

Mixed feelings: Migrant women's experiences of food, eating and home in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand¹

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Abstract

This article considers the relationship between food, eating and home for a group of eleven migrant women, each from a different country, currently living in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand. Interviews and cooking sessions with these women prompted mixed feelings to surface, aligning women with both their new and old homes. They discussed the numerous ways in which they blended food and cultural traditions, and the way they often feel both included and excluded from New Zealand society. In this way, food, culture and home are paradoxical. It is important therefore to focus on the coproduction of feelings, emotions and affects prompted by food and eating for migrant women in Hamilton. This account provides a means of enriching migration studies with recent theorizations in embodied, emotional and affective geographies.

Introduction

This article considers the relationship between cooking, eating and mixed feelings about home for a group of migrant women in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand. We are interested in the lived and felt experiences of place, power and subjectivities when migrants eat their "own" food, but more particularly the food of other migrants. We aim, therefore, to examine border crossings not *between* discursive constructions, such as Self and Other, national and foreign, and home and away, but *within* these constructions in relation to cooking, eating and feelings of (not) belonging. We take this opportunity to introduce ideas about interactions and feelings between migrant

women of different ethnicities as they cook, eat and share stories of (not) feeling at home in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The research project involved cooking, eating, thinking and talking about food (Probyn, 2000). We quickly found that sharing cooking and food offer a way of understanding more about embodied gendered and cultural difference. Much has been written about "eating the Other" (hooks, 1992), where white desire for racialized Otherness is expressed through food. What we argue here, however, is that in our project the way in which the Self and the Other were constructed was not clear, easily separable or stable. Consequently, we want to think beyond bell hook's (1992) famous "eating the Other" argument. Sara Ahmed's article "Collective feelings. Or, the impressions left by others," provides us with some pertinent questions: "How do emotions work to secure collectives through the way in which they read the bodies of others? How do emotions work to align some subjects with some others and against other others?" (2004:26). This mutually constitutive approach to Self and Other, collective and individual—through the lens of emotion and affect—frames our article and helps us tease out the mixed emotional geographies of food and home.

During September and October 2007 we visited 11 women in their homes in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand.² Visiting women at home was a very positive experience for us and, from what we could tell, it seemed enjoyable for our participants. Each was from a different country, resulting in the shared cooking and eating of food that had ties to South Africa, Singapore, Korea, Iraq, Thailand, Hong Kong, Somalia, Japan, Indonesia, Mexico and India.

The overall aim of the research was to use the subject of food to understand further the relationship between identity, place and power for migrant women in Hamilton. During our visits to participants' homes, each migrant woman prepared and cooked a meal that was significant to her in some way. Often when we turned up to homes for an interview and cooking session, we found that the participant had invited others, usually friends who were from a different country and ethnic group.

As the cooking, eating and talking continued with women from many different countries all contributing to the "interview," we were prompted to ask: What does it mean when women from different countries, cultures and ethnicities cook and eat together at "home" in Hamilton, New Zealand? The gatherings highlighted the multiple ways in which women migrants appeared to sense, feel and connect with each other in their kitchens. We wanted to understand more about this connection, which appeared to be driven by the place of Hamilton, emotions, feelings and affect. As Ahmed (2008:10) reminds us: "Emotions are quite sociable. We are moved by the proximity of others."

The article is divided into four sections. In the first section we offer a pathway through recent scholarship on feelings, emotions and affect and suggest this is a

productive way in which to understand the deeply felt geographies of food, home and migrant women. Following this, we offer an outline of the methodological approach used to carry out this research, ending this section with a discussion about our own paradoxical positioning as researchers. Third, we draw on data to illustrate that food, home, bodies, cultures, emotions, affects and feelings mix and blend due to the proximity of others—places, people and food. Finally, we conclude that geographies of food (see Cook et al., 2008) are often constituted within home spaces and beyond in ways that evoke a range and flow of emotions. This does not deny power relations, but suggests there is a need for more complex narratives to make sense of migrant women's emotional geographies.

Theorizations of emotions, affect and food

How, then, can we make sense of these mixed emotions in this project on food and eating with a small group of migrant women in Hamilton? During the course of our research it became apparent that, when women talked about food, there was an intertwining of gendered and racialized subjectivities expressed through geographies of emotions and affect. We decided, therefore, that it was worth paying more attention to feelings, emotions and affect by considering the “embodied and mindful phenomena that partially shape, and are shaped by our interaction with people, places and politics that make up our unique, personal geographies” (Davidson and Bondi, 2004:373; see also Jayne, Valentine and Holloway, 2010; McCormack, 2003; Pile, 2010; Thrift, 2004).

