'Here's her half heart'. She held her right hand up in a half heart shape, 'Here's his half heart. Separately, they're half hearts, but put them together and it's *LOVE*'. She smiled and then I returned a smile. Ebony said, 'You know, I like somebody too!?!'

'Really?' I said.

Cara interrupted yet another boyfriend conversation and gravely explained to the group that she was not allowed to have a boyfriend until she was 18 years old. We all nodded. I smiled and added, 'That's fine too!'

The account above demonstrates the frequency with which the girls were connecting with each other. Within the span of about eight minutes, they moved from comparing lunches, to sharing food, to asking for food, to talking about boys, sharing more food, and then finally more talk about boys. It is no surprise then that social engagement and interaction was one of the most important aspects of each meal for the consultants at school and home. The social interactions included verbal exchanges and activities shared between the consultants and her/his peers or family members. Below I present the findings relating to social interaction experienced by the consultants first at school and then at home. Within

each context I provide a small discussion and reflection related to that particular community (e.g., school or home). This is followed by a larger discussion related to social interaction at school and at home.

School

Before completely jumping into the different aspects of social interaction during lunchtime at school, I wanted to set the scene a little more. First, while the consultants described mealtime as beginning when they sat down at the table, I was also interested in how their full 25-minute lunch period unfolded. This included transitions to and from the lunch table. Furthermore, I also wanted to provide more of a context than just beginning at the lunch table. Thus, I provide examples of the transitions to and from the cafeteria as the consultants experienced them, in chronological order (e.g. lining up, standing in line, finding a seat and cleaning up after eating). This is in addition to presenting different types of social interaction at the lunch table, which is where most of the social connections occurred. Moreover, even though the students were expected to quietly line up and walk obediently to the lunchroom, they began engaging with each other even before leaving the classroom (e.g. talking to each other in line, playing silly games in the hallway). In considering the lack of time the students had to freely speak to each other (25 minutes during lunch and 15 minutes for recess) in an eight-hour school day, it is no surprise that they jump at the chance of connecting with each other.

Transitions. The following are examples of how the students transition from the classroom to actually sitting at the table. I highlight how the students attempted to engage with each other while also providing a general depiction of how the students arrived at the cafeteria lunch table. Below is an example from my field notes of Q's experience of lining up and getting to the lunchroom while his classmates conversed with each other.

Lining up and getting there. It was just before lunchtime at Three Streams Elementary School on a Friday in mid-October on a cool, misty day. I was in Ms. Jenkins third-grade classroom that was scattered with groups of desks and students who were milling around or just finishing their schoolwork. The energy and volume in the room increased quickly as everyone realized that it was time for lunch. Ms. Jenkins said loudly, 'Hands on Top!'

The students quickly quieted down, placed their hands on their head and replied in unison, 'That means STOP!'

Ms. Jenkins then called the students to line up for lunch in the classroom. 'Lunchboxes line up!' Q, who was wearing a bright yellow t-shirt, jeans and sneakers, held his soft gray lunchbox and raced to the front of the line and proudly stood there in front of three other classmates who brought their lunch from home. Ms. Jenkins then instructed the students who ordered chicken potpie for lunch to line up. About 13 students including KittyCat scrambled to get a 'good spot' closer to the front of the line behind the 'lunchboxes'. However, KittyCat and Mariana whispered to each other to move towards the back of the chicken potpie-part of the line. The other students who ordered chicken potpie quietly talked amongst themselves. Finally, the students who ordered cheeseburgers for lunch were called to line up at the end of the line. Jasmine raced to the beginning part of the cheeseburger line to stand directly behind her friends, KittyCat and Mariana. Natasha was at the end of the cheeseburger line, the last in line. The noise level in the room increased again as the students attempted to arrange themselves in a single file line. Short conversations about what the students were about to eat, what they were planning on doing at recess and what they will do after school overlapped and resulted in a large jumble of loud incoherent voices in the classroom.

Ms. Jenkins said in a quiet, soft voice, 'If you can hear me, touch your nose.' A handful of students, including Q, obeyed silently. She continued quietly, 'If you can hear me, touch your shoulder.' A few more students followed this direction. 'If you can hear me, touch your patellas.' Two-thirds of the class were quiet again and were touching their knees.

A couple students asked, 'Which one was the patella again?' Ms. Jenkins instructed quietly, 'Now put your phalanges at your sides.' The students were quiet again with their hands at their sides and in a single file line. Ms. Jenkins dismissed the class to lunch.

Q silently led the class about 10 yards from the classroom door and then stopped at a hallway intersection in order for everyone to catch up. The beige-painted cinder block hallway walls were decorated with inspirational quotes and student work. He led the class; half of who were whispering to each other another, halfway, or 35 yards, down the long empty hallway. He passed two resource rooms and stops at the media center and library doorway. About six of the girls were walking like penguins (not bending their knees) and giggling as they followed in line down the hallway. Q waited for his

mostly silent classmates to catch up again before walking past the first grade classrooms to the lunchroom door where he stopped again. As she approached the front of the line, Ms. Jenkins addressed the class to stop walking 'in a silly way' and to stand in a straight line 'three tiles' (or two and a half feet) from the wall. We straightened ourselves out according to Ms. Jenkins's instructions. Ms. Jenkins walked to the front of the line and peered into the open door of the lunchroom where there was some additional noise and commotion going on.

A brightly colored giant Chinese dragon was parading around the lunchroom. The large red, tissue paper covered cardboard dragonhead was driven by a first grade student. He moved slowly and behind him were at least 9-12 other students holding the red, yellow and green rectangular body sections of the dragon over their heads through the cafeteria. The head and body were connected, so this was a very slow moving dragon. There were about 10-12 additional first grade students following in the parade. Then a round of applause for the dragon parade flooded the cafeteria fueled by the students who were already eating their lunch. Ms. Jenkins instructed Q and his classmates to walk around the dragon. Q nodded and entered the lunchroom while avoiding the dragon parade. He led his classmates to stand in the lunch line to purchase his milk.

The above depiction was a typical day that outlined how the students lined up and walked to the lunchroom. According to the teachers, the students were instructed to line up by food type so it was easier and faster for the cafeteria staff to serve them. Additionally, the students required multiple prompts to quiet down before leaving the lunchroom. Despite the expectation of listening and quietly lining up, many of the students needed to connect with peers even before leaving for lunch.

Standing in line. The students were discouraged from talking to each other so the cafeteria staff could hear the students order their lunch. However, social interaction still occurred while waiting in line to order their lunch. I present an example from my fieldnotes where KittyCat was standing in line with her friends. This excerpt occurred the same day as the example above with Q leading his classmates to lunch.

KittyCat was standing in line in front of Mariana and Jasmine near the milk refrigerator and a stack of empty disposable lunch trays. Natasha, who was at the end of the line in Ms. Jenkins's classroom, squeezed into line just ahead of KittyCat. KittyCat objected to this move. Natasha insisted that she ordered 'chicken potpies'

(not a cheeseburger), even though she was standing at the end of the line where the students who ordered cheeseburgers were standing back in Ms. Jenkins classroom. KittyCat finally gave up arguing with Natasha and turned to face her two friends. The trio of girls had jackets tied around their waists, which they planned on taking out to recess with them after lunch. They placed their hands in the pockets of their jackets and flapped the jacket 'wings' up and down. They exclaimed, 'We are birds flying in the air!' They smiled, laughed, and flapped their wings some more. Natasha, who did not bring her jacket to lunch, watched the girls in anticipation. Her facial expression read like she wanted to be a bird with them. KittyCat noticed this and informed Natasha that she cannot be a bird because she did not have a jacket. Without saying a word, Natasha turned around and waited for her turn to order her food.

KittyCat, Mariana and Jasmine selected chocolate milk from the refrigerator as the line crept forward. The girls looked at the side of their milk cartons and read the printed trivia questions to each other. Mariana asked KittyCat, 'How many hearts does a worm have?' Mariana was reading from her chocolate milk carton 'A, 2; B, 4; C, 3; or D, 5?'

KittyCat responded, 'Five.' Mariana nodded and smiled. KittyCat smiled. KittyCat read her fact about a penguin from the container of her milk carton. Mariana nodded and said she heard that fact already. KittyCat nodded and smiled.

When it was time to order their food, Natasha asked for a cheeseburger (not chicken potpie). True to their word, KittyCat and Mariana ordered chicken potpie with mashed potatoes, and Jasmine ordered a cheeseburger with mashed potatoes. The three girls each selected a small disposable cup filled with mandarin oranges. Natasha ordered no sides, even though the new lunch 'rule' this year was that the students were required to take one vegetable side and one fruit side with each entrée. As they neared the cashier, Natasha was scolded by the cashier who told her to get back in line and order a vegetable and fruit: 'We go through this every day, honey, you need a veggie and a fruit, get back in the line.' Natasha sighed and carried her tray back to order a side. Meanwhile, KittyCat handed her lunch card to the cashier, and then dispensed it in the class lunch card pail. After obtaining her fork and napkin, she walked slowly to wait for Mariana and Jasmine so they could navigate the noisy lunchroom and find three seats together at one of the two classroom tables. By this point, the Chinese dragon exited the lunchroom and the noise level was now a dull roar.

KittyCat and her friends quietly entertained themselves in line without bringing attention to themselves. Therefore, they were not scolded for talking to each other in line.

Finding a seat. Each classroom had two class tables where the students could choose their own seat at lunch. Since there were a variety of peer groups in each classroom that sought to sit together, sometimes it was difficult to find a seat near a friend. Thus, I present an example of Candace finding a seat for her and her friends. In this example, Candace and her classmates already lined up in the classroom and are waiting for Mrs. Demarco to dismiss them into the cafeteria.

> Candace was quietly standing in line in the hallway with her friends Ta'nya, Ebony, Justine and the rest of her classmates, just before they entered the lunchroom. Ta'nya and Ebony were getting the school lunch so they whispered to Candace to save them seats at the lunch table. Candace nodded to confirm that she would try to save them seats, even though this was against the school rules. After Mrs. Demarco dismissed Candace and her classmates into the noisy lunchroom half-filled with students, the classmates ahead of her poured into the lunchroom and made their way to the lunch line. Candace brought her lunch and a drink from home, so she walked toward the two class tables and began searching for a 'good seat'. Candace chose an end seat at one empty table and placed her soft, light purple lunch bag on the table. Ta'nya happened to be taking 'the long way' to the lunch line and followed Candace to the table while carrying her jacket. Ta'nya said, 'Hey! You know I like to sit on the end because I can get up and give my sister a hug when she passes through the lunch line. Choose a different seat and put my jacket on this end seat here.' Ta'nya handed Candace her jacket.
>
> Candace audibly sighed, rolled her eyes, and nodded. Ta'nya rushed to get in the lunch line. Meanwhile Candace moved her lunch bag and filled the empty space at the end of the table with Ta'nya's jacket. Candace muttered to herself about Ta'nya being bossy as she chose a seat that was closer to the middle of the table. Candace sat down, opened her lunch bag, and began eating her cucumber slices until her friends who were purchasing school lunch came sit beside her.

The account above suggests that the students typically did not just sit down anywhere, but planned to sit with friends even before setting foot in the cafeteria. They were essentially setting their own lunch scene so they could engage with each other while they ate. Since I provided some examples of how the students got to the table above, I return to focus on social interaction at the lunch table below.

At the lunch table. While the consultants were seated at the lunch table, they were generally expected to eat their lunch. Yet, when I asked them what they liked best about lunchtime at school, the consultants were very clear:

> Candace: 'I like lunchtime best because I get to talk to my friends and cousins.'

> KittyCat: 'I get to talk, but like, I get to talk to my friends. At least I get to sit with them. (see Figure 5.1)'

> Kat: 'I like that we get to just sit down and eat if we're hungry and we can talk with friends.'

> Q: 'I guess it's my friends…usually… And lunch.'

KittyCat even created part of her lunchtime collage to signify talking with friends. She portrayed herself with some classmates as they talked and ate at the table (See Figure 5.1). Her classmate, Taylor, was seated on the very the left of the picture. He said, "I had a dream where my cat was dancing with me." Moving clockwise, KittyCat was seated next to him and said, "Ha! Ha! Ha! That's very funny!" Her friend, Mariana was facing KittyCat and said, "The food is really good today."

Figure 5.1. KittyCat's Collage of School Lunch
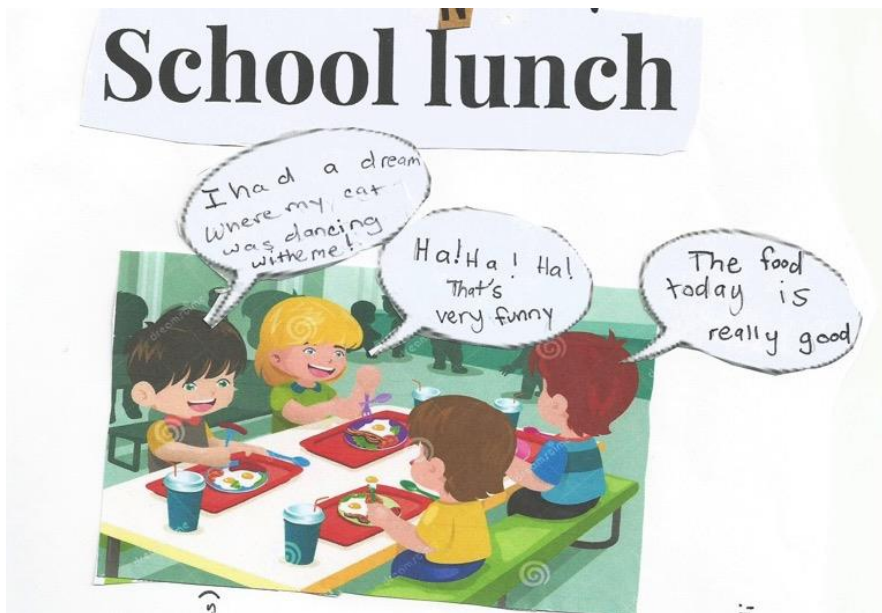
The consultants suggested that engaging with peers was important during lunchtime.

Through my observations, I found that the students engaged in multiple ways of connecting

with each other over the course of a lunch. Consequently, I present the following forms of

social interaction that occurred at the lunch table and include examples of each: conversing,

playing games, exchanging food, seeking affirmation, seeking attention, displaying affection,

and acting in ways outside of the norm.

      Conversing. There were so many different conversations occurring between students

at their tables and across tables that the volume in the cafeteria frequently became very close

to unbearable for me. Conversation topics varied greatly each day. Most of the conversations

were about events or subjects outside of the school curriculum. For example, KittyCat

explained her conversation at lunch that related to a television show she had seen recently

and how she and her friends were conversing in "waffle" language while eating chicken and

waffles:

> KittyCat: Oh, so Stacy, said, 'Have you ever seen the', -… a show Teen Titans Go,
> and she asked me, 'Have you seen that episode?' [*KittyCat laughs*] Because they sing
> 'waffle' and no one else knew what saying. [*KittyCat and Ashley laugh*] So we
> started randomly doing that and... We talked about food.
>
> Ashley: Oh. [*KittyCat laughs*] What kind of food?
>
> KittyCat: Um, chicken, what we were having today. And then, then we started talking
> about how it they (*the school*) call it a waffle, but it's really a funnel cake. …
> …[*KittyCat chuckles*] we were like, this is totally not a waffle. [*Ashley laughs,
> KittyCat laughs*] Because it doesn't look like a waffle at all…so then we just started
> talking waffles. …And no one else knew what we were saying. And I didn't even
> know what she was saying. [*Ashley laughs*] But we pretended like we knew what
> each other was saying.

Throughout the year Mariana, KittyCat's friend, re-engaged KittyCat in "waffle" language.

She giggled to KittyCat, pointed to her waffle and exclaimed, "Waffles!!...Waffle, waffle?"

KittyCat smiled and replied, "Waffle". On one or two occasions, KittyCat engaged another

group of female classmates at the other end of the table to speak "waffle" with them where the interaction lasted for about five minutes. Other times, the waffle-language exchange lasted briefly with one exchange between KittyCat and Mariana.

The topics of conversation were co-created between the students and sometimes me. Events were talked about in anticipation of the future such as holidays, birthday parties and recess plans. The students also engaged in telling stories of enjoyable events of the past (e.g., Christmas and what toys they 'got' for Christmas, what happened at birthday parties, what they did with their families over the weekend). The conversations in the present *about* the present occurred when the students used the object, usually the food or food containers (e.g., milk carton trivia), but also books in front of them during lunch.

For example, I was eating with Kat, who brought her lunch from home, and her friend Violet, who bought school lunch, a chicken breast and a vegetable. Kat summarized the topics she and Violet spoke about during that particular lunch:

> Kat: We were talking about like how kindergarteners get the different type of chicken than fourth graders do. (*Fourth graders get chicken breast and kindergarteners get chicken nuggets.*) And talking about like the sodas and how (*we*) mix 'em at some of the restaurants… and then we were also talking about she (*Violet*) had little Mentos and she put them in her soda…

> Ashley: What was that toy that you guys were talking about. I couldn't see it. You were saying, 'Oh, that girl over there has that toy and it could'-

> Kat: -Um it was this little toy that has like a thing here with a ball, ball and ball (*a fidget spinner*) …and we were talking about, she (*Violet*) saw it on You Tube, that if you spin it too fast, and you fight with it (*with another spinner in a special arena*), it can make (*a*) collision and then energy that's going between 'em, - the electricity - can make 'em both explode.

Kat and Violet's topics of conversation began with objects that were present during lunch (e.g., chicken and fidget spinners). They took notice of what children in other grades

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had for lunch at their tables. Essentially, the food and objects assisted in beginning and continuing the conversation between them.

Literature describing students engaging in lunchtime conversation at school is similar to the examples above where the students frequently engaged in brief conversations with each other using a variety of topics (Nukaga, 2008; Thorne, 2005). Further, as Thorne (2005) pointed out, one of the main differences between engaging in social interaction in the classrooms versus in the lunchroom is that the topics of lunch conversations are chosen and led by the students. Hence, the students were able to construct and steer where the conversation was going. In the first example when Cara initially interrupted the boyfriend conversation by sharing fruit gummies, I believe this was an intentional interruption. For example, later in the exchange, she interrupted the boyfriend conversations again to announce that she was not allowed to have a boyfriend for another eight or nine years. While I did not ask Cara about this personally, I suggest that at the very least, she was aware that she had some power to steer topics of conversation in a different direction.

Playing games. Sometimes, the classmates and consultants engaged in game play through singing and using hand clapping songs, spontaneous play, competitive play, and playing with food.

At the beginning of the year, Natasha engaged Q in a hand-clapping song. Q sang me the song in a conversation following that lunch:

> Q: It goes, for 'Lemonade' there are two ways to do Lemonade. The first one is, Le-mon-ade [*clap, clap*], coun-try ice [*clap, clap*], Sip it once, [*clap, clap*], sip it twice [*clap, clap*], Le-mon-ade, coun-try ice, sip it once, sip it twice. …And then the other one is Le-mon-ade [*clap, clap, clap*], Iced tea [*clap, clap, clap*], Coke-a-cola [*clap, clap, clap*], Pep-si [*clap, clap, clap*], Le-mon-ade, Iced tea, Coke-a-cola, Pep-si.

The understanding to participate in this 'game' was for both students who were playing to know the words to the songs, the rhythm of the song, and the hand-clapping pattern. If a student did not know the rhythm to the song or when to clap hands, they might not be invited to play that particular game. For instance, Natasha tried to engage me in a clapping game one day and I had to decline because I did not know how to play and she did not want to teach me the game. Consequently, knowledge of how to play certain games was important or the student missed out on that interaction.

"Napkin Lives". For other games, students used objects in creative ways to engage in play. Below is an example of KittyCat and Mariana using cups and napkins during play.

> KittyCat, Mariana, Jasmine and I were sitting at the table. KittyCat and Mariana sat across from each other and Jasmine and I sat across from each other. KittyCat and Mariana walked up to the water dispenser to get a disposable small clear plastic cup of water and returned with two extra empty cups. Back at the table, KittyCat finished drinking her water and then she and Mariana began to make their own small pyramids using each of their three water cups. They stacked and broke down the cups quickly. It looked like they were making a game out of who could stack and remove the cups, but neither girl mentioned a word about rules or what they should do. They just stacked and broke down their mini pyramids while watching the other do the same. They were smiling and laughing.

> Then Mariana ripped small pieces of her napkin and placed one small piece (the size of a nickel) under each of the cups in her three-cup pyramid. She told KittyCat to 'pick one'. KittyCat pointed to the top cup/napkin piece. Mariana took off the cup and examined the napkin. She looked at KittyCat with a grave expression and said 'Death'. KittyCat's shoulders sagged and she had a disappointed look on her face. Mariana encouraged KittyCat to choose another cup. KittyCat chose another cup. Mariana inspected this napkin piece, smiled and said, 'Life! You get a life!'

> KittyCat smiled and exclaimed, 'Yay!' KittyCat selected Mariana's final cup.

> Mariana glanced at the napkin and said, 'Bonus lives!'

> 'Yay!' said KittyCat.

> Mariana tore the rest of her napkin into small pieces. 'Look at all the lives I have!'

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KittyCat stood from the table again and returned with about three or four more napkins. KittyCat tore up her napkins as well. A few times Mariana and/or KittyCat turned to Jasmine to offer her 'lives'. Jasmine, looked uninterested, smiled politely, and shook her head 'no'. KittyCat and Mariana shared 'lives' back and forth across the table. Mariana piled hers up into a fluffy ball and held it delicately in her hand. 'Look at all the lives I have!'

KittyCat smiled at her and Jasmine looked at her like she was silly. 'Yay lives!' said KittyCat.

I asked KittyCat about the game after lunch and she told me that she and Mariana had never played this particular game before, it just spontaneously occurred.

KittyCat: …my friend, she was pretending that the napkins were 'lives'. [*KittyCat chuckles*] She just randomly said, 'Oh, here's some lives'…But we were trying to get Jasmine, the one (*girl*) that was sitting beside her (*Mariana to play*)… because she just came back at the school…we didn't want her to feel left out.

The presence of the water cups and napkins were the materials the girls used to spontaneously co-create a game without mentioning a word. Lawlor (2012), who studied social connections, intersubjectivity and occupation for over 15 years, described the 'doing with' as jointly constructed actions where interdependency on the actors was required. Intersubjectivity is the innate social connections that relate to understanding the minds of others through language or gestures and requires mutual engagement and response (Bruner, 1996; Carrithers, 1992). Intersubjectivity provides the means to examine the meaning people share when connecting with each other through engagement in occupation (Bonsall, 2014).

One of the best examples of intersubjectivity was the *Napkin Lives* example. Generally, the special social connection they had through play while eating lunch was mesmerizing to observe, especially in learning later that they did not have any pre-conceived ideas for this game prior to lunch. This social exchange was in-the-moment co-constructed play where the girls understood each other's minds through how they spoke and what they did. Jasmine, who was invited to play 'napkin lives' when offered some pieces of napkin and

then declined the napkin pieces, did not share this understanding of the game or she might

have not wanted to play. Therefore as girls were playing Jasmine was not included as the

game continued.

Water chugging contests. Other games resulted in competition. In the narrative below,

Q and his friends engaged in a series of water chugging contests.

One day, James, Q's friend, asked Malik (another friend) to time him to see how fast he could drink his water. (*Malik is sitting at the end of the table and James is sitting next to him. Q is sitting across from James and I am across from Malik.*) Instead, Malik told James to wait while he got a water cup so he could race him in a water-drinking contest. When Malik returned, they counted in unison and chugged water from their six-ounce plastic cups 'One…two…three...go!' Malik won easily.

James commented, 'The water is really cold!' Another one of their friends, Matthew sat down with his lunch tray next to James.

Q said, 'If I were racing you, I would win! I once drank a whole water bottle really fast. I can drink really fast.' The boys returned to eating their food. Then Malik convinced James into a rematch. Q and Matthew decided to engage in the water-drinking contest and stood up to get water as well. A few minutes went by and the boys were still getting water. I turned around to look for them and saw that they were all hovering over a large trashcan in the front of the lunchroom. They were holding their cups next to each other to measure the level of the water and dumped out excess in the trashcan.

Once they were satisfied, they sat back down at their stools. Malik and James looked at each other and said, 'go!' at roughly the same time. Malik took the same tactic as last time, gulping his water. James surprisingly was much faster this time – making it close. However, Malik still squeaked out a win and smiled. I commented, 'It was much closer!' James smiled.

Matthew and Q decided that it was their turn to race. James repeated once or twice to Matthew, 'I can't believe you're racing him (*referring to Q*), he's good!' Matthew's cup had a little more water than Q's cup. Matthew shrugged his shoulders to James' comment. He readied himself for the competition, while chewing a bite of food. Then Q and Matthew looked at each other, 'Ready?' they said to each other. 'Go!' said Q just slightly ahead of Matthew. Q drank his water first then Matthew. Matthew drank fast, just like Q. It looked like Q was going to win. But suddenly Matthew opened his mouth wide and threw the rest of the contents of his cup in his mouth. A tiny dribble leaked out the side of his lips as he finished his water just ahead of Q. Q looked up with a crestfallen look on his face and exclaimed. 'Hey! He can't do that. He spilled some water at the end! That makes me the winner!' James

and Malik shook their heads no; that it did not matter that he spilled a little bit. He finished first. Then Q, attempting to argue his way to a win began to make excuses, 'Well it's so cold on my teeth and my teeth are *very* sensitive. If the water were warmer I would win. My teeth hurt!" Matthew exclaimed, "You don't think my teeth hurt!?!' Malik and James nodded in agreement that their teeth hurt too.

The boys quickly turn drinking water into a contest. While KittyCat and her friends engaged in a water chugging contest once, Q and the boys also played other competitive games that included betting and guessing.

Playing with food. Finally, other games and play occurred with food. Below are three short examples of the students playing with food.

One minute KittyCat and Mariana were eating their fries from school lunch. A minute later, KittyCat found a longer French fry and demonstrated how she could construct a fry mustache. This precipitated Stacey to instruct KittyCat on how to properly play with her fries, 'No, no! You have to do the fry beard, then the mustache and *then* you can eat it.' KittyCat nodded and followed Stacey's instructions. First, she held the fry long ways so it dangled from her chin, and then held it horizontally between her nose and upper lip and finally she took a big bite of it.

On the same French fry day, KittyCat and Mariana played 'hide the French fry' where each had to guess where she hid the fry (e.g., lap, armpit, etc.). Jasmine piped into the game occasionally and called out KittyCat when she cheated and threw the fry on the ground. The French fry went from being something that was consumed to an integral part of a game.

Finally, Stacey engaged in games with other girls that consisted of one friend tossing a piece of food (e.g., chicken nugget or Goldfish cracker) while the other attempted to catch it in her mouth.

Catching the pieces of food in their mouths was the game and the added benefit was also being able to consume the food. Usually, the consultants and their peers were creative with how they used their food through play and interaction.

In summary, the students engaged in multiple forms of games and play during lunch including singing games and using everyday objects and food as part of play. Also, while most of the play occurred within gendered groups, there were some exceptions such as with

Q and Natasha above. Even though I observed KittyCat and Mariana once engage in a water chugging contest, I found that Q and his male companions created competitive games at least four times through racing or betting. Through my observations, more of the cooperative games occurred with the girls, whereas more competitive games occurred with groups of boys. This is similar to Thorne's (1993) work on gender play where the boys engaged in competitive play and the girls constructed and participated in cooperative games.

Games played at lunchtime crossed race and ethnic boundaries, as evidenced above with KittyCat and her friends and Q and his friends. This is different from findings in previous studies where play and social interaction mainly occurred in similar gender groups within similar ethnic groups (see for example Brice Heath, 1983;Thorne, 1993). Conversely both play and social exchanges with the students in this study were considered comfortable avenues for students to connect across racial and ethnic groups during lunchtime at school. While Brice Heath's study occurred within a similar area to this study, both Brice Heath and Thorne's studies occurred 20 to 30 years ago, which can also account for differences.

Exchanging food. The students exchanged food frequently throughout lunchtime. This was done through trading, sharing, giving away food, stealing, and begging.

Trading. Generally, mostly the students traded food, which was giving food to a peer (typically a friend) in exchange for food that they had. For example, if KittyCat gave away a piece of food (e.g. a small piece of chicken nugget) to Stacey, Stacey compensated her in as many Nerd candies. The girls literally counted out their trade, piece for piece. KittyCat explained that they traded food to "be fair."

Sharing. The students also shared some of their food. Sharing food began when one of the students in the interaction showed interest in a food that another friend was eating. This typically was an obvious gesture such as staring at the desired food (which prompted the owner of the food to share) or outright asking for a piece of food. However, sometimes a generous friend offered food to others without someone else asking first. For example, Candace's friends sometimes gave out food on occasion without looking for anything in return like in the first story with Cara and her Yan Yan cookies. I was never included in this distribution of food. Further if one of the girls in the group was unhappy, depending on who was at the table, the other girls gave her a piece of their candy or a part of a piece of fruit to help make her feel better. The friends did not look for any food equivalent in return. Even I ended up sharing my food with some of the consultants. The following was one time where I shared my popcorn with Candace and Ebony.

> Ebony sat down with her tray next to me at our table. She peeked into my opened lunch bag. She asked, 'Can I have that?' She poked her finger at my bag of popcorn.
>
> I replied, 'I'm happy to share some of it, but I want to eat some too.'
>
> She responded with a smile and asked, 'Can Candace have some too?'
>
> 'Of course!' I exclaimed. I looked over to see where Mrs. Demarco was facing to make sure she did not see me give any popcorn to the girls. I did not want to get any of us into trouble for sharing food. Thankfully she was facing away from the table. I poured a handful of popcorn onto Ebony's tray. Candace looked towards Mrs. Demarco and then held out her hands. I filled her hands with popcorn. She cupped the popcorn with one hand and gave me the thumbs-up sign with the other. She gave a few kernels to Justine.
>
> This type of exchanged occurred almost every day that I observed a group of girls.

Conversely, I witnessed only one or two instances of sharing amongst the boys.

Giving away food. Additionally, students gave away food that they were not planning on eating for lunch. Below is a brief example of Malik, Q's classmate, giving his food away.

Malik was seated at the other end of the table. 'I don't want my Nerds. Who wants them?' Taylor, Gabe and Michele eagerly raised their hands, waving them around wildly to display how badly they wanted the candy. Malik paused dramatically to consider who was going to receive the Nerd. Finally, he slid the box to Taylor, who excitedly received the box. Taylor immediately looked for an edge to open and eat the small candy box.

The main difference between giving away and sharing was that the person giving away the food, no longer wanted to eat any of the food.

Begging. The approaches to begging for food differed amongst students. Some students begged out of hunger whereas others tried to get as many items of food as possible. I describe two of those examples below.

Jasmine (KittyCat's friend) desperately announced that she was still hungry and wanted to eat more food for lunch even as some of the other female classmates taunted her with their own extra slice of pizza or sandwich that they did not give her. Jasmine sent a meek plea for any extra food down to the other end of the table, where the group of boys was sitting. Q ripped off the portion of pizza that he ate from and then gave her the rest. She thanked him and quickly devoured the pizza.

Taylor begged for food from his classmates at least once a week. Today, after putting his tray down at a spot at the table, he got out of his seat and begged (literally on his knees) to each of his female classmates for their diced peaches from the school lunch. Upon return to his seat, he had about four cups of fruit in his hands. After he sat down, he asked Malik for his peaches. Malik handed his peach container to Taylor. After his campaign for diced fruit, he displayed his five containers on and surrounding his lunch tray. He ate about one quarter of his fruit and ended up throwing the remainder away.

While the motives for begging for food may or may not have been different for the students above, it is clearly a method that works in obtaining extra food.

Stealing. Similar to begging, stealing food happened less frequently and the reasons for why it occurred varied. One example below includes classmates who were looking to get attention and the other example suggests stealing occurred due to hunger

A couple of girls were teasing Taylor and attempting to take his chicken nuggets off of his tray. In response, Taylor bent over his chicken nuggets and licked each

individual nugget.. The girls were repelled by the licking and began conversing amongst themselves instead.

We were waiting silently for Mrs. Demarco to dismiss us to line up to leave for lunch. Candace had an unopened package of mini muffins sitting on her lunch bag. Ebony outright took the muffins from Candace's lunch bag without permission. Candace looked like she wanted to object as she caught her thief in action, but then her facial expression changed. Instead she looked defeated and shrugged her shoulders.

Later Candace explained that while she wanted her muffins, she realized that some of her friends do not have as much food at home as she does; thus, she let Ebony have them.

Commensality refers to eating with people and sometimes includes sharing food with people (Fischler, 2011). The study of commensality typically focuses on family meals or adult dining experiences (e.g. dinner parties) where the groups generally eat the same food together. However, Andersen, Holm, and Baarts (2015) examined commensality in Swedish schools, comparing students eating the same school lunch in one school to students who eat together with varied packed lunches from home at a different school. They suggested that the food variety in the packed school lunch actually increased socialization at school by instigating sharing food, for example. The authors argue that a different form of commensality occurred where children at school used sharing different food as a way to interact with each other (Andersen, Holm, & Baarts, 2015). In this study, the students technically shared meals if they chose the same type of school lunch (e.g. cheeseburgers and potatoes) and sat next to each other. However, more often the consultants had different lunches than their peers and selected specific friends to trade and share food. They chose to create this sense of connection by exchanging particular foods that were appealing to them with certain peers.

The ubiquitous nature of the food exchanges was very surprising, especially because it was against school rules. Yet the students found it important to socially connect with each other through food. And despite the threat of getting scolded, it was worth risking for friends. Nukaga's (2008) work on food exchange or "gifting" food highlighted how her participants created and maintained friendships through these social acts. This generally aligned with my findings with the consultants during food exchange.

Seeking affirmation. One of the ways the female students interacted and marked friendship was to act in ways that resulted in them either feeling accepted and/or to appearing unique. This need to feel accepted was evident in two ways: 1) through conversation within the group of friends to make themselves stand out and appear valuable in the group compared to others and (2) and when one of the friends positively singled out another friend within the group to do something special together or talk about something special they did or would do together.

Social comparisons. The topics of conversation that were considered valuable typically involved what others had, whether it was a material, physical feature or relationship that other friends or classmates did not have (e.g., iPod touch, training bra, breasts or boyfriends). The girls sometimes attempted to comfort their friends if the exchange ended with jealousy in the group. But often they shrugged their shoulders and nodded approvingly at what her friend or classmate announced that she had or was hoping to get. I present a short example about Candace talking to her friends about potential Christmas presents while eating at the lunch table. Yet her classmate Cassie tried to trump her.

> Candace mentioned that she was 'asking for' a cell phone for Christmas. Candace's friends nodded in approval and continued to eat their lunch. Her classmate, Cassie overheard this comment and tried to 'one up' her. Cassie turned to Candace and said, 'Oh yeah? Well I am asking for the biggest iPad they make for Christmas this year.'

She holds her arms out to outline a large device about 12 inches wide by 14 inches long.

She turns to me, 'What do they call them?'

Since I honestly had no idea what she was talking about, I shrugged my shoulders and replied, 'I'm not sure.' Instead of attempting to help Cassie name this device or giving her an approving head nod, Candace's friends turned to their lunches and ignored her. Cassie waited for a response. When no one engaged her in conversation, she turned to a different group of students sitting at the table to speak with them.

Cassie did not seem to have many friends because she sat near different groups of peers practically every day. She attempted to get peer approval by boasting about her Christmas list, but did not get the endorsement she was looking for to feel accepted with Candace and her group of friends.

Special selection. Another way to feel included was for the girls to talk about things some or all the friends did together (e.g., games during recess, birthday parties or sleepovers) or to single out a friend to escort them to the nurse's office during the end of lunch. Since one student is allowed to accompany a peer to the nurse's office without the supervision of a teacher, Ta'nya's daily request for an escort was a coveted role. Below is an exchange between Ta'nya, Candace, and their friends as lunch came to a close.

