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Consumer Food Socialization in the School and Home

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Consumer Food Socialization in the School and Home

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration, with a Concentration in Marketing

by

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ABSTRACT

Consumer socialization literature has focused on individual socialization agents and their isolated effects. However, as John (1999) pointed out, children do not grow up in a social vacuum. Instead, the multitude of agents socializing children find their narratives interacting and their effects continually shaped and co-created. To understand how school-age children learn about food, I interrogate the complexity of socialization in three essays.

In the first essay, I take an ethnographic approach to investigate the interactive effect peers and adults, namely service workers, have on children's food socialization in a public-school lunchroom. By combining a Loseke's (2007) layered narrative model and the Hunt-Vitell model of marketing ethics (1986, 2006), I posit that value is co-created between consumers; organizations, including frontline service workers; as well as greater institutional and cultural narratives. Of note, frontline workers serve as cultural translators, aiding young consumers as they seek to understand cultural values and norms codified into feeding practices.

The second essay takes a structural approach to understand how organizations, in this case school districts, implement programs to promote greater justice. Using the Integrative Justice Model as a guide, deductive followed by axial coding is used to analyze school nutrition director's unique perspectives on implementing the National School Lunch Program. Leaning on market orchestration, the imposed system both orchestrates and obstructs distributive justice. Additionally, empowerment is shown to be action to promote justice, not a consequence of a just system. The expanded model is both prescriptive and descriptive, offering a structure organizations can follow to promote greater distributive justice as well as an example of practices that align with the different axiological pillars.

Finally, the third essay looks at parents and the home as a socialization agent and site of socialization. A national survey was collected to illuminate how parents and the home, as a multi-dimensional site of socialization, shapes children's relationships with food and subsequent food choices. Taken together, my dissertation offers researchers, educators, and policymakers a better understanding of the complexity of consumer food socialization and how both parents and organizations empower children and promote justice.

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DEDICATION

For my grandparents, my rocks. You left the physical world during this four-year journey, but you have continued by my side in memory. You are peace, and you are love. Now we are at the end, and I look forward to seeing where we go beyond.

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2010, President Barack Obama signed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act reinventing school nutrition programs and launching updated regulations for feeding in the school and beyond. The National School Lunch Program, funded through the USDA and reauthorized through the aforementioned act, serves to feed millions of children across the United States at a free or subsidized rate. However, while research has focused on these nutritional programs from a health perspective, I seek to build a structural understanding about how nutrition is learned in the school and home. Schools, peers, and parents help socialize children to become competent consumers in later life. And while consumer socialization and the child consumer have been studied in marketing since the 1960s and 1970s, little work has been done to bridge this body of literature with sociological and educational analyses. Additionally, I explore the complexity of the school nutrition program as a federally-subsidized program and how it operates within education systems as well as introduce front-line service workers, or street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010), to the conversation about socialization. In what follows, I explore different dimensions of consumer socialization through three essays: two focused on education and one on how parents contribute to children's learning.

The first essay takes a cultural approach to understanding the school lunchroom. A combined model of layered narratives explores how different groups of actors, or socialization agents, influence children's food learning and interact with each other. I address the question, "How do social environmental factors affect children's food consumption in the school lunchroom?" through an ethnographic approach.

As the dissertation somewhat serves as an intellectual exercise, the second essay analyzes a selection of interview data from essay one using a different research approach. Using the

Integrative Justice Model as a guide, I interrogate its current operationalization to offer a more widely applicable model that centers front-line service workers. This is done through the lens of market orchestration, a theory underutilized in the field of marketing. Additionally, I contextualize the model and offer insights into how distributive justice, which is based on norms and values that dictate what is right and wrong (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008), can be achieved. Thus, the updated model is both prescriptive and descriptive.

Finally, the third essay explores what John (1999) called the most important socialization agent, especially at a young age. Parents and the home environment they construct socialize children from birth. While interviews were planned to gain a deeper understanding of how parents affect their children's relationship with food, social distancing measures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic prevented in-person data collection. While data richness was sacrificed, essay three now reflects a nationally distributed survey featuring qualitative and quantitative responses about parents' goals for feeding in the home and surrounding spaces. While nutrition was the primary goal identified, motivations for the goal differed between fear-based and investment based.

This research is, simply put, at the intersection of marketing, education, public policy, public health, and sociology. The diversity of perspectives and literature incorporated offers a unique perspective on the sub-field of consumer socialization and moves science toward a veritable discussion within Habermas's public sphere.

ESSAY 1 - THE INTERACTIVE EFFECT OF ADULTS AND PEERS ON CHILDREN'S FOOD CONSUMPTION

“I knew I was different from all the other kids. I know that a lot of kids see themselves that way and they carry that all the way through their lives and they may think of themselves as less.” This quote by Senator Michael Padilla of New Mexico highlights how something as mundane as a public lunchroom can have a lasting effect on young consumers. In response to his personal experience as child, Senator Padilla brought a lunch shaming bill to the New Mexico Senate floor which was signed into law in April 2017 (Ryan, 2017). While policymakers and advocates are becoming increasingly interested in the implicit ways lunchrooms are shaping children, market research has lagged behind. Additionally, education literature fails to consider the effect these forces have on children's consumption practices and identities.

As one of the first instances where young consumers are faced with competing socializing forces, schools, especially the lunchroom, are able to shape consumer preferences that last into adulthood. Competing narratives from socialization agents, translating societal values into practice, guide everything from personal interactions to societal norms, create constraints on consumers' experiences. The tensions that arise from conflicting narratives leave consumers vulnerable, and, like Senator Padilla recalls, can have a lasting effect on their sense of self. In a pivotal time of development, early elementary school children's cognitive and affective abilities blossom guiding their consumption practices (McNeal, 2007). and have marked increase in consumer knowledge and skills starting around age seven (John, 1999). These ages coincide with early elementary education, where children begin learning the values and norms of society outside of parental influence (Halstead, 1996).

Much of the research in the school lunchroom has focused on the hierarchical difference created by subsidized programs providing children whose family are in a lower socioeconomic status discounted meal plans. However, since the introduction of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010, overt identification of program participants has been banned. While shaming still occurs, it has become institutionally diluted, shifting the responsibility of shaming to the service worker instead of children themselves. Instead of highlighting the impact of meal programs at individual level, this research examines the lunchroom as a site of consumption where socializing forces collide and multiple stakeholders have a vested interest in the success of the program (Halstead, 1996). This answers Ward's (1978) call for research that examines the cumulative effect of social environmental factors on a consumer's socialization.

By examining the effect of socialization agents from a sociological perspective, this manuscript explores how societal narratives are guided by cultural, institutional, organizational and personal goals, values and norms (Loseke, 2007, 2013) and how these goals can be conflicting, resulting in dissonance. The goal of this research is to understand the interactive effective of different agents and their narratives on children's food consumption. Specifically, it addresses the question: how do social environmental factors affect children's food consumption practices in and around the school lunchroom? The remainder of the paper reviews literature on consumer socialization from different agentic forces and interrogates competing narratives through in-depth interviews and ethnographic observation. It concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of this work for consumers, managers, and society as a whole.

Education and Its Effect on Young Consumers

Cultural narratives and institutional constraints are co-created through a social system in which consumers have to fight historic marketplace oppression through consumption practices

(Chase & Walker, 2012; Evans, 2018). Consumption, as a social phenomenon, is viewed by marketing scholars as a theory of practice that subsumes problems of individuals, social structures and discourses (Evans, 2018). It is an interdisciplinary endeavor seeking to reintroduce culture within consumption as a “reaction against the elitist and moralistic biases of critique, stressing instead the dynamic and creative potential of consumption and popular culture” (p. 6). As one of young consumers first experiences with social structures and cultural discourses, education systems teach children the values and norms of the culture (Halstead 1996). The codes of ethics that make up a given culture are shaped by different stakeholders who have vested interests in the future of society such as business owners, politicians, taxpayers, parents and local community members (Halstead, 1996). As action is shaped by these social norms (Goffman, 1963), dictated by the dominant group, the code is morphed to privilege some and disadvantage others. Disadvantaged or vulnerable consumers stifles individuals’ agency to reshape the structure of their social world. Through cultural codes, the social system shapes individuals’ view of society and themselves, affecting the personal narratives they construct about themselves.

While children are exposed to cultural narratives from birth, they lack cognitive and physical abilities to reflect on the self in an abstract way (John, 1999, 2008; Tatum, 1999). While schools continue to be socially segregated, education is meant to disrupt the cycle of segregation and inequality (Tatum, 1999). However, many times this is not the case. Reay (2006) remarks how even in the classroom, students can tell a difference in how their teacher addresses them based on their relative class compared to their peers. As children begin learning social codes in early elementary school, children become vulnerable based on their inherited social position. The cultural narrative that is learned through imposed value systems can lead to observable

differences in adulthood. Or as Shankar, Elliot and Fitchett (2009) explain, stories we are socialized into reflect our social position and have a profound impact on our ongoing narrative construction.

While the concept of identity is complex (Tatum, 1999), many environmental factors play a role in shaping children's personal narratives. Education as a social institution is charged with teaching children to function as adults and reflects the needs and goals of society (Moschis & Churchill, 1978). While Moschis and Churchill (1978) identified education as the weakest predictor of consumer skills, their investigation focused on explicit lessons in consumption practices. However, the influence of schools in socializing children to cultural narratives cannot be ignored. Just as Carlson and Grossbart (1988) found parents' attitudes, values, and goals have an effect on children's consumer knowledge, children are also socialized by a cumulative process as they are exposed to the consumer environment (Ward, 1974). As these agentic forces interact, they create a complex marketplace for consumers to construct their consumption practices. In a way, the classroom and school as a whole is a static reflection of the cultural narrative surrounding it. Teachers and professionals working in schools not only address teach students societal structure, but they also work to minimize inequalities and empower children to realize their potential (Demirbolat, 2012; Tatum, 1999).

Consumer Socialization and Vulnerable Consumption

Not only does it teach students the structure and discipline of everyday life, it helps socialize them to be competent consumers in the future. Consumer research began considering children's role in the consumption process in the 1960s and 1970s with James McNeal's (1969) "The Child Consumer" and Scott Ward's (1974, 1978) discussion of consumer socialization. While prior literature had focused on the influence children had on parents' consumption

behavior, this period marked a pivot to considering how children directly experience consumption and are socialized into consumption practices. These agentic forces are considered as independent from one another, and socialization theory has shied away from looking at the affect the interaction of different agents and narratives have on young consumers. Demirbolat (2012) highlights how, in schools, individual variables cannot be isolated and understanding the contexts that drive a consumers' personal narrative are key to understanding the consumer. At the most basic level, McNeal (2007) asserts that almost anything a child does can be related to consumption. Whether through verbal or nonverbal cues, children are communicating their wants and needs and learning how to have these satisfied through acquisition of goods and services (McNeal, 1992).

Just as Daniel Tatum (1999) identified that children absorb implicit cultural narratives through what is and is not said, children are also learning consumption behaviors from parents, other adults, and by the age of seven, their peers (McNeal, 1969). Carlson and Grossbart (1988) identify the role of parents in the socialization of children and the effect varying parental archetypes can have on the process. As John (1999) acknowledges in her review of consumer socialization research, students are learning scripts and prompts to consumption. Education, both in the classroom and interactions with other adults in the school context, can teach children the scripts the consume as they interact with different markets throughout the day.

In early childhood, specifically before the age of seven, children have limited information processing skills, resulting in creation of a single shopping script as children make decisions are made on salient features (John, 1999, 2008). They begin to weigh cost and benefits of additional search (John, 2008) and make the choice that provides the greatest reward, whether it be quantity or color (Baker & Gentry 1996; John, 1999; Wartella, Wackman, & Ward, 1978).

This anticipatory form of socialization not only allows children the ability to exercise their consumerist muscles, but it also helps children become acclimated to the attitudes and values necessary for exchange (Moschis & Churchill, 1978; Ward, 1974). This time coincides with early childhood education, where they are exposed to competing forces shaping their socialization.

As children enter second grade, consumption becomes more complex as children consider symbolic groups instead of purely concrete objects (John, 1999, 2008). The effect of peer groups and marketing efforts increase during this time, as children begin to think outside their own perspective and products begin to signal group identity (John, 1999). As other factors in the social environment become pertinent to the acquisition of goods and services, children rely heavily on social cues from adults and peers as well as previous experience to guide them in their decision-making process. At this time, children are disproportionately susceptible to advertising (Moore, 2004), resulting in unhealthy purchasing behavior becoming ingrained into adulthood.

A Note on Consumer Shaming

Stories of lunch shaming have filled popular press in recent years (Ryan, 2017). As institutional and organizational leaders are making moves to prevent this, policymakers are doing little to understand how competing narratives are shaping their socialization processes. As Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) observed in their study of segregation of Black Milwaukee, consumers “rearticulate market relations back into social relations” in such a way that their market experiences shape their social position and subsequent consumption practices (p. 525). Social positions are shaped by many things including “objective characteristics, how people experience society, the way they perceive their position in comparison with others, and what they imagine their position in the future” (Lindemann, 2007, p. 54). More than stigma and structural

disadvantage, social position can be self-reflexive and shape individuals personal narratives (Chase & Walker, 2012; Lindemann, 2007; Loseke, 2007).

Theoretical Development

While young consumers are interacting with a variety of socialization agents, they are running being exposed to codified cultural narratives in the form of imposed structure, expectations and norms. In 2007, Loseke created a model representing the multi-layered nature of narratives. Since that time, sociological literature has looked at how individuals use cultural, institutional and organizational narratives to shape their personal identity.

In marketing, Hunt and Vitell (1986) introduced a similar their marketing ethics model almost two decades earlier to highlight the many constraints a social system have on personal experiences. While the authors argue the model is a “general theory of ethical decision making” (Hunt & Vitell, 2006, p. 144), the Hunt-Vitell Theory of Marketing Ethics can be extended as a theory of societal complexity. As originally conceptualized, the Hunt-Vitell model supposes that constraints from organizations, institutions and cultures influence personal experiences (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). In their updated model, the authors add professional environment as a constraint on the system as different organizations and institutions have different professional codes of ethics for how to regard business (2006). While it has predominantly lived in the sub-discipline of business ethics, this model can help us discern the interaction effect competing narratives can have on consumers.

By combining the Hunt-Vitell model of marketing ethics (1986, 2006) and Loseke’s (2007) model of societal narratives in a market system context, we can understand how these narratives shape individual identities and how understanding the tensions within the structure can be transformative for consumers and organizations alike. Both models highlight how norms and

codes that shape each environment. Loseke's (2007) sociological model can further help us understand the dialogical nature of relationships as different narratives shape the different groups they interact with. The full model can be seen in figure 1.

