FOOD AND IDENTITY AMONG SECOND-GENERATION VIETNAMESE-AUSTRALIANS IN (SOUTH)WESTERN SYDNEY

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1 ABSTRACT

Within migrant and food literature, focus on the migrant communities is ubiquitously on individuals who fall within the migrant and refugee demographic group. While these perspectives are valuable, this research seeks to center second-generation members of that community in order to unpack the complex relations that are prevalent but unseen in the literature. In popular media, this perspective has begun to emerge in the Vietnamese diaspora that is getting older as the tumultuous history that catalyzed its formation nears its fifty-year anniversary. Using relational sociology, migrant theory, and foodie literature, I analyze the stories and experiences of second-generation Vietnamese-Australians in (south)western Sydney gathered through this ethnographic field research that bridge scholarship with the current realities in this community. By interviewing the participants, participating in the same activities as them, as well as observing their practices, I gain a contextually specific and personal understanding of how they see themselves and how they present themselves.

Migrant scholarship has identified food practices in migrant communities as a significant activity space to understand identity performance, and therefore food practices of my target group are a central point of focus in where I conduct this research. My results go beyond food practices to explore the multiplicity of relations that span social, spatial, and temporal dimensions, and that saturate the practices with meaning for second-generation Vietnamese-Australians. Combining this with conceptual ideas from foodie discourse synergizes a deeper understanding behind these relations. The data from the field work reveals that the family home, Vietnamese restaurants, and non-Vietnamese restaurants to be significant places of identity performance for this group. The generational, gender, class, and racial dynamics manifest in different ways in these spaces. The critical results of this thesis contribute to complex understanding of diaspora communities that is missing in current literature.

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4 INTRODUCTION

The social designation of “migrant” carries numerous heavy implications, good and bad, in how an individual or a collective is seen by others. Identity work is a two-way street, so this thesis focuses on the specific group of second-generation Vietnamese-Australians as an identity that is forged from its social relations within and outside of the group. Defining what constitutes the identity work of this group is both the starting place of this thesis as well as the frontier that this research explores. I lay out in this introductory chapter the foundational understanding of the migrant identity as it is articulated through scholarly and non-academic literature, and then trace different spaces through which food and identity are evident themes in the discourse. I then problematize the gaps in understanding that do not directly address the second-generation diaspora as a worthy focus of discussion and formulate my research objective. The aim of this project is to examine the meaningful spaces that second-generation Vietnamese-Australians perform identity through their relationships with food. The deep-rooted hybridity that comes with their social position engenders complex results through their multiplicities. This underlines the importance of normalizing recognition of these multi-faceted identities to understand the experiences within a diaspora.

4.1.1 Background: Understanding the migrant generation first

In this section, I outline the history of the Vietnamese diaspora at large and in Syndey to contextual the general subject group I focus on in this research. A background understanding of the migrant formation is crucial for narrowing down the specific needs this research must address for the current experience of the second-generation of the diaspora as well as why I opted to pinpoint food as an entry point for analysis. At the heart of this project is an understanding of struggles that form the foundation of the experience for the majority of Vietnamese-Australians, namely social, economic, and legal discrimination. In outlining the hardships, I expand on the complexities of these experiences to identify a sort of dualism in them. The multiplicities of the process to make a space for their community includes all the relations between the actors within and outside the community. I focus on the younger generation in this research, but understanding the traumas and identity practices of the first generation in their now home is crucial to fully grasping the context and interactions that have evolved over time to become what they are today. As I lay the groundwork, I move between unpacking the experiences of first-generation members of the community and how it has informed a foundation for the following Australian-born generation. This research project looks at the food relations of second-generation Vietnamese-Australians in Sydney, Australia and at the role food plays in their production of identity and community.

For nearly fifty years, large populations of people with ancestral roots in Vietnam have been establishing themselves in a great number of major cities across the globe as a result of the Vietnam War. Sydney, Australia is one of the destinations that received a significant number of Vietnamese refugees in the mid-seventies and through the following decades. Sydneysiders, and Australians in general, are no stranger to Asian culture and cuisine with Australia’s proximity to the Asian continent (Williams, 2016). Simultaneously, a natural relation emerged between the food of migrant populations and that of their host community, which in time, becomes their home community as well. In many ways, this relation is a contentious space to navigate and celebrate difference. On one hand, the experience of Vietnamese-Australians mirrors that of many migrant groups where the choice of staying in their homeland means facing more war and persecution. It is not a decision made lightly, and still, the difficulties that new

refugees face are numerous and traumatizing. On the other hand, the way the refugees practice identity and create space inherently changes over time, affecting the subsequent generations within their own population. These are the generations that were born in Australia. They still hold ties to the homeland of their parents while also continuing the work of creating spaces of belonging—that is the case for many diasporas across the globe. A hybrid identity of host and "home" is part of what defines this community, and this research will delve into how their food practices and sense of place are linked to this identity and are mutually constituted (Vu & Voeks, 2012).

The issues for the population start early in its formation. The diaspora began when millions of Vietnamese refugees fled their home country and sought refuge in distant nations. These destinations were primarily Western, Eurocentric nations such as Australia, where ultimately hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees went. Beginning in the 1970s, more than 15,000 Vietnamese refugees fled to Australia annually over the next decade (National Museum Australia, 2022). The majority of the refugees spoke little to no English when they arrived in Australia, therefore relegating most of this new labor force into low-pay wages in precarious or casual employment, in often poor work conditions (Birrell et all, 2002; Carey et al, 2022). Immigrants commonly dominate horticulture and food service industry in low-level labor, further demonstrating the utility of using food as an overall conceptual framing to pursue this research.

Low wages and unstable employment go hand in hand with food insecurity, further exacerbated by the lack of financial support for refugees and asylum seekers proved an additional hurdle for the new arrivals (Carey et al, 2022). To top it all off, Australia's economy was in recession in the seventies, making it all the more difficult for newcomers to the country to support their own livelihoods (Vo, 2020). The slant of these struggles in the early era of the migration of Vietnamese refugees is ubiquitously economic, and logically so, given employment and means of sustenance was an immediate obstacle that most had to overcome to survive. The experience is most often this way for initial arrivals of a migrant community. I do not imply that economic issues disappear with subsequent generations, but I argue that over time, relations build and morph into new ways of being in the diaspora. Indeed, the new generation is not of migrants, but of natural born citizens of the country where their parents bored and raised them. The opportunities available to them are different from the previous generation overall--relative to other migrant groups, the children of Vietnamese migrants are shown to have higher educational achievements, with higher graduation rates and higher numbers of those who go one to pursue university educations (Birrell et al, 2002). This larger narrative is important to understand the foundation that the diaspora was built upon and how the experiences of this community evolve to be more nuanced and complex over time.

More than the economic struggles, bullying and harassment is a commonplace occurrence for the Vietnamese diaspora, due to poor English language skills for new migrants, but also from cultural insensitivity about their cuisine and food practices when others outside of the diaspora encountered cultural differences that they rejected without respectful consideration. These sorts of discriminatory experiences are not only felt by new arrivals but echoed to the second-generation community members as well (Ho, 2018; Dorsey, 2019a; Dorsey, 2019b; Dorsey, 2021). Some of the effects of discrimination are experienced directly by the subsequent generations through the bigotry of their peers, though not all the discrimination aimed at the younger generation necessarily is. Still, generational trauma is nonetheless imparted. It is vital to be sensitive to inherited trauma the children of these migrants can be exposed to from these systemic stresses. Intolerance targeted at their parents and elders is easily

internalized by witnessing children, and anecdotes from the childhoods of these generations are prevalent throughout the diaspora (Dorsey, 2019b; Kim-Preito et al, 2018; Vo; 2022; Huynh et al, 2023). Indeed, prejudice towards the diaspora has manifested in many forms and iterations. Notably, the intersectional identities of members of the diaspora often times compounds, exacerbating the tensions between the diaspora and the larger community, as well as within the diaspora itself (Kim-Preito et al, 2018; Dorsey, 2019).

However, by the same token, these difficult experiences have led the Vietnamese diaspora to find different ways to navigate the contentious relations. It is evident through the places many scholars have identified as significant as specific spaces of food for the population. Entrepreneurship is high within migrant communities, in part because of their perceived low employability but also because of the task of grappling with cultural difference. As foreign as their host community find them, the new arrivals often find comfort being surrounded by that which is familiar to them (Sinnya & Nasholm, 2012). Food businesses such as Vietnamese restaurants and grocers are commonly established, as well as cultivated backyard gardens to create landscapes that are reminiscent of their home country, with familiar, edible, tropical flora native to their home country (Head, 2004). Furthermore, food markets and food stalls are often located at the heart of the community (Black, 2012; Medina, 2013). This is very much the case in Sydney, where like those who were part of the mass migration following the Vietnam War moved to urban centers in the destination country.

I further expand this partial conceptualization of the difficulties for the diaspora to understand the multifaceted spaces they work through that convey nuance in their experiences. In the specific case of this research, I began by looking at a place that has been deemed meaningful to the Vietnamese-Australian diaspora due to its significance for first-generation Vietnamese refugees. Cabramatta is the primary Vietnamese suburb in Sydney, and its nickname “little Saigon” is a moniker often employed to areas where there is a marked density of Vietnamese refugees who have made a home there following the Vietnam War (Collet & Furuya, 2010). Within this widely recognized ethnic suburb, there is a paradox between the characterization of Vietnamese refugees in the early migration that contradicts with the desirable food culture and the model minority status that is often upheld in reference to the community (Dorsey, 2019a; Dorsey, 2021).

Cabramatta, lauded nowadays as the sought after site to taste Vietnamese food also has a fraught history known for high criminal and drug activity (Thomas, 2004; Aubusson, 2018). The 1980’s and 1990’s marked the height of activity for the organized crime gang called 5T. Though it had suspected links to other areas of Australia and even internationally, it was based primarily in Cabramatta and was composed of approximately 200 Vietnamese teens and young men (Parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Crime Authority, 1995; Covey, 2021). In a summary of ethnic gangs in contemporary Australian, Covey writes that “The connection between ethnicity and violence has been a product of marginalization, negative stereotypes, moral panics, and racism” (208). However, the association between the migrant neighborhood as a whole and criminality and illegal drug use resulted in a degree of conflation for the image of the Vietnamese-Australian community. Subsequently, state and legal discrimination against the Vietnamese-Australian diaspora has not been uncommon (Parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Crime Authority, 1995; Threadgold, 2000; Kim-Prieto et al, 2018; Huỳnh et al, 2023). This added facet to the hardship Vietnamese refugees experienced is compounding with the trauma of state violence, and in some cases imprisonment, that led the refugees to leave Vietnam in the first place.

The suburb's reputation for criminal activity has diminished over recent years, but it has not been completely forgotten (Vo, 2020). In characterizing Cabramatta as simultaneously a place with a dark history and a must-go destination for culture, the multiplicity of relations is evident in the place, and it can be depicted over time. This history is not erased as it is still present in the how the community is perceived, though with more complexity.

The Vietnamese diaspora has been recognized over the past decades for these same cuisine and food practices, and Cabramatta has gained a reputation as the place to go for Vietnamese food in the large urban sprawl (Kumamonjeng, 2019). Vietnamese-Australians have experienced both prejudicial treatment and welcoming embrace, and it has created a contradictory relation that forms the bedrock of a diaspora identity. Along the same lines that identities are a product of relations, I take places to also be constructed from relations (Massey, 1995). Cabramatta is an area imbued with all the relations of its inhabitants as well as people who interact with the inhabitants. However, this research demonstrates how the diaspora is not defined by a singular space such as Cabramatta. I explore many different spaces through which second generation Vietnamese Australians meaningfully interact with food, thus illustrating the vast array of relations that inform these identity performances.

4.1.2 Countering stereotypes with hybridity

Food as a mode through which to study a culture can be incredibly valuable, but it is important to recognize possible damaging consequences if it is not done so in a critical and culturally sensitive way. I note that viewing an ethnic minority through the lens of that their cuisine offers is a potentially problematic downside due to what some scholars call cosmopolitan multiculturalism (Brook, 2008). It is a term used to critique social diversity that is relegated to a particular neighborhood but then extrapolated to elevate the larger region as being multicultural as well. This works under the progressive political and social idea that diversity benefits everyone, however, in this case, the diversity is still somewhat segregated because this perspective still centers the dominate culture. In this case, it is white Australians. As a result of the spatial formation of ethnic communities in a large city, they can be separated from the bigger community to an extent. This posits a dichotomy between what is inside the ethnic community and what is outside. In many cases of migrant neighborhoods with Asian backgrounds, teeming with food businesses (in the form of Asian grocers, "exotic" food and vegetable stands, Asian restaurants, Asian bakeries, or cafes, etc.), visitors from outside the community will come sample the diversity in the form of food. From the perspective of cosmopolitan multiculturalism, the emphasis in their experiences is on the foreignness felt by the visitor, centering the viewpoint of the visitors, and paying little lasting attention to anything else that the food symbolizes. Brook defines cosmopolitan multiculturalism as seeing diversity at a superficial level of consuming diverse foods without consideration for the complex interactions has emerged as a problematic food practice. The surface level perception of diversity allows for visitors to come through these "diverse" neighborhoods to experience and laude the diversity. These visitors act as tourists instead of participants in this act of sharing food, and risk ignoring the agency of the migrants and community members who have bought the food and the culture that designates the neighborhood as diverse in the first place (Brook, 2008).

Prominent ethnic food scholar Krishnendu Ray likewise recognizes the phenomenon of cosmopolitan multiculturalism and cites a lack in literature of immigrant perspectives of food & taste (2020). I return to my foundational approach of the multiplicity of relations and associations that play into what the community has become over time, which is a core part of my research objective. In relational sociology,

Massey portrays the making of a place as intimately tied up in social relations (1995). She takes social relations and place to then be ever-shifting and constantly reconstructed, as well as reinforced. I further argue that this can be supported by scholarship that includes perspectives of not just immigrants but also of their non-immigrant successors. The multi-layered struggles and practices of the Vietnamese refugees exists throughout the global diaspora, and the trauma is often passed down to the next generations. From this, I open the possibility for the diaspora is not just a spatially and temporally specific social imaginary, but also as an amalgamation of both shared and varied experiences. At times, these experiences contradict, between and within generations of the same diaspora group.

In a 2004 article, Mandy Thomas writes about the negotiation of members of the Vietnamese diaspora, especially the younger generations at the time, with food, the pleasure of eating, and a sort of political activism through their practice. Her work looks in large part to the diaspora in Australia, which draws direct ties to the scope of this this. Thomas draws interesting conclusions from these food practices, and they emerge in other parts of these community members' lives, through political performativity in reaction to the government, as well as in relation to creating a sense of belonging in a "home-building project" (Thomas, 2004). A fundamental idea in her work is that the food culture in the community is rapidly changing, and through it, the food practices performed by community members of differing age ranges. Though this article was written nearly 20 years prior, the diaspora has already been established for three decades with the earliest of the second generation of the community already emerging into adulthood. Her findings still ring of relevance as I ground my research approach in scholarly literature and other relevant publications; cultural change does not happen overnight, and it is clear from the narrative of food that she depicts that this is an ongoing process, even today.

4.2 Problem Statement

From the superficial to the deeply rooted food practices in the Vietnamese diasporic community, this field umbrellas the interests of many preceding scholars before I had formulated my own topic. I recognize the diversity of recurrent experiences shared by the community. Food is one of the primary modes in the Vietnamese diaspora to define themselves and make a home. In exploring recent and diversified scholarship in the Vietnamese diaspora, I have come across literature that is adjacent to my research interests. However, I find that there is very limited recognition specifically on the natural-born generations of the Vietnamese diaspora identity related to food practices. Less focus is placed in literature generally on the temporal dimension, and while I consider the current relevance at looking at diasporas at large, not all the literature is applicable for all diasporas. This is even more so with specific diasporas that have particular contexts, like with my focus of Vietnamese-Australians in Sydney. At this point, the most context-specific material I have come across has been outside of academia, in the form of blogs, shared online personal narratives, and mainstream articles. In one way, there is demonstrated prominence of food in understanding the Vietnamese diaspora's process of placemaking. However, I find the scholarship in these same perspectives to be lacking concerning complexities the more specific group of second-generation community members. Furthermore, it reifies the need for more depth in scholarship in this field that has yet to be researched, and I hope to contribute to a better understanding of this overlooked topic in academia in my research.

Discourse about migrant populations needs to include the subsequent generations because influences between the past and present flows both ways. The limited perception of the diaspora via the experience of the first generation only provides one aspect of a hybrid experience in this multi-

generational population. It is a reduction of their realities and confines them to identities that belong to only one community. Furthermore, discussions about experiences specific to the Australian-born segment of the diaspora is only discussed in individual narratives rather than indicative of a shared cultural experience. There has been no work that sought to spotlight the other spaces in which this second-generation population has also found belonging and community. Between these two shortcomings, the identity of the second-generation Vietnamese Australians is largely invisible. Seeing the population in this way has the potential to continue to perpetuate the struggles the earlier generation faced, both internally by community and from external influences. I complicate the relations present in the food in their lives in an inclusive analytical framework that serves to legitimize their experience.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The nature of the empirical research in this thesis is rooted in existing literature, and while I have a toolbox of theories and methods to employ to answer my research questions, I did not know if any of my assumptions had any bearing on what I would encounter in the field. Therefore, I had to rework the questions to reflect the emergent properties for the data in order to be more appropriate with what participants ended up sharing in the interviews and in casual conversations. Throughout the analytical process of making sense of the empirical data and creating a narrative argument that became the end result of this thesis, it felt as though I had to reconceive the entire project. Asking myself repeatedly about what the significance of this or that detail is a natural part of the thesis writing process, but I was caught by surprise when I realized that was in front of me all along. It is difficult to parse out something one is so close to, and this personal experience of piecing together felt emblematic of what it often looks like to find space as a second-generation member of a diaspora. It is a deeply personal journey, and through the shared experiences within a diaspora, they can find a sense of belonging, self, and community.

Without a doubt, the identity of the younger generations is still linked with the larger Vietnamese-Australian community in (south)western Sydney, but the way this is so, and what role food plays in it, is not clear in current scholarship. My objective is to investigate multiplicities in second-generation food practices and peel back the layers that to unpack the way Vietnamese-Australians imbue meaning in this for their communities, spatially and temporally. The importance of including the younger generations of the diaspora is a foundational implication of my approach because they have inherited much from the experiences of their forebearers and have created anew relations and spaces of their own. The hybridity inherent in the non-migrant generation embody both the present and the past, and the consequences of this have not been recognized in scholarship up to now. The centrality of food in parsing the identity of an ethnic diaspora is well supported in the literature, but my aim to look at the younger generation is not. I have encountered accounts in Vietnamese diasporas outside of Australia of tensions between the migrant generation and the following generation, but these accounts lack specificity of context and focus, easily lost without more in-depth study (Dorsey, 2019).

In conducting this research, I am interested in exploring the following questions regarding second-generation Vietnamese-Australians:

How do second-generation Vietnamese-Australians use food to perform identity?

- *What food relations inform their identity performance?*

- *What role does their ethnic and migrant status play in these relations?*
- *What relations and identities outside of their ethnic an migrant status impact these relations?*

6 THEORIES

The theoretical approach for this thesis began with intersecting relational sociology with migrant theory. Applying these two theories in tandem makes room to unpack how the social and spatial relations among and with the Vietnamese-Australian diaspora construct both identity and place (Massey, 2002; Day, 2021). Identities are an outcome of relations, so relations will be the unit of analysis as I carry out my research (Massey, 1995). Highlighting the relations that form identities makes room for a fluid and multi-dimensional understanding. Taking into consideration spatial relations that are part of a relational sociology approach lends analytical clarity to situate the subjects' experiences geographically but also of social imagination. Important to this is to also include the temporal aspect that relays nuance in this case because this research focuses on the identities performed by the younger generation of a multi-generational community. Altogether, the spatial and temporal collide with the social to become a cohesive experience for multi-generational cultural communities, and these are the crucial components I identified in the design of this project.

The generational and ethnic category I specify in this research of second-generation Vietnamese-Australian is in itself relationally situated in social, spatial, and temporal dimensions. Massey's approach is inclusive of the concept of a diasporic community, but I found it necessary to include migrant theory literature to lend more specificity that allows me to address the particular intricacies inherent in conducting research with such complex and vulnerable groups. Within migrant literature, the concepts of performance and identity are prominent, and they are useful analytical tools to unpack the practices and relationships in the empirical data.

6.1 MIGRANT FOOD SPACES AND PERFORMANCE

This field work is based on the presumption that understanding the second-generation Vietnamese-Australian identity needed to first be rooted in migrant theory literature. In the context of this research, I recognize that the view that the second-generation Vietnamese-Australians have on Vietnamese food, is built on multifaceted familial dynamics and spatial correlations. Relational sociology takes the spatial and social dimensions to be intertwined in identity constructing, therefore studying this community formed out of migration made the places significant when looking at social relations. Furthermore, in this research, I understood from the start that there is a temporal dimension in studying a generation defined in part by an older generation in the same community. Social, spatial, and temporal dimensions are simultaneously significant for the identity of second-generation diaspora members. Spatially, this involves paying attention to the physical (and digital) areas the second generation occupied while contextualizing it with the spaces taken up by the previous generation.

Scholars of migrant theory Al-Sayed and Bieling write that relationships created through food are "important for building new bridges with the host community and expressing social identities" (2022, 551). This is certainly pertinent in the Vietnamese-Australian community with the profusion of diverse practices that community members perform (Dorsey, 2019). My research will center the food practice as the consumption, provisioning, and preparation of food as a well-noted site of labor and identity reproduction in the Vietnamese diaspora (To, 2020).

Scholars, such as Terence Chum Tat Shum, have also published works that call attention to the performativity of migrant community food practices as constructing not only a sense of place away from

home and navigate relations with their host society, but also constructing collective memories across generations (2020; 2022). While establishing the temporal and spatial link inherent within diasporic community dynamics, performance indicates more than the simple doing of food practices and intentionally frames these acts to interrogate them as site to better understand the relationships the community members forge for themselves. For Shum, "Food and performance are embodied and charged with elements of survival and pleasure, nourishment, and taste and power relations" (2022, 3). Performance in cultural contexts are strategic acts of identity making, and with migrant food practices, the relationship is deepened by spatial contexts as well as temporal.