> Ta'nya stood in the aisle behind my stool. Ebony, Cara, Justine, and Candace, who were all sitting on the same side of the table, turned towards her. They all sat up straight with full attention and their eyes on Ta' nya. It was like a sergeant was addressing her troops for battle and was choosing the worthiest for a special assignment. Ta'nya marched up and down the aisle, eyeing up her hopeful escort to the nurse's office. 'Hmm' she said with her hand resting thoughtfully on her chin. She pointed to Justine; 'You have frosting on your face!' Justine quickly wiped the remaining frosting from a class birthday treat away with her hand. Ta'nya walked up and down the aisle and stopped next to Candace. She pointed to Candace; 'Get that icing off your face!' Candace wiped the small traces of green cupcake frosting from her face. Ebony happened to bring a large canister of Pringles chips to lunch with her and was holding it in her lap. Ta'nya pointed to Ebony. 'You can come if you give me your chips.'

> Ebony replied, 'I will give you one chip to go with you.'

'Hmmm,' said Ta'nya considering her wager. Ebony, Cara, Justine and Candace all had the same type of expression on their faces, a tiny fake smile full of anticipation, but also slightly scared. It seemed as though Ta'nya had previously told them *not* to smile too much when she was looking for a nurse escort. At this point Amber, the birthday girl, walked near this whole scene. Amelia, who was sitting across from Justine and watching this whole scene unfold said, 'Why don't you take Amber? That's a great birthday present.'

Amber, whose facial expression was indifferent to the whole situation, shrugged her shoulders. A couple of the girls nodded. 'Hmm', said Ta'nya, rubbing her chin with her hand as she weighed her decision. Finally, Ta'nya decided on Amber as her nurse's escort for the day. Candace and Justine's shoulders sank in defeat. Ta'nya asked Ebony, 'Can I still have that chip?'

'No way!' says Ebony. Ta'nya and Amber leave for the nurse.

I asked Candace about Ta'nya going to the nurse. "I noticed that Ta'nya goes to the nurse at the end of lunch. What's the reason?" Candace explains, "She has asthma and takes medicine." I nodded in understanding. The girls saw this coveted activity as a way to do something special with one of her friends without complete adult supervision. Singling out a friend or a select few in the group to do something slightly different or talk about something that they only know about seemed to be valuable to the girls and one of the ways the group marked friends versus acquaintances.

Interestingly, I saw no examples of the boys seeking affirmation in their gendered groups similar to the examples above. Thorne (1993) talked at length about gendered stereotypes and how at first glance much of her notes reflected the gendered stereotypes (e.g. girls bonding through conversation). After a closer look, she noticed that she was not drawn to (and thus did not take notes about) the marginalized groups of girls and boys who did not necessarily follow the gendered stereotypes. Finally, since I observed only what occurred near me, it is possible that some of the boys engaged in affirmation seeking in the abovementioned ways.

Seeking attention. Sometimes the students went out of their way to overtly get the attention of peers. Other times a particular event, such as a birthday, brought attention to a classmate. This was especially the case if a student brought in a sweet treat to share with the class at lunch. I provide two examples of boys seeking positive attention from their classmates. This is followed by my observation on how another student sought out any type of attention, including behavior that resulted in negative reactions.

Lunch and a show. Chuck, one of Candace's classmates, was known for drawing attention to himself by how he ate food. Sometimes he attempted to drink an entire carton of milk without using his hands (or a straw). Other times he mixed together and ate different "gross" combinations of food in order to get a response or connect with his classmates. In the example below, I was eating lunch with Candace when we heard some commotion going on.

> Candace and I heard, 'Ewww!' from the other end of the table. We turned and saw Chuck dipping a piece of his brownie first in ketchup, then in his mashed potatoes, and then popped it in his mouth. 'Do it again!' one of their classmates encouraged. 'Eww!' exclaimed a couple of classmates. Chuck continued to perform this act for his classmates until he ran out of brownie.

Chuck was like most students in that he tried to connect with peers in some way in order to elicit a positive (or sometimes a negative) response. Also, while sometimes I was the reason for the students 'acting up' to get my attention, they also engaged in similar displays of entertainment or attempting to elicit a reaction outside of my general viewing range.

Birthday attention. The students were permitted to bring in treats for their birthday as long as they were store bought and had a clear list of ingredients. This was to benefit children with food allergies, so they knew what was contained in the treat. The other rule was that the student had to bring enough treats to feed the entire class. The following is an example of how Taylor's birthday lunch unfolded.

It's a cold February Wednesday and I was eating with KittyCat today. Taylor was also celebrating his birthday. He brought two-dozen Dunkin' Donuts to lunch to share with his classmates in celebration of his birthday. He made a show of standing in front of the line in the classroom while holding a large Dunkin Donut bag containing 2 boxes of doughnuts. He proudly marched with his doughnuts down the hallway with his chest puffed.

Once we entered the noisy lunchroom, he gave the boxes to Ms. Parker so he could buy his lunch. KittyCat, Mariana, Jasmine and I went through the lunch line. We settled on some seats at the end of a table. Natasha came skidding into an empty seat to my right and smiled. Then Ms. Parker placed the doughnut boxes at the end of our table, next to KittyCat, Mariana, Jasmine, Natasha and me. Q and his male friends were sitting closer to Taylor, near the middle and other end of the table.

With about 10 minutes left at lunch, Ms. Parker walked over to our table and told Taylor that it was time to pass out the doughnuts. Taylor got up from his seat at the other end of the table and smiled. Ms. Parker instructed him to pass out napkins at the other class table while she passed extra napkins out at our table. Ms. Parker opened the dozen of glazed doughnuts and handed the open box to Taylor. She told him to pass out the doughnuts to his classmates at the other table while she passed out the doughnuts with chocolate glaze on the top to our table. KittyCat, Q and most of the other classmates anticipated that they would get to eat doughnuts since they watched Taylor carry the boxes from their classroom to the lunchroom. Therefore, most of the lunches on the table were only half-eaten so they could, as KittyCat put it, 'have enough room' to eat their sweet treat.

KittyCat, Mariana and Jasmine selected doughnuts with chocolate glaze and Q and Malik chose plain glazed. As Ms. Parker passed out doughnuts, some of the students asked if they could sing 'Happy Birthday' to Taylor. Once all the doughnuts were passed out to both tables, Ms. Parker asked the class for a vote on who wanted to sing to Taylor. About 15 of the 21 students raised their hands in favor of singing.

Ms. Parker nodded and led the class in song. We all sang, 'Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday dear Taylor, Happy Birthday to you!' As we sang, Taylor was the center of attention in most of our half of the cafeteria. He looked a little embarrassed with a slightly pink face, but quietly listened to his classmates sing. (*Even though Taylor typically sought attention, this was a bit too much.*) After the song his classmates continued to chant, 'Are you one? Are you two? Are you three? Are you four? Are you five? Are you six? Are you seven? Are you eight? Are you nine?...'

'Stop!' yelled Taylor, whose face continued to grow a light shade of red. The class stopped chanting and we all clapped, including the rest of the lunchroom. The students began eating their doughnuts. Then Q muttered quietly, 'These are good, but for my birthday, my doughnuts had sprinkles.' Meanwhile, Jasmine raised her

chocolate-topped doughnut in the air towards and Mariana did the same. In unison the girls 'clink' doughnuts and said, 'Cheers!'

Bringing in doughnuts to school to celebrate his birthday with his class gave Taylor the opportunity to feel special with his peers on a day that was meaningful to him. It was also a way to draw attention to himself and to experience embarrassment.

Negative attention. Sometimes, some classmates attempted to elicit *any* reaction, including a negative reaction when they were more desperate for a social connection, especially if they did not seem to have a core group of friends nearby. Natasha interacted this way daily with her peers, as suggested in the stories above. She picked on her peers or started verbal fights in order to get some reaction from a classmate before they decided to ignore her. Her behavior, or lack of understanding of her social relationships with her classmates, is similar to what Rodkin and Ahn (2009) found where aggressive and unpopular middle age children have poor social placement with their peers. Natasha was just trying to connect with them in any way she could.

Both genders sought to get attention from their peers as a way to connect with them. For example girls and boys celebrated birthdays and a couple of the girls were overt in providing entertainment during lunchtime, similar to Chuck. Nonetheless, much of the behavior associated with seeking attention was overt in some way so peers would take notice of their actions.

Displaying affection. Finally, many of the consultants engaged in displays of affection during lunchtime. The proceeding is a brief example of Kat hugging her brother in the lunchroom. Since the fourth graders and kindergarteners eat at the same time, Kat sees her brother every day at during lunch. On this particular day, it was at the very end of lunch and we were waiting to be dismissed.

Ms. White sees Kat and I sitting quietly at the lunch table and dismisses us to line up on the other side of the cafeteria. As we stand, Kat scanned the kindergarten tables in the next row of tables from ours. She spotted Justin and a small smile spread across her face. Justin was busy eating his sandwich. He turned as we approached the table. He smiled and held out his arms in order to hug his big sister. The siblings embrace for a moment. Then Kat tenderly patted him on the head and told him that she would, 'see you later'. Justin nodded and returned to his sandwich.

Kat hugged her brother every day as she passed him in the lunchroom. While this symbol of affection perhaps could be interpreted as a very close relationship with a family member, many other students also hugged during lunchtime. Other examples varied based on the emotional climate, the topic discussed or the people present in a particular situation with the consultants. Candace hugged her friend, Justine, who just broke up with her "boyfriend" after she learned he liked someone else. KittyCat hugged Mariana spontaneously when she saw Mariana standing next to her in line. KittyCat also hugged a peer fifth grader (who she knew from her extracurricular activity, "Girls on the Run") who came over to our table to visit and check-in with KittyCat. KittyCat and Candace also hugged present and previous teachers, even the male school police officer, all who happened to pass by their table in the lunchroom. Q did not hug other peers in the lunchroom or classroom. But he did hug me on more than one occasion when he saw me at school. In fact, the only hugs a handful of male students engaged in were with previous teachers who walked by in the lunchroom and this was rare. The girls hugged female peers, female adults (teachers), the male police officer and me. The boys did not hug male or female peers, only female adults (teachers).

Exceptions to the rule. Despite all the examples of students engaging in social interaction during lunch, there were still times where they chose not to talk to each other. The point here is that while the students valued the social interaction with their friends, they also

knew that they had a choice in how to spend this time. Accordingly, they also had the option

of *not* talking to friends.

Early release day. Due to potential inclement weather, there was an early release day

for the students on a Friday in January, which also altered Q's class schedule and time that he

ate lunch. Below is an account of this particular lunch with Q.

> Prior to lining up, Ms. Parker gave instructions to the class that were different than the typical full days at school. She told the class that they were to be silent the entire time we were in the lunchroom; that if we brought our lunch we still had to go to the cafeteria and sit quietly at the table; and that we were to return to her classroom to eat lunch. She reminded the class that they also voted on watching Wayside Story during lunch when they returned to the classroom. This announcement produced low excited whispers amongst the students.

> Ms. Parker instructed the lunchboxes to line up. Q lined up at the front of the line. She directed the students who ordered pepperoni pizza to get in line and then called for the students who ordered plain pizza to get at the end of the line. We quietly walked to the lunchroom as per usual with our stops every so many yards down the hallway. Ms. Parker selected two tables that were not the regular class tables and told the lunchboxes to sit down. Q, the other lunchbox classmates, and I sat down quietly. No one opened their lunch boxes. No one played games. We briefly whispered to each other, but mostly remained silent, waiting for the rest of the class to order their lunch. Quickly the other classmates returned to the two tables with their pepperoni or plain pizza, their milk, and sides. A couple of students mumbled that they were happy that they got pizza, because on scheduled early release days, they usually got a 'bag lunch' from school which was a 'gross' sandwich, an apple, and chips. As the students quietly engaged with each other, Natasha picked the pepperoni off her pizza. Jenny, who was clearly disgusted, asked her why she just didn't get a plain pizza if she did not like pepperoni. Natasha shrugged her shoulders and continued picking.

> Once everyone was accounted for, Ms. Parker told us to line up and walk back to her classroom. We walked back and Q and his classmates sat at their desks. The desks faced a Smart Board Screen and were organized in a 'U' shape in the center of the classroom (which was supposed to be conducive for discussions). I sat at a kidney shaped table off to the side. Ms. Parker showed us a large empty garbage bag that she hung off her desk. She told the class to place the trash from lunch in that bag. Then she turned the lights off in the classroom, found an episode of Wayside Stories for us to watch and played it on the large Smart Board Screen. Q and his classmates watched the cartoon with glazed-over looks on their faces and absent-mindedly shoveled food into their mouths without looking down. Even though Q and his classmates were sitting next to each other, practically no one was speaking and no one was sharing food. Despite the potential excitement of leaving school early and

excitedly chattering about what would or could happen, Q and his classmates remained unengaged with each other and focus their attention on the screen throughout lunch.

After this particular lunch, I asked Q about early release days. Through our very brief conversation, Q suggested that he and the students preferred watching the cartoons during early release lunch days. Although I regret not asking him why, I gathered through my observations that it was because the students were permitted to watch a cartoon as a form of entertainment instead of purely educational purposes.

Kat likes to read. This is the second and final example of consultants choosing not to talk to peers during lunchtime. In this particular instance, I was eating with Kat on a day where she knew she did not have to finish schoolwork during lunch. Previously, Kat shared with me that she liked animals and enjoyed reading about animals during lunch at least once a week. Therefore, on this particular day, she brought a book with her and chose to read for part of lunch instead of engage with peers. This excerpt begins after we entered the lunchroom.

> Since Kat did not have to do any schoolwork today, she avoided the schoolwork table. She chose an empty table in their fourth grade section of the lunchroom and sat down. I sat to her right. She brought the book entitled 'Eclipse' with her to lunch today and plopped the book on the table in front of her. She opened her square soft lunch bag and selected the bag with a ham and cheese sandwich. She deconstructed the sandwich and ate it in pieces. She ate some of her mini popcorn cakes and diced pineapple, too. Kat and I discussed parts of her Warrior Cat book series that she was re-reading. Soon, Kat's friend Talia, who walked over with her tray, sat across from her. Kat slid her book to her left to make room for Talia's tray. Talia told Kat that she was relieved that she did not have to finish schoolwork today at the schoolwork lunch table. Kat nodded and replied that she accidentally worked ahead and finished her reading guide for tomorrow already too.

> Talia laughed and said sarcastically, 'Whoops.' She added, 'It's funny' that Kat did that and maybe she could 'accidentally' finish the rest of her work for the week and then not have to worry about it. Kat smiled politely, but her facial expression read like she did not completely agree with Talia. The girls talked about a few other things, mostly about the food they were eating for lunch. A couple more minutes

went by and Jeff, a popular class jokester [according to Kat], sat down next to Talia and across from me. [*Kat was not fond of the popular crowd in her grade and avoided them because they were sometimes mean to other classmates.*] Jeff was working on some schoolwork at the designated table and sat at our table because the table where he typically sat was already full.

Soon after Jeff sat down, Kat shifted her focus to her book. In doing so, she either consciously or subconsciously blocked out most of Talia and Jeff's attempts to speak to her throughout the remainder of lunch. At one point, Kat paused her reading to show Talia one of her favorite comic-strip bookmarks, which involved a duck and a platypus. Jeff commented, 'So what is a platypus anyway?' Kat explained, 'It's almost like a duck-shaped mammal. It's only one of two mammals that lay eggs.' Talia, Jeff and I nodded at Kat's explanation.

Jeff asked Kat, 'What's the other animal?' Kat was either already engrossed in her book or attempting to ignore Jeff returned to reading. Jeff finally pestered Kat enough to ask if a beaver was the other mammal that laid eggs. Without looking up, Kat nodded. Jeff celebrated exuberantly.

Then Talia attempted to engage Kat in a game. She called Kat's name multiple times for a number of minutes until she gave up. This occurred through most of the rest of lunch, with Talia or Jeff attempting to engage Kat in conversation as they changed subjects in their conversation. Finally, Talia was able to get Kat's attention. Kat looked up and Talia asked, 'Kat, want to play a game where we guess where that song came from?' Talia begins to hum a song.
'No!' said Kat, almost rudely and she returned to her book. Talia shrugged her shoulders and engaged Jeff in conversation for a few minutes.

Then Talia picked up her strawberry and said to Kat, 'Kat, Kat, ….Kat, ...Kat, …Kat…Kat.' Finally Kat looked up from her book again and Talia said to Kat, 'Isn't it weird that we eat strawberry seeds… I mean it kind of makes me nervous that a strawberry can grow'-
Kat cut her off, 'Talia, you can't grow a strawberry in your stomach.' Kat returned to reading.

Jeff nodded and agreed with Kat. 'Yeah, you need like sunlight and stuff. Plus, it keeps moving down and around in your stomach. It doesn't just stay there. And all the stomach acids and stuff, there's no way it would grow.' Kat continued to read while Jeff gave Talia additional reasons why a strawberry could not grow in her stomach.

Talia shrugged her shoulders, 'I still think it's weird that you can eat some seeds.' Talia and Jeff continued to talk about different subjects until the end of lunch.

Talia did not seem offended by Kat almost rudely cutting her off. For that reason, this type of interaction most likely occurred weekly between Kat and Talia based on whether or not Kat chose to read that particular day (and whether or not Jeff was sitting at the table). It is interesting that Talia continued to engage Kat, even though Kat made it obvious by reading a book that she was not interested in talking.

In both examples, the consultants chose to refrain from interacting with friends and peers and instead focused on watching television or reading a story. For instance, the students voted on whether or not to watch the television show. They had a choice not to watch it. Also, Kat's choice to read instead of interact seemed to encourage Talia to get her to engage with her more instead of letting Kat decide when she wanted to join in the conversation. Thus Kat's decision to read affected how Talia and Jeff interacted with her and with each other.

One more transition. This final transition relating to mealtime is an example of how the students clean up and line up to leave the cafeteria. There is much less social interaction here, since the students were expected to be quiet and attentive prior to lining up.

Cleaning up and lining up. I continue the story with Kat from above where she was reading during lunch. However, at this point, Talia and Jeff finally gave up trying to get her attention. The proceeding is an example of how Kat and her classmates spend their last few minutes of lunchtime.

> Kat was still reading her book while Talia, Jeff and I were sitting near her at the table when, Peter, Kat's classmate, pushed a large 32 gallon trashcan on a circular dolly towards the table. The presence of Peter and the trashcan and the rumbling sound the wheels made as it approached the table were what told Kat and her classmates that lunch will be over within a matter of minutes. As the trashcan was pushed towards us and then between the lunch tables behind us, Kat and I gathered our trash from our lunch boxes, turned from the table towards the trashcan in the aisle, and threw our trash in the slowly moving garbage can. Since I was the last one in the row at the table, Peter abruptly stopped and turned the trashcan around. He pushed it towards Talia and Jeff's side of the table. Once Peter pushed the trashcan behind Talia, she

picked up her entire tray, turned, and threw the remaining contents into the trashcan. Jeff followed suit. Kat, Talia, Jeff and I were now silent and raised one arm in the air. We looked around for Ms. White and Ms. Goldstein who were standing next to each other with their arms crossing their chests. They were observing the four fourth grade lunch tables and waiting for the students to be silent and attentive to line up. Our table only had a few students and we were much quieter than the 'popular' table [who was scolded for being so loud today]. Thus, they rewarded us by dismissing us first to line up at the far end of the lunchroom.

Talia and Jeff walked ahead of us. Kat walked slowly towards the end of the cafeteria while looking amongst the kindergarten lunch tables for her little brother, Justin. Kat's eyes lit up briefly and she walked toward Justin who was still eating lunch. He saw us approaching his table and gave us a big smile. Kat gave him a quick hug and continued to walk to the end of the lunchroom to line up behind Talia. I waved to Justin, who returned my wave, and then I followed Kat. As her classmates were lining up behind us, Kat quietly explained to me how her book was progressing. She admitted that she woke up 'early' and began reading around 5:30 this morning.

Once the students in both fourth grade classes were lined up by homeroom and were quietly muttering amongst themselves, Ms. White dismissed her class first from the cafeteria. Then Ms. Goldstein instructed her class to follow Ms. White's class down to the end of the hallway. They stopped right at the intersection between the bathrooms and the third and fourth grade hallway. Kat and her classmates occasionally whispered to each other and me as we walked down the hallway. The students were dismissed in groups of two or three at a time based on how attentive they were (e.g. standing facing forward silently while listening to the teacher). They were permitted to either use the bathroom (as needed) or to go to the classroom to drop off a lunchbox, and/or pick up a jacket for recess. Once students from both classrooms had their jackets, they lined up in the fourth grade hallway. Then Ms. White and Ms. Goldstein dismissed everyone outside.

There was one large difference between lining up in the classroom before lunch and lining up in the cafeteria after lunch. Before lunch, it was common for the teacher to tell the students to line up and then return to their classroom seats due to excessive excitement and talking. After lunch, the teachers dismissed the lunch tables to line up and then the students were promptly dismissed down the hallway. The anticipation of talking to friends after not being able to converse with them all morning affected the line up process prior to leaving the classroom. After lunch, the students were already seated with friends, thus there was less excitement about being with friends.

While the consultants did not consider the transitions as a part of lunchtime, I noticed how the transitions actually temporarily quieted or calmed the students (even with the occasional whispering and game playing). This was especially true when they were already loud while lining up for lunch in the classroom or lining up to leave the cafeteria. Some studies such as Leedy, Bates, and Safran, (2004) suggested that if students have clear expectations of the hallway transitions, they were more likely to behave acceptably in the hallway (e.g., standing away from the wall with hands to themselves). However, there is little research on whether or not students actually became calmer during the hallway transitions when they had a clear understanding of hallway expectation.

General reflections on social interaction at school. When I prompted the consultants in conversations about what they talked about or what types of things they discussed with their friends, some had difficulty recalling what was talked about exactly. Candace did not like talking about personal discussions she had at lunch when we were not at lunch. Basically, the topics of conversations and the social interactions while at lunch seemed very important in real time, but easy to forget, embarrassing or not worth discussing afterwards with an outsider (me). Perhaps the consultants and their peers valued the ongoing interactions themselves, but not necessarily the content. The content of their interactions did not define their relationship or their interactions; it was how they felt about the interactions in the moment. Although I was unable to receive any hint of understanding why this occurred, it was interesting to observe such joy or excitement in the moment, and then the difficulty that consultants had in recalling what caused the joy or excitement.

One of the most interesting components of the lunch social interactions was that when the students initiated an interaction, their goal appeared to be to receive at least some type of

reaction, typically a positive reaction where it resulted in the other student smiling or laughing. This occurred not only in the category 'seeking attention,' but also with game play and conversing. Similarly, Corsaro (2015) and James (2013) confirm that child peers attempt to connect with each other and be accepted through various forms of social interaction.

Generally speaking, during lunchtime the students were active in co-constructing social connections with each other while eating. However, the way it occurred varied throughout the lunch. For example, conversing, playing games and exchanging food varied based on who was involved, whether it was a friend or an acquaintance. Seeking affirmation was generally used within groups of friends whereas seeking attention focused on anyone who noticed. Thus, regardless of what type of exchange occurred, this evidence quite plainly demonstrated that social interaction was imperative for third and fourth graders at lunch.

Home

The setting. In order to get a clearer picture of the difference of the dinnertime setting versus the above lunchtime setting, below I provide more detail about the where the consultants 'do dinnertime' before describing social interaction during dinner at home. While each of the consultants' homes was different (e.g. two-story house, ranch, apartment), there were some similarities in the food-related areas with regard to appliances used, the layout and space used for mealtime across consultants. The temperature of the homes was temperate enough to dress casually without being too warm or cold regardless of the time of year. The appliances in the kitchen used to store, prepare food and clean up by the consultants and her/his parents were present in all homes. This included a stove, an oven, a microwave, a refrigerator, a sink and a dishwasher in each of the kitchens. Even though the location of the appliances was different in each kitchen, all were used in some capacity during at least one of the dinners I shared with the consultants and their families. The kitchens either had tile,

laminate, or wood flooring. There was carpeting under Candace's table, a rug under KittyCat's table and tile/laminate under Kat and Q's tables. In all homes, when the family was eating together, the dinner table was reserved for dinnertime with family as opposed to the breakfast bar for breakfast or lunch or dining room table (in KittyCat and Q's homes) for larger crowds and more formal occasions and holidays.

The ambient noise in the room during dinner differed from family to family and sometimes dinner to dinner, yet the central theme to some degree was that the focus was on family and eating together. For example, Q and Kat's family made a specific point to turn off the television and did not have any background noise to the point where it was almost too quiet for me. It made the space between the social exchanges seem apparent and prompted a family member (mostly the mothers) to attempt to engage someone, typically the children, in conversation. The background noise during dinner with KittyCat's family ranged from NPR on the radio on low to holiday music or silence. Candace's home had the television on the entire time, whether it was the news or a movie of some kind before, during, and after dinner. The volume of the television in her home was more than background noise and at times seemed to add to our topics of dinner conversation, almost as if another person were at the table even though we could not see the television screen from our seats. The only time the television was not turned on in Candace's home was when "Auntie" Sharon ate with us and she either muted or turned the television off completely while we ate. Overall, the ambient noise typically appeared to continue to suggest that the consultants and her/his family members engaged in conversation with each other while they ate dinner.

In order to make this chapter more uniform, I proceed to describe how the consultants moved through dinnertime in sequential order, similar to lunchtime above. In hindsight, I did

not give the consultants a chance to define mealtime (e.g., when they thought dinner started). Whenever I asked them to answer dinnertime questions, I already defined dinnertime as the activities that occurred between setting the table and cleaning up. Therefore, I start this section with setting the table. While the consultants interacted with family members before sitting down at the table, most of the ways they connected were as they were eating the actual meal. Thus, I present descriptions of how the consultants set the table, sat down and said the blessing before discussing how they connected with family members while eating dinner. I also illustrate how the consultants were involved in cleanup after dinner. This is followed by a small discussion about children and mealtime at home. Finally, I conclude the chapter comparing similarities and differences about social interaction at home and school.

Setting the table. The following is an excerpt from my field note that describes how Q sets the table before dinner. I chose this particular excerpt because it is the most comprehensive and it is one of about four times I witnessed any of the consultants setting the table. On this particular evening, I was already in the kitchen sitting on a chair as Q's parents put the finishing touches on dinner:

> 'Q! We're going to eat soon, it's your turn to set the table!' Lisa yelled to Q who was in the other room. Q came racing into the family's large kitchen as his parents prepared dinner. The news was on the television in the other room serving as background noise. The smell of warmed marinara sauce filled the space. Jerry, Q's father was at the stove tending to boiling spaghetti in one large pot and marinara sauce in another smaller pot. Lisa pulled out bowls from the cabinet for salad. Q, noting my presence had a serious look on his face and was ready to set the table. With his eyebrows slightly furrowed, he expertly tore paper towels from the dispenser that was on the kitchen counter to the left of the stove. He folded each of the four paper towels lengthwise into long rectangles and placed one on the left side of each of the four plastic placemats around the table. Q opened a kitchen drawer and pulled out four dinner forks. He placed a fork on each of the paper towels on the placemats. He ran over to Lisa and quietly asked her if they need knives for dinner. Lisa pauses a moment and then replied, 'Yes, please'. Q opened the same kitchen drawer and pulled out four butter knives. He placed a knife next to the fork on the napkin. Jerry took the pot of spaghetti over to the kitchen sink to drain the water and then returned the

spaghetti pot back to an oven mitt resting on the counter next to the sauce. Then Q jogged over to the cabinets to the left of the stove. He stood on his toes to open the upper cabinet door. He remained on his tiptoes and after a moment or two of reaching was able to retrieve two plastic cups from a larger stack of eight on the lowest shelf in the cabinet. These plastic cups had a university's logo on them. He set one at his table setting and one at his brother, Jake's table setting.

He ran over to Jerry and asked if he needed a cup. Jerry responded, 'Yes, please.' Q opened the upper cabinet and retrieved another plastic cup and placed it at his father's table setting. Q spotted his mother's glass, which was empty at her place at the table.

He walked over and quietly asked her if she wanted water. She responded, 'Yes, please.' Q puffed his chest, retrieved the glass, and used the water dispenser on the outside of the refrigerator to fill her glass with water.

He returned to Lisa's side and asked, 'Do you want ice?'

'Yes please,' said Lisa. He returned to the refrigerator, pushed the button for ice, and held the water glass under the dispenser. He carefully carried it back and returned it to her placemat. Lisa instructed Q to 'get the salad dressings out'. Q obediently raced to the refrigerator and selected Ranch dressing and Italian salad dressing. Lisa placed three larger salad bowls at the other three place settings and gave Q a smaller cup-sized bowl of romaine lettuce with a pinch of shredded cheese on top.

Jerry noticed the salad bowls, abandoned his post at the spaghetti sauce, and walked to the pantry. He brought out the craisins and the bacon bits and placed them on the table. He returned to the pantry and searched and searched, but did not find what he was looking for. He asked Lisa, 'Have you seen the cashews?'

She replied, 'I ate them all.'

'Oh, …well how about the pecans?'

'I ate those, too. I really like to snack on nuts. Actually, I think we're out.'

'Oh, okay, I was just looking for a little more protein,' said Jerry who then closed the door to the pantry and began plating the spaghetti and sauce for his family. He set each plate on the table. Lisa yelled, 'Jake, it's time for dinner! Remember to wash your hands!' Jake appeared in the kitchen a minute later ready for dinner.

Q was very task oriented with setting the table and knew to ask particular questions without having to be prompted by his parents. Their dialogue was goal oriented. I presume this was so they could work together and sit down to eat dinner. Each family member had a particular job. Q later explained to me that he and his brother alternate days with setting the table.

With the other consultants, Kat described and demonstrated that her table setting experience was similar to Q's where she anticipated what might need to happen with little prompting. KittyCat explained that she never knew when she was expected to set the table because it was different everyday. It depended on who was home and who was doing homework before dinner.

Conversely, when Candace ate with Nana, her experience of setting the table was not as task oriented as Q's. For instance, I was about to eat dinner with Candace and Nana, but the table was not set yet.

> As Nana cooked dinner, she yelled for Candace to set napkins on the table. Candace obeyed by retrieving napkins and tossing three on the table in a haphazard manner. Then Candace returned to tossing and catching a softball-sized Nerf ball in the air. Nana's attention stayed on preparing dinner. A few minutes passed and then Nana yelled out again for Candace to 'get the forks'. Candace stopped her game and ran in the kitchen to retrieve three forks. She clumsily placed them in front of three chairs on top of the napkins on the table. She returned to her game of catch until Nana announced that it was time to eat and that she wanted Candace to get the salad dressings and water bottles from the refrigerator. Candace dropped her ball and completed the tasks prior to eating.

The communication in this exchange was similar to Q's in that it was goal oriented. However, the difference was that Candace did not anticipate what was coming next. She instead waited for Nana to give her instructions before continuing with her task.

Below is a picture of Candace setting the table when she eats with Nana.

Figure 5.2. Candace Setting the Table

Plating food and getting ready to sit down. Sometimes there was a little lag time between setting the table and sitting down for dinner. This occurred when everyone was not yet seated at the table (especially when there were more than two people eating) or when dinner required an extra minute to cook even though everyone was already milling around the kitchen and ready to eat. In the example that follows, Q helped his dad plate pancakes for dinner. What was special about this excerpt was that there were few words exchanged between father and son. Yet it was still a special exchange between them.

> Jerry helped Q's mother, Lisa, plate the food for dinner by placing pancakes on everyone's plate before they were placed on the dinner table. Q held his plate as his father put a large pancake in the middle of the plate. Lisa placed two sausage links on the side of his plate and told Jerry not to give Q any more food because the pancakes were large. Q turned and carried his plate towards the table. Jerry smiled at the pancake pan and quietly called Q back to the stove. He dished a very tiny pancake onto Q's plate – smaller than the size of a dime. (It was probably a drip from the pancake batter.) Q smiled and gazed at his father who was now smiling back at Q. Q found these tiny pancakes special. Through his facial expression alone, it looked as though Q won the lottery or found a small fortune. Then he smiled at the tiny pancake. I did not see any other tiny pancakes, so he may have had the only one from that batch of pancakes.

Q and Jerry did not talk about it again. But it was something they shared before and found special. The quality of this exchange through the gestures and eye contact proved that they understood each other and shared this special moment without having to say a word. This silent exchange was another example of intersubjectivity and occupation as described by Lawlor's (2003, 2012). Q and Jerry constructed a moment with each other without having to explain what was going on. It was a mutually shared understanding of each other's minds (Bruner, 1996; Carrithers, 1992).

Sitting down and saying grace/asking the blessing. Next the consultants chose their seat at the table and then said the blessing. All the consultants, regardless of how 'religious' they described themselves, said a form of a "blessing" or "grace" before eating dinner. In this next account, I was eating with KittyCat and her family on one February evening. It was just about time to eat:

> KittyCat's mother, Melissa just announced from the kitchen that dinner was 'ready.' Before entering the kitchen, we noticed aromas of mouthwatering chili were wafting their way to the front room. KittyCat reminded me that I was to sit in her 'old' seat next to her older sister Hannah. There was NPR playing in the background. I nodded and sat in the seat she steered me to. Hannah was sitting to my left and KittyCat's father, Joseph was sitting across from me. KittyCat was sitting at the head of the table, which was actually her older brother, William's seat, but he was away at college. Melissa's seat was between Joseph and KittyCat and closest to the stove. There was a chair at the other end of the table, opposite KittyCat, but instead of a placemat, papers and schoolwork rested in a pile.
>
> Smaller sized lunch plates and silverware were on the table already at each place setting and a stack of bowls were resting near the stove. Melissa announced, 'I'm going to dish the chili out to everyone.' We all nodded. She also brought the small cornbread sticks out of the oven. She passed out breadsticks to Joseph, then me, Hannah and KittyCat. As she was dishing out Joseph's bowl, the steam was billowing out of the bowl. She said, 'You may need to wait and let it cool down.' He nodded. She told me the same as she set my bowl on top of my plate. I thanked her and nodded. She got to Hannah and KittyCat and said, 'Here you go girls. You're probably going to have to wait about an hour for this to cool down.' We all chuckled. Melissa handed out paper napkins to everyone. A bag of shredded cheddar cheese was sitting on the table. Joseph sprinkled cheese on his chili.

Joseph commented, 'You know, there weren't always bags of shredded cheese. We actually had to slice or grate the cheese ourselves when we were growing up.' This comment produced an eye roll from Hannah and laughter from KittyCat, who was mostly in disbelief that there was such a thing as *not* having shredded cheese in a bag. Meanwhile Melissa placed a large bowl of coleslaw in the middle of the table between Joseph and me. There was also a breakfast cereal-sized bowl of raw broccoli on the table, along with hummus and ranch dressing and a tub of butter near the other end of the table in front of KittyCat, Hannah and Melissa. Melissa was now moving small, five-inch pieces of boiled corn on the cob from a pot on the stove into a serving bowl. She passed the corn bowl to me. I took one piece to start and passed it to Hannah. Melissa asked Hannah and KittyCat if they wanted coleslaw and they shook their heads, 'no'.

After serving everyone, Melissa sat down and said, 'Okay, who is asking the blessing tonight?' It was silent for about 30 seconds and then she said, 'Thanks KittyCat, for volunteering, you can ask the blessing.' The 'volunteer' comment produced stifled laughter from Hannah and KittyCat.

'I guess I'm asking the blessing tonight,' answered KittyCat smartly. After briefly composing herself, KittyCat folded her hands at her chest and bowed her head. The rest of her family members and I did the same. She began, 'Dear God, thank you for our friends, our family and our food…(*she continues, but I do not remember what she said.*)…Amen.' We all replied, 'Amen', raised our heads, and began eating.

