The Ontological Politics of Eating in Australia: Guidelines, Migration and Food

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The research conducted for this thesis has been approved by the University of Sydney Ethics Committee, and therefore complies with the University’s ethics guidelines.
Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Elsher Lawson-Boyd
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Abstract

According to the National Health and Medical Research Council (2013), Australians need to take charge of their own weight and health by making better dietary choices. One prominent yet contested method for intervention is public dietary advice, a prime example being the 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. Considering the Guidelines as pedagogical, meaning it is a kind of social process that attempts to influence a population’s actions, feelings and thoughts, the strategy deployed for intervention becomes significant (Sandlin, O’Malley and Burdick 2011). Food, according to this schema, is a nutritional materiality. The way it effects the body should alter the way it is eaten, and if individuals are to maintain a healthy weight then they must exercise control over their food choices (Mol 2012). Yet for many scholars, public health schemas like the Australian Dietary Guidelines are problematic in a variety of ways. Not only have they been described as rationalistic and individualistic, but they have been shown to be lacking in impact (Food Australia 2016; Lindsay 2010). In other areas of scholarship a growing body of research from Science and Technology Studies (STS) has raised some compelling questions about our understanding and relationship with material objects. In this genre of research the term ‘ontology’ has been utilised to understand how objects are enacted, and how dissonances emerge between contrasting practices (Mol 2012). Drawing from this scholarship, the aim of this thesis is to problematise the Guidelines by juxtaposing it with empirical research. Specifically, I draw from ethnographic fieldwork conducted at Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club in Sydney’s suburb Hinchinbrook, which included eight semi-structured interviews. In this juxtaposition I illustrate food’s multiplicity; food is as much a relational materiality as it is a necessity for individual bodies to survive. People are in so many ways held together by food, and when thinking seriously about this finding, there is clearly much to be lost if the relationality of food is not protected.
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Introduction

It would be fair to say that the noise about Australia’s so-called obesity ‘epidemic’ is somewhat difficult to ignore. In case you haven’t heard, the country’s waistline is expanding. If you are an adult living in Australia, the chances are you’re either overweight or obese. That’s the bleak story, at least, according to the National Health and Medical Research Council (2013). As it has been made abundantly clear, the concern around Australia’s obesity crisis has attracted much political, economic and social interest. From local to federal governments, from the grassroots, the not-for-profit, the academic and the corporate, a chorus of voices have called for changes to be made. Amongst the array of variables playing their part in this deeply complex problem, food has become a key focus for policy makers and health advocates. When looking to the academic literature one will find an infinite amount of debates and theories. For many scholars the key problem revolves around food systems in terms of security, safety, availability and affordability (Hawkes et al. 2015; Monteiro et al. 2013). For others, not only do food systems play a role but so too does genetics (Bell et al. 2005). The conversations are ongoing. Yet, when turning to formal advice in the public sphere, individual dietary ‘decisions’ have much to do with this issue (NHMRC 2013, p. iii). A key cause in the case of obesity is what people choose to eat.

As a means of improving the food choices of Australians, and responding to public health concerns, nationwide nutrition education has emerged as a popular strategy (Lupton 1994). Though this kind of strategy is not new. As Lindsay (2010, p. 476) pointed out, dietary guidelines were introduced in Australia in the 1970’s, and from the get go, they were established in response to ‘diet-related’ morbidity and mortality concerns. This was also explained by
Professor Warwick Anderson, CEO of the National Health and Medical Research Council (2013, p. iii) who stated, “For more than 75 years the Australian Government, primarily through NHMRC and Australian Government health departments, has provided nutrition advice to the public through food and nutrition policies, dietary guidelines and national food selection guides.” What people eat, or rather what they choose to eat, has become a political affair. Out of all other resources and initiatives deployed, the 2013 Dietary Guidelines is of particular interest here.

To summarise, the Guidelines were developed to provide health-care professionals, policy makers and the public with the most ‘accurate’ nutritional evidence (NHMRC 2013, p. iii). To put another way, their aim is to do pedagogical work where ‘accurate’ information is utilised for public education. More specifically, accurate scientific information. When using the term pedagogy I define it as a kind of social process that attempts to influence a population’s actions, feelings and thoughts (Sandlin et al. 2011). This is a curious point to pause on. The correlation between body weight and food is, according to the Guidelines, to do with ‘overconsumption’ and ‘excess energy intake’ (NHMRC 2013, p. 1). If we accept this causal relation then a good portion of Australians must apparently be willful, or at least, wilful eaters (Mol 2012). By this logic, the most accurate information - when widely disseminated - will remedy the problem. It will improve dietary decisions. Yet it seems that much hope is given to the authority of science. A colossal amount of research was sourced in the development of the Guidelines. According to the NHMRC, over 55,000 scientific journal articles were analysed to determine their reliability, applicability and generalisability. As this is public dietary advice the evidence needed to be rendered decipherable for a wider audience. After initial assessment the findings were translated
into a series five primary recommendations, a two hundred and ten page booklet and supplementary educational resources. The five primary recommendations are as follows:

1. Achieve and maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and choose amounts of nutritious food and drinks to meet your energy needs
2. Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from the five food groups every day
3. Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol
4. Encourage, support and promote breastfeeding
5. Care for your food; prepare and store it properly, (NHMRC 2013, p. v).

Though these recommendations are simplified for the use of the general public as well as health care professionals and educators, one will find further detailed information in the booklet Australian Dietary Guidelines: Providing the scientific evidence for healthier Australian diets (2013). Herein, there is a substantial amount of information about the kinds and amounts of food required to meet the body’s physiological needs depending on biomarkers like age, height and gender. Specific advice is presented as follows:

Taller and/or more active adults in each age and sex group can choose additional serves of foods from the five food groups and/or unsaturated spreads and oils and/or discretionary foods to increase energy intake to meet energy requirements, but they need to monitor weight or waist circumference to ensure energy intake does not exceed energy expenditure. (NHMRC 2013, p. 24)
There is much to say about this advice, which I will discuss in forthcoming chapters. In summary, the Guidelines aim is to improve the diets of Australians. People need to know better if they are to eat better.

At first appearance, the recommendations above may seem somewhat commonsensical. To promote a physically healthy body, and to promote physically healthy children, just follow these steps. Yet despite their apparent simplicity, they do not appear to be having the desired effect. According to one source, *Food Australia* (2016, p. 5), only 4% of Australians are adhering to the Guidelines’ recommendations. Why, then, are the Guidelines not taking purchase? This is a very complex question, which I do not aim to give an answer to here. But if we are to think critically about this issue, a good place to start is with the Guidelines themselves. As scholarship has shown, health initiatives like dietary guidelines make many troubling assumptions. Of particular interest here is that they assume rationality can and should be applied to eating (Duff 2004; Lindsay 2010). By a logic of calculation, control and consideration, individuals can ‘achieve and maintain’ a healthy weight (NHMRC 2013, p. v). There is little doubt of this apparent logic when considering the advice quoted above. Yet when thinking of the complexities, differences and nuances of eating practices, one must ask: is this realistic?

Dietary guidelines have received a substantial amount of critique both from within and outside the social sciences. Not only have they been deemed rationalistic, meaning that they are underpinned by a pervasive assumption that humans can and should exercise calculative methods for self-improvement, but they have been deemed individualistic (Lindsay 2010). It is the individual in this paradigm who is responsible for their own health, and in order to avoid the risk
of obesity and chronic illness, individuals must manage themselves (Keane 2009). As Lindsay (2010, p. 477) explained in her study on the 2003 Guidelines, they are ‘based on the assessments of risk to public health and the individual is encouraged to follow the guidelines to minimise the risk of developing disease.’

One notable study of this kind was Fullagar’s (2002, p. 69) cultural analysis of two Australian public health campaigns, namely ‘Life be in it!’ and ‘Active Australia’. As public health initiatives responding to rises in cardiovascular disease, the campaigns determined risk management to be the individual’s responsibility. They encouraged individuals to make use of their own leisure time in productive, physically active ways. Notions of ‘choice’ and ‘freedom’ were instrumentalised, where exercising command over one’s own health was represented as a positive exercise of agency. By encouraging individuals to self-improve, and by framing chronic illness as a ‘lifestyle related’ issue, Fullagar (2002, p. 72) argued that the campaigns failed to address social, environmental and economic factors.

When reflecting on the scholarly literature, many have interrogated the dominance and viability of public health schemas like the Guidelines. There have been biopolitical critiques of the public health policies (Wright and Harwood 2009), discourse analyses of anti-obesity policies (Evans 2006), and explorations of the Guidelines’ individualistic strategies (Lindsay 2010). Fundamentally, the Australian Dietary Guidelines require individuals to act on nutritional knowledge for the sake of their health by making dietary alterations. Yet when thinking critically about this in light of the complexities, nuances and variations of eating practices in Australia, the Guidelines’ logic is difficult to envision. Can generic metric systems and calculations take
purchase when food is so entangled with social relations and social life? When it is so important for living not just in terms of physical nourishment? As Lindsay (2010, p. 475) pointed out, “We inhabit complex social worlds where food and alcohol are central to social life, and the enactment of our social identities and key social practices.”

Stepping aside from biopolitical critiques, I turn here to a materialist approach offered by Science and Technology Studies (STS). In more recent years, a growing body of research from STS has raised some compelling questions about our understanding and relationship with material objects. Since the 1980s, STS scholars Annemarie Mol, John Law, Steve Woolgar and Zaviar Lezuan and others have attempted to interfere with an object’s assumed ‘nature’. Instead of accepting objects as passive, stable and singular, these studies reflect an effort to make sense of the ‘liveliness’ and ‘multiplicity’ of matter (Woolgar and Lezuan 2013, p. 323). In these studies, the term ‘ontology’ has been used to understand how materialities influence, and are influenced by, social processes and orders. As Mol (2012, p. 380) explained, ontology originated from Western philosophy and referred to ‘things in themselves’. In the traditional sense they were considered singular, stable and ‘out of reach’ (Mol 2012, p. 380). In the STS genre, the term has been ‘resurrected’ as a way of getting at the multiplicity of materialities (Mol 2012, p. 380). In this framework, an object’s ontology is imagined as momentary, stabilised accomplishment of ‘enactment’ (Woolgar and Lezuan 2013, p. 334). It is the multiplicity of practices that constitutes the multiplicity of objects, and thus, enactments become the point of empirical investigation.
A prime example of empirical work on ontologies is Mol’s (2012) analysis of dieting regimes in the Netherlands. Instead of re-stating that food is more than just nutritional matter as other food studies researchers have done, Mol (2012, p. 380) asked the question ‘what kind of matter is food?’ By using the term ‘enactment’ she argued that food materiality had many versions. It is fuel, pleasure, sinful, bad, good, calories, something to be regulated, and something to be felt, desired and enjoyed by a feeling body. By making the familiar strange and by analysing the norms embedded in practices while interfering with them, food materiality becomes multiple. And when analysed in this way, there are clearly politics to materialities. There are tensions between ontologies. As Sismondo (2015, p. 445) pointed out, “Empirical ontologists identify a small number of competing ontologies, the competing ones that have significant standing or that connect multiple actors and practices.” Drawing from these ideations, the ways in which an object is enacted can be starkly different to that of another. And more importantly, dissonances between them become identifiable. This kind of analysis opens up new ways of thinking about the Guidelines, as well as the politics inherent to materialities like food.

Food is by and large a nourishing materiality in the Guidelines. For example, foods high in fat, sugar and/or salt are known as ‘discretionary foods’, and therefore should be eaten in ‘limited and small amounts’ (NHMRC 2013, p. 24). In contrast, foods like vegetables are known as ‘nutrient-dense’, low in energy, and can be eaten in plentiful amounts. From this it would seem that food’s materiality (the ‘right’ materiality according to accurate scientific evidence) is one that the healthy body knows and eats. Yet if nutrients and energy are not taken as inherently natural but rather as the derivatives of practices, we can get at the Guidelines’ limitations in a novel way. If we are to take the STS slogan ‘it could be otherwise’ we are directed to consider
food’s multiplicity (Woolgar and Lezuan 2013, p. 322). Moreover, we are led to assess the Guidelines’ authority in stating what food ‘is’ and how it should be eaten.

Anthropological and sociological research has shown us that food is a complex materiality. It is connected to norms, cultures, customs, traditions and histories. It is entangled with intimacies, bodily sensations, memories, commensality and social relations (Sobal and Nelson 2003). And furthermore, it can be a modality of care (Yates-Doerr and Carney 2016). This is of course not exclusive to any one social group, however food’s meaningfulness often becomes amplified for those who move from one place to another. When looking to the literature on diasporic communities, food practices have frequently been described as an integral part of cultural continuation and reconstruction in a new place (Kalcik 1984; Visser et al. 2014), and are at times in tension with biomedically prescribed dietary advice (Yates-Doerr and Carney 2016, p. 315). Taken collectively, these studies highlight how heterogeneous, specific and vital food practices can be, especially in the event of migration. Yet despite these complexities, the NHMRC (2013, p. iii) asserts that the Guidelines’ instructions for eating can indeed ‘act as a firm basis’ for individual choices to be made from. But is this a feasible request? What of those in Australia’s communities who do not ‘do’ food as it is prescribed in the Guidelines, or view their relationship with food as based primarily on physiological needs? To clarify, I do not suggest and reiterate that the problem is a lack of nutritional education. Rather I suggest that the Guidelines assert a kind of eating and a version of food that is starkly different to others.

When I was searching for a site to explore these dissonances, I was referred to the Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club in Sydney’s suburb Hinchinbrook by a friend. The business was
founded by Uruguayan immigrants over forty years ago, and it has operated to provide a community space ever since. It houses an asado (Latin American styled barbecue), as well as a cafe and bistro, dancing, live music and Spanish language classes for young people and adults. The majority of its regular patrons come from various parts of South America as well as Europe. Given that the aim of my research was to juxtapose the Australian Dietary Guidelines with lived practices of eating, and as I was adopting an empirical ontologies framework as a means to unpack food’s social complexities, I believed the Club to be an ideal site to conduct fieldwork.

Drawing from ethnographic research conducted over a four month period, this thesis explores the multiplicity of food. My aim is to problematise the Guidelines by juxtaposing it with empirical findings derived from the Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club. In so doing, I build from theories raised in biopolitical and empirical ontologies analyses in tandem. Thus, I ask the following questions: What kind of food is represented in the Australian Dietary Guidelines, and what kind of normative conceptions of eating are constructed? How do these normalised conceptions contrast to the eating practices of members at the Uruguayan Social and Sports Club? The objective will be to contrast two different kinds of realities, and to explore potential dissonances between the two: the first being a prescribed, imagined reality illustrated in the Guidelines. The second being the lived realities of members at the Club.

I initially hypothesised this study would draw clear dissonances between the Guidelines and the practices of Club members. In many ways this was the case, yet also, many participants explained that there were tensions between ‘doing’ a kind of food that was represented in the Guidelines and doing other versions. There were many reasons for this, which I will explain in
forthcoming chapters. Yet what stood out was food’s participation in the making and doing of social, familial and intimate relations. Drawing from scholarship on sociality, affect and care, among others, this thesis argues that food does much more than feed individual bodies. It is vital for the maintenance of social life, and if the genuine concern of policy makers is to promote health and wellbeing then perhaps a shift in perspective is needed.

**Thesis outline**

In chapter one, I will begin by providing a review on the relevant literatures that have informed and supported this study. I start with a discussion on the Foucauldian terms ‘biopower’ and ‘biopolitics.’ This will lay the ground for an outline of some recent biopolitical literature on food and obesity. Then, I will explain how the terms ‘biopedagogies’ (Wright and Harwood 2009) and ‘nutritionism’ (Scrini 2008) prove themselves useful tools to help understand the Australian Dietary Guidelines. As this research deals with collectives that identify as diasporic, I will discuss the literature on diaspora and food. Following on from this, I outline the conceptual framework ‘ontologies’ and how it is best suited for the current research questions. Here I will include a brief discussion on debates, criticisms and limitations of the theories adopted.

Working from the theoretical basis of chapter one, I discuss the study design and methods in chapter two. Here, I outline the methodological approach of phenomenology, ethnography and empirical ontologies. By exploring each, I give the rationale as to why an empirical ontological framework is best suited for the aims of this research. This will include a discussion on ethnographic methods such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews, and how they lend themselves as the most appropriate for this study. From this, I will explain the process
of gaining access to the Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club and provide some demographic information on the interview participants. I explain the process of data analysis, ethical considerations of this research, and finally my own reflexivity as a researcher.

The thematic chapters begin with chapter three. I start with an analysis of the multiplicity of meat. By using an ontological framework, attention is given to ‘the ways objects are enacted in practices’ (Mol 2002, p. vii). With a kind of naive curiosity, I query what meat ‘is’ in the Guidelines. In so doing, I argue that meat materiality is ‘nutrients’, ‘energy’ and therefore ‘calculable.’ By illustrating this, meat’s materiality is not so much ‘natural’ but rather the derivative of scientific and political practices (Woolgar and Lezaun 2013, p. 323). In contrast, I discuss another kind of meat that is done by those interviewed, which I conceptualise as ‘our-food.’ As I explain, our-food encompasses memories, socialities, histories, flavours, cooking techniques and affects. When juxtaposed to ‘doing’ energy, this materiality is not done with calculative methods or an acute awareness of physical effectiveness. Given this, dissonances become clear between a prescribed kind of reality and the lived realities of those interviewed.

Following on from the discussion in chapter three, chapter four explores the emotionality and affective capacity of food. By using the Deleuzian concepts ‘assemblage’ and ‘affect’, food is considered active between collectives (Fox 2015). Frequently, food and eating events were entangled with the becomings and ruptures of intimacies and familial relations. In this case, I argue that food is affective as well as effective. Thus, a weakness becomes clear in the Guidelines; its aim of interference becomes less likely when other ways of doing food are strong.
Continuing with the notion that eating is an ‘event’, chapter five discusses food and its relationship with enjoyment (Mol 2010, p. 217). Eating events happen somewhere, in some time, with other material and non-material things, and hence, are subject to constraints and possibilities. In an eating event, I use the term ‘TimeSpace’ as a way of attending to constraints and possibilities (May and Thrift 2001). It became clear that enjoyment was central to the ways in which eating was done, and as such, I argue that the preferences of eating events, as well as the constraints, must be attended to if public dietary advice is to take purchase.

Finally, in chapter six I will discuss how food operates in ‘care’ practices. I outline the concept ‘care’ as a practice encompassing labour and emotion (Kroger 2009, p. 398). From what was frequently described by participants, and from my own experiences at the Club, food was an indispensable part of care. This care was not just for individuals, but for communities and maintenance of ‘culture.’ Thinking about the ways in which food functions as a nutritional material, it does starkly different work in care practices.

In conclusion, I return to the claim this thesis makes. If dietary advice is to take purchase at all it must better understand how food is enacted within social systems. Thinking with empirical ontologies turns our attention to the practices, which are conceptualised as actively doing the world (Woolgar and Lezuan 2013). It is in those practices that the nuances of food and everyday life are situated and connected. As I will illustrate in the coming chapters, food so often holds people together.
Chapter One. Literature Review

Introduction

The Australian Dietary Guidelines attempt to influence the population’s eating habits. As a form of pedagogy, they aim to educate individuals about the risks of eating, and moreover, to guide them on how to eat better (Lynch et al. 2007). Yet when thinking about this logic, many problems and limitations arise. As many others have argued, there are significant disparities between public health schemas and what happens in the everyday. In this study, I firstly posit that the Guidelines are individualistic. By this, they aim to alter the behaviours of individuals by drawing on notions of risk and self-regulation (Lindsay 2010). And secondly, that they are unrealistic. Food and eating in the Guidelines, as I will show in later chapters, is prescriptive. What it does not attend to in this case, is what food ‘is’ in the everyday (Mol 2002, p. 54). And moreover, what food does between people. In contrast to the Guidelines, I explore how food is multiple, active and complex. In so doing, the focus is on practices whereby the ‘multiplicity of realities’ may be better attended to (Woolgar and Lezuan 2013, p. 323).