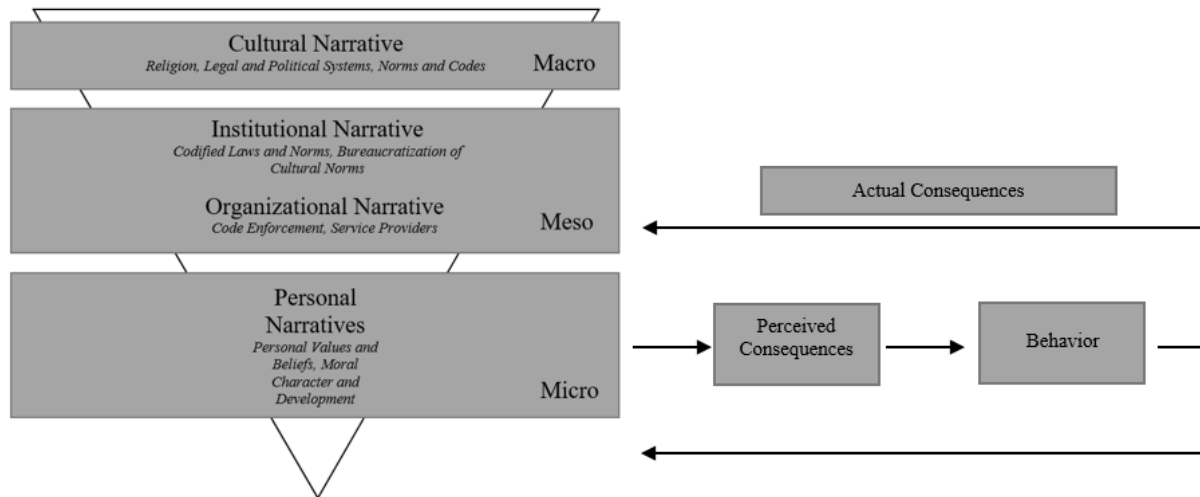


Figure 1. Model of Layered Narratives

These narratives can take many forms. Within marketing, the cultural narrative appears in public policy and public discourse. As legislators and administrators determine how to best manage programs, they are shaping how society perceives both services and consumers. The industry, or institutional level, is guided by institutional codes and norms that dictate how programs are executed. They are the gatekeepers that bridge programs creators and implementors. Industries also provide a map of what execution looks like. Organizations, on the other hand, actively implement these programs and interact directly with consumers. They translate institutional values and priorities into actionable programs meant to shape consumer experiences. Finally, the personal narratives constitute the realities individuals construct to define their identity.

As children are socialized into and navigate the marketplace, they are learning attitudes, values and norms (John, 1999). Concurrently, these young consumers are learning about

themselves and their position within a larger society through interactions with socialization agents like parents, teachers, peers, etc. In-depth interviews with organizational leaders and ethnographic observation in a school lunchroom, along with a field experiment testing marketing's direct effect on consumption, is used to better understand how these narratives interact and shape children's food consumption practices.

Methodology

An ethnography was conducted of a social program implemented across the United States. As Arnould (1998, p.86) articulates, ethnography explores “structural patterns of action that are cultural and/or social rather than merely cognitive, behavioral or affective.”

Ethnographic methods allow researchers to “unravel layered meanings that marketing activities hold for the customer,” and, from a consumer socialization perspective, allow us to understand the underlying structures and narratives that construct children's realities as they relate to food (Goulding, 2005, p. 299). The specific context of inquiry is the school lunch program, which is embedded in the larger educational and federal program context as it must meet federal requirements to receive financial support, navigate limited budgets and federal commodities to meet their organizational goal of feeding children nutritious meals. Because the purpose of this study is to understand the interaction between different agentic forces, ethnographic inquiry is appropriate as it allows for rich description from multiple perspectives.

Observations and interviews were collected of public school meal programs throughout the Midwest, Southwestern and Southeastern states in the United States. An estimated 56.6 million children attended school in the fall of 2018 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018), with 50.6 million attending public schools. Of eligible school-aged children, an estimated 29.7 million students participated in the school's lunch program during the 2018-2019 school

year, with over 74% of those receiving additional federal assistance (Food and Nutrition Services, 2019). Using convenience and snowball sampling, I conducted interviews across four states. School district size ranged from under 2000 students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade to 215,000 students (see Table 1 below). Fieldwork was conducted in a lower elementary lunchroom for breakfast and lunch service on both sides of the meal service line. Observation occurred across two meal cycles to reduce over-generalization based on particular events. A special event was also observed to understand how the school lunchroom context changes with the presence of another frequently studied socialization agent, namely parents.

Table 1. Participants

Participant (pseudonym)	Region	Role – Approx. Enrollment (if applicable)
Leah	Southwest	District Director – 215,000 students
Molly	Southeast	District Director – 2500 students
Aaron	Southeast	District Director – 4500 students
Camryn	Southeast	District Director – 10,000 students
Carol	Midwest	District Director – 2300 students
Nancy	Southeast	District Director – 23,000 students
Debbie	Southeast	District Director – 1900 students
Sarah	Southwest	Regional Farm to School Lead

Data is collected across multiple organizations and institutions to increase generalizability and impact of the findings (Loseke, 2013). Consistent with emergent ethnographic research, analysis was ongoing and reflective (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1988). While Goulding (2005) suggests data is analyzed through content analysis, a grounded theory approach was taken to allow themes to emerge dialectically from the data and literature. By posing a general research question, as is used in contemporary grounded theory, it allows us to explore “previously unrecognized facilitators or implications of a construct,” in this case, the interaction between different socialization agents on children’s food consumption (Fischer & Otnes, 2006, p. 22). Interviews were transcribed using Trint software and then coded along with

field notes based on codes that have emerged from extant literature in transformative consumer research, nutrition education and the theories explicated above (Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Loseke, 2007). Findings are clustered around common themes across interviews and observations, and detailed in the section that follows.

Findings

Based on in-depth interviews and ethnographic observation, the following themes emerged from the data, highlighting implications for consumers and managers to address how social environmental factors affect children's food consumption practices in and around the school lunchroom.

Schools Reinforcing Family and Societal Narratives with Consumers

When children enter the lunchroom, they come with product preferences learned from parents and regional tastes. Product offerings in a school, then, can systematically reinforce the norms previously learned. In a southwest district that is over 60% Hispanic, this takes the form of local favorites. However, doing so within the regulations can be difficult. Leah, the nutrition director who manages the district, reflected, "They have to meet regulations that are so particular. We have burgers, and I just reformulate it for child nutrition. There are typical meats that they find, you know ethnically Tex Mex food. But, you know, this regionally is Tex Mex food, a lot of Hispanic foods, lots of rice, lots of beans. They love salad, tacos, burritos, and those things that the kids like." By satisfying regional tastes, organizations are reinforcing norms instilled through cultural narratives.

This effect goes beyond regional tastes as well. Molly, a nutrition director of a small district in the Southeast, commented on the struggle to balance federal nutrition guidelines and match children's tastes. When discussing meal cycles, they comment, "We're trying to look at

things they are eating at home and offer that for them here...it all goes back to the parents in the home. So kids mimic at school what's happening at home. If their parents are eating out three meals a day, they're going to want takeout or fast food or whatever. So next year we're really looking at some different products that look more like some local fast food restaurants." Children learn to consume by mimicking their parents and peers, and, when making consumption decisions, stick to what aligns with their understanding of food. To meet nutritional guidelines and increase consumption, schools are working to mimic the marketplace of the industries children are most familiar with, though in a healthier form. By doing so, schools are reinforcing cultural and institutional narratives guiding food consumption while trying to shape children's preferences toward healthier versions of known products.

School Narratives in Tension with Family and Societal Narratives

While teachers and schools can reinforce other agents' effect, there can also be tension. As children are learning to express product preferences, it can come into contrast with the goals of the school. Increasing consumption of healthy food is not always appealing to children. Because of a reliance on salient characteristics, children choose not to eat certain products, such as stewed sweet potatoes because "it looks gross" (2nd grader, field notes, 2/26/2019). As they begin comparing experiences to previous encounters with products, they choose to forego products they would usually like because "my dad makes the best collard greens" (3rd grader, field notes, 3/8/2019), and the offering at the school is not up to the child's experiences with what they learned are "good" collard greens from their parents.

Additionally, the effect of peers can obscure the effect school programs have on children. In observation, when a school taste tested a new product, children gave an overwhelming positive response. However, when that same product is added to the menu, many times it ends up

in the garbage. Reflecting on this phenomenon, one custodian notes, “they throw most of it away. They don’t like the food, they like the chance to get up, talk to their friends and do something different” (field notes, 2/26/2019). The peer effect can also be seen in when children choose to bring food from home or purchase it from the lunchroom. Two 4th grade students consistently brought their lunches. When questioned, they explained they didn’t like the school offerings and would rather have snacks from home such as Cheetos, cookies, etc. (field notes, 11/16/2018). However, when the students were separated, one of them began eating the school-offered lunch almost daily. When asked why, they commented the food looked good and their friends were eating it (field notes, 12/7/2018). The student changed her preferences based on the peers they surrounded themselves with, not a change in the lunchroom protocol.

Organizations as Cultural Translators

As managers work to provide nutritious food to students, they do so by emphasizing different parts of their business relationship with institutions. Organizations emphasize different programs within the school lunchroom to increase access to food. Several district nutrition directors describe the struggle to provide food that is appealing while reducing food waste. While trying to meet student taste and incorporate federal subsidies, many times schools must decide one or the other.

Aaron, a district nutrition director who has worked at schools around the region, noted the instability of children’s taste and the challenge of meeting those tastes as well as expectations. While a small district, managing inventory is challenging on both ends of the spectrum. “Green eggs and ham. We got that too for Dr. Seuss week. I didn’t know the first year I was here. I didn’t stock up on green food coloring. It’s really hard to get green food coloring when it’s not Easter. I think we watered it down a little bit just to make it go a little farther.

We've been ahead of it since then." At the same time, student tastes can be fickle. During one Dr. Seuss Week, students ordered green eggs and ham and threw most of it away (field notes, 2/28/2019). When asked why, students said it "looked gross" or "yucky" and didn't look like eggs. While trying to meet students' expressed needs and wants, it can lead to increased waste. This problem was compounded as children began comparing their meals to their friends' meals. As one student expressed displeasure about the meal, others began to follow suit and pushed their green eggs aside (field notes, 2/28/2019).

Another goal of managers and the USDA, which provides oversight and guidelines for these programs, is to increase local product sourcing. The Farm to School program is a network of farmers, producers and school districts working to introduce local products to children. Each regional USDA office has an appointed Farm to School liaison that works with districts and states to promote robust food systems. Sarah, a regional director, describes her job and the variety of stakeholders she works with. "I work across three big buckets of work. We also have a grant program. We work directly with state agencies so I work a lot with the departments of ed[ucation], of ag[riculture], human services when it's relevant in our states. I work directly with grassroot stakeholders as well so any given day I could be talked to a farmer or a school district or nonprofit." With the combination of regional and state support, the responsibility for implementing these programs falls upon the school district. Support organizations provide training and educational materials, but lack the financial acuity to launch new programs state-, even district-, wide. Schools are relying on district nutrition directors to provide direction on incorporating nutrition education into the classroom. Aaron spoke about going into classrooms every semester and talking to middle school students. Camryn, a nutrition director for a mid-size district in the Southeast, spoke about working with the state's Food Corps, a branch of the

federal AmeriCorps service program, to start school gardens on campus. This education moves beyond understanding the importance of nutrition and focuses on farm to plate menus. Local ingredients, whether sourced from farmers or from the school garden, are incorporated into daily menus and marked with special signage. For example, mixed greens grown in the third grade students' garden was included on the salad bar (field notes, 12/7/2018). Students commented about how the lettuce had more flavor than the regular iceberg lettuce and mixed greens they had eaten at school or at home. By introducing students to the fresh fruits and vegetables, managers are shaping future consumption practices to incorporate more local ingredients.

Finding a way to translate institutional values to the consumer, such as the sense of food and community, is one role a district's nutrition director may take. Camryn excitedly shared how she has slowly incorporated local products into her district. "So we serve local foods every week of the school year even through the winter and we've been able to get to that place very slowly over the last eleven years," she said. "It's definitely a process. Just the product mix that we have. Most of it comes directly from the grower. They back up their pickup truck to our warehouse here and we have them out and label everything that's going to specific schools. So that took some coordination and tweaking but you know everybody is happy." While this may take increased logistics, the benefit of local produce, at least to some managers, outweighs the extra work involved.

Increasing Organizational Efficiency

While students tastes may change, the rules do not. Many districts have implemented In versus serve, where students must have three of the five required components for a reimbursable meal, including a fruit or vegetable. Not only does it cut down on food waste, it also saves money. Carol's district in the Midwest was running a food bill of \$1100-1200 per week. Since

implementing offer versus serve this year, grocery bills are down around \$700 per week. Camryn talked about sneaking vegetables into unsuspecting places such as chicken fried rice and egg rolls, which both have three of required components including vegetables. While children are acclimating their tastes to include vegetables, some believe this is not enough. One service worker commented, “I send them back. If [the nutrition director] was here, they would say the kid’s fine. But it’s not that much food. They need more” (field notes, 3/7/2019). Providing children nutrition, helping shape their tastes, and giving them choices helps service workers navigate the strict regulations they must follow.

Additionally, sometimes students change taste mid-school year after commodity orders have been placed. “Something else that we’ve just had to accept. We’ve had some products that we brought in and the kids, the first time we’ve had them, went crazy,” Aaron explained. “Well let’s get more of that, and then it falls off pretty quickly. I didn’t see that coming. Well you guys are still going to have to eat this...you don’t know really [why].” Satisfying consumer preferences while staying in inventory can be challenging as organizations try to meet students’ needs, even when these needs are fluid and changing.

Conclusion

The qualitative study explained above explores the interaction effect social environmental factors have on children’s food consumption in a school lunchroom. Many socialization agents play a role in shaping young consumers’ attitudes and preferences toward products. This manuscript explores how these agentic forces interact and affect consumers, managers, and society as a whole. As consumers seek to learn how to be consumers, they must navigate both reinforced and competing narratives from peers, parents and schools. Managers, seeking to market to children, must be aware of the influx of socialization agents upon entering the school.

Understanding how to reinforce these socialization agents' messages are key for managers and organizations to build product preferences at brand loyalty at a young age. As a whole, while education literature is quick to identify the many factors affecting children's learning, understanding how these interact can help us better understand how children are socialized, not only at home or at school, but in the third space in every interaction. McNeal (2007) notes that every action a child makes can be understood as consumption oriented. Understanding the constellation of factors affecting their consumption can help us better attune future consumers to be responsible and ethical members of the marketplace. From a managerial perspective, organizational leaders are seeking to meet consumer needs and shape consumer preferences while increasing efficiency of product purchasing and usage. To do so, they have to be open to the ambiguity of shifting interests as children are influenced by varying agents.

Based on my findings, organizational narratives present in schools are seen to both reinforce and contradict messages from parents and peers. While each organization approaches the goal of feeding children differently, school districts work to increase consumption by reinforcing eating patterns learned through parenting and society. Tension between different socialization agents' narratives and goals create a cloudy picture of what really guides children's consumption practices. Because of the complexity of the context, it is difficult to discriminate what social environmental factors play the most important role in shaping children's consumption. Carlson and Grossbart (1988) and others (e.g., John, 1999) affirm parents are important in shaping young consumers' tastes. However, the school context provides an interesting venue where parents, who physically absent from their children, are still guiding consumption choices through learned values and norms. These values and norms are reinforced or in contention to those from peers and the institution.

