

2016

Coming to the Table: Exploring the Narrative of Cafe Reconcile and Learning in the Kitchen

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COMING TO THE TABLE: EXPLORING THE NARRATIVE OF CAFÉ RECONCILE AND
LEARNING IN THE KITCHEN

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by

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May 2017

I dedicate my dissertation to my family, who have always supported and loved me, and who always believed that I could do this. Tom and Arlene, thank you for letting me go all over the country to pursue my education. Both of you took to the road with me, supported me financially when I needed it, and never created a reality for me where pursuit of my education and becoming a doctor was not possible. Even when you didn't make me study for a test, dad, or when you wouldn't stop pestering me about internships, mom – you both cheered me on and that meant the world. You are amazing parents and I really could not have been more supported in every way by both of you. I love you both. To Lisa, thank you for being my big sister, my fearless leader, and for forging the way. I am so very lucky to be your little sister. Without you, I would not be who I am. To Mike, thank you for coming into our life with a bang and a fight, for welcoming me into your home with my sister when I needed one most, and for still being able to recite the first 20 lines of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. You're a great big brother. And to Kayla, and JJ – lights of my life. Kayla, words cannot express how you changed all of our lives when you were born. From "putting on a show" to watching you perform in shows, you amaze me with your talent and generosity of soul. And JJ, last but certainly not least, you brought the spark and the sass into our lives when you were born – you also changed our lives in ways we could not imagine. Your unending creativity and your endless enthusiasm for life makes this a better world for all of us. We would not be complete without either of you.

To my husband, Dustin: thank you for not divorcing me when you finished your degrees before me. You have shown me endless support and I am so fortunate to have you as my husband and my best friend. I dedicate this dissertation to you for all of your encouragement, your unending patience, and your "just do this" mentality. You introduced me to this very special place and because of you, New Orleans and all of its possibilities has meaning for me. All the articles and menus you have read to me over the years has showed me how invested you are in this passion of mine and that has helped to keep me motivated. I love you. And now, I am officially more learned than you.

And finally, I dedicate this dissertation to Millie and Melpomene. To Melpomene for being my couch companion as I put this dissertation together and to Millie for being my paperweight, my muse, and my loyal pet all of these years.

Without all of you, I would be sitting alone at the Thanksgiving table.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I'd like to thank my Dissertation Committee. Entering into this program and coming into all of your spheres of knowledge and thought has allowed me to understand my scholarship in ways I never could have imagined. Your influence has empowered me to take the various strands of my education and weave them together into a cohesive system that is bigger than myself and the sum of my experiences. Through all of you, I better comprehend how to join my love of literature, education, teaching, and student development.

Dr. Mitchell, thank you for taking me on out of another program and allowing me to follow my passion for this field in creative ways. You have listened to me, pushed me, and made me laugh. At times, you have acted as guidance counselor, as administrator, and as principal. But most importantly, you have been my teacher and I am so glad to have attended the School of Roland. I am a better student for it. Your faith in my topic and your support has motivated me and inspired me to push forward and reach new levels of thought.

Dr. Hendry, thank you for introducing me to curriculum theory, for showing me that time is not linear, and for inspiring me to be creative and innovative in how I think about learning. In your classroom, you have provided me many opportunities to explore ideas about curriculum and learning in different forms. You have challenged my thinking in so many ways and I am grateful that you believed in my topic.

Dr. Denise, thank you for pushing me to be a better writer and a better thinker. You encouraged me to present at my first conference and you have been with me until the very end, even from halfway across the world. Because of you, I am aware of how important it is to be an ethical student and researcher, of the possibility inherent in my topic, and of what it means to be part of a scholarly community.

Dr. Robinson, thank you so much for joining my committee and lending your voice to my studies, my research, and my dissertation. Your unique perspective has allowed me to take a step back and view my research through fresh eyes and a new lens.

Celena, Julie, Maylen – I miss the days we were all on the same floor of Grace King Hall (although I don't miss those nights in the basement of GKH doing stats....). You are wonderful, strong women who have walked this path with me, holding my hand every step of the way.

Reagan Mitchell - you are my writing partner, my thinking partner, and my conversation partner. Because of you, the experience I have had in this program holds the meaning that it does. You have challenged me to think in new directions and supported me when I really, truly thought this just wasn't going to happen. My conversations with you have inspired me and motivated me.

And finally, I'd like to thank all of the students, teachers, and administrators at Café Reconcile: Stewart, Kathy, Rachel, Mr. O, Miss G., Stephanie, Devine, and everybody else..... without you, your amazing vision and drive, and the will and passion of the students in the Café Reconcile community, I would not have been inspired to embark on this journey. Café Reconcile is an incredible place of change, possibility, and love. Thank you for letting me into your space and welcoming into your worlds. My world is a bigger, better place for knowing all of you.

ABSTRACT

In New Orleans, Louisiana, food shapes much of the discourse around cultural history and identity. Residents of this city identify with the historical and cultural significance of the dishes they cook, and as a result foodways as a curriculum emerges as a way to engage individuals in their learning and development. This study is concerned with how students learn in a space where the classroom is not just four walls and rows of desks, but instead is reimagined to also include a kitchen, restaurant, and the context of the local community. Furthermore, this study explores what learning looks like in a space where food and life skills dominate the daily learning activity instead of the national curriculum.

Through six months of site observation and 10 semi-structured interviews, I explored the experiences of students going through the life-skills and food curriculum offered at my research site, Café Reconcile. Through their narratives, the following themes emerged: (1) students desire to be part of a community that explicitly shows care; (2) students are empowered and generate internal motivation to persist after gaining membership into the learning community; (3) the shape of learning changes from theory to application within a kitchen space; and (4) within this type of space, learning how to navigate cultures of power takes precedence over the food content.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.
William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet (Act II, scene ii)

I would like to open up this dissertation with one of Shakespeare's most well-known quotes. These lines are spoken by Juliet, upon finding out that Romeo, the object of her affection, is a Montague and member of the family of her enemy. Even though she has just met Romeo, Juliet senses that he is a person worthy of her love despite him bearing the name of Montague. In these simple lines holds a profound truth: it is not our labels that define us, but instead who we are and what we do that determines our truth in the world. If a rose was called something else, it would still smell like a rose and look like a rose, and isn't the essence of something, after all, how we should determine what that something is? For myself, when I started on this journey, I believed my experiences would tell me one thing. I named it, I followed it, and I truly expected the culmination of my coursework, studies, and research to live up to the idea of that name. And perhaps, in some ways, it did. But, in some other ways, the work I was doing did not and as I look to this quote to frame my meaning, I can only conclude that the smell of my work is just as sweet but my ability to call it a rose is up for debate.

In the beginning of my research, I believed I was going to write about a "creole curriculum". To me, this was a curriculum grounded in the cuisine and foodways of Louisiana. I thought my research would echo a lot of what I was being exposed to in the various texts about Cajun and Creole foodways I was reading, thinking about, talking about, and writing about. I believed that foodways as a curriculum revealed a culturally history and explored the ways in which a culture's identity developed. The basic tenets of this curriculum were the ways people developed and shared recipes, developed cooking techniques with the advent of time and

technology, and the methodology of food traditions and how the people within a culture passed those on. I was certain my research was going to study not just the foodways themselves, but the methodology of how information was transmitted.

I drew all sorts of connections between being Cajun and being Jewish, and explored ways in which the cultural identity of both manifested in everyday living through cooking and eating. I delved deeply into the Creole identity and began to not just understand how the food traditions of the people developed along with their identity, but also how it pulled strands of the various ethnicities together in new and exciting forms. Indeed, my research began to intersect with other strands of my developing philosophies about education, food, and cultural identity, namely those ideas I was formulating concerning creolization as an educational theory. Creolization, the study of how new cultural identities forms arise when different groups of people come together, has long been associated with power, racial, and ethnic dynamics. In light of my own research, I began to see the process of creolization, which I discuss much more in Chapters 2 and 3, as echoing what I believe learning to accomplish: engendering the possibility of new forms and understandings. Education is not free from power dynamics, nor is the process of culture making free from the process of learning.

Initially, the evidence of learning I believed was the product of my foodways curriculum could be found within the physically output of a culture's foodways: the dishes, the recipes, and the stories about both. However, as I've gone through this experience and interviewed the students at my research site, Café Reconcile, I've come to realize that a creole curriculum is less about the food and more about resiliency and relationships. The rose of my coursework bloomed into a new iteration of a curriculum that smelled the same, looked different, and nicely reflected the growth and innovation of the foodways I have been so heavily invested in. It is with much

pleasure that I follow the pathways of the narratives emerging out of my Café Reconcile experience and rely on them to translate my own narrative of growth, learning, and holistic identity.

Cajun, Creole, Judaism: Traditions of Resiliency and Community

My interest in Cajun culture and Cajun food comes from my love of being Jewish. As an adult, I am not the most observant or religious Jew. I do not go to temple regularly or on the high holidays. I do not keep kosher. I cannot speak the language. But I have vivid memories of rubbing the tattooed numbers on my grandmother's wrist, of enjoying potato latkes instead of cake with my classmates on my birthday, and of becoming an adult with the help of the friends I made at my Jewish summer camp. Being Jewish to me is not about being religious – it is about knowing who I am because of how I experienced my life with the people in my Jewish community. For me, being Jewish is a cultural and community identification more so than a religious one.

Being Cajun and being Jewish, on the surface, seem like foreign experiences. And, in the details, they are. But beneath the trappings of geography, religion, and language, both cultures are shaped by common experiences: we have been displaced from our native homes, we have been discriminated against by the dominant culture, we have found comfort in our rebuilt communities, and we have perpetuated our culture by turning inward. For me, though, the connection can be found in a much more intimate space than shared historical parallels. For me, my connection to the Cajun experience is situated in the ways both cultures translate an understanding of what it means to be Jewish or Cajun through food and the people we break our bread with.

Where It All Began: A Yankee Arrives in New Orleans

As a New York transplant to New Orleans, all the ways in which my new Creole adopted home was foreign to me was legion: the way people walk, the way people talk, the freedom of wide open spaces instead of the weight of skyscrapers, and taking a moment to enjoy the scenery instead of rushing to that next stop. I dealt with the transition of being a stranger in a strange land by finding comfort in the food of New Orleans. The cost of the food, the taste of the food, the way people prepared and ate the food, the festivals where people celebrated the food – all of that was a brand new experience for me. Yet I forged my deepest connections over the meals I shared with others, more than any other way I participated in my community (my job, my volunteerism, my recreation). In this space, Creole food also gained a new prominence for me alongside Cajun and Jewish food.

Realizing how central a role food played in my life started me on this odyssey of reflection and interest in the cuisines of my new adopted home. The deeper I delved, the more I began to understand why it was food that made me feel at home: my most central understanding of self revolved around the experiences with food I had as a child and adult engaging in my Jewish community. But like I said above, it wasn't the religious experiences of being Jewish that defined me but the cultural experiences – breaking the fast¹ with family and friends every November, learning how to make “chopped liver”² from my grandma and being the one to make it for family gatherings after she died, and deciding upon my new year's goals during Rosh Hashanah while sharing apples and honey with loved ones. My understanding of where I came

¹ At sundown on Yom Kippur, after a day of fasting, it is customary for Jews to gather and break the fast together with “traditional food” as defined by the community – for us, it was bagels and lox, blintze soufflé, whitefish, gefilte fish, and chopped liver.

² Common Eastern European dish made by “Jewish grandmas” consisting of liver, eggs, bread, onions, and mushrooms ground together.

from helped direct me to the places I would go and the person I would become. And I went to many places – I’ve lived all over the country and the one constant reminder of my own personal place came in the comfort I felt preparing the foods I grew up with and engaging in the food rituals I had always known. It is how I live and introduce others into understanding who I am.

In drawing these connections between myself and my identity, I have begun to see the parallels in how other cultures learn identity and community through food and food preparation. In my new home, I am drawn to the ways Creoles and Cajuns communicate through food because I want to understand how other communities engage in food traditions and pass on to the next generations the complex, ever unfolding intricacies of family, community recipes, traditions, and relations. Creole and Cajun cultures are made up of a rich network of rituals and tastes that represent sites of learning and I believe modern classrooms can benefit from their models of pedagogy and engagement. But because learning for me is about understanding the stories of experience that people have in their community spaces, I feel it is important for people to share their stories and from that foundation to build a model of educative practices based off foodway traditions and transmissions.

That is the heart of my dissertation – to explore New Orleans foodways as learning spaces, to understand a unique learning space in New Orleans that centers around food, and to examine how narrative inquiry is a methodology we can use to access the educational properties of this cultural materialism. Ultimately I believe this exercise will not only allow me to better understand how individuals learn when not divorced from their environmental contexts, but this exercise will also enable me to deepen my own understanding of how my context has shaped me into being the learner and scholar that I am today.

Voyeurism in the Bywater

I am a Jewish Yankee in love with a Catholic Southerner. Our pairing, in the eyes of his mother, is the most unlikely of matches. In the eyes of my mother, our pairing means I am no longer a spinster. I kid you all – sort of. Of course my mother loves Dustin, my husband, because he is a wonderful man. But I suspect that any man would have been good enough for my mother, as long as I loved him and he loved me back.

But back to my opening statement – Dustin and I come from different worlds. How we have learned to navigate those worlds together, to merge them and to truly understand as best as we can where the other comes from, started with (and I suspect will end with) food. Dustin wooed me by taking me out to eat in his favorite restaurants and cooking me his favorite dishes. Combined, we gained about 10 pounds in the first 6 weeks that we dated. I like to think that I sealed the deal with Dustin by introducing him to a whole new cuisine to taste and cook. While I may experience the world through food and stories, Dustin experiences it through food and cooking. How we came together and stayed together, can be symbolized through his creolization of a Jewish staple, matzoh ball soup.

Our story doesn't start with the soup, though, it starts in the Bywater neighborhood of New Orleans, Louisiana.

I met my husband's whole family within the first three weeks of dating. For a Yankee such as me, born and bred on the East Coast and inducted into the dating scene in New York City, the art of meeting someone was a disposable dance that never lasted longer than the brief song playing in the background. Being introduced to an extended family of more than 40 was completely unexplored territory for me. I had never dated a man longer than a couple of dates,

and certainly hadn't made it so far as to meet the parents, let alone the cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandmas. To do so in only a few weeks was beyond my sphere of experience or comfort.

I remember driving with Dustin and his mother to his cousin's house in the Bywater, a neighborhood that brushes up against the 9th Ward where the city's artists gathered and lived. There I was, sitting in the back seat of Dustin's car with my gift of Greek cookies on my lap, heart pounding. I was trying to keep track of the conversation going on in the front seat, trying to reconcile the narrative unfolding in front of me in exotic accents. Sherry, Dustin's mother, was talking about Stanley and Daniela, Mauri and Woowie, Maw Maw and Mee Maw. Not only were the names not those found in my familiar lexicon of Jewish monikers, no one that I knew made their living through painting, had died in a hunting accident (we didn't hunt), or were Jehovah's Witnesses. It was scandalous enough that my cousin had converted to Catholicism. No doubt about it, I was on my way to more than just a hipster neighborhood I had never been to. On that day I walked into a world as foreign and as fascinating as I have ever been.

Six years later, as I reflect on that day, one of the images that resonates with me most is that of Dustin and I sitting in the kitchen, eating with his mother and uncle, and listening to them recount their childhood and adulthood. The more I listened to their stories, the more I began to realize that every memory and moment was punctuated by a very particular phrase that was so much more than an affectation of speech. The way in which Dustin's mother revisited her history fell into either one of two categories – *before* the storm or *after* the storm. The storm I am referring to is Hurricane Katrina and the impact this catastrophic event had on this family extended far beyond the moment of devastation or reconstruction.

As an outsider, a Northerner who knew blizzards but not hurricanes, watching the impact of Katrina on New Orleans from my television screen was a pretty benign experience. I went

through the emotions of shock, sadness, anger, pity, and all from a safe distance – much like a Sophoclean tragedy. Anyone would when witnessing a tragedy not their own – after all, the simulation of emotion from afar is what Aristotle wrote about when exploring the value and power of tragic narrative. My association to the events happening in a city I knew – my sister had gone to Tulane so that made me more of an expert on New Orleans than anyone else I knew at the time – was disconnected. I knew what was happening was bad; however beyond my distanced experience of watching the tragedy on screen, I really did not understand what was happening on the ground level with the people whose lives were being directly affected.

I was a voyeur of Katrina and all that the tragedy entailed, and nothing brought that point to sharper relief more than that afternoon spent in the Bywater.

I learned a very important truth about the lived experience of Dustin and his family that day, and my lesson took place over a plate of food (not the Greek cookies that I brought with me – this plate was filled with jambalaya and cornbread, all cooked in cast iron), in the space of the kitchen. I never could have imagined the scope of Katrina's impact on this small clan of people had they directly said to me, *Katrina disrupted my family and my life*. Instead, by listening to the narratives of Dustin's mother and her brother, I gleaned from their stories – from the phrasing, the tone, and the imagery painted – themes of displacement, of sadness, of extreme loss, and of regret. A picture had begun to form that day that grows clearer with every visit and every year I spend with Dustin's family and their narratives – the major histories, the seminal stories, and the more current vignettes.

This experience has indelibly impacted the type of research I would like to do and the way I would like to engage in it. I am drawn to narrative inquiry because I believe that to understand a group of people and their lived experience, you need to hear their stories. After

coming to know Dustin's family, I am interested in stories from the South and stories of ongoing life occurring in New Orleans, Louisiana. The more I hear the stories, the more I learn about this adopted culture of mine and ultimately, the more I find myself going through my own process of learning and creolization. The new forms of myself that are arising as I spend more time in New Orleans and engage more with the heritage and traditions of my husband and his family, have impacted how I view the communication of culture and the learning of identity. I deeply feel my pattern adjusting to this new environment and emerging in new and subtle shapes of self.

Creolized Matzoh Ball Soup: A Marriage of Two Traditions

During our first Hanukkah living together, Dustin wanted to do something special. He called up my sister and got her recipe for matzoh ball soup, a favorite of mine. But because Dustin cannot just work from one recipe, and because my sister's recipe seemed to be missing some key ingredients for Dustin, he combed the internet and the plethora of cookbooks he owned for more inspiration on how to cook chicken noodle soup, matzoh ball soup, how to make matzoh balls, and how to cook chicken for soups. From there, he coalesced his own recipe for matzoh ball soup that added a little spice and a little color to what I had been eating for over 35 years of my life. When Dustin put the steaming bowl in front of me, I wasn't quite sure of what to make of the orange-tinged concoction in front of me that smelled like what I was used to but looked nothing like my grandma's or sister's matzoh ball soup.

I barely resisted the urge to wrinkle my nose and look at him in confusion.

Gingerly, I picked up my spoon and swirled the liquid. The orange did not dissipate. I poked at the matzoh balls and was relieved to see that they were not hard and tiny, but light and fluffy like I know that they should be. The chicken was different – instead of shredded pieces they were solid chunks covered in spices. Despite all of this, I reminded myself that even if ti

did not look the same, it smelled the same and that the longer I held off on tasting it, the more unhappy Dustin was looking. So I dug in and took that first bite.

Much to my surprise, the soup tasted just like I remembered from my childhood. I know that I did not do a very good job of hiding the relief on my face because Dustin smirked at me before sitting down with his own bowl. As I gingerly ate the soup – it may taste the same but I was still thrown by the look – Dustin detailed all the ways he had prepared and cooked the soup. Many of his techniques did not jive with what I had observed growing up. I found that it did not matter though – the soup tasted like my family and evoked those same feelings of home I associated with the people I loved and the way that I felt when I was around them.

While not Jewish or from the North, Dustin had performed an amazing feat of Jewish cooking that night. The lesson I took from that experience is one I will not forget, even if I continue to question the way Dustin cooks the other foods of my heritage (potato latkes and my grandmother's babka cake). When it comes to the cuisine and dishes of someone's culture or childhood, I feel that the significance of the food comes in how it makes you feel and the emotions it evokes. The power of food lies in the connection the dishes have to the memory of the people eating the dishes and the feelings of connection we have between memory, place, food, and identity. Dustin's dishes do not look like my childhood but they convey that same sense of belonging and comfort I have when I think about where I have come from and what that means to me.

I know who I am because of the food that I eat. I have also let my partner know who I am by the food that I eat. However, I also know who he is through the food that he cooks, especially the ways in which he has transformed the food of my childhood. It is this phenomena that inspires my research and has informed the localized engagement I have embarked on.

Circles, Patterns, and A Creolization of Self

I am the daughter of a teacher. My sister is a teacher. My aunt is a teacher. I resisted becoming a teacher myself because I felt it was so passé to take such an obvious route in life. I wanted to go into the sciences, like my father, however a life of numbers was not in my stars. Being an educator was and once I found myself on that path, it was truly a wonderful synergy of the different forces in my life. I honored the women in my family by entering the field of education and becoming a teacher, and I honored my father by entering the classroom of the high school that he graduated from.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1883) cites circles as the highest emblems of continuity found in nature. He writes, “The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end” (p. 95). Learning starts from within and expands outward from the point of the individual to the endless horizon that is nature. Indeed, Emerson (1883) believes that “every ultimate fact is only the first of a new series” (p. 96), so that every end is really just another beginning – each new circle of understanding is a ripple in a chain of circles that leads a person to understand themselves to a deeper degree. In closing the circle that joined my mother’s and father’s experiences together within the school I held my first teaching job, I began to understand my experiences in new and different ways. I began to question my beliefs about schooling and education as my own classical education was confronted with a rigid structure for teaching and a vibrantly inquisitive and diverse student body.

The more I engaged with literature and my students’ response to the texts we were reading, the more I began to wonder if what I had experienced in my own secondary education, which was so similar in methodology to the ways in which I was being instructed to teach, was

the only way that learning in the classroom could occur. My students rebelled against the shape of learning we were all experiencing at the Bronx High School of Science, and as we struggled to find a way to mesh instruction with engagement, I grew increasingly disillusioned. I began to question my teacher education and my classroom experience, and so I looked to the horizon of my understanding to discover how I could go on from there. My circles of understanding were intersecting and colliding with each other, and as Emerson wrote, “the natural world may be conceived of as a system of concentric circles, and we now and then detect in nature slight dislocations, which apprise us that this surface on which we now stand is not fixed, but sliding” (p. 99). My surface was indeed sliding and change inevitably came to my world once again. Which is how I find myself here: at the conclusion of six years of scholarship as I prepare to defend my dissertation.

I have gone through my own process of creolization, if you will. As I’ve expressed, to me, the idea of creolization is the establishing of new patterns from the merging, or joining, of two or more original cultures or patterns. As I will talk about in this dissertation, the establishing of new patterns is a sign of learning. I explore what learning looks like in the significance of new food patterns in Louisiana foodways, and then take these ideas and examine in the light of a classroom based on foodways and community. For me, I come from a pattern of traditional, public schooling. The teacher is the source of knowledge, the students are the recipients, and the curriculum consists of a standard dichotomy of science and math/literature and history. My graduation from high school was marked by a standardized state exam called the New York Regents. My placement in “talented and gifted” programs and “Regents” and “Honors” tracks marked my intelligence and placement in my school’s intellectual hierarchy.

This type of curriculum dominated my post-secondary understanding of my college experience and drove my decision making when it came to graduate school. Attending Columbia University's Teacher's College – an Ivy League school – was the pinnacle of my academic achievements. In fact, that I successfully graduated from college and two graduate programs paled in comparison to the name of the institution where I received my second graduate degree. The fact that I hated NYC and mourned my move away from Boulder, CO – a place and a community I had loved – was an emotion I assuaged by reminding myself of the power of my Columbia degree. My emotions and my academic experiences paled in the face of the name of my ultimate academic achievement – an institution imbued with a meaning separate from myself.

These are the structured ideas about schooling and curriculum that I matriculated through as a student, and it is within that structure that I engaged in my own teacher education. My experiences teaching in a public/private institution like Bronx Science – a school within the public system where students test into and therefore is not considered a community, neighborhood school – shifted my patterns as I came into a rigid system of teaching but an incredibly diverse set of students and modes of thought. My students were emerging from a post-9/11 world where their mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, brothers, and sisters were victims. The setting of my very structured teaching lessons was a student body of all creeds, races, and orientations. And even though we were reading texts from a classical cannon, my students' reaction to the literature was anything but standard. Our discussions ranged the full spectrum of their identity and everyday experiences, and hearing their thoughts and ideas began to disrupt the foundations of my structures of thinking and being, and heralded the formation of some new patterns in my life.

I believe this is where the start of my own personal creolization began, with my exposure to a student body so different from my own educational experience. If I think about my time teaching through a basic lens of creolization, my traditional experience of schooling as a student – tracked learning in classrooms with a mostly homogeneous student body and where the teacher stood as the only expert – was the “old” form that came into contact with the “new” form of student that I was teaching – highly independent, assured of their own knowledge, and coming from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds. Inevitably, my “native” understandings of schooling were confronted with new conceptions of teaching and learning, and the shape of my knowing began to shift. Part of what I bring to this dissertation are my own experiences of becoming, or creolization, as I explore what it means to learn and know within the space of a non-traditional classroom in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Conclusion: A Creole Research Project

And now, as I complete my dissertation and approach schooling from another perspective, I came back to Shakespeare’s idea of the rose. True, I am still me – I am still a rose. I “smell” the way in which Danielle J. Klein should smell – I am still recognizable to those who know me. But I am not the same rose I was before this project. And, if I may, let me introduce another Shakespearean theory of self: the challenging of individual boundaries as represented by the city/country dichotomy. Shakespeare often takes his city dwelling characters into chaotic situations within a countryside setting, in order to facilitate the breaking down of internal boundaries to engender personal growth and character development. The result is often comedic and tragic, highly entertaining, and at the heart of how he develops his characters. You see this happening in so many of his plays: *Taming of the Shrew*, *A Winter’s Tale*, *King Lear*, and *A Midsummer’s Night Dream* to name a few.

I feel that I have undergone a similar character transformation as Shakespeare outlines. In moving to the South, I have literally left the city – New York City – and entered into what many consider to be the uncivilized wild of Louisiana and debauchery of New Orleans. As a result, my boundaries of self have been even further challenged by my teaching experiences and have been in a steady state of dissolution since I moved here over eight years ago. My transformation has been affected by this research in that my outlook has been indelibly impacted by my education and experiences in a very non-traditional classroom like the one I found in my research site: Café Reconcile.

In coming into this educational space, I find that my status quo has been challenged once again, which I talk more about as this dissertation delves into the research. But, in this new educational space, I was confronted with new stimuli, new ways of thinking, and to put it simply, new experiences in the classroom and with a new set of students. I have jumped levels, so to speak, and with my boundaries shaken, my sense of self has experienced first disorientation, then a change in shape because of the impact of these new ideas, and now a resettlement into new forms. I am like one of Shakespeare's characters who, after having dived into the chaos of their own experiences and journeys, have emerged as the same but different. Changed. My rose still smells as sweet, but perhaps we can call it by a slightly different name.

In this dissertation, I have embarked upon a project that asks the question of whether a new shape of learning can exist, and if it does, is it possible within the paradigm of a foodways curriculum. As an educator, I am very interested in the ways that people learn and the conditions that impact that learning. The research questions that drive my project are as follows:

- How do culture and heritage play a role in the learning process?

- What can a curriculum emerging from foodways look like? In what ways does that shape the learning experience?
- Does place, specifically that of Louisiana, impact foodways as curriculum?
- Does the local experience disrupt hegemonic narratives of at-risk and vocational education?

I performed my research in the space of Café Reconcile, a cooking school in New Orleans that differs greatly from any of the educational institutions and experiences I have encountered in my life. Founded in 1996 by Reverend Harry Thompson to deal with the systems of neglect, poverty, and crime in the Central City Neighborhood, this Workforce Development center has evolved over the years to represent a highly skilled educational site where out of school youth connect with caring community members to learn life and practical restaurant/hospitality skills in order to achieve career success. In this research experience I see reflected the broader ideals of system's learning I speak of in the following chapters. My research did not go in the direction that I thought it would – my vision of what my project would look like and accomplish was neat and orderly – all of my ideas about café Reconcile resided in the fact that it was a teaching kitchen. Therefore, what I would observe would be in line with what I believed a foodways curriculum to be – learning how to cook, becoming familiar with foodstuffs, and sharing stories of recipes and ingredients to understand better what it means to learn in New Orleans, LA.

However, as I have come to expect with the process of learning I am beginning to adopt as my own philosophy, nothing turned out as I expected. While my unfamiliarity with this type of institution excited me, I was not prepared for what my research showed me. Instead of having my theories confirmed in the way I expected, I learned exactly what I need to but in a different

form. The foodways curriculum I believed in so deeply was more than just food and recipes. The narratives I knew would be so revealing illuminated far more than I thought it would on such a broader scale. The conclusions I drew about my “Creole Curriculum” is that learning is indeed about community, but one shaped by care and not necessarily food. This dissertation chronicles the journey me and my research took.

In my research I used familiar tools in my learning quest – stories, words, human relationships – to facilitate the process of narrative inquiry into the lives of students at this school. My dissertation talks in depth about why I used this framework for research; however before I get to the research methods, I will begin this dissertation by sharing what my theories about learning are and how they are embodied in a foodways curriculum. Because I have done my research in a very localized space, the next section of my dissertation explores the history and formation of Louisiana foodways, specifically Cajun and Creole foodways. I then explore the research framework I used and the site in which I completed my research. Following that I will go deeply into the narratives of my students and share some of the conclusions that have emerged and that I have drawn from the study. I will finally conclude by talking about some of the limitations and possibilities of my research, implications for how I view education today, and some possible next steps.

Café Reconcile does not re-enter this narrative for over another 100 pages. The reason for that somewhat mirrors the academic journey I have taken myself. A large part of what I believe can be found in the tracing of the theoretical and historical knowledge and learning I have undergone, a journey I take the reader on before I even reach the role that café Reconcile has played in my research. As I look back at this endeavor, and at my personal history in general, I believe that the circles of my being nest and build upon one another, intersecting and

entwining in unique ways indelibly influenced by my experiences, my emotions, and the people who have come in and out of my experiences. It is this understanding of myself and my philosophies as being non-linear and intersectional that I go into this research with the rhizomatic lens that I explore more in this next chapter. Who I am now could not be named according to who I was then (whether it be one year ago, five years ago, or twenty years ago). But my smell is just as sweet (I hope!), and therefore it is by this essence of who I am that I learn myself and allow others to know me as well.

CHAPTER 2: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I once did hold it, as our statists do,
A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now
It did me yeoman's service.
William Shakespeare, Hamlet (Act V, scene ii)

Hamlet speaks the above lines at the end of his life, when words can no longer delay for him the inevitable decisiveness of action. It is at this point that Hamlet abandons a way of being he has known for the entirety of the play – and his life – to embark upon a new way of navigating the world. In the end, Hamlet can no longer exist outside of his world, and whether that be for good or ill (Hamlet's world *is* one of corruption and lies, and his story *is* one of tragedy), he is ultimately transformed by entering into the currents of his present time and place. But Hamlet does more than just resolve himself to action through accepting his place within the world – Hamlet achieves a new perspective by crossing the boundaries of class, land, time, and even the supernatural. By going beyond what he has always known, Hamlet has indeed forgotten the learning of his past to engage in a new shape and effect of learning. This new shape is relational, contextual, and in many ways, sustainable.

A New Shape of Learning

This chapter explores what a new shape of learning (Davis & Sumara, 2000) could look like in today's world, specifically a shape perceived through a foodways curriculum. Within this type of curriculum, content knowledge falls outside of the boundaries of mainstream schooling and learning is a contextualized process of growth rather than an objectified accumulation of knowledge. Because education has the potential to be a “developing and generative practice” (Semetsky, 2003, p. 17), exploring learning as sustainable and contextual creates the space for

students to engage in new ways with knowledge within new conceptions of what and where the classroom can be. Dewey (1906) suggests that the educative process is one where multiple forces interact relationally. To avoid thinking about education in conflicting terms, where the student exists outside of the curriculum, Dewey explores learning as a sustainable (my term), active progression emerging from the relationships and experiences the student brings to the classroom space. To envision learning as becoming - as movement (Semestsky, 2003) - requires a shift in paradigmatic thinking, from that of providing instruction to one of producing learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995).

Complexity, Constructivism, and Creolization

To explore this new shape of learning enabled by a foodways curriculum, I will take a look at learning theory, specifically that of constructivism, and draw connections between learning, cultures of power, complexity theory, and creolization by way of rhizomatic thinking. As systems shift towards new and increasing levels of complexity, these ideas can be brought together under an umbrella of a sustainable epistemology. The profile of the rhizome is particularly apt in exploring a new shape of learning because the rhizome enables us the potential of thinking differently (Semetsky, 2003). Indeed, rhizomatic thinking can open up closed systems to new modes of thought, modes that are grounded within localized ideas of complexity, onto-epistemological outlooks on the world, and cogent pedagogy. Consequently, exploring learning within a foodways system will challenge existing modes of thought concerning the role of the student and teacher, the environment in which learning takes place, and how we engage with existing narratives of education.

Rhizomes and Rhizomatic Thinking

Envisioning a new shape of learning becomes possible when considering education through the lens of rhizomatic thinking. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), “one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways” (p. 12). Thus, as a framework for thought, the rhizome encourages people to think beyond dualisms and redundancies. What distinguishes a map as a framework for thinking, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) argue,

“...is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields, the removals of blockages on bodies without organs, the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of consistency. It is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation.” (p. 12)

With this description, and Deleuze’s and Guattari’s earlier comparison of the rhizome to a root complex, notions of time and space, of linear thought and irreversible forward movement, are challenged so that knowledge becomes uprooted from a stable object to becomes a process enacted in limitless ways. Indeed, the lines that move in and out of rhizomes “always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or dichotomy” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9). Without static boundaries suggesting an interior/exterior or inside/outside, rhizomatic thought is characterized by a resiliency of experience that embodies principles of connection and continuity.

If “the rhizome becomes, or is becoming, at any moment of its own entry,” and if the rhizome “goes in diverse directions instead of a single path, multiplying its own lines and establishing the plurality of unpredictable connections in the open-ended... space of its growth,” then, “in short, it [the rhizome] lives” (Semetsky, 2003, p. 18). In being alive, the rhizome is not static nor is it a closed system – it is an open system, and in being open, it is capable of infinite growth. Thus, if we are to consider complex learning systems through the lens of a rhizome, a new shape of learning can emerge that is capable of moving us beyond our current modern paradigm of knowing data and learning through receiving those static bits of data. Instead, this new shape of learning is one where relational experience engenders a sustainable process of knowing and learning that defies linearity to elevate data from static bits of data to a continuous practice of understanding.

For me, foodways as a curriculum accomplishes this through embodying a shape of learning that “requires a new understanding of ourselves and our place in nature and time” (Orr, 2001, p. 9). Whereas the shape of learning within the modern paradigm is linear, which influences how individuals arrange social relationships and conceptions of culture and power as undeviating or hierarchical with a constant forward progression, considering learning within the framework of rhizomatic thinking focuses on how the relationships within educational structures can operate in more complex ways. As a result, a number of different possibilities about education arise that are spiraling, fractal, and pragmatic in nature. Within these new possibilities, the language used to describe progress, culture, and schooling is relational and focuses on “thinking the world together” (Palmer, 1998/2008, p. 294) instead of reducing the world into discrete units of static data and disconnected difference. This shape of learning is free from some of the constraints of modernity and “looks to a concept of knowledge and of

epistemic norms that....in terms of sustainability....underwrite practices of inquiry that make it more....likely that others, especially those...who are marginalized or subordinated...will be able to acquire knowledge in the future” (Scheman, 2012, p. 2).

A Sustainable Epistemology

For Dewey (1938), the educational happening is constituted by a continuity of experiences that exist by virtue of relationships – of the interaction between the individual’s past and present. Dewey’s philosophy presents an idea of sustainable learning, one that is in harmony with the precepts of rhizomatic thinking and complex ontologies. When talking about sustainability today, a common discourse revolves around efforts at conserving environmental resources, recycling plastics and other products, and reusing goods instead of disposing of them. Reduce, reuse, recycle – it is a familiar theme amongst environmental conservationists³ and it is a prominent part of the curriculum of sustainable education. However, the scope of sustainability within education has the potential to far exceed the methodology of “reduce, reuse, recycle.” If the discourse in educational circles was to be freed from the restraining language and word pair of “sustainability education,” ideas about endurance, stewardship, and generational learning would begin to take on new meanings within multiple contexts that are relationship based. By expanding the concept of sustainability to move beyond “how we do things” to the realm of “how we know things,” sustainability emerges as an epistemology that, within the postmodern discourse on education, offers a complex, moral, and cultural sensitivity to the way we think about learning.

³ See the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the National Institute of Environmental Health Services, the National Resources Defense Council, a song by singer Jack Johnson, and a number of other agencies and outlets dedicated to environmental and sustainability education.

A sustainable epistemology (Slaughter, 1989; Scheman, 2012) offers an opportunity for educators to respond to what Slattery (2013) terms the “ecological and psychological devastation of modernity” (p. 225), and what Slaughter (1989) characterizes as something deeper than moral decline – “fragmentation, narrowness, and the subversion of meaning” (p. 255). As a result, our conceptions of learning, community, and identity are reduced to mere atomistic concepts that rip apart the very core of our educative systems and the ways in which we perceive knowing and being. Absent of Yeats’s center⁴, how does our society continue to hold meaning and build meaningful relationships? And most important to me, what does this crisis of substance look like in the spaces where we learn?

These questions lead me to more questions, until I find myself at what I believe to be the watershed of my inquiry: what are our schools supposed to look like and do? What should our curriculum and learning spaces look like? How do we begin to focus on the relationships we have with each other and our environment as a core part of the learning process? To try and respond to these questions – and to bring the soul back into the modern-day classroom – we need to put experience, and therefore relationships between data, people, and learning, back into our educational practices. It is here that I turn to theory because within the framework of a complex ontology we, as educators, can disrupt the dominant rational epistemology that converts the art of teaching into a deterministic formula that reduces the experiences of students in the classroom into something to be measured by tests (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and competencies (Biesta, 2010) within a dominant culture of power. It is through complexity theory that I believe relationships within educative practices become central, through a foodways curriculum that different spaces of learning are realized as sustainable practices, and it is with a complex

⁴ William Butler Yeats, *The Second Coming* – “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold” (line 3).

worldview that I believe creolization becomes a learning process. First, I will take a look at some of the basic tenets of complexity theory to begin the discussion of foodways as curriculum.

A Complex, Ecological Worldview: New Patterns of Being

The very fluid nature of complexity “makes it impossible to offer a readily comprehensible, one-size-fits-all description” (Davis, Sumara, & D’Amour, 2012, p. 375). However, Eric Dent (1999) offers a definition that resonates with me for the possibilities in education when he says that complexity is an approach towards perspective “that makes the philosophical assumptions of the emerging worldview,” one where holism and relationships are the unit of analysis (p. 5). Complexity science’s emerging ideas can be rooted in a number of movements: systems thinking, self-regulation, self-organization, and chaos theory. In all of these philosophical movements, a shift occurs in ways of knowing that moves understanding the world away from an analysis of the parts towards an awareness of the whole. This shift represents an ontological realignment where the metaphysical worldview (the universe as determined) wanes in predominance and the physical worldview (the universe as emergent) gains prominence (Davis, 2004).

I see complexity as more than just a science, however, because I feel that a complex worldview moves beyond ways of doing and into ways of being. In a complexity paradigm, we have the potential to switch to a worldview that acknowledges multiple ways of knowing. This paradigm is strongly influenced by systems thinking and is dependent upon a pragmatic approach towards research methods. Complexity is gaining prominence in many scientific circles, including education; however, ontological and epistemological reorientation is a gradual process. Because complexity considers the connections between inputs and outcomes in ways

that do not seek causal relationships, there is resistance in accepting data that has not been quantitatively tested and replicated (Gough, 2012).