In taking their seats, filling their plates, and "asking" the blessing, KittyCat and her family members used these brief behaviors as transitions before eating the meal. Their social interaction was a balance of direct instructions and casual and lighthearted commentary. Melissa directed us on how and when we transitioned to actually eating.

At the table. I encouraged the families to attempt to carry on as they would during a typical dinner without me there. While some of the stories and social exchanges were for my benefit, whether it was to tell me a story or to provide additional context for a topic that was discussed. However, sometimes there were also awkward silences that I assumed were due to my presence. I was, after all, a stranger who was trying to blend in and act like it was normal for me and eat dinner with them.

Regardless of my presence, the consultants also placed a large emphasis on engaging with family during dinnertime at home. It was understood between the consultants and family members that they talk to each other during dinner, typically about topics that would interest other family members or involved themselves and/or another family member.

While it had a different feel than the social interactions at school, there were still various ways that family members connected with each other during dinner. Similar to the school setting, I provide narratives of the different types of social interaction: short directives, social exchanges, narratives/storytelling about past events, games and teasing, sharing meals, and exceptions to the rule.

Short directives. Most of the communication that occurred between the consultants and their family members before dinner was in the form of brief (less than 30 seconds) directions and instructions that were related to an aspect of dinnertime. The best examples are in the earlier narratives with Q and Candace's parents directing them to set the table. Melissa also directed her family to sit down, when to eat the food, when it was time to ask the blessing and who was elected to ask it. Fiese, Foley, and Spagnola (2006) noted similar verbal exchanges in their studies with family mealtime and labeled them as "routine communication." Most of this type of communication in my study occurred before dinner started or just after the blessing.

Social exchanges. The social exchanges were the most frequent social interactions at dinner. It was where at least one family member engaged another family member by either verbally or non-verbally communicating with them. In my conversations with the consultants, Q and KittyCat, gave me a little insight into the what they do dinner, other than eat:

Q: Usually then we start eating and we talk usually talk about our day. And like what we will have dinner the next day and about how the week's gonna go.

****

KittyCat: Sometimes…So...[*KittyCat sighs*] so what we do, we usually start a conversation about our day. We'll start saying like, 'How was your day?' or 'My day was great, how was yours?' But, we love talking and eating, but not in a bad way.

These social exchanges were brief (no more than one or three minutes at most) and occurred more at the beginning of dinner. They included reminders about upcoming events in the family's schedule, explanations of their day and current events. I present examples of social exchanges below.

Reminders. The parents used dinnertime as a way to remind all family members of upcoming events. While I was with Q's family one Friday evening, Lisa had the following reminder for the family shortly after saying "grace."

> Lisa, Q's mom reminded everyone that 'remember that we (She, Jerry, Q and Jake) are going to the college football game tomorrow' with Q's community football team and their family members. She explained to me that this was a reschedule from the rainout over a month ago. Q and his dad nodded happily. Q asked if he and his teammates get to walk on the field. Jerry and Lisa discussed whether or not they get to walk on the field due to going to the rescheduled game.

This reminder helped Q (and his dad) get excited about doing something during the weekend together. Additionally, Fiese and colleagues (2006) also described this type of exchange as "routine communication" because they considered it instrumental. However, I see this type of communication to social exchange because while it was instrumental, it was something the family members got excited about. It evoked emotion. Conversely, Fiese et al. (2006) used the term "ritual communication" for exchanges that were "tied to emotions" (p. 69). I was careful to separate the constructs of social interaction to more reflect the thoughts and feelings of the consultants compared to the parent.

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Tell us about your day. The consultants were encouraged to talk about their day frequently during dinnertime. For example, Melissa prompted KittyCat to tell us about the power outage that occurred at school earlier today. Before she could begin, Joseph interrupted her and told us that his school (Three Streams Middle School), which was "right across the road", also did not have power. He explained that the cause of the outage was that a large truck "took out a transformer." We all nodded. Melissa encouraged KittyCat again to tell us about her experience.

> Okay, so we were in class and Ms. Jenkins told James to turn the lights on. And he went up to turn the lights on and they flipped the switch and it didn't work. He tried again. It didn't work. He said, 'I don't know!'…' So then another boy goes up and tried to flip the switch and it doesn't work for him either. A minute later the classroom phone rang and Ms. Jenkins answered it. It was the office telling her that the power was out. We pretty much carried on with our day though. After a little bit, we went to art class and were painting for a while without the lights on. We kind of forgot that we didn't have any power. We did just fine…at one point, we were pretending that we were in Harry Potter with the invisible cloak and that we were going to fight Voldemort.'

> Joseph says, 'Ah, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. But you said his name!'

> KittyCat slid Joseph a sideways glace and continued. 'I was a little surprised because Ms. Jenkins went along with us. She didn't even tell us to stop (pretending).' We all nodded

> Then Melissa encouraged Joseph to tell us his experience at school. Joseph nodded.

> Joseph: Okay well, there's not much to the power outage with the school. Like I said before, we're right across the road, so it happened at the same time. I mean, we could see okay because there are big skylights in each classroom at the middle school. But, everything we do in my class is on the computer and online – the lesson, the materials the work, everything. So we just had to kind of go with it. And of course the kids were asking if they could go home and began to get all riled up.

> Ashley: Is it normal for the students to get riled up on a Monday?

> Joseph [*shaking his head no.*] Usually, they're just easing into the day from the weekend. But because there was a big change, they got really excited. I mean we were talking about the human reproductive system today. So we could get by without the computer at least for parts of it.

Hannah: How do you teach that?

Joseph: We make it as basic and bland as possible. [*We all nodded and then the conversation topic changed completely.*]

Some of the exchanges about their day were shorter or sometimes longer than this one. Nevertheless, I liked this particular exchange because one event linked two of the family members' stories together, but they had completely different experiences. As Dickie et al (2006) suggest experiences are based on how the particular person is situated through a given context within a similar period of time.

National current events. Sometimes current event topics either implicitly or explicitly wove themselves into the conversation (e.g. the World Series, the presidential election, politics). In this next example, I was with Q and his family for dinner a few days after the Chicago Cubs won the World Series. Q and his family were seated at the table. I was seated next to Q, near the table.

Q just finished saying 'grace' and everyone picked up their forks to begin eating. Just then Jerry's cell phone beeped the ESPN jingle. Jerry chuckled. 'I bet it's about the World Series. I've been getting updates all day on the Cubs' parade…there was supposed to be coverage from 10 AM until 3 PM. What did they do for that amount of time today? I mean the Thanksgiving Day parade is only 3 hours.' Lisa and Jerry laughed. Lisa and Jerry made different suggestions about how the media and the team used that time (e.g. keys to the city for each player; each player gets a speech). Jerry also explained how some of the sportscasters focused on telling stories about some of the fans who were in tears and talking about how other family members died before seeing the Cubs win a World Series. 'It got pretty intense.' We nodded solemnly before the subject was changed.

The adults commented on these topics and the children did not contribute to the conversation. These social interactions were relatively short (sometimes two to three minutes in length) before the topic was changed so more family members were interested in participating.

Narratives/storytelling. Sometimes, one of the family members told a longer monologue type story either about their day or about a past event. At times this was addressed to the whole family, especially with regard to it pertaining to their day. Yet other times, it was addressed more towards me for my benefit, but not entirely. Some of these stories were about more than one family member and began with "Remember when…". While the stories were new to me and might have helped fill in contextual information, they were also typically enjoyable for the rest of the family members to hear this story repeated as indicated through smiles and nodding. In reliving a happy or exciting past event, other family members sometimes chimed in to help describe this particular occurrence. For example, shortly after Thanksgiving while I was having dinner with Candace, Nana and Sharon, the three were taking turns telling me about their trip to visit Nana's son in Virginia. After we sat down Sharon did most of the talking about (her disapproval of) the food:

> Sharon: They hardly eat any vegetables. There wasn't a lot of food, food. You know, vegetables, meat, the things that make up a meal. She (*the daughter-in-law*) made carrot cake *and* cookies and she set the cookie plate on the table. As if to say, 'take as many as you want'. I told K that she could only take two.

> Nana: Yeah, we didn't have a salad the whole time we were there. (*She shook her head in disgust.*) …and my son was trying to convince me that a funnel cake that we got at Busch Gardens counted as part of a meal…I think he does the cooking at home and they usually go out to eat …a lot.

> Sharon: It was a nice Thanksgiving and all, but I am happy to be back home and eat how we eat. (*Sharon asked Candace)* Can you go get my phone in my room? I want to show her pictures. (*Candace obediently left the table and returned with Sharon's phone. Sharon showed me pictures of Christmastown at Busch Gardens.*) It was as if the spirit of Christmas was all around and everyone was happy and nice to each other. I was cold, but it was fun.

> Nana (*nodded)*: The kids were all bundled up so they stayed pretty warm. (*Candace nodded and smiled.*) They even had the rides up and running. I went on the baby roller coaster with my little granddaughter but I screamed the whole time. (*Candace and Nana laughed.*) I was scared. It was beautiful there though. (*Sharon showed me a couple of pictures of Candace with her cousins.*)

Candace muttered: Yeah I can handle the younger one, but ugh, not the older one. (*Candace sighed and shook her head slowly.*)

They described the food, how Candace's cousins behaved (or misbehaved) and the fun they had at the theme park. Candace added a comment here or there, especially about riding a rollercoaster. However most of the story was framed from either Nana's or Sharon's perspective.

In another instance, we were talking about the outcome of the Superbowl when Melissa, KittyCat's mother, asked if I saw any of the commercials. I told her that I missed most of the commercials. She continued with this story:

Melissa: … there was this commercial on during the Superbowl that was very controversial by 84 Lumber. Did you see it? [*I shake my head no.*] It was one of the ones that said to find out the ending go to a website. Well I tried the website last night and so many people visited it, that it crashed. I tried early this morning and no luck. I was finally able to see the whole thing at work today. …So it was about this mother and daughter and you knew they were in Mexico, in a small, poor town. They wake up early in the morning and hug the grandfather good-bye. The mother was about in her late twenties and the girl was about KittyCat's age or maybe a little older, like ten.

KittyCat: Or like twenty? [*Joseph, Melissa, and Hannah laughed and I smiled at KittyCat's interjection. KittyCat smiled and didn't appear to understand why her comment was deemed as either funny or cute.*]

Melissa: The grandfather gives the girl a piece of candy in a red wrapper and a little piece of cloth. They show the mother and daughter walking during the day through the desert and it's hot. It makes it seem like they're walking for a while. …Every once in a while there are shots of coyotes and snakes in the desert. And then the commercial cuts to a very different scene. There are men wearing hardhats with lots of lumber building something. At first you can't tell what it is. Again, there are more scenes with the mother and daughter. They've been walking all day in the hot sun and sometimes there are other people who are walking with them. At one point there's a man carrying a jug of water over his shoulder and the mom asks, 'Agua por mi hija?' The man nods and gives the daughter some water. The scene cuts back to the men and it looks like they're building a wall.

Hannah: Oh no! Is this going to be heartbreaking?

Melissa (*nodding*). Throughout the clips, they show the mother and daughter looking sunburned. And daughter was picking up small scraps of cloth and a small stick.

Finally, it becomes dusk and the mother and daughter reach their destination. The image then shows this large wall, about fifteen or twenty feet high in front of them and cuts to the mother. The mother looks devastated and exhausted. She's not crying because she looks *that* upset… *heartbroken*. Then the daughter gives something to the mother – she hands her a handmade of the American flag from the pieces of cloth that she's gathered during their walk in the desert. The mother hugged the American flag. …I mean, I started to cry. Then the mother and daughter then walk along the wall-

Hannah: Wait, what happens with the piece of candy from the dad?

Melissa: Oh yeah, she ate that at some point. So then the mother and daughter get to this large door along the wall without any handles on it…

KittyCat interjected: Wait, is this a commercial *for* building the wall?

Joseph: That's what I was wondering, are they supporting the construction of the wall with the supplies?

Melissa continued: …They walk towards it (*the door*) and push it open. You can't tell what's on the other side because there's light coming from the doorway. Then the tag line says something like, '84 lumber we support those who have the courage to make their own destiny or journey or deep goals' or something like that. (*We sat there for a few moments silently.*)

Joseph: I guess 84 Lumber, with all of it's material in construction would support hiring Hispanic people, especially since a lot of people who end up building the sites are Hispanic. I didn't see that angle. [*He nodded in approval.*]

Hannah: Oh my gosh, I have the shivers and goose bumps. [*I nodded and realized I did too.*]

The parents or the older siblings had the 'privilege' of telling long stories to the rest of the family while the consultants were encouraged to listen. In fact, through our conversation, KittyCat recognized that she was not encouraged to talk or converse as much during dinner compared to her older sister. She explained that she looked forward to getting older so she could talk more at dinner.

Games and teasing. Games and teasing occurred once in a while during my observations, especially as my relationship with the consultants and the families became more comfortable. Games, where quizzing and trivia were involved, occurred once with Q. I was present part of the evening where Q invented a trivia game that was mostly directed towards his father, but sometimes his brother and mother. Q peppered Jerry about spelling colors in Spanish (e.g. yellow, orange, green) using the Spanish alphabet. The rule was that you could not refer to any outside sources to get to the answer. This game was based on pure knowledge.

> Q: Okay, Dad, spell blue in Spanish.
>
> Jerry (*smiling*): A-z-u-l.
>
> Q: You are wrong! You didn't use the Spanish alphabet. Jake, you can't help him because you just took a Spanish class. …And no looking it up on your phone! (*Jake shrugs.*)
>
> Jerry (*sighs playfully*): Okay… (In Spanish) A-z-u-l
>
> Q: That is correct. Okay…how about red?
>
> Once they went through all the colors he quizzed Jerry about properly writing Roman Numerals and then quizzed everyone about French and Japanese.

While it was good-natured, Q attempted to showcase his knowledge to his family members and me. Q clearly chose topics where he was the 'expert' and did not need to consult any other resources.

With regard to teasing, the older siblings and parents initiated this social exchange and it was directed towards the younger family members, either one of the consultants or their siblings. For example, during Q's game night where he was quizzing (or showing-off to) everyone about things he already knew, Jake teased Q by not following 'the rules'.

Q took out a piece of paper and wrote 'Japanese lesson' at the top. He handed the paper and pen to Jake. He told Jake to 'write how you say 'hello' in Japanese'. Initially there was confusion as to whether Jake was to write the actual characters or the phonetic spelling of the word. Then Q clarified and said, 'the spelling'.

Jake said, 'Hmm… I know this, but I can't remember.' He looked to Jerry and Lisa who both shrugged their shoulders and shook their heads. They didn't know either. Jake pretended to look deep in thought with his head down. Then Q noticed Jake was trying to look up the answer on his smart phone.

'You can't do that! You're cheating!' Q shrieked. Q's parents tried to stifle their laughter. A huge smile broke out over Jake's face. Once he composed himself, Q proudly took the paper back and wrote 'Kon niche wa'. And everybody nodded, 'Oh yeah, that's right.'

Similarly, Hannah or Joseph teased KittyCat about her pouring too much salad dressing on her salad or accidentally dumping too much cheese on her chili. Sometimes KittyCat laughed along with them though sometimes she did not understand exactly why they were joking or snickering at what she did or said (e.g., when she suggested the "young" daughter was 20 in the story above). Kat's father, Larry, joked a couple times with Kat or her mother, Erica, but jokes generally seemed to fall a little short with Kat. Kat did not tease Justin during dinner, but treated him more like a student, instructing him to eat his food a certain way. Finally, Nana's light-hearted teasing towards Candace typically occurred before or after dinner and it was mostly about how Candace never stopped moving (e.g., doing cartwheels, kicking a Nerf ball, throwing a Nerf ball to herself). Other studies have also included teasing of other family members as a common form of social communication during dinner that maintains social order and teaches children about engaging with others in a safe environment (Aronsson & Gottzén, 2011; Ochs & Shohet, 2006). Even though Q monopolized the dinner conversation with his game, Jake's teasing helped remind Q of the social order in the family. Playing games, on the other hand, was not a common practice in other literature describing family mealtime.

Another existing body of literature focuses on dinnertime discourse to examine how family members interact, especially how parents and children interact with and speak to each other while they eat dinner. Examples of types of social exchanges that have been studied focus on arguments and eating food (Paugh & Izquierdo, 2009) and how the idea of morality, the consideration of good and bad table manners and culturally acceptable behavior, influences discussion at the table (Aronsson & Gottzén, 2009; Ochs, Pontecorvo & Fasulo, 1996; Ochs & Shohet, 2006). Blum-Kulka (2008) argued that dinner discourse is a familial "we" event where children learn cultural ways of speaking (e.g., arguing, irony, politeness and humor) and form a social construction of knowledge and morality through the daily exchanges (e.g., directives, prayers, teasing, storytelling, authority) of asymmetrical relationships (Ochs & Shohet, 2006). The types of social interactions above between the consultants, their family members and sometimes me is congruent with the current research.

Sharing meals. Sharing meals was probably the most ubiquitous form of social interaction, even though most of it occurred without verbal exchange. The parent who cooked dinner, typically the mother, dished out plates from the stove or oven to all family members (including me) and handed them to each person.. Everyone ate the same food. Some of the consultants and their siblings were encouraged to finish less desired food on their plates once in a while. There were different types of condiments on the table for most meals where family members and consultants had the choice of dressing up salads, soups or stews to their preference. Because the side dishes and condiments were not always within an arm's reach, family members asked another person at the table to pass them the food. This act of passing sides or condiments acknowledged the presence of others at the table and reinforced the idea of sharing food.

Also, on occasion, if a family member was full, they gave away the rest of the food to other members of the family for consumption. However, there was no trading, stealing or begging for food between family members at dinner while I was with them.

Commensality, sharing meals together (with the implication that social interaction is involved), is considered important (Absolom & Roberts, 2011; James, Curtis, & Ellis, 2009; Ochs & Izquierdo, 2009) not only for gathering family members together to share information, but also to teach children about dining and socializing with others in a given culture (Ochs & Izquierdo, 2009; Ochs & Shohet, 2006). At home, the consultants shared food with family during dinner. They were literally served from the same pots and dishes and ate the same food together with their family members. They shared pieces of a meal and conversation. With the consultants who ate with their families most evenings, the practice of building the relationships and connections while sharing their meal emphasized and represented a special connection between family members.

Exceptions to the rule. While Candace did eat dinner at the table with Nana initially, Candace told me that since she got an Amazon Fire Stick for Christmas from her Nana, she ate all her meals in her room in order to watch her "shows." After Candace began eating dinner in her room, she had very little interaction with Nana during dinnertime. One dinner she allowed me to eat with her in her room. I begin this example after Nana served us dinner on red trays and Candace had just said the blessing.

> Candace had control of the television remote and picked short (three to five minutes long) You Tube videos to watch during our dinner. She chose silly video clips where two people completed a food challenge. One person was randomly given a certain food (e.g. cow brain, worms, pizza) and the other person was given the food in gummy form (e.g. gummy brain, gummy worms, gummy pizza). We did not speak much, but she checked in after the video to see if I was laughing and enjoying the clips on the television. I had the sense that she had watched these videos before because she chose specific clips to watch while we ate. When I was not there I

assume she just chose different videos and watched them, since she had no one else to check in with while eating alone in her room.

So even when family members at home were present, it was not always an indication that a consultant needed or desired social interaction. But this was more the exception than the rule. Nana gave Candace permission to choose where to eat dinner and Candace chose in her room with her television.

Candace's choice to eat in front of the television was a bit of a surprise, especially because she ate dinner with Nana and me at the table for the previous two meals. She chose to engage in what some researchers call parasocial (or one-sided) relationships with particular characters or shows on television (Rosaen & Dibble, 2009) instead of live social interaction with Nana. Since it was clear that Candace had previously viewed the shows that I watched with her during our meal in her room, perhaps her social relationship was in fact with particular characters from shows that challenged each other to eat silly or weird food. Wilson (2007) found that while viewing television, children eight years old and older tended to look for parallels to real life and how characters behave on programs. Therefore, since Candace chose to consistently watch programs with real life characters actually eating real weird or silly food, which is more socially realistic compared to watching a cartoon about Mickey Mouse, she was possibly forming a parasocial relationship with them while eating her own food. She was eating dinner while watching other people eating weird food and interacting with each other. Thus, Candace sought a different form of silly social interaction that she did not get from speaking with Nana at dinner. Since Nana permitted Candace to eat in her room and continue this type of dinner relationship, this was considered acceptable in their household.

Finishing the meal and cleaning up. Once the consultants were full or finished their

meal at the dinner table, they were still expected to ask permission before leaving the table

and cleaning up after themselves. As KittyCat described, "When you're finished….you wait

on everyone else and you like talk with them. You don't just go 'Oh let's go' [and leave the

table]." The consultants had to wait until everyone finished eating and then ask permission to

leave the table. I did not realize the importance of this practice until I was eating with Kat

and her family for the first time. It was a nice day so we ate outside at the table on the deck.

Dinner was eaten quickly, between 15 to 20 minutes. Michelle encouraged everyone

to eat more if they were still hungry. She suggested that I go inside and take as much

zucchini pasta as I wanted. I returned to the table and began eating my second helping.

> Upon my return to the table, Justin was laughing and explaining something as he
> finished his last few bites of food. [I did not catch exactly what he was talking about.]
> He used both his fork and his other hand to shovel food into his mouth until his plate
> was clear. Larry and Erica wore slightly concerned and slightly horrified expressions
> on their faces as Justin fed himself with his hands. Erica reminded him to wipe his
> face with his napkin. Justin nodded and wiped his face with the napkin that was
> resting next to his plate. Then he announced that he was done with his food. He asked
> to be excused from the table. His parents told him to wait until everyone was finished.
> I looked at my plate and tried to eat a little faster. Justin began playing on the chair
> and noticed how his legs were resting on the chair at the table. 'Look at my legs!' he
> said. 'Ahhh!' He sat on the chair with his legs spread apart widely -one leg on either
> side of the chair. He began rocking and soon after he made clicking noises, like a
> horse. 'Hey, how do you spell neigh?' he asked.
>
> Erica was silent for a moment and calmly responded, 'Well there are two different
> kinds. If you want to spell nay as in 'no', it's N-A-Y. If you want to spell it like what
> a horse says it's N-E-I-G-H.'
>
> 'Neigh! Neigh!...N-E-I-G-H.' 'Neigh!' Justin rocked in his chair and pretended that
> he was a horse. Justin continued to point out how silly his legs look.
>
> Kat covered her forehead and eyes with her hands. In an exasperated voice she said,
> 'Oh, Justin, you usually aren't this crazy at dinner.'
>
> Larry responded, 'Well, usually, we let him get up when he's done.'

Erica added, 'We let him get up when everyone is finished.' I realized that I did not finish eating and everyone else had. (The dinner would have been over if I hadn't had seconds!) I finished the last few bites quickly, almost shoveling them into my mouth. Justin was promptly excused from the table after I swallowed my last bite of food.

Since Justin finished dinner quickly, his other family members also finished dinner at the same pace. While I did not ask, it seemed as though this occurred regularly. Even though Justin entertained himself until I finished eating, it was clear to me that his creative behavior in pretending the chair was a horse, was not encouraged behavior during dinner. This experience outlined that there were clear behavioral and social exchanges that were expected to occur during dinner and that Justin's silly actions were close to being unacceptable.

After they were given permission to leave the table, all the consultants scraped their extra food from their plates into the trashcan. Then depending on the family and whether or not the dishes in the dishwasher were clean or dirty, they were instructed to put their plates and silverware in the sink or dishwasher. See Figure 5.3 for a photo of KittyCat putting dishes away, When Candace ate in her bedroom, dinner was served on a plate and carried to her room on a red plastic tray. Once she finished her dinner, she took the tray with her plate into the kitchen. She scraped the extra food into the garbage, put the tray on top of the other trays (on a small 3 foot-tall freezer), and placed her plate and silverware in the sink.

Figure 5.3. KittyCat Loading the Dishwasher

After they cleaned up, the consultants and their family members went their separate

ways to either work on homework, watch television or finish cleaning up from dinner in the

kitchen. The expectation for the consultants to cleanup after themselves is similar to findings

that examine family mealtime (e.g., Ochs & Beck, 2013; Ochs & Izquierdo, 2009).

Interestingly, none of the consultants alluded to cleaning up after themselves as a chore or

something that they were getting paid to do. This is different compared to findings from

another study that examined mealtime with middle class families living in Los Angeles

where the children were expected to cleanup after themselves and were rewarded with money

if they completed particular chores (Ochs & Izquierdo, 2009). None of the consultants

mentioned getting an allowance or getting paid for chores.

General reflections of social interaction at home. To some degree, all family

members were expected to engage in social interaction during dinner while seated at the

dinner table. Also, the parents did not go into detail about their entire day but prompted the

consultants and siblings to provide more detail about their day. Furthermore, even though the

consultants and their siblings started social exchanges without prompting during dinner, it

occurred much less frequently than at school. The consultants were more passive in their interactions with family members. They waited before they spoke. Instead they ate, listened, and watched other family members engage. The only exception was Q, who controlled most of the dinner conversation with his game one evening. Finally, the mothers of the consultants with traditional dual parent families encouraged conversation between and amongst family members throughout dinner. This is similar to DeVault's (1991) findings where in dual heterosexual parent families, the mother, and creator of the meal, felt responsible for not only planning and preparing the meal, but ensuring that the mealtime experience was enjoyable where everyone was interacting and socializing with each other. While I never interviewed the mothers about this specifically, the way in which the meals came together was similar.

Commensality. Since Kat, Q and KittyCat's families all emphasized eating dinner together most evenings as important, the consultants also felt eating dinner together was important. Nana did not put as much emphasis on eating together with Candace, thus Candace chose to eat in her room without Nana. This does not mean that Candace and Nana did not speak; they just did not share conversation and food together. In sum, the parents were responsible for emphasizing the importance of sitting down together to eat dinner to provide an opportunity to connect with each other socially. This emphasis then reflected how the consultants valued eating dinner together.

Through examining empirical data, Fischler (2011) and Simmel (1997 [1910]) argued that commensality produces bonding in all cultures where eating the same food was equated with "producing the same flesh and blood, thus making people more alike and bringing them closer to each other…If eating a food makes one become more like that food, then those sharing the same food become more like each other" (Simmel, p. 533). Thus, while Candace

and Nana did not eat together during dinners, they were still bonded through sharing the same food.

Discussion

The social worlds of school and home had notable differences and similarities between the two. I separate this discussion section by describing how the social interactions were alike and then how they were different. I begin with comparing the connections between the consultants with peers versus connections with family members. Then I describe the similarities between the social exchanges.

Differences in making social connections between home and school. Despite the overwhelming presence of social interaction during mealtime at school and home, there were many differences between how the consultants connected with their friends versus their family.

KittyCat explained that one of the differences between mealtimes at school and home is that she was with her friends all day and they did not need to discuss what they did together. Because her family was not with her all day, they did not know what she did. She felt that the content discussed during the meals differed because they were with one community all day (peers) and not the other (family). While the social interactions presented differently within contexts- creating and free-wheeling social exchanges between and among peers at school; a more formal way of observing and learning about social exchanges at home- they were important in that the consultants, peers and family members almost could not, *not* interact with each other in some capacity during mealtime.

The consultants engaged in a variety of types of social interactions during lunchtime that lasted between one to five minutes on average. On occasion a game or conversation

lasted longer, up to 15 minutes. Generally, this resulted in a string of different types social interactions that kept the students continually engaged with each other. The frequent change in social connections also gave other friends seated close by the opportunity to engage in a new conversation or game. At home there was less variation in social interaction as it was typically led by the parent and included longer conversations or stories.

Part of the difference between social interaction at home and school was the location of adult supervision. At school, the teacher or authority figure was at least 20 to 30 feet away from where the consultants interacted with their peers. However, at home, the parent and consultant were sitting next to each other at the dinner table. The exchanges at home were not as spontaneous (or loud) because the parent encouraged the consultant to participate in conversation, but also corrected their behavior to use table manners (e.g. "eat with a fork, not your fingers") or directed them to retrieve a condiment from the pantry. The consultant had less choice of when and how to engage in social interactions at home, compared to at school where no one corrected their every move, which was the only time of day they were not under the teacher's watchful eye.

Another difference was the consultants engaged in social interaction with peers throughout the lunchtime process (lining up, standing in line, eating, cleanup and lining up). There was a feeling of *needing* to speak to each other as much as possible during this time even though they were with their classmates within the same classroom for most of the day. However, at home the consultants and their family members were in different rooms in the house immediately before and after dinner. There was not a continuation of social engagement like there seemed to be at school. At home, the consultant's mother prompted the consultant to set the table and directed what to set on the table. The primary content of

what was talked about at home was when everyone was seated at the table eating. Similarly, as soon as the consultants and their family members decided dinner was over they dispersed to different areas in the home. KittyCat described after dinner, "…We go do what we usually do. Everyone does something different." In other words, the expectation was that being together only occurred while eating dinner. It was the only time to 'catch up'. After dinner he consultants and their family members continued to live together though apart.

Finally, another big difference was the level of affection towards others during mealtime. At school, the students hugged each other spontaneously on occasion at any given time during lunch. However, the consultants never showed that level of affection with their family members during dinnertime. Perhaps the additional affection at school was another way to maintain and define friendship or to demonstrate trust or appreciation. Perhaps the lack of affection during dinner was due to family members showing affection during other parts of the day. Another reason for no affection is that they might be uncomfortable to demonstrate that level of private affection in front of an acquaintance (me).

Needing to belong versus already belonging. At school the students engaged in multiple types of social interaction in order to maintain, create, or destroy friendship, to ensure that they belonged to a peer group (Corsaro, 2015; James, 2013; Nukaga, 2008). Their overt actions and behaviors towards one another helped determine who was best suited to engage with whom. Through my observations at home, the consultants showed me that they trusted and never questioned their parents' guidance on what to eat, when to eat, and what to do. The consultants did not have to invent overt ways to connect to family members in order ensure that they still belonged to their family. Also, these more dramatic ways of connecting were discouraged while eating at the dinner table. Thus, these differences between social

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communities and the relationships that the consultants had with each community also shaped how they engaged with each of them. Therefore, they were more active with social interaction at school with peers compared to more passive engagement at home with family.

Commensality. I alluded earlier to the fact that commensality is when people eat together, however sometimes the definition also includes sharing food (Fischler, 2011). According to the more traditional meaning of commensality, it is required that the meal is shared with others so then you are more like each other by eating the same food (Fischler, 2011). While the meaning of sharing meals together appeared important to the consultants' parents, the consultants never commented that it was important that they share the same meal with family. In fact, the consultants reported that they just liked "being together" with family for dinner. Even Candace mentioned that she enjoyed eating with family once in a while, especially on the holidays. Furthermore, there was no form of food exchange that occurred other than giving away food if another family member was full. Since the consultants were sharing entire meals with their family, there was no suggestion or need to exchange food.

However, at school food exchange was one way that the consultants engaged with peers daily. Similar to the findings from Anderson and colleagues (2015) study on children eating school lunch together, the students with lunches that were different from theirs exchanged food frequently. Yet, two students who had the same exact school lunch never shared or traded food amongst themselves when I was with them. Thus, the variety of food encouraged more food exchange and with it another type of social interaction. While sharing and trading food could be considered smaller versions of sharing whole meals with family, the other forms of food exchange did not exist in the meals that I observed at home. Therefore this difference in experience with commensality throughout their day suggests that

the consultants strived to navigate how to make connections with family members and peers regardless of what food was being served. There was only emphasis on commensality between students when the type of food mattered to both of the children involved in the exchange.

Similarities between home and school. Despite the number of differences between settings related to social interaction, there were also a handful of concepts that were similar. For example, the consultants ate with at least one other person; and everyone was expected to eat food during mealtime. Additionally, I present the consultants' description of how they ate together with other people; the "we-ness" of lunchtime and dinnertime. I finish my discussion on similarities by highlighting how the social interaction at school and home connect.

Intersubjectivity: the "we-ness". Lawlor (2003, 2012) drew on Daniel Sterns' (1994) use of the concept "we-ness", or doing together, when examining intersubjectivity. The consultants with traditional dual parent families spoke about how "we" do dinner at home. For example, in their interviews, Kat, Q and KittyCat used "we" to describe what happened typically during their dinner/supper on a given weekday (e.g., "we set the table, then we say the blessing, then we eat,"). Perhaps this "we-ness" or idea of social connection through doing dinner with family wove into how these consultants learned to live and do dinner at home. Another reason they may have used "we" was because there were three other family members in their home who also participated in family dinner activities and to give the range of who does what during dinner could get lengthy and confusing.

Candace on the other hand, rarely if at all used "we" as she described what happened during dinner with her and Nana. This could mean that she did not derive the same meaning

and social connections with Nana during dinner and could be the reason why she chose to eat in her bedroom. Perhaps Nana did not overtly or covertly place as much value on the "we-ness" of dinners like the rest of the parents based on how she grew up and viewed dinners. Another reason could be that there were generally two of them (i.e. Nana and Candace), and *sometimes* three of them at dinner so it was easier to delineate who did what during dinnertime (e.g., I do this, she does this).

Generally, the consultants' emphasis on needing to connect with others during mealtime highlights the importance of intersubjectivity during social interaction. It demonstrates that mealtime with others was constructed not only to feel satiated through food, but also satiated through making mostly positive social connections.

Connecting social interaction between school and home. Lunchtime was full of ways the consultants connected with their peers, retold experiences, and learned how to navigate their social world. Generally, my findings were similar to what Thorne (2005) and Nukaga (2008) noted in their studies of lunchtime where students used friendship, social interaction and food to create social boundaries and solidify friendship. In addition, Rogoff (2003) and Corsaro (2015) argued that children and preadolescents (aged 7 to 13 years old) marked their friendships through sharing routines. The consultants were building friendships with peers as they engaged the daily mealtime practices together. Likewise, the consultants built relationships with their family members as they engaged in similar daily mealtime practices at home.

The conversations and content discussed amongst the third and fourth graders reflected, to some degree, how adults interact but also became a version of how they understood how the adult world works (e.g., talking about boyfriends, flipping milk

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containers, or discussing local events). For example, the consultants and their peers connected with each other through their topics of conversation that were of interest to their peers. The exchange of information and the how the social interactions were received and responded to were miniature versions of adult interactions that they may have seen or experienced at home.

Corsaro (2015) described this collective action as how preadolescents practice and learn how to be a part of the social world at school (and the community and home) through interactions with peers, known as interpretive reproduction. He suggested that the preadolescents appropriated a particular piece of information from adults. They take this knowledge and produce it with their own understanding while interacting with their peers through social interaction. Finally this production of this knowledge leads to reproduction and change and new understanding and knowledge not only amongst the children and the peers, but also the adults (Corsaro, 2015).

Conclusion

The consultants were more overt with social interaction and willing to initiate conversation at school with peers compared to at home, where they did not have direct access to friends. They behaved more like active learners at school while interacting with friends versus at home where they were more passive learners and much quieter. At home, the consultants were aware that there were more specific expectations about how to engage in social exchanges with family through conversing and practicing manners. This was compared to school where play and social interaction were more seamless. Despite a mealtime space that was set-up to be more conducive to encouraging social exchange (home), in these

mealtime situations, the presence of their particular social communities guided these certain types of interactions. Even though there were many differences between school and home, the consultants stressed social interaction as imperative to mealtime.

CHAPTER 6: "YOU CAN'T FORCE PEOPLE TO SHARE WITH YOU"

While the consultants did not directly speak of norms, or expectations, they used

them to determine what was considered acceptable behavior within their present community.

