

**Treasures From the Earth:
Food as Nourishment for Body and Soul**

by
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Abstract

Treasures From the Earth: Food as Nourishment for Body and Soul

by Sarah D. Bergeson

The relationship to food, whether on an individual or societal basis, carries with it potential for nourishment on multiple levels. A mindful, healthy connection to the sourcing, preparation, serving, and enjoyment of food can become a catalyst for inner transformation, psychologically and physiologically. Utilizing hermeneutic methodology, this thesis explores food in relation to the soul by examining historical and cultural practices and beliefs about food. Various works of literature and the writings of culinary aficionados are discussed, giving examples of savoring food and receiving deep nourishment. In addition, a heuristic approach is undertaken to demonstrate the influence food has had on this researcher by recording personal reflections on her life and on literature that include memorable stories about the healing power of food. Depth psychological practices and theory may be positively impacted by the results of this research, due to the far-reaching implications for both mind and body.

Dedication

For my maternal grandmother, Geneva Magoon, who joyously welcomed me into her sunny, warm kitchen and satisfied my hungers so readily and consistently as a child. Fluffy pancakes on Saturday mornings; tuna sandwiches for lunch with plenty of chopped dill pickle, just the way I like it; buttery cinnamon coffee cake eaten with glee after a long day at school—these are a few examples of the ways she fed not just my body but my soul. She was my first model of the pleasure available through the preparation and gifting of food, sprinkled with the most important ingredient of all: love.

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Chapter I Introduction

Area of Interest

This thesis combines several topics related to food and psychology: the history of food as it has been utilized and understood in various cultures; the pathways, and sometimes blockades, by which the human body interacts with food to provide health and vitality; and lastly, the habits and practices that lead to a greater level of physical and psychological nourishment and well-being. All of humanity, throughout all of time, has relied on food for sustenance, but there is another level of understanding one can have toward food. Meal preparation, cooking, and eating do not have to be practiced solely for sustenance but can become a means of transformation—a way to understand oneself, individually, more fully; in addition, through an investigation of the collective experience of humanity, there is a way to bring greater nourishment, body and soul, to the world as a whole. This inquiry is informed by the field of depth psychology, which psychologist, scholar, and international lecturer James Hillman (1989) described as follows:

Depth psychology, the modern field whose interest is in the unconscious levels of the psyche—that is, the deeper meanings of the soul—is itself no modern term. *Depth* reverberates with a significance, echoing one of the first philosophers of antiquity. All depth psychology has already been summed up by this fragment of Heraclitus: “You could not discover the limits of the soul (*psyche*), even if you traveled every road to do so; such is the depth (*bathun*) of its meaning (*logos*).” Ever since Heraclitus brought soul and depth together in one formulation, the dimension of soul is depth (not breadth or height) and the dimension of our soul travel is downward. (p. 22)

I have been interested in the topic of food and nourishment for most of my life, always gravitating toward a desire to fully experience and savor the food I ate, obtaining more than relief of hunger from each meal; rather, I had a sense of being filled with love and gratitude. The sensory pleasures available through cooking and eating are vast, but psychological pleasure is equally valid, bringing with it the possibility for inner transformation and growth. This has been my experience time and time again and is part of the reason I am drawn to this topic. Food has never been just food to me; it has symbolized love and care for oneself and others, at times becoming almost magical in its power to inspire, soothe, and nurture. I have witnessed the opposite occur in other people's lives too, as the need to eat is seen as an encumbrance, or as I observe society on a grand scale gravitate toward foods that harm rather than heal. Refined sugar, such as high fructose corn syrup, is an example of this, and it is found as an ingredient in most food sold in grocery stores and served in restaurants (Shanahan, 2009, p. 227).

Another contributing factor in my choosing this thesis topic is my experience of having a child on the autism spectrum. This child also has epilepsy and food allergies. Ever since he was 3 months old, when his symptoms first began to show themselves, I have educated myself on health and nutrition. I wanted to find out if anything related to diet could help decrease or eliminate his symptoms. Although he still has health issues and is not cured, I have made changes in our household that contribute to greater well-being for him and the rest of my family. It is because of facing various health crisis situations related to my son through the years that I have taken the initiative to scour nutrition and psychology texts, searching for answers. As pieces of the puzzle were put together, I implemented a change here and another change there, all leading toward a

more holistic and nutrient-dense diet, largely free of overbearing toxins and antinutrients. This interest and drive led me to want to learn all I could about cooking, which increased my pleasure exponentially regarding all aspects of food preparation and feeding myself and those I care about with love and intention.

Guiding Purpose

With this research, I wish to shine a light on the benefits of valuing food—its preparation and enjoyment—as a means to heal and nurture on an individual and societal level. One of the primary resources for this research is the work of nutritionist and depth psychologist Susan Lee Guadarrama (2012), who gave an “overview of a spectrum of issues and problems arising from the many phases of the food cycle” (p. 338) as a way to reveal the possibility that there is not one part of the food cycle alone that is problematic; rather, all parts are interconnected and problems arise within each component (pp. 338-339). These issues affect people not just physically, but psychologically and spiritually as well.

Keeping in mind the quality of soul, or psyche, inherent in matter—including, but not limited to food, the human being, and the world as a whole—there is a need to recognize the way society has strayed from true nourishment and replaced it with artificiality, convenience, and emptiness (p. 9). Soul is described by Hillman (1975) as “that unknown component which makes meaning possible, turns events into experiences, is communicated in love, and has a religious concern” (p. 21). Guadarrama (2012), after compiling metaphorical quotes from various authors and thinkers about the need to recognize the malnourishment of the body and soul taking place on a societal level, said,

All of these metaphors describe a similar occurrence: loss of soul. The symptoms are showing up everywhere. No wonder journalist Michael Pollan claims we are

now experiencing a “national eating disorder” while Scientific American declares it has become a “world-wide epidemic!” Something needs to be done. This crisis is soul’s call for attention. (p. 22)

This thesis is my outward expression of a desire to face the soul’s call for attention.

Rationale

The worth of this thesis topic is evident as one looks at the cultural conversation taking place in the United States right now. There are media wars and factions regarding what proper nutrition looks like (Fallon, 2001, p. 2). The health of this nation is suffering as a result of poor eating habits (Guadarrama, 2012, p. 89). Depression, anxiety, ADHD, and autism spectrum disorder are on the rise (Gedgaudas, 2011, pp. 220-222, 236-239). Fast food and rushing through mealtime in general has become more accepted and normal than taking a long time to savor each meal in peace, leading to digestive upset and improper assimilation of nutrients as well as a disconnect from the pleasure available through thoughtful nourishing of the body and mind (David, 2005, pp. 2-3). There is ample reason to initiate or contribute to a recognition of the need for change in humanity’s relationship to food, as individuals as well as collectively.

This work will be a contribution to the field of counseling and depth psychology through the singular act of bringing it to the attention of the reader. Guadarrama (2012) wrote,

It is the work of the depth psychologists and others to usher in the transformation that will take place when deconstruction of our present social order occurs. The hard work is to put into place the new paradigm that has been envisioned and help make possible a new reality. When sacred imagination is invited back into the world, a greater-yet-to-be can be activated which is attuned to the infinite potentiality of the universe. (p. 95)

Paying attention to the soul of the world by looking at the culture’s relationship to food and how that is manifesting is in line with depth psychology’s goal of getting beyond the

surface layer to bring what is unclear and unknown to awareness, moving from blindness to seeing in truth. An example of this can be seen in Hillman's (1989) description of the purpose and function of symptoms. He said,

Because symptoms lead to soul, the cure of symptoms may also cure away soul, get rid of just what is beginning to show, at first tortured and crying for help, comfort, and love, but which is the soul in neurosis trying to make itself heard, trying to impress the stupid and stubborn mind—that impotent mule which insists on going its unchanging obstinate way. The right reaction to a symptom may as well be a welcoming rather than laments and demands for remedies, for the symptom is the first herald of an awakening psyche which will not tolerate any more abuse. Attention means attending to, tending, a certain tender care of, as well as waiting, pausing, listening. It takes a span of time and a tension of patience. Precisely what each symptom needs is time and tender care and attention. (pp. 18-19)

What lies beneath the tortured cries for help through the appearance of symptoms, as in the example above, is psyche's desire for wholeness and freedom. If one looks at symptoms on a surface level, without paying attention to what lies beneath and a patient desire to engage in the psychically oriented archeological dig to soul treasures, then an opportunity may be missed to bring health and wellness at a deep level.

