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2020
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Street kitchens and social lives: an ethnographic study of street food and eating practices in inner-city Johannesburg



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In the

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Declaration page

I declare that this dissertation is my own original work, and that none of its

Sections have been previously submitted for publication or examination

Signed on this……31……day of……March …….2020

Sapana Sewpersad

Abstract

The making and consumption of food are fundamental secular rituals that make up the everyday. The activity of eating is an inherently social activity. Eating practices and food are always mediated through social relations and vice-versa. This thesis is interested in the phenomenon of street food and economic exchange. Street food is an interesting, common food practice which is ancient and present in every civilisation, globally. Following this, street food is thus an important element that would make up the inner city of Johannesburg. This thesis is interested in interrogating what happens to the highly social events of sharing, giving and accepting food when it is mediated through economic exchange. This thesis seeks to understand how everyday food and eating practices facilitate a relationship between street vendors and their consumers. The main question of this thesis is; What kind of social relationships are formed and performed in the everyday preparing, selling and consuming of street food in downtown, inner-city Johannesburg? Using participant observation and ethnographic methods, this thesis finds that whilst there is a definite economic aspect to vending, food fosters social relationships between vendors and their customers. There is flexibility that is exhibited around price structure, there are cracks in the idea of vending being purely economic as social relationships are a factor in how profits are determined.The act of cooking takes on a maternal aspect, within this setting. This thesis further illustrates how close spatial proximity works to foster domestic commensality amongst the customers of the stall.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Prof. Julia Hornberger and Dr Njogu Morgan for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this project. They kept me from doubt and kept me grounded. Thank you.

My sincere gratitude goes to the participants who gave me their time in conducting this research. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, stories and food with me. I am very grateful for the warm invitations and experiences that you provided me with

Thank you to my family, friends and fellow students of academia. Your continued belief in my abilities and constant encouragement has really fuelled me and kept me going through this process

I would like to extend my thanks to Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their financial investment in this research and myself.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Wits History Workshop for the support and providing a stimulating intellectual environment to be a part of.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and background

'Walking through Diagonal Street, in the inner city of Johannesburg town, I was surrounded by the bustling city. I passed an array of store windows that were full of coloured, neon flashing signs which screamed that those shops were open. Around me, people were walking briskly and with urgency, holding their bags and belongings closely to themselves. The blare of taxi hooters was well heard from the street behind me. Johannesburg, a city that is alive. One of the many things that stood out prominently in this mid-day scene was the abundance of vendors at street corners selling fresh produce and food. Each street corner housed a woman selling cooked food. The smell of roasting mielies filled the air as I walked further down Diagonal Street. People piled around the vendors, buying their lunch and an afternoon snack. Some of them sat around the vendors on crates, eating their meals whilst having a lively conversation with the vendors and the surrounding customers.' Sewpersad (2020)

The making and consumption of food are fundamental secular rituals that make up the everyday. Anthropologists have always concerned themselves with studying food systems and eating practices (Mintz and Du Bois 2002). Using food as a subject of critical inquiry in society is a highly productive endeavour as food, food-related beliefs

and behaviours surrounding food explain how a culture creates its physical, social, and cultural universes (Long 2001).

The activity of eating is an inherently social activity. Eating practices and food are always mediated through social relations and vice-versa (Kerner, Chou, and Warmind 2015; Lupton 1996). One of the most fundamental articulations of human sociality is the sharing of a meal- commensality means to eat at the same table.

Kerner *et al* (2015, pp24) explain:

> *"Those who eat, and drink together are by this very act, tied to one another by a bond of friendship and mutual obligation."*

For the Kanamari, an Amazonian tribe, the act of feeding someone, means that you meet 'ones need', fulfilling the biological need of hunger. Feeding provides for another what was previously unavailable (Strathern 2012; Fausto and Costa 2013). Here commensality is derived from feeding. In this setting, the word for commensality means to eat within and the word within also means kin. Commensality is equally interpreted as 'to eat as kin.'(Strathern 2012; Fausto and Costa 2013)

Thus, food and eating practices play a key role in maintaining and shaping both social relationships as well as making and maintaining kinships.

In other contexts, eating together, especially accepting food, produces indebtedness (Hornberger 2017). In these contexts, there is no commensality occurring as the relationship is not reciprocated. Rather, here food has a power that holds someone accountable to another, making one indebted, creating an uneven relationship.

This thesis interrogates what happens to these highly social events of sharing, giving and accepting food when it is mediated through economic exchange. Common ideas around economic exchange assume that money is an impersonal tool that de-socialises all exchanges (Simmel in Zelizer 1997, 1). Money allows for an even, flat, grey tone to cover the economic market, that stamps out all meaningful nuances.

This notion of economic exchange even follows through to writings and understanding of the informal market, a place that exists beyond the structure of official institutions. The informal market is described as an alluring economic hub that is a money machine, made up of migrant entrepreneurs and thriving small markets that is shrouded in mystery and possible illegality. The informal market is understood from a predominantly economic perspective. However most works never asks *what* is exchanged and what happens in this exchange (Hart 1985).

As illustrated in my primary survey of the city, street food is a common and highly visible feature of the informal economy. Street food is an interesting common food practice as the phenomenon is an ancient one and is present in every civilisation, globally. Street food is defined as any food or drink that is prepared and sold by a street vendor at a stall or cart (Calloni 2013). This then begs the question; what kind of commodity is food?

Studies around street food have been focused on the health and safety of street food, and on issues of food security (Lues et al. 2006; Crush and Frayne 2010; Battersby 2011; Lakhani 2014; Shipton 1990; von Holy and Makhoane 2006; Chukuezi 2010;

Rane 2011,). These studies, however, have overlooked the social and cultural aspects of food, not accounting for the social relationships that food is able to foster.

Street food is an important element that makes up the inner city of Johannesburg. Street vendors are peppered along every corner and responsible for feeding the multitude of workers that pass-through Johannesburg. Many of these vendors have regular customers that buy from them daily. These customers seem to have a relationship with their vendors that move beyond the buyer/seller economic exchange. One of the customers that I spoke to when I visited a stall expressed "I always buy from her (the female vendor), I've been supporting her for many years, and she has the best mielies[1] on the street". This conversation indicated that the questions of reciprocity and social relationships do play a role in these exchanges, moving beyond the monetary basis of exchange.

This research project is interested in this relationship that moves past economic exchange into something more, and simultaneously how do these social dimensions shape the economic exchange which does take place. This research project seeks to understand how everyday food and eating practices facilitate a relationship between street vendors and their consumers as well as relationships between customers themselves.

> *"Food becomes more than a pure matter of production, trade and consumption"* (Calloni 2013, 3410).

[1] A type of corn that is grown in South Africa. Mielies are eaten as a common snack, boiled or roasted.

Rather food is a complex, intertwined process that has the power to transform and shape relationships. I am taking the idea of what everyday food is and does seriously, understanding that its foundational role is sustenance. Thus, the main research question of this thesis is; What kind of social relationships are formed and performed in the everyday preparing, selling and consuming of street food in downtown, inner-city Johannesburg.

Literature Survey and theoretical frameworks

In this section, I review four sets of scholarly literature that helped shape my research. Firstly, I look at literature that discusses the informal sector and economic exchange. The next set of literature examines food and street vending, considering the identarian nature of food. The third set of literature continues to look at food but moves toward the social aspect of food and how food is able to foster relationships. Lastly, I will be looking at literature surrounding the gendered aspects of food and cooking.

Economics and the Informal sector

The term "informal economy" became current in the 1970s as a label for economic activities which take place beyond the structure of official institutions (Hart, 1985). Groot et al (2017) defines the informal sector as comprising enterprises and employees that are not formally registered.

The informal sector plays a big role in the economy and according to Skinner (2016), 2 641 000 South Africans work in the informal sector which represents 16.7% of total employment in South Africa. Of this number 970, 000 women were recorded to be in the informal sector, constituting 37% of total informal sector employment (Skinner 2016). According to statistics from the United Nations (2010), an excessively bigger portion of women in relation to men is employed in the informal sector. The informal economic activities that women perform are in the lesser profitable end of the economic spectrum, namely the minor production of food items (de Groot et al. 2017; Bandara 2015). Thus, women become a key group to study in understanding how the everyday informal economy works and to understand the economic contributions that women make.

The informal sector has lower barriers of entry in comparison to the formal economy, namely, there is no set criteria for qualifications and people who work in the informal economy do not have to have a particular set of skills. There is also less pressure on the amount of start-up capital need to create businesses in the informal sector (De Groot et al. 2017). Women, in particular, are encouraged by these factors to enter the informal market. Women face a range of additional restrictions and responsibilities with regard to household and reproductive work and various cultural and religious beliefs (de Groot et al. 2017). These are factors that tend to prevent women from entering the formal economy.

The lower barriers of entry are particularly notable for the informal food sector as women are able to utilise their cooking skills to earn a living.

Downing and Daniels (1992) refer to this as 'spatial entrapment' of women.

> *"To encapsulate the restrictions inherent in their reproductive and household duties, which often confine them to an area of extra-household activity." (Downing and Daniels cited in* (de Groot et al. 2017, 89)*9)*

The informal food sector becomes an important site of investigation to understand how women can use food to assert their agency within the informal economy market. Notably women make up a large section of the informal food trade in the inner city.

Simmel (1974) explains that in the economic market common ideas around economic exchange assumes that money is an impersonal tool that de-socialises all exchanges. Money allows for a fixed market in which goods can be exchanged. It is assumed that within this market, one does not have to deal with the human element. Thus this conception of money destroys and replaces necessary personal bonds, changing cultural meanings with material concern (Simmel 1974; Deflem 2003). In this research, I am arguing against this notion. Rather, here I am arguing that because of the highly social nature of food, the economic exchange cannot be impersonal, but food transforms this and works to create relationships that move beyond the economic exchange. However, I do take seriously the importance of the economic exchange that is taking place.

Food and street vending

This section will look at the cultural and identitarian nature of food. This section of literature will also interrogate why food works as an impactful lens to understand culture and society.

In her paper *'Nourishing the academic imagination: The use of food in teaching concepts of culture'* Long (2001, 235) looks at how impactful food is as a window to teach culture. Long (2001) explains that scholars have always used food as a tool of cultural analysis as food, food-related beliefs, and behaviours surrounding food are expressive of how a culture conceptualizes its physical, social, and cultural universes. Scholars have also shown that food is a primary tool of enculturing individuals into the social rules of their specific culture. Learning how and what to eat is synonymous with becoming 'civilized'. (Long 2001). Food is a fitting endeavour as it surrounds us and is woven thoroughly into everyday life.

Studying the meanings, discourses and practices around food and eating are worthy of detailed cultural analysis and interpretation (Lupton 1996). Studying everyday food and eating practices on the streets of inner-city Johannesburg provides a lens in which to understand the cultural and social practices of the people that make up the inner city. Food is a vital need of the everyday to sustain life. It thus takes on additional social and symbolic significance. The everyday is conceptualised as the ordinary, non-spectacular(de Certeau 1988).

Using food as a lens of enquiry also allows for a better understanding of the everyday lived experience of the inner city. Food and eating practices indicate how social relationships between street vendors and their consumers are fostered, as well as

relationships between customers themselves. It is important to understand that food and eating practices are always mediated through social relation. As such one needs to understand the way in which ideas around the body and society are interrelated (Lupton, 1996).

Calloni (2013) moves towards conceptualising street food. Street food is defined as any food or beverage that is prepared and sold by a street vendor at a stall or cart (Calloni 2013). Calloni (2013) explains that academics need to move towards a holistic view of street food to understand it as something more than biological. Food becomes a complex and intertwined process (Calloni 2013, 3410)*".*

Koc and Welsh (2002) look at how food shapes and maintains migrant identities.