For ease in this discussion, I will be calling complexity a worldview. Complexity offers a sustainable existence within the world that is ecological and predicated upon human relationships. Community and culture is how we come to be, to know, and to learn in this world and it is here that I would like to explore how complexity and learning relate.

The Role of Relationships in Complex Systems

If we are to look at learning and learners as complex phenomena, then complexity is an apt framework to use in reconceptualizing education because the science of the theory is one of entanglement and not of distinction making, of participation and not of specification (Davis, 2003). Moreover, when looking through the lens of complexity, the learner emerges within a learning system that “might be better considered in terms of an agent that is nested within several different sorts of grander and/or cultural agents” (Davis, 2003, p. 43). Thus, within a complex worldview, learning does not happen in isolation but instead occurs within a system that is established in relationships (Doll, 2012). In turn, these relationships allow educators and learners to “read across cognitive, social, situated, critical, cultural, and ecological discourses without collapsing them or their particular foci into unitary or coherent phenomena” (Davis, 2003, p.43).

In this respect, the need for diversity within complex systems in order for learning to occur becomes extremely important, especially when we consider the present’s need for standardization and uniformity in national curriculums and testing. Indeed, “sameness does not generate meaning. The richness of [a] system is a function of the differences it contains” (Cilliers, 2010, p. 4). What complexity contributes to our understanding of difference originates

in the relationship learning and learning systems have to their environments. Context arises as very important because it is the elements and details of the environment that shape how the parts relate to the whole and the shape that the whole takes on. Because complexity is concerned with “wholes, with larger systems or environments and the relationships among their constituent elements or agents” (Mason, 2008, p. 36), and does not seek to reduce learning to discrete units of knowledge, this worldview emphasizes connections between the agents in a system because it is in these connections that communication occurs.

In short, relationships emerge as the primary ways in which a system forms and the shape of the system is defined. Thinking in this way inextricably ties environment and relationships together, thus highlighting the importance of context (past experiences, present conditions, future possibilities) when considering learning. Capra (1996) describes complexity as an “emerging theory of living systems that offers a unified view of mind, matter, and life” (p. xix) and that an ecological view within ideas of complexity talks about how phenomena “are embedded in [their] natural and social environment” (p. 6). Capra (1996) refers to an ecological worldview as spiritual and emerging from “the perspective of our relationships to one another, to future generations, and to the web of life of which we are a part” (p. 8).

Ecological systems are considered complex and are characterized by local interactions among components (Wu & David, 2002). In turning to this approach towards learning, the activities of learners both inside and outside of the classroom become extremely significant. Barron (2006) describes a learning ecology as one defined by the set of contexts within spaces that provide opportunities for learning and a move towards considering the multiple settings that are part of an individual’s overall learning process (p. 195). Environments change with developmental milestones, and these changes – or ecological transitions – impact the learning

occurring within individuals and groups (Barron, 2006; Brofenbrenner, 1979). Consequently, “the tools that have been created by prior generations serve as critical mediators of cognitive and social practices” (Barron, 2006, p. 197). What this affirms for me is the need for continuity in our learning spaces and a continuity – or sustainability – that can be located within the environments of individuals and the prior knowledge they bring with them into the classroom from these environments.

Learning as the Creation of New Patterns

Like Davis, Phelps, and Wells (2004) suggest, there is potential for complexity to stimulate “new insights and understandings about learning and teaching” (p. 3). An ecological and complex worldview breaks down the rigid barriers between the classroom and the world outside of the classroom in order to open new prospects for how we look at the identities of students and teachers, new understandings of the connections between disciplines (Davis & Sumara, 2008), and new ways of participating in the learning process. Davis and Sumara (2000) refer to these possibilities as a new shape to learning and knowing, and if we are to consider Grumet’s (1988) view of curriculum as constantly moving, then Davis and Sumara’s (2000) suggestion that curriculum be attentive and responsive makes a lot of sense. In a world where the modern and Western habit is to think in discontinuities (Davis & Sumara, 2010), and schools are still considered as a variable “dependent on the political and economic structure” of the present (Illich, 1971, p.73), considering the possibility of a curriculum grounded in the culture and community of the individuals doing the learning and teaching is a strong move towards a new shape of learning and being that is relationship based.

Complicated and Complex Systems

This new shape of learning is reflected in the complex worldview that learning itself is represented by a new pattern of being. Complex systems are characterized by a “whole is greater than the sum of its parts” philosophy. Many current educational models, however, embody the ideals of complicated systems, which perceive the parts as merely components of the larger whole⁵. In complicated systems, learning is the product of novice students who receive information from teachers who are experts in topics, and then students prove mastery of that topic by being able to report that information through an examination. In my opinion, this understanding of learning systems diminishes the capacity of that type of system to be adaptive, and thus grow, due to assigning fixed, instead of relational, bonds between the system’s components.

Under this worldview, a system becomes limited in its ability to learn by reducing the communication that can occur between the parts of the whole. If communication is indeed the foundation upon which a community transmits knowledge and fosters learning (Dewey, 1980), then schools and classrooms as complicated systems are limited in their ability to exchange information and grow as a system.

In complex systems, the relationships between the parts are dynamic and allow for an expanded ability for information to flow between the parts, thus allowing the system to grow.

⁵Warren Weaver began writing about complicated (or mechanical) and complex (or adaptive) systems in 1948 as he began to work through a theory of complexity and what that looks like in systems structures (Davis, Sumara, & D’Amour, 2012; Davis & Simmt, 2003; Waldrop, 1992). Complicated systems are what Weaver termed “simple” because they were concerned with rote processes of manageable parts like collection, description, and classification (Weaver, 1948, p. 536). Complicated systems can be understood as being the sum of their parts (Davis and Sumara, 2001). Complex systems, on the other hand, move beyond the mechanics of well-defined parts acting in predictable ways. As Davis and Sumara (2001) suggest, a “complex systems does not comprise simple, discrete parts. Rather it is a collective of dynamic and similarly complex systems...that transcend their components” (p. 88). These systems are made up of “a large number of interacting components (agents, processes, etc.) whose aggregate activity is non-linear” and self-organizing (Jorg, Davis, & Nickemans, 2007, p. 4).

Change occurs in a dynamic, complex system when the exchange of information is so dynamic that it brings the system to a point of disequilibrium – or, when the system exists in a chaotic state (Doll, 1993). As Mason (2008) suggests, “the dynamics of complex systems are inherently dynamic and transformational” (p. 37) and that emergence of new order – or phase transition – occurs at moments of critical mass, a time when a certain level of diversity and complexity is reached in a system that sustains momentum in a particular direction. The details of the phase transition are contextual and unique to the particular organism or system, and adhere to a fundamental law of increasing complexity. Phase transitions occur at the edge of stability in a complex system’s dynamics, lead up to moments of critical mass, and signal change. Capra (1996) calls moments of critical mass bifurcation points, or the places in a system where learning occurs. Without conditions of complexity, change – or learning – cannot occur.

Complex systems are labeled learning systems (Davis & Simmt, 2003; also see Capra, 2002 and Johnson, 2001) because the relationships established between the parts are not fixed and thus are not limited in how they can communicate and interact. Instead, the internal diversity of the parts allows them to join together in multiple and unpredictable ways and as a result, those dynamic interrelationships give rise to co-evolutionary relationships that are adaptive and thus exhibit learning (Davis, et. al, 2012). Many complexivists describe learning within complex systems as “ongoing, recursively elaborate adaptations through which systems maintain their coherence within their dynamic circumstances” (Davis & Simmt, 2003, p. 138). The communication between the interactions of a system’s agents enables learning (Davis & Simmt, 2003), with learning evidenced by a new pattern emerging out of pre-existing patterns.

Johnson (2001) similarly suggests that learning within complex systems is emergent, and that emergence occurs when a higher level pattern arises out of the interactions between a

system's agents where new structures and forms of order can emerge (Capra, 1996). New and different patterns depend on the surrounding environment and the needs of the learning system where evidence of evolving patterns – confirmation of the system's learning and history – can be seen in the nested nature of the existent and historical patterns.

Envisioning all components of the universe as being related and that existence is a holistic, unified event moves us far beyond a reductionist worldview that sees the components of a system as being atomized as opposed to webbed. A complex worldview sees the whole as a holistic composition. Moving beyond pre-determinism, accepting the cognates of system's thinking – that we are all interrelated – demonstrates a cultural changing of values that turns away from the individual or the atomized piece of data, and towards the collective or the relationships of the parts. The tension formerly existing between the parts of a whole gives rise to a whole new view of that tension as being productive instead of divisive. In this worldview, our values turn away from determining composition and towards constructing meaning.

The foundation of this new shape of learning and a complex curriculum lies within the belief that “knowledge [is] embodied, embedded in a culture” and lies within a continuity of knowledge constructions emerging from the cultural consciousness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 3). I am very interested in exploring how thinking about education in this way occurs in a very particular environment and culture: the foodways of New Orleans, LA. This next section first takes a look at how learning can occur in this space and then explores how some of the dynamics within this space impact the shape of that learning. My framework for this discussion will be creolization theory, because for me, this is a useful lens for exploring these ideas for two reasons: the process can be considered a learning theory grounded in culture and because of the inherent power dynamics associated with the emergence of new cultural forms.

Grounding Learning within Culture: Social Constructivism and Creolization

The above sections discussed ideas about learning. These ideas thought about in conjunction with the reality of foodways in Creole Louisiana, can help inform and add a dimension to creolization theory that, in my eyes, is concerned with learning and growth. To establish the connection between learning and creolization theory, I will first talk about the learning theories of constructivism and social constructivism, which I believe grounds creolization as learning process in notions of context and environment. Then, I will explore the etymology of Creole and creolization in order to trace the various iterations of meaning the theory (creolization) has as a process of generating new forms that reflect the complex worldview that learning is the emergence of new patterns of being.

Learning within Context: Exploring Social Constructivism

I believe that we are currently in the midst of a conceptual shift in our understanding of learning. A lot has been written about how educators are approaching and comprehending this shift, and one of the primary conversations emerging from these discourses focuses on a movement away from an instruction based paradigm to a learning based paradigm (Barr and Tagg, 1995; Sfard, 1998; Weick, 1976; Freire, 1970; Hua, 2012; Jorg, Davis, & Nickmans, 2007). Among these educators, researchers, and thinkers, Sfard (1998) describes this shift in terms of her acquisition and participation metaphors, Freire (1970) talks about it in his banking and problem posing models of learning, and Hua (2012) refers to it in his teaching and listening pedagogies. Regardless of the language used to frame these ideas, the overarching theme in this educational movement is concerned with transforming the way in which society perceives and understands our current learning systems. It is my belief that learning is no longer wholly functional in our current paradigm, where we see information as static bits of data to be imparted

by expert instructors to passive, novice students as if they are empty vessels. This is a mechanical worldview rooted in humanistic and Enlightenment ideals.

That worldview also understands knowledge as fixed and coming from a point of authority. Modernity fared well with this as a foundation for educational practice, but as we enter into a post-modern and complex understanding of the world, our ontologies and epistemologies are slowly outgrowing this foundation. I propose, however, that we avoid looking at this shift in terms of binaries in order to avoid privileging one model over another (St. Pierre, 2000). Humanism and post-structuralism can exist side by side, and within a complex worldview, this co-existence becomes functional. In a complex worldview, we can look at this shift as a natural occurrence of a complicated system transforming into a complex one. Within this movement, information is no longer fixed as learning becomes relational.

Certain learning theories (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1964; Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Bruner, 1961, 1996) inform us that learning and cognition are social and cultural. I do believe there are learning theories we can look at that can help us make a shift toward complex learning systems – towards the relational and contextual where meaning is made and learning is a process. Constructivist theories of learning “maintain that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experience” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 260). Social constructivist theories, an offshoot of constructivism, “emphasize the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding” (Kim, 2001, p. 2, citing Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997). Within this framework, learning is an active process where the learner makes meaning of the world through his or her relationship with the world.

In this sense, constructivism is a learning process that is not based solely on innate intelligence nor on an idea of a static reality – instead, the process of learning is a result of the combination of environment and individual engaged in meaningful and structured activity (Piaget, 1980; von Glasserfield, 1991). Indeed, Dewey (1960) suggests that since “knowing is not the act of an outside spectator but of a participator inside the natural and social scene, then the true object of knowledge resides in the consequences of directed action” (p. 196). Learning as a process (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), therefore, transcends movement towards an end goal or objective. Instead, learning “learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194) in order to construct knowledge.

Dewey (1897) also asserts that "education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience: . . . the process and goal of education are one and the same thing" (p. 79). Indeed, when looking at the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, who both understand learning as a process and transformational, the concept of a feedback loop emerges as the process of learning which connect Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and a complex worldview.

Piaget’s Learning Theory. For Piaget, experience is the cornerstone of learning. Learning, for Piaget, occurs as a result of moving through what Piaget perceives as the four stages of development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. These stages are linear and age dependent⁶, which remains a limitation on Piaget’s theory because development does not necessarily occur neatly and linearly through phases determined by age. Moreover, Piaget (1955) concludes that learning follows the same trajectory as his developmental stages and that “learning is subordinated to development” (p. 184). This is problematic because it begins to set up a hierarchy around when and how growth occurs through

⁶ While Piaget (1955) acknowledges that the chronological ages of these stages varies by ethnicity and geography, the linearity of his theory places the stages in immovable progress of each other.

dichotomizing the relationship between development and learning. And because “the ordering of [these] stages is a constant” to Piaget (1955, p. 178), there exists little flexibility to this aspect of the learning and development process.

However, despite these limitations, many of the foundations of Piaget’s theory are enduring when considering the aspects of constructivism that support holistic learning: learning is an active, contextualized process; the student is not a blank slate who blindly receives knowledge, and environment and prior knowledge are essential for growth. For instance, Piaget acknowledges that while development and learning have a hierarchical correlation, they do not happen in isolation and exist relationally. Piaget (1955) writes:

So I think that development explains learning, and this opinion is contrary to the widely held opinion that development is a sum of discrete learning experiences. For some psychologists development is reduced to a series of specific learned items, and development is thus the sum, the cumulation [original spelling] of this series of specific items. I think this is an atomistic view which deforms the real state of things. In reality, development is the essential process and each element of learning occurs as a function of total development, rather than being an element which explains development. (p. 176)

I would go so far as to suggest that Piaget was a complexivist of sorts, for his philosophy challenges reductionism by emphasizing the relationship between the elements of learning as opposed to focusing on the sum of them.

Additionally, the complex idea that learning is the emergence of new patterns from old patterns – or prior understanding – is also summarized in Piaget’s (1955) thoughts concerning the nature of knowledge:

Knowledge is not a copy of reality. To know an object, to know an event, is not simply to look at it and make a mental copy or image of it. To know an object is to act on it. To know is to modify, to transform the object, and to understand the process of this transformation, and as a consequence to understand the way the object is constructed. (p. 176)

These ideas reflect what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to as a map, a concept that is opposed to a tracing – the first is something mutable and alive where the second is merely a static replication or copy. For Piaget, the student is changed by the learning experience, thus shifting the boundaries of who he or she had been so that something incrementally transformed can emerge.

Piaget (1955) refers to this in his discussions about equilibrium, which he calls an “active ...process of self-regulation” (p. 181). In order for a student to engage in a process of equilibrium, which “takes the form of a succession of levels of equilibrium” (p. 181), he or she must progressively participate in feedback and feedforward. Of course, Piaget sees these levels as successive and thus linear, and his theories revolve around the development and learning of children, both limitations. However, it is the idea of movement as a product of self-regulatory activity – activity that is the result of a communication loop spiraling and not circular – that resonates with me. I don’t believe that these theories about learning are necessarily the province of children, for adults continually develop and learn as well. It is the indication of complex thinking that makes sense to me about constructivism, where experience and language (or communication) are fundamental to the developmental and learning processes (Piaget, 1955). It is that which draws me to constructivism as a framework for understanding how community and culture educate through foodways.

Vygotsky's Learning Theories. Lev Vygotsky, also connected with constructivism, similarly explored the realm of learning as a social process⁷. His emphasis on the social nature of learning remains one of the main differences between his and Piaget's theories. One of the main questions Vygotsky explored in his research was, "What is the relation between human beings and their environment, both physical and social?" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 19). This concern with the interaction between the person and his or her social environment characterizes Vygotsky's work, with a particular emphasis on the inherited knowledge a person gains as a result of being a part of a particular culture. The ability to read and recognize the signs and symbols of that culture or social environment is a function of what both Dewey and Vygotsky consider the power of speech/communication – a "means of social discourse" to mediate activity in order to achieve growth (learning and development) and survival (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 56). For Vygotsky, it is through speech that development begins, for it is through speech "that the child begins to master his surroundings" and through speech where "new relations with the environment in addition to the new organizations in behavior itself" emerge (p. 25). Speech, for Vygotsky, does not occur in isolation – it is when speech is paired with action that a syncretism of perception, and thus learning, occurs⁸ (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky refers to this syncretized⁹ activity as uneven, which resonates with me for it indicates that the process of learning is not stable but in fact, as Vygotsky suggests, is a function

⁷ Vygotsky's theories are also based on childhood development; however, for the same reasons that I described above in the value I find in Piaget's theories, I also find value in what Vygotsky writes about.

⁸ It is here where we see a difference in Piaget's and Vygotsky's view of the relationship between development and learning. For Piaget, learning trails development, whereas for Vygotsky, development occurs once learning has happened. (Vygotsky, 1978).

⁹ Syncretism is the combining of seemingly contradictory beliefs. In my discussion on creolization, which occurs later in this paper, syncretism comes up again as distinct from creolization, a different form of combination. See footnote #16.

of multiple processes coming together and working towards a state of equilibrium. The learner encounters an obstacle but uses his or her speech to obtain assistance in problem solving until ultimately his or her experience provides the assistance needed to overcome problems. This reflects both Piaget's cycle of equilibrium, where self-regulation continually pushes forward the efforts of coming to places of conclusions and knowledge, and the complex worldview that learning happens in moments of disequilibrium, where a system's strive for balance results in new patterns and thus new states of being.

Ultimately, Vygotsky came to call this place of problem solving the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD suggests that learning happens at levels instead of stages, so that the student exists within a space of actual and potential developmental possibility. Vygotsky (1978) writes that the zone of proximal development is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86).

From this description, we can see that development is understood subjectively, and that learning is determined in the space of the collective. Indeed, Vygotsky (1978) asserts that learning is "a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (p. 88). Consequently, we come to a major tenet of social constructivism when Vygotsky suggests that "learning awakens a variety of internal development processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers" (p. 90). I find this point extremely salient when it comes to my own theories on learning and the research I have done. We learn within the space of those people we consider our community and the place we call our environment.

In summary, constructivism is a pragmatic and emergent viewpoint on learning. The ideas of Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, which were of critical importance in the formation of constructivist theory and pedagogy, rejected the Cartesian mind/body split as well as the separation of method from substantive knowledge productions (Popkewitz, 1998). Consequently, constructivism and social constructivism details a holistic style of learning and pedagogy that acknowledges the value of the individual experience within educational structures. All of these experiences do not occur strictly in the classroom or strictly in recognized academic disciplines. Constructivism is concerned with both the general construction of human knowledge and the more specific construction of individual knowledge (Phillips, 1995), and Popkewitz (1998) recommends that constructivist ideas also be situated in historical spaces. In this respect, I believe constructivism is a useful lens to contextualize learning in everyday experiences within a continuum of experiences.

Because social constructivism is the viewpoint that knowledge is constructed within a social and cultural setting (Duit & Treagust, 1998), as a theory it expands upon ideas of constructivism to inhabit spaces beyond the personal and individual to those of social discourse and interaction (Driver, Asoko, Leach, Scott, & Mortimer, 1994; Merriam & Caffaerall, 1999). Thus, learning occurs within an environmental context that is rooted in place and experience. Kim (2001) writes that social constructivism “emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding” (p.2, citing Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997). Within the social context of learning, two perspectives emerge as significant: historical developments inherited by the learner and social interaction with members of society (Kim, 2001).

Furthermore, social constructivists believe that the process of learning involves both “the context in which learning occurs and the social contexts that learners bring to their learning environment” (Kim, 2001, p. 4). Indeed, Dewey (1980) suggests that learning is a “social fabric,” a quilt which is continually being re-woven through “the transmission of ideas and practices” to new generations (p. 154). This is where dialogue becomes so important, as communication between the parts of a system – a culture, a people, a place – become essential to that system’s overall sustainability and survival. When you combine these theories with the idea that learning is experiential (Dewey, 1980, 1938; Piaget, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996) and all experience is relational (Maturana, 1980¹⁰), creolization theory can emerge as a learning process. However, it is not a process that is devoid of power dynamics, especially when you consider creolization in the context of Louisiana and current day New Orleans, and therefore issues of culture and access need to enter into the discussion.

Creole, Creolization, Complexity, and Learning

Creolization is an idea that can embody the flux and adaptive characteristics of complex thinking. Creolization as a process has been applied to the fields of culture, architecture, language, music, art, and food. I have not found much literature or research where Creolization as a process is directly related to learning, which I believe demonstrates the need for my research. Therefore, I propose that creolization theory can also be applied to education. Many theorists describe creolization as a dynamic process (Stewart, 2007; Hannerz, 1987/2010, 1992; Edwards 2008, 2011; Ostendorf, 2013; Baron & Cara, 2011, 2003; Glissant 1997), which is not surprising considering the etymological roots of the term are either verbs or nouns describing some sort of movement or progression. Creolization comes from the word Creole, which itself

¹⁰ Maturana, along with Francisco Varela, are the progenitors of complexity theory with their ideas about autopoiesis.

springs from the Spanish *criado* (brought up, reared, produced) and *criar* (to create), (Ostendorf, 2013, p.66; Stewart, 2007).

Creolization Theory

I believe creolization is a process without an end-point or final product. It is a process that is continually growing and feeling itself out, with boundaries that are flexible and porous, open to the growth natural in any living idea. Dawdy (2008) calls creolization “the birth of a new native society” (p. 5), and describes the birth of New Orleans as an act of resistance against colonial power and ideological social inequalities. She further describes creolization as a transition from an experimental state of flux to a localized adapted society framed by a model of culture that is “a series of overlapping webs” (p. 6), three-dimensional, and constantly evolving. I believe that the process she describes is a learning process, a growth process characterized by complexity and the emergence of new patterns from environmental interactions.

Edwards (2011) asserts that the process of creolization is difficult to define because of continual refashioning; therefore he puts forward a theory of creolization that is synthetic and adaptive in order to account for the flux that occurs within the persistent process of culture-making. He says about the Creole culture, “out of the social processes of resistance, adaptation, and reformulation, new forms and new meanings emerge with each new generation” (Edwards, 2011, p. 56). As such, Edwards’ theory, which he often applies to architecture, can be broken down into 4 parts: a) synthesis¹¹; b) adoption¹²; c) revision¹³; and d) decreolization¹⁴.

¹¹ “The abstraction, separation, and selection of cultural traits from the larger pool” (Edwards, 2011, p. 76)

¹² “The amalgamation of alien cultural elements into a new configuration” (Edwards, 2011, p. 76)

¹³ “The adjustments and adaptations made by Creole populations” (Edwards, 2011, p. 77)

¹⁴ “The process of sublimation of creolized forms by those of the dominant culture” (Edwards, 2011, p. 78)

For Edwards (2008), creolization is a theory which suggests that the spaces where cultures meet are sites of cultural entanglements¹⁵. Some see creolization as a continuum of reinterpretation exemplifying cultural choices (Brathwaite, 1971; Glissant, 1995; Hannerz, 1987/2010). Others, like Baron and Cara (2011), understand creolization as “cultural creativity in process” that happens when “cultures come into contact” and “expressive forms and performances emerge from their encounter, embodying the sources that shape them yet constituting new and different entities” (p. 3)¹⁶. These entities are fluid and represent the restructuring of shared realities between the colonizer and colonized that give way to novel power structures”, “embodied resistance”, and “new ways of being in the world” (Baron and Cara, 2011, p. 3). Indeed, sites where cultures meet can be characterized by relations of domination and subordination that result in the restructuring of localized patterns of life into reinterpretations of cultural forms (Edwards, 2008; Hannerz, 1987/2010) different from syncretism¹⁷ and hybridity¹⁸ (Stewart, 1999). Pratt (1991) calls these sites “contact zones” in her reconsidering of community models, and she describes these places as “spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or there aftermaths as they are lived out in the world” (p. 33).

¹⁵ Also see Edwards (2011) for more details on his definition of Creolization.

¹⁶ Also see Hannerz, 1992. These new entities, for me, are very much like new learning patterns.

¹⁷ Stewart (1999), suggests that “syncretism describes the process by which cultures constitute themselves at any given point in time” (p. 41).

¹⁸ I will be relying on Bhabha (1990) for my definition of hybridity, which refers to a cultural mixing that is a process of identification that understands the self in relation to an other that “puts together certain traces of other meanings or discourses” (p. 211).

Buisseret (2000) remarks that while people may:

Vary in their approaches and, in some respects their conclusions, they essentially agree that the notion of cultural syncretism – whether described as acculturation or Creolization – is a conceptual tool of crucial importance for analyzing the interchange that occurred between the peoples of the continents bordering the Atlantic Ocean. (p. ix-x)

He calls creolization a process by which a “truly New World” came into being, and while predominantly this process is understood as a subordinate culture adjusting to a superior culture, there are authors and researchers who suggest the process is not unidirectional (Buisseret, 2000; Herskovits, 1938; Hoover, 1989; Mintz & Price, 1992; Axtell, 1981). Buisseret at the same time also acknowledges the weakness in this idea in regards to the applicability to all New World societies.

However, this paper is not concerned with all New World societies. My focus is on colonial and modern Louisiana, and the meaning that emerges today from the creolization process in Louisiana – and specifically New Orleans’ – foodways. Before I move into a discussion of creolization in New Orleans’ foodways, I would like to conclude with this: Jennings (1975) reminds us of creolization that “the process needs to be tracked far beyond the initial century of contact, into a period when the balance of power between the various cultures may go through many unexpected changes” (p. 207, cited in Buisseret, 2000, p. 14). Indeed, in models of creolization¹⁹ the final stage is usually one where there is a rise of new forms. It is this space of the creolization process I am most interested in, and the one, for me, that represents the new pattern emerging that is indication of a process of learning.

¹⁹ See Bitterli, 1989; Jennings, 1975; Lockhart, 1992; Ball, 1992; and Edwards, 2011

Creolization and New Orleans

Ultimately, the environment of my research is located in New Orleans, thus it is important to situate this process by first exploring the connection between creolization, Creole, and New Orleans. Creolization and Creole is a term used in everyday parlance in Louisiana when referring to cuisine (Buisseret, 2000). Usner (2000), citing Hall (1966) and Todd (1974), calls creolization a “process of interaction among different cultural groups in a colonial region as they adapted to a new environment” (p. 35). Specifically in the Lower Mississippi Valley, Usner (2000) describes creolization as a process of cultural practice deeply rooted in the land and characterized by intercultural exchange, adoption, and fusion especially present in agricultural practices. When discussing creolization in this region, the concept of “creole” in all of its “confusing, politicized meaning” needs to be considered (Usner, 2000, p. 35-36). In Louisiana, creole is used as an adjective designating settlers and slaves born in the colony and to anything native to the colony/state. The word has been appropriated by upper-class citizens later in the colony’s history despite the fact that it was never abandoned by Africans and native Louisianans, hence the politicized and confusing meaning of the term²⁰ (Usner, 2000; Tregle, 1992).

Creole, a term also used to describe plants and vegetables, was later extended to describe native New Orleanian cuisine and a style of cooking (Usner, 2000). Usner (2000) reminds us that the

Persistent usage of the term ‘creole’ in food markets and kitchens to the present day provides an important clue to applying the analytical concept of Creolization to the evolution of agriculture in the Lower Mississippi Valley, not only for the formative years

²⁰ For a discussion on class and Creole, see Chapter 3.

of the eighteenth century but for migrations and adaptations for subsequent years as well.
(p. 36).

In short, what Usner is telling us is that creolization is a process that extends beyond the initial “acquisition of local knowledge” about food that took place in colonial Louisiana to a maintenance of control that is still occurring in the present that displays the “knowledge and resourcefulness behind the creole livelihood” (p. 36-37). This knowledge and resourcefulness that is the hallmark of the creolization process shapes acts of pedagogy and learning today as acts of exchanging and sharing knowledge.

Usner (2000) suggests that some of the most “enduring forms of intercultural exchange occurred in the local subsistence and marketing practices” (p. 56) in Louisiana. This process of exchange is rooted in the land and experiences of the local communities. When Baron and Cara (2011) talk about creolization as being a process of creativity, they describe that process as “when cultures come into contact, expressive forms and performances emerge from their encounter, embodying the sources that shape them and yet constituting new and different entities [that are]...fluid in their adaptation to changing circumstances and open to multiple meanings” (p. 3). Similarly, Ostendorf (2013) describes creolization and New Orleans foodways as “a pattern of merry borrowing and exchanging” (p. 61) that emerges from the process of the different cultures in New Orleans interacting.

The creolization process in colonial Louisiana, born out of the creativity necessary to survive the harsh colonial conditions of weather, food shortage, and the strangeness of a new land, grew into a mode of learning that was built upon the foundations of prior human experiences in a particular environment and adapted to the current conditions of time and place.

To me, this is the act of creating a new pattern emerging from a sustainable epistemology and complex ontology, and thus is a process of learning.

Food as a social discourse provides an excellent framework for understanding the ways in which food as a living curriculum embodies ideas of complexity and can sustain cultural identity. How knowledge is gained, passed on, and evolved from generation to generation highlights the manner in which a group adapts for survival against time. The bricolage of identities and artifacts that are brought together under the umbrella of foodways, and through a process of creolization, represent more than the sum of its parts. It is a learning process that is grounded in the environment and evidenced by the emergence of new understandings through cultural and social interactions. Furthermore, the act of creolization materializes “out of the social processes of resistance, adaptation, and reformulation [and thus] new forms and new meanings emerge with each new generation” (Edwards, 2011, p. 56). Food helps us to understand the values of a culture and the spaces in which that culture is lived.

Creolization, Cultures of Power, and Learning

Ostendorf (2013) submits that creolization as a term and verb was first used by the Portuguese and Spanish in their colonization projects as a way to mark the maintenance of boundaries between the experiences and realities of the New and Old Worlds. He goes on to suggest that in America, the concept of creolization is inextricably bound up in the process of controlling the colonial project and establishing a new social order. Since Creole is a localized idea and an oppositional term when used in a racial context, creolization can also be considered an act of resistance since it combats the dichotomies imposed by structures of power: city/country, metropolitan/colonial, native/foreign (Stewart, 2007, p. 6-7). The power dynamics

that are acted out between native/indigenous and dominant cultures are structured by the somewhat oppositional process of creolization.

According to Stewart (2007), Old World/New World (aka native/foreign) becomes a cultural struggle between the dominant culture's perceptions of the indigenous culture as weak and degenerate. This struggle moves the power struggle for new forms into the sphere of race and not just nativity. In terms of the South and New Orleans, this struggle happens between races, where the notions of native and dominant take on new meanings in light of colonization and slavery, and the perception of African Creoles as lazy, slovenly, and morally degenerate (Stewart, 2007, p. 8). In modern day New Orleans and arenas of education, this struggle plays out in what Lisa Delpit (1988, 1991) terms a "culture of power," where students of color struggle with gaining access to codes that will enable them to enter into the power enjoyed by mainstream society.

One reason that Delpit (1995) discusses cultures of power is in order to "[identify] and [give] voice to alternative world views" (p. 23-24). In her analysis of what constitutes a culture of power, she identifies 5 aspects of power that are connected with schooling: issues of power are enacted in the classroom, there are codes for participating in power, the rules for participation come from the culture in power, explicit instruction as to what those rules are enables those outside of the culture of power to participate in it, and those within the culture of power are least aware of their power whereas those outside of the culture of power are most aware of its existence (Delpit, 1995, p. 24). While Delpit contextualizes her discussion of this culture of power in classroom literacy and writing curricula, her assertion has an extremely wide scope.

For me, Delpit's biggest impact is her emphasis on explicit instruction. She asserts that, "When you're talking across cultures, people have different sets of understandings, and you

often can't get across your meaning unless you are able to be very explicit" (1991, p. 541). It is this direct instruction that assists students in acquiring the culture of power, because students need guidelines to work from, especially if they are engaging in something completely new or foreign to them (Delpit, 1991). For me, I see this as classic scaffolding when you think of teacher education and the tools new teachers explore in supporting student learning. In order for students to ease into learning something new, they should be provided with support mechanisms that are clearly labeled as such so that they can be accessed.

Moreover, Delpit (1991) contends that being explicit is not the only ways in which students are taught about the ways to access the culture of power. She says that "you don't just learn about the culture of power, you also learn about and explore your own culture" (p. 542). In order to know that a culture of power exists, it needs to be named. Naming this culture does not need to come at the expense or in opposition to a native culture. Instead, acknowledging that a culture of power exists politicizes that culture and thus assists the student in understanding more deeply the system in which power operates. Delpit believes that in doing this, by being explicit in naming power for what it is, teachers empower students to understand that their culture still has value – power is simply a finite object within a closed system and learning which cultures will give you access to power allows students to learn how to navigate between cultures without assigning lesser or greater value to any of them.

I bring up Delpit's culture of power at this point because the power of explicitness in instruction that she talks about connects to what I am trying to emphasize in this new shape of learning in a number of different ways. First, Delpit is advocating for new patterns of knowing to emerge through explicit instruction, knowing that is not divorced from a student's native or natural environment. To enable students to move between their culture and a culture of power, it

is important to recognize that “different children bring different ways of construing the world as a result of the cultures they grow up in” (Delpit, 1991, p. 543). This is holistic learning because it considers the whole aspect of a student’s education – what they bring to the table, the table itself, and what they bring away from the table as a result of engaging in that space. This is the essence of meeting students where they are at. In considering how to navigate cultures of power, the potential for contextualized education emerges where the teacher becomes the arbiter between the cultures of students, which for me translates as the teacher being an agent of movement between different patterns of being.

Second, in being explicit, teachers build trust with their students. If teachers do not directly inform students of what the lesson is or what the expectations are, then “students ultimately find themselves held accountable for knowing a set of rules about which no one has directly informed them” (Delpit, 1995, p. 31). Indeed, Delpit goes on to assert that “if such explicitness is not provided to students, what it feels like to people who are old enough to judge is that secrets are being kept, that time is being wasted, that the teacher is abdicating his or her duty to teach” (p. 31). Students are certainly old enough to judge on many occasions, and if that is the case, then there is no trust of the teacher to be had on the part of the student because “they come to feel that the teacher knows these conventions and strategies but is not telling them” (Delpit, 1991, p. 545). Consequently, in conditions such as these, it is very difficult for relationships to form between student and teacher, and without relationships, the system fails to function in healthy ways.

Cultures of Care

When teachers are explicit, they show care. Delipt (1991) urges educators to “focus on what students need” because the values that educators hold “should be aspiring towards

liberation of individuals, communities, and groups that have been traditionally oppressed” (p. 546). We cannot explore creolization as a learning theory without acknowledging the power dynamics that exist when cultures come together. Delpit’s dialogue on the culture of power raises important points on the importance of transparency on learning when it comes to the relationships between teachers and students. Just as important is the assertion that there must be trust. To continue this line of thought, I’d like to bring ideas of care into the conversation, because care is an essential component of building trust as well.

Nell Noddings (2005) suggests that “the structures of current schooling are against care” (p. 20), that we live in a “throwaway society” where the disconnect that exists between humans and nature result in careless attitudes which treat human emotions and moral cares as disposable. Coming to know within a framework that does not value relationships, the epistemology of modern schooling becomes reduced to a linear model of learning that is impersonal and uncaring. In this approach towards schooling, the parts of a whole become disposable and easily replaceable as the ties between the parts grow thinner and less sustainable. Students, teachers, the values and ideas that we learn, even the physical structures that we learn within – all of these parts begin to become calcified into pieces that have less and less impact upon each other until their meaning disintegrates and knowledge becomes fractured.

According to Noddings (2005), “traditional educators organize the curriculum around the disciplines, and themes of care would have to arise within a discipline and be treated as a integral part of disciplinary study” (p. xxiii). Care, when treated this way, is separate from the curriculum. It becomes a commoditized object of the curriculum instead of a characteristic describing the learning activity taking place within the classroom and relationships of students, teacher, and material. As a result, the epistemology of modern schooling takes on a very linear

shape, which influences not only how individuals view progress and growth, but also how they arrange social relationships and conceptions of each other.

Instead of solely teaching about care, educators should also exhibit care and the curriculum should be characterized as caring. Noddings (2005) suggests that “responsiveness should be at the heart of caring” (p. xv). Moreover, schools should be “centers of care – places where they [students] are cared for and will be encouraged to care deeply themselves” (p. 65). Additionally, the ability to reflect characterizes caring relationships and its presence has the potential to bring about a new reality that “moves one *outward* to a connection with a larger whole” (Rud, 1997/2008, p. 162-163). Communication is one way that both Freire (2000) and Noddings (2005) suggest as a way for individuals to reflect, negotiate difference, and connect with this “whole,” or larger community/society. Indeed, I have been discussing how important communication is to learning, and in this light, communication becomes a pathway for participants to move outward and engage in caring relationships, because “dialogue is a common search for understanding, empathy, or appreciation” (Noddings, 2005, p. 228).

When this proximal space begins to form in the classroom, there begins to be “multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same” (Greene, 1995. P. 16). In achieving a constant state of flux such as this within the classroom, educators can avoid the routinizing effects of a curriculum bound by dichotomies and bifurcations – the curriculum can become expansive and be sustained by an epistemology that is situated within multiple cultural contexts. The new shape of learning that emerges from this sustainable epistemology has the potential to bridge the dichotomies in education and promote movement between the students outside of the culture of power.

Conclusion: Envisioning Louisiana Foodways as a Curriculum

Murdoch (1970) and Weil (1951) have defined care as attention. Noddings (1984) has defined care as receptivity, a concept she believes lasts longer than a momentary focus of attentiveness and which is a combination of attention and a desire to help. Sustainable relationships are ones that go beyond a single interaction and are based upon a sense of responsibility. To care means to take on responsibility for the feelings of another and I believe, as does Noddings (2005), that teachers bear a responsibility for the capacity of their students. Here is where the ideas of trust in explicitness that Delpit talks about connect with the ethic of care Noddings espouses when considering students, teachers, and the nature of curriculum.

Considering learning within a sustainable epistemology is one way that I propose educators can acknowledge non-traditional curriculums and bring them into the classroom for a more caring learning experience. A sustainable epistemology embodies a set of values that enables moral, caring relationships that respects the language of difference. If we are to take this worldview and focus it on the discourses of education, we can begin to see how the shape of education can change. Learning in this space is based upon an ecological theoretical outlook embodied by a sustainable epistemology, and looks to social awareness and holism to accomplish a systems approach towards transformative education. Because we do not exist in a world where our values are mutually exclusive, by concentrating on the relationships that do exist between individuals in the classroom, a caring education emerges within our learning systems that espouses reflection and care in our pursuit of ethical learning systems.

I believe a curriculum based on food and foodways embodies all that I have been writing about when it comes to a new shape of learning. A foodways curriculum values difference, is flexible, demonstrates learning in new forms, and is characterized by care. In exploring the

unfolding of a foodways curriculum rooted in the culture of New Orleans, understanding how a culture of power operates and how to educate those who are part of it is a natural extension of the work I am doing as an educator. Before we can explore the educative process happening in my study in present-day New Orleans, it is essential that we explore the ideas I wrote about in this chapter through the history of Louisiana foodways, the context of her people and the dynamics of how her cultures formed. We can do this through taking a closer look at the umbrella process of creolization.