Research Problem and Research Question

This research explores the relationship between food and psychoemotional functioning. Specifically, what are the psychological and spiritual issues related to everyday eating habits and practices? Psychotherapy has focused on food in relation to eating disorders but seems bereft with regard to one's relationship to food in the daily round. Depth psychology in particular is concerned with the way people think, act, and feel with "soul in mind" (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 4). Therefore, this research attempts to uncover how food is soulful as in "soul food" and soulless as in how food is consumed or neglected in an unconscious and habitual way. The research question is, What is the

relationship between psyche and food as it relates to nourishment, and neglect, of the soul?

Methodology

The methodology I use in this thesis is hermeneutic in its exploration of the meaning of food in relation to soul. Depth psychologist Robert Romanyshyn (2013) stated, “In the alchemical hermeneutic method, the researcher as witness attends to the flames without any premature concern about the results” (p. 228). Therefore, this research proceeds with “soul in mind” such that the researcher allows for unconscious material to emerge in an alchemical process of discovery (p. 4). A review of the literature includes cultural and religious studies in relation to the topic of nourishment through food. In light of being present to what the word and image present of themselves before becoming critically concerned with their meanings (p. 228), heuristic analysis is used to explore the researcher’s relationship to food as an intrapsychic and interpersonal phenomenon.

Ethical Concerns

The main ethical concern I have with regard to this thesis is that this topic may be too personal for me to be objective. My own need to share, and personalize, might eclipse the research; conversely, it may enhance the richness of the process. It will be important for me to stay aware of my own potential for bias, which may color and influence my writing and research.

Overview of Thesis

Chapter I outlined the reasons for my interest in this topic and the means by which I researched the connection between food and psychology and their relationship to

nourishment. Chapter II reviews literature focused on various aspects of understanding food as a means to greater connection with oneself, the world, and the psyche. The topics I explore are the history of food as seen through ancient culture up to the present day (Andrews, 2000; Giannini, 1983; Guadarrama, 2012; Kesten, 2007; Linn & Linn, 2012); the energetic components and properties of food (Gagné, 2008); the connection between mind and body, and how food plays a role in how these two interact (Campbell-McBride, 2010; David, 2005; Gedgudas, 2011); various practices that enhance the experience of eating (Harper, 1998; Kesten, 2001, 2007); and works of fiction and nonfiction that contain stories and anecdotes that relate to nourishment through food on a soul level (Besh, 2011; Florence, 2010; Frazier, 1997; Paltrow, 2011; Spyri, 1899/2000).

Chapter III synthesizes the findings and clinical applications related to food as psychological nourishment, bringing the thesis topic back to a depth psychological perspective from which to gain a more substantial and visionary level of understanding. In this chapter, I shed light on food history and culture, including a look at religious practices surrounding food (Andrews, 2000; Kesten, 2007). I look into the work of Weston A. Price, as understood by a depth psychologist, John Giannini (1983), and a researcher and catalyst for change, Sally Fallon (2001). The connection between the gut and psychology is expanded upon (Campbell-McBride, 2010; Gedgudas, 2011).

Although I include reflections about food, its preparation and enjoyment, from cooks and chefs as well as works of literature, there is also a heuristic portion to Chapter III in which I share my own personal memories and reflections about my evolving relationship with food. The end of Chapter III integrates the implications of this research

for depth psychologists and how they can make the connection between food, the soul, and depth psychology as a practice that can create momentum for change.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Overview

This thesis explores research from various psychological and nutritional sources pertaining to historical, cultural, and personal experiences with food that are then unified with the purpose of examining the thesis research question: What is the relationship between psyche and food as it relates to nourishment, and neglect, of the soul? Throughout history, there has been a recognition that food can serve as not only a physical but also a psychological form of nourishment. In the Old Testament, the story of Elijah and the angel comes to mind (I Kings 19:3-8, New King James Version). Elijah was weary and depressed, depleted and emotionally spent, wishing for his death. It was through the intervention of an angel providing food to him that he became deeply nourished. It was not just the food but the well-timed, loving care of the angel that fed his soul. The qualities of nurturance and care, combined with the living quality of food as nourishment, are addressed in this thesis as they relate to psychological, soul-centered well-being and what may be argued to be one of the most basic of human needs: unconditional love

The idea that food itself can provide psychological healing and nourishment has not been given a lot of attention within widely used evidence-based clinical approaches to psychology (Campbell-McBride, 2010; David, 1991; Medinform Publishing, 2012). The connection between mind and body, or more specifically the gut and brain, has more

research backing it than ever before (Campbell-McBride, 2010). Unfortunately, there is too often little to no focus on this with clients in many forms of psychotherapy (David, 1991; Gedgaudas, 2011; Medinform Publishing, 2012). The way in which food affects the mind is far-reaching and important, both for progress of treatment and the furthering of psychotherapy as a practice that pushes the boundaries of what leads to greater wholeness. This thesis explores the potential reality of food as psychological nourishment. Science has provided a wealth of information about how to better understand food as more than simply matter that is ingested for basic sustenance; food is a living form of nourishment that has transformative potential. As nutritional psychologist Marc David (1991) wrote,

We search for a way to eat that feels “right,” a nutrition that makes the body hum and the soul sing. This search begins when we admit we have little control over our habits, and that as eaters we can be so much more. We realize our relationship to food can serve as a vehicle through which we can learn about our relationship to life. (p. 6)

What one chooses to eat and drink, on a daily basis, and how one approaches the practice of eating, can determine how soulfully nourished one is as one moves through life.

The books and materials covered in this literature review delve into food as soul nourishment as well as physical nourishment. Traditional and ancestral societies had an intuitive sense about what would be healthy for the body and mind, as will be seen in various works that look into the history of nutrition (Giannini, 1983). The story of Elijah previously mentioned, as well as stories from works of fiction that show the power of well-timed nourishment through food, are explored. The work of psychologists and nutritionists who have tapped into the healing qualities of food, as a whole and also specifically in regards to certain foods, are looked at. Personal stories related to food as

nourishment, as well as a look into the process of cooking and the alchemical transformations that occur while engaging in that potentially artistic and meditative activity, are explored.

People and Food: Depth Psychological and Historical Perspectives

Nutritionist and depth psychologist Susan Lee Guadarrama (2012), in her book *The Alchemy of Food: From Soil to Soul*, explored the way food changes a person and the alchemy behind the entire process of eating. The history of food preparation and enjoyment and its evolution through revolutions of technology, from a depth psychological perspective focused on alchemy, is covered at length in her book. Alchemy, as defined by Guadarrama, is the “psychological process of individuation, in which a transformation takes place within a person who separates from the collective in order to develop into his full potential as a human being” (p. 4). Feasts, holidays, food rituals, and multiple examples of how to move toward wholeness through the enjoyment of food are illuminated. Guadarrama wrote,

When we view food as a path to the sacred and a bridge to the divine, then we as humans can use what we eat to help us in the process of becoming whole, reclaiming our Divine connection, and feeling at one with the Anima Mundi, the Soul of the World. (p. 27)

Making this connection between food and the soul of the world is important to this research topic, and is examined more thoroughly in Chapter III.

In the compendium *Money, Food, Drink, and Fashion and Analytic Training: Depth Dimensions of Physical Existence* (Beebe, 1983), the chapter “Nutrition, Degenerative Disease and Man’s Archetypal Producing and Eating Behavior,” by Jungian analyst John Giannini (1983), explored the work of Weston Price, a dentist who traveled the world in search of robust, healthy groups of people who did not struggle with

disease. His findings, described in other works, are elucidated in Chapter III as well, as his brilliant and informative findings have not been fully appreciated or put into practice by mainstream society. The implications of his research are vast and cover the connection of the mind to the body and its great potential to remain healthy and whole throughout the entire lifespan. Giannini looked at Price's work from a depth psychological perspective, specifically with regard to synchronicity as it relates to culture and eating practices, which is intriguing because this is not usually the lens through which Price's research has been studied. Giannini wrote,

Is it too far-fetched to go on to correlate spiritual and cultural health on the one hand and their degeneration on the other to a choice between indigenous diets and modern processed-food diets? Not if we take seriously the underlying order discussed by Jung, the total ecological unity that that order implies. The loss of the traditional diet began at least to break down the psyche-body-nature continuum that is characteristic of all integrally spiritual people. (p. 86)

This order, rooted in synchronicity, may be a key component to aligning with health and true nourishment. Giannini described synchronicity as

a lasting consciousness of a potential, consistent relationship of meaning among things, a commonly shared underlying, universal order between psyche and body felt within each person. It also supposes the possibility of a grounding, unifying continuum between each individual and the nurturing environment, a potential ordered meaningful rationality joining subject and object, person and cosmos. (pp. 82-83)

Ancient cultures related to food in profoundly mythical and depth-oriented ways that reveal the sacred quality of food at that time. *Nectar and Ambrosia: An Encyclopedia of Food in World Mythology* (Andrews, 2000) reveals food myths by culture and food functions, based on historical data. Salt, maple syrup, elderberries, coffee—a few examples of what is covered—are described from the vantage point of how these foods were perceived long ago. Healing qualities, as well as harmful properties, are explored.