According to Koc and Welsh (2002, 1) *"what we eat, how we eat and when we eat reveal the complexity of wide cultural arrangements around food and foodways, the unique organization of food systems, and existing social policies."*

Food plays an important role in the socialization of people. Food works in developing an awareness of the self, one's body, how one learns to speak and even goes as far in developing personality (Koc and Welsh 2002). By moving between the boundaries of cultural and geographical space, the immigrant experience offers a rare glimpse to the fluidity of identity and the cultural boundaries of resistance and change (Koc and Welsh 2002).

> *"As a transitional status, the immigrant cultural experience also offers us insights into the complexity of patterns of relationships between dominant and*

minority groups, change and resistance, and patterns of "ethnic" experience, racism, and identities.(Koc and Welsh 2002, 3)*."*

Given that the inner city of Johannesburg has a dense immigrant community - food provides a useful lens in which to understand how migrants in the inner city of Johannesburg relate to their space and interact with other ethnic groups. By observing the types of food that people consume and the strict adherence to certain recipes and ingredients in traditional foods, I was able to conceptualise how migrant workers and different ethnicities navigate the change of location and make links back to their homes. Koc and Welsh (2002) explain that:

"Our food choices, like various other cultural expressions and practices, offer insights on how we present ourselves, shape our identities, define our membership, and express our distance from others" (Koc and Welsh 2002, 9).

Changes in food preferences, therefore, serve as a reflection of possible changes in larger cultural practices and changed perceptions (Koc and Welsh 2002). Certain foods build the identity of people and a nation and food can become one of the primary ways in which we create 'othernesses' (Caplan 2013). Here, it is important to understand which foods are meaningful to certain identities and how ideas of belonging are created and sustained through food. It becomes evident that food choices amongst migrant workers are shaped by their conceptions of identity and longing for their homes. These conceptions also influence what types of food vendors sell as they wish to cater for their customers and create a sense of homeliness. Yet the question of authenticity, whilst interesting here, is not as prevalent as I initially

thought. Customers ideas of authenticity are varied therefore there is really no one conception of authentic. Instead of one single cultural authenticity, the authenticity that becomes important is that of the culture of street food.

Commensality: relationships, the public and private

This section moves away from the cultural and identity issues but moves towards issues of social relations. Here the literature interrogates how food can be used as a tool to build and maintain social bonds, as well as creating various systems of indebtedness.

The word commensality directly translated means those who eat and drink at the same table (Smith 1889). In his paper "*Commensality, Society and Culture."* Fischler (2011) discusses the importance of food in society. Fischler (2011) explains that food is more than biologically fundamental but also socially fundamental. The sharing of food is a vital part of kinship and friendship networks in all societies (Lupton 1996). The author brings forth the concept of commensality, the act of eating a meal together, as an important aspect of social life. Fischler (2011) argues that commensality bonds people together, working to maintain certain social relationships as well as socialise our behaviour through things such as table manners. Fischler notes that while food bonds, it also has the power to exclude and create boundaries. Kerner *et al* (2015) build on Fischler's work and advances the concept of commensality. The authors explain that there are two types of commensality:

domestic and communal. Domestic commensality, according to Kerner *et al* (2015) is the most basic form of commensality that grows out of convenience amongst family members in a household. Communal commensality is more complex and occurs at ritual occasions. Communal commensality works to express and reinforce social hierarchies and relationships. Here it is interesting to understand what type of commensality is fostered by those who eat on the street. The street is a public space, therefore domestic commensality cannot occur as it is outside the homestead. However, eating on the street is neither communal commensality as it is not a ritual event. The street becomes a "semi-public" public space. Sammells and Searles (2016,29) use the term “semi-public” to refer to “the ambiguous, hybrid spaces that connect producers, merchants, and consumers to friend-or kin-based feasts, neighbourhood restaurants, village markets, and roadside stands—places that are not quite private but not quite public.”

Sammells and Searles (2016) go on to explain that one can eat alone, but one can never truly eat in a way or in a place that is devoid of public meanings. It has long been clear that what, how, and with whom one eats indicates social status and economic class (Sammells and Searles 2016). To understand the type of commensality that occurs, it was important to observe how customers interacted with other customers and how they chose to eat. Studying the semeiotics of seating and customer interactions proved to be very insightful and is indicative of the commensal relationships between customers.

Maurice Bloch (1999) looks at commensality from a different lens and writes about commensality and poison. Bloch (1999) points out that whilst the phenomenon of eating together is rather universal, one must not forget that there are large differences between cultures. These differences inform things such as what constitutes a meal, who is able to eat with whom and what is socially acceptable or not. Bloch (1999) explains that these differences make the difference between whether something is considered commensality or poison. Eating with strangers and eating from stranger's presents an interesting approach to street food. Commensality may occur but so can poisoning - and how do customers differentiate between the two? *Muti* is a type of medicine or poison that is often used by traditional spiritual healers. *Muti*, however, can be sold to anyone and there are many *muti* shops around Johannesburg. In inner-city Johannesburg, the concept of *muti*- use and ideas around poisoning by *muti* is very strong. Yet contrary to the common idea that *muti* beliefs would influence consumer choices, I found that vendors were easily able to assure their customers that they were a safe space to eat from. Trust is established between vendors their customers, as well as trust between customers and other customers. The authoritative trust established by the vendors carries weight to its customers which establishes further trust between customers.

As mentioned before, for the Kanamari, an Amazonian tribe, the act of feeding someone, means that you make 'ones need'- the biological need of hunger is met when fed. Feeding provides for another what was previously unavailable (Strathern 2012; Fausto and Costa 2013). Here commensality is derived from feeding. In this setting,

the word for commensality means to eat within and the word within also means kin. Commensality is equally interpreted as 'to eat as kin.'.

In other contexts eating together, especially accepting food and being fed, produces indebtedness (Hornberger 2017; Counihan 1999). Counihan (1999) explains that the act of feeding another can be understood as a gift and there are a set of 'laws' that govern how gifts are reciprocated. If the relationship is not reciprocated, then food takes on the power that Mauss (1925) demonstrates in his book *The Gift*.

There is an indebtedness that is created when feeding someone and this translates to power as an influence (Counihan 1999). In these contexts, food has a power that holds someone accountable to another, making one indebted, creating an uneven relationship. Food works as a powerful channel for communication and a means to establish, create obligations and exert influence (Counihan 1999).

This is important to note as not to mistake all social relations as friendly, commensal relationships. This notion of food creating indebtedness provides us with a lens to understand how non-monetary relationships between customers and vendors work. Indebtedness is the start of a social relationship that is unequal. Here being indebted may not look drastic but small acts of indebtedness produce relationships in which people provide recognition towards their debtors.

Gender and food

This section of the literature will look at the gendered aspect of cooking and food and conceptualise how the family is reproduced through women cooking.

It is important when conceptualising the informal food market, to acknowledge that labour markets are gendered institutions that reflect socially constructed divisions of labour embedded in economies which are themselves gendered structures. (Pearson 2007). The concept of women feeding others and providing food is a culturally universal concept that constitutes a major component of female identity (Counihan 1999, 360)

The act of cooking has been described as a moral process, in which raw matter is transferred from nature into the state of 'culture', and thereby taming and domesticating it (Lupton 1996).

"Food and eating are feminine and always embodied" (Lupton 1996, 3).

A woman's role in feeding is to convey their love and care towards their family. The prevalent emotion that is constantly linked to food is that of love, particularly maternal love and wifely concern (Lupton 1996). Mass media has routinely constructed the mother as someone who cares for her family via the food that she prepares for them. During the 19th century, the public and private spheres were very separated and women's activities were confined to the home and their sphere of influence revolved around the maintenance of affective ties (Lupton 1996). The family meal became an important site for the construction and reproduction of the contemporary western family. The 'work' that is performed in the context of the family is rarely viewed as 'real' work in terms of attracting payment, but as a labour of love and commitment which tends to be taken for granted by those for whom it is performed (Lupton 1996). Cooking, for women, is thus an intensely social

undertaking, performed for others. The question that arises is how does this concept of nurturing and caring for others through food change when women make food their business. Here, women are not doing household work for no profit, but have made this household activity a business. Can women be separated from this idealised image and is the production of food in the informal sector merely an economic business or does it work to do more? As I will show, by cooking for others, namely working-class men, female street vendors do not re-create the contemporary western family through food as affection, neither is this just an economic vendor-customer exchange. Rather, another form of relationship is formed that is not normative but rather transitive.

Research Site

My research site is situated in the inner city of Johannesburg. My research took place at Bree Street City Mall, which is located in [2]Rahima Moosa St, Hillbrow. Bree Street City Mall is on the outskirts of Hillbrow. The mall is made up of two levels. The ground floor has general wholesalers that sell household groceries, cleaning supplies, clothes and a variety of other non-perishable goods. The second floor of the mall is a hub of food stalls. The stalls are situated around the World Betting Exchange, a place where people can place bets on sports and hosts a variety of other gambling activities.

Getting to the inner city

[2] Rahima Moosa was formerly known as Bree Street

I started my fieldwork on a cold winter's day at the start of June 2019. My starting point was Johannesburg child welfare, situated in the newly gentrified downtown Joburg area.

I had been a volunteer of the organisation for the past 5 years and when I started this master's project, they offered to help me with my fieldwork. The organisation ran programs in the inner city and offered to put me in touch with one of the centres that helped rehabilitate disadvantaged youth. Seeing as the inner city was rather foreign to me, I took them up on their offer.

A young man by the name of Alfred was assigned to 'chaperone' me around. Alfred is in his late twenties, tall and skinny. He worked in the JCW charity shop and was beyond nice, accompanying me everywhere. Everyone at the organisation, my parents included, were very concerned for my safety. Inner city Johannesburg had a reputation for being notoriously crime ridden, therefore scary. I was not fazed, rather the anthropologist in me was excited, giddy like a child. I wonder what 'culture' awaited. The everyday life of the inner city intrigued me. None the less, I conceded, and Alfred and I started towards Bree Street on that cold morning

> 'So*, what are you interested in huh? You want to go that side [inner city] it's dangerous. What do you want there'* Alfred decided to strike up conversationally?
>
> 'I'm *interested in food. So, I want to see what they are selling in town'*

'Ohhhh, you want to learn how to cook' he said with this aha look on his face. 'What food are you looking for?'

Alfred was under the distinct impression that I was thoroughly unable to cook. My interest in food and cooking meant, to him and my other participants, that I did not possess the skill at all. I do in fact possess a wide range of culinary skills and knowledge; however, I did not feel the need to correct him nor my other participants. In this instance, being inexperienced and unknowing worked to my advantaged. Each of my participants decided that they wanted to imbue me with the most knowledge around their food and cooking practices.

'Whatever *they sell on the streets. I'm interested in street food'*

'So, you are wanting African food? All those things they sell, skop [sheep's head] bones and pap? You are eating African food?'

Alfred listed the few foods that were sold on the street and asked in a tone of disbelief. I explained that it did not scare me, and I would eat anything to which he looked both impressed and shocked.

As we walked further into the city, the buildings changed from refaced bank buildings with clean, quiet streets to original, old, worn buildings. The streets become busy, people moving around me as we joined a steady stream of folks walking with us and the streets had a pungent smell: urine, and a lot of it at that.

The closer to Bree Street I got, the more alive the city got. We had been walking for 15 minutes by now, and the air had frozen my nose rather solid. Alfred was an expert

navigator and attributed it to his residence near Park Station- an intermodal train and transportation hub. He lived in the city and was constantly navigating it.

I was first introduced to the stall by Alfred and Maise, I had no idea about finding a participant and consulted JCW for help. Alfred and I went around the streets with Maise, an elderly worker from the Johannesburg child welfare center in the inner city. Maise was a regular, her job entailed a lot of interaction with the local street vendors and hawkers. We made our way to the Bree Street City Mall where I found my research site. Maise knew the owner of a stall in the mall and after a little convincing, the owner conceded to me doing my research with her. The stall was on the second floor of the mall, right opposite the stairs. There was an abundance of stalls all across Bree street city mall. The stall that I was working at was small, a meter by one and a half. The stall constituted a two-plate gas stove, a sink and a few cupboards for storage area. There were chairs and tables scattered around the floor around the stalls, places for customers to sit and eat. This stall sold meals to the many men and women that frequented the mall. The stall was a perfect site to examine street vending within the inner-city.