When applied to Creole food and foodways of Louisiana, we see the material signification of a particular mode of learning as new forms of food and dishes emerge as new patterns of familiar ingredients, cooking processes, and environmental settings come together to demonstrate cultural learning. This is a mode I believe forms the basis for a grounded curriculum and will be the focus of this next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: WRITING LOUISIANA

This night I hold an old accustomed feast,
Whereto I have invited many a guest,
Such as I love; and you among the store,
One more, most welcome, makes my number more.
William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, (Act I, scene ii)

Whether it is in feast, in identification, in isolation, or in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, to woo (for Capulet uses his party as a vehicle for Paris to court the young Juliet), food has long been a companion to people and their social activity. This is because food does more than nourish the body; food transcends the limits of physical survival to attend to the spiritual and emotional needs of a people (Andrews, 1999). Indeed, food tells the story of that body and soul (Fine, 1996) by narrating the experiences of the individual. Food tells of the places that a person has been, the people he or she has met, and the things he or she has seen. On a larger scale, food reveals the story of community (Fine, 1996; Belasco, 1999) – of how a community comes together, how it sticks together, and the ways the community expresses its values and identity in order to perpetuate its survival. The story of a culture as told through food can be traced through its foodways. For these reasons, foodways become one of the ways to understand cultural identity.

Exploring Louisiana Through Her People and Their Cuisine

Since the human relationship to what one eats is a complex one (Fischler, 1988, p. 275), my exploration of food's connection to culture, and specifically to education, is just one aspect surrounding the connections between food and humans. In the social sciences, food is studied in connection to: cuisine and cultural meanings (Levi-Strauss, 1968; Douglas, 1966, 1978), sociology and cultural norms (Grignon & Grignon, 1999; Bourdieu, 1984), the culinary arts (Richards 1932, 1985); and identity and memory (Sutton, 2010; Holtzman, 2006; Fischler,

1988). And those are only to name a few connections between people and eating. In all of my readings, I have found very little to connect food with education (see Davis, 1999, for a discussion on the kitchen and women in the Academy), and specifically with curriculum. Similarly, in my readings about Creolization theory and processes (Edwards, 2008, 2011; Stewart, 2007; Baron & Cara, 2003; Palmie, 2006; Ostendorf, 2013; Hannerz, 1987, 1992; Glissant, 1989, 1995), the theory is applied to such fields as medicine, architecture, music, language, and culture. In these readings, the theory and process itself is largely connected to ideas of power. Specifically, domination and subjugation, colonization, and cultural influences/creativity emerge as the major themes and topics of Creolization theory. I have not read about Creolization as a process of education in any of the readings I have encountered²¹.

This chapter explores these little made connections between food and education. In particular, this paper takes a look at how a “kitchen curriculum” – or what I see as a grounded curriculum – embodies ideas of learning as relational, cultural, and local – or rooted in environment. These ideas are expressed through food and foodways, and can contribute much to the daily activity happening in our schools and classrooms. This chapter is about the story of Louisiana’s cultural identity as told through its foodways, and how those foodways comprise a particular curriculum. This chapter will explore the role that food has played in shaping Louisiana’s material culture by exploring the major influences in Louisiana’s foodways and how the state’s foodways formed during colonial times. I will enter into a discussion of how these foodways evolved over the time in by visiting two of the major movements in Louisiana’s foodways: the physical movement of the kitchen from “back of the house” to part of the house,

²¹ Indeed, Hannerz (1987) suggests, in reference to Creolization, that there is “no entirely coherent and credible macro-oriented perspective in cultural studies...to have developed anywhere else in the human sciences” (p. 547). I believe, education and curriculum in relation to Creolization is one of the spaces within the human sciences in need to of exploration.

which chronicles some of the negotiations of race and gender in Louisiana foodways and the use of the space of the kitchen as a classroom; and the golden age of restaurants, which brought innovation and creativity firmly back into the everyday existence of Creole cuisine and placed the kitchen as an educational space once again. Finally, I will look at how foodways can function as curriculum. With these ideas in mind, I will then consider what a grounded curriculum is and can be based off of my earlier discussion on how Creolization can be a process of learning.

Food and Foodways

Understanding what a grounded curriculum is, for me, begins in the food and foodways of Southern Louisiana. Foodways refer to a culture's food-related traditions. Kalcik (1984) defines foodways as "the whole pattern of what is eaten, when, how, and what it means" and suggests that foodways are "very closely tied to individual and group . . . identity" (p. 38). Studying foodways includes looking at the entire process of preparing and consuming food: what food a cultural group eats; how that food is eaten; the ways in which food is preserved; and any cultural, religious, or personal taboos that accompany the ceremony of food consumption (Kalcik, 1984; Flores-Meiser, 1998; Henry and Bankston, 2001; Gutierrez, 1992; Ancelet, Edwards, & Pitre, 1991). Some of the most enduring traditions of a culture are related to its food, for food reveals how a culture adapts to its environment, how the participants in a culture interact, and the ways a culture acts out its identity.

In studying foodways, the qualities of a culture's principles and even morals begin to emerge because through food, group identity finds expression. Food culture provides a very revealing praxis – how a culture treats the subject of food preparation and consumption reveals a group's living philosophy. From praxis springs the symbols of identity, which function to help a

culture, and the individuals within that culture, “develop a sense of selfhood and to confront human problems such as life and death, and thus [these symbols] are both expressive and instrumental” (Kalcik, 1984, p. 45). Because food and foodways are “an important means through which humans construct reality²²” and “students’ ideas about food are embedded in the value system of U.S. society” (Counihan, 1992, p. 55), food and the spaces where food takes prominence are suitable mediums for exploring the connection between identify, education, and learning in the classroom. Warren Belasco (1999) discusses the role of food as a “metaphor, symbol, an agent by which people communicate and interact” (p. 28), and I propose that we look at food as a vehicle for understanding who we are and how we teach and learn; and kitchens as channels for rethinking expertise – who is a teacher and who is a student. If education is the study of life (Dewey, 1938), and if food indeed reinforces life (Counihan, 1992), then questions I am looking to explore are by what manner does this reinforcement occur and how does food act the agent in this process?

At its most basic, food and cuisine involves “complex cognitive processes” (Fishler, 1988, p. 281) that prompt individuals to transform raw materials into composite bodies. However, I am not interested in the mechanics of cooking per se and the cognition needed to transform a recipe into a dish. While this aspect of food is fascinating to me, for this project I am more interested in the learning system represented by a culinary system (food and foodways). This system is governed by relationships and interactions between different food items, between food and the environment, between food and humans, between food and technology, between technology and the environment, and between technology and humans. Fishler (1988) suggests that “cooking helps to give food and eaters a place in the world, a meaning” (p. 283). Belasco

²² To read more on food and construction of reality, see Barthes (1975), Kahn (1986), Levi-Strauss (1966), Meigs (1984), and Reid (1986).

(1999) suggests that food not only “forces us to ponder questions about responsibility” (p. 31, citing Gussow, 1978; Curtin & Heldke, 1992). He says that “when it comes to food, there is no mind-body separation. You eat your ideas” (Belasco, 1999, p. 32). In this, I couldn’t agree more. The reconciliation of mind and body within the learning system of food is one of the primary reasons that I wish to explore food as a curriculum, for it is in the relationships between the elements of a culinary system that we can gain insight into how to bring the soul back into the modern-day classroom²³.

Louisiana Foodways

Jean Andrews (1999) proposes that:

The manner in which food is selected, prepared and served is always the result of the culture in which it occurs... Although food is eaten as a response to hunger...The way in which food is altered reveals the function of food in society and the values that society supports. (p. x)

Because “scholars increasingly use foodways as tools for interpreting cultural traditions” (Sauter, 2006, p. 170), and some of the most enduring traditions of a culture are related to its food, food can reveal how a culture adapts to its environment, how the participants in a culture interact, and the ways in which a culture learns.

Through food, group identity finds expression (Gaudet & McDonald, 2003). Foodways, therefore, can be seen as cultural forms and can be treated as texts constructed from social materials that use food as one of their primary sources (Geertz, 1973). These texts chronicle how a culture has formed and continues to rematerialize, and in reading these stories, the qualities of a culture’s principles and morals begin to emerge. By studying these material symbols of these

²³ Creole foodways emerge from a long line of traditions and adaptations to the environment. To read more on my thoughts regarding this, please see my response to Dr. Petra Hendry’s Generals question.

morals, an understanding of how a culture's history also materializes, for the "system of beliefs, values, and ideas about food and social life that organize any event" occurring in the present (Theophano, 1991, p. 45) has developed out of a sense for the past and a need for the future. In the South, particularly in Louisiana, the continuity of culture and ways of life emerge out of a space where time recirculates into itself and the "here and now" is not so far from the "then and was".

Allen (1990) suggests that individuals within a region, be it neighborhood, community, or city, "possess a collective awareness of place and express it in their cultural forms" (p. 1). This sense of place Allen talks about is undeniably connected to the land, and in the South, Allen further suggests that individuals often express their sense of place, and thus identity, in the material forms that come from the land. Indeed, she asserts that the principles by which Southerners create order out of their lives comes "out of local landscapes" (p. 152). John Egerton (1987), Southern foodways historian, says that "for as long as there has been a South, and people who think of themselves as Southerners, food has been central to the region's image, it's personality, and its character" (p. 2). The cuisine of the South was born of labor intensive, homegrown efforts that presented meals as a performance (Egerton, 1987).

A Brief History of Louisiana and Louisiana's Foodways

The Limitations and Possibilities in Writing a History of Louisiana and Louisiana's Foodways. The narrative of Louisiana's history is much like the rhizomatic map Deleuze and Guattari (1987) discuss. History in general is much like a rhizome, with so many different beginnings and points of entry, that the recollection of what has occurred up until this very moment is a living, breathing reality that is fluid and twisting much like the hypnotic beauty of a moving snake that continually coils in and out of itself as it goes through its life. The idea that

“history” is a cohesive narrative with a linear story demarcated by definitive plot points becomes unwieldy and impossible when considering the varied viewpoints and experiences that constitute the making of place, time, and experience. Hall (1992) warns that “Louisiana history, especially the history of race relations, cannot be fit into neat, rigid categories. In colonial Louisiana, there was more chaos than order. The study of any one historical question taken out of context leads to serious distortions” (p. xiii). Indeed, writing history is not an easy process, nor is it tidy.

In my “writing” of Louisiana’s history and specifically that of its foodways, I am not entering into the project without an eye and an ear to what Hall warns against and what de Certeau (1975) discusses as the rupture that occurs when trying to put to words a narrative of a place and the people that inhabit it. Conley (1975) suggests that writing, and the writing of history, is a labor that separates the past from the present, and shapes reality into a fixed form privileging the written from the oral, and the represented from the lived (Introduction in de Certeau, 1975). de Certeau (1975) takes this idea a step further by pointing out that the role of the writer is to be author of a discourse determining reality, history, and subjectivity. Therefore, it is my opinion that writing colonizes. In other words, writing freezes the space of a people’s lived experience – and thus their identity – into a representation of what that culture’s experience is and means. This representation is both imposed upon and internalized by a culture.

It is also my opinion that through writing, the rich subjectivity of a culture is reduced to a two dimensional system suddenly removed from the “real” of the constitutive lived experience. I am fully aware of this as I write this dissertation, and I acknowledge this limitation in the project and experiences that lay behind and ahead of me. However, I am hopeful that my work is just one entry point that makes the map of Louisiana’s foodways more real through the sharing of

stories, the experience of communion, and a revelation of what a slice of everyday life looks like in the acting out of the foodways of New Orleans, Louisiana.

For Michel de Certeau (1998), the practice of everyday life is a relationship between strangeness and familiarity that links a way of operating to a way of living. Everyday life is an intimate, sometimes oppressive relationship that we have inherited, and as much as the practice of living is “halfway point” between ourselves and our histories, it is also a halfway point between concrete action and ephemeral memory. In short, we live the practice of our everyday life but our actions are authored by the ghosts of our pasts as much as they are directed by the needs we face in the present. Cooking, as one of these practices of everyday life, is – according to de Certeau (1998) – “a plural language of stratified histories...of multiple relationships” (p. 3) that provides a link between culture, place, and class. The ways in which that link is played out through food leads to a complex understanding of how a culture responds to the conditions of their present identification in light of the realities of the past.

de Certeau (1975) suggests that “What we initially call history is nothing more than a narrative” (p. 287). A narrative embodies multiple avenues of knowing, meaning, or coming to know (Hendry, 2010), thus a historical narrative is just one version of understanding and accessing the past. The historical narrative takes on new meaning when we begin to write it down; for once we begin to write history, a gap is created between the subject of history and the written text of the history itself. Within the space of this gap exists an infinity of meaning. On the other hand, food, and all the wondrous activities that emerge from the bodily acts of planting, farming, cooking, and eating, is just one of the many tactics available to resist the strategy of the writing of history. Foodways and ingredients function together to represent the lived

experiences of a culture, thus collapsing the boundaries of “past” and “present” through expanded conceptions of how people live their everyday lives.

An Attempt at Writing a Brief History of Louisiana and Her Foodways. The birth of Louisiana can be traced in a number of different ways. The moments that led up to Louisiana being defined as a state, the events which occurred in order for Louisiana to exist, and the benchmarks which led to Louisiana’s becoming are varied and many, with some common themes revolving around colonial exploration, movements of war and power, and the various hands that have held control over Louisiana. I cannot even begin to go into the details of these global and local movements in the limited space I have here, and while my penchant for tangents is one I do indulge often, I am saving my digressions for other areas of this dissertation. The themes of Louisiana’s becoming that I am interested in are those of the different peoples that have come to this space (willingly or not) and called it home, and the ways in which the foodways have developed as a result of these different groups of people learning to live together in this particular southern space.

Claude Levi-Strauss (1968) writes about the relationship between people and food as a means by which a culture makes sense of their worlds. In the formation of Louisiana and her foodways, we have relationships being forged by a number of different people and their foods: Native American, French, African, Spanish, the West Indies, and German – and that is not an exhaustive list by any means. Hall (1992) writes that “Culture is a dynamic process” and that “In the Americas, new cultures were formed through intense, and often violent, contacts between peoples of varied nations, races, languages, and traditions” (p. xiii). She also discusses how the cultural assumptions of these peoples needed to be modified or discarded depending upon a number of factors, all of which are tantamount to the need for survival in a new land. She writes

of the experiences of those inhabiting Louisiana, “Like the Indians and the Africans, Europeans were acculturated by the peoples, and the worlds, they encountered” (xiv). No one, from the most powerful to the slave, was exempt from the pragmatism necessary to survive and as a result, the culture emerging in Louisiana was not static nor did it belong more to one group than another. Here, I am going to focus on three of the cultures that played an important role in the early formation of Louisiana foodways: the Native American, African, and French peoples.

Native American Contributions. Usner (1992) asserts that “Colonial history has focused for a long time on the external linkages of colonies with their home countries, long to the neglect of internal relationships forged by inhabitants” (p. 5). In Louisiana, the early relationship between the Native Americans and the French was born out of a common struggle to survive against British interests, specifically the need of the Native Americans for military protection and the need of the French for subsistence (Usner, 1992). A system of barter between these two peoples emerged, one where knowledge and supplies were traded alongside manpower between both groups. At the time, the threat to the Native American way of life came from between tribes as well as from foreign parties, and the early days of the Louisiana colony were difficult and lean. Usner (1992) writes of the impact of the Native Americans on the formation of colonial foodways: “Hunger and fever affected the small number of men stationed on the Gulf Coast, making them almost entirely dependent upon food provided by local Indian villagers” (p. 25). To eat, the settlers depended on the provisions of the Native Americans. To make the land farmable, the settlers needed African slave labor.

Ultimately, Native Americans were a key factor in the development of early social protocol and commercial development in Louisiana. Indeed, shortly after the French settlers

came to colonize New Orleans, they realized they were not equipped to survive on their own in this strange, new land. Ancelet, Edwards, and Pitre (1991) write,

Once in the New World, the French settlers . . . found it necessary to relearn many things, including what was good to eat, where to get it, and how to cook it. They learned much of this from the Native American tribes in the area who taught them techniques for acquiring native game and fish, and for growing native fruits and vegetables, especially corn and potatoes. (p. 140)

The Native Americans taught the settlers about the different wildlife and game that populated Louisiana, including deer, raccoon, rabbit, squirrel, duck, and fowl; the local fish, including drum, catfish, bass, eel, pike, and redfish; and most importantly, the best places to catch oysters, crabs, shrimp, and crawfish (Folse, 2004; Usner, 1992). Folse (2004) reports that “Native Americans also consumed turtles, terrapins, alligators, and even snakes” (p. 9). All of these meats and fish – even the exotic ones – have found their way into modern Louisianan foodways.

Additionally, “Among other Indian foods that infiltrated the colonial diet was the mixture of wild fruits and nuts into a variety of dishes and the use of animal oils in cooking” (Usner, 1992, p. 206). Agriculturally, Native Americans “undoubtedly showed Europeans and Africans working beside them some useful techniques for raising food” (Usner, 1992, p. 157). Native Americans settled in areas with fertile soil, because once they settled, they set roots through the growing of food and the stability this provided to a settlement. Corn was a main staple of the colonial diet and to the present still remains a large part of Creole cuisine (along with rice).

Folse (2004) notes that in addition to having multiple ways of preparing food (“boiling, broiling, frying, roasting, baking, and poaching”), the Native Americans – here he names the

Natchez specifically – “were said to have had 42 ways to prepare corn” (p. 10). du Pratz, in his 1774 *History of Louisiana*, notes:

In order to give an account of the several sorts of plants cultivated in Louisiana, I begin with Maiz, as being the most useful grain, feeling it is the principle food of the people of America, and the French found it cultivated by the Indians. (p. 183)

He also notes that “the Parched Meal is the best preparation of this corn; the French like it extremely well” (p. 185). The Parched Meal is bread mixed with beans, with ears of roasted corn. While Du Pratz never mentions what types of beans, I see in this Parched Meal the origins of a Creole favorite: red beans and rice with corn bread. This is such a staple in New Orleans that it is the flagship meal served to this day on Mondays in restaurants and homes alike, no exceptions. Many restaurants feature this incarnation of the Parched Meal as a special on their weekly menus as well because it has remained a staple of New Orleans foodways²⁴.

Foodstuffs are not the only contribution that Native Americans made to the burgeoning Louisianan foodways. For the Native Americans, food had both a market value and a relational one. Usner (1992) informs us that “food played a deeply ritual function within their [Indian] own societies, so in more formal relations with Europeans, food was treated as a gift that held participants together in a kinship like relation” (p. 211). Here we have the early beginnings of what many refer to as “Southern Hospitality,” or the idea of welcoming people and as a host, ensuring those people are comfortable. The sharing of food during colonial times was not always just a market exchange. In the sharing of food – of sustenance – Native Americans were also engaging in the act of building relationships in order to forge a common experience. Food sharing also had political dimensions, as respect was tied into the ritual of exchange. So was the

²⁴ Interesting to note here is that in my research on red beans and rice recipes, a number of them make reference to this dish having Haitian roots.

expression of power, as withholding food or abiding by treaties sealed through meals demonstrated the dominant or subjective role a particular group played.

African Contributions. The African contribution to Louisianan foodways and material culture is powerful. The slave narratives collected by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) reveal a number of deep insights about African culture and the ways in which they contributed to the Louisiana food traditions. When coming to Louisiana,

Africans taken from their homeland to North America arrived with their old cultural ways and survival skills learned in transit and soon blended them with what they encountered in the colonies . . . West African cultures gave start to African American influence in southern lifestyles, food, and cooking techniques. (Covey & Eisnach, 2009, p. 41)

The creolization process for the slave population is strong when demonstrating how a dispossessed people retained their cultural identity from their homeland while at the same time integrating as best they could, and with their own tactics to steal power wherever they could, in a strange new land that geographically wasn't so different from their homeland.

Usner (1992) reports that Africans supplemented their livelihood “through various subsistence practices – practices that they both carried to Louisiana themselves and borrowed from other groups” (p. 190). Hall (1992) informs us that culturally, America owes a debt to the African population, which communicated culture through strong matriarchal currents. The “developmental approach to culture formation” that is legacy of the African population in colonial Louisiana is the result of cultural materials being “preserved or discarded...in response to their usefulness in the agonizing process of survival while a new world was being created” (p. xiv). The African presence in Louisiana not only exhibited pragmatism based on survival. Their

influence on the material culture (foodways) draws upon the strong connection found in the geography between the African homeland (particularly that of Senegambia) and Louisiana.

The fertile lands of New Orleans brought about by the Mississippi flooding, seasonal hurricanes, rainy seasons, and the general swampy geography closely resembled that of the Senegal River area in West Africa. There, the West Africans cultivated rice, corn, tobacco, indigo, cotton - all crops which African influence introduced to and helped thrive in New Orleans because of the similarities between the two places' agricultural cultures (Folse, 2004; Hall, 1992). Some of the most common foods that came over with the African population include yams, watermelon, okra, and black-eyed peas. Additional food staples and cultivation practices for rice, tomatoes, and peppers have also been introduced by Africa and have taken prominent root in Creole cuisine (du Pratz, 1774/1975; Dawdy, 2010; Mitchell, 2009). Rice appears in a majority of Creole dishes, as a side, a base, or the main ingredient itself.

African culture survived despite the hardship and demoralizing reality of slavery (Covey & Esinach, 2009, Mitchell, 2009), which can be seen in the strong influence African ingredients and ways of food preparation have in Creole cuisine. Du Pratz (1774/1975) talks about New Orleanean rice consumption, giving his opinion on its taste, directions to prepare it, and how to make a bread of it:

They eat rice as they do in France, but boiled much thicker, and with much less cookery, although it is not inferior in goodness to ours: they only wash it in warm water, taken out of the same pot you are to boil it in, then throw it all in at once, and boil it until it bursts, and so it is dressed without any further trouble. They make a bread of it that is very white and of good relish; but they have tried in vain to make any that will soak in soup.
(p. 186)

It is important to note that colonial narratives often brush the African contribution to Creole diet under the rug. Dawdy (2010) notes the audible absence of the African influence on the burgeoning writings about Creole cuisine in the colonial diaries and other artifacts.

Africans also bring a sense of resiliency to Louisiana culture, seen in their ability to survive despite all the obstacles – natural and manmade – that awaited the slave population’s arrival to the Gulf. Hall (1992) suggests that part of the African ability to survive is due to how “skilled [they were] at feeding themselves through hunting, fishing, and cultivating corn, rice, melons, and other food crops” (p. 74). The Africans brought this knowledge of food and transformed the lands, bringing a wave of technological advancement to colonial Louisianan foodways that converted swamps into rice paddies and wild bayous into cornfields (Hall, 1992).

French Contributions. A major French impact on Creole cuisine was not so much the foodstuffs contributed as much as the ways in which the foods were prepared and cooked. The French goal was to survive, and once that level of need was satisfied, the French then looked to elevate the ingredients offered by the Native Americans and Africans, and to supplement the lack of local French ingredients when it came to food preparation in colonial Louisiana. Ancelet, Edwards, and Pitre (1991) write,

Much of France’s fine cuisine is rooted in the need to make the best of a bad situation: examples are the development of cooking techniques designed to tenderize tough cuts of beef and pork, and the creation of sauces designed to make simple foods more appetizing. (p. 137)

Furthermore, the French tended to cook their dishes for long periods in covered pots in order to draw out the lifespan of the dishes. Thus, we begin to see the creolization of New Orleanean foodways in dishes such as gumbo and jambalaya, which mix the African preference for rice,

peppers, and tomatoes mixed with the French predilection for saucy dishes and long cooking times in order to tenderize meat.

According to Bienvenue, Brasseaux, and Brasseaux (2005), the national dish of France in the 17th century was soup and whole grain beds. This national dish later translated into the French love of sauces and adornment of meals with sauces, a practice we see abundantly in Creole cuisine. The base of these soups and sauces is the roux, which the French brought to New Orleans. A roux is made from 1 part flour and 1 part oil (or fat – chef’s choice), and no matter what cookbook or family history you look in from colonial times to present, the recipe for making a good roux rarely changes. Roux forms the base for soups, stocks, sauces, gumbo, and jambalaya, some of the more common native Louisianan fare regardless of where you come from. I like to think the roux symbolizes the glue that holds the Creole community together, for it is the roux that is the genesis of every Creole meal (Prudhomme, 1987, 1984; Besh, 2011, 2009; Land, 1969, 1954; Hulin, 2010; Link; 2009).

Adaptation is a lasting effect the French had on Louisianan foodways. Elevating native ingredients through familiar cooking techniques helped make the French feel more at home in their strange, new land and lent them a sense of ownership and control that was essential to their growing sense of colonial identity. The French saw native ingredients as exotic and as such, sought to interpret them through a lens of power that subsumed the original into a larger, newer vision of French colonial identity.

Key Moments in Louisiana Foodways

de Certeau (1975) warns us that:

An analogous change takes place when tradition, a lived body, is revealed to erudite curiosity through a corpus of texts...these two ‘heterologies’ (discourses on the other) are

built upon a division between the body of knowledge that utters a discourse and the mute body that nourishes it. (p. 3)

Writing has the ability to conquer (de Certeau, 1975), and writing history sets up a divide between he or she who relays that history and the participators of those moments in time that are being relayed and that have come to pass. Already, in my brief history of the different racial, ethnic, and national contributions to the beginnings of Louisiana's foodways, I have silenced the voices of those other progenitors to the vibrant cuisine we enjoy in Louisiana and New Orleans today – the German, the Spanish, the Italian (to only name a few). Moreover, I have barely done justice to the cultures I did write about, for time – both physically in my day and the colonial period I was writing about in this paper – creates boundaries that inevitably limit what I write.

However, when Tomasik (1998) in his Translator's Note to de Certeau's (1998) texts, makes reference to the "murmuring of the everyday" (p. x), he is suggesting that by hearing the sounds of those living in the everyday of the space being chronicled, the writing of history can offer a voice to disrupt the conquest of words. The everyday spoken discourse of a people can provide a balance to the writing of history, and it is with this belief that I move forward with my project. To arrive in the space of recent New Orleans, the place where I would like to explore a new shape of learning revolving around foodways as curriculum, I would like to offer a local history or genealogy of some important moments in Louisiana's and New Orleans' foodways. I have come to the conclusion that these are important and formative moments from my own readings and discussions of both locals and transplants to Louisiana. It is by no means exhaustive and it is most definitely subjective, and my account takes on what de Certeau (1988) calls a "fragmented discourse" (p. xxvi). In the sections below, I will talk about how the physical location of kitchens, and their impact on the intersection of race and gender, have

influenced the continual formation of Louisiana's foodways; the golden age of restaurants in New Orleans and the way this movement encouraged creativity in the cooking of food; and I will talk about the state of Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard in New Orleans today and how food is inspiring the rebirth of that Central City staple. All of these movements in foodways formations contribute to my ideas about creolization being an educational process of learning predicated on a foundation of creativity and merging. That these spaces are anchored in the physical also reinforces my belief that learning is contextual and emerges from the material and metaphysical environments we call home.

The Detached Kitchen²⁵

Stories of how boundaries between slavery and freedom, master and slave, races and classes are not privileged in the writing of history because they threaten projects of power and control. Yet the everyday agency of the people living in colonial New Orleans is reflected in the history of Louisiana foodways, which resonate with individual efforts to survive through "interethnic participation" (Usner, 1992, p. 294), working together, and crossing boundaries. However, as Louisiana moved out of the colonial period, architectural design reflected shifts in social rules and patterns. Therefore, an exploration of how the detached kitchen underwent transformation in Louisiana history is important to note in understanding how race and gender impacted the formation of foodways and its importance as a curriculum.

Creolization and Critical Geography. Creolization as it pertains to Creole architecture becomes very important in this discussion. Because critical geography looks at how spaces are shaped by the interrelationships of power, place, and identity, this is also an apt theory to use in conjunction with ideas about creolization and race to explore the learning site of the Creole

²⁵ I would like to acknowledge Berlisha Morton here, for I have worked with her on this idea in the past and could not have come to some of the conclusions I have about kitchens as learning spaces without our collaborations.

kitchen and ultimately my research site, Café Reconcile. Both creolization and critical geography happen in sites of entanglements or contact zones, spaces of “cross breeding or mixture” (Cottenet-Hage, 1995, p. 20, quoted in Stewart, 2007, p. 6). Creolization as a theory and a process maps the ways in which culture adapts to the changing conditions of the world and society. Through demonstrating how the multiple layers of people, place, and time intersect, creolization provides a narrative of the ways that cultures learn and survive, and in the space of the Creole kitchen, Louisiana foodways enact this learning process.

According to Edwards (2008), sites where cultures meet can be characterized by relations of domination and subordination that result in the restructuring of localized patterns of life into reinterpretations of cultural forms (Edwards, 2008; Hannerz, 1992). Pratt (1991) calls these sites “contact zones”, and she describes these places as “spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or there aftermaths as they are lived out in the world” (p. 33). This struggle moves the bid for new forms into the sphere of race and not just nativity. Critical geography is concerned with the lived experiences of the people who navigate the everyday of these spaces of entanglement and maps those forces that act upon the people to transform a space into a place (Helfenbein, 2010; de Certeau, 1984).

The particular space of the detached kitchen becomes a learning space when considering critical geography. Helfenbein (2010) suggests that schools (learning sites) are borderlands, places where dynamic learning can occur. Initially, the designation of Creole was meant to clearly define a person through race and status, and creolization as a process upset this attempt by colonizing powers to maintain social order. When establishing colonial Louisiana, borders became tools not only of control but markers of a space’s “place and politic”, however when

considering the “spatial metaphor”, “borders and boundaries are troubled, crossed, and complicated” because they are a “part of the process of place-making” (Helfenbein, 2010, p. 366). Consequently, “borders exist in embedded networks of history, politics and power...and have a materiality – real effects on lived experiences” (Helfenbein, 2010, p. 366). As such, borders are not stable spaces but places of multiple dimensions and possibilities that leak (Helfenbein, 2010).

Therefore, there is complexity here in terms of borderlands and learning. If the boundaries of schools indeed spill over, then the kitchen as a school, is a borderland— a very fluid, chaotic space where the learning that takes place is not a standard curriculum of accepted, bounded content knowledge. When Lees (2001) discusses critical geography as it pertains to architecture, she suggests that physical spaces map social structure and power. Furthermore, according to Lees, architecture is a social product that reflects and legitimizes “underlying social relations” through those individuals that use these architectural spaces to “actively shape the[ir] meanings” via “networks of interrelated practices” in which “social identities, environments, and their interrelations are performed and transformed” (p. 54-56). Therefore, architectural spaces can be transformative because of the agency of those peoples occupying the space. Architecture as a space is not inherently good or bad. It is the activity of those that occupy and perform within these physical spaces that translate their meaning metaphysically. It is within critical architectural geography that we can map these spaces.

Evolution of the Detached Kitchen Roots. The detached kitchen emerges from the West African social practice of keeping the family and hearth intimately joined within the larger dynamic of family of community. With the introduction of African tradition into the American colonial plantation society, the Creole kitchen subverted African social ground rules into covert

forms (Edwards, 2008). In Louisiana, Creole communities adapted the detached kitchen into architectural structures and thus created an opportunity for the growth of Louisiana foodways by privileging a separate space for food activity. Because the “social context of mealtimes” (Dawdy, 2010, p. 394) was of extreme importance to this burgeoning colony, the colonial practice of the detached kitchen submerged African American identity “in the execution of enslaved domesticity” (Dawdy, 2010, p. 394) that all but erased the written evidence of Africans in colonial writing. In Creole architecture, we see the English adoption of West African social spaces and the English appropriation of those spaces being transformed into places where power creates social orders privileging men and writing women of color out of the historical narrative.

The detached, Creole kitchen, “was an important emblem of hardening social boundaries and the evolving society created by slaveholders that increasingly demanded clearer definitions of status, position, and authority” (Vlach, 1993, p. 43). Therefore, the kitchen as a detached space was not only physically removed from the “big house” for practical and safety considerations. This “architectural gesture” was a political move aimed at “establish[ing] a clearer separation between those who served and those who were served” (Vlach, 1993, p. 43).

In Creole architecture, we see the English adoption of West African social spaces and the English appropriation of those spaces being transformed into places where power creates social orders privileging men and writing women of color out of the historical narrative. However, instead of silencing women of color, the detached kitchen as a separated space and borderland empowered women of color because the physical separation actually served to enhance the blurring of the lines of activity taking place within the kitchen. Mitchell (2009) informs us that “the emergence of New World Creole or an African American culture was an affirmation of identity and humanity during slavery” (p. 3) achieved through negotiating a survival from a new

and hostile environment (a complex motion of determination and endurance). Moreover, “with so much that had been familiar lost for the African captives, the beginning of a redefined culinary practice were significant as a language for claiming identity, and eventually in distinguishing skill, trade work, and class opportunities and cultural patterns” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 3). Within this new literacy was that of the female, of the matrilineal passage of culture and power. The unique space of the kitchen throughout Louisiana’s history allowed this lineage to give birth to traditions of strength and survival born out of negotiating identity and power within complex and oppressive realities that sought to make women of color invisible in the annals of colonization and acculturation.

African American foodways can challenge some of these ideas about power by communicating a cultural memory which affirms the connection between people. Mitchell (2009) asserts that African American foodways integrate the myriad strands of culture that form the basis of American cuisine: “European, African, and American Indian culinary traditions” (p. xi). And he emphasizes that “African American culinary traditions are in constant motion” (p. xi). Without movement, the everyday activity of a culture and a people become frozen and stymied – consequently, they cannot grow. Cooking therefore emerges as a *tactic* of the othered culture to resist the systems of oppression imposed by institutions of power through movement, which collapses the boundaries of past and present through expanded conceptions of how foodways and ingredients function together to represent the lived experiences of a culture. Foodways reaffirm the presence of the oppressed and establish a cultural legacy of experience because African foodways evolve with the growth of the community (Mitchell, 2009, xiii). Food may simply be just food, however it’s taste elicits memories and it’s consumption creates an occasion to remember and pass on those memories (Mitchell, 2009).

After the Civil War, the highly skilled and prized knowledge of the African American female cook was no longer free, and as a result, the space of the Creole kitchen began to change as the social and family structures in America were changing (Edwards, 2011). In the process of Americanization and Creolization, the detached kitchen – the African feminine space of power and pedagogy—slowly disappeared for economic reasons. In spite of the ways in which narratives of male power have relegated women of color to silence and written them off of the pages of written history, the reality of the everyday for women of color demonstrates that they were not just powerful players in Louisiana foodways, they were also the navigators and shapers of how those foodways developed. The strong African presence in Creole cuisine is testimony not only to the power of African women to subsist and survive despite the various forms of colonization imposed upon them, it is also a celebration of their power as teachers and conveyors of African wisdom and collective histories (Dillard, 2012).

Usener (1992) writes, “Afro-American women became the most visible of all buyers and sellers of food in the New Orleans market. Slave women were assigned to the cooking and grocerying chores of white households, which helps explain their dominant role in marketing food” (p. 287). Furthermore, “Black women used these street marketing skills in the slave colony of Louisiana to establish a sphere of life apart from owner’s control” (p. 185). The presence of African women in foodways demonstrates how they operated within multiple spheres and multiple layers of control and autonomy. They learned how to function within the strategies of power imposed upon them, and through food, they developed tactics to resist. These tactics empowered them to create space within their lives for certain freedoms. The physical representation of that space of freedom was the kitchen. Through the kitchen, women

of color gained skills not only to survive, but to gather and wield power within Louisiana food cultures. Through the kitchen, women of color passed on what they learned about survival.

This process of invisibility continues into present-day Louisiana, where cooking and the kitchen continues to be a male domain. From the patriarchal restaurant system in New Orleans to the modernized hunting and gathering system in Cajun country, very few women emerge as powerful or even active conductors of foodways despite their very integral role as progenitors of this cultural tradition of food preparation. However, in acknowledging a curriculum of foodways where women of color were key contributors, what emerges is a shape of learning that not only privileges the feminine and racial backgrounds of both the teachers and students, but also acknowledges the kitchen as a space where that learning can occur. Through their work in the kitchen, these women teach us how people come together to learn valuable community lessons and life skills. These women and their kitchens had power – the inherent power of food to sustain life and culture which resided in the recipes that sustained a colony, a plantation, a community, and a culture. What this knowledge is and where it comes from is important, and as a curriculum it should be more closely studied.

The Golden Age of Restaurants in New Orleans. The movement of the Creole kitchen from a detached structure to a part of the main house is a map of gender and racial politics that continues into today's restaurant culture of New Orleans, as I referenced briefly above. And while the critical geography of the kitchen is easily traced in the history of the architecture, the cultural impact of the cuisine is the other storyline I am looking to suss out in my historical discourse of Louisiana's foodways history. Here, I bring the narrative firmly into New Orleans and the restaurant culture which brings the activity of the kitchen into the public sphere in new and innovative ways which truly embody creolization as a creative learning process.

Tucker (2009) calls New Orleans a city of extremes, where scarcity and plenty “have lived side by side since 1718” and “many of the city’s dishes evolved from a resourcefulness born of deprivation” (p. 3). Rima Collin, (1975) when writing about the evolution of the Brennan family restaurants, talks about the “Creole sense of dramatic” (p. 4) and how Ella Brennan encouraged her cooks to experiment with local ingredients and innovative ways of preparation. Upon the success of one dish, the creative bug characteristic of creolization was caught in the Brennan’s kitchen and a new generation of Creole novelty was born of that success (Deutsch, 1961). It is this new generation where another formative moment of foodways history occurs.

This new generation of restaurants impacted New Orleans foodways greatly. It starts with the Brennan family, a clan of restaurateurs who created a new pattern of dining and eating in New Orleans. Fitzmorris (2010) writes, “In the last half of the twentieth century, the Brennan family was the most innovative, influential and interesting forces in the New Orleans restaurant world” (p. 41). Indeed, “a schematic diagram of the who, what, and how of New Orleans dining would show a dense network of lines extending to ‘The Brennans’ to hundreds of now-famous chefs, restaurants, and dishes” (Fitzmorris, 2010, p. 41). The Brennans made dining into entertainment by not only bringing the personal into the public eating experience (Fitzmorris, 2010), but by also challenging the public’s thinking about what constitutes dining hours, dining tastes, and dining locations. Owen Brennan started this movement, however without Ella Brennan, these two siblings would never have established the legacy that exists today.

With the opening of Brennan’s, Owen Brennan brought haute cuisine in New Orleans to the everyman by transforming the idea of dining into a concept that was accessible to all. The story goes that “Count” Arnaud (owner of Arnaud’s, one of the oldest restaurants in New

Orleans and purveyor of old school French haute cuisine) walked into Owen Brennan's bar one night, upon which Brennan took the opportunity to kid the Count about the complaints he was always hearing about Arnaud's restaurant. The Count's response was, "that he had no room to talk, because it was well known that no Irishman could possibly understand haute cuisine, let alone operate a decent restaurant" (Fitzmorris, 2010, 41-42). With the gauntlet thrown, Brennan opened up Brennan's French Restaurant, where he not only served the same quality of food as Arnaud's, he made the experience enjoyable and fun by removing what he considered the stuffiness from the dining experience.

It may have been Owen who opened the restaurant that started it all; however, it was Ella Brennan who introduced Paul Prudhomme to the culinary world. Ella took Owen's movement to transform the dining experience one step further – she transformed the cuisine of New Orleans dining through infusing Creole and Cajun tastes and techniques. By marrying her vision of restaurants with the innovative vision of food Chef Paul Prudhomme, these two individuals demonstrate the potential of creolization to be a transformative process of learning and growth. Their playground was Commander's Palace, the headquarters of the Brennan clan. Fitzmorris (2010) calls this movement Ella and Paul embarked on the "Big Idea." As Ella tells it: "'We threw out the interchangeable French menu every New Orleans restaurant had had for a million years... We replaced it with everything local" (Fitzmorris, 2010, p. 45). Almonds were replaced with pecans, Cajun influenced brown sauces were used, and the "old, polite standby" dishes were infused with new life through the use of Creole seasonings.

