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Poetics of Black Foodscapes: A Qualitative Study Exploring Black Culinary Epistemologies in
the Food Practices of Urban-dwelling African American Women Experiencing Food Apartheid

by

Armani Stewart

Under the Direction of Sarita Davis, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2023

ABSTRACT

African American women's nonadherence to standard food practices are overwhelmingly represented as a risk factor in their disproportionate rates of diet-related health conditions. Much of this misrepresentation stems from the lack of engagement with the cultural food knowledge that exists within this population's food practices. The purpose of this ethnographic study is to explore black culinary epistemologies in the food practices of urban-dwelling African American women experiencing food apartheid. Photovoice is conducted with five African American women between the age of 18-65 who reside in a United States Department of Agriculture Economic Resource Service (USDA ERS) identified urban food desert of Georgia. Common themes and expressive language chosen by participants are identified and discussed. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the data. Black Feminist Theory framework is used to guide this study.

INDEX WORDS: African American women, Intersectionality, Black food cultures, Food practices, Food apartheid, Black geographies, Health disparities

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the Food Practices of Urban-dwelling African American Women Experiencing Food Apartheid

by

Armani Stewart

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Office of Graduate Services
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
May 2023

DEDICATION

I dedicate this first and foremost to my ancestors who worked in and through me throughout this entire process. I carry you with me, always.

I dedicate this to black women who have been and continue to be our culture bearers and sustainers of black life despite every conceivable barrier erected to prevent otherwise.

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To the entire Africana Studies department, I thank you for the knowledge, support, opportunities, and encouragement that has transformed me on a personal, academic, and professional level. I am deeply proud and humbled to have shared space with such brilliant minds who have each uniquely imparted a gem into me that I will carry with me, always.

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PROLOGUE

Up until recently, I had a paradoxical relationship with food, which resulted in an unhealthy food behavior. Growing up in a city like New Orleans, a city distinguished for its culinary culture, I gained a visceral connection to the cultural foods prepared by the hands of the women in my family. This intimate connection I possessed with food was compromised by witnessing the women in my family suffer with numerous health issues, like diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension. Overtime, I began to attribute the consumption of these cultural foods to poor health. My internalization of this causal relationship was the bedrock for the development of binge-eating behavior in me, a behavior that transcended the act of merely purging my body of this food that I loved but required the simultaneous and inextricable act of purging my body of my culture to achieve this ideal standard of health. My complex body-and-food-relationship initiated my pursuit of my initial research topic upon entering my master's program: to examine binge-eating behavior to understand African American women's body and food relationship. As I advanced in my Africana Studies master's program, however, I became acclimated to this critical principle of *do no harm*, particularly as it pertains to the ways in which black bodies have been, both historically and presently, engaged in research. Upon this consciousness, I became aware of the self and collective harm I would be committing in adopting a biopolitical lens to approach this research question, contributing to the harmful practice of beginning my research at what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes as *secondly* rather than examining what happens first. In my case, premising my research from *secondly* furthered a narrative of African American women's food behaviors as pathological and bereft of any agency. And there exists, unfortunately, a body of literature that supports the practices and ideas that precipitate from this *secondly* narrative. Amidst this realization, it was incumbent of me to reorient my personal and

academic pursuit of decolonizing the lens through which I understood my food behaviors. This would eventually allow me to, instead, unearth the genesis of this population's food behaviors within its individual, historical, social, and cultural context, and ultimately reconcile my "either/or" stance between the consumption of culturally relevant foods and sustenance of health.

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter delineates the background of the research problem and includes a problem statement, purpose of the study, and its significance to its respective disciplines. The study's design, guiding research questions, and theoretical framework are briefly discussed. The chapter concludes with operational terms, researcher assumptions, and study's scope, limitations, and delimitations.

1.1 Background

Health conditions, most notably obesity and diet-related health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and stroke, are recognized by the field of public health as one of the foremost problems in the U.S. Public health officials and critical food scholars have identified the issue of food insecurity in areas of the U.S. where residents have limited to no food access to fresh and affordable food sources (USDA, 2009; Tate, 2018) as a contributor in these rates of diet-related health conditions. Communities who are experiencing food insecurity by way of limited to no access to fresh and affordable food sources are listed as food deserts by the Economic Research Service (ERS), a department of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA, 2009).

Food deserts in the U.S. are composed of residents who have lower levels of education, lower incomes, and higher rates of unemployment (Bower et al., 2014); African American communities make up disproportionate rates of these food deserts. "The prevalence of food insecurity is nearly 3 times as high among African American (21.2%) compared to White households (8.1%)" (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2014; Hastert et al., 2021). Due to supermarket redlining, "one out of every five Black households are situated in a food desert, with few grocery

stores, restaurants, and farmers markets" (Kwate, 2008); similarly, food swamps are more likely to be in poor zip code areas and neighborhoods with a higher proportion of lower-income African American residents (Dutko et al., 2003; Freeman, 2007; Tate, 2018). Despite these statistics, the racial composition of communities has been minimized as an identifier in rates of food deserts, as indicated in the absence of race in the ERS's mapping tool used to identify food deserts (Reese, 2019). The term 'food apartheid' is an emerging term in the field aims to replace the inadequate application of the term 'food desert' to describe the low-access food environments where African Americans disproportionately reside (Brones, 2018). While the latter term acknowledges the issue of access to fresh and affordable food sources in these food environments, it simplifies the kaleidoscopic nature of these foodscapes by obscuring the ways in which structural processes of racism and classism become spatialized matters, coalescing to influence the health of African Americans (Tung et al., 2017; Chinn et al., 2021).

Despite only comprising 12.4% of the U.S. population, the prevalence of diet-related health conditions amongst African Americans is stark. The percentage of hypertension amongst the non-Hispanic black population is 57.1%, compared to 43.6 % amongst the non-Hispanic white population (Ostchega and Nguyen, 2020); the percentage of diabetes is 12.4 % in the non-Hispanic black population, compared to 7.8 % in the non-Hispanic white population (CDC, 2022); the percentage of stroke occurrences are 4% in the non-Hispanic black population, compared to the 2.7% in the non-Hispanic white population (CDC, 2021). While the non-Hispanic white population has higher diagnosed cases of heart disease, most likely denoting their higher levels of accessibility to healthcare, the non-Hispanic black population mortality rate by way of heart disease is higher (212) compared to the non-Hispanic white population (168.1) (CDC., 2021). Obesity has been identified as a risk factor that increases the rates of these food-

related health conditions, with 76.1% of the non-Hispanic black population 20 years of age and older characterized as overweight or obese, in comparison to the non-Hispanic white population (69.8%) (National Center for Health Statistics, 2018).

These diet-related health disparities have been particularly hypervisible since the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic (Lopez et al., 2021). The rates of hypertension, diabetes, and obesity are higher among low-income, minority populations, all three of which have been associated with worse outcomes among patients with severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection. COVID-19 has both illuminated the stark rates of preexisting health disparities and, as a comorbidity, intensified the preexisting inequitable social and health conditions experienced by many Black, Hispanic, and American Indian persons living in the U.S. (Center for Disease Control (CDC), 2020; Lopez et al., 2021). However, with the pandemic being an ongoing health crisis, the rates in health disparities amongst the African American population, and its correlation to COVID-19, have not been fully examined in studies (Morales et al., 2021).

The disproportionate rates of diet-related morbidity and mortality rates amongst African Americans is most strikingly evident across gender lines (Tung et al., 2017; Chinn et al., 2021), and underscores the forms of spatialized gendered racism markedly experienced by African American women.

Black women earn on average \$5,500 less per year and experience higher unemployment and poverty rates (24%) than the U.S. average for women (14%). Further, black women are more likely to be the head of household (27%) than their white female counterparts (12%), effectively supporting more dependents with fewer resources. Additionally, black women live in neighborhoods that are more racially segregated and have lower property values than their white

counterparts (Black demographics, 2020; Chinn et al., 2021). These socioeconomic disparities are not unrelated to the rates in diet-related health disparities in this population. While on average, black women are younger (36.1 years) than U.S. women overall (39.6 years), the prevalence of many food-related health conditions are higher in this population. The percentage of hypertension amongst non-Hispanic black women are 56.7% in comparison to her white female (36.7%) (Ostchega and Nguyen, 2020); the percentage of diabetes amongst non-Hispanic black women are 12.7% in comparison to her white female counterpart (7.5%) (CDC, 2022); in rates of stroke occurrences, non-Hispanic black women are twice as likely to experience a stroke than non-Hispanic white women (CDC, 2021), and have higher heart disease mortality rates (CDC, 2021). In rates of obesity, non-Hispanic black women are characterized as having the highest rates of obesity or being overweight, compared to other groups in the United States, with a percentage of 80.6% compared to 70.6% amongst non-Hispanic black men, 64.8% amongst non-Hispanic white women, and 75.3% amongst non-Hispanic white men (National Center for Health Statistics, 2018), and as such are overwhelmingly represented as the face of the obesity “epidemic.”

Synthesizing demographic and health data at the intersection of geography, race, and gender, then, is critical to understanding how food apartheid and diet-related health conditions acutely impacts the bodies of black women.

In response to these issues of diet-related health disparities and food apartheid, the disciplines of food studies and public health nutrition have intervened; albeit with, what is described by Kimberle’ Crenshaw (1991, 2008) as a singular-focused, blanket relief that do not, alone, have all of the proper tools to address the intersecting identities in the population it’s supposedly aiding.

Food justice movements have focused on the issue of food access and have resulted to simply bringing in “healthy” food sources to African American communities defined as food deserts. These food efforts have largely excluded insight into the micro-level decision-making processes and strategies that African American residents employ to access food in the context of constrained personal and neighborhood resources (Reese, 2019).

Public health nutrition initiatives have taken a similar approach to the issue by applying a healthism lens to critique African American women’s nonadherence to national health guidelines, in fidelity to their traditional or cultural modes of food preparation and consumption. This “outsider” critique takes on the face of anti-blackness as it frames this population’s food behaviors, therefore culture, as a primal reason for the diet-related health disparities that exist amongst this population (James, 2004; Guthman and DuPuis, 2006). This is a particular issue for a population like African Americans who, amidst iterations of (dis)placement into surveilled environments, with food being a primal mechanism of bodily control, not only has a unique relationship with geography and food, but unique culture(s) that were produced out of this space-making. The neoliberal-charged master narrative of healthism has facilitated the notion that food behavior is simply a matter of choice rather than a reflection of processes of spatial racialization (Guthman and DuPuis, 2006).

There is, however, an emerging body of literature that is charting alternative trajectories from practices and ideas that trickle down from this ahistorical, ‘healthism’ narrative. Contributors of this counter literature are filling in gaps by employing unique frameworks that recognize the importance of intersectionality and culturally appropriate frameworks, as well as the use of community based participatory research (CBPR) methods in examining the food and health issues that African American women face. This emerging body of literature, of which

includes significant study findings, suggests that food practices, particularly amongst a population who has a unique sociohistorical relationship to land and agriculture within the U. S., are layered with individual, cultural, geographical, social, historical, and health meanings; as such, these layers must be considered in research, policies, and practices around African American women's food practices (Beoku-Betts, 1995; McCutcheon, 2019; Wade, 2017; Jones, 2018; Harper, 2020; White, 2017; McKittrick, 2000, 2006; Williams-Forson, 2006, 2022; Navarro, 2022).

1.2 Problem Statement and Purpose

The singular-focused lens commonly taken to define health as it relates to African American women's bodies and behaviors reproduces the idea of a causal relationship that exists between consumption of black cultural foodways and health disparities. Employing intersectional, culturally-appreciate frameworks and using community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods in food and public health nutrition initiatives requires not only an acknowledgement and critique of the multiplicative, intersectional, and oppressive inequities that are embedded in the social conditions and experiences of populations like African American women (Jones, 2018), but also the centering of this population's voice. The overwhelming absence of these frameworks and CBPR methodologies in many food justice and public health nutrition policies and practices has resulted in top-down initiatives that perpetuate the erasure of African American women's lived experiences and cultural health knowledge around food. As such, "despite recent mandates by the National Institute of Health (NIH) to enhance the inclusion of women and racial/ethnic groups that are underrepresented in biomedical research projects,

black women continue to be underrepresented and the resulting interventions may not reflect the unique needs of this population (Chinn et al., 2021, p. 215).

Byllye Avery offers a similar statement concerning this issue:

Frequently, we take the “public” out of public health and allow the practice to become extremely narrow, limited to experts telling the public what's best for them. But in reality, there are not enough public health educators to treat and teach the public. This means that people—the public—must participate in a much more active way (2002).

This study is situated within the emerging body of literature that is contributing to filling in those gaps. The purpose of this ethnographic study is to explore black culinary epistemologies in the food practices of urban-dwelling African American women experiencing food apartheid.

Inherent in black culinary epistemologies are knowledge surrounding food, its preparation, consumption, and health implications, a system produced through black space making, or black food geographies, informed by the spatial food politics of food apartheid.

1.3 Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of this study, the following research questions are used to guide the study:

1. How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive vulnerabilities in their food practices?
2. How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive strengths in their food practices that draw from black culinary epistemologies?

3. How can black culinary epistemologies be used to promote more community-centered, intersectional, and culturally competent food and health policies and practices?

The first question draws from the Black Feminist Theory framework tenets of *concrete experience as a criterion of meaning* and *use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims* and is designed to explore African American women's intersectional experiences with race, gender, class, and geography, and the ways in which these factors have influenced their food practices.

The second question draws from Black Feminist Theory framework tenets of *concrete experience as a criterion of meaning*, *use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims*, and *an ethic of caring* and is designed to explore the ways in which African American women have, both historically and presently, contested these various social and spatial constraints. Through a strengths-based, knowledgeable, and caring lens, this question seeks to better understand African American women's perceptions of their food practices, the meanings they ascribe to these food practices, and the cultural food knowledge evidenced in these food practices.

The third questions draw from Black Feminist Theory framework tenet of *an ethic of responsibility* and is designed to explore how the indigenous food knowledge retained by African American women could be mobilized to inform food justice and public health nutrition initiatives aiming to address the health inequities that exist amongst this population.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Developing culturally appropriate communication and outreach programs has been one of the objectives proposed in the disciplines of food and public health nutrition to address issues of health disparities that exist in high-risk populations like African American women. The critical issues highlighted in the existing studies on this study's topic suggest that the food preparation methods of black women should be explored as means to fill in the existing gaps in these nutrition initiatives. By centering, interpreting, and documenting the lived experiences of African American women, through a Black feminist lens and using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method, this study fosters a unique approach to addressing issues that are specific to black women and appropriate to understanding the thought and behavior of this population. As such, this study provides a unique contribution to the existing literature on this topic. The significance of this study, by centering the embodied knowledge of African American women, as well as articulating and documenting these experiences through a multidisciplinary lens and community-grounded methodology, could increase the use of black culinary epistemologies to inform food justice and health policies and practices. Additionally, and I argue equally as important, this study can potentially contribute to an increase in exposure to the cultural knowledge of food health that has always already existed amongst this population. Food justice and public health nutrition initiatives must shift their interventions from a "rescuing" lens, thereby rendering black communities desolate, to, instead, an empowering lens that center the voices of the communities who are experiencing these issues, and value their understandings, knowledge, and approaches taken to address issues that first and foremost concern their livelihoods.

While this study examines and discusses the macro-level processes of nutrition disparities, the primary focus is centered on micro-level insight into the food practices of African American women. Essentially, this study focuses intentionally on and attentively to the interior lives of African American women and their food practices, rather than the institutional actions and organizations far removed from the communities in which this population reside. The disciplines of food studies and public health nutrition have only just begun to engage black food geographies, even though these ideas and practices are rooted in the social justice work of the Black Freedom Movement and praxis of the Black Radical Tradition (Robinson, 1983; Navarro, 2022). I assert that, like Navarro (2022), black culinary epistemologies possess a differential knowledge that can radically (re)imagine the ways in which both black foodways and black women's food practices contribute to a re-presentation of human [food] geographies (McKittrick, 2006). This study contributes to what Marlene Nourbese Phillips (1997) defines as a "public genealogy of resistance" by archiving the intellectual production of food practices as a poetic device in urban foodscapes (Glissant, 1997).

1.5 Nature of the Study

To adequately address the concerns outlined in the research questions guiding this study's purpose, qualitative research is selected as the most appropriate method conducive to the study. Approaching this study from a qualitative lens allows me, the researcher, to center bodies as carriers of food knowledge systems, of which is fundamental to exploring the role played by black culinary epistemologies in influencing African American women's food practices, as well as the ways in which this knowledge transcends data objectively captured through quantitative research:

Food practices in relation to health have been considered subject to interpretation as well as subjective perceptions and feelings, and as such, cannot independently be observed, measured, and tested quantifiably. [Further,] “social surveys as a research method are inappropriate, for these tend to yield quantifiable data amenable for statistical analysis such as the naming of “healthy” foods and how often they are consumed rather than, in the interpretative tradition of qualitative research, the meanings given to food and the social contexts, differing subjective perspectives, and social backgrounds affecting [food] choice (Haeney, 2010, p. 82).

African American women’s relationship to food is, then, better understood through quotidian experiences that produce meanings around food, which in turn shape ideas around food practices and health. Employing an ethnographic approach to this qualitative research design offers participants’ agency in interpreting reality through the lens of their own lived experiences, as is critical to understand how African American women negotiate food practices amidst experiencing the intersections of (dis)placement, race, gender, and class in concerns around food, its preparation, consumption, and health implications.

Participants for the study are recruited through recruitment flyers that are posted on the social media platform, Instagram, as well as throughout Georgia State University campus, local black woman owned restaurants located in the historic West End community of Atlanta, and a farmer’s market located in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Five eligible African American women are identified and invited to participate in the study. The methods of data collection are Photovoice and individual interviews. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the data.

1.6 Theoretical Framework: Black Feminist Theory

There is a dearth of existing research in the disciplines of food studies and public health nutrition that utilizes black women centered theories and methodologies to understand the lived experiences of African American women and address the existing barriers they uniquely face (Wade et al., 2022). Issues that are specific to black women must be studied using black women-centered methodologies to adequately understand the thought and behavior of this population: Black Feminist Theory framework offers such a locus (Collins, 2009). Collins' framing of Black Feminist Theory framework as a methodology and critical social praxis offers four key tenets applicable to illuminating, interpreting, understanding, and documenting the lived experiences of African American women: (1) concrete experience as a criterion of meaning; (2) use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims; (3) an ethic of caring; and (4) an ethic of responsibility (Collins, 2009; McDougal, 2014; Lindsay-Dennis, 2015), all of which are useful for this study. The operationalization of Black Feminist Theory framework is critical to understanding how the intersections of race, gender, class, and geography are markedly experienced by African American women, and influences their food practices. In addition to illuminating the unique and intersectional sociohistorical location of African American women and their food experiences, Black Feminist Theory framework provides a lens through which African American women can articulate the social and cultural meanings they produced around their food practices. Finally, the use of a Black Feminist Theory framework in this study is critical to constructions of present problem resolutions and strategic approaches to addressing the rates of food related health conditions that exist amongst African American women experiencing food apartheid.

1.7 Operational Terms

- Built environment: The context in which the urban built environment is utilized in this study refers specifically to the creation of black concentrated spaces by way of residential segregation, which has, in turn, shaped the ways in which resources, specifically food resources, are allocated. The term in this study, then, functions as a social determinant of health in the rates of food related health conditions amongst African American women and influences, though does not wholly define, their food practices (Jackson, 2003; Cahill, 2007; Tate, 2018). Urban built environment, in acknowledging these processes of spatial racialization, is used in conjunction with food apartheid.
- Food apartheid: Karen Washington coins the term *food apartheid* to describe how, unlike the term food desert that defines the rampant health, economic, and food access disparities in food environments as a “naturally occurring” phenomenon, food apartheid *names* the racist systems that operate in these built environments (Brones, 2018).
- Food desert: The United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Economic Research System (2009) defines food deserts as areas having the criteria of low-income and low access, as indicated by Census tracts and location of food stores. Additionally, food deserts are defined as being low-income communities that are located more than one mile from a reliable source of healthy foods, especially fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Food insecurity: The USDA (2009) defines food insecurity as “a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.”
- Health disparities: The Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act defines “a population as a health disparity population if there is a significant disparity in the overall rate of disease incidence, prevalence, morbidity, mortality, or survival rates

in the population as compared to the health status of the general population” (US Public Law 106-525, 2000).

- Food practices and food behaviors: these two terms are used to refer to African American women’s relationship to food, its preparation and consumption.
- Black [food]geographies: Katherine McKittrick (2006) defines black geographies as the terrain of political struggle where the “interplay between domination and black women’s geographies is underscored by the social production of space” (p. xi); rather, “geography as space, place, and location in their physical materiality and imaginative configurations - which allows us to engage with a narrative that locates and draws on black histories and black subjects in order to make visible social lives which are often displaced, [and] rendered ungeographic” (p. x). In this study, black *food* geographies is operationalized as an alternative topography where, unlike in food desert literature that names black communities as desolate places bereft of food knowledge, the “historical and contemporary black food geographies surface and centralize the notion that black diaspora populations have told and are telling how their [foodscapes] have shaped [their food] lives” (p. xxi) but do not wholly define their food practices.
- Poetics of landscape: theorized and conceptualized by Edouard Glissant (1997) and built upon through the work of Sylvia Wynter (1990) and Katherine McKittrick (2006), poetics of landscape refers to geography as terrain of self-expression that “attaches the imaginative to the social” ...by engaging the both real written and unwritten responses (whether expressed through theoretical, fiction, poetic, musical, [food production/preparation], or dramatic texts) to real inequities bound to space, or traditional geography (McKittrick, 2006, pp. xxi-xxiii).

- Black culinary epistemologies: Marilisa Navarro (2022) defines black culinary epistemologies as “the culinary knowledge produced by black cooks, chefs, and food preparers that build upon the black radical tradition, reframe black foods and black consumption, and participate in life-making practices in death producing spaces” (p. 201). Navarro argues that “black culinary epistemologies showcase the knowledge, histories, and contributions of black cooks, chefs, and food preparers” (p. 202) and proceeds to conceptualizes three key tenets of black culinary epistemologies that are fundamental to its function in this study:

First, they are rooted in the black radical tradition. The black radical tradition is a set of “cultural, intellectual, action-oriented labor aimed at disrupting social, political, economic, and cultural norms originating in anticolonial and antislavery efforts” (The Black Radical Tradition of Resistance, 2019). [Secondly], black culinary epistemologies highlight the nutritional and healing benefits of cooking and consuming Afro-diasporic foods for black communities. Lastly, black culinary epistemologies imagine a future for black people. They do so by engaging in life-making practices within death-producing spaces (p. 202).

- Black and African American: I use the term black and African American throughout the study. Black people, however, are not a monolithic population; black women are not a monolithic subpopulation. Thus, I use the term “black” when I am referring to a heterogenous, yet collective socio historical identity, experience, history, and consciousness. I use the term African American to refer to the population of black people of African descent who, through iterations of transcontinental and domestic

(dis)placement, have produced a unique ethnic identity in the geographic region of the United States; even within this collective ethnic group are individual African American culture(s) and experiences that can vary. I focus on the African American women population who reside in the southeastern United States, for this geographic region is widely recognized as the cornerstone of African American culture(s), identit(ies), and cuisine(s).