Methodology

Participant Observation

As this study was an ethnographic account, participant observation was the main tool for information gathering. Geertz (1998) has described participant observation as a 'deep hanging out'. Participant observation involves the researcher immersing

themselves into the world of others, their participants, to gain an understanding of 'what they experience as meaningful and important' (Emerson et al., 1995).

I focused on interviewing and spending time with women who make and sell street food as their business, as there is a disproportionately larger share of women than men who are employed in the informal sector. The main participants in this study was one female street vendor and her kitchen assistant.

There were a multitude of stalls and I chose to work at only one food stall, and then interviewed the vendor and her assistant as well as any customers that came to eat from the stall. As it was a small number of participants and I was be able to conduct in-depth research on each vendor. One of the main participants of this research project was Mum Ayanda, a successful vendor that worked in the Bree Street city mall. Mum Ayanda is a migrant worker, hailing from Zimbabwe. The other participant was Mum Ayanda's cooking assistant, Precious. Precious ran the stall when Mum Ayanda was away and I spent a lot of time with her for the duration of my study.

With my research, I was not looking to interview a lot of people but rather I wanted to focus on creating a detailed account of everyday life. I interviewed and followed Mum Ayanda and Precious. The duration of the fieldwork spanned over two months: from beginning of June to end of July. My fieldwork took place from Monday to Friday, totalling 8 weeks of fieldwork. I divided my time equally amongst both women.

The focus of the participant observation was around meal preparation and serving. I wanted to understand the meanings behind meal practices, gender dynamics and the utility of space. As I sought to fully immerse myself into the process surrounding meals, I offered my help with meal preparation and performed meal making along with my participants, thus gaining a lived reality.

Interviews are another tool I used during the course of my fieldwork. I interviewed Mum Ayanda and Precious to understand the meanings and significance behind certain dishes and meal practices. I went shopping with Mum Ayanda to get a better sense of the cultural and socio-economic discourses that influence her purchase choices. The markets that Mum Ayanda buys from also gave me an insight into the vendor's notions of cultural authenticity surrounding food as well as which markets are clean and a trustworthy producer.

I observed, sat with and interviewed the many customers that support the Mum Ayanda's stall. I was interested in understanding how these customers choose which vendors to eat from. I was interested in the 'regular' customer and talked to them to understand what it was that informed their decision to choose and support a certain vendor in favour of another vendor. I observed the ways in which the customers interacted with both Precious and Mum Ayanda as well as how they interacted with other customers that supported Mum Ayanda.

I interviewed my participants as well as listened to ongoing conversations that are happening around the stalls. The languages that dominated my research site were namely isiZulu, isiXhosa and English.

These interviews were very informal and conversational, not following a set list of question. Rather, these interviews followed the trend of the discussion and I worked from what the vendors found interesting and the questions followed in that vein. I was careful not to infringe on the vendors when they were busy with customers, respecting their space and business practice, rather I held my interviews when they were free to talk, and they were waiting for customers. I listened to the conversations that happened around the stall amongst customers and took note of them, writing them down from memory at the end of each day. I spent time with each of my participants from the early morning, when they did their daily shopping, to preparing for lunch and their peak times and towards the end of the day when they closed for the day. My research schedule was be determined by each of the vendor's business rhythm.

In order to participate in the commensality that I sought to understand, I ate and shared the food that the vendors sold. I wanted to experience the same commensality that the customer's experience, gaining an authentic, lived experience.

Ethics

The standard Anthropology Southern Africa (ASnA) ethical procedures were followed in this research study. Each of the participants, Mum Ayanda and Precious, received participant information sheets that explained the research project in detail. The participants also received consent forms. The participants were free to withdraw from the study at any moment they no longer wished to participate. I applied for ethical clearance from my department. This research project was a minimal risk project as

it dealt with food which is not considered a contentious subject. This project was focused on questions about people's everyday lives, activities and opinions rather than detailed biographical information. No sensitive questions or topics were discussed. This research project did not work with anyone who is considered a vulnerable category rather, the participants were experts and professionals who work with and consume food.

Whilst the participants were informed that this was a research project for the university, the participants half-jokingly half-seriously interpreted this as me opening my own stall. They participants interacted me according to their interpretation and this is how they introduced me to their friends. Additionally, all of my participants were given pseudonyms in the writing up process.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2: The economic life of street vending

The first ethnographic chapter interrogates the economic nature of food and street vendors. This first chapter explores the need for economic gain amongst these vendors. The main aim of these vendors is to make a living and earn a profit from their food endeavours. This chapter follows my first participant and I will start by explaining the participant's history, depicting how she worked her way up from selling sweets to owning a successful eatery. The chapter further explores the methods she employs to run a successful stall. Conversely the chapter looks at the phenomenon of gambling and imagined time.

Chapter 3: The maternal life of cooking

The second chapter moves away from the economic aspect of street vending, rather this chapter focuses on the social aspect of food. This chapter will argue that there is a highly social aspect to selling food drawing from customer interactions I have witnesses at the stall. This chapter will examine how my two participants build customer relations and maintain these relationships in ways that move beyond the economic. Mum Ayanda and Precious both know their regular customers and cater for them. Food takes on a maternal quality and I will argue that it has the ability to foster and grow relationships between customers and vendors.

Chapter 4: Commensals and the customer

The third chapter will examine the relationship amongst the customers of the stall. This chapter will discuss the types commensality observed in the Bree Street city mall from deep participant observation. This chapter will further examine conceptions around poisoning and private vs public spaces. This chapter will look ay how close spatial proximity fosters domestic commensality as well as how these close proximities influence ideas around poisoning and *muti.*

Chapter 2: The economic life of street vending

Street food makes up a large part of the informal market in the urban setting as previously mentioned. This means that the street food market generates a lot of economic activity. In such a competitive sector of the informal market, the job of surviving and being successful is a real challenge faced by all food vendors. This chapter will interrogate both the economic nature of food and street vendors in this sector of the informal economy. The chapter begins by explaining the informal food sector and mapping out its importance in everyday life and economic significance for vendors. This chapter will then look at Mum Ayanda and how she navigates this world, following her economic exploits to become a successful business- woman.

Scholarship by Crush (2017), Crush and McDonald (2000) and Crush and Frayne (2011) have helped to provide insight into the relationship between the informal sector, street food and migration within the Southern African context. This is because the sector is largely dominated by migrant labor. The informal economy accounts for an estimated 78% of non-agricultural employment in Sub-Saharan Africa, 93% of all new jobs created, and 61% of urban employment (Crush and Frayne 2011).

However, informal sector employment and income is invariably irregular, unpredictable and provides no benefits. As a result, poor households tend to diversify their income sources as a basic livelihood strategy. Income is derived from a variety of sources, the importance of which varies from household to household, over the

course of the year. Common sources include formal employment, piecework and casual labor (Hart 1985; Crush and Frayne 2010)

The research around informal trade expresses that the south African informal market is dominated by migrant workers that come from southern African countries, namely Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi (Crush and McDonald 2000) .Both my participants, Mum Ayanda and Precious are from Zimbabwe and work in South Africa as migrant workers. It is important to state that new trend of note is the gendered reconfiguration of "traditional" migrant streams (Crush and McDonald 2000) meaning that women are making up a growing proportion of the African migrant population crossing over into South Africa. Food provides a space for women to employ their own domestic training to earn a living and creates job opportunities.

The informal market becomes a popular site for food security in poor urban communities in Southern Africa. Many poor households depend on informal sources for their food needs. Some 70 per cent of households in the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) survey normally sourced food from informal outlets, while 32 per cent of households patronized the informal food economy almost every day and 59 per cent did so at least once a week (Crush and Frayne 2011; Crush 2017) . In Johannesburg, over 80 per cent of surveyed households sourced informal food from each of the areas of Alexandra, the Inner City and Orange Farm (Crush 2017; Crush and Frayne 2011). The extremely frequent patronage of the informal food economy suggests that accessibility is a key factor. Food insecure households are more likely

to rely on informal sources than food secure households. This suggests that cost may also be an important consideration. In general, patronage of the informal food economy was higher in the cities where supermarkets have less of a presence, although Johannesburg was an important exception to this generalization. Even though supermarkets are more visible and may offer cheaper food, the urban poor do not necessarily increase their food security by shopping at supermarkets. They argue that food provisioned informally may be more expensive than supermarket food but continues to be the choice of the urban poor because of geographical access (Crush 2017; Crush and Frayne 2011). Thus it is argued that proximity and physical access to consumers is by no means equivalent to actual accessibility, considering unemployment, inflation, transportation costs and the inconsistent provision of electricity (Crush 2017; Crush and Frayne 2011). The informal food market becomes an important site to examine both food and economics simultaneously.

Mum Ayanda and the stall

Mum Ayanda was the first participant kind enough to speak to me. Aged in the mid-fifties, Mum Ayanda was the proud owner of shop number 12 situated on the second floor of the Bree city mall. When Alfred and I approached Mum Ayanda, she welcomed me into her shop with open arms. She was excited to help me and could not wait to teach me her ways. I disclosed to Mum that I was a Wits student who was interested in researching food and wanted to learn her ways.

'I'm going to teach you how to cook' she said with a broad smile. This acceptance and willingness to help was something that was truly new to me as an anthropologist. In my past fieldwork, I was met with a resistance and suspicion from my participants and it was often a struggle trying to immerse myself into the world of food. This is one of the challenges faced doing in-depth participant observation.

I made my way to the stall early the next morning, making sure to arrive punctually at 7:30, far too grateful for the opportunity to mess anything up. Bree Street was busy, taxis hooting, moving in seemingly complete chaos trying to get hordes of people to their jobs all across the city. I entered the Bree city mall from the front entrance. The bottom of the mall consisted of general stores that sold household supplies, clothes and other general goods. As I made my way up the stairs into the 'food court', there were no customers, but the workers at the stalls were busy at work, prepping everything for the day. The stalls opened at 8 o' clock as I later learned.

I entered Mum Ayanda's stall to find Precious hard at work. Precious was Mum Ayanda's right hand women and helped her run the store. Precious was busy making a huge vat of pap. She had just begun and was stirring the pap with a whisk like apparatus, which seemed 10 times larger than an ordinary household whisk. The stall was not very big, one meter by two and a half meters if I had to estimate. There was just enough room for Precious and me to be in there at the same time. Precious handed me a ratty apron, insisting that I needed to wear one. I complied and asked what I needed to help with. Mum Ayanda had 'hired' me in the efforts to teach me

how to cook, and Precious seemed dubious of my culinary skills, so she told me that I could just sit and watch her for the time being. Could she have been threatened by my presence in the stall? In spite of taking minor offence, I sat down and observed my surroundings, after all that's why I was here.

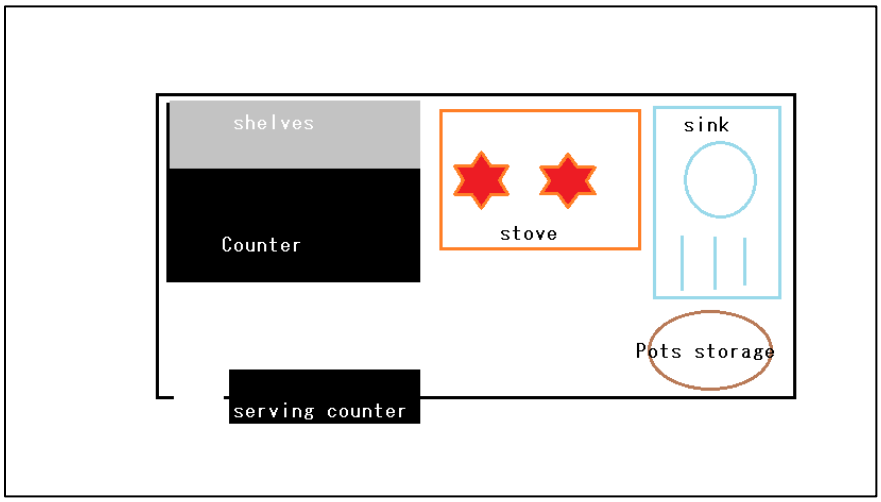


Figure 1 the Kitchen

The stall was small, 1x2.5m. As I later learned from Mum Ayanda, the stall rent cost R2500 a month. Each of the stalls was equipped with prepaid gas, electricity and water. As she told me, Mum Ayanda spent roughly around R1000 monthly on both gas and electricity, combined. The stall used gas as its main energy source. For the amount of energy, they used to cook, gas seemed to be the cheaper alternative to electricity.