Within the discipline of geography, there are many fascinating topics emerging that attempt to speak to emotions and affect including: the gendered psychodynamics of food culture; aging, grief and death; how people are moved by nature (Davidson, Smith and Bondi, 2005); and the influence of entertainers on the sociocultural and political mood of nations (Johnston, 2009). Some scholars, including us, have focused on people's visceral experiences of food (Longhurst, Johnston and Ho, 2009) and social movements (Hayes-Conroy and Martin, 2010). It is clear that food is central to the emotional geographies of new migrants, as cooking, eating, talking about and sharing food influences migrants' feelings about belonging in their old and new homes.

There is considerable overlap between emotional and affective geographies. Indeed, whether feelings arise from emotion or affect has tended to divide geographers. Affect, for Derek McCormack (2010:643), drawing on the work of Spinoza (1989), Deleuze (1990) and Massumi (2002),

[is] usually defined as the intensity of prepersonal relations immanent to the world. These relations are not necessarily distinct from matter; they are instead the ongoing set of potentials in excess of actuality, of which mattering is always

becoming consistent. Affect, in these terms, is like an atmosphere: it might not be visible, but at any given point it might be sensed.

Feelings, however, can be understood as arising out of these relations of affective intense atmospheres and are sensed through bodies. These feelings are not linear; rather, they may move back and forth simultaneously. Emotion, McCormack (2010) argues, may be understood as the sociocultural expression of this felt intensity. To the extent that materiality (in our case, the materiality of food) is affective, then, this affectivity is registered—and sensed—differentially.

Affective geographies tend to be concerned with materialities such as non-human actors, the built environment and technologies (see Anderson and Harrison, 2006). Some geographers, such as Deborah Thien (2005), have argued that studies of affect on human/non-human interaction privilege the impersonal over the personal, and mask the politics of emotionally embodied subjectivities. There is a concern that without the emotion, affective geographies will be anchorless, “autonomous and as such there is a risk that difference in subject position is erased, and histories of powerlessness and subjection forgotten” (Jayne et al., 2010:542; see also Hemmings, 2005; Tolia-Kelly, 2006).

Steve Pile attempts to tease out the differences in emotional and affective geographies. He understands that emotion geographers tend to consider the politics and ethics of “caring or of emotional transformation,” as well as the significance of expressing emotions, while geographers of affect align more with “the manipulation of powerful elites, covertly behind our backs” and the importance of inexpressible affects (Pile, 2010:6). These differences between emotional and affective geographies are inscribed onto bodies, with affectual geography privileging “an ontological model of the mind and body that presumes that it is always partitioned, with discrete spaces being sectioned off from one another” (Pile, 2010:10), as if it is possible to separate non-cognitive (affect), pre-cognitive (feelings) and thought.

Very few geographers cross the divide between emotion and affect. We have long argued that dualisms such as mind/body, Self/Other are mutually constitutive, and we extend that argument here in relation to emotions and affects. Biological, neurological and bodily expressions of affect cannot be removed from cultural and social geographies in which affects are made, felt and expressed. It is within this context of feelings, emotions and affect that we seek to advance understanding of migrant women, food and home.

Ahmed, as we have already suggested, provides a useful pathway through these mixed emotions. She describes how emotions:

do things, and work to align individuals with collectives—or bodily space with social space—through the intensity of their attachments. Rather than seeing

emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and collective (2004:26–27, emphasis in original).

Migrants' experiences of cooking, eating and belonging highlight the importance of bodies to collective and individual geographies. These affective economies (Ahmed, 2004) between food, bodies and place create an "emotional ripple" as feelings, emotions and affects emerge. It is through an analysis of the impressions left on us (the researchers) by migrant women as they cook, eat and talk that prompts us to consider feelings in common across ethnic, social and economic groups, something that is missing in current literature on food and migrants, which we now turn to.

Much of the research that examines food and diasporic migrant communities tends to focus on one ethnic/cultural/national group rather than on emotional and affective ties between different migrant groups. Such research often centers on the public spaces of ethnic restaurants and food outlets (Ray, 2011). It tends to highlight the old and new homes of migrants as distinct and separate, particularly from "down under" (New Zealand and Australia) and only in relation to one ethnic/cultural/national group. These studies illustrate that the process of settlement may be helped by the sharing food and feelings. In new homes, migrants try to create spaces of common meanings to communicate, to feel safe.