Shum discusses how culinary diasporic space may also encapsule physical spaces. He elaborates diaspora to be a practice of social imagination, wherein ethnic minority groups in a foreign place reconstitute identities with their cultural practices and create their own belonging while they are being excluded or othered (2022). Regarding topics of entrepreneurship and transcontinental projects, Syrett and Keles have drawn connections with identity and place making as a social and collective imagination for certain diasporas (2022). This can be seen in Cabramatta with its informal name of "little Saigon". As previously established, the social and spatial are inseparable (Day, 2021), and this understanding makes plain the significance of neighborhoods such as Cabramatta in the identity narratives of the Vietnamese-Australian diaspora. Shum illuminates shared practices that unify the whole community, but also distinguishes more nuance readings between the first generation and subsequent generations with differing aims. The former acts from a yearning for the homeland they have left as they are migrants, but the latter generations compose a social imaginary in their practices while in their own home context. This social performativity and practice of the later generations is precisely what I aim to examine.

6.2 GENDER IN FOOD

Cairns and Johnston argue that food is a place where gendered performances of the feminine have emerged throughout history (2015), and therefore there is potential to apply it as lens to understand particular aspects of migrant food practices. They elaborate throughout their book *Food and Femininity* about the intertwined realities of food and the feminine. Using an intersectional and relational approach grounded in feminist and gender studies literature, they see gender as socially constructed and performative (2015). Food has long been a symbol of femininity through multiple lens such as of patriarchal domesticity, care, and power; it is through food in the home that women frequently embody femininity. Food the home is frequently associated with the feminine because home-cooking has long been the archetypal role of women and mothers in the household. Cairns and Johnston draw connections between women and food through the caring act of women providing meals to their family at home (2010). Care is not an exclusive behavior of women, but they emphasize its prevailing association with food being gendered. They also highlight that these gendered expressions through food are not exclusively limited to women. It is important to note that although femininity is primarily associated with women, men are also able to display femininity because gender is socially constructed and not a hard category.

Marte's work on the Afro-Dominican diaspora's food practices in New York also recognizes the gendered practice in that community that locate many of the food practices to be of women in the home (2011). Within this article, she explicitly centers women cooks, and Marte uses a spatial lens to map the food paths of her subjects. The narrative that emerges from this spatial understanding asserts that the

women perform these acts also shape new imaginaries in their home. As this work focuses on a diasporic community, Marte connects migrant theories of performative belonging and literature on food and gender. The gender dimension is prominent in her work about migrants because traditional gender roles are reproduced in the diaspora. It is not a given of all the people she interviews because she also speaks to men who cook, but the gender norm of women cooks is pertinent. The subject of my thesis is not migrants, but the link is nevertheless relevant because they are still part of a diaspora.

Cairns and Johnston posit in their book that food performance is connected to performing femininity, and they lack a full framework to address what a masculine performance looks like through food (Cairns & Johnston, 2015). In a different publication that looks at gender in the foodie context, Cairns et al describe instances of masculine spaces for cooking food to be archetypically in professional settings and as a hobby (2010). It is also through foodie culture that masculine spaces for food emerge, writing foodies is a group "that is renowned for bringing men into the realm of food work" (594). This is distinct from the feminine spaces that Cairns and Johnson depict in their book. Furthermore, their study shows how foodie culture can also be a space for women to break out of the gender norms where women are not limited to a gender expression with food through care in home cooking. They state that "the women's identification with foodie pleasure complicates dominant ways of doing gender by catering to family tastes" (604). In this way, they assert an expanded capacity for women, through foodie culture, to socially interact with food. Such an understanding brings together a multiplicity of relations through food and speaks directly to the research goals of this thesis.

Many perspectives in this research were presented in terms of gendered experiences, thus understanding food as a topic that is performed through a gender lens helps inform a part of the analytical tools used to interpret the empirical data in this research. Gender and food literature has many interdisciplinary applications, and thus it is a theoretical framework that can work in tandem with the diaspora theories of performativity and identity previously discusses, and the foodie literature that I cover in the next section.

6.3 AUTHENTICITY

Flowers and Swan's article supports this gendered phenomenon of care through food in their research that also takes place in Sydney, Australia. Their chapter looks at a specific case of a food tour company that advertises authentic, multicultural food experiences throughout southwest Sydney, led by guides who are part of the same ethnic communities the tours visit. They scrutinize how the feminine identity of first-generation, women of color who perform this food-related labor lends authenticity to the food they are working with while simultaneously providing the emotional labor to care for their customers (2016). Their claims illustrate the importance of gender and ethnicity in understanding the underling relations within food labor for first-generation migrants in Sydney as well as in the perception of authentic food.

Lisa Heldke writes about authenticity of food cuisines as a relational understanding between those who share their food culture and who is learning about that food culture (2005). She also problematizes this relationship to interrogate her own positionality while consuming and creating non-white cuisines (2003). In some of her work, her reflections focus on racial power dynamics in western society, but also, she expands her relational understanding of authenticity more broadly. Adopting a relational understanding to parse the intentions and consequences in food consumption works to specify the work

of cuisines as infinitely malleable, drawing focus not just to the food itself but to all the people who are involved. The intersections of a multiplicity of relations emerges in her approach, and she demonstrates a relevant understanding that I strive for in this thesis.

6.4 FOODIE LITERATURE

I briefly touched on the pertinence of foodie discourse in the section about food and gender, and I will further expand on foodie literature and its utility in this project. The younger generation of a migrant/diaspora group is often more experimental, revealing this subgroup to have a more critical lens to view traditional practices. By innovating new food practices that depart from the previous generation, the social imaginaries are being reinvented with the younger generation. With my research, I investigate what that looks like with the second-generation Vietnamese-Australians. In this way, this project infuses the social and the spatial, as well as temporal, by looking at food practices as related to the differences between generations, and focusing on the places they have connected to and enacted these performances.

Foodie literature emerged as a relevant theoretical framework for this thesis once I had begun conducting the field work, and I note that it was not within the original theories that I was operating with from the start of this project. I had not expected to encounter habitual practices among the participants of dining out and meaningfully consuming cuisines that do not have roots within their ethnic identity as Vietnamese-Australian. This behavior directly connects the idea of culinary omnivores that forms the basis understanding foodie culture and discourse. Participating in culinary omnivorous practices carries implications of a desire for distinction through the gain of cultural and culinary capital (Kennedy et al, 2019). Johnston and Baumann's critical perspective on foodie culture illuminates the potential for it to reproduce class hierarchies, and they also explore the racial and ethnic dimension to critically analyze the potential to reproduce neo-colonial hierarchies as well (2010). Debates within this discourse about the systemic classist and racial inequalities that are potentially perpetuated in foodie culture are relevant discussions in regard to second-generation Vietnamese Australians.

Because foodie culture and being culinary omnivores indicates an openness to consuming other cultural cuisines, Johnston and Baumann highlight the inequalities inherent in many cross-cultural interactions. Heldke also problematizes this relationship to interrogate her own positionality while consuming and creating non-white cuisines (2003). She recognizes the impulse behind consuming "other" creates a relative understanding to help define one's own identity (Heldke, 2005). In both works, they take a relational stance that considers the nuances in what constitutes the inequalities, and it connects with the common practice in foodie culture of searching for authenticity. Frequently, the inequalities are due to a conflation in foodie culture between authenticity and exoticism. These debates in foodie discourse are important in beginning to recognize ethnicity and race as a crucial part in the emergence of foodie culture among the participants of this research. As previously established, ethnicity already plays a central role in this research, from the ethnic identity of the Vietnamese diaspora that determined the sampling population I sought to draw from, as well as the discrimination based in ethnic bigotry that the same group has experienced to this day. Thus, I will further problematize these positionalities in recognition of the racial and ethnic minority status of the research participants. Studying foodies of color is elaborate as it centers non-white perspectives in what Sukhmani Khorana labels as decolonial acts within foodie culture (2021). These racialized nuances in this subgenre of foodies of color are important in the specific case of this research project.

Moreover, there are overlaps in identity work being the prominent theme in this research as well as from Heldke's admission of consuming "other" to better understand one's own identity. It comes from cultural practices to discern tastes in the world of food consumption, particularly with people who are not food professionals. Johnston and Baumann relate this concept in their work to long-standing themes within gourmet food culture that enacts an exclusionary space in refinement and expertise (2010). Culinary omnivores are still status-seeking while claiming a more inclusive angle. Foodie literature plainly grapples with multiple facets of relational identity and power dynamics that became relevant to unpacking the stories and practices the participants shared with me.

Although the foodie literature is a theoretical framework that I apply at a later stage of thesis, the empirical data that unfolded during the field work could not be fully addressed without it, and this will become evident in the second results chapter. On its own, migrant food literature engages with the ethnic and generational aspects that are inherent in this project's focus. However, in combination with relational sociology, the spaces and practices emerging from the identity work of second-generation Vietnamese-Australians imply multiplicities of relations, as established by the hybridity of their position. When the practices of the participants veered towards culinary omnivorousness, it became clear that I needed to broaden the analytical tools at my disposal. I sought to address the subtleties in second-generation Vietnamese-Australian hybrid identities with relational sociology and migrant theory, and I also extend theoretical grounding needed in this project to include foodie literature. Therefore, by also employing a foodie literature framework, I am able to examine aspects specific to the participants of this research with a more inclusive approach than if I did not.

7 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

My research approach centers on the subjects' social and spatial relations as related to food, and to operationalize it, ethnographic research was a clear choice. The methodology employed is deeply qualitative and sensitive to cultural nuance. To this end, I intend to develop relationships with community members and gain in-depth insight into their experience through context-sensitive approaches. I reiterate that the breadth of my approach aimed to look at existing and well-known practices in specific places, such as in food businesses, but also beyond. Inherent in an ethnographic research project is that data is collected in the natural contexts of the subjects. Studying the subjects in these spaces serves the dual purpose of being able to access the subjects themselves, but also to determine some relational understanding that make the place significant to the subjects in the first place. Some common spaces that immigrant communities interact with food highlighted in existing literature include food businesses, gardens, and markets (Head, 2004; Black, 2012; Ray, 2020). This formed the basis of my understanding when I entered the field, but this understanding quickly evolved.

I will first address how my own position and identity affected the reasons behind these methodological choices. The ethnographic field work took place from the start of September 2023 through the first half of December of the same year. In total, I was in Australia for fourteen weeks. This research marked my first time in Australia, and before arrival, I had no contacts within the Vietnamese community of Australia. Daunting as this was, ethnographic research was the aim of this project's design from the beginning, and accessibility to the subjects I would study was a large determining factor in choose a topic in the first place. As a second-generation member of the Vietnamese diaspora myself, I emphasize accessibility to the community as an important dimension for me to feel ethically comfortable to conduct research in an ethnically-specific group as the subject. In a way, the importance of the regional difference was secondary because the community of overseas Vietnamese people transcends national boundaries. The findings to this research do not claim to be generalizable to all overseas Vietnamese people, but the degree in which I am able to access the specific subject group was a significant factor to me. It was also a conscious choice to study the diaspora in Australia, because of the language accessibility aspect for myself as the person conducting the research. The diaspora in the United States is another obvious choice to consider in this rationale as the largest English-speaking hub of overseas Vietnamese, and although I chose this topic based on the ethical accessibility that I assumed with my own ethnic identity, I had concerns for studying the precise community that I am a part of. I wanted to avoid the potential of projecting my own experiences onto that which the research subjects were sharing with me, while doubly being in spaces that I personally was already familiar with, especially if I wanted to have deep conversations where they could feel comfortable to be vulnerable with me. There is always potential for this to happen, but having some symbolic distance from the subject and the physical spaces I was navigating, no matter how small, was mentally and emotionally sufficient for me to feel like I could do justice to the material I was researching.

Sydney is a sizable city, and the initial assumption that the vast majority of this research in Cabramatta was quickly replaced by figuring out this suburb does not encapsulate the whole Vietnamese community and its experiences, and there is a lot more of the city I needed to understand. From tidbits I gathered from my time in the field, began to understand that although many Sydney suburbs had ethnic identifiers, they were not silos of any one community's identity and experience. Still, its relative

position, geographically and in the diasporic imaginary, plays a significant role in contextualizing the Vietnamese-Australian community.

Truthfully, my approach to conducting my research as well as the unanticipated circumstances of the physical breadth of the area I would need to travel around led to a somewhat chaotic schedule and lifestyle. There was some consistency in when social events would happen (on weekends, weekday evenings), but the high frequency in which I was socializing and going to one social commitment to the next was a rate I would not find sustainable outside of a field work context. In other words, in order to keep up with potential opportunities to collect data, I would have burned out on the intensity of the schedule if it to be a long-term reality. I consciously decided to keep up with the schedule out of awareness for the brevity of my field work and knowing that the repeated appearances I made to social events put me at better chances to get to know the people I hoped to have deep conversation with and potentially interview for research insights.

7.1 INTERVIEWS

For the most part, the interviews I conducted with the participants took place in restaurants over a meal. The setting felt appropriate for the nature of this research. Having food be part of this interaction made it an easy jumping off point of conversation. For both me and the interviewee, sharing a meal was an ice breaker for us to have a deeper conversation about their relationship with food. Furthermore, this dynamic of dining together was consistent with our relationship up to that point. I was requesting interviews from people who I had already started to get to know well in informal social settings and often had already eaten with. Treating the interviewees to meal was also a way I wanted to express gratitude for them taking the time and energy to take in this study. I had prepared participant consent forms but due to the informal nature in which many of these interviews and conversations occurred I garnered for verbal consent as the primary method of notifying participants of my intentions with this ethnographic research.

The downside of this interview method was that I was not able to record any of these conversations because the restaurants or too loud and my phone could not filter background noise in an effective way that would have been useful. I instead took very detailed field notes after every interview as well as every social outing I had with potential petition participants. This included all the events I attended through Meetup that also had people who were second-generation Vietnamese-Australians. At the time I did not know what connections I could draw from the food practices I was noting among the subjects, but this proved useful in contextualizing their practices by comparing what they were saying with what I was seeing. I took the field notes immediately after the interviews and the social events, connecting all the details of recent activities and conversations on digital documents.

There were some exceptions to these dinner interviews, such as where when I interviewed a participant in the car while we were already spending the day together. Another exception was when we could not coordinate a time that worked for the participant. This interview took place over the phone just a few days before the end of my field work. Another notable interview setting was when I visited the interviewee's family farm, and we had a lengthy conversation while we handpicked peaches and nectarines from the orchard. Regardless of interview setting, nearly every participant I had interviewed also conveyed information to me in the informal conversations we would have at other occasion during

our friendship. After all I got to know these participants by spending a lot of time with them, and naturally, relevant information cracked up outside of the demarcated interview times.

7.2 PARTICIPANT-OBSERVATION

Navigating this space of closeness and distance with the subjects was also part of my methodology of being a participant-observer in this ethnographic research. For these fourteen weeks, I harnessed a flexible schedule to allow me to interact with the subject where they were. I also participated in the same activities as them in order to personally internalize some of their experiences and analyze them from these perspectives. This and conducting interviews that were a mix of semi-structured and unstructured made up the bulk of the methods I used to collect data. Ultimately, I aimed to gather rich data from these interviews that would assemble a cohesive yet multiplicitious grasp of the identity as it is currently being constructed. Sharing experiences and participating in the same activities as the subjects was an unexpected method of gathering information, because this was initially only a method for me to recruit participants.

Eventually, I built relationships with my social network in Sydney where I benefited from carpooling to and from events. That was a great asset for logistical reasons, but it also gave me the opportunity to speak with participants in informal conversations. I recall one particular day where a group three Vietnamese-Australians and I planned an ambitious outing to go to two different beaches with stops to a scenic beach town and a hike, and we spent almost as much time in the car as we did at our destinations. Thus, in the passenger seat of a car became a key space for data collection. Considering often times, participants and I were almost always headed to a social event to partake in an activity not directly related to my research, such as bouldering or a games night, these car rides were great opportunities for extended conversations. Even for the interviews I conducted with individuals over dinner, the participants, finding out that I did not have a car and that I planned on taking the limited evening public transportation options, would more often than not offer me a ride home. This would naturally extend our conversation as well as transform our interaction to have a more uninhibited and easy-going air. At the very least, because I did not treat these moments to be part of the official interviews, the natural rapport between two people made room for connection and trust.

These conversations in carpools demonstrate one of many instances where the more casual time I spent with participants and I the clearer picture of their lifestyle and food practices. I would often take moments to naturally ask for clarification about comments made regarding any aspect of food, but the casual atmosphere of a car created a space for trust. My role as a researcher was plain from the first introductions with participants, but my approach prioritized an open dialogue. I would certainly ask critical follow up questions when clarification was necessary for my understanding, and I would not shy away from analytical style prompts. The overall effect of my style of interacting with participants was to welcome answers without judgement and to welcome their critical engagement as well. For this, I strove for safe and conversational interactions. In combination with the nature of the social environments were meeting in, the motivations in the interactions were both for research and for socializing and making friends.

Between shared social engagements, shared confidences, and the relaxed quality that characterized our interactions, the relationship I had with the research participants blurred the line between strict researcher and participants and friends. I count this as an advantage to my methodological approach as I

was able to deeply connect with individuals and actively participate in the community I discuss in this thesis. This composed the way I was able to become a participant-observer that makes sense in the context of this research.

7.3 RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

I ended up employing a hodgepodge mash of different ways to try to meet people in the Vietnamese-Australian community, and I had varying success. Recruiting participants ended up being a theme throughout my stay as previously mentioned, I did not have any connections before arriving. In anticipation of not being able to collect data until I met people and gained enough trust to speak with them in depth, it is one of the reasons why my time in the field was considerably longer than the minimum required time for a master thesis in my program. In the end, I was constantly recruiting people to speak with until the final week of my stay in Australia.

My participant-observation approach was two-pronged in that I was ultimately able to gather data from the shared experiences with the subjects, and I was also able to build the relationships that were conducive to sharing insightful casual conversation as well as requesting interviews over dinner. With these experiences as a participant-observer, I gained general insights on how I can frame particular contexts of relations as my unit of analysis and also provide a fruitful entry-point to exploring the wider network related to food as central focal point to understanding the place making practices of my case. I sought to gain trust with my immediate connections in the network, and this entry point increased my ability to recruit participants wherein I also used the snowballing method. This method of gathering interlocutors via a network is inherently non-random, but the benefits of gaining trust in the community and finding people willing to work with me are more crucial in the scope of this research. The common denominator of all the success in recruiting people was to simply socialize with people and continually look into spaces that were potentially significant to the subjects.

How I met interview participants:

- Moon Festival
- Meetup social events
- Through mutual relationships
- Work
- Farmer's market
- Gym

None of my participants were currently married or had children; almost all of them were single. Notably, most of them worked in white-collar jobs that with forty-some hour work weeks that dictated their availability to socialize and meet people. This coincides with my recruitment methods where social events took place mostly in the evenings and on the weekends.

7.3.1 Work

Securing employment at one of Cabramatta's Vietnamese food businesses was one of my primary methods I had planned to use to enter and involve myself in the Vietnamese community in the area—working at a Vietnamese-owned business alongside Vietnamese coworkers. After several bids for employment, I was unsuccessful in the end. I would later find out that it was actually very unlikely that second-generation Vietnamese-Australians would work in the food service sector because they tended

not to work in Vietnamese food businesses unless their parents specifically passed along their family business to them. This was insightful to debunk the essentializing presumption that Vietnamese communities primarily worked in food business. The underlining logic behind this assumption comes from first generation Vietnamese refugees, in Australia and elsewhere, started many food business and established well-known areas often dubbed “Little Saigon”. This visible and spatially tangible phenomenon overshadows the whole community, which I trace back to my problem statement.

The café I worked at was not in Cabramatta nor were the owners Vietnamese nor were my coworkers. I still worked at the cafe in order to support myself during the field work, and it provided an organized respite from the chaotic scheduling that I found necessary to keep up with the onslaught of social activity opportunities. This meshed well with the schedules of the participants I ended up spending time with, because I only needed to be flexible in my schedule on the weekends and weekday evenings when most of them were available. By chance, I did get to befriend one of my regular customers at the cafe who ended up being one of my research participants. This random encounter turned research relationship is indicative of how opportunities to connect with my research came from unexpected places.

7.3.2 Meetup

The meeting of one of the participants at my place of work was a chance encounter, and I found myself using the social media platform Meetup to intentionally meet people that I could involve in the research. I discovered it was not only a useful tool for me but also for others who were looking for public events in which to meet people who had similar interests. After all, that is the purpose of this social media platform. A participant told me that his awareness of the meet up app stemmed from startup culture and those in startup circles to be able to meet each other. He had begun to see Meetup as a way to make friends as well, especially because he was already familiar with using an online platform to then socialize in person.

The spaces of recruiting participants and also sharing experiences with them are not clearly delineated in this research because there is a lot of overlap. Navigating through this created some tension for myself because the boundaries around what was a fruitful data collecting experience and what was just simply me attending social events was only determined once these experiences played out in full. I was searching for food spaces for second-generation Vietnamese-Australians, but it was not immediately accessible from my position. Thus, I found it necessary to engage in all sorts of spaces of activity.

On Meetup, searching for events in the area with keywords “Vietnamese-Australian” or even “Vietnamese” came up with no hits, so I resorted to more general cast of my net with terms like “food”, “Asian”, and “Western Sydney”. As broad as these terms were, that is what got me search results on Meetup. There were specific groups that I gravitated towards as a result, and I found likewise had lot of the same members show up. One group was about Asians in Sydney meeting after work to socialize; another specified western Sydneysiders socializing. Overlap between the groups and repeat appearances catalyzed a particular social community for folks looking for the same thing. I followed this model and became an involved member of this community.

The social groups generated many WhatsApp groups, as well as spin off social and messaging groups both through WhatsApp and in person and word of mouth. The Meetup groups themselves were still a central feature in this social community, but I found myself entangled in numerous WhatsApp groups

and multiple virtual conversations with individuals to make and follow up on plans. It was with a considerable amount of effort that I stayed connected for the sake of being available for all research opportunities. In all honesty, this was the most social lifestyle I had been a long time, and I consider myself an extroverted person. Maintaining a presence in this social community endeared me to the people I was trying to connect with, and I found this to be an important value to establish before I could begin reaching out to individuals as research participants. To be sure, not everyone was a second-generation Vietnamese-Australian, but plenty of people were. Broken down to demographics and identity labels, this social community was heterogeneous, but I found it a productive way to actually get to know individuals that I would then involve in my research. Furthermore, actively keeping up with this social community and the individuals in it allowed me to build stronger connections and trust with participants. Instead of taking on the one-dimensional role of a researcher while in these spaces, I took on a hybrid role to also be a member of these social groups and a friend to those I would end up getting to know quite well.