- Spatialized, gendered racism and spatialized intersectionality: both of these terms refer to the intersections of place, race, and gender and how it uniquely impacts the livelihood of African American women.

1.8 Assumptions

While this study does focus on dissecting the cultural influences of African American women's food practices, as well as the health implication of these practices, body image is expected to inevitably come up, being that body image is often tethered to discourse around black women's body, food behaviors, and health. Because body image and health are sensitive topics for most women, it is assumed that some of the responses collected may not be the exact responses that the participants would provide under more private circumstances; this assumption, in turn, could foster some responses that, although valid, may not be useful for serving the purpose of this study. It is also assumed that because one of the main criteria for participation in this study is that the participant has a vested interest in preparation of black cultural foodways, the African American women selected for this study may have more general knowledge of the politics of black food cultures, as well as its health implications, than those African American women who have never been exposed to this education.

1.9 Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations

Due to the specificities of the criteria of this study, African American women who identify as other than cisgender, are under 18 and over 65, and do not have a vested interest in preparing black cultural foodways, and display COVID-19 symptoms are excluded from this study. Additionally, this study focuses on urban food deserts geographically situated in USDA-identified food deserts of Georgia. Thus, African American women who live outside of urban food deserts of Georgia, including rural food deserts, are excluded from this study. Because of the time constraints of the study, only five African American women are selected to participate in this study. To increase the efficacy of satisfying the study's purpose, only African American women who meet all the criteria are allowed to participate in the study: this is to decrease the emphasis that most studies place on examining the macro-level processes of nutritional inequality. While equally important, this study aims to speak to an aspect of African American women's food practices that is underexplored in research and undervalued in the disciplines of food and public health nutrition. The study's objective is to examine in-depth information that is collected from all five of this study's participants, without coming to any generalization.

This study draws attention to the interior lives of black women, with a specific focus on the role of black culinary epistemologies in influencing this population's food practices.

1.10 Summary

This chapter provides a synopsis for what is discussed within the study, commencing with a discussion on the background, purpose, and significance of the study. In addition, the nature of

the research study, operational terms, as well as assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study are discussed.

This thesis includes five chapters: this introduction chapter being the first, Chapter 2: Literature Review, Chapter 3: Methodology, Chapter 4: Findings, and Chapter 5: Conclusion. Chapter 2 reviews the existing body of literature on this study's topic. Chapter 3 provides information on the methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 consolidates the study's results and data analysis. Chapter 5 places the study's findings in conversation with the existing literature from Chapter 2 and concludes with study's implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to explore black culinary epistemologies in the food practices of urban-dwelling African American women experiencing food apartheid.

Chapter 2 highlights the trends in the existing literature on the study's topic. The first section, "Race, Food, and U.S. Geography," engages literature outlining the development of residential segregation and the ways in which this racialization of space is correlated to the issue of food access in black communities. This section pays particular attention to the trends in food desert literature, as well as the gaps related to the prominent approaches taken to address food inequities in black communities. The second section, "Nutrition Disparities in African American Women", highlights African American women's intersectional positionality within nutrition disparities. This section discusses the gaps related to the routine ways in which the food practices of African American women have been hypervisible yet underexplored in research and interventions aiming to address the food and health inequities that this population faces. The third section, "Black Food Culture(s), Memory, and the Role of African American Women," contextualizes this study's relevance within the body of literature regarding the spatial politics of black foodways, as well as the role that African American women have and continue to serve in these food practices.

The chapter concludes with a detailed description of Black Feminist Theory framework, its relevance, and use in this study.

2.1 Race, Food, and U.S. Geography

Race is foundational to the structure of the U.S., and as such, has permeated every facet of American society. Race, then, cannot be divorced from capitalism when examining factors that

influence rates of existing disparities amongst African Americans, for targeting poverty often means targeting blackness. A wide body of literature has established the obvious correlation between race and socioeconomic status, as well its relationship to geography. (Massey and Denton, 1993; Jones, 2000; Williams and Collins, 2001; Kwate, 2008; Feagin, 2006; Bowser, 2006; Powell et al., 2007; Larson et al., 2009; Oates, 2017; Dutko et al., 2012; Tung et al., 2017). The trends in this literature portray how, as articulated by McKittrick (2006, 2011), black matters are spatial matters. “Black neighborhoods, regardless of socioeconomic profiles, are stigmatized, and thus treated, as culturally inferior (Patillo, 2003), demonstrated in the ACORN (A Classification of Residential Neighborhoods) profiles of consumer markets (Kwate, 2008, p. 39).

Residential segregation is the principal organizational and structural feature of American society that both constitutes the perpetuation of urban black poverty and represents a primary cause of social, economic, and health inequities in the U.S. (Massey and Denton, 1993). Like the current trend in the Global South of food insecurity, displacement, urbanization, and social, economic, and health inequities, predominantly black urban communities of the U.S. are treated as “third world” zones occupying colonized space. Characteristic of many major black cities across the U.S., particularly within the historical context of Jim Crow caste system in the American South, are processes of racialization of space that have routinely disrupted and ravished through black communities. Processes of racial spatialization includes zoning, urban renewal and relocation, city annexation, gentrification, and infrastructure, all of which foster the continued cultural and physical displacement of black populations (Tate, 2018; Cahill, 2007).

As African Americans were barred access to public facilities in the Jim Crow south, de jure and de facto segregation ensured that the bodily surveillance, or policing of black bodies, extended to the private, bounded space of urban communities (Berman, 1986). The historically

present allocation of resources disparately dispersed between predominantly black urban neighborhoods and affluent white suburbs can be witnessed in the rates of food insecurity that disproportionally impacts black communities. Trends in food insecurity among some populations and not others are examples of how racist institutional and systemic policies and practices foster spatial vulnerabilities (Valdez, 2020), and reflect how these localized, built inequities are not independent of national and global trends of racial and economic inequities that shape access to resources and opportunities. Theorizing racism in and beyond the food system deepens understanding of how food institutions are implicated in the continued disinvestment of predominantly black urban spaces (Reese, 2019).

2.1.1 Food Apartheid v Food Desert

Food access literature encompasses discourse around the quality of the food environment, and is measured, though ambiguously, by residents' ability to access food resources within and outside of their immediate food environment (Tate, 2018). The term food desert, specifically, is used as an all-encompassing term to define food environments experiencing issues related to food access. Food deserts are defined by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research System as areas having the criteria of low-income and low access, as indicated by census tracts and location of food stores (USDA, 2009; Tate, 2018).

The rates of food deserts in the U.S. are disproportionately composed of residents who have lower levels of education, lower income, and higher rates of unemployment (Bower et al., 2014). In addition to, and inherent in, the rates of compromised access to fresh and affordable food sources are the excess rates in food swamps, or areas with excess fast-food restaurants, as well as non-chain stores where the quality of the food sources are not only poor, but the prices

are locally inflated. African Americans constitute disproportionate rates of these food insecure communities ascribed as food deserts.

A Hopkins University (2014) study examining the intersection of neighborhood racial segregation, poverty, and urbanicity and its impact on food store availability in the United States shows that neighborhood racial composition and neighborhood poverty are independently associated with food store availability. This is largely due to the racist geopolitical creation of localized areas for targeting by both food corporate, state and local actors and their continued divestment of black communities. Specific to African Americans and iterations of embeddedness in controlled spaces, as evident in enslaved environments, the prison system, and historical and contemporary segregation, is the use of food quantity and quality as mechanisms of surveillance and control. In the case of urban built environments, where food production and access, thereby consumption, is overwhelmingly controlled by state actors and food corporations, considering the racialization of space is useful for understanding the rates of food insecurity, as well as the ways in which biopolitics within the food system has and continues to influence [black bodies'] health exposures, attitudes, behaviors, and health outcomes (Williams and Collins, 2001; Cannuscio et al., 2010; Hemphill et al., 2008; Freudenberg, 2008; Morland and Filomena, 2008; Moore and Diez Roux, 2006; Powell et al., 2007; Slocum and Saldanha, 2013; Tung et al., 2017; Jones, 2018; Chinn et al., 2021).

The field of public health vaguely recognizes race and poverty as (SDOH). While recognizing the issue of food insecurity in urban communities and its correlation to diet-related health disparities has been a key topic of discourse in the disciplines of food studies and public health nutrition, the most prevalent approach taken by the actual practice of addressing these issues further deepens existing spatialized disparities, due to their singular-focused lens.

The overemphasis on access and availability in food justice movements, although an essential component in addressing food insecurity in communities identified as food deserts, aid and abet the burgeoning gap in the literature. There is a complex social geography to food deserts that is not simply based on proximity and accessibility but is part and parcel of deliberate processes of racialization (Slocum, 2007; Tung et al., 2017; Reese, 2019).

In addition to this key gap in food desert literature, there exists incessant focus on attributing “barrenness,” both spatial and cultural, to black communities. The term “food desert” itself has been exhausted as an all-encompassing term and naturally occurring phenomenon in predominantly black urban communities, which in turn works to scapegoat racist geopolitical policies and practices that created these contemporary spatial and food conditions (Reese, 2019). Often, food justice efforts are alienated from the experiences of the population they are supposedly targeting, due overwhelming to an assumption that these urban communities of color would adapt “better” eating habits if only access to fresh food was made available. As a result, bringing “healthy foods” into these ascribed desolate communities has been posited as the sole solution to fix the kaleidoscopic nature of food-related issues that exist in black communities (Larchet, 2014; Guthman, 2008).

Karen Washington, activist and community organizer, coins the term food apartheid to describe how, unlike the term food desert that defines the rampant health, economic, and food access disparities in food environments as a “naturally occurring” phenomenon, food apartheid names the systems in place. Washington is opposed to using the expression “food desert,” which she calls “an outsider term” that calls desolate places, rather than communities with enormous potential, to mind (Brones, 2018). The desire to bring foods deemed as “healthy” to black communities identified as “barren” erases black food geographies and reinforces the assumption

that these communities are bereft of local food knowledge of investment and creation (Reese, 2019).

The framing of food deserts has been largely premised on an approach that is guilty of overlooking the meanings residents attach to low-quality food environments, the agency they exhibit in negotiating such environments, and knowledge produced out of these colonized spaces. This food desert framing thereby excludes insight into the micro-level decision-making processes and strategies that residents employ to access food in the context of constrained personal and neighborhood resources (Tach and Amorim, 2015; Reese, 2019; Tate, 2018; Navarro, 2022). Evident in this literature, then, are the preconceived notion about the influence of the built environment on passive, (un)geographic bodies, resulting in assumptions surrounding the “lack of” food knowledge, skills, and histories with health considerations amongst low-income and black communities (Grosz, 1992; McKittrick, 2006; Cloke, 2013; Ramirez, 2015; Reese, 2019).

Ramirez’s (2015) study examines this erasure of black food geographies in her comparative analysis of two food justice organizations in Seattle, Washington. She discusses the food justice approach of the predominantly white, or outsider, organization that, although uses a food justice lens, is found to be complicit in both reproducing the racialization of space in urban black communities and rendering black communities as barren and in need of rescuing. Ramirez highlights the critical ways in which the predominantly black organization, Clean Greens, not only acknowledges and engages the racial histories and their contemporary remnants in spatial politics but centers the voices of the community as knowledgeable bodies. Ramirez’ study unveils a practice of visibly mapping black food geographies as a decolonial politics that has always already existed beyond more contemporary understandings of food justice movements,

like the Slow Food movement, as deriving from Euro-American epistemologies. Ramirez's study ultimately depicts how black food geographies can invigorate not only food studies, but public health nutrition policies and practices geared towards addressing existing food and health inequities that exist among African American populations: particularly African American women. Slocum and Cadieux's (2015) study offer such a blueprint, as it proposes a 4-step intervention model for food justice scholars and practitioners to adopt:

First, that accountability in research requires a more rigorous analysis of what constitutes food justice 'in practice' and how it might differ from what we have known as the food movement. Part of this accountability is engaging with relevant scholarship and activism that has gone before (such as that on antiracist scholarship and advocacy); Second, for more process-oriented documentation of barriers and enabling conditions—those places where the process toward food justice gets stuck, and ways those sticking points can be loosened. Third, although it is important to showcase the struggles of dispossessed groups, an essentialist and tautological reading is implicit in some of this work: food justice is a movement of marginalized people of color who do food justice because they are marginalized people of color. Fourth, we suggest it is necessary to consider the many small and halting steps, the seemingly insignificant actions that are part of a process of research, reflection, solidarity, and alliance (p. 44).

What these studies underscore is a need to expand the lens of contemporary food justice initiatives. This expansion requires a thorough assessment of and challenge to spatial processes of racialization in black communities, as well as a consideration of community members' lived experiences around their food realities and solutions to these concerns (Jones, 2016; Odoms-Young et al., 2009; Reynolds et al., 2020; Bradley and Herrera, 2016; Sbicca and Myers, 2017;

Passidomo, 2014; Smith, 2022). Accessing and addressing the root causes of symptomatic manifestations of structural and systemic inequities should be a foundational concern in analyzing and alleviating the food and health inequities that exist amongst this population.

2.2 Nutrition Disparities in African American Women

The rates of diet-related health disparities amongst African Americans experiencing food insecurity are most strikingly evident across gender lines (Tung et al., 2017; Chinn et al., 2021). While race, gender, class, and geography have been marginally identified as factors contributing to diet-related health disparities amongst African American women, the intersection between these SDOH have not been fully recognized in discourse around disease prevention and treatment (Satia, 2009; Oates, 2017; Black demographics, 2020; Massey and Denton, 1993; Williams and Collins, 2001; Hargreaves et al., 2002; Chinn et al., 2021). Synthesizing demographic and health data at this intersection is critical to understanding how these existing health disparities are uniquely experienced by and acutely impacts the bodies of black women in the form of nutritional violence. Crenshaw's (1991) intersectional critique of dimensions of violence uniquely experienced by black women offers a useful lens through which to examine the ways in which race, gender, class, and geography as SDOH markedly play out in and through the bodies of black women.

Alves and Vargas' (2018) study sought to explore the manifestations of structural anti-black, gendered violence as it relates to diet-related health conditions amongst black women in Brazil. The findings capture the participants' understanding of the partnership between anti-blackness and state-sanctioned gendered violence as recounted in their lived experiences that showed up in their body and interpersonal interactions. The findings further suggest how

transnational food corporations and state actors target local food production and consumption to promote participation in the normativity of Euro-American food patterns, while simultaneously recognizing the role of this colonial contact in adverse health effects amongst black populations (Caldwell, 2007; Burnett, 2020). The trends highlighted in this study's findings are not isolated to Brazil, but rather illuminates the interconnectedness of global iterations of gendered racism and its local manifestation in black female bodies (Caldwell, 2007). This trend is evident in the similar manifestations of structural violence in U.S. based black women, where anti-blackness and state-sanctioned gendered violence is heritage.

Diana Burnett (2020) adds to this discourse in her discussion of national nutrition guidelines and mainstream ideas of what bodies and consumption practices are deemed "healthy." Burnett coins the term "nutritional colonialism" in her framing of the structural violence that constrains the body-and-food relationship, thereby quality of life, amongst black women. Significant in Burnett's discussion, like Alves and Vargas (2018), is the global trend in a nutrition transition that targets and pathologizes food cultures in its conceptualization of "health", and how this targeting is not independent of diet-related morbidity and mortality rates amongst black women.

Good health, then, is not solely based on diet, given the overwhelming evidence that "racism, gendered violence, social and economic disparities, trade regulations, lack of food sovereignty, and land and livelihood dispossession are all iterations of anti-blackness" (Burnett, 2020). This evidence underscores how the ascribed causal relationship between food and health is far more nuanced than "we are what we eat."

2.2.1 “Healthism” and African American Women’s Food Behaviors

While African American women’s experiences range in these convoluted expressions of nutritional violence along scales of race, gender, class, and geography, these factors have been less engaged in the discourse around healthism: a belief that an individual is solely responsible for the quality of their health. The ahistorical and singular-focused framing of a master narrative is described by Toni Morrison as "whatever ideological script that is being imposed by the people in authority on everybody else. The master fiction, history. It has a certain point of view..." (Greenfield-Sanders, 2019). Advocates of this narrative, characteristic of neoliberal governmentality, blame low-income women of color for their own weight issues and health crises by reducing these issues to individual and cultural immorality instead of placing this phenomenon in the broader historical context of long entrenched racialized, geopolitical policies and practices (Guthman and DuPuis, 2006; Freeman, 2007; Pawlak and Colby, 2009; Burnett, 2020). This ahistorical narrative perpetuates the misrepresentation of African American women in obesity and diet-related morbidity discourse.

Since the 1980s, the simultaneous increase in production and consumption of industrialized foods, coupled with an increased emphasis on healthism within the emergence of neoliberal governance, has shaped the ways in which diet and morality are viewed as mutually exclusive: particularly amongst women. Neoliberal governmentality produces divisions between active citizens, those who can manage their own risks, and 'targeted, [passive] populations', those who require intervention in management of risks from outside, “knowledgeable” entities (Dean, 1999; Thompson, 2015; Guthman, 2009; Guthman and DuPuis, 2006). These ideas underpin what Vivian Halloran (2016) defines as “gastronomic surveillance, and what Psyche Williams-Forsen argues as a historical and present practice of surveilling African American [women]

minds, bodies, and spirit, [with] African American cultural expression-food- often implicated in these processes of spatial and bodily regulation (2022).

Guthman and DuPuis (2006) identifies the contradictions of neoliberal governance by illuminating the ways in which neoliberalism both produces food and health inequities and posits it as a problem of “diet-related disease” brought on by an individual’s own willpower, or lack thereof. While Guthman and DuPuis’s discussion of neoliberal governance is within the context of obesity, the findings in this study show the significant relationship between obesity and diet-related morbidities, both conditions’ correlation to race, class, and gender, and the ways in which they are framed within neoliberal discourse around the rhetoric of healthism. The neoliberal approach taken to reduce “inept” eating habits to either a lack of personal responsibility or pathological food culture, then, is a scapegoating of a food and health system that controls food production and choice, while at the same time reinforces paradoxical messages, policies, and practices around what foods and bodies are viewed as healthy (Moss, 2021; Guthman and DuPuis, 2006). This dichotomy is a particular issue for African American women who face the imposed reality of either exaggerated agency, as proposed within the neoliberal-charged rhetoric of healthism, or complete erasure of agency, as evident in food desert literature, which have resulted in top-down interventions; these top-down interventions are fashioned at the expense of the experiences and local food ecologies of this population

Trends in the literature around African American women's food behaviors have overwhelmingly used national nutrition guidelines as the frame of reference for assessing the standard of health (Ogle and Damhorst, 2003; Wilson, 2004; Brannen and O’Connell, 2017; Dobal et al., 2017, 2019). Dobal et al.’s (2017) study examines the food choices and physical activity of African American women and extends on this study with a follow-up study (2019)

that examines the ways in which African American women's food choices and activity preferences are transmitted to their daughters. The findings in these studies suggest that African American women participants' failure to adhere to national nutrition guidelines is due to fidelity to cultural food practices and "lack of" healthy food knowledge. This study's inattention to sources beyond national nutrition guidelines, particularly amongst this population, reinscribes this master narrative of healthism. Wilson's (2004) study is conducted in a similar fashion; however, Wilson highlights the need to better understand the content and mechanisms involved in transgenerational food communication among underserved and culturally diverse populations, for the food choices within these populations are laden with variables that go into the decision-making process of food practices.

While some studies depict some efforts put towards identifying ways to increase culturally geared nutrition interventions, one underlying issue has been the singular-focused approach taken to implement said adaptations, which have resulted in nutrition interventions that do not reflect the unique needs of African American women (Airhihenbuwa et al., 1996; Grimes and Grinter, 2007; Howard et al., 2018).

The substantial number of studies that employ intersectional and culturally relevant frameworks show findings that underscore the need for these frameworks in conceptualizing nutrition interventions shaped to speak to the unique needs of African American women (Bramble, 2009; Winham, 2020; Tkatch et al., 2018; Scarinci et al., 2014; Blanks et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2006; Hargreaves et al., 2002; Lynch et al., 2012; Beagan and Chapman, 2012; Bronner, 2014; Barnett and Praetorius, 2015; Young, 2018; Rickel et al., 2011; Antin and Hunt, 2012; Tussing-Humphreys et al., 2013; Harris and Nowverl, 1999; Airhihenbuwa and Liburd,

2006; Airhihenbuwa, 2007; Dutta, 2007; Shaw et al., 2009; Iwelumor et al., 2014; Brown et al., 2019; Winham et al., 2020; Chinn et al, 2021).

Studies that use black women-centered frameworks in particular center the lived experiences and knowledge around health that exist amongst African American women, and in turn, use this data to inform health practices and policies aiming to address health inequities amongst this population (Wade et al., 2022; Antin and Hunt, 2012; Rowe, 2010; Bowleg, 2012; Guerrero and Perez, 2017; Hess, 2021).

The Black Feminist and Womanist (BFW) analytical path to health equity offers six concrete steps that public policy analysis should focus on when attempting to obtain equitable health for black women:

Public policy analysis should begin with a focus on health equity that is community-informed (step 1) and takes a strength-based approach (step 2) to the health policy issue. Next, the role of gendered racism should be described and assessed (step 3), with the intention of a community-informed (step 4) approach to addressing the issue. This process must center the experiences of Black girls and women and reflect their experiences when considering policy solutions and alternatives (step 5). As policy recommendations are refined (step 6), Black girls' and women's collective agency over the bodies must be centered. Recommendations must augment the everyday decisions and solutions Black girls and women engage in regularly, for and with one another (Barlow and Johnson, 2021, p. 92).

Rowe's (2010) study on African American women's perspectives on health captures findings that show recurring themes centered on four areas: (1) the definition of health as a mind, body, and spiritual construct; (2) conceptualizations of cultural norms regarding healthy foods versus

unhealthy foods; (3) the importance of eating and social rituals on food choices; and (4) the impact of the environment in sustaining healthy initiatives.

Hess (2021) centers the relevance of such themes as he employs black feminist and womanist perspectives using Paulo Freire's (1973) liberating pedagogy as a theoretical framework to holistically explore the foodscapes of communities experiencing food apartheid in search of a community-informed ethics of care that could inform a more empathetic and loving approach to health inequity.

This literature captures how the food practices of populations like African Americans are laden with personal, communal, social, cultural, historical, and environmental elements that must be considered to further interventions aiming to address food and health inequities amongst this population. The ways in which health is defined around African American women's food behaviors, in particular, must be refashioned to consider more deeply why such resistance to national health and dietary guidelines exist amongst this population that is inclusive of, but not entirely defined by, an encompassing narrative of oppression. Using intersectional, culturally appropriate frameworks to look within, across, and beyond these geographies of oppression to access varying refusals expressed by African American women reveal a more integrated, more caring understanding of food practices as it relates to health amongst this population.

2.3 Black Food Culture(s), Memory, and the Role of African American Women

Anthropologists have been cognizant of public enframement of history that suits the narrative of the hegemonic culture, often at the expense of counter-memories regulated to the shadow archive of the historical memory bank. This culture of historical forgetting is

characteristic of western memory production (Holtzman, 2006; Haeney, 2010; Lambek and Antze, 1998; Sutton, 2001), defined by Adrienne Rich (1994) as historical amnesia:

Historical amnesia is the erasure, glossing over, or distortion of history that occurs when an official version of history - which reflects those in power- is substituted for the actual stories of people's struggles against inequality, robbing historical memory of accounts of oppressed people's struggles and triumphs against social injustice (Thompson, 1994, p. 101).