Food is crucial to these emotional and affective geographies. Yet importantly, to restate, the majority of this research focuses on the creation of single ethnic communities in new homes. Gabriela Coronado (2003), for example, discusses the importance of food as part of her diasporic identity as a Mexican living in Australia. Euridice Charon Cardona (2004) argues that Cubans living in Australia maintain their identity through food preparation and eating. Liora Gvion (2009:391) notes how Palestinian cuisine in Israel reveals "negotiations over inclusion and self-identification of Palestinians in Israel." Her participants' culinary practices highlight the construction and sustainability of cultural distinctiveness. Her study shows that it is in domestic spaces—Palestinian home kitchens—that new foods and cooking techniques are adopted. Crucially, this research by Gvion (2006, 2009) advances understanding of the relationship between identity, power and food.

A New Zealand study by Francis Collins (2008) considers culinary consumption choices of South Korean international students in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, as a way of rethinking the transnational production of familiarity. The concept of familiarity is not just about "group loyalties" or connecting with "home," but is an example of "the importance of practical know how, familiar sensations and sociality in feelings of belonging and attachment in everyday lives" (Collins,

2008:152). Collins illustrates the importance of food in bridging sensual gaps between “old homes” and “new homes.” Many of his participants reported that food such as kimch'i became symbolic of anxieties about the difference between “homestay” (living with a Kiwi family) and “home.” A Korean language counselor highlights this anxiety:

The first reason is food. That's quite difficult. You know if you stayed in Korea—all meals, if you eat kimchi I think you can't endure. But here they miss kimchi a lot and they always [say] “kiwi people don't like kimchi smell so I can't bring it.” “I miss kimchi.” “I miss Korean food.” “I miss some kind of Korean food.” “I miss Korea.” So if they [want to] eat kimchi I think [the] most convenient thing is to stay with other Korean group (Collins, 2008:161).

When South Korean students live together, they cook and eat Korean food. The advantage of having control over their home space also makes it possible to socialize with friends, something that was reported as particularly difficult when living in Kiwi homestays or school dormitories (Collins, 2008).

Compared to Auckland, Hamilton has a much smaller population of migrants and there are fewer possibilities for large-scale gatherings (at home or at community events) centered on one particular ethnic/cultural group. Migrants in Hamilton, therefore, choose to consume other migrants' food rather than penetrating the social boundaries of local—and often hegemonic white—society. Through their food practices, our participants reveal subjectivities as “migrants,” as well as their specific ethnic identities. In this sense, Hamilton experiences of eating, drinking and sharing feelings and stories about food are distinctly different from experiences in large cities. By moving in and out of each other's kitchen, they create a type of “migrant space,” and, as a result, parts of Hamilton become multicultural in unique ways (Johnston and Longhurst, 2012). Hence, it is not simply the sensual experiences of food, but rather the shared experiences of coming together that makes these events significant to the way women feel about old and new homes.

Methods of cooking, eating, talking and feeling

Participants were asked to cook a meal that was significant to them, and what they cooked was entirely their decision. They were recruited mainly through contacts at the Waikato Migrant Resource Center, a place where newcomers can access information and resources to assist with the settlement process in the Waikato Region. It is worth noting that clients of the Center are (mostly, but not always) migrants from developing countries and are in the ethnic minority in New Zealand.

Importantly, the size of Hamilton and concentration of migrant women is a major influence of the kinds of encounters that take place.

Approximately 4.2 million people live in New Zealand, and the population grows annually by about 48,000 people who are granted permanent residence through the New Zealand Residence Program (Bedford, Ho and Lidgard, 2005). These new migrants, who are from a wide range of countries, enter New Zealand under a points-based system,³ through family reunification or as refugees. It's worth noting that Hamilton is New Zealand's fourth largest city and has a population of approximately 130,000. The city's population has been transformed over the past ten years especially by immigration of new residents from "non-traditional" source countries, such as those in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Taking into account that citizens can identify with more than one ethnic group, in 2006 Hamilton's population was made up of Pākehā or Europeans (65.3%), Māori (19.9%), Asians (10.6%), Pacific peoples (4.2%) and those of Middle Eastern, Latin American and African origin (1.5%). Local government (Hamilton City Council) is active in promoting and enhancing the well being of all new migrants.⁴ The "Hamilton directory for new settlers 2009/2010" (Hamilton City Council, 2010) is illustrative of the small city's ethnic diversity:

Hamilton's rich cultural diversity is a source of great pride.... Hamilton City Council is committed to being accessible to and supporting the needs of our ethnic communities. Investing in our people and creating identity and prosperity are two important cornerstones to Council's vision for a "vibrant Hamilton"—and the value we place on our ethnic communities is a crucial part of this.

The participants were a diverse group. They differed in their religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, age (ranging from 20s to 60s) and education (see Table 1). The most recent migrant had been in New Zealand three years, the longest ten years. The common thread was that all were first-generation migrants to Aotearoa New Zealand. Although participants lived in a variety of household configurations, our approach to each encounter went like this: The "female head of the household" would greet us at her front door, then we would sit inside and talk about the research. After asking for, and being granted, permission to record proceedings on an audio-digital recorder, we would ask some general background questions, such as: When did you come to New Zealand? When did you come to Hamilton? Why did you come? Who do you live with? Where is your family? What did you bring with you when you came? This allowed us to get to know each other a bit more before we started cooking in the kitchen.