Some of the social gatherings I attended were organized by different parties: some were Meetup group organizers; others were regular participants who wanted to have a go at organizing events. So many of us got to know each other through Meetup, but non-Meetup members were still encouraged to come; oftentimes, people would bring along friends from other social groups. They tend to be very inclusive events. All these events had the same intention of bringing people together to have a good time. Organizers often expressed an open-door policy to suggestions for what members wanted to see in future events, further emphasizing that point. The main theme of each event varied; sometimes it was after work drinks, a board game night. Here, I list the various focuses of some of the events I attended.

- Karaoke
- Bouldering
- Top-rope climbing
- Go-karting
- Aqua golf driving range
- Night market dinner
- Badminton
- Beach hangout
- Hiking
- Boardgame night
- Mah-Jong game night
- Korean barbecue
- Hot pot dinner

For some of these events, food was an essential theme but even if food did not always come into play. After all, people all need to eat. Even though my main reason to go to all these social events in the first place was to meet people that I could then interview, I found that I could better understand the dynamics around their food practices by actually being around them when they would eat socially. I saw these social events as two-pronged, and that I was able to get to know people that I could then interview, and on the other hand, I also could experience the phenomenon of eating out so often. I reiterate that although it seemed to me that I was socializing too much higher frequency than I was

personally used to, the people that I saw repeatedly were doing the same thing. Thus, I can easily assume that people were going out as much as I was and eating out as much as I was.

Communities emerged from the Meetup attendees continuing their connections beyond single events. Most of the time, the communities were tied to Meetup and people carried on their dependence on Meetup as a way to maintain these communities. In many instances, these communities evolved from impromptu spin-off gatherings and group chats that originated from Meetup. These spin-off group chats fostered a new community that was no longer strictly associated with Meetup, but there was evident cross over in communities. This happened a lot, and while I was present at a lot of these social outings through Meetup and not, the lines were easily blurred to see that all community members and event attendees were part of a larger social network of people who simply wanted to socialize and go out. Indeed, people in this community were constantly looking to going out and eating together, and this broad umbrella quality defines the communities to be inclusive and flexible.

I admit that this aspect was really enjoyable on a personal level as Sydney has an incredible food scene. More importantly, it was also very insightful in seeing the dynamics between people and their eating habits. Regardless of the nature of how the social groups and communities formed, this was a common theme to consistently socially eat out. This finding forms a important premise throughout this research in understanding the relationships that various participants had with their food practices.

7.3.3 Fitness and Food

Another unanticipated encounter space with participants was a Cross-fit gym in (south)western Sydney. This gym emerged as a social community that is formed from the common pastime of fitness, and I came to realize that this gym was therefore just one of many fitness communities that was prevalent in Sydney.

One participant of this research, who I met through Meetup, invited me to a trial session with his gym, and he had impressed upon me that it had a really robust social aspect. To me, it was an unassuming space for socializing in general, but due to the inclusive environment that the gym fostered, and the sheer amount of time members spent at the gym, it made a lot of sense. They offered many classes that were included in the gym membership, and these classes were evidently spaces where people saw each other regularly and chatted with each other, often continuing conversations once the class ended. Between taking back-to-back classes and extensive time spent socializing, some members easily spent hours at the gym in one day. I noticed immediately that the other members were very ethnically diverse members of the API (Asian & Pacific Islander), which is reflective being located in western Sydney, and what I gathered from the ethnicity of the people who originally invited me to this gym.

My approach here was, once again, open-ended in joining the trial class as I do not know what the possibilities were to connect this to my research questions. I took this opportunity in stride to just scope it out and see where it leads me. I was interested in a contextual understanding of the lives of my research participants, and at the very least, this gym experience could expose me to a portion of that. Furthermore, I recalled that many people I had met in the Vietnamese community up to that point had expressed that they often went to the gym. Under these considerations, this gym became a site for participant recruitment as well as seeing the participants in other contexts.

By showing up to classes and meeting individuals at every class, I was gradually joining the inclusive social group(s) at the gym. These groups were not so strictly defined, but rather people would plan to

get brunch after the Saturday morning class or go on a group run after a weekday evening class—both opportunities I saw to spend more time getting to better acquaint each other with. Much like with the Meetup groups, I found the gym classes to be social opportunities that, with significant frequency, would involve going out to eat together. From the gym friends who invited me initially, I had a vague notion that it had a community-building element to it, and I found this was a correct assumption. The warm reception and inclusionary gestures to come along to these outings outside of the gym only came towards the end of my field work, because I only joined the gym in the second half of my time in Sydney. I am certain were if I were to have stayed, I would have continued to see more patterns in the how the socializing at the gym created social outings and deeper connections between all who partook.

Notably, requests for an interview were not successful when I asked people while at the gym, even after attending multiple classes with them and socializing with them afterwards on other occasions. The only times it was successful was when we were socializing outside of the gym, even if this social outing was directly after a class that we had took earlier that day. It was acceptable to make friends at the gym, but there seemed to necessitate a clear detachment from the gym space before I could broach my research. Some conversations I had at the gym about my research were very shallow and short, in part due to the nature of the space, but some people are not receptive to it, and I did not want to impose myself too much.

Overall, this gym became a space for participant recruitment and seeing another facet of the lives of the subjects of this research. A large portion of the data collected specifically referencing the gym and what it was to the participants was, in the end, not directly connected to my research questions. While I do locate the gym to be a significant social space for second generation Vietnamese Australians and their peers, it had little to do with food practices. The biggest connection was through the ideas of fitness and nutrition, which is very closely related to food, but it is outside the scope of this thesis. I made the analytical decision to remain focused on food practices while recognizing the meaningful space of gyms like this one. Further research must need to be done with this focus. Additionally, having the gym be a significant space for recruitment also contributes to the skew of the sampling of participants.

7.4 Social media research for a context

Conducting social media research was a tactic to gain contextual understanding of the food landscape in which my subject was a part of. I reiterate that Sydney was unfamiliar to me prior to doing the ethnographic data collection, and I used social media as a way to begin to understand the context before I had arrived and while I was there. Media research as tool to build a baseline knowledge made this research more well-rounded. Foundational understandings of the type of food content that is on social media is helpful when participants began mentioning their use of social media in casual conversations and how it informed some of their food knowledge, as well as how they related to certain types of food through their interactions with social media content. The importance of social media among the participants is evident.

I do not use social media content as data directly in my analysis because I wanted to focus specifically on the ethnographic data collection method in this project. Using social media content as data points does not follow my approach of gaining a holistic understanding of the participants' experience regarding food unless the content creators became participants in this research. As it was, reaching out to the content creators was not part of my recruitment methods, so I did not want to use digital content

without knowing the larger context of knowing the creator. The only instance in which I directly reference social media is it manifests directly in the physical world with the participants. In my results chapters, there is a section which I talk about social media in this sense, but further research with social media as a specific research question is necessary to fully address the influence this digital social arena has on the lives of the overall subjects.

7.5 CODING AND ANALYSIS

The analysis of this research's empirical data is informed by the use of ATLAS.ti coding software. The data all took to form of digital field notes, and with this software, I applied a limited number of codes to organize the many themes that emerged from the field work. Some codes were ultimately omitted from the analysis because some of the theoretical grounding changed throughout this process. The categories for these codes aligned with the overarching concepts from the problem statement and research questions through the theoretical lens of relational sociology, migrant theory, and foodie literature.

	Code categories		
Code	Relational	Influences	Food
Asian food	X	X	X
Dessert	X		X
Family	X	X	
Fitness		X	
Friends	X	X	
Hybridity	X		
Identity/self awareness	X	X	
Memory	X		
Nutrition			X
Parents/elders	X		
Place	X		
Social activity	X	X	
Social media		X	
Stereotyping	X	X	
Struggles	X		
Vietnamese culture	X	X	
Vietnamese food		X	X
Western/other influence	X	X	

The code categories and what fell under each category are determined by the prominent themes I was seeing that formed during the field work that connected back to my problem statement and theories. I was starting to see the trend in how the participants acted and what they shared with me where the differences between their cultural and familial connections differed from the socializing in their peer groups. In this way, the code category of *Relations* refers to codes that I used to identify instances that potentially pointed towards a basis of diasporic migrant identity, whereas the category of *Influences* refers to codes that identify themes beyond the assumptions in that diasporic migrant identity. This approach is certainly informed by the two theoretical frameworks I elected before the empirical data

was gathered, but because the data could not be contained by these categories and codes, I made room to include the data this is still meaningful in the participants' lives. Once I began analyzing the latter category and the material that fell within it, and with the gentle nudging of my thesis supervisor, the relevance of the foodie literature became evident. Ultimately, organizing the data into these two coding categories grew into the two results chapters in this thesis. Indeed, cross-referencing the codes clarified the interconnected web of relations to better understand the data linking to the subjects' performance of identity.

7.6 LIMITATIONS OF MY APPROACH

A big drawback from snowballing to gather participants and using social media platforms to socialize was that I did not get a sample that was fully representative of all of the Vietnamese-Australian community of (south)western Sydney. My sampling excludes an large demographic swath of the community. I had to accept this outcome as a result of my particular methods in just the span of a few months. Random sampling would not be feasible in this research, and I recognize that with my aim to have deep connections and conversations with a handful of people, any findings I come to would only be specific to them. I am genuinely satisfied with the degree of commitment and trust the participants demonstrated in sharing their lives and confidences with me. I consider it immeasurably valuable that I was able to interact with them the way that I did, and I deeply appreciate it.

The chosen methodology allowed me to dive deeply into personal histories and food practices, providing detailed descriptions and insights into the participants' understanding and perceptions of how food can be performative in accordance with the multiplicities of relations that form their identities. My small sample design does, however, limit the reliability and generalizability of the results. The twelve Vietnamese-Australians I have interviewed may not be representative of the regional diaspora's population in Sydney and elsewhere.

Even so, this research was planned with the sampling limitations in mind because I valued the prospect of understanding the full context of each individual participant's history more than the need to have a large pool of participants. With my own positionality in mind as a member of the Vietnamese diaspora myself, I understood that the nuances could not be uncovered by shallow sampling and understanding of the positionality of the participants at hand. When it became a methodological decision of whether to try to get as many people as possible or to focus on the people that I could reach, the latter was the obvious answer.

In a way, this research could benefit from a longer duration in the field because it was rooted in the relationships that I was building from the ground up and respecting the dense nuances in each individual participant's experience. I believe that were I to have had more time, I would have naturally been exposed to more of the social networks I was embedding myself into and would have inevitably found more connections that I was not able to parse out in the time I was there. Be that as it may, I recognize that given the typically structure length of the theses in my master's program, I was fortunate to have planned a longer period of time in the field compared to some of my peers.

7.7 Table of Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Living arrangement	Suburb	Occupation	Relationship status	How we met	Interview Location
Gwen	30's	F	With parents	Cabramatta	Chef	Single	Mutual friend	Dessert
Kyle	42	M	Alone	Liverpool	Gym Owner, trainer	Divorced	Customer at my workplace	Dinner
Matthew	31	M	With parents	Cabramatta	Financial risk specialist	Single	Meetup event	Dinner
Kevin	26	M	With girlfriend	Inner West, Bonnyrigg	Store manager, physical therapist	Has a girlfriend	Farmer's market	His family's orchard
Jeanie	30's	F	With parents	Canley Heights	Government employee	Single	Meetup event	Over the phone
Henry	36	M	With parents	Cabramatta	Grocery management	Single	Meetup event	Dinner
Casey	32	F	With friends	Homebush	Government employee	Single	Her brother (Henry)	Car
Jacob	29	M	With a friend	Wetherill Park	Army	Single	Gym, mutual friend	Dinner
Nate	29	M	With parents	Cabramatta	Teacher	Single	Meetup event	Lunch
Bao	31	M	With parents	Bonnyrigg	Civil engineer	Single	Meetup event	Dinner
Wanda	28	F	With roommate	Parramatta	Dietician	Has a boyfriend	Mutual friend	Dinner
Jane	30's	F	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Gym	Gym

7.8 Preface: Setting the Scene

This preface serves as an atmospheric introduction to describe my field work. I aim to present the results of this research through this necessary elaboration to situate space and place as central themes to this research.

An early step in this research was to explore the area in which I was focusing my research. I originally projected that I would primarily focus on Cabramatta, with the potential of looking beyond. I was sensitive to the risk of broadening the geographic area I was focusing on due to the limit of doing research over just a couple months. While Cabramatta is certainly still a major hub of Vietnamese business and social gathering among first generation migrants, I found that I could not restrict myself to Cabramatta because the second-generation Vietnamese-Australians I was hoping to work with did not restrict themselves to that suburb either. From inadvertently housing myself outside of Cabramatta and reworking my strategy to better navigate the physical spaces I needed to access, I found myself off to a somewhat inauspicious start.

I spent a lot of time in Cabramatta as an observer as well as a customer. Cabramatta is a suburb in southwestern Greater Sydney, easily reachable by public transport as there is a train station at the heart of it. Cabramatta is within the Fairfield City council area, one of over 30 local governments in the Greater Sydney area. This is a technical zoning detail, as most everyone I spoke to would casually mention Cabramatta to be in (south)west Sydney. For the sake for simplicity and coherence for this thesis, I will continue this practice by stating “Sydney” to mean to large metropolitan area within the state of New South Wales even though the suburbs I refer to fall within multiple city council jurisdictions, unless otherwise noted.

Cabramatta’s identity is built on being the business center for Vietnamese businesses, for and by members of the community. Vietnamese was the language heard in the walkways, shops, and eateries. The main streets had slower car traffic and wider sidewalks with benches and the occasional vendor selling things like produce from home gardens or prepared Vietnamese meals in takeaway containers. There were many side streets and alleyways, often only accessible for pedestrians. Any day of the week, there were customers congregating on the wide walkways bubble tea drinks in hand, older Vietnamese women pulling grocery caddies, children being towed by their guardians, and a couple panhandlers sitting on the pavement. In the early afternoon during the week, there was a noticeable spike in the number of uniformed school children and highschoolers clustering around the takeaway food counters and dozens of bubble tea shops with ordering windows right next to the sidewalk—one did not need to enter an establishment to get refreshment and a quick after-school snack with friends. There is no hurry in the crowd, but for all appearances, everyone had a reason to be there.

I observed all these phenomena consistently every time I came through Cabramatta, and it fit the bill for being a commercial area. Going outside this small grid of streets, I saw only residential housing. To this end, it became evident that this commercial center was all I could glean about Cabramatta as an outsider. Directly insert myself in the social clusters of Vietnamese people I saw in Cabramatta to then begin delving how all the food practices was not a feasible was to connect to my research questions. I did not have access to people’s private lives in this way. With the backdrop of a commerce-centered Cabramatta in mind, I knew could not find people to interview by simply staying an observer.

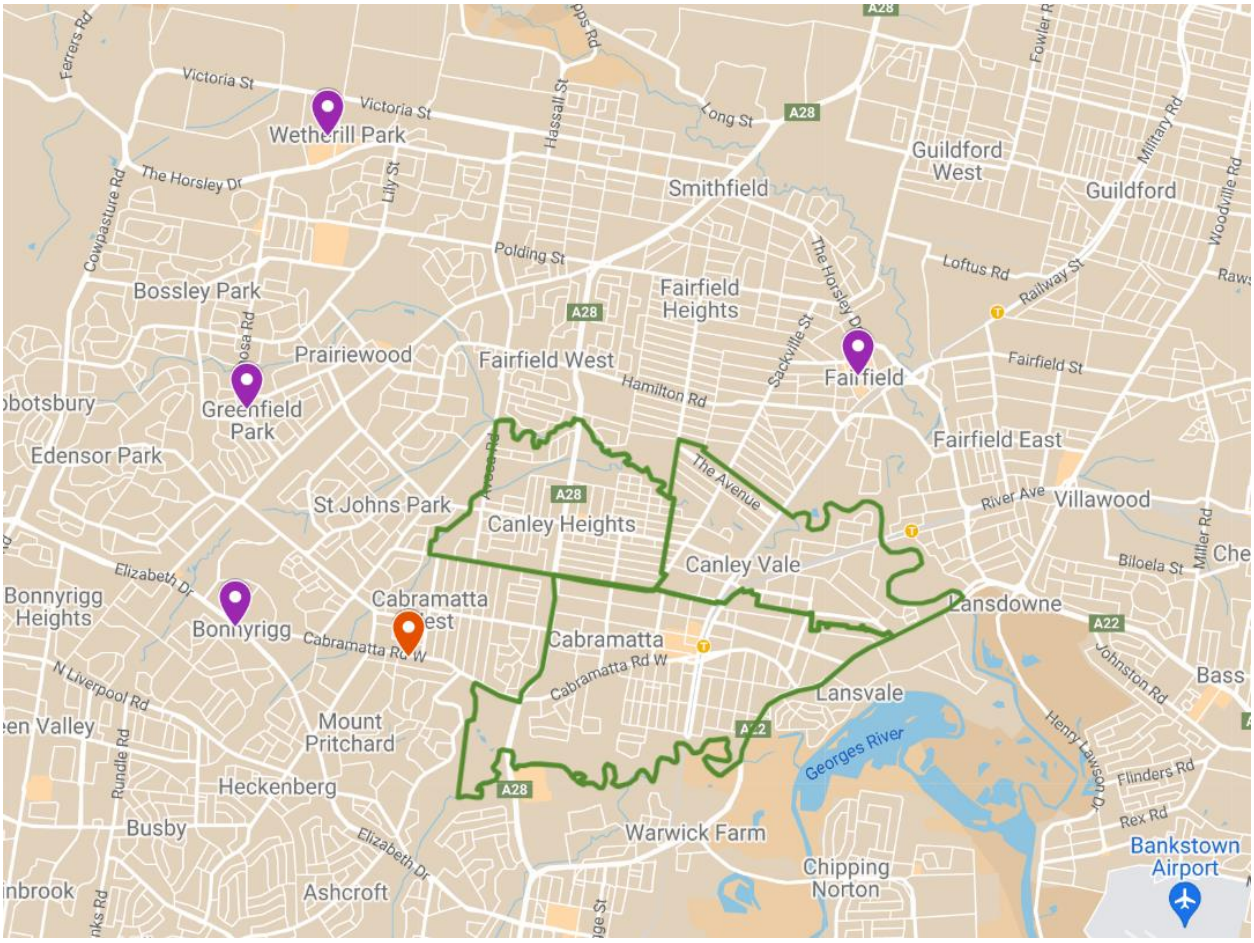

Figure 1 Suburbs connoted as predominately Vietnamese. The outlines in green indicate the three areas most refer to as the Vietnamese area (Cabramatta, Canley Heights, and Canley Vale). The purple markers highlight four other suburbs in the surrounding area that participants lived/have lived in. The red marker is where I lived during this field work.

Although the train lines make a clear connection from Sydney's city center into Cabramatta, buses are a necessity to get around within and around this and all suburbs, unless driving a car. Trains only make stops through major suburbs, making it the ideal mode to get across town, but not for more localized travel. Indeed, it bears noting in this regard that cars are generally seen as a need for residents due to the sheer size of the greater Sydney area, and of Australia at large. It is possible to get around without access to a car, to be sure, but it is not without drawbacks. I had to adjust my expectations of travel times to be a lot longer than I was used to. In a typical day, in traveling to run person errands, attend social events for research and meet up with research participants, I would easily spend three to five hours in transit.

Part of this was due to my own misstep of renting a room before I arrived in Australia that I mistakenly thought was located in Cabramatta but was actually in the neighboring suburb to the west—Mount Pritchard. Notably, Mount Pritchard does not have its own train station and requires a bus to get to Cabramatta which then can connect me to the rest of the city, or the time and determination to walk for well over an hour. Even so, I came to realize that these long travel times were going to be a reality of living in (south)western Sydney regardless of if I was right next to station or not.

This matter of travel accessibility impacted my research in a number of ways, particularly in how I structured my days and what became feasible for me to undertake. Furthermore, the geographical space of getting around Sydney is something I began to see as a given understanding and daily obstacle for a resident Sydneysider. The imposed travel times are embedded in Sydney life, whether or not one travels by car or public transportation, leading to a perception that leaving one's area of the city to be a significant endeavor for which you would shape your whole day. Each local government area in Greater Sydney has all basic amenities of daily life, and one does not need to venture far for your own suburb. For reference of size, there are over 650 suburbs in Greater Sydney. Though the individuals participating in this research did not limit themselves to the suburbs they lived in, their parents, the first-generation Vietnamese migrants, would often stay in the areas that have been designated Vietnamese neighborhoods, particularly Cabramatta, Canley Vale, and Canley Heights. Some of the second-generation Vietnamese-Australians I met also lived in surrounding suburbs such as Bonnyrigg, Wetherill Park, and Fairfield, which can be seen in Figure 1.