All of the stalls around the Bree street food market were busy preparing for the day ahead. Like Precious, they were cooking large vats of pap, making the meal of the day and a variety of salads. In the stall opposite me, there was a furious chopping of cabbage and carrots. All that could be heard was the '*thud thud thud*' of the knife

hitting the chopping board. Never in my life had I watched someone chop a cabbage so quickly with such fine precision.

'Coleslaw, 'that's what they are making, they are making coleslaw', Precious informed me. Coleslaw, I learned was one of the staples that featured in the inner-city meal.

As I would learn, the typical meal that was served in the food court was identical in composition. It was made up of a starch, namely pap[3], a cheap cut of meat and a choice of several salads available. On the menu at Mum Ayanda's, the favourite was a plate of pap and bones with salad for a cheap twenty rand. The salad selection: coleslaw, kale[4] salad (chomulia), chakalaka, green salad and tomato sambals. The identical composition of the meals in the food court suggests that there was a shared business model amongst the stalls. It is not surprising that the stalls in the Bree Street City Mall share a business model as Baden-Fuller and Morgan (2010) explains that businesses that are similar, model themselves after each other, such as the 'Franchise' business model.

Types of economies

The first customer I interacted with was that Tuesday morning when a young woman came to the stall. It was evident in her demeanour that she had never visited the stall before. She was not familiar with Precious and shyly crept towards her. She asked

[3] A starch component of a meal made from crushed maize meal that is cooked in boiling water. Staple in African cooking

[4] Kale is a leafy green vegetable, similar to spinach and is frequently featured in Southern African cooking

Precious what she could get for R15. Precious told her she could not get much and asked her what she was looking for.

The young women indicated that she wanted chicken and pap. The stall was selling Cornish[5] chicken on that Tuesday, along with bones[6] and beef liver. I thought that Precious would be eager to sell to the young woman, but this was the first of many customer interactions where I watched Precious haggle and almost turn a customer away. Precious was insistent that she could not sell a whole meal to the young lady for the price she was presenting. The lady tried to bargain with her, telling Precious that it was all she had. Precious firmly told her that all she could sell her was a single piece of chicken and one salad for the price. After some consideration the woman took the offer. Precious could not have been more unbothered by this customer. Whether she bought something or not, Precious did not feel it was worth the effort. She showed me how to dish out for the price. Opening the large pot full of well-cooked Cornish, she sought out a small piece of breast meat with little gravy. When she dished out the salad, she put half a dishing spoons worth onto the plate and sent the young woman to one of the stall's communal tables.

This was one of the many interactions that I observed at the stalls. Both Mum Ayanda and Precious had turned multiple customers away when they offered a price the two deemed 'too low' for a meal. It is interesting to note that the number for 'too low' varied from customer to customer. It was not a set bar but rather was something

[5] Cornish is a type of chicken. Cornish is an older chicken, regarded as a hen and is tougher textured in comparison to chicken

[6] Bone are known as matombula. These are beef marrow bones, rich in flavour with very little meat.

flexible and depended on whether the customer was both a regular and a favourite. For customers that were new and were not likeable to both Precious and Mum Ayanda the price of too low was R15. For customers that were likeable and regular the price was often R12

They made it clear to these customers that they were a business and did not need customers who were not willing to pay less than they required. There is a flexibility that is exhibited here that was new to me. From the outside, the informal economy seems purely economical and the logic would be that businesses followed a prescribed set of rules. However, this is not the case. The way in which profits are made is negotiated by various factors such as whether someone was a regular customer and liked.

In instances where customers were desperate and adamant, it was only Mum Ayanda that could authorise such a purchase. Precious was never at liberty. There is a clear hierarchy in the stall. Mum Ayanda is the owner and therefore is able to make business decisions like selling food for less money. Precious is not allowed to do such, in spite of being at the stall on her own for most of the day and running the stall.

Much of the literature on the informal economy discusses food and the informal market in generalities providing a broad overview of the phenomenon (Hart 1985; Skinner 2016). However, they do not discuss the forms of profits that are produced and the ways in which profit is generated. The widely held belief is that money allows for the impersonal exchange of goods and services (Simmel 1974). In the Philosophy of Money, Simmel (1974) explains that the use of money allows for fixed space, the

market, in which economic exchange can take place. The argument is that by using money, people do not have to wager how much things cost because the market is a fixed setting with predetermined rules (Deflem 2003). By using money, people are freed from obligation as they are able to act according to the labour produced not the person as a whole (Simmel 1974; Deflem 2003; Karalus 2018). This however is not what happens at Mum Ayanda's stall as we see that the manner in which prices are set are influenced by personal relationships. Zelizer (1997) notes this phenomenon, explaining that the value of money is not universal but rather money is weighted according to the social meaning applied. Here, the price of a meal is not set because the underlying social relationship carries different values.

The margins of profit

In teaching me how to run a successful stall, Mum Ayanda shared some of her most important tips and tricks on how to maximise one's profit. The most profitable meal that the stall sells is the matombula (bones). The bones are a customer favourite and a cheap cut of meat. Every day, the stall cooks up two batches of bones, one for day customers and one for night customers. Mum Ayanda explained that these bones were the life blood of her business.

I buy these bones every day, from my butcher in Hillbrow, they are very cheap.

Mum Ayanda and her youngest daughter would walk twice daily to Hillbrow[7] and back, with a 5 kg bag of bones in hand.

> *I buy these bones, a 5-kilo bag for R300. From this bag, I can sell thirty-five plates. So, I must sell fifteen plates to cover my cost and the rest I am eating. It's all my profit.*

It is interesting that Mum Ayanda refers to her profit as something that she eats. It is indicative of how she uses her profit: to buy food for her family. It's a completed cycle if one will. Mum Ayanda sells food which in turn she is able to feed herself from the profits she makes.

This was the meal that made her the most profit. From this 5-kilo bag Mum Ayanda was able to sell 35 plates. Each of these plates sold at R20 a plate. So, from one batch of bones, Mum Ayanda was able to make R700. Each day she would cook and sell two whole batches of bones. That means that she would make R1400 selling bones, daily. Of this R1400, she spent R600 on product and made R800 worth of profit daily.

In a week Mum Ayanda made R4800 worth of profit on bones alone.

Preparing the bones was easy, they were boiled in some water for about an hour with salt and a little Mozambique spice[8], and this was a popular packet spice mix that came from Mozambique. The bones have a natural beefy flavour, which added to their

[7] Hillbrow is 2 kilometres away from Bree Street. The butchery is within walking distance from the stall and often takes Mum Ayanda an hour to walk to the butchery and back

[8] This a packet spice that is sold in the convenience stores on the ground floor of the mall. The spice is a Portuguese flavoured spice that is imported from Mozambique, hence the name Mozambique spice

popularity. Once the water evaporated, the bones would fry for half an hour, this would bring out all the fat and make a natural gravy. I could see the appeal to cooking this dish. Matombula was high profit for little effort, the walk to the butcher being the most expended energy. The profit here is purely monetary and the margin of profit is high.

Customers that are favourites of the stall get bigger portions of the meal, two or three extra bones, because it is so profitable. The high margin for profit allows Mum Ayanda leeway to give more bones away. Giving a bone away is more likely to earn you favour and a loyal customer.

The high margin for profit is contrasted when it comes to Cornish hens. Mum Ayanda sold the bird as a meal and explained her very economic methodology for cutting a Cornish hen.

She cut the bird into 20 or so odd pieces. She cut it with such a precision, it was clear that she had been doing it for quite some time. She was an expert and cut it quickly, with a rather blunt knife

Selling chicken for R15 was more profitable than selling chicken for more. The single piece sales worked in favour for Ayanda. She often hesitated to sell chicken for more than R20 because it cut into her profit.

She explained:

The chicken costs R120. They deliver them [the chickens] to me, so I pay the price. It saves me time. I can cut this chicken into twenty pieces. It is better

for me if people buy chicken for R15. Then I can give them a small piece of chicken with gravy. When they buy for R20 then I must give them a big piece of chicken. If they buy for R30 then its three pieces of chicken, R35 its four pieces. Then selling the chicken is not making me money. So, it's better if people buy for less.

It is important to note that for Mum Ayanda time is money, she has made this clear. For the Cornish, she is willing to pay for delivery because it saves her time but for the bones, she is willing to walk to the butchery and expend her time.

The rules for selling chicken in this space, amongst the stalls, were as follows; the meals start from R15. For R15 you bought a small piece of chicken: a quarter piece of breast, a drumlet or a wing. The price of the chicken then increased in R5 increments. At each increment, the vendor adds another piece of chicken to the meal.

So, if someone purchased chicken for R20 they received a bigger piece of chicken, the thigh or a drumstick. R25 they got two pieces of chicken, R30 they got three pieces of chicken, and so on and so forth. These rules for selling chicken were unwritten but widely acknowledged. I had found out these rules when I spoke to the other stalls. The pricing system was rather standardised.

Mum Ayanda was very economical in her selling of chicken. She had a well thought out plan of how to make the most profit from a Cornish. She was strategic in her cooking and how she served people. She did not want people to feel like they were robbed but she would not be as generous as to lose profit. I enquired how she would

serve someone that wanted to buy chicken for R40, and she told me that she would divide the meal so she would not have to give them more chicken. This way, customers felt like they were getting more and Mum Ayanda did not have to give more than she wanted. Here, Mum Ayanda demonstrates how she is able to manipulate the rules that she is bound to. The rules are understood and adhered to, but she is able to tactically convince customers to purchase her food in a way that does not infringe on her profit nor does it break the rules.

During my fieldwork, I came to understand how popular the Cornish was. Whist the bones (matombula) were easy and profitable, the Cornish was tasty, and I understood it to be an 'elevated' meal. Mum Ayanda cooked the meal well and people would come looking for her meal specifically. The Cornish might not have been as profitable, but Mum Ayanda's cooking of the bird made her a favourite which ensured that she had a secured clientele.

One chicken can be cut into twenty pieces. If each of these pieces is sold at R15 a plate, then one Cornish hen makes R300. Of this, R180 is profit. Most days, Mum Ayanda only cooks one Cornish Hen, seldom two, depending on the demand or how fast the dish sells.

The margin of profit for chicken was low. Here the time she saves on buying the chicken is valuable and time becomes profit. The margin between customer and friend is very small here. There is a R3 difference that changes whether someone is a friend or a customer. Selling a meal for R15 is profitable. Selling meal for R12 is friendship.

Selling a meal for R40 is a loss. The margin for profit lies between R15-R20 for Cornish.

These are profits of small margins, which add up significantly. Yet this remains an economy of small but very calculated margins.

Mum Ayanda History

Mum Ayanda was no stranger to the economy of small margins. She had started her entrepreneurial career by selling sweets on the street. It was with this business that Mum Ayanda learnt how to stretch her small profits to be impactful. When her second last child was of crèche going age, she needed to make a living. Her husband was not around, she didn't elaborate, and I did not want to pry and make her uncomfortable. We discussed her life history as we prepared meals together. Mum Ayanda would tell me bits and pieces of her life story as we prepared dishes throughout the weeks of my fieldwork. Often it was a specific dish which we were preparing that held a nostalgia for her and brought back memories in which she shed more light on her life.