Table 1: List of Participants

Name	Country of origin	Dish prepared	Yrs in NZ	Living arrangements	Work
Catherine	Singapore	Soup, noodles, durian	4	Husband, two children	Mother, church volunteer
Frida	Mexico	Tortillas, chicken with mole, salsa	8	Three children	Part-time in not-for-profit sector
Hani	Somalia	Lamb prepared with onion, garlic, tomato, cloves, green herbs	10	Ten siblings, mom & stepdad	College student
Heri	Indonesia (Malay)	Beef rendang, nasi goreng, vegetables, chips	7	Husband	Retired
Kelly	Korea	Spicy calamari, kimch'i	3	Husband, two children	Mother
Man Yee	Hong Kong (Chinese)	Roasted chicken pieces, broccoli and prawn	3	Boyfriend (New Zealander)	In government department
Naaz	India	Naan, samosa, coconut chutney, potato dish	3	Two children (husband still in India)	High school teacher and sports coach
Phan	Thailand	Thai green chicken curry	5	Husband, two children	Mother
Sadiya	Iraq	Roast chicken stuffed with rice, sultanas, vermicelli, potato, peas	4	Husband, adult son	Volunteer worker
Sarah	South Africa (Colored)	Bobotie, brandy pudding	9	Husband	College teacher
Yoko	Japan	Sushi, miso soup, radish, cooked spinach	6	Husband, two children	Mother

On all but two occasions there were more women (and sometimes men and children) present at the cooking session than just the researchers and the participant. Hence, the cooking sessions turned out to be more like focus groups than individual interviews, involving 30 people over the two-month period of empirical data gathering. The “extra guests” at these sessions could have been a way for more migrants to “join in the fun” and/or a subtle attempt to redress an unarticulated power imbalance. The research provided an opportunity for the sharing of food amongst women from different ethnic groups in Hamilton. Conversations and events unfolded in a reasonably organic fashion. Sometimes we prepared food and cooked with the participants, and sometimes we just watched, talked and ate! Cooking sessions lasted between one and a half and three and a half hours, and we transcribed these sessions in full. Each of us became very familiar with all interview transcripts, which we analyzed using a discourse approach. We searched through more than 200 pages of transcripts, using key words such as home, food, family, friends, belonging, different, similar, community, love, hate, memory and racism.⁵ Key themes began to emerge, such as embodied knowing, agency and emotional geographies.

Privilege subject positions were not always clear within our groups of participants, or within our group of researchers. While Lynda and Robyn could readily be identified as white Selves, part of the dominant host nation, Elsie is Chinese and a migrant from Hong Kong. In this regard Elsie's corporeality tends to sometimes be constructed as “not a real New Zealander,” and yet Elsie has now lived in New Zealand for more than a decade. As a senior academic researcher, she tended to be seen by participants as someone who is very knowledgeable about food and cultural difference in New Zealand and beyond. In this way Elsie occupied a significant and powerful position.

At the outset our aim was not to uphold the dualism between the Self and Other, but rather to understand how various power relationships unfold through its destabilization. It became apparent through this project that, as researchers, we could not, nor did we want to, speak from a white position claiming migrant women to be Other.⁶ However, nor did we want to ignore the whiteness of some of our team.

Blended food traditions, contemporary practices and mixed emotions

When migrants arrive at a new place, there are complex interactions not just with the “host” community, but also with communities of other migrants (Pratt, with the Philippine Women Center, 1998; Valentine, 1999). One of the major themes that emerged from the current research was the blending of food, bodies, cultures and traditions that happens within and across migrant and ethnic groups on a daily basis. Many of the participants readily acknowledged that the traditions and contemporary practices that surround food are complex and overlapping.

Mixed feelings: Migrant women's experiences

Consider, for example, Heri, who identifies as a Malay from Indonesia. She and her husband are retired and have lived in New Zealand for seven years. She explains in relation to the Indonesia archipelago:

We are mixed African. The Chinese have been there for hundreds and hundreds of years. Before we became Muslims or Christians, we were Buddhists, until the 16th century [continues discussing the history] so we have everything. ... We manage to adapt.

Later in our conversation Heri talks about her love of fried rice, again commenting on the blending of traditions. She says:

I do not know anymore whether this is Chinese or Japanese, but there is one thing for sure, with fried rice there is no rule. You can put everything from the leftovers in, you know, and then you just fry it together and that's fried rice.

