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Bring a Plate: Facilitating experimentation and learning for newly arrived and established Australians in The Welcome Dinner Project

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Keywords: multiculturalism; commensality; food; pedagogies; solidarities; experimentation; facilitation; liminality

Introduction

Much of the extant migrant and refugee adult education literature examines the types of training, education and learning needed by, or offered to, arrivals to help them settle into a new country (Shan, 2015; Morrice, 2011, Noble, 2013; Simpson and Whiteside 2015; Sprung 2013). We want to also draw attention to the types of adult education needed by, and offered to, local or host communities to help them learn ways to accommodate to new arrivals, extending the work of scholars such as Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas and Mark Miller (2014). This gap in the research becomes all the more

significant when one considers that in Australia, NGOs and social enterprises offer a gamut of initiatives which aim to educate local residents about migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, international students and the challenges facing them. Examples include *Refugee Week, Diversity Works Programme*, and *Harmony Day*. Many of these deploy the sharing of food as a pedagogical strategy, historically a key part of curricula in inter-cultural non-formal adult education programs (authors). Critiqued for tokenism and superficiality, and glossed in Australia as 'spaghetti and polka', these forms of public pedagogy by community-based organisations place great store in the power of sharing food to produce understanding, connection, and empathy (Hilbers, 2012). To date, however little attention has been given to how sharing food operates pedagogically or what participants are taught (authors). This matters because sharing food as an intercultural strategy seesaws between being denigrated or celebrated with little empirical or theoretical research on what it means contextually, how it influences relations of domination and subordination, and how it is conceptualised and practised as a pedagogical approach.

Accordingly, in this paper, drawing on in-depth empirical research over a three-year period including participant-observation and interviews, we explore a project called *The Welcome Dinner* (WDP). As its handbook claims, the WDP aims to bring together 'newly arrived' people and 'established Australians' to meet and 'share stories' over a potluck meal in 'the comfort of their own home'. The purpose is to create meaningful connections, new friendships and social solidarities between people living near to each other. The category 'new arrivals' means migrants, refugees or people still seeking asylum in Australia or international students. Established in Sydney in 2013, the project has rapidly spread to major cities across all states and territories, having recruited more than 5,000 volunteers and participants, and trained over 300 volunteers

to facilitate WDP lunches and dinners. It receives glowing reports in the media, including television, major magazines and newspapers, and social media at a time of intense racist government policies and media reporting towards refugees and asylum seekers and the resurgence of white supremacist anti-immigration politics in Australia.

In addition to home dinners, the WDP also runs community lunches sponsored by local councils. The home and community dinner events are supported and led by volunteer facilitators who are required to participate in a full-day training, and encouraged to attend events and workshops, all convened by senior members of the WDP. The facilitators host the events and run a range of activities during the potluck, including asking people to share stories about the food they have brought, an important point to note because the events whilst just two hours long are highly structured in terms of roles and activities, and which are believed to produce a 'supported environment'.

The WDP forms part of an emerging international movement of food social enterprises and NGOs which perform what we call 'food hospitality activism.' This encompasses attempts by NGOs and social enterprises to facilitate connections between people of different racial backgrounds through food and hospitality, as a means to address social injustice and racism experienced by refugees, asylum seekers and racialised migrants, and to educate established Australians about how to welcome new arrivals.

In this paper, we focus on the micro-contexts of the dinners and the minute activities and techniques that facilitators use in hosting. Our aim is not to analyse the learning outcomes or effects of the project but rather the design and meaning of the activities. As a form of 'designed everyday multiculturalism,' focused on welcoming new arrivals to Australia, it takes effort, skill and labour to manage the contact between different cultural groups over organised meals. Thus, facilitators take over the hosting

of the lunches and dinners to run activities which are imagined to lubricate social dynamics and relations, and produce convivial, commensal affects and behaviours. Drawing on theories of training activities as embodied and cognitive experimentations, which enable new knowledge practices and social relations, we present two core activities at the WDP home dinners: introducing the dishes and expressing feelings on cardboard speech bubbles. From our participant-observation of WDP dinner, training and planning events, analysis of training and participant manuals, and interviews; we discuss how and why ritualised activities around the potluck dinner and post-meal 'speech bubble' activity are planned and facilitated.

Our analytic framework draws on theories of encounters with difference; training exercises as experimental processes; feeling expressions as emotives; structures of commensality, hospitality and the potluck; and everyday multiculturalism. In so doing, we make four contributions to research about how adult education and learning is responding to anxieties about, and the challenges of building social solidarities with, migrants in Australia. Firstly, in the words of Hongxia Shan and Pierre Walther 'while studies of everyday multiculturalism have uncovered various dimensions of related practices, rarely have researchers taken a learning perspective toward multicultural practices' (2015, p. 20). Secondly, we offer new ways to understand under-theorised but commonplace ritualistic activities in adult education such as icebreakers and the sharing of feelings in the context of formal and informal learning across difference. Thirdly, we extend scholarship about the non-human in adult education to foreground food, which has been relatively ignored to date (Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuk 2015; Shan 2015). Fourthly, in focusing on the training of facilitators, we build on Annette Sprung's challenge to promote education for the 'majority' so that racialised social structures and inequalities are transformed (2013).

The paper has six sections. In the first section, we provide an introduction to the WDP. This is followed by a description of policies and adult education programs for migrants and refugees in Australia, then a review of anthropological and geographical studies of training activities, and literature on encounters with difference through formal training events and food hospitality with generate the theoretical framework for our analysis. After a brief outline of our methodology, our fifth section present fieldnotes, interview data and our analyses of the dinner events, and in particular, two core exercises.

The Welcome Dinner

The WDP's espoused aim is to bring together 'newly arrived people and established Australians to meet over dinner conversation in the comfort of their own home' (WDP Handbook). The WDP publicity explains that 'people come together across cultures over a shared meal' a means through which 'strangers… become friends'. The project aims include:

> To create a platform for meaningful connection, sparking friendships between people of diverse cultures who are living in close proximity to one another in communities throughout Australia.

The project's purpose is to facilitate connections between people through food. The handbook explains:

> The mix of food, conversation and the opportunity to try something new, creates a perfect recipe for connection and rediscovery of our common humanity.

After the dinner, it is hoped that everyone will 'exchange contacts and stay in touch afterwards.' A central part of its philosophy is that the dinner events benefit established, as much as newly arrived, Australians because they too suffer from social isolation and

meaning.

The WDP was launched in 2013, and since then over 200 dinners have been held in homes and community spaces across Australia. Over 300 WDP facilitators have been trained across Australia and over 5,000 people have attended a dinner. While Penny Elsley, the founder describes the WDP as a grassroots movement, as an organisational form, it is in fact a registered charity with a Board of Directors. It could, furthermore, be observed that it operates more like a social enterprise than a charity inasmuch as it relies on a spirit of entrepreneurialism. The WDP is run largely by volunteers, but some have job descriptions with clear roles such as State or Regional Co-ordinator. Funding is sporadic, small amounts raised through crowd-funding, and to date only two State governments have given grants. Local government councils have provided in-kind support. The small national office is in Sydney. The founder has undertaken many unpaid interviews, fund-raising events, talks and training courses.

For the WDP, 'established Australians' refers to anyone who has lived in Australia for over ten years and the category 'newly arrived Australians' covers international students, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who have been in Australia for ten years or fewer. At the dinners we attended, there were a mix of people including international students from the Philippines, Germany and China, refugees from Iran, Afghanistan and Eastern Europe, and established Australians from various ethnic backgrounds.

To support the running of the community and home dinners, the WDP runs nation-wide training, and regional networking and update meetings and specialist training such as on-the-spot trauma counselling for volunteers. The volunteers come from a variety of professional backgrounds including community workers, lawyers, IT

workers, teachers and some retirees. Many are white Australians but some are from new migrant backgrounds. Most are young women.

Australian migrant and refugee policies

Australia is one of most culturally diverse countries in the world (Ho and Jakubowicz, 2016).

> The 2016 Census shows that … nearly half (49 per cent) of Australians had either been born overseas (first generation Australian) or one or both parents had been born overseas (second generation Australian)...Of the 6,163,667 people born overseas, nearly one in five (18 per cent) had arrived since the start of 2012 (ABS 2016).

But despite the longstanding history of transnational migration, and whilst multiculturalism is much vaunted in the 'selling' and marketing of Australia, there is a long history of state sanctioned and political racism (Ho, 2011). Australia has a long history of racist immigration policies, of not being welcoming, and continues to administer brutal detention practices, on and off-shore. The White Australia policy of 1901 racially excluded anyone not seen as White and European from migrating to Australia. 'The very presence of Asians was considered a blemish on the ideal image of the white island continent' (Ang, 2000, p. xiii) and for many years, in the white imaginary there was a deeply embedded 'obvious and threatening otherness of Asians' (Perera 1999, p. 189). Whilst racisms towards Aboriginal and Asian Australians continues, intense racist fears and hatred are now levelled at Arabic and Muslim Australians, new and established, with moral panics intensifying after September 11, 2001 and the Cronulla Riots in 2005 (Poynting et al., 2004; Dreher and Ho, 2009; Ho, 2011). Western Sydney University's Challenging Racism Program found that 32 percent of the population had Islamophobic view of Muslims, compared to 3 per cent in

1998 (Sophocleous, 2017).

The Australian government's refugee and asylum seeker policies have become some of the most draconian, regulatory and securitised in the world with privatised offshore detention centres for people seeking refuge by boats and cruel exclusionary refugee and asylum seeker legislation (Pickering, 2001). While there are NGO's (such as WDP) advocating for more support, the Australian government's track record towards refugees can best be described as harsh and uncompromising. There has been broad electoral support for ruling parties of different political persuasions to establish and sustain policies and programs where asylum seekers are kept in detention centres often for periods over three years, both onshore and offshore (Jupp, 2015). While some wish to strengthen Australia's humanitarian assistance to refugees; politicians, media and general public call for stronger border protection measures, code-word for more stringent provisions for refugees (Phillips and Spinks, 2013). Australia, ranked no. 2 in the world in 2015 by the United Nations Development Program for quality of life (UNDP 2016), ranks globally only '46th relative to national GDP' when it comes to the total number of refugees recognised and resettled by a country (ABC 2016).

Despite the fact that Australia's recent intake of refugees is small compared to other countries, there is vilification and moral panic about refugees and asylum seekers as a 'deviant population' in the 'quality' print media which circulates notions of the invading, racialised and diseased deviant (Pickering, 2001). Right-wing commentators position asylum seekers as 'queue jumpers', threats to Australian security, and the supposedly homogenous culture and national values. State-sanctioned racism limits who can come, live and work in Australia. Labour market research shows that recent humanitarian arrivals are relegated to low paid jobs such as cleaning, aged care, meat-processing, and night security regardless of their qualifications, and there is systemic

discrimination through non-recognition of qualifications (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007). Farida Fozdar and Lisa Hartley write that ‘negativity towards refugees in particular is widespread, with up to 75 per cent of the population seeing them as a threat’ (2013, p. 130). As a result, visibly different migrants and refugees have a perception that they are not welcomed by the majority mainstream population and feel ambivalent about whether they belong in Australia.

The WDP draws attention not only to the situation facing refugees but also for international students, whom research shows two-thirds experience intense loneliness (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland and Ramia, 2008). For the last decade, over half a million international students each year have come to Australia (Australian Government 2017a). In addition to interacting with racist state structures and racism in universities, international students face racialised exploitation as casual workers (Florance and McGhee, 2016), racist abuse on public transport (Williams, Gailberger and Lim, 2016).

While there have been harsh policies and deeply embedded racism, ‘among immigrant-receiving nations, Australia is unique in providing newly arrived immigrants and refugees with settlement and second-language programs that have been nationally funded’ since 1949 (Burns and DeSilva Joyce 2007). Through Australia’s humanitarian assistance program Australian NGOs get government funding to run a range of settlement programs for those who enter the country as refugees and ‘humanitarian’ entrants, but not for skilled or business migrants. These include programs for ESL, isolation and language needs, integrated community development and peer mentoring, human rights, community partnerships, and youth support (Mathews 2008). Fozdar and Hartley (20013) observe these settlement services are recognised as among the best in the world. For adult language education, all humanitarian entrants are entitled to a baseline number of tuition hours at a recognised college; those who have suffered

torture and trauma or have less than seven years of formal schooling are entitled to additional tuition hours. While in recent years there has been pressure for the adult migrant education curricula to be more narrowly vocational, Australian providers have successfully sustained a broad focus on general education.