McKittrick (2006) extends on this idea in her conceptualization of what she terms rational spatial colonization and domination, defined as "the profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, [individual and collective memories], and lands" (p. x): a deliberate elision of black geographies. This tension between memory and forgetting lives in food histories, particularly within the food cultures of populations subjected to colonial (dis)placement.

A substantial aggregate of literature has examined the relationship between race and (dis)placement, as well as the role of memory as a tool of cultural and corporeal preservation in the face of erasure (Lupton, 1994; Beoku-Betts, 1995; Bardenstein, 2002; Narvaez, 2006; Marte, 2007; Haeney, 2010; Ojwang, 2011; Ingram, 2020; Armstrong, 2021). Jonathan Fenderson (2013) argues the importance of memory in his article, "Towards the Gentrification of Black Power (?)," where he outlines the endangerment, of black radical memory within the ahistorical historization of black movement activity for American marketplace consumption. In this text, Fenderson goes on to define black radical memory:

We could think of black radical (collective) memory as part of an intangible public trust maintained not by any individual, the state, or by the private sector, but by a

contemporary assemblage of Black activists, intellectuals, artists, and frustrated segments of the black communities frequently at odds with the state... (p. 13).

Food as a social practice, with consumption being the most intimate and primal way of inscribing culture in and through the body, then, offers an integrated approach to unearthing how foodways as practiced by marginalized bodies act as mnemonic carriers of hegemonized histories. This is a particular case for a population whose experiences are tied to a tradition of resistance to spatial and cultural colonization. Within these populations, food has been integral to the production of culture, preservation of tradition, and sustenance of corporeal black bodies.

2.3.1 African American Foodway(s) and Critical Black Memory

African American food culture(s) are one of the largest variables contributing to African Americans' body-and-food-relationship and are only fully comprehensible in their historical context.

As practiced across the African diaspora, African Americans have historically used food processes to demonstrate, challenge, and produce dynamic food knowledge systems as means to conceptualize their relationship to both the “[colonial] nation-state and to the stateless, imagined black nation” (Wallach, 2019, p. 13). Soul food in particular as one of a myriad of black foodway(s) and a cultural cuisine that is widely pathologized, is a spatial, social, historical, and cultural product of black food geographies. This culinary delicacy, amongst a variety of other diasporic foodways, is valued as a preserver of [African American] history, and is transmitted through the selection, preparation, and consumption of both African ancestral and creolized food creations across generations of black space-making in the U.S. African Americans' unique relationship to food has been well established, ranging across markers of identity, space-making,

health, memory-work, politics, social mobility, creative expression, and resistance: all elements essential to the experiences of living while black (Ferguson, 1989; Friedman, 1990; Hughes, 1997; Whit, 1999; Deck, 2000; Witt, 2004; Innes, 2006; Williams-Forson, 2006; Hall, 2007; Opie, 2008; Gvion, 2009; Terry, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2020; Harris, 2012; Nettles- Barcelón, 2012; Prehn, 2013; Miller, 2013; Tipton-Martin, 2019; Twitty, 2017; Zafar, 2019; Wallach, 2019; Williams-Forson, 2022). Armstrong (2021) and Brunache's (2019) studies offer such insight into the unique mobilization of black foodways.

Armstrong (2021) uses a food pedagogical and memory-work framework in her explication of formerly enslaved African American oral narratives documented by the Works Project Administration (WPA) to explore the food histories retained in their memories of enslavement. Through a meticulous examination of the other than obvious reasons and subtle silences of the narratives, Armstrong's unearths how formerly enslaved African Americans strategically mobilized the retelling of their food memories as a way to simultaneously and covertly assert themselves as gatekeepers of their histories and enact self and community protection amidst the still racially charged climate of the 1930s.

Brunache's (2019) article engages the food-related strategies employed in the food practices of enslaved people that offers an alternative narrative to the prominent representation of African diasporic foodways as solely a passive by-product of "scraps." Brunache explores the plantation as a contested site where enslaved communities "struggled to not only survive and sustain life under an institution of racial terror but also to provide culinary satisfaction in their meals" (p. 154). Of particular relevance in Brunache's analysis, as well as Armstrong's (2021) is the central role played by enslaved women in the production of these dynamic food systems. Brunache's article shows that enslaved women employed culinary skills and ingenuity that

became “a material representation of African agency and black resistance...that served as one way to subvert and resist the politics of power” (Brunache, 2019, p. 158).

These findings underscore the distinct relationship between black women's experiences and food preparation, and showcase how black women, then and now, use food as a source to engage with and respond to the material world of the home, the family, community, and society at large.

2.4 “She Speaks”: African American Women, Food, and Protest

A substantial body of literature emphasizes the relationship between women, memory, and food, with a particular focus on how these factors interact across the scale of race and ethnicity. For (dis)placed women, embodied food practices have become the site and text of the historiography of generations of silenced women, and serve as a site of transmission in the broader sense of a woman’s culture, history, and quotidian experiences (Beoku-Betts, 1995; Counihan, 2004; Christensen, 2001; Meyers, 2001; Berzok, 2001; Innes, 2001; West, 1999; Williams-Forson, 2006; Holtzman, 2006; Sutton, 2001; Loichot, 2004; Danticat, 1994; D’Sylva and Beagan, 2011).

While binary understandings of gender roles posit cooking as a domestic and oppressive practice imposed on women, for black women, food production and preparation have functioned as a vehicle for intellectual expression and mobility. Food production and management can be seen as an empowering ritual that posits women as the carriers and preservers of food tradition, thereby transforming their culinary skills into political acts and engagement with the material environment into sites of political resistance (Smith, 1989; Loichot, 2004; Holtzman, 2006).

Josephine Beoku-Betts (1995) explores this in her essay “We Got Our Way Of Cooking Things: Women, Food, and Preservation of Cultural Identity among the Gullah,” where she argues against this dichotomy characteristic of dominant cultural practices and its ideas around gender inequality, and posits that, for marginalized groups, food preparation can be a site for the construction and sustenance of culture, as well as an anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-imperial, and anti-capitalist tool. In the absence of spoken and written words by way of these systems of oppression, black women have, both historically and presently, used the preparation of food as a conduit of bodily utterances that produce a type of tacit knowledge unintelligible in other sources of knowledge (Williams-Forsen, 2006; Loichot, 2004; Holtzman, 2006; Jones, 2018). This literature captures the ways in which black women have fluidly navigated between the paid, public sphere and unpaid, private realm of domesticity, particularly motherhood, and illuminates a new understanding of the private-public space of the home as a site of agentic performance for black women, embodying what Edouard Glissant (1997) defines as a poetic expression of landscape, and denoting what McKittrick (2006) dialectically terms the geographies of dominance and black women’s geographies of knowledges, negotiations, and experiences.

In McKittrick’s (2006) discussion of Toni Morrison’s (1995) essay “The Site of Memory,” McKittrick cites how Morrison “[re-presents] black subjects in a world that has dehumanized and erased the possibility of black interior lives as she aims to reconstruct these interior lives through the remains she is given” (McKittrick, 2006, p. 32). Following in this tradition, McKittrick maps interior lives by charting black women’s geographies across and through traditional geographies and argues that “the stories of black women contain in them meaningful geographic tenets, but these are often reduced to the seeable flesh and unseeable geographic knowledges” (McKittrick, 2006, p. 45).

There is an emerging body of literature that draws from both black geographies and black women's studies and is charting alternative trajectories in mapping out black women's food practices. This mapping is situated within the larger scheme of what Marilisa Navarro (2022) terms black culinary epistemologies, a critical concept that "showcases the knowledge, histories, and contributions of black cooks, chefs, and food preparers" (p. 202). Navarro conceptualizes three key tenets of black culinary epistemology:

First, they are rooted in the black radical tradition. The black radical tradition is a set of "cultural, intellectual, action-oriented labor aimed at disrupting social, political, economic, and cultural norms originating in anticolonial and antislavery efforts" (Robinson, 1983). [Secondly], black culinary epistemologies highlight the nutritional and healing benefits of cooking and consuming Afro-diasporic foods for black communities. Lastly, black culinary epistemologies imagine a future for black people. They do so by engaging in life-making practices within death-producing spaces (p. 202).

This literature depicts how black women speak through food to contest the various social barriers placed onto black populations.

2.4.1 African American Women, Food, and the Black Radical Tradition

The first tenet attributes black culinary epistemologies' roots in the black radical tradition. Black women-initiated agriculture cooperatives like Fannie Lou Hamer's Freedom Farm Cooperative, Georgia Gilmore's "Club to Nowhere," an underground resistance group that cooked and sold savory meals as well as baked goods, and Ruth Beckford's critical work in the co-founding of the Black Panther Party's Free Breakfast for School Children Program capture how black women applied their knowledge of both their social and political conditions to

mobilize food as a facilitator of equity in black communities, an ethical awareness that is often neglected in the present food justice movement's singular focus on "access" to fresh food. These black women efforts in the production and preparation of food underscore the caring ways in which life was and still is sustained through the efforts of black women in black communities.

McCutcheon (2019) examines Fannie Lou Hamer's food justice activism and how her radical agrarian visions informed future farming cooperatives focused on poverty, hunger and social justice. McCutcheon's examination of Hamer's work takes place on three scales: the body, the farm, and the southern landscape. On a bodily scale, McCutcheon illuminates the ways in which Hamer, despite being a renowned leader in the Civil Rights movement, experienced abject poverty, malnutrition and chronic health problems; on a farm scale, McCutcheon discusses how Hamer, on both a local and national plane, collaborated with Black individuals and organizations throughout the United States to map an agrarian landscape that would feed people, provide housing and be a safe space free from racial violence; on the southern landscape scale, McCutcheon details how Hamer, along with other leaders of Black-led farming cooperatives, created possibilities for alternate trajectories of the social order of the South through her anti-poverty agrarian activism. White (2017) maps Hamer as an expert food producer who existed within a long tradition of black women who have grown and cooked food, paying particular attention to the ways in which this knowledge of food production and preparation has gone largely unacknowledged. Alongside Hamer are countless other black women, like Georgia Gilmore and her role in the Montgomery Improvement Association, both named and unnamed, who contributed to social justice through their food efforts.

The Black Panther Party drew on similar, yet distinct climatic tactics in responding to the politicization of hunger and malnutrition in the black community, with the implementation of a

breakfast program that both illuminated the relationship between systematic deprivation, social welfare, community building, and revolutionary politics. The Free Breakfast for School Children Program combated the white power structure that used food as a primal mechanism of control in black communities. In Potori's (2017) examination of the Panthers' Free Breakfast for School Children Program, he captures the often glossed over intent of the conceptualization and execution of the program:

Panther free breakfasts and later free food programs spoke to an organizational commitment to undermine local and state officials, federal programs, and businesses in predominantly black neighborhoods that played upon the politics of poverty and hunger to maintain an ailing, fractured underclass in order to solidify their own political and economic bases. This work converted efforts to address a vital community concern—that of rampant childhood hunger—into a platform to mobilize and politicize the urban poor (p. 86).

Worth noticeably mentioning is Ruth Beckford, who was the unaffiliated co-founder of the Free Breakfast for School Children Program, alongside a myriad of unsung black women who were part and parcel to the implementation of the Free Breakfast program, as captured in Wade's (2017) essay chapter titled, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Black Women Lost and Found in Images of the Free Breakfast."

These black women-initiated agriculture and food cooperatives and breakfast programs depict just one segment of black women's critical role and contributions to black social. Grounded in the black radical tradition, these women applied their knowledge of both their social and political conditions to mobilize food as a facilitator of equity and source of nourishment in black communities (Penniman, 2020; McCutcheon, 2022), an ethical awareness that is often

neglected in present food justice movements' singular focus on "access" to fresh food, without recognizing the structural inequities that created these food conditions.

2.4.2 African American Women and the Nutritional and Healing Benefits Surrounding Food Practices

The second tenet of black culinary epistemologies conceptualizes a reframing of black foodways in highlighting the nutritional and healing benefits of preparing and consuming Afro-diasporic foods for black communities. While a substantial number of studies captured through the disciplinary lens of food studies and public health nutrition document the cultural significance and variety in African American women's food practices, a lack of nutritional knowledge in cultural food practices is almost always inferred (Young, 2018). These ahistorical and culturally incompetent analyses neglect the consideration of social and environmental factors that may influence the ways food are prepared and the types of food consumed amongst this population. Young's article takes a singular focus in charging soul food simply as high fat foods, with no mention of the ways in which foods have been globally altered by the corporate food system (McMichael, 2009).

Bryant Terry (2009, 2012, 2014, 2020), a prominent black culinary activist and author, illuminates the cultural knowledge of health evidenced in the “slow food practices born in black communities – that is, eating foods that are locally grown, cooking from scratch, consuming a variety of different types of foods that are fresh and nutritious, and sharing with community – that have been vital survival mechanisms for producing health and life” (Navarro, 2022, p. 211). Culinary historians Harris (2012) and Twitty (2017) expand on this knowledge by unearthing the

roots of and illuminating the historically present rich and diverse food traditions, from ways of production, preparation, and consumption, that exist across the African Diaspora.

In addition to the nutritional knowledge produced through the traditional and creolized ways of preparing black foodways, the variety of diets practiced by many black people challenges the view of black bodies as consuming only one type of food.

Particularly as it relates to practitioners of plant-based diets, African American women are largely erased. This elision is due to this idea of these dietary behaviors having roots in Euro-American dietary patterns, therefore only feasible in white bodies. Ashante Reese's (2014) review of Tracye McQuirter's *By Any Greens Necessary: A Revolutionary Guide for Black Women Who Want to Eat Great, Get Healthy, Lose Weight, and Look Phat* (2010) and A. Breeze Harper's *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society* (2010), illuminates the unique contributions of these texts in drawing on the lived experiences of black women and their varied approaches to practicing veganism. While Reese rightfully critiques the common thread of a middle-class focus and "either/or" dichotomy that runs through the texts, as well as prominent health programs, she credits these texts for expanding discourses around the diversity, wealth of health knowledge, and consciousness in the diversity in consumption of black foodways as practiced by black women (Harper, 2009; Navarro, 2021). As captured in the diverse range of reasons for taking on certain food practices within the African diaspora, an ethics of care takes primal concern in the ways in which African American women do food.

Jill Scott comes from a personal perspective on food and health as it relates to love of self, in relation to others, and God in attaining overall well-being. She does so through a liberatory platform for self-expression: song. In the song "Prepared," Scott's lyrics speak to an

intimate and holistic relationship with food and her body. Evidenced in Scott's lyrics are the importance of cultural food practices. Scott contests the mainstream ideas of "healthy" food by, instead, asserting her fidelity to a certain type of food preparation and consumption that she feels most connected to. These ideas are reflected in the following two verses of "Prepared," where Scott sings:

I been getting recipes off the internet
 Most times they be banging
 I realized they're only good when I put
 My lil' spices all up in rices

Scott further sings:

And I been eating more greens
 Getting my body out the line, oh
 I'm gonna be super fine

In asserting her right to add spices to bland dishes and consume more greens to reach her ideal body, Scott draws on her connection to her cultural frame of reference and defies standard ideals of healthy behaviors and bodies (Marte, 2011). These two verses of "Prepared" embody a contestation of the master narrative and offers interior insight into fidelity to a cultural frame of reference as it relates to bodies and food practices that are integral to overall well-being.

Another idea explored in "Prepared" is the ways in which Scott's relationship to food, her body, and health is refashioned from a disease and death-producing lens to a loving and life-sustaining lens. For Scott, as is the case for many black women, health is an integrated practice that transcends merely consuming fresh produce and exercising to prevent disease and achieve

this socially constructed health ideal. Health involves a dance amongst the physical, mental, and spiritual in order to attain and sustain optimal health. Scott sings:

I let the queen inside

I let her shine

I been listening to God more

I been doing my chores

This verse captures elements of care work in relation to God and self-love and offers a spiritual component that must be considered to better understand black women's relationship to food, health, and the body.

This body of literature posits black culinary epistemologies as existing within and beyond the traditional ways in which U.S. based food justice and public health nutrition initiatives uncritically adhere to a westernized public genealogy of food that frames black foodways as either a culprit in diet-related health disparities, marginal, or altogether nonexistent. Health, then, transcends simply consuming fruits and vegetables. For health-conscious practitioners of black foodways, care and culture are vital to the sustenance of black bodies.

2.4.3 African American Women and Life-making Practices in Death-producing Spaces

The third tenet of black culinary epistemologies is evidenced in an emerging body of literature that recognizes the importance of cultural competence, intersectionality, and community empowerment as part and parcel to challenging the master narrative of healthism surrounding African American women's food behaviors, as well as addressing food and health inequities that exist amongst this population's experiences with food apartheid. This body of literature does so by witnessing and engaging with the ways in which black communities have

engaged in life-making practices under death-producing circumstances through an “ethics of care” that includes four core values: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness (Sevenhuijsen, 2003).

Ashanté Reese discusses the possibilities evidenced in purposefully unseen yet very real and imagined black geographies in an interview by Chinonye Alma Otuonye titled “Thinking with Our Hands: A Conversation with Professor Ashanté Reese” (2022). In this piece, Reese talks about her ethnographic work of which has an intentional care component that is grounded in black feminism. Reese describes the theoretical and practical tenets of care work as “a constant set of negotiations that includes you [ethnographer] and the community, and that includes individuals within the community, and I’d add the environment...a collective project [and] mode of attending to people in relation to one another.” Reese’s concept and practice of care as reciprocal and communal work offers a useful framework through which food justice and public health nutrition initiatives could adapt in conceptualizing more collaborative and empowering ways of approaching how research and interventions are done amongst black women populations.

Psyche A. Williams-Forson takes an historical approach, grounded in food studies, cultural studies, and black geographies, filtered through a black feminist lens, to expound upon elements of autonomy and empowerment conceptualized in radical care work in her book, *Eating While Black: Food Shaming and Race in America* (2022). In the text, Williams-Forson critiques the devaluation of black cultural food traditions, as well as the iterations of spatialized surveillance of black people's bodies and behaviors, particularly in spaces where these bodies and behaviors are viewed as place(less), yet hypervisible. Williams-Forson expands the discourse around what it means for bodily-autonomy in food behaviors in the context of health

by pivoting the gaze relentlessly fixed upon racialized and gendered bodies. Williams-Forson's critique of this ahistorical and uncritical standard way of doing food and health makes space for intricacies to exist within black women's negotiation of spatial politics and their intersectional identities in their food practices.

In Black Food Geographies: Race, Self-Reliance, and Food Access in Washington, D.C. (2019), Ashanté Reese employs an anthropological approach to examine how, while “black food geographies are influenced by the unequal spatial distribution of grocery stores, [they] are not unilaterally defined by them” (p. 12). Reese captures the ways in which the black community of Deanwood in Washington D.C., uniquely, yet quite similar to other predominantly black communities across the U.S., contests anti-black foodscapes. Reese’s operating framework of geographies of self-reliance captures this contestation, thereby serving as a tool of empowerment for indigenous food epistemologies. Findings from this study underscore the usefulness of geographies of self-reliance in mapping micro-level insight into the autonomous ways in which African Americans have exhibited agency and creativity in “death-producing spaces” (Navarro, 2022).

Naya Jones (2019) combines both Williams-Forson and Reese’s lenses to explore black food geographies as both terrain of emotional slow violence and resilience. In “Dying to Eat? Black Food Geographies of Slow Violence and Resilience,” Jones not only examines the slow violence and racial trauma of complicity in the surveillance of black bodies but focuses attentively on and intentionally to the black life in these surveilled foodscapes. Jones’ healing arts-based project centers the personal experiences of African American and Afro-Latinx women as the vessel for illuminating affective and arts-based strategies created by and for personal and collective resilience.

This literature underscores the need to consider both the lived experiences of African American women, and knowledge produced out of these lived experiences to better understand the food practices of this population, for as Psyche Williams-Forsion (2022) argues, “narratives about food told by Black women and girls are particularly dynamic for how they unveil the textures of interior lives” (p. 8).

An example of applying these elements of care into health and wellness practices has been demonstrated in the medical field, where the predominance of western medicine has often resulted in the discrimination of any medical practices other than the standard singular-focused medical care offered in the practice. Rouselle (2009) examines centeredness as an emerging concept in health and wellbeing, a concept that offers a more integrated and grounded approach to health and wellness that is inclusive of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). In Rouselle’s examination of centeredness in health and wellness, he highlights three overarching elements inherent in this concept, all of which offer a useful lens for food justice and public health nutrition initiatives: empowerment, autonomy, and traditional practices. Combined, these elements entail “encouraging self-exploration and self-care for the new generation of health care consumers, [which] leads to empowering the patient or client to seek out resources that are complementary to their traditional services” (Rouselle, 2009, p. 3-4). In a similar fashion, the application of care work in food justice and public health nutrition initiatives would foster the possibilities for more integrated and grounded approaches to addressing African American women’s unique vulnerabilities to food apartheid and diet-related health disparities (Lewis, 2016; Smith and Ewoodzie Jr., 2021).

African American women's food practices are laden with invaluable information sourced from the spatial food politics and nutritional knowledge of black culinary epistemologies.

Further exploration of black culinary epistemologies, then, must be done when exploring the food practices of African American women. This, in turn, would lead to more culturally appropriate and intersectional food justice and public health nutrition initiatives that reflect the unique needs of this population. What this emerging body of literature additionally offers is a refashioning of health from a disease and death-producing lens, to a life-sustaining and loving lens in examining African American women's food practices, and demonstrates the ways in which care-work serves as an "idea that, when attained and explored, can help a person maintain their own sense of personal values and health, fostering autonomy and self-care" (Rouselle, 2009, p. 8). These elements of care are built into black culinary epistemologies and are evidenced in the black food geographies of black women who have and continue to map alternative trajectories for addressing the various social barriers that they experience.

2.5 Black Feminist Theory Framework

Issues that are specific to black women must be studied using black women-centered methodologies to understand the thought and behavior of this population: Black Feminist Theory framework offers such a locus. Patricia Hill Collins (2009) conceptualizes Black Feminist Theory framework as a social praxis grounded in black women epistemology. In outlining the elements of (in)visibility and standpoint as markers for the construction of this framework, Collins discusses the interdependence of political, ideological, and economic spheres of oppression and how black women's bodies have functioned historically and presently within these spaces. While not the first black feminist thought conceptualized in a long history of black women's intellectual tradition, with varying iterations of black feminism and womanism by black women like Sojourner Truth (2017), Ida. B. Wells (1996), Anna Julia Cooper (2000), Alice

Walker (1983), Charlene Carruthers (2018), and Joan Morgan (1999), Collin's framing of Black Feminist Theory framework as a methodological social praxis offers four key tenets applicable to illuminating, interpreting, understanding, and documenting the lived experiences of Black American women: (1) concrete experience as a criterion of meaning, (2) use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, (3) an ethic of caring, and (4) an ethic of responsibility (Collins, 2009; McDougal, 2014; Lindsay-Dennis, 2015), all of which are useful for this study.