Hani also speaks of the mingling and mixing of various foods and eating traditions. She migrated from Somalia as a young person ten years ago and lives with her ten brothers and sisters, mother and stepfather. She sees similarities and shared traditions amongst her own and others' (she mentions Pakistani and Middle Eastern) culinary traditions. Hani explains:

The main dishes for us are rice, pasta, different types of macaroni, sometimes a pasta ... not many know what Somali food looks like, or what we use, but we're the same, exactly the same, well, I wouldn't say exactly but we're similar with Pakistani and Middle Eastern food, and why? ... It's the ingredients we use, those bold spicy foods.

Heri's and Hani's narratives relay their complex geographies of food. Their feelings over food are characterized by multiple movements, axes and possibilities in relation to cooking and eating. Each of them acknowledges a complex blending of food and eating traditions that happens across local, regional, national and international boundaries, which means that their own food is not "pure" or necessarily unique to their place.

Sarah, a teacher from Cape Town, South Africa, who identifies as "Colored," says she moved with her husband to New Zealand nine years ago. We asked Sarah if she considers food to be something that makes her feel at home. She responded:

Yeah, initially we did do more South African things, but you lose that and also there's so much with all the Asian tastes. That's great and we love that. We've actually been to a Thai cookery course in Thailand for three days, you know. So we include all of those things. But there is a sense of [pause] it's more [pause] I won't call it home, because that is different but there is a warm feeling I think that you get when you have something from South Africa. It's like "oh, I haven't had

that for a long time.” You know, it’s more the memories that are connected to it. It’s one of the positive stuff of your home country. But it’s not that that defines home for me, but there is a warmth in it, like “it’s nice, do you remember?” That sort of thing.

Sarah went on to describe “loving” Thai food because it’s “all hot and spicy” and she was clearly excited about incorporating Asian tastes into her daily culinary life. Crucially, however, she has to search for words to describe the way in which food makes her feel at home and decides to associate that feeling with “loss.” The memory of not having had South African food for some time connects her emotionally to what she misses due to her New Zealand life. It is *what bodies are feeling* when eating, as well as when *not* able to eat certain food, that matters. In Ahmed’s words, this might be explained thus:

Emotion may function as a “*contingent attachment*” to the world (see Sartre, 1996:333, emphasis mine). The work “contingency” has the same root in Latin as the word “contact” (Latin: *contingere*: com-, with; *tangere*, to touch). Contingency is linked then to proximity, to getting close enough to touch another and to be moved by this or that other, *such that we cannot stay removed from this other*, is also what moves us, or what affects us such that we are no longer in the same place (2004:27).

Not being physically close to South Africa—the people and food of this place—has a paradoxical outcome for Sarah. When unable to enjoy some of the tastes of South African food, Sarah feels like she loses touch with (her previous) home.

Sarah, Heri and Hani themselves are not simply Others who have been incorporated into the New Zealand national body. Instead, over time, they have retained and reworked their own traditions around food preparation and consumption. Their movement as migrants and the movement of food are significant. Ahmed considers the relationship between movement, attachment and emotion, noting:

The word “emotion” comes from Latin, *emovere*, referring to “to move, to move out.” So emotions are what move us. But emotions are also about *attachments*, about what connects us to this or that ... what moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place (2004:27, emphasis in original).

The stories of Heri, Hani and Sarah illustrate the way in which movement connects bodies to other bodies and places via complex food traditions. Movement does not cut bodies off from previous homes; rather it connects bodies to other bodies—“indeed attachment takes place through movements, through being moved by the proximity of others” (Ahmed, 2004:27).

The mixing of culinary traditions does not just happen in relation to the preparing and

cooking of food; it also occurs in the eating of food. We experienced an eclectic mix of eating practices as we carried out the research. Most importantly, we encountered fluidity—a mixing of various traditions—around this. For example, when visiting Phan, who had migrated from Thailand five years before, a long conversation about the practices surrounding eating unfolded:

Phan: We get the food from the shared dish to your plate, and once we finish we get more.

Visitor: But for us [Malaysians] it's straight in the mouth.

Robyn: It doesn't go onto your plate first?

Visitor: No, no, we just take and put it straight in.

Phan: Because we use chopstick[s]. Right, so you can't, you can't. In Thailand if we have rice we use fork and spoon, but if we have noodles dry or soup we use chopstick[s]. It's because in Thailand we have like Chinese and Thai in the society so we learn how to learn chopstick[s] as well.

Robyn: Do you go directly from a communal plate to your mouth? Does that mean that the people, would their mouths touch the chopsticks and then that goes back in the communal plate? Is that an issue for people?