Mum Ayanda had approached Johannesburg Child Welfare (JCW) for help. The organization, a non-governmental entity, has a campaign that assists disenfranchised women start businesses as a form of economic empowerment. According to the campaign managers that I interviewed, the organization has helped many foreign women, migrants that come from other Southern African Development

Countries (SADC). As Mum Ayanda is a migrant worker from Zimbabwe, this organization was the perfect fit.

Mum Ayanda spoke proudly about how she worked hard. She began her entrepreneurial career by selling sweets on the street.

> *I had a crate on the side of the road, just up here [gestures to the street] and I was selling sweets and ama-kipkip (a popcorn snack). I needed to make money. Then my friend who was working at that place (JCW) told me that they help women.*

The empowerment campaign taught Mum Ayanda some basic entrepreneurial skills, such as money management and finding resources, and funded her endeavor, selling sweets at the time. With her new-found knowledge and lump sum, Mum Ayanda was able to save up and began searching for a stall to sell food.

Selling sweets has a very small margin of profit. Mum Ayanda was able to utilize these tiny margins to make a larger profit to start her stall business. These are rand and cents margins and becoming successful from these tiny margins of profits means that Mum Ayanda was able to accumulate money well. This is what I refer to as an accumulative economy. This accumulative economic strategy is indicative of Mum Ayanda's good business skills.

Mum Ayanda recognised that she was a good cook and decided that she would make money from this skill. The lower barriers of entry to the informal food sector worked to her advantage as discussed above in the literature. Mum Ayanda was able to utilise

her cooking skills to earn a living. This is a phenomenon known as 'spatial entrapment' (Downing and Daniels,1992). As discussed earlier, the spatial entrapment of women is what happens when women utilise their inherent reproductive and household skills in a space outside the home for their own economic gain.

Using the resources of JCW, Mum Ayanda began searching for kitchen equipment and a stall. She was able to find second-hand equipment and got a stall in Bree Street city mall.

It was no easy feat, finding a spot in the mall. According to Precious and Mum Ayanda, there are a plethora of eateries and stalls, like theirs, scattered around Johannesburg. This meant that competition was stiff, and one had to really excel in business to stay afloat. The business hours of the stall were testament to that. The stall ran from 8am to 11pm every day with the exception of Sunday with the stall closing.

Mum Ayanda showed further business initiative when she became a vegetable wholesaler to the rest of the Bree street mall. Mum Ayanda buys fresh produce in bulk, from the City Deep Fruit and Veg market. Her son has access to a bakkie[9] and can make the trip for her daily. Her access to a vehicle gives Mum a rather large advantage. This is no small feat as a vehicle is expensive but affords her access to fresh produce. I came to learn that Mums son does not own the bakkie but rather is

[9] A vehicle used for transporting large quantities of goods. A bakkie is a south African word, the western translation would be a light truck or pickup truck.

friends with the owner. This however is an asset that Mum has and is something that she was able to accumulate through a good relationship with her sons' friend.
She than sells the produce to other stalls in Bree city mall. Here the precarity of food security works to her advantage. The lack of refrigeration throughout the mall means that the stalls cannot buy in bulk and store their produce. Mum Ayanda can provide produce daily. This creates food security for the stalls and is also convenient.
Informal suppliers make a product more accessible by buying in bulk (such as a sack of oranges or a large packet of crisps) and sell on the items individually or in smaller quantities (Crush and Frayne 2011).

The need to provide for her family, forced Mum Ayanda to find a meaningful way in which she could make money. Mum Ayanda was able to utilize her gendered set of skills and be successful within the entrepreneurial realm. Mum learnt the value of small margin profits and was able to accumulate and stretch these margins to buy herself a stall and level up her entrepreneur pursuits.
The process of saving and stretching small profits is in stark contrast to the notion of gambling and using risk for wealth accumulation.

The speculative economy: Gambling and imagined spaces

A very interesting phenomenon presented itself over the course of my fieldwork. Within the first week, without fail, Mum Ayanda and Precious would buy lottery tickets. They were very committed to the activity and spent an ample amount of

thought and time on it. Every morning around ten o clock, when both were in the stall, an elderly man would come around and take their numbers to play the lottery for them. The man's name, as I later came to find out, was Bub John.

They would think carefully about the numbers that they wanted to play, talking about numbers they had dreamt about, seen or had any kind of significance. These methods and ideas around picking numbers is similar to the strategies employed in the informal gambling game of Fahfee (Krige 2011).

> *"In Fahfee, strategies for number picking are closely associated with number symbolism and the interpretation of dreams and everyday events… The number symbolism is made possible by a widely shared scheme…numbers are linked to several symbols, which seems to be for the most part a random categorisation of types of people (in terms of race, gender, age, class, and occupation), body parts, animals, events such as funerals and deaths, buildings and vehicles"* (Krige 2011)

Mum Ayanda referred to taking the lottery as her 'little game'. She spoke of it with such joy, like a small child, amused by this activity. This was interesting that Mum Ayanda, who was a very logical businesswoman that carefully calculated her profits, spent so much time, money and effort playing a game of chance.

The idea of making money through gambling and conceiving gambling as a 'business move' is however not a new phenomenon and is abundant in South Africa (Louw 2018; 2019; Krige 2011). This phenomenon is termed 'speculative accumulation' and has

been studied as presenting amongst those operating largely within the informal sector (Krige 2011). Games of gambling, such as Fahfee and numbers gambling, is played by (mostly)the black, elderly, working class women (Louw 2018). Louw (2018) explains that these women play gambling games several times a week, as Mum Ayanda and Precious did. Krige (2011) and Louw (2018) also explain that there is a social enjoyment and networking experience that attributes to the dedication that women put into these gambling games. This rang true with Mum Ayanda as gambling allowed her to socialize with Bub John daily and brought her some joy.

Precious also played but was not as invested in it as Mum Ayanda. Mum Ayanda had money to play daily, whilst Precious did not. When I asked Precious what she would do if she won the lottery, she told me about her aspirations which she had planned out to the tee. Precious told me that if she won, she would go back home (Zimbabwe) and she would take care of her family, see her kids and live well back home. For Precious, playing this game provided her with a sense of hope. She really did not have anything that she wanted here in Johannesburg and was unhappy with her life currently. She lamented over not seeing her children, she had not seen them for 5 years now. She was also unhappy with her job. She did not earn much and worked hard. The shifts were long and tedious with no room to move up the economic ladder and the job did not offer any benefits or a sense of security. Precious used the gambling purely in the sense of a speculative accumulation.

Precious was not as savvy as Mum Ayanda and had little passion for food or anything else , really.

After my fieldwork, Precious called me frequently asking if I had a job for her. At first, she wanted to help me at my own food stall. Later, she asked if there was any work whatsoever that I could give her. She became desperate to leave the stall and would even do domestic work. For her, she is not fulfilled by the work of food and the stall. It was too much (here recall the long hours of the stall), and she wanted out but was smart because she still works at the stall and is waiting for a secure job elsewhere.

This game of gambling was interesting because it contrasted with Mum Ayanda's business skills. Mum Ayanda started her business with small margins and was able to accumulate enough money to build her business. This accumulative economic business model was slow and consisted of saving and well calculated profits. Gambling is quite the opposite; it is an uncalculated risk which does not have a guaranteed outcome. The promise of an imagined time and better life is worth the risk (Guyer 2007).

Indeed, the informal economy and street food are foremostly a way of making money as illustrated by the dozens of migration studies. As we have seen, Mum Ayanda has become a successful vendor by stretching her small profits and using a model of accumulative wealth to build her stall.

However, what I show here is the particularity in which money is made. On one hand it is a very fine-grained calculation of small margins which nevertheless also has a social calculus. As seen with the flexibility around price structure, there are cracks

in the idea of vending being purely economic as social relationships are a factor in how profits are determined. This however is not the whole picture because this is contrasted with a speculative economy in which a different vision of the future and logical earnings plays out. What does this show us then? There is an interesting economic variability of economic practice within the informal market. The world of street vending however is not entirely based on monetary gains. The next chapter will explore these social relationships that emerge between the economic.

Chapter 3: The maternal life of cooking

This chapter moves away from studying the economic ideals presented in the informal market but rather will examine the social aspect of food and street vending. This chapter will argue that whilst there is an economic component to street vending, there is also a highly social aspect. This chapter will look at how Mum Ayanda and Precious both know their regular customers and cater for them. Here I will argue that food has the ability to foster and grow relationships between customers and vendors. I put forth that selling food takes on a social if not a maternal dimension and that the vendors at Bree street city mall have various relationships with their customers. There is a level of intimacy that comes with feeding people that surpasses the economic and builds the social. Here intimacy refers to the "oneness, boundedness, and connectedness of a relationship; it culminates in a relationship in which people "experience warmth". Intimacy is regarded as a matter of "knowledge" that accumulates"(Yim, Tse, and Wa Chan 2008). Street vending is neither purely economic nor social, but rather moves between these two realms of the economic and the social.

In the 1980s, Berry (1980,236) termed the contact between businesses and consumers as "relationship marketing". Berry (1980,236) defined this concept as

"attracting, maintaining, and in multi-service organizations, enhancing customer relationships".

Berry's (1980) argument was that customers were more likely to form relationships with other people as opposed to goods and this was beneficial to retailers as they would be able to use this relationship for economic gain.

The further developed concept of self-disclosure marketing which promotes long-term relationships with customers (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990) is based on this idea of 'relationship marketing'. The concept of self-disclosure marketing becomes a useful tool for businesses as social conversations grant customers a special intimate status (Berry 1995) and open communications with customers which foster customers' trust. It is through these relationships that businesses believe that customers will support them economically.

The ideology behind self-disclosure marketing and relationship marketing is that by knowing your customer, retaining information about their lives, likes and dislikes, the business is able to cater to their needs specifically and tailor their transactions with business, making for a happy customer and ensuring prolonged business interaction leading to economic gain (Gutek, Groth, and Cherry 2002). Essentially, it pays well to know your customers.

This literature acknowledges the presence of social relationship making as part of economic exchange, it however reduces social process as secondary or instrumental to economic profit. In addition, these writings do not necessarily pay attention to the idea that cooking for people and selling food is a form of feeding for these street

vendors. It is these ideas that I keep in mind as I write about how mum Ayanda relates to her customers.

How do they call you? Domestication through names

As I came to learn during my time at the stall, there was a story behind Mum Ayanda's name. Everyone that came to the stall, looking for her, referred to her as Mum or mama. Her name was not actually Ayanda, but rather Ayanda was the name of her youngest daughter. She was thus the mother of Ayanda. I understood it as a sign of respect to call her Mum. I was not sure of her real name.

Mum Ayanda was a very popular and busy woman. Everyone that frequented the stall came looking for Mum specifically.

'Where is Mum?'

She was a popular woman, at least 10 people would come looking for her daily, customers, friends and acquaintances. Whilst calling Mum Ayanda, mama is a sign of respect and is also implying a sort of familiarity. Each of these people that address her in this manner are familiar with her and interact with Mum on a regular basis. Here I suggest that how a person is named is an important way in building a relationship. Specifically, here referring to her as Mum is a kinning of the space. Her name means that she embodies that very maternal figure. Not everyone is referred to as Mum or mama. No one ever refers to Precious in that way.

Customers and various groups of people made a point of striking up a conversation with Mum Ayanda. No one got as friendly with Precious. Precious had a few friends

that would pass by and speak to her, but no one addressed her with the same respect as they did with Mum Ayanda? Furthermore, no one came looking for Precious. People came for Mum Ayanda. Mum Ayanda is an authoritative maternal figure. Customers and other vendors have recognized this and thus the surrounding relationships are structured accordingly.

Who eats from the stall?

Family Business

Coming into the stall space, I was unaware of the rules around eating and etiquette. I did not bring any food on my first day at the stall and was starving. I did not want to demand food or be rude and purchase food from another stall so I asked Mum if I could buy a plate of liver for R20. She waved at me with the click of a tongue.

You will not buy from me. You help us and you work here, you will eat with us.