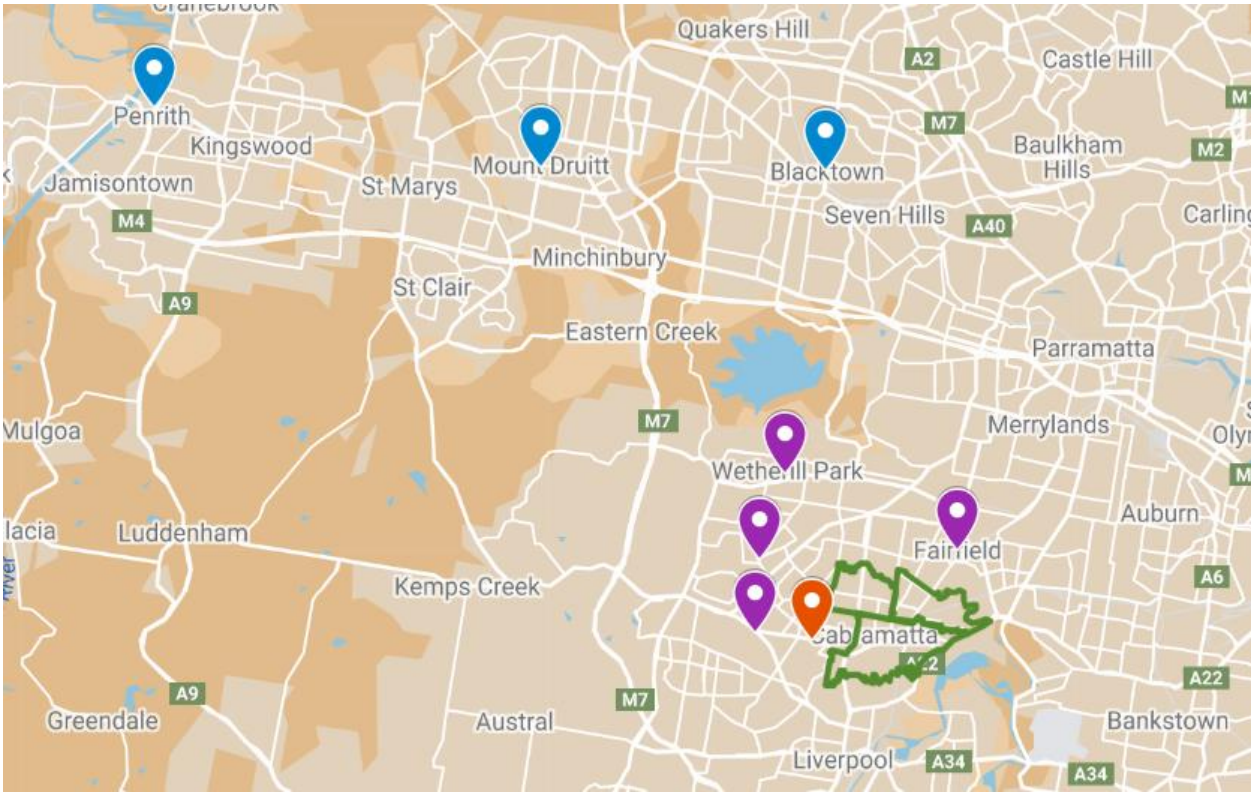

Figure 2 The blue markers indicate the three suburbs of western Sydney of Penrith, Mount Druitt, and Blacktown, which are not associated as major Vietnamese suburbs. This map visualizes the distance where these suburbs are in relation to the predominately Vietnamese suburbs, which are the areas outlined in green. The red marker indicates the address I stayed at during this research.

My initial presumption before arrival in Sydney was that I would spend nearly all of my time in Cabramatta was reshaped to a more complex understanding first of what the "Vietnamese suburb". For the first part, as shown on Figure 2, there is not a single suburb or area, but a large swath of areas that are recognized by locals as Vietnamese. Not emphasized here are the suburbs of Marrickville and Bankstown that are known also as Vietnamese. In regard to the expected needs in this research altering, it become clear to me that limiting myself to the geographic area of (south)western Sydney was just a good starting place to know where the Vietnamese suburbs have been historically as well as where a

significant portion of the second generation grew up. However, my research did not lead me to people's homes. I did not know anyone in the Vietnamese community in Sydney before I got there, so I was not about to just show up at their houses. I hoped to meet people at public events, open social groups, at our shared place of work. I recognize these distinctions as private and public arenas for socializing, in I could only begin with the public arenas.

In the rest of Results chapters, I analyze the results of my research to create a clear narrative for how second-generation Vietnamese-Australians perform identity through food. The connection with traditional Vietnamese food is a prominent theme that was evident from the start, and that is covered in the first results chapter. I subsequently move into the second chapter to discuss the robust foodie culture that is expressed in nearly all aspects of the lives of the second-generation community members. In these chapters, I explore how participants expressed their relationship to their own cultural food and while simultaneously interacting with foodie culture in order to gain a complex understanding on the practices and relationships surrounding their identity. The two major themes highlight the socio-spatial-temporal relationships they have with traditional Vietnamese food with non-traditional food.

8 RESULTS PART 1: VIETNAMESE FOOD

In this first of two results chapters, I explore how participants expressed their relationship to their own cultural food through a relational and spatial connection with the first generational diaspora members in their lives. I aim to address the first and second research sub-questions. *What relations inform second-generation Vietnamese-Australian identity performances (through food)? What roles does their ethnic and migrant status play in these performances?*

The focus of this chapter emerged from the start of mt conversations with the participants. They had originally agreed to work with me on this research already knowing the topic is on food and the second-generation of Vietnamese-Australians. I am particularly careful not to say "Vietnamese food" as the main topic for this research, because, per my contextualizing methodology, I aim to have the participants talk about the whole of their diets and food practices, both ethnically specific and not. However, participants often interpret the research to still center Vietnamese food, and throughout the interviews as well as the development of my relationships with each of the participants, conversations about this research heavily lean on Vietnamese food without my needing to prompt. I would bring up the identity marker of being Vietnamese-Australian as well food as the sites of the research I was conducting, and this naturally incline the participants towards the topic of Vietnamese food. For them, it goes hand in hand. The relationship the second-generation has with their cultural food is entangled with their conceptualization of cultural authenticity, as the results in this chapter will demonstrate. This connection is supported by the assumptions behind my research objectives and the literature on migrant experiences in the introduction, but I was reminded of it once I got down to brass tacks, so to speak, at the start of each of the interviews.

8.1 VIETNAMESE FOOD THROUGH THEIR PARENTS

During our interview, Jeanie (mid-30's) speaks of her mother cooking exclusively Vietnamese food because that is simply what she knew, and that is what she preferred. Logically, several other participants similarly rationalized on behalf of their parents that familiarity is behind why they were provided Vietnamese food in the home. Their parents were migrants from Vietnam, and this is the food they were primarily fed in their family home. This generalization throughout the experience of nearly all of the research participants is important to underline Vietnamese food as a significant cuisine among the second generation. It is a nuanced and differentiated generalization that still demonstrates a cultural norm for the second-generation. Without exception, all of the participants' views of Vietnamese food originate from the food they had at home growing up. The purpose of this section is to create a foundational understanding of the significance of cultural food for second-generation Vietnamese-Australians, because the participants in this research expressed it to be formatively linked with their relationship with first-generation migrants (primarily, their parents) and the importance of cultural food for first-generation migrants.

Another participant named Gwen (33) talks about her father's struggles when he arrived in Australia decades ago. He and his brother had nothing, but "food was their love language". In my conversation with Gwen about food, she constantly oscillates between her experience with food and her parents' experience with food. She does not tell of her father's relationship with food in isolation, but rather she uses it to ground why food is also important to her and her identity as a foodie and a food service

worker. This dynamic is the same as the majority of the other participants in their illustrations of their parents serving them food from their culture. The heady weight behind what this food cuisine means for the first-generation is recognized among the second-generation. Even though the latter do not see it the same way, given they have quintessentially different experiences. In this way, Vietnamese food is not just the main cuisine that the participants are fed at home by their parents, but their way of interacting with Vietnamese food is largely influenced by their parents' relationship with the food.

In Gwen conveying this sentiment, she illustrates her understanding of the importance of Vietnamese food among the migrant generation to connect to their loved ones at home and in their local community. It is a major theme I found in the literature about first-generation migrants, covered in the introduction of this thesis that connects various migrant and diaspora identities with their cultural foods and food practices. Gwen reaffirms that Vietnamese refugees continue this tradition with their children. Her positionality and status as a second-generation person are key for a nuanced understanding. I complicate the recognition of this norm among first-generation migrants within existing literature is to include Gwen's multi-generational understanding. Vietnamese food is an evidently prominent part of the second-generation Vietnamese-Australian experience with food in my empirical data. Second-generation Vietnamese-Australians' view on Vietnamese food must be first underscored by understanding how this relationship is grounded through a familial, cross-generational connection. Head et al (2004) highlight migrant practices of holding dear things that remind them of their homeland, and Marte (2015) likewise centers food in this endeavor. Indeed, these writings represent recognition of the relationship first-generation migrants have with their cultural food. Marte looks beyond "foodways" to focus on the relationships these practices signify, and her approach that centers relations as the unit of analysis echoes my own. The relations within this research realizes generational relationships, thus, I look at relationship between the first and second generation as evidenced through the marked provisioning of Vietnamese food in the home, and what is the impact this relationship has on how second-generation sees Vietnamese food. I shift the emphasis to be on the perspective of the second-generation, their children.

By relating to their identity as part of the Vietnamese community through a connection from their parents, it forgoes a direct link they have with this identity that originated a nationality, which they also do not experience for themselves. Instead, the Vietnamese food they are fed by their parents provides a trajectory for individuals in the second-generation to continue connecting with this identity. Authenticity of Vietnamese food is a given trait when it is associated with their parents because it is a relational understanding of food knowledge. As the participants express this one connection as the primary way they understand Vietnamese food and its authenticity, this trajectory is narrow, and tensions from navigating the limited path come up in different ways in the conversations with the participants. This section demonstrates how the participants generally expressed that they rooted their knowledge of Vietnamese food through their parents, and the next section will argue specific instances where this knowledge base is challenged and limited.

8.2 Family homes as a feminized space for Vietnamese food

It is important to note that the participants have all lived at home with their parents into adulthood, and this underlies the breadth of the impact their mother's home cooking had on their relationship to Vietnamese food. The participants have varying different living arrangements at the time that I meet them, and the five participants who do not currently live with their parents are able to convey to me

how their dynamics were around eating when they were living with their parents, which are consistent with the six participants who are currently living with their parents. Multi-generational homes in Sydney and in Vietnamese households are not unusual, and this norm only further emphasizes the extended presence their parents' influence can have on them into maturity, including their influence in food. This dynamic between the first and second generations thus also becomes spatial. As their relationships are maintained in the household for many participants, the family home becomes a place where they recognize Vietnamese food. Their understanding of authentic Vietnamese food is deeply bound to their family home.

Another important aspect of the participants' experience is that when they talk about the food they would have at home, both growing up and present day, it is always their mother who is the cook. Traditionally, women and mothers are homemakers of the family, fulfilling the role of food provider and household upkeep. None of the participants emphatically point out their mother as the main home cook, but I when ask each participant about their father cooking in the house, and answer is some version of simply saying no, it is mom who cooks for the family. This is a distinct gender division inconspicuously embedded into the food practices in the households of the participants, reflecting the long history of food practices normatively reproducing gendered power dynamics.

It is in varying degrees that the participants' mothers would cook. For some, it is every day. For others, it is seemingly seldom. In these cases, the reason is always that their parents would work late and long hours, and the mothers would not have time to cook food. This is a reality for many first-generation Vietnamese women who found themselves needed to financially contribute to the family. For example, siblings Henry and Casey have parents who were largely unavailable due to work outside of the home, and they tell me that they were often left to fend for themselves growing up. Even with mothers who were working long hours to make ends meet when the family was starting with very little in a new country, this traditional role still stays with the mother and does not transfer to other family members for the most part. A notable exception is when Matthew (31) said his sister-in-law also cooks ever since she moved into the home upon marrying his brother. Here, the role of food provider remains with the women of the family. Revisiting Cairns and Johnston's elaboration of care through food as a performance of femininity, this relational understanding is evident. In this way, the food acts of the mothers of the participants indicate that first-generation Vietnamese-Australians are no exception. Even with Matthew's sister-in-law, she was born in Vietnam and came to Australia as a youth, placing her within the migrant generation as well. She also cooks traditional Vietnamese food, reifying the connection of feeding traditional Vietnamese food as a feminine domain.

8.2.1.1 Jacob and Wanda

Women as the food providers in the home is a demonstratively normative practice among first-generation Vietnamese-Australians that constructs the home as a feminine space of Vietnamese food. This is still consistent in family dynamics with second-generation Vietnamese-Australians who do not live with their parents anymore. Four of the five participants I spoke to who no longer live at home still depend on their mothers to provide food for them to a significant degree. In these cases, it is still Vietnamese food that is meaningfully supplied from the parents to the participants, and the lengths their respective mothers take to provide care through food is revealing of how important this practice is to them.

Neither Wanda (28) nor Jacob (29) live with their parents, but they both describe how each of their mothers would cook large batches of Vietnamese food and call them and their siblings to come over and bring some home to eat. Jacob and his brothers regularly go over to their mother's home to share a family dinner that their mother has cooked, and there is always food for the men to take back to their separate dwellings. Their mother expands her practice of caring through food by always cooking more than her sons eat in that one meal. Sometimes, she would design meals of Vietnamese food that was specifically suitable for them to assemble the meal later. For example, she would make all the fixings for Vietnamese spring rolls, but because spring rolls should be consumed fresh in the rice paper, he and his siblings would be sent home with the various fillings and the dried rice paper so they could make it when they wanted to eat it later on.

Even though they no longer live in the same house, the participants are summoned back to their family home as the place that holds Vietnamese food. For Wanda, these meals are how she feeds herself for much of the week, and she describes how her mother is insistent even when her sister says that she cannot be bothered to come over to pack up the food. Wanda sees this as her younger sister taking it for granted and displaying "little sister syndrome", where taking things for granted and being doted upon is typical. Within Wanda's depiction of her family's dynamic is also the underlying assumption that her mother's desire to provide for them is undeterred by Wanda's sister's lack of appreciation. Like Jacob, the many meals her mother provides consequently feeds her for much of the week. Even though their children are now adults and no longer live in their home, both mothers continue to call them back to the family home as the place of Vietnamese food and to provide food to express care, unfazed by the additional hurdles it takes to do so.

For Jacob, the family dinners are a way for his family to stay connected, especially since his father died when he was young. He does not think too deeply about how his current and primary source for Vietnamese food in his life draws him back to the same place he has known it for all his life (his family home), nor about the actions of his mother that go above and beyond their weekly family meal tradition. In both Wanda and Jacob's stories, I have supported the idea that the family home is a significant place where the participants' mothers will enact food provisioning for their adult children, and I also unpack this dynamic to as one of power. Jacob's mother asserts her desire to provide food for him and his siblings beyond that meal, compounding the act of them gathering back at home to allow her to demonstrate the importance of this labor to also reflect how she performs care for them. This reflects the normative role of mothers providing food for the family, but because the participants are adults and are able to feed themselves, this speaks to how their mothers are unwilling to relinquish the food provisioning role. The way both Wanda, Jacob, and other participants talk about the remarkable lengths their respective mothers will go to provide food for them always depicts themselves as passive receivers. They are appreciative of the gesture and the food, but there is an element of powerlessness to it, and they are at the generous mercy of their mothers' ministrations. It is here in these narratives that the insistent actions of their mothers reveal that they are also assertions of power.

These participants express these experiences in the family home as the unqualified, principal way they understand Vietnamese food, but the family home as a space to know Vietnamese food for them as second-generation Vietnamese-Australians is markedly defined by their mothers' care and power. Of course, on the surface, these participants see themselves as fortunate to have food provided for them so lovingly by their mothers. The powerlessness of Wanda and Jacob as second-generation Vietnamese-Australians in these situations is embedded in how they interact with Vietnamese food on a daily basis,

and that limits their ability to form an understanding of Vietnamese food outside of their mothers' control. In this way, the restricted relationships they have with their own cultural food has the potential to manifest in a consequently narrow relationship with their cultural identity. This is a reflection of the second-generation's contentious identity work, and it connects back to the research objective of this thesis that seeks to know the relations that inform the overall meaningful food practices of this group. Both participants, like all the participants in this research, identify categorically as second-generation Vietnamese-Australian, but unpacking the source of the relationship with their culture through food traces a narrow path dictated and controlled by their mothers.

8.2.1.2 Matthew

All the participants' relationship with traditional Vietnamese food has linked the family home as the particular place where they see its significance. When I had the opportunity to experience first-hand traditional Vietnamese food in Matthew's home, this episode further solidified traditional Vietnamese food as feminine and place-bound to the family home. Matthew (31) and I have gotten to know each other quite well, and at that point, I had already interviewed him over a separate dinner which was at a restaurant. We continued to see each other at social events, and he would frequently give me rides to them. I volunteer to help his family with some yard work, and he invites me to his family home afterwards where his mother feeds us homecooked Vietnamese food. Matthew has already planned to eat at home with his family, and he extends the invitation in appreciation for the labor I provide. His family eats separately from us, even though we are in the house. We are preoccupied hanging out in the living room while they eat, so I do not realize until later. At some point, we are called into the kitchen to eat, and it is all set up for just the two of us. In a way, this configuration of separate meals seems on par the dynamic I am personally familiar with in Vietnamese homes, where the guest gets special treatment. His mother chats to us while we eat, asking me questions to get to know me, and his sister-in-law is straining Vietnamese yogurt while passively participating in the interaction as well. Immediately after I express my preference to Vietnamese yogurt, how my mom made it, and how I have tried my hand a couple times as well, Matthew offers to give me some in the coming days once the yogurt has set. He also extends that offer as something I could always ask for while I am in Sydney, since his household often had a large supply, and they are happy to share. I do not doubt this generosity that is coming from him and his family.

As a whole, this experience at his family home demonstrates the place-bound nature of traditional Vietnamese food. Matthew makes it clear that having me over for dinner rather than inviting me to dine out or anything else that is not related to food at all is an intentional choice on his part, motivated by his belief that it would be an informative experience for me in terms of this research. Authenticity is inherent in his perception of home-cooked Vietnamese food because it was prepared by the women in his family. Indeed, this invitation was not only a kind gesture of thanks that I value in itself, but he also exhibits two acts of care in his two offers using Vietnamese food. In this way, I agree that this experience did generate another piece for which I can connect the importance of Vietnamese food for second-generation Vietnamese-Australians, though perhaps not in the overt way he may have imagined. It is a significant detail that Matthew's acts of care through Vietnamese food involves him specifically inviting me to his home for this. It is in itself a kind and personalized gesture of appreciation, but once again, it is intentional because traditional Vietnamese food for the second-generation is place-bound to the family home.

Although Matthew is a cisgendered man, his purposeful action of using Vietnamese food to demonstrate care towards me is still dictated by the women in his family. Cairns and Johnston (2015) do not limit the feminine performance of care through food to only women, as it is a relational understanding, so feminine acts that corroborate with the gender norms in traditional Vietnamese cooking can also be perpetuated by men. That it is his mother and sister-and-law who are the laborers who actually made the dinner and the Vietnamese yogurt is a crucial detail in my visit to his family's home. Matthew's behavior of care towards me is a complex iteration of how Vietnamese food in the home is used to perform care by the women of the family because he also plays a role in it. As a masculine person in the family, he is only able to offer his care through food towards me as far as his mother and sister-in-law have made the option available through their labor. They themselves consent to him extending the food to me, and it is through their empowerment that Matthew is able to offer these foods to me. Not only do the women in his family play an active role in this exchange, but they also control Vietnamese food, and therefore care through food labor, in his home. As Matthew is motivated to perform care towards me through Vietnamese food, this offering was the most obvious option. His offering it through women in his family reaffirms the how he, as a second-generation Vietnamese-Australian, is bound, to a degree, to this particular way of knowing traditional Vietnamese food through the care of women at home.

8.2.1.3 Nate

I experience another instance of home as the space the first-generation Vietnamese mothers assert their power in the performance of care through food at a barbecue Nate (29) hosts at his family home. To set the scene, he lives with his parents and younger brother, but the official attendees to the barbecue are two of us and two other friends, who are also people I interview at other stages—Matthew and Henry. We had the idea for a barbecue because Nate had repeatedly expressed his love of eating meat and animal proteins, and the barbecue is an opportunity for him to show me what he loves so much about it. Inviting Matthew and Henry is a friendly gesture to make the event more sociable, even though neither of them has as strong a penchant for meat as Nate. It ends up as a potluck where each attendee brings other dishes to go along with the grilled meat theme. In the course of the evening, various members of Nate's family also come by, and his mother brings out cut fruit for us to eat. It is unprompted and almost unwanted because by this point, we are all already full from the feast we just had. However, she is very insistent and keeps bringing out more fruit, wanting to feed us fruit because we had expressed polite appreciation for how sweet and ripe the fruits were that she initially brought out. She then brings out Vietnamese yogurt that friend of hers regularly share with her and is insistent that we have some of that too.

The additions Nate's mother brought out are indeed tasty, and it fit the theme of all of us at the barbecue sharing different foods. I emphasize this dynamic as within the context of Nate's family home, and thereby impeding in his mother's space as a food-provider. Nate had previously shared with me that his mother, throughout his life, has had little time to fulfill the duties of this role on a regular basis as someone who works long hours. Knowing this, the determination she displays in this instance, with guests who are all second-generation Vietnamese diaspora members, carries more gravity. It is clearly important to her that she performs care for her son and his friends in feeding us in this unexpected opportunity in their home, even though we are far from needing it. This is a very familiar dance in a family dynamic of a parent making sure their children are well fed and are taken care of while in the home space, even to the point of forceful doling. However, in light of the tales other participants shared

about how their respective mothers made great efforts to maintain their position of food provider in the household, the connection to this event is clearly related to this position.

What is striking is how insistent she is even though she had not originally been part of the meal. All four of us are polite in accepting the food while simultaneously trying to gently dissuade her from bringing out more food in the multiple times she runs back into the house to grab more food items. These efforts are half-hearted and awkward, both because we do not want to disrespect our elder, and also because there is a sense that there is not anything we could do to stop her. Within our politeness and respect is an embedded understanding of our lack of power in this situation. All of use present at this meal fall into the normative dynamics as defined by our generational association: the second-generation Vietnamese-Australians are powerless, and the first-generation migrant feels empowered to dominate the food provisioning.

8.3 SECOND-GENERATION VIEWS ON COOKING VIETNAMESE FOOD

Growing up, none of the participants were involved with cooking beyond the occasional chore of assisting by chopping up raw ingredients for their mothers to then create the dishes. For the most part, the participants have little knowledge about the preparation of traditional Vietnamese food from being fed it. Sure, they would see bits and pieces of the steps it would take to make some dishes, but it was not enough to then be able to recreate it themselves independently. Several participants did not express any interest in cooking whatsoever. My interviewees included both men and women, and they all experience their mothers' feminine provisioning of Vietnamese food. As mentioned in the description of this empirical sampling, I was not made aware of any gender-queer identifying participants, so I will assume all participants are cis-gendered. Although this experience imparted of their mother's provision is shared by all, there is a difference in how and which participants then engage in cooking traditional Vietnamese food and how it reflected their gender identity.

