

Fall 2012

Organic food consumption and social class : an exploration of food culture at Whitman College

Kyla Novotny Flaten

Penrose Library, Whitman College

Permanent URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/10349/1121>

This thesis has been deposited to Arminda @ Whitman College by the author(s) as part of their degree program. All rights are retained by the author(s) and they are responsible for the content.

ORGANIC FOOD CONSUMPTION AND SOCIAL CLASS:
AN EXPLORATION OF FOOD CULTURE AT WHITMAN COLLEGE

by

Kyla Novotny Flaten

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors
in Sociology-Environmental Studies

Whitman College
2012

Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Kyla Novotny Flaten has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Sociology-Environmental Studies.

Jesse Abrams

Whitman College
May 9, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
Bourdieu and Cultural Consumption.....	4
Weber and Status Groups.....	8
Contemporary Theorists and Examples.....	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	
Industrial Agriculture.....	12
Figure 1.....	13
Alternatives to Industrial Agriculture.....	18
Organic Agriculture.....	18
Organic Marketing and Benefits.....	22
Elitism and the Food Movement.....	24
Research on Consumers.....	27
Access to Food.....	30
Food Deserts.....	30
Certified-Organic, Farmers’ Markets, Community Supported Agriculture.....	31
Implications.....	35
METHODS	
Research Design and Setting.....	36
Participants.....	39

Data Analysis.....	42
Limitations.....	43
Generalizability.....	44
Ethical Considerations.....	45
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	
Socialization in the Home Environment.....	47
Working-Class Students and Bon Appétit Employees.....	48
Food Club Students.....	51
Form and Function.....	53
Whitman Lifestyle.....	55
Socialization at Whitman College.....	55
Good and Bad Foods.....	58
Maintenance of Boundaries.....	60
Performance of a Whitman Lifestyle.....	68
Awareness of Boundaries.....	72
Returning Home.....	75
Parents' Responses.....	76
Practicing Restraint.....	79
CONCLUSION.....	82
Implications for the Food Movement.....	83
Importance of a Food Justice Framework.....	85
References.....	87

Appendix.....	94
Appendix A: Interview Questions for Whitman Students.....	94
Appendix B: Interview Questions for Bon Appétit Employees.....	96

INTRODUCTION

Prior to attending Whitman, I had never thought critically about my own food consumption and its consequences for land and people along the production chain. I have always cherished cooking with my family and appreciated food as more than a material sustenance, but the environmental, social, and economic consequences did not factor into how I viewed food. Entering Whitman allowed me to meet new people and take classes in which I began to understand the hidden reality of the food industry. I quickly adopted strong positive values towards organic and sustainable agriculture and began to shift my own consumption choices and pressure my family to do the same. Food took on a new role for me in that it became a place to project my moral values and try to define my identity as an environmentalist. After taking sociology classes I was able to understand the social implications of consuming certain foods. I started to think more critically about the privilege present in my own life, previously unbeknownst to me. The more I pondered my values, the more I was able to see the connection between my background in an upper-middle class family and the way I saw and valued certain types of food consumption. This thought process was the inspiration for my thesis research and this exploration of social class and food consumption.

In the last several years, I have seen an interest in food issues at Whitman explode, resulting in the formation of numerous food clubs. Concern over food production has been expanding at Whitman and in the United States for a number of valid reasons. Food issues have received increasing attention in the media with the writings of Michael Pollan (2006) and Eric Schlosser (2002) as well as popular movies such as Food

Inc. (2008). These publications have allowed a discourse concerning the problems of the food industry to successfully permeate across college campuses. In addition, industrial agriculture continues to cause incredible social, environmental, and economic harm to land, people, and animals and shows no signs of abating. Because of an expanding awareness of these issues by the public, alternatives to industrial agriculture such as organic and sustainable agriculture continue to expand in size.

In the cultural context of Whitman College, sustainability is an important theme on campus. With an extensive environmental studies department and a number of environmental clubs, it is logical that concerns over the food industry would resonate with the values already present on campus. Bon Appétit, the food service contracted to provide meals at Whitman, makes it a goal to purchase sustainable products and also provides educational resources in the dining halls (Bon Appétit Management Company 2012). At the same time, it is important to consider what groups have the resources to pursue an organic and sustainable lifestyle. Whitman is a unique community, like many small liberal-arts colleges, in the economic make-up of its student body. In fact, 62 percent of current first-year students (out of the 80 percent who completed the survey) self-reported that their family makes more than \$100,000 each year (Cooperative Institutional Research Program First-Year Survey 2011). This indicates that a fairly high proportion of Whitman students come from relatively affluent backgrounds. In addition, out of the 400 students that entered Whitman during the fall of 2011, only 35 were first-generation college students (Whitman College 2012). Because of the high proportion of students from affluent backgrounds and the fact that only a small proportion of students

come from first-generation households and potentially low-income households, it is important to examine the experiences of these students at Whitman and how they relate to this sustainable culture around food.

In this study, I draw primarily on the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu (1984) to investigate the use of organic food consumption as a marker between social class boundaries on the Whitman campus. Through an analysis of in-depth interviews with Whitman students and community members, I explore how food choices represent boundaries between social classes and how these boundaries work to maintain, or not maintain, social class distinctions. Because of the necessity for change in the industrial agricultural system, my research is important as it examines the ways that organic consumption is connected to, and potentially hindered, by issues of social class.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To specifically discuss the relationship between social class boundaries and organic consumption on the Whitman College campus, I utilize the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and Max Weber (1946) to theoretically situate my research. Through a discussion of Bourdieu's research on cultural consumption as well as Weber's discussion of status groups, it will become evident that food choices function as a boundary marker between various social groups. I provide specific examples from Horton's (2003) study within an environmental context to illustrate this pattern in a social setting.

Bourdieu and Cultural Consumption

In *Distinction: The Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Pierre Bourdieu (1984) analyzed a series of surveys conducted in France in the 1960s to examine the relationship between socioeconomic class and various types of consumption. Bourdieu noticed differences between class groups in their preference for certain types of food, dress, art, and other forms of cultural consumption. Bourdieu defined classes based upon their varying levels of economic, social, and cultural capital. By his definition, a class group does not need to have an equal amount of all types of capital but instead might have a larger proportion of one than the others. Social capital refers to social networks and connections, economic capital encompasses monetary resources while cultural capital refers to "legitimate knowledge of various sorts" (Williams 1995:587). Cultural capital is not stable across social contexts but instead varies depending on the social field (Webb,

Schirato, and Danaher 2002). For example, what constitutes cultural capital in a sorority is likely different from cultural capital in an environmental club.

Bourdieu's discussion of class difference in cultural consumption is rooted in his notion of the habitus. The habitus consists of "deeply engrained habits of behavior, feeling and thoughts" that are internalized by individuals through the process of socialization (Lovell 2000:12). The habitus is formed through practice and is not necessarily conscious to the individual (Lovell 2000). Bourdieu (1984a) noted that "different conditions of existence produce different habitus" (874). Being socialized in different levels of economic, social, and cultural capital, the markers of class, allows individuals to develop a specific class-based habitus, which is then expressed through a particular lifestyle. These lifestyles themselves "form around shared tastes" in cultural consumption (Horton 2003:67). The habitus is seen as Bourdieu's means of reconciling the interplay between social structure and an individual's agency as it "interdigitate[s]" the two (Williams 1995:585). In this sense, what seem like completely natural choices, preferences, and behaviors to an individual are actually formed by their location in the social structure (Williams 1995).

Because of his emphasis on the social structure in determining individual tastes and action, Bourdieu is sometimes criticized for portraying individual action as 'oversocialized' in that habitus "suggests no easy freedom to adapt or change the self" (Lovell 2000:31). Change is possible but "it largely tends to occur within rather than outside the compass of the habitus" (Williams 1995:592). This implies that an individual has a small amount of agency over changing their habitus. It is extremely important to

keep this critique in mind as I explore how students' eating preferences changed as they entered the social environment of Whitman College.

Clearly, tastes are formed as a result of an individual's placement in the social structure and consequent habitus. Taste in certain cultural consumption practices, such as food, is thus "a forced choice, produced by conditions of existence which rule out all alternatives as mere daydreams" (Bourdieu 1984a:879). An individual has a taste for a particular food because it was presented to them as natural or appropriate during socialization and engrained into their habitus. Because these tastes feel natural to the individual and are consequently unquestioned, class structures are reproduced without much thought or critique. In essence, "classes reproduce themselves by their internalization of and display of certain tastes, only some of which are marks of distinction" (Williams 1995:590).

Distinction is defined by those with cultural capital and given to those who engage in the correct taste. Certain tastes are given more or less distinction based on their amount of cultural capital. Crotty (1999) wrote: "Those who have more cultural capital—that is, those groups in society who are better able to create notions of 'good taste'—legitimate the forms of consumption to which they have more access" (144). Bourdieu emphasized that people with high economic and cultural capital engage in "practices designated by their rarity as distinguished" while those with low economic and cultural capital have "practices socially identified as vulgar because they are both easy and common" (Bourdieu 1984a:878). Thus, specific tastes become laden with value. Distinction is given to those who display the correct taste in a given social context.

Because of the value placed on certain tastes, food choices are a means of marking boundaries between social classes.

Specifically in the context of food, Bourdieu (1984) saw clear differences between the classes in their emphasis on the form or function of food. As income decreased, the amount of money spent on “heavy, fatty, fattening foods, which are also cheap” increased (Bourdieu 1984a:878-879) while those with higher incomes spent money on “leaner, lighter (more digestible), non-fattening foods” (879). Because the upper classes had more economic capital, their relationship to food “puts the pursuit of strength and substance in the background and identifies true freedom with the elective asceticism of a self-imposed rule” (887). Bourdieu (1984) noted that the upper classes, or bourgeoisie, focused upon how food was served, eaten, and presented rather than the pure material purpose, or function, of the food. The taste of the upper class is far beyond the “taste of necessity” (Bourdieu 1984a:879) as food becomes focused on form rather than function.

Bourdieu related each class’s ideas about food to the way they thought about their bodies. He wrote, “tastes in food also depend on the idea each class has of the body and of the effects of food on the body, that is, on its strength, health and beauty; and on the categories it uses to evaluate these effects” (Bourdieu 1984b:190). For the lower classes, food is a necessity with the purpose of providing health and nourishment for the body while for the upper classes, food can be used as an expression of restraint placed on the body (see also Bell and Valentine 1997). Overall, Bourdieu’s theories emphasize the role

social structure plays in shaping tastes in cultural consumption and maintaining seemingly natural social class boundaries.

Weber and Status Groups

Max Weber's ([1946] 1947) discussion of class and status groups helps broaden a discussion of social class and consumption patterns. For Weber, unlike Bourdieu, a class group is defined based solely on economic factors while status groups incorporate social, cultural and potentially economic aspects as well. Class can inform membership in a status group but it is not the primary driver. Weber (1947) defines a status group as "a plurality of individuals who, within a larger group, enjoy a particular kind and level of prestige by virtue of their position and possibly also claim certain special monopolies" (127). Status groups often are communities, which share the same amounts of honor and esteem. Through enacting particular lifestyles and engaging in certain rituals, status groups distinguish themselves from other groups (Giddens 1971; Weber 1946). Specifically, "a specific *style of life* can be expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle" (Weber 1946:119). Similar to Bourdieu, much of these lifestyles constitute "monopolies" on different forms of consumption (Weber 1947:127). Practicing the cultural consumption of specific objects, including food, can indicate identification with a particular status group.

Weber's (1968) description of open and closed relationships is helpful when considering how boundaries are policed between class and status groups. An open relationship is welcome to anyone while a relationship is closed when "participation of

certain persons is excluded, limited, or subjected to conditions” (Weber 1968:128). Relationships might be closed to reserve benefits of group membership to those involved (Weber 1968). Groups might foster open or closed relationships with non-members and even shift between the two (Weber 1968). Closed relationships function to police outsiders by excluding them from the group. Weber (1968) provides the examples of family relationships as closed and “market relationships” as open (129). This distinction between closed and open relationships is important to keep in mind when analyzing how boundaries marked by food choices are maintained at Whitman. Weber’s (1946, 1968) contribution is especially important because he emphasizes that shared lifestyles are associated with not just class and economic factors but also status group identification.

Contemporary Theorists and Examples

Germov and Williams (1999), more contemporary thinkers, support Bourdieu and Weber’s theories as they emphasize that food choices are a key means of social differentiation, especially in developed areas where food choices are numerous. Specifically, “individuals can construct their self-identity based on particular consumption patterns, particularly the food they choose to eat” (Germov and Williams 1999:7). Food is used as a means to express identification with a particular group or identity as well as maintain boundaries between different groups. Crotty (1999) writes, “food then is perhaps one of the most accessible sites for ‘boundary work’ and can be used to signify class and style. But it can also be used to dominate—common, inexpensive take-aways are undesirable, while Mediterranean cuisine becomes healthy

(145).” Because different food practices become a way to illustrate identification with a certain class or status lifestyle, boundaries between social groups are maintained by the food choices of individuals within and outside those groups.

In an environmental context, Horton (2003) applied Bourdieu’s concepts to his study of the identity performance of environmentalists in England. As “social identity is defined and asserted through difference” (Bourdieu 1984a:874), activists in his study used their consumption choices to distinguish their identity from non-activists (Horton 2003). Boundaries are maintained between activists and others by these consumption choices. By making certain consumption choices, such as buying organic or local food, an activist performs a green identity and earns green distinction through the correct performance. A key aspect of Horton’s discussion is that having a green identity and earning green distinction are all part of a performance in which the proper actions are constantly changing depending on the situation. He used the example of choice in milk to discuss the numerous correct choices depending on the context. There are many milk options ranging from organic to soy to home-delivered and none of them are the perfect choice in every setting; consequently, the performance is constantly changing. An individual feels out of place and uncomfortable when the proper performance does not take place. Horton (2003) illustrated the importance of material choices for boundary maintenance between particular identities as identity is “remade through appropriate performance in order to maintain its credibility to both self and others” (71).