I was taken aback. I did not want to eat into Mums profit, but I was not going to argue with her, and I was far too hungry to contest. So, in being a good guest, I opted for a small plate and dished out a little bit of food. People that worked for the stall did not pay for their meals, but rather ate together. The meal was a reward for the hard work we endured. Precious and I ate together in the stall, while Mum cooked around us. After that first day, I always waited for Mum Ayanda to offer me lunch. I did not want to be rude and eat before it was acceptable, so I would wait for Mum Ayanda to offer me lunch. When Ayanda and Precious were eating, then I would eat with them.

I would also wait for Mum to offer me lunch because she would make me try a new dish each day. She wanted me to taste the full range of her culinary skills.
People that work for her are regarded as a form of family. Her sons and daughter come and eat at the stall and they do not have to pay for their meals. She feeds family- but the meal is not entirely free because each of these people, me included, contribute work towards the stall. I was volunteering and provided free labor for the stall for the duration of my fieldwork. Precious works full time in the stall and runs it when Mum is not around. Both Ayanda (Mums' daughter) and her son labor for the stall in various ways. Ayanda runs small errands for her mother, buying packets of spices or relaying messages to other vendors. Mums oldest son has access to a bakkie and buys fresh vegetables from the produce market daily. So, the meals are not entirely free. Here family is characterized by people that work closely at the stall.

According to Litz (1995) a family business is defined as a business in which ninety percent of the work and profit is shared amongst members of a family. Family businesses provide an interesting lens in which to examine how the presence of economics and pressure to obtain success influences the dynamics and developments of familial relationships. In these contexts, the lines between worker and family are blurred creating a complex relationship. The pressure to succeed in whichever economic realm has implications on how business owners and their family define and develop the actual concept of family. The definition of family is certainly not fixed and in the case of Mum Ayanda we definitely see that.

Here in this case, Mum Ayanda adopts those who work hard and 'invest' their time and effort into her business as family. Family is not defined by blood relation but rather is defined by the hard work put into her business. People who help her turn a profit and show genuine interest, such as me, become a part of her 'family' and apart of the business. Mum Ayanda has six children in total and of those six, only two have really helped her run it.

Street food as home food: Cooking with care

After a week of working at the stall, I had come to recognise the regular customers. These were customers that ate at the stall 4-6 days of the week. They would often come for lunch, but some frequented the stall for breakfast or supper as well. After three weeks of serving these customers, I became familiar with what they enjoyed and disliked, and often I knew which dish they were coming for.

Mum Ayanda was excellent in customer engagement. She recognised each of her regular customers and had a way of making people feel special. When she served a customer, she truly was charming and caring. Here Mum Ayanda exhibits what Berry(1980) refers to as relationship marketing. As discussed earlier, relationship marketing became a popular method of marketing as the belief was that by creating a social relationship with one's customers, one would ensure their future business which was good for profits. Mum Ayanda was very good at this practice as she built social relationships with many of her customers. However, unlike the marketing

scholarship would suggest, these social relationships that Mum Ayanda created were not secondary nor instrumental to her profits. Mum Ayanda was genuinely interested in creating a social relationship with her customers.

She exhibited that these relationships moved beyond the economic on serval occasions, namely, there was a regular Swahili customer that Mum Ayanda was particularly fond of. She would greet him in Swahili. She had learnt several phrases over the years to engage with him. Mum served him herself and was careful in her serving. She remembered that he did not like tomatoes or chomulia, so she only served him chakalaka and green salad. This was just one of the many interactions in which I watched Mum Ayanda being so thoughtful. There is a practice of care that she exhibits when she interacts with her customers, both while serving them and when she cooks for them. This practice of care moves beyond the economic nature of vending.

The practice of caring for someone is termed as tending to their needs (Fine and Glendinning 2005). The prominent ideology surrounding care is that is it understood as a naturally female trait (Fine and Glendinning 2005; Lupton 1996; Counihan 1999). This ideology has been widely contested and critiqued with the turn of 70's feminist literature (Fine and Glendinning 2005; Federici 1975). Feminist literature, such as Silvia Federici's work, notes that the assumption that the work of care is naturally female puts pressure on women to perform this work which is unpaid and undervalued however is actual work and is emotionally taxing (Federici 1975). What

happens to the work of care however in an economic exchange? In the case of Mum Ayanda, the work of care is no longer unpaid, yet it appeared as though she did not do it out of economic calculas alone. It retained some of its genuineness and came out of the domestic sphere. The act of feeding plays an important role in understanding where this care comes from. As feeding someone is such a domestic and intimate activity, the care that is exhibited comes from that same sphere.

Many customers came to the stall looking for certain dishes, such as beef stew and rice, tripe and pap, Cornish chicken and liver. Whilst most of the other stalls sold similar dishes and often had the dishes for much cheaper, people would insist on eating from Mum Ayanda. They all maintain that it was her cooking that they wanted. It was then not just the care that she showed for them, but also the care that Mum Ayanda puts into her meals that customers find appealing.

In the second week of my fieldwork I witnessed how Mum Ayanda cooked with care. On a Wednesday, Mum Ayanda came into the stall, after a morning of shopping. Precious and I had made the usual that morning: matombula, Cornish chicken, ox liver, pap and the salads.

Mum informed us that she would be making beef stew. It was a special dish that she did not make very often. She was very excited to make this dish and said that it had to be ready before two o' clock. I wondered what the rush was, as she had never said something of the sort before. Nonetheless, I got to helping, chopping green beans and carrots.

This is my tastiest beef stew. The trick is, no water. You must fry the beef nicely and then you put the vegetables.

Mum was giving me step by step instructions on how I could cook the beef stew in my own stall. The stew smelt delicious and was living up to its special nature.

The special ingredient here is a mixture of the soup.

Mum mixed two packets of powdered soup to the stew and said that that was what made her stew a winning dish. Mum was really excited, and I soon found out why.

One of her customers, a young woman, came to the stall at two o clock. The young woman had recently moved from KwaZulu-Natal to Johannesburg to work in the 'big city'. She had told Mum, a week prior, about how homesick she was and that she missed her mother's cooking. The customer was looking for stew and mentioned this in her talks with Mum Ayanda. Mum Ayanda remembered this and had cooked the beef stew especially for her. The young lady frequented the stall on Wednesday at two, hence the rush.

The young lady was beyond happy that Mum had made stew for her. She said that she waited for each Wednesday for Mums cooking as it was unmatched. The meal that Mum made for the customer reminded her of home and made her feel less homesick.

Mum Ayanda cook's food that is reminiscent of home for many of her customers. Street food here begins to closely resemble 'home' food. The food and the care that Mum Ayanda exhibits in her cooking makes people feel as though they are being fed

their 'home'. People feel connected to Mum Ayanda as she is a mother figure, through the act of cooking with care and her thoughtfulness around customer satisfaction. The idea of the family becomes reconfigured in this situation. Here family is envisioned as the urban worker family. These are families that are built on transnational sentiments, as the stall is mainly frequented by young migrant men and women.

The stall thus almost becomes home kitchen for this transnational family. Food is able to connect these transnational migrants through the sociality of eating Mum Ayanda's cooking. Even though Precious cooks the meals the same way that Mum does, people relate to Mum Ayanda's cooking better. Precious cannot cook things like the beef stew! Mum won't let her, in spite of her knowing the recipe. She lacks the finesse if one will.

This restriction on who can cook what is symbolic of the hierarchy that exists within the family dynamic. If Mum Ayanda is seen as the mother of the stall, Precious is seen as a daughter or even a niece, as she is not as close as a daughter would be, and this means that she lacks the power and authoritative knowledge to cook as well as Mum does.

In moments of spatial instability and relocation, a common experience amongst migrants, special attention is paid to food and the culinary agency that women have (Mehta 2004). Mehta (2004) explains that in the instability of relocation, there is strict adherence to traditional culinary form. Women become agents of cultural authority as they are the producers of food. It is this authoritative knowledge that

Mum carries, that influences how people purchase her food. For these transnational and migrant workers, the processes of travelling and relocation serve as a dynamic process of identity making, and food plays a role in this. Food reflects this relocation and the instability faced in their everyday lives. Therefore, people come to buy from Mum Ayanda for her specific culinary form in which their identities are grounded. Mum Ayanda's cooking is not popular merely because it is cheap or the economic choice, but rather it serves as an anchor of identity.

The emotional work that Mum Ayanda exhibits by cooking with care as well as the authoritative knowledge she has moves beyond the economic realm of street food and marketing strategies, as discussed above. These qualities turn Mum Ayanda's cooking from regular street food into 'home cooking' for a new kinship form based on the transnational sentiments of many migrant workers. Following Mehta (2004) food becomes a useful way in which these workers are able to ground themselves in Mum Ayanda's cooking in times of instability and relocation.

Teaching me how to cook

In training me to own my own stall, Mum Ayanda interpreted my study and fieldwork as me opening my own food stall like the ones found at Bree Street City mall. Mum Ayanda took the task of teaching me how to cook very seriously. On my first day at the stall Mum Ayanda began my cooking lessons by sending me out with Ayanda to purchase ox liver.

I obliged and followed the 8-year-old into town. Ayanda was very independent and fierce for her age. She navigated the heart of the inner city like a pro, as she had been running errands for her mother since the age of six. Here I was, a grown woman of twenty-two, startled by the bustling streets, being led and assured by an eight-year-old.

When I returned to the stall with the liver, Mum Ayanda immediately threw me into a cooking lesson. Her method of teaching was immersive as she dished out careful instructions, making me do the work while she watched.

As I (Sewpersad, 2018) illustrate in my work on intergenerational cooking, this immersive method of teaching is common amongst stay-at-home mothers that provide their children with formative culinary knowledge.

Mum Ayanda was more than happy and willing to share her popular recipes with me. The sharing of recipes does not happen easily between strangers. From my previous research (Sewpersad 2018) I knew that the sharing of recipes is an important giving that takes place within families. Mothers share their recipes with their daughters and daughters-in- law to pass down familial knowledge and continue family tradition and history. Her recipes here were nothing precise or measured but rather a general list of ingredients and steps that should be followed to create the desired dish which can only be learned by cooking them with her several times. Mum Ayanda attributed a lot of the success of her best-selling dishes to her technique of cooking. According to her, it was her experience as a long time cook that made her food so tasty and so

popular. Thus, even in teaching me she assumes a motherly role and turns me into her daughter. This leads me to the concept of cooking with care.

I term the concept 'cooking with care' in relation to the effort that Mum Ayanda puts into her food. There is a thoughtfulness and nurturing that goes into each of her meals that surpasses the economic. This care of thoughtfulness is something that is very maternal and reminiscent of how a mother would cook for her family.

Women's' role in feeding is to convey their love and care towards their families. The prevalent emotion that is constantly linked to food is that of love, particularly maternal love and wifely concern (Lupton 1996). This is what is being enacted here, even though the dominant context is an economic one, and to be more precise, as illustrated in the previous chapter, one of calculating small margins.

Sons of the stall

These boys are fed well, this is home food.

This was a sentiment held well by Mum Ayanda. The sentiment was not aimed at any male customer but was directed at two customers in specific.

I would become acquainted with Kathlego and Sabelo for the duration of my fieldwork at the stall. Kathlego and Sabelo were both frequent customers of Mum Ayanda. Both men were in their late twenties and worked in the inner city. Kathlego had a formal job somewhere as he was always dressed in crisp shirt and slacks, while Sabelo was

a blue-collar worker in a construction company, the logo embossed on his blue overalls.

I came to learn that the two were close friends that lunched together three times a week. They bought all of these meals from Mum Ayanda. They were close customers of Mum as they never lunched anywhere else. Mum Ayanda clearly had a soft spot for them. She would wait around the stall for them on those three days. They usually showed up around twelve o clock and she never missed them, in all my time there.

They were real charmers and I could understand how they won over Mum Ayanda. They raved about her cooking and she would laugh and wave them off. She handled their orders herself and always dished out a little more food. This was blatant favouritism.

Kathlego and Sabelo had become more than customers to Mum Ayanda and Mum had become more than a vendor to them. The conversations between the two parties were a lot more in depth than conversations with other customers.