Black Feminist Theory framework seeks to disrupt the culture of marginalizing and omitting black women's voices in feminist thought, black social and political theories, and in other intellectual productions (Collins, 2009). Following in the tradition of Toni Morrison's method of "searching for the ghost in the machine" (Thompson, 1994; Morrison, 1993), Collins delves into the shadow archive of history to retrieve the knowledge systems forged from "everyday black women experiences" that, although part and parcel of historical consciousness, have been pushed to the periphery by hegemonic historicization. Collin's application of critical black memory as an active tool in the reclamation and utilization of repressed black diasporic knowledge systems simultaneously alludes to the advocacy for the (un)visibility of marginalized black female bodies who serve as living archives of black memory. In the context of this study, positing black women as carriers of both individual and collective food histories, as well as primary transmitters of this food knowledge system, serves to speak back to a western heritage of effacing. African American women's food practices are, then, explored as a product of traditional spatial processes, not independent of black imagination.

Black Feminist Theory framework recognizes the intersection of race, gender, class, and geography and how these factors uniquely play out in and through the bodies of black women. This framework, then, is useful here for unpacking the master narrative of healthism surrounding

African American women's food behaviors, a narrative that largely neglects this population's vulnerabilities to food and health inequities. *Concrete experience as a criterion of meaning* is operationalized in this study to explore African American women's intersectional experiences around race, gender, class, and geography, and the ways in which these factors have influenced, but have not wholly defined, this population's food practices. This tenet is further operationalized alongside the tenet of the *use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims* to explore how African American have contested food spaces by drawing from a cultural food knowledge system, a system that is politically charged with practices of black space-making: in this case, the creation of a food knowledge system forged out of spatial food politics amidst iterations of (dis)placement. Concerning *an ethic of caring*, Black Feminist Theory offers a strengths-based, knowledgeable, and caring lens through which to better understand African American women's perceptions around their food practices, the meanings that they ascribe to these food practices, as well as the cultural food knowledge evidenced in these food practices. *An ethic of responsibility* is operationalized in this study's objective of mobilizing the indigenous food knowledge of African American women experiencing food apartheid in urban communities to speak to food justice and health policies and practices.

The use of Black Feminist Theory framework in this study is critical to understanding the intersectional positionality of African American women within these food and health inequities, and how engaging the underexplored content and mechanisms of the food practices of this populations provides useful information for food justice and public health nutrition initiatives aiming to address these inequities that this population faces.

2.6 Summary

This chapter captures the trends in the literature that presents research overwhelmingly patterned after the master narrative of healthism, which has produced singular-focused approaches to addressing the food and health inequities that exist amongst African American women. In denoting the gaps in the literature, this chapter highlights the ways in which this singular-focused lens excludes insight into the lived experiences and cultural context of the black women populations under study, thereby producing inaccurate depictions of this population's food practices.

This chapter then engages a more grounded body of literature that captures the significance of black foodways as a mnemonic product of black spatial politics, as well as the central role of African American women in, both historically and presently, politicizing these foodways to address inequities that exist amongst African Americans.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of an emerging body of literature working to deconstruct the singular-focused lens taken to understand African American women's food practices. This literature recognizes the importance of intersectionality, cultural competence, and community empowerment in addressing inequities that bipoc women face: specifically, African American women. This research study is situated within this emerging body of literature.

In approaching this qualitative ethnographic study through a black feminist lens, the following chapter outlines the methods used to explore this study's purpose.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the key elements of qualitative research and justifies the appropriateness of using a qualitative approach to address this study's objective. The chapter further describes the selected sample and criteria used to exact purposeful sampling. The data collection methods are described in detail, as well the respective methods of data analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion speaking to reliability and validity, and study's limitations.

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to explore black culinary epistemologies in the food practices of urban-dwelling African American women experiencing food apartheid. The following research questions are used to guide this study:

1. How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive vulnerabilities in their food practices?
2. How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive strengths in their food practices that draw from black culinary epistemologies?
3. How can black culinary epistemologies be used to promote more community-centered, intersectional, and culturally competent food and health policies and practices?

3.1 Design

To adequately address the concerns outlined in the research questions, qualitative research is selected as the most appropriate research method conducive to the study. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 17). Creswell outlines eight factors that a researcher should consider prior to conducting qualitative research (Brown, 2007):

1. What is the nature of the question? The question should ask “how” or “what” rather than “why” as characteristic of quantitative research.
2. The topic of a qualitative study should be an underexplored phenomenon.
3. There should be a need to present a detailed view of the topic area.
4. A qualitative approach to research is needed to observe individuals within the context of their natural setting to foster grounded findings, conclusions, and implications.

5. A qualitative approach to research is useful for literary style writing.
6. Qualitative research should only be used when the researcher has sufficient time and resources to ensure a quality perception of participants' experiences.
7. The researcher should consider whether their audience is receptive to qualitative material and ensure that the reviewers are intrigued rather than dissatisfied with qualitative inquiry.
8. The researcher must be able to take on the role of active learner and be willing to impartially present the study's findings from the participants' view.

A review of the literature related to this study's topic reveals that little research to date has focused on the lived experiences of minority populations experiencing food apartheid; experiences that contain the ways in which minority populations, specifically African Americans, have historically and presently navigated these built food environments. Additionally, very little attention has been given to black culinary epistemologies and its influence on black women's food practices. A qualitative approach to this study allows me, the researcher, to center and privilege the lived experiences of the participants and their articulation of their food practices. A qualitative approach to this study is useful for capturing the ways in which this underexplored knowledge transcends data objectively captured through quantitative research.

3.2 Data Collection

Sensory ethnography is a qualitative research method that emerged from feminists, anthropologists, sociologists, ethnographers, and cultural studies scholars' critique of traditional

approaches of objectivity and reductionism taken in the social sciences in conducting research on group cultures: particularly underrepresented groups like African Americans. A shift from objective-based research on participants to collaborative and intersubjective research with participants is materialized in sensory ethnography. The researcher centers the embedded knowledge derived from the emic perspectives of the participants, rather than the etic perspectives of the researcher, as the focal point of analysis. Drysdale and Wong (2019) highlight the critical use of using an ethnographic research design to understand the cultural practices of underrepresented populations, particularly as it relates to the topic of this research study:

The key concern involved in researching cultural life is to identify the tacit, mundane, almost unconscious series of meanings that govern the behavior, but which are simultaneously difficult to articulate because they are often taken for granted (p. 8)

The body's relationship to food is, then, better understood through the quotidian experiences where individuals, and the social, cultural, and historical context in which they exist, produce meanings around food, which in turn shape ideas around food, its preparation, consumption, and health implications. Further, and equally important, this research design privileges the lived experiences of the participants.

3.2.1 *Photovoice*

To visually capture these experiences, Photovoice is selected as the method of data collection in this study. Photovoice is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method conceptualized by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris (1997) as a medium through which people from marginalized communities can identify, represent, and enhance their community

through photography. Photovoice has two essential components. The first component allows participants to use cameras to capture issues that concern them and use these captured as a catalyst for discussion; these action-oriented discussions take place during the second component of Photovoice, which is the interview. The interview component of Photovoice method provides the opportunity for participants to share their chosen photographs and for the researcher to better understand the meanings ascribed to the photographs. As a result of combining captured photographs with in-depth discussion surrounding the meanings behind the photographs, richer data is gained.

Photovoice emerged out of three distinct theoretical frameworks: (1) empowerment education for critical consciousness, (2) feminist theory, and (3) documentary photography.

Freire's (1973) concept of empowerment education for critical consciousness posits individual and community involvement as central, therefore critical, to bringing about social equity. Within this micro-meso level sphere, this concept encourages critical group dialogue to facilitate both critical understanding and action.

Feminist theory is grounded in the assumption that knowledge is experiential and that the power yielded by those who, historically and presently, have voice, set language, historicize, and participate in decision-making, posits them as gatekeepers of epistemology, to the disadvantage of women. (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2005).

Documentary photography captures the quotidian experiences of a specific population to produce a textured testimony of their experiences. Documentary photography uses this image-based evidence as a mode of authentication to bring awareness to social issues (Jing and Yun, 2007; Im, 2007; Sutton-Brown, 2011).

Drawing from these theoretical frameworks, Photovoice has three main goals: to enable people (1) to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through large and small group discussion of their photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers (Wang, 1999, p.185).

Wang (1999) describes how this method of data collection may specifically offer unique contributions to women's health, as this method has been most widely used to illuminate social and environmental determinants of health and as a source of advocacy for health improvements in underserved populations, like African American women.

3.3 Sample Selection and Criteria

To be considered for this study, participants must:

- 1) identity as a cisgender African American woman
- 2) be between the age of 18-65
- 3) reside in an identified urban food desert of Georgia
- 4) have a vested interest in preparation of black foodways
- 5) have a phone that can take photos
- 6) be absent of COVID-19 symptoms

African American women are selected as the sample population because of their intersectional positionality in food and health inequities, as well as their hypervisibility in public health nutrition discourses. The social location of this population, then, denotes the relevance of privileging urban-dwelling African American women's perspectives in informing the study's purpose. Due to time constraints, the study includes five qualified African American women.

3.4 Recruitment

Participants are recruited through flyers that are posted via the social media platform, Instagram, throughout Georgia State University, and in the local black woman-owned restaurants located in the historic West End community of Atlanta: a USDA-identified urban food desert. Potential participants are asked to complete COVID-19 and demographic screening forms to determine their eligibility for the study. Once the forms are reviewed, the researcher will contact 5 eligible participants through a phone call to notify of their eligibility. This phone call will consist of issuing the informed consent form and going over the research study. Once verbal consent is obtained, participants are asked to sign and send informed consent forms to the researcher. Once informed consent forms have been obtained, data collection will begin.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive and frequency analysis are applied to demographic data. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the Photovoice data and interview transcripts.

3.6 Trustworthiness

A second coder will be used to highlight any relevant or significant themes in the interview transcripts. Thick, rich description is included in the analysis process, as to increase the viability of translating the contextualized voices of the participants. Due to time constraints of the study, I perform minimal summarizing of responses back to the participants throughout their interview. Because of this constraint, I am emailing copies of the interview transcripts to the participants as an extended form of member checking; any participant who finds discrepancies are asked to contact me to corroborate their statements.

3.7 Summary

This chapter includes a discussion of the methods used to conduct this study. The chapter covers the selection and justification for using a qualitative approach to this research study, the reason for the selection of urban-dwelling, cisgender African American women as the sample population, including sampling and criteria, as well as the use of Photovoice and individual interviews as the primary methods of data collection. Additionally, the chapter includes a discussion on the use of thematic analysis as the primary mode of analysis and concludes with a discussion speaking to strategies employed to ensure trustworthiness. The following chapter offers a detailed description of the participants and discusses the results of the study.

4 FINDINGS

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to explore black culinary epistemologies in the food practices of urban-dwelling African American women experiencing food apartheid. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive vulnerabilities in their food practices?
2. How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive strengths in their food practices that draw from black culinary epistemologies?

3. How can black culinary epistemologies be used to promote more community-centered, intersectional, and culturally competent food and health policies and practices?

The institutional review boards at Georgia State University approved this study on October 12, 2022. This study utilized a qualitative research design and was conducted from December 2022 to January 2023. During this period, African American women were recruited by using purposive sampling via flyers, found on Appendix E, that were posted on the social media network, Instagram, throughout black women-owned eateries in the West End community of Atlanta, and a farmer's market located in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Potential participants reached out to me via email and contact number specified on the recruitment flyer. I emailed potential participants a COVID-19 form, found on Appendix D, and a demographic screening form, found on Appendix C, to determine eligibility for the study. Once the forms were sent back to me and reviewed, I ran each participant's zip code through the USDA ERS's food desert map to check if their place of residence was identified as an urban food desert. Of those recruited, five African American women were identified to participate in this study. I contacted eligible participants through a phone call to notify them of their eligibility. This phone call consisted of issuing the two informed consent forms. The first form, found on Appendix A, was consent for participation in the research study's two activities: Photovoice and an individual interview. The second form, found on Appendix B, was consent for release of Photovoice photos and the interview audio recording. Once verbal consent was obtained, participants were asked to sign and email informed consent forms to me. Once informed consent forms were obtained, I emailed directions for Photovoice, found on Appendix F, to participants, and asked participants to both complete the activity within a 48-hour timeframe and identify a time and date within the next

week that they would be available to conduct activity two: the one-hour interview. I emphasized to the participants that the Photovoice activity had to be completed before the interview. Once participants completed and emailed the Photovoice activity to me, the interviews were set up based on their availability.

The intended design for the interviews were focus group; however, due to the participants' time conflicts, I decided that individual interviews would be more convenient for both the participants' availability and for the study's objective of obtaining rich material from each participant's lived experiences. Conducting individual interviews also afforded participants the right to a setting that fostered a more confidential sharing of personal experiences that may have been otherwise compromised in a focused group interview setting. Face to face interviews took place in private rooms at a public library. The meeting location was accessible by Metro Atlanta Regional Transit Authority (MARTA), private, and quiet. During the interviews, participants reflected on their photos from Photovoice in response to the interview questions, found on Appendix G. A "thank you" card with \$50 enclosed was given to each participant at the end of their interview. I explained to each participant that I would email a copy of their interview transcript for verification, and that if necessary, clarifying questions would be asked of them. The same was done for the Photovoice component, where participants were asked to clarify their photos, captions, and descriptions. Each participant received a copy of their transcript within the next twenty-four to forty-eight-hour timeframe via email. All participants verified that the transcripts and photos were accurate and clarified over a phone call and email any questions that I had. The participants identities were protected through the selection of pseudonyms that were identified by participants during the informed consent process.

This chapter has three sections. The first section presents individual profiles of the five participants who participated in both the Photovoice and interview components of the study. Pseudonyms chosen by the participants were used to keep their true identities confidential. The second section presents data from both the interviews and Photovoice to support the overarching themes that emerged from the data, in respect of its correspondence to one of the three research questions. The last section provides a summary of the chapter.

4.1 The Participants

Five African American women who reside in Atlanta, Georgia and neighboring zip codes participated in this study. Three of the five participants live in predominantly black communities of Atlanta that are listed as USDA-identified urban food deserts. One participant, Andrea, lives in a predominantly black community of Lithonia, Georgia that is listed as a USDA-identified suburban food desert. Rainbow Walker lives in a commercial area of Atlanta but has a vegan eatery in a predominantly black community that is listed as a USDA-identified food desert. All five of the participants participated in both the Photovoice and interview component of the study.

The participants were diverse in terms of age, income, and living status. Their ages ranged from 20 to 42 years. All participants identified as African American, cisgender women. All participants completed high school, one completed some college, four completed a bachelor's degree. One of the five participants is considered head of household. Two of the participants are single and pay rent. Two of the participants live with family. Four of the five participants reside in predominantly black communities created as a result of residential segregation. Two of the five participants' average annual income is less than \$10,000, thus placing them at working class status. Two of the participants' annual income peaks at \$40,000, thus placing them at middle

class status. One participant's annual income is higher than \$50,000, thus placing her at middle-class status or above. All five of the participants' demographic information is visually captured in the table below.

Table 1 Participants' Sociodemographic Data
(N=5)

Characteristics	N	%
Age		
Range	20-42	-
Mean	29.5	-
Ethnicity		
Black or African American	5	100%
Gender		
Female	5	100%
Marital status		
Single	5	100%
Level of education		
Some college	1	20%
Bachelor's degree	4	80%
Income		
Under \$10k	2	40%
\$10-\$40k	1	20%
\$40-\$50k	1	20%
Over \$50k	1	20%

Living situation		
Pay rent	2	40%
Own place, no rent	1	20%
Stay with family	2	40%
Geographic location of residence		
USDA-identified urban food desert	4	80%
Other	1	20%
Dietary Restrictions		
Health condition	2	40%
Personal belief (spiritual, political, environmental)	2	40%
None	1	20%

*One participant refused to disclose her age, and thus was not included in the final age range and mean.

Below is a detailed description of each participant. The descriptions include the participants' own words, where appropriate, in order to uniquely capture each participant's personas.

Andrea. Andrea is a 31-year-old, single African American and Jamaican-identifying woman who resides in a predominantly black community located in Lithonia, Georgia. Andrea is a college graduate and current full time graduate student with an average income that peaks at \$10,000, annually. Andrea's current experience with food apartheid, as well as anxiety with driving, has had an impact on her food practices.

Andrea describes her food environment as a place where “everybody suffers, as far as it being a food desert,” due to the reality that “anytime you have limited food options, you always have limited health options.”

Andrea lives with her mother, whom Andrea feels her environment impacts the most. Andrea’s mother suffers from diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Andrea describes her mother’s health conditions as a constant worry of hers, more so because of their food environment. Andrea’s mother is also the only other person in the household able to drive, due to Andrea’s anxiety around driving; however, Andrea’s mother does not like to drive far distances from their home. Thus, Andrea and her mother are, as Andrea describes, “confined to this neighborhood.” Despite the geographical vulnerabilities, Andrea engages in food practices that reflect her strong Jamaican ties and conscious consumption.

Naomi. Naomi is a 25-year-old, single African American woman who resides in the predominantly black community of Forest Park, located in Atlanta, Georgia. Naomi is a college graduate and current graduate student who’s employed as a video editor. Naomi’s average income peaks at \$40,000, annually. With food being “expensive as hell” and having to, alone, pay high rent in her community, food apartheid is a constant reality for Naomi. While Naomi has mobility that allows her to access food services outside of her community, she must negotiate her food practices with her income and awareness of her attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Convenience is a determining factor in Naomi’s food practices: notably time and cost. Naomi states that “I do try to go for meals that I can cook fast...that’s not that I’m busy. It’s mainly cuz I got ADHD and like I don’t have the time to sit there and remember that I was cooking something that took an hour long to cook.” Naomi has to “stretch” the food resources

she obtains, stating that “I don’t have as much resources as other people where I can just throw it away and buy another one...it’s a reflection of my economic lifestyle.” Even though her “economic status” limits her ability to purchase enough food sources, and her ADHD requires her to prepare meals within a certain time frame, Naomi is highly selective with the quality of food sources that enter her body.

Despite residing in a community with limited food services, Naomi sees the abundance there, and channels this abundance through her relationship with nature’s raw resources. Naomi draws from the natural elements in her environment to cultivate her home as a sacred space. Naomi’s inside environment is where she can spiritually express herself through her practice of African American hoodoo and connection to her Choctaw heritage. These spiritual practices, as well as the ways in which she was taught to prepare her food, have influenced the ways in which Naomi views “cooking” as “spiritual in a way.”

Celestine Star. Celestine Star is a 20-year-old, single woman who identifies as African American and American Indian. Celestine Star resides in the predominantly black community of Ivan Hill, located in Atlanta, Georgia. Like Naomi and Andrea, Celestine Star is a full-time student and works as a cashier at a local black-owned vegan restaurant. Celestine Star’s average income peaks at \$10,000, annually. Celestine travels back and forth between her mother and father’s household but spends most of her time under her father’s residence in Ivan Hill: a community that Celestine Star describes as starkly different from her mother’s suburban community.

While “being a college student and being on a budget” is typically a barrier for quality food options, Celestine’s inner environment, her home, has been a space where she is able to

negotiate the realities of food apartheid. Celestine describes her home as an “oasis,” where regardless of her “situation with money,” she knows she can always go and feel food secure.

Celestine Star makes conscious attempts to see the “abundance” cultivated in her inside environment reflected in her outside environment, an outside environment where “even when outside circumstances might not reflect [the community’s] heart, [the community] still shines, and even while this vitality may not be noticed by some, it “is definitely apparent and noticed by everybody else.” One such practice of Celestine Star is related to her concern for the high number of “homeless people in the area.” She has opted to always carry “cuties” in her car to pass out “to give out to the people who are without a home” in her community as a way of recognizing the humanity of black people who, as Celestine Star states, are “already viewed as lesser than” and so are given “lesser than quality.”

Celestine Star carries symbols of hummingbirds with her that serve as a spiritual expression of her freedom, a freedom that she states is reflected in her “steadily available options” for creativity. This creative expression, in turn, fosters in Celestine Star a strong sense of wholeness in self that allows her to perceive the duality of vulnerabilities and strengths in her community that exist alongside and beyond her food practices.

Gloria. Gloria is a 42-year-old single mother of two who identifies as a Moorish American, or Black American. Gloria resides in a predominantly black community located in Fulton County, Georgia. Gloria is a college graduate and is self-employed as a toy manufacturer with an average income that peaks at \$40,000, annually. Gloria’s income allows her the freedom to contest the constraints of food apartheid because it allows her complete agency in her food options, options that she says she did not experience growing up in a “meat-eating family.”

Gloria states that her family did not “explore more options” that she believed were “more healthier options” for her body’s refusal to properly digest meat sources.

Gloria began the tradition of exploring alternative food practices when she started a family of her own. Gloria’s household foundation is built on a “cruelty-free” diet. Even within this ethical food practice, Gloria allows a “variety of different types of foods” to exist that supply “every mouth, every type of mouth and stomach” in her household, much unlike what she experienced in her childhood household. Gloria believes that “it’s important for” her children “to know...what they need for their own bodies.” Gloria began her “cruelty-free” diet upon reading the “Holy Koran of Moorish Holy Temple of Science- Circle 7” where certain scriptures discuss ways of being more “Christlike” through the act of “ceasing from being cruel.” Gloria applied this scripture to her life by integrating her religious and food practices as one in the same.

Gloria’s reasons for beginning and maintaining a “cruelty-free” diet evolved over its 23-year span as she gained more insight as to how her food practices influenced her health. Whereas once she was “just not eating meat” because she “didn’t want to be cruel,” in addition to her “spiritual reasons,” Gloria’s food practices soon “evolved to a self-care.”

Rainbow Walker. Rainbow Walker describes herself as an “ageless” Indigenous and African American woman. Rainbow Walker is a college graduate and restauranter who earns an annual income of over \$50,000. While Rainbow Walker does not experience food apartheid due to her current residence in southern Midtown, a commercial area of Atlanta, Georgia, and high-range income, her practice of “commerce from a place of being holistic” guided her to house her vegan restaurant in a community that she has called home for the past “36 years.” Rainbow Walker describes the Historic West End of Atlanta as a place she “will always come back to”

because it is a space that “nurtures culture,” “promotes sustainability,” as well as a “healthy homeostasis.”

Rainbow Walker’s vegan restaurant is one of the eight “vegan eateries” intentionally housed in the West End as means to, as Rainbow Walker states, “support our community and, and provide, um, a product that actually nurtures our people with, you know, using food as medicine.” Rainbow Walker comes from a lineage of women of commerce who have used their hands to create sources of income. Rainbow Walker describes herself as a “culinary artist” who sees a link between the “visual art process” and “culinary art.” Rainbow Walker enjoys being “creative with food preparation,” and regards the “art of nutrition” as a culmination of “diasporic energy.” For Rainbow Walker, her ability to alchemize her love of art and food into a trade has allowed her “fortune” to “come through food.”

The element of “care that goes into food tradition” is saturated in Rainbow Walker’s food trade. Rainbow Walker’s business ethics around food is reflected in her personal life, as she practices raw veganism and centers community in her daily food practices.