Below is an excerpt from my field notes that shows how some students required extra

guidance in understanding social norms when engaging with peers:

> Q and his friends, Malik and Matthew, just sat down with their 'butter boxes', a new and highly anticipated mystery item on Three Stream Elementary School's menu. Q admitted that part of the excitement was that no one knew what was actually going to be in the box. The contents included strawberry yogurt, a small container of granola, celery sticks, a small package of Doritos chips, a shortbread cookie, and a small container of sunflower seed butter. The four of us sat at the end of a lunch table. Natasha sat to my left and Q was on my right. Without speaking, Q and Malik handed their yogurt containers to Matthew, who acknowledged their food contributions with a nod. Q and Malik returned to their lunches and began eating their chips. Natasha saw Matthew with three containers of yogurt, 'Hey! Give me that yogrit!'
>
> Matthew responded calmly, 'I asked Q and Malik nicely for their yogurts and they gave them to me.'
>
> Natasha asked Q, 'Can you give me your yogrit?...Give me your yogrit!'
>
> Q told Natasha, 'Matthew asked me nicely first. Next time, if you ask nicely first, maybe you'll get it.' Matthew handed Natasha his granola instead. Natasha did not thank him.
>
> Natasha turned to me and said, 'Here, eat some.'
>
> 'Thanks, but I'm okay,' I responded. At that moment, Natasha coughed all over her granola container and its contents.
>
> She offered again, 'Here take some.'
>
> I replied, 'No thanks, I'm good for now.'
>
> 'You can have some,' she encouraged and pushed the container towards me.

I replied, 'Thanks really, but I can't eat the granola because I'm allergic to some of the ingredients.'

Q overheard this and said, 'Natasha, you can't force people to share with you. Stop telling her to eat your food.'

Natasha nodded and demanded that Q hand over his granola, 'Give me your granola.' Q shook his head 'no' and ate a couple bites of granola to appear as though he was going to eat it.

'You can have my celery,' said Q. Matthew nodded and inspected his celery. Matthew showed Natasha a large, ugly piece of celery. It looked dry, stringy, and unappetizing. She shook her head. Matthew offered another piece. Natasha examined this one and swiped it out of his hand.

Malik looked at Q and said, 'I thought you eat celery.'

'I do, but not this,' said Q with a look of disgust.

Sometimes the students, like with Natasha, just did not understand what was considered appropriate behavior when it came to interacting with classmates and exchanging food. While I believe all norms could be considered social norms to some degree, for the purposes of this paper, I delineate between norms, social norms, and legal norms. According to Hetcher & Opp, (2002), norms are "cultural phenomena that prescribe and proscribe behavior in specific circumstances…(and are) at least partly responsible for regulating social behavior," (p. *xi*,). They described social norms as spontaneous, unwritten and informally enforced (Hetcher & Opp, 2002), whereas legal norms were created deliberately, written down and enforced by specific authorities (Hetcher & Opp, 2002). The presence of the norms shaped the mealtime behaviors and social interactions of the consultants at home with family and at school with their peers. The expectations in both social communities provided boundaries and suggestions on what to do and how to behave during mealtime. Some norms were printed and formally hung on walls (see Figure 6.2 below). Others were more implicit

where the consultants were supposed to learn and follow certain expectations through trial and error or from verbal description.

I describe the different types of norms and explain how they were enforced or governed in each setting. I begin this particular section with findings at home and provide a small discussion on the social norms for dinner. Then I describe the social norms in the school setting while weaving pertinent literature through this section as well. Next, I provide a larger discussion using Bourdieu's (1991) concepts of *capital* and *habitus* to suggest how the consultants learn and understand social norms in their social communities. Finally, I suggest that the consultants exercise their agency to test boundaries while engaging with others during mealtime.

Home

The expectations at home were well integrated into the dinner practices. They were not overt in that they were not posted on the walls anywhere that I could see. In fact, if I had not asked about dinner rules, manners, and expectations, I would not have known there was such a web of information the consultants knew about dinnertime behavior. There were two types of norms for dinnertime at home: (1) table manners, and (2) social norms.

Table manners. I was eating dinner with Kat and her family on a rainy Thursday evening. Erica served and plated our food and called us all to the table. I was sitting at the table between Justin and Kat. Erica was seated on the other side of Kat and Larry was sitting between Erica and Justin. Everyone held out his or her hands. We joined hands around the table as Larry and then Justin said their dinner blessings respectively. I begin this excerpt as we were about eat dinner:

> Our plates were already filled with peas, mashed sweet potatoes, and baked pork
> chops. Erica told us how Justin was able to get a martial arts practice in this
> afternoon and we all nodded approvingly. Kat explained to me about how the

different colored belts in martial arts work and the amount of time it takes to earn each one. Meanwhile Justin was eating his peas one at a time with his fingers without anyone else noticing but me. Another minute or so later when there was a brief lull in conversation, Larry said to Justin sternly, 'Eat with your fork, not your fingers.' Justin sheepishly smiled, picked up his fork and continued eating.

In this brief exchange above, Justin was caught not using table manners while eating dinner. Once his father noticed this occurring, he stopped this behavior by telling Justin to use a fork instead.

To some degree all of the consultants were expected to use table manners. Candace and Nana had such implicit table manners that they had difficulty explaining any manners or rules that were expected of Candace other than to "eat the food". Candace still ate with a fork, was polite to everyone at the table (e.g., "Yes ma'am" and "Thank you, ma'am") and asked permission to be finished with dinner all without prompting from Nana. Conversely, the other three consultants and their family members spouted lists of table manners and expectations their family members followed. The table manners listed below in the table (Table 6.1) are organized based on who verbalized each of the expectations, yet the manners practiced throughout dinner occurred as they pertained to each family member (e.g., everyone ate with a fork but only the children had to ask to leave the table).

Table 6.1. Table Manners for Consultants and Family Members

Table Manners	Consultant	Parent/sibling
Don't smack or chew with your mouth open	Q; Kat	Melissa, (KittyCat's mom)
Clean up after yourself	Q; Kat	Erica, (Kat's mom)
No elbows (or chin) on the table	Kat	Lisa, (Q's mom)
No knees above the table	Kat	
Have good manners "yes ma'am, thank you"	Kat	
Sit on your bottom		Lisa; Joseph, (KittyCat's dad)
No smacking (each other)		Melissa
Stay seated		Melissa
No reaching over other people to get your food	KittyCat	
Wait until everyone else is seated to eat		Erica
No phones at the table while eating		Melissa
Eat what's on the table		Melissa
If it's not on the table, don't ask for it		Joseph/Melissa
If you don't like what's for dinner, say it in your head (not out loud) and eat the food	KittyCat	
Don't bite your fork		Hannah, KittyCat's sister
Use silverware (not fingers)		Erica
No playing with food		Erica
Wait until everyone is finished/ ask to get down	KittyCat	Erica

Some families placed emphasis on following certain table manners based on how they were to sit in their chair at the table (e.g. elbows on the table, sit on your bottom). Other families focused on how to eat during dinner (e.g. don't chew with your mouth open, use silverware [not fingers], and no playing with food). Candace and Nana used many of the manners similar to the other consultants and their families listed in the table above but did not label these behaviors as manners.

Since most of the consultants and their siblings 'minded their manners' while I was with them, I saw few incidents where parents had to remind them how to behave. However, Q's mom, Lisa, teased that she liked when I came to their dinners because "the kids get along *wonderfully*…eh, not so much on every typical day…you know, 'You're touching me!' or 'You're too close!' or 'You're kicking me under the table!'…You have to watch the conflict." The sibling conflict was reported to have occurred more frequently at the dinner table than what I was able to observe with the consultants and their families. In other words, the consultants and their siblings were not always using table manners. There were hints like Lisa's above that suggested they exercised their agency in behaving like they preferred instead of what was expected.

Enforcing table manners. The proceeding is an example and an explanation of how Q's family enforces table manners. The Peterson family is already eating dinner when one of the family members is caught not using their manners.

> Q was sitting at the dinner table with his older brother, Jake, and his parents Jerry and Lisa. The family was finishing up their fajitas and rice when Jerry began to tell everyone a story about what he and his brother used to do as kids. Q and Jake listened intently. Lisa, who looked a little tired that day, rested her chin in her hand as she used the table to support her elbow. She scooped some rice with a fork and brought it to her mouth as Jerry continued the story. Q happened to glance over and noticed her elbow is on the table. A smirk spread across his face and then he flicked

his mother's elbow. Jerry smiled as he watched Q flick Lisa. 'No elbows on the table!' exclaimed Q devilishly.

Lisa smiled, 'You're right, you got me!'

In a conversation later about table manners, Lisa and Q explained what happens if your elbows are resting on the table:

Lisa: 'Well we also have a rule that they're not to sit at the table with their elbows on the table.'

Q: 'Or you get flicked!' (*Ashley laughs*)

Lisa: 'And you get flicked- we thump their elbow. (*Q demonstrates the flick with placing his index finger behind his thumb with tension and allowing his finger to flick out*) I used to have to do that a lot more until they finally figured out, (*Lisa laughs*) let's keep those elbows down (*A laughs*) otherwise you're gonna get thumped by mom' (*Ashley and Lisa laugh*)

Q: 'I thumped (you before)!'

Lisa: 'Yep, you've gotten me before one time. I wasn't thinking…'

KittyCat's dad Joseph also described what he does if one of his daughters is not sitting flat on the chair during dinner, "I look at 'em. I give her 'The Look'. (*Joseph had a mock stern look on his face.*) And I say, 'Just sit on your bottom.'" With regard to enforcing table manners, generally one of the parents verbally addressed the child who did not use the manner in question and attempted to redirect them to engage in the expected behavior. However, in addition to verbal reminders, the physical reminder of an elbow flick was also used to refrain from keeping unwanted elbows on the table.

Kat and KittyCat's parents admitted to being inconsistent enforcing some of the manners. Each viewed different manners as more important than others. For example, in Kat's family, Erica was not as concerned about using silverware, which she joked could be "optional" with some food (e.g., asparagus). Whereas, Larry was very strict with ensuring all

of his family members were eating with a fork throughout dinner. Since Joseph was the "kamikaze-manners guy" and was so much stricter on table manners than Melissa, Melissa acknowledged that they had to discuss exactly which manners that they were going to follow through with their kids. Kat and KittyCat's parents also reported that their enforcement in specific manners originated from how they were raised.

There is a small body of literature that focuses on enforcing rules and behavior as it relates to social norms (see for example, Balliet, Mulder, & Van Lange, 2011; Horne, 2001; Voss, 2001). Fehr & Fischbacher (2004) discuss how social norms define laws and rules whether they are formal or informal. The social norms become enforced and reinforced through a variety of ways and people who determine what is considered acceptable behavior versus unacceptable behavior. Further they describe how different social groups vary greatly with respect to their own form of social norms. This creates conformity among groups and heterogeneity across groups (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004). The existence of social norms is conditional if everyone else obeys, a particular person will obey the norm; if someone defects, others are likely to defect. The enforcement of social norms ranges from judges or police officers formally ensuring that citizens abide the law to peers or family members informally correcting or praising another person's behavior in a particular situation or environment. This appears true with regard to examples from school and home.

At home, Kat's father, Larry was 'very strict' on using a fork while eating dinner. Whereas Erica, Kat's mother, was less concerned and sometimes believed using utensils was optional. This was especially true when Larry was not home for dinner on Tuesdays. Erica commented, "I believe asparagus is best eaten with your fingers." The inconsistency between Larry and Erica enforcing this manner was confusing for Kat and her brother Justin.

Therefore they required frequent reinforcement as to when to use it properly according to which parent.

Visser's (1991) work highlights the importance of table manners and why so many families around the world place value on particular table manners for their children to use. Similarly, Ochs and Shohet (2006) touch on dinnertime as the appropriate setting to showcase proper etiquette. Yet, there is no literature that examines how children make sense of and use table manners.

Having table manners produced understanding of what was considered appropriate and inappropriate behavior at dinner, which is considered a form of social norms. They created the boundaries for what the consultants should or should not do while eating a meal. While the consultants understood this concept of what was considered acceptable and not acceptable as boundaries, they might not have fully grasped why table manners were required. Kat's parents, Erica and Larry, explained why it was important to them for their children to have table manners publicly at a restaurant and privately at home:

Erica: So they can be in society [*Erica chuckles*] you know, be actually acceptable, presentable-

Larry: Out in public.

Erica: Yeah. To be out in public and us not be embarrassed of them. [*Ashley laughs*]

Larry: Actually, also so they can go to my parents' house at eat because my dad is a stickler for table manners.

Kat: He's (Grandpa's) always staring at me. [*Ashley laughs*]

Larry: Because you're the one he yells at the most! [*Larry, Erica, Kat and Ashley laugh*]

Kat: Not you?

Larry: No, he doesn't yell at me. 'Cause he corrects what he perceives is bad table manners. And …he's not mean with it, but he'll use his sharp command voice. …And so, it's more of 'we don't do that, that's not the way you're supposed to do that'. And … just so you can go out to nice restaurants or other places and that way, you don't have everyone just stare at you.

Erica and Larry believed practicing good table manners at home consistently should eventually carry over into eating with other people in different contexts. In practicing table manners at home and then continuing to engage in them at restaurants, families displayed what they perceived as proper dinnertime etiquette when eating together in a public place. Since reaching over family members, not using silverware, not sitting on your bottom, and chewing with your mouth open might not be considered typical dinner behavior in other middle-class homes, it was discouraged at home and in public.

Even though the consultants' parents attempted to instill the value of table manners in their children so they were not, as Larry put it "heathens", while eating out in public, it is difficult to determine if the consultants really understood that this was the reason why they were to behave a particular way. The consultants knew certain behaviors were not acceptable at the dinner table and understood there were small consequences for not using manners (e.g. stern verbal reminders or "flicking" from parents). But perhaps they do not completely understand yet *why* it was so important for them to behave a particular way at home or in public other than to have one or both of their parents angry with them. I am not sure what their thoughts were on table manners because I regretfully did not ask them.

Family social norms. The implicit social expectations are what I consider family social norms in this section. I provide two examples of social norms including assigned seats and saying the blessing.

Assigned seats. Below is another excerpt from my fieldnotes where Kat and I are

discussing where everyone in her family sits at the table during dinner. We are waiting for

Kat's mom to put the finishing touches on dinner. The baked pork, apple, and butternut

squash filled the room, almost taunting us to sneak a bite. During our conversation, I am

sitting in Larry's seat and Kat is standing near her chair (see Figure 6.1).

> The evening I ate with Kat when her dad was not home, I asked Kat where I should
> sit at their dinner table. Kat explained, 'I sit here.' She touched the chair that was
> facing the living room with the kitchen to her right. She pointed directly across the
> table and said, 'That is Justin's seat.' I nod. Then she pointed to the seat with its back
> to the kitchen, 'That's Mommy's seat.' Finally, she pointed to the chair that I was
> sitting in, the one facing the kitchen and said, 'That's Dada's seat, but since he won't
> be here for dinner you can sit there.' 'Thanks,' I said. She glanced outside through the
> window of their backdoor towards the picnic table on the deck. She then commented,
> 'We don't have seats out there though. We can sit wherever we want.' I nod again.

Figure 6.1. Walker Family Dinner Table

Kitchen

Erica

Living room   Justin   Kat   Backdoor

Larry
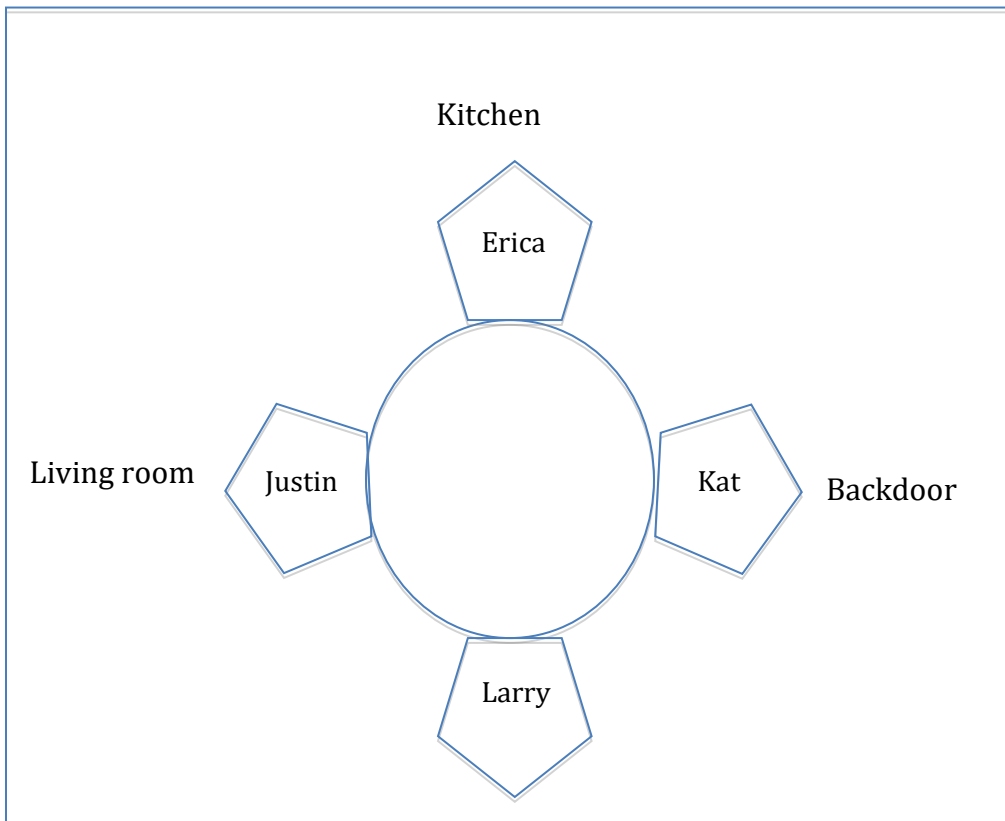
Three of the four consultants (everyone but Candace) described that each of their family members had a specific "spot" at the dinner table. These spots were considered permanent unless some type of larger event occurred that allowed or required the family members to change seats. For example, Q noted that a few years ago his family switched seats and they have been the same ever since; however, he was not sure why they made the changes in the first place. KittyCat explained that since her brother went to college, she has been sitting in "his seat" when he was at school and returned to "her seat" whenever he was home on school breaks. She did not mention why she moved her spot. While Candace and Nana did not have certain seats at the dinner table, Candace preferred the spot closest to the television when she ate with Nana on occasion.

There was little literature to address assigned seats at dinner. For example, according to Cinotto (2006), having a special seat at dinner every evening was part of the middle-class dinner experience, especially in the early 20th century. However, there is little literature that speaks to more present-day reasons for this occurrence. Furthermore, there was no literature on how children make sense of assigned seats or why it might be an important part of dinnertime. While I did not always directly ask the consultants about why they sit in a particular spot, Q, Kat, and KittyCat folded this practice into the larger picture of dinnertime activities with family. The repetition of doing the same thing (e.g. sitting in the same seat for dinner) for an extended period of time almost every day created this indisputable fact of their dinnertime practice: "I sit here," like Kat described her seat above.

Since everyone sat in 'their seat' during dinner, I did not see how the assigned seats were governed. KittyCat mentioned that when her brother returned home from school, she sat in her 'old seat' without argument. Thus, sitting in assigned dinner seats was a routine,

but there were no consequences for sitting in someone else's seat. While I could argue that it is possible that KittyCat exercised her agency by switching dinner seats when her brother was absent, I did not ask her if this was the case, so I cannot confirm this suggestion.

Saying the blessing. All of the consultants said the blessing before eating dinner. Below is an excerpt from my field notes that begins with Nana completing the final dinner preparations, but also emphasizes when and how Nana and Candace say the blessing:

> Nana is in the kitchen just finishing grilling the steak on their indoor Foreman grill. Candace dances emphatically around the living room space in anticipation of eating one of her favorite meals, steak with baked potato and salad. Nana prepares my plate, hands it to me and says, 'You can start eating.' I nod. I take my plate over to the table that was previously set by Candace and Nana. I sit and wait for Candace. Nana carries Candace's plate to the table and Candace trails behind her like a puppy dog. Nana cuts up a smaller piece of steak into bite-sized pieces on Candace's plate. 'That should be enough to start. Let me know if you want me to cut up more steak. Remember to say the blessing.' Candace nods and climbs up to her chair and immediately bows her head.
>
> She quietly says a blessing to herself in a hushed voice and then immediately begins spooning cucumbers and tomatoes on her plate. About two minutes later after Candace and I begin eating, Nana brings over her dinner plate and sits down at the table. She bows her head and silently says a blessing to herself before then starting to eat.

Another implicit rule observed with all the families was that no one could begin eating dinner until after someone said blessing (or grace). This is not to say that they did not handle their food before the blessing. In fact, the consultants and their family members sometimes dressed their salads and put sides on their plate before the blessing, especially as other family members were settling down, but they did not eat any food until *after* the blessing (or grace) was said. Interestingly, even when Nana and Candace ate together at the same table, they said their dinner blessings separately from each other.

Since the consultants and their families all identified as being religious in some way, saying grace (or "asking the blessing") before eating dinner was not at all surprising.

Interestingly, for the consultants there was a larger significance surrounding the blessing during dinner compared to sitting in a specific seat. This was apparent because some of the consultants were beginning to reason with why they say the blessing and why they have to wait to eat until after the blessing is over. For example, Kat explained why she thinks her family says the blessing before each dinner:

> Because we thank God for our food before we eat it. … It's just like a tradition that we do…we could be like some kids like, where they don't just have well water. They have to like walk miles to get their water...Or they only have …one meal every day.

Similarly, KittyCat rationalized that she had to wait to eat until after their family asked for the blessing "because…we need to bless the food (first)." Q had a different response about the blessing, "I'm not sure. That's just what Mom or Dad have always done." This statement is paramount in understanding more about children placing meaning on dinnertime practices. Q's answer suggests that instead of attempting to understand everything about his dinnertime practices as he learns them, he trusts and accepts the manner in which his parents 'do dinner' without always knowing the 'why.' As a note, the only governance with making sure the consultants said the blessing were verbal reminders to begin the blessing.

Similar to assigned seats, there was scant literature about saying the blessing for dinner. In looking at the act of saying grace, one study suggested just under half of the population of the United States says grace daily before meals (Putnam & Campbell, 2010) and another noted multiple ties to religion and food (Winton, 2008). Finally, Visser (1991) suggested that it is common to have a form of a blessing in many cultures prior to beginning the dinner meal. She found that all over the world there was a delay to begin eating that fought the natural hunger impulse to begin eating immediately. She suggests symbolic reasons behind pausing before eating is to enjoy the food more, as well as exercise gratitude

and awareness of other people (Visser, 1991). There is limited literature on saying grace for dinner and the meanings surrounding this phenomenon, especially from the child's perspective.

During my time with the families, there was no consequence for omitting blessing analogous to the governing of assigned dinner seats. However, with the families who ate and asked the blessing together, there was an awkward silence that ensued if there was not one designated person to ask it. Not saying grace was not an option. I did not discuss with the families what occurred if one person did not say the blessing.

Family norms. The consultants described this web of table manners and social norms that they were expected to use and follow during dinnertime specifically. Since the consultants and their family members often minded their manners, I did not observe how they were enforced. However, the consultants' parents alluded to the consultants using their table manners less when I was not around. Conversely, the consultants did not allude to breaking social norms (e.g., assigned seats and saying grace). To a degree the consultants sought to exercise their agency by testing boundaries with table manners, but not social norms.

School

On one November day, I was eating lunch with Candace and some of her friends. We were over halfway through eating lunch in the noisy lunchroom where the volume of the students' collective voices quickly became too loud. It exceeded the noise limit of what the teachers deemed 'acceptable':

> Candace and I were talking about the Halloween candy she got during trick-or-treating. All of a sudden, the teaching assistant Ms. Powers stood up and clapped (**Clap, clap, clap-clap-clap**). The entire lunchroom filled with third, second, and fifth graders responded with (**Clap, clap, clap-clap-clap**) and immediately became quiet. Ms. Powers yelled to the students, 'This cafeteria is entirely too loud! You need to

lower your voices and only talk to each other at your tables, not yelling from table to table. I will *not* eat my lunch while I listen to you scream at each other. If I need to stop you again, the remainder of your lunch will be a silent lunch. Do you understand?' Ms. Powers sat down. The students cautiously began to fill the cafeteria with their voices again, however this time it was at a more restrained level.

There was a rule about not talking too loudly in the lunchroom. Ms. Powers or another third grade teacher yelled at the third grade classes for being too noisy in the lunchroom about every other time I ate with them.

Different norms existed at school (compared to home), where some were rules actually printed on the wall for all consultants and their peers to see. For instance, one of those rules printed on the wall was for the students to talk to their classmates in a "low flow" voice at their own lunch table. Nonetheless, despite frequent attempts from teachers to quiet the students down like in the above example, the noise level in the lunchroom was always the same: loud.

There were also forms of social expectations at school that were similar to home (e.g. social norms). The two types of norms at school were as follows: (1) the school and lunch rules (or legal norms), and (2) and school social norms. I address each type of norm and how they were enforced or governed.

School and lunch rules (or legal norms). There were general school rules, where the consultants and her/his classmates were expected to follow at all times in the classroom, lunchroom, and playground. I use the word "rule" interchangeably with legal norms in this category because these norms appeared to be the most formal of all the norms the consultants experienced. They were the most formal because they were presented in print on a wall in each teacher's classroom as well as in the hallway. All of the rules on the walls were worded in a positive way (e.g. this is what a good student does) instead of "don't touch your

classmates". Other examples included listen and be kind to others, to be a good leader, take turns, be responsible for yourself and clean up after yourself. There were also ranges in how loud your voice was supposed to be in a given environment. It ranged from Level 0, 'Silence, Stealth Mode, No Talking' during class time or while walking in the hallway to Level 1, to Level 2 'Low Flow Mode,' talking with my friends at a (lunch) table; Level 3, 'Loud crowd; Across Room; Entire class can hear you', which was typically only allowed on the playground. Additionally, more specific rules for the lunchroom were presented in the cafeteria. Below is a picture of the rules for lunchtime.

Figure 6.2. Lunchtime Rules
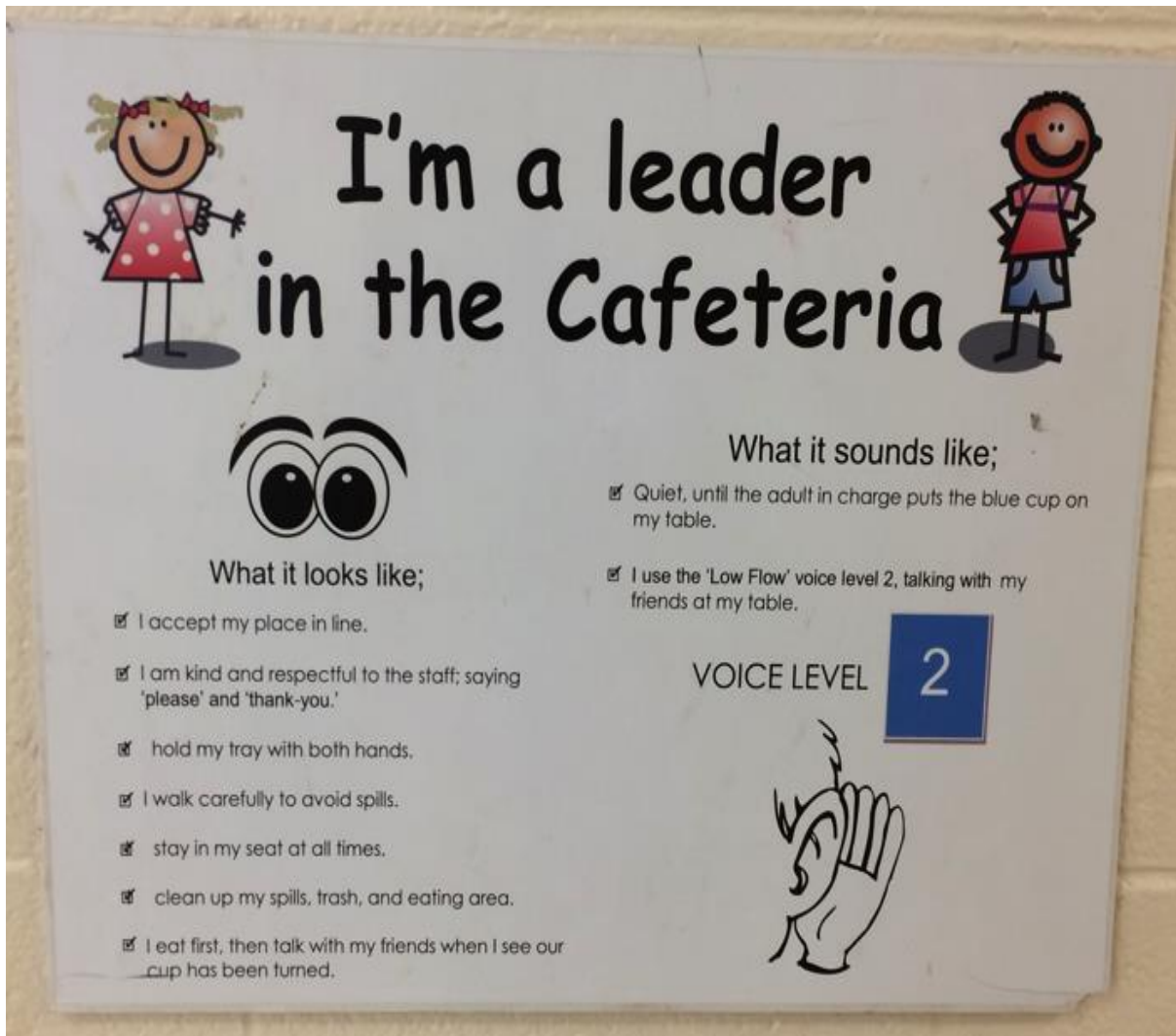
These rules on the wall served as reinforcement for the students to be on their best behavior during lunch. The only lunchtime rule that was not used while I was there was the blue cup system (listed on the picture above) where the students were only allowed to talk when a blue cup was placed on the table and its position meant whether or not the student could talk.

All of the consultants recited at least some of the lunch norms and expectations without needing to read the sign. Collectively, the consultants formed a list of rules and expectations for lunchtime below:

- Do not talk in the lunch line (Q)

- Eat first then talk (Q)

- Say "Please" and "Thank you" when getting your food (Q)

- Do not change seats once you sit down (Candace

- Do not save seats (KittyCat)

- Do not share food (Q, Candace, KittyCat, Kat)

- Do "not talk too loud," said Q (Kat, KittyCat, Candace)

- Do not talk to other students at other tables (e.g. "(only) talk to people like diagonally straight of you or beside you…no turning around", described Candace.)

- "Clean up your messes," instructed Candace

- Lunchboxes do not sit at the nut-free tables (Kat and Q);

- Do not play around a lot (Kat)

  - No Fidget Spinners (Kat, see Figure 6.3)

  - No Flipping Milk Cartons/yogurt (Candace)

Figure 6.3. Fidget Spinner (Dagur, 2017)

Together the consultants named most of the rules posted in the lunchroom with a couple of exceptions (e.g., holding tray with two hands, accept place in line). There were also other rules that were not posted on the walls but were still known to the students (e.g., saving seats; sharing food; playing around; lunchboxes sit at the nut free table). The 'no sharing food' rule was written in the Three Streams Elementary School Parent Handbook and discouraged students from sharing food with each other due to food allergies and food borne-illness concerns. The 'no playing around' (with dangerous and distracting games and toys) rule pertained not only during lunchtime, but also throughout the school day. Finally, the 'no saving seats' and 'lunchboxes at the nut-free table' expectations did not appear in the Handbook or on the wall, but the students talked about them on occasion.

The vast number of school rules, in print and otherwise, was sometimes almost too hard to keep track of. The number of school rules and expectations set the students up for getting scolded for something at least once a day. Trussell (2008) stated that posting visible rules in a room or classroom provides clarity to the expected behaviors for that particular space, which inevitably means a decrease in poor behavior. Interestingly, not all the lunchroom rules were printed on the signs, which may have contributed to some of the rowdier behavior during lunchtime amongst students. The discrepancies in the rules on the wall and how they were collectively, sporadically enforced by the teachers gave the consultants and peers room to find and test boundaries.

Bent or broken. Even though the rules were posted on the wall, all of them were bent and/or broken by the students. The rules that were most consistently broken include: students should eat before talking; students with lunchboxes should not sit at the nut-free tables; do not talk in the lunch line; do not share food; and do not talk too loudly, which I addressed above.

While the rules were 'eat before talking' and 'no talking in the lunch line', the students were almost always talking and rarely ate before talking. At best, the students whispered or were silent while walking in line to lunch. They were constantly interacting in the lunch line, at the lunch table, and when lining up to leave the lunchroom. With regard to food allergies and the nut-free table, the "lunchboxes" avoided the nut-free table at the beginning of the year, but ignored this rule after the first few months of school. The students shared and traded food daily when the teachers' backs were turned.

The lunchtime rules that were obeyed intermittently included: 'don't play games', which discouraged play that was dangerous or distracting according to the teachers, and 'don't save seats'. I present examples below of the consultants involved with each rule. Early on in the school year, KittyCat attempted to save a seat for Mariana who was further behind her in the lunch line. Even though Mariana sat next to KittyCat every day in virtually the same space, KittyCat casually leaned over the empty seat next to her to help save Mariana's seat. However, this lean brought attention to an open seat and Natasha scrambled to sit there first. Since the rule was technically not to save seats, Natasha won the argument to stay in the coveted seat despite KittyCat's pleas for her to move to another vacant seat further down the table.

In another example relating to 'not playing games', I was eating lunch with Candace. We were sitting with a few classmates, since most of her friends were at the other class table. Miles was sitting next to me and two female classmates were sitting across the table from Candace and me. Candace was attempting to eat ice cream with her spoon when she accidentally dropped it on the floor. She stood up and walked away from the table in search of a new spoon. I continued to eat my lunch while she was hunting for a spoon. The rest is an excerpt from my field notes:

> Miles tapped my shoulder to get my attention. He said, 'Look at this.' He had an unopened milk container with the closed, skinny end upside down between the crack in the middle of the table. Then he flipped his milk 180 degrees and it landed right side up. He laughed. The girls sitting across from Miles and me laughed and began flipping their milk containers. Candace returned to the table with a new spoon in hand. She looked around nervously and warned her classmates, 'Guys, you have to watch! Don't do the ball drop (flipping) with milk while she's (Ms. Demarco) looking!'

Candace was speaking from experience and did not want her friends to get in trouble like she did a few weeks ago by flipping her milk container. Candace's classmates stopped for about 5 minutes and then began 'ball dropping' (flipping) their milk cartons again. Interestingly, peers attempted to prevent their classmates from engaging in these actions and warned them that they could get into trouble if they did not stop. Yet they did not prevent peers from sharing or trading food or any of the other rules mentioned above. Furthermore, they never really discussed why they bent some rules over others.

Conversely, the one rule that appeared to be the most consistently followed was to "clean up your mess." The students cleaned up their spills, lunch trays or lunch bags on the table without prompting from the teacher. However, the lunchroom was not spotless. Stacey, KittyCat's 'old friend,' engaged in games with other girls that consisted of one friend tossing a piece of food while the other attempted to catch it in her mouth. This resulted in multiple

Goldfish crackers or chicken nuggets and crumbs on the floor, which they did not attempt to pick up. Also, the girls were not encouraged by their teacher to pick up the food. Cleaning up food from the floor was not always considered cleaning up after yourself. This act was passed on to the janitor who mopped the floors and tables after the students left and before the next round of students entered.

Children, even as young as preschool age, create relationships by mocking adults who place rules on how they should behave (Corsaro, 2015). The consultants, similar to children in other studies, connected with each other through bending or breaking school rules in a safe manner (Corsaro, 2015; Osowoski, Göranzon, & Fjellström, 2012; Thornberg, 2008). In other words, the students were creating a sense of community by banding together and resisting some of the lunchtime rules (Corsaro, 2015). Bending and breaking not only creates a sense of togetherness, but also increases a peer's social power, if they successfully get away with the act. While I did not discuss this with the consultants, it is possible something similar occurred at Three Streams Elementary.