In sum, food choices are a means to construct self-identity as well as maintain boundaries between social groups, including both class and status groups. Within my

thesis I utilize much of the theoretical terminology described above. To be clear, when I use the word “culture” I refer to the norms and values surrounding food consumption at Whitman. With the term “lifestyle” I refer to how this culture is enacted on a day-to-day basis and what tastes are accepted within this culture. In the context of Whitman College, it is crucial to consider how food choices serve to become a part of the Whitman culture and lifestyle and maintain, or not maintain, boundaries between those on the Whitman campus. Before delving into these questions more deeply with my research at Whitman College, I explore the problems of industrial agriculture, the alternatives to this system, as well inequalities in access to food.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE

As industrial agriculture is the primary way that food is produced in the United States, it is important to understand the characteristics of this system as well as its implications for the land, humans, and animals. Understanding these impacts will illuminate the reasons behind the emergence of and necessity for alternatives to the current system. Industrialization of the United States agricultural system “through specialization, standardization, and consolidation of control” began in the late 1800s (Ikerd 2008:25). As agriculture became specialized and consequently more efficient with industrialization, more people were able to move out of farming and into other jobs. These developments were extremely important as “a more efficient agriculture made it possible for this nation to build the strongest economy and the most affluent society in the world” (Ikerd 2008:26). Numerous technological developments allowed for the production of nitrogen fertilizers from an excess of chemicals after World War II, creating an even more productive system (Pollan 2006).

Modern industrial agriculture involves the production of vast monocultures of crops with a heavy use of technology and chemical inputs. This system is also increasingly globalized. Originally beginning in the United States, the “Green Revolution” spread to other parts of the world starting in the 1970s fueled by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Barker 2002). These developments fostered a more globalized food system increasingly reliant on fossil fuels and technology (Barker 2002). This consequently caused many countries to shift to monoculture

production to be used as exports. As a result, industrial agriculture and its numerous negative impacts now permeate the entire globe. Although I will explore the impacts in-depth, a table of the characteristics and negative impacts of industrial agriculture is available below in Figure 1. The third column in Figure 1 describes the response of organic and sustainable agriculture to these problems.

Figure 1: Characteristics and Impacts of Modern Industrial Agriculture and Response of Organic/Sustainable Agriculture

(Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Ikerd 2008; Kimbrell 2002; McKenney 2002; Pollan 2006; Spector 2002)

Industrial Characteristic	Impacts of Industrial Agriculture	Response of organic and sustainable agriculture
Use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers	-Runoff to water sources -Drinking water pollution -Algae blooms -Reliance on fossil fuels	-Use of organic fertilizers (i.e. manure) -Crop rotation for soil productivity
Crop monocultures	-Vulnerability to pests and weather changes -Loss of biodiversity	-Diversified crops
Highly mechanized farming techniques	-Reliance on fossil fuels -Depletion of fertile topsoil	-Labor done by hand
Corporate control and agribusiness structure	-Reduction in small farms -Reduction of rural communities -Less money for individuals farms because of middlemen -Harsh working-conditions; abuse of marginalized (often foreign-born) laborers	-Production on small farms -Direct farm to consumer marketing (i.e. farmers' markets, CSAs)
Globalized structure	-Spread of impacts to other countries -Immense fossil fuels required for transportation	-Local distribution of products

Ikerd (2008) worries that the United States has reached what he calls “the final stage of industrialization—the corporatization of command and control” (35). Ikerd (2008) draws a clear distinction between a farm and an agribusiness, a new structure emerging in the last sixty years. He defines an agribusiness as part of a corporate structure in which agricultural operations are increasingly specialized and managed with the sole focus of maximizing profits. An agribusiness is large in size and seeks to control nature and increase yields through the use of machinery, chemicals, and specialization of production. An increase in the number of large agribusiness farms results in the loss of small farms and consequently, the loss of rural populations (Ikerd 2008). As farmers move out of rural areas, local businesses receive fewer customers causing the local infrastructure and community to suffer. In fact, the number of people who work as farmers is currently below 2 percent in the United States in contrast to 40 percent in 1900 (Ikerd 2008). While this reduction in farmers is not inherently problematic, even farmers who still engage in industrial agriculture production are suffering because of falling prices. As agribusiness has expanded, more of the money that originally went to the farmer has gone to “middlemen for processing, packaging, storage, and distribution” (Spector 2002:289). Specifically, from 1950 to 2002, farm profits decreased by 32% (Spector 2002). Along with impacts to farmers, an additional social issue revolves around the treatment of agricultural workers on industrial farms.

In terms of health and well-being, employers have been known to provide unsafe and unsanitary housing for their workers (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, numerous farm employers were charged with imposing slavery practices on

their workers (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). In addition to their meager wages (Fisher 2002), farm workers are susceptible to becoming ill from contact with pesticides in their work, with around 300,000 workers yearly suffering from “acute pesticide poisoning” (Kimbrell 2002:17). In addition, one-third of the farm workers in the United States are undocumented, rendering them more vulnerable to abuses (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). In summary, farmers, rural communities, and agricultural workers suffer negative consequences because of the rise of agribusiness, low prices for agricultural products, and poor working conditions.

Environmentally, industrial agriculture is dependent on fossil fuels in both the production of fertilizers and the transportation of food (Kimbrell 2002; Pollan 2006). This reliance on fossil fuels is problematic because of the role they play in the perpetuation of climate change as well as their limited availability as the world supply decreases. Intensive machinery, which facilitated the growth of farm size, is dependent on fossil fuels for power. In addition, due to the globalized structure, industrial agriculture involves excessive transportation of food around the world (Kimbrell 2002). Specifically, “the food on an average American’s plate now travels at least 1,300 miles from the field to the dinner table” (Kimbrell 2002:16). The increased transportation of food results in an increase in carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels. The production of nitrogen-based fertilizers involves an immense amount of fossil fuels (Pollan 2006). In fact, “it takes the energy from burning 2,200 pounds of coal to produce 5.5 pounds of usable nitrogen” (McKenney 2002:127). In addition to their dependency on fossil fuels, fertilizers carry other environmental consequences in their application.

The extensive amount of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides used in industrial agriculture creates runoff that infiltrates nearby water sources. In addition to the harm pesticides inflict on birds that visit agricultural fields (Kimbrell 2002), excessive fertilizer in water systems creates algae blooms that kill fish and other organism in the water, essentially wreaking havoc on an ecosystem (Pollan 2006). Pesticide contamination has health impacts on humans as well. Many of the pesticides used in industrial agriculture are known to cause cancer in humans (Kimbrell 2002). In 2002, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recorded “that more than 1 million Americans drink water laced with pesticide runoff from industrial farms” (Kimbrell 2002:11). Similarly, manure from large animal operations, which contains numerous antibiotics and hormones given to the animals, can be released into the water system, causing harm to aquatic organisms as well as humans (Kimbrell 2002). Clearly, industrial agriculture is causing significant damage to humans, animals, and the natural environment.

Critics of industrial agriculture warn that the current productivity of the system will eventually be destroyed because of the use of destructive farming methods (Briscoe 2002; Kimbrell 2002). Loss of topsoil through “the overuse of chemicals and machines” will result in less fertile soil in the future (Kimbrell 2002:16). In addition, there is concern surrounding the reduction of aquifer volume due to excessive irrigation (Briscoe 2002). Irrigation can also lead to salinization of the soil in which salt is left behind after water drains, resulting in less productive land (Briscoe 2002). Due to the widespread use of monocultures, industrial agriculture is more vulnerable to changes in weather, insects, and other forces of nature than are diversified farms (Kimbrell 2002). As insects and

other pests adapt and become resistant to these pesticides, crops will be even more susceptible to damage. Ultimately, industrial agriculture will deplete the health of the soil and water resources and will not be a sustainable farming system for the future.

Extensive research has indicated that industrial agriculture is causing incredible economic, social, and environmental impacts to the people, land, and animals along the production chain. At the same time, the structure of industrial agriculture and the fact that many of the impacts are not factored into the cost allow the price of food to remain relatively low. Despite these benefits, industrial agriculture will not be a sustainable model for the future. As more attention has been drawn to these issues in the last fifty years, an expansion of alternatives to the industrial system has emerged—organic and sustainable agriculture.

ALTERNATIVES TO INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE

This section traces the development of the organic and sustainable agriculture movements as responses to problems created by industrial agriculture. I will explore the development and impacts of industrial organic as well as the current ways organic food is marketed and distributed. Understanding the benefits and critiques of the alternatives to industrial agriculture will set the backdrop to explore the relationship between the food movement and social class.

Organic Agriculture

Organic agriculture practices utilize a variety of methods to ensure soil productivity without the help of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. This can include different types of crop rotation as well as the use of “naturally based organic fertilizers” such as “composted plant materials, composted manures, fishery by-products, blood and bonemeals” (McKenney 2002:128). Figure 1 on page 13 lists the various aspects of the organic philosophy in contrast to industrial agriculture. Although organic agriculture was practiced in the United States prior to the 1960s, a flourishing of the United States organic agriculture movement occurred after the “first great blow to industrial agriculture,” the publishing of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962 which illuminated the health and ecological impacts of DDT and other synthetic chemicals (Sligh 2002:274). By shedding light upon the previously unknown harmful nature of pesticides, Carson raised public awareness surrounding the environmental and human health impacts of chemically intensive agriculture (Sligh 2002). During the end of the 1960s and early

1970s, organic agriculture as a movement became associated with the “back to the land movements” and was “perceived as both fringe and ‘hippie’ farming, if not downright counterculture” (Sligh 2002:273). However, it became more widespread in the 1970s as organic organizations were formed in many states (Sligh 2002). The year 1973 marked the beginning of the California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), “the first certification program in the USA...then a rag-tag group of fifty or so self-proclaimed hippie farmers” (Guthman 2003:47). As the organic movement spread and consumer demand for organic products grew, additional state certification programs were created.

Organic production expanded as many farmers began the “quest for higher-value production” (Guthman 2004:33). While organic products cost more to produce than conventionally grown products because of the greater amount of labor required, the price of organic products still resulted in a higher profit for farmers per acre. Guthman (2003) uses the example of organic salad mix to illustrate the shift of organic as a practice by a small number of farmers to an industrial model of organic agriculture. In the 1980s, organic baby greens began to be sold at high prices and consumed in high-end restaurants in San Francisco, amounting to a larger profit per acre for farmers (Guthman 2003). As more and more farmers entered baby green production to reap the benefits of the high costs, “the production of organic salad mix became industrialized, with scaled-up growers out-competing some of the earlier movement growers. Many of the practices they incorporated, while in keeping with organic regulations, were not in keeping with organic idioms” (Guthman 2003:51). In essence, many of the farmers that joined organic production came from conventional backgrounds and were less interested in the more

social aspects of the organic farming philosophy, which had originally characterized the movement. As a result, the “character of organic *farmers*” changed (Guthman 2004:41). Production of organic greens and other vegetables began to shift towards monocultures, similar to the industrial agribusiness structure to which organic agriculture was initially developed as an alternative.

As a result of the worry over uniform organic regulation as markets moved across state lines, the Organic Food Productions Act (OFPA) was passed in 1990 but was not fully functional until 2002 (Sligh 2002; United States Department of Agriculture 2010a). This act created national, rather than state-managed, organic standards (Sligh 2002). It was difficult for the parties involved to agree on specific criteria for certification standards, which resulted in the loss of some of the original tenets of the organic movement. Currently, organic certification means that the producer “did not use any synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers; they did not plant genetically modified seeds, use fertilizer derived from sewage sludge, or treat the seeds or foods with irradiation” (Nestle 2006:42).

Despite these positive environmental practices, organic-certified products are not necessarily local or sustainable as they may be shipped enormous distances, resulting in numerous carbon emissions (Nestle 2006). Another concern is that, much like industrial agriculture, production of certified-organic agriculture is concentrated in the hands of a few (Ikerd 2008). In addition, many small farms cannot afford the intense and costly organic certification process so they lack a certified-organic label even though their growing practices might follow organic principles (Ikerd 2008). As was visible in Figure

1 on page 13, the certification standards only addressed the top row of environmental concerns and ignored the other values. Despite the potential benefits of organic agriculture, the expansion of its movement and the consequent certification created a clear distinction between organic as a farming philosophy versus a certification standard. Consequently, the label “organic” contains many different meanings when used in a broad context. Because of the confusion around the label “organic,” other terminology is also utilized to refer to agriculture that differs from the industrial model.

While the language of organic agriculture was emerging in the 1970s, “the term sustainable agriculture did not come into widespread use until the late 1980s” (Ikerd 2008:159). Ikerd (2008) defines sustainable agriculture as being “ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible” (76). It incorporates environmental, economic, and social concerns, in contrast to organic agriculture, which can have more of a narrow focus on environmental aspects (especially after national standards were implemented). Many other terms such as “low-input, holistic, [and] practical” may be used to refer to similar methods of farming that seek to ameliorate the impacts of industrial agriculture (Ikerd 2008:71). Because of the numerous terminologies available to describe similar farming techniques, in the rest of my thesis I use the term “organic agriculture” to refer broadly to sustainable and organic agriculture (both certified and non-certified). I also use the broad term “food movement” to describe the social movement behind increasing organic production and availability. The justification behind the use of this broad term will be discussed in the Methods sections.

Organic Marketing and Benefits

In addition to the availability of certified-organic products in grocery stores, many forms of sustainable and organic agriculture are sold in niche markets. Ikerd (2008) defines niche marketing as “targeting relatively small groups of consumers rather than mass marketing” (195). Niche markets for organic agriculture include community supported agriculture (CSA), farmers’ markets, as well as roadside stands. Farmers’ markets, a community venue where food is sold directly from farm to consumer, began appearing in the mid-1970s (Winne 2008) and have been on the rise in recent years, increasing 17% from 2010 to 2011 (United States Department of Agriculture 2012). In a CSA, consumers pay for a subscription ahead of time and receive a weekly box of fresh produce and other goods from nearby farms (Spector 2002). The first CSA in the United States started in 1986 (Forbes and Harmon 2007), and there are currently more than 4,000 CSAs nationwide (United States Department of Agriculture 2012).

Farmers’ markets and CSAs have numerous benefits to both the producer and consumer. Money from consumers stays in the local community, promoting nearby farms rather than globalized industry (Norberg-Hodge, Goering, and Page 2001). Farmers’ markets provide a venue for community members to gather and socialize. Consumers are able to develop a relationship with local farmers, giving them a greater knowledge of how their food was grown in addition to developing a connection to their own community. In terms of environmental benefits, farmers’ markets and CSAs generally sell fresh, local produce and other products grown on small farms with usually less pesticide use than their industrial counterparts (Norberg-Hodge et al. 2001; Winne 2008).