The WDP does not provide settlement services or formal migrant adult education. Indeed, it seeks funding from government agencies on the grounds it provides an alternative type of support for newly arrived migrants including refugees, international students and new migrants on different visas. In essence, it sees itself as about welcoming new arrivals, and educating established Australians about new arrivals, and bringing people together, to connect, have new conversations in a form of affective and social hospitality over food. Through its food hospitality activism, the WDP wants to show that established Australians desire to make new migrants feel at home and challenge negative perceptions. It also wants to educate established Australians how to welcome. Elsley, the founder explains that she wanted to

> create a safe space for people to meet but to also encourage newly-arrived people and established Australians to think about their meeting in a way that helps create a more welcoming Australia.

Hence, we can think about the WDP producing pedagogical spaces (Shan and Walther, 2015) and advocating for egalitarian practices that disrupt the hierarchisation inherent to racist practices. It exemplifies the type of claims about intercultural encounters always being positive that Linda Morrice suggests hide the darker side of transformative learning (2013).

The WDP presents a three-fold rationale for its food hospitality activism. First, the founder states that many new arrivals have not been invited to an established Australian's home. She gives the example of two Somali women who had been living in

Australia for ten years and still not been invited into the home of an established Australian. Secondly, this weak sense of belonging and feeling alienated and disconnected is not seen as peculiar to new arrivals but a problem affecting established Australians. Thirdly, many established Australians want to meet new arrivals but claim that they do not know how to make it happen. As Elsley explained at the training course we attended:

> So I was actually hearing from both groups of people if you like, from highly professional, good hearted people that I was doing this course with, that they were wanting to meet. So I thought, well what a better way to bring people together than through food.

The WDP provides a space and tightly facilitated activities to enable established and newly arrived Australians to meet in ways which are seen to be 'safe' and hospitable.

Welcoming new arrivals to Australia is politically complicated on many fronts including its history of state racism and recent draconian asylum seeker policy but principally because Australia is a settler colony. Invaded by the British in 1788, Australia is a settler colony in which Indigenous people have been systematically murdered, dispossessed and disadvantaged, suffering higher levels of incarceration and deaths in custody than any other 'ethnic' group. This might mean that non-Aboriginal people are not in a position to welcome new arrivals. Indeed, there is a specific cultural protocol for public events where selected Aboriginal elders welcome non-Aboriginal people to a specific Aboriginal nation in Australia or in lieu of this, a non-Aboriginal person acknowledges the country the event is taking place on and the Aboriginal people from that country.

Micro-social experiments

In this section we review literature that informed our analysis, and examine close-up

studies of training activities and commensal practices which enable experimentation. Scholarship on institutionalised migrant education focuses largely on the content and effects of curriculum, rather than a 'learning perspective towards multicultural practices' (Shan and Walther 2015, p. 20), and hence attention to the micro-practices of engineered everyday multiculturalism in the WDP can help adult education theorising. In similar vein, little attention has been given to the meanings of facilitated activities such as icebreakers or exercises outside of Foucauldian influenced studies, even though adult educators from various theoretical perspectives extensively discuss informal and formal learning and education. It is true that Foucauldian adult education theorists have analysed training activities in detail because Foucault argues that power is exercised through mundane, micro, localized and dispersed knowledge-in-practices (authors). But scholars stick mostly to understanding training activities through the analytics of the 'confessional' or 'technologies of the self' (Fejes 2008; Reich 2008; Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tenannt and Yates 2003). This scholarship extends our understanding of training activities but has become somewhat predictable. The reliance on the confessional has been challenged by Foucauldian studies of informal learning outside of the scholarship in adult education, for instance *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Valverde, 1998; Valverde and White-Mair, 1999) and *Weight Watchers* (Heyes 2006).

In similar vein, studies of workplace and professional learning which draw on practice theories and socio-material theories have yet to analyse formal facilitation activities in any sustained close-up way outside of pre-determined learning theory (for instance, Falk, Hopwood and Dalgren, 2017; Hager, Lee and Reich, 2012). In contrast, geography and anthropology scholars undertake ethnographic research on professional training courses, and focus with more attention to detail on their 'micro-contexts… minute workings and techniques' (Wilson 2013, p. 74). These studies are more open in

their analysis of facilitated exercises and activities, not reducing them to particular theories or classifications (Hinchcliffe, 2000). Accordingly, in our analysis, we turn to these studies because they take training activities seriously as forms of social experiment, prising open their complex relations, analogies and operations, studying carefully the features that characterise the activities (Martin, 1994; Hinchcliffe, 2000; Wainwright et al., 2010; Wilson, 2013). Trainers and facilitators often set great store by such exercises and see them part of their expertise and repertoire.

Some of these studies examine outdoor corporate training which use activities to experiment with organisational hierarchical and gender relations through embodied learning. In an early influential study, anthropologist Emily Martin (1994) undertook an ethnography of a large-scale outdoors experiential management learning intervention, involving trust-building techniques with ropes within a very large US company listed in Fortune 500. The purpose of the programme was to develop both organisational and individual flexibility through risk-taking and to model physically the type of worker the corporations wanted to employ. Martin describes how activities involve participants walking tightropes and balancing on the top of very tall narrow wobbling poles. People are encouraged to be active in taking risks: 'like the shifting poles, platforms, ropes and wire unmoored in space, the nature of the person itself is to shift and to be able to tolerate continuing shifts' (Martin, 1994, p. 214). She explains how the trainers see the exercises as a way for participants to 'experience the metaphor' (1994, p. 214). Managers and workers experiment with the boundaries and divisions between them in the exercises, and the gendered characteristics associated with men and women are scrambled. The assumption built into the 'outward bound' experiential learning is that mastering risks in one domain is transferable to others.

Riffing off Martin's analysis, geographer Steve Hinchcliffe (2000) writes about an outward-bound corporate management training course run in the UK. His argument is that the outdoor exercises generate new forms of experimentation, experimental learning, knowledge practices and styles. Experimental learning is about 'performances which bring about something new' (2000, p. 575). In particular, the experiments relate to new forms of organising in the corporate world around entrepreneurialism and risk-taking. Thus, corporate training is an operationalisation of a wider narrative of organisational change to do with enterprise, agility, transformation and teamwork. In particular, this means that the training encourages reflexive, self-motivated, creative, risk taking, agile and active bodies and not 'rigid, disciplined bodies.'

His point of departure is the isomophormism between shifts in knowledge in social theory and management training. Thus, social theory - such as feminism and social psychology – has moved away from traditional rational and disembodied epistemology which privileges cognition towards knowing as experiential, tacit, relational and embodied. He traces the course practices and the types of knowing they provoke. Hence, balancing on poles, climbing, abseiling, sensory deprivation, building rafts enable 'corporeal experimentation.' Workplace conventions and forms of embodiment are disturbed as role-plays allow experiments with working relations. Work identities are unsettled through the types of clothing people wear for the activities which get away from 'artefacts of rank.' The 'outdoors becomes an experimental classroom' (2000, p. 582). In summing up, he suggests that the course can be understood a simulation through which metaphors of risk taking, agility, and creativity can be applied to workplaces. But he adds that it is more than this because the course is so different from the workplace. Thus, it is not about learning about the workplace or about building rafts but non-cognitivist knowing and corporeal experimentation.

Martin and Hinchcliffe examine how outdoor training activities are used as metaphors for new ways of working but also enable experiments with workplace relations, in particular, hierarchies. Martin, Hinchcliffe and Wainwright et al. (2010), draw our attention to the significance of the body and embodied training. They all emphasise the significance of the space in which the training takes place – the outdoors for Martin and Hinchcliffe and massage salon for Wainwright et al. Other scholars focus on experiments with the cognitive and affective, but again stress the influence of the spaces of training or geographies of encounter (Wilson, 2013). Of particular relevance for our paper is the work of Helen Wilson (2013) because she studies a diversity training course which has resonance with the WDP. Thus, she undertakes an ethnographic study of a diversity workshop run by an international not-for-profit organisation which facilitates 'encounters with difference' and 'prejudice reduction.' Her premise is that in the UK's economic and social context, 'living with difference' and 'diversity related tensions' are very pressing for individuals, organisations and policy makers, with the state and NGOs responding with an 'array of strategies' such as diversity training and community cohesion. Her focus is the range of exercises facilitated on the course which examine everyday violent micro-aggressions experienced by participants and which leave traumatic traces.

The course is a form of 'managed contact' to reconfigure prejudice with defined 'conditions of conduct' in how people should behave: for instance, confidentiality and respect. Activities entail 'practices of embodied thought and critical reflection' from which individuals can learn new knowledge practices around reducing their prejudice and effecting social change. Exercises are designed to cultivate 'experimentations in thought' and affective intensities (2013, p. p 74). The experimentations enable attendees to be 'attentive to' and 'expand conscious thought.' Activities involve first, people

sharing their painful experiences of prejudice and secondly, sharing a list of their own prejudices. The latter generates uncomfortable emotions such as shame and embarrassment, confronts people with their prejudiced thinking habits, encouraging them to develop new forms of thinking. Through feelings of embarrassment and discomfort, people bond, and they alter how they interact with each other. Facilitators use silence and questions to encourage thinking and reflection in the group.

In addition to the exercises which generate thoughts, reflections and feelings, the workshop creates others means for experimentation and learning. People bring in and share personal objects which facilitates **c**onnections between participants. Facilitators ask people to work in small groups to encourage intimacy and trust. In these ways, the exercises produce 'forms of attention and attachment' in the group and 'new ways of feeling' (2013, p. 74). The facilitators design the spatial environment or 'atmosphere' to facilitate diversity and animate 'attachment, encounter and intensity' (2013, p. 76). Thus, their handbook explains how to move furniture and organise games and icebreakers and moved furniture to shift the habits and the 'emotional tonality' of the space (Conradson, 2003 cited p. 76). The facilitators gentle and challenging style enables affective and experiential processes, 'embodied comprehensions' and a space for reflection and 'suspension', removed from everyday life. Furthermore, participants themselves are open before the workshop to challenging their thinking around diversity and prejudice. As a result of all of these practices, attendees are encouraged to 'positive experimentation…in perceptions, interpretation and explanation (Connolly, 2002 cited, p. 76).

Whilst it could be argued that the course Wilson attended was more positive in its effects than many diversity courses, particular those run in-house with mandatory attendance, she still questions its effects. Her overall summation is to ask whether the

techniques and facilitation methods ‘resonate beyond the training events’, and could ever be scaled up by policy makers or NGOs seeking wider social change (Wilson, 2013, p. 73).

Everyday multiculturalism

The literature reviewed examines micro-techniques in designed encounters for embodied, cognitive and affective experimentation, and Wilson’s study, in particular, examines activities around diversity and difference. Other scholarship on encounters across racial and cultural difference explores everyday unmanaged micro-social exchanges rather than formal training or learning. Conceptualising such encounters as everyday multiculturalism, the largely Australian based scholarship examines mundane, habitual, and quotidian practices urban public spaces. Everyday multiculturalism not only stands in contrast to managed or designed training encounters but also official policy multicultural approaches. One of the leading proponents, Amanda Wise, defines the study of everyday multiculturalism as understanding how people ‘inhabit’ multiculturalism: ‘the everyday practice and lived experience of diversity in specific situations and spaces of encounter’ (Wise and Velayutham 2009, p. 3). Hence the focus is on studies of everyday ritual interactions and negotiations over difference in urban neighbourhood spaces, like shopping centres, high streets, public spaces, parks, markets, public housing estates, public transport, schools, workplaces, and sport teams. In particular, research emphasises that there is an ‘everyday give and take’ where ‘mundane acts of reciprocity are the mechanism for negotiating difference’ (Ho 2011, p. 604) from the exchange of care, information and goods, and neighbours sharing of vegetables and recipes (Wise, 2009); or school children swapping lunches and gifts (Noble, 2009). Although researchers focus on the micro-social encounter, they position these in a wider political, social and economic context (Wise 2009).

Of particular significance for our analysis is that everyday multicultural encounters often centre on food exchange and consumption (Wise, 2011). Indeed, this is also the case for designed events focused on intercultural conviviality in workplaces, communities, schools and universities. Food takes on this significance because it is so multifaceted, everyday, material, sensory, embodied, also ritualistic and symbolic of difference. But writing of food's privileged status as a connector, Wise notes that commensal and convivial practices can be a site for 'low-level cosmopolitanism' but also 'cultural anxiety and disjuncture… disgust and desire' (2011, p. 82). Hence, her project is to study several intercultural food sharing and consumption scenarios to interrogate the specific conditions which enable positive experiments with culinary and cultural difference rather than those which exacerbate disconnection, alienation or racism (2011, p. 84).

Experimenting with eating the Other's food can generate strong feelings because it is taken into the body and can be seen as threat or transgression. Hospitality can feel precarious, dangerous, threatening or anxiety provoking. Ben Highmore suggests that in cultural culinary experimentation, we encounter new 'not me worlds' which engenders feelings from pleasure and joy but also aggression and fear (cited Wise 2011, p. 90). On the positive side, 'gustatory relish' can produce embodied connections and contribute to an appreciation of the Other in the community (Narayan, 1997 cited Wise 2011, p. 90).

