CULTURAL DISTINCTION IN CAMPUS DINING

by

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ABSTRACT

ZARA JILLANI. Cultural Distinction in Campus Dining. (Under the direction of DR. VAUGHN C. SCHMUTZ)

This study examines patterns of cultural consumption at four universities as indicated by the dining options offered on their campuses. I explore the diversity of university dining options, the considerations that guide dining personnel's decisions about what foods to offer, and how campus dining reflects and reinforces each university's status based on analysis of the dining options at campus dining halls and retail diners, dining services websites, and interviews with dining personnel. Results indicate considerable differences in the diversity of dining options available at each campus. The higher status universities provided more high-status, cosmopolitan dining options and placed more emphasis on ethical dining concerns compared to other universities, which prioritized function, cost, and convenience. These findings have implications for the role of universities in creating patterns of cultural distinction and in reinforcing symbolic boundaries related to food consumption among university students.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Food consumption is a form of cultural consumption that reflects identity and status, or comparative social rank (Fischler, 1988; Johnston & Baumann, 2007; Ridgeway, 2019). Like research on cultural consumption broadly, research on food consumption—and its relationship with identity in the form of class and status—primarily focuses on the familial contributions to cultural capital in early life (Backett-Millburn, Wills, Roberts, & Lawton, 2010; Fields-Singh, 2017; Wills, Backett-Millburn, Roberts, & Lawton, 2011). This Bourdieu-inspired perspective has historically dominated research on cultural capital, but more recent work has begun to consider the ways in which other factors contribute to cultural participation and the development of cultural capital (e.g., Schmutz, Stearns, & Glennie, 2016; Upright, 2004). Although the family context is an important part of socialization, the effect of parental cultural capital on educational outcomes diminishes as children age; by the time children reach adolescence and emerging adulthood, their own cultural participation has a greater effect than their parents' cultural capital (Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997). Therefore, it is pertinent to consider the contexts in which individuals accumulate cultural capital during emerging adulthood, including the opportunities for cultural participation and consumption at universities.

Universities give students opportunities to engage with an array of cultural resources, including an eclectic variety of cuisines that could influence students' consumption patterns and cultural capital. As institutions of higher education, all universities are likely to provide opportunities for cultural participation, but the returns on cultural capital attainment may be particularly great for students who attend elite

universities where cultural resources may be more prevalent or cultural participation more strongly encouraged. Possessing these high-status tastes can help to develop social networks with strong, dense ties, which can be advantageous (Lizardo, 2006). For instance, cultural matching is an important factor in hiring decisions in elite professions, which demonstrates that familiarity with legitimate culture is favorable on the job market and a potential source of social mobility (Reeves & de Vries, 2019; Rivera, 2012). As such, considering the variety of cultural resources that universities provide, including food, is important for understanding how college students attain cultural capital that increases the likelihood that they culturally match with high-status others, including employers, after they graduate.

Dining is not typically considered a focal aspect of universities, but dining decisions are everyday ways of representing cosmopolitanism and cultural identity (Cappeliez & Johnston, 2013). Food is a cultural resource that has symbolic value, and it can be used to express identity and communicate status and morality to others (Beagan, Power, & Chapman, 2015; Grauel, 2016; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Lusin, 2013; Parasecoli, 2014; Vartanian, 2015). In addition to offering students opportunities for cultural participation, university dining options may reinforce the university's own identity and status. While the use of food as a status cue is well established at the individual level, at the organizational level, research primarily focuses on institutional identity in terms of profit making (Langa & Zavale, 2018). I propose that there could be subtle yet meaningful reflections of status in university dining. The variety of food that universities provide likely both reinforces existing student tastes and introduces students to new dining experiences, particularly for students who did not have exposure to

legitimate culture prior to attending university. In this way, universities socialize students to adopt these forms of legitimate culture, which is, in turn, a reflection of the university's status and its values as an institution.

In this paper, I explore dining options on university campuses in the southeastern United States. I begin with a review of the literature on universities and cultural consumption and consider the status advantages that students can acquire at elite universities in particular. Next, I describe the relationship between status and food consumption, with particular attention to cultural distinctions in the form of eclectic dining and authenticity. Lastly, I describe the moral distinctions expressed in veganism, vegetarianism, and sustainable dining preferences and how these dietary preferences reflect status. I contribute to existing knowledge on cultural capital attainment and on food as a status cue by describing what dining options four universities provide to students and how food might, culturally or morally, reflect the status of these universities.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Universities and Cultural Consumption

Universities can reinforce students' existing values and consumption habits as well as provide opportunities to develop new values and consumption habits. The educated differ from the uneducated in part by their cultural capital and consumption patterns: universities are spaces where students are offered cultural resources and aesthetic experiences that can increase cultural mobility (DiMaggio & Useem, 1978). While some of the differences between the educated and uneducated can be owed to family background, student values and consumption habits do shift over time in university, which suggests that some of these shifts can be attributed to university attendance and the social networks that students can form within them (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Feldman & Newcomb, 2020; Lehmann, Sinha, & Harnett, 1966).

Cultural resources likely differ by university. Elite universities may advantage students by offering more exposure to legitimate culture, providing space for students to develop the cultural capital that distinguishes them as high status. Cultural capital can translate into a kind of "narrative capital" that aids in cultural mobility by allowing students to articulate their experiences in an interesting way, which can affect social capital and labor market outcomes (Rivera, 2012; Takacs, 2020). Although research has focused on opportunities such as study abroad programs, selective student organizations, and other extracurricular activities available at elite universities, everyday reflections of cultural capital, such as high-status eating, may be similarly beneficial. If elite universities tend to provide dining options that allow their students the opportunity to develop cosmopolitan taste, this creates yet another symbol of distinction for these

students in addition to the social, academic, and socioeconomic benefits of attending elite universities (Eide, Brewer, & Ehrenberg, 1998; Lee & Brinton, 1996).

2.2. Food and Symbolic Boundaries

Cosmopolitanism

Food can be used to demarcate symbolic boundaries, meaning that it can function as a status cue that categorizes consumers and distinguishes them from one another (Fielding-Sing, 2017; Lamont, 2001). For instance, Bourdieu (1984) termed the differences in consumption between classes "tastes of freedom" compared to "tastes of necessity." The upper class distinguished themselves by their taste for food that was exotic and light rather than familiar and heavy, prioritizing the aesthetic experience of food consumption rather than functional or utilitarian aspects. Recently, educated, high status people have become more eclectic, cosmopolitan consumers, which in the context of food consumption means that they eat "high-brow" foods (e.g. foie gras), "low-brow" foods (e.g. macaroni and cheese), and culturally exotic foods (e.g. banh mi) (Jæger & Katz-Gerro, 2010; Johnston & Baumann, 2007). Since consumption of exotic cuisine has become a symbol of status, traditional gourmet food culture has become less legitimate compared to eclectic consumption practices (Beagan, et al., 2015). This has produced foodies, or high-status, "cultured consumers" who continue to prioritize the aesthetic experience of dining over utilitarian concerns, such as cost or convenience, but the range of what constitutes high-status consumption has shifted (Johnston & Baumann, 2014; Lego, Wodo, McFee, & Soloman, 2002). Foodies have cosmopolitan taste, meaning that their consumption habits are diverse both in terms of culture and class compared to the historically exclusive patterns of consumption of the upper class (Peterson & Kern,

1996). This shift towards culturally rich, class-neutral dining appears to be a shift towards the democratization of dining, but foodie culture is inextricably linked to distinction since lower classes tend to consume more familiar and less exotic foods compared to middle and upper classes (Baumann, Szabo, & Johnston 2019). This makes cosmopolitan consumption a subtle but meaningful symbol of status and distinction (Oleschuk, 2017).