Reliance on fossil fuels is minimized as localized agriculture consumes less fossil fuel in transportation miles. In addition, the farmer benefits economically from marketing their products in a CSA or farmers' market. Spector (2002) writes: "like CSAs, farmers' markets provide farmers with close to 100 percent of the food dollar (minus a fee or small percentage paid to the market for maintenance)" (293). Without the complex corporate structure of industrial agriculture, the farmer is able to retain a greater percentage of their profit that would normally go to a middleman. In addition, the payment structure of a CSA allows the farmer to have some financial security. In a CSA, "many of the financial burdens typically borne by the farmers are shared by farmer and consumer" (Spector 2002:292). Because of this structure, the amount of produce the consumer receives is variable based on the success of the harvest. Clearly, organic and sustainable agriculture hold promise for ameliorating the problems of industrial agriculture.

As the literature has illustrated, industrial agriculture is devastating socially, economically, and environmentally, making it unsustainable for the future. Organic and sustainable agriculture offer promising avenues to grow and market food in a more sustainable manner. At the same time as these benefits are becoming more evident and these agricultural alternatives are expanding, there is increasing criticism over who are the main supporters and consumers of organic food; primarily, who can afford to live such a lifestyle.

Elitism and the Food Movement

Since the “dominant social change strategy” of the food movement is promoting organic and local food, there are extensive critiques and research regarding who can afford and access these products (Alkon and Agyeman 2011:2). Numerous scholars have discussed the elitist reputation the food movement has developed and its possible origins (Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). Alkon and Agyeman (2011) speculate that the food movement is perceived as elitist because:

By combining a prescient critique of industrial agriculture with a consumption-driven response, the food movement marks a particular set of foodways (organic, local and slow foods) as right and proper, and condemns what Michael Pollan (2006) calls “industrial eaters” as less worthy than others...Pollan’s analysis presumes that foodways are individual choices removed from their social and economic constraints. (P.12)

Individual choices become laden with value and judgment, which ignores the reality that food choices are formed as a result of an individual’s placement in the social structure, as Bourdieu (1984) illustrated. Similarly, Guthman (2003) offers a specific example of this issue when she describes the problematic dichotomy drawn between fast food and organic food. Because of the moral value placed on the decision to buy organic she recognizes that “one of the problems with these oppositions is they impart a great deal of subjectivity on to the organic or slow food eater while the fast food eater is treated like a mindless dupe” (Guthman 2003:55). In this sense, food choices are associated with particular moral choices that reflect on the consumer. However, as Alkon and Agyeman (2011) point out, the meaning behind these choices must be considered in the broader social context of their making.

The food movement's emphasis on local food production has the potential to become separated from issues of class and social justice. For example, as the focus on local food production grew in recent years, the word "locavore" was developed and first used in the San Francisco Chronicle in 2005 (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). Being a "locavore" quickly became associated with solely eating food grown 100 miles away or less (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). People began to argue about the specific number of miles that was acceptable for food production rather than "the broader issues of the importance of a local food approach" (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010:183). Discussion moved away from larger problems associated with the U.S. food system and instead focused on the actions of a small segment of society. Essentially, "the 100-mile diet revealed the vulnerability of the local preference as benefiting primarily those who could afford such a diet" (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010:183). In addition, localization does not necessarily ensure that benefits of food production will be distributed more equally than in an industrial, globalized system (Allen 2010). Allen (2010) emphasizes that trying to reduce inequality through a market-based system reliant on an individual's agency will do nothing to address the true roots behind inequality. Although there is potential to address broader issues of inequality, "local food efforts may inadvertently reproduce extant social privileges" (Allen 2010:305). These examples demonstrate the way in which the rhetoric and focus of the food movement can overlook larger issues of class and access to food, consequently not broadening its supporters or advancing its agenda.

Johnston and Bauman's (2010) book *Foodies* provides a key example of a lifestyle of the food movement that has largely been blind to issues of class. This book is

based on interviews with “foodies” who, broadly, are individuals primarily interested in issues surrounding good taste, but they also have concerns about the industrial agricultural system and often prioritize buying local, organic food. Foodies are omnivores in that they are “high-volume consumers of cultural products from lowbrow and highbrow genres” (Johnston and Bauman 2010:193). They consume foods that are traditionally associated with high-status, such as more expensive food, but also emphasize the importance of “authentic or exotic inexpensive food” (Johnston and Bauman 2010:194). As foodies prefer both high and lowbrow foods, Johnston and Bauman (2010) note that a discussion of class and privilege is minimized as participants attempt to distance themselves from the association with snobbiness by emphasizing the fact that they do not consume solely expensive food. Even though they eat foods from all cost groups, the participants focused on “describing worthy foods” and “by omission, defining categories of unworthy foods” (Johnston and Bauman 2010:198). Being a foodie is still a selective process that requires economic capital, even when there is an attempt to avoid elitism. Their omnivorousness makes class seem less present than it actually is, which helps to “perpetuate the very inequalities they conceal” (201). Johnston and Bauman (2010) raise a key concern:

If income equality continues unabated, the conscientious and privileged green eater may increasingly serve as a kind of ideological device that gives foodies an air of moral superiority, while drawing public attention away from the gross inequality of food resources at the national and global scale. (P. 209-210)

Johnston and Bauman (2010) recognize the lack of discussion of class as problematic in the lifestyle of foodies because, similar to the critiques of Allen (2003) and Gottlieb and Joshi (2010), larger social issues regarding the distribution of food remain ignored.

Research on Consumers

A key aspect of consideration when discussing the elitism of the food movement is the demographic make-up of its supporters. Research on consumers of three types of food sources including certified-organic products in grocery stores, farmers' markets, and CSAs is worth reviewing. In general, the food movement "may itself be something of a monoculture" with its "predominantly white and middle-class character" (Alkon and Agyeman 2011:2). Although extensive research has been done on organic food consumers in grocery stores, there is limited consensus about the demographics of a typical consumer (Pearson, Henryks, and Jones 2010). In their international literature review, Pearson et al. (2010) noted that, in general, consumers of organic food "may have higher levels of education, be more affluent, be women and have young children" (4). Supporting these findings, other studies have found that people with higher levels of education were more likely to purchase organic foods (Dettman and Dimitri 2009; United States Department of Agriculture 2010a). However, conclusions surrounding income have been unclear as some studies have found higher incomes to be associated with organic food purchasing (Dettman and Dimitri 2009) while others noted that it is not significant (United States Department of Agriculture 2010a). It was interesting that, in one study, households with higher incomes were "less likely to consistently dedicate

significant shares of their income to purchasing organic vegetables” (Dettman and Dimitri 2009:87). Thus, higher income does not necessarily indicate that a household will frequently buy organic vegetables.

In terms of CSA and farmers’ market shoppers, numerous studies have found gender to be a factor as farmers’ market shoppers were found to be predominately female (Baker, Hamshaw, and Kolodinsky 2009; Wolf, Spittler, and Ahern 2005; Zepeda 2009). Education and race were found to not be significant within one national sample comparing farmers’ market and non-farmers’ market shoppers (Zepeda 2009). Research has not reached a consensus on the relationship between income level and participation in a CSA or farmers’ market (Hinrichs and Kremer 2002; Zepeda 2009). Interestingly, in her national survey of farmers’ market consumers, Zepeda (2009) found that income was only significant in that “it [was] not the ability to pay, but the willingness to pay for fresh, local food that [was] the chief economic constraint” (256). Consequently, while income itself may not be significant, a person’s attitude towards food and cost may have a larger impact. Baker et al. (2009) found that the majority of consumers at a farmers’ market in Vermont made more than \$60,000 a year (a higher income than the average community member) while Wolf et al. (2005) noted that income levels appeared to be comparable between farmers’ market and non farmers’ market consumers in California. In contrast, one study of CSA participants in the Midwest found that a greater proportion of members were from higher income groups (Hinrichs and Kremer 2002). Although farmers’ market, CSA, and organic food shoppers do seem to represent a particular subset of society, there

is still a lack of consensus over who are the main consumer supporters of the food movement.

While research is not clear at this point, it is probable that the elitism of the food movement has the potential to alienate less educated individuals or those for whom money is a major concern. By fusing an environmental justice framework with concerns over the food system, the food justice movement has attempted to address some of these larger problems within the food industry. Specifically, food justice focuses on “ensuring that the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly” (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010:6). A concern of the food justice framework is the enormous inequalities within the access that different groups have to food, further reinforcing the elitism surrounding organic food. Exploring the research behind these inequalities will shed additional light upon how food choices are informed by an individual’s location in the social structure.

ACCESS TO FOOD

Although food choices can be used to maintain boundaries between groups, these choices can also illustrate inequalities faced by groups in accessing food. Beardsworth and Keil (1997) sum up nicely: “significant as the idea is that food can be used to *express* social differentiation, it is important to not lose sight of the fact that the food options and choices of specific categories also *reflect* the inequalities inherent in such differentiation” (53). As taste is formed as a result of the habitus and an individual’s access to capital and the availability of certain foods, it is essential to examine the ways in which access to food is differentiated based on income. These differences will be explored in the context of supermarkets, farmers’ markets, and CSAs.

Food Deserts

Food deserts are a commonly discussed example of inequality in access to food. The USDA defines food deserts as “urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, affordable food” (United States Department of Agriculture 2010b). Currently, 23.5 million Americans live in food deserts, with half considered low-income (United States Department of Agriculture 2010b). Many food deserts arose as large supermarkets located in low-income urban areas closed in the 1960s and 70s (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Winne 2008). This resulted from suburban expansion; supermarkets relocated to profit from the higher-income consumer base as well as accommodate growing store sizes (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Winne 2008). This loss of supermarkets as well as public transportation deficiencies makes it difficult for low-

income consumers in these areas to access affordable and healthy food. Instead of large supermarkets, residents of food deserts have greater access to convenience stores and fast food venues, which has enormous health implications because of high calorie content and limited fresh fruits and vegetables (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). Because of this lack of access, food desert residents likely have different habitus and taste formation than those not located in food deserts.

Certified-Organic, Farmers' Markets, and Community Supported Agriculture

Scholarship has also addressed the barriers that exist for low-income access to farmers' markets, CSAs, and certified-organic produce. Because of the extra labor required, certified-organic produce available in the grocery store costs more than conventional produce. This higher price is an obvious, yet important, barrier. In terms of CSAs, low-income consumers might not be able to supply the money in advance or negotiate transportation to pick up the produce (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). Some CSAs have created a number of options to allow for increased accessibility to low-income consumers, including: allowing payment in smaller amounts over a longer time frame rather than upfront, exchanging labor on the farm as part of payment, and having consumers pay more or less depending on their salary (Forbes and Harmon 2007).

Similarly, research indicates that low-income consumers perceive there to be barriers to using farmers' markets (Colasanti, Conner, and Smalley 2010; Grace et al. 2007). Two studies conducted in Oregon and Michigan found that barriers included: inconvenient hours and locations, lack of discounts, lack of consistent availability of

certain items, crowdedness of markets, and payment issues (i.e. cash only markets) (Colasanti et al. 2010; Grace et al. 2007). However, in contrast to organic produce in the grocery store, research has shown that farmers' markets offer potential financial savings depending on the item and its season (Flamm 2011; McGuirt et al. 2011). In one study, purchasing certain produce at the farmers' market in comparison with the nearest supermarket resulted in an 18% savings (McGuirt et al. 2011). Similarly, Flamm (2011), in her price comparison, found that "grocery shopping [at the farmers' market] for several key items or for a seasonal recipe can be quite affordable" (58) due to the fact that certain items were less expensive at the farmers' market while others were not.

In addition to the price of farmers' markets items, a key consideration is the acceptance of Electronic Benefit Transactions (EBT) or food stamps. Flamm (2011) describes how EBT works: "Food assistance funds are transferred onto EBT cards at the start of each month and can be used like a debit card to pay for goods at certified supermarkets, corner stores, farmers' markets, and more" (55). The ability of a farmers' market to handle these types of transactions can greatly limit or expand the consumer base. Fortunately, the number of farmers' markets accepting food stamps has been expanding, increasing by 34% from 2007 to 2008 (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010).

Another important factor is the issue of education and whether desire for these food sources is present in low-income communities. Regardless of the availability of organic sources, if there is no desire by low-income communities or a lack of knowledge concerning these organic food sources then physical and financial barriers are irrelevant. Consequently, merely looking at the issue of access to these food sources provides an

incomplete picture. Specifically, low-income consumers might “lack awareness of the alternative itself” (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010:170). A lack of education of organic sources functions as a barrier to organic consumption. In addition, the perception low-income consumer have of organic sources affects their desire to shop at those venues. For example, Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) address these perceptions and describe the complicated notion of price in farmers’ markets:

As farmers’ markets gained popularity, their reputation for higher costs became widely accepted, in part linked to their somewhat conformed image as niche places to shop. Yet the issue of price and affordability was more complex and related to the broader question of what determined the cost of food. Once an item was in season, even at higher-priced farmers’ markets in middle-class communities, it could be cost competitive with the same item sold in a large supermarket. (P. 166)

This implies that consumers might perceive farmers’ markets to be expensive, regardless of whether or not this is true. This is supported in Grace et al.’s (2007) interviews with food stamp users where they found that 22% of participants mentioned that farmers’ markets were too expensive for them to shop. Yet, Grace et al. (2007) found that certain produce cost less at the farmers’ market. This is significant because it emphasizes the fact that for farmers’ markets and other niche markets to be appealing to low-income consumers, they must not only be accessible but consumers must have the desire and knowledge to shop at them. In their interviews with low-income shoppers, Webber and Dollahite (2008) found that access was an important barrier rather than desires or values towards food. In this sense, low-income consumers had desire for these sources but

physical and financial barriers prevented them from accessing. Education and desire are considered key barriers in addition to financial and geographic barriers.