In her analysis of different forms of food exchange and experimentation, several dimensions were significant in shaping the affective encounter: the social setting, the materiality of the spaces of consumption, the social rituals involved, the actual food consumed and the wider political context. The food in its material, sensuous and symbolic qualities can 'invoke… push apart and rehabituate bodies' (2011, p. 85). In essence, it matters where, and when and with whom you eat: with neighbours or

workmates or with strangers; around a dining table or on a table in a mall. In these ways, food can produce new forms of inter-subjective relations and solidarity.

Food sharing in a potluck commensal style – bring a plate in Australian argot - can engender positive forms of exchange. Hospitality practices such as sharing not only the food but stories about where the food comes from, its cultural significance and the cultural biography of the giver can have positive impacts. Accommodating other people's preferences in the choice of dish made. The brought ethnic dish can suggest a gift of 'labour, otherness, and of me' (2011, p. 105). As a form of hospitality, the potluck style reinforces a sense of giving and reciprocity. At a sociality level, people can admire cooking skills. The guest/host role is blurred. Such food sharing is ritualised in a number of ways. And as Wise writes, 'it is order, ritual, hospitality, and reciprocity which makes [food] safe or at least reduces the ambiguity and anxiety that can sometimes come with encounters with difference' (2011, p. 101). In this way, as a form of intercultural commensality, the potluck meal not only enables the sharing of food and culture but 'incorporates hybrid others in a bodily way, through the consumption of the Other's food…[and] establishes a sense of 'we-ness' in difference (2011, p. 102).

Methodology

Our discussion and analysis arises from research undertaken between 2014 and 2017. For this paper we analysed data from our participant-observation, interviews and document analysis. Our fieldwork began with a number of meetings and semi-structured interviews with key informants such as the founding WDP Director and regional co-ordinators. We then moved on to participant-observation of a volunteer training full-day workshop, a networking meeting for WDP facilitators, three 'home' and three 'community' dinners, and a full-day WDP Strategy Planning workshop. This was followed up by one-on-one interviews with 12 home dinner participants. Our research

interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. We audio-taped and transcribed the interviews, the training workshop for WDP Facilitators and the WDP Strategy Planning workshop. Follow-up interviews were undertaken with the WDP Director to augment information and fill gaps in our knowledge as the research deepened. To avoid being intrusive we did not audio-tape the dinner events.

For the dinner events we instead made detailed fieldnotes. We developed a participant-observation checklist based on ethnographic and food studies literature. We also undertook visual analysis by taking photographs especially of interactions between participants, hosts and facilitators, but also of foods, objects and spaces. We participated in the dinner events: we brought dishes, ate, drank and conversed with the other participants. Our observation was, of course, disclosed. We made 'headnotes' and 'scratch-notes' during the events and wrote up more detailed fieldnotes at the end of each training and dinner event, detailing our observations and noting our hunches, questions, and preliminary interpretations (Mason, 2002). Our analysis drew on a repeated reading of our fieldnotes and interview transcripts, followed by successive stages of coding across the data. Our coding was both inductive and deductive, and we created in vivo, process and literature informed codes.

Experiments

In this section, we provide an introduction to the WDP events, drawing on our fieldnotes and interviews, and then present two key activities from the home dinners, including how they were discussed in the training workshop. We have chosen the 'introduce your dish activity' exercise. Here attendees talk about what they have brought to eat, why and what's in it, an activity designed to encourage people to talk, even if their English is not so good and to tell brief autobiographic stories and/or showcase their cultural culinary knowledge and skills. We follow this with the 'speech

bubbles' exercise, organised after the meal is finished, a post-commensal event, designed to encourage people to verbalise and share their emotional experience of the dinner.

The main aim of the WDP is to convene dinner events in 'local homes.' Hosts and participants register online, and from the WDP database a local co-ordinator selects and invites established Australians and new arrivals, ideally residing in the same local area. Dinners run for two hours and this timing is strictly adhered to by the facilitators. An established or newly arrived Australian hosts the event. Their home and motivation is vetted by the regional co-ordinator who visits the host in their home weeks before the event. The events are facilitated by trained volunteers, one of whom is usually also a regional co-ordinator. Prior to the event, a participant handbook and email are sent out which offer tips, guidance and a description of the event. The agenda for the event includes a formal welcome, an acknowledgement of country (a protocol), host welcome and introduction to their home, an icebreaker, gathering round the food with each person explaining their dishes, eating, sharing feelings about the event, exchanging contact information, and a group photograph.

The people who host, attend and volunteer as facilitators come from varied backgrounds. Hosts are often from white middle-class professional backgrounds but not always. Some are non-white, some not middle-class and some are new arrivals. Facilitators come from various racial backgrounds, many are young white Anglo Australian or European women but others are from young black British, Asian Australian and Asian migrant heritage. Some work as professionals in the public and private sector. Attendees vary considerably in age, race and ethnicity and background. Established Australians are often from white middle-class backgrounds, and work in a variety of sectors including education, refugee and migrant services, arts and culture,

PR and beauty services. The racial and ethnic backgrounds of newly arrived Australians varies according to whether they are international students, migrants or refugees. For instance, international students have come from China and Germany, and refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran.

Like the diversity training course of which Wilson writes, the WDP event designs and facilitates an encounter with difference. Because it is planned in so many ways, the dinner is not like quotidian rituals of everyday multiculturalism, but more like the 'bring a plate' neighbourly food sharing of which Wise writes. Its intention is in stark contrast to the diversity workshop which seeks to surface shame and discomfort, while the dinner event aims to generate comfort, pleasure, a sense of harmony and safety. The WDP Facilitators workshop and the handbooks offer practical guidance about how to behave, arrange the space, what to say and structure the event. The WDP has a facilitator and participant handbook which offer practical guidance and outline the tools needed. The guidance includes what exercises should be delivered, what support is needed, arrangement of furniture, and information to be delivered. The facilitators' workshop introduced, explained and roleplayed the 'minute workings and techniques' of the event (Wilson, 2013).

All of these tips and guidance helps to create a welcoming atmosphere through its focus on order, care and safety. As the founder explains at the training course for facilitators:

> [The WDP] just exploded. And so I think what we found was that here is something which sounds so simple. It's just a meal, people bringing a plate, pot luck meal…[But] it's quite intensive in terms of what it needs in facilitation. To make people safe to be able to come which is why people aren't having these pop up dinners in the first place. Because there are all these barriers. Most of them are around feeling safe…without those facilitators (a) people don't turn up because

they don't feel safe to come. And (b) it's not necessarily going to be the experience that you hoped for.

Like the diversity course, the WDP is 'managing contact in a particular spatial contact' (Wilson 2013, p. 74) but its 'geography of encounter' is someone's home. The home events are preferred as forms of encounter by the WDP because of the symbolic and affective significance of intercultural hospitality in the intimate space of the domestic sphere and its significance as a site of welcome and places of liminality (Beeman, 2014). But traditional dinner party roles are upturned in that the 'host' does not host the meal because it is facilitated by volunteers, and does not provide the food as it is a shared potluck meal in which everyone brings a dish. As food studies writers note, a potluck meal produces more egalitarian relations than other forms of meals because the preparing, shopping, budgeting and cooking, and cleaning up are distributed across the guests and not allocated to a single host (Crowther, 2013; Julier, 2013; Wise, 2011). Moreover, it represents a loss of control because as in the Welcome Dinner, facilitators and hosts can control the types of food or dishes brought. Thus, the usual ways in which dishes served are influenced – by local cuisine, host tastes, guest needs – are over-ruled in favour of surprise, experimentation and sharing. The potluck food's symbolism extends to the rest of the material culture – type of utensils, cutlery, seating, table decoration – at the home dinner, as informality is encouraged with mixed utensils from tupperware containers to boxes all placed on the table. The seating arrangements are informal with a mix of dining chairs, sofas, and beanbags. Often people stand up to eat and talk in small groups, sometimes mingling with new groups as they go to get extra food.

We were taught in the facilitators' workshop that the potluck was important in making newly arrived Australians feel respected/valued and enabling a range of people

from different backgrounds to host dinners. It also takes away the obligation to reciprocate which is often central to dinner invitations in which there is often cycle of ties and obligations (Crowther, 2013; Julier, 2013). In terms of eating at a home dinner, with its risks of not liking certain foods, the potluck enables people to bring dishes they will like, serve themselves and help themselves to what they want to much or as little of dishes as they want (Wise, 2011). Thus, it avoids more formal practices of being served and obligations to eat everything.

Given that the WDP team is the organisational host, the dinner event is designed with a concern for explaining the stages of hospitality and commensality such as the 'formal hostly welcome,' the 'transition to the dining table and sphere of commensality,' the announcement of the start of the commensal meal, the post-commensal activity and final departure (Beeman, 2014). In similar vein, it attends to teaching attendees about the informal table manners of helping oneself to food, and eating away from the table, and in particular, the forms of sociality and atmosphere it wishes to animate.

The WDP facilitators' workshop teaches the trainee facilitators new knowledge practices about how to plan, prepare and run a food event in such a way that it becomes food hospitality activism rather than just a shared meal. It emphasises that all the attendees and the host will need to experiment with forms of sociality, particularly in terms of conventional social niceties and small talk. Certain topics are seen as inhospitable and unwelcoming. These include: talking about one's paid work as this could reinforce status inequality; or discussing how and wherefrom newly arrived people came, because of potential for trauma, embarrassment, hierarchisation or legality. As the founder explains:

> The intent is…to invoke the kinds of conversations that are a breath of fresh air amongst our society. Rather than the usual speak of 'where do you live or work?', the Welcome Dinner Project facilitates conversations around those aspects of life where our human story intersects. And our common human hopes and dreams are realised.

Thus, WDP seeks to create relations and feelings of commonality, not difference. Unlike the diversity training Wilson studied with its focus on prejudice reduction, and discomforting emotions, the WDP draws on a humanism which encourages imaginative, affective connections that transcend difference. It acknowledges that people may have different, and uneven economic, emotional, ethnic, faith and cultural resources but wants to highlight possibilities for an intersubjectivity across these: that people are more than atomistic individuals subject to social forces (Hansen, 2010). Of course, such a view can be subject to critique for erasing racialised power differentials, histories of racial antagonism and racism, but in this paper, we seek to understand what it claims and how it operationalises these claims in its practices. Thus, to facilitate the de-emphasising of hierarchical difference, the WDP workshop teaches facilitators to induct the attendees in new ways to make conversation:

> So, we have two rules but …we ask you as facilitators to put out those rules in a way that's an invitation rather than a demand. The invitation is this:
>
> > 'for us to have a conversation that's a breath of fresh air. So we're going to invite you not to talk about where we work or to ask people where they work or how they came to Australia. If someone gives you that information that's fine but we're not going to ask it…This is an invitation to have a different kind of conversation tonight. So we ask you not to ask people how they came to Australia or where they work'.

These rules are in place to disturb the conversational habits and norms of established Australians. The founder explained at the facilitators' training that

questioning about how people came to Australia is not appropriate for refugees because of Australia's offshore detention policy for asylum seekers arriving by boat. The problem with the question about where people work is that it can cause embarrassment, especially for refugees and humanitarian migrants who may not have a job. Such rules temporarily ask people to unsettle identities and hierarchies created by economic, social and economic capital. Whilst 'artefacts of status' may be evident in other ways through clothes, cars, jewellery and hobbies, the rule suspends the social embarrassment some people may feel (Hinchliffe, 2010).

The WDP asks attendees, through planned and facilitated exercises, to experiment with other ways of getting to know people. In essence, there are four broad exercises:

- icebreaker in which people break into small groups, introduce their names and its historical and cultural meaning, and then a chosen passion such an interest, hobby or value;
- introduce your dish;
- sharing your feeling on cardboard speech bubble;
- share your contact details and group photo.

Exercises with simple instructions are designed to be of short duration, involve everyone, be 'low risk' not traumatising, get people talking and mingling. At the centre of the event are the commensal practices of eating, drinking and talking about the food.

Introducing your dish activity

The facilitators' workshop taught us how to structure the event including the staging of the potluck. Thus, facilitators ensure dishes are arranged on a table and then after they

have delivered a welcome to the event and run an icebreaker, they bring everyone round the table and acknowledge each dish in turn by asking who made it. Each person is asked to talk to their dish; ingredients and why they brought it, ideally through a connection to history or culture. Facilitators are asked to ensure that everyone has enough cutlery and drinks, to oversee conversations and re-direct them if people seem uncomfortable, and to encourage everyone to participate. Hence, they perform typical emotional and communication labour of 'hostessing' (Veijola and Jokinen, 2008; Author).