Authenticity versus Standardization

While dining inclusivity is a defining characteristic of foodies, they do discriminate in their consumption. Authenticity functions as a type of boundary, and especially so for foodies in regard to dining practices. Authenticity is an attribution that indicates that a place, person, or object is genuine, unique, and sincere (Wang, 1999). In the case of food and restaurants, there has been increasing interest in consuming authentic cuisine, particularly for foodies (Potter, 2010). Foodies prefer authentic restaurants, which are typically independent restaurants, over standardized options, which are typically large chain restaurants (Carroll, 2015; Ebster & Guist, 2005; Lillywhite & Simonsen, 2014; Zeng, de Vries, & Go, 2019). Foodies may perceive large chains as being "non-places," in which there is little of cultural and experiential value to be derived (Augé, 1995).

In general, non-foodies prefer non-places due to the safety and predictability that they offer. One study suggests that the success and proliferation of ethnic chains, explored in a case study on Olive Garden, demonstrates the broad appeal of ethnic cuisine that is presented in a predictable and standardized environment (Albrecht, 2011). The pronounced attempt at framing Olive Garden as Italian—from the art, to the music, to the overtly Italian advertising—makes the ethnic aspect of the restaurant unavoidable

and commodified; one can experience authentic Italian culture within the safety of a predictable and standardized environment. Despite the chain's attempts at feigning authenticity, the standardization and lack of uniqueness indicates inauthenticity to foodies, who consider standardized and authentic as mutually exclusive (de Vries & Go, 2017). Not only do foodies avoid standardized restaurants, they can be vocal about their disdain for these establishments and the people who dine at them, which suggests that for foodies, this dining habit is more than passive avoidance; it is an intentional decision to seek out culturally authentic dining experiences (Albrecht, 2011).

With respect to the current study, this research suggests that the presence of chain restaurants might indicate a more predictable, standardized dining environment, while local or independent, ethnic retailers might be perceived as more authentic. Universities may encourage students to develop—or continue—high status patterns of consumption by providing independent, eclectic retailers that offer more interesting or aesthetically appealing foods compared to chain retailers. Universities that provide more standardized options may be less concerned with offering students opportunities for cultural participation in dining and may be more focused on functional, utilitarian aspects of dining, such as providing students with convenient, low-cost options.

2.3. Moral Consumption

Veganism and Vegetarianism

Like food generally, dietary preferences such as veganism and vegetarianism are important indicators of identity that can create symbolic boundaries (Yeh, 2014). Veganism is defined as a diet that consists of no animal products (Costa, Gill, Morda, & Ali, 2019). Vegetarianism is defined as a diet that consists of some animal products (e.g.,

eggs, milk, cheese) but no meat (Nezlek & Forestell, 2020). For this study I refer to these diets as veg*ism to indicate meat-free consumption practices (Fox & Ward, 2008).

Vegan and vegetarian diets are largely motivated by ethical concerns or health concerns, but in the West, veg*ism are typically associated with moral identities; veg*ns often cite ethical concerns as the basis of their dietary decisions, and these decisions are associated with other characteristics, including attractiveness, empathy, and discipline (Beardsworth & Keil 1992; Fargo, 2015; Napoli, 2020; Radnitz, Beezhold, & DiMatteo, 2015). Vegetarians also have higher education levels and higher socioeconomic statuses compared to meat consumers, which may communicate information regarding their social status more broadly, something they share with foodies (Hoek, Luning, Staflu, & de Graaf, 2003). While foodies tend to eat meat, they can and do make ethical dining considerations in addition to cultural considerations. When foodies limit meat consumption, it is often in the form of flexitarianism, which "…allows foodies to eat meat and still have the moral high ground by avoiding industrially-raised livestock," (Johnston and Baumann, 2009). Although foodies and veg*ns do not necessarily share the same moral perspectives, their ethical considerations signal both of them as high-status consumers concerned with more than the functional aspects of consumption.

As veg*ns tend to view their diets as central to their identities, these dietary preferences are important for understanding boundaries and identities (Rosenfield, 2019). Exploring the availability of veg*n options at universities may provide a richer sense of the university's focus on dining; since veg*ism can function as indicators of identity at the individual level, a university's willingness (or ability) to accommodate these diets may signal the university's own status and moral identity. Further, the availability of

more veg*n options may increase receptivity to these alternative dining practices, so what may function as an accommodation can also expose students to alternative, high-status patterns of ethical consumption that shift dining perspectives away from utilitarianism.

Sustainability

Like veg*ism, ethical or sustainable dining considerations are associated with status and morality, because those with economic privilege have greater access to goods that are considered moral or ethical—such as fair-trade or sustainably harvested products—since they tend to be more costly than other options (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011). Since sustainable dining is typically motivated by environmental consciousness and moral responsibility, these considerations are moral rather than practical, which further distances ethical considerations from the strictly functional aspects of dining (Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). Like cosmopolitan consumption, the shift away from utilitarian concerns makes ethical consumption another way that consumers can create status distinctions between themselves and others. Although Johnston and colleagues note that, "…privileged perspectives tend to be normalized and presented as 'classless,'" ethical consumption is evidence of both morality and cultural capital, which reinforces ethical dining as a high-status practice (Johnston & Baumann, 2014; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011). As such, universities that are oriented towards creating or attracting high-status consumers by emphasizing sustainability and other ethical concerns may subtly communicate an expectation of what students should prioritize in their consumption choices, which encourages students to adopt high status taste and consumption patterns. In light of this, understanding how and to what degree topics such as sustainability are presented by universities can offer

insights into what they prioritize, as well as suggest how they might play a role in students' acquisition of these perspectives.

2.4. Present Study

The goal of this study is twofold. First, I describe the dining options provided at four southeastern universities in order to document differences in opportunities for cultural participation. Second, I explore how food might reflect each university's status as an institution. Based on the literature on status and patterns of cultural consumption among individuals, I anticipate that higher status universities will offer more eclectic, cosmopolitan dining options, including options that are perceived as authentic, and have an emphasis on ethical dining practices. I anticipate that lower status universities will take more utilitarian approaches to dining and provide common or familiar dining options that focus on taste or convenience.

No studies have examined differences in dining options across universities from a sociological perspective or examined how food might function as a status cue at the institutional level. I contribute to existing literature on cultural capital and symbolic boundaries by exploring how opportunities for cultural participation and cultural capital attainment differ between universities, as well as how status distinctions are reflected at these institutions. Documenting these differences is important for understanding the reproduction of inequality across universities and the ways that universities distinguish themselves.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample

I examined four universities in the southeastern United States that were selected due to variation in size, selectivity, and demographic factors. HMSI is a medium-sized, historically minority serving institution with a primarily black student body. Urban University is a large, urban research university with a diverse student population. Small Liberal Arts College (SLAC) is a small, liberal arts college with a primarily white student body. Research I is a large, selective university with a diverse student population. Table 1 provides full demographic and other information about each university.

Table 1

University Demographics

	HMSI	*Urban University*	*SLAC*	*Research I*
Enrollment	12,000	29,000	4,000	26,000
Average SAT Score	1090	1260	1240	1420
Ethnic Diversity	5.9% White 81.0% Black 3.9% Hispanic 1.0% Asian 9.2% Other	58.8% White 16.4% Black 9.2% Hispanic 6.0% Asian 9.6% Other	78.4% White 4.5% Black 6.2% Hispanic 2.0% Asian 8.9% Other	62.8% White 8.0% Black 7.6% Hispanic 10.3% Asian 11.3% Other
Acceptance Rate (Fall 2018)	62.2%	65.8%	80.4%	24.4%

Table 1 (continued)

	HMSI	*Urban University*	*SLAC*	*Research I*
Enrollment Rate (Fall 2018)	34.8%	30.7%	23.5%	45.0%
In-state Tuition (2018-2019)	$6,526	$6,832	$7,145	$9,005
Carnegie Classification	High Research Activity	High Research Activity	Arts & Sciences Focus	Very High Research Activity

3.2. Quantitative Data Sources

Dining Hall Menus

Dining hall menus list the dining options offered at university dining halls daily and were accessed from each university's dining website. I used Microsoft Excel to randomly generate seven numbers between 245 (September 1st) and 336 (December 1st) to construct a random week of the fall semester of 2019 during which all four universities were under normal operations. I selected dining hall menus from this randomly generated week to provide the most accurate depiction of an average week of dining options.