Fitzmorris (2010) writes, "the timing was ideal. New Orleans classic restaurant cuisine had become motionless, and newspapers like *Figaro* had instigated a revival of interest in root-level New Orleans institutions, music and tastes among people" (p. 46). Ella Brenna and

Prudhomme's big idea injected a bit of chaos into what was becoming a stable system by adjusting the role of some the elements of the foodways – spices, ingredients, and techniques for cooking. Prudhomme's blackening is just one example of that. This movement created a casual air around fine dining within restaurant spaces that resembled the salons of the Enlightenment. Kitchens were now becoming places of creative innovation and customers the willing participants in this social experiment. Resistance through food soon followed: the po-boy sandwich emerged as symbol of resistance to the 1929 Street Car Strikes; the Dookey Chase restaurant was home to meetings where key developments of the Civil Rights movement were planned (Tucker, 2009).

While the latter half of the twentieth century was showering frozen dinners and mass-produced food on the general public, New Orleans was indulging in its own creativity. Tucker (2009) reminds us that the “New Orleans food culture has never been static” (p. xii). Collin (1975) says, “New Orleans [Creole] cooking is first and foremost a style of preparation, a manner of preparing the best available ingredients with flair – and the deep-rooted conviction that good eating is one of life's great pleasures” (p. 5). The golden age of restaurants in New Orleans spawned a number of institutions that embodied a flair for the creative and thus New Orleans foodways began to provide a non-traditional means of educating new generations on the local culture.

Conclusion: Foodways as Curriculum

Because food, for Louisianans, is the medium through which social spaces and relationships are negotiated and interpreted (Bienvenue, Brasseaux, & Brasseaux, 2005; see Flores-Meiser (2001) for more about food in general as a medium), I liken foodways to a curriculum and the kitchen to a classroom because of the common and historical conception of

the classroom as the medium for a student to experience and understand the world (Triche & McKnight, 2004). This idea, I believe, disrupts the modern idea of the classroom. In that space, textbooks and the mapping of information to be tested and assessed across all educational spaces regardless of place and environment reduces the complexity of learning to competency based and divorces knowledge from context (Biesta, 2010). Schooling becomes a collection of best practices that silences the voice of the Other in the project of linearizing practice and solidifying learning. Foodways, a living act of existence that responds to the present and is therefore in continual flux, therefore emerge as an act of resistance against the colonizing force of standardization of curriculum and learning.

At its most basic, food as a curriculum can be seen in the trappings of what it means to gather and cook: food as ingredients represent the raw materials of knowledge; dishes represent the application of that knowledge; recipes constitute the lesson plans, theories, and processes of application. On a more complex, gnostic level, the curriculum functions in the way that a chef cooks in the kitchen: fluidly, innovatively, and based on the relationship between all of the elements present in the space de cuisine. Recipes are just guidelines for how to approach the usage of food and foodways (Bienvenue & Walker, 2008). Ostendorf (2013) posits that,

Like culture, cooking comes to life as a process and practice, only to settle later into a set of norms which are then codified by cookbooks. Like cooking, cultures are never static or pure, but they grow by constant borrowing and exchanging. (p. 55)

Where the food comes from, how it has been used in the past, what it accomplishes in the present, and the possibilities for using food in certain ways in the future is all part of the curriculum of foodways and is deeply entrenched in the environment from which it comes. Food is just nutritional matter and a recipe just a set of instructions when divorced from its context.

But when considered in the environment in which it is being prepared and consumed, and how the ingredients are proportioned and put together, food takes on a new meaning.

Foodways as a Grounded Curriculum

Sandy Hubbert (1983), in the introduction to the *Encyclopedia of Cajun and Creole Cuisine*, says that “a cuisine is a living thing that draws upon the very essence of the people who prepare it” (no page number). Indeed, I believe the same could be said of what happens in the classroom. Knowledge divorced from the context of the student and community results in a jumble of information and rules without any organizing principle that is deeply meaningful to a student. Now, not all information has to be deeply meaningful, however in order to take root in the consciousness of the student, it does need to be organized within the student’s consciousness in such a way to make sense. Drawing upon a student’s prior knowledge and social context (meaning, to me, their historical, communal, familial, and environmental backgrounds) are positive approaches towards making information – and by extension knowledge and learning – meaningful. I believe that if a curriculum is grounded in a student’s social context, if a curriculum emerges from a student’s and community’s environmental backdrop, then information is transformed from detached bits and pieces of data into something meaningful.

I believe conditions in education are slowly moving towards the possibility of a grounded curriculum. Postmodern and post-structural approaches to curriculum design can disrupt the static, passive learning processes modernism establishes within present educational systems. Complexity science offers an alternative within the postmodern paradigm to challenge traditional notions of how we learn, and a sustainable epistemology (Slaughter, 1989; Scheman, 2012) offers an opportunity for educators to respond to what Slattery (2013) terms the “ecological and psychological devastation of modernity” (p. 225), and what Slaughter (1989) characterizes as

deeper than moral decline –“fragmentation, narrowness, and the subversion of meaning” (p. 255). Because of the modernist paradigm of education, I believe schooling has moved away from the process and practice of learning and teaching. Indeed, “much of our curriculum to date has trained us to be passive receivers of pre-ordained ‘truths’, not active creators of knowledge” (Doll, 1993, p. 8). It is through an active participation in creative learning processes that students gain confidence in their abilities and autonomy in their learning. Today’s curriculum should reflect contextualized values in both pedagogy and student behavior, which is excluded within the modernist paradigm because of its emphasis on order, linear learning, and the teacher as authority.

The Importance of Border Crossing

We need border crossing in our learning, to avoid the “discrete, isolated environments cut off from one another” that the modernist and mechanical paradigm create (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 19). For Freire (1970), the solution is a problem-posing model of learning which “breaks the vertical patterns of banking education” (p. 80) by inspiring cognition and broadening the scope of student and teacher perception through innovation. When both students and teachers see the world as a process of reality and transformation, a movement of inquiry begins to characterize our learning structures (Freire, 1970). Indeed, Barr and Tagg agree. Their “learning paradigm” promotes the same ideals as Freire’s model does – eliciting student discovery and constructing knowledge through holistic learning. In both of these postmodern models, learning and teacher-student relationships are no longer discrete and atomized. Instead, the post-modern influences on these models open up Freire’s, and Barr’s and Tagg’s systems to provide more flexible boundaries in learning style and pedagogical practice to transform learning instead of producing it.

At the heart of the Creole identity is border crossing. New Orleans has exhibited countless measures of blurred boundaries: between races, between laws, even between the lines that separate walkways from roadways. The food itself is an amalgamation of numerous ethnicities: African, French, Native American, German, Spanish, Italian, and most recently Vietnamese. And to understand Creole is to understand a constantly evolving idea. The word “Creole” itself presents a semiotic conundrum: it is a signifier without boundaries that creates the possibility of an open system where creativity can reign. “Creole” should be viewed as a sliding signifier that occupies a unique space because of the multiple meanings the word connotes. Its anchorless existence allows the concept to be universal while at the same time highly specific. In short, “Creole” takes on the chaotic disorder characteristic of the city and culture of New Orleans.

To better understand the space that Creole, and Creole cuisine, occupies in New Orleans’s foodways, I think it is helpful to explore Cajun identity and foodways, another facet of French colonial identity. To appreciate Creole, one should take a look at the space that exists between Creole and Cajun – and how in that space the process of creolization transforms Louisiana material culture into two distinctive foodways and identities. As we travel Louisianan foodways, we can see the beginnings of class assignation impacting the food and foodways of Louisiana. From the physical tables the food was served on, to the regard the French held towards the ethnic and social groups assisting them with culinary means for survival – despite the fact that these groups were indeed keeping them alive – the beginnings of the “class” of food begins to characterize some of the ways in which the foodways were forming. In the local landscape of Louisiana, where two dominant foodways circulate this very Southern space, two very unique local identities emerge that are not so similar yet not so different.

Louisiana foodways are characterized by a social approach towards eating and living that is grounded in family, culture, and history. The narratives of Louisiana foodways, particularly those of Cajun and Creole traditions, tell stories of place, resilience, and creativity.

CHAPTER 4: EATING AT LOUISIANA’S TABLE: TRAVERSING BOUNDARIES, CLASS, AND LEARNING IN CAJUN AND CREOLE FOODWAYS

Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the caldron boil and bake.
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blindworm's sting,
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Fire burn and caldron bubble.
William Shakespeare, MacBeth, (Act IV, scene i)

Thus goes the chants of the Weird Sisters in Shakespeare’s *MacBeth*. They sing to dark powers as they make their witchy brew, a foul mix of odd and supernatural ingredients pulled together for shady and wicked purposes. I turn to the Sisters to start off this particular section of my paper not for their dastardly deeds but for their homegrown recipe, which is filled with ingredients that are natural to them and their way of being yet for many others, these ingredients are considered taboo and inedible fixings. As we go to explore Cajun and Creole foodways, some of the foodstuffs within these foodways are considered by many outside of Louisiana to be part of a strange diet. Yet to those that live in Louisiana, the food is part of their heritage. And while the differences between Cajun and Creole populations can be seen in the ways each culture interprets and presents these ingredients, what I find significant about these foodstuffs – and the formation of Cajun and Creole foodways in general – is how grounded the food is in the community and the translation this connection has in the material culture and lived identity of the people of this land.

Cajun and Creole Foodways – A Discursive History

Cajun and Creole foodways are “a thriving, evolving, dynamic, aspect of regional culture that faces the double tug of the traditional and the modern” (Gutierrez, 1994, p. 317). If Creole

is the rebellious yet sensational child who occupies a stylish perch, then Cajun is the earthy sibling who relishes being a tomboy running in the bayous. Mitcham (2013) calls Creole foodways “city” and Cajun foodways “country.” Ostendorf (2013) notes that “Creole is the European-by-birth urban cuisine of the sophisticated French and Spanish settlers of the city that’s been seasoned with the aromatic herbs and spices of New Orleans’ African, Native American and Caribbean ancestors” (p. 22). By contrast, “Cajun is the earthy, spicy, rural cuisine of the Southwest Louisiana Bayou country... [and] [d]eveloped in home kitchens” (Ostendorf, 2013, p. 22). Both sisters eat the same foods; however while the earthy sibling sets hers upon paper plates and newspapered tables, the sensational sister dines upon fine china and white tablecloths. Creole is perceived as cosmopolitan, worldly, and of a higher social class than the rural, poor, lower social class identity of Cajun (Henry & Bankston, 2001).

The class distinctions that have emerged as a result of Cajun and Creole foodways formation tells a story of how each culture interacts with its environment and what that means to the space of the larger social order. Ultimately, I believe that the class tensions that do exist between the various Louisianan foodways illuminate a unique nonsynchrony between Cajun and Creole that expresses itself through food – both foodways are composed of many of the same dishes and use the same ingredients, yet neither food tradition should be confused for the other. Because I believe food forms the basis of a very unique and essential curriculum, I will travel these foodways to understand how they are educational spaces and sites of learning.

I am very interested in how the Cajun and Creole cuisine coexist, how their similar French antecedents have merged with Native American, African, Caribbean, and Spanish (to name a few) foodways to develop into two very distinct cultural identities. Cajun cuisine is the foodways of the Acadians living in rural Southern Louisiana, far from the cultural center and

Creole cuisine of Metropolitan New Orleans. Both foodways are inevitably entwined and are the two faces of the same cultural coin; however class and complexity tends to separate the “haute cuisine” of New Orleans with the country cooking of Cajun Country. Inevitably, this issue shows itself in the culture of Louisiana, however I do believe the common foodways and foods that both cultures share act as a bridge between the two identities and the tension between them tends to be one that is less contentious than traditional conceptions of class difference may communicate. The origin and design of the line separating the two is an interesting gray space to explore.

And while these are reductionist generalities that I am imposing on Cajun and Creole communities, engaging with these assumed and enacted identities – and the stories and histories behind those identities – illuminate the ways in which Louisianan food and foodways are a unique curriculum. Cajun and Creole foodways,

...as material culture traces, point directly to the fundamental clashes that European colonization in the Americas represented. These traces are present in the specific ingredients of the recipes that exist today as textual representations of these cuisines, as well as in the everyday cultural practices of cooking and eating. Both may be studied historically for what they reveal about power relations and the social roles lived out by the different players who found themselves in everyday contact with each other.

(Mandlebratt, 2002, p. 17).

Dependence and blending gave birth to the Louisiana foodways that still exist today, which can be seen most clearly in the dominant Native American, African, and French aspects in Cajun and Creole cuisines. Furthermore, both foodways are born of the struggle to survive in colonial Louisiana.

In this chapter, I will explore the relationship between foodways, class, and culture that have developed in both the Cajun and Creole communities of Louisiana. I will do this through looking at the formation of those two foodways systems and highlighting the characteristics about them which contribute to our understanding of a grounded curriculum and the learning that takes place through food. This chapter serves to bring a local context to my research.

Cajun Foodways

The People: From Acadian to Cajun, A Class Transition. Cajun is “both an ethnic and a regional identity” (Gutierrez, 1984, p. 135). An etymology of the term brings to light a complex identity that has been strengthened through resistance, expulsion, and adaptation – a process characterized by flux, movement, and connections with the past that anchor the future. Attempts to understand and name what “Cajun” is have been made by historians, anthropologists, sociologists, folklorists, and linguists; however, despite the multiple lenses employed, a hard definition of what exactly a Cajun is remains elusive (Henry, 1998; Gutierrez, 1992). All of these attempts isolate some overarching themes of Cajun identity that “focus on or refer to Acadian ancestry, French language, ecological or cultural adaptation to Southwestern Louisiana, Catholicism, agriculturalism, and a particular folk culture as the main variables of Cajun ethnicity” and identity (Henry, 1998, p. 29).

After being expelled from their lands in Nova Scotia by the British around 1755, the French Acadians re-settled in southwest Louisiana after more than three decades of “hardship, rejection, and wandering” (Gutierrez, 1984, 1992). The Acadian resettlement in southwest Louisiana is deeply rooted in their adaptation to the land and a social landscape “that commingled peoples of many origins in an evolving New World cultural mix” (Gutierrez, 1992,

p. 6). Southwest Louisiana is filled with marshes, bayous, and prairies, and in order to survive the harsh environment, the Acadians learned a lot from their neighboring cultural groups.

Despite all they learned and adopted from the new cultures they encountered, Acadians “maintained their own identity during this process” (Gutierrez, 1992, p. 6). The Acadians continued working and hunting the land as they had in Nova Scotia. They lived lives as fisherman, ranchers, trappers, and farmers, and they spent their days in an agrarian existence working the land, raising cattle, and exploring the seas (Post 1962, Gutierrez, 1992). These were, and are, a people who lived a rural existence and “maintained a traditional or folk lifestyle” whose “geographic isolation, illiteracy, and language barriers shielded them in varying degrees from the modern or mainstream culture of the day” (Gutierrez, 1992, p. 7).

Cajuns were characterized by a certain class distinction because of this way of life, one associated with economic disadvantage, especially in contrast to the burgeoning sophistication and prosperity of metropolitan New Orleans. Post (1962) in her sketches of Cajun lives, notes how “the refugee Acadian had to start at the bottom of the economic scale, for they were poverty stricken. They were sent to lands that were subject to frequent overflow and which were occupied by mainly Indians” (p. 4). As the Acadian community branched into two discrete groups in the latter half of the 19th century, the split was identified in the class gulf between the wealthy, landowning Acadians and the “rural, poorest and least educated sharecroppers and fisherman [who] were labeled ‘Cajuns’, a pejorative label which first appeared in print in 1879 (Henry, 1998)” (Henry & Bankston, 2001, p.2). According to Gutierrez (1992), the term Cajun “usually referred to [a] poor, white, French-speaking underclass” (p. vii).

It is in the transition from “Acadian” to “Cajun” that an insider/outsider dichotomy begins to rise within a once singular cultural group that is based on class differences between

planters (Acadians) and farmers (Cajuns) (Brasseaux, 1992; Henry & Bankston, 2001). Indeed, Brasseaux (1992) asserts that “Though the economic gap between the small planter and the typical farmer was frequently small, the groups were separated by an ever-widening cultural gap” (p. 8). Acadians who were on the social rise wanted to distance themselves from being Cajun because the term was considered degrading. In fact, Acadians much preferred to be called Creole instead of Cajun during this time (Brasseaux, 1992). The Acadian move away from the Cajun (or “cadien”) identity results in the rise of negative stereotypes about the Cajun community that are negative and rooted in the Cajun affinity for hunting and working the land, rurality, poverty, ignorance, and a lack of education (Henry, 1998; Gutierrez, 1984).

Whereas Acadian is associated with “positive qualities” and is “lauded and studied”, Cajun has become connected with “condemnable behaviors” and is “derided and stereotyped” (Henry, 1998, p. 40, 42). These stereotypes have in large part been constructed by outsiders and internalized by Cajuns (Dormon, 1983; Henry, 1998; Henry & Bankston, 2001; Gutierrez, 1984). In particular, these stereotypes have been reproduced to such an extent that “over time, the Cajun has been constructed as the Other” (Henry and Bankston, 2001, p. 1034). Henry and Bankston (2001) assert that “the development of the Cajun ethnic image highlights the pivotal role that sociocultural and structural factors play in the emergence and evolution of stereotypes” so that questions arise as to “what is symbolized in symbolic ethnicity” (p. 1021).

In the end, Henry and Bankston (2001) found that “symbolic ethnicity is not simply a matter of group members subjective identification with symbols of ethnicity but that it involves the participation of group members in ideas of ethnicity based in part on received historical images constructed by outsiders” (p. 1021). This identification can be traced in the symbolic meaning of Cajun food and foodways and these social movements would inevitably impact the

way in which Cajun foodways evolved. Consequently, Acadiana's new foodways didn't just reflect changes in diet. Their adapted foodways also reflected changes in social class.

Cajun Culture and Foodways. For the Cajuns, the link between culture, place, and class is intimately represented through food. As a symbol, food has been used by both insiders and outsiders to understand/misunderstand the Cajun culture. Not only is food a "consuming passion" to Cajuns, "it also constitutes the glue that holds the Cajun community together" (Bienvenue, Brasseaux, & Brasseaux, 2005). Foodways assist a culture in maintaining ethnic identity because "traditional foods and ways of eating form a link with the past" (Kalcik, 1984, p. 37) that celebrates a way of life distinct to a cultural group. Since "food and identity are interconnected symbolically, and that each aids in the understanding of the other ...the symbolic aspects of foodways and their role in the expression of ethnic identity" (Gutierrez, 1992, p. 4) are extremely helpful in understanding the Cajun culture and Cajun ethnic identity.

The Cajun lifestyle is one that transmits culture through non-traditional educative means. Post (1962) writes of Cajuns, "without the advantage of public school, they seldom learned to read or write" (p. 5). Cajun education took place in a different classroom: in the home, the kitchen, the land. Indeed, Cajun children did not learn in schoolrooms but instead learned from their family structure and their environment – how to raise and catch the meat they would eat, how to adapt to the land to ensure survival, and how to engage in the community bonds to ensure the survival of their families and culture.

Indeed, Cajuns act out their cultural heritage every time they eat. Gutierrez (1992) posits that "contemporary knowledge of traditional Cajun foodways is the result of an unbroken chain of tradition" (p. 133). To this day, older Cajuns "still teach their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren how to roast pigs, peel crawfish, skin squirrels, plant vegetables,

season gumbo, and brown flour for a roux” (Gutierrez, 1992, p. 133). In this instance, food as a social discourse provides an excellent framework for understanding food culture as curriculum: how knowledge is appropriated, passed on, and evolved from generation to generation highlights that manner in which a group adapts for survival against time and technology. A Cajun foodways curriculum nurtures knowledge gleaned from the work of cultural survival and negotiates the threat outside class perceptions have on appropriated and negotiated Cajun self-identity construction (Henry and Bankston, 2001).

Cajun foodways embody the relationship between Cajuns and their environment, and Cajuns with each other (Gutierrez, 1992). From their arrival in Louisiana, Cajuns needed to adapt their foodways to the new lands they were settling. Food was scarce and much of it was foreign, thus the eating habits of Cajuns owe much to the Native Americans already living on the land and later to the other settlers who along with the Cajuns eked out an early existence in colonial Louisiana (Dawdy, 2010). According to Ancelet, Edwards, and Pitre (1991),

Cajun cooking is a hybrid, a blend of French, Acadian, Spanish, German, Anglo-American, Afro-Caribbean, and native American influences. In addition, the frontier imposed itself on Cajun foodways, forcing the area’s cooks to improvise recipes to make ingenious use of what was available to cook and cook with. (p. 137)

Cajun foodways reflect food cooked for maximum consumption – the idea of wasting nothing is one inherited from colonial times when food was in short supply and technology was not available for easy preservation. For example, Cajun community boucheries reflects this early practice of maximizing food supplies and gathering with community – during these all day events, members of the Cajun community come together to butcher a pig and make use of every part, including muscles, tendons, snouts and tails for consumption while at the same time

reinforcing community relations. Gumbo also mirrors the Cajun practice of maximizing food consumption with available foods; over the years Cajun gumbos have included the meat of rabbits, doves, blackbirds, deer, and guinea hen (Ancelet et. al, 1991, p. 141).

Class and Cajuns: A Lower Socio-Economic Designation. Class enters the picture when it comes to food because of the “tastes” of the lower classes when compared against those of the upper classes result in a diet hierarchy overlapping a social hierarchy (Thuillier, 1970, cited in de Certeau, 1998). Because “from one social group to another, people do not consume the same products, do not prepare them in the same way, and do not ingest them by respecting the same code of table manners (de Certeau, 1998, p. 177), geography plays a part in where tastes emerge from as traditional social discourses related to food assign meaning to region. This assignation retains particular importance to class when looking at the binary of city versus country, where historically peasant farmers in the country have saved their best foods to sell in the city while keeping the “mediocre subproducts for family consumption” (de Certeau, 1998, p. 176). Thus, city and urban identities have been imbued with higher class status and country and rural identities have been imbued with lower class status due to the food consumed in that space.

The ways in which the Acadians adjusted to their new home can be traced clearly in the ways in which their foodways adapted to the land. Indeed, upon landing in Southwest Louisiana, Cajuns needed to be inventive with the resources they had at hand to survive and it is this practice that has subjected Cajun foodways to scorn. Cajun foodways have adapted “recipes to available ingredients, including ‘exotic’ meats such as turtle, alligator, nutria, raccoon, possum, and armadillo” (Ancelet et al, 1991, p. 142), and while these “exotic” meats may have helped Cajuns survive resettlement, these ingredients also label the culture in derogatory ways. Often considered rodents, these meats may seem standard fare in Cajun country and other areas in

Louisiana, however the rest of the country may not agree – “certain Cajun foods violate the rules of edibility, or food taboos, held by some outsiders, especially middle-class Anglo-American[s]” (Gutierrez, 1992, p. 122; Ancelet et al., 1991).

Crawfish is a major example of negative stereotypes being attributed to Cajuns through food. Not only does the crawfish unite the Cajun to his land, the symbol also highlights the Cajun culture’s status as lower class (Gutierrez, 1984, 1992). Commonly known as “poor people’s food” (Gutierrez, 1984, p. 146), the crawfish is looked down upon because it makes its home in the mud and swamps of Acadiana bayous. Consequently, “both outsiders and some Cajuns associated crawfish eating with isolated, ‘backwards,’ swamp-dwelling Cajuns” (Gutierrez, 1992, p. 80). According to Gutierrez (1992), “Cajuns are aware that some outsiders categorize certain Cajun foodstuffs as inedible or repulsive” (p. 123). It is this awareness, I believe, that contributes to the Cajun internalization of ethnic stereotypes and thus colonized constructions of identity.

Whether the more hearty components of Cajun cuisine are viewed disparagingly by middle/upper class outsiders or insiders, Cajun foodways have historically been perceived as lower-class fare because the foodstuffs are considered inedible and not likely to be urbanized or suburbanized (Gutierrez, 1992). Some Cajuns have responded to this repulsion of their natural ingredients with pride. Others with shame.

Henry and Bankston (2001) remind readers that the negative stereotypes about Cajun cuisine have been internalized by Cajuns and expressed symbolically. Since one of the dominant symbols used to understand Cajun identity is food, when Cajuns tell the following jokes about themselves and their food, this sense of internalization and shame comes across strongly:

Q: Do you know the difference between an ordinary zoo and a Cajun zoo?

A: A Cajun zoo has a recipe next to the name of the animal on the cage. (Ancelet, et al., 1992, p. viii-ix)

Gutierrez (1992) cites two themes of Cajun identity: environmental competence and sociability. Both of these themes show themselves in the foods Cajuns cook and the spaces where they prepare their meals. There is a certain intimacy to Cajun food and eating – certain boundaries fall away during a Cajun meal. All courses of the meal are served at once and on one plate, and the food consists of both the ordinary and the extraordinary (ie: brains, livers, eyes). Furthermore, utensils are not always used at a Cajun table – one uses their hands to break open crawfish shells, food is dumped on a newspaper covered table without plates, and everyone eats from the same communal space (Gutierrez, 1992). This intimacy reflected in the foodways reveals the close bonds that Cajuns hold with each other, the food, and their environment.

Early Cajun existence did not initially differ greatly from those settling in New Orleans. However, by the times the Cajuns settled in Acadiana, New Orleans was already evolving into a city marked by sophistication. The evolution of the city and its Creole inhabitants almost from the beginning occupied a different class position based on economic advantage. While from the outsider's perspective New Orleans and Acadiana may seem one and the same, an insider's perspective tells us a very different story. Gutierrez (1992) states very plainly that "New Orleans is not a Cajun city", that while the French Catholic heritage brings together Acadiana and her more metropolitan sister, "the local dominance of the more specifically Cajun heritage distinguishes Acadiana from the larger region" (p.6). I'd like to suggest that it is not just the French Catholic heritage that unites Acadiana and New Orleans, Cajuns and Creoles, but also the food. However, while the raw food – the ingredients – may be similar, it is the tension that has sprung from the different methods of preparation that further distinguishes Cajun and Creole

cuisines. It is this nonsynchrony which helps to define Creole identity, as the presence of these multiple dynamics simultaneously show us an identity formed in difference and ultimately related to class.

Creole Foodways

New Orleans: Overflowing Boundaries and Creative Resistance. To understand New Orleans' foodways, it is important to explore the way the state and city formed politically, and the way the people who inhabited the land exercised their will. Mandelblatt (2004) suggests that

An investigation of the foodways, both material and discursive, that constitute New Orleans Creole cuisine . . . makes possible the articulation of not only European colonization of the Americas in relation of food, but also the everyday agency of the otherwise dispossessed peoples of the New World. (p. 25)

Louisiana's history is one marked by disorder and chaos, persistence and determination, and interdependence and independence. In some ways, Louisiana is a paradox of conflicting ideas that spill over the limits of boundaries that have been unstable since the state's inception.

Adaptation, improvisation, and resistance characterize New Orleans and thus the Creole lived experience, which is reflected through the local foodways. Unlike Cajun foodways, which adapted to their new land but maintained the French resonances of their Acadian roots, Creole foodways continually reimagine their boundaries because of the continual influx of new ethnicities and cultures constituting the makeup of those foodways. However, from these shifting boundaries a unique foodways identity has surfaced that is indebted to its roots but is also independent of them – “as the various contributing food cultures interacted with each other, each was fundamentally transformed...[and] there arose something entirely new, entirely single, if highly diverse, cuisine that transcended and supplanted all the cuisines that went into its

making” (Tucker, 2009, p. x). Indeed, Creole foodways are not static – adaptability and passion are the hallmarks of the food (Tucker, 2009). New Orleans itself is a paradox of conflicting ideas that spill over the limits of boundaries and Creole foodways acts as a beautiful symbol of this flux.

The planned community of the motherland France, New Orleans became a failure because of its resistance to France’s enlightened ideals of structure, order, and obedience imposed from afar. All of the Metropole’s strategies to enforce pristine law and order upon New Orleans – maps, census, laws, and urban planning – failed because of the reality of New Orleans’ existence: to survive, the people of the city couldn’t follow France’s rules. Instead, the city instituted its own strategies to eke out an existence in an ungiving swamp where an unfeeling mother nature did her worst – New Orleanians became the street walkers of De Certeau’s theories in order to claim their autonomy against an oblivious and uncaring power. From this struggle blossomed the Creole identity of the city: strong, resilient, and in complete ownership over its own unique identity, which was so hardly won.

Baron and Cara (2003) describe the Creole struggle as creative and counter-hegemonic, and accessible to insiders because it was they who enacted the moves to gain sovereignty:

In the expressive interactions shaping Creole forms, certain strategies are put into play which characterize Creole intercourse: reversals, carnivalization, improvisation, mimicry, double-talk, feigned submission and many other maneuvers, tactics, and schemes designed to steal power away from “top-down” monolithic impositions. (p. 5)

This act of independence defines New Orleans’ identity as a dark other, an indeterminate and shadowed city that plays by few rules other than those it makes on its own.

Indeed, New Orleans' history is one marked by disorder and chaos, persistence and determination, and interdependence and independence. New Orleans foodways reflect these qualities in the ways that recipes spill over each other and the methods in which people share the food they create. From these shifting boundaries an identity has surfaced that is comprised of Native American, African, French, Spanish, German, Italian, and Caribbean influences that have come together to form something entirely new yet not completely divorced from its roots. Folse (2004) writes, "Creole cuisine was inventive, refined, and generously seasoned. Though French in origin, Creole cuisine masterfully combined other cultural influences including Native America, Spain, Germany, England, Africa, and Italy" (p. 123). As we can see, values of cultural innovation are passed down through Creole foodways and form a continuous web of existence and practice that can be read in the evolution of the city's dishes.

Creole and Creolization: Blurring Boundaries and Creative Resistance. The cultural identity of New Orleans is closely tied to the food its citizens eat: a rich and sultry Creole cuisine that embodies the strength and pride of a people who take delight in their rebellious past and defiant identity. To understand the significance of a food tradition steeped in resistance, resilience, and rebirth, one should explore the spatial development of material culture, specifically the foodways of a budding Louisiana that have become translated in the city's Creole cuisine.

In looking at how concepts of Creole²⁶ and creolization²⁷ function, a better understanding of the space Creole cuisine occupies in the lives of New Orleanians emerges. Food is central to

²⁶ Creole is an identity, usually associated with race, class, or birthplace. Most commonly, Creole is associated with Louisiana. Creole can be capitalized or used with lower-case – I have not found a definitive rule that says when to use either. In this paper, I will be capitalizing it.

²⁷ Creolization is a process, usually associated with the hybridization of a culture.

New Orleanians and incorporating different local and exotic ingredients from various ethnicities and locales is the heart that keeps the city's lifeblood pumping. Experimenting with food is the city's lived experience: eking out a survival during the colonial years, accepting a tripartite racial/class system in the antebellum years, fighting for racial equality during the civil rights years. Experimentation in New Orleans food has given way to some of the world's greatest dishes and desserts: blackened fish and banana fosters, to name a couple.

To understand Creole is to understand a constantly evolving idea. The word "Creole" itself presents a semiotic conundrum: it is a signifier without boundaries. Saussure describes language as a naming process comprised of the signified (the object) and the signifier (the word naming the object), and that "the linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept" (Leitch, 2001, p. 963). To believe that the naming process is a simple act with direct consequences is naïve (Leitch, 2001) because naming is not linear but momentary, and doesn't represent a truth but a value. Naming exists as a link between thought and sound and represents an idea that shifts with the user, the context, and the time.

The concept of "Creole" exemplifies this non-linear reality of language and meaning, for it is a concept which is hard to trap, immobilize, and define with certitude and consensus (Folse, 2004; Hall, 1992; Dawdy, 2008 and 2010; Gaudet, 2001). Instead, "Creole" should be viewed as a sliding signifier that occupies a unique space because of the multiple meanings the word connotes. Its anchorless existence allows the concept to be universal while at the same time highly specific. In short, "Creole" takes on the chaotic disorder characteristic of the city and culture that is the subject of this paper: New Orleans.

Built on a crossroads, New Orleans has exhibited countless measures of blurred boundaries: between races, between laws, even between the lines that separate walkways from

roadways. New Orleans is a place where boundaries are blurred and the unique Creole identity that has culturally taken root reflects the city's ability to adapt to its social, political, and geographical currents (Hall, 1992, Dowdy, 2008; Thornton, 1998, Bell, 1997). Over the years, a number of historians, researchers, locals, and outsiders have tried to impose boundaries and define the term "Creole," yet despite even these best efforts, the meaning shifts depending on who you ask.

Nominally, Creole is applied to anything "homegrown or native" to Louisiana, specifically southwest Louisiana (Gaudet, 2001, p. 162). Folse (2004) is more specific in his definition, aligning Creole with anyone born from the union of European, Native American, and African relations on Louisiana soil and whatever significant cultural or cuisine contributions those individuals have made. Hall (1992) includes Spanish influence in her definition of Creole, and throws in the Portuguese word *crioulo* into the etymology of the word, which refers to a slave of African descent born in America²⁸. Besh (2011) reminds us of the German contribution to Creole identity in his cookbooks, as well as the Italian.

Creole, as an idea and an identity, seems to be continually reborn and recreated throughout the years and depending on whom you ask, it is used to designate a spectrum of realities from race, to class, to cuisine, to objects, to a way of life. Spitzer (1986) notes that Creole "has a long history of being a semantically elastic term" (p. 31). Gaudet (2001) suggests that "Creole is an elusive term that seems to deconstruct upon examination, shifting in meaning from block to block in one neighborhood" (p. 162). As a term, "Creole" as a sliding signifier is the perfect way to describe the city it is most known for: shifting, without boundaries, and capable of constant reinvention.

²⁸ Hall's emphasis of the African contribution to Creole identity is significant to note, as this narrative is often silenced in modern food discourses (Dawdy, 2010; Gaudet, 2001).

Creole Foodways: Creativity and Haute Cuisine. To understand how significant the importance of the Creole identity is to the natives of Louisiana, specifically to that of New Orleans, I think it is important to look at Creole in terms of food. Food helps us to understand the values of a culture and the spaces in which that culture is lived. Edwards (2011) suggests that the creolization of material culture is about building traditions. Passing on those traditions so that the Creole culture can be sustained over time is an education of a lifestyle that is easily traceable in the food, foodways, and food traditions unique to New Orleans. It is this non-traditional yet very real curriculum that I would like to unpack, because I believe that in looking at the space that Creole cuisine occupies in the lives of New Orleanians, a deeper understanding of the Creole tradition and identity of these people can be found.

The “New Orleans culinary tradition belongs to the city...in all its bewildering diversity, and not to any one or few of its constituent groups” (Tucker, 2009, p. ix). Food is central to New Orleans and incorporating different local and exotic ingredients from various ethnicities and locales is the heart that keeps the city’s lifeblood pumping. Mandelblatt (2004) suggests that

An investigation of the foodways, both material and discursive, that constitute New Orleans Creole cuisine . . . makes possible the articulation of not only European colonization of the Americas in relation of food, but also the everyday agency of the otherwise dispossessed peoples of the New World. (p. 25)

These ideas can be read in the history of New Orleans and the ways in which the city evolved and continues to grow.

Creole foodways were formed by the people and for the people because “Together [the people] crafted the rules of preparing and serving this food: how to choose a seasoning meat, how to make a roux, when to choose to sauté rather than fry one’s fish, when to eat red beans and

rice, when to drink café brulet, and much more” (Tucker, 2009, p. 5-6). The cuisine was further set by the people through the open spaces of the city, in the Sunday markets where all the different ethnicities in the city came together with their own models for marketing food. In this space all different types of knowledge was passed around through the materiality of food (recipes, food preparation, table setting, and hospitality) (Tucker, 2009; Usener, 1998). These qualities are reflected in Creole foodways and through the blurring of boundaries between the influencing cultures and ethnicities that go into the “boiling pot” that result in the creation of something new.

Jay Edwards (2011) says about the Creole culture, “out of the social processes of resistance, adaptation, and reformulation, new forms and new meanings emerge with each new generation” (p. 56). From these shifting boundaries a unique identity has surfaced that is characterized by “the blending of culinary habits [that] was critical to survival for all the early settlers” (Tucker, 2009, p. 5). Creole foodways reflect this interdependence and from this adaptability between neighbors, the “passage between hunger and affluence made what came to be called creole food...” (Tucker, 2009, p. 5-6). It is not only this idea of boundaries between cultural antecedent that distinguish Cajun and Creole foodways. Class identifiers serve as another distinction between the two foodways that impacts the formation of identity.

Cajun/Creole Dissonances as Curriculum

Cajuns and Creoles – both of French descent – experienced similar journeys into colonial America since both groups were forced to live in a difficult Louisianan environment after rejection from their mother-country. Rushton (1979) says about the Cajun culture, quoting Conrad (1978), “[it] is ‘founded on French tradition but [is] almost entirely superstructured by themselves’ – emphasizing an ability and resourcefulness” (p. 6) that echoes the cultural identity

formation of the Creoles. Yet in the historical class differences between these two cultures, one can find the unique identities each culture lives through food.

In colonial Louisiana, “Creoles sought power and prestige while enjoying a highly refined sense of social status” (Folse, 2004, p. 120). Hulin (2010) notes that,

Cajun cooking traces its roots to French peasants, trappers and farmers with African American and Native American influences stirred in. Creole is provincial cooking on good china – combining the techniques of French and Spanish aristocrats with Afro-Caribbean, Native American, and a bit of Italian, German and Irish inspiration of good measure. (p. vii)

From its inception, Cajun cuisine has occupied a different space than Creole cuisine. According to Paul Prudhomme (1984), one of the most celebrated chefs in both Cajun Country and New Orleans,

Cajun and Creole cuisines share many similarities. Both are Louisiana born with French roots. But Cajun is very old, French country cooking – a simple hearty fare...Creole food, unlike Cajun, began in New Orleans...Creole cooking is more sophisticated and complex than Cajun cooking – it’s city cooking. (p. 15-16)

Here, class is distinguished by the complexity of food and the urbanity of where it emerges. There are definite connections being drawn between class and location, where the dichotomy tends to be one of clichéd proportions: the upper social class is situated in the sophistication of the city and the lower social class in the simplicity of the country. Here, Creole is identified as an urbanized cuisine that, while similar to Cajun, differs in its more multifaceted preparation.

Food as Class Signifiers. The class difference we first see in the two different foodways is in the meats being used. Finer cuts of meat and fish like beef and shrimp were not very

accessible to Cajuns for economic reasons. The meats used in Cajun dishes were primarily those they could get for free from the land and water, such as wild game and crawfish. Another of the major differences between Cajun and Creole cuisine is the way in which flavors are layered – the complexity of the dishes. Manuel (1985) suggests that the difference between the two cuisines is the way in which spices and herbs are used:

Acadian cuisine, unlike Creole Cuisine, uses herbs, seasoning and spices to bring out the full taste of the main ingredient. Thus, the product is not highly seasoned and the original flavor of the main ingredient predominates. . . . When an Acadian uses seasonings, spices or herbs, it is not because they are tasty; it is because these bring out the flavor of the fish, meat or whatever food she is preparing. . . . If the flavor of any one of the seasonings, herbs or spices stands out, the dish is considered a failure. (p. 8)

Because the tenets of Cajun cuisine are simplicity and economy (Manuel, 1985), prudence is employed when spicing a dish²⁹. On the other hand, Creole cuisine is characterized by a complexity born of a wider variety of foods and spices, herbs, and a plethora of seasonings used in experimental ways to create new and different dishes.