The WDP handbooks advise how to eat a potluck as it may be new to some people and to prompt with a phrase like 'dig in'! An important part of the facilitators' hostessing role is to signal different stages of the event and move attendees through these comfortably. Using anthropological theories of liminality, William Beeman (2014) suggests that structured meals with invited guests have predictable ritual stages – processes of commensality - which transition people from the outside world to the commensal event. Thus, the facilitators 'passage' people through the front door across 'threshold' into the home, towards a 'gathering place' such as the kitchen, where everyone makes small talk and then to the liminal place of the table. Facilitators have to provide different announcements to signal the different stages of social action: for example, they make a verbal or non-verbal 'summons to the table' and an announcement that the meal has begun.

As mentioned, individuals are asked to bring a dish because of the potluck style of commensality and its production of more egalitarian relations. The guests prepare their dishes at home or buy them and bring them in a dish. There is not much emphasis placed on what food or dish to bring. Thus, there are no requirements to attend to healthy, ethical or vegetarian food. Before the stage of eating or commensality,

everyone in turn is asked by the facilitator to introduce their dish. Usually this takes around 2-3 minutes per person and around 25% of the whole event all told. Using our fieldnotes, we describe the typical facilitation processes at a home dinner.

> A few other people are already there. After about ten minutes, everyone has arrived:
>
> - Thirteen adult guests – two Persian men in their 40s; one Middle Eastern woman in her 50s; one Australian Macedonian man in his 60s; a Canadian Australian woman and her partner, a white Australian man, both in their 50s; two international students from the Phillipines in their 20s and an Australian Filipino in her 30s; two white Australian women in their late thirties, one of them with her daughter, in her late teens; and the other with five white young Australian children aged 4-10.
> - The two hosts are an Asian Australian woman and a white Australian man, both in their late 20s.
> - The two facilitators are white Australian women, one in her late twenties and one in her thirties.
>
> Isabelle, one of the facilitators and a youth worker in her late 20's, calls us together, and welcomes us. She tells us a bit about the project, the structure of the event and thanks Jared and Lakshmi, the two hosts in front of everyone for opening their house so we can enjoy a meal. She explains how we will do an introductions exercise, splitting into pairs, telling people about our name and our passion. Isabelle kicked off by thanking the hosts for opening up their house so that we can all enjoy a meal. She does a formal acknowledgement of Indigenous people. She explains there are rules about not talking about work and not asking where people come from. And she suggests we get chatting. She said there's lots of things you can talk about, the local area, your passion and then said we're going to introduce the dishes: what's in them and why you brought your dish. Maybe you cooked for a celebration. Then we will be eating and will swap seats and wrap up at 2.30pm.
>
> Various non-alcoholic drinks in hand, having chatted away, after about 20 minutes into the event, Isabelle calls us together and asks us to congregate around the dining table. The table is heaving with dishes – a huge plate of glistening Iranian rice, an Indian carrot dessert, a large fruit salad, and other dishes that are more ambiguous. The hosts have clearly gone to considerable effort laying a clean white

table cloth, serving cutlery, glasses and seating close to the table. It is a feast and we both feel hungry and excited about what we will sample, try, and eat. We all move around the table in a higgled piggedly circle, some people huddle closer to their friends. The table is rectangular and takes up much of the open plan kitchen and dining space which looks out on the back garden adjacent to a park with large eucalypt gum trees. The summer sun streams through the sliding glass doors over the dishes.

Isabelle quietly requests that each of us introduce our dish: 'what's in them and why you brought your dish. Maybe it's associated with your family or a celebration.' People hesitate to begin. Someone starts. Sometimes Isabelle invites someone in with a nod of the head or points to a dish and says, who brought this? Most people describe what is in their dish, what the dish is and some add a cultural story. People murmur approval and on occasions, for instance the Persian rice dish and the Indian carrot cake, oooh and ahhh, and admire the food and the skills of the cooks. A meatloaf bathed in dark gravy with baked pear in a functional rather than elegant serving dish is introduced by an older man with shorts and long socks. It is a dish from Macedonia which he has made. A middle-aged woman dressed in elegant and colourful robes with a headscarf, who spoke basic English, tells us that she had brought an Indian dessert with carrots. Newly arrived people bring more generous dishes than established Australians. For example, two men who identify as Persian, brought a large Tajin with saffron coloured rice and explain this has taken several hours to prepare. People mention enthusiastically they can smell the walnut oil and pomegranates in their dish. By contrast, a white couple – a Canadian and an Australian confess that the fruit salad they have brought was quickly cobbled together. People don't ask questions but instead murmur, coo, smile, peer more closely to show approval and gratitude. Around 30 minutes later, just under a quarter of the time of the whole dinner event, Isabelle invites us to help ourselves. The whole group look like they can't wait to dig in with 'gustatory relish' (Wise 2011)!

As can be seen from our fieldnotes, the introducing your dish activity is a ritualised exercise which encourages low-key participation. It enables a sharing of stories – cultural, ethnic and/or culinary, an appreciation of culinary skills, and care and attention for people for whom English is not their first language. All of which is

modelled by the verbal and bodily styles of the facilitators. Social scientists emphasise how commensality is a social ritual which entails exchange and produces relations through cultural rules of eating etiquette and commensal practices (Beeman, 2014; Crowther, 2013). An important social dynamic in the Welcome Dinner is that 'strangers' are brought into homes. Mary Douglas argues that meals identify boundaries, inclusions and exclusions: those who belong and those who do not belong, with drinks given to strangers and workmen, and meals for close friends, family and special guests (1997). Meals express friendship. The sharing of stories presages the sharing of food. The linguistic act of everyone introducing the food in turn, and everyone listening closely marks the passage from 'the public outside to the intimate inside' and reduces the gaps, hierarchy and social differences between people, however temporarily (Beeman, 2014). The activity enables everyone to 'approach the table in relative state of social comfort' (Beeman, 2014).

The activity does 'pre-liminality preparation' for the liminality of the commensal act of eating, but has particular resonance given the presence of the Other and their food (Beeman, 2014). As Wise explains the sharing of the Other's food requires order and narrative connections to build trust and reduce cultural anxiety or fear. Eating the potluck at the dinner event calls for cultural and culinary experimentation given that most people are strangers to each other; some are minoritised strangers, and more than several dishes are unfamiliar with unknown ingredients. Trying the dishes requires corporeal experimentation too. Hence, the act of coming to the table and eating constitutes the liminal event in which usual social rules of who eats together, what food they eat, and who mixes with whom are 'suspended' and replaced with these experiments, new knowledge practices and 'special observances' (Beeman, 2014). Thus, the activity can help prepare emotions and bodies

for the commensal event, underlining how the dishes are gifts of labour and Otherness, and support the transformation of social relations, the creation of a sense of intercultural 'we-ness' and the feeling of communitas and pleasurable bonding (Wise, 2011; Beeman, 2014).

Of course, even with everyone's keenness and orientation to learn and experiment, some dishes and people are less enthusiastically sampled. Some people and dishes are left to one side. In their study of eating migrant food, Robyn Longhurst and colleagues report how even though they as researchers wanted to try and like all the food served, their bodies betrayed them, and there were some dishes they could just could not stomach (2004). In reality, racialised relations are deeply complex, inflected by colonial histories and individual biographies which produce bodily encounters inflected by racism, anxiety, frustration and disjuncture (Ahmed, 2004; Wilson, 2013; Wise, 2011). But the intent of the WDP and its facilitated activity is to try to pre-empt or mediate these impressions.

On the facilitator's training day, the founder explained the purpose of the exercise:

> We haven't asked people to actually share their name or where they're from in the group. They've actually introduced their food. But we just found out a lot about that person from the story they told us about their dish. So it's kind of a nice way, that's not quite so confronting if you like, to find out something about each person right at the beginning. So they introduce their dish rather than themselves. But actually, they're introducing themselves in a way as well.

She tells us more about the aim of the activity.

> It's the role of the lead facilitator to get everyone to stand around the table, around the food and to start the process that way. We just find - we've been doing it at every welcome dinner, the same process, and it works really really well. It's just such a nice way to start off. To focus on the food is just a lovely way to begin. It's

> not confronting. Everyone is excited about trying everyone else's food. I think people who have been here and have been so isolated and felt like they're not making any contribution to anyone else in our society, for people to actually be really interested in their food and to be wanting to try something that they've made means a lot. There's just that feeling of contributing something that means something to other people. That's very simple but at the same time it can mean a lot.

The founder emphasises the excitement and 'gustatory relish' experienced at the dinners but also stresses how some newly arrived Australians can feel a sense of recognition through how their dishes are treated. Whilst this could be seen as a patronising gesture, the violence and racism experienced by some refugees in detention camps cannot be under-estimated and thus, kindness and interest, albeit temporary and short-lived can be important. In sum then, the activity prior to the commensal event of eating food, acts as the final stage of transition to the liminal relations of food intimacy and sharing, in which people move from being invited strangers to become 'equal' participants. Fraught with social and bodily risks, the activity and the sharing of food works to connect people, and as Wise notes, 'incorporating the other into a situation of conviviality which broadens [everyone's] community to incorporate the other' (2011, p. 99). The meal then marks the transformation of social relations, and for the WDP, like the Outward Bound courses, the liminal space of commensality works as a metaphor for a different kind of Australia in which everyone is welcome.

Speech bubbles

After the liminal event of eating, there is another import post liminal activity towards the end of the two hours of the event, and pre- the departure stage back into the outside world (Beeman, 2014). After everyone has served themselves to the food, mixed and mingled, the facilitator announces that sadly the meal is coming to a close and there are

a few things to do before the event finishes: the speech bubble exercise, the group photograph and swapping contacts. The instructions in the facilitator guide explains how to run the speech bubble activity:

> Ask people to write one word about how they feel, can be in own language. When you sense people have had enough time, move into sharing. Thank people for sharing and perhaps comment on some of the sharing.

The facilitators hand out coloured pieces of cardboard about half the size of a hand in the shape of a speech bubble, an oval shape with a tail at the bottom to indicate speech or thoughts coming from someone's mouth or head. It is one of 'most recognisable signs of the visual language used in comics and cartoons' (Cohn, 2013). They explain that we are to write a word to describe how we feel at the end of the dinner event. There are different coloured pens available. People are informed they can write in any language, not just English. Some people write quickly and are done, and others think and ponder. A few quietly ask for clarification. At Cranebook, we were in the living room and people wrote while sitting. It takes a few minutes until everyone is done. We are then asked in turn to read our feeling out-loud. Words vary from happy, positive, lovely, optimistic, blessed, proud, new faces, thankful, grateful to happy-happy- I find new friends. Once someone wrote boring! Some people simply read out their feeling words, people nod or smile, and others provide short explanations. Each time we have seen the exercise, people have written overwhelmingly positive words. Some people appear moved. Some people say quite meaningful things, for others it is just a nice activity. For a few it is quite strange but easy enough to go along with. After the litany is finished, each person recites their bubble word in turn - joy, happy, at home, hopeful. There is a warm atmosphere in the room, and the temporary sense of 'we-ness' more consolidated and embodied. The activity lasts around 15 minutes,

12.5% of the total time together. The bubbles are collected later and used for marketing, promotion, evaluation purposes and displayed in photographs and other events.

At the WDP facilitators' workshop it was explained as follows:

> Once the food is finished - so after the meal - then we do the speech bubble activity; which is kind of an icon of the WDP. You saw lots of them in the video. We actually collected them all last year. We had over 600 of them on display at our exhibition in Martin Place. It was really beautiful just to see hundreds and hundreds of these words with people describing their experience. So we're going to keep collecting them.

The focus for the activities is how we feel. Thus, we are asked to condense our experience of the event into a verbalised written emotional or affective response which we then share as a group with everyone. We can analyse this through the lens of humanist adult education and Rogerian approaches to facilitation and a focus on the expression of feelings. The direct expression of feelings has a long history in humanist therapy, interpersonal skills training and some forms of feminist consciousness-raising. Underpinning some of these practices is an assumption that feelings represent the unmediated truth about the self. In some models of friendship, the sharing of feelings as opposed to information or thoughts is understood as more intimate.