Food means different things to different people. To some it means nothing more than physical satisfaction. People tend to forget that in the past, food provided an affirmation of God's presence. In myths, food symbolizes wealth and prosperity, fertility and renewal. It purifies poisons, incites passion, and grants fertility. It elevates the mind, facilitating communication with the gods. Sometimes it bestows immortality. (p. xiv)

Modern Cultural and Psychological Perspectives on People and Food

Modern culture has shifted away from the focus on food as magical, as compared with the ancient past. For some, though, food still has magical qualities that bring with it a sublime component of life that is not to be missed (Linn & Linn, 2012). *The Mystic Cookbook: The Secret Alchemy of Food*, by healer, lecturer, and writer Denise Linn and professional chef Meadow Linn (2012), is not just a cookbook but a guide into the sensory pleasure and spiritual ecstasy that can be experienced through a deep appreciation for and understanding of food and the mindset with which it is prepared, as a healing, nourishing aspect of the human experience.

On the deepest level, your soul knows what will serve and support your spiritual evolution, and for some people, cooking can fulfill a yearning that religion and even spiritual practice doesn't seem to fill. Of course, it's more than all right to cook because your family needs to eat or because you're hungry. These meals can be warm, loving, and fulfilling. But what we're talking about are the kind of cooking experiences where it seems time stands still and the cadence of the chopping, dicing, and stirring feels like a ceremonial dance of the gods. There are many reasons why people will be drawn to being a chef, but most certainly one of the reasons is because their soul is nudging them to do it. (p. 11)

Linn and Linn led the reader down a path toward gaining an intuitive sense of nourishment by understanding the unconscious relationship one has with food. This is possible by looking at one's secret beliefs, examining them, discarding the unhelpful ones, and replacing them with life-giving and nourishing beliefs. The reason for this is to understand how one's body believes the messages it is sent via the mind, which has numerous repercussions for health and wellness.

Food Energetics: The Spiritual, Emotional, and Nutritional Power of What We Eat, by Steve Gagné (2008), a natural health and nutrition counselor, is a wide-ranging source of information about all things food. Chapter III details the role of food as one's most intimate relationship, because what one eats become a part of the very living cells within the body (Moran, 1997). Gagné (2008) wrote,

The study of the energetics of food is in reality an exercise in intuition and natural instinct. It is not a “system” of classifying foods so much as a way of training yourself to recognize the reality of what is in front of you—what is on your plate, so to speak. It also is the study of self-knowledge, for the qualities of yourself are what you will naturally tend to seek in the foods you choose. You must be able to recognize what you are—or what you would like to be—in order to consciously recognize the foods that will nourish that. (p. 27)

He focused on choosing food from an intuitive mental space, understanding the energetics of all the different variations of food, from the egg to dairy to nuts and seeds to condiments and seasonings—all of these foods provide a certain energetic component that influences the body and mind. The chapters on the origins of agriculture and traditional ancestral diets are reminiscent of what is found in the research of Weston Price, which was mentioned earlier (Giannini, 1983).

Food and Mood: Soulful Eating

Nourishing Wisdom: A Mind-Body Approach to Nutrition and Well-Being (David, 1991) is one of the most important resources for this thesis research. This book catapults the reader into the realization that food is connected to mood, and mood is connected to food. The author, Marc David (1991), is a psychologist and nutritionist, and has combined his two passions to bring greater understanding to the way one's psychological state affects digestion and assimilation. How one thinks about food, for example—a certain food being good or bad—has direct consequences for the way the body responds

to that food. David pointed the reader in the direction of gaining a sense of what it means to truly nourish oneself, mind and body, through food. He wrote,

Placed within a spiritual context, the ultimate goal of any dietary philosophy is to take us fully into the body, and beyond the body. That is, by taking us fully into the body our dietary system must enable us to experience the maximum physical benefits of food—good health, the delight of eating, and the fulfillment of nutrient needs. By taking us fully beyond the body, our dietary philosophy must serve to remind us that we are feeding more than just a body. Nutrition not only keeps the body healthy and attractive, it maintains it as a vehicle in the service of the Divine. By nourishing the body with joy and reverence, we nourish the spark of life within the body. (p. 4)

There is a deeper layer of psychological and spiritual awareness that can be found through understanding one's relationship to food and nourishment, which David expanded upon within his book.

Also written by Marc David (2005), *The Slow Down Diet: Eating for Pleasure, Energy, and Weight Loss* describes the underutilized practice of eating slowly and mindfully. American culture speeds through nearly everything, including eating, and is not prone to sit down, chew thoroughly, and ponder what is being eaten, savoring each bite. Rather, a rushed experience, which inhibits digestion, physically, and satisfaction, psychologically, is the norm (p. 111). David detailed the ways in which this rushed experience with food leads to increased stress, both mentally and physically, and outlined a path by which to approach each meal calmly. He said,

Pleasure loves slow. It thrives in a warm, intimate, cozy space. It reveals its deepest secrets when we drop all pretensions of speed and allow timelessness and sensuality to breathe us back into each moment. The promise of speed—fast food, fast cars, fast service, fast results—has left us with a distinct blur of nothing. We can then compensate with “hard”—we work hard, we play hard, we die hard—which altogether leaves us feeling exhausted and stiff. We might develop hardening of the arteries, a hardened heart, tight joints, or bones that crush under the weight of a high-impact life. Pleasure is the essential antidote. (p. 107)

The Tao of Eating: Feeding Your Soul Through Everyday Experiences With Food,

by clinical psychologist Linda Harper (1998), guides one through the transformative journey of developing a soulful relationship with food. Harper wrote,

In the typical paradoxical fashion of the soul, the soul of food is simple, yet complex; obvious, yet mysterious; and individual, yet universal. . . . The soul of food can be observed in its obvious role at the celebrations of our lives, such as a birthday party with cake and ice cream, a special dinner honoring an anniversary, and the special meals and treats attached to the holidays. . . . You may experience the soul of popcorn at the movies, and the pleasure of refreshing lemonade at a picnic or sporting event on a hot summer's day. . . . A universal, yet highly individual expression of the soul of food is its ability to comfort. Food has the capacity to soothe and console. Its ability to comfort may come from a memory, an association, a texture, a social pleasure, or for an unexplainable reason. (pp. 163-164)

Harper's wish is that dieting, focused on restraint and repression, be discarded and an intuitive, authentic, deeply personal investigation of what one truly desires and longs for takes its place. In making this shift, one gains assertiveness and awareness within oneself regarding when to eat, when not to eat, what to eat, and having all of those decisions be acceptable and warranted. She provided various exercises to personalize one's eating experience, as well as daily reminders and affirmations to help bolster a healthy relationship with nourishment through food.

Food and Transformation: Imagery and Symbolism of Eating, by analytical psychologist Eve Jackson (1996), contains a wealth of information regarding the effect of regularly eating with others, which has been in decline in recent years, and the positive benefits of regaining that tradition, on a familial as well as communal basis. The process of assimilation, from the mouth to swallowing to the gut, all the way down to elimination, is described in detail from a physical and depth psychological perspective, looking at

metaphors and psychological truths that underpin these processes. For example, Jackson described the psychological and physical parallels regarding assimilation:

The process of analysis is in large part one of assimilating unconscious contents, something that necessarily happens slowly. To chew thoroughly is also to savor, to get the maximum of flavor as well as food value. At this stage the food lingers in at least partial consciousness before disappearing down the throat into the hidden realm below. (p. 104)

Nutrition journalist, researcher, and lecturer Deborah Kesten (2001), in her book, *The Healing Secrets of Food: A Practical Guide for Nourishing Body, Mind, and Soul*, delved into the multitude of ways food has the capacity to heal. Socializing, understanding feelings associated with food and meal time, mindfulness, appreciation, connection, choosing optimal foods, having a meal meditation, and understanding nutrition from a holistic, integrative point of view are elucidated. Describing the soul of food, Kesten wrote,

How does the “oxygen line” of mindfulness heal the soul? Consider how a magnifying glass can focus the sun’s rays. If you take a magnifying glass out into the sunlight and hold it so that it catches the rays directly, it will concentrate the light into such an intense point of light that it can actually burn a hole through paper. Mindfulness works the same way. When you gather your thoughts and focus your attention on one point of thought, action, or the food before you, you ignite insight, wisdom, and healing energy. In this way, your one-pointed attention to each aspect of the meal allows you to meet and therefore heal the deepest parts of your being. (p. 74)

In addition to describing how to relish the healing qualities inherent in the enjoyment of food, Kesten outlined the beginning of food–mood research, describing how the connection between the two was originally made through scientific study related to sugar and starch boosting serotonin (p. 61). This was groundbreaking during the 1970s and paved the way for the field of nutrition to grow exponentially.