4.2 Data Analysis

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the human transcription company, Rev. and transcribed by hand by me for any words that Rev may not have been able to accurately understand. Each transcript was hand coded by me through the simultaneous use of In Vivo and Descriptive coding. I selected In Vivo coding for first cycle coding because this coding method privileges the voices of marginalized populations like African American women by using their own words, verbatim. In addition to In Vivo coding, I selected Descriptive coding for first cycle

coding because this coding method is useful for capturing responses to reflective questions (Saldaña, 2009, pp. 72-74).

First cycle coding revealed to me that Pattern coding was the most applicable coding technique for the second-cycle coding process. Similar codes are pulled from the data and tied together to create a pattern code; these pattern codes, in turn, foster the development of major themes (Saldaña, 2009, p. 52). The codes were determined by me, but the themes were cocreated by myself and a second coder, graduate student Maicey Melville, as a strategy to ensure trustworthiness. Melville and I met twice and coded separately between the times that we met up until our last meeting. During our first meeting, Maicey and I had a disagreement with the preferred language of one theme. Two days later, we met for our second meeting to revisit the theme. During this meeting, we deliberated until we unanimously agreed upon the language for that theme: Black Culinary Traditions.

The participants' transcripts were marked with the following codes: Geographic Accessibility, Economic Inequities, Racial Disparities, Health Conditions, Conscious Consumption, Self-care, Spirituality, Preservation of Life, Health, Resourcefulness, Food Staples, Culture, Creative Expression, Self-reliance, Holistic Commerce, and Sustainable Food Systems. From these major codes emerged four overarching themes: Spatialized Intersectionality, Ethics of Care, Black Culinary Traditions, and Economy of Self-Sustainability.

4.3 Overview of Themes

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore black culinary epistemologies in the food practices of urban-dwelling African American women experiencing food apartheid. Data analysis revealed one theme regarding vulnerabilities in the food practices of the participants:

Spatialized Intersectionality. Many of the participants reported how geographic accessibility, racial and economic inequities coalesced to impact their food choices and health. Two themes emerged regarding strengths in the food practices of the participants: Ethics of Care and Black Culinary Traditions. Concerning the theme of Ethics of Care, many participants reported a holistic view of health that centers care of self in relation to life forces, as well as spirituality, as key elements influencing their food practices. Concerning the theme of Black Culinary Traditions, the participants generally reported a correlation between their resourceful, creative, and communal food practices with traditions in respect of their black culture(s). One theme emerged regarding the participants' perception of how their food practices could inform their community as well as public health policies: Economy of Self-sustainability. Generally, the participants reported the need for organizations and institutions to listen to their voices and experiences around their food realities and knowledge. The more flagrant pattern was the participants' distrust of external support as means of rectifying their food and health realities, with a collective belief that their communities would be better sustained through an economy of self-reliance. These themes can be found in the table below.

Table 2 Themes

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEMES
1) How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive vulnerabilities in their food practices?	Spatialized Intersectionality We make certain food choices we make is because it's convenient which sometimes gets in the way of like making healthy choices - Andrea

	<p>...people wanna talk about black people's, um, you know, the way we eat and all that. But it's really a con. It's a situation that was put upon us, you know? It's not in our own choices.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Gloria</p> <p>I feel like it's apparent to witness the class system and the economic disparities when you look at pictures like the food marts because when you get off of Paces Ferry, you don't see a convenience store...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Celestine Star</p>
<p>2) How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive strengths in their food practices that draw from black culinary epistemologies?</p>	<p>Ethics of Care</p> <p>And I even found out that, okay, you're really supposed to eat according to your blood type. And I was like, dang, okay. Wow. I didn't even know that. I was just not eating meat because, not really for health reasons. I just didn't want to be cruel...so that was my only, my reason was spiritual. And then, um, then it evolved to a self-care.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Gloria</p> <p>You'll care more if the thing that you're eating is, uh, what you know you need to sustain yourself...you'll pay attention and you'll wanna be sure oranges, that bananas survive so that we'll always have a food supply, you know. You'll want to be sure that the animals and insects that help to create the ecosystem are present so we can survive and thrive.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Rainbow Walker</p> <p>Black Culinary Traditions</p> <p>So that's definitely our strength, is that we can take the smallest amount of items, put it together and make it a gourmet meal...our creativity, our ability to...manipulate things, to be innovative.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Gloria</p>

	<p>A tradition I find is the smoker because it's just traditional for us to all come over. Here with, um, smoked food and just a spread and our aunties and uncles bring mac and cheese or a side to go with it.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Celestine Star</p>
<p>3) How can black culinary epistemologies be used to promote more community-centered, intersectional, and culturally competent food and health policies and practices?</p>	<p>Economy of Self-Sustainability</p> <p>So the only way we can change our reality as black people, especially when it comes to food insecurity in a time when economic recession is about to hit, is we need to take matters into our own hands.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Naomi</p> <p>I think that moving forward we need to start thinking about how we can create our own production of food and start to provide these healthy options at a lower price.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Gloria</p>

4.4 Photovoice and Interview Data Presentation and Analysis

1) How does African American women's food practices, amidst experiencing food apartheid, reveal vulnerabilities?

Spatialized Intersectionality

Spatialized Intersectionality as a theme was created through the combining of the codes Geographic Accessibility, Economic Inequities, Racial Disparities and Health Conditions.

Participants' discussion of processes of residential segregation, lack of access to quality food and

health services, racial disparities, health anxieties, and economic barriers impacting food options were all deemed vulnerabilities in some of the participants' food practices.

A few participants identified the lack of access to quality food services in their food environments as the result of historically present processes of residential segregation. Andrea, who resides in a predominantly black, middle-class neighborhood, described how her community is "losing resources" and "losing things" because "redlining is still happening." When asked how race is connected to the issue of access, Andrea stated that "I feel like the only people who really suffer from food deserts are black and brown people." When asked why these issues exist in her community, Andrea insisted that race must be a determining factor in the quality of her food environment because she does not "understand what's the reason. You have a neighborhood of people who want more, who want better, who can afford better, but don't have better." Andrea described the "only food options" that she has in her community: a "crab seafood," "Chinese food restaurants," "Subway," and an "overcrowded Publix," "overcrowded" due to this store being the only available chain store within miles of Andrea's community. Reflecting on these options, Andrea stated that her community "don't really have anything, any food or just anything, any services...that really showcase the community." Andrea expressed how the "limited food options" in her environment are a particular concern of hers because she relies on her mother, whom she lives with, as her source of mobility. Andrea stated that since her mother "doesn't like to drive," she is "confined to this environment." Andrea shared that her constrained mobility limits her food options within her already "limiting" food environment.

Unlike Andrea, Celestine Star is mobile and is less dependent on her external food environment as her source of sustenance. However, Celestine Star shared a similar perspective as Andrea in her response to why similar issues exist in her community. Celestine Star discussed

the ways in which she sees both race and class as factors in the quality of food services offered in her community of Ivan Hill. Celestine Star described the setup of her community as follows:

You see people on a Friday night walking from Cascade and, uh, a Popeye's being like off of a exit near, not even a mile away from a convenience store and that's not even a mile away from another convenience store, and then another one. It's like, I feel like that's an economic disparity."

Like Andrea, Celestine Star described bearing witness to the obvious disparities that exist between predominantly black communities like Ivan Hill and other areas of Atlanta with different demographics. Celestine Star stated that it's "apparent to witness the class system and the economic disparities when you look at pictures like the food marts because when you get off of Paces Ferry, you don't see a convenience store..." Celestine Star stated that the reason she believes these generic "food marts" exist in this "predominantly black area" is because "the city already views us as lesser than so they'll give us lesser than quality." This "lesser than quality" described by Celestine Star is visually captured in the photos of "food marts" that she believes is "not like in a way selling anything but I guess like brokenness..."

Celestine Star.



Figure 1

Spatialized Intersectionality: “A weakness of the south side of Atlanta is the overconsumption of alcohol and processed foods. Although it’s not entirely our fault, there is a major distribution of “food marts” & not so convenient stores full of packaged factory-made goods that don’t add to our health but subtract from it. It’s unfortunate because the marts are strategically placed off the interstate and on corners into neighborhoods, so they become convenient for those who don’t have the ability to travel far from home to healthy options.”

Celestine Star’s photo of a “food mart” was captured in response to the prompt words “weaknesses,” “environment,” “health,” and “services” from the Photovoice activity. Celestine Star’s caption describes the intentional placement of “food marts” in predominantly black communities of southside Atlanta that, although function as a “convenient store,” sell products that compromise the health of an already vulnerable community.

Majority of the participants shared this same belief as Celestine Star that when residents have no means of accessing options outside of their immediate environment, due to lack of mobility or economic barriers, they have no choice but to depend on the available food services as the most convenient option for sustenance given their present circumstances. Gloria stated that “people wanna talk about black people’s, um, you know, the way we eat and all that. But it’s really, it’s, it’s a con. It’s a situation that was put upon us. You know? It’s not in our own choices.” Celestine Star captured this sentiment most intimately as she stated:

Like I can’t judge you for using your resources that you have available to you, like I’m judging the city and the circumstances we live in. But I understand by all means if we need to survive and do something then we’re gonna do that. And I guess that is the convenience in the state that we can walk up the street and grab some potato chips or hot Cheetos or whatever from the store because it’s readily available to us. Although it might not be like granny smith apples or something, it’s like, you know, we still have the comfort knowing that we could spend like \$2 at the corner store and have a little snack to snack on.

A few of the participants made a connection between their constrained food choices and their health. Andrea described how the quality of her food environment reflects the kind of health options available to her community. Andrea stated that “I feel like anytime you have like limited food options, you always have limited health options.” This statement is potently captured in Andrea’s photos depicted below.

Andrea.



Figure 2



Figure 3

Spatialized Intersectionality: “In every urban/black neighborhood where there is a plethora of inadequate and unhealthy food options, there are always limited and inadequate healthcare options.”

Andrea captured these two images, one showing the only health service in her community, and the other showing three of the four types of food services offered in her community, in response to the prompt words “community,” “health,” and “services provided” from the Photovoice activity. Andrea’s caption describes how the limited health service offered by Urgent Care is correlated to the limited food options and expresses how this correlation is most prevalent in predominately black and brown urban communities.

When asked to reflect on her photos in relation to the topic of health and food, Andrea stated that “I’ve been trying to drink alkaline water or to make smarter choices, like choices as far as eating” but “we don’t have, you know, grocery stores with organic sections,” so when “you try to make healthy options, it’s not really healthy.” As a result, “we make certain food choices...because it’s convenient, which sometimes gets in the way of like making healthy choices.” Andrea shared how because of the constant reality of limited food options at the expense of health, “everyone suffers” in her “community, um, as far as it being like a food desert.” For Andrea, these “limited health options” are also reflected in the one health service available in her community: an “urgent care” that Andrea stated her community is “forced to go to” because “it’s convenient.” Andrea described how her own frustration with the quality of the health options available in her community is extended to the wellbeing of her mom, whom Andrea described as “older” and “overweight” and suffers from health issues related to “her blood sugar, her blood pressure, and all those things.” Andrea stated that her concern for her

mother's health "puts a strain" on her and her family because they "have to be extra cautious" over her "mother's health."

Similar to Andrea's experience in a food environment where the community is expected to accept the limited food and health resources that they are given, Gloria reflected on her upbringing in a "meat eating family" who did not explore "healthier" food options, but rather forced the household to "eat what's put in front of" them. Gloria described how "even when I was growing up in a meat-eating family, you know, certain things I just couldn't eat. I couldn't eat crabs, I couldn't eat, you know, most seafood, I couldn't eat, um, beef without feeling like disgusted and heavy and nasty." Now a "cruelty-free" consumer, Gloria expressed how her want for food sources that she knew were "healthier" for her body was compromised by the limited options in her household environment. This lack of options in food resources, Gloria stated, is directly linked to the rates of health conditions in the black community. In response to a question regarding problems that exist in the community related to food practices, Gloria shared a belief in a correlation between quality of diet and quality of health rather than the idea that health conditions are simply hereditary; a common belief she stated is shared within the black community as told by health professionals. Gloria expressed her refute of this "hereditary" claim because she believes that "the body literally heals itself" through the consumption of quality food. Gloria expressed how "It's not hereditary, you know, like they try to label it as, and I think they do that on purpose so that we felt like there's no way of us solving this...even though you can see that [it's] the diet. How is that hereditary? That's crazy. Its diet related." For both Andrea and Gloria, environments that offer limited food options play a pivotal role in their food choices; these choices, in turn, impact the quality of their health and as well as others around them.

Both Naomi and Gloria identified economic impediments as another primary barrier to integrating health concerns into their food practices. Unlike the other participants, Naomi lives alone. Although she can travel outside of her immediate environment to access food, economic barriers impact her food practices. Naomi stated that she alone pays the “high rent” at her apartment and described the food market as “expensive as hell,” both of which are contributing factors in her present experiences with food insecurity. In addition to the influence of these factors on her limited food supply, Naomi expressed how the maintenance of her ADHD requires her to go for the most convenient meals that she “can cook fast.” In response to the ways in which class is reflected in her photos, Naomi described the ways in which many of her photos depict elements of her “economic lifestyle.” Naomi described the photo of half an onion wrapped in plastic to capture how her present experiences with food insecurity require her to “hold onto this cuz I know that I don’t have as much resources as other people where I can just throw it away and buy another one.”

Naomi.



Figure 4

Spatialized Intersectionality: “A half cut onion rests on my hands as I examine it. My mother would be proud that I didn’t waste such an important vegetable.”

Naomi’s photo of a “half-cut onion” wrapped in plastic as she stands in front of her refrigerator was captured in response to the prompt words “convenience” and “economics” from the Photovoice activity. Naomi’s caption describes how the practice of not “wasting” food sources is heralded as a familial practice transmitted to her through her mother’s practice of preserving food sources.

Naomi expressed a belief of food insecurity in the black community as a historically present issue. Naomi stated that “In our community, we’ve been conditioned to saver and hold onto everything we have and try to divvy out...” Gloria expressed a similar view, stating how, as black people, “we don’t play about our food,” due to the very real reality of food insecurity. Gloria described the cultural practice of “stocking up” on food as a means of preserving life in death-producing circumstances:

So we will stock up on you, you feel me? Um, that’s definitely one of our strengths. So we never go without, but, but the problem is the quality of food. And it’s based off economy and how much money we have because really it’s not that we’re so, uh, remedial or so dumb or something that we would not think about eating healthy if we could. But it’s just a matter of how much money do I have in my possession right now. And how many people I have to feed right now. So how can I make this stretch now.

2) How does African American women’s food practices, amidst experiencing food apartheid, reveal strengths that draw from black culinary epistemologies?

Ethics of Care

Ethics of Care emerged as a theme through the combining of the codes Conscious Consumption, Spirituality, Preservation of Life, Self-care, and Health. A few participants described the self-care component of their food practices as inextricable from their spiritual beliefs and social responsibility to the treatment and preservation of other life forces. These food practices were all deemed strengths that draw from black culinary epistemologies.

Two of the participants practice raw “vegan” and “cruelty-free” diets. Gloria and Rainbow Walker described these alternative food practices as a way of life that reflects their

responsibility to social “justice” and the “preservation of life.” While both Gloria and Rainbow Walker are both practitioners of a form of conscious consumption that is founded on an ethic of care, their alternative food practices are expressed differently. While Rainbow Walker described herself as a raw “vegan,” Gloria’s household contains “all the junk food” that Gloria described as “more of a healthy variety” of “cruelty-free” “junk food.”

When asked how care is connected to her food practices, Gloria described how her practice of a “cruelty-free” way of life transcends the act of simply consuming animal-free food sources. Gloria went on to describe how her “food culture is definitely, um, about, uh justice, and you know, going against injustice and protecting the weaker and smaller and being responsible for” her “choices.” Gloria described how she believes that “it’s cruel and it’s unfair and it’s just unjust and you can’t say you don’t believe in injustice, but then you are still unjust to other small creatures when you don’t have to be.” Gloria shared how her ultimate departure from her childhood food socialization in a “meat-eating family” was initiated by both her body and spirit’s refusal to consume animal food sources. It was her exposure to the “Holy Koran of the Moorish Holy Temple of Science-Circle 7,” one scripture in particular, that offered her a foundation on which to build her what would ultimately become a “cruelty-free” way of life. Gloria shared that transformative religious scripture:

We study, you know, we study about Jesus so you could become more Christlike and um, it said in one of his scriptures, he said that it is man and his utter shamelessness that strikes down and consumes the beast. And that cruelty makes the world go awry. So if you don’t want cruelty to continue, you yourself have to cease from being cruel.

Gloria went on to compare the witnessing of “cruel” and “unjust” treatment of animals to “watching slave movies, but more horrifying” because “like these creatures can’t even fight

back.” Gloria shared how her spiritual reasons for practicing a “cruelty-free” way of life evolved to include health as a determining factor in maintaining the practice. Upon doing some research over the years on her “cruelty-free” way of life, Gloria stated “I even found out that, okay, oh, you’re really supposed to eat according to your blood type. And I was like, dang, okay. Wow. I didn’t even know that. I was just not eating meat because, not really for health reasons. I just didn’t want to be cruel...so that was my only, my reason was spiritual. And then, um, then it evolved to a self-care.” Gloria described how, now, because she “care for other living creatures, then of course automatically everything” she eats is “gonna be good for” her too.

Gloria.



Figure 5

Ethics of Care: Vegan Breakfast

Gloria’s photo of a “vegan breakfast” consisting of breakfast sausage, butter, cheese, a condiment, seasoning, and a frozen vegetable was captured in response to the prompt words

“health,” “convenience,” and “responsibility” from the Photovoice activity. Reflecting on this image, Gloria shares how her “cruelty-free” and “junk” food stock considers the realities of both convenience for her work life and the privilege of having a “variety of options” in her food practices that others are not so fortunate to access in their limiting food environments.

Rainbow Walker offered a related response to care-related food practices. For Rainbow Walker, her practice of a “vegan” way of life is interdependent on the “preservation” of the ecosystem. Rainbow Walker stated that “we have a duty, in my opinion, to preserve what we can of that which is human, of that which adds to the richness of life, you know, um, that which preserves life.” Rainbow Walker went on to further describe how this “revolutionary” “duty” to “preserve life” is directly linked to conscious consumption:

And that means just having an orange instead of a bag of potato chips, you know. A banana instead of a cookie. Doesn't mean you can't have the potato chips and you can't have the cookie, but nine times out of ten, have the orange, have the banana, and then have the cookie, you know. You'll care more if the thing that you're eating is, uh, what you know you need to sustain yourself. And the other thing is the little treat. You'll pay attention and you'll wanna be sure oranges, that bananas survive so that we'll always have a food supply, you know. You'll want to be sure that the animals and insects that help to create the ecosystem are present so we can survive and thrive.

Rainbow Walker's concern for a balanced “ecosystem” and health in her food practices is captured in the image below.

Rainbow Walker.

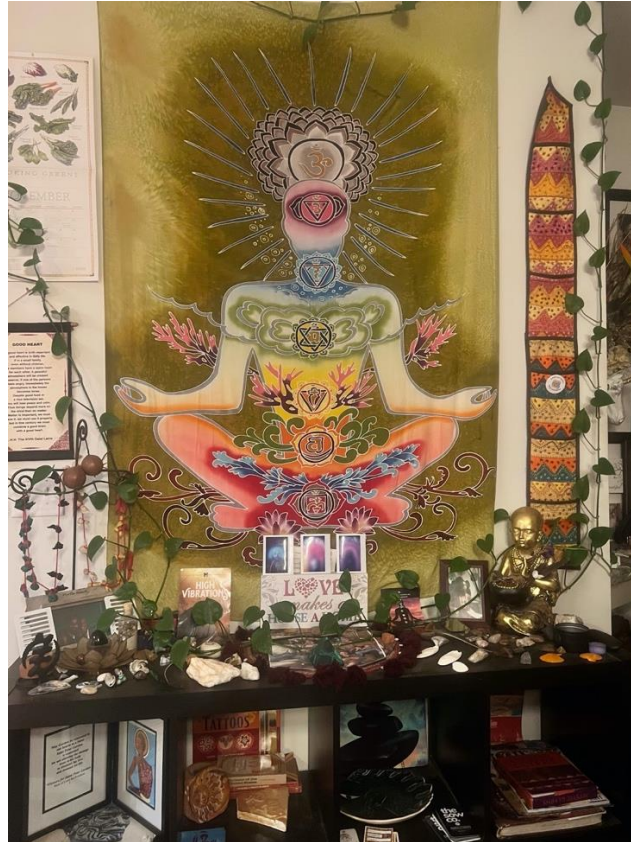


Figure 6

Ethics of Care: “Well-being can be experienced here in this tapestry to color, imagery, earth, air, and sea. It reflects the cultivating and harmonizing of the divine, feminine and masculine through the activation of the kundalini energy. This energy can be sustained by the practice of yoga, as it keeps the chakras open, clear and vibrant for healthy homeostasis.”

Rainbow Walker captured this photo of a colorful tapestry that depicts a figure sitting in the lotus position in response to the prompt word “health” from the Photovoice activity. The tapestry is surrounded by elemental items and captures, as Rainbow Walkers caption states, the balanced relationship between mind, body, and spirit in well-being. Rainbow Walker’s image expresses how her food practices are interconnected with her well-being and the overall well-being of the ecosystem.

While Naomi did not identify her food practices along the lines of “cruelty-free” and “vegan,” when asked how care is connected to her food practices, Naomi described her conscious selection of food. Naomi stated that “If I’m buying food, I try to make sure I’m looking at the labels. No Red 40. Um, no I don’t eat beef or pork. So no beef or pork byproducts.” In reflecting on her “economic lifestyle,” where food insecurity, as well as self-management of her ADHD, impacts her food choices, Naomi described how she still makes the conscious effort to “prepare” slow cooked, yet “fast” meals with “fresh” food sources rather than processed food sources.

I try to take my time when I cook, even though I wanna go fast, even though I know my ADHD won’t allow me to focus that long when I’m doing it, I try to make sure I’m making it taste good cuz I don’t wanna just cook something so I can eat and [get] full. I want to eat something that’s gonna feel good to me.

Naomi shared how the quality of care she puts into her food practices, despite her economic and health barriers, reflects the quality of self-worth she possesses. Andrea also described how she implements care into her food practices, despite having limited food and health options in her environment. In addition to trying to “drink alkaline water or to make smarter choices...as far as eating,” Andrea described how “having coffee in the morning” helps her “make better food choices.” Andrea described her intentional consumption of coffee as a form of “self-care.” In defining what self-care means to her, Andrea expressed how she is “very big on like self-care,” and for her, “self-care is eating healthy, you know, being attached to if you’re religious, attached to some, something that keeps you grounded, keeps you out of depression.” This idea of high-quality food practices, amidst experiencing variations of food apartheid, as a reflection of self-worth was most potently captured by Gloria:

So you put the most hood person, um, in a economic situation where they can thrive and they can win, you know, um, they start to build a certain level of confidence about themselves, and then they care about their bodies. Now they have a sense of self-worth about themselves. And then they feel like they're worth something. Um, and then they feel like, well, I'm worth something then I gotta make sure whatever I put in my body is good. And we literally just automatically become healthier people.