Visitor: Yeah but you, that's why we were told when we were young to have manners. You take that food, you see that food you just take, you don't, you know, search the plate. So you want that piece, you take from that piece. So some people who are more hygienic. They will have a public share spoon or chopstick, so you'll use that public one to take the food to your plate and then you use your own chopstick to eat. So no sharing of saliva.

Robyn: But, traditionally, people wouldn't have thought about sharing saliva, would they?

Visitor: No. Even with shared soup they used the spoon to get soup and after that they just used it. But in those days it's maybe not so many germs.

Phan: In Thailand we have like [a] middle spoon, like [a] public spoon and you know if you want to have curry, [you] use the middle spoon to scoop.

This conversation about various traditions, and the mixing of traditions, that surround eating in different places continued for approximately ten minutes. Social proximity is created by the invitation to sit together and share from the same dish. It illustrates

that how migrants feel about other migrants is not simply a matter of individual impressions. Feelings, indeed, do things. They “rehearse associations that are already in place, in the way in which they ‘read’ the proximity of others, at the same time as they establish the ‘truth’ of the reading” (Ahmed, 2004:39). Hence, migrants have not simply been incorporated into the New Zealand national body, but retain and rework their own traditions not only around food preparation, but also around the consumption of food. These traditions form and reform though daily practices as pleasures (such as the sensations of chewing and swallowing food) and risks (contagions in food shared through saliva) are mixed.

This mixing of culinary traditions was also reflected in the material practice of shopping for ingredients, tinned goods, meat, spices and produce. All eleven of the women interviewed explained that they tend to shop at one or more of approximately ten specialist grocery stores in Hamilton. These are the Thai Shop; “Chinese stores,” such as Garden Fresh, that sell mainly produce; an “Indian grocery” store, Moshims; “Asian supermarkets,” such as New Save; two butchers selling halal meat; and Binn Inn, a store which sells bulk dried foods from bins. A variety of ingredients from far and wide are available from these stores. A decade ago Hamilton offered migrants little by way of ingredients. Hani remembers that when her family arrived from Somalia, her mother “would have to go all the way from Hamilton to Auckland [one and a half hours drive] just to buy halal meat and now time has changed.” We were told repeatedly that now migrants are able to source most of what they need. Phan says that she gets her ingredients for Thai cooking “From [the] Thai Shop and also other Chinese shops like Garden Fresh, opposite the Thai Shop.” Heri explains:

For Indonesian food in particular, we can go to Chinese shop in Auckland or in Hamilton to get ingredients. We can get fresh ones, we can have African ones, no problem. We can have everything from Indian shops or Chinese shops. No problem.

Yoko, who migrated from Japan with her husband six years ago, says that she gets her supplies, including udon noodles, from the Thai Shop or New Save.

Visiting and shopping at these various grocery stores on a number of occasions during this project revealed that the stores are spaces in which mainly (but not only) women and children from a variety of places, and who occupy a variety of different cultural, ethnic and religious subjectivities, come together to shop and share knowledge about ingredients, food preparation, cooking, eating, life in various “homes,” life in Hamilton and community events. They are spaces sometimes visited by white Pākehā and Māori New Zealanders, but they are spaces that are mainly occupied by migrants. In these shops, not just bodies mingle, but also emotions. Catherine from Singapore goes to the Hamilton Thai shop

to buy durian (fruit). She told us: "I am *so* full of passion that I will go [to] all lengths [laughter] [to get durian] ... Yeah, I will go [to] all lengths to really get a durian in for my breakfast ... and you meet the right people [in the Thai Shop]."

Another way in which emotions are invoked through food is explained by Frida from Mexico, who lives with her children and migrated to New Zealand from Mexico eight years ago:

I remember my mother had to work and my grandmother would do the cooking and I would just sit down and "can I help grandmother? Can I chop something?" For me there are just certain aromas that just *bring* me to those days. When I smell something I remember, oh yeah, I remember about my grandmother and how she used to be cooking or yeah my mum, it just reminds me of *home* ... definitely of old times, you know like when I go to Mexico and they start cooking and it reminds me of when I was young. It really takes me back.

To take this further, "feelings make 'the collective' appear *as if* it were a body in the first place ... It is through an analysis of impressions left by bodily others that we can track the emergence of 'feelings-in-common'" (Ahmed, 2004:27, emphasis in original). For Frida, feelings in common are about family in Mexico, and these feelings are also affective, as they are about contact and connections through food objects.

Soon after we arrived at Heri's house, several other guests turned up. They included another migrant woman from Indonesia, a friend from Pakistan and her daughter (aged early 20s) with her baby. I asked Heri if this group of women often met and exchanged recipes. She replied, "Sometimes, yeah. The other day she [friend from Pakistan] taught me how to make chapatis."