Often, a Creole dish will feature herbs not often used and ingredients going beyond what is known as the “trinity” in both Cajun and Creole cooking: peppers, onions, and celery. The use of exotic or foreign ingredients is reflective of the Creole identity because of the ongoing Creole penchant to welcome and incorporate a number of different and foreign nationalities/ethnicities into the culture. We can see this difference illustrated in the different forms of Turtle Soup.

Turtle is a staple in Cajun and West African foodways, and is considered lower-class fare because of its status as wild game and therefore taboo to the middle and higher classes

²⁹ Spices were expensive too, hence the need to be prudent!

(Gutierrez, 1992; Covey & Eisnach, 2009). However, despite the lower-class identity of turtles as game, the meat is good and is enjoyed by all people. Turtles have always been a staple on Cajun tables. In more recent years turtles have become a staple in New Orleans foodways as well, and Creole cuisine has elevated the meat in the form of turtle soup and put the dish on all the best menus in the city: Brennan's, Broussard's, Galatoire's, Restaurant Antoine, Commander's Palace, The Monteleone, Pascal's Manale, and the Sazerac Restaurant (*New Orleans a la Carte*, 1976) all feature – or have featured if the restaurant no longer stands – turtle soup on their menus.

Furthermore, the dish is served during important Creole dinners during holidays such as Christmas and New Year's (*Christmas Eve and New Year's Day in Creole Families*, date unknown). Most Cajun and Creole cookbooks and recipes I consulted contain the same basic ingredients: a roux, turtle meat, the trinity (bell pepper, celery, onion), garlic, tomato sauce, and bay leaves. However, when looking at Creole recipes – recipes from famous restaurants and chefs in New Orleans – the recipes have more to them: cumin, multiple peppers (red, white, black), basil, dry mustard, thyme, and in the famous case of Paul Prudhomme, spinach. Even in this one dish, we see the layering of tastes that demonstrates the complexity of Creole cooking that differs in nature from Cajun.

In the Cajun recipe, the economy of ingredients and spices reflects what Manuel (1985) asserts is the Cajun practice of using spices to coax out flavor while at the same time letting the main ingredient – the meat/fish – shine. In the Creole style, the use of spices creates a complementary taste to the main ingredient. When these two are used in conjunction, an entirely new taste evolves that is more than the breakdown of spices and ingredients. What we get in the

creolization of the Cajun recipe is a new dish that transcends the taste and class boundaries of the Cajun recipe. Creolized turtle soup becomes more than just a meal – it is a delicacy.

The evolution of New Orleans and its Creole inhabitants almost from the beginning occupied a different class position based on economic advantage. These differences play out in the lived experience of food making and food consumption in both Cajun and Creole cuisines.

Haute Cuisine vs. Home Cooking. While from the outsider's perspective Cajun and Creole cuisine may seem one and the same, an insider's perspective tells us a very different story. Gaudet and MacDonald (2003) suggest that the “Creoles aspired to haute cuisine while the Cajuns aspired to good ‘home cooking’ with what they had available” (p. 150-151). Indeed, Creole cuisine tends to be viewed as more refined and delicate than Cajun cuisine because of Creole's urbanized existence born out of the plantation kitchens and economy from which it was originally served. Cajun, on the other hand, is viewed as a more hearty fare born out of the rural existence and hunter/trapper lifestyle of the bayous.

In their musings on the difference between Cajun and Creole, Gaudet and MacDonald (2003), write:

There has been much confusion about the terms Creole and Cajun as used in Louisiana. The term was originally used in Louisiana to designate French, Spanish, or other European people born in the colonies. When the Acadians (Cajuns) arrived, the French Creoles in New Orleans considered themselves aristocrats. They tended to be wealthy, educated, and urban, and they were likely to own slaves. The Acadians were poor, usually not formally educated, and rural settlers. Thus the Creole culture was centered in New Orleans and the surrounding areas and the Cajun culture developed in southwest

Louisiana. The Creoles aspired to haute cuisine while the Cajuns aspired to good 'home cooking' with what they had available. (p. 150-151)

Early Cajun existence did not initially differ greatly from those settling in New Orleans.

However, by the times the Cajuns settled in Acadiana, New Orleans was already evolving into a city marked by sophistication. The evolution of the city and its Creole inhabitants almost from the beginning occupied a different class position based on economic advantage.

Indeed, in colonial Louisiana, "Creoles sought power and prestige while enjoying a highly refined sense of social status" (Folse, 2004, p. 120). In addition to status, Creole identity was firmly grounded in a creed of "le joie de vivre," hospitality, an enjoyment of fine wines and "superb cooking" (Folse, 2004, p. 123). This fine cooking was built upon the free labor of slaves and born of an economic privilege not available to the poorer Cajuns. It is questionable that the Cajuns would have wanted this "privilege".

Creole cuisine is also characterized as haute cuisine because of the wealth of ingredients incorporated into a dish that are expensive and rare. Moreover, Creole cuisine incorporates contemporary cooking techniques that push at traditional boundaries and visions of what food should be, which in turn also transforms taboo foods into desirable dishes. The result is a unique fusion that puts dishes like Veal Sweetbreads with Sherry Mustard or Lemon Caper Butter (Bayonna Restaurant) or Muscovy Duck Leg Confit with Dirty Rice and Citrus Gastrique (Herbsaint Restaurant) on the table. It is the New Orleans table which elevates such rudimentary fare as sweetbreads and frog's legs to a progressive cuisine.

It is also the New Orleans table which takes "old" food (preserved for months as a confit, a technique that comes from Southwest France), and transforms it through experimental techniques and presents it as novel and enchanting. This occurs through a process of

Creolization, which is a dynamic process of movement (Stewart, 2007; Hannerz, 1988; Edwards 2008, 2011; Ostendorf, 2013) that restructure localized patterns of life into reinterpretations of cultural forms (Edwards, 2008). What was once inedible or taboo on the Cajun table, becomes desirable and acceptable, and in the space of Creole foodways of high value, on the Creole table.

Both Cajun and Creole foodways are inevitably entwined and are the two faces of the same cultural coin; however class and complexity tends to separate the “haute cuisine” of New Orleans with the country cooking of Cajun Country. Inevitably, this issue shows itself in the culture of Louisiana, however I do believe the common foodways and foods that both cultures share act as a bridge between the two identities and the tension between them tends to be one that is less contentious than traditional conceptions of class difference may communicate. The origin and design of the line separating the two is an interesting gray space to explore.

Conclusion: Grounded Curriculum – Food as Curriculum or a “Kitchen Curriculum”

In Louisiana, all are welcome to the table. Through food, visitors become part of the family and are introduced to southern living and hospitality through food. Through food visitors also learn what it means to come from this unique place, and to live and love in Louisiana. Foodways act as sites of learning because they are predicated upon communication. Foodways narrate the experiences of people living out their everyday lives. If we listen to the ways in which the stories communicate how people have learned to navigate the unfamiliar, to find common grounds, and to survive in new settings, then we can understand a culture’s lived experience and how those members of a culture act out their values and identity. Bateson describes learning as being centered on themes of continuity and improvisation (in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), which foodways most definitely reflect in the ways that ingredients are adapted to new spaces and conditions. Adaptation is learning.

The passing down of ingredients, preparations, and recipes is the material aspect of the curriculum's contents, but certainly not the entire scope of what the education means. The value of family, the appreciation of company, and the growth obtained from the sharing of ideas are the values passed down. This food curriculum does more than just pass down cultural identity. It nourishes the soul. Besh (2011) says of the power of the food in New Orleans after Katrina:

Not long after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, we noticed that our city had an astronomically high rate of children suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. I worked with a local hospital here on a project that brought those very children together to cook. It was a simple idea, to use a communal pot as the catalyst of healing. As I helped these kids chop and brown and stir, I watched barriers fall and the healing begin. Just about all those kids who attended our sessions found true reconciliation by cooking and eating together. (p. 1)

That is the power of food – to nourish the soul. It is essential that we, as educators and curriculum theorists, listen to the stories of the people who live this curriculum to understand how we can understand how to design curriculum that is grounded in a community. Localized learning is how we hear the literacy of the other within classroom spaces and nourish the soul of our institutional learning.

CHAPTER 5: HEARING LOCAL STORIES – NARRATIVE INQUIRY AND RECONCILIATION IN NEW ORLEANS

And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour, we rot and rot;
And thereby hangs a tale.
William Shakespeare, As You Like it, (Act II, scene ii)

Jerome Bruner (2004) suggests that life is a narrative and that autobiography is a procedure for life making. I would have to agree, and I believe Shakespeare does as well (as we can see by his quote above). From hour to hour we grow and die as we experience whatever life throws our way, and it is in our process of recounting, reliving, and reflecting on how we ripe or rot that we begin to make sense of what happens to us within the coil of everyday life. According to Bruner (2004) there is no other way to filter our “lived time” (p. 692) than through narrative, for narratives are a version of reality that are transmitted culturally and represented through both language and discourse (Bruner, 1991). When exploring the narratives of human experience, we are coming into contact with embodied knowledge rooted in the personal and cultural. If we are wise, we will pluck the tale hanging from Shakespeare’s imagined tree and engage with this knowledge in order to hear the stories of othered spaces within local places.

This study seeks to explore the stories of students learning within spaces that differ from the mainstream classroom. I have done a narrative study of Café Reconcile, a restaurant and school in Central City, New Orleans. This qualitative research project focuses on the experiences of both the students within this unique, local space, while also exploring the tensions that exists within the multiple identities that play out in the experiences of matriculating through Café Reconcile’s unique curriculum. In particular, this chapter focuses on how narrative inquiry is an appropriate method for hearing the experiences of this population and working with those stories. In this discussion I will also examine the elements of ethnography that I will employ in

my research and my own biases going into the research experience. Then I will talk about the project of Café Reconcile itself, where I describe the initiative of the educational space and then the marketing of that space. From there, I will discuss the rationale of my study, my participants in the study, and my mode of analysis for the narratives I heard. Finally, I will conclude with my role as the researcher and how this study will inform me and my burgeoning space in my adopted home of New Orleans as well as the field of education and curriculum in general.

Narrative Research as Ontology, Epistemology, and Methodology

Narratives can be educational tools that inform us on how we teach and learn (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) argue that “everyday experience itself – that taken for granted, immediate, and engrossing daily reality in which we are all continually immersed – is where narrative inquiry should begin and end” (p. 50, in Chase, 2011, p. 421). Narrative inquiry as a method for exploring how individuals experience and story their world (Moen, 2006; Bruner, 2004; Salmon & Reissman, 2008), therefore emerges as an incredibly effective approach towards engaging in the learning occurring at the local level of human experience – at the level of everyday living. For this reason, I feel that it is vital that we listen to the stories swirling around us in the world, because if the study of education is indeed the study of life – as Dewey suggests – then there is much that local narratives can contribute to the learning occurring within the present day classroom.

In my research, I am hoping to hear the voice of an indigenous curriculum³⁰ that is taken for granted within the machine of modern education. Because how we learn is an ongoing process subject to multiple interpretations, local narratives help us understand personal growth

³⁰ An indigenous curriculum embodies the learning that takes place within cultural groups and the unique spaces they occupy as natural inhabitants with historical ties to particular spaces and places. “Local” is an adjective I use to describe the activity taking place within indigenous curriculums.

and transformation from an individual perspective, one that is at the borders of the status quo of the classroom experience. When looking at the localized experience of everyday life, which is not a linear unfolding of events that remains static in meaning, narrative inquiry is an incredibly apt research approach for exploring the relationship between environment, experience, and education. All of this becomes even more important when the local narrative comes from an othered space³¹. In respect to my research, which explores how the everyday practices of New Orleans foodways are educative processes grounded in place and historical contexts, I believe there is a lot that cultural foodways – and how the teaching and learning that occurs within these indigenous spaces – can offer to today’s classroom.

In the following section, I will explore how narratives can transform modern conceptions of schooling within a classroom by carving out a space where an othered literacy prompts a more inclusive, grounded curriculum and educative experience. I will do this by exploring what a narrative is and how narrative inquiry has historically been situated in educational research. In particular, I will explore the concept of the grand narrative and using this as a framework, I will enter into a discussion of why and how narrative inquiry is a fitting approach to explore and disrupt the at-risk and rescue narratives surrounding a “kitchen” curriculum³².

Narrative and Narrative Inquiry

What is a narrative? While there is no singular definition of narrative, and the definitions shift from year to year (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013, p. 3), many would agree that at their heart, narratives are stories of lived experiences (Riessman, 2008; Bruner, 2004; Chase,

³¹ Othered spaces are those spaces where indigenous experiences are excluded from majority legitimation and consideration. In my opinion, local experiences are often othered and absent from mainstream consideration in educational processes and procedures – especially those dealing with curriculum.

³² This term covers any type of learning space that uses foodways as curriculum.

2011; Moen, 2006). Here, I am building upon Dewey's definition of experience³³ because I, too, believe that experience is both personal and social, and that people always exist in relation and in a social context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dewey, 1938; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Dewey (1981) describes experience as "a changing stream that is characterized by continuous interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment" (in Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39). While not all experiences are educational, Dewey (1938) proposes that experience is based on the principles of continuity³⁴ and interaction³⁵. Thus, narratives tell the story of learning and community because knowledge is embodied and embedded within a culture (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and therefore grounded in the language the community uses to describe their experiences. Moreover, Dewey's definition of experience roots knowledge within the memories of people and place, and talking about these memories gives rise to understanding the ways in which individuals make meaning of their world.

Hendry (2010) informs us that narrative means "to account" and exists as a primary way that humans use to make meaning (p. 72). Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou (2013) term narrative as a "line of thematic and causal progression in cultural form[s]" (p.2) that "suggest insight into – or concealment of – important biographical patterns or social structures" (p. 3). Chase (2011) suggests that narrative is "meaning making through the shaping or ordering of

³³ For more definitions of experience in this vein, see Kant's (1949) concept of "ding an sich," or the "infinite duree" of phenomenologists such as Bergson, 1889/1960; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; and Schutz, 1973.

³⁴ Continuity suggests that experiences give birth to other experiences and within this web emerges a continuum of time, place, person, and society that pulses with movement. Dewey (1938) writes, "Different situations succeed one another. But because of the principle of continuity something is carried over from the earlier to the later ones. As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts" (p. 44).

³⁵ Interaction refers to the objective and internal conditions of a situation (Dewey, 1938). Dewey suggests that "The trouble with traditional education was not that it emphasized the external conditions that enter into the control of the experiences but that it paid so little attention to the internal factors which also decide what kind of experience is had. It violated the principle of interaction from one side" (p. 42). Dewey is proposing that traditional education does not emphasize prior experiences in the design of classroom curriculum.

experience” (p. 430), and Salmon submits that narrative imposes upon life events “a meaningful pattern on what would otherwise be random and disconnected” (in Riessman, 2008, p. 5).

Bruner (1991) similarly asserts that a narrative is “an account of events over time” formed into patterns unique to the teller (p. 6). Labov (1972) would propose that this pattern is a “sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered” (p. 360, in Andrews et al., 2013, p. 29), however others would argue that this conception of narrative is somewhat limited by a Western perspective (Polanyi, 1979) that privileges linear time as a means for enabling coherence (Hyvarinen, Hyden, Saarenheimo, & Tamboukou, 2010; Bruner, 1991; Goodman, 1978; Langer, 1991; Salmon and Riessman, 2008). Regardless of the pattern given to a story by the teller, in order to understand a narrative, one must consider that life stories do not occur in isolation but within the intersection of many factors and influences.

Narrative inquiry, like narrative, is hard to definitively define. Narrative inquiry is a “qualitative research methodology that seeks ways to understand and represent experiences through the stories that individuals live and tell” (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012, p. 215). Indeed, narrative inquiry can be considered a form of qualitative research (Chase, 2011; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007) that is formed around the tenets of interpretation and human action, and uses words and stories as primary units of analysis (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Riessman (2008) suggests that narrative analysis refers to “a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form” (p. 11). She proposes that narrative inquiry relies on “extended accounts that are preserved and treated analytically as units, rather than fragmented into thematic categories as is customary in other forms of qualitative analysis, such as grounded theory” (p. 12). Because narrative analysis functions in this way, individual agency is therefore honored (Riessman, 2008). Moen (2006) describes narrative research as the study of how human beings

experience the world. Likewise, Clandinin & Huber (in press) define narrative inquiry as “the study of experience understood narratively” that follows a reflexive path from the field, to field texts, to final research texts (p, 1). Connelly and Clandinin (2006) describe narrative inquiry as the study of experience as story.

Consequently, a narrative research approach looks to “study things in their natural settings” and with attention towards making sense of and interpreting phenomena locally (Moen, 2006, p.5). Here, I define local as something emerging from everyday experiences and relating to a particular place and setting. Narrative inquiry is grounded within the human (i.e., individual or group) and for this reason, scholars (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Gundmundsdottir, 2001; Hoel, 1997; Moen, Gudmundsdottir, & Flem, 2003) view narratives as coming from the voices of individuals whose stories are “shaped by the[ir] knowledge, experiences, values, and feelings” (Moen, 2006, p. 5). Chase (2011) suggests that those engaging in narrative inquiry are “interested in how narrators make sense of personal experiences in relation to cultural discourses” (p. 3) and thus can be interested in how narratives disrupt hegemonic structures.

A System’s Approach to Narrative

It is the significance we place on the story that gives a narrative meaning – it is the meaning we ascribe to an event or series of events that shapes our understanding of ourselves, the world, and our relationship with our environments. I am not sure this is how we should engage with the stories of our lives and the lives of others. As a former English teacher, I take delight in the analysis of a story and the ways in which the elements of a story come together (or apart) to convey meaning. I am even comfortable with the ambiguity of analysis set up by reader response theory where, as Louise Rosenblatt (1994) asserts, a text is simply paper and ink until a

reader evokes meaning. It is important to consider, though, that who that reader is and under what circumstances he or she comes to interact with the text opens the door to looking at the experiencing of a narrative as “an event in time” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 12). Indeed, the “poem” – which Rosenblatt refers to as the event of reading a text – is very much a rhizomatic map itself, for it “comes into being in the live circuit set up between the reader and the text” and depends upon “a specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place: change any of these, and there occurs a different circuit, a different event – a different poem” (p. 14). Rosenblatt focuses on the relationship a reader has with a text when she looks at literary analysis, and my years in the English classroom as both student and teacher can attest to the practicality of that particular understanding of how we can interact with stories.

However, my experiences are tempered by more than just the English classroom and a reader-response transaction when exploring meaning in a text. As a result, I am entering into this narrative study with a viewpoint influenced by a system’s outlook to narrative inquiry and a process approach to research. I’d like to take the idea of the reader response circuit that Rosenblatt sets up and connect that to another iteration of circuit and rhizome to more fully explore what the relationship between narrative and narrative inquiry can be in order to realize the way in which I have engaged in my doctoral research. Hendry (2007) suggests that relationships should be primary when engaging with narrative. As researchers, Hendry proposes that we should “let the network of relationships construct the narrative” (Hendry, 2007, p. 492) we are exploring instead of constructing/imposing the meaning of a story through adding up the sum of its analyzed parts. When we do that, construct meaning through an analysis of the parts, Hendry warns that we are constructing narrative and therefore erasing “part of our lived experience” in addition to imposing “a particular way of thinking about experience” (p. 491).

When we do this, we reduce narrative to an object for dissection, where experience is a “thing” that has happened to someone (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). I believe that what Hendry is referring to is that once we “capture” a narrative we effectively freeze it so we can pull distinct pieces from it to analyze. This act turns a narrative into something different than what it really is. de Certeau (1988) suggests that the act of writing causes a rupture between experience and the real. He goes so far to suggest that the act of writing is an act of colonization that gives way to a system of production, one that imposes meaning – much as Hendry suggests above. Consequently, Hendry asks of the reader to consider narrative as a circuit where “the web of relationships and our experiencing of it” (p. 492) allows us, as the listener and researcher, to truly be present in the moment of the telling and hearing.

This system’s view of narrative inquiry is one where understanding of lived experience through stories is emergent and contextual, and where knowing occurs in the margins. In my study, I will be using Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) image of the rhizome and Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) approach to qualitative research to frame my inquiry. These authors view coming to know through a narrative as an assemblage or a process that is neither linear nor binary. In particular, Jackson and Mazzei describe this approach to inquiry as a continual plugging in of theory, data, and questions into our research to “produce something new” that is “a constant, continuous process of making and unmaking” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 1). We “plug in” to work with “unstable subjects and concepts on the move” so that we think at the limits or margins of knowing (p. 5). In viewing inquiry as happening at the margins or at what Jackson and Mazzei call a threshold, “we push research and data and theory to its exhaustion in order to produce knowledge differently” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 7). For the authors, the

margins, or a threshold, is a space that is in process or “in the middle of things” – a place where information is not reduced into frozen bits of data locked into time and place.

Instead, the articulation of knowledge is an assemblage emerging from constantly shifting networks where genealogies of meaning become the method of mapping processes in order to “expand/stretch/distort previous ways of knowing” (p. 7). A map, according to Jackson and Mazzei (2012) becomes the threshold to “multiple entryways” (p. 13) where we fold and unfold knowledge, where we *assemble* knowledge, to make new creations and new identities (p. 5) within the constantly shifting networks of our research process. In turn, this process brings us to the micro, or to what I see as the local, of lived experiences. In the local, we “think ‘in the mangle’” (p. 12), at the threshold, as we attempt to produce a space that is a “dynamic and shifting entanglement of relations” (p. 12) through which narrative and narrative inquiry can connect us with the experience of others. In doing so, we “enact a process of data/theory/writing that is at once and at the same time using, producing, and questioning the practices that are and have been available to us” (p. 11). Research and methodology in the strictest sense, gives way to an inquiry that reconsiders meaning to be “the irruptive emergence of a new concept, rather than a re-production of what is known” (p. 12).

In short, we can view our experience with narrative as a circuit, one where we plug in time and place – context – in order to be present for the relationship we, as the listener, have with the teller and with the narrative. In this view, where knowledge is in process and part of a circuit of movement, narrative inquiry as a three-dimensional space becomes of primary importance.

Narrative Inquiry as Movement

I am attracted to what Riessman (2008) acknowledges as the diverse forms narrative inquiry takes. Moreover, like Denzin & Lincoln (2011), I feel that narrative inquiry is a

methodology and an epistemology, and even an ontology. Like I discuss above, this positions narrative inquiry as a process that is interactive, dialogical, improvised, and emergent. For this reason, I feel as if narrative inquiry is a form of research marked by movement – the type of movement associated with dialogic forms of knowing that spring from the interaction of two or more consciousnesses coming together in a shared space. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) assert, dialogic texts “create spaces for give and take between reader and writer” (p. 5). In the tensions that exist between the teller, listener, and text itself, narrative inquiry arises as a useful model to explore the spaces and experiences that happen at boundaries, which Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define as “places where narrative inquiry thinking comes into the intellectual territory of another way of thinking” (p. 21).

According to Helfenbein (2010), “borders exist in embedded networks of history, politics and power...and have a materiality – real effects on lived experiences” (p. 366). As such, borders are not stable spaces but places of multiple dimensions and possibilities that leak (Helfenbein, 2010). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe borders as places where “the boundary between narrative inquiry and reductionist thinking” occurs (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 43). Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) suggest that “the spaces that exist around borders [is] where one lives within the possibility of multiple plotlines” (p. 59). It is in these leaking spaces and within these shifting borderlands and multiple plotlines where the tensions between narrative inquiry and the grand narrative come into contact. The “grand narrative”, a term used by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), refers to the struggle over how to conceive of educational research and tells a story of how the established, unquestioned “way” for educational research swung in the direction of taxonomies, objective observation, and measurement by numbers.

The grand narrative seeks to freeze the movement of localized experience through technical rationalism, which reduces knowing to an application and a set of rules that depersonalizes notions of truth and meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In these spaces, learning exists within a closed system that “has no sense of the accumulation of experience, only of the readiness of experience when it is being converted into a formula” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 37) that “makes the whole into something lesser” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 38) and fragmented. Inherent in this fragmentation is dislocation and disconnection –experience become bits of knowledge divorced from prior experience or local contexts. Here, knowledge becomes disembodied and automated. To resist this approach towards understanding learning and decontextualizing knowledge, narrative inquiry goes to the borders and boundaries of educational research to those places that are not immobilized by rationality.

Three Dimensional Spaces of Narrative Inquiry

Within these leaking spaces of borders and boundaries, narrative inquiry reaches into the memories of the individual embedded within the communal context in order to reunite the mind, body and soul (Dillard, 2012). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write, “To put the body back into the mind is to wreak havoc with certainty. Emotion, value, felt experience with the world, memory, and narrative explanations of one’s past do not stand still in a way that allows for certainty” (p. 37). Indeed, by putting experience back into the holistic space of personal knowledge in relation to the self, others, and the social milieu (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), we can engage in narrative inquiry within a three dimensional space that starts in progress and thus emerges as a process research space. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) suggest that because narrative inquiry begins with an ontology of experience, the conception of “reality as relational, temporal,

and continuous” (p. 44) advocates for a particular way of knowing the world and thus a particular way of conceiving of knowledge.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that because what we know is a result of how we are positioned at a particular point in our lives, how we interpret the world shifts, is open to revision, and is situated within a continuum that is temporal – but time in this sense is not dependent on a forward progression that is permanent but is instead contextualized by an ever-changing sense of moment and place. This concept of narrative is in line with my research ideals because what Clandinin and Connelly suggest is that we contextualize narrative within the margins, and because of this, we are in a constant state of assembling knowledge and meaning through narrative inquiry.

Indeed, according to Lemley and Mitchell (2012), “the stories we tell and identify with are constantly in flux, malleable, negotiated, and highly contested” (p. 216). Context is important for this reason because it not only situates narrative within the individual or group and their associated frameworks, but also within related historical moments and their connected discourses of power and culture. Here is where the cultures of power I discuss earlier in this dissertation are so important. Because narratives can function to hear the voices of those living at the borders, or boundaries, of majority experiences (Riessman, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), those spaces within culture of power, narratives can describe the tensions that exist within learning spaces and empower voices that are not ordinarily or easily heard. As such, questions of narrative inquiry seek to explore: “who produces [narratives] and by what means; the mechanisms by which [narratives] are consumed; how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted and what, if any, effects [narratives] have” (Andrews et al., 2013, p. 2). Answering – or exploring the answers to these questions – is where narrative inquiry becomes relevant.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) describe narrative inquiry as the study of experience as story. Clandinin and Huber (in press) build upon this definition by identifying three commonplaces of narrative inquiry (temporality, sociality, and place) which provide a conceptual framework distinguishing this type of research from other approaches. It is this framework that I will be working with and through this approach I hope to make sense of and interpret phenomena locally. Here, I define local as something emerging from everyday experiences and relating to a particular place and setting. I believe that narrative inquiry is grounded within the human (i.e., individual or group).

This three dimensional space Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to blurs the boundaries between time and space by offering narrative inquirers the opportunity to meet themselves in the past, present, and future. Within this space, narratives exist in the complexity of ongoing negotiations, co-construction between teller and listener, and stories in process. A three dimensional space of inquiry is a complex learning space and therefore is the embodiment of movement and context. Here, this space cannot be anything but a consideration of subjectivity and improvisation. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call this space “in the midst” and describe this state as being in a reality of nested stories and understandings that are constantly in flux; constantly moving backwards, forwards, and side to side as stories and meanings are being negotiated, re-negotiated, and reflected upon. This idea is very similar to Jackson’s and Mazzei’s (2012) views of inquiry being a process – both assertions are characterized by movement, hence the appropriateness for narrative inquiry to be the type of qualitative research I employ in my study of Café Reconcile. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) phrase it well when they write, “in the construction of narratives of experience, there is a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story” (p. 71). All

this movement happens in a space that is complex and collapses linear notions of time and place so that there is movement in the telling and receiving of these stories. This fluidity allows these narratives to contract and expand in meaning. With every re-telling of the narrative, the field text and its multiple meanings nest themselves into the larger pattern of the system of the inquiry. Ultimately, the narrative inquiry process gives birth to a complex learning system, which I find utterly fascinating.

Ethnography

While I did not engage in a full-on ethnographic study, there are elements of ethnography that I used in my project. Ethnography, in my words, is a qualitative research approach that engages with a culture and community to understand the daily lived experience of that culture or community. Johnson and Christensen (2012) define ethnography as the “writing about people” and describe the act of ethnographic research as “describing the culture of a people and learning what it is like to be a member of that group from the perspectives of the members of that group” (p. 48). That means documenting “shared attitudes, values, norms, practices, patterns of interaction, perspectives, and language of a group of people” (p. 48). Included in this documentation is an exploration of the material objects of a group of people and a holistic representation of the culture. Ethnographies are conducted in the natural setting of the cultural group over time, and focuses on the lived experience of the culture in question taken in the field setting (Creswell, 2009).

Ethnography is a flexible research method (Creswell, 2009) that emerges from anthropological roots (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Educational ethnographers are interested in studying the “cultural characteristics of small groups of people or other cultural scenes as they relate to educational issues” (p. 389). Ethnography focuses on patterns and it is the patterns of

learning that I am interested in. In that respect, I did a partial ethnography of the learning culture and community of Café Reconcile, as my interest is in the type of learning that occurs within that educational space. However, because of time limitations, I did engage in a full-on ethnography. As a result, I only utilized certain techniques of ethnographic research.

I engaged in fieldwork through my research project, as I conducted my narrative inquiry in the school setting of Café Reconcile. Furthermore, according to Jonson and Christensen (2012), data collection in ethnography is alternating or concurrent – meaning that data is collected in the field, analyzed, and then the researcher returns to the field to build upon that initial data collection and analysis. The research is a continuing cycle, however one in my mind that is spiraling and not circular. I went into the field to observe the setting of the educational space of Café Reconcile and hear the stories of my participants. After analyzing those stories, I adjusted my inquiry to reflect that analysis and inform my future endeavors.

I took field notes and I kept a journal, both techniques of the ethnographic researcher. I also engaged in artifact analysis, especially that of Café Reconcile's official marketing, its application process, its curriculum documents, and the materials used in the school's intake process and daily operation. Johnson and Christensen (2012) warn against ethnocentrism when engaging in ethnographic research, which is a judgment of the culture being studied according to the standards of the researcher's culture. Therefore, I acknowledged my own biases, perspectives, and historical grounding as I moved through the experience of my research.

Little Sister Syndrome and the Meaning of a Story

It is here that I would like to take a short intermission and move in a slightly different direction as I travel through the narrative of this study. Consider this a tale within a tale, a play within a play if you will and if we are to continue with my Shakespearean motif. Because my

role of a researcher is not one that is isolated from, or without being impacted by, the individuals or their stories I came into contact with, I want to share a moment in my life that not only helped me to understand my space in this world a little more clearly, but also assisted me in coming to my own conclusions about what it means to tell, hear, and understand a story.

Growing up, I have always idolized my big sister. She was a leading force in my life – she always knew what to wear, what to say, what to do; and, she always had the most exciting and interesting adventures. As a child, it was easy to adore my big sister and as such, we fit into our dualistic roles as “younger” and “older”, and “little” and “big” quite easily. As an adult, however, I found it increasingly harder to understand and know myself as an individual when filtering my experiences through the lens of my “little sister syndrome” and the binaries that lens imposed upon both me and my sister. Consequently, working through the intersection of singular individual yet also little sister, and living within the tension of admiration for another but desire for autonomy, I found maintaining a relationship with this one person whom I loved above all others incredibly difficult.

As children, we could understand our differences and play them out through sibling arguments and childish responses to the world and our relationship. As adults, my sister and I could no longer do this. To try and overcome this, we attended a self-help seminar, a three day workshop devoted to working through the stories of our lives in order to find a common vocabulary through which we could communicate with each other. We did the workshops separately, so we could have our own experiences, and we did indeed come together afterwards with a shared language we could both understand.

This workshop provided a space for me to think about the stories in my life and understand the ones that held prominence in my own narrative of my experiences, especially as

those understandings about how my experiences shaped my relation to my sister. This workshop, however, did not magically erase the issues we faced as siblings, sisters, and women engaged in a complex relationship. That we continue to work on until this day. However, what this workshop did do was allow me to deal with and contextualize a primary narrative in my life, the one where my mother missed my all-important Girl Scouts “coming up” ceremony because she was doing something else with my sister. (It did not matter that what my mother was doing with my sister was dealing with a medical emergency – all that did matter to me was that my mother missed my ceremony because she was choosing to be with my sister instead.)

This particular vignette about a missed ceremony was one that I was holding onto fast with a lot of resentment because of the meaning I applied to it – that my sister was more important than me. The meaning of this story was at odds with the other prominent stories in my life that included my sister: the one where my sister took the fall for cutting school in order to be present to defend me against a bully, the one where my sister surprised me in college with a visit during one of the darkest times in my life, and the one where my sister took me into her home during the other darkest time in my life. In fact, I came to realize during this workshop that many of the stories of my life featured my sister not just as a leading lady but as the heroine. Yet, for all the love I felt for my sister for all the support she has shown me over the years, that one time she was the reason my mother missed something important in my life shaped the way I perceived and understood my relationship to my sister.

So, while the workshop helped me and my sister to have a common vocabulary with which to speak with each other, more importantly, those three days I spent in a room full of strangers brought me to a place where I began to understand a major existential point that has had so much power in my life: a story is just a story with no meaning except whatever meaning

we choose to ascribe to it. It is the meaning we give to a story that in turn imbues it with significance and power. A story in my life was that my mother missed my Girl Scout ceremony when I was a child. The meaning I gave to that story became that my mother loved my sister more than me, and that narrative affected every experience I had with my sister from that day forward. Ultimately, that ascribed meaning damaged my understanding of the relationship I had with my sister and our present ability to function as sisters and individuals. Once I was able to let that meaning of the story go – and believe me, the child inside of me held onto that particular interpretation with grubby hands and tear-stained cheeks for a very long time – my sister and I had more than just a common vocabulary with which to speak to each other. We also had a chance to move beyond our roles of younger and older, little and big, to become something more, something whole.

It is at this point that I wish to highlight the meaning I ascribe to that particular story in this context: a story only has the meaning someone applies to it. It is with this understanding and viewpoint of narrative and narrative inquiry that I entered into my research project. I hope this viewpoint allows me to be fair with the people in my study and to be balanced in the way I treat the stories they shared with me.

My Own Personal Biases and Researcher

As I move forward with my story of the type of research I did for my doctoral studies, and as I consider myself as researcher, I must also take into consideration my positionality: my past experiences, my biases, the roadblocks I feel I face on this journey.

As I explore my own biases as they come to education, I must say that I find the concept of exploring classroom learning through food and foodways fascinating. However, I struggle with this as well. I think I am locked into the predominance of the legitimacy of classroom

learning because of my induction into teaching and pedagogy. I can trace this in my family's role as teachers in the 70s, 80s, and 90s; in my formal education at Columbia University's Teachers College; and in my experience teaching at The Bronx High School of Science. Yet despite of – or because of – these experiences, I am passionate about what learning means and all the different spaces in which we learn.

9/11 and my experience of interacting with my students at Bronx Science has invariably shaped my thoughts on the value of locality in learning and the role/identity of student/teacher. Hearing the stories of my students and what my students taught me in my Bronx Science classroom as a result of their experiences (their pedagogy and role as experts while I was the novice) – certainly shaped me in that respect, which is at odds with my formal institutional training. In that classroom experience I find an open door/closed door aspect of inside and outside learning I am attempting to verbalize here.

The phenomenon is: open door – when the classroom door is open, and administrative eyes/ears can see/hear, I would teach what the school wanted me to teach. Authentic learning was compromised in the face of that open door and the administration's mandatory scripted lesson plans. Closed door is when the door to the classroom was closed, and teaching and learning was spontaneous. With the door closed, personal learning occurred. I could do whatever I wanted in the classroom when the door was closed, which was largely dictated by my students' reaction to the literature and topics at hand.

As a Jewish, white woman who grew up privileged in the Northeast – in New York, the epitome of Northern urban life – I have some concerns about how the people I will be working with will accept me as someone coming into their space to hear their stories. I also am finding it difficult to formulate and write about the black student experience, which is be the experience of

a majority of the students I spoke to in my study. This is a complex thing I am looking to tackle and I am not sure of the language and vocabulary that I should and/or could be using to verbalize what I am thinking and feeling. Respect, fear, and a deep need to treat the experiences of my participants with the regard that they deserve roots my difficulty. I am not sure of any right way to treat these concerns, however I have moved forward as I always do: with an open mind, a careful heart, and an eye towards the process to ensure the journey is not taken lightly.

Café Reconcile: A Grand Narrative of At-Risk and Rescue

This study explored how students learn while enrolled in Café Reconcile, an educational borderland and institution in New Orleans, Louisiana, that teaches “at-risk” youth the skills needed to succeed in the food service industry. In many ways, a food-based curriculum has been identified as vocational learning with the main components of instruction centered on competency-based training. Competency-based training is not focused on holistic learning, but instead seeks to measure specific skills and abilities (Vorhees, 2001). In a competency-based educational paradigm, learning is structured around market needs and curriculum is designed to promote employability as opposed to life-long learning (Osberg & Biesta, 2010).

While the curriculum at Café Reconcile “addresses participants’ understanding of workplace culture and is tailored for African-American youth with little connection to the labor market” (<http://cafereconcile.org>), which is indeed a competency-based instruction, the materials of the curriculum – foodways and life skills – provide a cultural grounding to the instruction that exceeds the boundaries of specific skills and abilities. I conducted a narrative inquiry of the students at Café Reconcile to better understand their experiences and the shape of learning occurring in their classroom spaces. From these narratives, I hoped to discover if a food-based curriculum does indeed go beyond the reductionist tendencies of the competency-based

vocational education Café Reconcile markets. I discovered not quite what I was expecting, however overall the curriculum most definitely went beyond the competency based training it espoused.

Rationale for the Study

Since Creole is a localized idea within New Orleans foodways and is an oppositional term when used in a racial context, Creolization can also be considered an act of resistance since it combats the dichotomies imposed by structures of power: city/country, metropolitan/colonial, native/foreign (Stewart, 2007, p. 6-7). The educational processes at Café Reconcile replicate this power struggle between local populations and dominant power structures in the form of restaurants and employability. Café Reconcile is “a nonprofit restaurant that uses innovative strategies to provide life skills and job training to youth from at-risk communities in the New Orleans area” (<http://cafereconcile.org>). Founded by community members in the crime-ridden and poverty-stricken neighborhood of Central City, New Orleans, Café Reconcile was built upon the tenets of reconciliation and transformation. The curriculum of this learning institution revolves around food preparation and the acquisition of life skills needed to gain and keep employment in the hospitality industry. The students of this learning institution are between the ages of 16 and 22, and the teachers of this learning institution are local instructors, chefs, and community members. This is a school brought to life by a concerned community who used narratives of Central City’s trials and tribulations to identify the issues and causes of the city’s poverty and threats to its youth in order to come up with a response to what they saw as economic stagnation and destructive behavior (<http://cafereconcile.org>).

The Practice of Everyday Life

For Michel de Certeau (1998), the practice of everyday life is a relationship between strangeness and familiarity that links a way of operating to a way of living. Everyday life is an intimate, sometimes oppressive relationship that we have inherited, and as much as the practice of living is a “halfway point” between ourselves and our histories, it is also a halfway point between concrete action and ephemeral memory. In short, we live the practice of our everyday life but our actions are authored by the ghosts of our pasts as much as they are directed by the needs we face in the present. Cooking, as one of these practices of everyday life, is – according to de Certeau (1998) – “a plural language of stratified histories...of multiple relationships” (p. 3) that provides a link between culture, place, and class. The ways in which that link is played out through food leads to a complex understanding of how a culture responds to the conditions of their present identification in light of the realities of the past.