ESSAY 2 – EXPANDING THE INTEGRATIVE JUSTICE MODEL TO PROMOTE JUSTICE IN FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Introduction

In 2016, approximately 17.5% of children in the United States, or 12.9 million children, lived in food-insecure households. Food insecurity has “direct and indirect impacts on physical and mental health for people of all ages, food insecurity is especially detrimental to the health, development, and well-being of children in the short and long terms” (Food Research and Action Center 2017, p. 3). A common solution in Western countries are government-led nutrition programs in schools as an intervention for school age children. In studying ways to increase free meal participation in the UK, Woodward, Sahota, Pike and Molinari (2015) noted participation is linked to financial and nutrition inequality which has direct effects on cognitive and behavioral importance. Food insecurity and health disparities are linked to known vulnerabilities such as socioeconomic status, gender, disability, etc. These problems are compounded when considering children. Nairn (2015) notes children may participate in compensatory efforts to overcome a self-threat driven by puberty, peer rejection, low socioeconomic status, and family disharmony. These drivers, along with reduced life experience (Moore 2004), make children disproportionately vulnerable to self threats. Because of this, the onus of ensuring just exchanges with these young consumers falls on firms.

In 2009, Santos and Laczniak proposed the Integrative Justice Model (IJM) to “enhance fairness and equity in economic transactions involving impoverished consumers” (p. 11). Much like service-dominant logic, the IJM emphasizes relationships and views consumers as active agents in the market interaction. (Laczniak & Santos, 2011, p. 6). It also suggests that businesses and institutions are the key to transformative, distributive justice and creating a fairer

marketplace for vulnerable consumers (Santos, Laczniak, & Facca-Miess, 2015). Unlike conventional macromarketing literature that relies on positivist research (Pittz, Steiner & Pennington, 2019), my hope is this expanded model addresses the social and ethical aspirations of a just market system from a critical perspective. I interrogate the current operationalization of the IJM and offer a refined model that is applicable to government programs, non-governmental organizations and center front-line service workers through the lens of market orchestration.

Theory

At-risk consumer groups have been studied for decades. Andraeson (1975, 1993) defined disadvantaged consumers as individuals who struggled to achieve equal market value based on personal characteristics such as socioeconomic status, race, age, and/or language barriers. In 2005, Baker, Gentry and Rittenburg offered a conceptualization of consumer vulnerability defined by “powerlessness from an imbalance in marketplace interactions” (p. 134). Vulnerable consumers, then, lack control based on personal characteristics, individual motivations, and external conditions (Baker et al., 2005). However, many times these vulnerabilities may not happen in isolation. The study of intersectionality, that originated in feminist scholarship, offers that “every individual within a social group is positioned at the intersection of multiple identities (e.g. race, age, gender, social class, health status). As a result, everyone is subject to multiple overlapping advantages or disadvantages that are particular to their intersectional position” (Saatcioglu & Corus, 2015). This intersectional approach to vulnerability also unmask macro-level issues like race, gender and class issues.

For institutions, intersecting vulnerabilities create obstacles to overcome to promote distributive justice (DJ). DJ, a concept centered on equity, is based on the norms and values in a given culture that shape what is considered “right” and “wrong” (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008). It

takes a consumer-level construct like vulnerability and expands it to a systemic or macro level implications on impoverished consumers. DJ as a macro-level approach to vulnerability aligns with the goals of IJM. In a just system, we see benefits for both firms and consumers. Just marketplaces are more sustainable, with consumers and firms both committed to long-term relationships. Unlike in service captivity where consumers experience constrained choice, voice and power in service relationships (Rayburn, Mason & Volkers, 2020), consumers are free to leave relationships and pursue those that promote greater DJ. Distributive justice can manifest in many ways. Outcomes include long term relationships between firm and consumers, consumer empowerment in the marketplace, sustainable business relationships, and a fairer marketplace (Santos & Lacznik, 2009). As a strategy for poverty alleviation, market orchestration creates an infrastructure and institutions to facilitate exchanges between impoverished consumers and market actors (Kistruck & Shulist, 2020). While authors have critiqued market orchestration for its roots in colonialism and Western capitalism (e.g. Meredith, 2011), taking a DJ approach allows us to understand how market systems can be structured to be more equitable.

The original IJM model proposed in 2009 posits five value inputs and their effect on the exchange relationship between firm and consumer with subsequent justice-related outcomes. These value inputs; authentic engagement, cocreation of value between firm and consumer, investment in the future of consumption, stakeholder representation, and long-term profit management over short-term profit maximization; are characteristic of “just” market systems (Santos & Lacznik, 2009). The more firms rely on these tenets in exchanges with disadvantaged or vulnerable consumers, the more their actions should promote DJ within the system to create a fair and sustainable marketplace. While the IJM is said to be applicable to all interactions with impoverished consumers (Santos & Lacznik, 2009), it has largely been applied in exchanges

with MNCs. Santos, Laczniak and Facca-Miess (2015) go on to explain it is external entities, such as governing bodies, and internal perspectives, like company culture, that dictate how power is distributed between firm and consumer. Indeed, it is important to think about the firm within a wider network and market system, especially when examining how justice is distributed. From a macromarketing perspective, Kadirov (2018) offers a Market-Systems-as-a-Public-Good framework built on the idea that marketing systems change to better align with desired values based on the underlying motivation of firms to link individual values and higher-level cultural norms. As such, market orchestration as a public good should infuse DJ into the linkages formed between firm and individual.

Market orchestration, then, is meant to bridge the consumer and society as a whole. As Santos, Laczniak and Facca-Miess (2015) articulate, “it is institutions that are external to the marketing organization, along with various modes of thinking inside the enterprise, that constitute the “power” to generate TJ and to vitalize the IJM elements to achieve their purposes—a fairer marketplace for impoverished consumer segments” (p. 698). By expanding the scope to include nonprofits and government-led programs, the model can offer insights into how justice can be distributed in more B2C interactions and how these exchanges happen in a greater market system. This is done through the four key components of market orchestration: “(1) identification of new opportunities, (2) organization of new groups, (3) training in new practices, and (4) facilitating new transaction linkages” (Kistruck & Shulist, 2020, p. 4). Furthermore, Kelleher Gummerus, and Peñaloza (2020) articulate a need to loosen the assumption that actors in a service ecosystem are independent, agentic and able to engage others to accrue capital. These actors, or orchestrators, serve multiple roles as they identify new opportunities, organize groups, implement new practices and facilitate exchange. These roles, or

mechanisms, come in the form of assembling (actively configuring resources across connected actors), performing (directly integrating to cocreate value), and brokering resources (negotiate and mediate with intermediate actors without anticipated value) (Kelleher et al., 2020). In other words, within a service ecosystem, we see a “kaleidoscope” of connections that emphasizes “system dynamism, our discussion of relational value cocreation deepens our understanding of how nonreferent beneficiary-led orchestration, founded on generalized mutuality and on behalf of referent beneficiaries with reduced agency, enhances and balances multiform, oscillating and positive and negative well-being outcomes” (p. 211).

Frontline Service Workers as Cultural Translators

These nonreferent, intermediate actors, then, play a key role in value co-creation and organizational performance. Referent actors, or those directly benefited through value cocreation, are typically viewed dyadically as the two ends of an exchange (Baker, Azzari, Thomas, & Bennett, 2020), i.e. the firm and the consumer. By exploring this exchange from a service ecosystem and market orchestration lens, however, we see there are many other non-referent actors that help facilitate this value creation. Within the complex network of actors, those translating explicit regulations and cultural norms into practices are many times the front-line workers, or, borrowing a term from social science literature, street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010). The following section expands on this notion through a literature review of front-line workers in marketing, services, and social science literature.

In 2016, Facca-Miess and Santos took a first step in operationalizing the model to help managers assess the fairness of their market practices. While the authors “operationalized [the tenets of the model] in a way that provides context adaptability” while “preserving the structure of the normative framework for fair marketing practices” (p. 7), this approach fails to interrogate

the tenets themselves. Through the addition of frontline workers and application of an atypical market context, specifically a government-led program implemented in schools, the expanded model proposed in the sections that follow address how DJ can be promoted in all B2C relationships. In describing their role as child welfare professionals, Gibson, Samuels and Pryce's (2018) participants noted their justice-oriented practices were constrained by system-level accountability and compliance measures. Put another way, authentic engagement with certain stakeholders, e.g. regulatory bodies, inhibited their ability to promote greater DJ at the consumer level. Hupe and Hill (2007) discuss three types of public accountability for frontline service providers: public-administrative, or managerial, political and legal, accountability; professional accountability, marked by collective self-management and expertise; and participatory accountability, in which frontline workers co-create value with consumers. This highlights the double bind many frontline workers face. They are both accountable to their firms as well as their consumers. Many times, the goals contradict.

Out of this contradiction, we see emerging research domains such as transformative services research (TSR) and organizational frontlines. Anderson and colleagues (2013) first introduced the concept of TSR, an extension of transformative consumer research (TCR) that focuses on the relationship between service providers, consumers, and society at large. Specifically, TSR is "the integration of consumer and service research that centers on creating uplifting changes and improvements in the well-being of consumer entities: individuals (consumers and employees), communities and the ecosystem" (Anderson, Ostrom, Mathras & Bitner, 2011, p.3). The framework adds the complex nature of services to the TCR domain and opens the conversation about how service and consumer entities can work together to create a just marketplace. Put another way, through a service ecosystems approach, "institutions, people,

and technology work together with consumers, firms, or government entities to co-create value” (Russell-Bennett, Fisk, Rosenbaum & Zainuddin, 2019, p. 636). One fruitful area of TSR research is organizational frontlines which occur where interactions between firms and consumers meet (Singh, Brady, Arnold, & Brown, 2017). These spaces are fluid, and ever-changing context marked by innovations that engage consumers through enhanced experiences and co-creation. Much like teachers, service workers such as counselors, paraprofessionals, and lunchroom workers in an educational context find themselves not met with individual challenges, but instead in complex, ever-changing social contexts (Siciliano, 2015). These street-level bureaucrats, burdened by competing demands that require both time and resources, make compromises that create differences between formal regulations and implemented services (Lipsky, 2010; Siciliano, 2015). It is in this space where I interrogate how DJ is infused into the service ecosystem.

Context

As discussed in essay 1 (p. 10):

The specific context of inquiry is the school lunch program, which is embedded in the larger educational and federal program context as it must meet federal requirements to receive financial support, navigate limited budgets and federal commodities to meet their organizational goal of feeding children nutritious meals. An estimated 56.6 million children attended school in the fall of 2018 (National Center for Education Statistics 2018), with 50.6 million attending public schools. Of eligible school-aged children, an estimated 29.6 million students participated in the school’s lunch program during the 2018-2019 school year, with over 74% of those receiving additional federal assistance. (Food and Nutrition Services, 2019)

While participation in federal assistance does not imply participation in meal service, it adds additional complexity to the service relationship between schools and children. As a federal program, though, the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must adhere to strict federal guidelines for reimbursement and thus serves as a model of a unique social service ecosystem

embedded in a larger educational context. Specifically, it sheds light on a “macrostructure that highlights the interplay between macro, meso (contextual) and micro factors in understanding and delivering value to recipients” can be examined to understand how intermediate, nonreferent orchestrators infuse DJ in exchanges within an imposed macro-level marketing system (Baker et al., 2020, p. 220).

Method

To understand how firms enter these relationships, interviews collected were conducted with public school district nutrition directors, or those people in charge of translating federal regulations to the consumer levels. Using convenience and snowball sampling, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals from three Southern US states representing school districts ranging in size from under 2000 students enrolled to over 215,000 students across kindergarten through 12th grade. Interviews, which lasted 20-60 minutes, invited participants to share their personal experience and goals for the federal program in their community. Much like in the original model, the application is analyzed from the firm’s perspective. More information on the participants can be found in the methods section of essay 1 (p.).

Data was collected across diverse subcontexts to allow comparison and an increased impact of findings (Epp & Velagaleti, 2014; Loseke, 2013). By using a deductive grounded theory approach, I used the original value inputs of the IJM as themes and interrogated their applicability in the school lunch context to understand how public school nutrition programs are designed to promote greater justice. As stated by Fischer and Otnes (2006), contemporary grounded theory can be used to create of a conceptual framework or reconceptualizing a construct. At the intersection of these applications, this essay reconceptualizes a pre-existing

framework, namely the IJM, to increase applicability and capture the multidimensionality of the service ecosystem. After the initial round of deductive coding, axial coding is used to identify themes and their connection to DJ. Finally, a thematic analysis yields abstracted themes de-contextualized at the phenomenological level. Nodes were re-articulated from the original model for greater applicability across contexts and to better align with the above noted components of market orchestration. These abridged value inputs and an expanded view of the firm can be found in Figure 2 below.

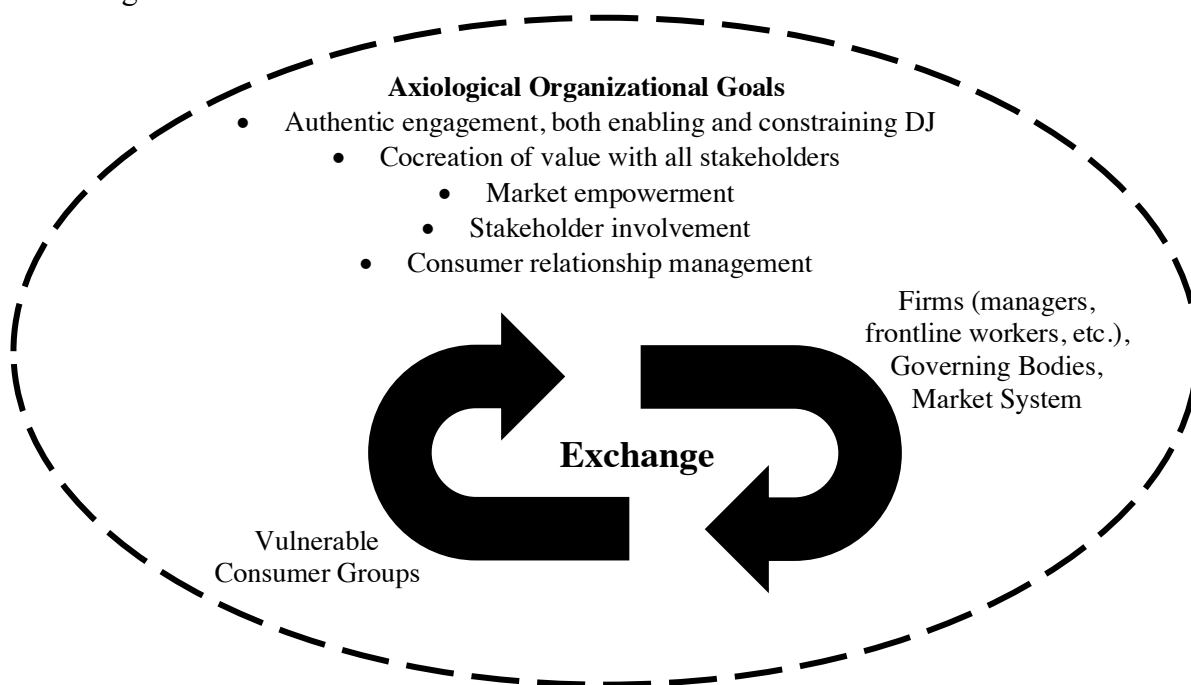


Figure 2. Expanded Integrative Justice Model (drawn from Santos & Laczniak, 2009)

Findings

Authentic Engagement

As Kelleher et al. (2020) observed with family caregivers, there was a range of positive and negative consequences of engagement with referent and nonreferent actors. In our inquiry, this came in the form of service workers being either empowered or constrained in providing just exchanges. While the authors coined this phenomenon “value obstruction,” in our context it can

be viewed as “DJ obstruction.” In the subsections below, I discuss how distributive justice is orchestrated as well as constrained in the school lunch context.