Kesten's (2007) book, *Feeding the Body, Nourishing the Soul: Essentials of Eating for Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Well-Being*, travels the labyrinth of the traditions associated with various religious and cultural practices. Judaism, Christianity, African roots, Yogic nutrition, Islam, Buddhism, Chinese and Japanese, Native American, and Hindu practices are discussed. For example, in the chapter on "African Roots: American Soul Food," Kesten wrote,

Just "doing it"—making your own soul-satisfying food—calls for tapping into what we've learned from the oral teachings of African American mothers and grandmothers over the centuries. What follows is a synthesis of key concepts you'll need to capture the essence of soul food cooking in your kitchen. Of course, they're "recipeless." This is because the most important ingredients are not the foods in the dish, but the heartfelt attitude and loving intention you mix into the meal you make. (p. 55)

This book serves as a rich historical background to how food has been viewed throughout history, as associated with various spiritual rituals and traditions. Kesten wove psychology, science, and spirituality into a beautiful tapestry that one can work with and implement as a personalized ritualistic practice.

How Food Feeds the Brain: Further Psychological Reflections

Primal Body, Primal Mind: Beyond the Paleo Diet for Total Health and a Longer Life, by nutritionist, speaker, and educator Nora Gedgaudas (2011), includes chapters on feeding the brain in an optimal way and why this matters. Gedgaudas wrote other chapters on ADHD, depression, and anxiety, the symptoms of which can be seriously diminished through a specific diet of certain nutrients the body needs to thrive and heal. This book serves as a transition into the next two resources, *Gut and Psychology Syndrome* (Campbell-McBride, 2010) and *GAPS Stories: Personal Accounts of Improvement and Recovery Through the GAPS Nutritional Protocol* (Medinform

Publishing, 2012). These books are potentially crucial pieces of the puzzle of improved mental health for those struggling with autism, dyspraxia, ADD, dyslexia, ADHD, depression, and schizophrenia. The premise behind the GAPS diet is that if the gut is in poor health, such as is the case with leaky gut syndrome (intestinal permeability), in which food particles are filtered directly into the blood stream as opposed to being digested and assimilated appropriately by the intestines, then physical as well as mental disturbance can often result.

Nutritionist Natasha Campbell-McBride (2010) wrote about the way in which diseases begin in the gut, the gut–brain connection, and how many diseases can be healed through proper nutrition as outlined in the rest of the book. This piece of writing, along with the companion book, *GAPS Stories* (Medinform Publishing, 2012), which provides story after story of success with the diet healing various mental disturbances, is a progressive and important piece of the puzzle for the field of psychology. If therapists and psychologists ignore the physiological effects of food on the body and brain, there is much less of a chance for total well-being and healing to be realized.

Food in Literature and Memoir

From the point of view of works of fiction, *Heidi* (Spyri, 1899/2000) and *Cold Mountain* (Frazier, 1997) are explored in Chapter IV in relation to soul nourishment and rejuvenation through a well-timed meal given to those in great need. These stories bring life and vitality to the subject matter by gaining a glimpse, in an imaginative, visual way, to the moving, poignant moments of true soul nourishment through food. Several cookbooks are utilized in Chapter III as well, as their description of cooking with soul is important for this thesis research. For example, in *My Family Table: A Passionate Plea*

for Home Cooking (2011), author and chef John Besh, reflecting on Sunday morning breakfast with his boys, wrote,

For this morning ritual I feed them a fine Southern breakfast, hoping to nourish their souls as well as their bodies. Sure there are healthier options, but opening a box of cereal—whole-grain, organic, or whatever—demands no sense of commitment; it doesn't engender memories. Yogurt might be a better source of protein, but does it feed the imagination like a fluffy stack of pancakes can? Instead, I choose the route of stone-milled grits and fresh eggs from our chicken coop, often cooked in the fat of our own bacon, stored, like my grandmother's, in a jar near the stove. (p. 100)

Food preparation carries with it great meaning and purpose when done with love. As is shown in Chapter III, it is through the descriptions of fictionalized characters in works of literature as well as true stories and memories written by food lovers and chefs that the degree of awe, fulfillment, and joy that can come from the entire experience of eating—from food selection, to preparation, to serving, and then savoring—may be clearly visualized.

In addition to the previously mentioned books, there are two different depth psychological thesis projects that are used as part of the research for Chapter III. *From the Night Kitchen to the Round Table: A Woman's Quest for Nourishment and Connection* (Hickman, 2013) is a beautifully written memoir that connects the longing for nourishment in relation to one's mother, the first relationship a human being has, with how that longing can manifest in one's relationship with food as a secondary source of nourishment. *A Depth Psychological Study of the Cooking Process: Archetypal Images of Body Wisdom* (Paini, 2001) explores the medium of cooking as a transformative process. This correlates with the deep sense of nourishment through food that this thesis hopes to uncover and journey into.

Summary

There is a wealth of information on the topic of nourishment through food, but my focus is on connecting the nourishing aspect not simply to the physical but also to the psychological health and well-being of an individual. Looking at nourishment through food as emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual, rooted in a psychological framework and also the science of nutritional therapy, gives greater opportunity for an integrative, holistic view of healing (David, 1991; Kesten, 2001, 2007). The practice of psychotherapy does not usually include such a thorough assessment and grasp of nutritive nourishment, but in the next chapter it is argued that that needs to be challenged and overcome. This chapter looked into the way food enriches one's life as ritual, magic, relationship, and nourishment of mind and body (Andrews, 2000; Harper, 1998; Linn & Linn, 2014; Moran, 1997). From a depth psychological perspective, eating and digestion were compared to the analytical process that occurs within therapy (Jackson, 1996). Synchronicity in ancestral and traditional cultures was witnessed as eating practices were uncovered (Giannini, 1983). Finally, this chapter brought into awareness the way one's earliest relationship with mother may symbolize, or carry over, into one's relationship with food (Hickman, 2013). Looking ahead, Chapter III examines what might lead a person closer to nourishment with a capital N. When one goes through the motions of eating or chooses unhealthy options that cause a decline in health and longevity, rich opportunities are missed for the life-giving properties that a delicious, intuitively chosen, mindfully prepared and eaten meal has to offer.

Chapter III Integration

Overview

Chapter II reviewed various works of literature pertaining to food as nourishment for the body and soul. Topics included the history of the perception of food in culture (Andrews, 2000; Giannini, 1983; Guadarrama, 2012; Kesten, 2007), the psychology behind the nourishing potential found in the practice of food preparation enjoyment (David, 1991, 2005; Gagné, 2008; Harper, 1998; Kesten, 2001; Linn & Linn, 2012; Moran, 1997), the connection between the gut and psychological health (Campbell-McBride, 2010; David, 2005; Gedgaudas, 2011; Medinform Publishing, 2012), a depth perspective of the history of food in culture and the process of eating and digestion (Giannini, 1983; Guadarrama, 2012; Jackson, 1996), works of literature that, through story, portray the healing virtues of a meal given in love (Frazier, 1997; King James Bible; Spyri, 1899/2000), and personal stories and reflections on food from cookbooks and memoirs (Florence, 2010; Hickman, 2013; Paltrow, 2011; Wizenberg, 2009).

In Chapter III, I bring these topics together with the purpose of addressing the relationship between psyche and food as it relates to nourishment, and neglect, of the soul. This integration pulls from the literature explored in Chapter II; literature pertaining to potential avenues of nourishment is not based on external gratification but from a wellspring within (Hawkins, 2003, 2012; Roth, 1991, 2004). In examining my own experience with food as physical and soul nourishment as well as the potential fallacies

that lie nestled in sensate reality, I aim toward illuminating the potential for a true and lasting fulfillment that a cursory enjoyment of food can only provide a momentary glimpse of.

In this chapter, I explore my personal relationship with food and how it has evolved over time, including while I was in graduate school pursuing a master's degree. I use my own experience as an example of how one's perception and experience of food can change over time, particularly as psychological healing manifests and mindfulness increases. I then bridge personal experience to a greater awareness of how psychotherapists may utilize the information researched to add rich, untapped layers of psychologically potent material in a clinical setting. Human beings are diverse and multidimensional; any opportunity to expand one's awareness and knowledge about all things human can benefit the effectiveness of treatment and outcome. Such a seemingly benign, everyday occurrence as eating actually carries with it the potential for much greater illumination into one's own life, as will be seen in a personal examination of my own process of moving toward wholeness.