8.3.1.1 Jacob

One participant's story demonstrates how he benefits from the food labor performed by the women is his life. Jacob (29) tells me of a period when his Vietnamese-Australian partner at the time took on cooking for the two of them. It was when they moved away from their families in (south)western Sydney to an area in Australia that did not have the same Vietnamese food options they were used to. Prior to the move, they had each been living with their respective parents as adults, and their respective mothers provided home-cooked Vietnamese food. Jacob adds that he spent a lot of time at his partner's home, so for him, he ate Vietnamese food both in his own home and at his girlfriend's home. He explained that this now ex-girlfriend began cooking because they found themselves deprived of the home-cooked food they previously had on a regular basis. Furthermore, there were also very few Vietnamese food establishments in this new area, so they were also deprived of their cultural cuisine. His ex-girlfriend began learning how to cook a diverse range of dishes, and this included Vietnamese food. She even began an Instagram page to share her cooking accomplishments. That it is his ex-girlfriend and not him that is inclined to take on this labor demonstrates how gendered division of food labor is reproduced among second-generation Vietnamese- Australians.

This narrative is told to me through Jacob's point of view, and his admiration for her venture into cooking reveals how not only impressed he was by her, but also how appreciative he was of her. In contrast, when I ask if he cooks, he humbly declines, saying that he sees cooking as a hassle with a lot of

ingredients and steps. The only things he makes are simple meals and stockpiles of marinaded meat in the freezer to have on hand to maintain his high-protein diet. In essence, any cooking he did was not related at all to Vietnamese food, and he does not have any interest in doing so. Considering Jacob's many sources of authentic, home-cooked Vietnamese, he has experience virtually no gap in home-cooked Vietnamese food. After he and his ex-girlfriend broke up, he moved back to (south)western Sydney and once again lives in close proximity to his mother. As described previously, he currently gets food from his mother regularly through the family dinners, and he packs home the intentionally made leftover Vietnamese food she makes. He has had the good fortune of having the women in his life providing authentic and traditional Vietnamese food at every of point of his life thus far and has had little reason to seek to challenge this gendered food norm. Although he expresses appreciation for his ex-girlfriend's cooking when they lived away from home, his lack of awareness of the gendered relationship he has with Vietnamese food, further solidifies the normative view of traditional Vietnamese food to be in the women's domain.

There is a parallel I draw between Nate and Jacob, as they both expressed their love of animal proteins. In light of their respective stories that show how their mothers assert Vietnamese food in their lives, this meat-loving food behavior stands out in contrast. Furthermore, it contrasts Matthew's food offerings to me in his home that was catalyzed by the women is his family. The heavy consumption of meat is generally seen as a more masculine food behavior in western culture, but it is also generally recognized as a part of typical Australian food culture. Nate did make the connection in our conversations between his own personal meat consumption and the Australian pastime. As such, his food practice with meat differentiates from the food practice of the previous generation because it is a different cuisine. I further expand the understanding of their personal meat consumption to where they are outlining a distinct space from which they have more control over their food, in light of how both he and Jacob both practice this outside of the realm of their mother's food provisioning. For both men, their meat consumption is a taste preference, as well a way for them to support their high-protein diets as people who are very fitness oriented to the degree that they value a traditional masculine body. In this way, they are also performing masculinity through their food. Altogether, their high meat consumption counters the food habits transmitted from their mothers in both the cultural and gender normative aspects.

8.3.2 Cooking Vietnamese food: gender, power, and authenticity

Only two of the participants regaled me about how they themselves have gone out of their way to learn how to cook Vietnamese food as adults despite their low exposure to the process in their childhood and their ongoing access to home-cooked, traditional Vietnamese food from their mothers at home. In both of these tellings, both the gender and authenticity dimension in their understanding of Vietnamese food is evident, but also unmistakable is their mothers' assertions of power that discouraged the participants.

8.3.2.1 Jeanie

Jeanie (mid-30's) is one of them, and she describes her attempts to cook Vietnamese food at while living at home as an adult as a judgmental endeavor where her mother would often criticize her efforts and even take over the cooking when she did not think Jeanie was doing it correctly. While Jeanie is sure to tell me that she has tried her hand at cooking Vietnamese food, it seems like a lost cause while she lives with her mother. In her description of what happened, Jeanie understands her mother as needing things to be done in the kitchen in a very specific way because the earlier generation of family members who

taught her mother how to cook imparted her with the idea of perfection in cooking. To Jeanie, it all paid off for her mom, because she claims that her mother is an incredible cook, professed by anyone who tries her cooking. Her mother is often told she should open her own restaurant because her phở is the best. With such high expectations, attempts to cook by her daughter are humbled.

By comparison, she speaks of her older half-sister who was born in Vietnam and came to Australia as child with the family. Her sister is a different sort of cook than their mother, because though she would also primarily cook Vietnamese food, she was open to outside input in how to go about it. Jeanie still describes her half-sister's cooking as traditional Vietnamese which is reflective of the food she ate in her early childhood, but it appears that her half-sister is also more confident in her own tastes and does not shy away from looking things up on the internet. The Vietnamese food palette of Australian-born Jeanie is limited by having just her mother's cooking as the primary reference, diminished the confidence that she had in her own cooking attempts. Thus, while she relies on her mother's cooking as a reference for traditional Vietnamese food, the judgement she has experienced from her mother restricts her ability to develop a different understanding towards Vietnamese food.

8.3.2.2 Kyle

Kyle (42) is the other participant who tells me about his effort to learn how to cook Vietnamese food. Inherent in these two stories is that it takes place in their family home, which is the space first-generation women perform gendered acts of care and power through food. He does not explicitly express wanting to know how to cook Vietnamese food as a desire to take over his mother's role as carer, but he is drawn by the admiration he has for his mother. In learning how to cook Vietnamese food, he notes significantly of the meticulous way he took it upon himself to learn how to cook Vietnamese food from his mother. This involved him writing down everything that she was doing while she was demonstrating how to cook a dish. Like all the other participants, his mother is the primary cook at home, and like Jeanie's mother, his mother is a very good cook with a very particular idea of how food should be cooked. It was to the point where his mother would intervene in his cooking as well when he used to live at home, even as an adult. He mentions this would happen even if he was cooking pasta (which is to say, non-Vietnamese food), and she would take over because she did not approve of the way he was going about it. It is clear from the demoralized sentiment both Jeanie and Kyle imbued in telling me about these experiences with their respective mothers that authenticity in Vietnamese cooking is derived from their mothers. Again, this reasserts the learned link for the second-generation that authentic Vietnamese food is understood within the realm of their mothers. Furthermore, the variation in Kyle's telling where this is only true when he lived with his mother reveals their mothers' actions to be place-bound in the family home.

Kyle speculates that tension in the act of him learning how to cook Vietnamese food from his mother, from his mother's perspective, is her feeling challenged on her role as the family caretaker. He asked his mother to teach him, and she acquiesced, but Kyle interprets her somewhat ineffective manner of teaching to be representative of her overall perception that she is the main cook and food provider in the home. It is evident in the way she would take over the cooking process while he was already cooking on some occasions. More than once, he describes his mother as a martyr in the way she has upheld her role in the family throughout his life by always giving, even if it came at a cost to herself. The tension of her feeling challenged by his learning how to cook is reflected in how she did not seem to make the effort to properly teach him how to cook, and instead, he had to overcompensate for the lack of

direction by becoming a meticulous and astute observer. This revelation poses an interesting perspective on the primary home-cook as the zealous gatekeeper of Vietnamese cooking. There is an element of power in this place-bound assertion from his mother's performance of care.

Between the two participants who attempted to learn how to cook Vietnamese food, they have the shared experience of a sort of reluctance from their mothers to adequately teach. Connecting to the narratives of other participants whose relationships with Vietnamese food through their mothers depicted a power imbalance, Kyle and Jeanie's separate attempts to learn how to cook Vietnamese food echo the same sentiments. Their mothers were very controlling of knowledge surrounding Vietnamese cooking, and for Jeanie, this blocked her from pursuing it further. Kyle was only able to work around the hinderance with great efforts in his methodological approach. Indeed, their mothers' discouraging behaviors impede the passing of cultural knowledge and thus inhibit, at least in part, their children from forging a relationship with Vietnamese food beyond what the mothers allow. Other participants did not regale such belittling cooking attempts to me, perhaps because they did not dare to broach it in the first place. This potential explanation is consistent with the imbalanced power dynamic between first and second-generation Vietnamese-Australians. The result comes out the same regardless of if the participants attempted to cook Vietnamese food at home or not: the overall impression is that their mothers are the primary and only food providers of the family, and the participants could only take up space for their own food choices and food practices when their mothers were not taking the reins—which is to say, outside of the family home.

I have argued that the act of cooking in the participant's family home is part of the second-generation's foundational understanding of Vietnamese food imparted from the previous generation, and they see it through a singularly feminine lens. However, analyzing Kyle's positionality and own conceptualization of his experience shows a dualism that is consistent with a complex and relational approach to understanding identity. First, I explore the feminine side of his gendered understanding. As a cisgendered man who was curious enough to try his hand at cooking Vietnamese food seems, he seems to contradict this generalized, gendered understanding of Vietnamese food and cooking as feminine. However, our conversations reveal that he is not necessarily an exception to this gender-normative perception. He describes his relationship with his mother growing up to be close, and in many ways, he learned to embody traits from her that he himself labels as "feminine". He attributes this to him spending a lot more time with his mother than his siblings did growing up, because he is the youngest in the family, and there is a big age gap between him and his older siblings. For him, he equates the giving, and somewhat martyr-esque, behavior of his mom to be a feminine quality. Therefore, his view of his own femininity has also manifested in what he sees as his own tendency to also provide for people to the point where he has given too much, even to his own detriment. He tells me that this is an outcome of many of his interpersonal relationships with other people, including with his ex-wife. I note that this self-awareness coming from him is a product of many years of therapy, and his personal interest in psychology as a discipline. Like in his way breaking down how his mother cooks Vietnamese food, Kyle applies this scientific way of thinking to understanding his own relations.

It is also striking in the initial dynamics of his and my meeting and in the consequent process of him becoming a participant in this research. Our relationship stemmed from him generously offering to be a guide and companion, even though our dynamic up to that point was only that of a customer and service provider (see Participant information table). Due to the age, gender, and professional dynamics, I was sure to clarify to him that I cannot offer more than friendship. He was nevertheless more than

happy to participate in this research and offered his labor as a guide without strings attached. Of course, I do not mean to undervalue the benefit of mutual companionship, but it is not every day that a professional acquaintance extends such generosity. Thus, my own experience with him reaffirms his altruistic nature, which contributes to his self-characterization of femininity. Generosity and kindness are not inherently feminine traits, and yet through his own logic, this side of him is an internalized feminine quality that he learned from his mother.

For him, these tendencies that he identifies as feminine has granted him access to cooking Vietnamese food. Outside of the instance of learning how to cook from his mom, the only time he describes actually cooking Vietnamese food on his own is when he had eventually moved out of his family home, and therefore his mother was not present. On these few and far between occasions, he undertook the involved process of cooking Vietnamese food when he had access to the spacious and well stocked kitchen of a friend, and he knew his efforts would be rewarded by having a large group of friends eating it. The intentionality of these few occasions indicates his performance of care for his friends through Vietnamese food in convivial environments. His own self-proclaimed femininity and his experience of learning to cook Vietnamese as an expression of his femininity supports his view of Vietnamese food and cooking as feminine. His interest in learning to cook Vietnamese food from his mom was an effort for him to explore his cultural identity better through his relationship with Vietnamese food. His self-proclaimed feminine characteristics were something that he sees as a tool that allowed him to learn in the spatial domain of his family home, but that he can only independently practice what he learned outside of the home and away from his mother is consistent with the idea that the family home is a place-bound space of knowledge controlled by the first-generation mothers.

While he identifies with a feminine gender performance when telling me about his relationship with traditional cooking, Kyle also exhibits distinctly masculine ideas in regard to food as well. He says that learning how to cook a couple of specific, Vietnamese dishes was a limited endeavor, because he does not actually cook regularly. Beyond the seldom occasions of hosting a large gathering for cook Vietnamese food for his friends, these acts are contrasted with his habitual feeding habits to either depend on the prepared meal service, small and simple meals he made for himself, and eating out with friends. His cooking is comprised of putting together simple meals for himself. He tells me that the level of involvement it takes to cook Vietnamese cuisine excludes it from his day-to-day cooking. Additionally, Kyle uses a meal service that provided him with ready-to-eat, nutritious, and high protein meals which supplemented his weekly food consumption. I connect his infrequent cooking efforts with Jacob's perspective of cooking being a hassle, and therefore not something either of them are willing to invest time in on a regular basis. For Jacob, all the examples in his life of home cooking are performed by the women around him, and Kyle is not exempt from this gendered perception of home cooking and Vietnamese food at home. Moreover, Kyle shares another link with Jacob and Nate who also have high-protein diets. Like the other two men, Kyle has a very active lifestyle and also values a traditional masculine physique as he is a retired professional mixed-martial-arts fighter and owns his own MMA gym. In these ways, Kyle's relationship with Vietnamese food and food beyond that demonstrated the strict, gendered boundaries that characterize Vietnamese food and the different areas where it is appropriate in his life. He views his dabbling with Vietnamese cooking as an expression of his femininity, but it is an infrequent expression. Within his daily life, he performs masculinity.

The remarkable difference between the approaches of the two participants who attempted to learn how to cook Vietnamese food is that Kyle had a calculated approach which allowed him more

maneuvering space to succeed. It is through a balance of both feminine and masculine qualities in performances around food that pave the way for him to successfully cook Vietnamese food at home. He admits that the behavior of meticulously recording every step and ingredient stems from an "obsessive" trait he sometimes expresses. He impresses upon the fact that she did not "properly" teach him, because the way she was showing him was not very educational. In other words, she was not teaching him in a way that was easily understandable to him. As a work around, he carefully wrote down everything she was doing and personally measured out the amounts of each ingredient she would use as a response to her approximating amounts based on muscles memory. In essence, she knew exactly how much of each thing she needed on sight, but because these were not easily communicated quantities, and she made little effort to convey this to him, he took it upon himself to use volume and weight metrics. Furthermore, he describes entering the quantities he recorded into a spreadsheet with formulas to adjust serving size. Clearly, Kyle had a very systematic approach, and this attitude is evident throughout the conversations and in the way he ran his own business. His scientific and measured cooking method evidently contrasts with his mother's embodied method, and in sense, could be coded as more masculine.

Between this systematic, more masculine method and the fact that he does not regularly interact with Vietnamese food in his daily life, Kyle has developed a fundamentally different relationship with Vietnamese food than the one his mother exudes. Even so, his relationship is still connected to his mother to the degree that it emerged from her passing along the knowledge and knowing of Vietnamese food in such a way that he was not able to reproduce in his own life. Through his logic of what is feminine in food, which contrasts with his other food practices that are coded as more masculine, Kyle displays a wide array of relationships with food that are rooted in the meaningful understanding of food that he gained from his mother. This network of relations demonstrates a complex interpretation of how second-generation Vietnamese-Australians can connect to their own culture.

In this widespread case that the participants' experience of Vietnamese food through their mothers, there is a clear parallel of purposeful performance of gendered food and care. Many second-generation Vietnamese-Australians have developed a gendered view of traditional Vietnamese food specifically due to the way the knowledge of it has been transmitted by their families as a gendered entity. I emphasize the perspective of second-generation in this research, and it is important to note that this gendered division of labor in the home is initiated from Vietnamese culture maintained by the first-generation. Indeed, Cairns and Johnston's delineation of the history of women in food traditions in one of the chapters of their book supports this norm (2015). Thus, this gendered connection for the participants is not unusual, and, like them, this critical and relational lens reveals a more complex understanding at work for Vietnamese diaspora members. Far from Vietnamese food being innately feminine, the participants convey to me a knowledge of Vietnamese food through the performative care of their mothers that is gendered in Vietnamese culture. Meanwhile, their own behaviors around Vietnamese food are not always consistent with this transmitted knowing from their parents.

Moreover, these performances are perceived with the idea of authenticity. Second-generation participants are subjected to a gendered understanding of Vietnamese food from the first-generation, and this influences how they perceive Vietnamese food. In both respecting their mothers as an authority on Vietnamese cuisine and their willing subjugation when their mothers correct their cooking, the participants perpetuate an understanding of femininity in care and cooking to be a hallmark of what

constitutes authentic Vietnamese food through the first-generation lens. Manifestations of this belief come up in casual conversations with the participants where compare the food to their respective mother's cooking. Authenticity is, thus, immutably entangled in the conveyed gendered perception of Vietnamese food for the second-generation. Within the same ethnic community, this is a relevant conceptualization from the view of the younger generation gaining a standard for food from their own culture when food knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. In the case of the mothers of the participants directly provisioning them with Vietnamese food, the dishes and flavors convey the idea of what Vietnamese food is to the participants. Participants, therefore, know what "real" Vietnamese food is based on what they ate at home, and they use it as a point of reference to judge Vietnamese food in other contexts.

I explored the idea of the second-generation experience when they navigate other ways of interacting with traditional Vietnamese food beyond solely consuming what their mothers provision. Namely, through learning to cook traditional Vietnamese food. It is reasonable to consider that because second-generation Vietnamese Australians experience the knowledge and skill to make authentic Vietnamese food as held primarily by women and mothers, they perceive the cuisine through the gender dynamics within Vietnamese culture. The understanding of traditional Vietnamese food as gendered is indeed reproduced in some cases, but it also creates tensions for the second-generation through the power dynamics displayed between the participants' respective mothers and the participants themselves. I establish traditional Vietnamese food, as the participants understand it, is laden with gendered power dynamics and with a reference point for authenticity.

8.4 VIETNAMESE RESTAURANTS

8.4.1 Traditional Vietnamese restaurants as places to project knowledge

The family home is a demonstrated place for knowing authentic Vietnamese food for the participants, and the narratives of care through food enacted by their mothers generate a perception among second-generation Vietnamese-Australians where they understand Vietnamese food through a gendered power dynamic. In this section, I investigate the possibility that this understanding of traditional Vietnamese food through a gendered lens or power also extends beyond the household space that is constructed by their mothers and specifically into traditional Vietnamese restaurants.

8.4.1.1 Matthew

Matthew's (31) spatial and relational understanding of authentic Vietnamese food is imparted on his opinion of the Vietnamese restaurants in Cabramatta. He describes them as authentic because he regards them as providing the Vietnamese food like that which Vietnamese families eat at home, which is to say, like his mother's cooking. He validates the Vietnamese food in Cabramatta with this comparison, and his rationale is telling of his interconnected perception of what constitutes good Vietnamese food. Interesting in his evaluation is that his opinion of different Vietnamese restaurants in Cabramatta seemingly flattens them to this one characteristic. It comes up when we discuss a place to have dinner to conduct the interview, and he asks for any preferences I have. However, I communicate to all participants that I prefer that they choose the locale, and he decides that due to the nature of my research, the obvious choice is to go to a Vietnamese restaurant near where we are in (south)western Sydney. We end up meeting at an easy-to-find corner in the business center of Cabramatta, and his ambivalence to any difference between the many establishments leads us to walk into the first

Vietnamese restaurant we pass. For him, they all have more or less the same menus and the same style of cooking, so they are uniformly good options for authentic Vietnamese food.

In a prior section about home-cooking, Matthew demonstrated his basis of knowing authentic Vietnamese is gendered through performance of care through food at home by the women in his family. He draws parallels between the authenticity of Vietnamese food in his home and that of the traditional Vietnamese food restaurants in Cabramatta. As a second-generation Vietnamese-Australian, he seems to conflate the gendered lens he is presented with at home with the food at the restaurants, potentially gendering the Vietnamese food at the traditional Vietnamese restaurants. However, this gendered understanding is at odds with the nature of commercial Vietnamese cooking in Cabramatta. Commercial cooking in these places of business is inherently different from home-cooking, because it is not made from a sense of care and instead for their financial livelihood. Certainly, Vietnamese women often work at these establishments. As Flowers et al (2016) describes, women of the ethnic group lend the image of authenticity by association to these establishments. As such, the restaurants may benefit from the desirable façade of a women's touch.

Nevertheless, these co-occurrences do not inform the reality here. For one, Vietnamese women are often not the given proprietor of these eateries. Indeed, during my time in Sydney, the Vietnamese food businesses I was able to get an inside look at revealed that most of them were owned by men. Thus, I deduce the motivation behind providing Vietnamese food at these restaurants that emulates home-cooked food is not centered around a gendered view of care but rather a two-fold practice in perpetuating authenticity from the first-generation migrants. On one hand, the patrons are often themselves also members of the Vietnamese community in the area, so the owners of the restaurants are motivated to uphold the same food standard that their discerning customers are familiar with. On the other, participants who have parents that own food businesses have relayed to me that Vietnamese food businesses are almost exclusively a first-generation operation, therefore their version of Vietnamese food, which they serve at their restaurants, is simply tied to their experience and knowledge from having lived in Vietnam with the traditional cuisine. Authenticity in Vietnamese food for the first generation is, recalling Heldke's (2005) conceptualization of authenticity, derived from its relationship to the source of knowing a cuisine. It is thus not inherently embedded in a gendered division of labor, nor is it ubiquitously stemming from care the way it is when it occurs in the home. It is an entirely different point of emphasis. Johnston and Baumann describe the category to analytically understand this type of authenticity as "geographic specificity", where "the connection between a food and a specific place is central to determining a food's authenticity" (2010, 74). This relational connection here refers to the first-generation identifier that links the owners of the restaurant directly to the cuisine the country originates from. The gendered authenticity perspective connects to this geographic specificity category only in a circuitous way, and that does not factor into the consciousness of the second-generation perspective. Key in their proposition of different categories of authenticity is that they still work together to form collective idea of authenticity, but the distinctions allow for methodological clarity. Understanding authenticity at these traditional Vietnamese restaurants alters depending on if it is perceived from this perspective or that of someone like Matthew as a second-generation member of the community.

Matthew's explanation for the authenticity of the restaurants presents a limiting, gendered perspective because of his association of it with his mother's cooking as a second-generation Vietnamese-Australian, and the cooking of Vietnamese women is his reference point for authentic Vietnamese food. I address

Matthew's conflicting understanding by emphasizing this positionality, and therefore he is bound to his only own source of knowledge to identify authenticity. Although this gendered view on authenticity is place-bound to the family home, because the restaurants are relationally authentic in the same way his mother asserts her own authenticity with of traditional Vietnamese food, he sees the restaurants perpetuating the same authenticity he perceives through his mother. The first-generation practice of authenticity translates into a gendered practice of authenticity in his eyes as a second-generation Vietnamese-Australian. In summary, he conceptualizes the restaurants in a gendered way, because his original understanding of Vietnamese food is gendered. Through this association, in a way, the establishments in Cabramatta that serve traditional Vietnamese food are gendered spaces for him.