Enforcement of school rules. The teachers were responsible for enforcing the classroom and lunchroom norms and rules. While the students were under the watchful eye of the teacher during class, there appeared to be much less oversight during lunch. However, the teachers and teachers' aide were more distracted during lunch due to having to eat their own lunch and conversing with each other. There were no lunchroom aides to assist the teachers with the enforcement of the rules at lunchtime, which resulted in a haphazard implementation.

The rule that was most often broken was the volume of the students' voices in the lunchroom. As the chatter slowly increased in the lunchroom, it is no surprise that the

students spoke louder to hear each other, which resulted in an elevated noise level. The punishment for students who were too loud was 'silent lunch.'

Silent lunch was one of the most frequent punishments used after verbal warnings in response to breaking a rule that had to do with talking too loudly in the lunchroom. If a student was to have silent lunch, sometimes they were told to sit at a small table away from other students in the front of the lunchroom for the entire lunch. If an entire class was punished with silent lunch, the teachers selected an amount of time and sat with the students to ensure that they were remaining silent for the selected time.

The other rules the students mentioned above were enforced only if the teacher happened to observe the rule breaking occurring and decided to get up and scold the students for breaking the rules. For example, Ms. Demarco saw Amelia share part of her homemade cookie with Ebony. Ms. Demarco rushed over to the table and scolded the girls until they had tears in their eyes. From then on, the food exchange within her classroom was performed more discreetly but still occurred just as frequently. Conversely, Ms. Jenkins explained that she sees her students share food all the time, but only gets involved if she knows one of the students with an allergy could be at risk.

Similar to the table manners at home, the students were more apt to break a school rule if other students did. This was especially true due to the inconsistent nature of how these rules were enforced. One example is the inconsistent nature of the teachers controlling the voices in the cafeteria. Thus, the irregularities with enforcement may have contributed to breaking this school rule along with others, such has how the children share and trade food. Thornberg (2008) found that some school-aged children criticized school rules as unfair and interventions were inconsistent at best. They were then skeptical about the reasons the

teachers gave for needing to abide by the particular rules and were frustrated that they did not have a say in creating the school rules (Thornberg, 2008). While the consultants did not report any skepticism with the school rules, similar to the kids in Thornberg's (2008) study, they did exercise 'covert resistance' by breaking the rules when they thought the teachers were not watching.

The students navigated the school rules by learning what they could do without getting yelled at or receiving silent lunch. They found that despite what was written on the wall, there was no consistency with rule enforcement. Furthermore, it was easier to get away with breaking rules because there was a large-open space and larger adult to child ratio to enforce these rules. It depended on the day, the situation and who was enforcing the rules. As a result, the students knew and recited the rules well, but they broke most or all of them daily or weekly. While we did not discuss specific reasons as to why they broke most or all of the lunchtime rules at one time or another, other studies suggest school-aged children band together because they either might not completely agree with the rule or attempt to exercise their right to be heard (Thornberg, 2008). The consultants learned how to exercise their agency to test boundaries during lunchtime.

For example, with regard to talking too loudly, the consultants did not want silent lunches because this prevented them from talking with their friends, which is what they liked best about lunch. Even though they agreed that the lunchroom did get too loud sometimes, and that 'silent lunch' was a good punishment yet not desired, it was not enough to stop them from speaking loudly practically every day. I asked the consultants if they thought there was anything else they or the teachers could do differently so it was not so loud in the lunchroom or so they would not get yelled at every day. None of the consultants had any suggestions.

School social norms. Most of the social norms within this social context were created, destroyed, and recreated by the consultants and their classmates. I address the different types of social norms at school in this section. They include food exchange, actions tied to responses, and sitting in saved spots.

Food exchange. The students engaged in food exchange as a way to construct social boundaries. In this next example, I was eating lunch with KittyCat. It was almost the end of lunch and her eating pace has slowed considerably. It did not look like she was going to eat much more because she already ate most of her lunch plus a cookie from home.

> KittyCat's tray was overflowing with food after multiple classmates had given her their extra waffles and bananas. Natasha noticed the surplus of food. She asked KittyCat for either one of her bananas or part of a waffle from her tray. Even though it was clear that KittyCat was not going to eat any more food during lunch, she refused to give anything to Natasha. However, a couple of minutes later when Natasha was talking to someone else, KittyCat gave away some of her food to Stacey and Mariana who asked her for the food.

This example of food exchange demonstrates how deliberate the consultants were when engaging in food exchange. Since I did not ask the reason why KittyCat chose to give away her food to her friends, I inferred that she intended to avoid Natasha's requests and Natasha, especially with how Natasha treated her previously by butting in front of KittyCat in line and sat in a lunch seat she was trying to save for her friend. Instead she gave her extra food to her friends.

While I examined this topic in the previous chapter, I focus on the social norms involving food exchange here. The consultants and peers were careful to exchange food in a way that corresponded to the relationship they had with a particular person or group of people (e.g., sharing versus trading / giving away / begging). The manner in which the

students exchanged food helped to redefine and sustain their relationship with their peers. This behavior was so apparent during lunch that it became a social norm.

Typically during my participant observations, the girls exchanged food to mark friendship and demonstrate a boundary between friends and non-friends. The girls ate the shared or traded food with friends together almost representing a family-style meal at a dinner table. The boys sometimes traded but mostly gave away food to friends if they were not going to eat it. However, the boys also begged for food amongst friends and acquaintances. Nevertheless, there were still boundaries regarding whom they exchanged food with. For instance, no one ever asked or begged Natasha, a classmate who did not have a group of friends, for food she did not want. There was still a line drawn for whom they thought it was and was not appropriate to beg from and trade with during this exchange or lack thereof when I was present in the lunchroom.

Table 6.2 summarizes the different types of food exchange. It is adapted from Nukaga's (2008) study on ethnic food and identity in school aged children. The food exchanges are explained by type, frequency, the reason for the food exchange ("function"), who initiated the exchange ("initiator"), how many students participated, the relationship between the students of the food exchange, and type of food (Wet - entrée or fruit item; or Dry - prepackaged foods such as chips or sweets). Nukaga (2008) found that the students in her study trended towards gender and racial biases when 'gifting' food to each other and that certain types of food (wet versus dry) helped mark friendship boundaries and relationships. While there were some gender differences amongst the food exchanges, there were no racial or ethnic biases found. The consultants and their friends openly exchanged with children of

all races and ethnicities. Finally, I introduce an example to prevent confusion about the table.

With stealing, it happened about three times between a pair of friends of the same gender. It

also depended on the situation and the food preference of those involved.

Table 6.2. Food Exchanges Between Third and Fourth Grade Students

	Trading	Sharing	Giving Food Away	Stealing	Begging
Frequency	Often	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally
Function	Mark friendships	Mark friendships	Mark friendships OR Not hungry and bored	Mark friendships and/or bring attention; hungry	Mark social power OR Hungry and wants more food
Initiator	Either	Either, usually receiver	Giver	Receiver	Receiver
Number of participants	2-3	2-5	2-4	2	2-7
Type of relationship	Close friends	Close friends	Offered first to friends, then interested acquaintances	Friends typically	First friends, then acquaintances then classmates
Gender groups	Females typically	Females typically	Males more often	Both; but only within gendered group	Both across and within groups
Type of Food	Wet or Dry	Wet or Dry	More often Dry, sometimes Wet	Wet or Dry	Wet or Dry

Trading occurred most frequently between female friends with any type of preferred food. Sharing and giving food away had similar characteristics amongst friends to mark friendship with the only differences in gender and who initiated the food exchange. For example, females shared more often and males gave food away regularly. Additionally, the student who initiated sharing was usually the food receiver. Conversely, the student initiating giving away food was the food provider. Thus, the difference between sharing and giving away depended on who initiated the exchange and the fact that the person sharing was not giving away the whole amount of food. Begging did not involve friendships and occurred across gender lines. The function of these non-friend food exchanges was to elicit attention to the person begging for food.

All the consultants either shared or traded food with friends even though they knew it was not allowed. Their reasons for why food exchange was not permitted included: "so (people) don't get sick" [Candace]; "you don't want to pass germs" [KittyCat]; and "they (peers) might be allergic to it (food)" [Q]. Additionally, the students were operating on the assumption that their peers and friends knew enough to tell the other friend if they were allergic to a food or were sick. It was the other student's responsibility to say "no thanks" even if the friend sharing food was clearly coughing and had a runny nose. In this case with sharing, it appeared as though the need to define the friendship was worth the potential punishment (e.g., getting sick, having an allergic reaction and/or getting scolded).

My findings were comparable to other studies that observed food exchange. For example, adults believe certain types of food sharing have a meaning that correlates with the relationship between the people involved in the food exchange (Erwin, 2002; Miller et al., 1998). Furthermore, shared food that has been touched indicates a level of mutual trust and

thus a close friendship or relationship (Miller et al., 1998). Additionally, adults who share

food that has been partially eaten indicates a stronger relationship. Nukaga (2008) and

Thorne (1995) noted that the food exchanges between students marked different levels of

friendship (e.g., close friends, acquaintances, or classmate). For instance, Nukaga (2008)

found that 'wet food' (e.g., sandwiches packed from home, entrees from school) was

exchanged frequently between close friends who did not appear to mind eating off the same

fork or to share "germs." But the same food was not offered to other classmates who were

merely acquaintances.

KittyCat and Stacey traded small pieces of food (e.g., pieces of chicken nugget for

Nerd candies) that they handled and handed to each other; Candace's friend Justine passed

out her grapes to each of her friends using her hands. Only one instance occurred where non-

friends exchanged food that had been handled: Jasmine was desperate to eat more food, so

she ate half a piece of pizza from Q, who had already eaten part of the slice. On the other

hand, prepackaged food and prepared food (e.g., uneaten fruit cups, yogurt containers,

containers of chocolate milk) that was untouched was traded or given away to the

consultants' peers (e.g., acquaintances or classmates, not close friends) more frequently.

However, I noted differences with food exchange between my consultants and

Nukaga's (2008) findings. While Nukaga rarely observed trading, trading was one of the

most common types of food exchange between the students in my study. Furthermore, the

students engaged in other types of food exchange that were not mentioned in Nukaga's study

such as begging (but similar to Thorne, 1995) and giving away unwanted food first to friends

and then to other peers. Since the students were one to two years younger than Nukaga's

participants, this difference in age, location, and time could account for a few of the

variances. The deliberate manner in which the different types of food exchange occurred

with consultants and particular peers leads me to believe that all the students were engaging

in following their own pattern of social norms to define relationship boundaries.

   Actions tied to responses. All of the students connected with a peer, by eliciting some

form of a response. Some students went to great lengths to get noticed or elicit a response

from their peers or me. For example, I was eating lunch with Candace one day when one of

her classmates, Judy, was desperate to get a response from me by using a very creative

introduction. The following is an excerpt from my fieldnotes:

> I heard some commotion coming from further down the table, 'Three… two... one!'
> (SPLAT!) I looked over and there was an empty pouch-like container of either
> applesauce or mashed bananas on the table. Judy, a sturdy white girl with long, thick,
> wavy, light brown hair, was holding both hands over her mouth. I heard another
> (SPLAT!) noise. She appeared to be attempting to hold in the entire contents of the
> pouch in her mouth and then spit some out. The chunks of food are all over her face
> and hands. If I hadn't seen the food pouch, I would have assumed she vomited. She
> looked at me and asked, 'Can I get a paper towel?' 'Absolutely. Please do.' I said.
> When she returned she said, 'I couldn't do it! I wanted to get that whole container of
> applesauce in but couldn't swallow. I'm glad I did it though. I always wanted to try.
> By the way, my name is Judy. And I'm a class clown.' She looked at me as she was
> talking. I smiled and nodded. Ebony, Candace's friend who was sitting across from
> me, looked disgusted after Judy's applesauce display. Ebony scolded Judy and
> quickly changed the subject to engage me in conversation.

   The students enjoyed connecting with their friends and classmates typically through

conversation and games. Moreover, experimenting with how to engage and connect with

peers is a way for preadolescents to negotiate and understand norms (Corsaro, 2015). The

students also knew that the goal to a socially accepted reaction was to get the other person or

people involved to react positively (e.g., smile, laugh, receive visual attention, or

encouragement in some way to continue). However, some students like Judy (and Chuck

with the brownie), went further to elicit a reaction or connection with their classmates than

others. The more overt ways of getting attention resulted in stronger reactions, such as Ebony and Judy in the above example.

Sitting in saved spots. One day, Q and I were sitting at the table when we noticed a few of his female classmates were huddling around one seat at the other table. We watched a scene unfold about which student won the right to a coveted seat at a full table:

> Stacey was a popular female and a frequent habitant of a particular spot at the table, and Michelle, a classmate went head to head with Stacey for the remaining seat at an already full table. Michelle arrived at the table slightly ahead of Stacey and hovered around Stacey's typical seat. KittyCat looked at Michelle and said, 'Whoa, whoa, what are you doing?' Michelle indicated that she wanted to sit across from her friend. This particular seat was also Stacey's seat. Michelle set her tray down on the table. Stacey came skittering around the corner with her tray. There was a short silent stand-off between the girls. Eventually, Stacey pushed her way into the seat and slid Michelle's tray to the middle of the table. The table was now completely full. Michelle's two other friends already sitting at the table did not defend her. Michelle's head hung low and she burst into tears. She dramatically and woefully shuffled her way to rest her head down on our half-empty table where Q and I watched the situation unfold. Ms. Jenkins had to step in to tell Michelle's friend to sit with her at the 'other' table. A minute or two later, KittyCat brought Michelle's tray and gently set it down near Michelle's new seat at our table. However, Michelle did not seem to notice because her head was still buried in her arms.

Some of the consultants and their peers sat in the same spots every day at lunch. Other students sat in different spots daily but held the assumption that they would be sitting near the same group of friends every day. Since most of the classmates were trying to sit with their respective friends, this caused conflict similar to the story above with Stacey and Michele.

Sometimes a classmate began to sit down but then asked classmates nearby who typically sat with the same friends in the same general space every day if the seat he was about to sit in was taken. The seat was clearly not taken since no one was sitting there, but depending on the group of students sitting there, it could be saved silently for another student in the group. This was allowed for students who were popular with most of her/his

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classmates. Sometimes one table became crowded as multiple groups of friends rushed to sit in seats with their friends at the same table simultaneously. The person who was further down in the lunch line had to contend with not sitting with friends, especially if he or she was not considered in the more popular groups of friends. This type of social behavior appeared to occur later in the year, once more of the social groups in the classrooms had been solidified.

There is little literature that speaks to students having the ability to choose their lunch seats in the cafeteria. Few studies exist that discuss the pattern of groups of classmates consistently sitting in similar areas within the lunchroom. Nukaga (2008) mentioned that the students in her study had the option of not only choosing seats, but also moving to another seat or table as they wished. However, she did not touch on students consistently choosing the same seating in her paper. Moore, Murphy, Tapper, and Moore (2010) suggest the need to provide assigned seats in the lunchroom to decrease negative student behaviors and rule breaking during lunch. More studies are needed to examine how sitting in similar seats without having seats assigned by teachers positively or negatively affects child interaction.

Interestingly, Q and KittyCat chose similar lunch seats at school daily. This parallels the fact that they sit in the same seats for dinner at home. Some days, Kat had to complete schoolwork at the beginning of her lunchtime. Thus, her seats changed daily based on where the available seats were that day. Candace sat in different seats at the lunch table every day, which reflects how she ate dinners at home. When she ate with Nana at the dinner table, she did not eat in a particular seat. Conversely, she sat at her desk for all of the meals she ate in her bedroom.

Enforcing and governing social peer norms. The social norms amongst the students were enforced in a different way than the social rules of the school itself, namely because they enforced these particular norms for each other. The students chose who to engage in food exchange and who not to ask. Most of the students (with the exception of Natasha) implicitly understood how to engage the social norms informing food exchange and creating and maintaining relationships.

With regard to actions and responses, the students monitored how they interacted with each other based on the responses of their peers, which was also influenced by their own understanding of table manners. If their peers laughed or responded in a positive manner, the actions and social interactions continued. If the responses were negative, full of disgust, or were ignored, this told the student that s/he was out of line and to stop the behavior. For example, Chuck was encouraged to continue to eat his 'gross' mix of brownie, potato, and ketchup through visual and verbal encouragement. However, Ebony scolded Judy for squeezing the applesauce all over herself. Later during that same lunch, Ebony told Judy that her punishment for 'being gross' was that Judy had to throw out her (Ebony's) lunch tray garbage. Judy complied without argument.

When students sat in the similar spots nearly every day, the repetition of sitting in that same seat along with a student's higher level of popularity reinforced this behavior of having a particular seat in the lunchroom. The more popular person with more social power who sat in a particular area with the same group of friends was more likely to claim a particular seat.

These examples of children governing or enforcing their own play and interactions are similar to findings in other studies (e.g., Cobb et al, 2005; Corsaro, 2014). For instance, Corsaro suggests that children organize themselves in ways that they can govern each other.

Cobb and colleagues (2005) noted that children drew on adult-oriented rules to monitor behavior, used verbal and non-verbal language to regulate the action around them, and created relationship boundaries to include or exclude others from social groups. Hence the students used their knowledge of table manners and other norms from their experiences in the adult world to govern each other.

Discussion for Norms at Home and School

There were similar forms of social norms for the consultants to follow at home and at school. For example, even though the school rules and table manners at home differed (i.e. posting of rules on the wall at school), the consultants placed as much or more importance on table manners compared to lunchtime rules when I ate with them. Additionally, there were social norms in both settings. The set of social norms at school related more to navigating and surviving socially with other third and fourth grade peers. Alternatively, at home, social rules were a part of the process of dinnertime with little obvious consequence.

The consultants developed an understanding of norms by eating with family and receiving directions over time on what was considered "appropriate" mealtime behavior. The consultants embodied and to some degree carried out similar mealtime practices from home in the lunchroom with peers.

Using *capital* and *habitus* to negotiate social fields. Bourdieu (1998, 1984) suggested that people in different social classes use social norms specific to their class culture to behave and socially interact with each other. They also use knowledge of their social class and others to improve and define their own social and cultural capital (or power) through interaction in social spaces (e.g., public spaces and school lunchrooms) where social and cultural capital may vary. Capital is described as (tangible and intangible) 'objects of struggle' (i.e. perceived need) that are considered valued resources, or symbolic goods,

within a capitalist society (Swartz, 2002). Bourdieu introduced four types of capital (social, cultural, economic and symbolic), but only three will be examined in more detail in this section. Bourdieu defines social capital as power associated with having valued acquaintances and networks. Cultural capital is power that is gained through having knowledge of particular subjects (e.g. formal education, art, music or pop culture), whereas economic capital refers to money and tangible valued goods and objects (Bourdieu, 1986). These multiple forms of capital can be used essentially as currency to increase, decrease and/or manipulate a person's power (e.g. social or cultural) in a given situation or environment (Swartz). It is also important to note, according to Bourdieu, social norms become so embedded and embodied in a person or child's life that they become habitual (Swartz, 2002).

Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus is referred to as durable habits of society by informing how individuals to operate through the habits of social norms while including power and social rank (Cutchin, Aldrich, Bailliard, & Coppola, 2008). Essentially, Bourdieu argued that a person's habits and actions are used to gain social power within a given situation in a social space. In the continued discussion below, I want to bring forward this notion of habitus and social capital as I examine how the consultants navigated their social worlds through mealtime activities.

According to Bourdieu (1984), the immersion of early learning within the family at a young age differs from methodical learning at school. This is not due to the depth or durability of the effect of family, but to the fact that the children develop a relationship to the language, culture, and behaviors that are perpetuated over time. To Bourdieu, the emphasis on learning these particular *Bourgeois* manners is in the relationship with family members.

He also describes how actions and behaviors, such as table manners or implicit social norms, are acquired and function like a trade-mark that help define the value of a particular behavior in a specific setting (Bourdieu, 1984).

> Knowing that 'manner' is a symbolic manifestation whose meaning and value depend as much on the perceivers as on the producer, one can see how it is that the manner of using symbolic goods, especially those regarded as the attributes of excellence, constitutes one of the key markers of 'class' and also the ideal weapon in strategies of distinction…(p.66)

In the passage above, Bourdieu argued that it is also important to determine who perceives the actions as acceptable and unacceptable as much as the people producing the action. The consultants in dual parent families in my study were operating under this general assumption that they should practice 'acceptable' social manners and norms so when they are in public either together or separately, they will know how to behave in an 'acceptable' manner during mealtime activities, according to other Western middle-class citizens. I believe one of these public spaces included the school lunchroom.

Bourdieu (1998) also described the concept of field, which is considered a social space where the agents (individuals) confront each other with their capital (social, economic, cultural, etc.). Following the confrontation (or discussion), the agents determine their position within the field based on their capital. Sometimes, however, agents are unaware or do not understand the 'rules' of particular field and then are unknowingly excluded from this field or exchange of capital.

Since children appropriate social norms and behaviors from home and redefine cultural norms at school and other contexts (Corsaro, 2015; Rogoff, 2003), the school lunchroom was one of the best places for children to practice cultural norms and respond to each other in social situations. Conversely, many of the games and play that occurred at

school were not overtly practiced at the dinner table, because flipping drink containers and tossing food to catch in each other's mouths, I assume, was not considered appropriate table manners. However, this is not to say the consultants never practiced what they learned at school in the home; I was just not around when and if it occurred. Also, while much about the social interactions with peers during school lunch was to make someone laugh or respond positively, they also called out their peers if they behaved in a manner that they consider 'unacceptable'. If a student, such as Natasha, practices different forms of 'unacceptable' behavior over the course of multiple lunches, the accumulation of her rude behaviors towards her peers may result in decreasing the social capital of that particular child. Furthermore, in observing Natasha's interactions with her classmates, I noticed that she might have difficulty understanding what is considered appropriate peer lunchtime behavior and concedes to act out to get any attention possible, as in the first story of this chapter.

In the proceeding block quote, Bourdieu (1984) also commented on using knowledge of acceptable behavior as a strategic weapon when competing for capital in a given environment. There were distinct differences in behavior and interactions amongst the consultants that appeared to hinder or support their capital during lunchtime. Most of the time, it was apparent that most of the students already had an implicit understanding of different types of power and attempted to attain what their peers valued throughout their daily exchanges. For example, Candace used her knowledge of popular YouTube videos and a list of the vast number of gifts she received for Christmas to improve her cultural and economic capital.

However, sometimes the students did not necessarily understand how the rules within the field in the lunchroom worked. For instance, Q, who was very bright, had too much

cultural capital (e.g., knowledge) at the beginning of the school year and ate on the fringes of the tables with random classmates. After his early winter birthday and birthday party with male peers, he was participating in the social games that his popular male classmates were engaging in at lunch, even though these types of games did not fit with how he conducted himself earlier in the year. It was as if he had learned more about how to socially connect with his male classmates by playing their games, even if it was not part of how he used to behave. He was learning the proper conduct to be accepted through their unique idea of social capital in the field. By the end of the year, Q bought school lunches more frequently than he brought lunch so he could stand in line with his friends. On the other hand, Kat did not appear to have any interest in gaining social capital. Kat was also very smart (as described by her teachers) and typically chose to talk to a select few classmates, usually about what she was currently reading or animals, a favorite subject of hers. While Q attempted to adopt new social norms to be accepted and improve his social capital, Kat appeared to avoid the 'popular kids' and focus on her strengths, her knowledge, and cultural capital. Kat and Q both had parents who were highly educated and appeared to value education (especially higher education) and knowledge.

Despite the given environment (e.g. attending school for learning and gaining an education), being the 'smart kid' in school can be considered a barrier to social capital, and that a particular type of social, economic (valued goods: toys or food) and some forms of cultural capital (e.g., pop culture) are valued. Perhaps, as Bourdieu (1998) argued, indifference in something such as cultural capital (e.g., education) can also be a telltale sign that the certain group of people (or children) do not understand the importance of 'the game' (or value of intelligence) and attempt to shift 'the game' to where they are at an advantage

(e.g. better social capital). Bourdieu marveled at how different forms of capital can shift and become more valued in a given situation and depending on who was present (Swartz, 2002). Therefore, children who were present at the lunch table implicitly determined what was valued capital (social versus cultural) and the norms and expected behavior shift accordingly.

In saving seats and sitting near friends, when there was an issue with regard to space, a classmate or peer with more social capital would be rewarded with what she/he wanted. With Stacey having the upper hand (and more social capital) in the seat standoff with Michelle, she was able to score a coveted seat (that she already claimed as hers) at a class table. While this was a tearful example of social capital and implicit norms at school lunch, it also demonstrated how volatile the social situations could become at such a young age.

With regard to school rules enforced by teachers and table manners at home, the assumption was that the adults held more social capital because they created and enforced those particular norms in each setting. While the students and consultants recognized the imbalance in this power and exercised their agency by pressing the social expectations when and where they could, the adults still had the power to punish them if they disobeyed rules or did not use manners. These adult enforced norms were carried out in part to maintain order and to suggest appropriate middle-class mealtime behavior in Three Streams, North Carolina.

Finally, even though Candace and Nana could not name any behaviors they labeled as "table manners" and Candace chose to eat by herself in her bedroom most evenings, it is important to note that Candace still used similar table manners and mealtime behaviors to those of her peers at home and school. Further, while Nana loved Candace very much, their relationship of grandmother/granddaughter and foster mother/foster child was different compared to the other consultants and their biological parents in the study. Candace and

Nana's separate life courses defined how they 'do mealtime' together. For instance, Candace rarely received prompting from Nana to "eat more" or "eat all the food" because Candace's biological mother forced Candace to eat food. Candace's mealtime experiences with Nana were the direct opposite of the negative mealtime experiences Candace had with her biological mother.

Expressing their agency in an adult world. Punch (2002) and James (2013) suggested that children are used to living in an adult world (with rules) where there is an apparent power imbalance that is not in their favor. Additionally, Thornberg (2008) argued that school-aged children are more likely to resist rules in school when they do not believe there is a good reason for the rule, when the rule is enforced inconsistently, and when they are not asked to construct the rules. Therefore, when the students and consultants broke lunch rules and reportedly did not use manners at home, they were using their 'covert resistance' by disobeying, and simultaneously they were attempting to gain social capital within that particular field. Thus, they were exercising their agency by pressing the boundaries of norms in at home and school.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the consultants' mealtime social expectations and activities were developed through watching and doing mealtime practices, which were reinforced as habits at home over time. As they continued home mealtime practices, they reinforced similar practices through school, linking the two social environments together. The predominant middle-class social norms and etiquette shaped the consultants' behavior at home and school because the consultants and their families were generally part of the same community and they reinforced each other.

While the consultants never explained how they knew about capital, they learned from observing peers and family members interacting with others through Corsaro's (2015) concept of interpretive reproduction. In observing the interactions and the outcome of those social exchanges, the consultants determined that behaving in similar ways could result in receiving similar desired reactions (e.g., jealousy or admiration) and establish connections and create boundaries with peers. The consultants practiced and reproduced this idea of social, cultural, or economic power. They reinforced how they interacted with each other by using the various forms of capital to create, destroy, or maintain friendship boundaries. Finally, the consultants exercised their agency to test and press boundaries while engaging with others during mealtime.

CHAPTER 7: LEARNING ABOUT MEALTIME THROUGH DOING

Knowing What to Do

As the students moved through their day, they told me and showed me that they knew what to do during mealtime. The following excerpt highlights that the students knew what to do even when there were many aspects of this lunch that were different than others. It was a Friday morning in mid-October and I was about to eat with KittyCat. Even though I arrived a few minutes later than I intended, KittyCat and her classmates were still in Ms. Jenkins room in a semi-formed line talking very loudly to each other. The following is an excerpt from my field notes:

> I scanned the room for Ms. Jenkins to catch her eye and thank her for delaying the lunch line-up a few minutes when I noticed she was not there. I spotted Q and KittyCat. I waved to them and then gave them a confused look indicating that I was looking for Ms. Jenkins. They pointed to another woman, a substitute teacher Ms. Brown. I waved to Ms. Brown, who had a deer in headlights look on her face. She looked up from hastily scanning a paper.
>
> She approached me and asked, 'Do you know what the plan is for line up?' I introduced myself and told her that the students were to line up based on their menu choices. Q and a few of his classmates also explained what to do to Ms. Brown.
>
> Q instructed, 'You ask the lunchboxes to go line up first.'
>
> Jenny added, 'Then you call out the other school lunches.'
>
> Ms. Brown announced to the class, 'Lunch boxes, line up! Then cheese pizzas! Then pepperoni pizza.' She asked another classmate, Jessica, to give out hand sanitizer to her classmates. Jessica retrieved the hand sanitizer and obediently squirted a dollop in the hand of each of her classmates who continued to converse loudly with each other while in line. The substitute teacher said, 'Hands on top.'
>
> The class yelled, 'That means stop!' The class quieted down. Then Ms. Brown dismissed the class to lunch. As the class was leaving she asked the first girl in line if she was the line leader.

The girl shook her head, 'no' and said politely, 'We usually don't have a line leader for lunch'. Ms. Brown nodded and allowed the class to continue down the hall. The girl leading the line made all the hallway stops without prompting from Ms. Brown. Just before we entered the lunchroom, Ms. Brown caught up with me and asked if I could watch the class while she went to get lunch for a few minutes.

I answered, 'I usually sit with the students.' This answer satisfied her and she turned to purchase lunch from a nearby fast food restaurant. The lunchroom was almost visibly pulsing due to general excitement of Friday and was filled with tantalizing pizza aromas…

Once we were seated, I noticed more chatter and excitement today compared to other days because while Ms. Brown had returned, she was not monitoring the volume in the lunchroom. As KittyCat engaged with some friends further down the table, I overheard some of her classmates talking to each other.

Michelle commented, 'I can't believe we have these plastic trays! We usually get the (disposable) ones where we throw it all away in the trash!' Her classmates sitting around her who bought lunch formed concerned looks on their faces, complete with knitted brows.

Jenny asked with slight panic in her voice, 'What do we do?'

Michelle added, 'How do we throw out our trash? Where do we put the trays?' I did not realize the trays were different today until Michelle said something. This was the first time the students had plastic non-disposable trays. A minute later, Michelle, Jenny, Jasmine and I watched a table of 5th graders throw away their trash into the trash can, stack the trays into two piles and then selected two people to take the stacks to the dishwashing area.

Then the weary substitute teacher walks over to our table and explained to the students who bought lunch, 'When you're finished, throw away your trash in the garbage can and then take your trays to the dish room.' She pointed her finger to the far right corner of the lunchroom. Despite the explanation, Michelle and the other students still looked confused. Meanwhile, KittyCat was still in deep conversation with Mariana and Stacey and was not aware of any of this going on.

Then Ms. Brown remembered it was Michelle's job to push the trashcan to her classmates every day. She excused Michelle to return her tray before the other students. Michele smiling, stood up, threw away her garbage and then marched towards the dish room with her tray. Upon her return, Michelle pushed the trashcan toward her classmates. She slowly pushed the can around both tables so her peers could dispense their trash.

The students with the plastic trays at our table still had confused looks on their faces and were unsure what to do. Finally, Jenny, Jasmine and a couple other students

stacked their empty trays on top of each other. When it was KittyCat's turn to throw away her food, she looked around for what to do with her tray. A couple of her classmates attempted to convince her to stack her tray with theirs, but KittyCat was still confused. She looked from one end of the cafeteria to the other trying to make sense of what to do with this tray. Michele was standing nearby and pointed out the dish room to her. Once KittyCat was able to follow Michele's gaze, she smiled and nodded. She took a small stack of four empty trays to the dish room for some of her classmates. She returned to the table and continued to speak to her friends. Her other classmates followed her lead and Jenny and another girl carried small stacks of trays to the dish room. About a minute later Ms. Brown dismissed the table for the students to return to the classroom before recess.

Q, KittyCat and their classmates knew how to engage in their typical mealtime activities when it came to lining up, ordering food and interacting. They helped their substitute teacher with their line up protocol when she was unsure what to do. However they were initially reluctant to listen to her instructions about properly caring for the plastic trays as lunch came to a close. Once they confirmed Ms. Browns' instructions through watching older peers engage in the same expected mealtime activities, they followed suit.

Through their pictures and drawings and our conversations, the consultants used their previous engagement in mealtime activities and experiences (e.g. eating meals at home and school, eating out, engaging in food related activities and eating balanced meals) as a framework to describe how they do mealtime at home and school. Furthermore, they learned how to do mealtime through their ongoing and recurrent mealtime experiences to form an understanding about daily mealtime activities. First, in the section entitled Embracing Notion of Balanced Meals, I suggest that the consultants use healthy food discourse to talk about their experiences with food during mealtime at home and school. Then, in the section entitled Learning Through Doing Food-Related and Other Mealtime Activities, I use John Dewey's concept of habit to describe how the consultants know what to do every day despite engaging in different mealtime experiences daily in different settings.

Embracing Notion of Balanced Meals

  Eating balanced meals at home. It is one of the first dinners I have with Candace.

Nana requested that I come early so that I can watch how she prepares dinner. On this

particular evening, Candace and I are sitting on the bar stools watching Nana as she begins

prepping the food one of Candace's favorite dinners, grilled steak with a baked potato and

salad. Below are excerpts from my field notes on this particular evening.

> I arrived at Candace and Nana's apartment just before Nana began preparing the
> meal. Candace sat next to me on the bar stool as we watch Nana make dinner. Nana
> made a show of demonstrating how she rubbed a smashed clove of garlic around the
> large Tupperware bowl that will hold the salad. She cut up the head of lettuce and
> placed it in the bowl seasoned with garlic. She sliced cucumbers and tomatoes and
> placed them on a separate plate the side. Nana explained, 'Candace really like
> cucumbers and tomatoes, so I put them on a separate plate.' Candace nodded
> emphatically.
>
> After the vegetables were sliced, Candace slowly and stealthily moved off her stool
> towards the kitchen. As Nana began preparing the steaks for dinner, Candace grinning
> from ear to ear, snuck a slice of cucumber and a cube of tomato from the plate. She
> slipped them into her mouth and then quietly tiptoed out of the kitchen. Nana noticed
> after Candace made a second attempt to take more vegetables. Nana playfully swatted
> Candace away from the plate. 'Those are for dinner!' she exclaimed smiling.
> Candace giggled.
>
> 'But I love them!' She exclaimed dramatically while flailing her arms in the air.
>
> Nana nodded and added, 'I know, I'm going to have to run to the store tomorrow and
> buy more because we're all out now!' Candace smiled at Nana. Nana smiled and
> then returned to preparing dinner where she was placing the large T-bone steaks on
> their indoor Foreman grill. As Nana continued to prepare dinner, Candace made one
> additional attempt to steal a cucumber. While Nana thwarted her efforts, dinner was
> ready a few moments later.

In the example above Candace and Nana emphasized how Candace and Nana like to eat

balanced meals. They also made sure to show and tell me how much Candace liked to eat

vegetables. Similarly, the other consultants and their family members often communicated

that they were "good eaters" and that they ate "mostly anything", especially when it came to

healthy food (e.g., fruit and vegetables). Since it can be common for children to be picky

about the food that they are expected to eat, especially healthier food, (Taylor, Wernimont, Northstone & Emmett, 2015), the consultants and family members proudly displayed that the consultants were not included in this group of picky eaters. For example, Kat explained, "…technically … I love like any food at the dinner table except for beets, kale and brussel sprouts." With regard to eating healthy food, Q commented that one of the reasons he liked breakfast was "… Because it's healthy." In one of our brief recorded conversations Candace added, "I *love* fruit…I love to stay healthy…I brush my teeth everyday…(especially after) I eat a piece of candy." KittyCat was equally dramatic while explaining a picture (Figure 7.1 below) of her eating broccoli at home after "supper." She described, "If there's something on the (counter after) supper I like to steal it…Broccoli is my life…I like to eat broccoli." KittyCat verbalized her love for broccoli to me three other times in addition to this exchange.