On the surface it would look like this was just a good customer-vendor relationship, but there was more to it. Mum often referred to those two men as her sons. She commented on how she felt like she was nurturing them through feeding them.

> *This is home cooking and that's why people enjoy my food. Those boys are always well fed.*

There was a genuine interest on both parties' side. They were interested in each other's lives. Mum Ayanda knew what the boys were up to on certain days. Mum

Ayanda was aware of the happenings in both of the men's lives and would have a lengthy conversation about what was going on in their lives that week. They would reciprocate and ask Mum about her children and events that they knew she was interested in.

This relationship clearly moved beyond money. There were many customers that bought for a large amount of money by being regular customers, but no one caught the eye of Mum like these two had. There was also the way that she allowed Kathlego and Sabelo to interact with me.

My interaction with male customers

During my fieldwork, working at the stall, a lot of my customer interactions were with men as the stall's clientele was mainly men. Whilst the fieldwork was highly productive and a perfect setting to study the social effects of food, I was not very comfortable throughout majority of the fieldwork. The interaction with male customer was always uneasy for me. The male customers would often touch my hands when I was serving them, holding onto them asking me if I found them attractive or wanted to marry them. Some of them would ask Precious how much I was worth and then would proceed to ask me if I would date them for a monetary value. These interactions illuminated how ideas around social interactions, such as romantic and sexual relationships, were intertwined and conflated with ideas of monetary value and being able to be purchased (V. A. Zelizer 2000; Constable 2009) . This unwanted

sexual attention on me was unnerving and made it difficult to interact with the male customers. The older male customers and women were nice and friendly and did not act inappropriately with me and I had those interactions to gather data from. In other instances, the men would speak to Precious in Zulu whilst blatantly staring at me. They would make a remark and laugh. When I would ask Precious what they had said, she would instruct me to sit out of eyesight in the back of the stall, telling me to stay there for a little while.

When Mum was around, she would chastise the men that were intrusive or made sexual remarks at me. However, when Kathlego and Sabelo would make sexual remarks towards me, Mum Ayanda would laugh at them and tell me that they were good boys. She said that I should listen to them because they were nice young men, her favourites. In spite of my clear discomfort, she allowed them to continue their antics because of this close relationship with them. Here the idea of familial closeness and relationships is enacted by ignoring the actions of those you are close to. In this situation, even if the acts are inappropriate and wrong, the familial closeness between these two parties trumped my comfortability as well as my relationship with Mum Ayanda. Thus, to conclude, whilst social relationships are often assumed to be apart of an economic calculus, in this chapter I have shown that the way in which Mum Ayanda cooks her food and feeds her customers exceeds the economic. Notions of home away from home and social relations, which take on the form of the family,

take on a life of its own, shaping these social relationships far beyond the immediate need to bind customers to the stall

It is then interesting to examine how these conceptions and ideas surrounding family and closeness are translated away from the vendor customer dynamic and move amongst the customer and customer relationship. The next chapter will be looking at these relationships and dynamics.

Chapter 4: Commensals and the customer

The two previous chapters have focused on the relationship between the buyer and the seller. This chapter will move away from that dynamic and rather examine the relationship between the customers of the stall, which, however, as I will show, takes place under a sense of the familial which is being created through Mum Ayanda's practice of 'cooking with care'. This chapter will illustrate how close the spatial proximity exhibited in the Bree Street city mall works to foster domestic commensality amongst the customers of the stall.

Bree street city mall

One of the advantages of doing participant observation and being immersed into a research site is that one is able to build onto initial ideas and really build into greater detail the meaning and significance of experiences and in this instance, the research space of the Bree City mall. My initial impression of the uniformity of Bree street city mall is important as it showcases how impactful long-term observation can be in finding out about emerging and subtle patterns.

As previously mentioned, the Bree street city mall is a small building comprised of shops and eateries that can be found on Rahima Moosa Street. That mall is made up of two levels. The bottom floor is filled with an array of stores that sell a variety of household goods, from cleaning supplies to furniture. As you walk up to the second floor, you are greeted with the sight of a large eatery.

On your left and right, there were several stalls lined up next to one another. There were colourful signs set above the stalls with stock pictures of the meals they sold. In the middle of the space was a multitude of chairs and tables, strewn about somewhat haphazardly. I had first made my way to the eatery after the lunch time rush which accounted for the messy display. The chairs and tables in this space are identical. The floor is filled by white plastic, garden variety, chairs and tables. By all accounts, the space looks uniform with no distinction between tables. There are no table clothes, cutlery or condiments on the tables. Instead they are plain and communal.

From the first glance, this eatery resembled the Matrix[10] that was the initial impression I got. The matrix is a student eatery found on the Wits Campus, a place I frequented often as a student.

As I began working for Mum Ayanda, I soon learnt the rules and etiquette of eating in this space. Precious explained to me that the tables and chairs all belonged to the Bree Street City mall and they were communal property. Each of the stalls used, more or less, five tables that seated four people, so altogether they could seat twenty customers.

Each of the stalls was in charge of whichever tables they used for the day, responsible for setting them up every morning, positioning them and making sure they were clean. At the end of the day, these chairs and tables were stacked up together and set

[10] A student eatery at wits

aside the stalls, clearing the floor of the eatery. The tables were not set aside at any specific stall.

When a customer bought a meal to sit down, whoever was serving them would take them their meal to the table. The server would also have to clear the table when the customer was finished as well as bring the customer a bowl of water and a towel so that the customer could wash their hands. This task was simple enough, and I was able to do this after watching both Precious and Ayanda do this in my training week. However, this task became much more complicated during lunchtime rush hours. During the lunchtime hours of 12-2 o' clock, the eatery would become immensely busy, with crowds of people, mainly men, sitting down for their meals. As there was such a high number of customers sitting down, often customers would sit at any table that was close and had some vacant space. Here the task would be complicated by that I would have to remember the faces of customers and identify which tables to clean and which dishes to take back. After performing this task daily for a month, a couple of things became apparent to me. The first thing was that it was a lot less complicated to serve customers during rush hour, as customers became more familiar and I was immersed in my surrounding.

I then came to learn and understand the politics between vendors of the eateries. A pattern emerged between the tables that customers would share, during rush hour. There were clear alliances between the different vendors, and this was illustrated through who was able to sit where and how vendors interacted with these customers.

For instance, the stall next to Mum Ayanda often let our surplus of customers sit at their tables during rush hour and so would we. When customers left, the vendors from that stall would clean the tables irrespective of whether the customers bought from us or them. Mum Ayanda was friends with the owners of the adjacent stall. They bought produce from her and often came by to gossip with Precious and Mum Ayanda. The people and guests of the stall opposite Mum Ayanda, however, never interacted with Mum Ayanda. During my first week there, Mum Ayanda expressed her dislike for the girls in the opposite stall and it seemed as though the feeling was mutual because none of our customers were allowed to sit at their tables. They would not be as kind as the other vendors and shooed our customers away. This stall did not buy produce from Mum either.

Thus, the rules guiding where customers are allowed to sit and eat are not as simple as finding a space, but rather become indicative of larger spacial politics and the relationships between vendors. If this eatery on first view looks like a uniform space with no distinction and shared property, on immersion it gives way to a picture in which tables and seating arrangements are distinct and different.

Eateries: Private vs Public

Street food is an interesting space to study the flux between ideas around conceptions of public and private. Upon first glance, the space of the Bree Street City mall appears to be an entirely public space. The tables in the middle of the eatery are set out communally, with everything in plain view. There are no spaces in this area where one can hide or have their meal without prying eyes. The eatery is in constant

movement with people parading through the space coming out of the Bet Exchange, buying from surrounding vendors and shopping in the market below, and passing through on their trek home. The eatery is a common space, a place without exclusivity.

Even the space of the stall is an open space, meant to allow the vendors to showcase their meals for the day. This space is by all means a public space, however, the longer one spends time there, it becomes more apparent that there is more to this space.

The longer time I spent immersed in this space, I began to understand that this eatery has instances when it is also a private space. Sammells and Searles (2016) explain that the places where street eating takes place are all public spaces: street pavements, public eateries, road corners. Yet, the act of eating is something very private and intimate. In fact, the act of eating together with others here, in this eatery, is not done in a celebratory communal manner. Therefore, this eating becomes a form of domestic commensality. As discussed earlier, commensality occurs when people eat together and this act of sharing a meal, whether eating with each other or from each other, has implications for social relationships (Fischler 2011; Kerner, Chou, and Warmind 2015).

Street food and public eaters are straddling this binary of public versus private and steps into a hybrid space. The Bree Street eatery thus steps into this hybrid space that allows for public relationships as well as for private relationships.

This hybrid space brings in questions and concerns around the idea of communal food poisoning and the dangers of *muti.*

The fear of poison

When dealing with the idea of commensality, it is important not to romanticize the idea and think thoroughly through the logistics of people eating together in this larger public space. Bloch (1999) explains that commensality can be understood from a different viewpoint. Bloch (1999) points out that whilst eating together is a universal concept and not foreign, one must account for the differences in culture. The etiquettes and conceptions of what constitutes a meal or poison is not universal. Going into the field, this was one of the ideas I kept in mind, as I had had many discussions in which people advised me to look out for this. Discussions with fellow colleagues alluded me to the fact that there was always suspicion around a communal kind of eating. In a country like South Africa where *muti*[11] is prevalent, it did not strike me as odd that this was the view held, people had a fear of being poisoned.

This idea however changed after time in the field. This fear of being poisoned seemed to be absent amongst the customers and vendors of the Bree Street eatery. I was so sure that this idea of poison would be discussed and relevant and yet between all my participant observation and interviews with customers and vendors alike this did not come up. The fear of being poisoned was not as strong I imagined, and I attribute this to the trust instilled in Mum Ayanda as a vendor.

Mum Ayanda is a trusted vendor. She has built a rapport with her customers and has a reputation for cleanliness. Mum Ayanda has a strong code of conduct surrounding

[11] Traditional medicine or poison

cleanliness and holds a high standard for the quality of her food. The stall is always being cleaned, with servers needing to be in the proper gear- aprons and hair nets.

Here the trusted reputation of Mum Ayanda is carried over to her customers. Customers are not scared of *muti* or poisoning because of the trusted reputability of Mum Ayanda and the space they are eating within. The care that Mum Ayanda exhibits in her cooking is also something that is translated into her reputation. With such care and thoughtfulness put into her cooking, the idea of *muti* or poison seems uncharacteristic and insulting towards Mum Ayanda. More importantly, the fact that she recreates the idea of a family and a home away from home with some of her customers, as shown in the previous chapter, does have the power to banish the idea that people are eating their food amongst strangers.

We share

After some time at the stall it became clear to me that there was a clear commensal pattern that was emerging amongst the customers that bought from the stall.

The first time I witnessed this was on a quiet morning at the stall. A regular customer, Jabu, had come around for a late breakfast. He purchased a whole portion of bones, pap and salad. This was a large portion and could easily feed two people as Mum was generous with this customer because Jabu was a regular. The eatery was quiet as it was early, and our stall tables were empty. Jabu sat down and was served his meal. As Jabu was nearly finished, another customer, Sipho, approached the stall. This man was also a regular however he did not have a lot of money. Sipho bought a small portion of liver and salad for R15 and took a seat at the table next to Jabu who

had bought the bones. Coming to the end of his meal, Jabu had a large portion of pap and salads left over. As the pap and salads were served in communal style plates, they were 'clean' as Jabu, like many other customers, had dished out from the communal plate into his own plate. Jabu approached Sipho who had bought the liver and offered him his excess pap and salads. Sipho gratefully accepted the food and was able to finish the excess of the large meal so that nothing was wasted. As I brought water to Jabu to wash his hands, this was customary after any sit-down customer concluded a meal, he explained that his plates were with the gentleman that purchased the liver and that I would collect them when he was done eating. Jabu did not know Sipho's name as he referred to him as umBaba- a name of respect when one does not know a name. I had never seen Jabu and Sipho interact before this and the lack of knowledge about Sipho's name alludes to both men not knowing one another. This was the first of many instances in which people would share their food with strangers. Often, the only thing these people had in common was that they bought from the same stall, Mum Ayanda, and were sitting at the same table. Customers who were on their own and would buy for R25 and had a lot of food would share with customers that only bought for R15 and had no pap or salads. This pattern of sharing became increasingly more apparent the longer I worked at the stall. Often, people who bought pap for themselves would end not be able to finish the last third of their pap and salads because the portions were quite large.