In this chapter, I lay out the current study’s theoretical ground by drawing on literatures from a number of strands in the social sciences. To begin, I point out that there has been much discussion on the potential for interdisciplinary approaches to research (Klein 1990; Stember 1991). In her book Interdisciplinarity: Theory, History and Practice, Klein (1990, p. 13) explains, “The need for meaningful interaction is everywhere. As a result the discourse on interdisciplinarity is widely diffused.” It is also clear that there remain varying understandings of what this approach looks like and what kinds of issues it raises between disciplines. In light of
this, I adopt Jasanoﬀ’s (2013, p. 100) assertion that interdisciplinarity can ‘define new territories of intellectual creativity characterised by questions and answers not previously recognised as necessary or desirable.’ Drawing from this argument, the current research was carried out with the belief that an interdisciplinary approach fosters innovative and novel ways of seeing the world (Barry and Born 2013). Thus, I draw upon work from anthropology, sociology and empirical philosophy. I begin by ﬁrstly outlining Foucault’s theoretical concepts ‘biopower’ and ‘biopolitics’ and how they have been used in recent studies and emergent theories on nutrition, obesity and health. Here, I explain the term ‘individualisation’ and how it offers a means to understand the logic of the Australian Dietary Guidelines (Lindsay 2010).

Building from this foundation, I will then give an explanation of the terms ‘biopedagogies’ (Wright and Harwood 2009) and ‘nutritionism’ (Scrinis 2008), which support the conceptual framework of this study. Following on from this, I will discuss a collection of studies that have sought to understand how eating practices contrast to dominant biomedical and health schemas. As this study adopts an ethnographic methodology, and as I use a number of concepts from anthropological literature in the thematic chapters, I will also provide a background to a selection of these studies.

Then, I will turn to a discussion on scholarship on diasporas, culture and food. This study speciﬁcally focuses on eating practices at a Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club in Sydney, and I will explain how such practices become signiﬁcant particularly through experiences of migration. In so doing, this will lay the ground for a focus on materialities like food, and how they come to be implicated within practices.
Finally, I lay out the theoretical notion ‘ontologies’ originating from Science and Technology Studies (STS). Here I will explain Annemarie Mol’s (2010) methodical term ‘ontonorm.’ The theoretical and conceptual framework of the current study will be set out. I will conclude by addressing the potential limitations of this framework.

**Biopower, Biopolitics and Individualisation**

Foucault’s theoretical concepts ‘biopower’ and ‘biopolitics’ are pivotal terms in studies on the body, power and state sovereignty. More recently, they have become highly influential in the fields of obesity and health studies. As they are key terms in the context of this study, as well as throughout the development of my research questions, I will explain them further. In the works *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1990) and *Society Must be Defended* (2003), Foucault traced the ways in which state power had transformed from the seventeenth century to the modern period. Over this time frame, sovereign power, that being the power of the state to ‘take life or let live’, had transformed into what Foucault termed ‘biopower’ (Taylor 2011, p. 43). Taylor (2011, p. 44) described biopower as ‘a power over bios or life’, where ‘lives may be managed on both an individual and a group basis.’ Displaced from its location in the ‘state’, biopower in modern industrialised societies is decentralised and dispersed throughout various organisations.

In the case of organisations such as medical and judicial institutions, they are granted authority to sanction social deviances that impede or omit productivity (Rose and Miller 1992). Instead of taking life away, biopower is used to ‘administer’ life, and hence, public information such as
census data becomes instrumental to its operations. In this framework, governance over the
‘populations’ emerged; sexuality, health and reproduction became a public interest. Governance
over population health is critical when analysing the Australian Dietary Guidelines. The ways in
which people eat is, according to the Guidelines, a public (and thus, economic) concern. As it
was pointed out:

As the quality and quantity of foods and drinks consumed has a significant impact on the
health and wellbeing of individuals, society and the environment, better nutrition has
huge potential to improve individual and public health and decrease healthcare costs.
(NHMRC 2013, p. 5)

Drawing from this information, individual health is rendered public health (Lupton 1995). Or to
put in other words, ‘the quality and quantity of foods and drinks consumed’ by individuals is
framed as having societal and economic implications. As many have argued, this kind of framing
reflects a broader process of ‘individualisation’, which I will return to soon.

One key and salient premise of biopower is that it functions through internalisation. As such,
there is a capacity for individuals to become ‘self-regulators’ when certain knowledges are
embodied (Taylor 2011, p. 43). Rather than exercised through explicit violence on the body,
biopower:

Is able to access the body because it functions through norms rather than laws, because it
is internalised by subjects rather than exercised from above through acts or threats of
violence, and because it is dispersed throughout society rather than located in a single individual or government body. (Taylor 2011, p. 43)

If we are to consider this in relation to the Guidelines, the methods adopted for intervention become significant. The objective, as is made clear, is to alter eating practices through population wide dietary education. Thus, individuals must internalise and act on the most appropriate ‘evidence-based’ nutritional information for the Guidelines to have effect.

Through the development of biopower, ‘biopolitics’ emerged in Foucault’s work as a way of identifying political technologies that were used to manage populations, specifically through statistical data analysis (Lupton 1995, p. 7). Biopolitics can be understood as the instruments, techniques or ‘macro-technologies’ that are used to govern and regulate populations (Lupton 1995, p. 7). According to Foucault, the body and subjectivity became sites for intervention where disciplining techniques are exercised. In other words, the body is understood as a ‘political space’ (Wright and Harwood 2009, p. 7). Foucault’s conceptualisation of modern governing practices have been enormously influential in contemporary sociological research, specifically in regards to public health regimes.

By adopting Foucauldian theory, Lupton (1995) conducted a discourse analysis to examine public health initiatives between the Middle Ages and the mid-twentieth century in Britain. The initiatives were designed to contain outbreaks of communicable diseases. As Lupton argued, they were underpinned by a utilitarian, discriminatory and moralistic logic. Ideologies to do with sinfulness and dirtiness were intrinsic, implicitly blaming poorer, marginalised collectives for
their sub-optimal health. The ethos of contemporary health promotion, Lupton asserted, rests on the belief that only those who are educated and civilised can take care of their health. In this case, optimal health reflects an individual’s internalisation and adherence to expert knowledges.

As others have found, a shift has been witnessed in contemporary public health policies (Lindsay 2010; Rose 2007). What characterises this shift is an ongoing process of ‘individualisation.’ Underpinning this process is a deferral of responsibility. As Lindsay (2010, p. 481) pointed out, “Public health issues have been successfully individualised so that individuals rather than governments or businesses are now responsible for managing individual harms and risks.” Individuals in this framework are considered rational and responsible, where there is an imperative to follow through on civic duties by personally attending to their own health. In his book *The Politics of Life Itself*, Nikolas Rose (2007, p. 154) explained this further, “Today, we are required to be flexible, to be in continuous training, life-long learning, to undergo perpetual assessment, continual incitement to buy, constantly to improve oneself, to monitor our health, to manage our risk.” When analysing the Australian Dietary Guidelines, they parallel what Lindsay and Rose describe as individual risk management. The act of eating is to do with self-management, which I will further explore in the chapters to follow.

**Obesity, Biopedagogies and Nutritionism**

I have argued that it would be difficult in this day and age to ignore growing concerns of an obesity ‘epidemic.’ In response to discussions that have dominated the field of public health, many social scientists have problematised the inherent assumptions and ideologies of ‘obesity’ as it is currently framed. By adopting a biopolitical framework, attention has been given to the
various other factors that influence the health of populations (Coveney 2000). As some have argued, dominant discussions have failed to address broader social, political and environmental structures and systems (see Coveney 2000; Guthman 2011; Lupton 2014).

One notable biopolitical critique on obesity is the edited work *Biopolitics and the ‘Obesity Epidemic’* (Wright and Harwood 2009). Obesity, the authors argued, has been constructed as a widespread, economically disruptive ‘illness.’ By framing obesity as a very real threat not only to an individual’s health but that of society’s, the case has been made for governmental intervention. Using the term biopower, Wright and Harwood (2009, p. 12) coined the term ‘biopedagogies’ as a way of analysing normalised regulating practices across a range of pedagogical sites. This included formal and informal sites, such as schools and online platforms. ‘Pedagogy’ in this framework can be defined as a kind of social process that attempts to influence a population’s actions, feelings and thoughts (Sandlin, O’Malley and Burdick 2011). When describing the term, the researchers stated:

Biopedagogies not only place individuals under constant surveillance, but also press them towards increasingly monitoring themselves, often through increasing their knowledge around ‘obesity’ related risks, and ‘instructing’ them on how to eat healthily, and stay active. (Wright and Harwood 2009, p. 6)

By using Foucauldian theory alongside a pedagogical scope of analysis, the politics of public health become the focus of enquiry.
Building on these ideas, the politicisation of food and health can be conceptualised through Scrinis’ (2014, p. 2) term ‘nutritionism.’ In his work *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice* (2014), nutritionism functions as a method of governance. This is particularly in the case of initiatives responding to public health concerns. It is inherently ideological as it has had a profound effect on the ways in which individuals come to see and interact with food. Food’s physicality, according to Scrinis, has become politicised. It was stated (Scrinis 2014, p. 8), “Dietary advice and the everyday language we use to talk about food and dietary health has... been steadily colonised by a proliferation of nutritional categories and concepts.”

When discussing the mobilisation of nutrition knowledge in public health initiatives, Scrinis argued that the focus on food’s composition alone is a reductive, limited means for understanding its healthiness:

> The point is not that nutrition science has not yielded valuable insights into the relationships among nutrients, foods, and the body, but that these insights have often been interpreted in a reductive manner and then translated into nutritionally reductive dietary guidelines. (Scrinis 2014, p. 5)

Drawing from these literatures, and paying attention to the instructions of eating as they are presented, the Australian Dietary Guidelines are conceptualised as a ‘biopedagical site.’ In this case, food and the act of eating is politicised. Working from Scrinis’ framework, I posit that nutritional knowledge is translated and disseminated for the purpose of mobilising a way to see and eat food. Though this study does not endeavour to provide an exhaustive biopolitical
analysis of the Guidelines, these conceptual tools support and ground the analysis to follow. A biopolitical analysis of the Guidelines warrants a study in its own right.

**Health, Meaning(s) and Food**

Over the last forty years, a burgeoning body of empirical research exploring food systems, cultures, consumption patterns and practices has emerged in the social sciences. In response to biomedical schemas, many have argued that food is more than a basic nutritional resource (Mol 2012). Amongst the literature on food, culture and health, eating patterns have been explored as socially, environmentally, politically and historically shaped (Delormier, Frohlich and Potvin 2009; Lupton 1994). Many have posited that food’s meanings are cultivated within collective units, such as the family and the community (Lupton 2000; Delormier, Frohlich and Potvin 2009). For example, James (1990, p. 666) conducted a qualitative study on confectionary in British society. Despite the effort made by public health advocates to emphasise the risks of sugar consumption, James found that sweets, candies and chocolate encompassed mythological and symbolic value in British history. Moreover, they were frequently used as powerful mediators between social relations.

Another notable example was Lupton’s (1994, p. 664) exploratory study on food, memory and meaning. Through an analysis of childhood memories, Lupton argued that memory-making was central to the ways in which people eat throughout their lives. When reflecting on this finding in relation to the current research, memories were commonly linked to enjoyable tastes and ways of eating in adulthood. This will be explored further in the chapters to follow. In regards to current public concern of diet and nutrition, Lupton (p. 664) argued:
Food preparation and consumption practices are considered integral to the maintenance or deterioration of bodily health. As a consequence, individuals in western societies are regularly exhorted to follow health guidelines in their everyday diets. However many fail to heed this advice.

In light of this ‘failure’ to heed to dietary advice, Lupton asserted that few researchers had properly considered the effect of food’s social meaning. Interestingly, research has suggested that only approximately 4% of Australians are reaching nutritional targets set out by the Australian Dietary Guidelines (Food Australia 2016, p. 5). One particularly relevant study that addresses this issue is Lindsay’s (2010) research on the 2003 Australian Dietary Guidelines. When speaking of ‘non-compliance’ with the Guidelines, Lindsay (2010, p. 479) pointed out that, “In Australia, non-compliance with healthy living guidelines is ‘normal’.” As a public health initiative, the Guidelines, she argued, are inherently disconnected from everyday life:

On the basis of current public health practice, it seems the guidelines will remain central to public health knowledge and funding claims but increasingly disconnected and irrelevant to citizens who inhabit contextualised social worlds. (Lindsay 2010, p. 476)

This is a critical point for my study. Lindsay (2010, p. 476) argued that food is ‘central to social life’ as it is for identities and social practices. Though I do not necessarily agree that a lack of adherence to dietary recommendations equates to failure as such, Lupton and Lindsay’s findings show there is a need for further critical inquiry into why national dietary advice is not taking
purchase. There is an apparent dissonance between dietary advice and the audience it cares to influence, which is the point of departure for this study.

The ‘diasporic experience’: Food and movement

Much research has been done on diasporic eating practices, identity, nutrition and health in sociology and anthropology. As this research seeks to explore eating practices of South American migrants in Sydney, I will outline some of this scholarship and how it supports the current study. To begin with, the term ‘diaspora’ has been used in various modes of research, and has many definitions. In his book *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (1997, p. xi) Cohen described diasporas as collectives who ‘settle outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories, [and who] acknowledge that “the old country” always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions.’ Drawing from this definition, the study of diasporas looks at groups who keep their ethnic, religious or national identities after leaving their country of origin. Underpinning Cohen’s definition is the ideation of ‘collectivity’, which is paramount to this study.

Many have problematised the idea of diasporic collectivism, and have argued there is a risk of creating an ‘ideal type’ of orientation to the homeland (Safran 1991, p. 84; Clifford 1994). Others have also identified the limitations and problems of drawing boundaries between groups, particularly in the case of studying ethnic food cultures (Keller Brown and Mussell 1984). Though the Club began as a space for Uruguayan migrants in the 1970’s, many of the Club’s community come from other parts of South America and Europe. For all those I spoke to, a sense of collectivity was found in their shared language (Spanish), food and music cultures, and the experience of migrating to Australia. Many described a new sense of identity with other
members in the Club, as ‘South American’, ‘Latin American’ or ‘Hispanic.’ When saying ‘new’ in this context, they had come to identify themselves as such after migrating to Sydney and joining the Club.

In much of the literature on diasporas in Australia, the intersections between food, place, identity and culture have been thoroughly examined (Duarte 2005; Mintz 2008; Thomas 2004). As has been pointed out, food has an ability to convey cultural meanings by virtue of its immersion in ‘everyday practice in a material way’, which is a pertinent point to consider in the case of diasporas (Weismantel 1988, p. 7-8). One notable study is Duarte’s (2005, p. 315) research on diaspora consciousness formation and identity among Brazilians in Australia. For those participants included in the study, Duarte asserted that there is a ‘fundamental link’ between cultural identity and food that comes into being under ‘diasporic conditions.’ Similarly, in Cardona’s study (2009) on Cuban diasporas in Australia, it was found that food is a critical way in which a kind of identity is reconstructed. Food becomes a way in which ‘culture’ is refashioned and redone in a new place. As Cardona pointed out:

The multiple means by which migrant groups remember their homeland through the eating and sharing of food and recreate a cultural community at a distance from the homeland, reveal the critical role of food in the diasporic experience. (2009, p. 40)

This is, of course, not to say that all food cultures remain static in processes of migration. On the contrary, many studies have critiqued the idea of food’s ‘authenticity’ by drawing attention to the effects of globalisation, intercultural engagements and political economies (Thomas 2004).
What these studies collectively show is the heterogeneity, locality, specificity and changeability of food practices, particularly within ‘multicultural’ spaces such as Australia. This draws us back to our initial problematic with the Guidelines. As it was expressed, the aim of the Guidelines is to reach Australia’s population in its totality, yet in so doing, there is a risk of homogenising the nuances and differences that are so clearly visible. As Ang (2003, p. 141) pointed out, the notion of ‘we’ is a site of contestation in our contemporary era. In response, Ang (2003, p. 141) advocates for a ‘together-in-difference’ approach, which pushes back against the ‘hegemonic plane of sameness and homogeneity’ that is characteristic of national initiatives like the Guidelines.

**Food: perspective or multiplicity?**

What appears common within the locus of food, health and nutrition research is a predominant focus on perspectives. The underpinning logic, it would seem, is that conflicting perspectives of what constitutes ‘healthy’ eating may be where the problem lies (Ristovski-Slijepcevic et al. 2008). In other words, the views of nutritional scientists, health advocates and eaters may not align. Yet some others have taken a different approach. In Yates-Doerr and Carney’s (2016) study on food and care, questions about perspective become curious.

In *Demedicalizing Health: The Kitchen as a Site of Care* (2016, p. 305) Yates-Doerr and Carney explored how healthcare was done through culinary practices. In contrast to routine biomedical practices in an obesity clinic, the kitchen was considered a site for doing health-care. By conducting ethnographic fieldwork in a number of kitchens belonging to Latin American
women, the researchers found that food sourcing, preparation and cooking were a kind of ‘culinary care’ given to the women’s familial relations (Yates-Doerr and Carney 2016, p. 305). Origin, cultivation and cooking processes became entangled with food’s connection to health. Moreover, food became a kind of materiality embodying their sense of connection to home, to geographies, to their spirituality and to their familial knowledge.

In stark contrast to a biomedical version of health and health-care, which was described as individualist, unadaptable and somewhat generic in its approach, the women enacted a kind of care through their food that encompassed affection and resourcefulness. Furthermore, translating nutritional advice into the women’s existing practices was found to be a problematic undertaking. This was exemplified in their description of one informant, Dalia:

Care for dietary health, in the case of Dalia... depended on knowing how and under what conditions food was grown. A clinician might look at corn and see nutrients, but Dalia looked at corn and saw histories. When she could not see histories, as was the case for the corn packaged in plastic, she saw illness and death. (Yates-Doerr and Carney 2016, p. 313)

Drawing from this, food’s materiality, or materialities, emerges as a point of focus. In contrast to food that operates in the routine work of health practitioners, food comes to be something starkly different when considered a derivative of the women’s culinary care practices. Although not explicitly stated, Yates-Doerr and Carney’s research sheds light on how materialities such as food can be understood as multiple when attention is given to the practices in which they are
enacted. As the current research explores the multiplicity of food and eating, I will now discuss the notion ‘empirical ontologies’ in the final section.

**Ontological Politics: Ontologies and ‘Ontonorms’**

As explained by STS scholar Annemarie Mol (2012, p. 380) ‘ontology’ in the traditional western philosophical canon refers to ‘things in themselves’ that precede knowledge. In other words (Mol 1999, p. 75), “Ontology defines what belongs to the real, the conditions of possibility we live with.” An object’s ontology in this schema is therefore singular, stable and ‘out of reach.’ In more recent years, the term ontology has gained much attention particularly in so-called ‘materialist’ turns (Anderson and Perrin 2015, p. 3). Within the humanities and social sciences, scholars have attempted to deconstruct a ‘narrow’ humanist conception that objects are somehow passive and without agency (Anderson and Perrin 2015, p. 3). In other words, there is an effort to get at the ‘liveliness’ of matter (Sismondo 2015, p. 441). This effort is representative of new materialist, relational materialist and post-humanist perspectives. The underpinning belief of these movements is captured by Bennett (2004, p. ix), who argued that ‘culture’ has and should be conceptualised as an entanglement of human and non-human materials.