I counted the total number of dishes offered and coded them for veganism and vegetarianism, which were flagged by the dining menus, and the national origin of each dish. The number of dishes offered included all dishes listed on the dining hall menu. I excluded beverages and condiments, because information regarding these items were not provided by all universities.

National origin was operationalized as the country in which the focal aspect of the dish originates so that pizza was Italian, sushi was Japanese, and so on. Codes for

national origin were created inductively as dishes arose from a particular origin. Nine different cuisines were initially identified: American, Mexican, Asian, Italian, Mediterranean, South Asian, Latin American, Cuban, and Middle Eastern. I collapsed Asian and South Asian into a unified Asian category, and I collapsed Latin American and Cuban into a unified Latin American category, which resulted in seven categories. Non-ethnic and Other were included to capture any dishes that were not prepared according to any specific national culinary tradition or any dishes that had limited representation across the menus and retail diners, respectively.

Retail Dining

University retail dining included any dining facilities aside from dining halls, which included food trucks where available. Flex dining options, or retail diners that accept declining balance, were not included in the sample since these were off-campus establishments. Information pertaining to retail dining was obtained from either the university's website or the establishment's website.

Retail dining was coded for national origin using the same criteria as that used for coding the dining hall menus. If a retail diner provided menu items of varying national origins, it was coded according to the origin of the majority of the menu items.

In order to evaluate university focus on authenticity, retail dining was also coded for whether the establishment was a national chain or an independent retailer. A chain was considered any retailer that was part of a franchise, and an independent retailer was considered any retailer that was not part of a franchise (Lin, Sharma, & Ouyang, 2020). Chain retailers typically had several locations and were found in several cities throughout

the U.S., while independent retailers typically had only one location or limited locations located in the same city.

3.3. Qualitative Data Sources

Dining Websites

To provide a preliminary sense of each institution's emphases in dining, university website pages were thematically coded according to seven themes (see Table 2). Themes were created to focus on key content areas based on the literature review, with international and local themes capturing cultural boundaries and ethical and environmental themes capturing moral boundaries. Education, accessibility, and accommodations captured how the universities engaged with students about dining, or to what degree the universities aimed to educate students about dining, how accessible they made supplemental dining services, and how they involved students in dining. This information provides a sense of how and if students are encouraged to engage with dining beyond simply consuming it. Any pages from each university website that did not contain operational information, i.e. any page that provided supplemental information regarding topics such as nutrition or sustainability rather than dining maps or hours, was included in the analysis. Website content was coded in Nvivo 1.0.

Table 2

University Website Themes, Descriptions, and Sample Text

International	
	Describes international dining options. *"…restaurants featured within our food courts provide international and cultural cuisine…"*

Table 2 (continued)

Local	Describes the use of locally sourced ingredients or local partnerships. *"We strive to purchase as much as possible from local sources."*
Ethical	Describes moral issues such as reducing meat consumption, ethically sourcing ingredients, and so on. *"He raises his birds cage free and we are proud to support him."*
Environmental	Describes environmental concerns such as sustainability. *"We strive to only offer seafood that has been responsibly harvested."*
Education	Describes educating students about nutrition, the environment, and so on. *"Fun, interactive weekly educational tables to raise awareness of issues like carbon footprint, fair trade, sustainable seafood, meat consumption and waste reduction."*
Accessibility	Describes the ways in which the dining personnel are accessible to students. *"Students with food allergies or nutritionally significant medical conditions…can receive nutrition advice through a private consultation with our Registered Dietitian."*
Accommodations	Describes how the university is connecting with students or getting students involved with dining. *"The purpose of the Student Dining Board is to keep an open channel of communication between the administration and the student body."*

Interviews

Interviews were semi-structured, meaning that an interview guide was created in order to address topics of interest while still allowing participants to discuss the unique ways in which their university approaches dining. The interview guide was based on the website themes in order to provide additional context and interpretation of those data, allowing dining personnel to explain or expand upon topics such as sustainability and local food purchasing. Participants were asked the same set of 13 questions as well as up to two unique questions based on website content specific to the university they represented. Topics included sustainability, dietary preferences, perceived student

preferences, and university dining priorities (see Appendix for full interview guide). The Institutional Review Board determined this study exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b).

Email invitations to participate were sent to 16 individuals who were identified as eligible based on their involvement with dining at their university. While the objective was to obtain two to three interviews per university, several of the eligible participants were furloughed during the study period or had limited availability due to COVID-19. Ultimately, three consented to participate (18.75% response rate). Two participants were employed by Urban University, and one participant was employed by SLAC. All of the participants were white women who had been employed in dining operations at their university for several years and had experience with both the dining service provider and the university, making these participants well-positioned to explain the university's dining operations. Interviews were conducted virtually between April-August 2020 and lasted between 40-60 minutes. Transcriptions were performed in Nvivo 1.0.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1. Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism was primarily captured by dining hall menus and retail dining rather than by website content, which generally did not address the eclecticism of dining options. There were substantial differences between universities in the international variety of retail diners but considerably less variation in dining hall items. For instance, Mexican, Asian, and Italian were the most numerous international options at nearly all four university dining halls (see Table 3).

Table 3

National Origin of Dining Hall Menu Items by University

National Origin	*HMSI N=272*	*Urban University N=337*	*SLAC N=358*	*Research I N=633*
Non-ethnic	128 47%	115 34%	175 49%	259 41%
American	50 18%	83 25%	43 12%	120 19%
Mexican	11 4%	12 4%	18 5%	33 5%
Asian	26 10%	46 14%	44 12%	74 12%
Italian	28 10%	41 12%	23 6%	88 14%
Mediterranean	6 2%	1 .3%	6 2%	6 .9%
Latin	1 .4%	2 .6%	1 .3%	3 .5%

Table 3 (continued)

	HMSI	*Urban University*	*SLAC*	*Research I*
Middle Eastern	4 1%	3 .9%	11 3%	7 1%
Other	18 7%	34 10%	37 10%	43 7%

HMSI

HMSI had no website content related to cosmopolitanism but rather discussed their nutrition labeling. Their dining team, "…helps you select delicious, nutritious and satisfying meals, snacks, and desserts…". Terms like "delicious" and "satisfying" align with "tastes of necessity" in that they focus on taste and satiation rather than eclecticism or variety. All of the retail diners served primarily American food (see Table 4). HMSI's homogenous, American retailers suggests that their student body prefers familiar foods, and either lack of resources or perceived lack of student receptivity to eclectic dining—and more focus on taste—may be preventing HMSI from offering high status, culturally diverse options.

Table 4

National Origin of Retail Diners by University

National Origin	*HMSI*	*Urban University*	*SLAC*	*Research I*	*%*
American	10 100%	17 74%	10 91%	23 51%	59 67.8%
Mexican	0	1 4%	1 9%	7 16%	9 10.3%

Table 4 (continued)

	HMSI	*Urban University*	*SLAC*	*Research I*	*%*
Asian	0	3 13%	0	5 11%	7 6.9%
Italian	0	1 4%	0	3 7%	4 4.6%
Mediterranean	0	0	0	3 7%	3 3.4%
Latin	0	1 4%	0	3 7%	3 3.4%
Middle Eastern	0	0	0	1 2%	1 1.1%
Total	10 11.5%	23 25.3%	11 12.6%	45 50.6%	89 100%

Urban University

Urban University's retail dining was primarily American (74%), and there was more American representation (25%) in the dining halls than any other nationality. Both participants at Urban University observed that their students liked to experiment with unusual or international foods but generally preferred familiar, American foods.