But we suggest a different way into understanding this ritualised activity: through the concept of emotives. Thus, scholars write that we can understand emotional expressions as emotives: speech acts which perform feelings. They are verbalised feeling words that operate performatively: they do things (Ahmed, 2004; Reddy, 2001). Rather than seeing the emotives as expressions of inner feelings, we can theorise them as conventionalised feeling words which bring emotions into being. Emotives appear descriptive but are, in fact, performative. This is partly because bodily feelings are fugitive, inchoate and messy and in labelling them we reconfigure them (Wetherell,

2012). It is also because they need to be rendered intelligible culturally and contextually and hence fit in with social norms and emotional regimes. As William Reddy puts it: an emotional expression is an attempt to call up the emotion that is expressed; it is an attempt to feel what one says one feels. Thus, in expressing a feeling in the first person, the feeling becomes formulated and in so doing, is transformed. The utterance itself changes the feeling. As Margaret Wetherell sums it up pithily, emotives 'describe, perform and reformulate subjective experience (2012, p. 98). Or according to Reddy (2001), emotives change the state of the speaker and the world around them. Emotives make meaning out of our sensations but through conforming to imposed ways of expression.

Going round one after another creates a litany of positive feelings which then make the group feel those feelings of positivity, bonding, and we-ness. The repetition aims to generate a sense of embodied communitas. Indeed, Ahmed (2004) shows feelings are performative in the sense that the circulation of feelings can bring into being a sense of 'we'. The words on the speech bubble express warmth, appreciation, and happiness which perform gratitude for 'the welcome'. Unlike the diversity training of which Wilson writes and dark feelings in Morrice's study of migrant education, there is not talk of racism or negative feelings. To kill the joy, with newly arrived migrants expressing feelings of alienation, sadness or anger, would not return the gratitude nor attune to the affective atmosphere or we-ness.

Conclusion

In this paper, we respond to the call for papers by presenting the WDP, a community organisation which undertakes food hospitality activism by bringing established and newly arrived Australians together for a facilitated potluck dinner. We argued that it is helpful to analyse the detailed exercises run as part of the dinner in similar vein to

anthropological and geographical studies of training activities which explore how facilitated activities can be understood as rituals which enable embodied, cognitive, affective experimentation and new knowledge practices. We augmented these analytic ideas with theorising on everyday multiculturalism, particularly studies of intercultural food sharing. Whilst everyday multiculturalism differs as a mode of encounter of difference from training courses in that many of its practices are not designed, planned or facilitated as intercultural pedagogies, Wise suggests that an intercultural potluck dinner involves experimentation. And the work of Beeman shows how home dinners with invited guests are designed and staged, deploying spaces of liminality and practices of transformative relations. Drawing on these theories, and our fieldnotes from the WDP facilitation training, dinner events and interviews, we showed how the conversational rules and activities encouraged social and embodied experimentation. These can produce a temporary sense of embodied connection, we-ness and learning through the collective sharing of food, stories, and feelings, and the liminality of the activities and the commensal event.

There are questions about the effects of the events on attendees and wider racist politics in Australia. Our study, to date, has not analysed the interview data from attendees, although we interpret our observation of attendees in this paper. The aim of this paper is to examine the aims of facilitator-led activities. In relation to the question about wider effect, the WDP offers attendees a one-off event with fleeting connections. It expects people at the events to follow up, by running their own events, or by connecting in other ways. Hence, in contrast to certain forms of everyday multiculturalism - for instance the community gardeners in Shan and Walter's study (2015) - the WDP creates a pop-up pedagogical space and group bond. Indeed, scholars and activists question the longevity and wider resonances of such projects including

Wilson of the diversity training she studied. Moreover, both Gillian Valentine (2008), and Christina Ho (2011) question whether everyday multicultural acts of neighbourly exchange is equivalent to respect for difference and 'scaled up beyond the moment' (Valentine, 2008, p. 334). But another way to look at this is that the temporary, fleeting, experimental and short-term has its place, and can create helpful effects through liminal relations and experimental sociality (Collins, 2004). For instance, from quite different perspectives, Wise, Eve Giraud (2015) and Jenny Molz (2012) argue that ephemeral socialities across difference can be understood as such but still experienced as intense, meaningful and significant.

At the same time, it is important not to exaggerate the uneven distribution of emotional, economic and social capital in the events. Minoritised people may not feel or give any of the positive feelings expected. Indeed, the work of Ahmed suggests that emotions are unevenly distributed in social encounters, including in pedagogical spaces and homes, such that racialised minorities may be experienced as unfriendly, frightening or threatening. Ahmed (2004) show how impressions based on collective past histories, colonialism and individual biographies create bodily senses of proximity and strangerliness which are difficult to control or resist. In this paper, we are concerned with the WDP intentions, and the 'experimental set up' (Hinchcliffe, 2000) of their food hospitality activism through their training and activities and more research needs to be done on the experiences and effects of those that attend.

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Author bios

Rick Flowers and Elaine Swan have jointly undertaken research of various ethnic food tour organisations, food social enterprises providing support and education to migrants and refugees, food activist initiatives and food practices in a mixed race family. To date, they have jointly published over ten book chapters and journal papers and an edited book with Routledge – *Food Pedagogies*.

Bring a Plate: Facilitating experimentation and learning for newly arrived and established Australians in The Welcome Dinner Project

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Bring a Plate: Facilitating experimentation and learning for newly arrived and established Australians in The Welcome Dinner Project

Drawing on in-depth empirical research we explore a project called *The Welcome Dinner* (WDP). The WDP aims to bring together 'newly arrived' people and 'established Australians' to meet and 'share stories' over a potluck meal in 'the comfort of their own home'. The purpose is to create meaningful connections, new friendships and social solidarities. In this paper, we focus on the micro-contexts of the dinners and the minute activities and techniques that facilitators use in hosting. Our aim is not to analyse the effects of the project but rather the design and meaning of the activities. As a form of 'designed everyday multiculturalism', focused on welcoming new arrivals to Australia, it takes effort, skill and labour to manage the contact between different cultural groups over organised meals. Thus, facilitators take over the hosting of the lunches and dinners to run activities which are imagined to lubricate social dynamics and relations, and produce convivial commensal affects and behaviours. Drawing on theories of training activities as embodied and cognitive experimentations, which enable new knowledge practices and social relations, we present two core activities at the WDP home dinners: introducing the dishes and expressing feelings on cardboard speech bubbles.

Keywords: multiculturalism; commensality; food; pedagogies; solidarities; experimentation; facilitation; liminality

Introduction

Much of the extant migrant and refugee adult education literature examines the types of training, education and learning needed by, or offered to, arrivals to help them settle into a new country (Shan, 2015; Morrice, 2011, Noble, 2013; Simpson and Whiteside 2015; Sprung 2013). We want to also draw attention to the types of adult education needed by, and offered to, local or host communities to help them learn ways to accommodate to new arrivals, extending the work of scholars such as Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas and Mark Miller (2014). This gap in the research becomes all the more

significant when one considers that in Australia, NGOs and social enterprises offer a gamut of initiatives which aim to educate local residents about migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, international students and the challenges facing them. Examples include *Refugee Week, Diversity Works Programme*, and *Harmony Day*. Many of these deploy the sharing of food as a pedagogical strategy, historically a key part of curricula in inter-cultural non-formal adult education programs (authors). Critiqued for tokenism and superficiality, and glossed in Australia as 'spaghetti and polka', these forms of public pedagogy by community-based organisations place great store in the power of sharing food to produce understanding, connection, and empathy (Hilbers, 2012). To date, however little attention has been given to how sharing food operates pedagogically or what participants are taught (authors). This matters because sharing food as an intercultural strategy seesaws between being denigrated or celebrated with little empirical or theoretical research on what it means contextually, how it influences relations of domination and subordination, and how it is conceptualised and practised as a pedagogical approach.

Accordingly, in this paper, drawing on in-depth empirical research over a three-year period including participant-observation and interviews, we explore a project called *The Welcome Dinner* (WDP). As its handbook claims, the WDP aims to bring together 'newly arrived' people and 'established Australians' to meet and 'share stories' over a potluck meal in 'the comfort of their own home'. The purpose is to create meaningful connections, new friendships and social solidarities between people living near to each other. The category 'new arrivals' means migrants, refugees or people still seeking asylum in Australia or international students. Established in Sydney in 2013, the project has rapidly spread to major cities across all states and territories, having recruited more than 5,000 volunteers and participants, and trained over 300 volunteers

to facilitate WDP lunches and dinners. It receives glowing reports in the media, including television, major magazines and newspapers, and social media at a time of intense racist government policies and media reporting towards refugees and asylum seekers and the resurgence of white supremacist anti-immigration politics in Australia.

In addition to home dinners, the WDP also runs community lunches sponsored by local councils. The home and community dinner events are supported and led by volunteer facilitators who are required to participate in a full-day training, and encouraged to attend events and workshops, all convened by senior members of the WDP. The facilitators host the events and run a range of activities during the potluck, including asking people to share stories about the food they have brought, an important point to note because the events whilst just two hours long are highly structured in terms of roles and activities, and which are believed to produce a 'supported environment'.

The WDP forms part of an emerging international movement of food social enterprises and NGOs which perform what we call 'food hospitality activism.' This encompasses attempts by NGOs and social enterprises to facilitate connections between people of different racial backgrounds through food and hospitality, as a means to address social injustice and racism experienced by refugees, asylum seekers and racialised migrants, and to educate established Australians about how to welcome new arrivals.

In this paper, we focus on the micro-contexts of the dinners and the minute activities and techniques that facilitators use in hosting. Our aim is not to analyse the learning outcomes or effects of the project but rather the design and meaning of the activities. As a form of 'designed everyday multiculturalism,' focused on welcoming new arrivals to Australia, it takes effort, skill and labour to manage the contact between different cultural groups over organised meals. Thus, facilitators take over the hosting

of the lunches and dinners to run activities which are imagined to lubricate social dynamics and relations, and produce convivial, commensal affects and behaviours. Drawing on theories of training activities as embodied and cognitive experimentations, which enable new knowledge practices and social relations, we present two core activities at the WDP home dinners: introducing the dishes and expressing feelings on cardboard speech bubbles. From our participant-observation of WDP dinner, training and planning events, analysis of training and participant manuals, and interviews; we discuss how and why ritualised activities around the potluck dinner and post-meal 'speech bubble' activity are planned and facilitated.

Our analytic framework draws on theories of encounters with difference; training exercises as experimental processes; feeling expressions as emotives; structures of commensality, hospitality and the potluck; and everyday multiculturalism. In so doing, we make four contributions to research about how adult education and learning is responding to anxieties about, and the challenges of building social solidarities with, migrants in Australia. Firstly, in the words of Hongxia Shan and Pierre Walther 'while studies of everyday multiculturalism have uncovered various dimensions of related practices, rarely have researchers taken a learning perspective toward multicultural practices' (2015, p. 20). Secondly, we offer new ways to understand under-theorised but commonplace ritualistic activities in adult education such as icebreakers and the sharing of feelings in the context of formal and informal learning across difference. Thirdly, we extend scholarship about the non-human in adult education to foreground food, which has been relatively ignored to date (Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuk 2015; Shan 2015). Fourthly, in focusing on the training of facilitators, we build on Annette Sprung's challenge to promote education for the 'majority' so that racialised social structures and inequalities are transformed (2013).

The paper has six sections. In the first section, we provide an introduction to the WDP. This is followed by a description of policies and adult education programs for migrants and refugees in Australia, then a review of anthropological and geographical studies of training activities, and literature on encounters with difference through formal training events and food hospitality with generate the theoretical framework for our analysis. After a brief outline of our methodology, our fifth section present fieldnotes, interview data and our analyses of the dinner events, and in particular, two core exercises.

The Welcome Dinner

The WDP's espoused aim is to bring together 'newly arrived people and established Australians to meet over dinner conversation in the comfort of their own home' (WDP Handbook). The WDP publicity explains that 'people come together across cultures over a shared meal' a means through which 'strangers… become friends'. The project aims include:

> To create a platform for meaningful connection, sparking friendships between people of diverse cultures who are living in close proximity to one another in communities throughout Australia.

The project's purpose is to facilitate connections between people through food. The handbook explains:

> The mix of food, conversation and the opportunity to try something new, creates a perfect recipe for connection and rediscovery of our common humanity.

After the dinner, it is hoped that everyone will 'exchange contacts and stay in touch afterwards.' A central part of its philosophy is that the dinner events benefit established, as much as newly arrived, Australians because they too suffer from social isolation and

meaning.

The WDP was launched in 2013, and since then over 200 dinners have been held in homes and community spaces across Australia. Over 300 WDP facilitators have been trained across Australia and over 5,000 people have attended a dinner. While Penny Elsley, the founder describes the WDP as a grassroots movement, as an organisational form, it is in fact a registered charity with a Board of Directors. It could, furthermore, be observed that it operates more like a social enterprise than a charity inasmuch as it relies on a spirit of entrepreneurialism. The WDP is run largely by volunteers, but some have job descriptions with clear roles such as State or Regional Co-ordinator. Funding is sporadic, small amounts raised through crowd-funding, and to date only two State governments have given grants. Local government councils have provided in-kind support. The small national office is in Sydney. The founder has undertaken many unpaid interviews, fund-raising events, talks and training courses.