The participants in this project were clearly appreciative of the food of other migrants. Man Yee, a young woman in her twenties who came to New Zealand from Hong Kong three years ago, enjoys spending time with Heri, and they eat a diverse range of foods. These migrant women negotiate complex interactions across local, national and global spaces. When migrants arrive in a new country, such as New Zealand, they are influenced by the food of other migrants. Like many of the other participants, Frida felt proud of her own culinary traditions but also valued the traditions of others. She says: "I love food [laughter]. I am loyal to my food, but I love all food [laughter]." Frida explains the same is true for her children. Sometimes for school lunches, "I do tortillas with chicken and my daughter loves tortilla with whatever meat you cut and lettuce and tomato or whatever and wrap it up," but also Frida's children "love to take sushi." Frida was less keen on providing her children with a traditional New Zealand or Kiwi lunch:

So we are very international [laughter], like I said, mom loves food, so they take [all sorts], but I will never make a sandwich with vegemite and potato chips—now that's a big no-no [laughter]. Oh my goodness. Even the nutella, I feel bad if I give them that, a nutella sandwich, I feel very bad [laughter].

Frida felt she would be failing her children if she was to give them an unpalatable Kiwi lunch of vegemite, marmite or nutella sandwiches.⁷

It is worth noting, however, that Pearson and Kothari (2007:53) found examples of Chinese women in New Zealand whose mothers made them sandwiches for school lunches so as not to draw attention to them at schools in small New Zealand towns. Participants in our study reported that their children tend to take a variety of foods, typically sandwiches, noodles and rice dishes, to school for lunch, but there are still some fears about migrant children being made to feel too visible and vulnerable by having food that is considered “different.” School food choices, therefore, are a mixture of fear of rejections as well as a desire to blend in. This kind of racism has not disappeared.

Emotive distinctions of place

In outlining the mixing of food traditions and emotion for migrant women, we do not want to imply that “culinary cosmopolitanism” (Pearson and Kothari, 2007:53) pervades Hamilton. Within these food encounters, we were struck by the power relations that inhabit all culinary landscapes. For example, one of the participants who arrived in Hamilton as a refugee four years ago was keen to distance “her food” from that produced and consumed in other places, such as “Asia.” In relation to “Asian” cuisine she says: “We have different dishes, not like them, they have just vegetables, rice and fried rice and they like seafood, the seaweed, and they roll it with the fish, sushi, my son loves it, but for me, no seafood.” In this narrative, use of the terms “they” and “them” sets up a dualism that constructs various groups of migrants as Other. Although this Othering may not necessarily be intentional, a hierarchy of food at times emerged as migrant women discussed the food of Other (usually, but not always, newer) migrant groups (see also Douglas, 1984:249–279).

More often than not, however, it is the food of those considered to be Other that is constructed as disgusting. In some of the interviews, participants talked about foods that might seem unusual to the New Zealand palate. For example, at Phan's, we talked about birds nest soup (an expensive delicacy in Chinese cuisine with a unique texture that comes from the bird's saliva, which is used to construct the nest). At Frida's, we talked about eating grasshoppers, snails, crickets and cacti. None of the interviewees prepared these dishes for us, possibly because they were too expensive, inaccessible

or perhaps they thought we would find them abject.

Cooking food and eating with migrants allowed some to share deeply felt emotions related to lives left behind. When we asked Sadiya, a refugee from Iraq, how she felt about Iraq now, she responded:

We cry every night. We hear the news, so yesterday they killed 100. Suicide bombers a lot everyday they, either they bomb a car or they launch themselves. Religion doesn't kill people. Never. Not religion, but what can you say ... *insha'allah* [which] means in the name of God.

Sadiya then blessed all the dishes, saying *insha'allah*, and we all ate together, continuing to talk about Iraq. Cooking and eating with Sadiya seemed to open up a space where she felt comfortable talking about political turmoil and lives lost. Her kitchen was busy. She cooked biryani for us, took phone calls and held conversations with her husband and children as they moved in and out of the kitchen. All of these interactions were carried out using a variety of languages (Farsi, Kurdish, Arabic and English). She said that she came to New Zealand with "just [a] handbag. We left everything behind. I sold my furniture, but kept the house for people to live in and they give the rent to my husband's brothers who need the money." She went onto reflect on what it was like in Iraq under Saddam Hussein's rule:

Terrible. Saddam was a big dictator. A lot of our family was in jail and we can't find them now, he killed them. So many, my husband's brother, his nephew, my sister's son (an engineer) and my sister in Dubai—her husband has [lost] 17 uncles from father and mother ... 7,100 from my Kurdish group have been exiled to Iran. The boys kept in jail, not found yet—7,500. 182,000 from Kurdish people he puts them in grave[s] alive, he buried them. That's why they put him on trial and 6,500 were killed by chemical weapons in one village in the north. That's why they call him "Chemical Ali," his cousin. More than half a million of Shi'a and all the Christians, everybody has one lost, two, five lost. Girls, university teachers, professors, doctors, engineers, children killed with their mothers.