Food History and Culture, Including a Depth Perspective

The history of food in culture is a fascinating study, rich with mythology and symbolism. People living in ancient civilizations did not have awareness about nutrients, digestive processes, and physical health from a scientific point of view that human beings now have. They relied on their intuition and experiences with food in order to discover and determine what is best to eat and when it is best to eat it (Andrews, 2000, p. xiv). Tamra Andrews (2000), an author and researcher specializing in the myths and symbolism of food, wrote, "Early people were preoccupied with food; they considered it

a gift from the gods, and as such, the most auspicious offering” (p. xiii). Myths and legends were a regular part of the lives of ancients, as can be seen in the sacred texts of the Hindus and other religious writings that were created in prehistory (p. xiii), and this extended to their relationship with food as well.

Because they deeply believed that gods and spirits controlled the fertility of the earth, they viewed foodstuffs too as sacred and full of spirit. These ancients spun myths around these spirits to tap into their powers, and they left them offerings of food to ensure that these spirits would act benevolently toward humans and continue to provide. . . . What powers these deities and their sacred foodstuffs possessed! . . . The ancients searched for magic in food just as they did in every other element of their world. (p. xiv)

Cinnamon was viewed in ancient myths as a “celestial seasoning, a spice that grew in the sky” and was associated with immortality (Andrews, 2000, p. 65). Honey was considered a “divine substance” or “heavenly dew” and was the first sweetener used in food and drink preparation (pp. 116-117). It has widespread usage in religious ritual and ancient mythology as a purifying agent, but also as a “love charm, curative, preservative, and offering to the dead” (p. 117). Elderberries have a long history of association with evil spirits and bad omens, particularly in Great Britain (p. 87). “Some people believed that burning elder wood would bewitch them, or that sleeping under an elder tree would cause them to dream of death” (p. 87). Taking an alternative view, people inhabiting Scotland believed the elder tree drove evil spirits away (p. 89). As can be seen, food was more than sustenance; it was a means of connection with the divine.

As ancient mythology morphed into the religions of today through a long cultural evolution, the practice of attributing meaning and divinity to food ritual and preparation has not diminished. Judaism values eating kosher, which is in line with the dietary guidelines of the Hebrew bible (Kesten, 2007, p. 15); there are some who believe meat

should be avoided altogether as it would “reflect a sanctity of all life and show compassion” (p. 16). Kesten (2007) summarized the view of food through the lens of Judaism as sharing a “common tenet: that all food should be savored with a sense of holiness . . . an opportunity to connect with God” (p. 16).

Buddhism focuses on mindfulness as a meditative practice that includes food preparation and enjoyment (Kesten, 2007, p. 89). Kesten (2007) added,

Abbot John Daido Looi tells the story of a cook in Nelson, New Zealand, who once prepared the meals during an intensive meditation retreat. “Most of you know how I feel about modern vegetarian food,” he says. “It seems bland and lacking any vitality. [But] this guy’s cooking is absolutely exquisite, the tastiest vegetarian cooking I’ve ever had in my life.”

The secret? The way the cook regarded the food. “He handles those cabbage leaves as if they were his children,” says Daido Looi. “He handles them with loving kindness, with intimacy, with joy, and with a profound respect.” By preparing food with “wisdom, compassion, love—we *eat* [emphasis added] wisdom, compassion, love,” he says. “It nourishes us, we in turn nourish each other and return it to . . . whence it came.” (p. 97)

Native American, Hindu, Islam, Chinese, and Japanese religious beliefs and contexts each contain their own understanding and practice regarding food, which then influences the culture these religions are practiced in. Once again, as in ancient mythology, the connection to the divine, whether within the self or found outside the self, is a foundational principle inherent to these beliefs and practices.

Shifting to a depth psychological viewpoint, various authors have explored the work of Weston A. Price, a dentist who wanted to find the healthiest civilizations in the world, free of dental caries (cavities) and disease. Price then studied these civilizations’ diets, which revealed a crosscultural synchronistic quality to food choices (Giannini, 1983). Synchronicity, as defined by analytical psychology founder Carl Jung (1952/1969), is “the simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more

external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state—and, in certain cases, vice versa” (p. 441 [CW 8, para. 850]). During the 1930s, Price studied the mountain people in the Loetschental valley of Switzerland, the Gaelics in the outer and inner Hebrides, the Eskimos in Alaska, the American Indians in the western and northwestern United States, the Lalanians and Polynesians, tribes in Eastern and Central Africa, the Aborigines of Australia, Malayan tribes on the islands north of Australia, and ancient civilizations and their descendants in the Amazon basin of Peru (Giannini, 1983, p. 85). Price’s discovery was that the closer these civilizations kept to their traditional diet, the healthier they were (p. 86). His work was groundbreaking at the time but was not recognized as such until more recently, when nutritional researcher and pioneer Sally Fallon (2001) wrote about Price in her book, *Nourishing Traditions*. Giannini (1983) explained that “when the tribes or people subsisted on their indigenous diet, they were practically free of dental caries; showed no facial deformities; lacked evidence of degenerative diseases; and had little incidence of birth defects” (p. 86). It was through the introduction of modern foods such as highly refined sugars, refined flours, canned goods, vegetable fats, and polished rice that health concerns, including dental caries, began to increase (p. 86).

At the same time that this is interesting to consider from a nutritional health perspective, Giannini (1983) wrote about the possibility of synchronicity at work in the maintenance of healthy societies when intuition regarding food choice is practiced. He explained,

A new attitude is available to us when we focus on synchronicity as a principle. I call it the synchronistic attitude, an attitude which is shaped not so much by particular coincidental events but rather by the potential general acausal orderedness and meaning which make these events possible. This attitude

includes a sense of wonder and trust, a kind of spiritual sensitivity to the ecological reality that underlies phenomena. Thus the pervasive pattern in primitive societies and in the great religions to treat food as sacred, as sacramental. (p. 84)

Expanding further about the healthy cultures Price studied and the plethora of similarities he found within the specific nutrient content of their diets, Giannini wrote,

They had at the same time, found another connection with the inner pulse of our existence, the ecological web of health, wholeness and holiness that has been variously called The Great Spirit, the Providence of God, the Body of Christ, the Great Tao. Jung called it the synchronicity principle. . . . Following it, human beings find harmony not just in synchronistic events and generally social situations, but specifically in their use and reverence for food. (p. 89)

Giannini summarized his article by calling for a greater conscious connection to and respect for the laws of nature, urging people to abide by them (p. 94). He said the cultures that ate according to their tradition were uninfluenced by man's "egoistic hubris" (p. 94); once that entered the daily practices of eating everything went downhill, as can be seen in modern culture today.

In contrast to the traditional peoples Price studied, Westernized culture has become addicted to fast-paced eating, often focused on flavor and immediate gratification (David, 2005, p. 2). Nutrient content has been diminished and chemicals have infiltrated the food supply in greater quantity than at any other time in history (Gedgaudas, 2011, p. 295). Fast-paced eating creates digestive distress that inhibits vital nutrients from being absorbed into the body, which doubles the impact of eating foods already less likely to nourish at a qualitatively beneficial level (David, 2005, pp. 20-21). McDonald's, one of a multitude of fast-food chain restaurants, has catered to the more gluttonous aspects of the psyche by providing immediate flavor and fullness gratification at a low cost. Ronald McDonald, the inventive character created to "lure the children . . . much like the witch in

Hansel and Gretel does with her house made out of candy” (Guadarrama, 2012, p. 86), along with the Happy Meal, has created generations of children who keep coming back for more even though the food they are eating is largely devoid of nutrients and contains chemicals substituting as real food (p. 66).

As a depth psychotherapist in training, I have interest in tending to the soul of the world, as the Pacifica Graduate Institute motto, *anima mundi colendae gratia*, states. Individuals are a part of the soul of the world, but there is a larger, collective soul to be taken into account as well. Guadarrama (2012), providing a glimmer of hope for change, wrote,

The negative aspects of the American fast food industry are a collective shadow that all in America needs to face and acknowledge in order for change to begin. It is part of the alchemical process. One of the shining lights on the horizon of hope is Carlo Petrini. He started the “Slow Food” movement in his hometown of Rome, Italy in response to McDonald’s franchise moving onto the Spanish Steps. The Slow Food philosophy is founded on the concept of “eco-gastronomy,” recognition of the strong connections between plate and planet. From a depth psychological perspective, “slow” is an aspect of soul. . . . Petrini’s organization was formed to preserve and honor the bio-diversity of food and life; to slow down from the rapid pace that globalization, technology, and fast food has implanted into the lives of people today who are hurting from the result of the pace and the food being produced and then eaten. (pp. 92-93)

Through the writings of people such as Fallon (2001), author of the previously mentioned book *Nourishing Traditions*, and the passionate leadership of Carlo Petrini in the Slow Food movement, there is a growing trend toward conscious eating. People are becoming more aware of the emptiness of fake, processed food, and are choosing to prefer more nutrient-dense food. This shift contributes to the well-being of the soul of the world, as its inhabitants become more nourished and deeply connected to their own bodies and souls.