For the WDP, 'established Australians' refers to anyone who has lived in Australia for over ten years and the category 'newly arrived Australians' covers international students, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who have been in Australia for ten years or fewer. At the dinners we attended, there were a mix of people including international students from the Philippines, Germany and China, refugees from Iran, Afghanistan and Eastern Europe, and established Australians from various ethnic backgrounds.

To support the running of the community and home dinners, the WDP runs nation-wide training, and regional networking and update meetings and specialist training such as on-the-spot trauma counselling for volunteers. The volunteers come from a variety of professional backgrounds including community workers, lawyers, IT

workers, teachers and some retirees. Many are white Australians but some are from new migrant backgrounds. Most are young women.

Australian migrant and refugee policies

Australia is one of most culturally diverse countries in the world (Ho and Jakubowicz, 2016).

> The 2016 Census shows that … nearly half (49 per cent) of Australians had either been born overseas (first generation Australian) or one or both parents had been born overseas (second generation Australian)...Of the 6,163,667 people born overseas, nearly one in five (18 per cent) had arrived since the start of 2012 (ABS 2016).

But despite the longstanding history of transnational migration, and whilst multiculturalism is much vaunted in the 'selling' and marketing of Australia, there is a long history of state sanctioned and political racism (Ho, 2011). Australia has a long history of racist immigration policies, of not being welcoming, and continues to administer brutal detention practices, on and off-shore. The White Australia policy of 1901 racially excluded anyone not seen as White and European from migrating to Australia. 'The very presence of Asians was considered a blemish on the ideal image of the white island continent' (Ang, 2000, p. xiii) and for many years, in the white imaginary there was a deeply embedded 'obvious and threatening otherness of Asians' (Perera 1999, p. 189). Whilst racisms towards Aboriginal and Asian Australians continues, intense racist fears and hatred are now levelled at Arabic and Muslim Australians, new and established, with moral panics intensifying after September 11, 2001 and the Cronulla Riots in 2005 (Poynting et al., 2004; Dreher and Ho, 2009; Ho, 2011). Western Sydney University's Challenging Racism Program found that 32 percent of the population had Islamophobic view of Muslims, compared to 3 per cent in

1998 (Sophocleous, 2017).

The Australian government's refugee and asylum seeker policies have become some of the most draconian, regulatory and securitised in the world with privatised offshore detention centres for people seeking refuge by boats and cruel exclusionary refugee and asylum seeker legislation (Pickering, 2001). While there are NGO's (such as WDP) advocating for more support, the Australian government's track record towards refugees can best be described as harsh and uncompromising. There has been broad electoral support for ruling parties of different political persuasions to establish and sustain policies and programs where asylum seekers are kept in detention centres often for periods over three years, both onshore and offshore (Jupp, 2015). While some wish to strengthen Australia's humanitarian assistance to refugees; politicians, media and general public call for stronger border protection measures, code-word for more stringent provisions for refugees (Phillips and Spinks, 2013). Australia, ranked no. 2 in the world in 2015 by the United Nations Development Program for quality of life (UNDP 2016), ranks globally only '46th relative to national GDP' when it comes to the total number of refugees recognised and resettled by a country (ABC 2016).

Despite the fact that Australia's recent intake of refugees is small compared to other countries, there is vilification and moral panic about refugees and asylum seekers as a 'deviant population' in the 'quality' print media which circulates notions of the invading, racialised and diseased deviant (Pickering, 2001). Right-wing commentators position asylum seekers as 'queue jumpers', threats to Australian security, and the supposedly homogenous culture and national values. State-sanctioned racism limits who can come, live and work in Australia. Labour market research shows that recent humanitarian arrivals are relegated to low paid jobs such as cleaning, aged care, meat-processing, and night security regardless of their qualifications, and there is systemic

discrimination through non-recognition of qualifications (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007). Farida Fozdar and Lisa Hartley write that 'negativity towards refugees in particular is widespread, with up to 75 per cent of the population seeing them as a threat' (2013, p. 130). As a result, visibly different migrants and refugees have a perception that they are not welcomed by the majority mainstream population and feel ambivalent about whether they belong in Australia.

The WDP draws attention not only to the situation facing refugees but also for international students, whom research shows two-thirds experience intense loneliness (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland and Ramia, 2008). For the last decade, over half a million international students each year have come to Australia (Australian Government 2017a). In addition to interacting with racist state structures and racism in universities, international students face racialised exploitation as casual workers (Florance and McGhee, 2016), racist abuse on public transport (Williams, Gailberger and Lim, 2016).

While there have been harsh policies and deeply embedded racism, 'among immigrant-receiving nations, Australia is unique in providing newly arrived immigrants and refugees with settlement and second-language programs that have been nationally funded' since 1949 (Burns and DeSilva Joyce 2007). Through Australia's humanitarian assistance program Australian NGOs get government funding to run a range of settlement programs for those who enter the country as refugees and 'humanitarian' entrants, but not for skilled or business migrants. These include programs for ESL, isolation and language needs, integrated community development and peer mentoring, human rights, community partnerships, and youth support (Mathews 2008). Fozdar and Hartley (20013) observe these settlement services are recognised as among the best in the world. For adult language education, all humanitarian entrants are entitled to a baseline number of tuition hours at a recognised college; those who have suffered

torture and trauma or have less than seven years of formal schooling are entitled to additional tuition hours. While in recent years there has been pressure for the adult migrant education curricula to be more narrowly vocational, Australian providers have successfully sustained a broad focus on general education.

The WDP does not provide settlement services or formal migrant adult education. Indeed, it seeks funding from government agencies on the grounds it provides an alternative type of support for newly arrived migrants including refugees, international students and new migrants on different visas. In essence, it sees itself as about welcoming new arrivals, and educating established Australians about new arrivals, and bringing people together, to connect, have new conversations in a form of affective and social hospitality over food. Through its food hospitality activism, the WDP wants to show that established Australians desire to make new migrants feel at home and challenge negative perceptions. It also wants to educate established Australians how to welcome. Elsley, the founder explains that she wanted to

> create a safe space for people to meet but to also encourage newly-arrived people and established Australians to think about their meeting in a way that helps create a more welcoming Australia.

Hence, we can think about the WDP producing pedagogical spaces (Shan and Walther, 2015) and advocating for egalitarian practices that disrupt the hierarchisation inherent to racist practices. It exemplifies the type of claims about intercultural encounters always being positive that Linda Morrice suggests hide the darker side of transformative learning (2013).

The WDP presents a three-fold rationale for its food hospitality activism. First, the founder states that many new arrivals have not been invited to an established Australian's home. She gives the example of two Somali women who had been living in

Australia for ten years and still not been invited into the home of an established Australian. Secondly, this weak sense of belonging and feeling alienated and disconnected is not seen as peculiar to new arrivals but a problem affecting established Australians. Thirdly, many established Australians want to meet new arrivals but claim that they do not know how to make it happen. As Elsley explained at the training course we attended:

> So I was actually hearing from both groups of people if you like, from highly professional, good hearted people that I was doing this course with, that they were wanting to meet. So I thought, well what a better way to bring people together than through food.

The WDP provides a space and tightly facilitated activities to enable established and newly arrived Australians to meet in ways which are seen to be 'safe' and hospitable.

Welcoming new arrivals to Australia is politically complicated on many fronts including its history of state racism and recent draconian asylum seeker policy but principally because Australia is a settler colony. Invaded by the British in 1788, Australia is a settler colony in which Indigenous people have been systematically murdered, dispossessed and disadvantaged, suffering higher levels of incarceration and deaths in custody than any other 'ethnic' group. This might mean that non-Aboriginal people are not in a position to welcome new arrivals. Indeed, there is a specific cultural protocol for public events where selected Aboriginal elders welcome non-Aboriginal people to a specific Aboriginal nation in Australia or in lieu of this, a non-Aboriginal person acknowledges the country the event is taking place on and the Aboriginal people from that country.

Micro-social experiments

In this section we review literature that informed our analysis, and examine close-up

studies of training activities and commensal practices which enable experimentation. Scholarship on institutionalised migrant education focuses largely on the content and effects of curriculum, rather than a 'learning perspective towards multicultural practices' (Shan and Walther 2015, p. 20), and hence attention to the micro-practices of engineered everyday multiculturalism in the WDP can help adult education theorising. In similar vein, little attention has been given to the meanings of facilitated activities such as icebreakers or exercises outside of Foucauldian influenced studies, even though adult educators from various theoretical perspectives extensively discuss informal and formal learning and education. It is true that Foucauldian adult education theorists have analysed training activities in detail because Foucault argues that power is exercised through mundane, micro, localized and dispersed knowledge-in-practices (authors). But scholars stick mostly to understanding training activities through the analytics of the 'confessional' or 'technologies of the self' (Fejes 2008; Reich 2008; Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tenannt and Yates 2003). This scholarship extends our understanding of training activities but has become somewhat predictable. The reliance on the confessional has been challenged by Foucauldian studies of informal learning outside of the scholarship in adult education, for instance *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Valverde, 1998; Valverde and White-Mair, 1999) and *Weight Watchers* (Heyes 2006).

In similar vein, studies of workplace and professional learning which draw on practice theories and socio-material theories have yet to analyse formal facilitation activities in any sustained close-up way outside of pre-determined learning theory (for instance, Falk, Hopwood and Dalgren, 2017; Hager, Lee and Reich, 2012). In contrast, geography and anthropology scholars undertake ethnographic research on professional training courses, and focus with more attention to detail on their 'micro-contexts… minute workings and techniques' (Wilson 2013, p. 74). These studies are more open in

their analysis of facilitated exercises and activities, not reducing them to particular theories or classifications (Hinchcliffe, 2000). Accordingly, in our analysis, we turn to these studies because they take training activities seriously as forms of social experiment, prising open their complex relations, analogies and operations, studying carefully the features that characterise the activities (Martin, 1994; Hinchcliffe, 2000; Wainwright et al., 2010; Wilson, 2013). Trainers and facilitators often set great store by such exercises and see them part of their expertise and repertoire.

Some of these studies examine outdoor corporate training which use activities to experiment with organisational hierarchical and gender relations through embodied learning. In an early influential study, anthropologist Emily Martin (1994) undertook an ethnography of a large-scale outdoors experiential management learning intervention, involving trust-building techniques with ropes within a very large US company listed in Fortune 500. The purpose of the programme was to develop both organisational and individual flexibility through risk-taking and to model physically the type of worker the corporations wanted to employ. Martin describes how activities involve participants walking tightropes and balancing on the top of very tall narrow wobbling poles. People are encouraged to be active in taking risks: 'like the shifting poles, platforms, ropes and wire unmoored in space, the nature of the person itself is to shift and to be able to tolerate continuing shifts' (Martin, 1994, p. 214). She explains how the trainers see the exercises as a way for participants to 'experience the metaphor' (1994, p. 214). Managers and workers experiment with the boundaries and divisions between them in the exercises, and the gendered characteristics associated with men and women are scrambled. The assumption built into the 'outward bound' experiential learning is that mastering risks in one domain is transferable to others.

Riffing off Martin's analysis, geographer Steve Hinchcliffe (2000) writes about an outward-bound corporate management training course run in the UK. His argument is that the outdoor exercises generate new forms of experimentation, experimental learning, knowledge practices and styles. Experimental learning is about 'performances which bring about something new' (2000, p. 575). In particular, the experiments relate to new forms of organising in the corporate world around entrepreneurialism and risk-taking. Thus, corporate training is an operationalisation of a wider narrative of organisational change to do with enterprise, agility, transformation and teamwork. In particular, this means that the training encourages reflexive, self-motivated, creative, risk taking, agile and active bodies and not 'rigid, disciplined bodies.'

His point of departure is the isomophormism between shifts in knowledge in social theory and management training. Thus, social theory - such as feminism and social psychology – has moved away from traditional rational and disembodied epistemology which privileges cognition towards knowing as experiential, tacit, relational and embodied. He traces the course practices and the types of knowing they provoke. Hence, balancing on poles, climbing, abseiling, sensory deprivation, building rafts enable 'corporeal experimentation.' Workplace conventions and forms of embodiment are disturbed as role-plays allow experiments with working relations. Work identities are unsettled through the types of clothing people wear for the activities which get away from 'artefacts of rank.' The 'outdoors becomes an experimental classroom' (2000, p. 582). In summing up, he suggests that the course can be understood a simulation through which metaphors of risk taking, agility, and creativity can be applied to workplaces. But he adds that it is more than this because the course is so different from the workplace. Thus, it is not about learning about the workplace or about building rafts but non-cognitivist knowing and corporeal experimentation.