"[Students prefer] more of the American food, as much as we have tried to feature healthy offerings and more sustainable offerings. Students love it once in a while, but on a consistent basis, they still go to those offerings that they are familiar with and more American." (Participant 1, Urban University)

"Typical American foods tend to be the winner, not that they don't appreciate [international food]. They love if it's Egyptian or Caribbean, they value that. But the next day they go back to the grill. So, I think the classic American is still a significant staple of dining habits." (Participant 2, Urban University)

Urban University focused primarily on accommodating what they perceived as existing student taste, which is reflected in their dining hall options and retailers. Participants' observations that students tend to experiment with international foods but return to familiar options explains why Urban University's retail dining is 74% American:

"Most students aren't as adventurous as [non-students] may be when it comes to their dining preferences. So, we really try to meet them where they're at. I think that the dining halls themselves, we can get a little experimental in those spaces, which is great… But when we're looking at an actual retail concept, we have to put a lot more thought into that because it does involve construction… So, without making a large investment in something, we want to make sure that it's something that people will want to visit." (Participant 1, Urban University)

"We need to [offer both familiar and unfamiliar options] for students, because we have a group of students who aren't interested in trying new items and they just want, you know, a value-based menu that's very basic and provides some kind of classic comfort meals. And then we have other students who are really yearning for the full experience that I think universities provide, which is giving students exposure to things that they might not have had the opportunity to be exposed to. And I think it's our responsibility to make sure that we're providing a balance of both." (Participant 2, Urban University)

Participant 1 explained that Urban University was able to provide more eclectic dining options in the dining halls but generally avoided offering more permanent options due to lack of perceived student interest. Participant 2 identified universities as a space

for students to engage in new experiences, including dining experiences, and considered providing those experiences to be important, yet she did not indicate that exposing students generally to new cuisines was a goal as much as accommodating students in whatever their dining preferences are. Whether or not Urban University provides the cultural resources necessary for students to develop cosmopolitan taste, Participant 2's acknowledgment of the desirability of providing students with new experiences reinforces the status and legitimacy of cosmopolitan consumption.

Although there were different perspectives on whether Urban University accommodated preexisting student taste or whether there were intentions to introduce students to new cuisines, the broad implication from both participants is that Urban University has a student body that is perceived to be somewhat experimental in their consumption habits, but these habits and tastes are not enduring. There seemed to be some reluctance in offering retail options—which are higher stakes than dining hall options—that students will not take immediate interest in. Urban University seems consumer-driven and unlikely to offer students a consistent space for cultural dining participation.

SLAC

Like Urban University, SLAC's retail dining was primarily American (83%). They offered fewer American options (12%) and had more non-ethnic options (49%) compared to Urban University (34%). Participant 3 offered insights into SLAC's dining variety, where there was a focus on general variety in terms of proteins and vegetables rather than international variety.

"We like to have variety in terms of like multiple proteins…then lots of vegetables, like roasted vegetables, sauteed kale, steamed green beans, steamed broccoli, and just that rainbow of food you can put on your plate. I mean, I'm sure this is how it is in other schools, because I can't imagine that we're that unique." (Participant 3, SLAC)

Participant 3 emphasized SLAC's dining diversity by highlighting their multiple protein and vegetable options and referred to the variety as a "rainbow of food," which focuses more on aesthetic value than utilitarian value. This is an instance of high status or privileged perspectives being framed as normative; SLAC prioritized this variety, and Participant 3 makes the assumption that other universities must also prioritize it.

Urban University and SLAC differed on attitudes towards educating students about different cuisines. Like Urban University's participants, Participant 3 observed SLAC students who were open to new cuisines and those who were not, but she noted that the desire is for students to be open-minded to the variety of dining options that are offered as opposed to primarily offering students what they were already accustomed to eating.

"I see some students who are really open to trying things and do really like some of the international dishes and will comment that they love the variety because it is, like I said, the variety of different kinds of food, but then also mixing it up with different cuisines from different parts of the world… I would hope that lots of students open their minds and their palates while they're dining with us. But I definitely still see some picky people… They're like, I want white rice and grilled chicken, and that's it. And then, they're passing over all of these vegetables… We pride ourselves on all these fresh

vegetables, but there's still plenty of students that want fried chicken and French fries." (Participant 3, SLAC)

Participant 3 perceived willingness to try new or international food positively, framing high status, eclectic patterns of consumption, such as eating healthy or international foods, as more desirable than "picky," unadventurous, or simple tastes. Interestingly, Participant 3 highlights the dining options that SLAC continues to provide despite the fact that many students do not demonstrate interest in those dining options. SLAC leaves these cultural resources and opportunities for cultural participation available for students to engage with, perhaps as a reflection of status.

Research I

Research I was the only university in the sample that specifically mentioned international dining offerings on their website: "Local restaurants featured within our food courts provide international and cultural cuisine and provides local businesses an opportunity to offer food on-campus." Though the mention is brief, the fact that Research I included content regarding international dining options at all suggests some commitment to providing these cultural resources to their students, and perhaps that students expect to receive them. Research I also had the most numerous and diverse retail dining in the sample with 45 retail diners. Although American retailers (51%) were the most prominent, Research I was the only university in the sample to have at least one retailer across all seven nationalities that I coded (see Table 4). This offered their students space to explore new cuisines or further legitimate students' existing cosmopolitan consumption patterns. As Participant 1 from Urban University mentioned, universities have more flexibility in experimenting with new foods in the dining halls, so the

eclecticism of the retailers might serve as a stronger indicator of the student body's taste or the university's commitment to offering cosmopolitan dining options.

Sum

The lack of website content and the comparatively fewer international options at HMSI in both their retail dining and dining hall menus suggests that diversifying student taste is not a key priority for their campus. Like Urban University, SLAC had a student body that preferred both familiar and unfamiliar foods, and there were attempts to provide something for students who preferred both or either. However, Participant 3 was more emphatic about SLAC's variety and their hope of students "opening their minds and their palates," than Urban University's participants. While the universities were similar in student makeup, SLAC hoped for students to diversify their palates while Urban University was more focused, and satisfied, with accommodating students where their palates were when they arrived. Research I's mention of international options and eclectic offerings in retail dining and dining halls shows that there may be an attempt to accommodate a cosmopolitan student body, an attempt to diversify students' palates, or both.

4.2. Authenticity

University focus on local dining options can be an indirect measure of the perceived authenticity of their offerings. As I noted earlier, chains can be considered non-places compared to independent retailers that might be perceived as more genuine. Each university differed in regard to the availability of local products and independent retail dining. HMSI discussed local sourcing on their website, but it did not appear to be a strong focus. Urban University did not discuss local options on their website and did not

find local dining options to be of much interest to students. SLAC and Research I both discussed local offerings on their websites and had primarily independent retailers.

HMSI

HMSI did not describe any local retailers on their website, but their sustainability page mentioned that they source from local suppliers: "We work closely with local produce distributors to maximize the fruits and vegetables purchased from local farms. We also purchase from local dairies…" While the presence of this content does signify some focus on local offerings, the fact that ingredients are sourced locally and meals are not locally prepared makes the framing around local sourcing less about authenticity or community and more about sustainability.

Retail dining at HMSI was half independent and half chain (see Table 5). This, combined with the mention of local sourcing, might suggest some interest or commitment to local offerings, but connections to authenticity and student perceptions are unclear.