In a commentary paper presented for the *Social Studies of Science* journal, Sismondo (2015, p. 441) discussed a so-called ‘ontological turn’ in Science and Technologies Studies (STS). A turn to ontology, he explained, is a means to ‘appreciate the resistances, liveliness, or agency’ of materialities that are brought into being through science. By drawing on the term, STS scholars have experimented with the idea that an object’s ontology is constantly ‘becoming’ in practices (Mol 2012, p. 380). Guided by the belief that practices shape the material world, empirical
ontologists like Mol have pioneered a study of practices in which material objects both act and are enacted. As such, an object’s ‘ontology’ is rendered both multiple and mundane through empirical analysis (Sismondo 2015, p. 441).

A prime example of this kind of empirical work is Mol’s study *Mind Your Plate! The ontonorms of Dutch dieting* (2012). As I briefly discussed in the introduction chapter, Mol’s research has been pivotal for the analysis used in the current research. Thus, I will provide a fuller summary of this study. By drawing on the term enactment, Mol conducted an analysis of contrasting versions of food in two different dieting regimes. The term ‘ontonorm’ was used as a methodical tool, which Mol (2012, p. 381) simply described as a way of sensitising us to ‘materialities and issues of good and bad at the same time.’ Using ontonorms, the following questions were asked, ‘what kind of matter is food?’ and ‘What kind of body does it feed?’ In the regime *Mind Your Plate*, food is ‘fuel’ for the body in the form of calories. If the client’s body weight is to be reduced, fuel intake needs to be less than the amount of energy expended. By this logic a body that consumes too much fuel will put on weight in the form of fat deposits, and a body that reduces fuel intake will reduce weight. Pleasurable eating in this regime is classed as a danger, and therefore needs to be controlled. As Mol suggests, human bodies in this paradigm are inherently and naturally willful in their eating practices, and hence they require measures for control.

In the contrasting regime *Enjoy Your Food*, a body is a ‘feeling’ entity (Mol 2012, p. 388). Healthy eating habits can be cultivated through attentiveness and self-care, such as cooking skills and engagement with mindful eating practices. Enjoyable eating is considered part and parcel for
improving body weight; rather than overruling pleasures through calorie control, bodily satisfaction becomes the goal. The body is not a ‘naturally’ willful eater in need of regulation here, but is ‘naturally’ capable of self-care if the necessary resources are made available.

Empirical ontologies attends to the ways in which food is enacted in practices, allowing the researcher to identify competing versions of materialities like food. As Mol (2012) pointed out, empirical ontologies are not so much about philosophical questions as they are about political questions. Through analyses such as these, the ‘multiplicity of objects, constituted in diverse socio-material settings’ becomes apparent (Woolgar and Lezaun 2013, p. 324). As my study focuses on contrasting and competing versions of food and eating, empirical ontologies has been adopted.

**Debates and limitations**

There is much debate amongst emergent materialist theories. This is particularly the case in regards to the benefits of using the term ‘ontology’ in empirical analyses. In his article ‘Performing Ontology’, Aspers (2015, p. 499) suggested that empirical ontologies are no more useful than the tools offered by social constructivism, as there is little linguistic difference. Yet, in response, the turn to ontology can be understood as a shift away from constructivist and perspectivist accounts. As Sismondo (2015, p. 446) asserted:
If the mundane practices version of the ontological turn is to be useful, then it will be because of the value of the verbs that empirical ontologists employ and the insights gained from studies using those verbs. ‘Construct’ is a very generic version of those verbs. [Empirical or historical ontologies] certainly encourage us to see the competing ways in which things are constructed.

The rationality behind this study’s use of an empirical ontological framework rests on a belief that to speak of an object’s ontology, not just of its social construction, holds a level of gravitas. Moreover, it directs empirical attention to the practices, or the performances, of which things are done. As Mol (1999, p. 75) explains, “[o]ntological politics is informed by, but does not directly follow from or easily coexist with either perspectivalism or constructivism. Its pivotal term is slight different: it is performance.”

By making an object’s ontology both mundane and multiple, empirical focus can be given to competing versions of food. As illustrated in this literature review, there are dissonances between Australian Dietary Guidelines and the public, which is a salient problem. Hence, this research attempts to analyse on how practices enact materialities and visa-versa. Moreover, the ‘liveliness’ and affective power of materialities can be attended to in this framework. When reflecting on the differences found between eating as it is prescribed in the Guidelines, and eating as it is done by those involved in this study, an empirical focus on practices offers a novel way in which we can unpack these differences.
In the next chapter, I will outline the research design, methodology and the choice of methods. By drawing on phenomenology, ethnography and empirical ontologies, I will discuss how the research design is supported by a number of methodological strands. I justify the framework this study adopts and the methods undertaken. Through these discussions I illustrate why qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation are the most appropriate choices for a study on multiplicity and food.
Chapter Two. Study Design and Methods

Introduction

The aim of this research is to problematise the 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines by exploring food’s multiplicity. My empirical focus is the Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club where I juxtapose lived eating practices with the dietary advice apparent in the Guidelines. This chapter will discuss research methodology and design. Firstly I will explain the choice of methodology and methods, followed on with ethical considerations, and finally, an explanation of my own reflexivity. Given the questions and aims, this study was conducted using a number of methods, namely ethnographic methods and qualitative interviews.

Methodologies - Phenomenology, Ethnography and Empirical Ontologies

As the study was focused on food and eating practices, ‘immersing’ myself ethnographically within the Club’s context as a volunteer for a period of time enabled me to use my own first-hand experiences as a part of data collection and analysis (Goffman 1989, p. 125). Originating from anthropology, ethnographic methods of empirical work required the researcher to immerse themselves for an extended period of time within an unfamiliar site, where the researcher became a key tool. The task is to ecologically subject oneself, body and personality to the social situation in order to make plausible interpretations of a given collective (Goffman 1989). During this process, data is collected in the form of thoroughly detailed field notes, which are then used to write an ethnography. It should be noted that although the researcher engages in observation, traditionally a somewhat positivist method of data collection, field notes are and should be
considered ‘made and fashioned’ by the researcher, therefore rendering it an interpretive methodology (Geertz 1973, p. 15).

The ethnographic component of my study spanned a total of three months from May to August 2017 where, fortnightly, I volunteered at the Club as a barista. Concretely, the ethnographic exploration included participant observation, which means that I both passively and actively participated at the social events organised by the members. Besides visible eating practices, this study was also interested both in the experiences of eating. Therefore it was necessary to adopt another method to capture how food was entangled within their everyday lives. Moreover, the concern was to explore how participant’s emotions, relations and networks affected the food that they ate, both at the time of the interview and in their past. Given this, I conducted eight semi-structured interviews with individual members of the Club. Interviewing enabled me to explore the observations I had made during participant observation with greater depth, as well as engage in a dialogue with club members about their beliefs, experiences and intimacies around eating.

Ethnographic designs, including interviews, have commonly been used in the fields of qualitative health, food and nutrition research as they have sought to understand perspectives, experiences, and inequities. Using ethnographic methods, cultural anthropologists and folklorists have explored what is termed ‘foodways’, a term that encompasses the intersection of food’s production, preparation, and consumption with the environment, tradition and culture (Man Kong Lum and de Ferriere le Vayer 2016, p. 1). By studying foodways, attention is given not only to the object of food itself but to the social activities and beliefs shared by a given collective (Gutierrez 1992, p. xi).
The ethnographic insights of this study are formed by phenomenological ideas about perception and experience. Originating from 19th Century philosophical traditions, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty came to see phenomenology as the study of an individual’s lived everyday experience (Husserl 1970). In opposition to positivist epistemologies, phenomenology was deemed to be a focus on individual perception, consciousness and experience of lived reality as a primary source of knowledge that that could be studied separately to causal, historical explanations (Husserl 1970). In essence, the phenomenological tradition argued that epistemological knowledges were socio-historically situated and could be based on a subject’s first-hand description of her or his own lived reality. In other words, we take the described everyday phenomena of our research subjects as their reality, thus including all matter of objects as a part of that reality. Following on from Merleau-Ponty’s ideas, phenomenology’s underpinning philosophy not only serves to legitimise the qualitative epistemological work done in the current research, but also provides a platform to build an ontological framework. In regards to combined methodologies, it has been argued that using both phenomenological and ethnographic approaches allows the researcher to gather a rich body of data providing insight into phenomena from varying angles and contexts (Maggs-Rapport 2000).

Access to the Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club, participant observation and interviews
After receiving approval from the University of Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee\(^1\), I made contact with the organisers of the ‘Latin Social Group’ via a social networking online website meetup.com.au. The Latin Social Group is a networking collective for anyone who

\(^1\) See appendix A for ethics approval.
identifies as having a Latin American and/or Hispanic background. The group comes together regularly at the Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club in Sydney to socialise, dance and dine. In my initial email to the group’s organisers I described the outline and aims of the research, including involvement of participant observation and eight one-on-one interviews within group members, asking if they felt it appropriate for the study to be conducted in the group setting. If this was indeed the case, I asked if they would like to get together for a meeting to further discuss the research requirements. When receiving a positive response, I met with the group’s coordinator Belky at the Club where we discussed potential interview candidates and options for participant observation.

The Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club is located in Sydney’s suburb Hinchinbrook. Every weekend it welcomes patrons from an array of European and Latin American backgrounds, Italian, Spanish, Uruguayan, Argentinian. It thrives off a foundation of volunteer support. As stated in its objectives, the Club aims to provide a ‘space of expression, assembly and entertainment through the feel of Hispanic and Latin American culture’, and on Friday nights it becomes a lively busy space to share conversation, drink and eat with friends, family and other members of the community.

As the Club relies heavily on volunteers for food service, and as I have worked for many years as a barista while studying, I offered to volunteer fortnightly for three months in the café as a means of carrying out participant observation and to meet potential interview participants. From then

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2 Please see the email in Appendix F.
on, I drove to the club fortnightly to work a three-hour shift, where I would make coffee for patrons, serve desserts and eat dinner usually with club and committee members. Interview participants were recruited by the group’s coordinator Belky. She acted as a gatekeeper and introduced me to members who she thought would like to have an interview.

Throughout the duration of my time working at the Club, I kept a reflexive journal to record of my own personal reflections of time spent in the field, as well as a formal fieldwork notebook. When writing them up, I kept the notes in narrative form as a way of ensuring ‘thick description’ was maintained (Geertz 1973, p. 6). Thick description, known as a fundamental part in the enterprise of anthropological methodologies, is an approach to data collection and interpretation where the researcher interprets and reduces the context of interest through processes of writing and describing. The field-notes were used as a process of sense-making, where I could reflect on observations and my own interpretations (Angrosino 2007).

When working at the club I would usually eat dinners and desserts with fellow volunteers and club members, and sometimes I would eat alone. There would regularly be live South American music playing and salsa dancing, sometimes birthday parties and other family celebrations. From what I observed and according to the Club’s board members, the majority of patrons who attended regularly were in their middle to older years of age as the club had become a long term space for them to socialise in Spanish and engage with other members of their community. The club was often described as a family and a community that fostered relationships between first, second and third generation migrants, as well as enabling people to connect with each other and their culture through music and food. Each night I worked, at 7:30pm patrons would stand in line
for the barbecue where assortments of meats were plated up alongside salads and bread rolls. In the café people would come to purchase coffee, tea and South American styled sweets such as budin de pan (bread pudding), flan (cream caramels) and milhojas (puff pastry with apple and caramel), most often buying four or five at a time to be shared with friends and families. After completing my shift, I would write out my field-notes in my car as precisely as I could before leaving.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were used as a primary source of data collection in order to further explore the significance of eating as described by the Club’s members. Considered a method for constructing knowledge about an individual’s ‘lived reality’, the interviews opened a space for participants to freely discuss their own practices and beliefs vis-à-vis food and eating (Daly 2007, p. 139). Furthermore, eating could be contextualised during the interview.

Participants were initially recruited based on the following criteria: a) they were regular attendees of the Club; b) they were above the age of 18; c) they identified as having a Latino and/or Hispanic and/or South American background; and d) they were fluent in English. When conducting fieldwork, my gatekeeper introduced me to a number of individuals whom she had discussed my research with and had shown interest in having an interview. During the initial introductions I explained the research’s purpose and aims, and asked if they would like to be involved. There were a couple of individuals who felt they did not know enough about South American food to participate, so I chose not to pursue them further. Throughout the recruitment period I had a total of nine participants who agreed to be interviewed. The interviews were
conducted between June and August 2017, seven of which were conducted in the Club’s administration office and one at a café in Liverpool, Sydney. All participants were above the age of 50 and identified as having Uruguayan, Argentinian, Polish, Italian and Spanish backgrounds. Five identified as women, and three identified as men.³

The interviews took around thirty minutes to an hour. Each interview was electronically recorded. Throughout the duration of the interview I explored the experience of eating as a social one, and what food meant for the participants as broadly as possible. Hence, a series of direct and indirect open-ended questions were asked, such as ‘how does your day look in terms of your social life?’, ‘what do you enjoy about coming to the club?’ and ‘how do you feel when eating with others?’⁴ I also wanted to learn how ‘health’ was understood subjectively in terms of food, but this was often a tricky question as I felt participants often assumed I meant healthiness as related to nutrition.

**Analysing the data - coding and using ‘ontonorms’**

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. A number of coding methods were adopted and experimented with using the computer software NVivo. Following the tradition of phenomenology, the first stage of coding was done without the use of theories and hypotheses as a means of allowing the data to speak independently (Thompson et al. 1989). Initially I began with open and thematic coding, where common terms, experiences and expressions would be categorised under headings such as ‘family eating’, ‘memories’ and ‘nutrition.’ When analysing

³ For further demographic details, please see Appendix D.
⁴ For a more detailed list of interview questions, please see Appendix E.
the Australian Dietary Guidelines, I used a similar method of coding. Common terms and phrases were grouped and categorized as themes, such ‘food as nutrients/energy’ and ‘rules of eating.’ After the fieldwork period was completed, field-notes were analysed using identical coding methods. As this research explored the ontological multiplicity of food objects as a way of understanding eating practices, Mol’s methodical tool ‘ontonorm’ was drawn upon and used throughout data analysis. When using ontonorms, I attempted to identify and analyse the norms embedded within food and eating practices in my empirical data, and in the Guidelines. This inclusion opened all manners of possibilities to consider food active, political, and as always ‘becoming’ (Mol 2013, p. 381). By using this method and by remaining sensitive to multiplicity, I found myself better able to query the stability of beliefs intrinsic to food materialities and eating practices (including my own). This choice of mixed methodology worked as an experimental platform to answer and expand on the research questions as well as open up new sites of enquiry into food socialities and ontologies.

**Ethical considerations**

The current research project was conducted in alignment with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct In Human Research (NHMRC 2007). In so doing, a number of relevant ethical issues needed consideration. In adherence to the guidelines, researchers are required to gauge the risks and benefits of the research in question and ensure potential benefits are justifiable (NHMRC 2007, p. 14). The aims and objectives of the current research were accepted as low risk for interview participants, however it should be acknowledged that the topic of food can often open up unexpected personal details and experiences. Given this, and as the research questions were predominantly open-ended, it was the researcher’s responsibility to ensure participants were
fully aware of conditions of consent, as well as ensuring that interviews were guided with care⁵. Assurance was given to the participants that the interview could be terminated at any time. In order to conduct fieldwork in accordance with the statement, written permission was provided by the director of the Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club⁶. In terms of research benefits, for many participants the interviews were seemingly positive experiences as they offered an opportunity to openly discuss and explore their own personal histories, joyful memories of their families and, in many instances, their pleasure in food.

One other ethical consideration was also in regards to language and communication. Many, if not most of the Club’s regular clients and volunteers are first and second generation migrants. Given this, Spanish was frequently pointed out as their primary language. As this raised potential communication issues in terms of consent and interviewing, English proficiency was included in the recruitment criteria.

**Researcher reflexivity**

As mentioned above, phenomenology and ethnography are premised on the belief that they are indeed interpretive methodologies. Beyond these, reflexivity is an integral component of any research process, and should be practiced from start to finish (Emirbayer and Desmond 2012). By acknowledging one’s own active participation in the research, an ‘intersectional’ approach was taken, where multiple aspects of identity of the researcher are recognised (2012, p. 581). As

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⁵ Please see Appendix B and C for participant information form and consent form.
⁶ Please see Appendix G for permission letter.
such, I will briefly lay out my own role in the research process and how my beliefs, social position and motives have come to play a part.

As a relatively young Anglo-Australian middle class woman, dietary and nutritional schemas have informed and influenced my understanding of food and eating. Moreover, given my demographic background I felt some participants saw me as one with preconceptions of what ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ eating looked like. To what extent this influenced my data I cannot say, though I did feel it had influence. What I would also point out, is that as someone who has experienced an eating disorder I am also somewhat sensitive (and responsive) to the messages and rhetoric of nutritional schemas such as the Guidelines. After having lived a period of time where food was only nutrients and energy, my curiosity for this project stemmed from a possibility of otherness.

As a means of continuously practicing reflexivity, Patton’s (2002, p. 12) method of triangulated reflexive enquiry was a useful tool. This method involves asking the following questions: What do I know? How do I know what I know? How do they (the participants) know what they know? Throughout the research process, and through theoretical tools provided by scholars such as Mol, food’s multiplicity became apparent in unexpected and exciting ways.
Chapter Three. Unpacking Energy: The Multiplicity of Meat

Introduction

During an evening of work at the Club’s cafe, I was chatting to fellow volunteer Vince about his ‘fitness’ iPhone app. To help lose weight, he uses it to log his daily calorie intake. He went on to explain the amount of calories his body requires for a day’s work, when another volunteer, Jeff, joined our conversation. Overhearing the talk about calories, Jeff asked Vince in a casual tone, “Are you in a deficit?” I found myself somewhat perplexed by this question, but Vince seemed quite comfortable in answering. The discussion then became one involving numerical values, energy outputs and inputs. What the body did with nutrients and energy, as far as I could tell, was knowable. What’s more, it could be calculated to get something done: weight-loss. Only a few moments later, Jeff shared a story with me about the hunting trip he had been on the weekend prior. Along with uncles, aunts and cousins, he drove out somewhere west of Sydney and spent the day tracking wild pigs. Jeff pulled an iPhone from his pocket and showed me photos, one depicting an enormous stack of pork sausages made from the meat of a single pig. “We don’t leave any part of the animal unused”, Jeff said enthusiastically. Much effort and many hands had gone into the day’s hunt, to be sure. There was pride in the work done, and as I understood it, the sausages and remaining off-cuts would be shared amongst friends and family.

When we reflect deeper on these two conversations, food is quite complicated. If you think meat, what do you think of? Considering nutrition science for instance, food is, as many understand it, a composition. We may think it as a combination of fats, proteins and carbohydrates, all of which have physiological effects. In recent times, knowing food’s nutritional physicality has become
commonplace in Australia (Scrinis 2014). If we turn to Australia’s Dietary Guidelines, its contents echo this common way in which, by and large, food ‘is’ the bits that make it up (Mol 2002, p. 54). The bits known as ‘nutrients’ and ‘energy.’ And when looking further, there is a politics to these kinds of materialities. Food’s physicality it would seem determines and informs the more favourable eating practice in the Guidelines, where modes of self-surveillance are necessary. But in the case of other food practices, this logic finds problems. From the narratives explained by members of the Club, foods like meat come in other versions (Mol 2012). I argue in this chapter that meat is an object with multiplicity. In so doing, I posit that the otherness of food, not just perspective, is a crucial point of enquiry as it draws attention to some tensions and complexities that dietary advice will find trouble addressing.

What is Meat?

Out of all the kinds of food served at the Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club, meat from the asado (South American barbecue) is one of the most popular foods. According to the committee members I interviewed, people attend regularly because of the barbecued meat. The asado has a long history in Uruguay, Argentina and other parts of South America, and still remains a popular way of cooking meat for many. Thinking on this, I start with a somewhat naive question: what is meat in the Guidelines? The word ‘is’ in this question is an important one, which I will explain. In her book *Body Multiple* (2002) Mol applied an ontological framework to the study of atherosclerosis. By asking questions about the what ‘is’, Mol (2002, p. 54) stated, “In this ontological genre, a sentence that tells what atherosclerosis is, is to be supplemented with another one that reveals where this is the case… The word ‘is’ used here is a localised term.” This is a critical point. When thinking of meat’s multiplicity, the word ‘is’ does not mean to
denote ontological totality, be that a nutritional substance or not. Rather, the question becomes one of specificity. In this case, the ‘is’ of meat in the following analysis is localised.