Because of the physical and educational barriers for low-income consumers to organic food sources, there is potential that the taste of poor and working-class groups is defined by their lack of access to these types of food. This lack of access might maintain organic food consumption as something more available and desired by the middle and upper classes. As Bourdieu (1984) illustrates, what may seem like natural tastes or desires in food choices for people of different classes might be a result of these social and economic barriers. This is important to keep in mind as organic food consumption could be a means to maintain distinction between different class and status groups. This is incredibly problematic since the problems of industrial agriculture need to be ameliorated through the use of alternatives. Alkon and Agyeman (2011) emphasize the importance of the food movement expanding beyond its typical constituents:

If activists in the food movement are to go beyond providing alternatives and truly challenge agribusiness's destructive power, they will need a broad coalition of supporters. We argue that such support can best be found in the low-income communities and communities of color that have been, and are currently, most deeply harmed by the food system. But this alliance will require that the food movement reach beyond its own dominant narrative to understand the experiences and perspectives of its potential allies. (P. 4)

Limiting the food movement to a small segment of society who are largely unaffected by the problems of the current food industry, will not be adequate enough to create change. Because of the necessity to expand the food movement, I will explore issues of class and social boundaries in the context of organic food consumption.

Implications

My research occupies a unique place within the current literature of food consumption and the maintenance of social boundaries. There is well-established scholarship concerning the use of food choices to illustrate association with a particular lifestyle both in class and status groups (Bourdieu 1984; Weber 1946). Because of the critique of elitism surrounding the food movement as well as the clear barriers to low-income participation in the food movement, it is important to investigate whether organic food consumption is part of an upper class lifestyle and is used to maintain class distinctions. Because of the high percentage of students that come from fairly affluent backgrounds at Whitman (Cooperative Institutional Research Program First-Year Survey 2011), it is interesting to consider the social meaning behind organic consumption for students as well as look at the experiences of students who come from lower-income backgrounds.

METHODS

Research Design and Setting

The research question my thesis explores is: How does food consumption serve to mark boundaries between social classes on the Whitman campus? My focus is specifically on the consumption of organic food sources because dialogue concerning these foods is becoming increasingly prevalent on campus. My thesis considers if and how boundaries between social classes are policed and maintained and in what ways the values of the food movement permeate across class boundaries. Additional questions include: Is there a distinctive culture around food on the Whitman campus? If so, how do people of different social class backgrounds relate to this culture differently?

As numerous quantitative studies have been conducted on organic food consumers (Dettman and Dimitri 2009; Pearson et al. 2010) and farmers' market shoppers (Baker et al. 2009; Zepeda 2009), I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews to allow for the gathering of rich, descriptive data. I wanted to provide detailed qualitative data to examine the intricacies of participants' consumption choices and experiences surrounding food at Whitman. Interview questions are available in Appendix A and Appendix B. These questions served as a rough guide for topics to cover in each interview rather than a standardized script. In addition to conducting in-person semi-structured interviews, I emailed participants with several follow-up questions to inform my interpretation of results. My sample consisted of both Whitman College students and employees of the college food service contractor, Bon Appétit. I chose Whitman College as a research setting because of my access to the population and because of the

institution's active environment surrounding issues of food sustainability. As described earlier, Whitman is an interesting setting because of its fairly affluent student body. In my years at Whitman, I have seen clubs related to food issues expand and become more influential on campus. Because of this expansion, it is increasingly important to understand the class-based dimensions of food choices.

I conducted interviews with fifteen participants during the period of January to March 2012. Interviews took place in person on the Whitman campus and ranged from 20 to 50 minutes in duration. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Interview questions broadly focused upon a participants' food consumption, primarily through their own purchasing. Interviews began with questions about food consumption (including organic food) during a participant's childhood and then shifted to their food consumption choices at Whitman and how their choices have changed during their time on campus. I also asked participants about their interest in issues related to food production and how they learned about and acted upon these values. Finally, I asked participants about the culture around food at Whitman and how they relate and fit into it.

Due to the complexity of the concept of class, there is not a consensus over its proper operationalization as a research variable (Lareau 2011). I adopted Bourdieu's definition (in comparison to Weber) of class as being composed of varying levels of capital rather than solely economic factors. For my operationalization of social class, I utilized Lareau's (2011) conceptualization of class in my use of a "categorical analysis" (236). She writes that "social scientists who accept this perspective may disagree about the number and types of categories...still, they agree that the observed differences in how

people act can be meaningfully grouped into categories, without violating the complexity of daily life” (236). My measurement of a participants’ social class was operationalized through a short survey. At the end of the interview, each participant completed a one-page survey containing demographic information including their gender, hometown, years at Whitman or Bon Appétit, major (if applicable), and self-reported socioeconomic status of the household in which they were raised (i.e. poor, working class, lower-middle class, middle class, upper-middle class, upper class). I focused upon the socioeconomic status of the household in which the participant grew up as the operational definition of social class rather than the socioeconomic status they currently identify with, which may or may not be the same, because much of socialization and habitus formation occurs during younger years (Lovell 2000).

Multiple participants were unable to designate just one socioeconomic category so I allowed them to indicate more than one if they were unsure. In addition, although my measure might not be able to measure the intricacies of social class, by drawing a large portion of my sample from the First Generation Working Class (FGWC) student club, I thought it was likely that those students would have been raised in households with similar levels of economic and cultural capital. In addition to my measure, numerous participants explicitly identified with a particular social class during the interview. Lareau (2011) also made sure to recognize areas of her study that were influenced by other variables than social class. I made an attempt to do this as well within my results section by indicating other possible explanations for patterns outside of social class when relevant.

Since the focus of my thesis is primarily on organic food consumption, an important area of consideration was my use of language in how I referred to these food sources. As noted in the literature review, the word “organic” is value-laden and refers to many different types of food production (i.e. certified-organic, sustainable agriculture). I considered limiting my word choice to “sustainable” food but decided against it because I wanted to allow people to discuss their consumption of certified-organic food, which might not necessarily be grown sustainably. To ensure that I was standardizing the use of the word “organic,” I explained at the beginning of each interview that I would use the term “organic” very loosely and that it includes any food production that goes against the traditional industrial system. I gave them several examples including certified-organic food, farmers’ markets, CSAs, and encouraged them to provide other examples or definitions. To also prevent participants from limiting their answers to solely certified-organic foods, I included probes that allowed me to ask questions about food sources that might not necessarily be considered organic by all participants, such as CSAs or farmers’ markets. I recognize that there are other forms of food production, such as community gardens, that seek to counter the industrial agriculture system. However, I decided to focus on the purchasing of food, as this would likely be the most relevant aspect for Whitman students and Bon Appétit employees.

Participants

In selecting participants from my working population of Whitman students and Bon Appétit employees, my goal was to interview people from varying socioeconomic

backgrounds and interest in food issues. Interview data from participants with different social class backgrounds allowed me to compare their responses about food consumption to uncover patterns. I used purposive sampling to get in contact with students from working-class backgrounds. I originally contacted the faculty adviser of the First Generation Working Class (FGWC) group who put me in touch with the two student leaders. Through communication with them, I was able to send an email to the FGWC listserv describing my project and giving my email address so students could contact me if they were interested in participating. After interviewing the first several students who contacted me, I engaged in snowball sampling to contact other FGWC members with whom they were in contact. Utilizing snowball sampling was helpful because the population of working-class students at Whitman College is relatively small so it allowed me to get in touch with students from working-class backgrounds who were not actively involved in FGWC. All of the FGWC students I interviewed self-identified the socioeconomic status of the household in which they were raised as working-class. It is important to note that no one in this particular sample self-identified as poor. In addition, all FGWC participants had at least one parent from non-Euro-American descent, commonly of Hispanic or Asian descent. In total, seven of the fifteen participants were from FGWC.

Another group I drew my sample from was students involved in food-oriented clubs on campus. I thought it was important to hear the perspective of students interested in food to examine where they learned those values and the relationship to their social class background. To speak with students involved in food-related clubs on campus such

as the Real Food Alliance (RFA), Student Agriculture at Whitman (SAW), as well as Daily Market Cooperative volunteers, I contacted the head of the RFA and asked for the emails of various members of the food clubs. She provided a detailed list from which I was able to select participants to represent different genders as well as years at Whitman. I emailed participants with a description of my project and my contact information. Five of the fifteen participants in my study were members of food clubs. All of the food club students with whom I conducted interviews with identified as coming from middle-class to upper-middle class backgrounds and were all of Euro-American descent. In my thesis, I refer to these students as food-club students rather than their individual club affiliation because some of the clubs are too small to protect the anonymity of participants. A set of interview questions used for Whitman students is available in Appendix A.

Another key group included in my sample consisted of community members employed by Bon Appétit, the food service concessionaire contracted to provide on-campus meals for Whitman College. I wanted to speak with Bon Appétit employees because they might identify as working-class (because of the nature and income level of their jobs), and because they worked with food and encountered Whitman students on a daily basis. I also thought this would be an interesting contrast to Whitman students from working-class backgrounds, as there could be educational differences between the two groups as well as degrees of socialization within the Whitman culture. To organize interviews, I received assistance from a Whitman student employed at Bon Appétit who described my project to her co-workers. Although it was difficult to schedule a time within their busy schedules, I was able to arrange an interview with two Bon Appétit

employees during one of their daily safety meetings. As I had limited time and because the interviews were conducted in a group setting, these questions varied slightly from those asked to students and focused more broadly on some of the philosophies of Bon Appétit as a whole rather than just the individual participants. Both of these participants were in their late twenties or early 30s and identified as having grown up in a working-class or poor household. Both Bon Appétit employees did not specifically mention any non-Euro-American ethnic or racial identification. A set of interview questions used for Bon Appétit employees is available in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

After printing out all interview transcripts, I utilized open coding to analyze and organize my data. I decided on the use of open coding as “the central purpose of which is to open inquiry widely” (Berg 2009:353). Through the use of open coding, coding categories are developed after a researcher’s engagement with the data rather than beforehand. This was an appropriate method for my research because I wanted to consider findings outside the scope of my question and consider the presence of variables other than social class. To start, I read through each transcript and highlighted key passages and made notes in the margins. After repeating this process numerous times, I settled on coding categories that represented themes across the data. My coding categories included: Parents’ responses, peers, changing tastes, boundary maintenance, guilt, Whitman socialization, and Whitman culture. I grouped responses by code and compared across social classes as well as levels of interest in food. Although I was

interested in patterns across the data, I also paid close attention to individual experiences; general themes as well as outliers were both equally important.

Limitations

To fully understand my research, it is important to consider the ways in which measurement error is present in my study. A possible source of measurement error could result as participants might be inclined to choose more socially desirable answers. Although discussions of food choices are potentially less sensitive than other issues, there are still internalized social norms on the Whitman campus (a key focus of my research) about what foods are more or less acceptable. In an attempt to avoid the pressure of social desirability, I conducted interviews in the sociology workroom, a comfortable and private environment where conversations would not be overheard. In addition, I phrased interview questions in an open manner so the questions did not lead participants to answer in a particular way. Especially with participants who admitted they did not know a lot about food, I emphasized that there were no right answers to any questions. As interviews are a social interaction in which the interviewer's actions, appearance, and words could affect the responses of the participant, my own social characteristics as a researcher could also cause a participant to shift their answers (Berg 2009). It is possible that a participant's perception of me and my attitudes towards food could have affected their interview responses. In addition to presenting my opinions and myself in a neutral manner, most of the participants were people I had never met or who were, at the most, casual acquaintances.

I was purposely vague about the specific variables I was looking at so as to not let this knowledge influence participants' responses. This was surprisingly hard to control with several participants who I recruited through FGWC, as the email I sent to their faculty advisor explaining the full scope of my project was forwarded to them. Consequently, there is the potential that their answers might be different than normal as they had more details about the specifics of my research.

I recognize that an underrepresented group within my thesis is middle, upper-middle, and upper class students at Whitman who have minimal interest in food issues. I conducted one interview with a student from this demographic and interest but found it to not be incredibly fruitful for my analysis. Because of time constraints, I chose not to conduct more interviews with Whitman students who come from middle to upper class backgrounds who were not interested in food. However, because the goal of my research was not necessarily to indicate a direct relationship between social class and desire for organic food, I believe that the absence of this perspective does not make my results suspect.

Generalizability

Although I attempted to interview participants from a variety of class backgrounds and interests in food issues, generalizability of my research to a larger population, such as college students, is limited because of the small sample size as well as my non-probabilistic sampling methods. In addition, it is possible that participants who chose to participate in my research are not representative of Whitman groups as a

whole. However, there is potential that my results could be generalizable to a similar college setting as Whitman. For example, a small liberal-arts college located in the Pacific Northwest with a fairly liberal student body might have a similar food culture. However, as the goal of my thesis was not to create generalizable conclusions, my thesis could be the starting point for research that will be generalizable in the future to larger populations.

Ethical Considerations

As with any research, ethics are a key consideration before, during, and after the research process. Prior to each interview, I explained my project and had participants read and sign an informed consent form. I asked for a verbal confirmation that it was acceptable for me to record the interview and all participants consented. I decided to keep all participant information confidential and replace names with pseudonyms in the oral and written presentation of my results. I decided to present all of my research participants anonymously so participants did not feel pressure to respond in a certain way knowing that the answers could be associated with their name.

Because of the sensitive nature of discussing issues related to class, a key ethical consideration revolved around my sampling method. I wanted to avoid making assumptions about particular groups or people or only recruiting from my own personal contacts. Recruiting from FGWC was a good idea because students involved in the group clearly identify as coming from lower-income backgrounds. Another ethical consideration revolved around my own personal biases and social class status. As I was

raised and socialized in an upper-middle class background, I have an outsider status when talking to participants from working-class backgrounds. My outsider status has the potential to prevent people from sharing their full stories and experiences because they might not feel comfortable. In addition, I have a clear bias in that I support organic agriculture and make it a priority to consume local and organic foods. To prevent this bias from interfering with the ethics of my research, I remained cognizant of my biases and outsider status to both help participants feel comfortable and to phrase questions in a non-leading manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The broad question I seek to answer is: how does food consumption serve to mark boundaries between social classes on the Whitman campus? First, I examine differences in socialization environments between working-class students and food club students who were all from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds. Second, I explore the dominant norms at Whitman surrounding food consumption and examine which of these norms are given distinction. Third, I explore the way social boundaries are maintained and the implications for students of different social classes. Finally, I describe how the Whitman lifestyle is performed by students of various social class backgrounds and how these students were or were not able to bring these values back to their life at home. This analysis will illuminate the presence of social class boundaries through food choices on the Whitman campus.