DJ orchestration. Market orchestration as a concept is about creating the infrastructure that mutually creates value. It is done by identifying opportunities, organizing groups, training and education surrounding practices, and facilitating new connections (Kistruck & Schulist, 2020). For firms, generalized mutuality and justice works to overcome reduced agency. One way they do this, is encouraging consumers to learn by doing. Camryn, a nutrition director from a district of 10,000 students, stated, “These cafeterias are nutrition education in a way and subconsciously they're learning what they're their plate should look like.” Allowing students to learn what a plate should look like also includes trying different foods. Both Camryn and Carol, a director for a school district serving 2300 students, incorporate taste tests of new products. Carol described taste tests as “kind of a crazy day. We'll bake it, like I said some the vendors are there. They help a lot, and we just hand out samples.” It is a way to engage consumers and test new products while giving real-time feedback to service workers about whether they like it or not.

Engagement goes past just eating the food, however. Aaron, who has served as a nutrition director for various school districts in the area, recalled, “We had a kid. One day he was putting bones in a napkin he folded up his pocket. We asked what he was doing. He said he was gonna take it home to show his mommy the chicken bones. And honestly as a younger kid, I mean you think about it, they don't have access to chicken bones.” Food service in schools engages students in learning about food and exposes to different products. Even a lesson like chicken comes from an animal and animals have bones, as Aaron went on to explain, is an opportunity to engage students through experiences.

Another way to engage consumers is treating them as such. Even though, in this context, they are children with constrained choices, they still have a choice. As a firm, it is important to center what you do around consumer needs. Carol, when reflecting on the taste tests explained how she goes around to tables and, “I’m like, ‘hey guys try this. What do you think?’ I mean they’re the customer. We don’t do anything without them.” Taste tests, and the nutrition programs, allow children’s voices to be heard. Nancy, who manages school nutrition for a district with over 23,000 students, commented, “They have control very key things in their lives. The little ones anyway. And so this is one area that you know they get to make choices.” By giving them choices, the students are learning about food by actually engaging with it.

This is resulting in measurable outcomes as well. Debbie, a nutrition director for a small district, talked to the nurse after implementing second chance breakfast and asked if she noticed a difference. “She said yes,” Debbie said. “And I want to thank you for it because she said now I know if a student comes to me in the morning it’s because they’re literally sick and not just hungry.” Nancy received similar feedback. “It’s hard to focus if you’re hungry. Hungry children can’t learn. That’s just the bottom line. We see less visits to the nurse’s office with tummy aches; we see kids just ready to start their school day.” By providing breakfasts in the school through the School Breakfast Program, districts are able to engage more students and get them fueled for a day of learning.

To do so, it is important for firms to identify consumer needs and meet them where they are. At a large district with over 200,000 students, that means incorporating locally specific meals. Leah, who has managed large districts across the US describes her experience working with the local students.

They’re typical meals that they find. Ethnically Tex Mex food which is something that’s new to me so I don’t write the menus. But this regionally is Tex Mex foods,

a lot of Hispanic food, lots of rice lots of beans. They love salad, tacos and burritos and tamales. And so it's thanks to the kids. Like I said I think we're serving their favorites. They also into all this fusion food now and different kind of food like hummus and things that they're seeing in the marketplace and seeing on television we're replicating in our menus. (Leah)

In designing her menu, Leah is intentionally including foods she knows her consumers, the children, want to eat. However, just as children's tastes change, so do circumstances. Nutrition directors, as low-level managers, must monitor the environment and intentionally build an infrastructure of justice and support.

Molly, who just took over as nutrition director after working as a service worker in a small district, discussed the importance of engaging with parents. "I'm going through all these e-mails of parents e-mailing me that they want to know why my kid is negative. ...that's when we want them to talk to us." She shared the story of one child who owed money. A parent called, upset, and stating "She [the child] doesn't eat at school and then we say, 'well look here, she's eating breakfast every day' and they say she's not supposed to be eating breakfast at school. She's eating at home. So if they communicate with us then we can say OK well we'll send Sally to class if she's eating at home and she gets in line we can just say 'Sally you've eaten breakfast, honey, at home. Run on the class.'" By working with parents and having candid conversations, Molly was able to problem solve before it escalated.

Similarly, Aaron has conversations with new teachers, discouraging them from making negative comments. "It's not because we want you to be proud of the lunch or whatever but for a lot of your kids it's what they have," he shares. "And whenever you talk of it, it makes them feel bad about themselves because they know they're gonna go get the school lunch every day. And when you say something negative about the school

lunch it puts that in them that that they're less than or that they should feel bad about having to eat that every day.” He continued on sharing that in his talk, if teachers have concerns to share them with service workers, just not in front of the children as “it's just a little bit irresponsible sometimes to say it to your audience.” Acknowledging the weaknesses of the program, and creating an open line of dialogue with teachers, he is able to address concerns without causing students emotional harm and constantly work to improve his program. He also acknowledges behavioral problems may be linked to a deeper issue.

We did have a kid that was getting a breakfast from the first cart and then putting it in his backpack and then getting a breakfast from the second cart. We they caught him because he was going at the wrong also. But that's typically a sign of something else that that kid really isn't going to get access to food and he's going to take every advantage you can get as much as he can when he does it. So that's something that where it helps us identify who might need to be on the backpack program. (Aaron)

Instead of assuming the child is acting out for attention, Aaron took the time to reflect on the infrastructure in place and how connecting the child to resources would address the root cause instead of the symptom. Schools can encourage DJ orchestration in a number of ways, including encouraging children learn by doing, treating them as empowered consumers, meeting them where they are, and constantly monitoring the environment. Being aware allows district managers and service workers to build an infrastructure the better connects students to products, or food, they want and need and creates open channels of communication to connect students and families with resources.

DJ obstruction. While orchestration and infrastructure can create justice, it can also get in the way of firms reaching their “just” potential. One reason is the stigma associated with participating in federal programs. While not all students who eat school-provided meals receive free or reduced-price meals subsidizing by the federal government, all meals with at least three

components qualify for federal reimbursement. This money makes up the majority of school lunchroom's budgets which pay for food, equipment, and staff. Camryn is trying to combat this by being "hip to the trends." Molly recalled an episode of Saturday Night Live where Adam Sandler sings about the sloppy joe lady. "If you've ever watched that video and she slopping stuff and she's dressed with the big wart on her nose, stuff like that. So I am wanting to put a new face on school lunches and our cafeteria and our staff." While food service in schools has come a long way, there are still negative stereotypes and stigmas. As Nancy shared, "We have a lot of children that they don't really get much food outside of the school programs." Many of the nutrition directors noted their concern about how the negative perceptions of the program transfer to its participants.

Because school lunches are the only financial exchange in the education system, nutrition directors have to deal with strict regulations that get in the way of providing service. Nancy shared, obviously frustrated, "We've become bill collectors. Our goal is not to turn away any student." And yet, sometimes schools have to serve alternative meals or denying children meals. Aaron took a deep breath before talking about the rigidity of regulations and the sacrifices that have been made because of the current infrastructure. "Just like the American way we had to put a little bit of capitalism in it and create these different paid structures." Because of the way reimbursement structures are in place, if students overcharge their account, that comes out of the school's general budget. Alternative meals have a lower cost, but are not reimbursable so the school district does not get money for the meal. Aaron finished with a story. "I had a parent conversation last week. 'Well that's the dumbest thing it's \$2.35' and it's 'absolutely I agree with you. But it's \$2.35. Two thousand times. That's the problem is it's not a one-time incident. It's the build of that incident and now you're \$6,000 in the negative. Well that money's going to come

from the school district. Now that's \$6,000 that they can't spend on something else.” The cost of the program limits nutrition directors and service workers from achieving their goal which is ultimately provide nutrition to students.

Molly explained the problem with the payment structure by breaking down her budget: “Free and reduced. The government reimburses us for those meals. We get a smaller amount of reimbursement for paid meals and then lunch money. That's it. So I pay staff salaries and benefits out of that money. I buy groceries out of that money and I repair all my equipment just out of lunch money. So that is a tight budget.” Similarly, Leah discussed costs in terms of percentages. “I'm 42-45% on my food. But this is what it's about; it's about the kid. And I like to run maybe 33-35% on employees that don't give you much for anything. It doesn't give you much.” These tight budgets do not allow for much discretionary spending, including repairs. Frustrated, Molly stated, “When parents are not paying and their children are eating every day and they are owing us \$200, \$300 and we have \$6,000 of negative lunch balances in our district that affects us. Because then we have to let things go, and they have to let some piece of equipment sit.” Put another way, tight budgets and an inflexible payment structure prevents nutrition programs from operating at peak quality and efficiency.

Another problem with strict regulations are the thresholds set for the federal programs granting students free or reduced status. Nancy agreed with Aaron stating, “I wish that we could serve every student and the students wouldn't have to worry about whether they have money.” In her experience, “We have a lot of students who are not qualified for free or reduced meals. But many of them are like a dollar or two over the income guidelines. You know we have a lot of students that are right on the line and their families don't have a lot of money and it's just, it's really hard because right now I can't help it. I don't have money to pay for a meal.” The low

operating cost of the federal programs do not allow for necessary shrinkage caused by providing meals to children on the bubble. It also places service workers as the obstructer of justice, not the system. Aaron continued stating, “It's absolutely the worst part of my job is dealing with a denying you get a meal which is contrary to what we try to do here. We embarrass them we embarrass the parent the parent calls the parents angry and say we have a policy. We follow that policy. That's the only thing we can do.”

Having codified rules allows school lunchrooms, as businesses within the education system partially funded by federal programs, to function. However, as Carol noted, “It's hard to run schools like a business. It really is when you when you're basing decisions based on the needs of children. It's kids first and it's hard to operate sometimes.” Some districts are able to recover some of their losses. Nancy expressed gratitude for anonymous donations around the holidays that pay off debts. Molly described an angel account where, “if there is a student who's struggling, usually that would be a reduced student because they still pay just a small amount or paid student if they get into a bind” service workers spend their off hours working concession stands for discretionary funds to allocate to cover these costs. Many times, however, costs are too great. Carol pointed out that from “where we sit, we're not set up to do that [provide universal free meals]. Our program doesn't operate like that. We're always in the red.” For service workers and nutrition directors to meet consumer needs, they must orchestrate solutions. However, many times, with the layered structure of federal programs and large organizations, rigid regulations and perceptions impede their progress for justice.

Cocreation of Value with All Stakeholders

Communal relationships are foundational in just business relationships. In federal programs, we see low-level managers and service workers bearing the brunt of the responsibility

for these relationships. Just as with stakeholder management, reciprocal determinism distributes power between the firm, consumers, and various other invested parties. Reciprocal determinism is the idea that no one benefits unless the conditions are mutually agreed upon. It is in this space value is cocreated between consumers, firms, and their stakeholders.

Communal relationships. Cocreated value can take many forms. One realm value is cocreated is nutritional value. School districts are promoting healthy eating through a variety of different avenues, but one way is through incorporating local products. For Camryn, that means forging relationships with growers. “It’s really great to help meet our full orders because sometimes we’re ordering between, you know, 45 to 2500 pounds of produce from one grower ... they like those consistent orders because they can count on it.” When reflecting on how these products make it from farm to table, she simply stated, “They back up their pickup truck to our warehouse here” and then products went out with other orders to the schools themselves. Camryn was able to foster a mutually beneficial relationship with farmers where students would receive locally grown produce and farmers received steady orders without farmers incurring barriers to distribution.

Value can also be co-created with the end consumer, in this case students. Sometimes that means reducing barrier to entry. Barriers could be something like stigma, as Nancy mentioned, “They don’t want to be looking any different than anyone else.” She continued sharing her solution, “We have breakfast in the classroom, universal free breakfast for students at 12 of our elementary schools where we actually take for the students that are that are not free or reduced, we pay their meal, because we found that if a student is a free student they may not eat breakfast. Their friends aren’t going to eat. So they’re not going to eat.” Reducing the stigma for

participation allowed Nancy get more child consumers to participate in their district meal programs and receive food to fuel them for the school day.

Another example of a barrier to entry could be product perception, where students assume they will not like a product based on salient characteristics. Aaron described the importance of plating all food components at a young age stating, “If it's on their tray already and they're still hungry they might just try something that they wouldn't normally try ... We also try to go talk to them like, ‘Hey just try something.’ Just have a little conversation. Like, ‘No, that's awesome. You should try that; try to put a little positive peer pressure on them to try something new.’” Camryn takes a research-based approach to overcome these perceptions as education can serve to create new value for young consumers. Without previous knowledge about food and how it is cultivated, children cannot make founded conclusions about whether they do or do not like particular products and experiences. She states, “Students have to try something 10 to 15 times before they actually like it. In K-12, I have the opportunity to give them all those exposures and then some of them by high school. They're demanding that I serve these fresh foods these healthier foods. And you know that's in the form of what I am serving on the menu at the lower grades but also the taste tests and kind of just giving them a low-pressure exposure.” Increased exposure helps students create positive experiences with products that translate to preferences later in life.

This can also come in the form of knowledge about how food grows. Nancy reflected on some of the ways she is incorporating nutrition education outside of the lunchroom, remarking, “They actually grow gardens and students learn how where their food comes from.” Camryn works to connect the school garden to classroom and stated, “We have an outdoor education specialist who's created curriculum. Third fourth graders use it, and I think there's some for

second grade and it's science and math and literacy.” By providing children with valuable experiences, service workers and schools work together with student work together to create competent consumers who see value in variety, food, and where it comes from.

By encouraging students to eat a greater quantity, service workers are helping children overcome barriers to nutritional value. Many times, they see a direct pay off. Carol proudly shared, “There's nothing better than watching a child grab a piece of food or come up to me and say, ‘Hey, I liked what you did today’ or to hear child say ‘Oh, I never had chocolate milk. I've never seen chocolate milk’ ...it makes you feel good.” Exposing children to a wider variety of products and encouraging them to eat a higher quantity of nutritious food and helping are just a few ways working *with* students can help promote greater justice.