If we are to take the purpose of the Guidelines at face value, it is to dispense the most ‘accurate’ dietary advice to all Australians (NHMRC 2013, p. iii). When considering this goal and the number of stakeholders involved in the Guidelines’ development, a consensus in terms of what food is was agreed upon (NHMRC 2013). For the sake of translation, common ‘food’ needed to be established for dietary advice to be generated. Or to put another way, for scientific evidence to turn into sound dietary advice, objects like meat would require a criteria. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, up to 55,000 scientific papers were reviewed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), and the Dietary Guidelines Working Committee. And as was made transparent, this process did not go ahead without some complications (NHMRC 2013, p. 49), “The evidence is difficult to interpret because of widely varying definitions of ‘meat’.” But aside from some difficulties in the works, we can see from resulting dietary advice that meat is finalised as something.

Firstly, meat is derived from some kind of non-human animal. It is (NHMRC 2013, p. 146) ‘all or part of the carcass of any cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo, kangaroo, camel, deer, goat, pig or rabbit.’ Though understandably, meat’s origin, be that from the farm or the bush or the animal, is not the main interest for a criteria here. This is dietary advice after all, and hence the concern by and large is with meat’s nutritional effects on the body. Thus, meat is categorised into two types:
‘lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs and plant-based alternatives’ and ‘processed and cured meat.’

The former is the favourable choice given that:

The ‘lean meats and alternatives’ food group is diverse, both nutritionally and biologically. The foods in this group have traditionally been seen as ‘protein-rich’, but they also provide a wide variety of other nutrients. (NHMRC 2013, p. 48)

So we can see, some commonalities are established. Between meats and ‘alternatives’ like plant-based foods, the commonality is the kinds and concentrations of nutrients. In this case, protein. And the nutritional values are telling of quality; the more nutritious, the better the quality and therefore the more favourable the meat is to take up in a balanced diet. Fish for example is a ‘lean’ meat (NHMRC 2013, p. 38). It is ‘nutritious, providing energy (kilojoules), protein, selenium, zinc, iodine and vitamins A and D.’

In contrast, the latter meats are the less favourable choice. And the reason, as expected, is based on the physical bits. According to Guidelines (2013, p. 49), “They can be high in added salt and saturated fat and are not recommended as substitutes for unprocessed meat. These foods fit in the ‘discretionary foods’ category.” So here we have another variable. Depending on particulars like processing methods, and the kinds of fats and minerals present, meat can fit into a third category, namely ‘discretionary foods.’ Let’s take a look, then, at the potentially problematic bits. Firstly, there is salt, which is made up of sodium and chloride ions. As the research in the Guidelines shows, too much can have ‘detrimental’ effects on health, and thus, Australians should limit their
intake to 6 grams a day (NHMRC 2013, p. 148). And secondly, there is saturated fat, which are molecules saturated in hydrocarbons. These kinds of fats are found mainly in the food products of land animals (such as cheese, milk and meat). In the Guidelines, saturated fats are the least favourable, yet all fats should be treated with caution, as it was noted (NHMRC 2013, p. 68), “As a nutrient, fat has high energy value (fat delivers about 37 kJ/g, compared to around 17 kJ/g for carbohydrate and protein).”

In this case, meat can be ‘energy dense’ in the form of kilojoules and not so ‘rich’ in the nutrients, which turns out to be problematic if the goal is to achieve a healthy body weight. As it was pointed out (NHMRC 2013, p. 70), if intake of discretionary foods is not reduced, then ‘most Australians need to greatly increase physical activity to ‘burn up’ the additional energy (kilojoules)... to help achieve and maintain a healthy weight.’ The word ‘discretionary’ is an interesting one if we think of what it means in the Guidelines:

[discretionary foods] includes foods and drinks not necessary to provide the nutrients the body needs, but that may add variety. They can be included sometimes in small amounts by those who are physically active, but are not a necessary part of the diet (2013, p. 144, emphasis added).

We have established so far from this information that ‘meat’ in the Guidelines is a kind of materiality. It is physiologically effective. And there are concerns of good and not so good if we think of which is preferable in dietary advice (Mol 2012). Meat is nutrients, it is energy, and
depending on the kinds and amounts, it can have negative or positive effects on health. The good meat is nutritious and provides energy. The not so good meat is not so nutritious, provides too much energy, and thus, is not ‘necessary’ to eat (unless it can be compensated for). Yet the epistemic claims apparent in this representation of food are curious. Why is meat, by and large, settled as nutrients and energy in the dietary advice? As was made clear, overweightness and obesity are the Guidelines’ primary concern. And if we determine what kind of relationship is made between body weight and food, the leading explanation has to do with energy and overconsumption. As it was pointed out (NHMRC 2013, p. 2), “Overconsumption of some foods and drinks, leading to excess energy intake and consequent increases in adiposity, is now a key public health problem for Australia.” Reflecting on this, the politics of materialities become curious. After all, what use is energy in dietary advice if it cannot be put into dietary practices? Let us continue taking the Guidelines at face value. Baring Jeff’s question ‘are you in a deficit?’ in mind, how are bits like energy put into practices?

**Calculate and Quantify: How does one ‘do’ Energy?**

If the Guidelines’ task is to improve Australian diets, then the way food is eaten becomes a point of intervention. As we can see from the information above, energy is clearly problematic. Or more accurately, how it is handled by a good portion of Australians. The idea of energy as effective on body weight is, of course, not exclusive to the Guidelines. On the contrary, it echoes long standing methods of physiological calculations. As Mol (2012, p. 383) pointed out, “Historically, the first scientific measurements of how much food energy a body needed were done with equipment that had earlier been used for assessing the fuel requirements of combustion engines.” It would be difficult to miss the utilitarian and mechanical tone underlying
these methods of measurement. But leaving this aside, our focus here is on the Guidelines’ advice for eating. And more specifically, on the additional equipment that enables energy to be enacted (Mol 2012). From what we can gather in the Guidelines, a nationwide health issue like ‘obesity’ can be remedied with the taking up of a more rationalised, calculative way of eating. And through these practices, energy intake should be controlled. When reviewing the Guidelines’ supplementary online materials and resources, technologies appear to be instrumental for this logic to be taken up in practices.

In their work on obesity and biopolitics, Wright and Harwood (2009) asserted that the purpose of biopedagogies (of which the Guidelines is a prime example) is to teach individuals to regulate themselves, particularly in terms of their food consumption. This finding resonates when looking at the NHMRC’s online nutrition tools and resources. If one is to go onto the Department of Health’s Eat for Health website (NHMRC 2015), one will find an abundance of educational materials, tips and guides for eating. There is information on ‘serving sizes’ and ‘sample meals’ for men, women and children. One can also find an online game titled ‘Food Balance’, which is designed for children between the ages of 4 and 13. In the game, a player selects an avatar named ‘Peach’ or ‘Basil.’ The aim is to choose the most appropriate kinds and amounts of food for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The main concern for the player is the amount of energy and nutrients when selecting foods. If the player succeeds in picking the appropriate choices, their avatar will safely tiptoe along a balancing line. If the player fails, their avatar will fall.
Aside from the tips and games on *Eat for Health*, one can also find out their own energy requirements with the assistance of a ‘daily energy requirements calculator.’ By providing biomarkers such as age, gender, body weight, as well as ‘activity level’, the calculator gives the appropriate amounts of nutrients and energy required. The underpinning pedagogical logic, it would seem, is that a healthy weight will be promoted and sustained if one internalises a practice of self-surveillance (Wright and Harwood 2009). And it would seem that technologies play a vital role in this process. As many have found, self-monitoring technologies have proliferated in recent years. Moreover, they have authority over the information they provide. In her work on personal data practices, Lupton (2017, p. 339) argued that, “[t]he lives of humans have become increasingly entangled with digital technologies due to the reactive and responsive nature of computer software and the ubiquity of the devices that people carry with them.” In her research on fitness self-tracking devices, Lupton (2017, p. 345) found that ‘trust’ and ‘accuracy’ were central to the human-technology interface. Precise numerical values such as ‘calories burned’ and ‘distance travelled’ encouraged users to feel a sense of trust in the data, rather than relying on their own incalculable bodily perceptions. Similarly, Crawford et al. (2015, p. 480) argued that wearable fitness devices give the impression of ‘unambiguous’ self-assessment, where the ‘real’ state of the body is reflected. If we think of the initial conversation explained in the beginning of this chapter, the inputs and outputs of energy can seem pretty matter-of-fact. Though the task is not to delve into the epistemology of personal technological data practices here, what is of interest is how energy becomes mobilised in eating practices (or not).
For Vince, energy can be ‘done’ with a technological means. That is, if other materialities and circumstances allow for it. During our interview I asked if he had become conscious of nutrition more recently, to which he answered:

Yeah, look um there’s, um, an app that I have on my phone where I can scan barcodes and it will tell you um, the portion you should be eating, how many calories per portion and so on, and that’s something that I would never have thought about ten years ago, you know. Even 5 years ago I never would have thought of that. (Vince)

From what Vince explained, using a technology to calculate energy intake had been of benefit, as he had lost over 20 kilograms. Though interestingly, he explained that there are often interferences in his calculation processes. If there are other materials and entities, such as people, distractions, a lack of portioning tools, and an inappropriate setting, calculation becomes difficult:

Growing up probably as a kid, and if I’m in a group and I’m eating, I was probably eating more than what I should, because I don’t notice, because I’m not focused on what I’m doing. Whether if I’m at home alone, I will look at what I’m eating, and I tend to think “oh no that’s too much” um and maybe make a smaller portion. Whether when you’re sitting down, especially when we like, we [family and friends] don’t sort of portion food on a plate, most of the time it's put on a dish in the middle of the table, and everybody sort of helps themselves, so because you’re talking and you’re not actually thinking about what you’re doing you probably tend to eat more, probably. (Vince)
A number of points stand out from this statement. It would seem that a tension arises between what amount of food ‘should’ be eaten, and what happens when the rules are overshadowed. Doing energy, as can be seen above, is contingent upon other factors. For instance, conscious awareness of intake, quietness, a space alone to eat, a technology that provides the amount of food required, as well as the correct serving utensils. Perhaps an eating event needs to be right (Mol 2010).

As I understood from our interview, Vince eating was most often done with the family. And food was plentiful. Normally a large bowl of pasta would be placed in the middle of the dining table, along with other entrees and sides. His mother would continue to bring out plate after plate, and by the end, everyone was ‘full.’ Could it be, in these events, that eating does not involve doing energy? Not only is it impractical, but it is not preferable. As stated earlier in this thesis, materialities in an ontological framework are considered the derivatives of practices (Woolgar and Lezuan 2013). Rather than consider materialities like meat as, by default, natural, what do they look like when considered products of politics? From what was explained by Club members, it is the sizzling, smoking spectacle of a social barbecue. It is part of a day’s hunting trip, stored away in a freezer or passed on to family friends. It is to do with various elements, other than just physical bits and bodies. In the final section of this chapter, I will turn attention to practices where another meat is enacted, which I conceptualise as ‘our-food.’
Our-Food or Energy?

Before beginning, I will take a moment to explain the narrative that follows. In restating the position this study takes, the empirical focus in terms of the Club has been one on practices where food is done. In her work on care practices, Mol (2015, p. 218) stated that, “Over the last decade many have insisted that not only the substance, food, deserves attention, but that the practice, eating, is at least as important.” I will explain how practices are engaged in the becoming of our-food, and in so doing, how another kind of politics emerges. Of those I spoke to, all are first generation migrants to Australia, and from what was observed, particular kinds of foods and practices were deeply important to maintain. A stark contrast becomes clear between ‘meat’ as it is established in the Guidelines, and ‘meat’ when it is our-food.

Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening, the Club provides barbecued meat from the asado, as well as roasts, salads, pastas and breads from the canteen. As was often mentioned by many Club members, the asado is a ‘special’ kind of barbecue. According to committee member and interviewee Belky, it originated from traditional cooking methods used by Uruguayan and Argentinian ‘gauchos’, also commonly referred to as cowboys. As she explained, when working on the land, the only food they typically had access to was their livestock:

The pastures over there were very very good. It was full of cows walking around, so it was the main food for them [gauchos]. You know on the land, you kill a cow, make a fire, do the barbecue, eat. It was the main food. (Belky)
The gauchos would cook beef on their campfire using a grill, which is very similar to the asado today. The modern asado is fired with either coal or wood, and consists of a long grill (the one at the club is about two metres long). Some asados have an adjustable grill so it can be raised and lowered depending on the amount of heat required. Given the size of the grill, the asado can be used to cook a substantial amount of meat at once. Barbecued meat is an event, as many interviewees explained.

Ana, an Argentine woman in her early thirties, explained that the asado is always an event with family and friends. Normally, each guest will bring something to share such as a salad, a collection of breads and some kind of meat. The task of organising the salads would typically be done by the women in Ana’s family, such as her grandmother, mother and aunts, and the men would cook the meat. It would be a long affair; people would arrive at the house early evening to snack, drink and chat, and the meat would be ready to eat around 9 or 10 o’clock at night. Though Ana does not have her own barbecue in Australia, she will usually have one with family and friends when returning to Argentina. The barbecue is central for social events, as the Club’s chef Marcel pointed out, “Everything revolves around the barbecue, it’s the barbecue that brings people together.”

Aside from a sprinkling of salt, meat is often cooked without additional ingredients as flavour comes through in the cooking process. Marcel mentioned that ‘cheap meat is good meat’ for asado. At the Club, choices of meat range from beef steaks, beef and pork sausages, black pudding and sometimes, if it is available from the supplier, different kinds of offal. Frequently,
interviewees and other Club members described meat from the asado as ‘our food.’ When talking to the Club’s senior committee member Irma, she said, “Our food is the barbecue. Barbecues are the main thing. Eating meat for us is on every menu… we’ve been eating it since we were born.”

A similar remark was made by Belky. In Uruguay she knew her neighbours well, and if anyone was having a barbecue, the neighbourhood would be welcome. When speaking about the importance of the asado, Belky said:

> It’s our food, the food we used to have when we were little. Some of them [the Club’s patrons], they came here [Australia] when they were young. But it’s still… we grew up with that sort of food and also the music and the language.

Although she has never been a big meat eater herself, Belky’s father saw meat as an essential part of a dish, “If you don’t give him a meal without meat… he says this is not a meal. Doesn’t matter about vegetables, it has to be meat. And I suppose, we keep our traditions.”

Belky’s final point is telling when thinking of the politics involved in maintaining practices. As is clear, memories, methods and flavours are entangled with meat. Though when considering this, there are of course tensions. Many participants spoke of the changes they experienced when coming to Australia, particularly between their own eating practices and ‘healthy’ eating schemas. For example, Club member Eva discussed her experiences when seeing her doctor:
We talking *a lot* about healthy food, this food is not healthy food [food at the Club]. But we don’t follow that.. [laughs] my doctor say you have to lose about 15 kilos, I say I try I try, he says you don’t have to try you have to do it. Because before we don’t care about, see, cholesterol or, sugar, no, but now you go to the doctor and they’ll say ‘oh your sugar levels is high, don’t drink this don’t have that, no fat.’ Probably in my country in the school they were never talking about cholesterol or sugar, what is good what is healthy what is not good, no, never, I can’t remember that. And so, I come here [the Club] and I talk about what I have to eat, this and that, but probably, I don’t follow the rules. (Eva, emphasis original)

Meat is complex when considering these descriptions. As is the case with Vince, disparities emerge between the rules of what one ‘should’ eat, and what happens outside the rules. If we return to the Guidelines, and if we again think of practices as indispensable from materialities, there is a clear dissonance between nutritionally effective food and our-food. If our-food is a derivative, another kind of politics becomes apparent. The word ‘our’ needs to be underscored in this case. When a food is owned, when it finds its place in memories and histories, and is made through cooking techniques of a particular kind alongside familial and social relations, and in a new place of living, it is significant. When thinking of what our-food embodies, can it then be rendered energy? Can it first and foremost be ‘discretionary’ when another proves to be important, and to various extents, protected?
Conclusion – Contrast and dissonance make all the difference

By adopting an ontological framework, food such as meat has been considered an object with multiplicity. In so doing, contrasting versions have been explored. If we accept the Guidelines as a ‘pedagogical site’, motivated to alter actions and beliefs in terms of food practices, then it is clear that kinds of materialities becomes instrumental in these efforts (Wright and Harwood 2009, p. 6). It is not the differing perspectives of nutrition scientists, policy makers and eaters that is of interest in this framework, but rather, the material derivatives of practices. We can query if ‘doing energy’ is plausible or realistic given the various, contrasting practices and politics that make up a different food. There are, as we can see, dissonances. Thus, the question may be asked: is dietary advice pitted against other cultural practices? Though I have not explored them in depth here, it is important to note that there are, as we have seen, conditions for enactment. Not only does this include intersections between cultural dispositions, class and ethnicity for example, but also, and importantly, gender. Though this research does not seek to pinpoint the relations between enactment, food and gender specifically, this needs to be highlighted. A schema like the Australian Dietary Guidelines relies on translation, and hence, this example of meat and multiplicity may contribute to ongoing critical discussions to do with dietary education. As alluded to in the final section of this chapter, there is significance to our-food as it was expressed by members of the Club. In the next chapter, I will extend this discussion by exploring the links between affect, sociality and food. In so doing, I draw upon the Deleuzian concepts ‘affect’ and ‘assemblage’ as a means of engaging with food’s active participation in the becoming of social relationships.
Chapter Four. The (un)Emotionality of Eating: Kilojoules and Collectives

Introduction

During the development of the Guidelines, a modelling system was used to establish the optimal nutritional requirements for the body. In the system, there were two dietary models titled ‘Foundation Diets’ and ‘Total Diets.’ Used in tandem, the models served to provide (with a great deal of precision) the amount of energy in kilojoules necessary for the body, depending on age, height and gender. To begin with, the Foundation Diet provides the amount of servings recommended for the smallest, least active adult as a reference point. And then next, the Total Diet provides the amount of additional energy an individual would need, depending on ‘lifestyle type.’ Lifestyle type is determined by an individual’s average level of activeness. For instance, lifestyle type can be categorised as ‘inactive’, ‘light activity’ and ‘moderate activity.’ To give one example, if you are an inactive woman between the age of 51-70 and are 160cm tall, your recommended daily kilojoule intake on top of the Foundation Diet recommendation would be 400 kilojoules. Although it is acknowledged that the model’s recommendations will not be followed precisely due to the changeability of daily life, the Guidelines emphasise that increasing energy intake without raising activity level will lead, in one way or another, to weight gain (NHMRC 2013).

There is much to be drawn from this example in the Guidelines. Though if we are to pinpoint one particularly interesting point, is that eating should, by and large, be an unemotional affair. Or to put another way, eating food in this schema is rendered a rational choice (Crotty 1995). And it raises the question: what kind of relationship is to be had between people and their food? When
drawing from this information, a relationship needs to be cultivated on the basis of what is ‘necessary’ (NHMRC 2013, p. 144). As we have already seen, there is an imperative for individuals to know their own nutritional and energy needs, and food choices should be made based on those needs. Yet when considering materialities like our-food, as discussed in the previous chapter, what of the emotionality of eating? Food has deeply affective capacities. For those I interviewed, it is entangled with intimacies, memories, emotions and socialities it enacts and is enacted by. This finding starkly contrasts the physiological-centric approach taken by the Guidelines. In the previous chapter, I explored how objects like meat are brought into being through enactments. In this chapter I will focus the analysis on eating practices by drawing on Fox’s (2015, p. 309) adaptation of the Deleuzian concepts ‘affect’ and ‘assemblage.’ The task of this chapter is to illustrate how food is active and engaged with the doing of intimate and social relations. I posit that the cultivation of a nutritional, needs based relationship between humans and food will find limitations. And moreover, I argue that that a rational, individualist logic potentially ignores what food does between people.