Authentic Vietnamese food is food cooked at home by first generation mothers, and some restaurants are also experienced as authentic because they are run by first generation migrants and can make food that tastes like home. The impression of second-generation Vietnamese-Australians garnered from their upbringing must be understood through the narrow scope that are allotted from their limited experience with Vietnamese food. For them, it makes sense that it exists in their family homes and potentially also at traditional Vietnamese food establishments. To be clear, this limited lens to understand food practices does not restrict who can access the food, but rather it speaks to the limited categories of what can be included in this perspective. The common denominators of this second-generation vantage are that both their mothers' cooking and these Vietnamese restaurants cook traditional Vietnamese food, and the chefs are first-generation migrants.

8.4.2 Traditional Vietnamese food at the family's restaurant

As established in the previous section, authentic Vietnamese food for the second-generation is food that is made by first-generation women, so although the intention at traditional Vietnamese restaurants is not an embodied performance of care through Vietnamese food in the way that it is for the participants' mothers, this association of authenticity and femininity is still present. However, challenges to the defining characteristics of Vietnamese food as feminine serves as a counter to reveal another realm in which Vietnamese food also exists in the consciousness of second-generation Vietnamese-Australians. This is the side of Vietnamese food that is decisively different than traditional Vietnamese food that reproduces femininity because it is not seen as built from women's labor of care in the home. Instead, it is built from male-owned food eateries. This is a distinct perspective than what Matthew shares about how he sees the authenticity of Cabramatta's Vietnamese restaurants as connected with the first-generation, feminine idea of Vietnamese food, because he derives this perspective as a consumer. Matthew's narrative equates the authenticity of Vietnamese restaurants to what he knows from his mother's cooking. His perception that ties femininity in the first-generation and traditional food cuisines is continually reproduced with inherent views on the authenticity, leading him to see first-generation-Vietnamese-Australian-owned restaurants in Cabramatta to also perpetuate the image and norm of Vietnamese food as feminine. In a way, following the logic from his position creates a positive feedback loop for second-generation in his limited vantage by only seeing the restaurants on the outside and thereby only being able to understand traditional Vietnamese food by using their mother's cooking as points of reference. However, the internal, second-generation viewpoint of some of these restaurants, provided by participants I interview who work in the food industry, reveals assertions of how masculine spaces for Vietnamese food, informed from their fathers' relationship with it, serve as a counterbalance to the femininized understanding.

8.4.2.1 Gwen

Gwen works as a wok chef in her family's restaurant, and understanding her dual gendered perspectives about her cultural food lends to this nuanced view within the second-generation Vietnamese community. She does subscribe to the idea as home as feminine space for food. As far as home cooking goes, if she needs to make something for herself, she cooks simple meals, and she does not cook the same dishes her mother prepares. She clarifies this to say she does not cook Vietnamese food at home, but her mother does. Because she still lives with her parents, she still benefits from her mother providing food on the occasions her mother is not also helping at the restaurant. Gwen is sure to tell me that mother really enjoys cooking food at home, to the point that Gwen confides that is part of the reason why she pitches in at the family restaurant—to give her parents a break and her mother an opportunity to perform the fulfilling activity of cooking food at home for her family. In the same vein, Gwen also really emphasizes her appreciation for home cooking from her mother, championing home-cooked Vietnamese food as a thing to be celebrated and valued. Thus, she differentiates the sort of Vietnamese food her mother cooks and the food her family restaurant provided. She distinguishes her mother's role in the two places as someone who produces delicious, authentic food at home, and then as someone who is simply assisting the business at the restaurant. Speaking with her, the two versions of Vietnamese food clearly occupied different spaces in her mind. Indeed, she does cook Vietnamese and Chinese food at her family's restaurant, but that is for business, and eating her mother's food which is rooted in the maternal ideas of care is different. Notably, her interaction with the concept of Vietnamese food as care is limited to consumption. Even though she is a chef in her own rite by trade, she does not impede on her mother's home space for food, demonstrating once again the implicit power dynamic between first generation mothers and their children.

Gwen's father is the proprietor of the family restaurant and the head wok chef. Her depiction of this family restaurant emphasized it as her father's endeavor, and her mother, herself, and her siblings who also work there are subject to his leadership at the family business. Our conversation during her interview leans heavily on her ongoing frustrations working at the restaurant. One of these frustrations manifests in the challenge of hiring additional chefs to work at the restaurant. To Gwen, this is a huge need at the restaurant, as her father is overworked, and her mother is pulled into helping out more than she would have preferred. It is one of the motivations why she had stepped in to fulfill various roles in the restaurant over the years. The difficulty of hiring more chefs, Gwen explains, is due to how the art of wok cooking is fairly male dominated and tends to involve a lot of egos, as wok chefs are generally particular about how things are to be done. This perspective illustrates the masculinities involved in the family restaurant. It is her father's authority and the inherently masculine field of wok cooking that define her experience as a worker in the restaurant. Recalling previous sections that unpacked the power dynamics between the second-generation and their mothers in the home space with food, similar power dynamics emerge in Gwen's family restaurant as it is her father's domain.

In the same vein as these frustrations, her father had a hard time with any suggestions she had about making processes in the kitchen more efficient. All of her constructive criticisms fall on deaf ears, and she understands this as a fundamental trait in how her father runs the restaurant. Simply put, he runs it in his way, and only his way, and she sees little recourse in altering that. For her, however, making more streamlined processes in the kitchen that do not compromise food quality and taste was exactly what the family restaurant needs. Gwen works there to help out her parents, but due to these frustrations, she has "one foot out the door" because she does not see how she could continue collaborating at her

family restaurant if her input is not being valued. This has been an ongoing conflict for her quite some time, and over the years, she has left and come back to work at her father's restaurant more than once. Gwen describes her relationship with the family restaurant through the lens of her father's authority. This is a definitive difference in perspective on Vietnamese food than how she understands Vietnamese food at home, because it is in the context of the business, and it is categorically her father's realm of operation.

It is no less important to demonstrate her multi-faceted relationship with Vietnamese food, and it this insider perspective as someone who actually works in the food industry creates more nuance in the possibilities of how people in the second-generation can relate to Vietnamese food. Her recognition of the power imbalance at the restaurant echoes the power imbalances in the dynamics between other participants and their mothers, but a salient difference is that she does present herself as a passive receiver of her father's authority. Indeed, she conveys her realization that the power imbalance and unyielding stance of her father means that she cannot change the way the restaurant is run without her father changing his position. However, instead of submitting to her father's authority, her desire to leave the restaurant demonstrates her expressed agency. That she has left has come back to the restaurant still speaks to the respect she has for her father and the business, but it remains contentious.

8.4.2.2 Kyle

Another participant who shares his view on family's restaurants is Kyle. Recalling to a previous section, he is one of only two participants I speak with who has tried to cook Vietnamese food at home. Analyzing his professed gender performance with this revealed that Kyle associates Vietnamese food at home with femininity, though some of his other perceptions of food displays what can be considered more masculine. In that same interview, Kyle speaks separately about his father's various restaurant enterprises before he retired. He lauds his father for his pioneering influence for being the first phở restaurant in Marrickville, which kickstarted the trend of Vietnamese restaurants in that suburb that continues on today with renown. This side of the conversation juxtaposed the way he described his mother's home cooking, and like Gwen, he does not connect the two whatsoever in our long conversations. Each of his elaborations on his parents are distinct, where his mother is only referred to when talking about food at home, and then in another, unconnected branch of the conversation about the family's restaurant businesses, he only centers his father. At no point do Gwen or Kyle refer to both of their parents in the same space as the joint authorities. Indeed, both of parents in his family are accomplished cooks in their own right, but they have operated in separate arenas: his mother is the home cook performing care to her family, and his father ran several restaurants at his own leisure for business. I recognize that there is an indirect element of care in both Kyle and Gwen's respective fathers' restaurants, as the income gained supported their families. However, this connects more so to the phenomenon of first-generation migrants' food entrepreneurship being based in what they know: Vietnamese food (Ray, 2020; Shum, 2020). Any care here is not viewed by their children in the same performative way at these restaurants because they do not carry the same intention of care that they saw their mothers performing in the home. It is definitely distinct in the way they understand each of their respective parents' intentions, and, therefore, their fathers' restaurants must be understood differently.

A similarity in Kyle's explanations of each of his parents' role in food is his respect for their unyielding expertise. Due to the success of the restaurants, Kyle does hold his father's business acumen in esteem.

In the same way his mother seemed to have guarded her culinary knowledge while he revered her perfectionist abilities, his father would never relinquish control of his restaurants. This meant that he worked every day of the week, from before dawn into midnight hours. It was not a sustainable practice, and Kyle critically views this as the reason his father had closed the restaurants multiple times: he could no longer run himself down, but furthermore, he could not trust someone or a team of people to run the restaurants the way he saw fit. Essentially, his father exhibited some of the same characteristics the Gwen's father does, where they both run their respective restaurants in strictly their way and are not open to doing it in any different way, even if their children believe there is a better way. His father opened three different restaurants in (south)western Sydney, and they closed all for this same reason. While Kyle still sees his father's restaurants as successful due to their popularity, he disagrees with the way his father ran these businesses. Overall, both of his parents affected him in many ways, including how he sees the execution of cooking Vietnamese food must be done in a particular and perfected way. However, these influences came from two distinct space that Vietnamese food has existed in his life. The narratives Kyle and Gwen share with me illustrate how they see Vietnamese food as a business as masculine not only by how it contrasts with the feminine view from their mother, but because it is rooted from their interactions with their father.

There is a point in our conversation where Kyle is boasting his ability to make really good phở, and he supports this claim to authenticity through having his father having very successful restaurants. However, when I ask him more about it, he clarifies that he actually learned the recipe from his mother, which links to the previous anecdote he shared about learning how to cook Vietnamese food from his mother. He conflates these two sources that ground his knowledge of authentic Vietnamese food, and indeed, there is a level of amalgamation that inherently happens with simultaneous and strong influences. Still, this one instance of conflation is more telling of him actively working through the complex relationships he has with Vietnamese food and his parents, rather than that these two different and gendered spaces are the same in any way.

8.4.3 Non-traditional Vietnamese food breaking boundaries of understanding

Up to this point, I have discussed the participant's perspective on traditional Vietnamese food and how their gendered view of it in different spaces is directly influenced by their parents' performance of gender. In the majority of the conversations and interviews with the participants, Vietnamese food is indeed talked about in the traditional sense. However, there were some instances where some participants demonstrated a different relationship with Vietnamese food that indicated to a distinct space of food practices. With non-traditional Vietnamese food, many found the freedom to express views that are not informed by their relationship with their parents. I take this as a proffered attempt to rework their identities to be beyond their migrant upbringing.

I encounter a standout example of a non-traditional Vietnamese establishment that is celebrated as the go-to place for Vietnamese food among all Sydneysiders. Its popularity is evident as it is mentioned to me by Vietnamese Sydneysiders as well as non-Vietnamese Sydneysiders. It is important to note that this restaurant subverts the norm that first-generation members of the Vietnamese-Australian community are the only restaurant owners because it was founded by a second-generation Vietnamese-Australian. Furthermore, as a markedly non-traditional Vietnamese restaurant, it defies femininized relational understandings of the traditional Vietnamese restaurants that Matthew tells me about.

This non-traditional Vietnamese-restaurant presents a framework to understand how the inside-view from second-generation Vietnamese-Australians who work in the food industry conceive a different relationship with Vietnamese food. I ended up going to this restaurant on two occasions, and each experience greatly differed from the other because of the positionality exhibited by my different companions.

8.4.3.1 Henry

I had patroned this restaurant the first time with Henry, because we wanted to check out the reputation for what some called the best Vietnamese food in Sydney. Upon reflection, the food at this restaurant was far from what I and most of the second-generation participants would think of when we envision Vietnamese food, because they are not exactly the dishes that we know from growing up. In truth, it is not the dishes you could get at a Vietnamese restaurant the majority of the time now. In that visit, neither of Henry nor I are impressed by this restaurant's famous dish that we order, because it is not true to our traditional understanding of Vietnamese food, and we judge it from that parameter of authenticity. We leave that meal disappointed and with the opinion that this restaurant does not measure up to all the praise. Without any other point of reference to understanding Vietnamese food, we are limited as second-generation Vietnamese diaspora members to this singular evaluation. Neither Henry nor I have the experience of knowing the dynamics within a Vietnamese restaurant, and therefore, our relational connections to understand the food this restaurant concocts is limited to knowing authenticity through the lens of traditional food. This food does not conform to our preconceived assumptions of Vietnamese food that reminds us of our mothers' cooking, thus we judge it as unauthentic.

8.4.3.2 Gwen and Wanda

On the other hand, Gwen and the others who come to this same restaurant with me on a separate, and later, instance convey an entirely different understanding of this food while also accepting it as authentic from a different grounding. In a curious contrast to my disappointing experience with Henry, Gwen and the others thoroughly respected this restaurant for its masterful execution of innovated and non-traditional Vietnamese food. These two experiences came about independently of each other but having the two very different experiences reveal the differences between what is understood as traditional and non-traditional spaces to view Vietnamese food.

This later dining experience at the same restaurant is with Gwen (33), as well as Wanda, who I also interviewed for this research. At this point, I had already interviewed them separately, so we are well acquainted. We are five in total at the table, and it is important to note that Gwen and another tablemate work in Vietnamese restaurants, so their viewpoint informs the rest of the table's behavior as they come from an "insider" perspective, so to speak. This dining experience turns out to be a luxuriously decadent lunch, in part because this other tablemate who works in food service has a really good connection with that restaurant. Of all the food establishments I visit during this field work, it is one of the most memorable for many reasons. For one, the connection my tablemates have to the restaurant gives me a sneak-peak into the dynamics of how this restaurant is run, and we receive a lot of dishes sent to the table free of charge. This aspect heightens the experience, not because of the financial benefit, but because the sentiment the proprietors and my tablemates impart emphasizes this purpose of this meal is to center taste and experience with all the avant-garde dishes this restaurant is known for innovating. The restaurant is more of a fine-dining establishment, which was not typical

among Vietnamese eateries. In contrast, traditional Vietnamese restaurants are not known for their aesthetic flourishes in presentation and locale. The second-generation owner and his many chefs like to creatively experiment with new dishes, but the promise is that it always comes back to the root of Vietnamese flavors and cooking. On their website, the chef explicitly draws authenticity from his mother's home-cooking while acknowledging the creative liberties in his unorthodox choices. The unique dishes his restaurant sells both relates to the feminized traditional Vietnamese food and gains authentic status from it, while also molding a new way for Vietnamese food to exist that is separate from the traditional way. In this way, his restaurant counters the label and carves out a prominent, new space for Vietnamese food.

Throughout the lunch, my table mates are critically evaluating the dishes that we are having, especially because the menu rotates and changes every six months or so. There are mainstays in the menu, but that day, we are also trying all the new things that these frequenters have not tasted before at this establishment. It certainly has the air of a foodie experience, and getting to see some of the participants and their friends socialize over it was really special. Because I am fairly new to Sydney, they really seem to enjoy including me into what they see in this restaurant and what its dishes represent, and as well as the culinary experiment that was this restaurant's project. Overall, tasting these dishes in this space that is actively conducive to sharing open opinions for us second-generation diaspora members is a significantly interactive experience that is the opposite of how unwelcome second-generation Vietnamese-Australians feel to push the boundaries of traditional Vietnamese food spaces created by the first-generation.

What makes this a different space for Gwen and the other second-generation Vietnamese-Australians at the table is that they have more power to explore and express opinions about it. This is in stark contrast to the matriarchal spaces of Vietnamese food that is dictated by their mothers, where their mothers wield a power to belittles their children's autonomy and liberty to assert their own selves. Furthermore, because Gwen's family owns a traditional Vietnamese-Chinese restaurant, her valuation of the Vietnamese food comes to an entirely new light. As someone who contends with knowing Vietnamese food not only from the space of home but also in her family's restaurant, Gwen has developed her own agency and awareness to be more critical of the limited understandings she receives from her parents. This is particularly evident in the previous section in reference to her frustrations with her father and how she reacts to it.

There is a difference between Vietnamese food that the participants grew up with and ate at home and what Vietnamese food looked like when they encountered it outside of the gendered space of the family house. The dissonance in understanding between the time I dined with Henry and the time I dined with Gwen and the others can be attributed to the evolution of Vietnamese food in the culinary world and how second-generation Vietnamese-Australians are able to process it based on their references of knowledge and authenticity. In fact, the two of the people who I dined with for that lavish lunch who worked in the food industry told me in our individual interviews, independent of each other, about how they considered Vietnamese food to be economically undervalued. To them, it should not only be associated with being a cheap meal to the point where some participants commented on how prices of Vietnamese food in Cabramatta were competitively low. Vietnamese food takes a lot of time, labor, and knowledge to prepare, to which many participants alluded, and should be valued as such. To my fellow diners that day, this lunch was a food experience, and the costs were justified. This lunch at a fine dining Vietnamese restaurant illustrated a non-traditional version of Vietnamese food through which Gwen

and friends still embraced their own culture. They believed that the food we ate that day, though unorthodox, was firmly seated in authentic Vietnamese cuisine. I see this new culture of food draws from a shared knowledge of traditional Vietnamese food but does not include it as a continuation and is therefore unmistakably separate. Like all the other participants I spoke to, they all developed a sense of what Vietnamese food is from there food experiences growing up. However, those at the table who worked in the Vietnamese food industry had expanded their view of what the cuisine included, and the other friends at the table are brought into the same belief. I revisit the idea of different influences on what each of the participants ate, and how they see food. This culinary lunch experience is an example of how some participants have evolved their way of seeing Vietnamese food. For them, this elevated, non-traditional Vietnamese cuisine is still distinguished as something different than what they grew up with, but it has become something they have accepted.

Like Henry, the other participants who do not work in the food industry, and therefore do not follow the "new" refined and transformed Vietnamese culinary style, are not categorically averse to eating Vietnamese food when dining out. After all, Henry was keen to try out this restaurant with me in the first place. When I inquire about these sentiments to other participants, I receive a resulting mix of personal circumstances that causes them to arrive at this similar result of doing so infrequently. One participant says that it is because he already has the best Vietnamese food at home; some essentially shrug at my question that it is not that they avoid dining out with Vietnamese food, but that it just is not their immediate first choice all the time. This indicates a subconscious conceptualization of what Vietnamese food is allowed to be and where it can exist for them. Namey, in their family home. Another participant, who also do not work in food service, says that it is because he is so particular about his tastes for good Vietnamese food that there are only two establishments, outside of his mother's cooking, that he would ever go to for Vietnamese food, which are traditional Vietnamese restaurants. Implicit in these responses is the belief that good, or authentic, Vietnamese food is restricted to spaces they see are connected to first-generation Vietnamese migrants. These ideas are so embedded in their understanding of Vietnamese food that they are disinclined to accept it in other places. The exception has only emerged in this empirical research when interacting with participants who have personal experiences in the food industry, and ergo have developed a separate understanding of Vietnamese food where they feel they are able to express opinions that do not have to align with that of their parents.

The non-traditional Vietnamese restaurant I describe above is a stark example of individuals expanding spaces within Vietnamese cuisine, formed from the particular perspective of the second-generation in the food industry that then allows more freedom for expression. However, attitudes towards Vietnamese food as gendered and traditional is still evident in how second-generation Vietnamese-Australians view their family's restaurants, traditional and not. Within traditional Vietnamese food, the participants who work in food service still convey a masculine understanding of Vietnamese food stemming from their fathers' influence on how they see the cuisine. In these ways, spaces for understanding food in general takes form in two ways: simply in the way traditional Vietnamese food is a monolith in the participants' foundational relationship with food, and through food experiences rooted in curiosity and exploration. In this next section, I elaborate on the latter phenomenon.

Throughout this chapter, I recounted the experience of many of the participants where their understanding of Vietnamese food is derived from their parents, and I identify three distinct places where knowledge of Vietnamese food is meaningfully nurtured for second-generation Vietnamese-

Australians. The variances between these three spaces stem from the significant relationships the participants are able to draw with Vietnamese food, evidenced by the varying degrees in each place that knowledge is transmitted from the first generation to the second. In the first place, I assert that the participants are exposed to a view of the gendered traditional Vietnamese food, feminized in the place-bound space of the family home. The experience of their mother's home-cooking dominates their experience of Vietnamese culture through food. Traditional Vietnamese restaurants are the second place where a more complex relationship between the second-generation and Vietnamese food emerges, because it is not controlled by their mothers. Traditional Vietnamese restaurants are family enterprises that are instead controlled by the fathers. This relationship with fathers as an authority in Vietnamese food is not entangled in care-giving, and it is a connection only relevant in the experience of families who run a restaurant. The third place is a non-traditional Vietnamese restaurant, and such a locale creates space for second-generation Vietnamese-Australians to redefine how they see Vietnamese food outside of the influence of their parents and other first-generation Vietnamese migrants.

9 RESULTS PART 2: NON-VIETNAMESE FOOD AND FOODIE CULTURE

In the previous chapter, I expound on how Vietnamese food is a meaningful category that reflects how second-generation Vietnamese-Australians interact with their cultural and generational identity. However, Vietnamese food is not the only cuisine they consume, so I also look at how they express their thoughts around non-Vietnamese food and how they act around it. This data is gathered through the same interviews in which we speak about Vietnamese food, as well as through my observations while jointly participating in the same social activities that the participants and I attended.