Sharing a similar perspective as Gloria's belief that "food is, is not supposed to be, uh, something that you live for. Food is something that you use to help you live," was Rainbow Walker, who stated when "you eat better, you feel better. When you feel better, you think better. When you think better, you make better choices, thus improving the quality of your life and the lives of those around you."

The participants food practices retain in them variations of "self-care," a form of care that the participants generally associated with self-worth, health, and a social "responsibility" to other life forces for the "balance" of the ecosystem.

Black Culinary Traditions

Black Culinary Traditions as a theme emerged through the combining of the codes Resourcefulness, Food Staples, Culture, and Creative Expression. Many of the participants described the use of staples, from seasonings to tools, for food preparation and storage. Some participants shared insight into their nutritional knowledge around their food practices. The participants generally described a correlation between the resourceful, creative, and communal aspects of their food practices and black cultural traditions.

A few of the participants described some of the staples that they use to prepare their food sources. Gloria described how the “ninja” serves as a “key component” in her diet, particularly when she prepares “smoothies” as a “meal replacer.” In addition to the “ninja,” Gloria described her use of an “air fryer,” a food preparation tool that she believes “is way healthier than the microwave” because the microwave leaves “no nutrition left in the food.” Gloria mentioned that both household staples are a luxury that reflects a “middle-class person” like herself who can “afford to eat the way” she “wants to eat,” rather than “find food that is cheaper because” she “can’t afford better.”

In response to a question posed regarding the ways in which culture is connected to her photos, Celestine Star reflected on her photo of a “deep freezer,” a kind of food storage that she views as a sustainer of food security and a black cultural practice. Celestine Star described the “deep freezer” as “a black thing” that encompasses “going shopping in a manner that even if I don’t have a lot of money to spend on groceries, I will ensure that my family has food on the table.” Celestine Star shared how she believes that “most of” her “black friends” “have a backup fridge or freezer,” because “we don’t play those games.” Celestine Star described how the “deep freezer” for black people means “that there’s always food” and that, for her, the “deep freezer” is “a part of the identity” that shows how “although we might want to go out to eat, there’s something that’s like, we do have food at home...we really do.” Gloria made a similar statement when describing how her “deep freezer” contains a variety of food options that “supply every mouth, every type of mouth and stomach” in her household.

Gloria also described the way in which she stores her food, particularly her liquids, out of concern for her health and fidelity to black cultural practices:

I like to put my juice in the copper container...it's part of our culture to utilize different metals and things, you know, with our food like it's a science project. But it's your food. You should think about it like, okay, be more precise, on, you know, what you put your food in and you know, even plastic itself is bad for you. So you know, I try to at least take it out of the plastic and put in in the copper container.

In connecting culture to her food practices, Andrea focused in on her photo of seasonings that she described as “stables” in “every Jamaican household.”

Andrea.



Figure 7

Black Cultural Traditions: “Jamaican food is a huge part of my life. It keeps me connected to my Jamaican heritage. Cooking is an extremely important aspect of Caribbean Culture. It’s how we celebrate life, socialize and show our loved ones we care.”

Andrea captured this photo of browning and seasoning sauce, Jamaican curry powder, oxtail seasoning, garlic scallion allspice seasoning, and a plastic bag of unground black pepper in

response to the prompt words “food culture,” “food tradition,” and “family” from the Photovoice activity. Andrea discussed the importance of these “staples” to her “Jamaican household” and expressed the function of these “Jamaican staples” as a primary means through which she could connect to her Jamaican roots amidst residing in a food environment where she does not see her food culture reflected in.

In response to the ways in which culture is connected to her food practices, Rainbow Walker, like Andrea, described the function of herbs in connecting her to her “food culture.” However, Rainbow Walker expressed the root source of her connection to her “food culture” coming through the self-harvesting and preparation of herbs.

I have my root things here, the potatoes, the garlic, the ginger. There are herbs in there too. I have ginkgo that I harvested. Um, I have basil. There’s eucalyptus and, um, you know, the, the mortar and pestle. And here’s one that I got from Ghana. This is a plate over here. Um, which of course you see the other utensils. For food culture. So that’s there. And then this pestle here, and then the mortar is in a bowl that they grind everything. And so instead of being more small like that, it’s like a bowl they grind their garlic and stuff in. And this one is from Jamaica. And you know it’s like this diasporic energy of food prep, of food tradition.

Naomi expressed a connection between herbs and the “black community” and the versatile use of these food sources. In reflecting on her photo of a piece of ginger, Naomi described it as part of the “tradition of being black” and shared that she “don’t know no black community in America that don’t use ginger for something... whether it be for hoodoo or whether it be just because you like the way ginger smell or taste.” Naomi also mentioned the

medicinal uses of herbs like ginger, describing ginger as a method of “keeping the doctors away.”

Some of the participants responses during the interview made a connection between resourcefulness and black food culture(s). Gloria and Naomi mentioned the reason for black people’s practice of making food “stretch” is due to a history of food insecurity. However, instead of passively accepting their food lot, both Naomi and Gloria described how black people have always produced “abundance.” Gloria referred to this “abundance” as “our strength” as a people to “take the smallest amount of items, put it together and make it a gourmet meal.” Gloria went on to describe this “abundance” as a testament to “our creativity, our ability to, um, you know, what is it, what’s the word I’m looking for. To manipulate things, to be innovative.” Naomi reflected on her photo of freshly prepared “turkey pasta” to best capture this tension between food insecurity and resourcefulness.

Naomi.



Figure 8

Black Culinary Traditions: “A fresh bowl of turkey pasta made by me!”

Naomi captured a photo of a bowl of “freshly” prepared “turkey pasta” in response to the prompt words “economics,” “food preparation,” “self,” and “food culture” from the Photovoice activity. In describing the photo of the “turkey pasta,” Naomi described the meal as a product of her own creation that reflects the ability of black people to create something out of very little resources. Reflecting on the tension between food insecurity and resourcefulness, Naomi described the symbolism of the “turkey pasta” further

you can see that, you know, all I ate was a fresh bowl of, you know, turkey pasta. Sure it was fresh, but had I been, had we been, you know, had we been allotted different economic, I guess fortitude as black people, I would probably be able to afford more with

that meal....everything in these photos is something I created or that I cultivated...and to me that's just what it means to be black. We cultivate things, we, we hone in our energy and we just soak it up and we spread it to the ones we love.

Rainbow Walker expressed a similar connection between the preparation of food and resourcefulness, albeit more through the lens of creative expression. She identified herself as an “artist first” and a “culinary artist second,” and shared how she “alchemized” her love of art and food preparation to produce a trade that embodied “the art of nutrition.”

Rainbow Walker.



Figure 9

Black Culinary Traditions: “Healthy food prep starts with the basics, it’s got to be fresh organic and non-GMO. The culinary ✨ Alchemist, transforms food into medicine, deliciously. The laboratory is the humble kitchen who’s main ingredient is love.”

Rainbow Walker captured this photo that depicts a wooden spoon arrangement with bead assortments that are arranged behind a bowl of oranges, a tin cooking utensil set, and wooden

plate full of ginger and a purple onion in response to the prompt words “food preparation,” “food tradition,” and “health” from the Photovoice activity. Rainbow Walker described this visual as “the bridge between art as a visual process, and then the color, culinary art, which is, you know, the art of nutrition.”

Reflecting on the relationship between all of her photos, Rainbow Walker described how they illustrate “the care that goes into” the “tradition” of her food practices. Rainbow Walker expressed how the most fulfilling part of her traditional food practices is sharing it amongst her community.

Rainbow Walker.



Figure 10

Black Culinary Traditions: The primary way of life is to be nourished. Whether we seek it from others or create it for ourselves. If sharing is caring, then very little can beat one of the most ancient of food traditions... breaking bread with a friend.

Rainbow Walker captured this photo of two individuals sharing a plate of food in response to the prompt words “community,” “food traditions,” and “family” from the Photovoice activity. In

reflecting on this photo, Rainbow Walker described this visual as the “breaking of bread,” a practice that she described as the “oldest tradition of time” that demonstrates the “joining” of the “past,” “present,” and “future” in this “collective meal.” Celestine Star similarly described the element of community as both an important and fulfilling part of her food practices. In reflecting on her photo of a “smoker,” Celestine Star stated that “A tradition I find is this smoker because it’s just traditional for us to all come over here with, um, smoked food and just a spread and our aunts and uncles bring mac and cheese with a side to go with it.”

3) How can black culinary epistemologies be used to promote more community-centered, intersectional, and culturally competent food and health policies and practices?

Economy of Self-sustainability

Economy of Self-sustainability emerged as a theme through the combining of codes Self-reliance, Holistic Commerce, and Sustainable Food Systems. All the participants expressed the lack of faith in external support as means of rectifying their food and health realities, with a collective belief that their communities would be better sustained through an economy of self-reliance by way of community-sustained, economically sound, and holistic food programs and food systems. Generally, the participants reported the need for organizations and institutions to listen to their voices and experiences around their food realities and nutrition knowledge.

When asked how their photos could be used as a catalyst to create change in their communities, all the participants mentioned their lack of faith in legislation as the means through which their food realities could change, for, as Celestine Star stated, “the city already views us as

lesser than, so they'll give us lesser than quality." Naomi captured the sentiment of all the participants most potently:

So the only way we can change our reality as black people, especially when it comes to food insecurity in a time of economic recession is about to hit, is we need to take that into our...we need to take matters into our own hands. As long as we stand up and advocate for ourselves and stop expecting legislation to do something cause they're not going to do nothing.

A few of the participants described the cultivation of their own food sources as one way of "taking matters into" their "own hands." Naomi stated how she feels like "number one, each hood, each community, or whatever you call it, needs to have their own community garden." Naomi shared how a "download" she received led her to believe that she was "gonna need to start" "planting" her "own food soon," and captured this "download" of self-sustainability in the image below:

Naomi.



Figure 11

Economy of Self-sustainability: “I was taught by my nana to save seeds because ‘you’ll never know when you need them.’ On the left are refrigerated apple seeds, and on the right are refrigerated lemon seeds.”

Naomi captured this photo of “refrigerated apple and lemon seeds” in response to the prompt words “future,” “our land,” “economics,” and “race.” As expressed in her caption, Naomi described how, despite not being able to presently plant her seeds due to the “red clay dirt” around her home, she “needs to have the seed so that when it’s time for” her “to make her own food,” she “will have the resources to do so.” Gloria similarly stated the “need to start thinking about how we can create our own production of food,” and placed emphasis on the economic concern to “provide these healthy options at a lower price.”

Relating the abundance of space, or lack of, to sustainable food supply like Naomi was Andrea. Andrea described the “ton of space, a ton of empty space” that exist in her community and expressed her desire to see both the return of certain retailers and availability of alternative food services that reflect the food cultures of her community. In critiquing the efforts that have been put into offering more services, Andrea expressed her concern with not only the offered food services, but the lack of care she feels is possessed by the owners of those food services.

But see the problem is the person who, like the people who are over it, um, they’re I guess I don’t think they live in the community. They just funded the issue and it’s almost like they don’t really care about the mission of it.

Andrea juxtaposed the availability of “Chinese food restaurants,” “crab seafood,” “Subway,” and an “overcrowded Publix,” with the lack of availability to diasporic food services, the latter of which she feels a stronger connection with. Andrea went on to express the significance of these cultural food services to black communities:

Even if you’re not Jamaican, like black people tend to like, it’s a diaspora thing. Like, we relate to Caribbean culture in a way. Even if we’re not of that culture, like the food, you know, the Caribbean restaurants in our black neighborhoods, like that’s for our community.

Andrea mentioned one such place in her community that she sees her culture reflected in. She expressed her “love” for the “one black owned restaurant called Trend Urban Café, which is pretty new” that offers alternative food “options” for her community.

When asked how their photos could be used as a catalyst for change in their communities, Gloria and Rainbow Walker, both of whom are black entrepreneurs, offered a critique of capitalism and expressed the need to “do commerce from a place of being more holistic.”

Gloria expressed the need for a community-informed nutrition education and food program that she described as similar, yet more culturally relevant and sustainable than “WIC.” Gloria described how this community-sustained food program would offer community members not only “food vouchers” but would, like the food practices she’s curated in her household, “create a diet for each household and the number of people in the household” that “doesn’t have to be all vegan but at least cruelty-free.” Gloria discussed a “cooking class” component to this food program that would “teach” community members “how to cook this food now” and emphasized the quality of these meal plans as being both considerate of “convenience” for working families and familiar to their cultural food practices. Gloria described some of the alternative food choices that could potentially be included in this nutrition program:

You can pick natural sodas. You can pick...natural juices. You can pick, um, you know, almond milk instead of regular milk. You can pick, you know, um country crock, which is vegan, that’s a vegan butter...and that’s the same price as all other foods.

Restauranter Rainbow Walker described how “holistic commerce” embodies “everything” that she’s “about,” which is “supporting” her “community and providing, um, a product that actually nurtures people, you know, food as medicine.”

When asked how their photos could educate others, Rainbow Walker and Celestine Star expressed the need to recognize the “abundance” that exist in their black communities.

Rainbow Walker identified the Historic West End of Atlanta, Georgia, the community where her vegan restaurant is housed, as an example of a black community filled with “abundance” that encompasses self-reliance, holistic commerce, and sustainable food systems expressed by the participants. Rainbow Walker described the West End as “the spiritual hub of Atlanta” that serves as an example of how an economy of self-sustainability is possible for black

communities, without dependence on legislation. Rainbow Walker expressed how, through food, “the West End nurtures culture. It nurtures well-being within the West End. There are at least eight or nine vegan eateries within a mile of each other. Who does that?” Rainbow Walker went on to describe the “abundance” and “vitality” that exists in this community, despite its misrepresentation as a food desert:

There are a lot of urban gardens in the West End. Urban farms, you know, little farmer’s markets. So yeah. They call it a food desert and by some standards, it is. But by most standards, it’s not because you can go anywhere and eat healthy vegan food more than seven days a week at different places. And affordable.

Celestine Star stated the need for others, both the community and policy makers, to realize both the “weaknesses” and “strengths” that exist in the community and went on to state that “within this recognition, there must be a balance.” Celestine Star further expressed how “there’s life in everything, whether you witness it or not,” and as such, there needs to “be more love, communication, understanding, and freedom” between the community and those who create the policies within those communities.

The data used to analyze the themes were based on relevance, as there was a lot of useful information obtained from the participants that was not reported within this section of the findings.

4.5 Summary

Photovoice and individual interviews were instrumental in examining the food practices of the five participants.

The intersection of race, class, and geography were flagrantly expressed as factors influencing the food realities of the participants; gender, however, was not. Nonetheless, each of the African American female participants shared intersectional experiences that spoke to their role as either head of household, single, or informal care practitioners, as well as the ways in which these roles influence their food practices and health concerns. Although all the participants expressed an awareness of vulnerabilities to food apartheid, most of the participants shared that their food practices are not directly impacted by these vulnerabilities; this is due to these participants having the economic resources and mobility to engage in alternative food practices. The participants' "inner environment," or their home, was recurringly expressed as a fundamental factor that influences their food practices. Duality was a prominent code found throughout each of the participants' photos and interviews. While questions regarding both vulnerabilities and strength were posed to participants, the participants elaborated extensively on the strengths rather than the vulnerabilities that exist in their food practices.

All the participants described strengths in their food practices that depict variations of care and consideration of health. Additionally, all the participants described the cultural significance of their food practices. All the participants expressed a lack of faith in legislation, and, instead, expressed the need for a self-sustainable way of rectifying their communities' food realities. Most of the participants expressed their view of Photovoice and interviews to be empowering tools useful for both capturing their lived experiences around their food practices and disseminating their cultural health knowledge around food throughout their community and to public health policy makers. Each of the participants' photos and experiences expanded my understanding of how African American women experience food apartheid in urban settings.

The next chapter, the Conclusion, will place this chapter (Findings) in conversation with the literature from Chapter 2. The next chapter will further discuss the implications for the disciplines of Africana Studies, Food Studies, and Public Health Nutrition, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore black culinary epistemologies in the food practices of urban-dwelling African American women experiencing food apartheid. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive vulnerabilities in their food practices?
2. How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive strengths in their food practices that draw from black culinary epistemologies?
3. How can black culinary epistemologies be used to promote more community-centered, intersectional, and culturally competent food and health policies and practices?

Five African American women between the age of 18-65 who reside in Georgia, four of whom reside in an urban food desert of Georgia, and one of whom has a restaurant in an urban food desert of Georgia, were purposively recruited through flyers posted on the social media platform, Instagram, as well as throughout Georgia State University's campus, black women-owned eateries located in the Historic West End community of Atlanta, and a farmer's market located in downtown Atlanta. All five of the participants partook in the Photovoice and individual interview components of the study; these Photovoice photos and individual interviews served as the sole source of data for this study. A qualitative research design was used to explore the participants perception of both vulnerabilities and strengths that exist in their food practices. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted to discuss the Photovoice images. The data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis.

Common themes were revealed during the analysis of the Photovoice and interview data. Data analysis revealed Spatialized Intersectionality as a theme regarding vulnerabilities in the food practices of the participants. Spatialized Intersectionality emerged as a theme as many of the participants perceived geographic accessibility, racial and economic inequities as factors that coalesce to impact their food choices and health.

Data analysis revealed Ethics of Care and Black Culinary Traditions as themes regarding strengths in the food practices of the participants. Ethics of Care emerged as a theme as many participants shared a holistic view of health that integrates variations of care into their food practices. Black Culinary Traditions emerged as a theme as the participants generally perceived a correlation between their resourceful, creative, and communal food practices and tradition in respect of their black culture(s).

Data analysis revealed Economy of Self-sustainability as a theme regarding the participants' perception of how their food practices could inform their community as well as public health policies. Economy of Self-sustainability emerged as a theme as, generally, the participants reported the need for organizations and institutions to listen to their voices and experiences around their food realities and knowledge. The more explicit pattern was the participants' perception of external support as an unreliable resource for rectifying their food and health realities, with a collective belief that their communities would be better sustained through an economy of self-reliance.

The duality captured in the participants' photos and expressed during the interviews revealed that while the participants' experiences with variations of food apartheid impacted their food practices, these constraints did not wholly define their food practices.

This concluding chapter includes a comprehensive discussion regarding the conclusions of the study, the implications for the discipline of Africana Studies, Food Studies, and Public Health Nutrition, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Discussion

Based on the analysis of the data, three conclusions were drawn from the findings. These conclusions were as follows:

1. African American women who experience food apartheid perceive the intersection of race, class, and geography as vulnerabilities in their food practices.
2. African American women who experience food apartheid perceive both care practices and black culinary traditions as strengths in their food practices.
3. Engaging the black culinary epistemologies evidenced in African American women's food practices from an intersectional, culturally appropriate, knowledgeable, and caring lens intersectional experience around their food practices from a strengths-based, knowledgeable, and caring lens can strengthen or change existing systems to better promote food and health equity in this population.

Black Feminist Theory framework was operationalized in each of the research questions. The tenet *concrete experience as a criterion of meaning* was operationalized in the first two research questions as it sought to explore how African American women perceive the impact of the intersection of race, gender, class, and geography on their food practices; this tenet, alongside *use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims* and *an ethic of caring*, was further operationalized in the second research question as it sought to, from a strengths-based, knowledgeable, and caring lens, better understand African American women's perceptions of their food practices, the meanings they ascribe to these food practices, and the cultural food

knowledge evidenced in these food practices. *An ethic of responsibility* was operationalized in the third research question as it sought ways to mobilize this indigenous food knowledge retained by African American women as means to inform food justice and public health nutrition initiatives aiming to address the health inequities that exist amongst this population.

African American women who experience food apartheid perceive the intersection of race, class, and geography as vulnerabilities in their food practices.

A wide body of literature has established the correlation between race and socioeconomic status, and how this correlation is spatially concentrated, thereby influencing access to resources (Oates, 2017; Kwate, 2008; Dutko et al., 2012; Powell et al., 2007; Tate, 2018; Cahill, 2007). In this regard, this study's findings support this finding in the literature. All the participants have general or basic knowledge of the ways in which redlining, gentrification, and residential segregation, as well as economic inequities, have both shaped access to food and health resources, and influenced the rates of food insecurity and health disparities that exist in their black communities.

In regard to food access, two of the participants, Andrea and Celestine Star, both of whom reside with one of their parents, described their foodscape, capturing images of "food marts," "crowded" chain stores, "Chinese food restaurants," and other food services that are overwhelmingly present in their black neighborhoods; they each shared how these same food services are either rare or absent in neighborhoods comprised of different racial demographics. These findings support research findings, like the findings in Hopkins University (2014) study, that found that neighborhood racial composition and neighborhood poverty are independently associated with food store availability (Kwate, 2008). One participant, Andrea, shared how,

despite living in a predominantly black middle-class community, the quality of food services offered there reflect the same food services offered in Celestine Star, Gloria, and Naomi's predominantly black, lower-income communities. Both Andrea and Celestine Star shared that these racial and spatial trends underscore how the "only people who suffer from food deserts are black and brown people." These findings support the research that shows that communities ascribed as "food deserts" are the product of racial processes rather than a naturally occurring phenomenon and underscore the need for the use of the more appropriate term, food apartheid, to examine this issue of food insecurity disproportionately impacting black neighborhoods. (Brones, 2018; Tate, 2018; Reese, 2019).

A substantial amount of literature presents findings that show how engaging the racialization of space is useful for understanding the rates of food insecurity and its correlation to health disparities. These health conditions impact African American women's bodies' health exposures, attitudes, behaviors, and health outcomes in disparate rates due to their intersectional identities (Freeman, 2007; Pawlak and Colby, 2009; Burnett, 2020; Guthman and DuPuis, 2006; Jones, 2018; Tung et al., 2017; Jones, 2018; Chinn et al., 2021; Slocum and Saldanha, 2013). The findings in this study supports and works alongside this literature findings in challenging the research that reenforces this master narrative of healthism surrounding African American women's food practices, the latter reducing "inept" eating habits to simply a matter of personal choice rather than placing this phenomenon in the broader historical context of long entrenched racialized, geopolitical policies and practices (Ogle and Damhorst, 2003; Wilson, 2004; Brannen and O'Connell, 2017; Dobal et al., 2017, 2019). Guthman and DuPuis (2006) particularly identifies the contradictions of neoliberal governance by illuminating the ways in which

neoliberalism both produces food and health inequities and posits it as a problem brought on by an individual's own willpower, or lack thereof.

While most of the participants in this study were not directly impacted by the lack of food options in their food environment, all of the participants expressed how the allocation of resources disparately dispersed between predominantly black urban neighborhoods and affluent white suburbs, with their black communities offering higher rates of lower quality foods at inflated prices, as well as economic disparities, have resulted in limited food options that ultimately impact the health of those around them who are left with these limiting options. Despite living in a middle-class neighborhood, Andrea expressed how obtaining healthy food was a struggle due to the lack of healthy food options offered in her neighborhood's food services. Andrea's anxiety around driving, as well as her mother, who suffers from multiple health conditions, dislike of driving, further "confines" Andrea to her food environment. Three other participants corroborate this statement, speaking from the perspective of lower-income black communities. Gloria, a single mother of two, expressed that "it's not that we don't think about eating healthy if we could...it's based off economy...and it's just a matter of how much money do I have in my possession right now. And how many people I have to feed right now." Celestine Star expressed that "I can't judge you for using your resources that you have available to you, like I'm judging the city and the circumstances we live in. But I understand by all means if we need to survive and do something then we're gonna do that." Naomi, a single African American woman who pays "high rent" in her home, described her need to "divvy" out food resources due to her constant reality of food insecurity, a reality described by Naomi as part of she and other black people's historically present "economic lifestyle." Naomi further expressed her need to negotiate this food anxiety with her struggle with ADHD.