SOCIALIZATION IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

As Bourdieu (1984) described, social classes differ in their amounts of social, economic, and cultural capital. These differences affect the formation of the habitus associated with each social class and the way class-characteristic lifestyles are manifested. I begin my analysis by examining participants' food consumption patterns while growing up to look at the ways in which food socialization differed across social class and how these differences reflect the form or function of food. These results will inform a later discussion of how an individual's socialization environment affects their

ability to perform a Whitman lifestyle and negotiate boundaries between ¹good and bad food.

Working-Class Students and Bon Appétit Employees²

Differences between social classes were evident in participants' discussions of food consumption in their household while growing up. More so than students involved in food clubs, participants from working-class backgrounds discussed fast food, canned food, and processed food as being a major part of their family's diet while growing up. Both Bon Appétit employees echoed these sentiments and described family's food consumption as "out of a box" and including "mystery meats." In addition, all participants from working-class backgrounds, except for one participant, said that their families did not buy or discuss organic food while they were growing up. Students saw

¹ By using the labels of "good" and "bad" food, my intention is not to describe my own personal opinion but rather illustrate the value participants associated with particular foods. These labels are indicative of how participants labeled certain types of food in the interviews.

² As previously mentioned, there were ethnic differences between FGWC students and food club students. All of the FGWC members had at least one parent who was of non-Euro-American descent. Ethnic background seemed to play a role in food consumption in terms of their consumption of foods associated with their culture. Despite these differences, ethnicity was not a major theme of interviews nor did participants discuss their ethnic background influencing their attitude towards organic food.

this lack of dialogue and consumption of organic food (and increased processed food consumption) as the result of two main barriers: education and access, both economic and physical. A number of participants explained that their parents were aware that fast food was unhealthy but consumed it, or other processed foods, because of various constraints. These included lack of time to devote to home cooking because of parents' work hours and limited economic capital. This is particularly interesting because this finding indicates that knowledge about the nutritional aspects of fast food does not discourage consumption. For example, Daniel was the one participant whose family attempted to buy organic food. However they rarely bought organic foods because of monetary constraints. He explained, "I mean I know I was raised on McDonalds and fast food even though I did have a mother who was concerned. That was just the reality." Economic capital was the main barrier that prevented his family from accessing these desired foods despite the cultural capital that his family had about alternatives.

Participants associated desire for organic foods with increased cultural capital, primarily through education. Many participants explained that because their parents lacked extensive education they were not able to learn about organic food; these participants saw education as a key barrier to desire for organic food. For example, after I inquired about organic consumption in her childhood, Nora replied, "No, my parents never did that. I think because they've never been educated on the notions of eating organic or local or Whole Foods. It was mostly just keeping in mind our budget and just this is convenient and this is here." Lack of knowledge of organic food, cultural capital, combined with budgetary concerns limited the food options for these families.

This focus on budget was frequently mentioned in interviews with FGWC members. Jessica explained, “my family we have a budget and organic food would go over our thirty dollar budget so we would never really consider it unless it’s something really delicious.” The limited economic capital of these families played a strong role in dictating their food consumption.

In addition, for some participants the community in which they lived, both people and store options, had a major influence on their ability or desire to purchase organic food. For example, Beth lived in a community of farm laborers so she thought the desire for organic food did not resonate with her community. The social values and networks of her community, social capital, did not facilitate a desire for organic food. Consequently, economic, cultural, and social capital were all described as barriers to the consumption of unprocessed and organic foods. Participants described structural barriers to their access to organic foods. Melissa and Jason did not have grocery stores near their houses with organic sections so it was not a viable option for their families. In addition, Tom discussed his mother’s inability to drive to the farmers’ market to get local produce. For his family, although they would have liked to purchase food from the farmers’ market, eating processed food became easier than fresher options.

Due to these constraints, fast food was a more acceptable food choice for working-class families than it was for middle to upper-middle class families in my study. At the same time, it was not always the most desirable choice; it was something that families accepted as legitimate because of their economic and time constraints. In sum, education, price, and access were described as key barriers to the consumption of organic

and fresh, unprocessed food. As Bourdieu (1984) described, these differences are a reflection of the economic, cultural, and social capital available to each family. These results are consistent with the research of Webber and Dollahite (2008) and Gottlieb and Joshi (2010). Clearly, most working-class students were not socialized in an environment with organic food, which is an important consideration when discussing how these students performed and related to the Whitman lifestyle around food.

*Food Club Students*³

In contrast to the FGWC students and Bon Appétit employees, all students who were involved in food clubs identified as coming from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds. This is significant because it reinforces the critiques posed by Alkon and Agyeman (2011) concerning the homogenous nature of the food movement supporters. All these participants from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds in addition to Nick, an upper-middle class student with no interest in food issues, described food in their

³ Around half of the students involved in food clubs suffered from some food-related problem such as gluten intolerance. This is significant because it might also have an impact on a participants' socialization environment and relationship with food outside of social class. Being gluten intolerant might make a participant more likely to pay more attention to their food choices. In my sample of working-class participants, none of them mentioned any major food-related health issues, which makes a comparison concerning this topic difficult.

childhood quite differently than participants from working-class backgrounds. An important area of similarity between all of these middle to upper-middle class students (regardless of their level of interest in food issues) was that each of them mentioned that they ate mostly home-cooked meals growing up and limited fast food. The phrase “cooking from scratch” was used several times in the course of these interviews, which emphasizes limited consumption of processed foods. Fresh vegetables were also a commonly mentioned food consumed in contrast to canned vegetables. Instead of being commonplace, processed food was limited and even considered a special treat for several of these families. Sarah described, “I only got Lunchables when I begged and pleaded, like on field trip days. They were special.” The consumption of processed food was more of an active and intentional choice rather than an assumed part of their diet. Although cooking was important in these families, not all food club participants discussed growing up learning about or buying organic food. Many of their families have now adopted these practices as a result of their children’s values, yet students did not necessarily learn those values from their parents.

For the most part, economic capital as a limitation to food consumption did not appear to be a salient issue for most of these families. In fact, several of the students who are currently heavily involved in food activism related that their family prioritizes more of their budget on foods of higher quality. This devotion of economic capital to food purchases indicates the importance of food consumption to these families. The availability of economic capital allowed these families to seek out high quality ingredients and practice increased selectivity surrounding their food choices. In addition,

multiple participants described traveling as having a major influence on cooking in their family. Camille, an upper-middle class food club member, said, “I think a lot of my food memories are from Europe and like we ate really well in Europe. I think that’s shaped my perspective on food more than I know [such as] traveling to Venice and having some of the most beautiful Italian food I could ever imagine.” These opportunities for travel, requiring economic capital, increased the amount of cultural capital a participant had as well as the way they viewed food. These experiences exposed them to a broad range of foods including international cuisine as well as exotic ingredients. The emphasis on the artistry of food and the use of quality ingredients seemed to reinforce the importance of cooking for these participants. Their increased economic and cultural capital surrounding food allowed these families to be more selective with their food choices. For example, these families were able to make an active choice to consume fast food in comparing to working-class families who consumed it frequently because of time and economic constraints. This is reminiscent of Johnston and Bauman’s (2010) discussion of the omnivorousness of foodies. These families could also be described as omnivores in their consumption of high and lowbrow foods.

Form and Function

These differences between the socialization environment in working-class and middle to upper-middle class households reflects Bourdieu’s distinction between the form and function of food for different social classes. Bourdieu (1984a) found that the working classes “place food on the side of being and substance” while the upper classes

“introduce it into the categories of form and appearance” (888). Essentially, function refers to the material purpose of food in supplying nutrients and energy while form includes also the way food is served, consumed, and shared. With the emphasis on calorie-rich, relatively cheap foods (fast and processed food) in numerous working-class households in this study, food appears to have been seen as a material necessity, fitting under the category of function. In contrast, many of the middle to upper-middle class households emphasized the form of food as they valued home cooking, using fresh ingredients, eating meals as a family, and teaching cooking to their children. This finding resonates with other studies comparing the eating habits of working-class and middle-class households (Wills et al. 2011).

Because of these differences in food choices while growing up, it is apparent that a participant’s social class does have an impact on their food socialization environment. These differences reflect inequalities in cultural and economic capital as well as the presence of structural constraints, including food deserts and the wide availability of fast food as discussed by the United States Department of Agriculture (2010b) and Winne (2008). It appears that food consumption does serve to mark a boundary between students from different social class backgrounds, at least in terms of their consumption patterns prior to arriving on the Whitman campus.

WHITMAN LIFESTYLE

This section focuses on answering several key questions surrounding ⁴food culture at Whitman. I focus upon participants' perceptions of food culture at Whitman to examine what constitutes cultural capital and distinction in the Whitman setting. By examining what tastes are given distinction, I identify what characterizes a Whitman ⁵lifestyle. The findings in this section are primarily based upon participants' answers to the question, 'how would you describe the culture around food at Whitman?' I also asked several probes about how they related to the culture and if they would like to see anything changed. Examining the food culture at Whitman will set the stage for examining the experiences of students of different social class backgrounds in this environment.

Socialization at Whitman College

In general, participants described food culture at Whitman as promoting healthy behaviors. Included in the prevailing notion of health was an emphasis on eating organic foods. Interviews with two Bon Appétit employees reinforced these notions as they described that fried foods are not incredibly popular in the dining halls. They noted that, "if we put anything that says organic, local, the students go all over it." At Whitman, knowledge about food appears to be a form of cultural capital. For example, Daniel, a

⁴ By "food culture" I refer to the norms and values surrounding food consumption at Whitman.

⁵ By "lifestyle" I refer to how these values and norms around food consumption are manifested on a day-to-day basis.

student from a working-class background, mentioned that not knowing about food issues was “a little socially unacceptable.” A proper Whitman lifestyle is characterized by the consumption of healthy and organic products.

While students do value organic food, participants discussed the varying levels of concern that students show towards food issues. Several students described an “intense foodie culture” existing alongside a large group of students who have no interest in food issues. Nathan, a member of a food club, pointed out that there might be a perception that people really care about food issues but individual actions do not necessarily support this assumption. In this sense, there are key values around food that permeate the Whitman campus but it is by no means a culture in which these values are shared and performed by all.

Within my sample, the values of the Whitman lifestyle were partially absorbed by most participants. Positive values towards organic food permeated across class boundaries. That is, the majority of working-class students and Bon Appétit employees saw organic food in a positive light; it was a food choice that they viewed as desirable. This is significant because the majority of students from working class backgrounds were not socialized in an environment where organic food was present. Their interest in organic food reflects the presence of the Whitman culture around food and the ability of students to absorb cultural capital in this new environment.

The primary ways that students were socialized into this new culture were through the dining hall and interactions with Whitman peers. As students are required to be on a meal plan for at least their first two years at Whitman, the dining hall is an environment

that students frequently share and encounter. For some, exposure to new foods and ideas occurred the dining hall. Tom said, “the very first thing [I noticed] was walking into a dining hall where you had the vegetarian options, the vegan options.” Vegetarian and vegan lifestyles were something he had no exposure to in his socialization environment. His experiences in the dining hall provided him with cultural capital about alternative ways of eating. In addition, Bon Appétit frequently has informational handouts in the form of table toppers available on dining hall tables for students to read about issues related to sustainability. Bon Appétit as a company does attempt to buy organic and sustainable food when feasible and also has specific policies concerning the ethical purchase of products such as meat and eggs (Bon Appétit Management Company 2012). Interviews with Bon Appétit employees revealed that Bon Appétit makes an effort to serve only home-cooked meals and, for the most part, avoid processed foods. The food consumption philosophy of Bon Appétit is more similar to the socialization environment of middle to upper-middle class students than working class students. However, it is difficult to determine whether a specific culture exists around food because of the food provided by Bon Appétit or whether Bon Appétit provides the food they do because of the culture on campus. Regardless, food sustainability is an important aspect of the dining hall environment at Whitman.

In addition to socialization in the dining hall, knowledge about the importance of organic food was developed through interactions with peers. Although learning in a formal academic setting was mentioned, such as an environmental studies class, far more emphasis was placed on learning about organic food from peers or as Beth described,

“spending time with different people.” Even students who were socialized in an environment where organic food was consumed expanded their food knowledge from others. For example, Stefanie, a middle-class student who was raised in a “foodie environment,” decided to become a vegan after “someone mentioned how weird the milk industry was.” Obviously, values learned from other students have a major impact on the culture around food. For others, values around food were learned in much more subtle and non-verbal ways. For example, Melissa, a working-class student, remembered being influenced regarding what foods to buy by seeing certain brands around her dorm. Peers played a key role in socializing other students into Whitman food culture. In general, students were socialized into the Whitman culture around food through exposure in the dining hall and interactions with peers. Through these interactions, many participants began to assign values to different types of food.

Good and Bad Foods

Embedded in participants’ discussion of food culture on campus was the distinction between food choices that are or are not acceptable at Whitman. These labels were evident in the way participants talked about their own consumption decisions, others’ reactions to their choices, and the way participants made comparisons to their food consumption at home. For the most part, good foods were those that were associated with healthy habits and organic consumption such as produce from the farmers’ market. Good foods were given distinction by others and indicated a certain level of cultural capital regarding food issues. In contrast, bad foods, such as fast food and processed

food, were criticized by others and often were consumed with guilt from self or others. For example, Nora mentioned “feeling guilted into eating better” by other students. When I asked her what “better food” meant, she explained, “the whole guilt of eating organic and local and buying food that doesn’t use pesticides but it isn’t always necessarily the cheapest option.” Numerous other participants equated healthy and guilt-free eating with organic consumption. This is particularly notable considering how the label organic does not necessarily mean a product is nutritionally sound as there are products ranging from organic chips to organic sodas. Guthman (2003) describes how in addition to the problematic dichotomy of organic versus fast food, there are also implications for how people consume each type of food. She writes, “reminiscent of the opposition of gastronomy and gluttony, fast food has come to represent indulgent satiety, organic food a guiltless aesthetic” (Guthman 2003: 55). An example of the guiltlessness of organic food was visible when Jason noted that “If it’s organic, sure I will eat more than I have to.” Clearly, good foods were encouraged by others and could be consumed without guilt, in contrast to bad foods.