Social listening. Another way organizations cocreate value with consumers is social listening and an ever-changing product assortment. While all programs must manage a certain level of commodities, the actual products themselves can change. As discussed with authentic engagement, children are consumers. As Carol mentioned, “I don't know why people think kids have to eat lunch. They do not, they have a choice.” Because of this choice, it is important to meet consumer tastes to ensure repatronage. Otherwise, children are not getting fed and food is thrown away. Reflecting on this, Aaron remarked, “You have to hit you cast a wide net whenever you're looking at the menu because essentially the trash cans don't need the nutrition.”

Directors have come up with strategies to better meet consumer needs. Molly’s solution was to incorporate more meals “that look more like some local fast food restaurants. You know just in our presentation and the things that they like to eat to try to get them to eat with us.” Another strategy, taken by Carol, was to use better ingredients. When speaking about nutrition regulations, she mentioned, “We did apply for a waiver because of the 51 percent whole grain

stipulation that they have now it has been lifted. It was killing our participation. The bread was just too dry.” Similarly, Molly lamented whole grain regulations because children did not like the consistency of spaghetti and hamburger buns. By changing products and meals based on children’s feedback, directors are better able to center their programs on their consumers, cocreating and reinventing value in spaces.

Social listening and centering the conversation on the consumer also means mitigating problems. For a reciprocal determinism to promote justice, service workers and their respective firms most constantly re-orient to the changing climate. Aaron did this by getting student feedback. “If something’s [a menu item’s] not doing well whenever I go talk to the kids like, ‘What’s your least favorite? What’s your favorite?’ You know we just have an open conversation and they’ll tell you exactly what they think.” Carol echoed this, stating, “They talk to you about their food. They tell you their wants, their dislikes.” Identifying successful (and unsuccessful) products and changing to product assortment to meet the needs brings value to the consumers, as they receive nutrition, and the firm, as they receive greater participation and increased reimbursement. Molly managed problems by working diligently to combat issues. “If there is a complaint or I go into the kitchen and see something that I don’t like in the way they’re preparing the food, we talk about it and we get a new plan. Because we want the kids, our customers you know, and we want them to be happy with what we provide.” Through reciprocal determinism, firms center the conversation on the consumer and adapt to better meet consumer needs through social listening. Fostering a communal relationship that is beneficial for all stakeholders encourages sharing and promotes DJ through the firm’s attunement and commitment to consumers’ diverse needs.

Empowerment

In the original IJM, empowerment was an output of the just marketplace. However, through data analysis, it became clear investment in future consumption without damaging the environment, the third value input, could not be achieved without empowering consumers and the marketplace. Additionally, for consumers to fully participate in the just exchange they have to be empowered pre-exchange, not as a consequence of such. Thus, I suggest four ways this was achieved in the data: environmental justice, access, choice, and equitable exchanges.

Environmental justice. Environmental justice promotes justice by respecting the natural environment. One way schools do this is through local sourcing from area farms. Camryn is passionate about incorporating local foods into her product mix. “It's a really great way for us to experiment with new recipes to see if it's worth putting a you and gives us more ideas for how to incorporate this local stuff into the menu. So we are doing weekly orders and deliveries and on our menus. If you see a little green ‘L’ that means it has a local ingredient in it.” Nancy does something similar. “We're trying to incorporate more locally grown items as well as give the students opportunity to really look at different fruits and vegetables that we might have right here in [the state].”

This also looks like reducing the amount of food waste from meal service. Doing so not only reduces the amount of product used, thus lowering the price, but it also reduces the amount of food going to compost or landfill. Carol laughed at one point, stating, “People think it's kind of weird but you see what they throw away. Yeah it's just a great way to see. So throw a lot of things forks spoons trays. You'd be surprised but it's a great way for us to see what they're actually eating.” But doing real-time trash audits and seeing what food is being wasted, she can modify her meal offerings to deliver a better meal for consumers while concurrently producing

less waste. All interviewees mentioned offer versus serve as an important tenant in their programs. Camryn explained the benefits, stating “I think the offer versus serve tenant that we're not putting all of the products on the plate. They get to pick and choose and they within that they get to choose which vegetables or fruits and types of milk. And if they leave certain things off the entree that can reduce food waste just the fact that they're getting to choose.” By only requiring students to get three components out of meat, grain, dairy, fruit and vegetable (with at least one being a fruit or vegetable), young consumers are able to choose what they want, and reduce waste at the same time.

Molly is looking to expand her districts offer versus serve program. “We're looking at taking offer versus serve all the way down to our little ones and letting them have a choice in what they want in hopes. The only reason being is waste. You know we just want to prevent waste because then that is cost right to us.” This quote highlights the appeal of offer versus serve programs from a firm perspective. That is, less food waste is less cost waste.

Access. The most obvious benefit of nutritional programs in schools is providing meals to children. However, as mentioned in the discussion on DJ obstruction, sometimes cost is a constraint, even in a subsidized and reimbursed federal program. Nancy discussed how they work to provide universal breakfast to students. “We have breakfast in the classroom, universal free breakfast for students at 12 of our elementary schools where we actually take for the students that are that are not free or reduced, we pay their meal, because we found that if a student is a free student they may not eat breakfast.” Nancy decided that having access to free meals was more important than the cost of paying for students not on a subsidized meal plan.

Unlike Molly’s description of the importance of offer versus serve above, Aaron believes it is important to plate everything at a young age. “We want the kids to know that they've got a

meal for them whenever they come to the lunchroom. They may not like everything on the tray. That's another philosophy that I've learned and I heard it from actually from our state director. She said that the younger grades to plate everything rather than do the offer versus serve because if they haven't selected it they're not going to eat it. But if it's on their tray already and they're still hungry they might just try something that they wouldn't normally try." While offer versus serve reduces food and cost waste, plating empowers children in a different way. It ensures children always have food on their plate, even if it eventually ends up in the garbage.

Choice. Plating everything, as in Aaron's example above, allows students to choose which food they want to eat. Camryn explained the benefit of both programs stating, "I learned in school called the division of responsibilities meaning you're offering options and they're all good options to you. So whatever they choose they're making a good choice and ... So the meal pattern helps us provide those options and then the offer versus serve helps the students make their choice." Because all options are nutritious, nutrition directors are ensuring children are getting adequate sustenance. At the same time, offer versus serve allows them to choose which components they want while plating allows students to choose which products they want to consume. Children are making active decisions in both scenarios, whether at the purchase or consumption stage.

Nancy puts the choice a different way. "I like to make choices just like we do when we go to a restaurant. We don't want to be told we're going to have this so many years ago." Instead of a prescribed menu, entrée choices, side options, and salad bars allow students to make decisions based on their preferences. Even with a small budget, Debbie prioritized choice. "Moving forward I would like to, and I've already talked to my managers about this, but I'd like to offer different options of fruit and vegetables other than just what's on the menu. Maybe just

have several different items out there so that they can choose.” By increasing options, and ensuring all choices are good options, Debbie and others are empowering students to make healthful decisions.

This choice goes beyond what is on the plate. Aaron takes a data-based approach to menu options. When visiting classrooms to talk about the importance of nutrition, he reminds students that “every time you pick a meal you're voting. You're voting for or you're voting against one of the two and so we're looking at that. So if you like something continue to get it or get your friends to try it. It's basically like you're making active decisions on what you're going to see if you stop taking something. We'll get it off the menu.” While the previous statements have shown how students are empowered to make choices now, Aaron’s comment highlights how their decisions now have consequences in the future. Consumers are actively reconfiguring the infrastructure of the nutrition programs to better fit their needs.

Equitable exchanges. To this point, while the analysis has acknowledged free, reduced, and paid students and their different experiences, I have worked to portray the nutrition program as a single entity. However, the stratification of students into different groups needs to be discussed. As with other federal programs, the onus of implementation falls on managers like nutrition directors and service workers. Nancy explained the application system for their school. “We have an online application that parents can go online and fill it out and it has an electronic signature feature and they know they can. It's very quick and I think very easy. However, it's been a learning curve for a lot of our parents.” She also explained how they recently added a direct certification system which automatically enrolls students who participate in another federal program such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Women, Infants and

Children; or are registered as homeless or migrant youth. Doing so alleviates the burden on the child and family as to whether they will receive benefits.

One change since the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act passed in 2010 is schools are no longer allowed to overly identify children enrolled in the program. “We're not trying to identify kids,” Aaron commented. “Yes, we have spent a lot of time identifying free or reduced kids but we really don't care.” Debbie intentionally does not learn more about the students enrolled. “They come through the line and they sit boy-girl-boy-girl or ABC order in our elementary schools...Could I couldn't put the face with the name.” Students enter a PIN or state their name or a cashier, and their account is charged. From the external facing system, there is no way to tell how students are paying for their meal. Molly explained how confidentiality is maintained further. “A lot of times the students don't know that they're involved in that program unless their parents tell them because we do not tell them we cannot. That's confidential information. It is used in the school for testing purposes the counselors can know who is free and reduced and they use that I guess for statistical purposes on testing.” By intentionally designing programs to reduce potential impact on free and reduced program participants, schools are able to promote greater justice and empower students through equal access to the marketplace.

Taken together, schools create a more just marketplace through environmental justice, access to healthy foods, choice, and equitable exchanges. Not only do these actions invest in the future of consumption, they invest in the future of consumers.

Stakeholder Representation

DJ is not solely based in the exchanges between firms and their consumers. While Santos and Laczniak (2009) stated assuming a stakeholder perspective is crucial for promoting a fairer marketplace, they do not elucidate a picture of what this looks like outside of representing the

interests of vulnerable consumer groups. In the section that follows, I elaborate on some of the key stakeholders and the implications of these relationships on school nutrition programs.

Internal stakeholders. School lunchrooms provide an interesting context as they are a semi-independent business operating within the education system. Working with a common goal allows firms and their stakeholders to work together to achieve their goal. Aaron pointed out, “Our school secretaries and our principals and they don't need to be collection agents. They need to build relationships. They don't need to call and ask for money.” Building relationships with consumers alongside other school employees is critical to the promotion and success of programs. Debbie emphasizes the importance of getting buy in from school administrators, stating, “We've got some of the greatest principals because they were all just eager to really help out with our food service and make it happen for the kids. And because that's our number one goal, to make sure that every child is fueled so that they can be in the classroom without being hungry and learn.” By treating principals, teachers, and other school employees as partners, nutrition directors can work with invested stakeholders to achieve greater justice for their young consumers. It also means listening to service workers and answering their questions. “My cooks were so funny, Carol explained, “I don't know why you keep putting beans on the menu once a week’ I said ‘because I’m mandated to put them on the menu once.’” Explaining policies and giving context for decisions helps service workers and other internal stakeholders understand why decisions are made and how it benefits them and the children.

Parents. Just as Carol discussed the importance of adding context for internal stakeholders, it is equally valuable to have open communication with parents. As discussed in essay 3, parents and the home are the most important socialization agent, especially at a young age (John, 1999). Helping parents understand their role in nutrition and nutrition education, then,

becomes part of the job of the schools' nutrition programs. Molly does this through candid conversations with parents. "I always tell parents when they say to me, especially when I was working as a lunch lady, and they would say 'I just want you to feed my kid' and I would say 'I'm going to feed your kid but I'm coming for you because parents are responsible' there. Their children cannot work to pay for their lunch. The parents are responsible to take care of their children." Without context as to why it is important to pay even small balances, parents do not understand the consequences on their actions could have on the program. Through open dialogue, service workers and nutrition directors are working with parents to promote greater justice. Camryn summed up this partnership, stating, "For decades we've been eating this certain way, highly processed foods. So to change it in a matter of a few years. You're working with parents on what they're seeing and it captures what they're also seeing at home. It's a huge reform that I'm all for, but it's going to take some time and a lot of support take to get us there." Just as school nutrition has changed, so must children's relationship with food in the home. School nutrition directors must work with parents to empower children in their food decisions and support healthy eating in the school and home.

Federal programs. While school nutrition programs manage internal and external stakeholders, nutrition directors and service workers must operate within the institutional structure imposed by Food and Nutrition Services, a subsidiary of the US Department of Agriculture, that manages the NSLP. Since the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act passed in 2010, there have been annual updates to regulations, causing nutrition directors to scramble their product assortment to meet guidelines for reimbursement. Reflecting on the past few years, Camryn commented, "It will be nice to not have so many changes. I think we're all just trying to catch our breath. It's been a long five years of not only child nutrition programs learning

regulations and many planning accordingly, but food manufacturers have had to really make some changes very quickly. And so it's the whole school food system was really trying to catch up.” While these regulations are difficult on school programs, they impact other firms as well. To promote justice for consumers, all stakeholders, including food manufacturers and suppliers, need to be considered. Another example of this is the sodium stipulation, which sets a target for the amount of sodium served in foods. However, as Camryn noted above, the onus for changing sodium content falls on the formulation of input product purchased from food manufacturers. And as she continued, “I mean if the sodium can stay in place that would be helpful. There's two more targets that still could potentially go into effect.” With changing targets and long processes for recipe reformation, nutrition programs must work *within* federal regulations and *with* suppliers to achieve their goals.

While providing nutritional meals promotes just exchanges between school nutrition programs and child consumers, the organizations must also be economically viable. To receive reimbursement, schools must reach the nutritional targets. Aaron laughed, stating, “It's always joke with the kids. I say anybody can read a menu that kids like, anybody can read a menu that meets USDA standards. It's trying to write one that does both. And that's the trick.” The regulations are, as Leah put it, “so peculiar.” While managers are balancing consumers wants, they also must fit their products into specific boxes to achieve certain metrics. “The USDA has some strict guidelines for us and a lot of people don't understand that,” Molly commented. “So we push broccoli every week. You know broccoli is on the menu. And a lot of kids don't eat broccoli.” The product assortment, as well, is regulated. Aaron explained, “There's never been more food on a kid's plate than there is today. However, it's not what they want. We took away three nuggets and we added another half a cup of vegetables to it. They didn't want that.” Carol

agreed, stating, “You can be over now on your meats and grains. When the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act came out, they were limiting us on meats and grains and I mean these kids were going home hungry. It was a disaster. it was bad.”

Strict guidelines imposed by federal programs constrain managers’ ability to achieve goals. However, if they work hard, many are still able to engage the students. Molly’s strategy is to make food resembling what children are already eating, aligning “our presentation and the things that they like to eat to try to get them to eat with us.” Leah’s strategy is to take children’s preferences and “just reformulate it for child nutrition. We serve whole muscle meat. I don't use any pre-formed items.” No matter the strategy, managers must find a way to work within federal programs to be a viable business while still attending to consumer needs.

Consumer Relationship Management

While the original IJM focused on long-term profit management versus short-term profit maximization, the data revealed a different type of investment was important for just exchanges. Namely, firms need to invest in relationships with consumers and the conditions of the exchange to promote justice. The data revealed two different strategies school districts take to create sustainable relationships.