The Connection Between the Gut and Psychological Well-Being

The connection between the gut, or digestive system, and psyche has become less apparent throughout the past century as Western medicine has sought to break things down into reductionistic parts that have no affiliation. There are brain surgeons, gastrointestinal surgeons, heart surgeons, orthopedic surgeons; specialty reigns supreme in the medical sciences. Bringing the mind and body together with a holistic view of health care is now becoming the practice of holistic health care practitioners such as osteopaths, nutritional therapy practitioners, naturopathic doctors, and other practitioners of alternative modalities. Gedgaudas (2011) explained,

The myth, of course, is that there is a real distinction between body and mind. There is, in fact, no fundamental separation between mind and body. . . . You cannot have healthy cognitive or psychological functioning without a healthy, properly nourished body. . . . The best psychotherapy, brain training, or medication cannot put a nutrient there that is not there or remove some damaging substance that doesn't belong. They cannot even begin to compensate for poor dietary tendencies. (p. 220)

Further explaining the physiological connection between mind and body, she wrote,

Furthermore, all neurotransmitters and neuropeptides have receptors that exist in literally every organ and system in the body. Of the almost three hundred internal communication substances, nearly all are shared throughout the entire body and are anything but unique to the brain. Even neurons are not unique to the brain; they exist in abundance elsewhere in the body. (p. 221)

Taking into account the reality that physical nourishment is needed for optimal psychological functioning, it makes sense to look at how nourishment happens on a cellular level.

Nowhere else in the body is of as key importance as the digestive system for assimilation of all the nutrients in food (Gedgaudas, 2009, p. 54). Hundreds of years ago, Hippocrates (460-370 BCE) said, "All diseases begin in the gut" (as cited in Campbell-

McBride, 2010, p. 9). Campbell-McBride (2010) made a similar case in her book, *Gut and Psychology Syndrome*. Describing why the gut is a crucial piece of the puzzle for optimal health, particularly the beneficial bacteria or gut flora the human body needs an abundance of in order to digest food properly, she wrote,

Without well-functioning gut flora the gut wall not only becomes unprotected, but also malnourished. Normal gut flora provides a major source of energy and nourishment for the cells which are lining the digestive tract. The beneficial bacteria living on the gut epithelium digest the food which comes along, converting it into nourishing substances for the gut lining. In fact it is estimated that gut epithelium derives 60-70% of its energy from bacterial activity. When the gut flora is compromised, the lack of nourishment it would produce adds to the damage of the digestive wall. This sets up a chain of degenerative changes in the digestive wall structure, which would further impair its ability to digest and absorb nutrients. (p. 17)

She went on to describe how antibiotics, sugary foods, processed carbohydrates, stress, pollution, and exposure to toxic substances, which are found in abundance in the food supply and in the environment, all contribute to damaging gut flora. The remedy, she believed, is found in adopting a diet similar to the traditional diets that Price (2008) outlined in his book, *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*, after examining healthy cultures and their eating habits. Repairing the gut lining so that it is permeated with good bacteria and therefore able to assimilate nutrients into the body is of paramount importance.

Also important to the process of digestion is the psychological state in which one eats. If people are rushed and shoveling food into their mouths, unaware of what they are eating and how their stress is affecting digestion, or lack thereof, they usually end up feeling dissatisfied and ready for another meal soon after or perhaps bloated with an upset stomach (Kesten, 2001, p. 79). In contrast to this, a mindful eating practice aids proper

assimilation of nutrients and also emotional satisfaction from thoroughly enjoying the process. David (1991) explained,

Giving attention to eating is the most fundamental level of healing we can reach in our relationship to food. It is also the most rewarding. Experiencing the body brings unimaginable joy and satisfaction, sometimes quiet and subdued, at other times ecstatic and uninhibited. If you eat, you owe it to yourself to experience what you eat. (p. 135)

Healing the digestive system on a physiological level combined with mindful eating seem to be two active steps to take if one desires to move toward greater nourishment of mind and body through one's relationship to food.

Reflections From Food Lovers

Cookbooks written these days are not just books filled with pages and pages of recipes; usually, each recipe has a paragraph or two above it that describes the story behind its creation. Sometimes there are whole chapter introductions that set the stage for the theme of the next chapter, offering insights into the feelings, textures, meaningful history, and intangible qualities of tenderness that come with each recipe reflection. Often there is a sense of awe and enjoyment that is transmitted from author to reader in the descriptions.

Actor Gwyneth Paltrow (2011), in her cookbook, *My Father's Daughter*, warmly remembered her father and his way of being with food:

I always feel closest to my father, who was the love of my life until his death in 2002, when I am in the kitchen. I can still hear him over my shoulder, heckling me, telling me to be careful with my knife, moaning with pleasure over a bite of something in the way only a Jew from Long Island can, his shoulders doing most of the talking. I will never forget how concentrated he looked in the kitchen; it almost looked like a grimace or a frown if you didn't know him. He practiced incredible care and precision when he was preparing food. It was as if the deliciousness of the food would convey the love he felt in direct proportion.

Reading through her cookbook, one can easily sense the lasting legacy of the love he had for cooking for those he loved. Here she described his pancake skills—the food preparation but also the way he infused love into the batter.

My father was a master pancake maker. To the point that anyone who ever tried them would vouch that they were the best they had ever had. They still will to this day. They were thin, and light, and had that perfect subtle tang from fresh buttermilk. The pancake making started as a casual weekend breakfast thing and became a ritual. He became obsessed with perfecting them, eventually making the batter the night before as he was convinced it had some discreet effect on the outcome. Not only would we, his children and wife, delight in the taste of those mini stacks with warmed up maple syrup, but our extended family of friends would as well, the size of the group often swelling to twenty or so. I think he started to feel the impact of making people so content and relaxed and sated with those pancakes. He was, after all, the most loving and nurturing of all men. (p. 14)

He embodied two skill sets, which make for the most enjoyable of food experiences: a high level of culinary expertise for a home cook and an awareness that there is more to cooking than food preparation—there is also, as she described, the “magic that is created when you imbue food with energy and nurturing” (p. 15).

Besh (2011) wrote about the difference between cooking in restaurants, as part of his career, and preparing meals for loved ones at home.

Sunday suppers are my escape. I lose myself in cooking. I hide away from the world among my little boys—their kitchen chatter works magic to transport me far away from the pressures of work. On Sundays, I cook for myself in totally different ways than in my restaurants. It becomes purely a cooking of the heart. I assign each of the boys a kitchen task, and I wish I could describe the joyful feeling of everything being right with the world (if only for a few minutes) as I look over my shoulder and see Brendan slicing an onion (properly!), or Drew Drew peeling garlic, or Jack kneading dough, or Luke carefully measuring ingredients, or Jenifer relaxing for a change, just sipping a glass of wine. (p. 34)

Chef Tyler Florence (2010) wrote a cookbook dedicated to the family meal. In the two-page spread describing the backstory of the chocolate chip pancake recipe, with beautiful pictures of him and his 3-year-old son cooking together included, he said,

The way I see it, my kitchen is a sanctuary of nourishment and discovery, full of warm smells, flavors, and experiences that will hopefully bake into a memory that will last my children a lifetime. To see a smile on Hayden's face as we cook together is all I need to remind me that it's my turn to teach the next generation that we're all important, we're all connected, and we care for each other—and in our house, we do it through food. (p. 11)

Molly Wizenberg (2009), a foodie if there ever was one, grew up with parents who loved to cook. That love filtered down to Molly, and she took it to another level, creating a food blog that grew to such popularity she was offered a book deal. Then she and her husband opened a restaurant in Seattle and wrote another book about the process involved with that endeavor. Describing her history with food, she wrote,

Like most people who love to cook, I like the tangible things. I like the way the knife claps when it meets the cutting board. I like the haze of sweet air that hovers over a hot cake as it sits, cooling, on the counter. I like the way a strip of orange peel looks on an empty plate. But what I like even more are the intangible things: the familiar voices that fall out of the folds of an old cookbook, or the scenes that replay like a film reel across my kitchen wall. When we fall in love with a certain dish, I think that's what we're often responding to: that something else behind the fork or the spoon, the familiar story that food tells. (pp. 2-3)

What Wizenberg wrote resonates with my own personal experiences with food and the development of the love of all things cooking and nourishment. There is an intangible quality to food prepared with consciousness and the intention to enjoy, savor, and love.