Consequently, the rich subjectivity of a culture is reduced to a two-dimensional system suddenly removed from the “real” of the constitutive lived experience and filtered through the lens of the outsider whose motivation in visiting a place is to taste and experience – and therefore to *know* – what it means to be local. Cooking emerges as the tactic of a “local” people to disrupt outside perceptions of culture, place and class. According to de Certeau (1984), a tactic “belongs to the other” and “insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily” (p. xix). A tactic is not the province of the voyeur and a tactic does not depend on time – without having a particular place, a tactic waits for an opportunity to be performed. A tactic challenges the system of power relations set up by the structures of power, and for this reason, “many everyday practices (talking, reading, moving about, shopping, *cooking*, etc.) are tactical in character” (de Certeau,

1984, p. xix, emphasis is mine). In short, a tactic is an act of resistance against a space defined by strategies or colonizing efforts.

Because “tactics introduce...movement into a system” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xx), cooking emerges as the living embodiment of a tactic, as a flexible improvised tactic of a culture to resist the gaze of the outside world that reads the culture’s identity as being more real than what the culture knows itself to be. Hendry (2007) suggests that “through telling our lives we engage in the act of meaning making” (p. 495), and that “narrative research [holds] out the promise of providing a more complex and complete picture of social life” (p. 489). Stories exist within the spaces of everyday life that works around colonization. Mitchell points out that narrative inquiry is a particularly useful method in exploring “historically marginalized communities” because narrative has the ability to engender empowerment “social, political, cultural and economic identities” (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012, p. 218).

Researchers engaging in narrative forms of inquiry utilize multiple sources of information to fairly represent individual and/or community experiences, which helps to avoid objective truth finding and contributes to the metaphorical or sliding nature of this methodology. While this may lend to the subjective interpretations of experiences, I believe that is the point of this type of inquiry: narrative does not seek to objectify the participants or to ignore the biases of the researchers. Instead, this method of understanding lived experience seeks a complex engagement with the world that takes into account multiple perspectives so that a full and rich picture of experience emerges.

de Certeau (1988) suggests that “What we initially call history is nothing more than a narrative” (p. 287). A narrative embodies multiple avenues of knowing, meaning, or coming to know (Hendry, 2010). Because food, for New Orleanians, is the medium through which social

spaces and relationships are negotiated and interpreted (Bienvenue, Brasseaux, & Brasseaux, 2005; Flores-Meiser, 2001), I liken foodways to a curriculum because of the common, and historical, conception of the classroom as the medium for a student to experience and understand the world (Triche & McKnight, 2004). As a result, foodways, a tactic and living act of existence that responds to the present and is therefore in continual flux, emerge as an act of resistance against the colonizing force of writing reality, writing experience, writing, identity.

Marketing Café Reconcile

The marketing narratives that describe the learning taking place in Café Reconcile tell a different story, that of at-risk youth being rescued through a competency-based curriculum. Food, in this sense, is not a curriculum in Café Reconcile, despite its prominence in the teaching space of the school. Instead, the curriculum being used in Café Reconcile comes from a local, private organization (the Nola Jobs Initiative), but it is the product of a national coalition and set of employment initiatives (the 21st Century Success Principles). The purpose of Café Reconcile's curriculum, as proposed by the New Orleans Job Initiative and the Casey Foundation, which in turn espouses the 21st Century Success Principles, is to provide "technical support to others interested in replication of the Reconcile model across the country" (<http://cafereconcile.org>). The use of outside resources provide a palliative solution to a persistent problem of poverty, violence, and neglect. Particularly, narratives of rescue emerge when the marketing espouses to provide a voice to at-risk youth (<http://cafereconcile.org>), which is the opposite of empowering the voices of the students at Café Reconcile. I am interested in understanding the role the local voices in this unique educational borderland play beyond the marketing of the website.

The website and marketing materials inform me of what the institution is about but not of what the students are thinking, feeling, and learning beyond a vague notion of food-industry skills. And aside from a few pictures of dishes purportedly cooked at Café Reconcile, there is little representation of the food or its cultural setting – where it came from, how it is cooked, where it is served. There is mention of the local restaurants but no real identification (beyond a name) of the local chefs (both famous and unknown, Cajun and Creole), who also act as instructors. These are the people I am interested in and their stories are the ones I would like to hear. Narrative inquiry is an appropriate way to explore these questions because of the sliding nature of the approach and the emergent process of understanding. Because learning through narrative is a process – an assemblage – whatever conclusions I may come to as a result of my study will be “in media res”. Narrative, in this sense, functions as the map Deleuze and Guatarri (1987) reference in their discussions of rhizomatic thinking: as an entryway to multiplicities of understandings. In the case of my study of Café Reconcile, the narratives I heard will be the doorway to an understanding appropriate to the moment of experiencing the narrative.

I originally wanted to look at Creole foodways and explore how Creolization reflects a type of learning that is sustainable, transactional, and established in history and culture. In short, I felt as if Creolization is a curriculum predicated upon the relationship between teacher, learner, and environment. What I learned is that in Café Reconcile, it was less about the particulars of the foodways and more about how engaging in the foodways created a community of caring individuals that supported and engendered learning. In this curricular model, there is no end product to represent a moment. Instead, Creolization as a learning process that comes from community and is continually in movement. Here, curriculum acted as a map of possible directions to move to learn. The purpose of my study is to hear the local stories about and from

Café Reconcile to understand the localized experience of this type of educational space. I also explored how foodways grounded sustainable sites of learning through the local narratives of students going through the program and native chefs who work with the school.

Research Questions

Within the learning environment that is Café Reconcile, I explore the following questions:

- What shape of learning occurs in Café Reconcile?
- How do culture and heritage play a role in the learning process?
- Does food play a role as the curriculum?
- Does the local experience disrupt hegemonic narratives of at-risk and vocational education?

I have taken a rhizomatic approach towards analyzing the narratives coming from my participants to understand the shape of the learning they are experiencing. This Deleuzian perspective focuses on the process of formation instead of the final, concrete product, thus allowing for understanding to emerge as a creative process rooted in decentralized networks. I believe this type of approach towards the stories of these individuals who, according to the literature of Café Reconcile, are tethered to the identity of at-risk through an immobilizing grand narrative, will help to disrupt some common conclusions that the controlling powers of the school's curriculum make about the black youth of the city (Andrews, et. al, 2013; Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987). Under these terms, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe the self as a "rhizomatic story with multiple entryways" (Andrews, et. al, 2013, p. 111), where no one entryway is the magical "right" entryway that will lead to conclusive, permanent understanding of an individual, a group, or their experience. This leaves the door open to an understanding rooted in contextual space, where knowing is a moment that gives way to a larger understanding

but not a frozen meaning. A rhizomatic approach allows for rupture, which is an apt approach when looking at the story of youth in Central City in New Orleans, LA.

Research Considerations and Plan

I conducted my research in the following ways: through observation, engagement, and interviews. I started my project by first observing the activity within the various classrooms in Café Reconcile to become familiar with my surroundings. During this time I took field notes observing my surroundings, my emotions and my experiences, as well as the individuals moving within those spaces. Although I only formally observed Café Reconcile two half-days a week, I was quickly welcomed into my surroundings and became a part of the rhythms of the classroom and restaurant. The people there are incredibly friendly and encouraged by my welcome, I often attended the morning “Word of the Day” sessions whenever time permitted.

I observed at Café Reconcile for the length of one class cycle (8 weeks), in both the classroom and kitchen spaces, before making the determination that I would begin my interviews during the next class cycle, after students had moved down to the kitchen for instruction. Each cycle at Café Reconcile lasts for eight weeks, with the students moving from the classroom to the kitchen halfway through. Initially, I envisioned that I would get to know the students, identify the individuals I would like interview, and invite them to participate in the study. I was going to do three phases of semi-structured interviews: individual, group, and group again. I wanted to conduct the individual interviews both at Café Reconcile and in the kitchens of the students and/or teachers, because I wanted to see if my interviews took on a different tenor based on my participants’ surroundings. I had planned on conducting my group interviews in Café Reconcile, although I was interested to see if during my individual interviews, a more local space emerged that may be a comfortable place for my participants.

That did not work out as I planned.

When it came time to begin my interviews, I quickly realized that inviting students to interview was too passive of an approach to take. When I announced my study, the students were all interested and willing, however there were a number of obstacles between students agreeing to be a part of my study and having them actually sit down in a room with me at the end of the day. Student attendance was not regular and getting anyone to agree to see me after hours was very difficult. I could not interview the students during school hours, so I would go to Café Reconcile every morning to see who had shown up for the day and work with those students to see if an interview at the end of the day worked for them. And every day I would show up to Café Reconcile after school ended to see if that student was still around – if they were, we would interview. If they were not, and there was someone else around who had the time, I would interview them.

As for conducting multiple group interviews, that would have been impossible. It was hard to get one student in a room and it would have been nearly impossible to get a whole group together, let alone a group who had all participated in individual interviews with me. Perfect attendance didn't happen regularly in the classroom and the schedule at the time I was interviewing did not permit for me to disrupt the program and shut down the activity for a day for my interviews. So I adjusted my study to consist of only individual interviews. I also adjusted my aspirations for interviewing in my participants' homes. One student lived in his car for part of the time and regardless, while the relationships I developed with those students were genuine, they did not extend for inviting me into their homes.

I interviewed ten students in a three-month period. (See Appendix A for Interview Questions.) Because I was only able to interview five students during the second school cycle, I

extended my study to go into a third class cycle. All of my interviews occurred in the upstairs classroom or conference room spaces of Café Reconcile, with the exception of one interview that took place in the Director's office since the classroom and conference spaces were occupied. I asked all of my participants the same questions, although not necessarily in the same order every time. The questions revolved around the themes in the bullets above and explored each student's experience in high school, their community, and specifically in Café Reconcile. Each interview lasted between 18 and 45 minutes, with one interview lasting as long as 80 minutes. I learned throughout the process how to not interrupt my participants in telling their stories, when and where to ask follow up questions, and most importantly, why I should not pepper their experiences with my own. In some instances, sharing my own narratives of learning helped engage the participant and grew trust between us as we realized we had similar experiences despite our different upbringings. But ultimately, the interviews were about my participants and that was where the focus needed to stay.

Existing Research

There are a small number of articles assessing and analyzing the New Orleans Jobs Initiative (Lowe, 2004; Lynch, 2006; Cowan, 2006; Stoll, 2005), which focus primarily on the nature and success of community development collaboratives (CDCs) in their uses of resources and ability to train low wage workers. I found even less on the 21st Century Success Principles (Stoll, 2005), which focuses primarily on workforce development and public policy in low-wage labor markets. I have been unable to find research on Café Reconcile, however the institution did put out a cookbook in 2011. One area of future research that I need to follow is in vocational and competency based learning.

There has been research performed on food as curriculum, however most of the research I have been able to find focuses on the following: nutrition, biology, food safety, food chains, farming, school gardens, environmental sustainability, and culinary skills. There are a number of scholars writing about foodways, as culture and cultural identity (see Counihan, 1992; Covey & Eissach, 2009; Flores-Meiser, 1998; Kalcik, 1984; Mitchell, 2009; Monatano, 1997; Theophano, 1991), and Cajun and Creole foodways in particular (see Ancelet, Edwards, & Pitre, 1991; Besh, 2011, 2009; Bienvenu, Brasseaux, & Brasseaux, 2005; Collin, 1975; Dawdy, 2010; Folse, 2004; Gutierrez, 1992; Hulin, 2010; Land, 1954, 1969; du Pratz, 1775/1775; Leslie, 1874; Link, 2009; Mandelblatt, 2002, 2004; Manuel, 1985; Prudhomme, 1987. 1984; Roahen, 2008; Tucker, 2009; Usner, 1992). However, there is little to none written in these texts about the specific educational capacities of food as a curriculum or model for student-teacher relationships. There is definitely a gap in the literature concerning foodways as a curriculum for learning. I hope my research can fill a little bit of that gap and that a qualitative, narrative mode of inquiry can help me do this.

Conclusion

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), “narrative inquiry is stories lived and told” (p. 20), and since experience happens, narratively, we should look for how learning happens within narrative spaces. My interest in narrative inquiry lies in hearing localized stories about experience, and from those stories, hopefully gaining some sort of understanding about the learning that happens in localized, grounded spaces like Café Reconcile. Because narrative inquiry maps local forms of knowledge (Andrews, et. al., 2013), when stories of experience enter into dialogue with one another, educators can hopefully carve spaces within modern classrooms for local literacies to seep into the curriculum. I am interested in what Clandinin and Connelly

(2000) describe as a possible contribution of narrative inquiry: “the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic” (p. 42).

As a teacher, I understood that my space existed within my classroom. However, I always understood that my classroom was just one of many within my school, and that my school was just one of many nested spaces within the larger system of learning, life, and experience. I believe that narrative inquiry as a way to hear localized stories is one way to start a ripple of movement that can impact the larger system and hopefully engender those spaces to be more inclusive and intentional in how learning is enacted. I believe I discovered an aspect of that in my study and in this next chapter I will share what I learned from my interviews – which was not at all what I was expecting.

In place of hearing stories of food, I instead was inspired by narratives of hope and passion, all inspired by Café Reconcile. All of my interviews revolved around the community at Café Reconcile, the nature of the relationships my participants had with each other and their instructors, the care they all had for one another, and how empowering the life skills curriculum was in helping them change their lives. It was exciting and confusing, as I was expecting one thing but receiving another. However, I learned early on in this process to let go of my expectations as a researcher, scholar, and educator.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

Yet by your gracious patience,
I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.
William Shakespeare, Othello (Act I, scene iii)

Unmet Expectations

When gathering the narratives of the students I interviewed, I was expecting to hear a lot of tales around New Orleans, Central City, redemption, and food. I was expecting to hear from students about how they were making it through Café Reconcile's program because they were cooking food they identified with and therefore, they were able to persevere because the content of their learning came from a place of familiarity. I was anticipating hearing stories about how they were cooking the food of their mothers and grandmothers (admittedly a matriarchal bias of mine) in the kitchens of Café Reconcile, and that because they were comfortable with what they were cooking, they were therefore going to succeed in ways that they did not in high school.

I had a hypothesis: if students identified with what they were learning – if the content of their curriculum emerged from their environment – then students would be more engaged with their schooling. I based this hypothesis on the notion that there is a direct connection between environment, community, and identity. The learning theory I discuss earlier in this dissertation supports this hypothesis, especially constructivist theories that suggest students understand the world through their experiences and that students construct meaning by relating what they are learning to what they already know. If students were cooking – and I assumed that every student had some sort of history with, or connection to, cooking because they were choosing to enter into the program at Café Reconcile – then they were de facto going to be tapping into some family or cultural practice that would connect them to the program's curriculum.

And while I still believe that the students in Café Reconcile are persisting and succeeding through the program because of *a* connection to the material, I am transformed by my experiences – by their experiences – into having a deeper understanding of why students learn and succeed at Café Reconcile. My interviews revealed to me that a lot of my assumptions going into this experience didn't hold as much water as I anticipated. After spending time observing the program at Café Reconcile, I have a better sense of what grounds the curriculum and the experiences of those who take part in the activity within this unique space. And after hearing the stories of the students at Café Reconcile, I not only understand what it means to let meaning emerge from narrative inquiry, but I also have a clearer sense of what it means to learn in the unique space that is the “upstairs and downstairs” of Café Reconcile.

I found that learning is indeed based on connection to community for the students at Café Reconcile. However, the shape of learning that emerges from the classroom spaces is less about food and food content, and not necessarily about membership in the external community of New Orleans or belonging to individual family/friend circles as I expected. In the student narratives I heard, the students talked a lot about the shared community that is created in the classroom and kitchen of Café Reconcile and how those relationships impacted them and their behavior. I believe that the unique shape of learning occurring in Café Reconcile is shaped by the care from the Café Reconcile community. Ultimately, I feel that this community of care intrinsically motivates students to persist in the program, authentically engage in the learning activity, and, in their words, take advantage of the tools provided to them to “better” their lives.

Overwhelmingly, at the end of each interview when I asked the students about their last thoughts on Café Reconcile, they talked about the importance of “putting into” the program – that what you get out of the experience is directly related to what you put into it. From my

observations, students didn't persevere because the instructors explicitly told students they will get out of the program what they put into it (which they did). Instead, I observed and interpreted through interviews that students made this realization as a result of the relationships they formed with their peers, their instructors, and the chefs; by trying new things; and through applying the life skills that they were learning.

The Shape of Learning at Café Reconcile

In the end, my original belief that a unique shape of learning occurs at Café Reconcile still holds true. The program creates a space that takes into consideration the context of the learner and values the relationships happening in the learning system. I witnessed true care between students, teachers, and even the customers in the restaurant in the ways they interacted and genuinely appreciated each other. The curriculum is responsive to the needs of the students and emerges from a very local place: the program met each student where they were at and students had access to whatever they needed to be successful. Café Reconcile provided meals, bus passes, uniforms. The school provided instruction, resources, and 1:1 counseling sessions to work with students on how to manage their emotions, deal with anger, and navigate society outside of Café Reconcile. The program taught students how to be good employees and the ways to be successful in a job. If a student did not have a high school diploma, they were able to take classes that prepared them to pass the GED in addition to the primary Café Reconcile courses. Even though the principal focus of the program did not dive into the nature of Creole foodways and the discourse did not engage in conversations about native foods and dishes and their connection to cultural identity, food still existed as a vehicle towards creating change in the lives of the students.

I was challenged in realizing that Café Reconcile was not all that I expected it to be. However, what Café Reconcile is in its reality far exceeds anything I could have imagined. The forces and influences that define the shape of learning I came to know in the program are structural, emotional, contextual, and environmental – and unique to the way that they all come together for each individual student experience in the program. To explore what all of this means is to unpack the different elements of Café Reconcile that emerged for me as central to the narrative of the student experience: the upstairs/downstairs of classroom space, the community of care within that space, and the unique curriculum that drives the activity in that space. So, to begin, I will take you to the corner of Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard and Euterpe Street in New Orleans’ Central City neighborhood.

Café Reconcile: A Building of Change

Café Reconcile is a five story brick building sitting at the corner of Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard and Euterpe Street in New Orleans’ Central City neighborhood. Central City is a primarily low income, African American neighborhood whose residents have lived there for generations. Community runs deep, however it is a neighborhood with some of the highest crime rates in the city of New Orleans. According to the New Orleans newspaper *The Advocate* (2015), “Central City and the 7th Ward account for less than 7 percent of the city’s population but 19 percent of its shootings, according to 2010 census figures and population trends estimated by New Orleans-based The Data Center ” (para. 2). According to Jeff Asher, an analyst who works with the New Orleans Police Department, “...it’s not too surprising Central City has been the most violent over the last 4.5 years. It’s just the sheer numbers. It’s bad, but also it seems like it might be getting worse” (Simerman, 2015, para. 13).

In starting my research, I felt that Café Reconcile being in this neighborhood would be very significant – I had questions specifically geared towards Central City in my interview agenda. The narrative of Café Reconcile, from an administrator’s point of view, speaks to the history of violence in the neighborhood that was negatively impacting the community and the need for an intervention to provide a safe space for the community’s youth to gather and grow (<http://cafereconcile.org/about/history>). The idea of Café Reconcile was born out of a desire to provide an alternative to the culture of violence as a means to disrupt the narrative that only negative activity was occurring with the neighborhood’s, and city’s, youth. A historic building that stood in a hotbed of drug activity and prostitution was repurposed to provide a safe space and opportunity to learn usable skills for this youth. Café Reconcile became an effort towards, and a symbol of, change in the Central City neighborhood.

The original goals of Café Reconcile were to:

Provide young people who desired a change with a chance to gain the life, work and educational skills necessary to put themselves on a productive path; and establish a positive presence in the Central City neighborhood, helping to restore a sense of community and stimulate economic growth. (<http://cafereconcile.org/about/history, n.d>).

Since then, these goals have evolved to be more specific in their outcomes. According to the website, presently Café Reconcile strives to provide:

- Youth from at-risk communities with an opportunity to learn the life, job, and educational skills necessary for successful entry into the food service and construction industries.
- A cornerstone for the economic recovery of the Central City neighborhood.

- Services to address unmet neighborhood needs, such as GED education, computer literacy, parenting skills, and organizational support for aspiring local entrepreneurs.
- A gathering place where people of goodwill can work together to solve difficult social problems.

The program of Café Reconcile has identified in more distinct ways how it can establish a presence and provide restoration of the neighborhood through educational initiatives, establishing community space for dialogue, and infusing money back into the community. With these outcomes as a cornerstone of the operation, shouldn't students within the Café Reconcile program at the very least be aware of the mission of the school they are attending?

Knowing this, I expected students to identify with Central City in the same ways that they did with Café Reconcile – that both were one in the same in a manner of speaking. Surprisingly, I found that Central City as a space was not significant to the work inside of Café Reconcile. Only one out of the ten students I interviewed had a meaningful connection to Central City and my conversations about place focused more on New Orleans as a whole than any of the neighborhoods that make up the city.

I find this to be significant, especially in light of the current gentrification process happening in Central City. I live in Central City – my apartment is about three blocks from OC Haley Blvd and a ten minute walk to Café Reconcile. There have been shootings at the street corner where I live and on a regular basis there are police officers responding to calls and incidents in the streets around my apartment building. I also live a block away from St. Charles Avenue, one of the nicest streets in the city, and on the edge of the Lower Garden District, one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city. Because of this, as much as I find the gentrification

that is occurring disturbing, I can also see why it is happening. And yet, despite all of this, I would think that there would be an increased sense of loyalty to a neighborhood whose current residents are being pushed out and a long standing culture is being displaced. I don't know how to describe what I am feeling or my finding that Café Reconcile is not the symbol of Central City I anticipated it to be. At least, it is not the symbol of the disappearing Central City but instead of a gentrifying space at odds with how it is honoring the native culture of its place.

The building itself is gorgeous. Red brick, lots of windows, a hand drawn sign by a local artist – it actually reminds me a lot of the buildings of my home state New York. The first floor of Café Reconcile is the restaurant. The second floor is a catering hall with a large, open space for events. The third floor is the classroom and educational offices, the fourth floor is a program space for other businesses or organizations to use, and the fifth floor is where the business offices for Café Reconcile are housed. I spent most of my time on the first and third floors of Café Reconcile. The restaurant is a long rectangular room with floor to ceiling windows and a lot of natural sunlight. The tables and chairs are sturdy, restaurant grade, and they fill the room casually and naturally. The floors are a warm, polished brown and like everything else in the room, they are welcoming and unpretentious.

The Café Reconcile classroom is a room at the end of the hallway of the building's third floor. A front desk area greets anyone coming on to the third floor, and as you walked down the hallway to get to the classroom, you pass by the offices of the teachers in the program and a conference room. The classroom itself is a rectangular room with brick walls and a slightly industrial look. The room consists of four rows of tables on each side of the room with two – three chairs per table. There is a portable white board at the front of the room and a few posters

and a small cork board hanging on the brick walls. Long windows line two of the walls and like on the first floor, a lot of natural sunlight comes in the room.

Overall, the building itself is sturdy and unremarkable. The insides are solid, definitely not new, and certainly not flashy or shiny. However, a newly minted business with all the latest pizzazz is not what this building is trying to be – instead, what it offers to the world is less of an image and more of a feeling. From day one I felt welcome there, which is what the students report as well. It is the people who create the magic of Café Reconcile and not the facilities – it is the people who create the community of care that I will talk about shortly. For the students, they talk about the building as a break from the real world, as an actual space separate from the ones they normally move within. According to Jasmine Williams, “Cause once I leave Café Reconcile I mean, I still have to go back to the real world. There’s no restaurant – I don’t believe there’s no restaurant like Café Reconcile” (personal communication, April 28, 2016). And for Jacarlus Cook, “Like, it’s just amazing, it’s like when I come here I’m in a whole different world” (personal communication, April 29, 2016).

The world of Café Reconcile is composed of two spaces: upstairs and downstairs. I observed this during my time in the program and heard the breakdown of the learning occurring within that dichotomy as well. Most of the students discussed their experience in terms of what they *learned* upstairs and what they *did* downstairs. It really is quite interesting, but in order to better understand this phenomenon, I should first talk more about the spaces themselves.

Upstairs and Downstairs: A Curriculum of Life Skills and New Patterns of Being

My experiences at Café Reconcile have organized the operations of the school into two spaces: an “upstairs” and a “downstairs”. During my time there I came to understand that upstairs is the classroom space and downstairs is the kitchen or restaurant space. I find it very

interesting that classroom and kitchen are not synonymous in meaning for anyone who is a part of Café Reconcile, even though teaching and learning are regularly associated with the downstairs space. Both the upstairs and the downstairs complement each other in the skills learned. If I was to put it loosely, upstairs is where you learn the theory and downstairs is where you have the opportunity to apply that theory.

Upstairs is the home of the formal curriculum, which is enacted by those individuals who teach classes, provide oversight and management of student matriculation, and offer counseling and support. These individuals are teachers, instructors, social workers, counselors, interns, and managers. As I write this, I find it hard to even characterize them thusly, as their roles are fluid and their experience deeper than what their titles, some unfamiliar to me and some of which I do not normally associate with traditional ideas of “school”, imply. For instance, Miss Kathy, who holds the title of “Employment and Educational Coordinator”, is a former certified teacher who organizes the internships and employment opportunities for the students. However, she also is the heart and soul of the student experience and, in my opinion, does and represents so much more than her title implies.

Unlike in traditional schools, where roles are clearly defined and played out within titled boundaries, the roles of the instructors at Café Reconcile are not so delimited. Miss Kathy and Miss Rachel (title: Youth Advocate) said it best when we were discussing the Café Reconcile curriculum board – “it [the curriculum] is displayed that way so anyone can jump in at any time to teach the class” (personal communication, November 18, 2016). Any of the instructors, interns, etc., can jump in at any time to teach a class because they are all well versed in the curriculum as a whole and not just one aspect of it as designated by a title. In fact, titles do not dictate roles for the staff at Café Reconcile, which is part of the program’s success.

Let me take a moment here and share some of my field notes and some of my experiences coming to know the Café Reconcile program to help all of you understand better why I find this so significant, despite ideas of non-sectionality being ones that I have talked about often. I felt very challenged after coming in to the world of Café Reconcile in ways that I hadn't been expecting. In that warm, red brick building on the corner of OC Haley Blvd and Euterpe Street, I was being exposed to a teaching and learning space outside of that in which I was trained to trust was the "right" type. My matriculation through school happened in very traditional spaces where classes had very clear boundaries erected between subjects and disciplines, grade levels, and achievement abilities. Teachers stood at the head of the class where they shared their expertise with students. The way in which grades were distributed was fair, ability based, and according to some mysterious standard that regardless of its unknown origins was implacably and inarguably consistent.

As a teacher, I understood that grading was more subjective, and that lesson plans weren't always meant to be followed in an English class as long as the discussion still achieved pre-planned goals. However, the model of schooling that I matriculated through still stood true to me in many ways. I may not have agreed with the system always, but I certainly adhered to it. My ontology did not know anything else, despite my conscious efforts at internalizing different beliefs.

Writing that, I cannot even begin to think of how to unpack my statement about a "right" way to do school because I entered into this research believing that the current system of learning, the one I grew up in as a student and entered into as a teacher, could not be the only one accepted as the norm. If I believed that, how could my assumptions still be otherwise? Yet, as I entered into a different type of schooling system that operated under unfamiliar rules, I resisted

what I was observing and experiencing. In the beginning, I judged as inferior what was occurring in Café Reconcile, from the implementation of the curriculum all the way down to the set-up of the classroom:

First day. Feeling in classroom is quiet, awkward, a little unsure... Kathy and Stewart starting the day with an activity about thinking outside the box... Fluid flow of teachers – Kathy started the activity and Stewart finished the box exercise. Icebreaker activity and program overview. Stewart has left, Miss Rachel has come in. Kathy giving a description of the program. Mr. O now walks in. (Field Notes, 11/30/2015)

Still fluid with instructors coming going. (Field notes, 12/2/2015)

Class is noticeably smaller. Is attendance not regular? (Field notes, 12/2/2015)

Alumni just show up and drop in. Fluid movement of people coming and going. (Field notes, 12/7/2015)

There seems to be confusion sometimes. When some students are in Hi-set, others are in a class and either the instructor doesn't really know what's going on (asking me what to do!) or the class is not very focused/organized. Might be the instructors of these sessions are interns or not full time? (Field notes, 12/14/2015).

Not enough students in the class today to make a budget. (Field notes, 12/17/2015).

During my first few weeks at Café Reconcile, as I observed what was happening around me in the Café Reconcile classroom, I questioned everything. Teachers just came and went as they pleased? Instructors were asking me, a visitor, questions – they weren't the experts? Students didn't show up every day like clockwork? Anyone is allowed to just drop in when they please, without notice, and disrupt class? There were no lesson plans?

As I learned that instructors didn't necessarily have lesson plans in the way that I was familiar with, that they didn't hold complete control over an orderly classroom that sat quietly and listened, that class sessions didn't start and end with concrete, defined movements, and that the instructors weren't certified in ways that were familiar to me, I judged the Café Reconcile classroom and the learning occurring within that classroom to be less than. I did this because it was not what I had experienced, and because this space did not look like the classrooms that I matriculated through and that I had stood at the head of as a teacher.

However, the more immersed I became in the new rhythms of schooling and learning I was exposed to in Café Reconcile, the more I began to let go of my old patterns and beliefs about what school and learning is and what it should be. Not every classroom is neatly ordered with a detailed schedule of events clearly outlined by a well-organized and structured developmental lesson plan. Bells don't always signal the beginning and end of a class and students don't always sit nicely and quietly with their phones put away and their pens poised to take notes in a clearly labelled binder. This process of letting go for me was uncomfortable because it shed light on prejudices or biases I had that I thought I did not possess as strongly as I did. My time at Café Reconcile demonstrated to me that even though I was aware of my biases as an educator and researcher, I was not necessarily free of them. Acknowledgement is not the same as evolution.

To my amazement, those biases I was most afraid of (for what they might reveal about me), were not the ones that held me back. My positionality as a white, Jewish woman from a privileged background proved less of a disruption to my ability to form connections with the students, instructors, and volunteers at Café Reconcile than did my pride in my traditional schooling, my Ivy League education, and my training as a teacher. I realized this one day as I was driving away from Café Reconcile, and I had to pull over for a moment to process. I sat

stunned on the side of the road as I realized the jokes my husband and I would pass between each other regarding my educational snobbery were actually true. That really stung me and was cause for some introspection.

I'll be honest, I have not gone home and eaten crow with my husband – I am not evolved enough as a human being to give him a one up so easily. However, I am forever grateful for that realization for I believe that it tipped how I engaged with my research in directions I had not anticipated. My pattern subtly shifted that day as I learned something incredible about myself. My first cycle of observation at Café Reconcile was so focused on the curriculum content, the instruction, and the kitchen, that had I kept going in that direction, I may have missed the message my later interviews have revealed about the nature of schooling and learning as centered in community and relationships and not content and instruction.

Learning Upstairs: A Living Curriculum of Choice. The Café Reconcile curriculum is a 12-week program that is centered on the following tenets: employment readiness, life skills, GED/college readiness (Hi-Set), and culinary arts. There are three movements to the curriculum – four weeks of employment readiness/life skills instruction on the third floor, four weeks of culinary training in the restaurant, and then four weeks of an internship with a restaurant or organization in the city. Hi-set education occurs during the first eight weeks at Café Reconcile. The first movement, which I am going to talk about here, utilizes the 21st Century Success Principles curriculum (as I mentioned before).

The components of the first four weeks of the curriculum are scheduled out on a sandwich board in Café Reconcile's conference room (Appendix B).

The curriculum is laid out on a sandwich board for the whole world to see. The titles of the classes and sections are written in different color inks and look worn. What if one of the pieces of paper falls? (Field notes, 11/30/2015).

Again, I experienced a moment when I saw the sandwich board with the pieces of blue, yellow, purple, white, and pink paper taped onto the board – how can a curriculum be represented so? Why is it not contained within a neat, typewritten document saved onto a hard drive somewhere and printed into a polished looking booklet? I mentioned this during a meeting I had with Miss Kathy and Miss Rachel, when speaking about my own biases. They shared with me that the curriculum used to be that way – that Miss Rachel had typed up the curriculum in the manner that I originally thought it should be, but that because of its format, the curriculum turned into a hidden and unused document. Something that was in an office somewhere and rarely used. To me, it sounded as if the curriculum in that format became an artifact and not a guide.

The way that Miss Kathy and Miss Rachel explained the “sandwich board curriculum” demonstrates to me a well-worn, tried, and tested curriculum that is truly alive. Miss Rachel spoke about how they were able to move the paper notes around the board based on instructor availability, guest speaker availability, and the ability to respond to what is happening in the school in the event that something may be more applicable on a certain day based on certain conditions. And like I mentioned before, any of the instructors are capable of teaching any of the content contained within the paper notes. The Café Reconcile program has a flexible, responsive curriculum that truly emerges from context and the environment.

As I look back and read my field notes, I realize that initially I was occupied by and focused on the wrong things. A curriculum should not be secret and hidden in a document that is inaccessible to others, in both form and language. A curriculum should be alive – flexible and

fluid. By having the post-it notes, the administrators have created a space for classes and content to be moved around when need or logic necessitates it. The curriculum is also available for everyone to see, including the students, which helps to build trust. Transparency is very important when building relationships and enlisting people in a learning partnership (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). What the instructors at Café Reconcile have done with the sandwich board curriculum is make the content of the courses open and reachable to everyone, as well as responsive to the rhythms of the learning environment.

The classes contained on the post-it notes range from Serv Safe certification classes, Hi-Set GED prep, culinary services such as knife handling, work place skills such as when to call in sick and resume writing, and life skills such as crabs in a pot and codeswitching. The goal of the upstairs classes is not just to give students concrete skills to be successful in the kitchen or dining room downstairs, but to also gain the emotional tools to manage the stress and expectations of working in a high contact space. According to Miss Kathy, these are the most important student takeaways from Café Reconcile: learning skills, the ability to make money, being on time, an understanding of how to follow rules, counseling, developing a work ethic, case management, and, if applicable, obtaining a high school diploma and access to higher education.

When I first realized that the classes upstairs were not just based on culinary and interview/resume prep, I felt a little unsure of what was going on. I also experienced a learning curve of understanding where the students were at when they came into Café Reconcile:

Today's class activity is talking about what are acceptable reasons to call into work. We were given a handout that lists a number of reasons people have called into work and the students are to pick out the three legitimate reasons. At the start of the lesson, I looked over the list and thought, ok, this is going to be easy. Clearly, drinking too much the

night before and having a hangover is not a legitimate reason to call into work. Yet, many of the students picked that as an acceptable reason to call in to work! (Field notes, 12/2/2016)

I was incredulous that anyone could think some of the reasons listed on the handout were legitimate reasons to call in sick. Some of the reasons included not having a clean uniform, no transportation, or no childcare. Here is where my privilege emerged – I have never *not* had the means to get somewhere that I needed to go, nor have I ever been in an environment where *not* showing up to work no matter how sick, tired, or unprepared you were was an option. I had a car at sixteen that my parents fixed for me whenever there was an issue with it. I also grew up in a household where a strong work ethic resided: my mother was a teacher and every year worked the afterschool program and every summer she worked summer school; and my father travelled an hour and a half to get to work every day and later on in life worked months away from home to do a job. Although I knew I was going to encounter students from a different background as mine, I was unprepared for some of the ways in which that difference revealed itself.

As we moved through the particular lesson that day, I wrote in my field notes the following:

Not many got these [legitimate excuses to call in sick] right. The lesson focused on what is not in your control. The idea here is to understand what is within your power. There is a lot of challenging from students on unacceptable reasons they feel are acceptable.

Resistance. PLANNING! (Field notes, 12/2/2015)

This lesson, and many others, made me realize that at Café Reconcile the “emphasis [is] is on maintaining a job, not just getting one” (Field notes, 12/2/2015). Furthermore, I began to notice

...that the curriculum encompasses CHOICE. I am hearing instructors say [during a lesson on setting up voicemail, in response to students' resistance to putting their names on their voicemail], ie: 'if they are going to judge you on your name then they may not be someone you want to work for'. This aspect of CHOICE is empowering. (Field notes, 12/7/2016)

Choice, though, is about more than just employment. The empowerment I mention above means having the ability to *make* choices – about jobs, about personal actions, about how to respond to workplace situations. The life skills lessons, where students are taught about themselves and how they navigate through the different arenas of their lives, are where they are given the tools they need to make choices.

The life-skills courses make up the heart and soul of the upstairs experience and in my interviews with the students, dominated their narratives about Café Reconcile. The students see the upstairs as a place to learn, and many of them feel it is a space where they can eventually become their authentic self. David Griffin describes going through the upstairs curriculum:

My experience over here at Café Reconcile is – it's a nice experience. It's a nice place to like, you know, to learn. To learn, like, real life.... I just want to make it in life, you know. I want to be like, you know, I want to be me. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

For me, I was surprised that food and culinary skills were not the binding forces of the curriculum. To be honest, I wasn't expecting the content of the curriculum to revolve around food as little as it did. Instead, in my opinion, the food, the kitchen, the service was all secondary. Many of the students I interviewed felt the same way. Shanice Lewis shared with me that when she first started at Café Reconcile, it wasn't quite what she expected:

No, actually, when I hear—when I – having another young lady living where I live at, um, having her explain it before I actually started the program, I actually thought it was like a, a cooking school, like a culinary school, you know? But it's totally different from a culinary school (laughs). But it's not a culinary school. It's a life skills [class].

(personal communication, March 3, 2016)

Similarly, Jasmine Williams shared with me about her misconceptions of Café Reconcile:

...So when I came, all this I was like oh, I gotta sit in a classroom. I thought we was be cooking or something – I thought I was coming for a job interview here, for the restaurant...I mean I'm excited, I'm in it – cause uh, I didn't, I didn't expect some of the stuff of the stuff you know, some of the stuff we learned in class, I didn't expect all that. I mean, they teach you how to have self-control, all that great stuff, business planning, how to manage your bank account, budgeting, all that great stuff. I mean you learn a lot up in there, so... (personal communication, April, 28, 2016)

And while the business planning and budgeting is important, most of the students talked about the like skills aspect of the curriculum in terms of the tools they learned to manage their emotions and be successful in their future jobs. In short, upstairs is a place of self-exploration.

Jacarlus Cook describes the upstairs experience as a way to get to know oneself:

Well, upstairs its more about learning about yourself and what you're capable of, your weaknesses and your strengths. And what your team needs, your employees are capable of. Their weaknesses and strengths are. So you basically just finding out what your true characteristics are. (personal communication, April 29, 2016)

Additionally, the upstairs is a place of communication, which as Dewey (1906) has said, is education in itself. Besides getting to know themselves, the students were talking with each

other, getting to know each other and forming relationships, as Warnell Kelly talked about when he said, “Umm, everybody communicate with each other. We work as a group. Nobody aint teasing nobody. Nobody aint fussing and fighting, it all calm and collected. And paying attention” (personal communication. May 2, 2016). The classroom space became a place where the students began to build relationships with each other and with themselves because the content of the classroom space required that students look at themselves and engage in self exploration.

With classes like “Crab in the Pots” and “Hot Buttons and Cooling Off”, students are encouraged to explore who they are in relation to their community, to others, and to themselves. They are asked to identify factors of their environment which help or hinder their success at Café Reconcile and in life. They are encouraged to look within and try to understand better why they respond the way they do to certain situations and stimuli, and with the help of their instructors, their social workers, and anyone else at Café Reconcile they connect with, they are exposed to tools and strategies to cope with the world, people, and their own triggers.