Fostering an inclusive, safe environment. The first way organizations promote sustainable relationships is through fostering a safe, inclusive environment. Nancy stressed the importance of this, saying, “If everybody's eating then it's ok, I can join my friends. I can eat too. So we just try to provide an environment where it's more conducive. And it's you know it's cool to eat at school.” This begins with breakfast in the classroom, where all students eat meals for free. It continues with choices in the lunchroom and allowing children to talk, eat, and be a part of something. As Aaron stated, “Well feeding people is cultural. So we hope, first off, that they

enjoy being a part of the school culture, being part of our culture that we've tried to create.” He went on to explain the importance of cultivating relationships throughout the school year with students.

We want the cafeteria to be an inviting ... And for some kids it's almost a debilitating. It's just overwhelming. They don't come in the cafeteria because they don't. So I don't know how we fix something like that. We can't lessen the amount of kids that come in there but just try to try to build a relationship. We get to build a relationship. Ten seconds at a time with these kids over the course of the year. So we want it to be an inviting place. We want them to enjoy the food. We want them to feel welcome and we want them to feel a part of something. (Aaron)

Aaron, and others, mentioned little ways service workers do this. It could something as simple as smiling at the children or encouraging them to eat their vegetables. One story, or a recently retired service worker, captured this sentiment. “The kids would come in, and she would have done steamed broccoli that day and the kids wouldn't have raised an eyebrow. And she'd say you're not going to get that? But I made it with love for you.” Connecting to students on the personal level, with a smile or a little love and encouragement, kept students engaged and participating in the program. Even if, as Aaron stated, for ten seconds at a time, service workers are forging important relationships with students and creating a safe, inclusive environment. These interactions, however brief, are important. Reflecting on the emotional labor of the work, Molly stated, “We want to show some professionalism for what we do. We work hard, and we sweat, and it's tiring. But what we do we're passionate about because we're feeding kids.” Service workers commitment to feeding children, and the directors’ commitment to creating an inclusive space are key to cultivating long-term relationships and promoting justice. This is summed up perfectly by Camryn:

Kind of my philosophy is we're creating the environment. So these cafeterias are nutrition education in a way and subconsciously they're learning what they're their plate should look like. So when we're offering salad bars and colorful food and those different meal components which are the food groups basically and then

they get to choose they're learning what a balance plate should look like. Just creating the environment and then working more with in classes and after school programs to teach about nutrition and good eating.

For Camryn, everything connects back to education. The lunchroom creates an environment conducive for learning about food, even subconsciously, to help them be competent consumers. By offering variety and trusting students to make healthful decisions, Camryn demonstrates how creating a safe environment and focusing on relationships can be empower students in their future decision making.

Food literacy. Long-term relationship management also includes the firm investing in the relationship. In this context, it takes to form of food literacy. The goal of food literacy, according to Leah, “is for people to be thoughtful about their food. Think critically about what they're eating and hopefully get them lifelong learning skills. It's supports fitness and physical activity, something has been taken out of our schools.” Scott and Vallen (2019) define food literacy as “knowledge and skills needed to access, choose, prepare, and consume meals” (p. 129). Taken together, Leah along with Scott and Vallen’s (2019) definitions emphasize how food literacy goes beyond product awareness and to building lifelong skills.

There are different strategies to achieving this, school gardens like Nancy and Camryn mentioned, taste tastes like Carol and Camryn described, or dedicated curriculum. But no matter the strategy, my participants echoed the importance of school lunchrooms for building food literacy. Aaron adds, “You're making your building habits right now. No it's okay to try new things that you're not allergic to, it will hurt.” And to capture new consumers, or excite current ones, it takes some creativity. Camryn has an Instagram account where she posts pictures of food. It is all to, as Aaron puts it, “Try to

make it fun and try to make them engaged. It's not just not a tray of food." Engaging these young consumers is crucial, not just to provide nutrition, but to promote justice around food for years to come. "We're creating competent eaters because they get a choice and they're there learning how to feed themselves," Camryn reflected.

Leah emphasized the importance of this, especially in a large district impacting a hundreds of thousands of children, stated she wanted students to have "a whole new awareness of the importance of food learning, how to make good selections, understanding what they're eating, and the ability to think critically about how they eat and why they buy. And showing them enough choices on a tray so their palates will expand. I really think that school nutrition can do that."

Discussion

The original Integrative Justice Model (IJM) was designed to help MNCs achieve more just exchanges with impoverished consumer groups (Santos & Laczniak, 2009). While the normative framework offers values for firms to achieve, and Facca-Miess and Santos (2016) provide an operationalization of the model, little has been done to capture the complexity of actually promoting distributive justice within the market. By expanding the model through a market orchestration lens, I provide an updated framework along with some ways the axiological organizational goals are achieved. Of note, distributive justice is both orchestrated and obstructed by the market system, and empowerment is an essential precursor to a just marketplace. Empowerment is an action that needs constant attention when promoting justice with vulnerable groups, not just a result. Additionally, focusing on long-term relationships versus long-term profit centers the conversation and firm on the consumer, not the institutional structures.

ESSAY 3 – EXPLORING PARENTAL FOOD SOCIALIZATION ON CHILDREN’S RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

In the first two essays, I analyzed how the school context affects children’s food socialization from a theoretical (1) and social justice perspective (2). Because of the complex system of social determinants of children’s relationship with food, I take a different approach in this essay. While consumer literature has discussed how parenting styles affect consumer socialization, in what follows, I explore parental food socialization goals to understand how they shape and empower their children’s eating habits and food choices in and around the home.

Literature has explored how parents affect their children’s consumption (i.e. Ensaff, Cannovon, Crawford, & Barker, 2015; Fitzgerald, Heary, Nixon, & Kelly, 2010; Moore, Wilkie, & Descrochers, 2017; Pechmann, Catlin, & Zheng, 2020). While most studies have focused on feeding in the home, parental food socialization does not happen in a social vacuum (John, 1999; Wills, Danesi, & Kapetanaki, 2016). As noted by Grønhoj and Gram (2020), socialization occurs in a variety of contexts including “shopping, cooking, visiting friends, between mealtime interactions” and the like (p. 78). Because of this, it is important, as marketing scholars, to understand the role parents play in socialization across these contexts and how they empower their children’s relationship with food. To do so, I adopt the UK’s Food Standard Agency phrase ‘food choice’ as defined in a review article by Buttriss et al. (2004) as “the selection of foods for consumption, which results from the competing, reinforcing and interacting influences of a variety of factors” (p. 334). This definition lends itself to the widely acknowledged complexity of social determinants of health and bridges research in social science, business, education, and public health disciplines. Food choice, as an action, happens within the food well-being domain which is composed of food availability, food marketing, food policy, food socialization, and food

literacy (Scott & Vallen, 2019). In this paper, I focus specifically on food socialization and its effect on food choice in and around the home, or how “people learn any number of food-related behaviors including those surrounding eating occasions, food preparation, consumption etiquette, and food safety” (Scott & Vallen, 2019, p. 128). Food literacy, defined as “knowledge and skills needed to access, choose, prepare, and consume meals,” is one of the ways children can be empowered in their food choice, both in the home and wider physical environment (Scott & Vallen, 2019, p. 129).

In exploring food choice, I look at the role parents play in food socialization and choice. Families and the home are the most important factors in early childhood (Fitzgerald et al., 2010; John, 1999). As peers and the school gain influence in middle childhood and adolescence, the home continues to be a pillar in social determinants. Additionally, because of the individualistic tendencies of the United States, we see responsibility shifted from community and societal influences to parents and the home. This is well illustrated in Moore et al.’s (2017) observation that “in our own discussions with child advocates, public policy makers, and concerned marketers, the question of marketing’s culpability in the crisis is central, but is almost always quickly countered by the challenge: ‘Isn’t this really the responsibility of parents, though?’” (p. 846). Thus, in what follows, I discuss parental food socialization in relation to schools, the complexity of social determinants and parents’ roles and explore these roles through a national survey.

A Complex Web of Social Determinants

At a young age, children define themselves and form food preferences in relation to others. As they enter primary school, their circles expand to include peers, teachers and school staff. Schools serve as a bridge between the home and the external environment and are key to learning

in both spheres (Ensaff et al., 2015). While parents are monitoring and guiding children's actions, including eating habits, in the home, they are reinforcing narratives children are exposed to in schools (Pechmann et al., 2020). Schools are increasingly emphasizing children's food literacy through access to healthy food, exposure to unfamiliar foods, and nutrition education (Ensaff et al., 2015). This takes the onus for education off parents and out of the home; though, as previously stated, many still believe parents are responsible for children's learning (Moore et al., 2017). Additionally, Ensaff et al. (2015) found greater food socialization in schools has carry-over effects into the home including increased enthusiasm for cooking, greater food knowledge affecting food shopping and overall confidence. As Story, Neumark-Sztainer, and French (2002) observed in their analysis on influences on adolescent eating, "schools should be an environment where healthful eating behavior is normative, modeled, and reinforced" (p. S46) and they "offer the opportunity to build social support for behavioral changes and change social norms to promote healthful eating" (p. S49). That is, schools serve to both directly influence food socialization as well as reinforce other influences on children's eating.

As discussed in essay 1, schools can both support and negate other influences around children's eating. This complex system of social determinants, or socialization agents, is key to understanding consumers' food preferences and choice. The constellation of intrapersonal, interpersonal, social and environmental as well as cultural factors influences individual behavior and socializes children to be competent consumers for the rest of their lives (Fitzgerald et al., 2010; Grønhøj & Gram, 2020; Kebbe et al., 2017; Story et al., 2002). Marketing and advertising, in turn, affects children's social environment. At two to three years old, children begin recognizing characters and associated food and beverage products (Sadeghirad, Duhaney, Motaghipisheh, Campbell, & Johnston, 2016). Three to four-year old children begin expanding

past deprivation-based eating and evaluating environmental cues about feeding (Patrick & Nicklas, 2005). However, while children are absorbing advertising messages, it is not until they reach seven to eight years old when they are able to discriminate persuasive advertising from programming content (Sadeghirad et al., 2016). However, as Pechmann et al. (2020) pointed out in their discussion of adolescent well-being, parents act as a buffer and provide guidance on peers and media use. Thus, parents play a key role in how children internalize marketing messages from the media, schools, siblings, and the larger community (Grønhoj & Gram, 2020). This is why, in her seminal review of consumer socialization literature, John (1999) states, parental socialization is the most important factor affecting children's, especially very young children's, food choice and behavior. We derive values and meaning families, especially at a young age, and this informs consumers' decision making (Challa, Singh, Fosado, Harjani, & Hota, 2016). In the section that follows, I further explore how parenting practices and goals informs children's food choice and relationships with food.

Parenting Practices and Goals

While most consumer socialization research has focused on parenting style (starting with Carlson & Grossbart, 1988), parenting practices have only just begun being explored in marketing (e.g. Grønhoj & Gram, 2020). Parenting style, or “general approaches of parenting across domains,” differs from practices which are “more specific strategies that parents practice in order to socialize their children for specific goals, for instance by restricting the availability of unhealthy food, or pressuring the child to eat more healthy food” (Grønhoj & Gram, 2020, p. 78). In this essay, I focus specifically on practices rather than style to inform how parents' goals are tied to their children's lived experiences. Parents provide a host of functions when socializing their children including “providing support and stability, modeling good and avoid bad behavior,

monitoring and restricting risky behavior, discussing behavioral risks, providing guidance on peers, providing guidance on media use, offering a religious/spiritual upbringing, investing in development/avoid excess, avoiding overreliance on material rewards and fostering gratitude” (Pechmann et al., 2020, p. 158).

Public health literature uses the term “parenting practices” to reference specific actions that fall under the general constructs of coercive control, structure and autonomy support (Vaughn et al., 2016), or as Veerecken, Legiest, and Bourdeaudhuji (2009) found in their study of parenting practices and associated sixth graders’ food consumption, “pressure, reward, encouragement through, negotiation, catering of children’s demands, permissiveness, avoiding negative modeling, and praise” (p. 233). What these functions have in common is they provide structure, discipline and guidance on children’s learning about food and society as a whole. Instead of focusing on specific actions related to desired consequences, I take a practice theory approach defined as “linked and implicit ways of understanding, saying and doing things...that include practical activities, performances and representations or talk” (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009, p. 31). This perspective allows me to map parent actions toward achieving specific goals to desired outcomes without value judgements of what is “good” and “bad” parenting. While research has shown restrictive parenting has negative health effects (Carlson & Grossbart, 1988; Schau et al., 2009; Veerecken et al., 2009), such as in the context of healthy eating and the obesity epidemic (e.g. Moore et al., 2017, Copperstone, Douglas, Craig, & Jackson, 2018), I am instead focusing on how parents model behavior and empower their children in food choices. Just as with parenting style (Carlson & Grossbart, 1988), parental socialization practices are unlikely to be uniform across or even within family units, depending on each child’s relationships with their family and the world around them. However, by understanding parents’

actions and goals for their children, we can gain an emic perspective on how they ‘practice’ parenting around food and to foster their children’s relationships to world around them.

Parents have control over a lot in children’s lives, especially at a young age. Social determinants such as family structure, parent influence, feeding styles and mealtime structure all have an effect on children’s food choice (Copperstone et al., 2018). Parents control factors like food availability and accessibility which strongly influence their children’s preferences (Patrick & Nicklas, 2005). Families not only provide food in the home, but they influence children’s attitudes, and preferences all while encoding cultural values around food rituals (Story et al., 2002). This has lifelong impacts on children’s food choice, and as children gain greater independence with age, they take lessons learned at home into their food choices into other interactions. While the practice of family meal time is heavily anchored in socioeconomic conditions (Wills et al., 2016), children learn by doing as well as observing others in relation to food (Patrick & Nicklas, 2005). Work schedules; food costs; complex schedules caused by social lives, extracurricular activities, work, and religion; as well as children’s expressed food preferences have served as barriers to parental food socialization, especially among financially strapped families (Schuster, Szpak, Klein, Slkar, & Dickin, 2019; Story et al., 2002). But, as Story et al. (2002) pointed out “increasing frequency of family dinner was associated with more healthful dietary intake patterns, including more fruits and vegetables, less fried food and soft drinks, less saturated and trans fat, and more fiber and micronutrients from food” (p. S44).

Parents have control not only over the foods served in the home (Story et al. 2002, Patrick & Nicklas, 2005), but also portion sizes, mealtimes, and meal structure. Thus, parent involvement in feeding is key to children becoming competent consumers. Copperstone et al. (2018) linked the accessibility of food in and around the home with the increasing obesity

epidemic among US children. Put another way, parents control access to food and food knowledge and through exposure to (un)healthy products, children are making food choices that may lead to weight gain and obesity.