Personal Reflections

As a child, I had the tendency to equate a meal prepared for me with love. Not just any kind of love—pure, unadulterated love that offers, sacrifices, and nurtures. I took it very seriously when served a meal, intuiting the love with which it was prepared. In my childish state, that intuition may have been filled with more storytelling than would occur now, since I have grown, but I remember well how loved and nurtured I felt when a real, home-cooked meal was made for me.

As an adult, I loved to eat but did not know how to cook as well as I wished. It took 10 years, at least, of watching Food Network television shows and practicing the meals prepared in each episode, along with making plenty of mistakes and correcting or altering things the next time around, for me to learn how to cook well. Now that I know a fair amount about a variety of foods and how to cook them, I find that intuition, creativity, and spontaneity are able to spring forth more readily during the cooking process. It begins with the entrance into my den, where all my cookbooks are displayed on a center bookshelf. These books are my treasures. Each one offers the chance to experience new tastes and textures or to remember and savor favorites that have never gotten old. I pull cookbooks off the shelf and study the pictures and descriptions, connecting what I see in each recipe with what I remember happens to be stored in the pantry and refrigerator. If I have the ingredients, time, and inclination, then I dive into the process. This is where my creativity soars. The chopping, blending, sauteeing, simmering, the tastes along the way, the textures, colors, and scents that permeate the kitchen, quickly spreading throughout the whole house, become an intoxicating, indulgent exercise in self-love. I prepare a meal for myself with the same level of love and attention as I do when I cook for my family or a larger crowd. If I am stressed, I find that cooking provides a meditative atmosphere to center myself and focus on the task at hand. In the end, I get to enjoy a treat—whatever I have prepared. It does not get much better than that. Every time I cook or eat, it is an opportunity to experience the intangible quality of divine connection with soul and spirit, eventually becoming a part of the physical body as the meal is slowly savored, bite after bite. There are few things that offer as much sensory and spiritual pleasure as cooking and eating.

Findings in Literature: Food as Nourishment

What first drew me to research food as nourishment was the reaction I had whenever I came across stories involving food lovingly prepared and offered to a weak, hungry person. I was intensely moved by the generosity of the offering, but also the physical and emotional satiation that came from partaking of the offering. This can be seen in the story of Inman and the old woman in *Cold Mountain* (Frazier, 1997). Inman, a wounded soldier on his way home, traveling through barren landscapes and finding trouble at seemingly every turn, came upon an old woman who unexpectedly and graciously tended to his needs. This woman had goats and knew how to fend for herself from the land, so she had enough at her fingertips to provide for Inman's immediate needs. After she sacrificed one of her goats for their meal, she began to lovingly prepare the nourishment Inman's body so desperately needed.

The tenderest pieces she coated with a dry rub of herbs, ground peppers, salt, a little sugar. These she skewered on green twigs and set to roast. The other pieces she put into an iron pot with water, onions, an entire bulb of garlic, five dried red peppers, leaves of sage, and summer savory scrubbed between her palms. The pot had little legs, and she took a stick and scraped coals under it for slow cooking. —In a little bit I'll put us some white beans in there and by dinner time we'll have some good eating, she said. (pp. 268-269)

I can almost feel the love being poured out in this meal preparation. She knew that Inman was depleted, mind and body, and she wanted to restore hope and vitality to him through this meal and the care with which it was prepared.

Inman watched the woman cook. She was frying flatbread from cornmeal batter in a skillet over the one stove lid. She dipped out batter into sputtering lard and cooked piece after piece. When she had a tall stack in a plate, she folded a flap of the bread around a piece of roast goat and handed it to Inman. The bread was shiny with lard and the meat was deep reddish brown from the fire and the rub of spices.

—Thank you, Inman said.

He ate so fast that the woman just handed him a plate of meat and bread and let him fold his own. While he ate, she swapped the skillet for a pot and began making cheese from goat milk. . . . While she worked, Inman kept having to move his feet to keep them out of her way. They had little to say to each other, for she was busy and Inman was eating with great concentration. (Frazier, 1997, p. 270)

I can see Inman now, in my mind's eye, watching the old woman fry, dip, and stack her creations while he anticipates not only the tastes and textures that will soon be his to experience, but also the longed-for sensation of fullness to replace the lack and hunger he has known for so long by this point. Something within me, as the reader, begins to feel satiated as well, as I imagine his fulfillment. There is more going on here than physical satisfaction, as will be seen further on.

He looked at her in the eyes and was surprised to find that they were wells of kindness despite all her hard talk. Not a soul he had met in some time drew him out as this goatwoman did, and so he told her what was in her heart. (p. 276)

Inman's heart was now open to see the tenderness of another, after being cared for in such a profound way. He felt free to pour out his soul to her, to share his innermost fears, regrets, and contemplations.

Sometime in the evening they ate the stew of white beans and the pieces of the little goat. They sat side by side under the brush arbor and listened to the faint rain come down in the woods. Inman ate three bowlsful and then they both had little earthen cups of laudanum and fed the fire and talked. (Frazier, 1997, p. 279)

There is an almost magical quality to the transformation that takes place within this story. Inman meets her as an emaciated man who had witnessed and participated in the ravages of war for 4 years straight. The loving influence of a caring soul was enough to wake him up to possibility and hope for the journey ahead. This goatwoman, in my mind, has taken on mythic proportion. She is akin to an angel and similar to the angel mentioned in Chapter II, the one who gave Elijah food and nourished his soul when he was depleted and contemplating death.

Heidi (Spyri, 1899/2000) is another story that relays the quality of food as nourishment for more than just the body. When I read this book, the part that stayed in remembrance more than any other was when Heidi went to Grandfather's home to stay and she ate bread, cheese, and fresh milk with abandon.

The kettle began to boil, and the old man held over the fire a large piece of cheese on the end of a long iron fork. He moved it this way and that, until it was golden yellow on all sides. Heidi looked on with eager attention. . . . The Grandfather laid a large slice of bread and a piece of the golden cheese on the chair and said:—
“Now eat!”

Heidi grasped her bowl and drank and drank without stopping, for all the thirst of her long journey came back to her. Then she drew a long breath and set down the bowl.

“Do you like the milk?” asked her grandfather.

“I have never tasted such good milk before,” answered Heidi.

“Then you must have some more”; and the grandfather filled the bowl again to the brim and placed it before the child, who looked quite content as she began to eat her bread, after it had been spread with the toasted cheese soft as butter. The combination tasted very good, with frequent drinks of milk. (pp. 17-18)

When I read about the golden cheese, fresh bread, and delicious milk, and the properties in the food—the flavors, textures, and nutrients, but most importantly, the love with which it was offered, I think of the nearly alchemical reaction that seemed to take place within Heidi's young body. She was experiencing new surroundings, acclimating herself to an entirely new living space, with different people, and the way her meal was offered, prepared, and received provided a sense of security and vitality to face the challenges inherent with change. Later that night Heidi went to sleep in her newly made bed, content and peaceful.

Then the moonlight came again brightly through the round opening and fell directly on Heidi's couch. Her cheeks were fiery red as she slept under the heavy coverlet, and she lay perfectly calm and peaceful on her little round arm. She must have been dreaming happy dreams, for a look of contentment was on her face. (Spyri, 1899/2000, p. 21)

In this story, Heidi received tremendous nourishment and found inner peace and contentment. She relished each moment and was able to assimilate her experiences, which led to a deep sleep, safe as she fully inhabited her body and soul.

Implications for Depth Psychology and Therapeutic Treatment

In looking at the implications of this research for the field of depth psychology, I see two areas of focus, almost like two pillars standing next to each other. One of them is the physical dimension, including gut health and an understanding of what happens on the cellular level each time we eat.

A well-functioning gut with healthy gut flora holds the roots of our health. And, just as a tree with sick roots is not going to thrive, the rest of the body cannot thrive without a well-functioning digestive system. The bacterial population of the gut—the gut flora—is the soil around these roots, giving them their habitat, protection, support and nourishment. (Campbell-McBride, 2010, p. 25)

The other pillar is the soulful quality of savoring food, allowing it to wash over the senses, and indulging fully as each morsel is taken in. Mindfulness, combined with eating a nutrient-dense diet that truly nourishes the body, is an avenue toward greater wholeness and vitality.