**Food, Assemblage and Affect: doing family**

In his work on the production of social life, Fox (2015) argued that scholarly attention needs to be given to emotions and how they shape social life. As a way of attending to the ‘flows’ between objects, bodies and institutions, Fox (2015, p. 309) adopted the Deleuzian concepts ‘assemblage’ and ‘affect.’ An ‘assemblage’ in this framework is defined as a group of human and non-human entities that are all acting in relation to one another. One example could be a ‘love’ assemblage, which involves ‘affects’ such as lovers, their families, gender norms, the lover’s histories, and materialities like food and drinks. Thus, ‘affects’ are defined simply as
things that cause action and change within the assemblage. To put in other words, they can be understood as ‘becomings’ that augment or diminish the capacities of relations (Fox 2015, p. 306). Similar to Lupton’s (2017, p. 339) description of the ‘socio-material’, which positions human and non-human entities in a reciprocal, affective relation to one another, there is no active subject and passive object in an assemblage. Instead, the assemblage is considered ‘a confluence of elements in affective relationship to each other which changes their states, and their ability to act’ (Fox 2015, p. 306).

In contrast to sociological theories that draw distinctions between structure and agency, these concepts are useful here as they give credence to the dynamics between human and non-human entities. We can look specifically at assemblages and affects empirically, which finds similarities with an ontological framework. Moreover, these concepts sensitise us to ‘the unstableness of everyday life’ (Renold and Mellor 2013, p. 28). For all those I spoke to, the transition from their country of origin to Australia was often described as challenging; many spoke of a need to rebuild familial and familiar practices. As it became clear, materialities are affective forces in the making and doing of their relations. Not just food, but the dining table, the kinds of utensils, and the processes of creating meals for many. In the following descriptions, familial relations were frequently fostered by these materialities. It is important to note in this context, the term ‘familial relations’ is recognised as fluid, heterogeneous and ever changing (Jackson 2009).

Vince identified himself as Italian-Australian. He was born in Sicily, and came to Australia as a boy with his family in 1970. As discussed in the previous chapter, there was typically plenty of food at the dining table. His mother would make large batches of homemade pasta, moussaka
and lasagna, all of which would be made for sharing. Food would be set in the middle of the dining table, and each family member or guest would help themselves. From what Vince described, this kind of practice was related to his ‘European background.’ The dining table would be a place to do family life; conversations would regularly be had about the details and experiences of the everyday:

It’s good to sit down and talk. You know, you ask ‘how was your day?’ and talk over a plate of food. Having a European background and that, meal times were a time for families to socialise, you know, get together to discuss the day… When I was growing up meal time meant everyone sat the table, and they sat together as a family and had dinner.

(Vince)

As an adult, Vince continued similar practices to his own upbringing. When his own children were young and living at home, he would cook a family meal and they would eat together. His children would talk about general daily contents, and share their thoughts and feelings with little distraction. One night at the Club, Vince mentioned that these moments were seemingly mundane at the time, though he now remembers them as integral moments to build a relationship with his kids.

This experience was commonly described amongst other interviewees. Yet for others, there were some generational tensions between themselves, their children and grandchildren in regards to
food. During my interview with Eva, she mentioned that her grandchildren often comment on her food when they are eating together:

See that’s the difference when you’re born here, because my granddaughter, my grandkids were all born here in Australia. And they know everything about healthy food, because they tell me. ‘Don’t drink this don’t have that, no that is too much fat’, no, they know more. (Eva)

Though ‘healthy food’ had become more of her grandchildren’s concern, they still eat the food she cooks when they visit for family meals. For Eva, eating is a time to be structured into family life:

They [grandchildren] don’t have different ideas about food, they got more ideas about what is healthy and what is not. But when come to my house they don’t care about that! They eat what I cook! [laughs] They love my cooking. I try with my kids, Mondays see, Mondays is family together. Don’t come with excuses, ‘I can’t come because this or that’, no, Monday is our day. I cook for the whole family. (Eva)

It was commonly mentioned by interviewees that mundane regular family dinners were remembered as a time for their relationships to crystallise. This became pertinent during my
interview with Belky and Enrique. Belky identified herself as half-Italian and half-Uruguayan. For Belky, the importance of eating together with family came from her Italian side:

Because of the influence of the Italians, you know the Italians are very important with family, like eating together, on Sundays they were with all the family together and that’s what we keep as well. For us it's very, very important to be together. And food, always food. (Belky)

Although social and familial eating was described by many as a strong part of their ‘Italian’ culture, the importance of eating together was described as a central part of many other South American cultures. When discussing social eating, Enrique mentioned:

In all communities the eating is important, because when you have a meal you feel happy having something, it is in our DNA, in our evolution you know, you can keep living because you have something to eat. And then it’s a social event, and in South America it’s the same. (Enrique)

After migrating to Australia from Argentina in 1992, Enrique worked as an electrical engineer and then later he became the Club’s treasurer. He recalled memories of family meals from his childhood, all involving his mother’s cooking. She would make large batches of hearty meals like stews, and often would fix homemade bread sliced and rolled into fat and bits of meat for
flavor. I asked Enrique if eating with family was important in his childhood, and he said, “It was natural like, normal, it was not ceremonious, but yes I realise now it was important, very important.”

Enrique remembers his mother enjoying her cooking, though there were, from what he explained, underlying difficulties for his mother. From what he mentioned, she often felt ‘resentment’ having to serve others:

Many of my uncles were doctors and dentists, because they were males, my mother was the eldest and she was female, then she couldn’t go to university, she always had this resentment because she was very intelligent and she wanted study. But she couldn’t because she had to serve the others. (Enrique)

It is clear here that eating, cooking and doing family has a politics of its own. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, there are conditions for enactment. And when reflecting on these narratives collectively, gender performativities are clearly a critical factor to consider (Butler 1990). As others have found, those who identify as women are so commonly the cooks and the carers (Cairns et al. 2010). Though this is not the main focus here, it should be acknowledged that food is inseparable from social conditions, which shape the ways in which practices are done.
Drawing from these narratives and experiences, there are many affects entangled in the doing of familial relations: social expectations, performativities, dining tables, plates of food that are shared, and what is ‘normal’ and ‘important.’ When thinking on this, is it possible to disentangle materialities like food from familial relations? Considered in this way, much may be lost when the nuances of preparing, cooking and sharing a dinner are overlaid with a logic of daily kilojoule intake. In many of the stories I heard, home cooked food would frequently be offered on occasions where family, friends and acquaintances came together under the same roof. Considering the notion that affects have capacity to change the states of the elements within an assemblage, as well as the assemblage as a whole, I turn here to ‘sociality.’

‘It’s more fun!’: talking, eating and ‘cultural priorities’

As mentioned in this chapter’s introduction, an implicit assertion of the Guidelines is that a kind of relationship needs to be cultivated between humans and food. To put simply, food impacts the body as nutrients and energy. Hence, a more favourable (and improved) relationship can be imagined as one based on an individual’s rationality. But as described above, food does other affective work, particularly in the case of familial relations. For those at the Club, food is actively involved in the making and remaking of collective life. In the case of migrating from South America to Australia, it was commonly mentioned that food is instrumental for the survival of their traditions and customs. This finding resonates with some of the literatures on diasporic eating practices, which shows that materialities like food are often used to establish a sense of the familiar, particularly for first generation migrants (Kalcik 1984; Tooks 2015). Considering the relationship between collectivity, familiar practices and affect, I draw upon what Amirou’s (1989) described as ‘sociality.’
Sociality, as a similar concept to Durkheim’s imagining of a ‘collective soul’ is considered a state where sociabilities like hospitality, politeness, courtesy and other taken for granted ‘social habits’ crystalise (Amirou 1989, p. 118). In other words, sociality can be thought of as emergent in collective experiences:

Sociality brings people together. In our sociological perspective, the ego is not a given entity once and for all, perfectly stable, that would simply move from one situation to the next. Rather, it is engaged…in a process of continuous creation and recreation, in accordance with our social situations, linked together by our memory. Such is one of ‘sociality’s’ essential variants; that is, its link to common sense, to everyday life, to the inertia of collective practice and to the nature of things. (Amirou 1989, p. 118)

There are critical points to draw attention to here. Firstly, subjectivity or the ‘ego’ in this framework is both affected by and affective within collective practices. We can imagine subjectivity as permeable, with reference to the social relations in which it is immersed in. And secondly, the term ‘inertia’ asserts that collective practices (or in other words, assemblages) have strength, which is critical if we are to consider the continuation of eating practices. Doing food together, like sociabilities, can work to crystalise socialities. In other words, the strength of collectives can be maintained through food practices. By drawing on these ideas, I turn here to the narrative explained by interviewee, Eva.
Eva grew up in Uruguay and came to Australia in 1974. On Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, she comes to the Club with her husband. Sometimes she will volunteer in the bistro, and other times she will come to share a meal with friends. Most of the Club’s regular attendees are first generation migrants from South America, such as Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Uruguay, among others. When asked what is important about having the Club, Eva said:

The Club is very important for people to have that tradition, see, because they come with their family together and the kids, and they have the food, it's our food. The barbecue, the schnitzel, the pasta, it’s the food we used to have in our country. (Eva)

As discussed in the previous chapter, our-food emerges. Eva discussed that she has a number of long-standing relationships with other Club members. And regularly, they will come together to eat. As English is the second language for many of the Club’s regular clients, having a place to socialise in their native language is important. I asked what people liked about eating at the Club, which she answered:

Because they can speak their language, which is very important for older people, they can speak their language. And because we came to this country, we meet all others [migrants] here. Their children play with my son, their children dancing with my daughter… so we all like one big family. (Eva)

When our discussion turned to the topic of food, it instantaneously became about socialising. I asked her what she found pleasurable about eating and she answered, “We always like having
someone to talk to during the food… When you share with other people, it's more fun!”

Whenever a social gathering is organised, having enough food to feed everyone is the first consideration:

   Even when we plan something to go out to the beach, or to other places, we always say ok, I’m going to bring this or that. I’m going to bring pizza, first we’re talking about the food! When we go somewhere like the Blue Mountains, first we think, okay, we are going to fix enough food for everyone. (Eva)

It is not just eating but sharing food that brings pleasure, Eva told me, and being surrounded by food means being surrounded by loved ones. It was almost as though ‘food’ was synonymous with ‘family’ when she said, “On the table, food is always around me!” Though it was not always possible to eat socially given the daily constraints and circumstances, all of those I interviewed found pleasure in the event of eating with others. Eva ensures that eating is meshed with her social relations; she enjoys being connected to family and friends, which frequently happens through food. If we consider Amirou’s conceptual tools, and if we return to the previous chapter, it is clear how memory, everyday life, common belief and collective practice influence the becoming of our-food. Yet this also makes sense in the reverse. Drawing from Eva’s descriptions, our-food is engaged in the becoming of socialities and assemblages.

Reflecting on this, limitations inherent to the Guidelines’ logic becomes apparent. Let us consider the following point made in the Guidelines:
Choice of food in Australia has become more complex as we have become a more diverse society, and many Australians take into account issues such as environmental concerns or cultural priorities in making their choices. We hope that these Guidelines act as a firm basis upon which these individual decisions may be made. (NHMRC 2013, p. 4)

This is a critical point to consider. Presumably, cultural priorities can be built on the foundation of dietary advice. Yet what this ignores is how dietary advice is, itself, cultured. The language in which it speaks and the representation of eating it provides is, as is our-food, a derivative. If we are to reflect on a human-food relationship based of physiological necessity, how can such a relationship be kindled when another, contrasting kind already exists? When food does work in these kinds of assemblages, and when collective practice has inertia, how can individual-centred eating practices take purchase? It is not a simple matter of reforming an individual’s relationship with food, but a matter of reconfiguring assemblages. That is of course not to say that they are impermeable. On the contrary, assemblages are subject to rupture. Yet this raises another issue: food’s emotional affectiveness. From the experiences explained by interviewees, food’s affect in terms of emotionality became a common theme. Considering this, I turn to emotion as an affect.

‘I can’t do it yet’: Rupture and emotion

Let us return once more to the initial problematic of the Guidelines that this chapter seeks to address. Given the ways in which dietary advice should be practiced, a kind of relationship with food needs to be cultivated. That being, one based on physiological necessity. Considered a ‘biopedagogical site’, the Guidelines aim to interfere with and reform the eating practices of Australians (Wright and Harwood 2009, p. 6). By this logic, individuals learn how to follow a set
of eating rules. Yet emotion in this logic appears to be absent. Which makes sense; this kind of advice is about using rationality, not emotionality. When using the term ‘emotion’ in this context, I define it as (Oxford English Dictionary 2013) ‘a strong feeling deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others.’ From the stories shared by interviewees, emotionality and its connection to food was central to many of the experiences they shared. Discussions about food opened up deeply personal experiences in the present and past, and furthermore, much of this was to do with ruptures in the normal everyday practices to do with food. By attending to food’s emotionality, the ‘unstablness of everyday life’ is acknowledged (Renold and Mellor 2013, p. 28). In this final section, I will discuss how emotion as a kind of affect is paramount when considering eating practices. By doing so, I query if eating practices can be interfered with without attending to their emotionally affective capacity.

Since sociology’s early days, theorists have attempted to deal with emotionality and its connection to action, social structure and social orders. Fox (2015, p. 302) recalls the Durkheimian notion ‘collective effervescence’, a phenomenon and a sensation that arose in the event of sacred gatherings. Durkheim believed the experience of this sensation had a capacity to shape social action and social orders. Emotion, contrasted to rationality and reason, was believed to affect the production of social life. Building from scholarly literature on affect, Fox (2015, p. 301) argued, “[w]hat humans feel has a part to play in producing the world, from the progression of a conversation to the shaping of global politics.” The idea that emotions are active in ‘producing the world’ is a salient proposition in terms of materialities like food, a point which I will return to soon.
Similarly, Jasper (1998, p. 398) described emotions as ‘part of our responses to events, but they also - in the form of deep affective attachments - shape the goals of our actions.’ Drawing from these theories, emotions are understood in two ways. They are affective drivers of action, and in this case, they are productive. And they are also the outcome of other affects. From the conversations I had with interviewees, the making of significant relationships and social relations was frequently done with and through food, where ‘deep affective attachments’ were entangled. Emotion was both an affective force, and a response. Here I turn to Irma’s experience.

I met Irma when first arriving at the club, and she, like all who I met, was kind, welcoming and generous with her time. Irma migrated to Australia from Uruguay in 1974 with her husband and children. She had moved around in a number of different administrative positions throughout her working life, and had been involved in Uruguayan community services as a Union representative, and more recently as the Club’s secretary. Her children now live with their own families, and she has six grandchildren. Irma’s life at the time of the interview, she told me, was a ‘special’ time, as her husband of 55 years and her mother had both passed away in the last few months. Her days largely depend on how she ‘feels’, as they are lived with fluctuating moments of sadness and tiredness; some days are good, others are not so good.

Being an active committee member and being engaged with her community was described by Irma as her ‘therapy.’ We discussed how the taste of food could be different when eating with family and friends as opposed to eating alone. Talking about solitary eating was difficult and evocative for Irma; she recalled the normality of sitting across a table from her husband simply
chatting about regular day to day things. At the time of our interview, she was not yet able to eat dinner alone:

Since my husband is no longer with me, it’s very hard for me to sit at the table and have dinner on my own. So I try to get involved in something else, and to get busy because I don’t sit to have dinner on my own, I can’t yet. I eat a little bit here and there but not like we used to in front of each other, talking and chatting and sharing things, that’s why I can’t do it yet, I can’t do it. (Irma)

Assemblages are indeed subject to ruptures, which becomes salient in Irma’s experience. When we consider the ‘inertia’ and significance of seemingly mundane practices like eating dinner at a table, it’s fracturing evokes grief. A kind of meal with a close relation, in a particular place with a history becomes significant. Feelings, memories, practices and materialities in this case, are entangled.

This also became salient in Enrique’s story of his mother. After migrating to Australia, Enrique’s mother became ill, and so he returned to Argentina to care for her. As her body aged and her dependence on care increased, Enrique remembers her distress as she realised she could no longer cook for her family:
She was sick, very sick and old, and then at some stage she couldn’t do too much, and I went to Argentina to visit and I remember she was crying and saying, “Ah I cannot make nothing, I cannot make soup for you, I cannot make.” And she was concerned that she couldn’t cook for us. (Enrique)

As clear in these two cases, food is affective. And in the undoing of what is normal, the emotions evoked is telling of its significance. Not only is emotion a product of other affects, but it also influences the becoming (or not) of materialities. I asked Irma if she enjoyed cooking, which she replied these days, not really. Cooking was something to be done ‘with love’ Irma said. She found pleasure in preparing meals to be enjoyed by her family. Irma knew the flavours her husband preferred, and she took pride in knowing her food pleased him, “I used to cook everything my husband loves, I knew what he preferred, even if I was not really keen on that, but I do. To please him, always.”

Relations and practices, when considered ‘becomings’, are as strong as they are fragile (Fox 2015, p. 306). Food, as we can see in these experiences, gets caught up in ‘the unstableness of everyday life’ (Renold and Mellor 2013, p. 28). Reflecting on Fox’s idea that emotions ‘produce the world’, and if we are to take Irma’s words literally, perhaps emotions take material forms. If we return to the Guidelines, how can ‘energy needs’ be attended to when other affective forces partake in and strengthen the way people eat? The effect of food, when reflecting on these narratives, is not simply about nourishment alone. It does work and is worked on in between
people. Considering these experiences, how can food be disentangled from the collective lives and relationships it takes part in?

**Conclusion – The inescapable emotionality of food**

Building on the ideas explored in chapter 3, this chapter has discussed how food and the practice of eating becomes complex when drawing on theoretical concepts ‘affect’, ‘assemblage’ and ‘sociality.’ By drawing on these concepts, we can see how food partakes in the establishment, continuation and rupture of familial relations, socialities and intimacies. Memories and practices do things with food, as food does things with memories and practices. The inescapable emotionality of food illustrates that it participates, to varying degrees, in both the doing and undoing of relations. Drawing from this, the ‘unstablenss of everyday life’ and its influence on eating practices needs to be recognised if dietary pedagogical tools are to translate (Renold and Mellor 2013, p. 28). For those I interviewed, food takes on a significance that, as I argue, starkly contrasts food as it is represented in the Guidelines. Moreover, just as there is an imperative to alter the diets of populations, these narratives show that there is an imperative to continue and protect their food practices. By bringing food, affect and social relations together, a rationalist mode of eating may need to be thought over if it is to take purchase. What has been alluded to in this chapter is that eating is done with other things in some kind of time and place. Leading on from here, I will continue to explore eating with specific attention given to time and place, or rather, ‘TimeSpace.’
Chapter Five. Time, Space and Pleasure: the case of a tasty pie

Introduction

It was my first shift at the Club, and I was on break after working a few hours behind the coffee machine. My supervisor Maria asked if I would like dinner. As I learnt, all volunteers at the Club are offered a free dinner and drink during their shift for their work. As a vegetarian I had the option of either a combination of salads and bread from the bistro, or a vegetarian pie from the cafe. I asked Maria what the pies were like, and she said they were ‘delicious.’ From what I could see, the pies were flat, square, and filled with cooked spinach and cheese. Maria mentioned they also contained a boiled egg. I was curious, particularly when hearing about the boiled egg, so I opted to give the pie a go. All the volunteers were busy at the time, so I sat to one of the long tables in the dining hall, my phone in hand as to not appear completely alone, and ate. Initially, I felt excited to try something new, and the pie certainly was delicious. The boiled egg was whole and located right in the centre; a surprise for someone who hadn’t experienced such a thing. But there was something, or some things, missing. It was me and the pie, just me and the pie. I looked around and observed all the other patrons sitting with their families and friends, talking and being together in a shared time and place. No one was obviously gawking at their food as I was doing. Nor was anyone obviously attending the club with the purpose of being alone. From this brief but memorable experience, it was clear that the pleasure evoked by food had more to it than just what I was eating.