Table 5

Independent and Chain Retail Diners by University

Type of Retail Diner	*HMSI*	*Urban University*	*SLAC*	*Research I*	*%*
Independent	5 50%	10 43%	8 73%	35 78%	57 65.5%
Chain	5 50%	13 57%	3 27%	10 22%	30 34.5%
Total	10 11.5%	23 25.3%	11 12.6%	45 50.6%	89 100%

Urban University

Urban University's website text did not describe any local sourcing, but interviews with dining personnel did explain that the food service provider sourced locally when possible. Participant 2 noted that local sources and dining offerings were not perceived as particularly important to students, which could explain why it was not described on the website.

"I think [local items are] not a core expectation from the students, but they like to know…I think we probably could do a better job of telling the story so that students knew that those were local tomatoes [in the dining hall]… We probably don't connect the dots as frequently or as intentionally as we could." (Participant 2, Urban University)

Student interest in local dining offerings was perceived to be low, and the university did not seem to engage in any educational practices to stimulate interest in local options.

When choosing where to eat, Urban University participants found that location—a utilitarian concern—was a main driver of student consumption habits; students were perceived as unwilling to prioritize a particular kind of food, like local or sustainable options, over convenience.

"I think [what students eat] just depends on where they're located. To be honest with you, I think students aren't really excited about having to travel across campus to go somewhere. They're going to eat whatever is in their close proximity." (Participant 1, Urban University)

Additionally, both participants explained that fast food chains on campus were more desirable to students than the independent options, illustrating that Urban University's student body adopts a "taste of necessity" approach to dining.

"Chick-fil-A is hands down our most popular. I would say that a close second is Bojangles—apparently fried chicken is the thing that students choose to eat—and then Wendy's stays quite busy also." (Participant 1, Urban University)

Rather than viewing dining as an aesthetic experience, an ethical decision, or a reflection of identity, Urban University's students appear to prioritize qualities like taste and convenience. This aligns closely with lower status consumption practices, regarding food as mere sustenance rather than an interesting or aesthetic experience. Instead of continuing to offer high status options despite perceived student disinterest, Urban University had a more reactive orientation, focusing on existing student taste, profit, and national trends when considering their dining offerings.

"[It's important] to make sure that we're connecting with students, and we'll ask a variety of questions, things like understanding what's important to them. This could include categories like health or vegetarian eating. The price point that they're willing to purchase, how often they may eat on campus, what meals they eat on campus or what meals they eat in general. And then we also do surveying, just… what's happening with retail trends across the nation… so that we can understand what… national brands might be growing or decreasing." (Participant 2, Urban University)

SLAC

SLAC emphasized their local sourcing and local dining offerings, often tying them into environmental concerns. Their website named over 10 different local and

regional (defined as within 250 miles) companies and organizations that they partner with, which was distinct from other universities in the sample who stated that they purchased locally or regionally but not where from. The website explained that SLAC deals regionally only when locally is not an option: "Since the majority of a school year does not coincide with the bountiful growing season of [SLAC], it's important to look to local *and* regional to keep our carbon footprint low." Even with regional suppliers, SLAC emphasized a communal aspect of these partnerships: "Having a close relationship with our suppliers is paramount…", which might enhance the sense of ethical responsibility or authenticity of these sources.

Most of SLAC's retailers were independent (73%), with three chain options (27%) on campus. Participant 3 noted that students are perceived to expect local options, and the culture of the town that SLAC is situated in reinforces the values of appreciating local options.

"I would say [students] demand [local products] in a lot of ways. People always want more local, we get that comment a lot. We have a lot of local companies that are thriving in our town, so the town backs those values up." (Participant 3, SLAC)

Local options were positively framed throughout my interview with Participant 3; there was a general theme of local dining options being about connection with community and environmental concerns. Though it does not evoke the same sense of cosmopolitanism that eating authentic international food does, eating local food is a way of experiencing authentic food and connecting with others.

Local dining options tended to be framed more in terms of ethical or sustainability themes, but Participant 3 did discuss SLAC's dining authenticity in terms of their

international dining options as well. She expressed concern over the lack of authenticity of SLAC's international dining options, using miso (a paste made from fermented soybeans) as an example.

"[offering international foods] is questionable because, are a lot of our international dishes totally authentic? Maybe, maybe not. I know there's a miso label that gets used occasionally and I'm like, where's the miso? No, we don't have miso, they just use rice vinegar…And that's not miso, so don't call it miso." (Participant 3, SLAC)

While this quote may reflect the perspective of one member of SLAC's dining personnel rather than the university's perspective more broadly, Participant 3 valued preparing international options correctly by preparing them authentically, which emphasizes that authentic cuisine is legitimate and high status. Additionally, the fact that SLAC markets their dining options as containing miso rather than rice vinegar suggests that SLAC prefers their students to be receptive towards eclectic foods, even if the experience is not authentic.

Participant 3 uniquely discussed a moral concern with one popular fast food chain. When asked about retailers that were popular with students, Participant 3 explained that SLAC students would like to have a Chick-fil-A on campus, but SLAC will not introduce one due to moral differences between the chain and their university. This is an interesting instance of a university not offering what would seem to be a successful retailer due to a moral objection, which might instill such moral considerations in their student body.

"I think there's definitely a large group of students that would love Chick-fil-A here. And I think if we had a franchise, that would probably be the most popular. But the

school definitely does not want a Chick-fil-A. They're not really that interested, specifically because of the homophobic rhetoric. We have a population of people who identify as queer or trans… so even though it's a popular place, I just think the school doesn't want to get near it... (Participant 3, SLAC)

Research I

Research I's website discussed local offerings in detail, describing partnerships with local farmers in creating an on-campus farmers market to encourage students to purchase local produce. Research I's emphasis on local partnerships is also emphasized by their retail dining options, about 77% of which are independent. In addition to underscoring the sustainability of dealing locally, this set of retail diners may encourage—or reinforce—student habits of selecting independent retailers, which may be perceived as more authentic. In fact, Research I was unique in their extensive partnerships with food trucks, which are local, mobile businesses that consumers often consider to be unique and authentic (Yoon & Chung, 2018). Twenty-seven of Research I's 45 retailers were food trucks, most of which offered international foods. While partnerships with food trucks may occur at the other universities sampled, Research I provided a full list of their partners, as well as a schedule so that students were aware of which food trucks would be available at a particular day and time, which implies that these food trucks, and the eclecticism and authenticity that they provide, are a key part of campus dining that students are encouraged to participate in.

Unlike SLAC, Research I did seem to connect local and international dining directly; about half of their retailers were international, and most of those were independent. Recall that their website specifically mentioned that local restaurants served

international options: “Local restaurants featured within our food courts provide international and cultural cuisine and provides local businesses an opportunity to offer food on-campus.” By emphasizing this combination of local and international food rather than focusing on chain retailers and international food, Research I creates a sense of authenticity in their international dining options.

Sum

Overall, local options were primarily connected to environmental concerns rather than authenticity. While the two are not mutually exclusive, the dialogue from both website content and interview data largely framed local offerings in terms of sustainability rather than in terms of offering an authentic, genuine, or cosmopolitan dining experience. The exception to this was Research I who briefly discussed local and international options together. There is an important distinction between sourcing produce locally and offering students access to meals prepared by local or authentic retailers; preparing a dish with locally grown tomatoes does not offer the same sort of cosmopolitan or perceived authentic dining experience that eating an exotic meal from a local vendor does. In this sense, Research I seemed to provide students with a more authentic, cosmopolitan dining experience compared to other universities in this sample.

4.3. Veganism and Vegetarianism

Veganism and vegetarianism (veg*ism) can be framed from a moral perspective, a health perspective, or both. While vegan and vegetarian diets can be motivated by several different values, I discuss them jointly as veg*ism as a way of representing an aspect of morality that the universities may use to distinguish themselves since moral consumption is a high-status concern. All four universities provided similar percentages

of veg*n options (see Table 6), so distinctions between universities were made clearer by website and interview data. HMSI did not provide any information about veg*ism on their website, and Urban University provided only functional information (e.g., veg*n options at each retail diner). SLAC and Research I had detailed discussion about veg*ism on their websites; both universities framed veg*ism as a normal, welcome, and easily accommodated dietary preference.