For instance, “Crabs in the Pot” (Appendix C) is a worksheet that asks the students questions like “What is the POT that you are in?”, “What are reasons for getting out of the POT?”, and “What are the tools I can use to get out?”. Mr. O usually teaches this class and through this exercise, he asks the students to engage in self and community reflection as they discuss those questions and others revolving around the negative and positives influences of the people around them. David Griffin shared with me the following:

...it’s hard for somebody to come up in New Orleans. And, they going to have people that down you and stuff like that. And, get in fights, you know, like Mr. O saying, you gonna have them crabs that’s going to grab you and pull you down, man. And stuff like that. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

In this space, the students not only explore who they are, but through communication with others, they also begin to understand others. This, in turn, encourages students to form bonds with each other and trust each other as they learn more about the people going through the program with them. Hearing of others possibly having experiences similar to theirs supports the development of relationships between students and teacher, as Mr. O – as well as any of the other instructors I have observed in Café Reconcile – regularly share their experiences as well.

The “Hot Buttons and Cooling Off” exercise is one where the students are again presented with a worksheet (Appendix D), this time of a table with the following column headings: “Hot Button (Red, Yellow, Blue),” “Ways People Push that Hot Button,” and “Appropriate Way of Responding”. Students are then asked to fill out the table, again engaging in self-reflection followed by group conversation. In talking about his experience at Café Reconcile, this exercise found its way into the natural vocabulary of Brian Smith’s narrative. Through his words we can see the impact this exercise had on him:

I think everything was important, because it teaches you, you gotta, umm, deal with life, you know? Like when someone pushes your hot button in the restaurant, how to act calm, how to not get mean towards the customers, you know? That was uh, umm, important to me, you know? Cause if you don’t know how to, umm, deal with your hot buttons, you know, you don’t know how to control your hot buttons, you never going to be anything in life, you know? (personal communication, March 7, 2016)

I heard many of the students speak the language of this lesson very casually when referring to their “red moments” and their efforts at “going to the blue”. My field notes from the day of this lesson are: “they have their own language and vocabulary: ‘stay at the blue’. New patterns, new systems, learning this new language is evidence of learning” (Field notes, 12/2/2016).

Shanice Lewis talked about how her experience with the hot buttons concept and anger management impacted her in this way:

Café Reconcile? It had helped me a lot, especially with the life skills and anger and everything. There was a bit of a situation that I could have blew up about since I been here, but I just like, you know, I just smile – I just smile – and walk away. (personal communication, May 3, 2016)

These exercises, the lessons, Café Reconcile's curriculum is aimed at helping students to form new patterns in their lives in order to respond to triggers in different ways. In many of my interviews, I have heard stories of how the classroom exercises have helped with that. None were spoken about as much, though, as the exercises on code switching.

As I discussed earlier, Lisa Delpit (1995) plays around with ideas of language fluency and cultures of power when discussing the concept of code-switching. This is a complex concept with a number of different layers negotiating ideas of race, power, and class. When I first heard this term thrown around casually at Café Reconcile, and with intense reverence by students, I wasn't sure how to think about it. Normally, code switching implies that in order for students from marginalized populations to access the culture of power, they need to remove themselves from their native culture because it is less than. When Delpit (1995) talks about the culture of power, she refers to it in terms of language and literacy. Code switching for her is found in the language people use and how accessing mainstream codes enables people access to power. She distinguishes between personal literacy and power code literacy as a way to demonstrate the language used world of the individual versus that used in the world outside of the individual.

To hear the students so boldly and proudly label code switching as a means for their success was uncomfortable for me at first. Here were a group of young black students

venerating a highly politicized term with negative connotations to their culture and race. While both Delpit and I would acknowledge that yes, code switching is a means towards success for young, black students, I feel as if we both would do so with an understanding of how charged the term is. Delpit (1995) writes in *Other People's Children* that “to act as if power does not exist is to ensure that the power status quo remains the same” (p. 39). Indeed, to not acknowledge the power of culture is dangerous. However the balance in acknowledging the value of code switching lies in recognizing that personal literacy – and the culture that exists outside of the one of power – has equal value. Part of the power code is teaching students to be critical of the power code, and that wasn't something I was witnessing in Café Reconcile. The term was used as a tool to empower students, but I don't know how the convention was passed on in its entirety to the students as it pertains to hidden curriculums, power dynamics, and hegemonic control.

Despite all of that, it was very illuminating for me to hear the students talk about what code switching meant to them. One student, Warnell Kelly, described code switching as “They taught me how - they taught me how to code switch and my grammar” (personal communication, May 2, 2016). However, an overwhelming majority of the students I interviewed understood code switching as a concept that went way beyond grammar and language. It became a way to manage emotions, to monitor behavior, and to gain access to a good job. The convention became a primary way in which the students understood what they were learning and deciphered how they were applying their knowledge. How to code switch was explicitly taught to the students in Café Reconcile, which not only endeared the teachers to the students I interviewed, but also allowed them success in mastering the concept.

Read on to see how code switching, as defined by Jasmine Williams, translates for her into creating something positive:

Umm, now upstairs they taught us about the code switching, code switching usually meaning – I-I talk to the kids yesterday, you know the kids that uh came. I told them code switching basically means taking bad words and turning them around into good words. Taking a positive situation and turning it into – I mean taking a negative situation and turning it into a positive situation. So, I learned that. I had a problem with my patience when I came here, umm, I’m learning more how to have patience, I’m learning more about that. Um..... what else, um.... Life skills. Life skills, how to, how to function. Um, in the kitchen I learn the whole – I already was a cook but there’s a whole bunch of stuff that, you know, they taught me that I didn’t know. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

For many of the other students, code switching is an umbrella method for turning negative behavior into positive behavior. For them, code switching goes beyond language to envelope all other behaviors and provides the context for understanding the other lessons in the curriculum.

According to Jahwonn Smith:

Mr. O, he taught me everything. Like, before – before I would – and Mr. O aint never like taught me all the skills like I be still flashing out when I get angry and stuff like that. And his skills really helped me. I’m using them as well and its helping me downstairs when I get somebody – when I get heated or whatever I just think of Mr. O and what he taught me. I just think about what I’m here for, you know, and I just code switch. And I do what I gotta do and don’t let nobody – and don’t let nobody press on my red but stay on blue. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

Similarly, Ashante Brown shared with me:

The classroom was good because it kind of like taught us to code switch and some people be like, mmmeh, nahh, they don't like doing all that. So it's like, it was good because we could leave all the negative out the door and come back inside and we could be more professional and it was just teaching us how attitudes and everything else gonna be – if someone was to come at us in a different way so we can be prepared, if we was going to go out in the big business, so that was kinda good. (personal communication, March 8, 2016)

In line with this idea, code switching for the students I interviewed at Café Reconcile means the ability to change behaviors. It means leaving negative emotions behind and letting go of destructive actions. I find this incredibly interesting.

Additionally, I gathered from the interviews that learning about code switching was helping the students to learn about how to navigate different spaces through language. David Griffin describes how important code-switching is to getting and keeping a job:

I love upstairs because they show you, they-they show you like, they show you like, you know, what all – like – you know what I mean – all type of stuff. They show you like code switch, I mean, they show you like body language, you know, they show you all that good stuff, man, and that's what I love about here. Know what I mean, nobody ain't never told me how to keep a job and that's how you keep a job, know what I mean. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Similarly for Devine Lee, code switching was a way for him to navigate professional spaces:

Yeah, they helped me a lot in the classroom because uh...my biggest problem was code switching. I better able to go into the interview and I speak with my hands, and like I did that and sometimes I'd slip up and be like, you heard me and something. There was a lot

of stuff I'd switch and do that I wouldn't do now. Like I purposefully put in my mind, like, ok, you got to. But what it – whereas before I didn't know how to do it – I tried my best but you just don't know what you don't know. So, uhhh.... It [Café Reconcile] helped me with the code switching. Every interview I went on I got the job, you know, because I was better able to handle myself. And properly present myself, and so the code switching help me. (personal communication, March 14, 2016)

Ultimately, one of the outcomes of the upstairs curriculum is to empower students. Code switching, controlling anger, and recognizing triggers are all lessons in which students explore different coping mechanisms for behavior. Some of the ways that the curriculum and instructors achieve this outcome is by asking students to engage in self-reflection in order to help build their confidence through engendering a better understanding of self and environment. Jahwonn Smith described his experience going through a “Why Try” exercise that takes place in the upstairs curriculum:

Yeah, I'm a whole different person, I – Mr O, he wanted a – uh – his why try, it was like, write everything down on a piece of paper that everyone told you before that discouraged you. And, we wrote everything down and he was like, now ball it up and throw it in the trash. And he was like, you a whole different person, don't worry about none of that. And that –by me just picking up that paper and balling it up and throwing it in the trash, I really felt like I was somebody – a whole different person. Like that really helped me. Mr. O he a good teacher and everything. I love his classes. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

Like my field notes reference above, the curriculum upstairs is about helping students move into new patterns of being. During their time upstairs, students are asked to envision the future, to

imagine what their world would look like outside of the figurative crab pot. This vision questing is one of the ways in which the people at Café Reconcile empower students to grow and change. These lessons begin upstairs, however they are not contained within that space. Learning new patterns of being continues in the downstairs teaching spaces, as well as in the world outside of Café Reconcile. The curriculum may manifest differently between the upstairs and downstairs, however the learning itself is not atomized between these two distinct physical zones.

Learning Downstairs: The Application of Theory. Both the upstairs and the downstairs complement each other in the skills learned. Upstairs is like learning the theory of life skills and downstairs is having the opportunity to apply that theory. Ashante Brown describes it as “[the] stuff that they had to teach us so we could be prepared to go downstairs, so that was good. And being downstairs, now that we see, ok, they was serious people’s attitudes and everything” (personal communication, March 8, 2016). Warnell Kelly concurs: “cause being upstairs like I’m in a class. Being downstairs made – it made me feel like I’m working. You know? I’m getting things done.... I like both, cause they taught me something” (personal communication, May 2, 2016). And Jahwonn Smith talks about how the two come together in this way:

They – all the skills we use when we really need them. I see why we need those skills, and... everything it just, upstairs is – is – is taught to you, like taught, and downstairs is hands on what you learned. It’s basically the same to me. Like everything I learnt upstairs I use it downstairs. It’s the same... Like, upstairs they talk – they told us what they gonna be doing and downstairs they – we just do it. Its hands on. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

The students describe the upstairs and downstairs in more detail, and it wasn't until they actually started going downstairs that they started to see the benefit of the upstairs classroom component of Café Reconcile.

But let's take a step back and take a look at the downstairs space. The downstairs space, which is the kitchen and dining room, is one where a formal curriculum is not enacted. A number of the classes listed on the upstairs sandwich board are directly related to the activity that takes place downstairs: Spirit of Hospitality, dealing with Difficult Customers, Culinary 101: Tools, Pots & Pans, and Selling the Menu (to name a few). With the exception of comments about how to cut/slice vegetables, (and never in reference to the "Knife Handling" class – only in reference to activity in the kitchen. I did not hear the students in any of the interviews refer to any of these classes. Instead, the language used to talk about the downstairs space is "front of the house", "back of the house", and "hustle and bustle". The second movement of the Café Reconcile curriculum consists of four weeks working the restaurant, with half the time being split between the dining room (front of the house) and the kitchen (back of the house). The work being completed downstairs is associated with the running of the restaurant and not the school.

The Café Reconcile staff members downstairs are also instructors; however, the students see them more as mentors and chefs instead of teachers. Teacher is a word they associate with the upstairs classroom more than the downstairs restaurant – "chef" and "work" are how they describe some of the major components of the second movement in the Café Reconcile program. The downstairs restaurant is run by two older chefs, both men of color (Chef Eugene and Chef Joe). Miss G runs the front of the house, and everyone else in between are cooks, trainers, and managers who have clearly defined roles but again, run fluid with each other in a way of organized chaos that I find theatrical and musical.

My field notes describe the downstairs in the following ways:

There is a very different feel down here. The kitchen seems like community space and relaxed down here. Students are very engaged – is this because it is the first day in the kitchen or the first day back after the holidays and a break? (Field notes, 1/4/2016)

There is a different language down here, too – more relaxed, different vocab, different inflection. There is a lot of 1:1, 1:2, 1:3 interaction going on. Chefs and cooks showing students how to cut vegetables, how to heat up dishes, how to do prep. Dre seems more engaged – he was not interested upstairs...down here in the kitchen he is alert, takes initiative, follows instruction. TRIES. (Field notes, 1/7/2016).

Very musical, lyrical downstairs. People talking, singing, the sound of dishes, pans, utensils, glasses. Shouting. Everyone has their role in front of the house – some of it is shared. In the back, it seems a little messier if no less organized. The lines are distinct but looser, blurred. Its nosier back there – everyone doing their job but also everyone can jump in or jump to another task easily, fluidly. (Field notes, 1/11/2016).

Week 2, not as much 1:1 teaching going on. More working independently. (Field notes, 1/11/2016).

People helping each other out. Movement is fluid, continuous, with one picking up where the other left off. Ie: one person pouring corn out of a bag into a pan, someone else comes up to grab the empty bag to throw away so the person can pour the next bag uninterrupted. There is a lot of routine and repetition in the kitchen. Same things to prepare everyday, always cutting peppers and onions and vegetables, standard things on the menu, specials, etc. that provide difference or variety. A balance of both. (Field notes, 1/14/2016).

So much more movement down here. The repetition of cutting, stirring. But also people come in and out regularly. People working, making deliveries, volunteers, alumni coming back to visit. Chefs stop to say hello, have a moment to talk, catch up.

Environment and context always coming up, coming back. Movement between past and present. Non-linearity!!! (Field notes, 1/21/2016).

My field notes also reveal the benefit of the curriculum we see downstairs when it comes to how people work together. Students and teachers almost do not miss a beat as they cross boundaries in positive ways – lines are blurred as students all practice the same jobs and gain interchangeable skills with each other.

Laura Jewett (2008) , in *A Delicate Dance*, characterized zydeco as an “embodied local curriculum” and talks about how “the complicated dance of race, culture, gender, and knowledge embodied by zydeco shows that important teaching and learning takes place in the pedagogical spaces of bandstands, dancehalls, festivals, rodeos, plantations, as well as in classrooms” (p. 14). Jewett discusses the importance of location and invokes Elspeth Probyn (1990) in her discussion of local, locale, and location. Jewett connects these ideas by seeing practice as a local act, locale as embodying tensions of day to day living, and ultimately suggests that location is an epistemological process and a space where knowledge is ordered. Ultimately, engaging in and thinking about dance in this way opens up the possibility of embodying a different relationship with the world and with the self (Jewett, 2008). In reading my field notes, in seeing how the dance of the kitchen is space specific in many ways, I cannot help but think of the activity happening in Café Reconcile in this way.

There is sound, music, chaos, and order – downstairs there is a cacophony of activity that to me was a stark difference from upstairs. Mike Jones describes it this way:

Yeah. I love – I love the hustle and b – I tell everyone I love the hustle and bustle of the restaurant. I’m a – I’m a back of the house person, a kitchen person. I love the tickets, the heat, the screaming, the crowdedness, you now, all that. It just gets me through my day. (personal communication, March 1, 2016)

True, there is movement upstairs – people go in and out of classrooms, of sessions, of conversations. But downstairs, students sing, they dance, they move in and out of each other’s spaces with familiarity and levity. After all of my observations I still do not know if this comfort and fluidity is a function of time (meaning, time for students to get to know each other so they can form trust and relationships) or space (the kitchen simply *not* being a traditional classroom space may engender a different type of activity). This may be a chicken or egg type of question anyway – one that needs not be resolved but appreciated for the complexity of its existence. In the end, my interviews with the students revealed that they all feel differently about the downstairs space and that they see the activity happening in the restaurant space as different but not disconnected from the upstairs.

Mike Jones speaks of the relationship between the upstairs and the downstairs in the following way: “Ok, well, upstairs we have life skills and we have hospitality, uh, skills. So, the upstairs as far as life skills go, and downstairs, it kind of entwines” (personal communication, March 1, 2016). Jacarlus Cook described the relationship between upstairs and downstairs in the following way:

Upstairs is more of a learning experience, um, teaching you about before you go downstairs how to conduct yourself around other people professionally and not just the way that you would at home. So, you know, its – its uh – its uh a pretty good thing, like, there’s more to it than just sitting in here and they just writing something on the board

and you gotta look in a book and look it up and figure it out on your own. (personal communication, April 29, 2016)

Here, you can see that Jacarlus is seeing how the life skills learned upstairs need to be applied downstairs if he is going to be successful. For him, and many of the other students, there were two types of skills gained upstairs – an ability to present yourself to be successful in a job and then the nuts and bolts of how to do the job.

Jacarlus also recognizes the interrelated role of both spaces and how important the connection between the two are –most of the students associated with the upstairs classroom space some of the negative attributes that they remembered from high school (having to sit in a seat all day, being quiet, having to figure out information from books instead of action), namely that of being in a motionless space. Ashante Brown shared that the downstairs is “different because we are working. We doing classwork up here and then downstairs we actually working, we doing instead of us just talking about it. So that’s the big difference” (personal communication, March 8, 2016). Jahwonn Smith described this feeling of learning as application in the following way:

Upstairs is – to me is like – is getting you prepared for like – for what you about to step into. It’s not – upstairs gets you ready. Upstairs, gets you prepared, makes you capable, makes you ready for code switching. Code switching is a big thing that you need working in hospitality field because you can’t be flashing out in front of boucoup people and everything. You gotta stay calm and upstairs gets you ready for that. And I think a lot of people ain’t come upstairs before they go downstairs, they would never, they would never be here today. Like, they needed those skills. I think upstairs is the good thing to do before you go downstairs. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

The downstairs and upstairs could not exist without the other. Mike Jones says of the relationship between the upstairs and the downstairs:

Oh yeah [the upstairs prepares you for downstairs]. As far as the hospitality training and how the job goes. It prepares you for it as far as to tell you what's coming. But if you never witnessed the hospitality industry at all, it's going to be a shock. It's not, you know, it's not a big shock, it's easy to grasp but it's going to be a shock. But in the same sense I think they prepare you for it. Cause they do tell you that this is going to happen, this is going happen, we're gonna learn to do this, and sure enough this is boom, boom, boom, boom. (personal communication, March 1, 2016)

For Devine Lee, his transition looked like this:

Then I got downstairs and that's when it started making sense to me. And I wasn't focused in the classroom and it was a hindrance and – but when I got downstairs it was like I'm focused, I'm locked in, I want to work, I want to get money. I could see myself making money, I could see the skills I was learning, I could see how I could take me to the next step of where I need to be, so you know, that's why it started making sense downstairs cause I was like, ok, now this is making sense. Now this is work. Now this is like why I came here. But the classroom isn't why I came here. (personal communication, March 14, 2016)

It is through the application of skills, that students begin to make sense of their learning and make meaning through their action. The students really valued this sense of action, of activity, and of the feeling that time is going by but that they are filling the time with something useful or valuable.

Jasmine Williams shared with me that:

Now downstairs, action. It's just like, as soon as you get downstairs it's like action.

Everybody's running here, there, everywhere so it's a lot of work. Its work downstairs and up here it's basically listening. And, uh, just having that having an ear to what they, you know, to what they has to say. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

And Warnell Kelly said, "Uhh, the time go faster and you making more money and you, you really getting your experience up. You know? To really be ready in the future" (personal communication, May 2, 2016). I believe that this all means that the students feel good about how they are filling their time, that they recognize they are doing something meaningful.

Additionally, in the space of the restaurant, students perform their own dance of transitioning to a new space, applying knowledge that they studied upstairs, and learning new skills. David Griffin said, "I like downstairs more better, cause that's when the work come in, that's when, that's where you get it on at, I mean, that's where you, you know, that's where you really learn something" (personal communication, April 28, 2016). Similarly, Jasmine Williams shared,

Downstairs they tell you what to do and you get on it. You get on it. And then, its-its-its- they're working so much down there, um, to where you have to figure it out – sometimes you have to figure it out yourself. How to do it, when to do it, because they're doing it so much, so... yeah. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Being downstairs isn't just about application of concrete skills. It is also about transferring some of the newly acquired thinking structures and combining that with the students' newfound confidence in their abilities to be able to independently learn. Part of the responsibility of making it to the downstairs space is trying new things and incorporating the autonomy that comes along with new skills to help establish new patterns of being.

Many of the students shared with me that because of their time at Café Reconcile, they became open to trying new things and learning about new things. It wasn't always easy, as Jahwonn Smith described:

The challenge is really doing – doing like hands on doing what you got to do cause something happens I get the bubble-bubble guppies in my stomach from when I'm about to do something that I never did before. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

However, he went on to say that,

And just don't – you gotta break out that mind set of, like, not knowing what you could do. You got to know what you capable of. Like, I didn't know what I was capable of, I ain't think I could do nothing and now I'm downstairs doing all the different things I didn't even know I could do, but I – I feel good about myself and I'm finding myself also. And café reconcile it helps you find yourself cause it really do. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

From my time with Jahwonn, I believe that the work he did upstairs in reflecting on who he is as a person as well as the intake of practical skills, assisted him in gaining the confidence to establish new patterns of being. He talks about feeling good about himself and the confidence he gains from every new thing he tries. I see Jahwonn going through a transformation of self-actualization as a result of a positive mind-set and the ability to practice newfound knowledge.

Ashante Brown shared a similar experience with me in regards to how the downstairs helped her understand what some of her strengths are:

That's [downstairs] a good learning experience for me because I had a chance, I got the chance to go to different stations so I could test out what I'm really good at or what I'm

really capable of doing, where I'm really going to learn. That was a good big experience for me. (personal communication, March 8, 2016)

This is one of the strengths of the downstairs curriculum: the rotation through the different stations of the front of the house and the back of the house allows students to explore the different roles they can play in a restaurant. In a space where trying new things is expected, students get to test out their skills and see where they feel comfortable, assess their talent, and make an informed decision on the role they want to play in their professional life.

The students at Café Reconcile don't do this alone. Through feedback from the chefs and managers, through conversations with their upstairs instructors (who continue to monitor their progress through regular meetings), students process through their experience downstairs as they self-assess where their strengths lie and what type of internship (front of the house or back of the house) they want to take. Jasmine Williams emphasized the learning partnership between her and the staff at Café Reconcile when she told me that:

I've learned a lot and they've taught me a lot. And I have, I have uh, an open mind and an open ear, and open eyes to receive anything, you know coming from here cause it can take me a long way once I leave... So, I mean I just gotta – they're prepping me, that's just what they, they, they doing and um, its working. Its-its-its food – I'm learning a lot.

(personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Similarly, Shanice Lewis shared with me that not only has Café Reconcile been a life changing experience for her, but that she was surprised at how she now considers herself a front of the house person. She revealed that it was through her experience at downstairs and the support of her teachers that she figured out what it was that she wanted to do:

I – I feel just comfortable – cause, I don’t know why. I didn’t use to be a people person, but its like since I changed my life around I’m like people, yaaaay! People! Let’s go! (laughter)... But, I like the front of the house. That’s my favorite, that’s what I’m sticking to, I like the front of the house. That’s the positions I’m going to be applying for, it’s the front of the house. (personal communication, May 3, 2016)

The students look at trying new things as just not job related but food related. Ashante Brown summarized it nicely: “I actually tried new things – and I do not try anything new. So, that’s kind of been the experience” (personal communication, March 8, 2016). In particular, she shared that:

So it was good that I got the opportunity to come here and have all the learning experience that I needed to know, be in the kitchen, uh, taste stuff – I’m not a fan of tasting new things, so I was kind of like, you know what, let me just do it anyway because probably when I get another job they gonna ask me to do all this stuff and I can’t be like, oh, I don’t like this, I don’t like that. Stuff like that. (personal communication, March 8, 2016)

Mike Jones confided in me that trying new food for him meant so much more than just new tastes:

But I definitely, Reconcile definitely opened new experiences to my life. I’ve tried calamari, I’ve tried caviar, I’ve tried eggplant, I’ve tried beef tongue, I’ve tried – oh man, some – I’ve tried some stuff, but it also opened my eyes to the um, I told, I think I heard this: never trust a skinny chef, something like that. So, and I heard it before a long time ago, but hearing it makes sense. So I know now that if I want to, like I talk about my – if I want to broaden my horizon and gain experience, I can’t say no to food. Because like

chef says, like chef says, we don't use nasty because in another country, I another place it could be a delicacy. (personal communication, March 1, 2016)

For Mike, trying new foods is a metaphor for, as he called it, broadening his horizons. If he truly wants to grow, he needs to be open to new things – not just tastes but also ideas, people, experiences. I believe that Mike's desire to broaden his horizon supports this broader sense that I got from all of the students I interviewed about wanting to better their lives. The students' reasons for wanting to better themselves (their terminology) are many: to be a role model, to be independent, to be a good parent, to give back to their community.

For these students, learning and making it through Café Reconcile's program isn't simply about the acquisition and application of skills. One of the ways they marked their learning and success was demonstrated by their relationship with others and themselves and their ability to sustainably better themselves through this experience. Jacarlus Cook talked about his decision to come to Café Reconcile in this way:

Well, I knew it was time for a change in my life. I knew I wanted to do more, cause I felt like I was supposed to be further in life than what I am. And so I just thought it would be a better opportunity. (personal communication, April 29, 2016)

For David Griffin, he realized *how* Café Reconcile could help him advance his life:

I love upstairs because they show you, they-they show you like, they show you like, you know, what all – like – you know what I mean – all type of stuff. They show you like code switch, I mean, they show you like body language, you know, they show you all that good stuff, man, and that's what I love about here. Know what I mean, nobody ain't never told me how to keep a job and that's how you keep a job, know what I mean. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

But it's more than that for David – he wants to do more than just fulfil his need to survive. Bettering himself means doing more than just getting a job – it also means keeping that job. Surviving is just getting by day to day. David wants more than that – he wants independence and the ability to grow:

Cause I needed me a steady job. So I can get on my feet. I mean, I'm not, you know, I got somebody that I can stay with now, but you know, I want my own place. I want to make my own money. You know, have my own income. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Brian Smith describes bettering himself in terms of being able to take care of his family: Being downstairs, um, it's like the, umm, let me start with upstairs. Upstairs like school. But downstairs is like, umm, like training for real, real life, you know? Like, you really training for, like, real life, like, a job. It's taking care of your family, you know. (personal communication, March 7, 2016)

For many of the students I interviewed, they viewed succeeding in Café Reconcile as being able to provide for their family financially and becoming positive role models for their kids or siblings. Warnell Kelly shared that:

Damn, two kids and I, you know, you know, I'm not deadbeat like people say, you know. I'm trying to make it work for them so they have a good father and a role model and be like me, graduate from high school. But being here, its teaching you how to become a man, you know, taking responsibility, you know? It teach you how to...keep a job not get a job. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

Similarly, Shanice Lewis talked about her son and being a good role model for him as the driving force towards completing the program at Café Reconcile:

I'm passionate about making it in life. Setting a good example for my son, to be honest, like, you know. I never... growing up I never really had a mother figure or a fatherfi— well, I had a father figure but, you know, he was basically a mother figure. I never had someone who did things for themselves so I can see that this is how – this is the thing you want to be – this is how you want to be in life. I never had anyone set an example for me, especially as a female, you know? Like, I never had, like, I never knew how to take care of myself as a female, you know, because I never had a female who could actually show me. You know, like, my goal in life that I'm so passionate about is to better myself so I can better my son. Like, that's the number one thing on my bucket list, like before I die I have to –my son has to know you gotta, you- you can be something in life know matter what you do, no matter where you come from, no matter if you was abused, no matter if you was beat, thrown off the bridge and survived, you can be what you want to be in life - it just all depends on you. And I, I don't want him to feel like he gotta quit, and everything? Because I was a quitter before I came here. (personal communication, May 3, 2016)

Furthermore, Ashante Brown's drive to succeed at Café Reconcile comes from her desire to get out of Café Reconcile "A better intern, a better – better job. Better pay and better – good opportunities to do everything" (personal communication, March 8, 2016). She wants to succeed at Café Reconcile to provide for her son and be a good role model:

Me, I love working because I know at the end of the day I'm going to be getting my paycheck. So that's why I think I work too much. Because I got to provide for me and my son. (personal communication, March 8, 2016)

For Jahwonn Smith, succeeding at Café Reconcile is about demonstrating to his sisters a better

way of living:

I just want to do that for my sisters and building my – if they seeing that I’m growing up a bad life and doing bad things, then they just going to follow me and think that’s good.

An.... If they was in a situation now that I’m in, I would recommend them to Café

Reconcile. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

These students recognize how the learning they receive at Café Reconcile goes beyond their roles in the program. They all talk about the larger community they are from and how they’d like to give back to that community.

For Devine Lee, the best part of Café Reconcile is the ability to give back:

I love giving back and I want to be able to have like, you know what I say, come back and do community service. Like, help the community the best way I can, rather than just like, giving like – those who didn’t have dads and sold drugs and you know, who feel like that’s their only way out. Not everyone’s giving them a pat on the back and not everyone’s giving them a resource to get a job but I would like, just being, giving that the best way I can. While I always like, uh, the mentoring aspect of the café, so that’s what I like best. (personal communication, March 14, 2016)

In moving to downstairs, the relationships the students have with each other and their teachers undergo nuanced changes. There is more of an apprenticeship model of schooling occurring downstairs than upstairs, however the students report that despite the differences between upstairs and downstairs, the relationships they have with their instructor and the bonds that are formed between them and their peers are not so different between the two spaces.

In hearing the stories of the students at Café Reconcile, a few themes emerged that were echoed in all of the narratives: the people there form a community that is based on trust and

support; Café Reconcile is a place of comfort and possibility; and the motivation to go to Café Reconcile comes from a desire to better oneself. Mike Jones (personal communication, March 1, 2016) summed up Café Reconcile as a place that opens doors. Throughout the interview process, I began to see that the students engaged in the curriculum because they felt as if they were in a place that cared about them. They felt as if there was trust and respect. Brian Smith said, “I like, umm, I like the people. How, how they treat you, like, they treat you how you want to be, how – how you want to be treated, you know, how they want to be treated” (personal communication, March 7, 2016).

From what I gathered, and will talk about more extensively in the next section, the students also benefit immensely from the energy they receive from the relationships they have with others. They learn through interacting with others, with the degree of how much they learn dependent on the nature of the relationship they have with their peers, instructors, and community. For these students, those relationships assist and enhance the learning process. Transitioning from upstairs to downstairs keeps the aspect of engaging with people alive while at the same time teaching the students the value of the upstairs lessons through the application of knowledge.

Mike Jones shared,

Time goes by faster [downstairs]. Umm, and it’s more of a – it’s more of a comradery, I guess you could say. Upstairs it was really a – more of a classroom setting, a teacher – not a teacher but a faculty/student type of situation, relationship. Downstairs is more of a co-worker relationship, the chef, you know, uh, you all working together, when he tell you to do something you gotta get it done and they expect you to do it right in a timely manner, no matter what it be. It’s a different type of environment, more laughing, more

going on, more of a free conversation – you know, more of a personal conversation going on between you and the chef. It’s more of a comradery, front of the house and back of the house. (personal communication, March 1, 2016)

There is a reciprocity in the care that students experience at Café Reconcile. In this next section, I’m going to talk about that care, for this is the paradigmatic element of the curriculum that, in my opinion, brings the upstairs and downstairs experiences together and binds them within the student consciousness. It is within the community of care created within the space of Café Reconcile that we see change happening in the lives of these students.

Café Reconcile: A Community and Curriculum of Care

What I observed from the Café Reconcile curriculum was that everything revolved around an ethic of care. Noddings (2005) would define a caring relationship as one that is “a connection or encounter between two human beings – a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for” (p. 222). Furthermore, for Noddings (1984), “caring is the very bedrock of all successful education and ...contemporary schooling can be revitalized in its light” (p. 27). An ethic of care can function to overturn traditional values in education by considering “care, concern, and connection, in finding answers to....moral dilemmas” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 17) and thus transforming education into a “human enterprise” (Starratt, 1991, p. 195). Indeed, that is what the schooling in Café Reconcile accomplishes – transforming the human spirit through an emphasis on care and relationships.

Upstairs and downstairs meet in perfect unison at the start of everyday in Café Reconcile. The restaurant space of the building is truly a communal space – in the morning it is used to host the students’ start of the day, in the afternoon it brings the community and students together for the lunch service, and at the end of the day it reverts back again to the students for cleaning and

closure. The restaurant space is also a community space that is home to people from every aspect of New Orleans society – I have come to view that space as a great leveler of experience. It is the space that I wanted to use for my interviews, however the time of day in which I conducted my interviews did not provide for that. In any event, each day started downstairs with my favorite part of the curriculum: Word of the Day.

Word of the Day is when teachers, students, chefs, staff, and community members come together in the dining room of the restaurant to eat breakfast and engage in the first lesson of the day. That lesson is an exploration of a word that embodies a characteristic of the program at Café Reconcile or a personality trait that the students can aspire to. Some of the words include respect, service, and hope and each lesson has students exploring the word's meaning through quotes, questions, scripture, and discussion. Everyone has a chance at leading the lesson regardless of title or experience. Volunteers, alumni, and guests often take part in Word of the Day with or without invitation. Everyone is welcome.

The lesson starts with a prayer circle where everybody holds hands, which for me was a little strange at first not being a very religious person. I felt like a fake in the beginning, however the circle is such a welcoming space and it is less about the prayer and more about the opportunity to offer praise, share accomplishments, and ask for support. After prayer, everyone breaks bread. Students are responsible for cooking breakfast and for cleaning up afterwards. And in between, everyone sits down together in a big circle (or square, as that's how the tables configure together), and explore the meaning of a word and how that meaning is a part of what everyone does at Café Reconcile. Brian Smith describes Word of the Day as an opportunity to share: "Yeah, Word of the Day. Everybody get to talk, get to say their opinion of the words. I like Word of the Day" (personal communication, March 7, 2016).

Indeed, each day starts with a show of care and engagement in the community that is the heart and soul of Café Reconcile. Word of the Day helps to establish that community and with the inclusion of people from outside of the particular class that is currently happening, the parameters of membership in this community of care is established. Mike Jones shared with me the impact this ritual has on him:

That's- that's what I - that's what Café Reconcile really opened up to my doors – positivity and happiness. Uh, you know, just taking the little things like simply having Word of the Day, simply having breakfast to eat in the morning and taking those things – taking those things and running with them for the rest of the day. (personal communication, March 1, 2016)

Each day in the program starts with sharing and positivity – this is very intentional in terms of curriculum planning, however without the instructors, chefs, and staff members at Café Reconcile reinforcing these ideas and emotions throughout the day, the environment wouldn't form the way it does. Jasmine Williams describes how important that is for her:

I mean, I look forward to seeing Miss Kathy, Miss Rachel, I mean all of them every day. So. Yeah. Its a little escape from my problems, I feel. Café Reconcile. Everybody around me is smiling, everybody around me has positive energy and it, and it bounce on me, so I gotta keep a smile. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Jahwonn Smith describes why the students at Café Reconcile become enlisted in the vision of the staff: “Just hands on, just role models and people I see lead us. I'm around leaders all day, every day” (personal communication, May 2, 2016).

This leadership is synonymous with care for many of these students. Devine Lee said about the community created in the classroom and restaurant: “They got a team who really care”

(personal communication, March 14, 2016). That was one of the first things I noticed about Café Reconcile and an element of the program I realized to be a cornerstone of the curriculum's success. It is my belief that the content of Café Reconcile's curriculum is secondary to the environment of caring that is established. According to Devine, that care is expressed in the dedication of the teachers, their desire to see where the students go after graduation, and the structure and organization of the program. The students who come to Café Reconcile aren't cycled through a curriculum and moved through a program that is one stop in a disconnected path towards a nebulous idea of success. The experience at Café Reconcile isn't linear in that respect – instead, Café Reconcile is a community with a lifelong membership. Members are welcome back at any time, primarily because there is a foundation of care shaping how people move in and out of this unique, non-linear space. Caring, for Noddings (2005), is relational and in looking through the interviews of the students, this idea of relational care is resonated in many ways: care as support, care as motivation, and care as a safe space.

For the students that I interviewed, they reported that one of the things they value about the community is how membership in it makes them feel as if they are valued. David Griffin shared with me that Café Reconcile makes him feel as if he is somebody, that he – as an individual – is important:

I love the – the – the atmosphere of it, like, cause at the same time you can, you know, come in up for anything and they'll help you.... I mean, and, I mean I never had that before. I never had nobody just give me something and don't ask for a return.... Cause this is the place, this is real life, Café Reconciles is real life. Like seriously. They help me and I ain't know nothing at one point. And now I know something, I know-know something. I feel like somebody now. You know. I felt more confident in myself than I

was, you know, back in the past. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

This sense of individuality and personal worth helps the students to engage in the curriculum of Café Reconcile.

Indeed, Café Reconcile is a community whose care is felt and shown in the bonds formed between students, teachers, and staff. These are relationships based in emotion and support.

Warnell Kelly shared his feelings about the community as: “At Café Reconcile they want you to be something, you heard me, they make sure you’re here every day. That’s the difference”

(personal communication, May 2, 2016). While the students enroll in the program because of a desire to better themselves, their regular attendance wouldn’t be possible without them knowing – feeling – that they were going to a place that valued them and their continued presence. For Brian Smith, the care he received from relationships he made with the people at Café Reconcile motivated him to keep coming:

Café Reconcile, I think, umm, my experience was good because I done came here just looking for a job but like the first thing, well I came looking for a job, but when I start, like, progressing like that first week? I just start making new friends, you hear me? And, umm, that just made me want to come every day, like, yeah, it was fun. You know? I just came here every day. (personal communication, March 7, 2016)

And while not all the students that I interviewed had perfect attendance, they all came regularly for this very reason.

Jacarlus Cook described how the relationships he formed at Café Reconcile helped in his motivation in the following way:

They - they – they right there during the whole thing. They never leave your side. Once you start you not stopping until you finish. They motivate you all the way till the end.

(personal communication, April 29, 2016)

Indeed, for many of the students, the relationships they build at Café Reconcile are some of the most important that they build in their lives. A lot of the students I interviewed talked about the people at Café Reconcile as family. Jahwonn Smith described the care he sees in Café Reconcile like this:

You know they really teaching me what I need to know and everybody in the building just feels like family. When I walk in here I don't – I don't – I just – it just feel the same where everybody like family. You know? (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

For this very reason Café Reconcile becomes a major support system for a lot of the students who go through the program. When asked about the support systems he has during his time at Café Reconcile, Jacarlus Cook told me,

Yes, I do have a support system. Mr. Onassis and the rest of the staff. And my classmates. It's more – it's more of a family than just employees and students. Because we always there for each other when we need to be, not just because that we think it will get us further in life, we do it because we want to, not because we have to. (personal communication, April 29, 2016)

It is also a community based in trust – care, for the students at Café Reconcile, mean relying and depending on those people around you. Shanice Lewis described what trust is in her community looks like:

I feel like trust. Trust that comes with family. Like in order for you to be with me personally, or for you to be considered my family, I have to trust you. Like, if it's not

trust then it's nothing between us. Because if I can't trust you then what's your reason for being around me? Like, I wanted you to be somebody like, if I'm feeling depressed, you know, then I can come and talk to you. And then I don't have to worry about you going and telling Tom, Dick, and Harry about it and everything. And, you know, like trust. That's the number one key. Like in a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend. If there's trust, there's nothing if there ain't no trust. (personal communication, May 3, 2016)

For relationships to form at Café Reconcile, for this community of care to exist, trust needs to be established between individuals and within the group. That is why voluntary group membership is so important – because students and staff are choosing to be part of something, they are voluntarily making themselves vulnerable by opening themselves up to trust – and therefore possibility.

