Question 1 Response

When I think about the term “You are what you eat”, the first things that come to mind are the health effects caused by eating certain foods. While this notion may be accurate, the cliche can also possess additional meanings within the dimensions of ethnicity, gender, and social class. In that sense, I agree with the notion that “I am what I eat”, as I’ve seen how consumption habits can reflect many things beyond the implied physiological aspects.

Jollibee is a perfect example of how one’s ethnicity can shine through food. They prioritize the use of regional ingredients and dishes over western staples such as burgers, fries, and milkshakes. Consequently, Jollibee menu items are sweeter, juicier, and more savory while western fast food can come across as dry, bland, and even sour. By integrating local cuisines into their menus, this chain is able to compete with global chains. Not only is Jollibee food a proper representation of Filipino food, it disproves the common notion that western products are superior to local ones. This exception has resulted in Jollibee becoming a source of national pride and Filipino excellence. The chain’s triumph against McDonalds is compared to the tale of David and Goliath, as both focus on an underdog overcoming a supposedly invincible opponent. However, Jollibee’s success lies in its appropriation of western techniques in logistics, marketing, expansion, and even branding. And while the Philippines has an otherwise struggling economy, the achievements of Jollibee help it stand out even more. These advancements have been crucial to feeding the nation’s newly risen middle class, who demand affordable precooked meals that are primarily found in fast food restaurants. With that in mind, Jollibee has become the primary manifestation of the country’s socio-economic growth.

As displayed by Chicana Lesbian authors, gender identity can also be expressed through foodstuffs. In several books and poems, the authors utilize food metaphors to symbolize and justify their sexual orientations. In E. D. Hernández’ poem, “You as a Public Turn On,” the speaker compares her lover’s kiss to chili sauce, linking the tingling ‘hotness’ caused by both items. In “untitled,” Angela Arellano queers the cultural significance of biscochitos, the anise-flavored cookies served at weddings. She likens the passion of her lovemaking to the crumbling of “biscochitos dunked in hot creamy coffee”, verifying her sexual desires and the intimacy of her relationships. Above all, the word “tortillera” (tortilla maker) is used

to positively describe Alicia Gaspar de Alba, despite it being a derogatory term describing queer Chicana women. De Alba insists that the “tortillera” provides a new perspective on Chicana culinary tradition by queering the meanings of food and foodways. These writers challenge heteronormative food practices not only by appropriating Chicano dishes and heterosexual rituals to represent queer sexuality, but also by changing the role of women in cuisine and romance/sexual relationships. Typically, women must satisfy others over themselves, but these works argue that they deserve to be satisfied too.

Although this can be subject to personal choices, your socio-economic status can also be found in the food you eat. In response to improving food security across the United States, community gardens and farmers’ markets have become increasingly prevalent within the recent decades. The Portland-Shawnee and Smoketown/Shelby Park markets in Louisville, Kentucky exemplify the importance of providing affordable fresh produce to low-income consumers and giving a decent return to the farmers involved. The former failed because the participating vendors were more used to wealthier middle class customers, so having to adjust pricing and volume for predominantly lower-income communities proved too difficult. Fortunately, the latter market has been more successful due to increased community support and its location being close to both poor and rich neighborhoods. Low-income consumers use food stamps and special tokens to purchase food while the farmers redeem them for monetary compensation. As for affluent consumers, their decision to shop at these markets out of choice/leisure rather than necessity highlights the privileges afforded by wealth. So while the food itself may not be entirely unique, the way people obtain them can reveal much about their socioeconomic background.

Once again, I support the argument that “we are what we eat” because food can represent more than just the physiological aspects of ourselves. As seen previously, food can symbolize things such as ethnicity, gender, and social class. Even then, these are only a few examples of food revealing one’s identity, as food can mean different things in every culture.

Question 4 Response

The idea of “virtuous globalization” originated during the 1980s, when Italian leftist activists sought to restore their cultural landscapes, promote social change, and safeguard their agriculture using alternate cultural politics. Carlo Petrini was one of these activists, and he used this concept to found Slow Food. While he was the one who formally coined the term, Leitch provides a more nuanced definition. In her words, this idea describes a form of globalization that promotes the networking and success of minority cultures, groups, and producers. More specifically, she identifies the defense of local heritage/cultures and the nurturing of ideologically diverse communities as two main components of virtuous globalization. Although Leitch highlights the benefits of this belief, she also argues that “virtuous globalization” can gloss over the benefits of modernity and improperly address class issues.

As mentioned earlier, protecting heritage is a major facet of virtuous globalization. This can be seen in Slow Food’s ‘endangered foods’ campaign, where it aims to prevent regional tastes and idiosyncratic products from disappearing due to factors such as Europeanization. One example of an ‘endangered food’ is a type of cured pork fat called *lardo di Colonnata*. This product’s future and reputation were threatened by new standardized European food rules and rumors of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) being spread through it. Fortunately, Slow Foods nominated *lardo di Colonnata* as a key symbol of its endangered foods campaign, restoring attention and acclaim to the product. They did so in order to promote their eco-gastronomical agenda, include cultural issues within debates over food rules, and portray *lardo di Colonnata* as a symbol of national heritage. With this instance, we can see how improving the statuses and meanings of culinary items helps bring success and expansion of small-scale communities, producers, and cultures.

Forming interconnected and diverse communities is another major goal of virtuous globalization. With Slow Food, the Ark of Taste, Presidia, and the Terra Madre are its most notable achievements of networking and relationship building. The Ark of Taste focused on building links with gourmets and environmentalists, helping to promote food sustainability and environmental activism. The Presidia saw producers collaborate with Slow Food’s researchers to identify and promote local Ark foods to the public, typically at food fairs and conventions. Finally, the Terra Madre consists of 5,000 food producers from 131

nations, all of whom share common feelings and problems with the desire to reconcile those issues. What makes the Terra Madre special is that it explicitly recognized social justice issues within the global economy and demonstrated Slow Food's ability to bring together many individuals and groups from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Without these initiatives, Slow Food would not enjoy the success and power it has today. In that regard, forming and maintaining cliques is imperative to achieving the shared vision of a virtuous and globalized world.

As promising as it sounds, virtuous globalization is not without its potential flaws. Some argue that Slow Food's supposed culinary luddism prevents it from recognizing the benefits and appeal of modern food. Jeffrey Pilcher points out that although mass-produced corn tortillas/maize flour are denounced by Mexican elites, food activists and environmentalists, they are key to feeding a wider and less wealthy consumer base. Thus, Slow Food's defense of high quality local products and regional cuisines at the expense of more manufactured food products actually does little to solve the problem of worldwide hunger. Critics also argue that elitism can be found in the efforts to promote virtuous globalization. While it's easy for the middle class and elite to afford consuming high-quality artisanal foods, these luxuries are far less accessible to those outside these groups. Slow Food may also favor elites in the field of food producers over the 'lower class'. In her study on Tuscan olive oil, Anne Meneley recalls how Slow Food's marketing strategies primarily benefited larger producers and consortiums. Others have also raised concerns about the organization's member base primarily originating from wealthy industrialized nations. While Slow Food politics sometimes acknowledge class issues regarding one's ability to access food, there are too many social and cultural contexts that general Slow Politics may not account for. Perhaps it would be more relevant to treat this 'elitism' as a form of cultural imperialism, as western nations may be seen as sentimentalizing 'ethnic' heritage and traditions. Regardless, these complaints do showcase some of the possible problems stemming from virtuous globalization.