Martin and Hinchcliffe examine how outdoor training activities are used as metaphors for new ways of working but also enable experiments with workplace relations, in particular, hierarchies. Martin, Hinchcliffe and Wainwright et al. (2010), draw our attention to the significance of the body and embodied training. They all emphasise the significance of the space in which the training takes place – the outdoors for Martin and Hinchcliffe and massage salon for Wainwright et al. Other scholars focus on experiments with the cognitive and affective, but again stress the influence of the spaces of training or geographies of encounter (Wilson, 2013). Of particular relevance for our paper is the work of Helen Wilson (2013) because she studies a diversity training course which has resonance with the WDP. Thus, she undertakes an ethnographic study of a diversity workshop run by an international not-for-profit organisation which facilitates 'encounters with difference' and 'prejudice reduction.' Her premise is that in the UK's economic and social context, 'living with difference' and 'diversity related tensions' are very pressing for individuals, organisations and policy makers, with the state and NGOs responding with an 'array of strategies' such as diversity training and community cohesion. Her focus is the range of exercises facilitated on the course which examine everyday violent micro-aggressions experienced by participants and which leave traumatic traces.

The course is a form of 'managed contact' to reconfigure prejudice with defined 'conditions of conduct' in how people should behave: for instance, confidentiality and respect. Activities entail 'practices of embodied thought and critical reflection' from which individuals can learn new knowledge practices around reducing their prejudice and effecting social change. Exercises are designed to cultivate 'experimentations in thought' and affective intensities (2013, p. p 74). The experimentations enable attendees to be 'attentive to' and 'expand conscious thought.' Activities involve first, people

sharing their painful experiences of prejudice and secondly, sharing a list of their own prejudices. The latter generates uncomfortable emotions such as shame and embarrassment, confronts people with their prejudiced thinking habits, encouraging them to develop new forms of thinking. Through feelings of embarrassment and discomfort, people bond, and they alter how they interact with each other. Facilitators use silence and questions to encourage thinking and reflection in the group.

In addition to the exercises which generate thoughts, reflections and feelings, the workshop creates others means for experimentation and learning. People bring in and share personal objects which facilitates **c**onnections between participants. Facilitators ask people to work in small groups to encourage intimacy and trust. In these ways, the exercises produce 'forms of attention and attachment' in the group and 'new ways of feeling' (2013, p. 74). The facilitators design the spatial environment or 'atmosphere' to facilitate diversity and animate 'attachment, encounter and intensity' (2013, p. 76). Thus, their handbook explains how to move furniture and organise games and icebreakers and moved furniture to shift the habits and the 'emotional tonality' of the space (Conradson, 2003 cited p. 76). The facilitators gentle and challenging style enables affective and experiential processes, 'embodied comprehensions' and a space for reflection and 'suspension', removed from everyday life. Furthermore, participants themselves are open before the workshop to challenging their thinking around diversity and prejudice. As a result of all of these practices, attendees are encouraged to 'positive experimentation…in perceptions, interpretation and explanation (Connolly, 2002 cited, p. 76).

Whilst it could be argued that the course Wilson attended was more positive in its effects than many diversity courses, particular those run in-house with mandatory attendance, she still questions its effects. Her overall summation is to ask whether the

techniques and facilitation methods ‘resonate beyond the training events’, and could ever be scaled up by policy makers or NGOs seeking wider social change (Wilson, 2013, p. 73).

Everyday multiculturalism

The literature reviewed examines micro-techniques in designed encounters for embodied, cognitive and affective experimentation, and Wilson’s study, in particular, examines activities around diversity and difference. Other scholarship on encounters across racial and cultural difference explores everyday unmanaged micro-social exchanges rather than formal training or learning. Conceptualising such encounters as everyday multiculturalism, the largely Australian based scholarship examines mundane, habitual, and quotidian practices urban public spaces. Everyday multiculturalism not only stands in contrast to managed or designed training encounters but also official policy multicultural approaches. One of the leading proponents, Amanda Wise, defines the study of everyday multiculturalism as understanding how people ‘inhabit’ multiculturalism: ‘the everyday practice and lived experience of diversity in specific situations and spaces of encounter’ (Wise and Velayutham 2009, p. 3). Hence the focus is on studies of everyday ritual interactions and negotiations over difference in urban neighbourhood spaces, like shopping centres, high streets, public spaces, parks, markets, public housing estates, public transport, schools, workplaces, and sport teams. In particular, research emphasises that there is an ‘everyday give and take’ where ‘mundane acts of reciprocity are the mechanism for negotiating difference’ (Ho 2011, p. 604) from the exchange of care, information and goods, and neighbours sharing of vegetables and recipes (Wise, 2009); or school children swapping lunches and gifts (Noble, 2009). Although researchers focus on the micro-social encounter, they position these in a wider political, social and economic context (Wise 2009).

Of particular significance for our analysis is that everyday multicultural encounters often centre on food exchange and consumption (Wise, 2011). Indeed, this is also the case for designed events focused on intercultural conviviality in workplaces, communities, schools and universities. Food takes on this significance because it is so multifaceted, everyday, material, sensory, embodied, also ritualistic and symbolic of difference. But writing of food's privileged status as a connector, Wise notes that commensal and convivial practices can be a site for 'low-level cosmopolitanism' but also 'cultural anxiety and disjuncture… disgust and desire' (2011, p. 82). Hence, her project is to study several intercultural food sharing and consumption scenarios to interrogate the specific conditions which enable positive experiments with culinary and cultural difference rather than those which exacerbate disconnection, alienation or racism (2011, p. 84).

Experimenting with eating the Other's food can generate strong feelings because it is taken into the body and can be seen as threat or transgression. Hospitality can feel precarious, dangerous, threatening or anxiety provoking. Ben Highmore suggests that in cultural culinary experimentation, we encounter new 'not me worlds' which engenders feelings from pleasure and joy but also aggression and fear (cited Wise 2011, p. 90). On the positive side, 'gustatory relish' can produce embodied connections and contribute to an appreciation of the Other in the community (Narayan, 1997 cited Wise 2011, p. 90).

In her analysis of different forms of food exchange and experimentation, several dimensions were significant in shaping the affective encounter: the social setting, the materiality of the spaces of consumption, the social rituals involved, the actual food consumed and the wider political context. The food in its material, sensuous and symbolic qualities can 'invoke… push apart and rehabituate bodies' (2011, p. 85). In essence, it matters where, and when and with whom you eat: with neighbours or

workmates or with strangers; around a dining table or on a table in a mall. In these ways, food can produce new forms of inter-subjective relations and solidarity.

Food sharing in a potluck commensal style – bring a plate in Australian argot - can engender positive forms of exchange. Hospitality practices such as sharing not only the food but stories about where the food comes from, its cultural significance and the cultural biography of the giver can have positive impacts. Accommodating other people's preferences in the choice of dish made. The brought ethnic dish can suggest a gift of 'labour, otherness, and of me' (2011, p. 105). As a form of hospitality, the potluck style reinforces a sense of giving and reciprocity. At a sociality level, people can admire cooking skills. The guest/host role is blurred. Such food sharing is ritualised in a number of ways. And as Wise writes, 'it is order, ritual, hospitality, and reciprocity which makes [food] safe or at least reduces the ambiguity and anxiety that can sometimes come with encounters with difference' (2011, p. 101). In this way, as a form of intercultural commensality, the potluck meal not only enables the sharing of food and culture but 'incorporates hybrid others in a bodily way, through the consumption of the Other's food…[and] establishes a sense of 'we-ness' in difference (2011, p. 102).

Methodology

Our discussion and analysis arises from research undertaken between 2014 and 2017. For this paper we analysed data from our participant-observation, interviews and document analysis. Our fieldwork began with a number of meetings and semi-structured interviews with key informants such as the founding WDP Director and regional co-ordinators. We then moved on to participant-observation of a volunteer training full-day workshop, a networking meeting for WDP facilitators, three 'home' and three 'community' dinners, and a full-day WDP Strategy Planning workshop. This was followed up by one-on-one interviews with 12 home dinner participants. Our research

interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. We audio-taped and transcribed the interviews, the training workshop for WDP Facilitators and the WDP Strategy Planning workshop. Follow-up interviews were undertaken with the WDP Director to augment information and fill gaps in our knowledge as the research deepened. To avoid being intrusive we did not audio-tape the dinner events.

For the dinner events we instead made detailed fieldnotes. We developed a participant-observation checklist based on ethnographic and food studies literature. We also undertook visual analysis by taking photographs especially of interactions between participants, hosts and facilitators, but also of foods, objects and spaces. We participated in the dinner events: we brought dishes, ate, drank and conversed with the other participants. Our observation was, of course, disclosed. We made 'headnotes' and 'scratch-notes' during the events and wrote up more detailed fieldnotes at the end of each training and dinner event, detailing our observations and noting our hunches, questions, and preliminary interpretations (Mason, 2002). Our analysis drew on a repeated reading of our fieldnotes and interview transcripts, followed by successive stages of coding across the data. Our coding was both inductive and deductive, and we created in vivo, process and literature informed codes.

Experiments

In this section, we provide an introduction to the WDP events, drawing on our fieldnotes and interviews, and then present two key activities from the home dinners, including how they were discussed in the training workshop. We have chosen the 'introduce your dish activity' exercise. Here attendees talk about what they have brought to eat, why and what's in it, an activity designed to encourage people to talk, even if their English is not so good and to tell brief autobiographic stories and/or showcase their cultural culinary knowledge and skills. We follow this with the 'speech

bubbles' exercise, organised after the meal is finished, a post-commensal event, designed to encourage people to verbalise and share their emotional experience of the dinner.

The main aim of the WDP is to convene dinner events in 'local homes.' Hosts and participants register online, and from the WDP database a local co-ordinator selects and invites established Australians and new arrivals, ideally residing in the same local area. Dinners run for two hours and this timing is strictly adhered to by the facilitators. An established or newly arrived Australian hosts the event. Their home and motivation is vetted by the regional co-ordinator who visits the host in their home weeks before the event. The events are facilitated by trained volunteers, one of whom is usually also a regional co-ordinator. Prior to the event, a participant handbook and email are sent out which offer tips, guidance and a description of the event. The agenda for the event includes a formal welcome, an acknowledgement of country (a protocol), host welcome and introduction to their home, an icebreaker, gathering round the food with each person explaining their dishes, eating, sharing feelings about the event, exchanging contact information, and a group photograph.

The people who host, attend and volunteer as facilitators come from varied backgrounds. Hosts are often from white middle-class professional backgrounds but not always. Some are non-white, some not middle-class and some are new arrivals. Facilitators come from various racial backgrounds, many are young white Anglo Australian or European women but others are from young black British, Asian Australian and Asian migrant heritage. Some work as professionals in the public and private sector. Attendees vary considerably in age, race and ethnicity and background. Established Australians are often from white middle-class backgrounds, and work in a variety of sectors including education, refugee and migrant services, arts and culture,

PR and beauty services. The racial and ethnic backgrounds of newly arrived Australians varies according to whether they are international students, migrants or refugees. For instance, international students have come from China and Germany, and refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran.

Like the diversity training course of which Wilson writes, the WDP event designs and facilitates an encounter with difference. Because it is planned in so many ways, the dinner is not like quotidian rituals of everyday multiculturalism, but more like the 'bring a plate' neighbourly food sharing of which Wise writes. Its intention is in stark contrast to the diversity workshop which seeks to surface shame and discomfort, while the dinner event aims to generate comfort, pleasure, a sense of harmony and safety. The WDP Facilitators workshop and the handbooks offer practical guidance about how to behave, arrange the space, what to say and structure the event. The WDP has a facilitator and participant handbook which offer practical guidance and outline the tools needed. The guidance includes what exercises should be delivered, what support is needed, arrangement of furniture, and information to be delivered. The facilitators' workshop introduced, explained and roleplayed the 'minute workings and techniques' of the event (Wilson, 2013).

All of these tips and guidance helps to create a welcoming atmosphere through its focus on order, care and safety. As the founder explains at the training course for facilitators:

> [The WDP] just exploded. And so I think what we found was that here is something which sounds so simple. It's just a meal, people bringing a plate, pot luck meal…[But] it's quite intensive in terms of what it needs in facilitation. To make people safe to be able to come which is why people aren't having these pop up dinners in the first place. Because there are all these barriers. Most of them are around feeling safe…without those facilitators (a) people don't turn up because

they don't feel safe to come. And (b) it's not necessarily going to be the experience that you hoped for.