Table 6

Vegan and Vegetarian Dining Hall Items by University

Dietary Preference	*HMSI N=272*	*Urban University N=337*	*SLAC N=358*	*Research I N=633*
Vegan	78 29%	128 38%	140 40%	243 39%
Vegetarian	186 69%	218 65%	251 72%	427 68%

Urban University

Urban University's website did not provide any information about how they accommodated veg*n diets beyond a list of dining locations with veg*n options, which at some retailers were as limited as hash browns, fruit, or fries for vegan students. There was no mention of a commitment to accommodating these groups, nor information about veg*n populations on campus. The website mentioned that Urban University is "able to accommodate many food allergies, and special dietary requirements," and "…consult with students who are vegan, vegetarian…" but did not elaborate on what that meant.

Participants at Urban University indicated that there was not substantial demand for veg*n options from students but that accommodating these dietary needs was something that they took seriously.

"So, I think if you ask that group [vegans/vegetarians], I don't know if [they] would ever feel like we should stop continuing to add options. So, from my opinion, I think we have a good representation that touches each of those needs… But I will share in that same breath that it's still something that we're very keenly focused on… taking menu flexibility into consideration to ensure that it's covering that broad scope of needs." (Participant 2, Urban University)

*"[Veg*n options] are definitely not as in demand as we would think it would be. I know that because it's a very common concern at this point. But we really, you know, obviously we take those requests very seriously because it's a serious outcome If they aren't accommodated."* (Participant 1, Urban University)

Rather than legitimating or encouraging veg*n diets, Urban University seemed to view them as necessary to accommodate but had no desire to normalize them or accommodate them beyond what they considered adequate. For instance, they frame veg*ns as "other," as evidenced by language such as "that group" to describe veg*ns, and describe providing veg*n options as something to be done to avoid a consequence. Overall, veg*ism were primarily regarded as dietary restrictions rather than moral or health issues, and accommodations were viewed as necessary but not a strong focus or point of distinction for Urban University.

SLAC

SLAC's website described their veg*n accommodations in detail and connected veg*ism to local and sustainability themes: "We understand dietary preferences are important to our campus community and we offer vegetarian and vegan meals every day in all of our outlets. Having a long-standing local business like [veg*n restaurant on campus] certainly helps increase the sustainable offerings on campus, and we are thrilled with this partnership."

SLAC was the only university in the sample that had certifications or awards related to their veg*n offerings, which were available daily at every dining establishment on campus. They had a Peta2 rank of "A" four years in a row and were the second most "vegan friendly" small school in 2015 and 2016, hosting "Mindful Mondays" that emphasize plant-based food consumption. Again, this underscores the high-status notion that consumption is about more than simply sustaining oneself, and SLAC encourages their students to be thoughtful about the food that they consume rather than focusing on lower status concerns like cost or convenience.

Although SLAC generally framed veg*ism as a health or environmental issue instead of an animal welfare issue, their use of cage-free eggs and humanely raised meat implied some moral stance on the use of animal products rather than framing veg*ism as a strictly health or environmental issue. SLAC's commitment to providing veg*n options was clearly communicated on their website, but Participant 3 did describe challenges in providing adequate accommodations to SLAC's student body:

"We have a small but vocal group of vegan students… so there's always a push for more plant-based products, less meat… But then we also have a lot of student athletes and students that aren't vegan, and they want meat. So we kind of struggle with this back

and forth... We like to have variety in terms of multiple animal proteins but then also multiple, or at least one plant-based protein like tempeh, tofu, seitan, or beans…" (Participant 3, SLAC)

Despite the small vegan population and the difficulties in accommodating the variety of student preferences, Participant 3 discussed the importance of providing a variety of options for veg*n students rather than making options available but limited. The prioritization of accommodating veg*n diets rather than normalizing meat consumption and regarding veg*n diets as "other" legitimates, and perhaps encourages, veg*n consumption.

Research I

Like SLAC, Research I normalized veg*n practices on their campus by emphasizing their large veg*n population and veg*n dining offerings, which included offering dairy-free alternatives and cruelty-free eggs, and ensuring that half of the soups and pizzas in the dining hall were vegetarian. They participated in "Meat 'Less' Mondays," which they described as a global initiative to reduce meat consumption, though this is framed as for "the health of the planet," rather than for animal cruelty concerns. This is similar to SLAC's "Mindful Mondays"; both events are intended to educate diners about being mindful and intentional about the ethical aspects of their dining decisions.

The normalization of veg*n diets establishes them as legitimate options, and hosting "Meat 'Less' Mondays" is a way of encouraging flexitarian diets. In other words, while Research I is not necessarily encouraging students to abandon meat consumption, they are encouraging meat reduction for "the health of the planet" and ethical

mindfulness regarding animal products (e.g., cage-free eggs), both of which are high status, foodie concerns.

Sum

HMSI and Urban University differed strongly from Research I and SLAC in their conceptualization and treatment of veg*n diets. The lack of any content from HMSI and the vagueness of the content from Urban University did not suggest a strong commitment to providing veg*n options, and concerns about morality were absent entirely. This is consistent with utilitarian viewpoints of food in which taste is prioritized over moral or ethical concerns.

Themes about sustainability, morality, and health were interwoven throughout SLAC and Research I's discourse. These descriptions made it evident that veg*ism were not only accommodated but normalized at these universities. Rather than treating veg*ism as only a dietary preference or health concern, it was framed as an important ethical consideration and something that the universities were committed to. Participant 3 at SLAC, in particular, noted the difficulties in accommodating the wide variety of student needs, but maintained that SLAC aimed to strike a middle ground of providing for both meat consuming and veg*n students. While morality themes were discussed less than anticipated, the mention of humanely raised meats and cage-free eggs implies that veg*n options were provided for more than health reasons or economic concerns.

Although veg*n options were comparable at all of the universities, the depth of discussion around veg*n issues, the level of accommodations, and the differences in participation in educational events draws a boundary between these four universities in the way that they conceptualize the importance of providing veg*n options, as

participants at Urban University framed veg*n accommodations less positively than Research I or SLAC, and HMSI did not discuss them at all.

4.4. Sustainability

All of the university websites in the sample had a stronger focus on sustainability than on any other topic, but SLAC and Research I had the most complex and detailed content. There were clear attempts to both educate students on the importance of sustainability and to engage students in dining. HMSI and Urban University discussed sustainability less extensively and used less sophisticated or specific language, though Urban University interviews did reveal that more sustainability initiatives were being implemented on their campus than what was indicated on their website. While the extent of sustainability efforts may not be captured via website content, the lack of public discussion may suggest that these two universities do not anticipate their audience to expect this content. In other words, while these universities are participating in sustainability initiatives, they do not seem to be attempting to generate much student interest or involvement or frame their universities in terms of these initiatives.

HMSI

HMSI offered the most precise list of sustainability practices in the sample, highlighting procedures such as offering china dishes instead of disposable dishes, using recycled napkins, and turning off equipment when not in use. However, the majority of the content is not unique to HMSI: 89% of the sustainability website content is utilized on other campus dining websites operated by HMSI's food service provider. While the website details the sustainability practices that the food service provider engages in, there

was little content that sought to uniquely position or frame HMSI, which implies that sustainability is not a central part of the university's identity.