The distinction between good and bad foods was also evident in that several participants described fast food and organic food as two options in a dichotomy, similar to Guthman’s (2003) description. Tom, a working-class participant who did not purchase organic food, tried to strike a balance between what he saw as the two extremes of food consumption. He said, “I’m not going to go to the fried pre-packaged frozen extreme but I’m also probably not going to buy organic vegetables for example and I haven’t.” To him, unhealthy processed foods were on one end of a spectrum while organic vegetables

were perceived as healthier and consequently on the other end. On a similar note, Daniel pointed out that “even though there’s a core sustainability [at Whitman], there are a lot of people that go to McDonalds’ and Taco Bell on the weekends.” Similar to Tom, these two actions presented a contrast to one another.

The distinction between good and bad foods illustrates the choices that are used to define a Whitman lifestyle and which choices are given distinction. As previously discussed, specific lifestyles can be used to distinguish between different status groups (Weber 1946) or class groups (Bourdieu 1984). Consuming healthy and organic foods indicates identification with a proper Whitman lifestyle and allows the consumer to gain a sense of distinction and express their cultural capital. This labeling of foods as good and bad is reminiscent of Johnston and Bauman’s (2010) discussion of foodies. The foodies they interviewed described “worthy” (198) foods and consequently labeled other foods as unworthy. It appears that a similar type of selectiveness is present among Whitman students. Good and bad foods were also labeled through the maintaining of boundaries by other students.

Maintenance of Boundaries

Several participants became aware of these distinctions between good and bad food through the gatekeeping actions of other students. In several situations, students maintained these boundaries between good and bad food by criticizing others’ food choices or encouraging students to change their habits. This phenomenon was experienced most strongly by students from working-class backgrounds. These examples of gatekeeping of the boundary between good and bad food are extremely important

because they illustrate the way that food choices mark boundaries between different social groups. This distinction between good and bad foods indicates a key boundary between valued tastes but was also divided around class and status. In my study, students functioned as gatekeepers along boundaries to share cultural capital and create a uniform Whitman culture.

Two examples from interviews provide interesting scenarios in which the boundaries between healthy food and unhealthy food as well as organic and non-organic food were maintained by other students. In both examples, a student from a working-class background was confronted by a peer when their food choices fell outside the boundary of what was considered to be acceptable at Whitman. In one instance, Jessica, who is from a working class background, was eating a bowl of Captain Crunch and was approached by her section-mates, one of whom she labeled a “food snob.” They noticed her eating Captain Crunch and said, “Oh that’s a lot of sugar.” Jessica expressed confusion at this statement and said that her friends explained to her that they were raised without eating sugary cereals. By pointing out the nutritional content of Captain Crunch, the two girls attempted to educate Jessica, potentially through shaming, about healthier ways of eating by making her self-conscious of her choice. Since her taste was not associated with the requisite cultural capital, these students extended knowledge to her to convince her to change. Jessica did not internalize these distinctions as she noted that experiences like this did not really change what she was eating, although she was becoming more conscious of her eating habits.

In another example that had a large effect on the student, Jason was told by another student that he was buying the wrong kind of milk during his first week at Whitman. He recalled:

With my friends we went milk shopping and I was going to get the generic label and she's like, 'What are you doing?' And I'm like, 'Why, it's milk?' And she's like, 'You should get this one' and I'm like 'Why?' and she's like 'Blah blah blah organic.' I'm like 'Fine, fine' I'll take your [trails off]. That was around the first week I came here. I'm like organic is such a big deal here, I don't taste a difference. Afterwards, I'm like 'Ew, I want that [organic milk], not this [non-organic milk].'

In this example, his friend blatantly asked him to change his purchasing habits to buy organic milk. Jason's confusion over the idea of organic food indicated its absence within his socialization environment. Initially, Jason was not ecstatic about embracing this new way of eating and resigned himself to simply eat like those around him as illustrated in his statement "fine, fine." Beth, a student from a working-class background, had a similar reaction to pressure from others to buy organic food. She described, "then people are like 'you should buy organic' and it's like 'oh ok I guess.'" For both of these participants, they did not feel excitement about their initial experiences learning about organic food but rather a resignation towards these new practices. They both seemed to accept that that was the proper way of eating at Whitman and consequently changed their practices.

In contrast to Jessica, at the end of his comment Jason illustrated that his preferences have now fully shifted to prefer organic foods. As he spent more time in the Whitman socialization environment, Jason internalized these distinctions and now he

prefers organic food over conventional. In our interview, Jason illustrated these new distinctions between good and bad foods when discussing his mom's food choices at home. He described how when his mom shops "she brings back Cheetos and not the good stuff." By "good stuff" he was referring to non-processed, organic food. Despite his frequent consumption of processed food in his childhood, his socialization at Whitman caused him to reject those foods now labeled as "bad." In this example, the pressure from other students allowed Jason to internalize the distinction between good and bad food present at Whitman and ultimately change his preferences. Many other FGWC students internalized these boundaries between good and bad food. Students described feeling guilt or shame from themselves, rather than others, if they were not making the "correct" choices. For example, Melissa said, "Every now and then I eat some [fast food], like I'm guilty of that." Her use of the word "guilty" to describe her feelings towards fast food consumption indicate that she believes fast food is not the ideal food for consumption; this sense of guilt indicates a boundary transgression.

In both examples, the students maintaining the boundaries between good and bad were attempting to share their cultural capital with the working-class students. This stands in contrast to policing, which seeks to define boundaries between groups and exclude others to maintain class or status distinctions. Students were standing guard at the boundaries, much like a gatekeeper or border patrol, so as to let working-class students cross over; they were sharing knowledge rather than excluding them because of their choices. Through this experience with a gatekeeper, the individual making a boundary transgression was provided with self-consciousness and possibly shame surrounding their

choices. Both experiences indicate pressure to conform to the Whitman lifestyle as these actions attempted to ensure students stayed within boundaries of a proper Whitman lifestyle instead of outside. This type of gatekeeping is similar to Weber's (1968) description of open relationships. Students are freely welcome to join this new group, consisting of bearers of cultural capital and consumers of good food, but at the same time there are still material and knowledge requirements for membership. To receive distinction, similar to crossing a border, students must display their cultural capital through purchasing healthy and organic foods. Gatekeeping serves the function of encouraging consumption of good foods but also marginalizing those who do not display the proper cultural capital. Through the transmission of cultural capital, a reproduction of class-based tastes is disrupted as working-class students conform to values not present in their socialization environment.

Similar to these examples, several participants used the language of "indoctrination" and "assimilation" to describe their experiences at Whitman. This rhetoric of indoctrination and assimilation implies that there is an expectation for individuals to conform to certain values or else face a lack of acceptance by their peers. The function of gatekeeping is to provide students with cultural capital to be able to assimilate into Whitman culture. Although gatekeeping at boundaries allowed for the potential transmission of cultural capital, not all students followed the "correct" assimilation. If a student did not adopt healthy and organic practices, the student was marginalized, at least in certain social circles.

This boundary between good and bad foods was divided by class lines because of the association that good and bad foods had with socialization environments. For working-class students, many of the foods that received criticism and were labeled as “bad,” such as non-organic processed foods, were foods that they frequently consumed throughout their childhoods. In contrast, good foods, healthy and organic products, were far more frequent in the middle to upper-middle class socialization environments. Students from working-class backgrounds were not defining the culture around food at Whitman but instead were changing their tastes to conform to these new values. Those possessing the requisite cultural capital defined what constitutes distinction in the Whitman culture, as Crotty (1999) suggests. In this sense, working-class students felt pressure to assimilate into the food values of the middle and upper-middle class. In order to earn distinction and “assimilate” into Whitman, a student from a working-class background must abandon many of the foods they were socialized into liking and shift their tastes. Distinction came from adopting these new practices rather than continuing to eat a diet similar to the one experienced in their socialization environment. The consumption of different foods does serve to mark boundaries between social classes, at least when students initially enter Whitman.

For the most part, participants saw adopting healthier lifestyles as a positive change and looked back on their consumption at home with a sense of negativity. Beth described, “if people saw me buying the kinds of things my mom bought I would feel embarrassed about it, I guess.” Eating in a similar manner as she would at home would bring a certain level of shame because of the reactions of her peers. Numerous working-

class participants absorbed this new lifestyle and began to reject “bad” foods that they grew up with. Almost all working-class participants said they now consume less junk and fast food and several described losing their taste for it altogether. Consumption of these food was associated with negative bodily reactions such feeling sick or nauseous. Beth noted, “I don’t like junk food very much, I think I like got really burnt out on it and it’s kind of a reactionary spirit in me. I don’t want to eat what I ate.” In this sense, food as a marker between social classes became less apparent as students adopted certain eating practices and developed new tastes; tastes became homogenized on campus to that of the middle to upper-middle class.

At the same time, occasional boundary transgressions between good and bad food were seen as a positive act in numerous interviews with both working-class and middle to upper-middle class students. In several cases, transgression was seen as a necessary activity. Sarah expressed “honestly I want an Oreo sometimes” and “your social interactions are food should be healthy that you’re like not restricting yourself.” Similarly, Stefanie, who was a vegan, said she would indulge in chocolate every so often just to keep her sanity. One working-class student, Jason, described his disgust when talking about a friend from home who eats fast food every day. He said, “I mean once in a while it wouldn’t hurt but that’s terrible.” Minor transgressions were acceptable and sometimes celebrated when they happened occasionally and with intention. Once those habits turned into a lifestyle in which processed food was commonplace, they became associated with negativity. The occasional consumption of “bad foods” was seen as positive because it did not threaten a person’s identity or group association.

The positivity of transgressions indicates that the boundaries are slightly flexible and perhaps that possessing cultural capital surrounding food allows participants to consciously violate norms at their discretion. Having cultural capital and understanding the “rules” governing food choices at Whitman seemed to give participants more agency to intentionally set aside the norms. The idea of infrequent transgressions through “bad” foods corresponds more closely to middle and upper-middle class socialization where processed food was a special treat rather than commonplace. This type of selectivity is similar to the omnivorousness of foodies (Johnston and Bauman 2010). Potentially, the occasional consumption of processed foods in addition to organic and healthy foods allows class to be less apparent. Participants not only consume organic food in the grocery store (the most expensive option) but also consume “bad foods” occasionally, consequently making the privilege behind this type of selectivity less apparent.

Yet, for some participants, their tastes showed limited change despite their eating patterns changing. Two working-class participants, Jessica and Tom, noted that their meat consumption reduced but this was primarily due to the lack of appealing options in the dining hall as well as their reluctance to cook and prepare meat. In this sense, their tastes for meat did not change despite its lack of availability. These two students illustrated that being in a new environment with varying access to foods and new values around food does not necessarily change tastes or lifestyle choices. For example, Jessica still preferred white bread despite the availability of whole wheat in the dining hall. She described, “I like white bread better just because, I don’t know, I was raised on white

bread, I guess. But, I don't know, I just find it yummiier." This is a prime example of tastes being formed in socialization and remaining unchanged later in life.

Another example of tastes remaining unchanged was visible in Nick, a student from an upper-middle class background. Nick had no interest in issues related to food although he acknowledged its presence within the Whitman culture. Nick's example is important because it emphasizes that being upper-middle class does not mean these positive values towards organic food will necessarily be adopted. Perhaps the example of Nick points to Bourdieu's (1984) idea that having high economic capital does not automatically correspond to high cultural capital. Although he labeled himself as upper-middle class, this does not mean his family had the same amount of cultural capital than another family who self-identified as upper-middle class. Additionally, these examples provide evidence for the fact that the Whitman lifestyle was not universally absorbed by all participants. Yet, due to the way many participants internalized new tastes, a key consideration is how these changes were limited by their habitus.

Performance of a Whitman Lifestyle

As was evident in Horton's (2003) discussion of the performance of environmental activists, consumption choices are used to indicate a particular identity. Certain performances through material choices are used to stay within boundaries of what is acceptable. These performances of a Whitman lifestyle were visible in many interviews. In contrast to the judgment and guilt experienced by some working-class students, students in food clubs did not express the same kind of social pressure or

describe having their food choices criticized. It did not appear problematic for these middle to upper-middle class students to perform a Whitman lifestyle. This makes sense as all of them make it a priority to buy organic food, however, this is particularly interesting because a number of these students were not aware of organic food until they came to Whitman. This indicates that the socialization developed in their habitus at home made these new social performances around food easier to fill. It is possible that these participants already had cultural capital surrounding food because of their household environment that was easily adapted to absorb values concerning healthy and organic eating. For these participants, the performance of a Whitman lifestyle through food consumption created less tension for themselves as well as those around them (will be discussed in next section). These new distinctions between good and bad food at Whitman fit more closely to the lifestyle into which they were socialized into at home.

Although a number of working-class students described their food preferences changing, it is important to consider whether these changes indicate a change in habitus or an enhanced ability to negotiate boundaries correctly within a given situation. In addition, to what extent are working-class students able to successfully perform the Whitman lifestyle? This is a significant question since the change in socialization environment of working-class participants is fairly drastic in contrast to many of the food club students. Several working-class students actively performed to negotiate the boundaries of what was acceptable at Whitman. For example, Melissa, a first-year student, recalled her thought process behind picking an item to bring to a potluck. She described, “I had to look for a certain brand because I know certain people don’t eat that

here or it's not very accepted...I feel like if I bought something processed they would have been like 'Oh, thanks' but then nobody would eat it." For her, making this choice to not bring processed food was an active process that required consideration rather than something that felt completely natural. She was aware of the norms regulating eating on the Whitman campus and attempted to perform them to not feel out of place. Although her preferences for food have changed as she described now preferring organic and healthy food, this indicates that her habitus has remained largely the same since she had to consciously think about the decision. If these tastes were part of her habitus or even felt natural to her habitus, her choice for non-processed food might not necessarily have been conscious to her and would have instead felt natural. Although many working-class students cared about food issues, sometimes motivation for eating a certain way was derived from external forces (i.e. peers) rather than something inherent in their habitus. This limiting nature of the habitus made these new performances around food harder to fulfill naturally which stands in contrast to students from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds for whom these social performances felt more natural.