The pain that Sadiya evokes is palpable and illustrates the intensification of feeling that allows bodies and places to materialize and take shape (Ahmed, 2004). It is perhaps not surprising, then, that after experiencing such loss, she is very proud of her sons and their life in Hamilton, relaying to us that one of her sons' teachers:

told me they are very good boys and it's a pleasure to have them. They work hard, behave well. They are very quiet. They have Kiwi friends, Māori friends, so they were getting on very well with them. They [the friends] visit us, they eat here. Some Iraqis here [have] got problems with their kids. They [other kids] didn't take [Iraqi] food to school, just fruits. They didn't take [food] so that they are not offensive.

Through visiting and eating with migrant women, we found evidence of this kind of multiculturalism and racism that some of the participants, and the participants' friends, face on a daily basis. Racism is sometimes directed at migrants from other migrant groups and sometimes from people who have been in the country for generations. Cooking, eating and talking about food with Sadiya created a space in which she could share some of her experiences of loss, racism, fear and hurt, but also pride and belonging.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that food prompts feelings, emotions and affective ties to place and people. Cook et al. (2008), drawing on Wagner (2007:32), argue: "Once there are many other places, and not just split into 'here' and 'there,' past and present, belonging and exile, vicarious nostalgic returns through displaced (diasporic) food are necessarily aborted." Our interviews and cooking sessions with migrant women and their families and friends illustrate the flow and movement of feelings, emotions and affective ties. Talking, cooking and eating with migrant women illustrates the way in which emotions are bound up with justice and injustice and how bodies are included and excluded from New Zealand society. The migrant women in this research cook, eat, and spend a great deal of time in each other's Kiwi kitchens. Our time with them highlights the importance of food in understanding collective and individual geographies. Their food practices reflect their personal histories, their professional careers and their various journeys to New Zealand. Some participants talked of food blending traditions and histories of various missing cuisines. These affective economies (Ahmed, 2004) between food, bodies and place create feelings, emotions and affects that are sometimes positive, and other times distressing. Thinking about the emergence of feelings across ethnic, social and economic groups helps deepen our understanding of migrants' everyday lives in Hamilton.

Cook et al. (2008) explain that food, culture and race are paradoxical. Cultures are not easily separable, stable, essentialized, homogenous or bounded, but are messy, changing, non-essential, heterogenous, embodied and diasporic (Duncan and Duncan, 2004; Saldanha, 2006). We have argued that migrant women in Hamilton have mixed feelings of belonging and home. They have moved around the world, and their emotions have moved them. Perhaps it is the act of responsiveness to and openness toward other places that enables "an interweaving of the personal with the social, and the affective with the mediated" (Ahmed, 2004:28). Their lives in Hamilton rub up against a "New Zealand identity," which Pearson and Kothari claim is:

modelled in large part upon British post-settler society [and] is subject to a dynamic and often contentious range of national defined culturalisms. These culturalisms are defined as monoculturism, biculturalism and multi-culturalism, and the power relations between them are amply evident in the food discourses (2007:46).

We agree. At the beginning of this article, we noted that the gatherings seemed to be something more than a binary between Self and Other, or a multicultural event at which “exotic” Otherness was consumed by all, but we were not sure what exactly. The answer is that by considering the emotional geographies of migrant women, it is possible to point to the emergence of new food and new “belonging” discourses in New Zealand that resist the unproblematic incorporation of immigrants into the national body. How migrant women feel about Others—particularly other migrants—can be understood by considering emotional and affectual geographies associated with new and old homes. It is important to focus on feelings, emotions and affect while still being mindful of the power relations, including racism, which inhabit culinary landscapes.

Notes

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- 2 See Blunt and Dowling (2006) for an in-depth discussion on women and home.
- 3 Prospective migrants earn points for qualifications, work experience or job offers.
- 4 See <http://www.hamilton.co.nz/page/pageid/2145827047>.
- 5 A similar selection of key words was used by Pearson and Kothari (2007) and by Valentine (1999).
- 6 See Longhurst, Ho and Johnston (2008) for a methodological discussion of using our bodies as instruments of research.

- 7 Vegemite is a black colored food paste made from the yeast byproduct of beer manufacturing. Marmite is similar to vegemite, but is New Zealand rather than Australian made. Nutella is a hazelnut spread sometimes used as a peanut butter substitute.

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