Urban University

Like HMSI, Urban University's website content was less complex and detailed compared to SLAC and Research I. Urban University primarily highlighted certifications, such as being named the 2014 Wells Fargo Green Award winner and having two 3 star certified green dining halls from the Green Restaurant Association (GRA). They mentioned having sustainability goals regarding energy consumption and reducing costs, and that, "Dining services maintains sustainability standards set by the university, while remaining in line with goals defined within the Compass Group Sustainability Platform," but there was no specification on what steps were being taken to reduce energy consumption or elaboration on what these sustainability goals were. The lack of specialized language made this content accessible without extensive knowledge about sustainability while still acknowledging the university's awareness of environmental issues and success in establishing sustainability programs. Urban University may use these certifications as status cues rather than for informational or educational purposes given the lack of detail.

Although participants confirmed the website's implication that sustainability was not a main focus for them, several sustainability practices were observed, including eliminating Styrofoam on campus, a composting partnership with a local farm, and working with a recycling organization. These practices were not discussed on the website, which might suggest perceived student indifference to the specifics of the campus' sustainability practices. There was no mention of any educational initiatives to

increase awareness or participation amongst students, and student engagement was framed more around employment opportunities than volunteer or interest groups.

"The dining program employs close to 200 students, so that's a really great way to get them involved…There's a dining ambassadors group… and they are able to work for dining services and they kind of advocate for gardening… so I think there's quite a bit of student outreach." (Participant 1, Urban University)

There seemed to be a sense of novelty to the more visible sustainability and local initiatives that the university engaged in, perhaps an attempt to passively interest students in these issues. For instance, Participant 1 highlighted the university's use of hydroponic towers and plans to have honeybees on campus, adding "We're always kind of looking at fun things like that to really enhance the program." Sustainability was a peripheral concern for Urban University, and they did not believe that students were generally interested in participating in sustainability initiatives.

"…We have a small, passionate student base about that specific topic [sustainability]… But it isn't necessarily a primary driver of our student activities. So, for example, we've drastically reduced the number of straws that we offer on campus, but that doesn't restrict the majority of our student population from requesting one." (Participant 2, Urban University)

SLAC

SLAC's website used more descriptive language to explain their efforts. For instance: "We compost with [blinded] for all post-consumer waste and whatever pre-consumer waste we cannot reutilize." No other university differentiated between pre- and post-consumer waste but instead spoke generally to say that they aim to reduce waste.

SLAC also highlighted the several local partnerships that they engage with to reduce waste, including partnering with a local composting organization to attain "an 81% diversion rate." Local partnerships are discussed throughout the website and were a focal point of their sustainability efforts. Speaking specifically rather than generally about these issues implies that there is some expectation that the website's audience is going to both care about environmentalism and possess a comparatively high level of comprehension about sustainability, or it implies that SLAC believes that their students should have this knowledge and care about sustainability.

SLAC's website described several ways that they educate their students about sustainability: "[We have] Fun, interactive weekly educational tables to raise awareness of issues like carbon footprint, fair trade, sustainable seafood, meat consumption, and waste reduction. We partner with students, student organizations, faculty, staff, and even community groups to spread education around sustainability." If students do not arrive at SLAC with knowledge about sustainability issues, it seems like a goal to ensure that they leave with it. A participant from SLAC discussed their passion for educating students:

"We're on a college campus, and already education is really important. But, [dining education] is one thing that we do constantly… Educating our community is really important… It's just good for everybody… I really try to use many points of contact to educate diners, especially the people who might not know or not care what's going on. So, at least to give them nuggets of knowledge, whether or not they decide to care about it. Understanding everything that goes into producing meat and bringing animal products to our tab. And then, you know, understanding the impact even if you skip those products for just one day a week. Even if you still eat cheese and even if you still eat meat, you can

make a difference. And that adds up. So, I really try to reach out to students and have that message be as eye opening and flexible as possible. I'm sure there's plenty of students that don't care at all, but I still want to try my best to reach them." (Participant 3, SLAC)

The level of commitment to student outreach indicated by Participant 3 and the extensive discussion of student involvement and educational opportunities from SLAC's website demonstrates that ethical dining is a core value for the university. Students are clearly encouraged to be aware of the environmental impact of their dining decisions. Though Participant 3 notes that not all students on their campus will care about their message, they were committed to trying to educate all students rather than accommodating other perceived student values.

SLAC's website described their GRA certification in addition to a fair-trade certification. They explained what each of these certifications mean: "…we offer at least 2 fair trade items in every outlet, host at least 2 educational events per semester, and organize a Fair Trade Committee consisting of students, faculty, and staff." Rather than treating their certifications as something impressive or difficult to achieve, SLAC treated sustainability as something fundamentally important or necessary. Additionally, Participant 3 perceived many of SLAC's dining characteristics to be something that many students ask for or expect, which suggests that these values are perceived as normative to their campus:

"I would like to think that we're not unique [in every aspect of dining]. I mean, I would like to think that students are asking for the same things all across the country because they're important to ask for." (Participant 3, SLAC)

This sentiment is similar to that Participant 3 mentioned regarding dining variety: *"I mean, I'm sure this is how it is in other schools, because I can't imagine that we're that unique."* Again, Participant 3 made an assumption of what dining options "are important to ask for," legitimating and normalizing SLAC's own high status values.

At times, SLAC adopted a moral tone when discussing sustainability: "[blinded] is our platform to explain everything that we are doing in dining to better the Earth," and "Food waste is a huge problem in our society. Dining Services understands this problem and works hard to reduce waste both pre and post consumer." While other universities addressed sustainability and food waste in some way, they did not address these issues with any clear moral sentiment.

SLAC cited their food donation program as a post-consumer waste reduction method, again creating a somewhat moral distinction between their partnering organizations and others: "Every year we donate food and volunteer with [blinded]. Unlike a soup kitchen, they serve seated meals, family-style, to underserved members of our community. We believe off-campus partnerships like these make our community stronger and more resilient." Instead of creating a distinction based on exclusivity, SLAC seems to distinguish themselves morally.

Research I

Like SLAC, Research I's website provided specific information about their sustainability goals rather than leaving them vague or general. For instance, they "ensure at least 21% of our food purchases are sustainable and locally sourced." They also presented goals and guidelines associated with the Office of Sustainability and Office of Waste Reduction and Recycling, which were sectioned into five different subcategories

of sustainability initiatives. While they did not go into further detail on these subcategories, they did link to a sustainability report for more information. This could imply that Research I's students are encouraged to not only care about environmentalism, but also have a certain set of standards and expectations about how these issues are approached and implemented.

Research I had an active Student Dining Board, and there was an effort to educate the broader student population about sustainability: "We recognize the various levels of interest and awareness on the topic of sustainability within a large campus population and are dedicated to students through activities and programs. The goal of our program is to identify, promote and education the [Research I] community on sustainable initiatives…" Research I recognized that some students may not possess knowledge about sustainability, but rather than expecting students to passively adopt environmentalist knowledge or values, the university seemed to actively instill them, which connects to ethical considerations about dining more generally.

Like Urban University and SLAC, Research I is GRA certified. Research I explained what this certification means in explicit detail, beginning with what the GRA does: "The Green Restaurant Association has a noble goal – to help all restaurants become more sustainable, and in the process, honor the environmental accomplishments of restaurants already striving for sustainability." Research I framed sustainability as being somewhat virtuous, using terms like "noble" and "honor" to describe the GRA's purpose. They also highlighted the difficulty of attaining a 3 star certification in a way that emphasized their commitment, stating, "It's a long road to become certified by the GRA, but it's well worth it!" and described the process of becoming certified as

"grueling" but "an awesome recognition of all of the hard work, conscientious planning and green-mindedness that make [blinded] our favorite places to dine on campus." Research I used the exclusivity of this certification as a status cue by framing it as an accomplishment that is difficult to achieve.