Figure 7.1. KittyCat Eating Broccoli

  Candace, Q and Kat also took pictures of the meals they ate at home shown in Figures 7.2 through 7.4. When we reviewed their pictures, I asked the consultants to describe the

meal (the contents), when they ate the meal (breakfast, lunch or dinner) and whether or not it was a weekday or a weekend. I provide examples from Candace, Q and Kat's meals below.

Figure 7.2. Candace's Dinner: Chicken, Baked Potato, Salad, Corn

Figure 7.3. Q's Weekend Dinner: Beef Stew, Collards, Carrots, Potatoes and Rice

**Figure 7.4. Kat's Dinner: Steak, Corn and Veggies**

Other meals not pictured above included additional weekday breakfasts of waffles, sausage and orange juice (Q), oatmeal and oranges (Candace), and Apple Jacks (Kat). Q added a few pictures of weekend breakfasts including quiche, another with toast, eggs, sausage and oranges and the breakfast pizza he referred to in the previous chapter. Candace took pictures of breakfasts with Nana (e.g., eggs, juice, and cream of wheat) and her lunch at home of a hot dog, French fries, green beans, cucumbers and tomato. Q also took pictures of dinners: rice and beans with sausage and steak fajitas with black beans.

Finally, when I asked the consultants to create pictures about what mealtime at home meant to them, Candace and KittyCat constructed pictures of food and dinner. KittyCat described her favorite dinner at home in the blocked quote and collage below (starting in the top left and then moving onto the steak then clockwise from there):

> Okay, so this is mealtime at home. So I started with my tea that my mom makes all the time. …And then my favorite meal. So I (made a collage of) my- country styled steak, which is my favorite food, …(and) mashed potatoes that we usually have with the country styled steak. 'Cause I like cover my country styled steak in (mashed potatoes). And (then)… green beans, we usually have green beans, a lot of times …(with) that (rolls). … (sometimes) we… have rice with (country styled steak) 'cuz rice is a really good thing to go with it also….Well we might have … rice or maybe mashed potatoes (not both).

Figure 7.5. KittyCat's Favorite Dinner
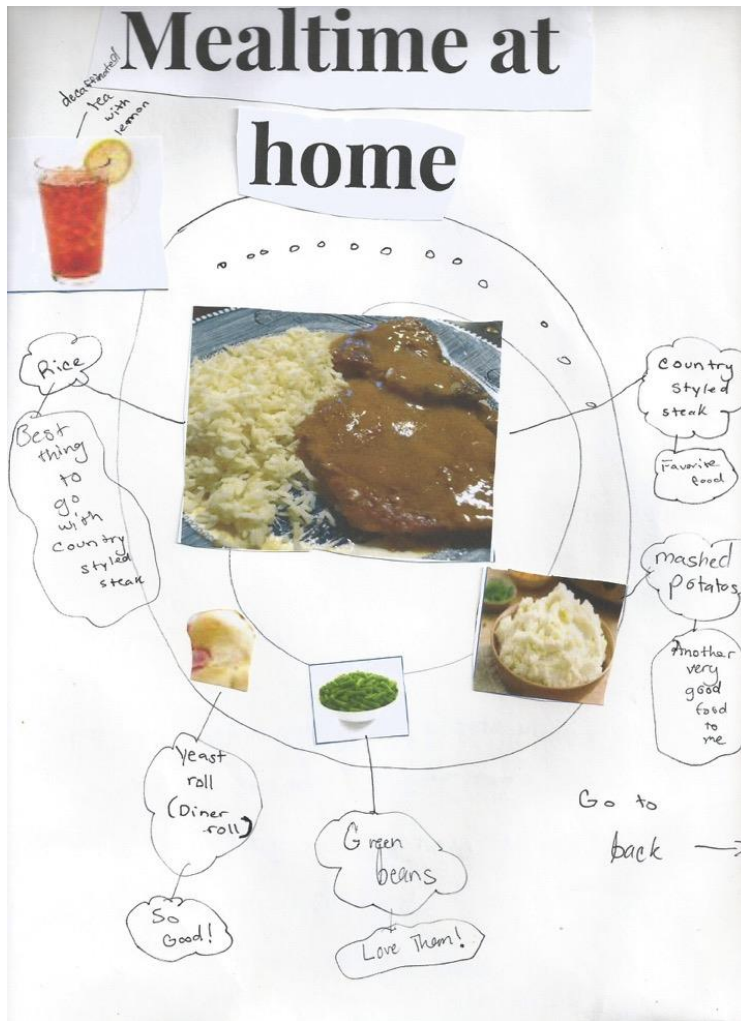
KittyCat's collage depicts the meat (country fried steak), a choice of starch (rice or mashed potatoes), a vegetable, and a roll. This was similar to the food groups of dinner pictures the other consultants provided above.

Candace demonstrated her love of vegetables by drawing them as one of the things that means a lot to her about dinnertime. She explained, "green beans…in a pile… (*Candace giggled*) I love green beans SO much that I decided to draw a picture of green beans for mealtime."

Figure 7.6. Candace's "Green beans in a Pale (pile)"

The consultants expressed their enjoyment with eating vegetables and balanced

meals. This is similar to findings noted by Savage, Fisher, and Birch (2007) where children's

food preferences and intake patterns reflected the types of food that were familiar to them. In

the consultants' cases, the consistent practice of eating balanced meals and vegetables was

the norm, but also recognized as a 'good' accomplishment. Furthermore, Woody and

Costanzo (1985) and Ventura and Birch (2008) suggested that parenting style affects how

children eat (e.g., food choice) and weight status. Interestingly, even though Nana had a

laissez faire (laid-back) parenting-style (which is considered a parenting style that typically

results in lower success for child eating habits; Ventura & Birch, 2008), her parenting

practices still guided Candace to eat her fruits and vegetables without complaint from

Candace. The other consultants' parents had authoritative parenting styles (e.g., reasonable

demands and a supportive environment for child to succeed) relating to home mealtime

practices. Thus, the consultants' healthy eating practices align with previous research that

suggests particular parenting styles correlate with children's food choices.

Eating 'healthy' at school. Q and Candace often made a show of eating their vegetables first out of their lunchboxes during our lunches together at school. Candace exclaimed on the days where we had the same vegetables, "You have carrots too! You like to eat healthy, just like me!" Other days, she danced in her seat as she ate cucumber slices. KittyCat made a point to order broccoli and eat it during school lunches despite her classmates' looks of disgust when she chose to eat her broccoli happily in front of them. Finally, Kat could not contain her excitement when she pulled out a bag of small red peppers to dip into her hummus during lunch one day. "Yes! I love these!" She exclaimed smiling to me.

When I asked the consultants to create a picture that represented lunchtime at school, both Kat and KittyCat included pictures of food that they typically eat during lunch. Below, from left to right Kat's school lunch drawing: her lunch box with an ice pack, granola bar, green beans, a banana and half a peanut butter and jelly sandwich sticking out of a baggie.

Figure 7.7. Kat's School Lunch

KittyCat also created a collage of one of her favorite school lunches in the figure below:

Figure 7.8. KittyCat's School Lunch
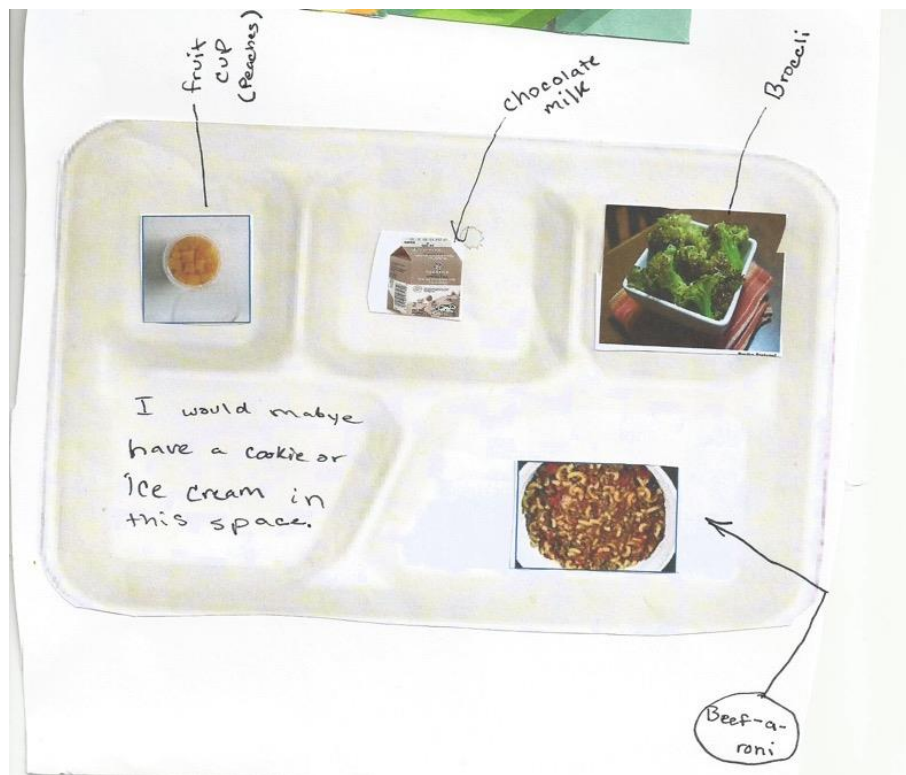
However, even though all the consultants ate vegetables with their school lunches, they placed less emphasis on eating their vegetables when other peers sat near them at the table, compared to when they were at home.

The consultants only created and took pictures of food that they liked, as cited in KittyCat's collage in Figure 7.8. Thus, the consultants were creating understanding based on their positive experiences with food and family where they ate balanced homemade meals with family members. This is similar to findings Moisio, Arnould & Price's (2004) findings where the participants in their study as well as the consultants noted that homemade food was part of their family practice and was preferred over eating food prepared in a restaurant.

The consultants embraced this notion of balanced meals and social discourse about healthy eating through how their families valued healthy food. Thus, the consultants were

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following and eating what their parents believed were acceptable and nutritious food consumption preferences and behaviors, which aligned with the current acceptable child nutrition discourse. These findings with the consultants are not surprising considering the strong influence that family has on healthy eating and eating practices (Scaglioni et al, 2008). Additionally, since the consultants were sometimes overly dramatic with their knowledge about healthy eating (e.g., exclaiming that they love vegetables), they and their parents also might have been using the discourse generated by the media that emphasized healthy eating and raised concern for the relationship between unhealthy eating and poor health outcomes (e.g., obesity in children and adults). In highlighting their "healthy eating lifestyles" they demonstrated that they were *not* part of the two-thirds of people in the country who were obese or overweight and thus unhealthy (National Institutes of Health, 2014).

Eating sweets in both settings. The consultants also liked to eat sweets (e.g. cupcakes, candy, donuts, ice cream) at home and at school (e.g. birthday treats, ice cream). There was also a range in how many sweets the consultants ate per day. For example, Kat remarked that she liked having donuts on the weekends because it was one of a few sweet treats her family indulged in about once every two months. This was after pointing out the sugary cereals she ate for breakfast most mornings. At the other end of the spectrum, Candace asked Nana for dessert and ate it almost every evening. KittyCat and Q explained that they could have dessert once every week or so, as long as they finished most of their dinner. At school, KittyCat and Q explained that they were allowed to buy ice cream; KittyCat was allowed to buy it on Tuesdays with extra money she received from her parents and Q could buy it on Tuesdays and Fridays using extra money his parents gave him. Kat

and Candace rarely brought in any sweet food to school in their lunchboxes. Thus, they only indulged in sugary school desserts when a classmate provided their birthday treats.

Interestingly, candy was considered a different food category than dessert, but could also be eaten as part of a dessert depending on the situation. The consultants alluded to knowing that candy is unhealthy and described that they limited their holiday candy consumption either through their own volition or their mother provided them a ration. For example, Candace explained that she had a huge bag of candy from trick-or-treating from Halloween. She explained, "I get to keep my whole thing (bag of candy). But I eat one piece. …I choose my favorite piece of candy. My nana would let me have one or two, but I choose one." Conversely, Kat's mother kept her and her brother's Easter candy on a high shelf in the pantry. The siblings were required to ask for a piece of candy after dinner if they desired. Erica, their mother made the decision as to whether or not they could have it. The consultants described sweets as something that they enjoyed on occasion. They explained that they had to eat their dinner before eating dessert at home, if dessert was permitted. KittyCat described, "If you don't eat all your food (dinner), you don't get it (dessert)." This is similar to previous research (Ochs & Shohet; Ochs, Pontecorvo, & Fasculo, 1996), where children in the United States often receive the reward of dessert if they finish their dinner. Interestingly, even though all the consultants enjoyed eating food with sugar in them, none of them took any pictures of sweet food.

If the students knew that they were going to eat a birthday treat at school, they did not finish their lunch first. For example, KittyCat told her friends and I that she wanted to "save room" for the doughnut she was going to get later during lunch. She did not eat at least half of the food on her tray so that she was sure that she could finish the whole doughnut.

Sometimes students like Jenny, Q's classmate, ate the ice cream she bought from school first because she "didn't want it to melt". Subsequently she did not eat any of the school lunch on her tray. Q also typically ate his ice cream in the middle of lunch because if he waited until the end, his orange creamsicle pushpop resulted in a melted disaster. In fact, during the lunch when Taylor passed out doughnuts, Q did not anticipate eating a doughnut and also bought ice cream. At one point during his meal, he was eating his pasta from home and a doughnut with chocolate frosting on top while tending to a melting creamsicle pushpop. The expression on his face read that he was almost overwhelmed by managing all that food during lunch at once.

Despite eating sweets fairly frequently (three to five times per week), the consultants often omitted or downplayed this fact during our conversations. This finding is similar to other work with children and labeling food. For example, Dryden, Metcalfe, Owen and Shipton (2009) argued that since children from the United States are a part of this neoliberal society, they are taught to take responsibility to eat things that are healthy based on current nutritional guidelines. Furthermore, they reasoned that children's personal preferences are questioned if they do not consider healthy food choices when eating and talking about food. Finally, they suggested that children might also attach morality to the discourse of food where healthy food is good (and so are you) and unhealthy food is bad (Dryden, Metcalfe, Owen, & Shipton, 2009). Since the consultants were so open about talking about their healthy eating and neglected to talk at length about sweets except when prompted, it is possible that they were concerned about how I perceived them as good or bad based on how they talked about food.

Identifying types of meals at home and how it relates to mealtime experience.

Since the consultants took so many pictures of their meals, I asked them to describe the meal, in terms of the types of food, the time of day of the meal and whether or not it was on a week or weekend. Because some of the pictures turned out a little better than others, the consultants used context clues to identify the pictures they took (e.g., "it was light outside, so this must have been breakfast on a weekend;" or "we had beef stew, so it must have been dinner on the weekend"). They also identified the types of food and related it to specific meals. For example, once KittyCat and her mother determined that KittyCat was eating toast in one of the pictures she took, KittyCat deduced that she was eating breakfast with cereal on a weekend morning. Similarly, Kat identified the steak, corn and vegetables on their picnic table as dinner, because her family typically ate dinner outside on the picnic table during "nice" spring evenings.

The consultants consistently used the types of food in the pictures to help them determine when they took the pictures and what meal they were talking about. For example, eggs, oatmeal, toast, cereal, oranges and waffles were all described as food eaten during breakfast at home. The meals with meat or other protein (e.g., chicken, steak, sausage, hotdogs), a vegetable and a starch were classified as dinner. The lunches they described above at school varied from sandwiches, chips and fruit to smaller portion-sized dinner-type meals like rice, chicken and vegetables mixed together. Thus, the lunches contained the most varied types of food, but rarely if ever were described as food they also ate for breakfast (e.g., pancakes, eggs, oatmeal). However, there were some exceptions to this rule. I observed a meal with Q and his family having dinner that consisted of pancakes and sausage, which most of the consultants described as breakfast food. This example, even in Q's case, seemed

to be a treat and not the "norm," especially when looking at the other meals Q took pictures of and labeled as "dinner" (e.g., rice, beans, and sausage).

The experience of consistently eating certain types of food during certain parts of the day literally helped the consultants define and identify the meal that occurred. In other words, the consultants were negotiating the meanings of previous experiences (with food) to continue to form an understanding about practices (e.g., when, why, and how their family eats particular types of food) (Wenger, 1998,2008). This is similar to a study by James, Curtis and Ellis (2009) where they found that children characterized meals based on the types of food. Since most of these meals pictured above could be considered healthy, the consultants included this knowledge of healthy eating as part of their everyday food and mealtime practice. Since they typically eat balanced meals with their families, this is what their meals always look like. The practice of eating balanced meals became part of how they understood mealtime with family (Strachan & Brawley, 2009).

Connecting balanced meals from school to home. Finally, the consultants displayed their healthy eating practices from home to their peers at school by continuing to eat vegetables and fruit at lunchtime. This is different from the findings from a study that emphasized how young teenagers identify food choice with peer acceptance where it is 'uncool' to eat healthy food (Stead, McDermott, MacKintosh & Adamson, 2011). Perhaps the age difference between the consultants and the young adolescents was enough where peer pressure and influence was not as significant for the consultants. Therefore some consultants were more overt than others in expressing their excitement for eating healthy food; they were consistent with eating what they were familiar with from home (e.g., balanced meals), even if their lunches were not always homemade. Additionally, Rawlins (2009) added that children's

home and school eating habits are interrelated and that their eating practices are clearly influenced by the space they inhabit. The students were more influenced by how peers ate at school by saving room for sweets, but still ate their vegetables; whereas at home, the influence and emphasis was on eating the vegetables.

To sum up this section, the consultants and their families expressed their enjoyment of eating balanced meals for dinner, while also indulging in sweets. The findings suggest that they perceived their meals as balanced and healthy; however, based on the amount of sweets that they eat, it is possible there is a disconnect between their knowledge of balanced meals and their practice of eating healthy balanced meals. This is similar to findings from Rawlins' (2009) study where they found a disconnect in the children and families between eating healthy and knowing what is healthy to eat.

Learning Through Doing Mealtime and Food-Related Activities

The consultants engaged in mealtime activities daily. They relied on previous experiences to inform them of what they could expect next as it related to mealtime. Below I present an excerpt from my field notes that outline the procedural 'doing' of dinnertime with Kat.

> **Dinnertime everyday.** It's about 6:20 on a Tuesday evening in the spring. I am about to eat dinner with Kat in her home. Kat's father is working late tonight, so it will just be Kat, Erica, Justin and me for dinner. The aromas from dinner have permeated the kitchen and front rooms of their home as we try to wait patiently for dinner to finish cooking in the oven. Justin unable to handle waiting any longer, sneaks into the kitchen and swipes a small handful of grape tomatoes; he quickly shoves them in his mouth and races out of the kitchen.
>
> Finally, Erica informs Kat, Justin and me that while dinner took longer than expected it 'is now ready!' Erica asks Kat, 'Hey honey, can you please set the table?' Kat nods and smiles. Erica adds, 'We will only need forks tonight.' Kat gets right to work and retrieves four dinner forks from the kitchen drawer. She puts one fork in front of each of the four seats at the dinner table. Erica dishes the mixture of baked and cut up pieces of butternut squash, apples and chicken sausage and plates the food for each of us. She asks Kat to put each plate at a specific spot on the table. Kat obeys and

delivers the plates to the table. Erica fills salad bowls for us and Kat delivers these to the place settings too. Erica calls for Justin who was playing in the other room, 'Dinner's ready Justin, time to eat!' Justin comes running in and sits down at his usual place at the table.

Without verbal prompting, Kat, Erica and Justin bow their heads and hold hands. Erica asks Justin if he wants to say the blessing tonight. He very quietly recites something that I cannot hear at all. Erica then asks Kat if she wants to say anything this evening. Kat shakes her head no. Erica nods and then raises her, head, 'Okay then.' That's the signal for the family to begin eating. Justin eats a few bites and then begins to make silly noises 'La, la la!'. We eat for a couple of minutes and then Erica realizes that she did not put drinks on the table. She spends a few minutes assembling water cups and glasses and handing them out to us. She is about ready to sit down when Justin asks, 'Wait, can I have ice?' Before she can respond, he sticks his left hand in his water cup and swishes his hand around. Erica watches Justin play in his water cup for a few moments, almost surprised that this is actually happening. Kat is also watching Justin and she is wearing a slight frown and a disapproving look on her face. Erica exclaims, 'Justin! Stop that! That's disgusting!' She takes Justin's water cup, dumps it in the sink, puts some ice in it and refills it with water. She hands Justin his new cup of water. We begin to talk about homework and school projects.

We talk a little longer and Justin is only a few bites away from finishing his dinner. He then asks if he can have a piece of candy in an excited whispery voice. Erica makes a noncommittal face and encourages him to finish. Kat is quietly finishing her last bite and then watches Justin finish. He shoves the forkfuls into his mouth and then asks for the treat again. Erica sighs and smiles, 'Okay, one piece for each of you, but you have to put the dishes away. The dishwasher is clean and I didn't put the dishes away yet, so put them in the sink please.' Justin carries his and Erica's the dishes and silverware to the sink. Kat is out of her chair and wandering around a little. Erica cues Kat to clear the rest of the table. I thank Kat for clearing my plate. Kat nods and places everything in the sink. After eating one piece of Easter candy each, Kat and Justin ask to 'get down' from the table. Erica nods. Kat and Justin run off to finish homework and play.

The consultants frequently talked about their mealtime activities by describing or taking pictures of the sequence of events during each meal with each social community. Next, I provide the consultants' depiction of their general mealtime experiences throughout the day first on a weekday and then a weekend. Then they describe food-related mealtime occupations that they engaged in occasionally. Finally I discuss how their daily mealtime practices helped construct their understanding of how to do mealtime in different contexts.

How we do breakfast on a weekday. Q liked weekday breakfasts because it "always (puts) us in a good mood… and we usually like it." However, this "we" for breakfast is different than the "we" for dinner where everyone eats together. Q and Kat describe their weekday breakfasts as eating in shifts or in a staggered manner where only one or two people may eat for part of the meal together.

> Q: …usually, it's just me and …my mom (who) is (either) just finishing up breakfast when I'm eating or just making hers. But she (usually) finishes before me… and then later, when I go back upstairs to brush my teeth, my brother usually comes down to have breakfast… And my dad usually has breakfast when I've gone-… (so it's either when) I'm on the bus and my brother's waiting at the bus stop …or I'm probably at school and my brother's on the bus. My mom's probably leaving for work, he usually has breakfast (last because he wakes up later than we do).

> Kat: During the week, me and Justin (my brother) get up first. We play with the kitties and Cooper (our dog). We take Cooper outside. And then I get mine and Justin's food. I pour the milk, for (the cereal), we put it on the table and we eat. And then for Mommy and Daddy, they get up a bit later. Like Mom-mom makes her English muffin. She eats it. Dada gets his egg sandwich and eats it.

Candace also described eating breakfast at a different time than Nana; however, Nana usually prepared a hot breakfast (e.g. eggs, cream of wheat, pancakes, and waffles) every morning for Candace. Candace added that she preferred a hot breakfast over eating cereal that she prepared herself, "cold cereal…yuck! I like real food for breakfast."

Finally, KittyCat said, during "the week, I don't eat breakfast here (at home). I go to school and eat breakfast… Only if we have a lot of time (in the morning), I'll eat breakfast here (at home). So, if I do seem to eat breakfast here, I'll eat cereal". However, on school days, she ate (free) breakfast at school. KittyCat described ordering her breakfast as similar to lunch. She noted that two differences were that she entered the cafeteria when she arrived at school and she could sit anywhere in the cafeteria after she ordered her breakfast.

Q, Kat and KittyCat indicated that there was a specific rhythm to their weekday mornings. Candace was more vague in her description, but suggested that Nana made her breakfast every morning.

Lunchtime at school. KittyCat explained the normal lunchtime procedure at school beginning in their classroom

> So really…, my teacher just calls (*out)*, our lunch (*choices)*, because we vote for what we want. And then she just calls by like lunch box (*lunch from home)*, cheese pizza, today. And then, we get into the lunchroom and we go through the line. And you tell the lunch lady what you want. And you get your sides and then you pay for a lunch. Then we go and sit down, and I always sit down in the same place. Because I sit with my friends, usually …we play while we're eating and talk about stuff, really. And then sometimes I bring a book like I did today and read, if like because sometimes my friends are talking to someone else. …then the trash can person comes and we throw our trash away… Then our teacher tells us to line up.

The students knew what was expected of them during lunchtime in order to get them efficiently into the lunchroom, eat, socialize, and cleanup all within 25 minutes.

Dinnertime during the week. The consultants knew that there was also a rhythm to their family dinner practices. They described what happened typically during dinner, who was expected to carry out certain duties, what they were expected to do, when to say the blessing, and how dinner began and how it ended. For example, when we talked about what she did during dinner every day Kat explained,

> …we set the table, we get the plates out, we put food on the plates, … we put the food out, we say the prayer. When we're done with that, we eat…then We take our dishes, we put 'em in the dishwasher … depending on if the dishwasher's empty, … And then we, ...go off and do our things ...

The repetition of engaging in these activities enabled the consultants to have a working knowledge of what happens when during dinnertime every evening. While Candace's dinner procedure included eating in her room, she also received food, said a prayer, ate, and then cleaned up after herself.

Breakfast on the weekend. The consultants reported a variety of scenarios of how breakfast occurred during the weekend. For example, Candace and Nana reported that Nana liked to make big breakfasts for both of them on the weekends (e.g. eggs, bacon and pancakes) and that Candace eats in her room "breakfast in bed".

Weekend breakfasts in KittyCat's household is based on when you wake up. KittyCat explains,

> I wake up, before everyone most of the time. … Well Daddy's usually up. And then we watch some tv. Then my mother comes in and tells us to go get breakfast. (*KittyCat chuckles*)… it's usually only me or Daddy and I, or Hannah and I, or just me (on weekend mornings)'…(I like that I can) 'pick whatever I want to eat' at breakfast time.

For Kat and her family, weekend breakfasts are more consistent: 'The weekend, Mommy makes breakfast, like dinner, for all of us and then we all eat at the same time.' Finally, while Q mentioned that he 'usually' eats together with his family most weekend mornings, his mother Lisa, explained a little more about weekend breakfasts: 'On the weekends, usually a lot of times you know we'll laze around…You know it's not often we do like big breakfasts on the weekends. Every so often. It might be every other weekend…'

The consultants described that they expected a variation in their weekend breakfasts. However, they still had an idea of what that variation looked like with each family.

Lunch and dinner on the weekends? Lunches at home appeared to be the most ambiguous meal during the weekends especially since it was described in passing or not at all in conferring with the consultants. Kat was the only consultant to describe lunches on the weekends. She indicated that what she ate and whom she ate with varied depending on what else occurred that particular day.

Finally, with the exception of KittyCat, who explained that her family ate out or were on their own for dinner (in more of a staggered manner) on the weekends, there were few if any differences between how the rest of the consultants participated in weekend dinners versus weekday dinners with their families. Therefore, they did not specifically comment on weekend dinners.

We eat out. Finally, all the consultants mentioned eating outside of the home with their families. Candace and Nana discussed eating lunch or dinner at least once a week on the weekends, 'We went out twice and forgot to take the camera with us both times!' exclaims Candace. Q and Kat described eating out less, typically for a special occasion, when family visited, or if Q's brother participated in an athletic event out of town.

KittyCat and her family explained that they ate out of the house on the weekends because their schedules were so packed. KittyCat took a picture story of her family eating out at a favorite Mexican restaurant one weekend when her brother was home from college. Please note how she sequenced the pictures and the vantage point from which she took some of the pictures. She described the first picture. 'This is the kid's menu… So I got refried beans, and then rice and then I had a chicken quesadilla, I think?' (*White box added to provide locations of the kid's menu.*)

Figure 7.9. Ordering from the Kids Menu
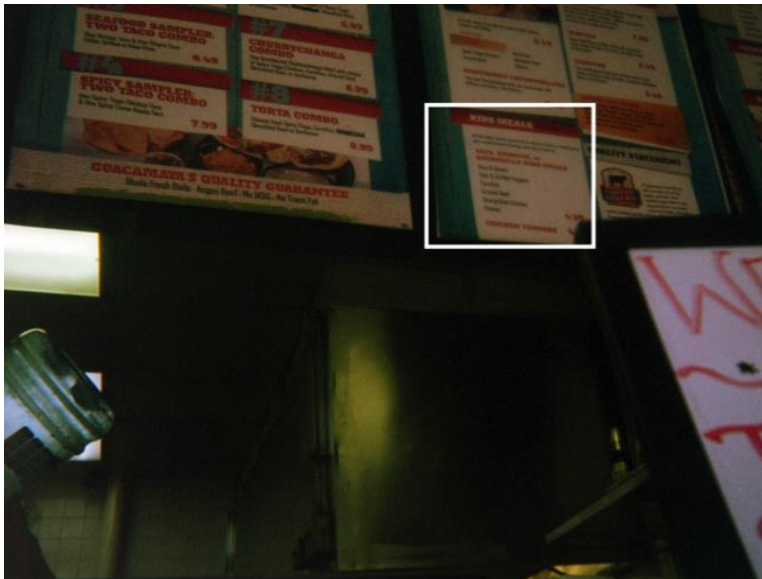
KittyCat continued, ' I was trying to take a picture of lemonade…I got pink lemonade.'

Figure 7.10. Pink Lemonade from the Soda Fountain
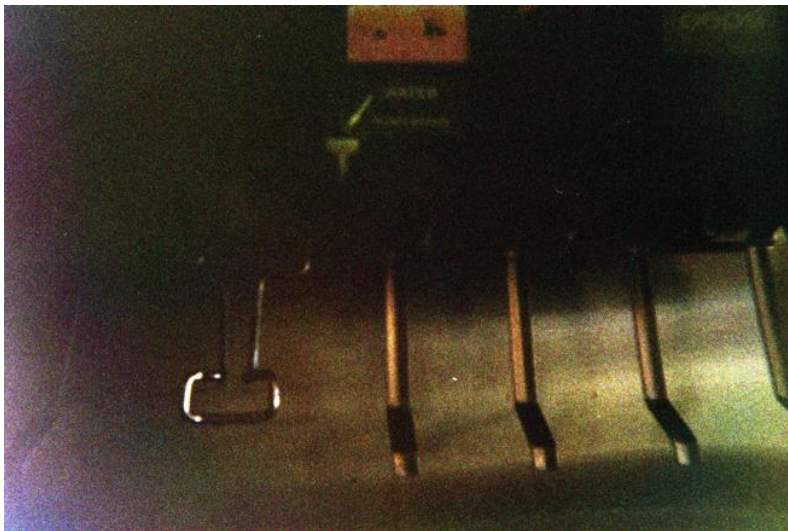
She added, 'That's just all the sauces that we have (*she chuckles*)… We got so many. We eat

a lot…I got the medium (salsa)

Figure 7.11. The Sauces

She described her dinner next, '..and that's my burrito with sour cream and cheese (and rice and beans).'

Figure 7.12. KittyCat's Burrito Dinner

She finished the story by showing me their dinner table with her family's food. 'That's the inside…that's my brother's torta…I ate some of it.'

Figure 7.13. The Dinner Table and William's Torta

KittyCat described ordering from the kid's menu, getting her drink, getting some of the

sauces and eating with her family. Her perspective from ordering from the kids' menu is

interesting because the picture was taken from so far away and the menu looks so small.

Also, she indicated that while she and her family members might have ordered different

types of food, similar to home they still shared sauces and traded bites of food with each

other. Finally, she indicated that there was a sequence to how her dinner experience unfolded

with her family. While there were a couple of differences compared to home, she still helped

set the table, ate, and socialized.

General thoughts on daily mealtime activities. The consultants described the

sequence of their meals and what typically occurred during the week and weekend . They

also included engaging in these mealtime activities with family members or peers. Their

tendency to refrain from talking about lunches and dinners at home suggest that there was

such variation every weekend that it was difficult to describe. Conversely, in not

emphasizing dinnertime activities, they might not have had anything different to add that

occurred on the weekend. Despite the lack of description of their weekend meals, a common thread amongst all the meals the consultants emphasized was they knew there was a sequence to the meals, in the presence of other people. However, there was still a range of possibilities or situations that they could expect during that particular meal.

Sometimes we …(do food-related activities). The consultants also described food-related activities (e.g., grocery shopping or food preparation) that they engaged in more sporadically (about once a week or twice a month). I present their food-related activities in the following section below: help prepare meals, help with cooking, make food by ourselves, and go grocery shopping.

Help prepare meals. Some of the consultants helped with preparing and cooking meals on the weekends once in awhile. For example, Candace explained that she helps get ingredients out for Nana when she cooks dinner. 'My part of making the salad is get the garlic out, you know get the lettuce out and everything.' And during weekend breakfasts she added,

> I like, help her like, make the pancakes and help her do the eggs and oranges…(so) If she says get out the pancake batter, I'll get out the pancake batter. And a spoon and ...a container to put it in…(for the eggs) I get the eggs out and she cracks 'em, I crack 'em too. Mostly, mostly she cracks 'em because uh, sometimes I get shells in there, but uh…I help her with …Whisk(ing) them….for the oranges, she gets it started and I peel.

Help with cooking. Q and Kat discussed some interest in cooking, but this was not a frequently recurring mealtime activity. For example, Q explained how he made hot chocolate with his mom one weekend:

> And then that's me helping my mom make hot chocolate… (The ingredients are) milk, and vanilla extract and Hershey's Cocoa powder…Usually you add an amount of milk and a amount of that (vanilla) and that (cocoa powder). And it takes a little while and you can stir it around. You have to keep stirring it….(until) it's the right consistency.

Figure 7.14. Q's Hot Chocolate

Q also explained how he made Christmas cookies with his mom and that he received a cookbook at Christmas, but he was not yet old enough to make food or a meal on the stove on his own. 'I can cook on the stove without supervision when I'm ten?... or twelve, something like that.' He was infatuated with cooking independently to some degree because when I asked him to draw something that described mealtime at home, he drew his brother cooking breakfast at the stove.

Figure 7.15. Q's Drawing of his Brother, Cooking Egg Sandwiches for Their Family
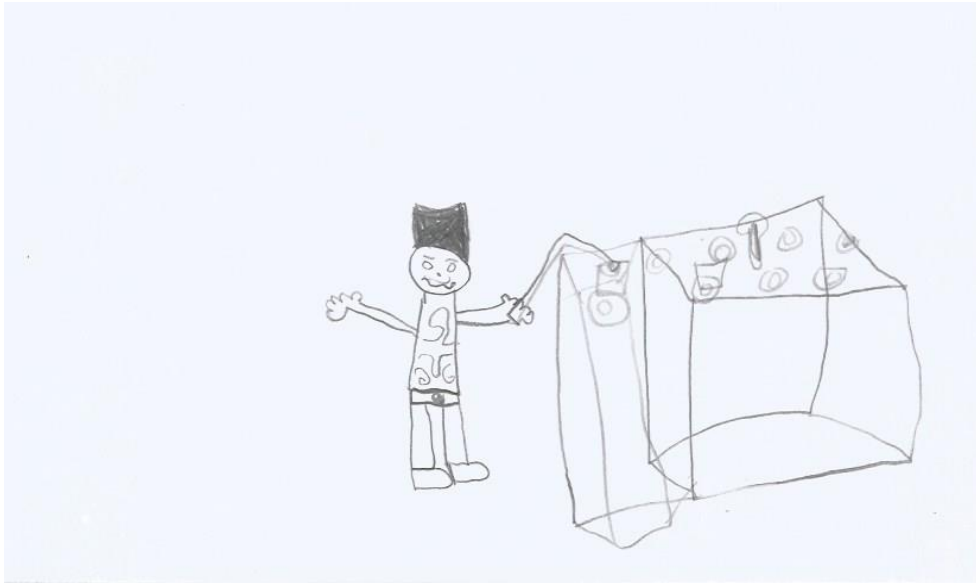
I interpreted this drawing as Q striving to cook for his family like his older brother.