As it turns out, the relationship between pleasure, eating and sociality is not a strong point of interest in the Guidelines. Pleasure and food, it would seem, is to do with physiology. It is
explained (NHMRC 2013, p. 222) by terms like ‘palatability’, ‘appetite’, ‘satiety’ and ‘hunger.’ And furthermore, pleasurable eating can be problematic. As it was stated (NHMRC 2013, p. 222), “Foods that are high in energy density tend to be more palatable, and high palatability is associated with increased food intake in single-meal studies.” What is curious about this information, is that two entities appear most significant. The physiological body and the physiologically effective food. Yet when reflecting on our-food, and when considering the experience described above, pleasure is not just made between two entities. Meals are not just about the substance; they are, as Mol (2010, p. 217) points out, ‘events.’ Eating is done somewhere, in some time, with some things, all of which are subject to constraints and possibilities. When considering the descriptions given by interviewees, experiences of commensality, as well as feelings like ‘relaxation’ were part and parcel of pleasurable eating. If emotions take effect in producing the world, we are directed to consider the interplay between food, socialities, spatialities, temporalities and the corporeal (Fox 2015). Building on from the last two chapters, I draw upon the concepts ‘TimeSpace’ (May and Thrift 2001) and ‘commensality’ (Sobal and Nelson 2003). What I will do in this chapter is explore some of the constraints, possibilities and preferences to do with eating. In so doing, I argue that food pleasures are to do with more than just taste buds, chemicals and nutrients, which in turn shape the ways in which people eat.

‘I just don’t have the time’: TimeSpaces and constraints

In their edited book TimeSpace. Geographies of Temporality (2001, p. 3) May and Thrift established the theoretical notion ‘TimeSpace’ as an effort to bring time and space together analytically. In a shift away from universal and dualistic understandings of time and space, they
argued that TimeSpace should be thought of as localised, specific and heterogeneous. The studies included in the book analysed TimeSpace as a socially constructed phenomena, as it was stated:

> Our starting point here is that just as it has been recognised that the nature and experience of social time is multiple and heterogeneous, so it follows that the manner of its construction - the means by which a particular sense of time comes into being and moves forward to frame our understandings and actions - is in turn both multiple and dynamic. (May and Thrift 2001, p. 3)

The idea that a ‘particular sense of time’ is both ‘multiple and dynamic’ becomes salient in this study, which I will return to soon. As a contributor to the edited book, Davies’ study (2001, p. 133) explored TimeSpace in women’s experiences of care-work. Drawing spatiality and temporality together, Davies (2001, p. 135) argued, “How we in fact use our time and locate ourselves (the two being inseparably related to each other) is dependent upon the social relations in which they are embedded.” The study found that care-duties frequently fell to the women, who were burdened with the task of multi-managing their work duties and parental duties. Given their situations, the women had little time for ‘pauses’ in their daily lives. Pauses are conceptualised as moments when the ‘usual flow of work’ ceases for a period of time (Davies 2001, p. 140). As others have also pointed out, pauses are:

> Essential in establishing a rhythm in one’s personal and social existence. The fact that rhythm is ubiquitous in all life forms may belie its importance. At the very least we feel
that pausing provides the contrast, emphasis, and energy that aid in developing and sustaining meaning in any area. (Snow and Brissett 1986, p. 12)

Drawing from these arguments, TimeSpace and its underpinning conceptual tools needs to be given credence when understanding eating events, particularly in terms of what is possible and what is preferable. Though my focus is not specifically on the gendered nature of TimeSpace, I wholeheartedly agree with Davies that it is indeed a resource subject to unequal distribution. When considering the following descriptions by interviewees, as well as observations made at the Club, the changeability of rhythm is paramount.

In our interview and during the time volunteering together in the Club’s cafe, Vince shared memories of his parents. As discussed in the previous chapters, both his mother and father were first-generation migrants to Sydney from Sicily. As Vince explained, they put time and labour into producing their own food. Vince learnt many cooking methods from his parents, and still takes pleasure in cooking similar dishes for family and friends. During one evening he showed me photos of an elaborately decorated cake he had baked for his daughter’s birthday. Vince’s mother would make her own pasta and tomato sauces, which would take up to four hours to cook. When his father was alive, he kept a vegetable garden in the backyard and produced his own wine. As Vince mentioned:

He [father] grew a lot of stuff and we ate what he grew as well, that doesn’t happen a lot these days. You know I’d love to do it, but my thing is that I don’t have the time, even at my age, with my job I just don’t have the time. (Vince)
As a building construction manager, Vince usually starts early in the morning and stays back late. Given the demands of his job, he normally has little time to cook:

These days being home alone, I don’t get a lot of time to get home and cook, so I tend to, during the week mostly have something really quick or buy something, or go out for a meal. So I’m usually buying things at work at the moment, yeah. So I’m not actually making much stuff to take from home like sandwiches or leftover food just because there isn’t any, the time constraints you know? (Vince)

With a shortage of time to socialise during the week, he usually volunteers at the Club on weekends. As discussed in chapter four, Vince remembered eating as a social occasion. It was frequently an event done with other people. When in the office at work, he and his colleagues don’t typically have time to socialise during the lunch-break, so they will tend to eat at their computers:

At work it’s very hard for a few of us [colleagues] to get together because of what’s going on and the amount of stuff that's going on, and if we’re in the office having lunch, um, usually everyone’s got their nose in their computer you know, or they’re all doing paperwork, so we don’t socialise a lot. (Vince)
Drawing from this, attending to a more preferable kind of eating event, meaning one that is social and unhurried, is not typically the first priority. It is competing with other priorities where attention needs to be given. On the occasion, however, Vince will organise a lunch meeting with his colleagues. Usually he will book a table at a restaurant, which helps ‘notch it down and make everyone a bit more comfortable.’ Having a meeting over a meal in a location outside the office helps everyone ‘relax’, as Vince explained:

I think it helps you to socialise because you’re not, you know your focus is not, um solely on what you’re discussing, you know. You might be thinking ‘this looks nice, have you tried that?’ or ‘you should try this.’ I sort of find that if you’re having a straight out meeting in the office, it's totally different to sitting down having a meal, it just sort of makes it more relaxing. (Vince)

Considering this situation, there is a contrast between eating events. If we reflect on what makes up a preferable kind, it involves a kind of space, rhythm, attention, and conversation that are relatively different from that in the office. It involves a pause, where food’s flavour is given attention (Davies 2001). Bringing these elements together, a ‘particular sense of time’ and a particular sense of place is indispensable from what is preferable (May and Thrift 2001, p. 3). Furthermore, a sense of ‘relaxation’ is engendered in periods of pausing. For many others I spoke with, feeling relaxed was part and parcel of good eating.
‘Let’s relax and eat’: Mindful events or measurements?

In her work *Care and its values. Good care in the nursing home* (2015) Mol discussed two interwoven considerations in feeding care provided for the residents of a Dutch nursing home. Firstly, food needed to be nourishing. The nutritional value of a resident’s meal was considered a priority to feeding practices. For example, the kinds of ingredients used in a meal, and the kind of cooking methods adopted were key to providing nourishing food. Secondly, and at times a lower priority of the two was the need for ‘cosy’ eating practices. Cosiness, Mol stated, insisted on other materialities:

> There should be a proper table cloth on the table, or (if this is asking too much) the paper placemats used should be nice and colourful, not dull and white. Rather than eating alone, it is better that people do so together. Putting serving dishes on every table is more homely and inviting than dishing up plates in the kitchen. During the meal, the room that is used to dine in should be quiet instead of buzzing with strangers walking around, in and out. There should be enough light...Cosiness depends on ever so many elements of the dinner table and its surroundings. (Mol 2015, p. 217)

A number of factors become important for feeding in this case; the kind of setting, the cutlery, the rhythm of the space and presence of other people. Thinking on this, it is somewhat difficult to imagine attending to ‘cosiness’ in the event of enacting energy. As is the case for cosiness, other materialities become important for an eating event to be ‘relaxing.’ For all of those I spoke to, pleasurable eating practices were engendered by many elements, most particularly, a relative change in time and space. As was noted by Grasseni (2009, p. 8), the concept of place ‘must be
considered not only as a mental or social construct but as the sensuous experience of being in space and time.’ In the following, I explain this further.

I was waiting in the Club’s cafe for Enrique. It was my second last interview to conduct, and he was rushing around trying to finish the last administration jobs before he could chat. Enrique is a busy, well regarded treasurer of the Club, and works tirelessly. He came back and forth to ask for a few more moments to finish the final administration duties. It was a busy night, but then most nights at the club were busy. Finally he came in with a relieved look on his face; he was free for our interview. I was escorted upstairs to one of the quieter rooms usually reserved for card games and dancing sessions. After leading me into the room, Enrique immediately turned back to the door and asked what I wanted to drink. I realised he was leaving to return downstairs. Recognising my own hesitation, mostly due to the attempt of remaining ‘professional’ and not under the influence of alcohol during my interviews, I resigned and opted for a beer. After a few minutes, Enrique returned carrying a tray of two full plates of food (one clearly being mine as there was no sign of meat but a substantial arrangement of salads and bread) and a longneck bottle of beer to share. As the food was neatly placed in front of me on a fold out table, along with knives and forks, my formalities quickly softened. After all the rushing around, Enrique asked for a moment to let his body settle. “Let’s relax and eat” he said.

As a full time engineer, Enrique mentioned that setting aside hours for ‘household’ duties like washing and cleaning is difficult. Given this, dinner usually consists of leftovers from the bistro. Alongside his day job, Enrique normally works most nights in the Club’s administration. He
light-heartedly mentioned that on his days off from work, his friends often have to remind him to stop rushing. Eating is good when it is ‘mindfully’ done, particularly with other people, he said:

When you are mindful and you are in the present eating, it's better. Normally I’m running around and this is not good I realise. The other day we were in the car with friends and then I’m eating quickly, and he [a friend] says ‘oh come on, relax, we have a long trip and you don’t need to eat it all’, and sometimes here I am, always thinking of something that I have to do, or things that I promise I have to do. (Enrique)

Not only in Enrique’s descriptions but in the experience of our interview, ‘being’ relaxed requires a number of factors (Grasseni 2009, p.8). It involves a quiet place to sit, a set of utensils, perhaps company, and a conscious state being of ‘mindful.’ Though it was not explicitly pointed out, Enrique’s use of the term ‘mindful’ resonated with what has been described as a mindful eating movement (Beshara, Hutchinson and Wilson 2013). As a part of this movement, eating is encouraged to be conscious, slow and thoughtful. From what Enrique implied, it is preferable to be ‘present’ while eating. Though this kind of event is indeed the more favourable, it appears somewhat difficult to put into practice in Enrique’s case. There are other intersecting factors, such as the overlapping jobs and thoughts that Enrique gives attention to, the business of his usual days, and the pace in which he typically moves.

If we return to the practice of ‘doing energy’ as discussed in chapter 3, a certain criteria needs to be met. Such as a conscious awareness of food intake, quietness, a space alone to eat, a technology that provides the amount of food required, as well as the correct portioning utensils.
Considering this in relation to preferable ways of eating examined so far, some parallels can be drawn. Yet what appears to be deeply problematic about a calculation criteria is that preferable eating occasions are geared towards other, contrasting outcomes. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss this further.

I will sing, I will dance, I will enjoy life: Commensality, enjoyment and taste

If you think back for a moment to an occasion when the food you ate tasted good, what comes to mind? Do you think of a place, friends, or members of the family? Do you think of smells? Do you think of laughter and maybe music? Whatever the memory, perhaps the pleasure you experienced stemmed from a number of places. During my time at the Club, and from what interviewees shared, eating alongside others is part and parcel of enjoyable eating. Drawing from the literature on sociality and eating, a useful term to begin examining this experience is ‘commensality.’ As explained by Fischler (2011), the significance of commensality has been a focal point of sociology since its earliest days, particularly in religious and ritualistic contexts. Simply put, commensality can be defined as the act of eating with other people (Sobal and Nelson 2003). When discussing this social phenomena, Fischler stated (2011, p. 529), “One of the most striking manifestations of human sociality is commensality: humans tend to eat together or, to put it more exactly, to eat in groups.”

As mentioned in this chapter’s introduction, I felt somewhat out of place eating my pie alone in the Club. After all, it is a social place. The pie was indeed delicious, but I could only imagine that it might have tasted, to some extent, better had it been eaten in the company of others. And as it turned out, many interviewees spoke of food’s taste as contingent with commensality. If
‘humans tend to eat together’, then that togetherness should direct analytical attention if we are to consider what is preferable and pleasurable (Fischler 2011). Under the arc of TimeSpace and commensality, I explore how enjoyable eating is done at the Club.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most nights are bustling in the Club. While lining up at the canteen, one can feel the radiating heat and smell of the asado. You can see people of all ages talking, mingling, laughing, quietly listening to the music and watching dancers. Amongst the groups of customers, a team of up to eight volunteers will be working behind the bistro, counter and asado, while others work on the floor collecting dishes. As was commonly described amongst those I interviewed and met at the Club, it was described as a place ‘do’ their culture. And eating with others, as I understood it, is a significant part of this doing. When we discussed the Club’s economic systems, Enrique mentioned, “I’m a little bit crazy because I have the romantic idea of having a place to keep the Latin American culture, and the food and the music.” For committee member Irma, the Club is a place for people in her community to come and eat together:

   It’s the only way, the only point of union that we have in the community, there are no other communities that have a place where to dance, where to come and have dinner where to chat with your friends, for the Uruguayan community there is only one place to get together. To eat together. (Irma)

When looking at the spatial arrangement in the Club, it is intentionally set up to bring people together. The main hall is a large, open space with long tables lined in rows. Each dining table
seats up to ten people, and if groups of patrons don’t have enough in their party to fill one, you will see many different groups sitting together. Interviewee Vince explained this further:

[Club patrons] come to socialise. And they do, you can see the ways the tables are set up as well, it’s not just one family sitting at a table, there might be two or three different families, people that don’t know each other will sit down and have a conversation, you know? It's over a drink, food, coffee, the music, it's just a social atmosphere. (Vince)

Drawing from these descriptions, eating together is clearly important. Yet also, commensality is situated amongst other shared happenings. There is music, dancing, smells, movements and sounds. If we return to Grasseni’s (2009, p. 8) point that ‘place’ must be considered as a ‘sensuous experience’, the finer details of what happens become significant. Drawing from Vince’s notion of a social ‘atmosphere’, we are directed not just to the materialities and actions in a place, but how happenings, when done together, effect the senses.

As many interviewees mentioned, music and dance is a part of living out what is familiar and pleasurable. In an interview with Maria, she mentioned, “They [Club patrons] come from everywhere, Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, they come in for dancing, to get together.” On the regular food service nights, a South American band will start playing on stage from 7:30pm onwards, and their sound will normally boom throughout the entire building. When the music begins, patrons can be seen making their way to dance, and the hall’s main lights will be dimmed to allow colourful disco lights to splash about on the dance floor. As most of songs are in Spanish, I wasn’t sure what was being said in the song’s lyrics. Thankfully during my interview with
Enrique, he translated one for me, “The song says, “I will sing, I will dance, I will enjoy life, la la la. Life life, live the life. I will laugh, I will enjoy, life life, enjoy life.”

As discussed earlier in this chapter, interviewees could feel differently when eating is social, and in a relatively different time and place. Following on from this, the sense of taste was also bound up with spatial and temporal contingencies. In the anthropological literature on taste and food, physiological ideations and explanations of ‘taste’ have been critically examined (Mann et al. 2011; Stoller 1989). In their experimental work on taste, culture and the fingers, Mann et al. (2011, p. 211) pointed out, “Tasting… need not be understood as an activity confined to the tongue.” From what was shared by interviewees, food often becomes more ‘enjoyable’ when they are relaxed and when they were with others. In this case, taste has to do with entities and happenings external to the body. It has to do with the other people, other materialities, and a kind of ‘atmosphere.’

When speaking with Enrique, he explained that his sense of taste were dependent on the way he ‘felt.’ If eating is a social event, and he feels calm, food can taste different. As he explained, “You feel different. If you feel different [and] your senses are different and the food tastes different.” From this, physiology, spatiality, temporality, flavours and commensality are entangled. Similarly, Eva described what eating ‘felt’ like when she ate alone. I asked her if food tastes different when eating with others, and she answered, “Of course, yes. Yes, of course. Even when you are alone, and you have dinner, it's not really good for us.. for me! It's terrible, it feels down.” When speaking with Belky, she described the enjoyment of eating as contingent upon
spatial, temporal and social factors. Moreover, having a conversation about the food influenced the pleasure evoked:

For me, I enjoy it [eating] more because, one thing is you’re talking about the food you’re enjoying. You enjoy, definitely when you eat on a table with other people, you eat lunch alone, you don’t enjoy it as much.

If we are to bring these experiences together, a nuanced story of the preferable eating event emerges. Various elements come together in the experience of enjoyable eating. Feelings, sensory perceptions, beliefs, meanings, emotions, TimeSpace and commensality are all entangled, affective and affected. As pointed out by Vannini et al. (2011, p. 15), “Humans sense as well as make sense. This process of sense-making entails minded and embodied social and cultural practices that cannot be explained or reduced to physiological processes alone.” When thinking on this, how can a neat and tidy depiction of calculating and rationality breach these practices? How does it connect to a kind of pleasurable eating that so aptly involves the social, spatial, temporal and the sensual?

**Conclusion – A multiplicity of feelings and flavours**

This chapter has explored the intersection between time, space and enjoyment. According to the Guidelines food choices are made somewhat neat and tidy: calculations are precise, food is to be chosen and eaten, by the individual and for the individual. Only two entities are of interest in this schema; the individual’s body and the food she or he eats. This chapter has demonstrated that food is an event (Mol 2010). Such an event involves other material and non-material entities, all
of which shape, enable and constrain eating practices. If it is that how people feel will affect their actions, we must attend to what people enjoy about eating (Fox 2015). A preference is not just about the substance. It is a relative experience of TimeSpace, which is local, particular and heterogenous. Sensory perceptions are engaged, and commensality, pleasures and a ‘atmosphere’ are experienced. As has been argued by many, population wide dietary advice has many limitations. By drawing attention to eating events in the case of the Club, imagining ‘eating’ as between just two entities may seem simplistic. Eating is not just a matter between individuals and food. And furthermore, food does more than feed individual bodies. In the final chapter of this thesis, I will discuss this further by drawing attention to the notion of ‘care.’
Chapter Six. Something to do with Care: Communities, Cakes and Calories

Introduction

If there’s one outstanding commonality amongst my field notes, it would be the question ‘would you like some food?’ in varying forms. During the first visit to the Club, Belky introduced me to a few of the committee members. They were friendly, welcoming, and offered whatever assistance they could in the project. That evening, the Club’s treasurer Enrique asked if I would like to have dinner free of charge. I mentioned that I had not eaten meat from an asado before, and he was enthusiastic for me to try it. This offering would be the first of many occasions. As explained, I worked as volunteer barista in the Club’s cafe while conducting my fieldwork. At the end of every night volunteering, the ladies in the cafe would offered me something from the cake fridge to take home. I’m guessing they figured I had a bit of a sweet tooth, as they would usually fix a paper bag of two or three cakes. Typically, the sweets would get eaten in the car, but on occasion they survived the journey home and were shared with friends. At the end of my final shift, I was saying farewells to Belky when she handed me a large white cake box filled top to bottom with desserts. It was both a belated birthday and goodbye gift, and a warming surprise to be sure. As this thesis has illustrated thus far, food’s materialities and meanings are entangled with the social. It is active between people. And when considering these experiences, something emerges in the case of given food. Something to do with care.