Sum

HMSI and Urban University were similar in that their websites' sustainability content did not seem to be a focal point or something that was embedded into campus values. While Urban University is engaging in several sustainability initiatives, interviews with dining personnel and website content indicated that sustainability was not the dining service's main priority. The fact that HMSI offers a list of their sustainability practices shows that they recognize that signaling their awareness of environmental issues is considered important—or at least normative—but the content is somewhat mundane compared to SLAC or Research I's descriptions. One might assume that most universities practice shutting off equipment when not in use, for instance, but the other universities in this sample did not highlight this as an example of their sustainability practices. This content may suggest an assumption that the audience is not well-versed in, or highly concerned about, sustainability or environmental issues, and there was no mention of any educational outreach programs to attempt to increase student knowledge and awareness of these issues at either university.

SLAC and Research I shared a focus on sustainability based on the extensive discussion on their websites. Sustainability seemed to be tied into their dining identities based on their emphasis on educating students and encouraging their involvement in dining. By educating and involving students in the ethical aspects of dining, these

universities encourage students to be interested, knowledgeable, and conscientious about the food that they eat as well as its environmental impact, which aligns with the other high status cultural resources and opportunities for cultural participation that these universities provide. Website content at Research I had a slightly exclusive tone at points, most notably in regard to their GRA certification, while the interview at SLAC emphasized their university's commitment to raising student awareness about sustainability and seemed to define such efforts to be a nearly moral obligation.

4.5. Results Summary

HMSI offered little information on their website to interpret their dining offerings. This could, in itself, indicate a sense of indifference to dining, which seemed a utilitarian affair at HMSI rather than an aesthetic experience. The all-American retailers and comparatively little variety in the dining hall menus indicate few opportunities for cultural dining participation or cultural capital attainment.

Urban University was primarily concerned with providing students with more utilitarian aspects of dining, such as accommodating existing student taste, cost, and convenience. While participants at Urban University described the international options offered in their dining halls, the retail dining and fast-food focus suggests that there is little in the way of cultural participation at Urban University and little attempts to engage students with eclectic, high-status dining.

SLAC valued providing local products and authentic cuisine to students. Although SLAC lacked the same extent of cosmopolitan, international dining options that Research I offered, SLAC still emphasized educating students and had high-status values of mindful, ethical consumption, and, to a lesser degree, dining eclecticism.

Research I's approach to dining was the most consistent with "tastes of freedom," or high-status consumption. Their extensive partnerships with international and local dining retailers and diverse dining hall menus provide students with the cultural resources to become knowledgeable about cosmopolitan dining. Their normalization of veg*n diets, their commitment to providing cruelty-free options, and their focus on sustainability demonstrates high-status, moral values that are consistent with those that foodies hold. I summarize these findings in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Summary of Dining Focuses

Theme	*HMSI*	*Urban University*	*SLAC*	*Research I*
Cosmopolitanism	-	+/-	+/-	+
Authenticity	-	-	+	+
*Veg*ism*	-	-	+	+
Sustainability	+/-	+/-	+	+

Note. - indicates focus is low, +/- indicates focus is moderate, + indicates focus is high.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This study provided evidence of differences between universities in the types of cultural goods that students can access. This adds food to the list of cultural goods that high-status universities provide students with that create more opportunities for cultural capital attainment in addition to other well-researched opportunities, such as more extracurricular activities and study abroad programs. Additionally, this study offered preliminary evidence of institutional status reflections in dining options, which suggests that universities may reflect status and draw symbolic boundaries in ways similar to that of individuals in their consumption decisions.

Universities are all likely to provide cultural resources and opportunities for cultural participation being that they are institutions of higher education. This is exemplified by the similarities in overall website content (e.g., every website discussed sustainability) and dining options (e.g., American, Italian, and Asian foods were most numerous at almost every university in the sample). These results suggest that students have opportunities for cultural participation and cultural capital attainment by attending any university, but the depth of the discussions on each university's website and the qualitative differences between dining hall items varied substantially between universities, indicating that there are disparities in access to cultural goods between high and low status universities. These findings are useful for understanding how access to cultural resources can vary widely between universities and that cultural resources are particularly accessible to students who attend elite universities. For instance, Research I was the most elite university in the sample and had a far greater number of eclectic dishes in their dining halls, advertised opportunities for students to have leadership positions in

dining, and had extensive partnerships with local food trucks. This reinforces the high-status consumption patterns that students may have possessed prior to attending Research I but also provides these cultural resources for students who may not have come from high-status backgrounds, thereby building their cultural capital. This is an example of how a context outside of the family might reinforce or influence consumption patterns and position students to adopt high-status behaviors. As a university that provides students with these high-status, cosmopolitan dining options, Research I reinforces their institutional status.

SLAC emulated Research I's high status dining behavior in many respects, particularly in regard to local, authentic dining options, veg*n accommodations, educational outreach, and ethical considerations. However, while SLAC provided diverse dining options, they lacked the same degree of cosmopolitanism that Research I provided with their international options, wider selection of dining hall menu items, and more eclectic dining retailers.

Both HMSI and Urban University acknowledged the legitimacy of high-status dining behaviors by emulating or referencing some of them. For instance, both universities did have some variety and diversity in their dining, but these offerings were fewer compared to SLAC or Research I. Both universities also included sustainability website content despite the fact that, for Urban University at least, they do not consider their students to be concerned with sustainability issues. Lastly, these universities accommodated veg*n diets to an extent but did not appear to provide educational resources or outreach as SLAC and Research I did. In sum, HMSI and Urban University reflected lower status dining given their emphasis on cost, convenience, or taste.

5.1. Limitations

Since the number of interviews were limited and interview data were not available for all of the universities in the sample, I cannot fully explain each university's rationale behind their dining options. Additionally, data were interpreted by one researcher, so it was not possible to validate interpretations. While interview data for Urban University and SLAC were useful in confirming many of the interpretations, this was not possible for HMSI and Research I, so these results should be interpreted cautiously.

5.2. Future Directions

Future studies can consider exploring the directionality of food consumption patterns among university students. While universities have a perception of what dining options students prefer, there is no longitudinal research that examines if, or how, food consumption changes over time based on university dining options and what that might mean for cultural capital attainment. It is unknown if students are accepting influence from the universities that they attend, although prior research on the effect of university attendance on cultural capital suggests that students do assimilate at least some of the tastes and behaviors that they are exposed to in university.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about your role as [job title].

2. What makes dining unique at [university]?

Dining Goals

1. What would you say are the top three main priorities or goals for [university] when it comes to dining?

2. Is dining a priority for [university] in general, or is it becoming one?

Perceived Student Preferences

1. What is the most important thing to consider when opening, or thinking about opening, a new restaurant on campus?

2. Do you know if students tend to gravitate more towards the dining halls or the retail dining?

3. Are there any retail diners you know of that are particularly popular with students?
    a. Are there any that you'd say are particularly unpopular?

4. Would you say that there are some types of foods students are more receptive to?
    a. Are students interested in international dining options?

Moral Focus

1. Is providing vegan/vegetarian options a priority?
    a. Is there increasing or decreasing demand for that or do you think you've reached a point where students are pretty satisfied with what's available?

2. Sustainability is discussed quite a lot on your website. Why is sustainability important to your campus?

Future Orientations

1. Thinking about the university's future in dining, are there any plans for changing or increasing the dining offerings right now, either what's offered in the dining halls or retail dining?

2. How much does [university] look to other universities for ideas or guidance about dining?

3. Is there anything else about the university's dining that you want to mention or that you think it would be helpful for me to know?

Unique to Urban University

1. [University] has a food blog and a teaching kitchen. Can you tell me about why that started and what the goal was?
    a. Has it been successful?

Unique to SLAC

1. I noticed that there seems to be a lot of local sourcing in [university] dining. Why is that important to [university]?

2. Your campus dining is mostly made up of independent retail diners rather than chains, is there a reason for that?
    a. Are chains unpopular (or thought to be) with your students?