Finally, during one conversation, Kat described how she made monkey bread with her mom

and brother:

> One time we got a little conveyor belt going. …Justin was making the balls, I was putting (the dough balls) in the (melted) butter, and then Mommy was putting it in cinnamon sugar. And then putting it in the angel food cake pan. And then we cooked 'em.

In learning how to prepare food Q and Kat alluded to enjoying participating in these

activities with family. They were learning and doing with family.

Make food by our selves. Q and Kat indicated that sometimes they prepared part (or

all) of breakfast themselves either on the weekday or the weekend. On another occasion Kat

explained how she made deviled eggs by herself. She describes how she made them in the

passage below:

> ...I just got this new recipe book…um the American Girl (cookbook) and they had a deviled eggs recipe (M sounds excited). So I did it. (We made them) once before …I think we had 'em before because momma made 'em and bought 'em before. … These I made by myself…some parts were harder than others. Like the part when sprinkling

the stuff (paprika) on it was easy. But, like making the paste um, putting it in the egg, - that was hard.

Go grocery shopping. Kat and Candace reported that they consistently (e.g., once a week) went grocery shopping with at least one parent whereas Q and KittyCat went shopping occasionally (e.g., one or two times per month). Kat reported that her whole family goes grocery shopping together on the weekends, usually at one of the big bulk stores, BJs. She took pictures of the grocery cart during one of her shopping trips. Kat explained that she and her brother helped pick out cereal for their breakfasts.

Figure 7.16. Kat Picking Out Cereal

Kitty Cat also took pictures while grocery shopping with her mom and sister one day. She explained the picture below (Figure, 'We went…to Walmart…(we were) going shopping. My sister was the role model. We get the pulp-free (orange juice) because I don't like the other kind (with pulp).'

Figure 7.17. KittyCat's Pulp-Free Orange Juice

KittyCat described the next grocery picture, 'And then we usually get these peanut butter crackers…that's my snack.'

Figure 7.18. KittyCat's Peanut Butter Crackers

Even though she took pictures while grocery shopping, KittyCat only went with her mom a few times a month. Her mother, Melissa explained that she preferred to do most of the grocery shopping by herself and took the girls on occasion if they needed a couple things. When KittyCat and Hannah went shopping, it was much harder to stick to the budget and often took much longer. Similarly, Q's mom Lisa explained, 'every other week is our big

grocery shopping time… in between is just buying perishables and staples, you know, like fresh vegetables….Most of the time we try to (have) one parent go on their own. It's much quicker.' Thus, time was more of a factor as to why the boys did not go shopping very often with her or Jerry.

General thoughts on food-related activities. In this section, the consultants described their roles in food-related occupations. Often, their descriptions included parents or other family members and how the adult also engaged with the consultants or over-saw their food-related activities. While the consultants did not talk considerably about social interaction with me during these food-related activities, it does not mean that they did not speak to their family members. In fact, much of what the consultants showed me during participant observations at school and home was the nature of their social interactions as they occurred during mealtime with both social communities. I observed the vast range of social interaction in both social communities; however the consultants did not articulate the level of social interaction to the degree that I experienced it with them. Thus, it is very possible that continued learning and social interaction occurred during these activities as well but were just not articulated.

Discussion About Learning from Doing Mealtime Activities

In bringing attention to particular meals through our conversation and photo elicitation interviews, the consultants talked about what and how they typically participated in particular meals throughout the day. Further, the consultants described that they knew what to do during each meal because they engaged in all of their mealtime activities in about the same order everyday and received some prompting from their parents and teachers as needed. They explained that they knew how to 'do' school lunch by learning and remembering from the previous year and practicing and talking it over with their teacher on

the first day of school. Similarly, the consultants knew what to do at home by watching or being taught by their parents or other family members. As KittyCat noted, 'I just watch people, that's how I do it.' While KittyCat highlighted the importance of observing others when learning how to engage in her mealtime activities, often more implicit learning and practicing occurs in addition to 'just watch(ing)' (Rogoff, 2003). Finally, the consultants spoke about each mealtime experience in general terms while leaving space for change to occur. This space was where the consultants engaged in most of their mealtime experiences, through a situationally-based context depending on the time of day and the day of the week.

This knowledge of previous lived mealtime experiences through daily repetition helped them navigate each mealtime situation to create a similar recognizable daily experience within each social setting. Similarly, Mistry and Wu (2010) argued that children are required to navigate and contend with multiple worlds and identities within a given day. This is especially true for the consultants as they engaged in different mealtime experiences throughout their day with different social communities.

The consultants also engaged in food-related activities with family members. They were able to practice and learn what to do during those activities with the help of a parent. Since older siblings and/or parents were generally responsible for completing food-related activities, the consultants had time to learn and understand how they might be expected to engage in food-related activities when they were older. In this way, the consultants also knew that food-related and mealtime activities were open to change as they changed.

For example, Q enjoyed cooking and baking, but because he was so young, he was not allowed to use the stove and oven by himself. Through practice with making morning breakfast sandwiches in the toaster oven or baking Christmas cookies with his mother, Q

formed an understanding of what to do by learning through participating in these food-related occupations under the supervision of his mother. He also discussed that he would like to continue cooking and baking so he could make breakfast for his family on the weekends like his older brother currently does. Thus, he realized that in practicing his cooking and baking skills, he will one day be considered responsible enough to independently prepare more complex meals involving the stove and oven.

Dewey's habits and experiencing daily mealtime activities. John Dewey, a pragmatic philosopher, found the relationships between individuals, organisms and the environment transact and change each other in a way that makes it difficult not to view the relationship as 'organism-in-environment-as-a-whole' (Dewey & Bentley, 1949, p.149). Habit was a paramount concept John Dewey described and examined throughout his action theory literature. According to Dewey, habit is not simply an automatic or reflexive motor response to a stimulus. It is preconscious action that is socially constructed. It takes form through a person's thoughts, senses, behaviors, morals, and will (Cutchin et al, 2008). Dewey saw habits as acquired meanings that are experienced by the human (Kestenbaum, 1977). Cognitive, perceptual and motor habits fuse together to create perceptual meaning for the individual, which in turn affect and embody other perceptual meanings and habits of the individual (Kestenbaum). Furthermore, habits include past experiences, consider future situations and experiences and are unique to each individual. Habits are plastic and undergo continuous modification as the individual transacts with organisms through different environments. Yet individuals have the capacity to retain factors from previous experiences, which modify subsequent actions and ultimately can develop efficiencies in those actions (Dewey, 1916/2013). The individual also develops the awareness to recognize the difference

in context and surrounding organisms can largely affect the result of the experience and situation (Dewey, 1930).

The consultants' learned sequence of how their meals unfolded at home and school fits with Dewey's description of habit. In both settings, the consultants had this preconscious way of knowing what to do and how to do it (e.g. set the table at home or line up for lunch at school). Yet they had a difficult time describing how they knew what to do. The verbal reinforcement from teachers and parents to continue to engage in these normative activities helped the consultants continue to solidify their knowledge of action in a given situation or mealtime environment, which provided foundation for knowing how to act or what to do in a similar but novel mealtime situation. This was especially true when Q and his class had a substitute teacher who did not know order of events of lunchtime. The students guided the teacher through what they do and how they did lunchtime without a hitch.

Conclusion

Through the practices of eating fairly healthy food and engaging in mealtime and food-related activities, the consultants were negotiating the meaning of these experiences to create their own understanding about food and mealtime with family (Wenger, 1998, 2008). In learning these practices almost daily, the consultants were able to make sense of, understand and even define what 'doing mealtime' with family means and how it occurs. Additionally, Alanen (2001) and James et al (2009) suggest, children often have an interdependent relationship with adults when it comes to food, where the children have certain preferences and the adults make the final call in what is nutritious and what the child should be served. Therefore the child's thoughts about food are not only shaped by their personal preferences, but also influenced by their parents, who make and buy their food. Through accepting these experiences as their own while including some personal preferences

(e.g. favorite dinners), the consultants learned and understood daily mealtime activity through practice and repetition. Furthermore, they underscored how meals are complex, situationaly-based moments imbued with sites of social learning.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION, FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTONS, AND CONCLUSION

Since I provided some discussion and interpretation within each of the findings chapters, I reserved the discussion chapter to pull my findings together. First, I answer my research question regarding how the consultants experience mealtime activities in different settings by describing mealtime practices through Wenger's (1998, 2008) concept of practice. I also suggest how their mealtime practices connect with each other despite being in different contexts. Next, I highlight the similarities and differences between the consultants' experiences with mealtime at home and school. Then I make suggestions on how this study will contribute to OS, including asserting the child's perspective in research, importance of studying occupations closely and calling for more emphasis on the study of daily occupations as practices. I move on to examine the consultants' role and their position of power within this study. Finally, I complete this chapter by discussing the limitations of this study, future research directions, and implications.

Answering the Question

My research question was the following, 'How do children experience eating and mealtime activities in different environments (at home and school)?' The purpose of this dissertation was to gain a better understanding of children's experience in mealtime activities from their perspective. The answer to this research question is multifaceted because the consultants' mealtime experiences in both settings were complex, situationally based and shaped by context (Dickie et al, 2006).

What are mealtime experiences? The research question addresses consultants'

mealtime experiences, or 'a practical knowledge… or *practice* derived from direct

observation of or participation in events in a particular activity' ('Experience', 2018;

emphasis added). In viewing mealtime experiences through the consultants' actions, pictures

and words, the daily mealtime practices they learned through participation in mealtime

activities became apparent. The consultants learned that there was a certain rhythm to their

day and that they knew what to expect during mealtime based on engaging in these mealtime

practices previously in each setting.

Practice and communities of practice. Wenger's concept of practice stems from a

form of a social learning theory he developed where learning occurs in context through

participating in experience (Wenger, 2008, 1998), or learning as social participation. He

emphasized that practices are not only local engagements in activity, but also reinforce

sociocultural practices within immediate and larger communities. He argued that practice is

'doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we

do…practice is always social practice' (Wenger, 2008, p.47). Finally, in connecting

Wenger's practice to Dewey's concept of habits, Wenger posited that habits were smaller

preconscious components of action that informed practice. Similarly, other researchers (e.g.

Hedegaard, 2009; Humphry 2005; Humphry and Wakeford, 2006; Rogoff, 2003) studying

children and their engagement in activity arrived at similar conclusions: that in practicing and

doing through lived historical and sociocultural contexts, children learn how to 'do' through

observation, participation, and continued lived experience. While the above researchers touch

on points that are similar to practice with other people, Wenger (2008) brings the concept of

social practice to the forefront. Thus in applying Wenger's view of practice to this study, the

consultants' lived mealtime experiences were essentially learned mealtime practices that occurred over time at school and at home.

Similar to Wenger, Hedegaard (2009) suggested that children develop cultural practices in different social communities. However, she emphasized examining the development and relationship between how the child participates in practices within different communities. The consultants' mealtime practices across communities and settings included: eating balanced meals; using particular social norms within a specific setting; and engaging in activities during mealtime based on the context and situation. They had to navigate through different communities of practice about mealtime throughout their day depending on the situation.

Connecting mealtime practices: school to home. Many scholars and philosophers identified connections between different social spheres or contexts where social norms and practices are reinforced (e.g., Bourdieu, 1998; Corsaro, 2015; Dewey, 1930; Dickie et al, 2006; Hedegaard, 2009; Humphry, 2012, 2005; Humphry & Wakeford, 2006; Wenger, 1998). This is especially apparent in the consultants' social contexts of school and home. Even though there was a fairly broad mix of social classes (e.g., working class to upper-middle class) and ethnic (Hispanic/non-Hispanic) and racial (black, white, Asian, mixed-race) groups within the school, the dominant values and approved social interactions during lunchtime derived from the middle and upper-middle classes and were more or less 'the norm' for the consultants. The consultants and their families and their peers and their peers' families (and the range of social classes) were quite literally the population of school's larger community. Thus, the norms and mealtime activities that the children learned at home and practiced at school were then recreated, enforced, and practiced over time in both contexts

and became 'acceptable' (Bourdieu, 1998; Corsaro, 2014; Wenger, 2008,1998). Essentially, the norms shaped the consultants' mealtime practices at home and at school because they provided a range of acceptable and unacceptable habits and behaviors to live by.

Mealtime differences between school and home. Even though the consultants were engaging in mealtime occupations multiple times throughout the day, each meal was entirely different based on the time of day, setting, and surrounding social community. In fact the only thing that the consultants' meals had in common across the day was food, presence of a social community, and the presence of mealtime practices within that social community. Below I highlight the differences between the consultants' mealtime experiences at school and home.

School. The consultants and their peers placed a heavy emphasis on social interaction during mealtime at school. Eating food was a distant second. The students were almost constantly trying to belong to or connect with a social group especially since this was one of the few times of the day this was allowed. Through games, social engagement and play (i.e. occupations) the students sought to connect with each other while occasionally taking bites of food. Furthermore, they used their knowledge of social norms to define, maintain, create and redefine social boundaries between their social group and others (Corsaro, 2015; James, 2013; Nukaga, 2008). They also exercised their agency to bend or break lunchtime rules and social norms in order to locate boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Interestingly, some of these interactions and behaviors may not have been as intense or obvious if the students had assigned seats for lunch. They had the privilege of having the choice of sitting next to their friends and have more chances to co-construct enjoyable social

interactions with each other. Since belonging and connecting with social groups is important to school age children (Corsaro, 2015; James, 2013), this took precedence over eating.

Home. Mealtime at home was different. The consultants did not have to work at belonging to a social group at home. They belonged to a family whom they trusted and saw every day. Instead, the consultants engaged in their familial mealtime practices and created an understanding of how they do mealtime with family at home by helping prepare food, setting the table, saying the blessing, socializing (or not), and cleaning up. For example, when asked how she knows what to do every evening for dinner, KittyCat simply stated, 'I just watch people, that's how I do it.' Yet there was more to it than watching peers and family members and deciding that it meant something. Essentially they were developing mealtime occupations and practices through observing, learning, and doing. The consultants also embodied the meaning of occupation through doing with others (Spitzer, 2003), as well as understanding their self worth while engaging in activities (Reed, Hocking, & Smythe, 2010).

However, this is not to say that mealtime practices all occurred seamlessly without the need for guidance. Most of the families used table manners and other social norms to help shape how the consultants engaged and interacted with family at dinner. Furthermore, while I did not witness any issues with not using manners, some of the parents suggested that the consultants and siblings fought with each other at the table or did not use their manners during other dinners. The consultants were exercising their agency by not using table manners or fighting with siblings at supper.

A note about food-related activities. Even though some of the consultants described food-related activities that they engaged in at home, I was responsible for prompting them to discuss this component of mealtime. Left to their own devices, the consultants considered daily mealtime occupations as the daily activities that they were directly involved in and were independent in completing. While they occasionally assisted with food-related activities such as menu planning, grocery shopping or cooking, they did not consider this part of their mealtime experience. Mealtime activities started with lining up or setting up for the meal and ended with cleanup for each description of mealtime, which is similar to other studies that examine mealtime in Westernized middle class families (see for example James, Curtis & Ellis, 2013; Ochs & Izquierdo, 2009).

The consultants also recognized that learning about and participating in food-related experiences and activities was not static, but a process that changes (Wenger, 1998, 2008). For example, Q recognized that with practice he could cook more independently in the kitchen like his older brother. While food preparation and cooking, grocery shopping and menu planning might not be considered mealtime activities, the consultants were learning that the food-related activities could become a more integral part of daily mealtime practices in the future.

Daily mealtime practices. Psychologists Neely, Walton, and Stephens (2014) suggested that children's food practices are embedded in social relationships that involve caring, belonging, talking, sharing, reciprocating, trusting and negotiating. Where the food practices are embedded in the relationships. I argue that the relationship between the consultants' mealtime practices and making connections are woven together, that the social connections are a valuable piece of the mealtime process. In fact, the consultants learned how

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to engage with others during a particular meal based on the mealtime practices in each setting. They could get away with breaking rules and acting silly at school with peers. Whereas at home, with the exception of Candace, they were encouraged to be quiet family members while the parents provided the structure for how to engage with others at the dinner table (DeVault, 1991).

In sum, the consultants were sensitive to their surrounding community and acted accordingly during mealtime. For example, while the consultants briefly acknowledged their understanding of all school mealtime practices, they highlighted social interaction as the most important part of that practice. Conversely, while most of the consultants reported enjoying talking with family during mealtime, they emphasized more of doing family mealtime activities and practices together as essential pieces of mealtime. It suggests their keen ability to navigate different cultural mealtime practices at school and home with ease, similar to findings suggested by Mistry and Wu (2010). These findings reinforce previous literature that stated behavior and action were situationally and contextually based with children and adults (Dickie et al, 2006; Fleer & Hedegaard, 2010; Hedegaard, 2009; Humphry & Wakeford, 2006; Rogoff, 2003).

How do children experience mealtime activities? Through my findings and the beginning of this discussion, I provided examples of how the consultants experienced mealtime activities and highlighted similarities and differences. However, I have not yet answered the question in its entirety. The following statements highlight how the children experience mealtime in both settings: (1) Social interaction is essential to mealtime practices; (2) Meals are moments imbued with sites of social learning; (3) The consultants learned to

exercise a degree of agency to test and press boundaries while engaging with others during mealtime.

Contributions to Occupational Science

The child's perspective. This study highlights the importance of working with children in research as opposed to using the children's answers to interpret through a particular theoretical lens. While I discuss later that emphasizing the children's perspective and their power throughout this study was not always easy, it is essential to better understand how children experience occupations. In providing a space for children to speak about their daily mealtime experiences, it offers a platform where they can communicate what matters to them and reinforce that their perspective is important. Even though I used the consultants' words and ideas, their 'voice', from our audio-recorded interviews, I found that most of the data from their perspective came from my observations while eating meals with them. In spending large amounts of time with the consultants during participant observations, I learned about their patterns and how they connected with people in different settings. While using observation to create a more thorough understanding is not new (e.g., Spitzer, 2003), this method provided depth and thick description to my data. It enabled me to highlight micro-moments on how the consultants experienced mealtime from their perspective. Often in research across disciplines, the children's collective perspective is muted. In omitting this body of research, it consequently emphasizes the power differential between adult and child and marginalizes and undermines the children's perspectives and ideas.

Contrasting the children's perspective to the adult's perspective. In gathering information about a particular group of occupations from a particular population (Hocking, 2009), I am able to contribute a body of knowledge that is different from the common knowledge of the adult perspective. For example, the consultants (and their peers) focused on

the social interactions, enjoying their food and determining where the boundaries for social norms exist in relation to mealtime at school and at home. Conversely, the consultants' parents and teachers focused on shaping the consultants' mealtime experiences so they could receive and healthy daily mealtime practices that existed within their personal and collective beliefs on appropriate social norms relating to mealtime. Thus, the consultants showed where they placed importance and how they experienced and learned mealtime occupations and practices in two different settings. This knowledge can better inform occupational scientists and other researchers regarding how some children navigate various types of mealtime occupations throughout their day.

Studying occupations. There are few studies that closely examine occupations that also emphasize the micro-moments where important aspects of social occupations occur (e.g., Bonsall, 2014, Lawlor, 2012). Each of the moments depicted above carried significant meaning to the consultants about mealtime with others and simultaneously illustrated the situated nature of mealtime for school-aged children. Therefore, highlighting sharp detail about occupations underlines differences in how various groups experience similar occupations. In using a collaborative ethnographic methodology, I could closely study the cultural mealtime occupations and practices (Dickie, personal communication, 2018) while also generating more knowledge about occupations from a group of people who are still considered a minority in research.

Practice versus routine. Finally, there is some literature on occupations in OS and occupational therapy that focuses on routine (e.g., Boyd, McCarty & Sethi, 2014; Evans & Rodger, 2008; Koome, Hocking & Sutton, 2012). Generally, the authors in these studies use Barbara Fiese's definition of routine (e.g. tasks completed with little thought) to describe

recurrent daily occupations (Fiese, Foley & Spagnola, 2006). Fiese and colleagues separate the constructs of routine and ritual (e.g. symbolic and tied to emotions), especially when looking at mealtime (Fiese et al., 2006). While it is sometimes helpful to examine mealtime occupations and other occupations as routines, I had difficulty labeling routine versus ritual throughout this study.

For example, the execution of how table manners were sometimes enforced appeared almost as a cold directive. This would be termed as a routine communication by Fiese, Foley and Spagnola (2006). However, there was a history and meaning behind this reminder with the consultants and their family members. When I was eating dinner with Kat and her family, Justin, Kat's brother, was reminded by Larry to 'eat with a fork'. This small directive also had stronger meaning behind it. As illustrated in the small, recorded discussion in the social norms chapter, Kat's father, Larry, was raised to have and prided himself in having good table manners. He sought to have his children value similar manners during dinner. Larry communicated the high value he placed on table manners to his children by reminding his son to use a fork. He wanted his children to feel proud of having 'good' table manners when they became older and to not be judged negatively by their peers as 'heathens' in public. Consciously labeling the consultants' mealtime 'practices' (Wenger 2008) provides a richer socialized explanation of how mealtime occupations occur over time regardless of who is providing the perspective. Thus, I suggest examining recurrent occupations that occur through a specific community be studied and labeled as practices instead of routines when applicable.

Studying similar occupations in different settings. This study highlights the variances between how children engage in mealtime occupations in different settings including time of day, how they socialize with peers versus family members while eating, and the time allotted for each meal (e.g., a hasty 25-minute lunch with about 15 minutes provided to eat compared to dinners that provide 20-45 minutes to consume dinner). Furthermore, the consultants' mealtime occupations can be considered social occupations due the constant presence of others. Thus, the variations between the home and school communities that also have their own list of social expectations related to mealtime underscore how mealtime is influenced and conducted differently in each setting. Since many daily occupations occur in different settings (e.g., getting dressed at home compared to gym class at school, toileting, washing hands) it would be beneficial to examine how people engage in other occupations differently across more than one setting, especially when these occupations can be completed alone or in the presence of others. The social and environmental differences across settings can drastically change how an occupation is experienced; yet there is no other research on this topic.

The idea of mealtime occupations versus how they unfold in real time. The consultants suggested that their knowledge or idea of how mealtime occupations occurred in more than one setting was less elaborate than how they actually occurred during my participant observations. My findings support concepts from Pierce's (2001) work on activity and occupation. Without getting into specific definitions, semantics, or differences between activity and occupation that her article also discussed, here I emphasize Pierce's (2001) point about the stark differences between the idea of an occupation (e.g., the sequence and framework of how it unfolds) compared to how situated the occupations are as they

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actually occur in-the-moment during a given time of day in a given setting. For example, the consultants described a procedural sequence and framework from which they understood mealtime events to occur at school and home. But, there was so much more to how the scenes unfolded on a given day during my participant observations. The occupations included several micro-moments that highlighted social connections as the consultants ate their meal. Therefore, it is important to note that it is common for children and adults (according to Pierce, 2001) to use their idea (or streamlined framework) of how occupations occur to describe them to others. Comparatively, they experience more nuanced, complex, and situationally-based versions of this description of occupation. For researchers, this suggests that using participant observation and ethnographic methods is critical when seeking to understand occupations more in-depth. For occupational therapists, this suggests that the description that the client provides about how they engage in occupations could vary from their generalized description.

Contributions to Occupational Therapy

Hocking (2009) called for more OS research relating to thorough descriptions of human occupations. Hocking (2009) defended her argument of needing more research on occupations by listing their potential benefits that could help contribute to OS and OT literature. For example, she suggested that in studying occupations, scientists should demonstrate how social and physical contexts influence occupations. The consultants underscored how different the mealtime occupations were in each setting. They had to navigate diverse communities and situations while successfully engaging in their daily mealtime practices. The mere presence of different communities suggests strong influence on how those mealtime occupations occurred. These findings have implications for occupational therapists who focus on children's mealtime occupations. For example, instead of purely

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focusing on the child and their physical or behavioral concerns with the meal, it is important for occupational therapists to consider the social and physical contexts through which the child eats his/her meal. For therapists working in medical-based settings, this includes the need to travel to the child's home to assess the mealtime set-up and social context at home. Therefore, including the parent in the feeding session can highlight some positive or negative behaviors that the child and the parent use during mealtime. For therapists working in schools, it is important to have the child eat with his/her friends and to encourage social interaction while addressing mealtime goals.

Generating more research about occupations in-depth has implications to inform occupational therapists of how some groups of people perceive and experience occupation. It also provides a richer understanding of how occupations occur for occupational scientists.

This will also inform occupational therapists' clinical knowledge about how particular populations might 'do' a particular occupation

Consultants' Role and Power in Research

I considered the challenges posed by conducting ethnography with children including the various aspects of power differences between the researcher and the child collaborators in this study (e.g. generational, environmental, ethical, reflexive, and analytical). Below I present a mix of my experiences in the study and literature about power and conducting research with children.

Generational power. One of the first and potentially most obvious differences in power is the generational difference (Christensen, 2004), where in many communities and cultures children are considered subordinate and powerless and are expected to listen to adults (Corsaro, 2015; Tisdall, Davis, & Gallagher, 2009). Therefore, I was hoping to either elevate their power and voice within the study, or perhaps decrease the perception of my

power through observing, acting more like a child (e.g. sharing food) and waiting for them to talk to me so that the consultants and I would appear closer to equals. As having almost equal power, my hope was to gain even more understanding about how the consultants engage with others, especially with the added confidence in knowing that their contribution to the study was important.

On one or two occasions, after my encouragement, one consultant suggested questions for me to ask to the other consultants (e.g. what's their favorite food); however, most of the time the consultants waited to answer the questions that I asked them. To some degree, there was some comfort with my presence where the consultants played in the lunchroom and carried on as if I were a peer eating at their lunch table. They trusted that I would not get them into trouble for acting out. Kat enjoyed having someone (me) to talk to about whatever she wanted without judgment. This built our rapport and her confidence when we were recording our conversations. Finally, my presence and attention to a particular consultant (e.g. Candace) appeared to elevate their social status on the given day that I ate with them, which seemed to assist with improving their confidence in interacting with me. In sum, I was measuring their power more through their actions than their words.

One factor that seemed to increase my power (and remove power from the consultants) was the teachers' perception of my relationship with the consultants versus the consultants' perception of our relationship. For example, I was juggling the teachers' perception of my presence, which was that any additional pair of adult eyes helped to keep order in the lunchroom, thus affirming that I was not a peer to their student in the cafeteria. On occasion, the teachers asked me to keep an 'eye' on their class if they stepped out to use the restroom. Since I wanted to keep a positive relationship with the teachers, I agreed to this

role. However, it caused me to switch roles from a peer in the lunchroom to a teacher's aide, which made it more apparent that I was in fact an adult attempting to pose as a peer and could switch roles without the consultants knowing. While it was obvious that I was an adult sitting with school children, I built a trust with the consultants that I would not get them in trouble with the teacher if I noticed them not following the rules. However, when I was in this teacher's aide role, I felt that I broke this trust.

Environmental power. There are also palpable differences in the amount of power children have in different social and environmental contexts, which can affect what the children say, and how they say it, and what the children do (Graue & Walsh, 1998; Punch, 2002;). For example, in some households, children are not to speak unless spoken to and are taught (or learn) to provide answers or conversation that pleases the adults. This is different from school, where some teachers encourage children to speak up in class and where they create their own social rules and boundaries at lunch and recess while being surrounded by peers (Corsaro, 2015; Nukaga, 2008; Thorne, 2005). These environmental factors deterred the consultants and me from having closer to equal power in the study. For example, the consultants quickly adopted the habit of calling me 'Ms. Ashley,' even though I attempted to correct them multiple times to 'Ashley'. Their experience in interacting with adults included adding a prefix to my name, which seemed to increase my power. Also, throughout the study, part of what the consultants learned about navigating their world was that they were used to not having power or say-so in what they should be doing during mealtime (or the other parts of the day that I observed). Instead, they seemed to rely on trusted adults, authority figures and learned social norms provide boundaries of what is expected of them and what they should and should not do. I believe they understood that their position of power of

determining what to do and what not to do (throughout life as a child) was less than adults due to past learned experiences.

Ethical power. Ethically, children are considered a vulnerable population, where it is easy to take advantage of a group of individuals who are used to having less power in many situations involving adults (Christensen, 2004; Lassiter, 2005; Levey, 2009; Punch, 2002). Therefore, it was important for me to inform the parents and the children of the privacy and confidentiality of their conversations and work during the research project (Lassiter, 2005; Levey, 2009;). I found that the consultants, especially Kat and Candace, were focused on this aspect of the study, especially when we recorded our conversations. Candace did not wish to speak about personal discussions she had at lunch with me when we recorded our discussions. Kat was concerned about her brother's privacy about being recorded in the background of our interviews at home. I respected the wishes of both consultants.

Reflexive power. Another challenge regarding power when conducting ethnography with children includes the researcher avoiding the need to impose her/his ideas on the children (Punch, 2002) and being reflexive about those ideas. Since children are experts in their own lives and produce their own culture (Tisdall, Davis, & Gallagher, 2009), it is important for the researcher to learn from children (Jones & Jenkins, 2008). I compare this to other studies where researchers learn about or assume that his/her understanding of their own childhood provides them with enough insight to understand the child consultant's perspective (Punch, 2002). Initially unknowingly, I placed my occupational therapist perspective of mealtime on the consultants, often focusing on their actions relating to how they engage in mealtime occupations. I asked them to describe specific actions of what they do during mealtime. Thus, many of my early conversations were requests for the consultants to

describe procedural information, like the data in Chapter 7. Through my initial analysis during data collection, I realized this error and attempted to be more open with the questions I asked about their mealtime experiences, thus learning how the differences in the communities affected their mealtime experiences.

Analytical power. Finally, the power of the analysis and interpretation of a research project ultimately lies within the researcher (Punch, 2002). Therefore, when collaborating with children it is important that they understand how the researcher analyzes and interprets the findings from gathering the data. Thus, prior to wrapping up data collection, I asked the consultants to weigh in on my initial analysis and interpretation of their mealtime experiences and activities through presenting general themes. I read the consultants a statement and asked them to tell me whether they though it was true or false based on their experiences and to explain their answer. This appeared to work well with the consultants as they took this job seriously and corrected me when what I suggested did not completely coincide with what they thought.

While I intended the consultants to have close to equal power to me in this study, I learned how difficult this was to achieve as I moved through the day with the consultants. In raising their power as close to equal to me, an adult researcher, this went against everything they knew about most child and adult relationships. In hindsight, I would have encouraged them to call me by my first name more often, possibly engaged in play with them during recess (if they allowed it), possibly play more during our interviews to initiate more conversation rather than question and answer, and attempted to communicate to them how important their voice in research can be. However, even those suggestions might not have made much difference. I would have to create consistent experiences where the power was

close to equal so that the consultants could construct their 'new' meaning of power within our relationship, much like they co-constructed meanings from consistent experiences during mealtime activities.

Limitations

There were limitations to my study. I conducted all data gathering and analysis. Therefore, while I worked hard to underscore the consultants' perspective, the analysis and interpretation still reflect my perception of their mealtime experiences. I would have liked to enroll more consultants from more diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and with different food preferences within the same school district. Due to time constraints, this was not possible. While I had four primary consultants enrolled in my study, the consultants' school peers added to the depth of understanding mealtime from the children's perspective by acting mostly like themselves during my participant observation.

Additionally, I was not living in Three Streams while I gathered data. Thus, spending additional time in the community for events and holidays could have provided a deeper understanding to how the consultants and their families were situated in this particular time period. Finally, it is important to note that the actions and behaviors I observed might have been enhanced for my benefit. For example, the consultants and families displayed healthy eating and good manners with smiling faces at home. Although I discovered when I was not present, siblings were more likely to bicker. At school, I noticed some students tried to get my attention before they engaged in an action to impress their peers (and me). While I am sure this occurred when I was absent, my presence may have increased these showing off behaviors.

Future Directions and Implications for Research

While I learned how four middle class children from North Carolina experience and engage in mealtime activities at home and school, I am curious if the emphasis on social interaction and exercising their agency during mealtime is similar in other child populations. For example, I am interested in examining mealtime experiences in children who have physical disabilities and have difficulty feeding themselves; mealtime experiences of children with autism and their feeding difficulties; children with food allergies; and rural children living in low-income families and their mealtime experiences in either one or both settings of home and school. A fourth potential area of research is to examine the mealtime practices of children living with different family constellations such as a single parent and no siblings. In using Candace and her family mealtime practices as the example, I would like to look more in depth at how this group of children experience family mealtime and compare it to Candace's experiences of eating by herself in front of the television. Is this the norm or is this specific to Candace and Nana? Finally, I would like to examine breakfast in participant observations with families to further examine and compare how dynamic and different they are to lunch and dinner.

In understanding how children learn how to engage in healthy mealtime practices, my findings have laid the groundwork to collaborate with researchers in other fields to focus on mealtime through the lens of public health, nutrition, education, disability studies and social work. In sum, I have recognized and embraced the complexity of mealtime occupations and look forward to further understanding how it is perceived and experienced in other child populations.

Conclusion

In navigating different mealtime occupations daily in diverse settings and communities, the consultants were engaging in complex and situationally based mealtime practices that changed over time. They sought to connect with friends and family through participating in mealtime occupations. Essentially, the mealtime occupations were the vehicle to support these social connections. The consultants co-constructed their mealtime practices through continued engagement with others at home and at school. In engaging in mealtime practices, the consultants learned about norms as boundaries to guide their mealtime behaviors while also exercising their agency. While it can be challenging to provide power to children in research when they are not used to having their voices heard, researchers can better understand how children learn cultural practices and activities. Providing children with a voice in research also provides a space for children to exercise their agency. Therefore, my findings stress the following about children's mealtime experiences in different settings:

(1) Social interaction is essential to mealtime

(2) Meals are complex, situationally-based moments imbued with sites of social learning

(3) The consultants learned to exercise a degree of agency to test and press boundaries while engaging with others during mealtime.