In psychotherapeutic work with clients, it is important not to forget one's relationship to food as a potential avenue toward greater enjoyment and exuberance in the experiencing of life. Abstract thought processes such as dream interpretation, active imagination, looking at the shadow, and understanding one's childhood traumas all have their place in a therapeutic practice. In addition to these, an understanding of one's relationship to food and the ways in which it may be enriched through intention and acquiring more knowledge and skills about food choices and cooking all have the potential to hasten the process of individuation. As Guadarrama (2012) explained,

It is the work of the depth psychologists and others to usher in the transformation that will take place when deconstruction of our present social order occurs. The hard work is to put into place the new paradigm that has been envisioned and help make possible a new reality. When sacred imagination is invited back into the world, a greater-yet-to-be can be activated which is attuned to the infinite potentiality of the universe. Be willing to hang out in the unknown and dream beyond the conditions presented in this transformation and then continue the process to see it become a way of life. Thus, this book helps continue the process of deconstruction where soul is consciously acknowledged and welcomed as an important aspect of the world and all of life: infused back into people, animals, and the earth. (p. 95)

There is much to be done, and the potentials are exciting and invigorating. I am grateful to be a part of the awareness of the changes that can begin taking place and to have the opportunity to practice incorporating these changes with clients in the future.

Chapter IV

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

In Chapter I, I introduced the area of interest for this research: the relationship between food and psychoemotional functioning. In exploring the psychological and spiritual issues related to habitual eating patterns and practices, I then became interested in how people interact with food at the soul level—whether they fill themselves with soulful nourishment or neglect that level of self-care through mindless consumption. This led to the research question: What is the relationship between psyche and food as it relates to nourishment, and neglect, of the soul?

In Chapter II, I pointed out research that shows why psychologists and therapists need to seriously consider food and one's relationship with it as a potential healing agent for the psyche (Campbell-McBride, 2010; David, 2005). Ancient cultures' understanding of food as well as religious practices related to food revealed a tendency toward thinking of food as magical, holding special powers from the gods (Andrews, 2000; Kesten, 2007; Linn & Linn, 2012). The ways in which one can create a fulfilling, satisfying relationship with food and its preparation was explored by considering mindfulness and developing personal intuition centered on food choices, preparation, and soulful savoring of each meal or beverage (David, 1991; Harper, 1998; Kesten, 2001). The physiological processes surrounding digestion for optimal health of mind and body as well as psyche were described in detail, with particular attention paid to obtaining and maintaining

healthy gut flora (Campbell-McBride, 2010; Gedgaudas, 2011; Medinform Publishing, 2012). Memorable portions of works of fiction in which the characters were in dire need of nourishment, which was lovingly provided, were cited and expanded upon to add mental images and a creative path toward grasping the material presented in this thesis (Frazier, 1997; Spyri, 1899/2000). A cookbook was cited to reveal the level of enjoyment a chef has when creating meals at home for his family (Besh, 2011).

Chapter III began with a hermeneutic approach as the literature researched was integrated and brought together with the purpose of understanding how the individual and society at large are expressing anxiety and endless consumption through fast-paced eating (David, 2005). A depth psychological approach to this issue was then explored, with the intention of looking beneath the surface to what needs to come to light: greater appreciation and mindfulness regarding one's daily food habits, individually and collectively (Guadarrama, 2012). Chapter III turned a corner and became more heuristic in methodology when I reflected on my personal experiences and thoughts surrounding this topic, focusing on the warmth and soul nourishment I have always felt when food has been thoughtfully prepared for me or when I engage in thoughtful preparation of my own meal. I explored how my relationship with food has changed over the years, particularly recently, and why I felt such a strong desire to learn to cook for myself and others. Finally, I described the implications for depth psychology and therapeutic treatment: when considering what true nourishment is, therapists would do well to consider not only psychological nourishment but sensory nourishment through food and one's relationship to it. The culture has shifted far from the days when people viewed food as magical; it

may benefit society to bring that kind of interest and value back to a collective understanding of the power of food as potential healing agent.

Conclusions: Clinical Implications

Psychotherapists, particularly those who are depth-oriented, have an opportunity to open their eyes and see what is going on in the culture at large. There is a lack of mindfulness—more often a race to the finish line—as is evidenced by the proliferation of fast-food chains, online shopping with one-click settings, and less time spent in leisure enjoyment of family meals due to sports practice or other regular afternoon and evening activities for children. In the therapy office, there can be a deep listening to the psyche's call for slowing down, savoring, nourishing, relaxing, and allowing. Therapists can educate their clients in how to approach meal time, ensuring the most optimal mental state is reached in order to enhance emotional satisfaction, digestion, and assimilation of food and therefore increase the likelihood of greater wholeness and well-being (David, 2005; Guadarrama, 2012). Guadarrama (2012) wrote,

When we view food as a path to the sacred and a bridge to the divine, then we as humans can use what we eat to help us in the process of becoming whole, re-claiming our Divine connection, and feeling at one with the Anima Mundi, The Soul of the World. Just as in alchemy, the end result of the Philosopher's Stone is likened to the union with the Divine Spirit (or Self). We might discover what new connections with the invisible and divine realm would look like that would restore our sacred rituals and attitudes towards food. (p. 27)

Food is not inconsequential or unimportant; it is an essential aspect of life and it behooves therapists to pay attention to its crucial influence on behavior and well-being. It has the potential to give life and vitality to a weary soul and to nourish the heart, leaving one's soul at greater peace.

When I was practicing as a trainee at my practicum site this past year, I provided psychoeducation to several of my clients who were interested about the role their food choices played in contributing to psychological issues they faced. I think of the second-grade boy who suffered from anxiety and fidgeted a lot; once his mother changed his diet and cut down sugar consumption, his symptoms started to lessen. Other clients were not eating enough throughout the day, which depleted their energy. Therapists are observers, and there are numerous ways to pick up on the stories, signals, anecdotes, and body language messages surrounding the topic of food and clients' relationship to it. Once people gain greater awareness of their habits, there is the potential for more conscientious action to be taken. Therapists can help move this process along in ways many health care providers are unable to because of how often clients are seen. This awareness has the potential to bring many benefits to clients that extend to their everyday lives on a practical level.

Recommendations for Further Research

I have only touched on the way food choices contribute to one's mood; there is great need for further research on this topic. Diseases and syndromes, all of which affect one's psychology and are therefore often discussed in therapy, can be prevented and sometimes healed through mindful food preparation and nourishment. Some believe that symptoms associated with ADHD, autism, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, and many other illnesses can be drastically improved through proper nourishment. Not all agree on what that is, which is where contention and arguments often occur. Unbiased, wholehearted research into the potential for food to act as healer is one recommendation I have.

I also recommend further research be done about what some consider to be extreme diets in this culture, such as raw food, Paleo, or vegan. Some consider these diets to be unhealthy and restrictive, but perhaps that is not the case and those adherents are on to something. I think it would also be beneficial to research how to help children develop a wide range of food interests, so they can develop a palate that is not picky but is able to enjoy the abundance of foods available. Parent education about this is crucial as well, since I overhear many moms and dads saying their children will not eat anything but macaroni and cheese or chicken nuggets. Children in other parts of the world are not picky like this and can eat from a wide variety of choices; therefore, it is not impossible to change. Parents need to be educated, and I suggest that therapists have a responsibility to bring this up when needed rather than viewing it only as a problem for another health professional to address.

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Autobiographical Sketch

Sarah grew up in Southern California, the daughter of a part-time elementary school teacher's aide and homemaker mother and rehabilitation counselor father. She has one brother, a dear friend throughout childhood and to this day, who found food to be uninteresting (except for buttercream frosting spread thickly on birthday cake). Sarah, on the other hand, found food to be magical in its appearance, taste, and most of all, presentation from the one who created the meal. Flavors would explode like fireworks in her mouth, causing astonishment and tremendous satisfaction. She would feel gratitude and connection towards the cook.

It was not until she married, at the age of 20, that she began to slowly, every so slowly, learn how to cook. It took a decade of watching Food Network on television, studying the chefs' skills, and cataloguing their multitudinous tips in various compartments of her mind, along with a lot of trial-and-error cooking, that she grew in her own skill and confidence in the kitchen. Now, at the age of 37, cooking food for herself and her family, consisting of four young children in addition to her husband, is one of her greatest pleasures. And after years of somewhat mediocre results, her meals are now turning out quite well. Reading cookbooks like novels, shopping for the ingredients, engaging in the act of cooking, which she considers a form of creative play, seeing the finished product, and having the pleasure of savoring meal—these activities provide tremendous meaning and fulfillment in her life.

Normally she finds herself dreaming, postulating, and contemplating abstract ideas and theories in her head, which makes use of the intuitive side of her personality. Cooking and enjoying food is one of the few ways she relishes in sensory pleasure. It has become a meditative act, a way to reduce stress and to care for herself. As a marriage and family therapist trainee and counseling psychology graduate student, she has a desire to bridge the gap between psychotherapy and the culinary world, and this thesis is the first step toward that end.