While managing barriers and trying to provide food to children, parents struggle to know how to best achieve their goals. In focus groups with parents, Copperstone et al. (2018) found “parental struggles to do what’s right, and their occasional personal conflicts to go ahead” (p. 36). Many times, parents can have multiple goals within the parental food socialization function. These goals, like those of schools discussed in essay 1, can be conflicting. Grønhøj and Gram (2020) found four main food socialization goals: “(1) Nutrition and Health, (2) Healthy Relationship with Food, (3) Food Assimilation and (4) Self-Regulation and Autonomy. Parents prioritized children's acquisition of a healthy relationship with food which included preserving family relations and harmony, more than strictly attending a nutritious diet, contrasting the focus on the nutritional value of diet usually emphasized by public health authorities” (p. 77). While parents strive to provide nutritious food to children, this goal becomes secondary to other goals. Schuster et al. (2019) found similar trade-offs in their analysis of low-income families. Parents, in their study, took a “life course perspective” while balancing goals such as “encouraging child to eat a nutritious diet, fostering healthful relationships with food, economizing food costs, and avoiding inadequate nutrient intake” (p. 118). Both of these studies point to key barriers in parental food socialization. While health and nutrition are the goal, inadequate financial and food resources obstruct parents’ progress. Additionally, fostering healthy relationships with food was identified as a major goal in both studies, suggesting this is not only important to parents, but it is also a separate construct from nutrition. Put another way, parents’ goals for their children in

terms of nutrition and healthy relationships with food are distinctly different and may come in conflict.

While parents experience barriers to achieving goals, it is important to consider the link between parental food socialization goals and children's relationships with food and food choice. Kebbe et al. (2017) identified autonomy and behavior control, biological and psychological factors, and family and social network as potential barriers to nutrition. However, through intervention, these barriers can become enablers. Parents can empower children to be critical and conscious consumers that make healthy decisions. As Ensaff et al. (2015) noted in their school-based intervention study, "children empowered with food knowledge and skills, perhaps over and above their parents', feel a greater degree of ownership of food, and this feeds into their growing sense of independence over food choices" (p. 463). The home can affect children's decision making both at an interpersonal and environmental level (Kebbe et al., 2017). The knowledge they gain in the home, especially at a young age, is present across influences at the individual, interpersonal (or social environmental), community, and societal (or cultural) level (Story et al., 2002). At an individual level, children's food knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, autonomy, preferences as well as physical hunger influences their food literacy and food choice. Many of these factors are shaped by exposure to foods and mimicking their family's eating habits (Ensaff et al., 2015; Patrick & Nicklas, 2005; Sadeghirad et al., 2016). Interpersonal influences include peers, family and friends and "can affect eating behaviors through mechanisms such as modeling, reinforcement, social support, and perceived norms" (Story et al., 2002, p. S41). Dunaway et al. (2017) found family meals at least five times a week resulted in children consuming significantly more fruit and vegetables and less soda. And while children are forming individual perceptions about food, their experience in the home serves as anchor for

their lived experiences (Fitzgerald et al., 2010; Grønhøj & Gram, 2020; John, 1999). This is because, from a social cognitive perspective, children's environments are co-created and reciprocal in which individuals create and shape their environment (Challa et al., 2016; Story et al., 2002).

Children's physical environment can also play in role in their relationship with food and food choice. Food accessibility and availability as well as physical spaces such as schools, restaurants, convenience stores, shopping malls and restaurants structure how they relate with food (Story et al., 2002). Pechmann et al. (2020) further articulates that schools serve to "encourage academic achievement, offer extracurricular activities, offer effective health education, and provide nutritious meals" (p. 158). These activities may support or contradict parental food socialization goals for children, as they support nutrition and health knowledge as well as potentially create obstacles to scheduling family meals. Additionally, neighborhoods as a collective, or the community occupying the immediate physical space surrounding the home, may "offer structured activities, combat [or perpetuate] poverty, and combat [or perpetuate] violence and crime" (Pechmann et al., 2020, p. 158). Much like the activities in the school, neighborhoods as a physical environment can support or contradict parental food socialization goals in the home. The presence of fast food and convenience stores, which parents aim to provide nutritious meals in the home, can offer adolescents greater flexibility and autonomy (Fitzgerald et al., 2010; Wills et al., 2016) but the accessibility of nutritionally-deficient meals is related to the increasing prevalence of childhood obesity (Copperstone et al., 2018). Dunaway et al. (2017) found children living within 500 meters of fast food restaurants consumed significantly less vegetables. Underlying all other factors are societal influences that operate on a macro, or systems, level. These include media, marketing, supply chains and food production

(which impact availability), cultural norms and values, and politics and regulatory bodies which influences availability and pricing in physical spaces such as stores, schools, and, ultimately, the home (Story et al., 2002).

The complexity of the social environment makes it difficult to isolate the influence of one factor over others. As John (1999) noted and Wills et al. (2016) echoed, children do not grow up in a social vacuum, but are bombarded by competing messages. And while each child's experience is important to consider within the constellation of social determinants, the role of parents has been well documented as a guiding force in food socialization. Parental food socialization goals, following goal-setting theory, direct efforts to specific actions that will help achieve desirable outcomes (Schuster et al., 2019), which in turn affects how children relate to food in the home. To better understand parental food socialization goals, this study examines parents feeding goals in and around the home and actions taken to empower children in their food choices.

Methods

The intended methodology for this essay was in-person interviews recruited through schools. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent social distancing guidelines, data collection was re-imagined as an online survey. While I was able to collect data from more participants through a survey instrument versus interviews, the richness and reliability of data suffered. Survey respondents were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A preliminary screening question, "How many children under the age of 18 do you have in your household?" resulted in 296 potential participants. Further quality checks resulted in 142 participants. Quality checks included relevant responses to qualitative questions and not selecting

all answers on questions prompting “please select all that apply” when such an answer has negligible external validity.

Measures

The survey instrument was composed of a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures, some of which were drawn from previous literature and scales. A summary of measures can be found in the Appendix. Scales of note, parents reported on their children’s participation and help in the initiation, choice and purchase stage of the decision-making process. Three five-point multi-item scales were pulled from Nørgaard, Bruns, Christensen, and Mikkelsen (2007) to measure parent perceptions at each stage with endpoints of always and never. The scales for the initiation stage (3 items, $\alpha=.70$), choice stage, (4 items, $\alpha=.82$), and purchase stage (6 items, $\alpha=.81$) were all strongly correlated. The Healthy Children, Healthy Families Checklist (Dickin, Lent, Lu, Sequeira, & Dollahite, 2012) is composed of six subscales totaling 16 items. One subscale about soda consumption was excluded (2 items) for a total of 14 items. The overall checklist administered to participants ($\alpha=.51$), then, was composed of five subscales: fruits and vegetables (5 items, $\alpha=.61$), dairy (2 items, $\alpha= -.01$), energy-dense foods (2 items, $\alpha=.04$), physical activity (3 items, $\alpha=.41$), and parenting practices (2 items, $\alpha=.10$). Because of the low alpha values for the majority of subscales, the modified 14-item checklist was evaluated in its entirety. A modified version of Nørgaard et al.’s (2007) five-point multi-item scale for children’s influence at the general decision-making stage was used to measure children’s involvement in meal and food choices, meal times, food purchase decisions, snack choices, snack times with endpoints parents decide and children decide (5 items, $\alpha=.62$). Factors that influence parents’ food decision making were drawn from previous research (e.g., Schuster et al., 2019) and expanded through feedback from pretests. Qualitative questions were drawn from previous

research on parental food socialization goals (e.g., Schuster et al., 2019) to better understand goals, barriers, and influences affecting children’s food choice.

Results

Demographics

Participants had a median income ranging from \$40,000 and \$49,999, had received a 4-year college degree, and the median age of 37.3. 65.5% (93) of participants identified as male 33.8% (48) female, and 0.7% (1) answered “prefer not to say.” Households ranged from one to five adults and one to five children. Median adults were 2.26 suggesting most households in the sample represent two-parent or multi-guardian households. The average number of children was 1.41 suggesting most participants had one or two children living in the household as of June 2020.

Influences and Factors Affecting Feeding the Family

Individuals are exposed to a variety of influences that shape the way their family. A large number of participants identify both child and parent preferences as influences affecting their decisions (63 or 44.4% and 54 or 38.0% respectively). The home, however, is larger than just parent and child. Immediate family (45 or 31.7%), friends (33 or 23.2%), and extended family (27 or 19.0%) also influenced parents’ decisions. Further influences include marketing channels such as traditional media (29 or 20.4%) and social media (26 or 18.3%). Parents participants also identified barriers to providing meals such as cost (26 or 18.3%) and access (24 or 16.9%) as influential. To probe how parents consider product attributes, barriers, and preferences when feeding their family, participants identified specific factors that affect feeding the family. Table 2a (below) details the frequency and percentage of participants that identified various factors as important in their food decision making. Key factors include nutrition (81 or 57.0%), taste (62 or

43.7%), freshness (56 or 39.4%), and child preferences (47 or 33.1%), which were identified as important by at least one third of participants. When asked which factor is most important, there was a significant difference in answers ($\chi^2 = 179.51, p < .001$). Specifically, 35.9% of participants (51) stated nutrition was the most important factor when feeding their family, followed by organic (17, 12.0%), cost (12, 8.5%), taste (11, 7.7%), and freshness (11, 7.7%). While nutrition was the primary driving factor, it seems product attributes, preferences, and cost are secondary drivers of behavior. Table 2b (below) shows the frequency and percentage of participants that rated each factor as most important.

Table 2. Factors Affecting Parents' Food Decision Making

Factor	a		b		c	
	# Consider	% Consider	# Most Important	% Most Important	# Consider School Meals	% Consider School Meals
Cost	40	28.2	12	8.5	19	13.4
Nutrition	81	57.0	51	35.9	71	50.0
Organic	42	29.6	17	12.0	40	28.2
Non-GMO	12	8.5	4	2.8	6	4.2
No artificial flavors or ingredients	16	11.3	10	7.0	16	11.3
Local	22	15.5	3	2.1	10	7.0
Grocery store availability	37	26.1	4	2.8	15	10.6
Taste	62	43.7	11	7.7	44	31.0
Food allergies	29	20.4	6	4.2	23	16.2
Preferences	38	26.8	5	3.5	21	14.8
Child preferences	47	33.1	5	3.5	29	20.4
Variety	39	27.6	3	2.1	27	19
Freshness	56	39.4	11	7.7	35	24.6
Other					5	3.5

The most common reasons given for why participants chose factors was health and nutrition. Qualitative answers suggested nutrition is a higher-level construct than some of the other secondary factors on the list, such as organic, non-GMO, no artificial flavors and ingredients, etc. Consumers are presuming these attributes or labels signify a certain level of

nutrition or quality (as shown in Berry, Burton & Howlett, 2017) and thus foods with these labels are “healthy” and “nutritious.” In a presentation to the Food and Drug Law Institute, Colas, a senior associate with Hogan Lovells (2018) notes ambiguity surrounding many claims including “no artificial ingredients,” “non-GMO,” “made with _____,” and “real” or “pure.” Many of these have no regulatory definition and the FDA continues to work on regulatory guidances and rules to catch up to marketing claims. Another reason participants chose given factors was to display affection for family members. This affection could take the form of nourishing their family; wanting to make family members, especially children, happy; and to foster and maintain strong relationships between family members. Schuster et al. (2019) similarly identified the psychosocial-oriented goals of “having family meals to enhance family relationships” and “helping children feel secure” as important considerations for low-income parents (p. 118).

Children’s Involvement in Food Choices

One way parents can empower children is by allowing them to make independent decisions about their food choices. While intuitively most parents share decision making power with their children, there was some variability between activities. Further exploration of the means reveal children have the most control over snack choices ($M=2.94$, $SD=1.11$) and least control surrounding meal and food choices ($M=3.65$, $SD=0.97$), meal time ($M=3.67$, $SD=0.94$), and food purchase decisions ($M=3.62$, $SD=1.09$). A measure of children’s participation and help throughout the decision-making process yielded similar results across all stages (initiation stage: $M=3.36$, $SD=0.79$; choice stage: $M=3.15$, $SD=0.95$; purchase stage: $M=3.26$, $SD=0.78$). Means of composite measures ranged from 3.06 to 3.43. While this could be another example for the even or odd number scales debate, the repetition of shared responsibility across scales suggests children’s ownership throughout the decision-making process is truly neutral, or as was

quantified in the survey, 41-60% of the time. Self-reported children's ages were coded based on Piaget's stages. If participants reported children across multiple stages, they were excluded from the post-hoc analysis. A MANOVA was conducted to measure the differences between Piagetian stages (Wilks' Lambda=.92, $F(9,216.75)=0.82$, ns). Piagetian stages did not have a significant impact on reported children's involvement across all stages (initiation: $F(3,91)=0.19$; choice: $F(3,91)=0.55$; purchase: $F(3,91)=.75$). This suggests while parenting practices may differ, parenting styles and parents' subsequent sharing in decision making do not change over a child's lifetime.

Children Outside the Home

Children are exposed to a variety of influences outside of the home. As discussed in essay 1, these influences can both reinforce and contradict what children are learning from other sources, including the home. One space children are exposed to food messaging is in the grocery store. McNeal (1969) articulated that children's interactions with the "store man" is one of their first exercises of consumer independence. Pre-pandemic, participants went to the grocery store one to three times per week ($M=2.73$, $SD=0.98$ coded 2=about once a week, 3=2-3 times per week). Parents brought their children with them to the store about half the time ($M=2.68$, $SD=1.07$ coded 2=61-80%, 3=41-60%). Again, there was no difference between Piagetian stages (Wilks' Lambda=.94, $F(6,180)=1.02$, ns) as well as no difference across grocery shopping frequency ($F(3,91)=0.82$, ns) or children grocery shopping with their parents ($F(3,91)=1.02$, ns).

Another influence outside of the home is the school, discussed heavily in essays 1 and 2. Children represented in the sample primarily attended public (65 or 45.8%) or private (64 or 45.1%) schools. Other school scenarios included charter (11 or 7.7%), boarding (16 or 11.3%), Montessori or similar school (6 or 4.2%), home school (11 or 7.7%), day care facility (4 or

2.8%), family or other babysitter (8 or 5.6%) or stay-at-home parent (9 or 6.3%). Most children attend a conventional daytime school setting that would provide a meal and/or snack. Thus, just as various factors affect families eating in the home, these factors can also influence children's eating in schools. When asked what factors affected if children participated in school meals, results were similar to feeding in the home. Nutrition (71 or 50.0%) and taste (44 or 31.0%) were the most noted factors affecting children's participation. A full report of factors can be found above in Table 2c (p. 64). Of note, while all meals at public charter schools are subsidized through the NSLP and further subsidies exist for children's families that fall below certain socioeconomic thresholds, cost was only identified by 19 (13.4%) participants.