If we return one last time to the Guidelines, we have established that food has a physiological function. It is primarily, for a variety of reasons, nutrients and energy. As the logic goes in the first recommendation, the body’s nutritional and energy ‘needs’ are to be prioritised if one is to
achieve and maintain a ‘healthy’ weight (NHMRC 2013, p. v). What we could say, in this case, is that food’s ‘function’ is to provide such needs. Through calculation and quantification, dietary practices can be practiced. In contrast, this study has sought to shed light on how individualistic, rationalistic advice is limited in its purchase. What’s more, it misses a great deal of what food does. Though it is clear there are some benefits to calculative ways of eating, other valuable elements may also be lost. Food is entangled with social relations, affects, temporalities and spatialities. It is active in social practices, and when reflecting on these minute experiences described above, care practices.

In this final chapter, I focus on care and food. In contrast to an individualistic, rationalistic logic, I argue in this chapter that food is not just about attending to one’s own bodily needs, but to the needs of others. Food is an inseparable part of care at the Club, and its effects are telling of this inseparability. This shows something deeply important about the interdependencies within communities; they are held together, not just by chance but by actions. Social relations, community, and what Visser et al. (2015, p. 610) describe as ‘social well-being’ are attended to with care, and specifically in the following, with food.

‘Did you have breakfast?’: Doing care

Earlier, I pointed out that food is one of the main services provided at the Club. As a business it earns the majority of its income from the food it sells. In an interview, one committee member mentioned, “Most of the time the money that we get is from the food, we are not getting that much money because we don’t have poker machines… but the people are buying here, mainly
the food.” From what was also commonly said, the asado is particularly important for the Club’s economic survival. It was mentioned by the head chef Marcel, “I don’t think the Club would exist without the barbecue.” Thus, there is an economic imperative to maintain food services, however, food’s economic value is not its only value at the Club. Many of the volunteers and committee staff have worked with each other for years, and from what I observed and what was discussed in interviews, food from the cafe and bistro would often be given between these relations. Before exploring one example, I will turn to a discussion of the concept ‘care’ and how it is adopted in this chapter.

In recent years, the significance, strength and diversity of ‘care’ has gained much attention within academic literatures. From nursing theory to sociology, anthropology, disability studies and other disciplines, studies on care practices within and outside traditionally biomedical contexts have proliferated (Mol et al. 2010). Various definitions have emerged in the literature, yet what is commonly agreed upon is that care is manifestation of work, emotion, beliefs and values (Kittay 2002; Kroger 2009; Yates-Doerr and Carney 2016). Moreover, it is inherently a relational practice (Kontos et al. 2017). In this case, care is understood as happening between human and non-human entities, where materialities like food are part and parcel. In the edited book *On Tinkering in Clinics, Homes and Farms* (2010, p. 1) Mol et al. stated, “Someone has to harvest or slaughter; someone has to milk; someone has to cook; someone has to build and do the carpentry...All in all, care is central to daily life.” Not only are care practices in this framework of thought ‘central to daily life’, but they are also local, specific and heterogeneous. Care is not without an inherent morality; it seeks to ‘improve life’ (Mol et al. 2010, p. 4).
A notable study that took this approach was Yates-Doerr and Carney’s (2016, p. 305) work on ‘culinary-care’ practices. To briefly recap, culinary-care, in contrast to biomedical practices, was conceptualised as care provided to kin through food. For the women involved in the study, food could encompass histories, geographies and affection, all of which were pivotal to their good health. Drawing from these literatures, there is opportunity to use the concept ‘care’ broadly, while maintaining a focus on the specific and local. It is verbally and non-verbally practiced with materialities, as Mol et al. (2010, p. 13) pointed out, “Care, after all, is not necessarily verbal. It may involve putting a hand on an arm at just the right moment, or jointly drinking hot chocolate while chatting about nothing in particular.” In this chapter, I define care simply as a practice of ‘attending to.’ There were many instances where care work was done between relations at the Club. In these instances of attending to others, food was care as much as virtue and labour.

At the time of our interview, Enrique had been a committee member for five years. He has long established relationships with fellow workers and clients at the Club, and from those who I spoke to, he is well regarded as a treasurer. Given the long hours of work he does at the Club, Enrique told me that he usually eats leftovers from the bistro for dinner. As discussed in chapter five, he typically has little time to prepare his own meals, “Everything takes time, you know I’m working, working, I need to work, and plus the work here, plus my personal life so, my home can you imagine? Piles of dirty clothes everywhere.” Enrique will sometimes start work at the Club early in the morning, and the chef Marcel will make breakfast for him:

7 Please review chapter one for further details on Yates-Doerr and Carney’s study.
Sometimes I’m here in the morning, this morning I was here very early in the morning, and he [Marcel] come and he say ‘oh did you have breakfast?’ and he prepared breakfast, and it was a very very good breakfast. With chicken and egg, oh! A very big plate! And then we talk and then I say, yeah, the cooking is very good with this guy. He enjoys doing these things. (Enrique)

There are many important points of interest in this scenario, which I will explore in a moment. When later speaking to Marcel, he clearly does ‘enjoy doing these things’ for a number of reasons.

Marcel was born in Uruguay and moved to Australia in the 1970’s. After working as a volunteer for a number of South American charities, he now works part time as the Club’s head chef. We met at a café around the corner from his work, and before taking his seat, he offered to buy me a coffee and a piece of cake. We talked about volunteer work, and as it seemed, Marcel considers living life with generosity as a worthwhile virtue. I asked if he had become more conscious of nutrition more recently, to which he answered:

You know I like to live the way our grandparents lived, you know with their values and everything was fine, now the world is going upside down. No one cares about anyone anymore, you know, people see everything as an account where you have to give something to receive something.
Later on, Marcel discussed what he enjoyed about working at the Club. From what he explained, it is the kind of people he enjoys most about volunteering:

You know you find people that are at that stage in their life where they need to give something, you know what I mean? They get no profit from it, they get no wages, no nothing, they just want to give. I find that when people work as a volunteer, you get a variety of people like, people who care, they stop living for themselves and they just want to contribute, you know what I mean? (Marcel)

Drawing from these descriptions, the act of cooking a colleague’s breakfast is to do with virtue and values. But as is also clear, care is done with materialities. When speaking further with Marcel about food and giving, making ‘good food’ for others involves ‘good’ flavours, memories of familial relations and, perhaps, resistance from the rhetoric of nutrition advice. From what he explained, our food is food that tastes good:

It’s tangy, it’s tasty, it's not like mild food, I don’t like anything mild. You know I like everything hot and strong, and the food there is like how our grandmothers used to make it, you know. Our grandmothers didn't know about cholesterol or carbohydrates or calories or whatever, they just make what tastes good. And this is, this is why people go to the Club. We just make good food you know. Hopefully it's going to be healthy but if it’s not, well that's the way we do it. There is no half way about our food, it's just the way our grandmothers used to make it. (Marcel)
If we reflect back on the previous chapters, food’s multiplicity becomes explicit here (Mol 2012). As has been illustrated, our-food encompasses many elements, which sets it apart from the Guidelines’ versions. It is done through memories, emotions, places, social and familial relations, gender performativities and other materialities. For Marcel, it is the ‘way our grandmothers used to make it.’ If care practices seek to make life better, then by this, food is an a indispensable part (Mol et al. 2010). Care involves labour, a kitchen, some chicken, eggs and a ‘very big plate.’ It involves ‘good food’ and what it means to ‘give something.’ If we are to consider care practices as local, specific and heterogenous, in this instance, it may be what is what is filling, helpful and what is tasty.

As is the case with sociality and commensality, care is a relational practice (Kontos et al. 2017). I mentioned earlier that many of the Club’s members have known each other for years. From the example of Marcel, Enrique and a breakfast, relations are attended to in many ways and with particular materialities. In light of this, how does an individualistic logic of eating make sense of food that is given? If calculation and control are to be prioritised, is resistance or even denial of care warranted? And moreover, does this logic render care obsolete or problematic? When thinking on these rhetorical questions, the point becomes clearer when we consider what could be lost when attending to ceases. Care happens between social relations, and when reflecting on the inner workings of the Club, this is but one of many ways in which it operates. From what was expressed by other volunteers, beliefs of ‘community service’ were common. A kind of ‘caring ethos’ emerged from their descriptions and actions, where the Club and its community needs to be safeguarded.
‘A place to feel they belong’: Doing invisible care

In the sociological and anthropological literature on diaspora and eating practices, what appears common is a link between familiar foods, social relations and a sense of belonging. To recap, diasporic communities can be defined as collectives who (Cohen 1997, p. xi) ‘settle outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories, [who] acknowledge that “the old country” always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions.’ Thus, the study of diasporas is a study of people who keep their ethnic, religious or national identities after leaving (or being expelled from) their home country. As has been found in the case of various diasporas, familiar foods and eating practices are support those in the process of migration (Alexeyeff 2004; Visser et al. 2015). As many have observed, food acts as a link to the past. In their study on Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands for example, Visser et al. (2015, p. 614) stated, ”Memories of their life in Ghana are strongly related to cooking and sharing food, and shared within a new environment, their food represents the places they come from.” This finding parallels much of what was found at the Club. For many interviewees, there was a need for familiarity and commonality when migrating to Australia. And for many, particularly those belonging to an older generation, the Club fulfills such needs. This means having a place to speak in Spanish, to dance and to socialise with others of similar backgrounds. And particularly, to access to familiar foods.

As has been mentioned earlier in this thesis, the Club relies heavily on the work given by volunteer staff. On the Club’s website (Bruntech NSW 2018), it states, “Volunteers are the backbone of our institution and [are] collaborating directly in all aspects and activities of the organisation.” Many will work up to four nights a week in various areas, such as food and
beverage service, events management and administration. At the time of fieldwork, Enrique was organising a South American radio show that would be run with the assistance of volunteer staff. As Belky mentioned, volunteers keep the Club alive, “We have to keep this [the Club] alive. And all we do is to keep this alive, because it's a lot of money. If the Club has to pay wages it won’t survive.” Out of those on the board committee, most had previous experience working voluntarily in government and non-government organisations. Throughout my time at the Club, I came into contact with many volunteers who had various backgrounds, motives and experiences. Yet it was commonly mentioned by interviewees that the Club’s goals are shared. As one committee member said:

I enjoy being with people I love these people, and it’s a good team, we all work with the same goals, sometimes it’s hard and down, sometimes we get upset like any other community. But that’s okay. (Belky)

From what I saw during fieldwork, much effort is given to ensure familiar ‘South American’ foods are sold at the Club. And the labour given by volunteers enabled this to continue. Familiar foods were voluntarily provided through preparation and cooking, but also, through other momentary, inconspicuous acts.

As I have mentioned earlier in this thesis, the cafe sells a variety of popular South American styled desserts such as budin de pan (bread pudding), flan (cream caramels) and milhojas (puff pastry with apple and caramel). Many of them were described as ‘traditional’ sweets. Most of them are made with ingredients like caramel, custard and coconut, which are commonly used in
Uruguay and Argentina. Belky and other committee members explained that the desserts supplied by a South American bakery in Liverpool, which the Club has a long standing business relationship with. During my first shift in the cafe, I and other volunteers had the task of carefully unpacking the newly ordered desserts and placing them into a large display fridge. As I was unfamiliar with the names, the women I was working with gave me directions. In these moments, I observed the acts of volunteers, each being significant when we are to think of the effects they had collectively. Of all these observations, one experience with Belky was particularly notable.

For Belky, working at the Club is a ‘service’ to her community. At the time of meeting her, she had been at the Club for roughly two years. Belky works full time as a teacher’s aide assisting children with disabilities, and during Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings she will most likely be at the Club. Previously, she had worked in a charity organisation with the secretary, Urma, to help raise money for hospitals in Uruguay. When Urma came to the Club, so did Belky. Her work is based in administration duties and communications, but she will generally fill other roles that need filling. During my fieldwork period, the cafe manager had to resign unexpectedly, and so Belky took the role until a replacement could be found. I asked what she thought was important about volunteering at the Club, and she said:

In terms of community service, there’s still a generation here that need a place where they belong to. Probably in twenty more years, they probably won’t need it that much, because the next generation after us are born here, they have a different life, but there is still some people as you can see who need a place to feel they belong. (Belky)
As was pointed out by many of the committee members, the majority of regular clients are first
generation migrants. Many are from Uruguay and Argentina, but also other parts of South
America. To support a place where people ‘feel they belong’, attention needed to be given to the
food. Belky mentioned:

In most cultures, well in all cultures, food is something that is very important. I think it's
the strongest part of a culture, it is the food. By food you feel represented, like that's part
of me because I grew up with that. It's your food, the food you used to have when you
were little, for some of them, they came here when they were young. They grew up with
that sort of food and also the music and the language, and they feel comfortable in here.
(Belky)

During my time at the Club, I saw Belky working tirelessly. When coming in to conduct
interviews one night, I found her in the upstairs office printing name tags for the cafe’s dessert
selections. They certainly were popular products. In our interview, Belky said, “You notice when
people come in and they try the sweets and they’re like ‘oh!’ and they take boxes back home.”

During most nights in the cafe, there would typically be a long line of people waiting to order.
Customers of all ages would buy three or four plates of desserts to be shared amongst friends and
family. The croissants are particularly popular on the weekend, as many of the regular customers
will buy them in bulk for Sunday family lunches.
“The old tags needed replacing” Belky said to me. She was in a rush; there were other administration duties to attend to while she was managing the cafe. I sat to help her with the name tags as they needed laminating and cutting. Belky had spent her lunch break during the day typing them up, and to her frustration, the computer was being slow so she didn’t have time to finish them. Each tag simply stated the name of dessert in both Spanish and English, along with the Club’s logo. When we finished I took them downstairs to the cafe and handled them to one of the volunteers. She seemed pleased to see new, clean tags.

The mundane, inconspicuous tasks done by volunteers like Belky are significant. If we reflect on ‘care’ as a manifestation of labour, emotion, beliefs, values and relationality, what volunteers do, individually and collectively, can be conceptualised as care. And when reflecting on the vignettes explained above, materialities are intrinsic to these care practices. A budin de pan is, perhaps, a ‘discretionary food’ that needs to be ‘burnt up’ if we return to the Guidelines (NHMRC 2013, p. 67). Yet it is also a dessert sitting in a cake fridge, where one of its purposes is to provide comfort, however finite that may be. Ordering ‘traditional’ styled desserts, placing them in a display fridge, making name tags in lunch breaks, working as a ‘good team’, can these practices not be seen as attending to? If so, the question than becomes: what does attending to do? As mentioned by Belky and others who regularly visit and work at the Club, it is a place that needs to be kept alive. Care practices, as it became clear, has affects. In the final section of this chapter, I explore how care comes to enact a kind of ‘well-being’ for those at the Club.
**Reassembling the ‘goods’**

It was Friday night, and I was walking through the Club’s car park for the first time. It sounded like there was a special event happening, but as I found out later, the volume was pretty normal for a Friday night. I could hear the sound of South American music blasting, along with plenty of chatter. The main hall was full of people – families, couples, all age groups. A band of three men dressed in colourful shirts and beige trilby hats were playing on stage, and the dance floor was filling up. Glasses, bottles of wine and beer, crumbs, wrapping paper, half empty plates of barbecued meat, bread, salad, dessert and birthday cakes were peppered along the dining tables. It was fun and it was lively.

Thus far, we have seen that food materialities are significant for social relations, comfort and a sense of belonging. As was explained by Belky, this is particularly important for those in her community who were born overseas. For many, the shift to Australia had resulted in many losses and, in some circumstances, grief. This was commonly in response to the breaking down of familiar and much loved ways of living, particularly in the case of eating with others. In other literatures, what has been observed empirically is that place and culture are continuously reconstructed when people move from one place to another (Massey 2005). In this case, the specificity and locality of place are pivotal for cultural reconstructions to happen. In a lively site like the Club, it has become a place for the remaking of familiar practices, and when considering the effects of care work at the Club, a kind of fostered ‘well-being’ emerged in interviewee’s descriptions.
Amongst the plethora of literatures on well-being, one will find many varying definitions. For the purposes of the current research, I borrow Visser et al.’s (2015, p. 610) term ‘social well-being’, which refers to ‘people’s place-based evaluation of their social relations and emotions related to social relations, such as a sense of belonging.’ In this framework, individuals are considered ‘active agents’ with capacity to make their own sense of well-being within the constraints of daily life (Visser et al. 2015, p. 620). As it became clear in interviewee’s descriptions, well-being needs some ‘goods’ (Mol 2010, p. 216). By this, I mean that particular materialities and practices support and enable their well-being. Though I never asked interviewees explicitly about their own subjective sense of well-being, much could be deduced from their explanations about why the Club mattered to them.

For all of those I spoke to, eating with others was commonly exclaimed as an essential part of living well. Moreover, sharing food is a ‘part of life’ for many. Belky, for example, mentioned in our interview that ‘[s]haring food is something important, it’s a part of life, if someone comes to your place, you offer food. Whatever you have to offer.’ As I explored in chapter four, Club members like Eva find great pleasure in eating when it is a social occasion. But when migrating to Australia, the normality of familiar eating practices changed. I asked how Eva felt about not having social meals like she used to, and she answered:

Terrible, terrible. We feel very sad. When I come to Australia the first few years, we knew other people and when they came [from Uruguay], we have to have dinner. Very terrible for us. They say it's one of the things we miss most. All family are there [in Uruguay].
Later on in our interview, Eva also discussed how she had noticed a difference with her children. Unlike Eva and her husband, the children were born and raised in Australia. Eating for them was less of a social occasion, as she explained:

> We were always eating together. But when I see my son, he says he gets home and puts food in the microwave, takes the plate and goes to his room. And I say uh [sighs] it’s boring, why you doing this? We don’t talk, we don’t ask what happened during the day, it’s the most important time of the day to get together, for me. Because I was brought up like that. (Eva)

Since migrating to Australia, Eva has become increasingly involved with Club’s community. Many of her family’s close friends are also involved in the Club, and they will often meet there and eat together:

> On Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday we meet. But even on another days, he [husband] say ‘what about we call Martha or Sally or whoever [friends from Club] and we have dinner together’ We always like having someone to talk to during the food.

For Eva, the Club has become a place to recreate much of what was lost after migrating to Australia. Having opportunity to build new friendships, to be with others of a similar

---

8 I discuss the tension between Eva and her grandchildren in chapter four.
background, to share food, dance and eat ‘together’ are her reasons, as she explained, for continuing to remain a Club member.

Similar experiences were also explained by interviewees Elida and Maria. A Uruguayan migrant and long-term volunteer, Elida described the Club as her ‘second family.’ When discussing why the Club was important, Elida exclaimed, “I really feel though, it’s my second family, because my own family from the blood is not here, they are still in Uruguay.” Later in our interview, Elida shared a story of how she met her husband. After migrating to Sydney in 1974 she came to the Club for a social event with a friend. That night, Elida met a young man (also a Uruguayan migrant) who she later went on to marry. Neither of them had any family in Australia, so the Club became a place for them to be with people of similar background and experience. Food has always been a significant part of the Club’s appeal, as she described:

We really enjoy the barbecue, because we used to have it over there [in Uruguay]. We really enjoy when we eat with the family together, you know? And very close friends, the closest person to me was my best friend. We eat together, it’s a custom we have.