Trust also means that you are part of a community that is rooting for you. For Jahwonn Smith, that means others want you to succeed:

I feel like I can trust everybody. Here, everybody got your back, everybody trying to see you open those doors for ourself. And better for us. Nobody trying to down you here. Everybody want to see you make something out of yourself and build. And that's the motivation everybody need and buildup. At Café Reconcile treat everybody not – as family, not just co-workers. Cause its more than that. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

Unfortunately, trust does not come easy for many of these students and it is not something that they always feel in their community outside of Café Reconcile. David Griffin was telling me that:

Uhhhh, I got a bunch – I had a bunch of friends that went through here [Café Reconcile].
Ummm, some of them tried to get me to go, tried to get me to go over there but, but, you know, I don't – I – I – I don't trust people.... Cause this a nice – this a good place full of good people, you know what I mean, and each trying to send you round – they trying to send you – they trying to get you ready for real life if you trying to go – if you trying to get to – get to the actual real life, you know what I mean, the make it on your own, you know? (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Indeed, without this care, students would not trust the support they were getting from the staff in the program. Without care, the students would not be motivated to wake up early at ungodly hours to arrive at Café Reconcile for Word of the Day, nor would they be committed to staying when they weren't making money to support themselves or their families. Trust is a huge part of Ashante Brown's experience and motivation:

As far as, um, Miss G and Miss Kathy and all the others, that's like a big support because they see us and they be like, I knew you could make it. Or I see better in you. Or we down and they like, you got this, pick yourself back up. So they really a big support cause we woulda been stopped coming if that was the case, if they didn't push us hard enough, we woulda just stopped. (personal communication, March 8, 2016)

Care, for her, is about being supported and motivated to do more. This is done through encouragement and being told that not only is there more to who they are as individuals, but that they can attain that something extra.

Most college attainment and adult development theories will tell you that students who go to college exist within environments that show the possibility of college – either through friends or relatives who have gone to college or in the high schools that students attend where

college bound activity is the norm (Astin, 1984). The same is happening here at Café Reconcile: new patterns of possibility are created in that space where students are exposed regularly to what they can be and who they could be through regular visits from chefs, businessmen, and community leaders – and alumni. The alumni visits are invaluable in this environment of care that is created at Café Reconcile, where students feel supported to be more than what they had initially imagined for themselves. In their alumni, they can see a vision of who and what they can be one day. The alumni make the future a more real possibility.

Warnell Kelly sees the support from Café Reconcile in this way:

It's a family. If you need help, they gonna help you. You need to talk, they gonna talk, they gonna listen. There ain't no bad – you ain't gonna get in a bad situation here.

(personal communication, May 2, 2016)

Membership in this community is completely voluntary and means that students can be themselves. Membership also means for many students that there is space to make mistakes. That is what learning is after all in my opinion, and learning at Café Reconcile isn't just about the acquisition of new skills. Learning in this space is also about personal growth. Shanice Lewis talks about this and the role she sees the instructors, chefs, and staff playing in the students' learning process:

You know, they both trying to help us in life, and trying to guide us in the right direction, cause you know, I see it as their, you know, doing – the staff is older than us. They'd been there at our age, a bit young and dumb and made stupid decisions, and it's like their trying to steer us in the right path so we won't make the same mistakes they made in life. And that's where a lot of people have to realize that, you know, they tell us stuff, that they might yell at us, they might get on our nerves, they might make us want to cuss them

out and everything, but at the end of the day they not telling us that stuff just to tell it to us. They telling it to us so we can learn from their mistakes, before we make that same mistake. (personal communication, May 3, 2016)

After getting into a fight at Café Reconcile, David Griffin shared with me,

Up there I had one mistake up in here, know what I mean, and I – I – I had one mistake up in here, know what I mean, and I wish not to make any more mistakes. But, you know, that's- that's- that's my word..., I fought a 17 year old but I felt like I was in the wrong cause I could have cut- I could have walked away... That's the whole – but the whole – the-the whole thing between that situation and me... the 17 yr old – me and the 17 yr old cool as – as heartbeat. We cool as ice. The only thing about that situation we-we like brothers. We like brothers under one roof at our house. This is our home....Café Reconcile's is our home. All it was we got into it. We like two brothers who got into it. Nobody had nothing - ain't nobody had nothing to do with it, no what I mean, why we got into it how we got into it. Know what I mean? We and – and – what I love about downstairs and upstairs, you know what I mean – they really came together – they merged together. And they say – they – they – you know – they was planning on sending – sending us home and not coming back, know what I mean, but at the same time they let us stay – they gave us one more chance without pay... I mean I see if I would have, like, you know, had a fight on the first day, second day or third day, or the first week you know after that, yeah, they ought to kick me out, cool, know what I mean, but I made it this far, man, like.... (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Even though David broke the rules, and was held accountable for that by not getting paid for the week, he wasn't kicked out of Café Reconcile. He was still part of the community, he still felt

like he was part of the team there, and he continued to come back to school despite the event determined to do better. For David, he learned that at Café Reconcile care means having the space to make mistakes – which includes support through the reparation process.

I think it's important to note the part of David's narrative that talks about the timing of his actions and consequent accountability. Ultimately, David made amends with the individual he got into a fight with and held himself accountable for his actions. He understood that he had earned something because he was a member of the community – admission to this community is not just automatic, as can be seen from David's statement that had this fight occurred on the first, second, or third day of the program he would not have been granted such clemency. However, because David had put the time in and engaged in the rituals and acts necessary to be considered a part of the community, he was treated with what he considers to be respect. And those membership rituals and acts are not very complex – as any of the students will tell you all you need to do is show up, engage with the curriculum, and have a positive attitude to be accepted by the team and be shown the care that is part of that acceptance. David learned from his actions, which allowed him continued membership.

Mike Jones expressed this as well. However, the story that Mike shared with me demonstrates that even though you have the space to make mistakes at Café Reconcile, sometimes just the knowing of that impacts how you act and avoid those mistakes. Mike's story tells of new patterns learned because of the curriculum of care we see at Café Reconcile:

But when I thought about it, and actually, that – that's when I really started to become humble. And you know, looking at things as a learning experience and not as a- as uhh, as a punishment.... (personal communication, March 1, 2016)

Here, Mike has made the transition from reacting to his actions to showing proactivity in acting. Here, Mike is sharing with me that he has learned something from his time at Café Reconcile, that he has created new patterns of being for himself as a result of being in a community of care and from engaging in the curriculum.

He went to share with me the impact membership in this community ultimately had on him:

Cause I feel like I became, uh, a part of Café Reconcile. Café Reconcile became a part of me. Because it changed me so much, you know, for the better, and now I noticed that change, that uh, you know, just, you know sometimes you changed and you won't notice it until, uh, later or someone bring it up upon you. I actually notice the change now as its happening, so I – I – know that Café Reconcile is like a said, a part of, oh yeah, café reconcile is a part of me now. (personal communication, March 1, 2016)

For me, this was a beautiful thing to hear.

Jacarlus Cook experienced confidence in his ability to learn as well:

Umm, you get to be yourself. And you can't get in trouble for being yourself. Because, like, they had this and they have rules, but at the same time they want you to feel comfortable, feel... like, if you like, if you see if you really like doing – doing it.

(personal communication, April 29, 2016)

The curriculum of care at Café Reconcile recognizes individuality and works with students to feel alright with being who they are. Students will not be in trouble for being themselves, nor will they be penalized for it.

Jahwonn Smith said, “that’s really it because everybody downstairs they see you messing up or slacking, they gonna support you” (personal communication, May 2, 2016). This mentality

of supporting you even if you make mistakes is extended to the small as well as the big. Motivation is impacted by how you are treated by those around you, especially teachers and instructors. What I witnessed at Café Reconcile, and what the students reported in their interviews, is that while the instructors at Café Reconcile didn't let you get away with a lot, they provided the scaffolding to engage students in the work at the school. Small cues were given regularly to students on how to be involved in the content of the curriculum. I heard a lot during my time upstairs instructors reminding students to pay attention, to engage in class, to respond to what was happening. The cues that were given weren't recriminatory or always in response to a student not exhibiting the behavior described above. In addition to the gentle reminding that students may need for not paying attention, these cues were given to provide students with instruction on how to engage not just in the absence of said actions, but primarily in the absence of knowing how to be active learners.

Conclusion: You Get What You Put Into It

After hearing the stories of the students at Café Reconcile, I understand better what it means to let meaning emerge from narrative inquiry. I also understand better what it means to learn in the unique space that is the “upstairs and downstairs” of Café Reconcile. Learning is indeed based on connection to community; however, it is less about the external community of New Orleans or the individual family/friend circles of the students (as I expected), and more about the shared community created in the classroom and kitchen of Café Reconcile. The unique shape of learning that occurs in Café Reconcile is inspired by care from that community in order to form an experience that intrinsically motivates students to, in their words, better their lives. Overwhelmingly, at the end of each interview when asked about their last thoughts on Café

Reconcile, the students talked about the importance of putting into the program – that what you get out of the experience is directly related to what you put into it.

Brian Smith: If anybody else try to come here, you make the most out of it, you know. If you don't, you're going to wish you did. That's all I gotta say. I'm done. (personal communication, March 7, 2016)

Shanice Lewis: Like, I think that's amazing and everything. But I- I love the program. I'd recommend it to anybody – who's serious, cause you know, you have people that's not serious." ... "Café Reconcile is a life changing program. It's good for troubled youth, I could say troubled adolescents, young adults. I feel like it really helps you, you know? Especially if you really have something on your background that's like, that really make it hard for you to get a job, and everything. I fell like, you're coming here and doing the program, I feel like it will probably make it a little bit more easy for you to get a job, you know, like, but you gotta be dedicated. You can't just come here and sit in class and like ok, I'm just sitting in class..... Like you gotta be dedicated, you gotta be dedicated to completing the program, and you gotta be dedicated to basically turning your life around, changing things, you know? (personal communication, May 3, 2016)

Ashante Brown: Because, like, they aint given up – they don't give up on you. Knowing certain people, they be like, oh – I don't want to do this or they have stank attitudes, but they tends to still let you come and get through it with it, so I just grateful – and everybody else should be grateful that they have people out here that is willing to help young folks like me. (personal communication, March 8, 2016)

David Griffin: But, you know, its like I said, man, some people don't have Café reconcile life and people want that life, know what I mean. If you want that life, come get this like,

you know. Stop playing around and just, you know, come – come to café reconcile and do what you got to do. Come here and do what you got to do, know what I mean? You know, pay attention when they talking, don't talk over them, you know, do what you got to do. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Warnell Kelly: It depend if you make it hard. But its easy... [I asked how people make it hard on themselves] They don't want to put their phone up they don't want to lock up their stuff/walk up the stairs?. They don't want to, you know? They don't want to participate. (personal communication, May 2, 2016)

Jasmine Williams: There's-there's nothing hard, nothing hard about the program. I mean, as long as I'm showing up and doing my part, there ain't nothing hard. (personal communication, April 28, 2016)

Through the curriculum, the students begin to understand that they can better their lives through the relationships they form, through the life skills that they gain in the classroom, and by trying new things.

In the next chapter, I will talk about the areas that this research was limited and how my research agenda can be expanded. But most importantly, I will engage in a conversation of the impact of my study and what recommendations emerge from it that can be applied to today's classroom and teacher education programs.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

For man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion.

William Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing, (Act V, scene iv)

Thus ends one of my favorite Shakespearean plays, *Much Ado About Nothing*. In the play, Benedick is referring to himself and his newfound ability to love while at the same time poking fun at himself for his hypocrisy and change of stance from declared bachelor to committed lover. He is marveling over his own transformation and in Benedick's words we hear one of the Bard's most enduring declarations about human nature – it is inconstant, it is fallible, it has an enormous capacity for growth and learning. Indeed, man is a giddy thing and if you consider the meaning of the word – causing disorientation, feeling excited to the point of confusion – that fits in well with Shakespeare's vision of learning: one must be transformed by the world, even if it is just by a little. I believe, to my core, that Shakespeare wrote about complex learning systems and transformational learning. He explored timeless themes of the human condition that still resonate today with how we experience the world, after all these centuries and paradigms of thought. He explored these themes through narratives and the stories of his characters as they navigate his fictional worlds. For that reason, I have chosen Shakespeare to start off every chapter of my dissertation.

Shakespeare, Café Reconcile, and Looking Towards New Patterns of Being

I believe Shakespeare was a complexivist and through his writing emerges a vision of learning that I feel reflects the themes and ideas I have been writing about myself in this dissertation. It is my belief that my experience in Café Reconcile and the possibility inherent in what we can learn from the narratives of the students in that program can also be understood through exploring the possibility of evolving characters within the complex learning systems that constitute Shakespeare's comedic settings. In this conclusion, I am going to talk about the

implications of my research and findings through an exploration of the limitations and possibilities of my study, the future research that can be done, and my recommendations for the future. However, I am going to do this by first discussing Shakespeare's world and then discussing our world.

Shakespeare's Complex Learning Systems

The learning occurring within Shakespeare's worlds is emergent, contextual, and occurs at points of instability. I believe William Shakespeare was a complexivist and that in his body of work a vision of learning surfaces that is adaptive, filled with transformative agents, and exhibits self-organized growth. In his plays, Shakespeare creates dynamic places filled with nested systems where the boundaries around structure and order are flexible and transparent, and growth is measured in how characters navigate their world and relationships through language. It is in these spaces where complexity emerges. Johnson (2001) suggests that the behavior between agents in a complex system is characterized by "multiple agents dynamically interacting in multiple ways, following local rules and oblivious to any higher level instructions" (p. 19). If you trace the arc of Shakespeare's character development, you see his characters reacting to their environments and each other in just this way. Whether they are running around in the middle of the night in a forest or trying to navigate the political machinations of the English royal court, Shakespeare's characters are responding to their immediate environment when trying to resolve their issues of the heart, family, or duty. Ultimately, order springs from the madness of their activity as Shakespeare brings his characters to higher levels of understanding and existence.

Shakespeare's pattern of growth can be seen in the way Shakespeare's characters evolve from two dimensional elements who simply respond to stimuli into three dimensional agents who exhibit depth and growth in their development. I believe this is because Shakespeare and

his plays adapted to the dynamic times he was living in. These elements make up what I believe to be Shakespeare's philosophy of learning: characters who lose themselves in the chaos of their lives in order to emerge from their experiences with more flexible boundaries and understandings of who they are and where they fit into their worlds. In short, characters who are giddy.

Seeing Shakespeare in My Research

Throughout this dissertation, I have quoted Shakespeare to demonstrate not just that the worlds of Shakespeare reflect the ideas and tenets of complex learning systems, but also to demonstrate how the timelessness of the various themes he explores in his plays are relevant to my research and to themes I am exploring today. Life, food, stories, learning – these are conditions of everyday living that humans grapple with, enjoy, and cry over. These have not changed in hundreds of years. In Chapter One, I quote *Romeo and Juliet* and the very important message of sensing someone's worth and naming that for the experiences that make up the horizon of one's life. Succeed or fail, in order to live life, one must try at life – one must act and try new things, which is what the quote from *Hamlet* that starts off Chapter Two is about. *Romeo and Juliet* starts off Chapter Three with a statement about the primary role of food as a means to bring community and family together. Chapter Four delves into the intricacies of food and food traditions by taking a look at some of the more exotic tastes that people have, as demonstrated by the witches in *MacBeth*. Why we tell stories, the meaning those stories hold for people, and how they chronicle life experiences, is what the quote from *As You Like It* – a play where people write their love for each other on trees – is about and is the focus of Chapter Five.

For Chapter Six, the *Othello* quote was not the original start I had for that movement of my dissertation. In fact, the original quote was another gem from *Hamlet* and my focus was

going to be on how important it is to keep an open mind when it comes to learning. See below for my original start to Chapter Six:

*There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio,
than are dreamt of in your philosophy*

William Shakespeare, Hamlet (Act 1, scene v), lines 165-166

With these words, Hamlet suggests that Horatio's adherence to humanism – and thus his inability to imagine a world beyond that which Horatio can rationally touch or feel – is limiting his ability to look beyond what he knows and holds to be true. Now, Horatio has just seen a ghost (the ghost of Hamlet's father, the former king) and undoubtedly he is finding it difficult to reconcile what his worldview has told him to be true (there is no world beyond the rational one he can touch and feel) with the evidence suggesting otherwise that is being presented to him in that moment (he is seeing a ghost!). The moment, for Horatio, is highly uncomfortable. His ontological center is being challenged and to acknowledge what his philosophical training has called him to do – believe what he can witness – ultimately goes against everything he has been raised to believe regarding the metaphysical world. Horatio is experiencing a moment of discomfort in which the patterns of his life are being challenged. In essence, Horatio is going through a learning moment.

I then went on with some of my original prose which is in Chapter Six, which was to talk about my own transformation as a result of being a part of Café Reconcile and hearing the stories of the students going through the program. I opted to go with the quote from *Othello* because as much as the research is important to me, the research itself is ultimately not about only me. I was not going to co-opt the narratives of the students by making their experience about me. I have six

other chapters in this dissertation that are about me and my views/ideas – Chapter Six is about the students at Café Reconcile, and the quote from *Othello* is my telling of their tale, unvarnished and – after five previous chapters that you’ve all had to read, delivered with your patience as we near the end.

Limitations of My Study

Which is now where we find ourselves – at the end of this dissertation but certainly not at the close of my research. It is here that I want to move away from Shakespeare for the moment and turn back to my research at Café Reconcile. The overall conclusions I drew from the narratives of the students in the program were that learning, for them, took place in a community of care. Intrinsic motivation to persist in the program emerged from a desire to better oneself for themselves and their families, where the pathway for that was found in learning the life skills needed to keep and succeed in a job. The relationships the students had with each other and the program cultivated the ways in which the students engaged with the material and participated in the program.

I only interviewed students who were persisting in the program, which is one of the limitations I see in my research. I didn’t start interviewing students until after they had already gone through four weeks of the program upstairs and just began the downstairs portion of the curriculum. By that point, they had already gained membership in the community – made friends who motivated them to come learn, formed relationships with their teachers which helped in their persistence. Brian Smith talks about how relationships with his peers motivated him to persist in the following way:

I done came here just looking for a job but like the first thing, well I came looking for a

job, but when I start, like, progressing like that first week? I just start making new friends, you hear me? And, umm, that just made me want to come every day, like, yeah, it was fun. You know? I just came here every day. (personal communication, March 7, 2016)

And Ashante Brown talked about the relationships she made with the upstairs instructors kept her going through the program:

Like, as far as like the teachers – I mean, I say teachers. As far as, um, Miss G and Miss Kathy and all the others, that's like a big support because they see us and they be like, I knew you could make it. Or I see better in you. Or we down and they like, you got this, pick yourself back up. So they really a big support cause we woulda been stopped coming if that was the case, if they didn't push us hard enough, we woulda just stopped.

(personal communication, March 8, 2016)

At the point that I started the interviews for my study, the students that I met with already had certain experiences and had gained “admittance” into the Café Reconcile community. What might the narratives looked like if I interviewed them earlier?

I feel as if a different way to approach the timing of my study would be to do a pre/post style study and interview students during the first week, the fifth week, and then the eighth week to measure the impact of the program and possible change in attitudes. Furthermore, I would like to try again to do group interviews, now that I know better the nature of the program and student attendance. Given the relationship I now have with the instructors and administrators at Café Reconcile, there may be space to do group interviews while students are still upstairs in the classroom.

In the future, I would like to expand my research agenda to include interviewing the students after they graduate and while they are in jobs. I'd like to see how they are faring in the

space that the program prepared them for and determine the long-term impact of the life-skills portion of the curriculum on their ability to not just keep a position, but their happiness in the position and their perception of if they indeed feel as if they have “bettered” themselves as they originally articulated to me. On that note, I think interviewing the alumni of Café Reconcile would also add dimensions to the study in terms of learning about the impact of the program and to further explore the curriculum being founded on concepts of a care and Café Reconcile being a community of care.

Additional Avenues of Research

Beyond that, I would also like to do related studies at similar institutions in New Orleans like Liberty’s Kitchen and Café Hope. On one level, I’d like to see what the experience of students in those programs are like, what the communities are like, how the students feel about the curriculum. But on a macro level, I’d also like to explore how the different programs interact and form a larger community in New Orleans. Devine Lee shared with me during his interview the following perspective:

...like organizations, like, like, they in competition with each other. Like, they, they, they, like they this place, this place for example Café Reconcile and Liberty’s Kitchen doing the exact same thing. But this for example, I ain’t saying they doing this but Café Reconcile and Liberty’s Kitchen trying to fill their seats. So instead of them saying, ok Café Reconcile can better utilize your time because they got more resources to get you what you need, they going to be like, no come here, come here. Uh, you know, they ain’t going to point you in the direction until what’s going to get you. I think every organization instead of competing with each other should point children wherever you need to be. Like, they all need to work

together and be like, well, I don't have that resource, but this places do. But this place do.

(personal communication, March 14, 2016)

I'm curious how the different organizations communicate, what their relationships are like, what the competition, if any, looks like and if it impacts potential student recruitment. Café Reconcile seems to recruit students through word of mouth and depends heavily on that word passing between graduates and alumni of the program. Is this how it works with every program?

Moreover, is there any oversight over all of these programs? This is a question that is reflective of the larger education systems in New Orleans, where unless your institution is part of the private sector, public and charter schooling in New Orleans is largely unregulated and, in my opinion, to negative results. I do not necessarily believe there needs to be oversight or centralization of these programs, however I am very curious about the nature of the relationship between these curriculums and spaces, and what the long term impact is to the self-organization and sustainability to their success.

Finally, some of the administrators at Café Reconcile have talked about bringing the curriculum to different parts of the state outside of New Orleans. I am very curious, indeed, on the impact of establishing similar programs outside of an urban setting with a thriving restaurant scene.

Conclusion: Implications and New Directions

In 2013, Geneva Gay wrote that education and educating Louisianan students post-Hurricane Katrina, "is more about everyday issues and events that are normal occurrences in U.S. society and schools rather than the exotic, exceptional and spectacular. Katrina and its aftermath fall within the later categories" (p. 49). In this quote, we see the exotic gaze focusing on New Orleans as the tragedy of the storm brings the city to national attention. Gay (2013)

goes on to write about the transitory nature of support for students displaced by Katrina, starting with the overwhelming donations of a time and money that started pouring in and the number of communities that opened their doors and their schools to the children of the hurricane. However, this goodwill eventually ran its course as visitors to these communities struggled with the transition and the hosts themselves became fatigued by their own generosity.

I bring this up in light of my study to touch upon issues of privilege and what the impact of privilege is upon a curriculum like the one at Café Reconcile and the student experience in going through that program. The phenomenon that Gay talks about above is the fetishization of helping Katrina students out in the aftermath of the hurricane, a desire that objectifies the individuals going through the tragedy and an inclination that is not lasting in perpetuity. It was not long before host cities and host schools, unprepared for the influx of students and the length of their visit, felt the strain of their goodwill. According to Gay (2013), goodwill can only go so far in supporting transition from cultural displacement: “Their good intentions needed to be accompanied by carefully designed programs and purposeful actions to accomplish more specified educational goals” (p. 51). Without what Gay (2013) calls corollary action, good intentions are merely enticing rhetoric.

Furthermore, the storm itself brought the national gaze to New Orleans but not always with positive and sustainable effects – the gaze picks and chooses what it remains on and provides an interpretation for the world on what it sees. Privilege helps to direct and sustain that gaze. Gay talks about it in her article as it relates to the educational process marginalizing students and reifying inequities even in the face of good will. Gay (2013) asserts that, “Katrina did not reveal anything that we did not already know regarding the disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes for poor children of color and their middle class European

counterparts” (p. 51). When considered in a more universal scope, I turn to Michael Apple and his theories about schooling, community, and learning structures.

Apple (2004), on analyzing hegemony, suggests that there are 3 aspects of education that need to be considered: “the school as an institution, the knowledge forms, and the educator him or himself” (p. 3). This rises in significance for me as I consider Café Reconcile because the impact of that particular program on how we understand schooling in New Orleans and mainstream curriculum in general, is largely concerned with issues of community, knowledge, and teachers. Apple suggests that schools can function as purveyor of class (primarily class at the intersection of socio-economics and race) in the way that it not only communicates knowledge but also in how it conveys the value and production of technical knowledge. He suggests that schools exist to preserve “the hegemonic role of the intellectual” (2004, p. 59) with a liberal arts or science based education. By default, this statement suggests that the value of a vocational or technical knowledge is less than and a curriculum put into place to control underprivileged students through consciously or unconsciously teaching them their place in society through the parsing out of different knowledge types. In short, the message is that only privileged students are given skills critical to higher forms of thought while underprivileged students meet the need of an economy for laborers through learning a vocation.

Of course, Apple’s argument is incredibly complex, and for the sake of this chapter, I specifically want to focus on a small part of that argument – the grand narrative of privilege and its impact on curriculum. And community. It is true that the students who enter into the program at Café Reconcile are majority students of color who come from lower socio-economic classes. It is also true that a majority come through the program in an effort to learn vocational skills to enable them to be proficient and successful laborers. The issues of class that arise in the

nature of the curriculum – whether it be in the identities of the students themselves or the personality of the high class restaurants the program is partnered with to place students in for internships or positions after graduation – are reflective of the culture of New Orleans as a city in the South that is still enacting racial and cultural prejudices that have lived in this country for hundreds of years.

I assert that a conclusion of my research is that the program at Café Reconcile works because a community of care is created in this very open and welcoming space. This does not mean however, that the program is free from the grand narrative revealed clearly and strongly in the aftermath of the presidential election in our embittered and struggling present. Apple (2004) suggests that “control is exercised...through the forms of meaning the school distributes” (p. 61). I assert that the meaning a school distributes is closely tied to the community that the school operates within – in Café Reconcile’s case, the inner community of the school itself and the outer community of Central City, New Orleans, and Louisiana – a southern state. Along that line of thinking, Apple (2004) writes that community is “synonymous with the idea of homogeneity and cultural consensus” (p. 68). Basically, community simply reflects the values of those in power.

This truth, for me, is depressing. So I am hopeful that the community that I saw in Café Reconcile can play its part in disrupting that truth, even if only a little bit. I will do my part in acknowledging the power of this truth – like Delpit (1995), I will not give power to the status quo by not recognizing this particular culture of power. Privilege indeed allows us to place life skills education on a low rung in the hierarchy of knowledge. I myself did it when I went through that first lesson and was incredulous at where the Café Reconcile students were in their development. I also judged the students for the knowledge that they did – and did not – possess. I spoke of my educational snobbery in the preceding chapter and understand the influence that

my unconscious – and now conscious – judgment holds. It is this privilege that allows me to assess the knowledge forms that I have – and how my upbringing in well-resourced schools exposed me to that knowledge – as being higher than other forms of knowledge.

But the third component of Apple's analysis of hegemony, that of the educator, is the magic key here for me that saves me from hopelessness. When I reflect back on my education, I can honestly say that I never felt the type of connection with a teacher (aside from my mother and father, and even my sister and husband) that I witnessed and experienced in café Reconcile. Of course, that is my experience and certainly not attributable to every student in America. It is this truth, though, that injects movement into the frozen hegemony of education (de Certeau, 1984, 1988). I do believe it is possible to acknowledge alternative notions of community and that in considering the role of the teacher, we as educators can envision ways in which to disrupt the grand narrative that privileges mainstream education over vocational education.

Vocational education has been othered within the national curriculum for a very long time, in my opinion. It has impacted how we differentiate education and curriculum and how we view those in need of life skills education. Because that view is negative – the national gaze in that respect has not been kind - I am hopeful that one way we can work to re-shape the intensity of that gaze is through how we work with our teachers and their preparation to enter the classroom. I observed the relationships that the students at Café Reconcile had with their instructors and mentors to be central to their success in the program. As I've discussed and demonstrated in the interviews with the students, it is with the support and belief of their teachers that students find their pathway towards intrinsic motivation to succeed in the program. If the focus of those relationships is on care, then what drives the educational experience is something more than just content.

Delpit (1991), when asked about how she would center efforts on transforming education, talks about how “rather than policymakers, I’d like to focus on teacher education because that is what I believe is the key in getting us to the point where we can get teachers to who are able to respond to the differences they have in their classrooms” (p. 546). If the purpose of school is to communicate knowledge, and the hidden curriculum is to reify existing power structures, then teachers could exist as a way to disrupt the hidden curriculum. The shape of learning that I witnessed in Café Reconcile was not perfect but it existed within a paradigm of being that values relationships and acknowledges the link between community, schooling, and knowledge. With teachers exhibiting, it may be possible to reshape what we expect of how our communities live together.

Overall, if I take a step back from this dissertation and think of the larger systems I find nested into this life changing endeavor, I find that what I witnessed at Café Reconcile is just one system within a larger nest of systems that make up a complex learning environment. This environment is dynamic, it goes through continual change – as a learning curriculum should – and it suggests that we need to creolize how we engage with the larger educational system as a whole. I do believe we are at a point of instability in our political and learning environments here in the United States, and that we may be poised at a point to make significant leap into a phase transition.

This transition would impact the shape of our learning by moving away from rigid rubrics and hierarchies of learning to create space for new ideas about how educate and how we teach. With schools so mired in universal curriculums measured by standardized tests, we could learn something from Café Reconcile’s “sandwich board curriculum” that promotes flexibility. I believe this flexibility creates a porous learning experience with room for care to enter into the

system, and thus an opportunity for communities to come together in a space that is holistic and with the heart, mind, and soul working together towards educating our youth. I believe we are on the precipice of a new pattern and I hope that my research injects even a little chaotic energy into our current system to encourage and move it along to that next level of change.

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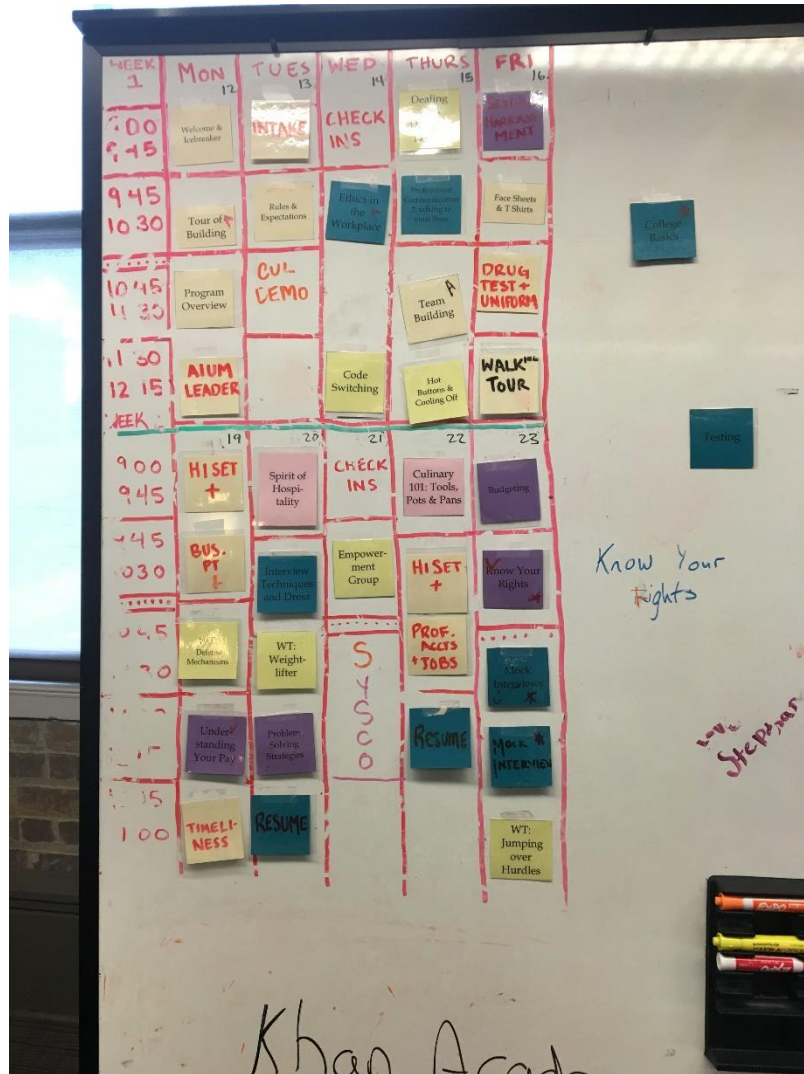
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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. Do you like living in New Orleans?
4. Did you graduate high school?
 - a. What were your experiences with high school like?
5. Are you doing the HiSet classes here?
 - a. How do you feel about HiSet?
6. How did you learn about Café Reconcile?
7. What made you decide to come to this program?
8. How would you describe your experience at Café Reconcile?
9. Do you like being here? Why?
10. Is being “upstairs” different from being downstairs? Can you explain how or why?
 - a. What’s hard about coming to Café Reconcile?
 - b. What is easy about coming here?
 - c. How did you come to be at Café Reconcile?
 - d. What obstacles did you face on your journey?
 - e. What support systems do you have while you are here?
 - f. What do you find most challenging for yourself being in this environment?
 - g. What aspect of Café Reconcile are you most passionate?
11. Can you tell me about a meaningful learning experience for you?
12. What does community mean to you?
 - a. How would you describe community?
 - b. What values does your community hold?
 - c. How do you feel about New Orleans?
 - d. How do you feel about Central City?
 - e. How do you feel about other people’s ideas or perceptions about Central City and New Orleans?
13. What do you think of when you think of home?
14. What taste represents home to you?
15. What are you passionate about?
16. When/where do you feel most comfortable?

APPENDIX B

CAFÉ RECONCILE CURRICULUM BOARD



Weeks 1 and 2

WEEK 3	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
9:00-9:45	HiSET CL	Selling the Menu	CHECK INS	knife Handling 1	Service Learning * AO
9:45-10:30	HiSET + CONFER LETTERS	Banking & Financial Tools		HiSET Paz	Service Learning * O
BREAK					
10:45-11:30	WT: Can You See Over the Wall?	ONLINE INTERVIEW	ServSafe 2	HiSET O	WT: Reality Ride
11:30-12:15	Volleyball	ONLINE INTERVIEW	Empowerment Group	cater. ing	WT: Plugged In V
LUNCH					
1:00-1:45		FOCUS GROUP			

Week 3

WEEK 4	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
9:00 - 9:45	HI SET	CULINARY DEMO	CHECK INS	Basic Cooking Methods	Orientation to the Cafe
9:45 - 10:30	HI SET	ServSafe 1		HI SET	Know Your Rights
BREAK					
10:45 - 11:30	WT: Crabs in a Pot		Lunch in Cafe		How to Leave a Job
11:30 - 12:15	Ruth Fertel 1 1/2	WT: Labels		ServSafe Test	DEBRIEF
LUNCH					
1:00 - 1:45		DEAR YOUR FUTURE SELF	Empowerment Group	WT: Maze	Issue Uniforms

Steps of Service

Floor clean up

Alyson T.B.D.

Office DEPOT

H S T M
BANKE

Week 4

APPENDIX C

CRABS IN A POT WORKSHEET

Climbing Out

2 What is the "POT" that you are in?

•

3 When I get in Trouble (or in the pot) Am I keeping others in, or myself? How?

•

•

6 What are the reasons for staying "IN" the pot?

•

•

•

7 What will my future be like if I don't get out?

•

•

•

8 What are the reasons for getting out of the "POT"?

•

•

•

4 Explain The Overall Concept

5 How do Friends (others) effect me in both Positive ways and Negative ways?

•

9 Who wants to see "Me" climb out? Why?

•

•

9 What will my future be like when I climb out?

•

•

•

10 What are the tools I can use to get out?

•

•

•

Warning: If you try to get out you will be Attacked! . . . Why?

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APPENDIX D

MY HOT BUTTONS WORKSHEET

My Hot Buttons

Everybody has hot buttons. Hot buttons are things that set you off. Some examples of hot buttons could be money, when someone disrespects you, or when someone doesn't listen to you. We may have similar hot buttons or very different ones. We all need to (1) identify our hot buttons, (2) ways people can push them, and (3) appropriate ways to respond when pushed.

HOT BUTTON (Red, Yellow, or Blue)	WAYS PEOPLE PUSH THAT HOT BUTTON	APPROPRIATE WAY OF RESPONDING

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT

Consent Form

Project Title:

Coming to the Table: Exploring the Narrative of Café Reconcile and Learning in the Kitchen

Performance Site:

Café Reconcile, 1631 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd, New Orleans, LA 70113

Investigator:

The following investigator is available for questions about this study, M-F, 8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m. Danielle Klein, 310-871-4947. Roland Mitchell, PhD, is also an investigator; however, all inquiries need to go through Danielle Klein.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to conduct one-on-one and group interviews with students at Café Reconcile about their learning experiences at the school.

Subjects:

Students currently enrolled/teaching at Café Reconcile.

Number of Subjects:

10 subjects.

Study Procedures:

The interviews will be conducted in 3 stages. The first stage of interviews will be one-on-one and held at Café Reconcile. The second stage will be a group interview that occurs after an analysis of the individual interviews and will consist of questions formed as a result. The second stage of interviews will occur at Café Reconcile. The third stage will be another group interview where the researcher and subjects review the emergent narrative resulting from the first two stages of interviews.

Benefits:

Subjects will have an opportunity to share their stories of learning to help impact their experience at Café Reconcile. The feedback of the subjects can also impact Café Reconcile's curriculum. Subjects will also receive classroom assistance from the researcher when appropriate.

Risks/Discomfort:

The only risk is the inability to completely conceal participant identities. However, in the effort to protect the participants, pseudonyms will be used in place of names in addition to any information which blatantly discloses their identities.

Right to Refuse:

Subjects have the right to refuse participation in this study at any time, including withdrawal from the study.

Privacy:

Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225)578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers' obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

Subject Signature: _____ Date _____

Researcher Signature: _____ Date _____

APPENDIX F
IRB APPROVAL

ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

TO: Roland Mitchell
Education

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: December 16, 2015

RE: IRB# 3673

TITLE: Coming to the Table: Exploring the Narrative of Café Reconcile and Learning in the Kitchen

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review type: Full ☐ Expedited ☒ **Review date:** 11/30/2015

Risk Factor: Minimal ☒ Uncertain ☐ Greater Than Minimal ☐

Approved ☒ **Disapproved** ☐

Approval Date: 12/15/2015 **Approval Expiration Date:** 12/14/2016

Re-review frequency: (annual unless otherwise stated)

Number of subjects approved: 12

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable) _____

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc.**

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

APPENDIX G

IRB APPROVAL - CONTINUATION

ACTION ON PROTOCOL CONTINUATION REQUEST



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

TO: Roland Mitchell
Education

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: October 27, 2016

RE: IRB# 3673

TITLE: Coming to the Table: Exploring the Narrative of Café Reconcile and Learning in the Kitchen

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: Continuation

Review type: Full ☐ Expedited ☒ **Review date:** 10/26/2016

Risk Factor: Minimal ☒ Uncertain ☐ Greater Than Minimal ☐

Approved ☒ **Disapproved** ☐

Approval Date: 10/27/2016 **Approval Expiration Date:** 10/26/2017

Re-review frequency: (annual unless otherwise stated)

Number of subjects approved: 12

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –

Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: Make sure to use bcc when emailing more than one recipient.**

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

VITA

Danielle Klein, a native on New York, received her Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Buffalo in 1999. Wanting to teach literature in a post-secondary institution, she attended the University of Colorado, Boulder, where she received a Master of Arts in Literature. After deciding to become a high school English teacher, Danielle went back to New York and received a Master of Arts in English Education, along with secondary teacher certification, from Teachers College at Columbia University. She taught at the high school her father graduated from, and after 5 years in New York City, Danielle moved to New Orleans where she began to work in institutions of higher education. As her interest in this field grew, Danielle made the decision to pursue a doctorate in higher education and curriculum theory. She entered the graduate school in the College of Human Sciences and Education and will receive her Ph.D. in May 2017.