For working-class participants, their ability to properly perform a Whitman lifestyle was limited by their access to economic and cultural capital and even a tension between the two. For most, the devotion of economic capital to organic food sources went against their habitus while growing up. For example, Beth mentioned that it is hard for her to buy organic food because of her focus on cost-effectiveness. She noted, "I think that mindset is really hard for me to get past because it's like this isn't cost effective so I just don't do it." Even though she noted that she had enough money to purchase mostly

organic products, the attitudes that she had towards money, formed as a result of her working-class background and her family's concern for money, made it difficult for her to justify purchasing organic food. She had the requisite cultural capital surrounding food but her attitude towards economic capital limited her actions. Although price was perceived as a barrier for the majority of participants, there is potential that working-class students have less access to the economic capital required to purchase organic food in the grocery stores. Even though farmers' market offered potential savings, there was a vast array of opinion concerning the price of farmers' market goods.

It also appeared that knowledge of organic sources, cultural capital, limited working-class participants' desire for organic foods. Several FGWC participants who were not especially interested in organic food mentioned that they thought that farmers' markets were more expensive than supermarkets. In contrast, food club participants frequently mentioned that farmers' market produce is cheaper than that in the supermarket, which was reinforced by the research of Flamm et al. (2011). The perceptions and attitudes that participants have towards the cost of these sources, often informed by cultural capital, might prevent them from considering these options. As Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) described, education and perceptions of organic food sources plays a role in encouraging or discouraging consumption. In sum, the economic and cultural capital of working-class participants made the performance of a Whitman lifestyle more difficult than for middle to upper-middle class students.

Despite these positive values towards organic food held by many participants from working class backgrounds, none of them were directly involved in any of the food-

related clubs on campus. When I followed up with several students who were extremely interested in food issues about why they had decided not to join, Nora mentioned lack of time as a major constraint. She explained, “because I'm not incredibly invested in food-related topics I feel a bit intimidated when I'm around people who are really passionate about food politics.” She implied that to join these types of clubs a student has to have a certain amount of commitment to these issues. Many of these working-class students who had an interest in food issues were also heavily involved in FGWC or other clubs such as Club Latino and could not find the time to devote to other meetings. This suggests that non-working class students were more able to fully embrace their values surrounding food and join a food club because they either had the extra time or felt more comfortable in that environment. Middle to upper-middle class students had an easier time performing the Whitman lifestyle because of their increased economic capital as well as their previous cultural capital surrounding food. Because of the ways in which working-class participants were limited from fully performing a Whitman lifestyle by their habitus, this reinforces Williams’ (1995) idea that change in an individual is limited within the scope of their habitus.

Awareness of Boundaries

Although assimilation in the Whitman culture was seen as a positive change by the majority of participants, several students were conscious of the class associations behind these boundaries between good and bad food. Beth, a senior from a working-class background provided an excellent example of the negative impacts of policing:

So I think [in] a lot of ways I've fallen in line and in a lot of ways have been assimilated into Whitman food culture but I think it's weird and I think it's hard for my mom and for my family to understand the shift...So I think, yeah I agree with it in a lot of ways but at the same time I don't like the stigma around eating a different way. And I can understand why it exists and 'Well why aren't you eating better and why aren't you eating food that's better for yourself and for the environment.' Sure, I understand that attitude but at the same time I think there's also judgment behind it and I think that that judgment also falls along class lines and I think that's really problematic. It's definitely something that's come up in FGWC meetings a lot as like people being embarrassed because they're like 'Oh I really like Chef Boyardee' and people are like 'Why? That's disgusting?' And it's like 'That's cause I was raised eating it, that's why.' So I think that that attitude can be a slippery slope between "You should eat healthy and sustainable" and judgment.

Beth implied that the labeling of certain eating practices as "bad" accentuates class divides in food consumption, as the "bad" food practices are associated with the working class. Her critique of the food movement is similar to that of Alkon and Agyeman (2011) in that individual choices are judged outside of the social and economic context of their making. Numerous participants echoed these sentiments in their discussion of how they wished the culture on campus could be changed. In the context of social boundaries, participants emphasized that these boundaries between good and bad food (and between classes) should be less strictly enforced or at least enforced with some understanding of why taste differences exist. Nora, a working-class student, emphasized, "I think if the food culture at Whitman were to change it needs to be accepting of the fact that there are lots and lots of people out there, even at Whitman, who can't afford this kind of food and it shouldn't necessarily be a culture that condemns eating bad food but more an embrace

of eating better food.” The implication for these comments is that although boundaries might be maintained with the positive intention of spreading healthier and sustainable practices, there are still negative consequences for those on the margins, primarily FGWC students. Although boundaries might appear to divide healthy and unhealthy foods, they can also reinforce distinctions between classes and marginalize students from lower-income backgrounds.

Placing judgment on individual food choices does not necessarily address the broader issues at play concerning barriers to healthy food consumption. Emily, a participant from an upper-middle class background involved in a food club, was cognizant of the impact of food culture on other students. Although she did not describe experiencing any pressure to consume certain foods or receiving criticism about her food choices, she was aware of the potential negative consequences of Whitman food culture. Emily described:

I relate to a lot of the issues but I feel again like I think a lot about the paternalism and the privilege in it. I think Whitman students don't always [trails off]...like it's easy to say “Buy organic” when you can afford it and your parents are paying for your college but not everyone can do that and people forget everyone has different life circumstances that prevent them from sharing those values.

Emily enjoyed her lifestyle of consuming organic food but recognized that she cannot pressure others to live that way because of the economic capital required to live such a lifestyle. Her recognition of this impact is important because it indicates that there is some awareness of these negative effects of boundary maintenance by both class groups

within my sample. In addition to the experiences working-class students retold of being pressured by other students, socialization at Whitman created tension and confusion for their families when they returned home.

Returning Home

Changes in the tastes of students from working-class backgrounds were especially evident when they returned home during school breaks. Examining how students related to their home socialization environment is particularly interesting because it reflects on the internalization of new tastes and whether these tastes fit into their habitus. Working-class students described returning home as difficult because many of them adopted new practices at school such as vegetarianism, veganism, or valuing healthy and organic foods. These new preferences limited their food consumption options at home. Although frequent transgression of boundaries at Whitman through eating “bad foods” might be met with criticism by others or internalized shame, these consequences were not necessarily present in the working-class home environment. For example, Nora, a working-class participant, described eating at home as a place where she did not feel guilt consuming certain foods. She contrasted this to Whitman where she described feeling “guilted” into eating “good” foods. There is no shame around eating “bad” foods in her home environment because consumption is removed from the social context in which shame is present. Perhaps for Nora, this lack of guilt at home indicates that there is less tension with her habitus at home than at Whitman.

However, some working-working class participants completely avoided fast and processed food and felt guilty about after eating it, even at home. This guilt came internally rather from those around them. The presence of guilt indicates an internalization of tastes and distinctions from the Whitman culture. Consequently, food consumption at home felt more natural for some participants while for others this transition was extremely difficult. Although it is difficult to determine, it is possible that the habitus of some working-class students was more flexible and easily allowed them to adapt to the Whitman lifestyle. At the very least, internalizing the taste for “good” foods at Whitman made the return home difficult for the majority of working-class students.

Parents’ Responses

For working-class students that discussed expressing their new preferences to their families, their avoidance of fast food and processed food was confusing to their families. Jason, in particular, was very adamant about rejecting fast food and encouraging his family to eat healthier, much to the dismay of his mother and friends at home. According to Jason, his mom described him as “too picky” and complained that “Whitman refined [his] taste buds.” When they went grocery shopping when he was home from school, he pressured his mom to make healthier choices. As a result, he admitted that his mom now dislikes grocery shopping with him. In this sense, Jason’s new preferences were a part of the Whitman lifestyle but appeared as a burden to his mother. These finding support Bourdieu’s idea that cultural capital varies across social fields. When participants bring cultural capital back into their home life and

consequently enter a new social field, they are not given distinction but are instead greeted with confusion and at times frustration. It was not easy to transmit their new cultural capital back to their home environment.

In another example, after reading *Fast Food Nation* (Schlosser 2002) in high school, Melissa described a conversation with her mom concerning the fact that Melissa would not like to feed her children fast food. Her mom responded with, “well, I fed you that and you’re ok.” Her mother clearly objected to Melissa’s new negative values towards fast food. These internalized tastes by Jason and Melissa were not compatible with the habitus in their socialization environment. In general, most working-class parents did not adopt the new values of their children. These values did not resonate with the habitus of most parents and at some points even offended them. An interesting aspect of these two examples is that both students were attempting to share cultural capital with their parents, similar to the experiences they both had at Whitman. By encouraging the consumption of “good” foods (as defined by the Whitman culture) these students provided a similar experience to their families as they initially had at Whitman.

Although many interactions with parents around food choices were a result of criticisms or discussions with their child, Tom, a working-class student, described a situation in which his parents noticed a change that was unconscious to him. During a break from Whitman, he went out to dinner with his family. He ordered water at the restaurant instead of soda and his family was confused. He recalled:

They’re like ‘Why are you drinking water?’ And I said “Oh, I hadn’t thought about it.’ I just had ordered water because I got used to not drinking soda...and they saw it as like ‘Are you doing it because you don’t want to pay for the

soda?’ They saw it like that and I didn’t see it like that at all. It was more like ‘Well, I just don’t want soda.’

This example is particularly significant because it illustrates Tom’s internalization of the values of eating healthy food, although he did not make it a priority to buy organic food. Clearly, not all changes are fully conscious as his tastes around food subconsciously changed. When his new practice was not consistent with his socialization environment at home where soda was frequently consumed, his family was confused.

These responses of working-class families stood in contrast to several reactions of middle to upper-middle class parents. Several participants mentioned slight tension with their parents, exclusively ⁶fathers, because of the extra cost required for organic food. This shift to organic food for these families seemed to be relatively painless in comparison to working-class families. However, many parents, or at least one parent, adopted these new eating practices as a result of the values of their child. I speculate that this was an easier shift to make for these families because food already had an important place in their household (i.e. cooking). Like their children, perhaps parents of these students already had the cultural capital, and required economic capital, to more easily adopt these new values into their lifestyle. Camille mentioned, “sometimes it feels like

⁶ It was interesting that food club students reported that it was primarily their fathers that had trouble with the cost-effectiveness of organic food. However, this corresponds to research that indicates that women are more likely to shop at farmers’ markets and purchase organic food (Baker et al. 2009; Pearson et al. 2010; Wolf et al. 2005; Zepeda 2009).

my parents don't always understand [my] reasons for being vegetarian. But they're very supportive." Although her parents were slightly confused about the philosophy behind her new eating practices, they made it a priority to accommodate her desires and purchase more sustainable and meatless choices. These differences between the responses and attitudes of parents indicate that middle to upper-middle class parents, like their children, have an easier time adopting new values towards food potentially because their habitus is compatible with this new cultural capital.

Practicing Restraint

Although food consumption was the main focus of my interviews with participants, an interesting finding emerged out of participants' discussion of restraint, especially in the context of bodies. As Bourdieu (1984) discussed, social class differences regarding food reflect differences in the way each class thinks about their bodies. As there were specific class-based dimensions that I found in terms of eating habits, it makes sense that this would correspond to class dimensions associated with body. As several working-class participants adopted new food practices that were far different from their socialization environment, they also began to see the purpose of food in a different way. For a number of them, this included practicing restraint in their eating choices, seeing food as form rather than function. Prior to attention Whitman, Melissa described how whenever there was ample food available she would feast. She noted:

Me and some friends, whenever we're in new environments we feel like we have to eat a lot. Because we feel like it's not going to be there...and I feel like that's kind of how we grew up, eat as much as you can, like at that moment.

She said that this pattern took a while to change and now to control her eating she writes down everything she eats. This is a prime example of adopting a relationship with food that is based on restraint in choices. Similarly, Jason describes treating his initial time at Whitman like a feast. He noted, “Like the first week when I first got here it’s like food in unlimited quantities...Now that I came back I’m like the food isn’t going anywhere.” Like Melissa, he gradually had to adopt a new way of looking at food and practice restraint with his eating choices.

The use of restraint in food choices took additional forms. For several participants, vegetarianism and veganism became a means to lose weight and control their body shape. For others, this new restraint over food choices was disturbing as they thought it could lead to removing food entirely and restricting food in an unhealthy way. Tom described, “That’s probably one thing [I would change] because I think the way that a lot of people see eating healthier is eating less or less quantity.” In addition, one upper-middle class participant, Camille, was critical of this culture and described it as “healthy to the extreme.” This concern was shared by another food club student who discussed her recent struggle with anorexia. She noted “my interest in food definitely contributed to my anxiety around eating.” As would be expected, very serious problems can result from practicing too much restraint with food choices.

In fact, researchers have suggested a connection between higher-class status and increased risk for eating disorders (Darmon 2009). Based on his interviews with anorexic medical patients, Darmon (2009) saw a relationship between Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of habitus and the development of anorexia. Included in this notion was the avoidance of

fattening and heavy foods associated with the working-class and practicing restraint with food choices. He wrote, “‘the anorexic ethos’ ...reveals close allegiance with specific upper- and middle-class attitudes and values” (Darmon 2009:724). In the same way that there is a class-based dimension to food choices, it appears as though these choices have implications for the development of eating disorders and other problems that go along with practicing excessive restraint in eating.

CONCLUSION

My study suggests that social class can have a major influence on the role of food in the socialization environment, with economic and cultural capital having important implications for how food is accessed and consumed. Food consumption initially served as a marker between social class boundaries when participants arrived at Whitman. Through interactions with other students and exposure to new foods in the dining hall, participants were socialized into the Whitman culture and many “assimilated” and began to shift their tastes. Behaviors that received distinction and indicated cultural capital (healthy and organic foods) at Whitman College were not as present in working-class households so more effort was required for those students to assimilate. Consequently, to pressure working-class students to adopt new cultural capital around food, others students criticized their consumption of bad foods. A student was marginalized if they did not partially or fully assimilate by absorbing cultural capital and changing their eating practices. As participants spent more time in the Whitman socialization environment and adopted practices associated with the middle and upper-middle class, class distinctions became less apparent.

An important implication of this assimilation is that, even though lifestyles and cultures can be positive and promote healthy behaviors, it is crucial to consider how the judgment behind food choices affects those individuals on the margins of boundaries. Working-class students described having their food preferences judged or shamed by other students. These judgments took place outside of a broader understanding of why differences in taste exist in the first place. This is problematic because it illustrates that

the food movement, at least in the context of Whitman, has the potential to alienate individuals from lower social classes.