The conclusions I draw from the position of the participants unveil another side from which their understanding of Vietnamese food can be juxtaposed. Recognizing these combined points of view illustrates the complex ways that the participants broadly use food to perform their identity and belonging to different communities. Not all conversations I have with the participants about food specifically center Vietnamese food, much less Vietnamese food businesses. This is the point of departure from the first-generation literature detailing migrant identities around food and businesses and then challenging the consequent white-centric multicultural cosmopolitanism (Brook, 2008; Ray, 2020). The reality that the participants share subverts the essentializing assumption that I problematize in the introduction about how the diaspora is reductively categorized. In this chapter, I explore the foods that participants consumed aside from Vietnamese food, and the spaces they navigate that demonstrate a complex, hybrid identity. I aim to answer the following research questions in this chapter: *What identities do second-generation Vietnamese-Australian perform through food? What relations inform these identity performances? What relations and identities outside their ethnic and migrant statuses impact these performances?*

9.1 JUNK FOOD FREEDOM

9.1.1.1 Casey

Casey (32) spoke to me at length of how she and her siblings were often left to their own devices to feed themselves growing up, and this meant they ate a lot of junk food. At first, this admission seemed like an outlier because so many of the other conversations I have with other participants about the food they ate throughout childhood centered Vietnamese food. Instead, Casey decides to talk about how prominent junk food was in informing her relationship with food that is still prevalent in her life today.

She illustrates her story in the example of lunch at school. In Australian schools, there are lunchrooms where students eat together. They can buy food there, but they can otherwise bring their lunches. As Casey's parents were too busy with work to pack lunches, her parents instructed her and her siblings to grab something from the cupboard to bring to school. As a young child, she would often grab a packet of chocolate covered biscuits that are popular in Australia. The lunch periods in school were combined with recess, where the children were encouraged to socialize and play outside, so the kids were spread out between the lunchroom and the playground. Casey tells me how this dynamic meant what the school children were eating was not always closely supervised. One day, all the school children had to stay inside due to bad weather, and one of the teachers commented on how she was eating a sleeve of biscuits for lunch. She did not know better at the time, and she impressed upon me how cogent a memory this was of being singled out by a teacher, but she did not unlearn these habits. Once they were older, her parents would give her a five-dollar bill to buy lunch, and this only compounded the elective

freedom she had to choose her own food growing up. Furthermore, at no point in her childhood does Casey recall strictly being taught what she should choose to eat, so every food option was available to her without guidance. Her parents enabled her food choices, but due to their absence and lack of attention to what she was eating at school, her eating decisions were not impacted by them. Instead, she is thrust into a relationship with food that is vastly different than the other participants talk about regarding Vietnamese food for them at home.

Casey adds to this explanation of her early memories by mentioning occasions of accompanying her mother to the grocery store. It is an illustration prompted by my asking to what degree she participated in the management of food in the house growing up. At the store, her mother would handle the grocery list, but she and her siblings were sometimes allowed to add one thing each to the shopping cart, and the obvious choice was whatever junk food snack or candy they wanted. This led to longer conversation with Casey about how she was undereducated about the importance of nutrition. Even as she got older and had spending money, she and her friends would opt for their favorite guilty pleasure foods. She was given a sort of free reign over what she wanted to eat on the specific occasions that she was given a choice growing up, and it follows that the thought process became learned behaviors from her childhood that lingered as she got older.

In an off-hand comment, she says that at home, her mom would frequently come into her room with a plate of cut fruit, and this was something she never really thought deeply about. In her memory, she would accept the fruit and eat it without question but also without forming a concrete preference regarding it. In other words, eating the fruit was not a choice because you simply ate what your parents gave you. This was the only instance Casey spoke about food within the family home, and it aligns with the feminine act of care through food established in the previous chapter. In this memory, she is a willing and passive subject to her mother's actions. In contrast, the other memories where she chose what she ate is treated with an entirely different respect, and she would eat junk food. Afterall, the biscuits in the cupboard seemed just a good an option to bring to school, so why should she not choose it at the grocery store? Casey's self-reflection through conveying her relationship with food ultimately points broadly to a common experience with all the participants where this relationship begins formulating early in their lives, and therefore their parents' actions (or inaction) greatly influenced the participants as children and adults. Furthermore, her experience related to those of the other participants because they all speak to some degree of their relationship with foods that are not Vietnamese. This is an important element of their reality that bears addressing in this research that aims to unpack the multiplicity of relations that come from identity work.

9.1.1.2 Kevin

Kevin remarked similarly to Casey on the topic of school lunches and junk food growing up, and it is reflective of his ambivalent relationship with food now. As a child, his parents also worked long hours, and he was given cash from his mother to buy his own lunch at school. Perhaps emulating the money-conscious behavior he saw in his parents, his younger self decided to pocket the majority of the small amount of cash to give himself spending money for other things by using a fraction of the cash he was given to buy a bag of chips for lunch each day. His mother eventually found out, and she took back the money that he saved without saying much aside from that he should feed himself properly. She did not communicate much more beyond this, and in his eyes, his mother did not understand why he would do such a thing. In regaling me about it, he is left to scrabble up an explanation to me about what the

dynamic was between him and his mother in this incident. What he had thought of as a stroke of clever frugality is also a telling tale regarding the lack of guidance that he received about what sort of thing he should feed himself with. Furthermore, his mystified understanding of his mother's actions in combination with this lack of general guidance shows how a gap in food knowledge formed without significant input from his parents.

In the same interview, Kevin described eating Vietnamese food at home when his mom had time to cook, but otherwise, they ate fast food with considerable frequency because it was open late when his parents got off work, and it was affordable. He grew up eating a mix of fast food and Vietnamese food at home, and it was not until he was in university that different friends and romantic partners would introduce him to cuisines he never tried before. To this day, he still eats a lot of Vietnamese food, either from his mother, even though he no longer lives at home, or from stopping into Vietnamese restaurants during his busy workdays, as well as fast food. He is twenty-six years old, and these food habits echo those which he grew up with. Only more recently has he ventured out to eat differently under the influence of his current girlfriend. The piecemeal and patchy relationship with food Kevin had through his upbringing is reflected in his noncommittal relationship with food now. In one way, Kevin's narrative is insightful in understanding that there are many influences that come into play for second-generation Vietnamese-Australians. In another, the lack of cohesion in his narrative contrasts with the more concrete relationships for participants in the prior chapter where they expressed more concrete ideas with food in their lives today.

These anecdotes highlight what it looked like in instances when they were given an unfettered choice in the matter as children. Unfettered by being told what they should eat at that specific time, and in general. In a way, they were still limited by what they were exposed to: a packet of biscuits from the cupboard that served as your lunch, and fast-food drive-ins for accessible food. Aside from the common link of eating junk food frequently, Kevin and Casey's narratives are underlined by the fact that when their parents did provide food, this choice was effectively nonexistent. As with all the participants, there is a unanimous understanding that you ate what your parents gave you. As a dependent, this is true in any household. It is clear that their understanding of food beyond what they were directly being fed as children was wholly unstructured, while also narrow in scope. Meanwhile, they are left with little connection to the food in their lives. I emphasize that this is the effect during the childhood of the participants. As adults, all the participants have gained even more freedom to explore their relationship with food. For example, the exposure to other cuisines and eating out coincided with when they were teenagers or young adults, and they old enough to go out to eat with friends or significant others, in part because they could drive and/or when they had their own spending money beyond a five-dollar bill. Not all the participants had stories to tell me about how they would eat junk food under low supervision as a youth, but what is striking is the overall importance of recognizing the effect relationships outside of the food provided by their parents has on their ability to express a well-rounded identity or to relate to the identity projected by their parents.

9.2 EATING OUT AS A NORM

As people who continue to live at home as adults, currently and formally, the participants have gradually navigated other spaces to explore other foods via their social activity. In the same vein of subverting the assumption that Vietnamese food is the only significant food they interact with, I discover the importance of non-Vietnamese food in the habitual practice of dining out. Through attending the same

social outings as the participants that involved dining out, I realize that we would infrequently go out to Vietnamese restaurants, even though I have witnessed at other points that many of the people going to these food businesses are indeed Vietnamese. The communities to which the participants subscribe to go beyond the Vietnamese community to also include the Meetup groups, fitness groups, and sporting groups, and just foodie groups, and this is reflected in the diverse food choices when dining out.

The reverence many participants maintain while talking about their mothers' cooking in the previous sections clearly demonstrates their fondness for their own culture, dispelling any potential assumption that it is because they do not like the Vietnamese food or that they do not see themselves as Vietnamese. Likewise, the participants all lived in or around the well-known trio of Vietnamese suburbs in south(western) Sydney that is home to a large number of establishments, and therefore, they had access to it and are all well aware of the area's reputation as the place to eat Vietnamese food. Theirs is a more elaborate spatial understanding of food cuisines, where Vietnamese food existed most prominently for them at home. While the previous chapter on other spaces of Vietnamese food challenge this to a degree, the home still remains that central and originating space the participants understand Vietnamese food.

Conversely, when they go out with friends, they are more interested in other foods. The communities formed outside of their family still largely involve food in the form of dining out and more often than not, non-Vietnamese food. Many of the participants shared narratives of discovering their preferences in food only once they became older. This progression of learning what you like once you did not need to depend on your parents to be your primary food provider is logical with simply growing up. What distinguishes this pattern among second-generation Vietnamese-Australians is that their cultural food being foundation in their relationship with food in general becomes a meaningful jumping off point from which they find themselves redirected outside of traditional Vietnamese food. Cooking and consuming Vietnamese food is not something they practice the same way the previous generation did, and their conceptual spaces for Vietnamese food is generally limited to the gendered view imposed by their parents. The following narratives in the remainer of this chapter, garnered from empirical research, highlight just how other spaces to understand food came to be and how they connect with other communities with hybrid spatial and social reworkings in order to perform identity.

It is evident that any discourse on food and identity for second-generation Vietnamese-Australians does not only focus on Vietnamese food and requires consideration of all the other food in their life. After all, although they are part of the diaspora from Vietnam, part of their hybrid identity fundamentally recognizes their connection to the non-Vietnamese. The hybridity of being Vietnamese-Australian contains diversity beyond superficial assumptions that the non-Vietnamese food in their life is all western, partially because Sydney known for its multiculturalism. A mix of having many options to choose from as well as that they would have sufficient fill of Vietnamese food at home already motivates them make meaningful connections through food outside of the home. I further this inquiry to explore the intricacies of their hybrid identity and to engage with more nuanced possibilities in how they are enacted.

The behavior of eating many different types of food refers to what Johnston and Baumann call culinary omnivores (2007; 2010). They interrogate this idea within the foodie discourse to parse out the underlying institutions that contribute to contentious beliefs that surround it. Some of the participants outright proclaim themselves as foodies while others do not explicitly do so. All the same, reflecting on

different elements of the foodie discourse sheds light on the prevalent experience among second-generation Vietnamese-Australians around non-Vietnamese food and what communities associate with it. Foodie discourse touches on many socially significant identity categories such as ethnicity, class, authenticity, and power, thus exemplifying its relevance to this empirical research. The concept of relationality has a fundamental place in this discourse, further bridging its relevance in endeavoring to understand the identity practices of the participants. The idea of a foodie is an inherently relational and socially constructed concept that Johnston and Baumann acknowledge means that its definition is not universally agreed upon, even in the academic realms, much less the general discourse among people who care about food (2010). This is apparent to the degree that even those who participate in the discourse do not always prescribe the label of foodie onto themselves. For the analytical purposes for this research, I will use the term broadly to indicate the meaningful considerations and ideas about food ubiquitously expressed throughout the time I have spent with the participants.

Indeed, some participants explicitly stated that they were foodies, explaining their intentional pursuit for "good" food. Gwen is one such self-professed foodie, and her favorite pastime is to go out to eat with friends. She loves brunch because it is a meal designed for the experience, and that viewpoint is emblematic of how she thinks food should be: an experience. If there is a trendy new restaurant/bar/bakery/etc. in Sydney, she strives to find out about it and will likely make plans to try it. For her, travelling distance and queues do not faze her as long as she gets to try something new, and even better if it does turn out to be a mind-blowing gastronomic experience. Hype is a big part of food trends for her, and she loves it. It is all worth it for the possibility of good food and a memorable time.

Not all participants proclaimed themselves as foodies, but the pervasiveness of the culture was undeniable in all the social outings I partook in during this research. All the participants I speak to and eat with all share preferences and opinions of "good" and "bad" food while dining out. Even when some do not consider this to be true and are reluctant to identify as a "foodie", I find that there is a more nuanced understanding beyond this label for people who still ascribe importance to their food preferences.

This is demonstrated in the interactions I have with one participant who was recommended to me through her friend. Jane was hesitant to speak with me at first, citing that she has very unhealthy and unsavory habits. Essentially, she sees herself as not eating interesting food, so she thinks that I would likely not get anything from our conversation together. She humbly asserts this to be true even after my attempts to assure her that I am not looking for people who eat "interesting" food—simply that I want to talk to second-generation Vietnamese people in general about food without expectations. By pivoting the conversation away from confronting the idea of needing to have an outwardly sophisticated relationship with food, she does start to open up about how she eats and why. Furthermore, on a separate occasion with a large group that has us searching for a late-night food joint, she expresses a lot of interest at the dessert bar we end up at. In this scenario, she shares definitive preferences and opinions about the dessert menu that showed that she does have feelings about food. Regardless of her initial perception she projected of this research, it is clearly not as irrelevant to the research goals as she thought. In fact, her acts and expressed preferences at this dessert bar reaffirm the overarching trend that is happening among all the participants. Regardless of whether it is an explicit label someone used to describe themselves or not, the foodie culture, as defined in this research, is present in every food outing I shared with participants, both one-on-ones and amongst larger groups.

Johnston and Baumann also stipulate that foodies are people who are not directly involved in the food industry (2010), but I argue that one does not need to literally extricate themselves from being a worker in the industry to participate with the foodie culture or to identify with the foodie identity. For foodies with complex and hybrid identities, there is space where both can exist at the same time. Gwen is an example of this, because although she has long worked in the food industry, she says that she considers herself a foodie. Her assertion of her foodie identity is still consistent with Johnston and Baumann's definition in part because she says it in reference to her food consumption practices. She is certainly informed in her consumer choices by her experience as a food service worker to a degree, and the philosophical expression of her foodie identity in the interview reveals the complex associations she has with food. Rather than exclude her from the foodie discourse on the premise that her food service experience precludes her interaction with it, valuing her point of view from is consistent with a relational approach to take into account the broader reality. Johnston and Baumann agree that foodie-ism is relational and socially constructed, and although their analytical framing would exclude her, I move to include her view. In this way, her position postulates a dualism where she can be both a food service worker and a foodie. This hybridity in identity is a compelling connection to the hybridity she inherently navigates as a part of the Vietnamese diaspora. Identity work for second-generation Vietnamese-Australians is an ongoing negotiation between the many spatial and societal relationships they maintain, and for Gwen, it manifests as well in her attitudes towards food.

9.3 Social media

The digital realm of social media is another space in which participants experience food beyond their cultural food which links them to their parent's identity. The use and consumption of social media is a common thread throughout the duration of my time in Sydney that illustrates the way foodie culture permeates the consciousness of all the participants and creates a community in itself. The participants all use social media to share personal moments in their life, from dining out experiences to fitness journey milestones. It is commonplace in this modern, digital era, so it comes as no surprise.

In addition to using social media to stay connected to others they know in their personal lives, the other side of it is the consumption of popular content. This includes a broad range of things, but relevant to this research is the regular mention by various participants of some food content they saw. By regular, I mean that it is casually brought up, unprompted, in conversation. Sometimes, it is to recommend a place to eat or to explain a new food trend they have heard about. In response to my asking them about their social media use, many refer to popular food accounts, especially those that are active in their area. It appears that most, if not all, the participants are aware to some degree of the local foodie accounts. They do not always center such content in our conversations about food, but they all more or less affirm knowing about them in the interviews and in conversation. On the subjects of social media and modern food culture, much has been researched about the influential impact the digital realm can have on people's food choices and habits (Lewis & Phillipov, 2018). With the wide range of possibilities in social media influence, consumers can encounter content that reaffirms their habits or suggests changes to them. In this, acknowledging social media in the evident foodie culture among the participants goes hand in hand. It is both a subliminal and an overt space where participants express and experience food that is different from the food knowledge they inherited from their families.

9.3.1.1 Bao, Henry, Matthew, Gwen, Wanda

One particular poignant moment that I myself am made aware of a local social media food phenomenon is when I am catching a ride with a participant, Bao (31), to attend a large Meetup event with the Sydney Asians social Meetup group. En route from the car to meet up with the others, we come up to an eye-catching mobile trailer in an open square, and we can see a long queue beside it that goes beyond what we can see at first glance. Instantly, Bao knows what is happening; meanwhile, I am at a complete loss at the spectacle before me. After numerous questions and piecemeal explanations from Bao, I come to learn that this is a pop-up event where a well-known food content creator and social media personality is presenting his branded food products that are a creative take on Japanese crepes. This particular pop-up consists of a little food truck that is dispensing free crepes to the first 1000 people as a marketing ploy. Serendipitously, we have shown up right when the first crepes are being handed out that day, and the proprietor of the brand and the whole event is making a short speech to address those all lined up for a free crepe. It is through pure chance that we encounter this event, and its spectacle is what makes it stand out. I found out later that this is the sort of event many of the participants would attend in their free time.

After an hour and fifteen minutes queueing and finally getting the free crepes, we join up with the others, and regaling them about this event serves more than just as an icebreaker, as others at this Meetup event are also well aware of the content creator and his food brand and show interest in the details of the pop-up event. We still have remnants of our crepes with us, and several event attendees take up our offers to try it so they can see what all the hype is about. In truth, the crepes are not extraordinary, yet they hold intrigue as result of the sensationalized marketing tactics. A common strategy I find on the company's Instagram account is that many of their pop-up events feature limited-time-only flavors. While no one is particularly impressed at the crepes, we are all captivated by their manufactured special status. This status connects to the idea of cultural capital in foodie literature as both a tool and a goal for foodies to gain distinction (Johnston & Baumann 2007; 2010; Kennedy, Baumann & Johnston, 2019). The interest Bao and other Meetup-event goers exhibit around this unique experience marks what is actually a commonplace state of awareness those around me have of local food in social media. Furthermore, the sharing of experiences between me and Bao, and then with the others at the larger gathering, demonstrates the practice of utilizing cultural capital in a social setting. To varying degrees, Bao and other Meetup attendees demonstrate their knowledge of the food scene in Sydney.

Participants Matthew and Henry tell me that they have both also been aware of this crepe company's brand as well as the owner as a food social media personality when I share my experience with them after the fact. Beyond this evening as well, all the participants are in touch with the virtual foodie culture through social media, primarily Instagram. Mention of this awareness comes up casually when a reference is vaguely made about something about the local food scene they had seen online, and in few of the interviews, it crops up when I ask the participants to elaborate when they seem to know a lot about the food scene. The responses are that friends or social media would inform them. As previously mentioned, Gwen is emphatic in her interview that hype about food is very exciting for her, and social media is the primary way she finds out about trendy food. It is something she loves to do with friends, and Wanda shares the same sentiment about food trends in eating out is a great way to socialize and spend time with friends. It is clear that social media is a substantial part of the network of knowledge the participants gather about food and that it interacts with their interpersonal relationships as well. I

note that this sort of food on social media is particularly food eaten out of the house, typically as a social outing, or at the very least, without the influence of their parents. It an accepted and regular part of all the participant's lives, and I take social media spaces as a significant dimension to understand how the participants interact with food beyond Vietnamese food. It is through social media that they can gain cultural capital through knowledge of local food culture. This sort of knowledge of food as cultural capital is comparable to the participants' knowledge of Vietnamese food in the previous chapter. On both cases, this knowledge forms the bedrock of how the second-generation Vietnamese-Australian participants are able to perform their identity through their food practices. As I discovered through unpacking the multiplicity of relations the participants gain and maintain, they foster many ways of knowing food, and this supports the hybridity of their identity.

9.3.1.2 Casey

Casey (32) is a participant who demonstrates how social media has affected her opinions on food, even though she has a history of having little consideration towards food at all. In an earlier section, the details of her limited perspective of health and food are elaborated, and I emphasize here that her perspective emblematically reflects her overall lack of awareness about the nutritional part of food growing up because she did not obtain concrete knowledge of food from her parents. By extension, she does not associate food with being entangled with identity performance. Like Jane, she questioned her relevance to my research because she does not see herself as having a strong or meaningful relationship with food. However, she explicitly speaks about seeing a lot of food content online that talks about health and nutrition while simultaneously reflecting on her inactive lifestyle and relationship with food. At the time of the interview, she expressed that she is experiencing a gradual shift in her lifestyle as she is just beginning to do more physical activity and become more interested in food. She admits this is also because some of her friends and her brother invite her to social sporting activities as well as dining outings. The confluence of her interpersonal connections and her connection via social media is changing her view of how she sees her health. In the same vein, she has previously been disinterested in nutrition, but she is becoming more aware of the nutritional aspect of food and eating. Although she herself is not at the point of wholly embodying these ideas when it came to food and lifestyle, the prevalence in social media is starting to affect how she views food and its potential to be more than just a necessary part of staying alive. The latter perspective is a result of her upbringing, and as an adult, she is challenging this view. During these conversations I have with her, she is beginning to adopt a lifestyle of being more intentional with her food, due to the combined influence of the health and nutrition skewed food content on social media and her friends, roommates, and her brother, all of whom impressed on her varying viewpoints in the same general direction of food as conscious choice. Her case is an acute example of the prominence social media spaces have in second-generation perceptions with food.

9.4 CLASS

At its core, food is more than sustenance for all the participants, because it represents a diverse space through which they can perform their multi-faceted identities. The foodie mindset is inexorable in the second-generation Vietnamese-Australian food culture, and it is important to address the ingrained part class plays in general foodie culture. Johnston and Baumann trace a foundational rationale for foodies coming from omnivorous consumption that is markedly different from gourmet food culture that focuses on highbrow cuisine (2007; 2010). In their work, however, they ground their understanding of

foodie culture in Bourdieu's concept of class distinction, and thus foodies' acts to increase their social capital through food often perpetuates existing class hierarchies. Though foodies refute associations of elitism that is defining in gourmet food culture through the promotion of more accessible and low-brow food fair, the class privilege and financial accessibility are inherent part of being able to participate in foodie culture.

Matthew considers himself a foodie, yet there was a time when he was at university where financial costs barred him and his friends from pursuing foodie activities. Specifically, he and his friends wanted to start a foodie blog for college students, but this idea never came to fruition because they simply did not have the money to actually go out to places to create the content then envisioned for their hypothetical food blog. There is an unmistakable element of financial privilege to be able to partake in the foodie lifestyle, and the ability to frequently dine out and spontaneously transform social activities to become foodie outings is a luxury that nearly all the participants I speak with exhibit to varying degrees. I witness this first-hand when I accompany participants to numerous social events and activities, and in interviews, many of them value eating out with friends as a routine pastime.