In other instances, groups of three or four men would come together to buy lunch. Here, these groups would purchase one full meal, often bones worth R25, which would come with a full plate of pap, salad and another plate of bones. In addition, the other

men would only purchase R20 worth of bones. These groups would share a table, place the pap and salads in the middle and share from this serving amongst themselves. These men would talk to one another over the meal, small talk, discussing their jobs and daily happenings. Eating is an inherently social activity and as Kerner *et al* (2015) has explained, food plays a major role in creating, shaping and sustaining social bonds. The act of sharing a meal is a universal phenomenon known as commensality (Fischler 2011). As previously discussed, the word commensality translates to eating and drinking at the same table (Fischler 2011). This is exactly what is happening amongst these customers at these stalls. The implications of commensality being enacted here are striking because commensality is a fundamental articulation of human sociality (Fischler 2011). When people eat together, enacting commensality, they are able to foster social connections with one another. Eating together is not merely a biological act but rather becomes a communicative act with implications on social relationships as well as how people organize themselves.

These group meals worked out cheaper and reduced waste. In terms of reducing waste and not throwing away a perfectly good meal, I understand the turn to sharing one's meal. In my personal politics on waste, I deem it somewhat of a crime to throw away food when one could share instead.

This however was not the motive behind the sharing. From my interviews with the customers that shared, none of them were friends with the other customers and had

no prior knowledge of one and other. This sharing was not out of existing friendship but rather something else, a new friendship if you will.

Many of these customers do not have any prior meeting, but I did find that some of them knew each other from general passing and varied daily interactions which were mainly around the street vendors. Whilst they knew of each other, they were not friends, nor did they have 'deep' connections. These instances depict a moment of the human experience. When these men share parts of their meals with others, strangers and colleagues, they recognise these people as human.

Upon doing further fieldwork, I have found that customers that buy from the same vendor often share food. There have been many customers that cannot afford to purchase a whole meal, rather purchasing a smaller, less substantial meal. In several of these instances, customers that have purchased more food, share their food with the customers that have less food. They share their pap, out of kindness. It is important to note that this sharing only occurs with customers that sit at the same tables. Tables are shared by customers of the same vendor but during rush hour eating times, there is no space and customers are mixed. As mentioned earlier, the close special proximity forces a 'we'ness' in this space.

This sharing is indicative of domestic commensality. Domestic commensality is a basic form of commensality and grows out of the convenience of family members in a household (Kerner et al, 2015 pp27). It is very private and intimate.

According to the literature, domestic commensality would be found in homes, not public spaces such as the Bree street city mall. However, here the close spatial proximity of this eatery forces people to be in contact with each other and acknowledge one another which is the key factor in creating this domestic commensality which creates and sustains everyday life. If the eatery were larger and the special politics played out like that of a restaurant, the commensality produced here would look very different. However, it's these factors which shape it, this close spatial proximity and 'forced' contact creates an environment that mimics the household. Hence the domestic commensality. Using long term participant observation worked to my advantage as I was able to understand this after being in the space on a daily basis for a month.

In this chapter I have shown that not everything is as it seems on the surface. Whilst the space of the Bree Street city mall appears to be uniform, there are clear underlying etiquette which exist and are indicative of vendor politics. The space of the mall has moved away from being either entirely public or private but rather moves into a hybrid space. The hybridity of the space along with the close spatial proximity allows for domestic commensality to arise. This closeness translated into familial closeness has also played a part in stamping out fears of poisoning and *muti.*

Chapter 5: Conclusion

At a first glance the world of street vending in the informal market would appear to be a solely economic activity, however as we have come to learn there is more than meets the eye. This thesis sought to understand how everyday food and eating practices facilitated relationships between street vendors and their consumers. The world of street vending whilst undoubtedly economic is equally as social. There are clear social relationships that food is able to create and sustain. Street vendors and cooks play a vital role in shaping new ideas surrounding familial ties and transnational kinship systems.

As I have argued in this thesis, I do take seriously the economic nature of street vending. The way in which Mum Ayanda portions and sells her Cornish hen is indicative of the economic strategy she employs. In this instance Mum Ayanda showed that she was able to manipulate the set rules around Cornish sales and use them to her advantage. Whilst these are profits of small margins, which add up significantly, this remains an economy of small but very calculated margins.

Even in this highly calculated economy of small margins there are cracks that begin to emerge. I have argued that there is a flexibility that is exhibited by Mum Ayanda's stall that was new to me. Whilst the informal economy seems to operate on pure economics and business logic, this is not the case. The way in which profits are made is negotiated by various factors such as whether someone was a regular customer and

liked. In these instances, I showed that the underlying social relationship carries different values affecting how profit was negotiated. The social became prevalent and important to business practice.

These social relationships become more pronounced in the instances where Mum Ayanda cooks with care for her customers. As I have shown, Mum Ayanda practised a care in her cooking that exceeds the economic realm. The care that she exhibits comes from a domestic sphere and is genuine . Care is thus able to transform street food into home food for the migrant men and women that frequent the stall regularly. I have also illustrated that the care that Mum Ayanda puts into her food allows for a space in which migrant men and women are able to ground themselves. The instability of relocation puts stress on ideas of identity and the self. Mum Ayanda's cooking provides migrant workers with stability and they are able to ground themselves and their identities in her food.

I have also shown that Mum Ayanda's cooking connects migrant workers to one another. Here food is able to connect these people and forges a new concept of family. Here this conception of family is built on transnational sentiments.

Building on this, I have argued in this thesis that food has the ability to reshape the way in which family is defined. In the instance of Mum Ayanda's family, it is not defined by blood relation. Rather Mum Ayanda defines family by the work that is put into her business. I was not a blood relation, however during my fieldwork I put in my effort and time into Mum Ayanda's business and was treated with the same care as her children, becoming family.

I have also shown that social relationships are formed not only between Mum Ayanda and her customers but also amongst the customers of the stall itself. I have illustrated that customers often share their food with each other. Here, these customers are not always acquainted but idea of family that Mum Ayanda fosters translates to her customers to create a we'ness. I have also argued that the close spatial proximity of the Bree Street city mall has fostered a domestic commensality amongst the customers of the stall. This domestic commensality is made possible by the closeness of the mall. The mall steps into a hybrid space between public and private.

This thesis has shown that the even in economic settings, such as street food in the informal market, food is strong enough to build social relationships. Food creates both persons in a physical sense and the substance-blood-by which they are related to each other. As such personhood, relatedness, and feeding are intimately connected.
Based on these conclusions, moving forward, I believe that using food as a lens would be a highly productive endeavor in understanding new and flexible definitions of kinship and familial relationships.

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Appendix

Participant Information Sheet

Street kitchens and social lives: an ethnographic study of street food and eating practices in inner-city of Johannesburg

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT?

My name is Sapana Sewpersad and I am a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, currently completing my master's degree. This research project is a part of my degree.

The research project is interested in looking at street food in Johannesburg. I would like to understand how people that sell street food, make and sell the food. I would like to find out how selling street food works and how one becomes a successful vendor. I am also interested in talking to your customers and understand what type of food they like.

WHAT DOES TAKING PART INVOLVE?

If you take part in this study, I would like to spend some time with you. I would like to follow you for a few weeks, learning about making food and how you go about doing this. I will ask you questions about what I find interesting, but we will mainly have informal conversations about food. I would like to offer my help in making the meals or any help you might need throughout

the day. The research will take place wherever you are and the time I spend with you is left entirely up to you to decide, based on how comfortable you feel.

I would like to record some of the questions I ask you, to listen to them later and write about them. I would also like to take photos of the food that you make, as they are interesting and will help my research project.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

You have been chosen to take part because you are a successful food vendor and an expert vendor.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

This study is completely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and withdraw at any time without any consequence whatsoever.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study, please feel free to contact:

Sapana Sewpersad: 0743206420 1078383@students.wits.ac.za

Julia Hornberger: (011) 717 4407 Julia.Hornberger@wits.ac.za

Njogu Morgan: 011 717 4294 njogumorgan@gmail.com

Consent Form

I agree to participate in a research project on street food titled: *Street kitchens and social lives: an ethnographic study of street food and eating practices in inner-city of Johannesburg*, conducted by Sapana Sewpersad.

I understand that:

- This research project is part of a course requirement for Sapana Sewpersad to complete her master's degree at the University of the Witwatersrand.
- My participation consists of a number of interviews and Sapana Sewpersad will be accompanying me in my day to day life from June to August.
- I am not required to answer any questions I do not wish to answer
- I may withdraw from the research at any time with no penalty to me
- The interview will be recorded. The only people that will listen to this recording include: the researcher, Sapana Sewpersad), and members of the History Workshop.
- This research will be presented in the form of a final paper, to be read by my supervisors and marker. My supervisors are Julia Hornberger and Njogu Morgan.
- The results of this research may also be presented in workshops or conferences
- The presentation of the research will not identify me in any way. My name, as well as any information which could identify me, will be taken out of all presentation of the research (conferences and final papers)

Signature of Participant	Signature of Researcher
_____	_____
Name of Participant (please print)	Name of Researcher (Please print)
_____	_____
Date: _____	Date: _____

If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study, please feel free to contact:

Julia Hornberger: (011) 717 4407	Njogu Morgan: 011 717 4294
Julia.Hornberger@wits.ac.za	njogumorgan@gmail.com

AUDIO TAPE CONSENT FORM

As part of our aim in offering a high-quality service, we have found it helpful to the work that people do with us to make recordings of sessions. Review of tapes usually furnishes us with more ideas that you might find helpful in your circumstances.

1. I / We consent to video/audio tapes being made of these sessions and to these tapes being used to aid the work of Sapana Sewpersad for her research report on street food titled: *Street kitchens and social lives: an ethnographic study of street food and eating practices in inner-city of Johannesburg*.
2. I / We consent to the excerpts from these recordings, or descriptions of them, being used by Sapana Sewpersad for the purposes of research. I / We understand that the Sapana Sewpersad will edit out from these recordings, or from descriptions of the recordings, as much identifying information as is possible.
3. On behalf of Sapana Sewpersad, I undertake that, in respect of any video/audio tapes made, every effort will be made to ensure professional confidentiality and that any use of video/audio tapes, or descriptions of video/audio tapes, will be for professional purposes only and in the interests of improving professional standards through research or training programmes. Every effort will be made to protect the anonymity of all those involved in the sessions.

Signature of Participant	Signature of Researcher
_____	_____
Name of Participant (please print)	Name of Researcher (Please print)
_____	_____
Date: _____	Date: _____

If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study, please feel free to contact:

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Julia.Hornberger@wits.ac.za

Njogu Morgan: 011 717 4294
njogumorgan@gmail.com

Photo Release Form

I hereby grant permission to *Sapana Sewpersad* to use photographs and/or video of me taken on_____ at _____, strictly for use in conjunction with research project on street food titled: *Street kitchens and social lives: an ethnographic study of street food and eating practices in inner-city of Johannesburg*.

- I understand that these pictures will not be distributed for any other work.
- I give permission for these pictures to be used solely for the research project.
- I give permission for these pictures to be used in the written report produced by this research project and any conference papers or additional work created from the research report
- I understand that I can withhold permission for using photos that I do not like.
- The photos that will be taken are strict of food and food-related practices and objects, such as utensils, menus, ingredients and food dishes

Signature of Participant	Signature of Researcher
_____	_____
Name of Participant (please print)	Name of Researcher (Please print)
_____	_____
Date: _____	Date: _____

If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study, please feel free to contact:

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