Despite the cultural capital that was available at Whitman for students to internalize new tastes, numerous working-class students had difficulty with the performance of a proper Whitman lifestyle. Because working-class students have a different habitus and varying access to economic and cultural capital than the upper classes, these new performances did not necessarily feel natural or appropriate. These social performances around food felt more natural for food club students who were socialized in middle to upper-middle class environments. Although a certain social class background does not necessarily indicate that certain values will be adopted, it does appear easier for middle to upper-middle class students to more naturally fulfill these social performances around food and bring those values back into their lives at home. In sum, organic consumption does appear to be connected to and hindered by issues of social class. This connection between social class and the ability to participate fully in the current food movement has enormous implications for proceeding forward to create change in the food system.

Implications for the Food Movement

My research has important implications for a discussion on how best to ameliorate the problems of industrial agriculture. This is a key consideration due to the numerous negative impacts of industrial agriculture and the necessity for change away from an industrial model (both organic and non-organic). My research shows that students are

able to internalize positive values towards organic food (cultural capital) despite not being socialized in an environment where it was valued. The values of the food movement clearly resonated with many participants regardless of their social class. This is positive in the context of the food movement because it indicates that participants are able to readily adopt positive values towards organic food. However, some working-class students were not able to transform those values into action because of their limited economic capital. Primarily, middle to upper-middle class participants and their families had the cultural and economic capital to support a consumption-based social movement. Although there is potential to spread organic values through changing individual choices, participants are still limited by their position within the social structure; thus, focusing on changing individual choices does not address the roots of the problems. In order to create the greatest amount of change to our food system, communities from all social class categories need to be involved (Alkon and Agyeman 2011). Focusing on individual choices is also problematic because of the moral value placed behind consuming certain types of foods, as Guthman (2003) describes, and the judgment that is placed on others because of these choices.

The food movement needs to focus on creating structural changes such as making fresh, healthy options more available in food deserts. Activism should address larger changes within the government to decrease the power of agribusiness such as reducing subsidies for monoculture corn and soy production and create subsidies for small, diversified farms. Structural changes would allow more people to receive the benefits of a more just food system rather than a small segment of society as in the current model. If

food movement supporters, myself included, hope to move organic beyond niche markets, it is important to consider new methods of growing, marketing, and distributing food outside of current models that could be more accessible to all populations. New strategies could include: a greater focus on community gardening and other non-market means of growing food, reducing barriers to farmers' market use, and most importantly, thinking critically about the larger meaning behind food choices. To consider the best strategies for creating structural change, future research should examine how social class makes different types of food activism more or less feasible. For example, some communities might be able to readily embrace the development of a community garden in their neighborhood while others might be more supportive of a farmers' market. The important point is that there is no perfect solution to such large and systemic problems, but change has to encompass a broad strategy with a focus on structural as well as individual changes.

Importance of a Food Justice Framework

A fruitful approach to balance the interplay between individual choice and structural change is found in the food justice movement. The food justice movement focuses on ameliorating the social, environmental, and economic injustices of the modern food system (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). If the mainstream food movement embraced a food justice perspective this would allow rhetoric to move towards a discussion of inequalities in access to healthy and sustainable food rather than perpetuate the elitism already present in the mainstream food movement. Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) explain the

benefits of such an approach: “food justice has the capacity to reorient the food movement in both ways—to prioritize the need to address inequities while seeking to change the system as a whole” (7). By addressing larger structural inequalities and involving a more diverse group of supporters, a transformation of the food system is more feasible. By exploring the intersection of social class and the food movement, my research illuminated areas that serve to perpetuate elitism rather than advance the agenda of the food movement. The implications of this research can be utilized to alter the social strategies of the food movement to involve people across social class boundaries. Only if all social classes are able to participate in creating change to the industrial food system will transformation take place.

References

- Alkon, Alison Hope, and Julian Agyeman. 2011. "Introduction: The Food Movement as Polyculture." Pp. 1-20 in *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*, edited by A. H. Alkon and J. Agyeman, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Allen, Patricia. 2010. "Realizing Justice in Local Food Systems." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy, and Society* 3(2):295-308.
- Baker, Daniel, Kelly Hamshaw, and Jane Kolodinsky. 2009. "Who Shops at the Market? Using Consumer Surveys to Grow Farmers' Markets: Findings from a Regional Market in Northwestern Vermont." *Journal of Extension* 47(6):1-9.
- Barker, Debi. 2002. "Globalization and Industrial Agriculture." Pp. 249- 263 in *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*, edited by A. Kimbrell. Sausalito, CA: Island Press.
- Beardsworth, Alan and Teresa Keil. 1997. *Sociology on the Menu: An Invitation to the Study of Food and Society*. London: Routledge.
- Bell, David and Gill Valentine. 1997. *Consuming Geographies: We are Where We Eat*. London: Routledge.
- Berg, Bruce L. 2009. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bon Appétit Management Company. 2012. "Kitchen Principles." Retrieved 8 April 2012. (<http://www.cafebonappetit.com/our-approach/kitchen-principles>).

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984a. "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste." Pp. 870-893 in *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*, edited by D. B. Grusky. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- , 1984b. "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Briscoe, Mark. 2002. "Water: The Overtapped Resource." Pp. 181- 190 in *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*, edited by A. Kimbrell. Sausalito, CA: Island Press.
- Colasanti, Kathryn J.A., David S. Conner, and Susan B. Smalley. 2010. "Understanding Barriers to Farmers' Market Patronage in Michigan: Perspectives from Marginalized Populations." *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 5(3):316-338.
- Cooperative Institutional Research Program First-Year Survey. 2011. "Incoming Student Family Income." Walla Walla, WA: Whitman College.
- Crotty, Pat. 1999. "Food and Class." Pp. 135-148 in *A Sociology of Food and Nutrition: The Social Appetite*, edited by J. Germov and L. Williams, South Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Darmon, Muriel. 2009. "The Fifth Element: Social Class and the Sociology of Anorexia." Retrieved 4 April 2012. (<http://soc.sagepub.com/content/43/4/717>).
- Dettman, Rachael L., and Carolyn Dimitri. 2009. "Who's Buying Organic Vegetables? Demographic Characteristics of U.S. Consumers." *Journal of Food Products Marketing* 16(1):79-91.

- Fisher, Andrew. 2002. "Community Food Security: A Promising Alternative to the Global Food System." Pp. 295-302 in *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*, edited by A. Kimbrell. Sausalito, CA: Island Press.
- Flamm, Laura J. 2011. "Barriers to EBT Use at Farmers' Markets: Lessons in Empowerment Evaluation from Rural Ohio." *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition* 6:54-63.
- Forbes, Cristin B. and Alison H. Harmon. 2007. "Buying Into Community Supported Agriculture: Strategies for Overcoming Income Barriers." *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition* 2(2/3):65-79.
- Germov, J. and L. Williams. 1999. *A Sociology of Food and Nutrition: The Social Appetite*. South Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1971. *Capitalism & Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim, and Max Weber*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gottlieb, Robert and Anupama Joshi. 2010. *Food Justice*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Grace, Christina, Thomas Grace, Nancy Becker, and Judy Lyden. 2007. "Barriers to Using Farmers' Markets: An Investigation of Food Stamp Clients' Perception." *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition* 2(1):55-75.
- Guthman, Julie. 2003. "Fast Food/Organic Food: Reflexive Tastes and the Making of 'Yuppie Chow.'" *Social and Cultural Geography* 4(1):45-58.

- , 2004. *Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California*.
Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Hinrichs, Clare and Kathy S. Kremer. 2002. "Social Inclusion in a Midwest Local Food System Project." *Journal of Poverty* 6(1):65-90.
- Horton, Dave. 2003. "Green Distinctions: The Performance of Identity among Environmental Activists." *The Editorial Board of Sociology Review*.
- Ikerd, John E. 2008. *Crisis & Opportunity: Sustainability in American Agriculture*.
Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Johnston, Josee and Shyon Baumann. 2010. *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*. New York: Routledge.
- Kenner, Robert. 2008. *Food Inc.* Magnolia Home Entertainment.
- Kimbrell, Andrew. 2002. "Seven Deadly Myths of Industrial Agriculture." Pp. 3-32 in *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*, edited by A. Kimbrell. Sausalito, CA: Island Press.
- Lareau, Annette. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lovell, Terry. 2000. "Thinking Feminism With and Against Bourdieu." *The Editorial Board of Sociology Review*.
- McGuirt, Jared T., Stephanie B. Jilcott, Haiyong Liu, and Alice S. Ammerman. 2011. "Produce Price Savings for Consumers at Farmers' Markets Compared to Supermarkets in North Carolina." *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition* 6:86-98.

- McKenney, Jason. 2002. "Artificial Fertility: The Environmental Costs of Industrial Fertilizers." Pp. 121-129 in *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*, edited by A. Kimbrell. Sausalito, CA: Island Press.
- Nestle, Marion. 2006. *What to Eat*. New York: North Point Press.
- Norberg-Hodge, Helena, Peter Goering, and John Page. 2001. *From the Ground Up: Rethinking Industrial Agriculture*. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd.
- Pearson, David, Joanna Henryks, and Hannah Jones. 2010. "Organic Food: What We Know (and do not know) about Consumers." *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*.
- Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Schlosser, Eric. 2002. *Fast Food Nation*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Sligh, Michael. 2002. "Organics at the Crossroads: The Past and the Future of the Organic Movement." Pp. 272- 282 in *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*, edited by A. Kimbrell. Sausalito, CA: Island Press.
- Spector, Rebecca. 2002. "Fully Integrated Food Systems: Regaining Connections between Farmers and Consumers." Pp. 288-294 in *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*, edited by A. Kimbrell. Sausalito, CA: Island Press.
- United States Department of Agriculture. 2010a. "Data Sets: Organic Production." Retrieved 24 February 2012. (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/organic/>).

- 2010b. "Food Deserts." Retrieved 20 February 2012.
(<http://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts/foodDeserts.aspx>).
- 2012. "Farmers Markets and Local Food Marketing." Retrieved 4 February 2012
(<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateS&leftNav=WholesaleandFarmersMarkets&page=WFMFarmersMarketGrowth&description=Farmers%20Market%20Growth&acct=frmrdirnkt>).
- Webb, Jen, Tony Schiarto, and Geoff Danaher. 2002. *Understanding Bourdieu*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Webber, Caroline B. and Jamie S. Dollahite. 2008. "Attitudes and Behaviors of Low-Income Food Heads of Household Toward Sustainable Food Concepts." *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition* 3(2/3):186-205.
- Weber, Max. 1946. "Class, Status, Party." Pp. 114-124 in *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*, edited by D. B. Grusky. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- 1947. "Status Groups and Classes." Pp. 124-128 in *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*, edited by D. B. Grusky. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- 1968. "Open and Closed Relationships." Pp. 128-132 in *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*, edited by D. B. Grusky. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Williams, Simon J. 1995. "Theorising Class, Health and Lifestyles: Can Bourdieu Help Us?" *Sociology of Health & Illness* 17(5):577-604.

- Wills, Wendy, Kathryn Backett-Milburn, Mei-Li Roberts, and Julia Lawton. 2011. "The Framing of Social Class Distinctions Through Family Food and Eating Practices." *The Sociological Review* 59(4):725-740.
- Winne, Mark. 2008. *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Whitman College. 2012. "Class Profile." Retrieved 13 March 2012. (<http://www.whitman.edu/content/admission/learn-more/profile>).
- Wolf, Marianne McGarry, Arianne Spittler, and James Ahern. 2005. "A Profile of Farmers' Market Consumers and the Perceived Advantages of Produce Sold at Farmers' Markets." *Journal of Food Distribution Research* 36(1):192-201.
- Zepeda, Lydia. 2009. "Which Little Piggy Goes to Market? Characteristics of US Farmers' Market Shoppers." *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 33:250-257.

Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Questions for Whitman Students

1) Can you tell me about yourself?

Probes: What kind of activities do you do on campus?

Why did you decide to come to Whitman?

2) Can you tell me about your life at home?

Probes: Where is your hometown? What are your parents' professions?

3) Why did you decide to get involved in Real Food Challenge/Student Agriculture at Whitman?

(If applicable)

Probes: When did you become interested in food issues?

Why are food issues important to you?

4) Why did you decide to get involved in the First Generation/Working class student group? (If applicable)

5) What kind of foods did you eat growing up?

6) Where did your family buy most of their food?

7) Did your family buy organic, local, or sustainable food when you were growing up?

Probe: Why do you think that is?

8) What factors do you consider when making food purchases?

Probe: Has this changed during your time at Whitman?

9) Where do you do most of your food shopping?

Probe: Are you on a meal plan?

What kinds of foods do you buy?

10) Are you interested in issues surrounding food?

Probes: Which issues are you most interested in? Why is that?

Does this affect what you purchase?

11) Do you buy organic or local food in the grocery store? Do you shop at the farmers' market? Do you have a 'Made in Walla Walla' box?

Probes: Why or why not?

12) Do you perceive price as a barrier for buying organic food in your own life?

13) Has your eating changed since coming to Whitman?

Probes: How so?

How has your consumption of organic food changed?

14) Have your attitudes towards food changed since coming to Whitman?

Probes: How so?

15) How would you describe the culture around food at Whitman?

Probes: How well do you feel you relate to this culture?

Do you feel pressure to buy or eat certain foods?

How would you like to see this culture changed?

16) Do you think your experience with food differs from other Whitman students?

Probe: How so?

17) Is there anything else important you think I should know?

18) Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Bon Appétit Employees

- 1) How would you describe the culture around food at Whitman?
- 2) Do you think your experience with food differs from Whitman students?

Probe: How so?

- 3) How do you feel about organic food? Local food?
- 4) Do you shop at the farmers' market?

Probe: Why or why not?

- 5) Where do you do most of your food shopping?
- 6) What kinds of foods do you like to buy?
- 7) Are you interested in issues related to food production?

Probes: Why or why not? Which issues?

If so, when did you become interested in food issues?

Does this affect what your purchase?

- 8) What factors do you consider when making food purchases?
- 9) What kinds of food did you eat growing up?