As previously mentioned, both Wanda and Gwen do this in accordance with their foodie identity. However, I call back to Jane's reluctance to speak with me because of her perception that she is essentially not enough of a foodie to warrant my interest in her perspective. A degree of this is attributed to a facet in foodie discourse that reflects on the elitist reputation that foodies can get, stemming from the elevated reputation of gourmet food. Due to scheduling issues, I am ultimately unable to talk to Jane at length about her own history, so I do not presume to know a lot about her financial situation. Yet, her reluctance when I first approach her, where she proclaims her eating habits to be unsophisticated to the point of undesirable, holds parallel sentiments about why people who are indeed personally and emotionally invested in the food in their lives do not necessarily subscribe to the foodie label. The class elitist undertones are prevalent in foodie discourse among scholars and non-scholars alike, so the hesitance to associate with it often pushes people away from it, even while some parts of the same discourse proclaim it to liberate from elitism (Johnston & Baumann, 2010; Cairns & Johnston, 2015). Evidently, there is no unified consensus in the discourse and among foodies themselves about the degree to which social hierarchies are reproduced through foodie culture, but the connection cannot be ignored.

Shum's work on performing diaspora through culinary practices support the prominence of food culture among the participants who are all members of the Vietnamese diaspora (2022). Within the context of this research, socio-economic hierarchies are complex because I consider the migrant identity that forms a foundation for the Vietnamese diaspora. There is a common narrative of a painfully traumatic familial history of refugees fleeing their homeland from political and social persecution became economic struggles in an unfamiliar country. In the extensive interviews I conducted with the participants, this is a cultural fact in the community that is widely understood by the second-generation. Many clearly recollect economic strife within their family growing up while others reflect on the stories their parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents have shared with them throughout their lives. This community is very familiar with hardships stemming from disadvantages from a socio-economic standpoint, and this carries some contradiction with the ability of second-generation Vietnamese-Australians that I talk with to regularly dine out. Investigating this tension reveals an intentional pattern of behavior where they are redefining their identities beyond their historical migrant roots in spaces where they have a degree of agency and autonomy, using monetary capital and privileges to gain

cultural capital that their parents' generation did not have access to. This interaction of financial and cultural capital refers specifically and notably to spaces outside of the home and away from their parents' influence.

It bears highlighting that the participants I speak with are representative of a particular portion of the Vietnamese diaspora as a result of my sampling and recruitment methods. Most of them are white-collar earners who are unmarried and have no dependents. They have a lot of disposable income which they are at liberty to use to fund their dining out habits. In this way, they distinguish themselves from the parents' generation where economic struggle is commonplace. Their financial difficulties are not necessarily eradicated, but rather they have more financial freedoms to engage in foodie culture. That they choose to spend their money this way indicates a conscious decision to prioritize food and the experience of it outside of the family home. After all, the collective memory of financial struggle among the migrant generation is a something all the participants are conscious of.

This new space of financial privilege among the participants reveals a different way the participants work to gain status and distinction. They contend with cultural capital in foodie culture rather than the way their parents perceived approach with financial capital (Sinnya & Nasholm, 2012). As previously established, financial capital is still very relevant to the second-generation. I look instead to the dynamics of the different types of capital that highlight the distinct relations that comprise the second-generations' experience with food. I connect their desire for cultural capital with the fact that their Australian-born status already sets them up to have a different position within society than their parents did upon arriving in Australia as refugees. Based on all participants acknowledging the truth of the difficulties earlier generations faced as migrants, they have more privileges than their parents did in many ways. Indeed, many participants take the opportunity to emphasize this recognition in conversations about their parents. However, recalling back to an earlier chapter discussion background to this research and the discrimination first-generation migrants experience, second-generation individuals in the Vietnamese diaspora are not immune to the discriminatory treatment either (Dorsey, 2019). Here, the innate yearning for cultural distinction among their peers is natural for the second-generation, and it manifests in the aspiration for cultural capital through foodie behavior (Oleschuk, 2017). I reiterate the emergence of foodie culture among the participants creates a distinct space from those inherited from their parents through which they can perform identity through food and find other communities they belong to.

9.5 Foodies of color & authenticity

Gwen opens up about her perspective about Vietnamese food by asserting that "Vietnamese food is a pillar of Australian cuisine" at the start of the interview. As a foodie and food service worker who has paved new ways to connect meaningfully with food and as a participant that has overall demonstrated multiplicities in her relationship with food and, this sentence is laden with significance. The declaration contains contradictions for the assumptions of foodie culture, both challenging it and reaffirming it. In this belief, it could be interpreted that she firmly plants the Vietnamese community at large to be a pillar of Australian society, and that it is through Vietnamese food that she bases this claim. More simply, it could be that she believes that Vietnamese food to be ubiquitous to a degree that it is, or must be, included as part of the larger imaginary of Australia's cuisine.

Where it contradicts with the ideas of dominant foodie culture is that Vietnamese food, and its people, have long been considered "other" in Australia, or at least new, as the Vietnamese diaspora did not begin until the 1970s and 1980s. Vietnamese is categorized as ethnic food in Australia, but to claim to be part of the dominant cuisine of Australia approaches a subversion as Vietnamese food being an option in foodie culture. However, within the dualism she balances in her Vietnamese-Australian identity, Gwen toes the line of where Vietnamese food falls in the foodie narrative. She herself, being a self-proclaimed foodie, regales me about the lengths she will go to experience food with any sort of "hype". Here, she follows an omnivore's approach, according to Johnston and Baumann, where she welcomes a large variety of food (2007).

Alongside the low- and working-class socio-economic status that migrant communities such Vietnamese-Australian community have extensively experienced is the racial and ethnic struggles that comes with being a minority group. As elaborated in the introduction and background of this thesis, the Vietnamese-Australian community has faced a significant amount of discrimination due to their race, and as such, they experience a deep awareness to inequalities when it comes to race and ethnicity. I emphasize this point in order to establish a foundational understanding from which to examine the relationship the participants have with food that originates from outside of Vietnamese food, which is to say, outside of their cultural food. Their hybrid and racial identity lend complexity to their participation in foodie culture, and it is worth unpacking how the social and power dynamics interact for second-generation Vietnamese-Australians.

I recognize that their hybrid identity means they do not fully identity as Vietnamese in a nationalistic sense given that they also are Australian-born and currently participate in Australian society. That being so, the connection members of this community have with Australian food may have significant consequences in terms of how they can express the duality of their identity. However, that would require even deeper nuance beyond what this thesis is able to address and more extensive empirical data than I was able to collect. Therefore, I remain content to simply recognize it as another important part in the identity work second-generation Vietnamese-Australians perform through their relationship with food.

In terms of what participants broadly ate, the food cuisines we would venture to eat at different establishments is varied, but it is almost ubiquitously an Asian cuisine, with only some exceptions. It is worth noting that Sydney as a city is known for its diverse food scene, and a lot of it is famously of Asian cuisine. That we frequently ate Asian food is not surprising given that most people in attendance to the various social events the participants attended are of Asian ethnic background, but this fact is not congruous to mean that we could only eat Asian food. In fact, some outings led us to eat chicken parmesans on a couple instances, which is popular with Australian at large, and as well as Italian food, every once in a while; we even eat at American fast-food chains on a couple occasions. This phenomenon happens in social settings with ethnically mixed company, and it is dependent on the scenario when they would be picking something or somewhere to eat. Even so, the general consensus in these situations have us gravitating towards Asian cuisines the majority of the time. The category of Asian food is itself immense, demonstrated in the variety of cuisines and food the participants would eat, and this is true even in more racially homogenous company. It is a subconscious decision that, once more, reflects a socio-spatial conceptualization outside of Vietnamese food. The more I speak with participants about this, it moreover indicates an entirely separate formulation about how they make food choices when they are outside of that spaces where they recognize Vietnamese food.

I reiterate that participating in foodie culture carries implications of a desire for distinction through the gain of cultural and culinary capital. Johnston and Baumann's critical perspective on foodie culture illuminates the potential for it to reproduce class hierarchies, and they also explore the racial and ethnic dimension to critically analyze the potential to reproduce neo-colonial hierarchies as well (2010). Because foodie culture and being culinary omnivores indicates an openness to consuming other cultural cuisines, Johnston and Baumann highlight the inequalities inherent in many cross-cultural interactions. Helke recognizes the impulse behind consuming "other" creates a relative understanding to help define one's own identity and she problematizes this in terms of racial power dynamics (2003; 2005). For both scholars, they take a relational stance that considers the nuances in what constitutes the inequalities, and it connects with the common practice in foodie culture of searching for authenticity. Frequently, the inequalities are due to a conflation in foodie culture between authenticity and exoticism. These debates in foodie discourse are important in beginning to recognize ethnicity and race as a crucial part in the emergence of foodie culture among the participants of this research. As previously established, ethnicity already plays a central role in this research, from the ethnic identity of the Vietnamese diaspora that determined the sampling population I sought to draw from, as well as the discrimination based in ethnic bigotry that the same group has experienced to this day. Moreover, there are overlaps in identity work being the prominent theme in this research as well as from Heldke's admission of consuming "other" to better understand one's own identity. Therefore, while I uphold the claim that foodie culture is a significant space where the participants assert identity practices and find community outside of their general understanding of traditional Vietnamese, it is important to address the racial and ethnic element in foodie culture and how it manifests in this particular context.

Indeed, foodie discourse recognizes multicultural cosmopolitanism as a problematic outcome which would be alleviated with more sensitivity towards equity and "less exploitative process that address political, economic, and culinary privileges" (Johnston & Baumann, 2010, 106). This is a complex and relational understanding that continually requires a self-reflective approach when trying to be ethnically unproblematic. Furthermore, Heldke argues this is an anticolonial approach that subverts the real potential for neo-colonial reproduction (2012). In a more recent publication, Khorana takes an interesting stance that furthering the literature about foodies of color is to work towards decolonizing food culture. "Multiculturalism" in reference to food is a linguistic and ontological choice that centers whiteness as the point of departure from which one views ethnic cuisine, whereas in decolonizing food would mean centering the non-white (Khorana, 2021). Inherent in this research are non-white participants and a migrant community that is ethnically marginalized. In this way, foodie culture in the context of these participants' experience is potentially contributing to Khorana's call for food culture decolonization in a beneficial way.

Oleschuk writes about foodies of color that "because they approached cross-cultural exploration from positions not marked by histories of domination, they could participate in exploring exotic difference in a way that was not harmful" (Oleschuk, 2017). This relational framing helps position the role the participants have through their habits of dining out and consuming cuisines outside of their own culture. However, I move to complicate this position back to the utility of dining out and consuming outside cultural cuisines as an intentional desire to grapple with one's identity. The participants are not only "foodies of color", but they carry a multiplicity of relations that inform their hybrid identity. On the one hand, their approach to cultural difference is not inherently harmful because they do not hold a dominant position in society. More to the point about the way their ethnicity and race inform their

identity is that it is an ongoing conversation to reconcile the hybrid and multiplicity of spaces they move through.

Emblematic of this conclusion is Gwen's opening statement. Her foodie perspective follows the same dominant ideas about foodie culture while also highlighting her identity as a foodie of color. Hence, it is both a decolonial act because she is centering Vietnamese food, but she does not erase her positionality as also being Australian and it being an equally important facet to understanding her values. In this one sentence, Gwen demonstrates the tricky work of creating a narrative space where her relationships with food can fully encapsulate her identity. In speaking about her own cultural food, her views emerge as a challenge to the ethnic categories within foodie culture that dares to make space for her whole identity without caveats. To her, her hybrid identity has a rightful place within the societal narrative and should be recognized.

10 Discussion and Conclusion

I have substantiated my findings in this empirical research with awareness of my own positionality as part of the diaspora and how all the anecdotes cohere into a narrative about second-generation overseas Vietnamese. While the results are inherently non-representative, and personally involving myself in the communities that I sought to research engendered a skew in my own perspectives, reflecting on this field work after the fact lends clarity to all that had transpired and all the relations and practices that I encountered and hoped to unpack. This research revealed a mix of affirming and surprising results that exemplify the multiplicity of connections and realities that make up a hybrid identity. In this chapter, I discuss my conclusions through the existing literature to demonstrate my finding's contribution and how they are significant. Then, I critically reflect on the limitations of this research and where other spaces should be explored.

Some perspectives about the migrant communities come from discriminatory angles that are traumatic and harmful, and scholars such as Shum have published work that lends nuance to these discussions (2020, 2022). The Vietnamese diaspora has a rich culture that is also colored by its complex history. Considering these dimensions is only the tip of the iceberg, so while I account for the formation of the second-generation demographic group relative to their parents, it is crucial that they are not reduced to only this identifier by default. Migrant literature has demonstrated that food is a cornerstone of the diasporic experience, but the bulk of the research has focused on first-generation members of these populations. Vo & Voeks reflect that first-generation overseas Vietnamese retain more of their traditional culture than later generations (2012), but there is little literature that addresses what these differences are and why exactly have come to be.

Just as Shum looks at performativity as a practical lens to understand the first-generation, I carried this approach into the field to locate food practices in the participant data and unpack the meanings behind that for the second-generation. This connects with the relational approach in my research, but the application is distinct because I do not limit identity performative through food to be a migrant generation practice. Identity is performed by the children of the migrant generation as well, and using the same premise of performative identity, my results illustrate multiplicities in their identities that were not clear from the labels that only connect them to their parents. Indeed, the participants find community in spaces outside those they inherited, and their food practices show this. Eating out as a social activity defined a place beyond their reductive ethnic cultural spaces where they found more freedom to experience and enjoy food. This is difficult in places that are pre-established places of cultural food. They are not restricted to the gendered expectations surrounding food when they eat out with friends, and these spaces dually serve to connect them to other communities to which they belong.

I interpret these multiplicities from Massey's relational sociology perspective that asserts social relations to also translate to spatial relations. Through these intertwined understandings, my results became more defined. The significance of the spaces of the family home versus dining out spaces, and spaces of traditional Vietnamese food versus non-traditional Vietnamese food exist in a consistent pattern for the participants. Further nuance through the migrant identity lens reveals a temporal dimension through which these social and spatial relations also exists, as the identities performed by the participants through food reproduce many of the same gendered relations their parents established through food. This approach sheds light on the food practices of the second-generation so that their identity formation

is distinctly theirs and not diminished. Implementing a migrant theory lens and a relational sociology lens in combination rendered a synergistic analytical approach that recognizes performative identity of food as a social, spatial, and temporal act. The subject of second-generation Vietnamese-Australians is complex, thus studying a hybrid identity necessitated a hybrid analytical framework. Many communities are defined in complicated networks of relations, and theoretical frameworks that do not address that may not sufficiently advance understandings of these communities and risk harming them.

Once I came to realize how prominent foodie culture is among the participants, I looked towards foodie literature to understand the dimensions through which foodie culture has emerged and what discourses are ongoing. Some scholarship I included in this review took relational approaches to defining foodies, which further demonstrated their relevance to this research project (Johnston & Baumann, 2010; Heldke, 2012). As foodie discourse accounts for societal structures and influences as part of that makes up foodie culture, thence did I apply their arguments to my case.

Johnston and Baumann are prominent scholars in this field, and while they indeed lean heavily on Bourdieu's theory on class and distinction to scrutinize foodie culture, they simultaneously state that it must be understood relationally and as a social construct (2007, 2010). Their work has laid a solid foundation in understanding the power dynamics and reproduction of inequitable social hierarchies, and this tension is one that is widely recognized in the discourse for scholars and non-academics alike. Even so, I looked for more nuance in the discourse because of the more complex identity categories that the participants of this research fell under. Namely, being foodies of color with migrant backgrounds. Inherently, this community had held lower social and economic statuses than those who Johnston and Baumann emphasize. Certainly, the sampling in their research has materialized some diversity, but the focus on the particular experiences of a disadvantaged community is more fitting to apply to the research I was doing.

Within Heldke's body of work, her relational understanding to unpack the dynamics of herself and other foodies in positions of dominance in their consumption of "other" (2005). She problematizes this in her later work to argue for anti-colonial pursuits in foodie culture (2012). Indeed, scholars in foodie literature understand the role of ethnicity and class in an omnivore's pursuit of culinary capital. References to these social categories spark recognition in the empirical data I gathered, and from here, literature discussing more variance among foodies became more relevant. Oleschuk (2017) discusses the intersections of power and authenticity regarding foodies of color that begin to touch on the nuances I sought uncover in my research. With Khorana's discussion of decolonialization in foodie culture through foodies of color, some elements of ethnicity are acknowledged which progresses the discourse even further (2021). Overall, the inclusion of these analytical dimensions in foodie literature creates more room for new avenues to understand foodies.

However, foodie literature is still somewhat deficient in fully addressing the many facets that make up second-generation Vietnamese-Australians. Where it falls short is in expressly connecting spaces of food as significant places for the foodies of color. Oleschuk engages with the tensions around the ethnic and racial dimension in these foodies of color, and it allows them to minimize harm and act in appreciation for other food cultures, but no focus is drawn on how these foodies also understand their own cultural food. Foodie literature centers the discourse on oneself through others' food, but there is a lack of connection between oneself through one's food *and* others' food. In a way, it only focuses on a singular type of space for food and excludes a more holistic discussion of what other spaces inform foodie

perceptions, and therefore what other identities they perform through their food practices. With my application of relational sociology where the spatial is interwind with the social, the spatial analysis generated a distinction between how these foodies manifested their relationship with these differing cuisines and served as an invaluable framework to unpack these meanings behind them. The results of my research draw direct connections between how the participants understand both their own cultural food and non-cultural food, and it is through this link that the tensions of hybrid identity are evident.

10.1 Other areas of future research

I have identified other spaces beyond the ethnic, culturally significant spaces that second-generation Vietnamese-Australians have meaningfully interacted with food specifically spaces that are outside the family home and where are they consume non-Vietnamese food. These spaces also include social media and fitness spaces. I recognize the significance of these spaces in my results, but I acknowledge the limitations of these findings because I did not originally expect to encounter these sorts of spaces as significant. Further research that includes these spaces in their research objectives is necessary to better address the meanings these spaces hold for the subjects. Fitness is intimately connected to food and the topic of nutrition, and there is already research that shows this. However, further research could include the migrant and second-generation perspective and how these intersections affect their identity work. Likewise, the digital space of social media has been widely researched in many disciplines because of its prominence in society (Lewis & Phillipov, 2018). Researching this from a minority community's perspective would lend more nuance to the discourse as well as help in understanding how communities in disadvantaged positions interact and even leverage social media spaces to gain cultural capital. Additionally, the prominence of food content in social media expands such research objectives to intersect once more with groups such as migrant communities in which food is already a meaningful theme.

Inherent in the methodological approach of this research was the non-random sampling of participants. This resulted in a skew towards second generation Vietnamese Australians who had disposable income, were unmarried, and had no kids. The majority of them also worked white collar jobs where their work schedules overlapped with others who also shared their lifestyle and therefore formulated the bulk of their social circles. My recruitment approach was advantageous to reach this particular slice of the larger diaspora of the region, and therefore excluded others who do not fall under these demographic categories. In this way, research that includes those who are not present in this study would be beneficial to continue answering the research questions that guided this project.

Linguistically, I have distinguished the first and second generation as the migrant generation and the Australian born generation respectively. These are analytical categories that are useful to clarify different populations I am referring to within the same diaspora. However, I recognize that there is overlap in reality. In the sampling population used for this research, I specify that I focus on Australian-born members of the Vietnamese Australian population, and I maintained this throughout my field work. While this is helpful in the conversations I had with participants where they can directly point to their parents who are migrants, there is a gray area with other family members who are also migrants but are in the same familial generation, such as older siblings who were born in Vietnam and migrated to Australia from a very young age. These family members often share the same experiences as the participants having had a lot of their formative years take place in Australia. However, they also have inherently garnered the experience of being a migrant. I avoid confusion through my sampling strategy's

demographic specificity, but this also contributes to a distinction between the generations that is not always so clear cut. This space of generational ambiguity can be beneficial to explore particularly with my relational theoretical approach because the inclusion of additional relations contributes to a more complete understanding of experiences and identity in the diaspora.

Furthermore, in terms of subtleties in generational variances, some recent Vietnamese migrants to Australia do not identify with being first or second generation, because although they are migrants, they did not experience migration the same way the refugees in the seventies, eighties, and nineties experienced it. Like the second generation, they benefited from the first generation establishing a community, but they differ because they are not Australian-born. One individual who I spoke to who falls into this category says he identifies as third-generation Vietnamese-Australian, and his perspective on food carried interesting implications about the differences and similarities in his positionality in the diaspora. This is also another location in which further research can be done. Including this third generation of Vietnamese Australians would lend even greater nuance to the identity work that is being performed in the population.

While some of the methodological limits of this research inhibit its ability to generalize to the larger population of second-generation Vietnamese-Australians, my research objective answers many gaps in the literature regarding what is understood about this population and why it is a significant group to study in the first place. Without looking at the whole diasporic community we risk reducing it to not only just the first generation but also the migrant experience through the lens of struggle and trauma. These facets of this are indeed centrally important to recognize in this population, but as the community gets matures and makes space for itself in larger society, and more young members are born into it, validating spaces for them to express their identity becomes all the more important to avoid reproducing the same harmful practices that were experienced by the first generation. Furthermore, this also means recognizing spaces that aren't solely defined by their ethnic and migrant status. Multiplicity in identity is inherent for the participants of this research and for so many more. This concept is what drew me to relational sociology because it allows us to break down barriers of assumptions to really understand the realities that people face informs the foundation of how we can better give credence to everyone.

This project started as a desire to unpack an unknown space that I instinctively felt within the second-generation diaspora. It reflects on my own personal journey towards identity, but also and what I know others among overseas Vietnamese experience. Pouring over available literature that discusses the Vietnamese diaspora, the focus was primarily on the first-generation and their experience. Likewise, food as a significant arena to study diasporic communities transcended disciplines to address their idiosyncrasies. Conducting this research felt like entering uncharted academic territory with how under-researched the second-generation is. While I cannot untangle myself from my identities, this was a valuable tool that permitted me to leverage academics and cultural specificity within the same project in a fulfilling way. The result of connecting with the participants on an academic and personal level as well as all those who helped informed this research process unveiled prevailing realities withing and beyond the group that will continue to transform over time and space.

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