Through closely examining the children's experiences with mealtime occupations, I hope I brought attention to where they placed importance on mealtime practices; highlighted the sharp contrast in how they navigated situated mealtime experiences on a daily basis in different settings; and underlined the significance of the children's voice.
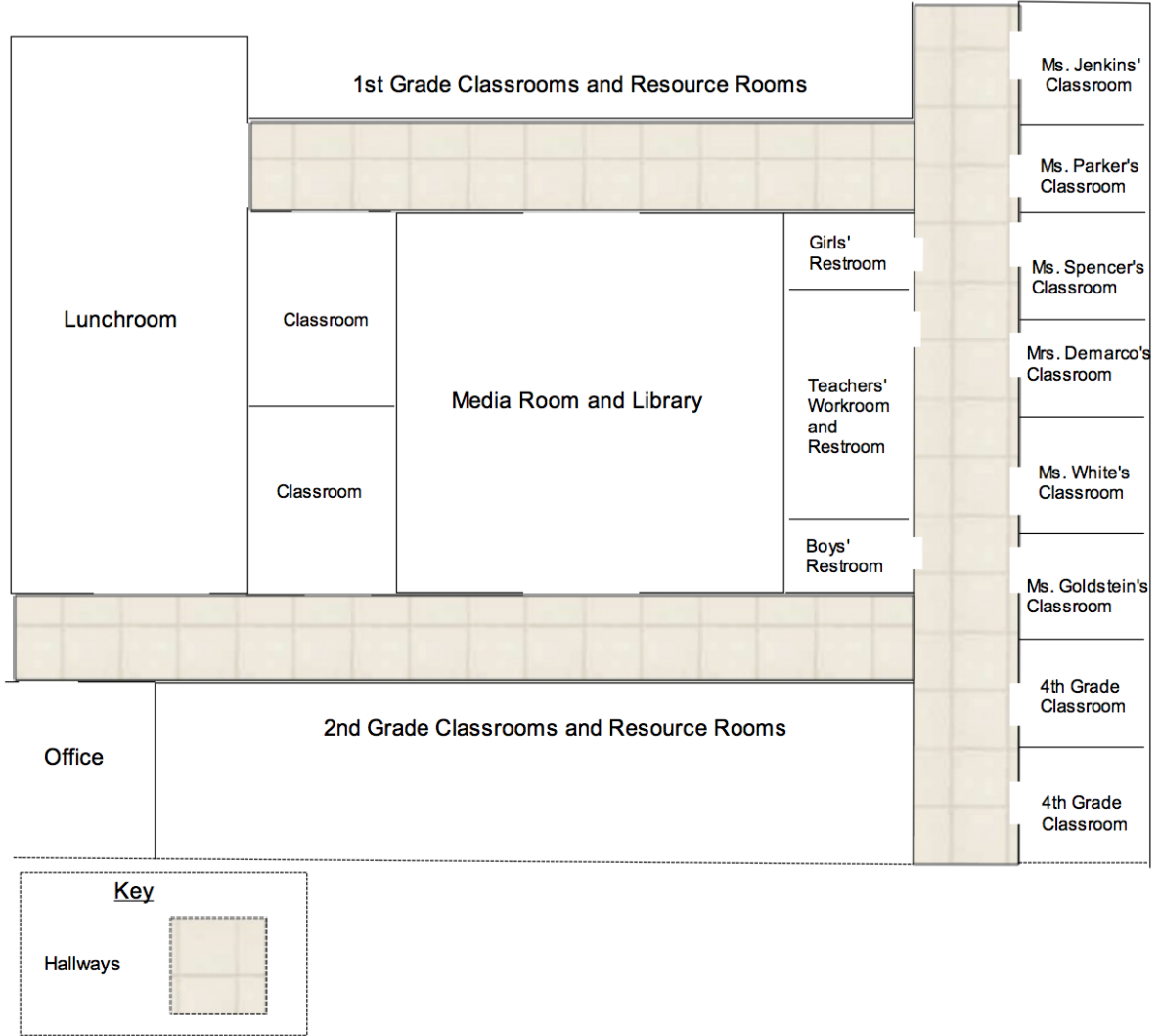
APPENDIX B: MAP OF THREE STREAMS ELEMENTARY LUNCHROOM

Cafeteria Staff Food Serving Area

Key

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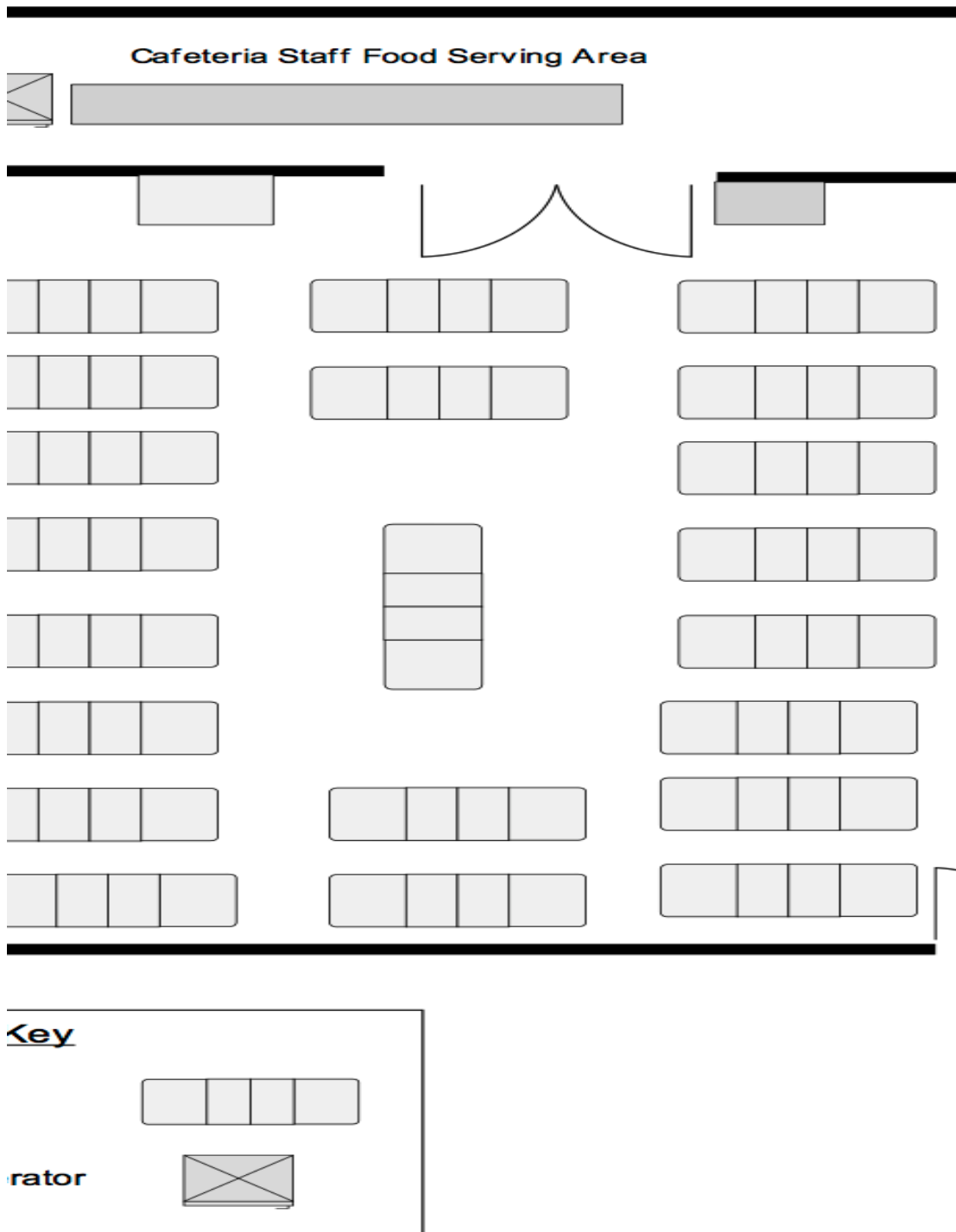
APPENDIX C: CONSULTANT ASSENT FORM

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Assent to Participate in a Research Study
Minor Subjects (7-14 yrs)

Consent Form Version Date: December 7, 2016
IRB Study # 16-1395
Title of Study: Mealtime Experiences and Activities of Children Living in Rural North Carolina (MEAL in NC)
Person in charge of study: Ashley Mason
Where they work at UNC-Chapel Hill: Allied Health Sciences
Other people working on this study: Ruth Humphry and Nancy Bagatell
The people named above are doing a research study.

These are some things we want you to know about research studies:
Your parent needs to give permission for you to be in this study. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to, even if your parent has already given permission.

You may stop being in the study at any time. If you decide to stop, no one will be angry or upset with you.

Sometimes good things happen to people who take part in studies, and sometimes things happen that they may not like. We will tell you more about these things below.

Why are they doing this research study?
The reason for doing this research is to learn more about your experiences and activities relating to food and meals at home and at school.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?
You are invited to participate because you are a third or fourth grader and eat food at home and at school.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of about *eight children* in this research study. Your parents, family members, classmates, teachers, school staff members and some community members will also be asked to be in this research study totaling possibly 1,000 people or more.

What will happen during this study?

- The researcher will observe you doing activities relating to food and meals at home and at school for 0-2 days per week throughout the 2016-2017 school year.
- The researcher will talk to you about the activities you do that has to do with food and meals at home and school at least 12 times during the study. These talks will mostly

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occur during recess or a quiet period at school or after you have eaten at home. They will be recorded using an audio recorder.

- o The researcher will give you a camera to take pictures of activities related to food at home and then will want you to describe those pictures in more detail. (You may keep the pictures once the researcher has scanned them into her computer.)
- o The researcher will also ask you to draw or make 1-2 pictures relating to food and mealtime during the study.
- o There will be at least one follow up interview or talk with you so the researcher makes sure she understood what you told her.
- o The pictures and audio recordings from the talks/interviews will be moved to a password protected laptop and then transcribed. The original recording will be deleted from the recorder once the interview has been moved to the laptop.
- o You may ask the audio recorder to be turned off if you feel uncomfortable.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me during the study

_____ Not OK to record me during the study

- o The photos of food related activities at home will be developed and scanned to a password protected laptop. Once the photos are scanned into the laptop, the hard copies will either be given to you or shredded and thrown away.
- o You may ask not to use photos of you in the study if you feel uncomfortable.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

____ OK to use photos of me during the study

____ Not OK to use photos of me during the study

This study will take place at *school and at home* and will last from August 2016-June 2017.

Who will be told the things we learn about you in this study?
We will not tell anyone what you tell us without your permission unless there is something that could be dangerous to you or someone else. For example if you tell the researcher about something that has happened or will happened that could hurt someone else, the researcher can tell your parent or teacher. Otherwise, the researcher will not tell your parent or teacher the information you gave. Also, to protect who you are, a false name will be given in the place of your actual name. You may make up this name or a name can be created for you.

What are the good things that might happen?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. There is little chance you will benefit from being in this research study.

What are the bad things that might happen?

Sometimes things happen to people in research studies that may make them feel bad. These are called 'risks.' These are the risks of this study: You might feel embarrassed or distressed with the researcher observing you. Not all of these things may happen to you. None of them may happen or things may happen that the researchers don't know about. You should report any problems to the researcher.

Will you get any money or gifts for being in this research study?

You will be receiving school supplies (such as pencils, erasers, notebooks and stickers) for taking part in this study. You will receive half of the supplies half way through the study (after about 5 observations at school and 1-2 at home with at least 2-3 interviews). You will receive the other half of the school supplies at the end of the study at the follow up interview.

Who should you ask if you have any questions?

If you have questions you should ask the people listed on the first page of this form. If you have other questions, complaints or concerns about your rights while you are in this research study you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

If you sign your name below, it means that you agree to take part in this research study.

_____ _____
Sign your name here if you want to be in the study   Date

_____
Print your name here if you want to be in the study

_____ _____
Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Assent   Date

_____
Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Assent

<center>APPENDIX D: SIBLING ASSENT FORM</center>

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Assent to Participate in a Research Study
Minor Subjects (7-14 yrs) Sibling

Consent Form Version Date: December 7, 2016
IRB Study # 16-1395
Title of Study: Mealtime Experiences and Activities of Children Living in Rural North Carolina (MEAL in NC)
Person in charge of study: Ashley Mason
Where they work at UNC-Chapel Hill: Allied Health Sciences
Other people working on this study: Ruth Humphry and Nancy Bagatell

The people named above are doing a research study.

These are some things we want you to know about research studies:
Your parent needs to give permission for you to be in this study. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to, even if your parent has already given permission.

You may stop being in the study at any time. If you decide to stop, no one will be angry or upset with you.

Sometimes good things happen to people who take part in studies, and sometimes things happen that they may not like. We will tell you more about these things below.

Why are they doing this research study?
The reason for doing this research is to learn more about your sibling's experiences and activities relating to food and meals at home and at school.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?
You are invited to participate because you are a sibling of a third or fourth grader and eat food at home and at school with that third grader.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of about *twelve siblings* in this research study. Your parents, family members, classmates, teachers, school staff members and some community members will also be asked to be in this research study totaling possibly 1,000 people or more.

What will happen during this study?

- o The researcher will observe you with your third or fourth grade sibling doing activities relating to food and meals at home for 4-7 times throughout the 2016-2017 school year.

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- The researcher might talk to you about the activities you do that has to do with food and meals at home. They will be recorded using an audio recorder.
- The researcher will give your sibling a camera to take pictures of activities related to food at home and then will want your sibling to describe those pictures in more detail. (You may keep the pictures once the researcher has scanned them into her computer.)
- There will be at least one follow up interview or talk with you so the researcher makes sure she understood what you told her.
- The pictures and audio recordings from the talks/interviews will be moved to a password protected laptop and then transcribed. The original recording will be deleted from the recorder once the interview has been moved to the laptop.
- You may ask the audio recorder to be turned off if you feel uncomfortable.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me during the study

_____ Not OK to record me during the study

- The photos of food related activities at home will be developed and scanned to a password protected laptop. Once the photos are scanned into the laptop, the hard copies will either be given to you or shredded and thrown away.
- You may ask not to use photos of you in the study if you feel uncomfortable.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to use photos of me during the study

_____ Not OK to use photos of me during the study

This study will take place at *school and at home* and will last from August 2016-June 2017.

Who will be told the things we learn about you in this study?
We will not tell anyone what you tell us without your permission unless there is something that could be dangerous to you or someone else. For example if you tell the researcher about something that has happened or will happened that could hurt someone else, the researcher can tell your parent. Otherwise, the researcher will not tell your parent the information you gave. Also, to protect who you are, a false name will be given in the place of your actual name. You may make up this name or a name can be created for you.

What are the good things that might happen?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. There is little chance you will benefit from being in this research study.

What are the bad things that might happen?
Sometimes things happen to people in research studies that may make them feel bad. These are called 'risks.' These are the risks of this study: You might feel embarrassed or distressed with the researcher observing you.

Not all of these things may happen to you. None of them may happen or things may happen that the researchers don't know about. You should report any problems to the researcher.

Who should you ask if you have any questions?
If you have questions you should ask the people listed on the first page of this form. If you have other questions, complaints or concerns about your rights while you are in this research study you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

If you sign your name below, it means that you agree to take part in this research study.

_____   _____
Sign your name here if you want to be in the study   Date

_____
Print your name here if you want to be in the study

_____   _____
Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Assent   Date

_____
Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining
Assent

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Parental Consent and Permission for a Minor Child to Participate in a Research Study

Consent Form Version Date: December 7, 2016
IRB Study # 16-1395
Title of Study: Mealtime Experiences and Activities of Children Living in Rural North Carolina (MEAL in NC)
Principal Investigator: Ashley Mason
Principal Investigator Department: Allied Health Sciences
Principal Investigator Phone number: 570-574-9006
Principal Investigator Email Address: ashley_mason@med.unc.edu
Faculty Advisor: Ruth Humphry
Faculty Advisor Contact Information: (919) 966-2452

_____

What are some general things you and you child should know about research studies?
You are being asked to allow your child and you to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary.
You may refuse to give permission, or you may withdraw your permission for your child to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty. Even if you give your permission, your child can decide not to be in the study or to leave the study early.

Also, you may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You and your child may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you and your child understand this information so that you and your child can make an informed choice about being in this research study.
You will be given a copy of this consent and permission form. You and your child should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to learn more about how children perceive mealtimes and food-related activities, as well as what types of activities they are involved in or expected to do in relation to mealtimes at school and at home. This study will be viewed through the lens of an occupational therapist in order to gain more knowledge about how food and meals in the schools and at home intersect.

Your child is being asked to be in the study because he/she is a third or fourth grader and eats food at home and at school. You are being asked to be in the study because you are a family member or caregiver of one of the child participants.

Are there any reasons you or your child should not be in this study?
Your child should not be in this study if he/she cannot follow 2 step directions or carry on a conversation. You should not be in this study if you do not live within the Efland-Cheeks Elementary community or if you do not speak English.

How many people will take part in this study?
There will be about 8 children and their family members as well as their school peers, teachers, school staff and possibly additional community members as it relates to food and meals of your child. A total of at least 700 people or more may be involved in the study directly or indirectly.

How long will your child's part in this study last?
You and your child's active involvement will be between August 2016 – June 2017. The expected time for your child's involvement includes about 20 observations with 9-12 interviews at school and 4-7 observations with interviews in your home or where you typically eat with the child participant. Each observation can last between 30-90 minutes. Additionally the home interviews with you and the child participant can last for 20-60 minutes each for a total of approximately 1-3 hours per home visit and a total of 45-60 minutes per school visit.

The expected time for your involvement includes approximately 4-7 observations with interviews in your home or where you typically eat with the child participant.

There will be at least 1 follow-up interview after observations and interviews have been completed occurring in March-June 2017.

What will happen if your child takes part in the study?

- *Overall design*:
    - Your child will be observed during the activities your child does relating to eating and/or mealtime as they typically happen on a day-to-day basis at home and at school. This will occur at least 24 total times and is a requirement for the study.
    - The researcher will interview your child after he/she has eaten and finished any type of activities related to eating. This is a requirement for the study.
    - At school, the researcher will interview your child during recess or other times that do not interfere with schoolwork.
    - At home, the researcher will interview your child in a room of you and your child's choosing in your home.
    - All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed electronically.
    - The researcher will provide your child with a disposable camera and ask your child to take pictures related to family meals and food. The researcher will

then interview your child and you about the pictures taken. This is a requirement for the study.
- o The researcher will also ask your child to draw or make 1-2 pictures related to food or meals during the study.
- o During any of the interviews your child may choose not to answer a question for any reason.
- o There will be at least one follow-up interview so the researcher can make sure she has interpreted what your child has told her correctly.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

- o You, your child and other family members will be observed during the activities your child does relating to eating and/or mealtime as they typically happen on a day-to-day basis. This will occur 4-7 times and is a requirement for the study.
- o The researcher will interview you at least 2 or 3 times after the child has eaten about food experiences at home with family. This is a requirement for the study.
- o All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed electronically.
- o During any of the interviews you may choose not to answer a question for any reason.
- o There will be at least one follow-up interview so the researcher can make sure she has interpreted what you have told her correctly.
- o You will receive a $50 gift card after 2 home observations and your child takes the pictures relating to meals and food. You will receive a second gift card for $75 at the follow-up interview.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. There is little chance you or your child will benefit from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

During the observations and interviews, your child may experience embarrassment or emotional distress from being singled out by a researcher. The researcher will make sure the interviews take place in a quiet, private room. The researcher will not include any information the child feels embarrassed about. Also, the observations may cause embarrassment or discomfort. The researcher will not include anything from the observations or interviews that you do not feel comfortable with. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher.

What if we learn about new findings or information during the study?
You and your child will be given any new information gained during the course of the study that might affect your willingness to continue your child's participation in the study.

How will information about you and your child be protected?

- The handwritten and hard copy information from the researcher's observations will be stored in a locked box. The electronic information and other notes will be stored on a password protected laptop. All electronic files will also be stored on an electronic hard drive and locked in a secured location.
- The researcher and her advisor will have access to individually identifiable data.
- Your name and your child's name will be replaced with another name (you and your child may either choose your own name or a name can be chosen for you) to protect your identity. The linkage file containing your name (and your child's name) and the false name will be saved on a password protected laptop. Whether names or ID numbers will be used (if codes or numbers are assigned, describe how the linkage file will be secured).

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your child's information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies (for example, the FDA) for purposes such as quality control or safety.

- The audio recordings will be transferred to a password protected laptop and transcribed on that password protected laptop. Once the audio recordings from the interviews are transferred to the laptop, they will be deleted from the recording device.
- A backup copy of the audio recording and transcription will also be transferred to an external hard drive. These copies will remain on the password protected laptop and/or the external hard drive for 2 years. Then these copies will be deleted from all sources. The only remaining copies of the audio recordings will be the transcriptions with the false names applied to the interview after those 2 years have passed.
- Audio recordings may be requested to be turned off.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me and my child during the study

_____ Not OK to record me and my child during the study

- The photos of food related activities at home will be developed and scanned to a password protected laptop. Once the photos are scanned into the laptop, the hard copies will either be given to you and your family or shredded and thrown away.
- A backup copy of the photos will also be transferred to an external hard drive. These copies will remain on the password protected laptop and/or the external hard drive for

2 years. Then these copies will be deleted from all sources. The only remaining copies of the photos will be the scanned copies after those 2 years have passed.
- o Photos of family members' faces may be requested to either be obscured or not to be used.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

____ OK to use photos of me during the study   _____ OK to use photos of my child
                                                           during the study

____ Not OK to use photos of me during the study   _____Not OK to use photos of my child
                                                           during the study

What if you or your child wants to stop before your child's part in the study is complete?
You can withdraw your child and yourself from this study at any time, without penalty. The investigators also have the right to stop you and/or your child's participation at any time. This could be because you and/or your child has had an unexpected reaction, or has failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped.

Will your child and you receive anything for being in this study?
Your child will receive a total of $30 in school supplies for being in this study. Your child will receive $15 in school supplies (such as pencils, markers, notebooks, stickers) after 10 observations in school, 2 observations at home, at least 5 interviews and has taken the pictures of food related activities at home. Your child will receive an additional $15 school supplies at the final follow up interview following the additional observations and interviews. If your child completes half the study and then withdraws from the study, your child will be compensated with the first $15 in school supplies, but not the second $15 in school supplies. If your child withdraws from the study before the halfway point in the study, he/she will not receive any gift cards.

You (and your family) will be receiving 2 gift cards for taking part in this study. You will receive 1 $50 gift card after 2 observations and 1-2 interviews. You will receive an additional $75 gift card at the final follow up interview following the additional observations and interviews. If you complete half the study and then withdraw from the study, you will be compensated with the $50 gift card, but not the $75 gift card. If you withdraw from the study before the halfway point in the study, you will not receive any gift cards.

Will it cost you anything for your child to be in this study?
It will not cost anything to be in this study.

What if you or your child has questions about this study?
You and your child have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If there are questions about the study (including payments), complaints, concerns, or if a research-related injury occurs, contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form**.**

<u>What if there are questions about you or your child's rights as research participants?</u>
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect you and your child's rights and welfare. If there are questions or concerns about you or your child's rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Parent's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily give permission to allow my child to participate in this research study. I also voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____
Printed Name of Research Participant (child)

_____ _____
Signature of Parent/Participant   Date

_____
Printed Name of Parent/Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Permission   Date

_____
Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Permission

Family Member/Adult Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Consent Form Version Date: December 7, 2016
IRB Study # 16-1395
Title of Study: Mealtime Experiences and Activities of Children Living in Rural North Carolina (MEAL in NC)
Principal Investigator: Ashley Mason
Principal Investigator Department: Allied Health Sciences
Principal Investigator Phone number: 570-574-9006
Principal Investigator Email Address: ashley_mason@med.unc.edu
Faculty Advisor: Ruth Humphry
Faculty Advisor Contact Information: (919) 966-2452

_____

What are some general things you and you child should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You and your child may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to learn more about how children perceive mealtimes and food-related activities, as well as what types of activities they are involved in or expected to do in relation to mealtimes at school and at home. This study will be viewed through the lens of an occupational therapist in order to gain more knowledge about how food and meals in the schools and at home intersect.

Your child family member/friend is being asked to be in the study because he/she is a third or fourth grader and eats food at home and at school. You are being asked to be in the study because you are a family member or caregiver of one of the child participants.

Are there any reasons you should not be in this study?
You should not be in this study if you do not live within the Efland-Cheeks Elementary community or if you do not speak English.

How many people will take part in this study?
There will be about 8 children and their family members as well as their school peers, teachers, school staff and possibly additional community members as it relates to food and meals of your third grader. A total of at least 600 people or more may be involved in the study directly or indirectly.

How long will your part in this study last?
Your active involvement will be between August 2016 – June 2017. The expected time for your involvement includes approximately 4-7 observations with interviews in your home or where you typically eat with the child participant. The home observations can last for 30-60 minutes. The home interviews with you and the child participant can last for 20-60 minutes each for a total of approximately 1-3 hours per home visit.

There will be at least 1 follow-up interview after observations and interviews have been completed occurring in March-June 2017.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

- You, the child participant and other family members will be observed during the activities the child participant does relating to eating and/or mealtime as they typically happen on a day-to-day basis. This will occur 4-7 times and is a requirement for the study.
- The researcher might interview you between 1-3 times after the child has eaten about food experiences at home with family. This is a requirement for the study.
- The researcher will provide the child participant with a disposable camera and ask him/her to take pictures related to family meals and food. The researcher will then interview the child participant and possibly you about the pictures taken. This is a requirement for the study.
- All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed electronically.
- During any of the interviews you may choose not to answer a question for any reason.
- There will be at least one follow-up interview so the researcher can make sure she has interpreted what you have told her correctly.
- The parent signing the permission form for the child participant will receive a $50 gift card for your household after 2 home observations and the child takes the pictures relating to meals and food. The parent will receive a second gift card for $75 for your household at the follow-up interview.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. There is little chance you will benefit from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
The observations may cause embarrassment or discomfort. The researcher will not include anything from the observations or interviews that you do not feel comfortable with. There

may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher.

What if we learn about new findings or information during the study?
You will be given any new information gained during the course of the study that might affect your willingness to continue your child's participation in the study.

How will information about you be protected?

- The handwritten and hard copy information from the researcher's observations will be stored in a locked box. The electronic information and other notes will be stored on a password protected laptop. All electronic files will also be stored on an electronic hard drive and locked in a secured location.
- The researcher and her advisor will have access to individually identifiable data.
- Your name will be replaced with another name (you may either choose your own name or a name can be chosen for you) to protect your identity. The linkage file containing your name and the false name will be saved on a password protected laptop. Whether names or ID numbers will be used (if codes or numbers are assigned, describe how the linkage file will be secured).

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your child's information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies (for example, the FDA) for purposes such as quality control or safety.

- The audio recordings will be transferred to a password protected laptop and transcribed on that password protected laptop. Once the audio recordings from the interviews are transferred to the laptop, they will be deleted from the recording device.
- A backup copy of the audio recording and transcription will also be transferred to an external hard drive. These copies will remain on the password protected laptop and/or the external hard drive for 2 years. Then these copies will be deleted from all sources. The only remaining copies of the audio recordings will be the transcriptions with the false names applied to the interview after those 2 years have passed.
- Audio recordings may be requested to be turned off.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me during the study

_____ Not OK to record me during the study

- o The photos of food related activities at home will be developed and scanned to a password protected laptop. Once the photos are scanned into the laptop, the hard copies will either be given to you and your family or shredded and thrown away.
- o A backup copy of the photos will also be transferred to an external hard drive. These copies will remain on the password protected laptop and/or the external hard drive for 2 years. Then these copies will be deleted from all sources. The only remaining copies of the photos will be the scanned copies after those 2 years have passed.
- o Photos of family members' faces may be requested to either be obscured or not to be used.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to use photos of me during the study

_____ Not OK to use photos of me during the study

What if you want to stop before the child's part in the study is complete?
You can withdraw your child and yourself from this study at any time, without penalty. The investigators also have the right to stop you and/or your child's participation at any time. This could be because you and/or your child has had an unexpected reaction, or has failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
The parent signing the permission and consent form for the child participant will be receiving 2 gift cards for the household for taking part in this study. The first $50 gift card will be provided after 2 home observations and 1-2 interviews with at least one adult family member. An additional $75 gift card will be provided at the final follow up interview following the additional observations and interviews. If you withdraw from the study before the halfway point in the study, your household will still receive the gift cards as long as the parent signing the permission and consent form is still participating in the study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
It will not cost anything to be in this study.

What if you have questions about this study?
You and your child have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If there are questions about the study (including payments), complaints, concerns, or if a research-related injury occurs, contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form**.**

What if there are questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your child's rights and welfare. If there are questions or concerns about your child's rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Parent's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily give permission to allow my child to participate in this research study. I also voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____
Printed Name of Research Participant (child)

_____ _____
Signature of Parent/Participant   Date

_____
Printed Name of Parent/Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Permission   Date

_____
Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Permission

APPENDIX G: PARTICIPATION OBSERVATION GUIDE

My specific responsibilities include:
- to observe collaborators as they engage in activities that might occur in much the same way if I was not present
- to engage to some extent in the activities taking place, in order to better understand the collaborators' perspective or so as not to call attention to myself
- to identify and develop relationships with key informants and stakeholders
- to interact with people socially outside of a controlled environment, at a community or school event, at school or at the child's home

Categories	Components	To Note
Appearance	Physical appearance, clothing, age, gender,	Anything that might indicate membership in groups of interest to the study, such as social status, socioeconomic class, religion, or ethnicity
Language and Interactions	Who speaks to whom and for how long; who initiates interaction; languages or dialects spoken; tone of voice	Gender, age, ethnicity; dynamics of interaction
Physical Behavior	What people do, who does what, who interacts with whom, who is not interacting	How people use their bodies and voices to communicate; what individuals' behaviors indicate about their feelings toward one another or their social rank
Personal Space	How close people stand to one another; how close caregivers stand or sit near their children	What individuals' preferences concerning personal space suggest about their relationships
Physical Space	Sizes of rooms, distance to walk to desired destinations, physical layout of the observation sites	What objects are found in rooms, social spaces, and the around the observation sites. Are spaces conducive the activities performed in them?
Human Traffic	People who enter, leave, and spend time at the observation sites	Where people enter and exit; how long they stay; who they are (ethnicity, age, gender); whether they are alone or accompanied; number of people
Notable Behaviors	Identification of people who receive a lot of attention from others	The characteristics of these individuals; what differentiates them from others; whether people consult them or they approach other people; whether they seem to be strangers or well known by others present

Adapted from: https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/documents/ParticipantObservationFieldGuide.pdf
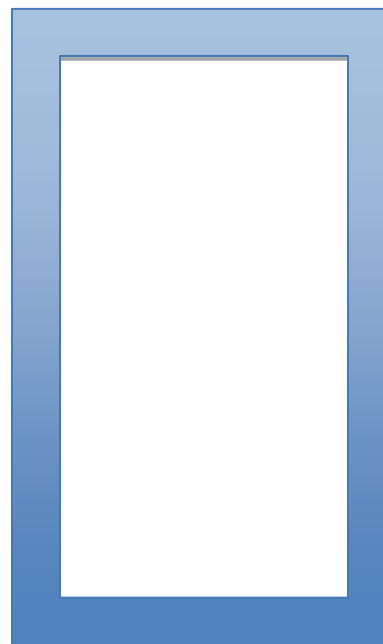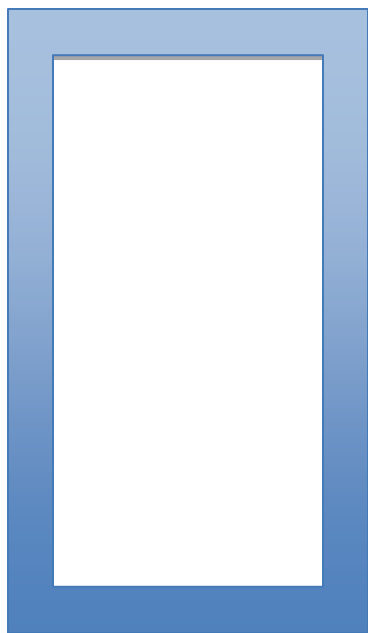
Observation Sample 2
Where the child participants eat at the lunch table in reference to their peers   Date_____

Names of children participants observed this date:
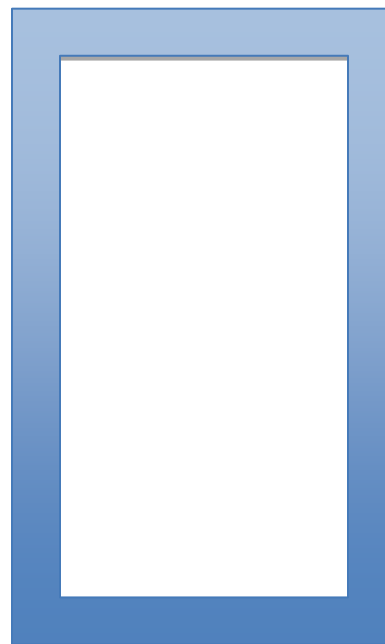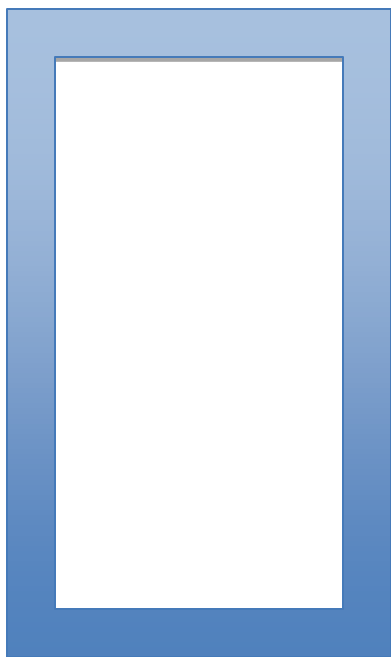_____
_____

Tables in cafeteria

Standardized Observation Sample 3
Whom the child participants interact with at the lunch table in reference to their peers   Date_____

Names of children participants observed this date: _____
_____

Number of times child interacts with certain peers:_____

APPENDIX H: SAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Formal Interview Guide Child Sample School

- Tell me about yourself?
    - How old are you?
    - What do you like to do?

- What would you like to know about me?

- Tell be about today's lunch at school starting with just before your teacher asked you to get in line for lunch?

- What do you like about lunchtime at school? Why?
    - How does that make you feel?

- What do you dislike about lunchtime at school? Why?
    - How does that make you feel?

- Please describe what you ate for lunch today – what did you like about it?
    - Do you get to choose what you eat for lunch?
    - Lunch box versus school lunch?
    - How do you choose?

(I would summarize the information addressed during interview next.)

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about today's lunch?

Interview Guide for Children at Home

- What is your favorite food to eat at home?

- Who typically makes it?

- How to they make it? Do you help?

- Does this person make all your food? Do you ever make food?

- Who chooses what you eat?

- When do you usually eat at home?

- What happens with food during the weekend?

****

- How is food typically prepared after school – (e.g. who is in charge?)

- Who cleans up? What do they do?

- Who chooses what you eat?

- When do you eat?

Formal Interview Guide Parent Sample

- Tell me about yourself?
  - What do you?

- What would you like to know about me?

- How was your day?

- Take me through this afternoon and evening's events related to food starting with when (name of child) came home from school.
  - Who was there?
  - What did you eat?
  - Who prepared, served and cleaned-up?

- What do you like about eating at home?
  - Are there things you would change if you could? If so, what are they?

- Are there other places you eat other than home with (name of child)?
  - Where are they?
  - How often do you eat somewhere else with (name of child)?
  - Who is usually there?

- Where do you usually go to get food for your family?
  - How often do you go?
  - Does anyone else go with you? If so, who?
  - What types of foods do you usually look for at the store?

(I would summarize the information addressed during interview next.)

- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

School Staff/Community Member Interview

- Tell me about yourself
  - What do you do?

- What would you like to know about me?

- How was your day?

- How often do you interact with (<u>name of child/children participants</u>)?

- How often do you interact with (<u>name of child</u>) as it pertains to their food or mealtime (either directly or indirectly)?
  - Please describe the activities that you do as it relates to their food or mealtime.
    - Who is there?
    - What do you (and <u>name of child</u>) do with food or meals when you are together?
    - Where does this occur?
    - What time of day does this occur?

(I would summarize the information addressed during interview next.)

- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

APPENDIX I: PHOTO ELICITATION INSTRUCTIONS

Take pictures of things that you and your family do that involves food and meals around breakfast, lunch and/or dinner as it usually happens at home. Examples might include taking pictures of

- You and family members eating food
- The food itself
- Someone making your food before you eat it
- You or a family member cleaning up after a meal
- Your trip to the store to help your family member(s) get food to eat at home

You don't have to take pictures of any or all of the ideas. They are just suggestions to help you get an idea of what to take pictures of.

Please contact Ashley Mason at 570-574-9006 or ashley_mason@med.unc.edu with any questions.

Thanks and enjoy!

APPENDIX J: DRAWING INSTRUCTIONS

Please make 2 drawings.
- One drawing that you think represents mealtime at home.
    - This could be anything. A drawing of food, family members or something else. There is no wrong answer.
- One drawing that you think represents lunchtime at school.
    - This can be anything – a drawing of food, classmates or anything else that you think of with school lunchtime. There is no wrong answer.

Please contact Ashley Mason at 570-574-9006 or ashley_mason@med.unc.edu with any questions.

Thanks and enjoy!

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