Parental Goals for Food Socialization

Previous literature has focused on parental food socialization goals (e.g., Schuster et al., 2019; Grønhøj & Gram, 2020). When participants were asked about their goals for their children's eating habits, common answers focused on "health" or "healthy" food (63), "nutrition" (21), "good" food (14), and eating "fruits" (13) and "vegetables" (20). Parents identified nutrition and health as their main goal for food socialization derived from public health information on "healthy" eating and nutrition (similar to Grønhøj & Gram, 2020). The contextual cues in answers surrounding these key words pointed to parents doing this through food assimilation and self-regulation and autonomy, other food socialization goals articulated by Grønhøj and Gram (2020). Assimilation in goal-setting emphasizes the importance of balance in meals and aligning children's eating habits with parents and emerges in the data in comments like, "Everything in moderation. If they're eating something bad for them they need to balance it with some good for them." Self-regulation and autonomy reflect children's growing independence and parents' acknowledgement that children will soon be fully independent

consumers. This goal emerged in the data in statements like “I want them to be able to make very healthy food decisions when they grow older,” “I want her to select healthy things to eat even when I am not present,” and wanting their child to “learn how to cook for herself.” While all these goals emphasize nutrition and health, the goals identified by participants portray underlying secondary goals, or a “why” for the goal.

When probed why these goals are important, participants indicated healthy and healthy eating (71) and investment in growth and the future (38). Healthy eating was rooted in fear and what children would lose from not eating healthy, demonstrated by mentions of malnutrition, lack of nutrients, and health issues such as diabetes. Inversely, a focus on growth, development and forming habits represented what could be gained through nutrition, demonstrated by comments like “I need them to eat healthy now so they can carry it over to adulthood,” “for them to carry them on to when they are making their own food decisions when older and continue to promote a healthy living style.” When parents focus on growth-oriented goals, they view parental food socialization as an investment instead of an intervention to prevent poor nutritional outcomes in the future, as with goals rooted in health.

Parents also deal with many obstacles in achieving their goals. Participants identified advertisements, friends, fast food and junk food availability and preferences, and separated spouses as external influences detrimental to their goals. The influence of traditional and social media was mentioned multiple times, the most pointed comment being “the media makes her think she’s fat and she isn’t.” Other commonly identified barriers include cost and time. Child-specific barriers include getting children to actively participate in eating rituals, difficulty forming and maintain habits, and children being picky eaters. An underlying assumption within children’s specific preferences is the idea that healthy is not tasty, and parents had to balance

feeding their children *anything* even if its unhealthy versus them not eating at all because they do not like the taste of healthy foods. One participant lamented that their child “absolutely hates almost all fruits and vegetables, so I’m stuck giving him less healthy foods just because I want him to eat.”

Healthy Children, Healthy Families Checklist

Finally, to better understand how participants prioritized healthy eating and activities in their families, individuals completed a modified version of Dickin et al.’s (2012) Healthy Children, Healthy Families Checklist. The composite mean for the entire scale is 3.17 (SD=0.52) suggesting there is little variability across scale items. Means and SDs as well as their assigned subscale from the original checklist can be found in table 2 below.

Table 3. HCHF Means and SDs

Factor	Endpoints	M	SD	Subscale
Fruit consumption	Once in a while: Every day	3.18	1.37	Fruits and veg.
Vegetable consumption	Once in a while: Every day	3.05	1.45	Fruits and veg.
Child’s vegetable consumption	Once in a while: Every day	3.08	1.43	Fruits and veg.
Child’s fruit consumption	Once in a while: Every day	2.96	1.49	Fruits and veg.
Fruit availability	Almost never: Almost always	3.59	1.41	Fruits and veg.
Physical activity	Once in a while: Every day	3.02	1.47	Activity
Child’s physical activity	Once in a while: Every day	3.07	1.44	Activity
Time spent watching TV, video games, internet, etc. (r)	7+ hours each day: Less than 1 hour each day	2.87	0.97	Activity
Dairy consumption	Never: 3+ times each day	3.20	1.18	Dairy
Child’s dairy consumption	Never: 3+ times each day	3.00	1.26	Dairy
Child’s exposure to dine-out options (i.e. takeout, fast food) (r)	Every day: Once in a while	3.30	1.39	Energy-dense foods
Junk food availability (r)	Almost always: Almost never	3.07	1.39	Energy-dense foods
Eat together with children	Almost never: Every day	3.65	1.01	Parenting practices
Allow children to decide quantity	Almost never: Almost always	3.33	1.34	Parenting practices

One thing to note is means for the energy-dense foods subscale not significantly different the overall scale (dine-out options: $t(141) = -1.06$, ns; junk food availability: $t(141) = 0.80$, $p = ns$; adjusted composite (excluding energy-dense foods items): $M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.57$). From a health

perspective, it is concerning that junk food availability and exposure to fast food and other dine-out options are commonplace. However, technology use and consumption sits significantly below the mean ($t(141)= 3.77, p<.001$; adjusted composite (excluding technology use item): $M=3.19, SD=0.54$). This means participants' children spent 3-4 hours each day watching television, using a computer or smartphone, or playing video games, and, with the recent quarantine, this number has assuredly increased farther.

Just as psychosocial-oriented goals are central to parental food socialization, we are reminded of their importance again in this scale. The highest mean ($M=3.65, SD=1.01$) is for parents or other adults eating with their children, suggesting parents are prioritizing the social aspect of mealtime and eating with their children over half the week. Allowing children to decide how much food to eat, a measure of parenting practices aligned with self-regulation and autonomy goals, is also above the composite mean ($M=3.33, M=1.34$). Interestingly, but not surprisingly, positive parenting practices is significantly or near significantly different than overall scale (eat together: $t(141)= -6.18, p<.001$; children decide quantity: $t(141)= -1.85, p=.067$; adjusted composite (excluding parenting practices items): $M=3.12, SD=0.55$).

Discussion

Parental food socialization is influenced by a variety of factors and competing goals. Just as students must manage multiple competing narratives in the school (as discussed in essay 1), parents navigate a complex web of social determinants while managing multiple goals related to children's relationship with food and subsequent food choice. As Schuster et al. (2019) observed in their interviews with low-income parents, there are tradeoffs between nutrition and psychosocial-oriented goals. Parental food socialization goals can also be classified using Grønhøj and Gram's (2020) framework in which parents juggle goals related to nutrition and

health, children's relationship with food, food assimilation, and self-regulation and autonomy. Parenting practices structure decisions around how to feed the family and reach desired outcomes.

The most common goal for parental food socialization both in the home and community settings was nutrition and underlying product attributes; such as organic, non-GMO, etc. In the data, underlying mechanism of these nutrition-oriented goals took two forms. Some participants that focused on nutrition did so in fear of children lacking something, be in nutrition, sustenance, or long-term health. Other participants focused on nutrition as an investment into their children, their futures, and future generations. In both cases, nutrition is synonymous with "healthy" food, a term not regulated in the United States and commonly defined colloquially by nutrient content. There were also participants that focused on the concept the balance, much like Grønhøj and Gram's (2020) observation that sometimes parents prioritizing children having a healthy relationship with food and the family comes at the cost of nutrition. While cost is an important factor identified in literature and the data, less than 10% of participants identified it as the most important factor when feeding the family. It is worth noting average household income of the sample was \$40,000-\$49,999 and capturing a sample across a wider range of socioeconomic statuses could impact this finding.

To further encourage self-regulation and autonomy, participants shared responsibility over food and snack choices, as well as snack and meal times with their children. Children were empowered by parents to participate across the decision-making phases; however, parents rarely relinquish full control aligning with parenting functions like providing support and modeling behavior. Interestingly, while studies have children at different developmental stages, there were no differences in children's help and participation or children grocery shopping across the

Piagetian stages of development suggesting parenting styles and associated practices do not change considerably over time.

While nutrition was the primary driver of parents' decision-making around food, psychosocial-oriented goals also played an important role in parental food socialization. Parents are the most important influences in early childhood (Fitzgerald et al., 2010; John, 1999). The present survey shows this is not only because they are guiding children's food choices and helping them foster a healthy relationship with food, but parents are key to fostering a safe home environment for growing, learning, and exploring food. The home serves as an anchor for children's lived experiences outside of the home at the grocery store, school, and virtually as children evaluate advertisements online. It is in this space parents buffer and translate other influences, and children learn the cultural dimensions of food at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, and cultural level. The home, and the positive affect individuals feel for their family, represents a key component underlying decision making. This "affection" is displayed by wanting to make family members, especially children, happy; nourishing the family; cultivating relationships; and providing healthy meals for the family. While no outcomes were measured in the current survey, these qualitative responses suggest affection toward one's family should be considered by scholars as a potential construct in family decision making and further research needs to be done to understand the role the home plays in emotionally anchoring parents' socialization practices.

CONCLUSION

The three essays elucidated above serve to demonstrate the complexity still to be explored within the consumer socialization sub-field with implications for marketing, education, public policy, public health, and sociology scholars and practitioners. Specifically, they explore how a constellation of socialization agents shape children's relationships with food. At a phenomenological level, the compilation of essays presented in this dissertation shows that variables or actors cannot be analyzed in isolation.

The first essay serves to build an understanding of layered narratives within the school lunchroom context and how they interact to influence children's learning about food. Essay two explores how the school lunchroom context can promote justice in children's feeding and learning, thus expanding the applicability of the Integrative Justice Model to create more just market interactions within federal programs, government agencies, and the like. Essay three explores parental food socialization goals and motivations to inform how parents inform children's food choice and relationship with food in the home and beyond.

At a philosophical level, the goal of my dissertation is to offer a critique of food socialization practices in school and the home. It highlights the tension between cultural narratives, pulling frontline service workers and marketers to provides good and services to provide for consumers while constraining them from providing these same services. Put another way, the research presented above demonstrates how the body politic can be controlled and politicized, such as in the example of school nutrition programs. When politics and science align with what is best for the body, we see productive social change encouraging healthy food choices and relationships with food. However, when misaligned, we see a society riddled with contradictions. These contractions include tradeoffs between quantity and quality, minimum

qualifications for reimbursement, and rigid cutoffs for what constitutes a reimbursable meal. However, as Baker et al. (2020) points out, we cannot view these federal programs dichotomously. Instead, as a society, just as the manager in individual programs must evaluate, we must anchor ourselves in the axiological goals that guide our decision making. In a sense, we are pinning the health of the individual against the health of the body politic. Thus, the health of the individual, and the micronutrients that physical body receives, is more important than the physical body. To reorient policy to the body politic would take qualitative measures and compromises on nutritional qualifications of a complete meal to be more inclusive. This would not only provide nutrition to a wider range of students, but it would also promote greater distributive justice and learning about food and consumption practices. Abstractly, the question becomes whether it is important to meet individual needs or offer, at least partial, needs satisfaction to the collective? As an individualistic society, the United States errs toward the side of the body. However, for the health and longevity of the nation state as a whole, to see a more prosperous country in the years to come, it must invest in more just practices for all consumers, not just those who reach rigid guidelines of what is and is not deemed worthy.

The complexity of societal narratives, from the cultural, community, and interpersonal level, demonstrates the importance of consumer education at a young age. Children must discern meaning and make consumption decisions, even before ending formalized schooling. Without consumer in the school and home, they are left astray to translate marketing messages for themselves. Schools, parents, retail stores and the like serve to expose children to an array of perspectives and expect them to decipher what is right and wrong. In a just marketplace, all actors act on behalf on the consumers to empower them with good choices, no matter what they choose. Unfortunately, in practice, this is not the case. Schools and other public spaces are

becoming increasingly commercialized. Children are exposed to television, video games and social media at high rates, as shown in essay three. Thus, it is important, from a critical perspective, to think of the consequences of our commercialization of these spaces on these young, vulnerable consumers. The marketing systems put in place must promote justice and learning over corporate profits. Then, children will be able to make informed decisions. By educating children, we can invest in a future generation of competent consumers that will foster a fairer marketplace for firms and consumers alike.

There is still work to be done. Future work should explore the longitudinal effect schools have on children's food socialization and the role service workers have in facilitating learning. Additionally, from a marketing perspective, the role of distributive justice in socialization contexts should be explored in practice from both the firm and consumer perspective. While not touched on much in these essays, there is little known about stigma and consumer shaming at a young age and the lasting effects. Food socialization goes beyond a single agent or actor. Instead, children's food choices must be considered as a cultural phenomenon, interacting with different forces to shape children's lasting relationships with food. Not only does it affect their nutritional intake in the short term, food socialization impacts their decision making into adulthood. To create competent consumers as a society, we must invest in food literacy at a young age to a healthier future tomorrow.

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APPENDIX

Table 4. Survey Items

Question	Notes
Who or what influences the way your children eat?	Drawn from Schuster et al. (2019)
Specifically, what factors do you consider when feeding your family?	
What is the most important factor when feeding your family?	
Why is this the most important factor when feeding your family?	
How involved are your children in the following activities: meal and food choices, meal times, food purchase decisions, snack choices, snack times	Drawn from Nørgaard et al. (2007) Endpoints Children decide: Parents decide
How often did you go grocery shopping before the pandemic?	Scale Points: Less than once per week; About once a week; 2-3x per week; 4-5x per week; Once per day Multiple times per day
How often did you take your child(ren) grocery shopping with you?	Never (0-20%): Always (80-100%)
When making decisions, how often do children: express what food they want to purchase, choose fruits or vegetables to buy, choose food to buy, write items on the shopping list, look for information in sales materials/in store promotion, find good food offers, compare prices on food products, place items on checkout counter, carry shopping bag, locate products in shops, bag food products, push shopping cart or carry shopping basket, choose grocery store	Drawn from Nørgaard et al. (2007) Endpoints Never (0-20%): Always (80-100%)
What is your goal for your child(ren)'s eating habits?	Drawn from Schuster et al. (2019)
Why is your goal for your child(ren)'s eating habits important to you?	Drawn from Schuster et al. (2019)
What is the biggest obstacle to achieving your child(ren)'s eating goals?	Drawn from Schuster et al. (2019)
What factors are important when deciding if your child(ren) will eat school-provided meals? Select all that apply.	
Healthy Children, Healthy Families Behavior Checklist (modified – subscale excluded from survey)	14-item 5-point scale Drawn from Dickin et al. (2012)

To: Ashley Adele Deutsch
WCOB 302

From: Douglas James Adams, Chair
IRB Committee

Date: 01/25/2018

Action: **Expedited Approval**

Action Date: 01/25/2018

Protocol #: 1709074219

Study Title: School Programs Effect on Student Well-Being

Expiration Date: 12/19/2018

Last Approval Date:

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Jeff B Murray, Investigator

To: Ashley Adele Deutsch
WCOB 302

From: Douglas James Adams, Chair
IRB Committee

Date: 12/06/2018

Action: **Expedited Approval**

Action Date: 11/30/2018

Protocol #: 1709074219R001

Study Title: School Programs Effect on Student Well-Being

Expiration Date: 12/19/2019

Last Approval Date: 12/20/2018

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Jeff B Murray, Investigator

To: Ashley Adele Deutsch
WCOB 302

From: Douglas James Adams, Chair
IRB Expedited Review

Date: 06/02/2020

Action: **Exemption Granted**

Action Date: 06/02/2020

Protocol #: 2005266853

Study Title: Parent impact on family eating

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Jeff B Murray, Investigator