For Maria, volunteering at the Club has allowed her to connect with people from all over South America. After migrating to Sydney from Chile around forty years ago, she has been volunteering at the Club for almost twelve years. As she explained, the Club is a ‘community’ space. Throughout the week, the space upstairs is reserved for dance classes like rumba, salsa, tango, and more recently, zumba:
I like to get socialising with the outer community. So some are from Chile, some from Uruguay, they come in on Saturday. In the Club people, they come from everywhere, Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, they come in for dancing and to get together, even we have zumba here!

As she explained, zumba is a popular contemporary fitness dance style that originates from Columbia and Brazil. At the age of 74, Maria enjoys being an active and social member in the Club’s community:

I like to do it, and the other thing is I got the energy to do it. That’s important when you can go there, you’re not sick and you feel well. So I like to be out. I don’t feel tired… I can stay awake all night and day, it’s my system, my body you know? It's nice, like tonight, now I’m not working but I’m sitting with the other ladies, they used to work here too, you know. They’re not working but they come in every Friday to talk and dance… I enjoy to talk, we do a lot of talking. South American people all the time are wanting to talk! If there is no-one there we talk to ourselves! (Maria)

Drawing from these descriptions and narratives, the Club is significant. It is a place where cultures are continuously reassembled and reshaped, where relationships and communities are formed, and where familiar practices are practiced (Massey 2005). For many like Eva, migrating to Australia was in many ways a difficult experience. It was a rupture to the familiar. And if we are to work on the basis that individuals are ‘active agents’ who make their own well-being, the Club is instrumental for this remaking (Siete Visser, Bailey and Meijering 2015, p. 620). Care, as
can be seen, is part and parcel of these becomings. As Belky pointed out, there remains a need to ‘keep the Club alive’, which becomes clearer in these descriptions. With care, place, food and collectivity, a kind of well-being is fostered. We can reflect on the Guidelines, which state that well-being and quality of life are influenced by ‘nutrition’ (NHMRC 2013, p. 1). While I do not question this assertion, in light of the many various becomings that are brought into being by a caring ethos, by the making of new social relations and by food, I do wonder if we really can reduce well-being to the substance alone.

**Conclusion – A flexible, adaptive necessity**

This chapter has discussed the relationship between food and care. In so doing, I built upon previous chapters by attending to practices. Here, I have drawn attention to food as an indispensable part of care in the case of those at the Club. Though I do not argue that the Guidelines are explicitly opposing care per se, they preach a care for what is physiologically and individually necessary. I would say there is a risk when rationalistic logics encompassing food, health and well-being are elevated. Not only are they limited in their scope, but they miss what food can do in the social. And moreover, they fail to realise human and non-human interdependencies. As Lynch et al. (2007, p. 2) point out, we cannot ignore the ‘centrality of nurturing for the preservation and self-actualisation of the human species.’ Care is a relational practice, and in many ways, it holds people together. It can attend to the necessities as much as it can attend to pleasures, joys and ruptures. It is local, localised and continuously adaptive. For the Club, care is critical for its continuation, as well as the social relations, networks and cultures it energises. Is it favourable to envision a mode of eating that undermines these interdependencies? What is at stake?
Conclusion

This thesis began with a claim. The Australian Dietary Guidelines, although widely endorsed, are arguably unrealistic. By underscoring this problem and by juxtaposing the Guidelines with empirical work, I have tried to illustrate how food’s multiplicity renders the Guidelines a limited means for intervention. My focus has not been solely on the Guidelines, nor has it solely been on a Uruguayan Club. They have been drawn together as a way of understanding the politics and complexities of food.

In so doing, I have contrasted some experiences and enactments with the Guidelines’ advice. The objective of this juxtaposition was to question if the Guidelines portray a feasible way to eat, and to better understand food’s role within the lives of Club members. As it has been shown in this thesis, food is complicated. As much as it provides the body with nourishment, it does work between people. What I have hoped to do with this novel composition of guidelines and ethnographic work is to open up new ways of understanding the intersections between food, food cultures, nutrition science and health policy.

If I were to put these findings in one simple sentence, I would say that food, its interaction with the senses, its meanings, its significance, its materialities and its affective qualities are entangled with the social. When reflecting on this study’s key findings, the following story emerges. Firstly, we have seen that materialities are the derivatives of practices and politics. They are not, in this framework, inherently natural. Rather, they are momentary, stabilised accomplishments
(Woolgar and Lezuan 2013). Working from this foundation, contrasting versions of food have been explored. In the case of meat, it is a nourishing materiality. It is nutrients and energy. And, it is also our-food. I would point out that these names are somewhat arbitrary. What they say, or what they represent, is what happens in practices. By this, nutrients, energy and our-food are done. The constituting factors involved are integral; a food materiality is a necessity in contrasting ways. Moreover, there are, as this research has shown, tensions between enactments. Doing energy is a far reach from doing our-food.

Secondly, we have seen that food materialities are affective and affected. Food is not, as the Guidelines portray, just a substance to be calculated and controlled by the individual. It is so often entangled with the becoming, as well as the breaking down, of intimate and familial relations. It is connected with emotions, memories and intimacies. It is so often, as many at the Club pointed out, to do with love and grief. From what was shared by many interviewees it is difficult to imagine how a relationship with food can be formed on a logic of what one ‘should’ eat. When thought of in this way, tensions between Guidelines and the everyday amplify.

Thirdly, we have found that tastes, pleasures and preferences are not just a matter of food’s physicality. They are to do with many other factors. They are to do with experiences of times, places, socialities and the senses, all of which are heterogeneous and relative. Eating is an event, and thus it is subject to constraints and possibilities, as are bodies and the feelings they feel (Mol 2010). If we are to build this into the story told thus far, the question of rational eating becomes curious. How can food pleasures be reduced to individuals and the food they eat when it involves
an interplay between the corporeal and the external? What is pleasurable, enjoyable and possible will affect the ways in which eating practices are made to be.

And finally, food is engaged with care. If we take care as a manifestation of labour, emotion and virtue, food is in many ways care. I have not argued that the Guidelines explicitly oppose this, but rather, that they do not give room for its significance. The Guidelines are, inherently, individualistic. In contrast, practices of attending to are comprehensive, local and adaptive. In this case, the importance of care signifies the interdependencies between people, and the dependency on materialities. The needs of friends, relations and a community can be attended to with care and with food. In light of this, it is obvious that food does more than feed individual bodies.

If we take these findings together, food is as much a relational materiality as it is an necessity for individual bodies to survive. People are, in so many ways, held together by food. It is active in the making, doing and, at times, undoing of collective life. To prioritise the latter over the former fails to realise the significance of these realities. From what was observed and heard, eating is complex, heterogeneous and, most importantly, social. This is of course not to say that it is all peachy. Nor is this to romanticise the interconnections between people and the food they eat. What I have tried to show in this thesis is that food is lively, active and multiple. If the genuine concern is to support and promote health and well-being the best ways in which policy makers can, a shift in perspective may be needed. Eating is not a practice separate from the norms, values and ways of doing life. Given this, I would say that it will not so easily be interfered with.
When thinking seriously about these findings, there is much to be lost if the relationality of food is not protected. Human relations, networks and communities are, as we have seen, fragile as they are integral.

By adopting empirical ontologies in this study, alongside conceptual tools like sociality and care, there are many openings for further research from this point onwards. What I have found to be most pressing in this case is the intersection between enactment, food and gender. As it has been clear throughout this thesis, enactments have conditions, and this is certain in the case of gender. Many times was it implicitly and explicitly explained that women were the carers, the feeders and the cooks (Charles and Kerr 1988). And, as participants pointed out, there were often tensions in doing this work. This thesis did not set out with the task of finely explicating the conditions for enactment, yet it is impossible to consider the significance of food without giving credence to its gendered nuances. This is especially pressing in the case of problematising national dietary advice. Yet in this ontological genre, it has been challenging to find the right words to adequately explain this. It is of course a condition, and a very important one, to investigate. It warrants further empirical focus in its own right.

This research reflects and is supported by much of the current sociological and anthropological literature on food and health policy. As many have argued, food is not just about necessity. Nor is just about the substance (Mol et al. 2010). It is various in its meanings and significance, and is engaged with other human and non-human becomings. And as others have recognised, there are significant disparities between dietary schemas and ways of eating in everyday life. Initiatives
like the Australian Dietary Guidelines have been shown to fail in reaching the complexities of lived realities (Lindsay 2010). As has been clearly illustrated in these literatures, there is a need for further critical research into the ‘why’ of this failure. Though my research was not specifically aiming to suggest a better way of producing guidelines, it contributes to these ongoing critical discussions. Furthermore, it adds to a greater body of work that calls for critical reflection on individualist, rationalist eating logics. There are alternatives to this framework of thought, which I hope this research contributes to.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Human Research Ethics Committee

Friday, 2 June 2017

Dr Sonja Van Wichelen
Sociology & Social Policy, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Email: sonja.vanwichelen@sydney.edu.au

Dear Sonja

The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has considered your application.

After consideration of your response to the comments raised your project has been approved.

Approval is granted for a period of four years from 02/06/2017 to 02/06/2021

Project title: Eating the same thing? A comparative ontological analysis of food in Australia’s Nutritional Guidelines and Hispanic migrant Communities in Sydney

Project no.: 2017/312

First Annual Report due: 02/06/2018

Authorised Personnel: Van Wichelen Sonja; Lawson Boyd Elisher;

Documents Approved:

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Conditions of Approval

- Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal.
- An annual progress report must be submitted to the Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and on completion of the project.
- You must report as soon as practicable anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
  - Serious or unexpected adverse events (which should be reported within 72 hours).
  - Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
- Any changes to the proposal must be approved prior to their implementation (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate immediate risk to participants).

Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Level 2, Macquarie Tower building (N07)
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia
• Personnel working on this project must be sufficiently qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or adequately supervised. Changes to personnel must be reported and approved.

• Personnel must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, as relevant to this project.

• Data and primary materials must be retained and stored in accordance with the relevant legislation and University guidelines.

• Ethics approval is dependent upon ongoing compliance of the research with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, applicable legal requirements, and with University policies, procedures and governance requirements.

• The Ethics Office may conduct audits on approved projects.

• The Chief Investigator has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research and is responsible for ensuring all others involved will conduct the research in accordance with the above.

This letter constitutes ethical approval only.

Please contact the Ethics Office should you require further information or clarification.

Sincerely

Dr Jim Rooney
Deputy Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC 2)

The University of Sydney HRECs are constituted and operate in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and the NHMRC’s Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007).
Eating the same thing? A comparative ontological analysis of food in Australia’s Dietary Guidelines and Latino/Hispanic Communities in Sydney

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study about the way food is described and used in two different settings: Australia’s dietary guidelines, and Latino/Hispanic social groups in Sydney. The purpose of the study is to explore how food as a cultural object is given significance within these two settings, and how individuals who identify as having a Latino/Hispanic background may consider the relevance of national dietary guidelines. The aim of this research is firstly to situate and understand food as a cultural object in these two spaces, and secondly to ascertain whether or not tension arises between two cultural understandings of food.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you identify as a member of the Latino Social Club. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don’t understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

✓ Understand what you have read.
✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The following researchers are carrying out the study:

• Elshar Lawson-Boyd, University of Sydney Master of Arts (Research) student.
Elsher Lawson-Boyd is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Master of Arts (Research) at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Dr Sonja van Wichelen, Senior Lecturer of Sociology.

(3) What will the study involve for me?

You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one and/or group interview that will go for a maximum of one hour. The interview will take place at the Uruguayan Social Club in Hinchinbrook, Sydney. In order to ensure the information you provide is accurate, the researcher will ask your permission for a voice recorder to be used throughout the duration. In the interview, you will be asked a series of open-ended questions that relate to the importance of food in your life. In the beginning of the interview, you will be asked to provide some demographic information that includes your name, age, gender, occupation and nationality/ethnic background. This information will only be recorded in the final research paper if you provide full consent. This will then be followed by a series of questions that relate to food. Examples of the questions include:

- What does your average day look like in terms of work, family and social life?
- How does food fit into your average day?
- What kinds of food do you like to eat?
- How is food socially important to you?
- What makes food enjoyable?
- How do you think food relates to good health?
- There is generally a great deal of discussion around food choice, what kind of things do you think influence your food choice?
- What kinds of differences in terms of food are apparent to you between where you have come from to where you are now?

To ensure that the information you have provided has been understood by the researcher, you will be asked to cross-check the information after the interview is finished and transcribed.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

The interview will require a maximum of 1-hour.

(5) Who can take part in the study?

As this study aims to understand and explore how food becomes a part of the lives of individuals who identify as belonging to culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds, specifically Hispanic and Latino, it will ask to include participants who meet the following criteria:

- Fluency in English*
- Above the age of 18
- Identifies as having a Latino/Hispanic/South American background

* As it cannot be guaranteed that an interpreter will be present during the interview process, this research will only include individuals who feel competent in communicating in English.

(6) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I’ve started?
Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by notifying the researcher via email.

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

If you take part in a focus group, you are free to stop participating at any stage or to refuse to answer any of the questions. Your comments will not be used if you choose to withdraw from a focus group discussion, either throughout the discussion or after it has finished. Please be assured that your personal details will not be identified if you decide to withdraw.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study. However, it should be noted that the interview questions are food related and intentionally open-ended, which may lead to unexpected themes arising in the discussion (such as health related issues), hence consideration must be made for the possibility that this may potentially cause discomfort to the participant.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(9) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

Before the interview begins, you will be asked to provide demographic information that includes your name, age, gender, occupation and nationality/ethnic background. This information will only be recorded and used in the final research paper if you provide full consent. If you do not want to be identifiable in the final research paper, a pseudo-name will be used instead. When the interview is finished, the interview voice recording will be transcribed verbatim (in exactly the same words as used originally) by the researcher and used for data analysis. The personal details you provide will be kept on a digital record by the researcher only, and after the project is complete your details will be deleted.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications unless you agree to this using the tick box on the consent form.

We intend to submit the information from this project to a public database for research information, so that other researchers can access it and use it in their projects. Before we do so, we will take out all the identifying information so that the people we give it to won’t know whose
information it is. They won’t know that you participated in the project and they won’t be able to link you to any of the information you provided.

(10) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(11) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Elsher Lawson-Boyd will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Elsher Lawson-Boyd, student researcher via email at elaw8571@uni.sydney.edu.au.

(12) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of a one page lay summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [INSERT protocol number once approval is obtained]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- Telephone: +61 2 8627 8176
- Email: human.ethics@sydney.edu.au
- Fax: +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep
Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

Dr Sonja van Wichelen
Senior Lecturer of Sociology

Eating the same thing? A comparative ontological analysis of food in Australia’s Nutritional Guidelines and Latino/Hispanic migrant Communities in Sydney

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ............................................................................................................. [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney now or in the future.

✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don’t wish to answer.

✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand
that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me unless I consent to being identified using the "Yes" checkbox below.

☐ Yes, I am happy to be identified.

☐ No, I don't want to be identified. Please keep my identity anonymous.

I consent to:

- Audio-recording
  YES ☐ NO ☐

- Reviewing transcripts
  YES ☐ NO ☐

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered YES, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: ________________________________________________

______________________________________________

☐ Email: ________________________________________________

______________________________________________

..................................................................................

Signature

..................................................................................

PRINT name

..................................................................................

Date
# Appendix D: Participant Demographic Information

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<td>68</td>
<td>Uruguayan</td>
<td>Committee Member</td>
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<td>Polish/Uruguayan</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
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<td>Ana</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Argentine</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
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Appendix E: Interview Questions

Elsher Lawson-Boyd

Interview questions

Introduction questions

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself (for example, where you grew up, what kind of upbringing you had, your occupation, whether you’re married or have kids, etc.)

2. What does your average day look like in terms of work, family and social life?

Food

How does food fit into your average day?

What kinds of food do you tend to eat?

If you had a favourite food what would it be? (if probing needed) What makes it your favourite?

Enjoyment

What do you enjoy about coming to the Club?

Is the food important when you come to the Club?

What do you think makes food enjoyable? (taste, feeling of fullness, social aspect, etc).

What do you think makes eating enjoyable?

(possible) do you think about your body when you eat?

Does food hold any important memories for you?

Socialising

How often would you say you eat with others? (family, colleagues, friends etc.)

How do you think food is socially important?
Would you say that eating together changes the taste of food?

Do you ever eat alone? How do you feel about eating alone?

**Health**

Can you describe how you think food relates to good health? What do you think makes food good for you?

There is generally a great deal of discussion around food choice, nutrition and healthiness, is this something you think about often?

What kinds of differences in terms of food are apparent to you between where you have come from to where you are now?

What kind of things do you think about when you eat? (what other people are eating, body etc).

Do you think that healthy eating follows through a greater awareness of nutrition?

Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix F: Email to ‘Latino Social Group’ via website Meetup.com.au

Message to be sent via Meetup.com to the Latino Social Club in Sydney, and English Spanish Integration

Hi there,

My name is Elsher Lawson-Boyd and I’m a Masters research student from the University of Sydney, and I am emailing you in regards to a proposition I was hoping to talk to you further about.

At the moment I am organising a 12 month research project that will endeavour to understand how nutritional advice, specifically the advice disseminated in Australia’s Dietary Guidelines, enforces a particular way of eating and seeing food. The aim of my research will be to understand how this advice may be contrasted to food as it is seen and eaten by individuals who identify as having a Latino/Hispanic background in Sydney. After doing some searching on the web, I found your group on meetup.com/Facebook and thought I would make contact to see if you and the members of your group may like to participate in the project.

The project would include:

- Spending a maximum of 6 months observing, participating and if possible volunteering in the group activities/meetings.
- A minimum of 8 one-on-one/group semi-structured interviews with the group’s adult members that would explore how food is commonly enjoyed, shared and created.

Please note that this study will be conducted in alignment with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Fieldwork/interviews will be conducted only when the group’s organisers have granted permission, and when participants have provided full consent.

If you and other members of the group would be interested in participating and would like further information on the proposed research project, please feel free to contact me at elaw8571@uni.sydney.edu.au. If you were interested I would love to organise a meeting with you to further discuss the project and its recruitment processes.

Thanks very much!

Elsher
Appendix G: Permission Letter from Uruguayan Social and Sporting Club*

Letter of Permission from Uruguayan Social and Sports Club

Eating the same thing? A comparative ontological analysis of food in Australia’s Dietary Guidelines, and Latino/Hispanic social groups in Sydney

This research aims to understand how food is described and used in two different contexts: Australia’s dietary guidelines, and Latino and Hispanic social groups in Sydney. The purpose of the study is to explore how food as a cultural object is given significance within these two settings, and how individuals who identify as having a Latino/Hispanic background consider good health and enjoyment in eating. The aim of this research is firstly to situate and understand food as a cultural object in both contexts, and secondly to ascertain whether or not there is dissonance between two ways of understanding food and eating.

This involves:

- Learning how food is commonly prepared, consumed and shared by the Uruguayan Social and Sports Club’s patrons.
- Learning what kind of foods are commonly eaten, and why.
- Learning how and why food becomes important and enjoyable for members of the Club (for example taste, memories, feeling of fullness, socialising etc.)
- Learning what good health and good food means for members of the Club.

This research will be conducted with:

- A minimum of 8 semi-structured interviews with members of the Uruguayan Social and Sports Club, either in group or one-on-one (depending on what is appropriate for people who would like to participate).
- A maximum 6 months of ethnographic fieldwork (which includes volunteer work in the Club and participant observation during Club activities/events).

To ensure this study follows the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, the proposed research will only be conducted with the full permission of the Uruguayan Social and Sports Club.

The Club’s executive staff will inform guests and members of the researcher’s presence, and will explain the nature, purpose and extent of the research (most importantly that it will involve participant observation). In regards to interviewee recruitment, and as a means of making the researcher’s presence further known to members, a poster will be put up on the Club’s notice board. If guests/members do not wish to be observed, they will have the opportunity to convey their wishes to the Club’s staff who can relay this information to the researcher. If this is to occur, the research will be discontinued and the researcher will contact her supervisor.

*Please note that the thesis’ title was changed more recently.