The findings in both this study and the existing literature show that food practices, particularly when economic and spatial barriers exist, are not simply a matter of choice; factors like geography, race, gender, class, and ability must be explored as SDOH when examining the food practices and health of African American women. What this study's findings revealed were food realities and concerns that were unique to each participant's intersectional experience. This finding supports research that has demonstrated the usefulness of intersectional frameworks like the Black Feminist and Womanist analytical path in conceptualizing food and health initiatives that challenge the shortcomings of singularly focused, "blanket relief" sources that do not speak to the intersectional experiences of African American women (Bramble, 2009; Winham, 2020; Brown et al., 2019; Tkatch et al., 2018; Chinn et al., 2021; Young, 2018; Wade et al., 2022; Guerrero and Perez, 2017; Hess, 2021; Barlow and Johnson, 2021; Jones, 2018; Crenshaw, 1992, 2008; Rowe, 2010).

African American women who experience food apartheid perceive both care practices and black culinary traditions as strengths in their food practices.

Despite findings that reveal vulnerabilities in the food practices of the participants, these results challenge the trends found in food desert literature that attribute "barrenness" to black communities, rather, black residents as passive consumers of their immediate food environment. The trends in food desert literature are complicit in the erasure of black food geographies and "reinforces the assumption that these communities are bereft of local food knowledge of investment and creation" (Reese, 2019; Brones, 2018). This study's finding showed, as expressed by Ashanté Reese, that "while black food geographies are influenced by the unequal spatial distribution of grocery stores, [they] are not unitarily defined by them" (2019, p. 12), and

supports the literature that showcase both the variety of food practices created by African Americans amidst iterations of colonial processes and knowledge produced out of these spatial politics, which in turn have challenged the view of African Americans and their food culture(s) as passive, unintelligible, and (un)geographical (Harris, 2012; Twitty, 2017; McKittrick, 2006; Terry, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2020). This study's findings revealed ethical care practices and black culinary traditions as strengths in the food practices of the participants.

Most of the participants, despite living in predominantly black communities defined as food deserts, described an awareness of the quality of their food environment and its impact on residents in their community; however, these same participants expressed options in their food practices that were not dependent, therefore not wholly defined, by the quality of their immediate food environment. Celestine Star expressed her "strong" home environment as the primary food environment from which she draws her food practices. Gloria described her "middle-class" status and mobility as privileges that allow her the ability to consume foods of her choosing. Naomi, a participant who experiences constant food insecurity due to economic barriers, described her self-imposed dietary restrictions and intentional use of "fresh" food sources for meal preparation. Andrea, who is "confined to her food environment," even described the ways in which she still sought out "alkaline water" and "organic produce" despite its rarity in her food environment, as well as her resistance to this environment through the act of drinking coffee as an act of "self-care."

All the participants related these food practices to their concern for their health and went on to define their expansive understanding of health as an interconnected care practice. One finding in particular showed how some of the participants engaged these "self-care" food practices in response to social and ecological inequities. This finding supports the data that

shows how black women, both historically and presently, use food production, preparation, and consumption to engage food as a critique of social and ecological inequities (White, 2017; McCutcheon, 2019; Potori, 2017; Wade, 2017; Penniman, 2020; Williams-Forson, 2006; Navarro, 2021, 2022). Two participants, Gloria and Rainbow Walker, described how their 20 plus years of ethical food practices is due to a “duty” and “responsibility” that they each believe they have to other life forces. Rainbow Walker, a restauranter, described the “abundance” and “vitality” that exist in the West End community where her vegan eatery is located, and expressed how her food products “nourish” residents of this predominantly black community. These findings particularly contest the research that source plant-based diets in Euro-American dietary patterns, therefore only feasible in white bodies, and capture how an ethic of care often takes primal concern in the ways in which African American women do food. These findings further support the literature that make visible the variation in diet that exists amongst African American women (Reese, 2014; McQuirter, 2010; Harper, 2009, 2010).

This study’s findings support the research that shows black women’s fidelity to cultural food practices (Ogle and Damhorst, 2003; Wilson, 2004; Brannen and O’Connell, 2017; Dobal et al., 2017, 2019); however, unlike this body of literature that renders black cultural food ways as absent of nutritional benefits and a culprit in the rates of health disparities that exist in African American women, this study’s findings reveal the “cultural knowledge of health evidenced in the “slow food practices born in black communities – that is, eating foods that are locally grown, cooking from scratch, consuming a variety of different types of foods that are fresh and nutrition, and sharing with community – that have been vital survival mechanisms for producing health and life (Navarro, 2022, p. 211). All the participants perceived a correlation between their resourceful, creative, and communal food practices and tradition in respect of their black

culture(s). Both Naomi and Gloria described how, due to a history of food insecurity tied to what Williams-Forson described as “place(less)ness” (2022), black people have had to come up with resourceful ways of nourishing their bodies within colonized geographies. Naomi captured this in her photo of “freshly” prepared turkey pasta. Andrea and Rainbow Walker described the food staples integral to these food creations, and the element of “diasporic energy” that goes into the preparation of these cultural food traditions. To showcase the “care that goes into food tradition,” Rainbow Walker, specifically, expressed her intimate relationship with “harvesting” these cultural “herbs” and preparing them with “Ghanaian” and “Jamaican” food prep tools. Both Rainbow Walker and Celestine Star expressed the significance of “community” in their food practices. Rainbow Walker captured the cultural tradition of “breaking bread” as a black culinary practice, while Celestine Star captured her family’s “smoker” that functions as the food center as her family brings “side” dishes to join in communion with she and her dad.

These findings support the research that underscores the need for both intersectional and culturally competent frameworks in conceptualizing health interventions shaped to speak to the unique needs of African American women (Bramble, 2009; Winham, 2020; Brown et al., 2019; Tkatch et al., 2018; Chinn et al., 2021; Young, 2018; Wade et al., 2022; Guerrero and Perez, 2017; Hess, 2021; Barlow and Johnson, 2021; Rowe, 2010). These findings ultimately support the food and black geographies research done by Ashanté Reese (Otuonye, 2022; Reese, 2019), Psyche A. Williams-Forson (2006, 2022), Naya Jones (2019), Marilisa Navarro (2021, 2022), and many more black women scholars who are engaging the food practices of African American women through an agentic, loving and life-sustaining lens.

Engaging the black culinary epistemologies evidenced in African American women's food practices from an intersectional, culturally appropriate, knowledgeable, and caring lens
intersectional experience around their food practices from a strengths-based, knowledgeable, and caring lens can strengthen or change existing systems to better promote food and health equity in this population.

Marilisa Navarro (2022) defines black culinary epistemologies as “the culinary knowledge produced by black cooks, chefs, and food preparers that build upon the black radical tradition, reframe black foods and black consumption, and participate in life-making practices in death-producing spaces” (p. 201). The findings in this study underscore the significance of these tenets in the food practices of the participants.

As argued by scholars like Jennifer Wallach (2019) and Psyche A. Williams-Forsion (2006, 2022), African Americans have used food processes to demonstrate, challenge, and produce dynamic food knowledge systems as means to conceptualize their relationship to both the “[colonial] nation-state and to the stateless, imagined black nation” (Wallach, 2019, p. 13). As it relates to African American women, research shows the ways in which black women have, both historically and presently, mobilized food to respond to the social world around them by contesting unjust systems that prevail at the expense of black bodies, and partaking in, as framed by Marilisa Navarro (2022), “life-making practices in death-producing spaces” (Jones, 2019; Brunache, 2019; Beoku-Betts, 1995; Williams-Forsion, 2006; Loichot, 2004; Danticat, 1994; D’Sylva and Beagan, 2011). This research is underscored by this study’s findings that revealed how some of the participants engaged in alternative food practices from a social justice lens, like Gloria’s practice of a “cruelty-free and “just” way of life, as well as Rainbow Walker’s consideration of a harmonious ecosystem in her practice of a raw “vegan” way of life. These

same two participants, both restaurateurs, offered a critique of capitalism and its role in food inequity, and imagined a system predicated on holistic commerce. While Gloria imagined a community-sustain nutrition program, Rainbow Walker described the very real Historic West End as a pillar of black self-reliance and sustainability that showcases the life that exist, and possibilities that could exist, in predominately black communities ascribed as “food deserts.” Andrea and Celestine Star images of “food deserts” and descriptions of the quality of food services offered in their food environments were expressed alongside the ways in which they engage in “life-making” practices despite living in a “death-producing space” (Navarro, 2022). These findings were placed in conversation with Naomi and Gloria’s discussion of cultural resourcefulness, a practice that they described as an element of black people’s “economic lifestyle.” All the participants imagined the mobilization of the strengths in their food practices as a catalyst for change. Relating this finding with the concept of black culinary epistemologies as defined by Navarro (2022), the general perception amongst the participants of external support as an unreliable resource for rectifying their food and health realities, with a collective belief that their communities would be better sustained through an economy of self-reliance, is an ideology grounded in the black radical tradition (Robinson, 1983). Similar perceptions of self-reliance amongst black communities are evidenced in the research of scholars like Ashanté Reese (2019).

Findings in this study support the research that demonstrates the need to consider the lived experiences of African American women, their food realities, and the ways in which they navigate these spatial food and health issues that they uniquely face (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015; Ramirez, 2015; Reese, 2019), for as Psyche A. Williams-Forsson (2022) argues, “narratives about food told by Black women and girls are particularly dynamic for how they unveil the textures of

interior lives” (p. 8). Premising this research study from the lens of African American women and their ways of knowing and doing food offered the agentic and intersectional lens necessary to understand the food practices of this population. One participant, Celestine Star, expressed the significance of this lens, stating that “talking” “sharing insight” and “allowing black people to be the center of projects” like Photovoice would allow both the community and those outside of the community to not only see the “weaknesses” but witness the “strengths” that exist in black communities.

5.2 Implications for Africana Studies

The politics of food has not received much traction in the discipline of Africana Studies. While other disciplines like Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Food Studies, and Anthropology have taken on the topic, and have expanded immensely due to these contributions, the field of Africana Studies has not posited the politics of food as part and parcel to discourses around prominent topics in the field. In respect of the findings, this study adds to the field of Africana Studies as it relates to the concept of self-determination and Afrofuturism.

This study’s findings underscore the evidence of self-determination in the food practices of African American women. Whyte (2015) defines self-determination as “the widely embraced moral norm that human groups have the right to decide their own destinies free from external compulsion or interface from other human groups (p. 4), and applies this definition to the concept of food sovereignty:

The concepts of community self-reliance, collective meals, community rights and food sovereignty express claims about the value of food as a contributor to a group’s *collective* self-determination. Collective self-determination refers to a group’s ability to provide the

cultural, social, economic and political relations needed for its members to pursue good lives. Food contributes to collective self-determination through its integral roles in family and ceremonial life, as a source of nourishment and income, as a facilitator of trust and good will in society, as a carrier of a group's heritage and knowledge, and as a vital good that political leaders are entrusted to protect through laws and policies (p. 5).

Similarly, Figueroa and Alkon (2017) express how “access to producing and consuming healthy food becomes an issue of self-determination; a mechanism for economic survival that facilitates neighborhood residents' abilities to connect their everyday eating practices to larger political realities” (p. 219). Self-determination is evidenced in not only the presence of community gardens, urban farms, farmer's markets, and other modes of sustainable food cooperatives led mostly by black women in the U.S and across the Diaspora, but also evidenced in the personal food practices of black women who choose not to be unitarily defined by their food realities due to socioeconomic and political barriers, and, instead, partake in life-sustaining care practices (Jones, 2019; Williams-Forson).

This study's findings, in relation to its connection to self-determination, further suggest the significance of food analyses as an important topic in expanding the discourse around Afrofuturism by the ways in which black people have imagined black food futures beyond the present food paradigm that is built on plantation logic. These ideas are being materialized by Afrofuturist and equity and inclusion specialist Dr. A. Breeze Harper in her current project on Regenerative Futures for Food Systems and Foodtech, which focuses specifically on Black and Indigenous methods of food sovereignty (2022).

5.3 Theoretical Implications

Black Feminist Theory framework offers four key tenets that were prevalent during the analysis of the data collected in this study: (1) concrete experience as criterion of meaning, (2) use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, (3) an ethic of caring, and (4) and an ethic of responsibility.

It is important to recognize how race, gender, class, and geography intersect in the lives of African American women, making them more susceptible to health conditions and experiences with food apartheid. Alongside this consideration, it is important to recognize and engage the interior lives of African American women beyond these social constructs and their material effects. The use of the first tenet, *concrete experience as criterion of meaning*, in this qualitative study sought to privilege the lived experiences of African American women to better understand their perceptions of their food practices and the meanings they ascribe to these food practices. The use of the second tenet, *use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims*, was built into the research design using Photovoice and individual interviews as modes of dialogue to assess the food knowledge evidenced in the food practices of African American women. As it relates to *an ethic of care and responsibility*, this study pays particular attention to the interior lives of African American women and sought to explore their food practices from a strengths-based, knowledgeable, and caring approach; this study, then, sought to mobilize this cultural food knowledge to inform food justice and public health nutrition policies and practices.

The result of this study suggests that the inclusion of Black Feminist Theory framework in food justice efforts and public health nutrition initiatives with African American women is a viable one (Hess, 2021, Barlow and Johnson, 2021, Rowe, 2010) for achieving a deeper understanding of African American women's food realities and practices.

5.4 Implications for Public Health and Food Justice Practice

This study impacts the field of public health and food justice practice at several different levels. As it relates to public health, this study provides public health practitioners with more information related to outreach gaps in the African American female community. This study suggests a more community-centered and intersectional social justice lens and research methodology for public health initiatives regarding how to proceed further in creating coalitions with black communities that empowers rather than paternalizes black communities most affected by nutrition anxieties. This study's use of a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method, Photovoice, and black women-centered framework was instrumental in elevating African American women, as community members, voices, capitalize on their unique experiences, and openly include their perspectives. As such, this study suggests the usefulness of using modes of CBPR and black women-centered frameworks when conducting research and for transitioning research to practice. These same implications are relevant to food justice practice.

Regarding food justice practice, this study's findings around an economy of self-sustainability suggest the need to unpack the issue of food insecurity beyond the matter of food access. The structural issue lay in the matter of who controls the means of food production in predominantly black communities. Simply bringing in chain stores and making fresh food sources more accessible is not addressing the economic, geographical, and racial inequities that are sustained through the agrifood system. As the participants in this study shared, and as evidenced in Ashanté Reese's (2019) work, there is a shared perspective and practice of self-reliance that exist across black communities; this perspective and practice should be the primary concern in efforts attempting to strengthen or revolutionize existing systems that affect the quality of health amongst vulnerable populations like African Americans, particularly women.

5.5 Implications for Policy

Public health practitioners and their ideas greatly influence public health policies, and therefore hold a significant position in encouraging new policies that are sensitive to high-risk populations like African American women.

As this study sampled women from urban communities in Georgia, the findings suggest policy implications specific, but not isolated, to Georgia. The Department of Agriculture's Title 2 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated was recently amended by adding Chapter 24, titled 'The Food Insecurity Eradication Act,' as a means of eradicating food insecurity in Georgia. The Georgia Food Security Advisory Council is appointed with carrying out the responsibilities of this Act. The findings in this study offer suggestions for the Georgia Food Security Advisory Council. As it relates to Article 44, 'Recommend ways to maximize current educational programs that educate the public on purchasing and consuming healthy foods,' findings in this study suggest the viability of community-informed and culturally appropriate nutrition education programs. Concerning Article 50, 'Recommend policies that encourage the use of food co-ops and community gardens located in Georgia,' findings in this study demonstrate an insistence on an economy of self-sustainability which has almost always existed throughout black communities as a viable way of life; the Historic West End of Atlanta is one such example. While Article 57, 'Research and identify ways to reduce food insecurity,' references the use of quantitative methodologies (Article 82) to reduce food insecurity, this study suggests the need for more qualitative research methods, for considering the lived experiences and indigenous knowledge of African American women is central to understanding the issues that this population uniquely faces.

African American women experience disproportionate rates of food apartheid and health disparities due to their intersectional identities. Concerning health policies in predominantly black urban communities, this study's findings suggest the need for more detailed reporting of demographic and health data through black women-centered frameworks like Black Feminist Theory framework to better understand how these variables intersect in the lives of African American women and coalesce to influence the food behaviors and health of this population. The Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2022 is one such existing health policy undertaking efforts to reduce health disparities, as this bill (1) requires more detailed reporting of demographic and health disparities data, (2) increases access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health care, (3) modifies eligibility and other requirements for [health services] nutrition assistance and other programs to reduce health disparities among vulnerable populations, and (4) supports health impact assessments and other efforts pertaining to environmental justice and SDOH (S.4486 – 117th Congress).

5.6 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are due to the methods employed to conduct the study. The findings could have potentially been affected by the small number of purposefully sampled participants and by the fact that all the participants had to reside in a Georgia community identified by the USDA-ERS as an urban food desert.

In-depth understanding was the true goal of the study, but I am aware that critics may see the lack of generalizability as a limitation.

Some aspects of the sampling methods that were viewed as assets to this study on the outset limited the conclusions and applicability to the wider geographical and sociodemographic range. For example, when identifying the sample group for this study, African American women

were purposefully sampled from a farmer's market and vegan eateries. Selection of such a population may have minimized the opportunity to explore differences between African American women who shop at food retailers like the recruitment sites and African American women who shop at chain stores like Publix and Walmart. Additionally, the recruitment sites were concentrated primarily in downtown Atlanta and the Historic West End of Atlanta; this may have minimized the opportunity to explore differences between African American women who reside in rural food deserts of Atlanta, as well as these differences throughout Georgia as a whole. Perhaps women with similar demographics who reside in rural food deserts of Georgia and/or shop at chain stores perceive different strengths and weaknesses in their food practices as it relates to their immediate food environment and intersectional identities.

All the participants had at least some college education; four of the five participants had at least a bachelor's degree. This factor may have served as a limitation. There was, however, class variability in the population.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Research

A qualitative methodology was used to facilitate the exploration of the variable in this study. Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed for future research:

1. Use additional methods of qualitative inquiry to investigate African American women's perception of their food practices.
2. This research can be expanded by collecting data from African American women populations in other constrained food environments like USDA-identified rural food deserts and prison facilities.

3. Further explore the concept of black culinary epistemologies and how it shows up in the food practices of African American women beyond the themes that emerged in this study.
4. This research can be expanded to focus on the African American LGBTQI+ community in USDA-identified food deserts.
5. This research can be expanded to focus on African American women with disabilities who reside in a USDA-identified food desert.
6. Research can be done specifically on urban-dwelling African American mother-daughter dyads to better understand how food practices are transmitted, continued, and discontinued amidst broad socioeconomic processes.
7. Recruit African American women from food services like nonchain stores and fast-food restaurants in USDA-identified food deserts.
8. Repeat this study with a larger and random sample of African American women.
9. Probe further into the concept of strength, specifically regarding how it is understood and acted upon by urban-dwelling African American women.

5.8 Summary

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore black culinary epistemologies in the food practices of urban-dwelling African American women experiencing food apartheid. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive vulnerabilities in their food practices?

2. How do African American women experiencing food apartheid perceive strengths in their food practices that draw from black culinary epistemologies?
3. How can black culinary epistemologies be used to promote more community-centered, intersectional, and culturally competent food and health policies and practices?

African American women's nonadherence to national health guidelines are overwhelmingly represented as a risk factor in their disproportionate rates of diet-related health conditions. Much of this misrepresentation stems from the lack of engagement with the cultural food knowledge that exist within this population's food practices. This neoliberal framing of a causal relationship between health inequities and nonadherence to a standardized food practice is problematic in that it renders both a paradoxical and ahistorical narrative.

The paradox rendered in this neoliberal framing reveals a scapegoating of a food and health system that controls food production and choice, while at the same time reinforces paradoxical messages, policies, and practices around what foods and bodies are viewed as healthy (Moss, 2021; Guthman and DuPuis, 2006). This paradox is a particular issue for African American women who face the imposed reality of either exaggerated agency, as proposed within the neoliberal-charged rhetoric of healthism, or complete erasure of agency, as evident in food desert literature, which have resulted in top-down interventions that are fashioned at the expense of the experiences and indigenous food knowledge of this population.

This neoliberal framing is inherently ahistorical in that it charges low-income women of color for their own weight issues and health crises by reducing these issues to individual and cultural immorality instead of placing this phenomenon in the broader historical context of long

entrenched racialized, geopolitical policies and practices (Guthman and DuPuis, 2006; Freeman, 2007; Pawlak and Colby, 2009; Burnett, 2020).

This study captured not only the vulnerabilities but was intentionally attentive to the strengths and knowledge that exist in the food practices of urban-dwelling African American women who are experiencing variations of food apartheid. This study thus offers an alternative lens to examining widespread fidelity to cultural food practices amongst African American women as not a culprit in their rates of diet-related health disparities, but rather a radical rejection of a food paradigm rooted in plantation logic.

Additionally, this study contributes to expanding the ways in which health is defined beyond a standardized food behavior and palette that is antithetical to cultural frames of reference.

Finally, this study adds to the epistemology of black women's intellectual tradition as it relates to knowledge production through black space-making, informed by the spatial food politics of black women's social location, and black culinary epistemologies, both of which were captured through the methodology and framework intentionally used to conduct this research study.

The use of Photovoice in this study permitted the reconceptualization of geography as a terrain of self-expression that “attaches the imaginative to the social ...by engaging the both real written and unwritten responses (in this study's case, food practices) to real inequities bound to space, or traditional geography” (McKittrick, 2006, pp. xxi-xxiii) using photography.

In operationalizing Black Feminist Theory framework as a platform for elevating the voices of African American women and exploring the interior lives of their food practices, this study captured the culinary knowledge of black women who “build upon the black radical

tradition, reframe black foods and black consumption, and participate in life-making practices in death producing spaces” (Navarro, 2022, p. 201)

The following three conclusions were derived based on the analysis of the Photovoice and interview data of the five participants: (1) African American women who experience food apartheid perceive the intersection of race, class, and geography as vulnerabilities in their food practices, (2) African American women who experience food apartheid perceive both care practices and black culinary traditions as strengths in their food practices, and (3) black culinary epistemologies centers African American women’s intersectional experiences around their food practices from a strengths-based, knowledgeable lens, is inclusive of the historically present social and cultural significance of these food practices, and can be mobilized to strengthen or change existing systems to better promote food and health equity in this population. These conclusions, along with the implications of this study for the discipline of Africana Studies, public health policy and practice, and food justice practice, limitations, as well as recommendations for future research were discussed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Georgia State University

Informed Consent

Title: Understanding the Relationship Between Black Foodways and Health amongst African American Women

Principal Investigator: Sarita Davis

Student Principal Investigator: Armani Stewart

Sponsor: Armani Stewart

Introduction and Key Information

You are invited to take part in a research study. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in the study.

The purpose of this research study is to better understand the relationship between black foodways and health amongst African American women.

Your role in the study will last two hours.

The COVID-19 and demographic screening forms will be collected during recruitment. These forms will check for eligibility in the study.

You will be asked to do the following: There will be two study related activities. For the first activity, you are asked to take 9 photos and create 1 caption and short response for each photo. The photos are not to include your face, other people's faces, your real name, or other people's names. The photos, captions, and responses are to be sent to the researcher. Activity 1 will take 1 hour. On a selected time, date, and location, you are asked to participate in an interview. During the interview, you are asked to discuss the photos and captions. The interview will take 1 hour. The interview will be audio recorded. Overall, your participation in the research study will span two hours.

Participating in this study will not expose you to any more risks than you would experience in a typical day.

This research study is designed to benefit you. You may arrive at new levels of health awareness in your food practices. Overall, we hope to gain information that adds to the emerging body of research on this topic. Additionally, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of African American women's food behaviors. Finally, we hope to gain community-level insight into nutrition. This insight can prove useful to public health policies.

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is to better understand the relationship between black foodways and health amongst African American women. You are invited to take part in this research study because: You are a cisgender African American woman. You are between the age of 18-65. You reside in an urban community. You have an interest in the preparation of black cultural foodways. You have a phone that is capable of taking photos. You are absent of COVID-19 symptoms. A total of 5 people will be invited to take part in this study.

Procedures

You will be asked to complete the COVID-19 and demographic screening forms to determine your eligibility for the study. Once the forms are reviewed, the researcher will contact you through a phone call to notify you of your eligibility. This phone call will consist of issuing the informed consent form and going over the research study. Once verbal consent is obtained, participants are asked to sign and send informed consent forms to the researcher. Once informed consent forms have been obtained, data collection will begin.

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to:

A word guide will be sent to you. You will be asked to use your cellphone to take 9 photos and create one caption and one short response for each photo.

The photos are not to include your face. The photos are not to include other people's faces. The photos are not to include your real name. The photos are not to include other people's names.

The photos, along with their captions and responses, are to be sent to the researcher.

This activity will take 1 hour.

On a selected date, time, and location, you are asked to participate in an interview. During the interview, you are asked to discuss the photos and captions.

This interview will take one hour.

This interview will be audio-recorded.

Overall, your participation in the research study will span two hours.

Future Research

Researchers will not use or distribute your data for future research studies even if identifiers are removed.

Risks

In this research study, you will not have any more risks than they would in a normal day of life.

No injury is expected from this study. If you believe you have been harmed, contact the research team as soon as possible. Georgia State University and the research team have not set aside funds to compensate for any injury.

Benefits

This research study is designed to benefit you. You may arrive at new levels of health awareness in your food practices. Overall, we hope to gain information that adds to the emerging body of research on this topic. Additionally, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of African American women's food behaviors. Finally, we hope to gain community-level insight into nutrition. This insight can prove useful to public health policies.

Alternatives

The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

Compensation

You will receive \$50 for participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

You do not have to be in this research study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. You may refuse to take part in the study or stop at any time. This will not cause you to lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Confidentiality

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

Sarita Davis and Armani Stewart

GSU Institutional Review Board

Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)

We will use a name other than your real name on study records. The photos will be stored on a google drive and USB port. The google drive and USB port will be encrypted for security and privacy of data. The photos will be included in a published record. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not be shown when we share this study or publish its results. The findings will be shortened and reported with a group. You will not be identified personally. The interviews will be audio recorded. The audio recording will be stored on a voice recorder and a USB port. The voice recorder and USB port will be encrypted for security and privacy of data. The audio recordings will be destroyed after you read what is written from the recorded audio

and state that the information is correct. When we present or publish the results of this study, we will not use your name or other information that may identify you.

The participant should be aware that data sent over the Internet may not be secure, any special procedures to protect the data such as encryption, and whether or not you are collecting IP addresses.

Contact Information

Contact: Armani Stewart cellphone: (504) 478-6411 or email: astewart98@student.gsu.edu

Sarita Davis cellphone: (404) 281-4291 or email: saritadavis@gsu.edu

If you have questions about the study or your part in it

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study

The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB if you would like to speak to someone who is not involved directly with the study. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu.

Consent

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix B: Audio/Visual Release Form**GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY****PHOTO, VIDEO and FILM RELEASE****Consent to Videotape/Audiotape, Film or Photograph**

We are requesting your permission to photograph and audiotape your participation in the Understanding the Relationship Between Black Foodways and Health amongst African American Women research study project. We will let you review all such media for your approval. We will use these pictures and audiotapes to present and/or publish the results of the research study. This recording is optional and does not impact you being in the study. You may choose to give permission for the audiotapes, or you may decide not to allow audiotapes for this purpose at all. Your decision will not affect your ability to remain in the study. You may request at any time that the videotapes or films of you be destroyed and the research staff will honor your request promptly.

We are asking you to authorize the use of any such photographic, audio, or electronic reproductions of you for any purpose, including, but not limited to educational and other public media as may be deemed appropriate by the Understanding the Relationship Between Black Foodways and Health amongst African American Women research study project.

I, _____, hereby voluntarily grant the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia by and on behalf of Georgia State University (“Georgia State

University”) and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia the right to use and make any and all sound recordings, photographs, or likenesses of me to use for educational, marketing, promotional, or any other lawful purpose, including for use during courses of instruction now and in the future. I hereby renounce any claim to any payment for or royalty from these sound recordings, photographs, or likenesses. I understand that Georgia State University, its faculty, staff, students, and any of its agents or contractors may use these photographs, sound recordings, or likenesses for any lawful purpose, or that these parties may decline to use these photographs, sound recordings, or likenesses at all. Further, I hereby release and covenant not to sue Georgia State University, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, or any of their employees, officers, members, or agents from any and all claims, rights, or causes of action of whatever kind or nature that I might have as a result of the use of these photographs, sound recordings, or likenesses.

I have read and agreed to all of the above this _____ day of _____, 20____.

Print Name

Signature

Appendix C: Demographic Screening Form

Pseudonym (name other than your full name): _____

Age: _____

Highest Level of Education:

Some High school ___ High school Graduate ___ Some College ___ College Graduate ___

Employment:

Employed ___ Unemployed ___ Self Employed ___ Student ___ Other _____ (Specify)

Occupation: _____ (if applicable)

Income Range:

0-\$10k ___ \$10k-20k ___ \$20k-40k ___ \$40k-50k ___ \$50k < ___

Relationship Status:

Single ___ Married ___ Separated ___ Divorced ___ Widowed ___

Sexual Orientation _____

Ethnic Identity _____

Disability, if applicable _____

Were you born biologically female? (Please circle) Y/N

Do you identify as a woman? (Please circle) Y/N

Zip Code: _____

Community name: _____

Period of residency in the specified community _____

What factor(s) are important to your food practices (food preparation and consumption)? Circle two of the three following options:

1) Responsibility (health, environment, social justice, and economy)

2) Identity (taste, cuisine, recipes, freedom of choice, the "proper" meal, culture, traditions in the home).

3) Convenience (time, price, availability, storage space)

Appendix D: COVID-19 Screening Form



Patient Screening Form

Patient Name:

	PRE-APPOINTMENT	IN-OFFICE
	Date:	Date:
Do you/they have fever or have you/they felt hot or feverish recently (14-21 days)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you/they having shortness of breath or other difficulties breathing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you/they have a cough?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Any other flu-like symptoms, such as gastrointestinal upset, headache or fatigue?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you/they experienced recent loss of taste or smell?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you/they in contact with any confirmed COVID-19 positive patients? <i>Patients who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should consider postponing elective treatment.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is your/their age over 60?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you/they have heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, diabetes or any auto-immune disorders?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you/they traveled in the past 14 days to any regions affected by COVID-19? (as relevant to your location)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Positive responses to any of these would likely indicate a deeper discussion with the dentist before proceeding with elective dental treatment.

- For testing, see the list of [State and Territorial Health Department Websites](#) for your specific area's information.

Appendix E: Flyer

SEEKING 5 Black Women with Culinary Knowledge!!!

Black Foodways include Traditional and/or Culturally Relevant Food

PURPOSE
You are invited to participate in a research study aiming to understand the relationship between black foodways and health amongst Black women

PROCEDURE
This 2 hour research study consists of two activities:

- Activity 1: take 9 photos and create captions for each photo.
- Activity 2: audio-recorded interview

Participants will be compensated \$50 at the end of the research study. All information collected will remain confidential.

ELIGIBILITY
In order to participate, you must:

- Identify as a cisgender, African American woman
- Be between the age of 18-65
- Reside in an identified urban food desert of Georgia
- Have a vested interest in the preparation of black cultural foodways
- Have a phone capable of taking photos
- be absent of COVID-19 symptoms

If you are interested in the research study or have any questions, please

CONTACT

Student Principal Investigator, Armani Stewart-
astewart98@student.gsu.edu; (504) 478-6411

Principal Investigator, Dr. Sarita Davis- saritadavis@gsu.edu
Research Institute: Georgia State University

Appendix F: Photovoice Guide Part 1

Directions: Take a total of 9 photographs that you believe are linked to the prompt words listed below. These prompt words will help guide your photography during this activity. Please caption each photo, and in less than three sentences, describe the caption and image. Upon completion, you are asked to email or text the photographs with respective captions to specified email and phone number identified by me. This activity should take no more than one hour.

*Please Note: Do not capture any images of anything that would directly identify you or someone else, which would include your name or someone else's name.

Prompt Words:

- Community
- Self
- Identity
- Food culture
- Food traditions
- Food preparation
- Environment
- Strengths
- Race
- Health
- Gender
- Goals
- Economics
- Convenience
- Availability

- Our Land
- Family
- Responsibility
- Future
- Helping
- Services
- Weaknesses

Andrea



“Every Jamaican household.” Jamaican food is a huge part of my life. It keeps me connected to my Jamaican heritage. Cooking is an extremely important aspect of Caribbean Culture. It’s how we celebrate life, socialize and show our loved ones we care.



“Coffee Snob!” Anybody who knows me knows I’m obsessed with Coffee. I love the overall experience of coffee, being in coffee shops and of course the energy I get from having a cup of coffee in the morning. Also Having a cup of coffee in the morning allows me to make better food decisions because it curbs my appetite and stabilizes my mood. Also its my goal to one day open a black owned coffee shop in a black neighborhood.



“Food Desert.” In every urban/black neighborhood where there is a plethora of inadequate and unhealthy food options.... there are always limited and inadequate healthcare options.



“Food Desert.” In every urban/black neighborhood where there is a plethora of inadequate and unhealthy food options...there are always limited and inadequate healthcare options.



“Foodaholic!” I Love Food! I am a huge foodie. I love to cook and I love the experience of dining at the best restaurants and socializing with friends. However my relationship with food is a major weakness because I tend to be an emotional eater. I use food as a way to express my every emotion.



“Foodaholic!” I Love Food! I am a huge foodie. I love to cook and I love the experience of dining at the best restaurants and socializing with friends. However my relationship with food is a major weakness because I tend to be an emotional eater. I use food as a way to express my every emotion.



“Dining Room Table.” In my family having a completely set dining room table is a huge tradition. This is something every member of my family has regardless of how old school it is. It symbolizes the role that food plays in bringing my family together. It is also a symbol of class within my family irrespective of income and wealth status.



“Eating ‘Healthy.’” Recently I have tried to make better eating choices by switching to only drinking Alkaline Water and eating organic fruits and vegetables. But sometimes it can be difficult to decipher from what bit truly “natural and organic due to the currents state of food practices in the United stated and living in a neighborhood like mine where options are limited.



“Eating ‘Healthy.’” Recently I have tried to make better eating choices by switching to only drinking Alkaline Water and eating organic fruits and vegetables. But sometimes it can be difficult to decipher from what bit truly “natural and organic due to the currents state of food practices in the United stated and living in a neighborhood like mine where options are limited.

Naomi



I was taught by my nana to save seeds because “you’ll never know when you need them.” On the left are refrigerated apple seeds, and on the right are refrigerated lemon seeds.



The image above is a self-portrait I created in 2017 during undergrad.



Placed on a table are 3 apples and 3 bananas in a fruit basket. Simple yet represents both life and balance.



My ancestor altar is the pinnacle for protection in my home. Including on this altar are the names of my family members who've passed on.



Pictured above are 3 glass jars filled with rainwater charged from the February 2022 full moon.



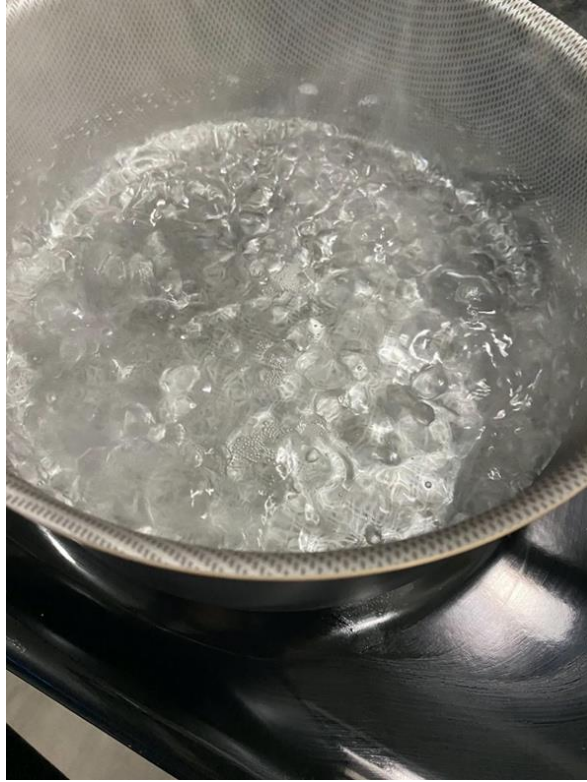
A half-cut onion rests on my hands as I examine it. My mother would be proud that I didn't waste such an important vegetable.



Ginger is a health staple on many black communities. 3gs of ginger a day keeps the doctor away!



A fresh bowl of turkey paste made by me!



Boiling water is truly a luxury.

Celestine Star



For my environment & strengths. In the home I live in there are reinforced gates at the doors and it adds a strong sense of security. Even for the days that feel chaotic and dangerous to step outside, I feel safe. Although the weakness is that stray bullets still travel, I submerge in the feeling that I am safe in my home and carry the feeling of security outside of my home.



“Our family dog Don.” He’s a part of my identity and family and is one of the most charismatic and loving dogs I am cool with. Although my face isn’t to be shown, denim jeans and bright colored sneakers are a part of my identity as well, along with the background of unique furniture pieces.



“Our family freezer where we store food.” For as long as I can remember my family has always ensured that we have back up food for the days we don’t feel like cooking & having frozen meals cuts down on food preparation. This simple yet economically smart move is a tradition I’ll carry along to my own household one day. It’s also very convenient for sudden emergencies like the 2020 pandemic that had the grocery stores in disarray.



Every time I come home I park right in front of my dad's truck and it's an immediate feeling of being home. The act of backing up a steep driveway is a part of my identity and environment.

It's also a strength of driving skills I share with most people in my family.



A weakness of the south side of Atlanta is the overconsumption of alcohol and processed foods.

Although it's not entirely our fault, there is a major distribution of "food marts" & not so convenient stores full of packaged factory-made goods that don't add to our health but subtract from it. It's unfortunate because the marts are strategically placed off the interstate and on corners into neighborhoods, so they become convenient for those who don't have the ability to travel far from home to healthy options.



Everywhere I drive I have a hummingbird hanging on my rear-view mirror. It's a gentle reminder to keep rising and uplifting myself in order to reflect a change. It's also a part of my racial identity for birds are symbolized as woman ancestors and wherever I go my ancestors are with me. Even through a beaded charm, I know I am not alone.



Although it's a little hypocritical that Georgia plates have "In god we trust" on them it's still a part of our identity. Religion plays a large part in the divide we face in our world but for me personally God is the divine that helps when we let go and allow all to flow as is. It's also a reminder that through the weaknesses we can still find our strength. It's our responsibility every time we navigate through the world to walk with love in our heart and trust that all is going to be okay.



Although it is advertised as a food mart the food consists of genetically modified foods & weakens rather than strengthens our systems. If we are to remove the heaviness of toxins in our mind, body and spirit we can move forward and grow. I feel we are stunted by what's in our environment but the sun shining on the mart gives me hope to look forward to a beautiful future. There's also people on the side that symbolize the sense of community even through the colder days.



The birds were singing as I took this picture which is a play on what I mentioned before but pictured below is a smoker my dad used to cook with. This single device is a staple in our food traditions because we have the ability to smoke our BBQ which is a cultural food for black people. It differentiates from a grill and creates a wonderful flavor amongst what's placed inside.

Gloria



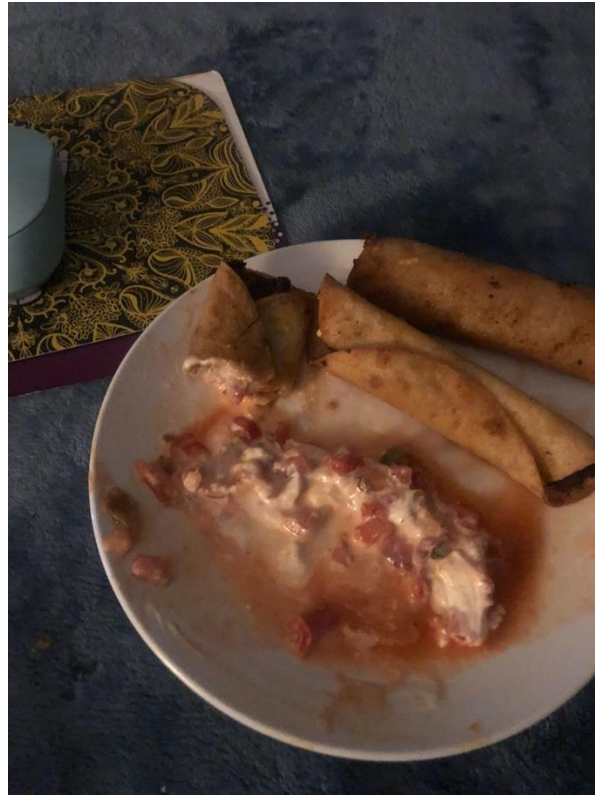
“Food Culture.”



“Food Tradition.”



“Environment.”



“Responsibility.”



“Health.”



“Self.”



“Convenience.”



“Food Preparation.”



“Goals.”



“Family.”

Rainbow Walker



“Community.” These traditional Sandé masks are from the Mende market women’s society of Sierra Leone. The funeral urn contains the ashes of an African American diaspora woman of Mende descent. The daughter of this woman completes the circle of the Sandé market women’s community, as she too, is a woman of commerce.



“Self.” Reflections on being. The artist and the culinary alchemist, the colors, the simplicity, the details, the not yet born, and the fruits of labor. Tools of self-womb manifestation.



“Identity.” This garment reflects the identity of universal culture. The designs echo the indigenous people of Turtle Island. While the fabric is distinctly hand woven Bogolanfini (Mud cloth) of Mali west, Africa and Kuba Cloth from Democratic Republic of Congo, Central Africa.

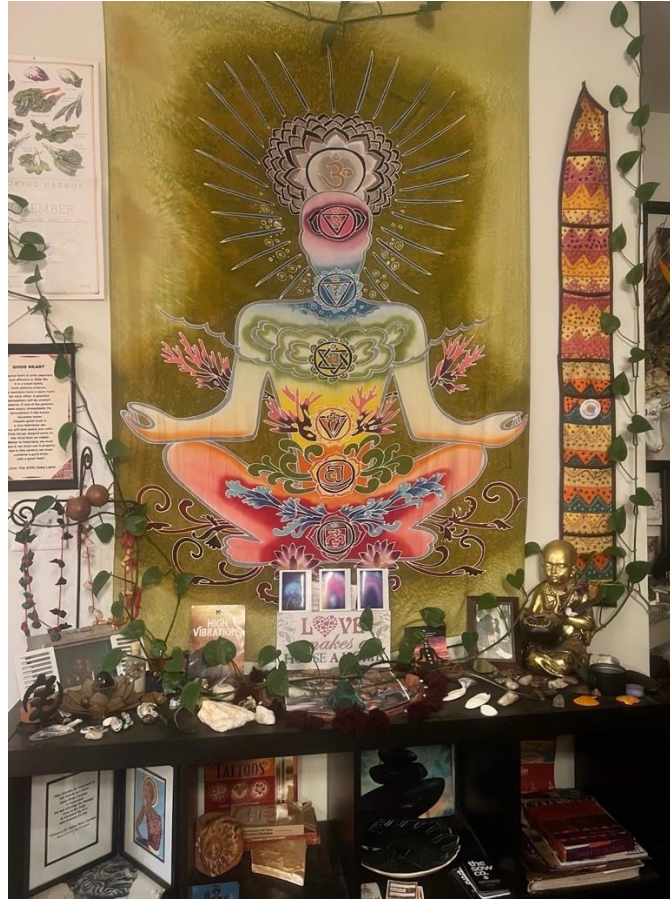


“Food Prep.” Healthy food prep starts with the basics, it’s got to be fresh organic and non-GMO.

The culinary ✨ Alchemist, transforms food into medicine, deliciously. The laboratory is the humble kitchen whose main ingredient is “love”.



“Environment.” Home. A Selffull environment. A sacred space of peace, rejuvenation, healing, sequestering, meditation, reflection, art, color, texture, balance, harmony, order, if you decide to come comfort, where living, laughing and loving is easy.



“Health.” Well-being can be experienced here in this tapestry to color, imagery, earth, air, and sea. It reflects the cultivating and harmonizing of the divine, feminine and masculine through the activation of the kundalini energy. This energy can be sustained by the practice of yoga, as it keeps the chakras open, clear and vibrant for healthy homeostasis.



“Food Traditions.” The primary way of life is to be nourished. Whether we seek it from others or create it for ourselves. If sharing is caring, then very little can beat one of the most ancient of food traditions... breaking bread with a friend.



“Strength.” Captured in the moment, sculpted for eternity, the essence of durability, regal royalty, nobility of character and beauty refined. This elegant bronze statue reflects the strength of a people not lost to “his” story, but preserved in the lost wax technique, cultivated by the skilled artisans of the empire of Benin 1200 to 1800 CE. It’s time to tell “our” story.



“Race.” Literally... “a little child shall lead them.” Come innocence, focus, power, humility, patience, perseverance, vision, prophecy. The children are the ancestors returned, moving the race forward.



“Food Culture.” Food culture fundamentals, from seeds to mortar and pestle. The rich roots and sweet fruits. Savory herbs and spices make everything extra nice. ♡

Appendix G: Interview Guide

1. What did you **S**ee here?
2. What is really **H**appening here?
3. How does this relate to **O**ur lives?
4. How is race connected to any of your photos?
5. How is gender connected to any of your photos?
6. How is class connected to any of your photos?
7. How is culture/tradition connected to any of your photos?
8. How is convenience (time, price, availability, etc.) connected to any of your photos?
9. How is care (health, environment, social justice, community, spirituality, family, etc.) connected to any of your photos?
10. **W**hy does this problem, concern, or strength **E**xist (in your community)?
11. How could your images **E**ducate people? (The community, policy makers, etc.)
12. What can we **D**o about it?