Like the diversity course, the WDP is 'managing contact in a particular spatial contact' (Wilson 2013, p. 74) but its 'geography of encounter' is someone's home. The home events are preferred as forms of encounter by the WDP because of the symbolic and affective significance of intercultural hospitality in the intimate space of the domestic sphere and its significance as a site of welcome and places of liminality (Beeman, 2014). But traditional dinner party roles are upturned in that the 'host' does not host the meal because it is facilitated by volunteers, and does not provide the food as it is a shared potluck meal in which everyone brings a dish. As food studies writers note, a potluck meal produces more egalitarian relations than other forms of meals because the preparing, shopping, budgeting and cooking, and cleaning up are distributed across the guests and not allocated to a single host (Crowther, 2013; Julier, 2013; Wise, 2011). Moreover, it represents a loss of control because as in the Welcome Dinner, facilitators and hosts can control the types of food or dishes brought. Thus, the usual ways in which dishes served are influenced – by local cuisine, host tastes, guest needs – are over-ruled in favour of surprise, experimentation and sharing. The potluck food's symbolism extends to the rest of the material culture – type of utensils, cutlery, seating, table decoration – at the home dinner, as informality is encouraged with mixed utensils from tupperware containers to boxes all placed on the table. The seating arrangements are informal with a mix of dining chairs, sofas, and beanbags. Often people stand up to eat and talk in small groups, sometimes mingling with new groups as they go to get extra food.

We were taught in the facilitators' workshop that the potluck was important in making newly arrived Australians feel respected/valued and enabling a range of people

from different backgrounds to host dinners. It also takes away the obligation to reciprocate which is often central to dinner invitations in which there is often cycle of ties and obligations (Crowther, 2013; Julier, 2013). In terms of eating at a home dinner, with its risks of not liking certain foods, the potluck enables people to bring dishes they will like, serve themselves and help themselves to what they want to much or as little of dishes as they want (Wise, 2011). Thus, it avoids more formal practices of being served and obligations to eat everything.

Given that the WDP team is the organisational host, the dinner event is designed with a concern for explaining the stages of hospitality and commensality such as the 'formal hostly welcome,' the 'transition to the dining table and sphere of commensality,' the announcement of the start of the commensal meal, the post-commensal activity and final departure (Beeman, 2014). In similar vein, it attends to teaching attendees about the informal table manners of helping oneself to food, and eating away from the table, and in particular, the forms of sociality and atmosphere it wishes to animate.

The WDP facilitators' workshop teaches the trainee facilitators new knowledge practices about how to plan, prepare and run a food event in such a way that it becomes food hospitality activism rather than just a shared meal. It emphasises that all the attendees and the host will need to experiment with forms of sociality, particularly in terms of conventional social niceties and small talk. Certain topics are seen as inhospitable and unwelcoming. These include: talking about one's paid work as this could reinforce status inequality; or discussing how and wherefrom newly arrived people came, because of potential for trauma, embarrassment, hierarchisation or legality. As the founder explains:

> The intent is…to invoke the kinds of conversations that are a breath of fresh air amongst our society. Rather than the usual speak of 'where do you live or work?', the Welcome Dinner Project facilitates conversations around those aspects of life where our human story intersects. And our common human hopes and dreams are realised.

Thus, WDP seeks to create relations and feelings of commonality, not difference. Unlike the diversity training Wilson studied with its focus on prejudice reduction, and discomforting emotions, the WDP draws on a humanism which encourages imaginative, affective connections that transcend difference. It acknowledges that people may have different, and uneven economic, emotional, ethnic, faith and cultural resources but wants to highlight possibilities for an intersubjectivity across these: that people are more than atomistic individuals subject to social forces (Hansen, 2010). Of course, such a view can be subject to critique for erasing racialised power differentials, histories of racial antagonism and racism, but in this paper, we seek to understand what it claims and how it operationalises these claims in its practices. Thus, to facilitate the de-emphasising of hierarchical difference, the WDP workshop teaches facilitators to induct the attendees in new ways to make conversation:

> So, we have two rules but …we ask you as facilitators to put out those rules in a way that's an invitation rather than a demand. The invitation is this:
>
> > 'for us to have a conversation that's a breath of fresh air. So we're going to invite you not to talk about where we work or to ask people where they work or how they came to Australia. If someone gives you that information that's fine but we're not going to ask it…This is an invitation to have a different kind of conversation tonight. So we ask you not to ask people how they came to Australia or where they work'.

These rules are in place to disturb the conversational habits and norms of established Australians. The founder explained at the facilitators' training that

questioning about how people came to Australia is not appropriate for refugees because of Australia's offshore detention policy for asylum seekers arriving by boat. The problem with the question about where people work is that it can cause embarrassment, especially for refugees and humanitarian migrants who may not have a job. Such rules temporarily ask people to unsettle identities and hierarchies created by economic, social and economic capital. Whilst 'artefacts of status' may be evident in other ways through clothes, cars, jewellery and hobbies, the rule suspends the social embarrassment some people may feel (Hinchliffe, 2010).

The WDP asks attendees, through planned and facilitated exercises, to experiment with other ways of getting to know people. In essence, there are four broad exercises:

- icebreaker in which people break into small groups, introduce their names and its historical and cultural meaning, and then a chosen passion such an interest, hobby or value;
- introduce your dish;
- sharing your feeling on cardboard speech bubble;
- share your contact details and group photo.

Exercises with simple instructions are designed to be of short duration, involve everyone, be 'low risk' not traumatising, get people talking and mingling. At the centre of the event are the commensal practices of eating, drinking and talking about the food.

Introducing your dish activity

The facilitators' workshop taught us how to structure the event including the staging of the potluck. Thus, facilitators ensure dishes are arranged on a table and then after they

have delivered a welcome to the event and run an icebreaker, they bring everyone round the table and acknowledge each dish in turn by asking who made it. Each person is asked to talk to their dish; ingredients and why they brought it, ideally through a connection to history or culture. Facilitators are asked to ensure that everyone has enough cutlery and drinks, to oversee conversations and re-direct them if people seem uncomfortable, and to encourage everyone to participate. Hence, they perform typical emotional and communication labour of 'hostessing' (Veijola and Jokinen, 2008; Author).

The WDP handbooks advise how to eat a potluck as it may be new to some people and to prompt with a phrase like 'dig in'! An important part of the facilitators' hostessing role is to signal different stages of the event and move attendees through these comfortably. Using anthropological theories of liminality, William Beeman (2014) suggests that structured meals with invited guests have predictable ritual stages – processes of commensality - which transition people from the outside world to the commensal event. Thus, the facilitators 'passage' people through the front door across 'threshold' into the home, towards a 'gathering place' such as the kitchen, where everyone makes small talk and then to the liminal place of the table. Facilitators have to provide different announcements to signal the different stages of social action: for example, they make a verbal or non-verbal 'summons to the table' and an announcement that the meal has begun.

As mentioned, individuals are asked to bring a dish because of the potluck style of commensality and its production of more egalitarian relations. The guests prepare their dishes at home or buy them and bring them in a dish. There is not much emphasis placed on what food or dish to bring. Thus, there are no requirements to attend to healthy, ethical or vegetarian food. Before the stage of eating or commensality,

everyone in turn is asked by the facilitator to introduce their dish. Usually this takes around 2-3 minutes per person and around 25% of the whole event all told. Using our fieldnotes, we describe the typical facilitation processes at a home dinner.

> A few other people are already there. After about ten minutes, everyone has arrived:
>
> - Thirteen adult guests – two Persian men in their 40s; one Middle Eastern woman in her 50s; one Australian Macedonian man in his 60s; a Canadian Australian woman and her partner, a white Australian man, both in their 50s; two international students from the Phillipines in their 20s and an Australian Filipino in her 30s; two white Australian women in their late thirties, one of them with her daughter, in her late teens; and the other with five white young Australian children aged 4-10.
> - The two hosts are an Asian Australian woman and a white Australian man, both in their late 20s.
> - The two facilitators are white Australian women, one in her late twenties and one in her thirties.
>
> Isabelle, one of the facilitators and a youth worker in her late 20's, calls us together, and welcomes us. She tells us a bit about the project, the structure of the event and thanks Jared and Lakshmi, the two hosts in front of everyone for opening their house so we can enjoy a meal. She explains how we will do an introductions exercise, splitting into pairs, telling people about our name and our passion. Isabelle kicked off by thanking the hosts for opening up their house so that we can all enjoy a meal. She does a formal acknowledgement of Indigenous people. She explains there are rules about not talking about work and not asking where people come from. And she suggests we get chatting. She said there's lots of things you can talk about, the local area, your passion and then said we're going to introduce the dishes: what's in them and why you brought your dish. Maybe you cooked for a celebration. Then we will be eating and will swap seats and wrap up at 2.30pm.
>
> Various non-alcoholic drinks in hand, having chatted away, after about 20 minutes into the event, Isabelle calls us together and asks us to congregate around the dining table. The table is heaving with dishes – a huge plate of glistening Iranian rice, an Indian carrot dessert, a large fruit salad, and other dishes that are more ambiguous. The hosts have clearly gone to considerable effort laying a clean white

table cloth, serving cutlery, glasses and seating close to the table. It is a feast and we both feel hungry and excited about what we will sample, try, and eat. We all move around the table in a higgled piggedly circle, some people huddle closer to their friends. The table is rectangular and takes up much of the open plan kitchen and dining space which looks out on the back garden adjacent to a park with large eucalypt gum trees. The summer sun streams through the sliding glass doors over the dishes.

Isabelle quietly requests that each of us introduce our dish: 'what's in them and why you brought your dish. Maybe it's associated with your family or a celebration.' People hesitate to begin. Someone starts. Sometimes Isabelle invites someone in with a nod of the head or points to a dish and says, who brought this? Most people describe what is in their dish, what the dish is and some add a cultural story. People murmur approval and on occasions, for instance the Persian rice dish and the Indian carrot cake, oooh and ahhh, and admire the food and the skills of the cooks. A meatloaf bathed in dark gravy with baked pear in a functional rather than elegant serving dish is introduced by an older man with shorts and long socks. It is a dish from Macedonia which he has made. A middle-aged woman dressed in elegant and colourful robes with a headscarf, who spoke basic English, tells us that she had brought an Indian dessert with carrots. Newly arrived people bring more generous dishes than established Australians. For example, two men who identify as Persian, brought a large Tajin with saffron coloured rice and explain this has taken several hours to prepare. People mention enthusiastically they can smell the walnut oil and pomegranates in their dish. By contrast, a white couple – a Canadian and an Australian confess that the fruit salad they have brought was quickly cobbled together. People don't ask questions but instead murmur, coo, smile, peer more closely to show approval and gratitude. Around 30 minutes later, just under a quarter of the time of the whole dinner event, Isabelle invites us to help ourselves. The whole group look like they can't wait to dig in with 'gustatory relish' (Wise 2011)!

As can be seen from our fieldnotes, the introducing your dish activity is a ritualised exercise which encourages low-key participation. It enables a sharing of stories – cultural, ethnic and/or culinary, an appreciation of culinary skills, and care and attention for people for whom English is not their first language. All of which is

modelled by the verbal and bodily styles of the facilitators. Social scientists emphasise how commensality is a social ritual which entails exchange and produces relations through cultural rules of eating etiquette and commensal practices (Beeman, 2014; Crowther, 2013). An important social dynamic in the Welcome Dinner is that 'strangers' are brought into homes. Mary Douglas argues that meals identify boundaries, inclusions and exclusions: those who belong and those who do not belong, with drinks given to strangers and workmen, and meals for close friends, family and special guests (1997). Meals express friendship. The sharing of stories presages the sharing of food. The linguistic act of everyone introducing the food in turn, and everyone listening closely marks the passage from 'the public outside to the intimate inside' and reduces the gaps, hierarchy and social differences between people, however temporarily (Beeman, 2014). The activity enables everyone to 'approach the table in relative state of social comfort' (Beeman, 2014).

The activity does 'pre-liminality preparation' for the liminality of the commensal act of eating, but has particular resonance given the presence of the Other and their food (Beeman, 2014). As Wise explains the sharing of the Other's food requires order and narrative connections to build trust and reduce cultural anxiety or fear. Eating the potluck at the dinner event calls for cultural and culinary experimentation given that most people are strangers to each other; some are minoritised strangers, and more than several dishes are unfamiliar with unknown ingredients. Trying the dishes requires corporeal experimentation too. Hence, the act of coming to the table and eating constitutes the liminal event in which usual social rules of who eats together, what food they eat, and who mixes with whom are 'suspended' and replaced with these experiments, new knowledge practices and 'special observances' (Beeman, 2014). Thus, the activity can help prepare emotions and bodies

for the commensal event, underlining how the dishes are gifts of labour and Otherness, and support the transformation of social relations, the creation of a sense of intercultural 'we-ness' and the feeling of communitas and pleasurable bonding (Wise, 2011; Beeman, 2014).

Of course, even with everyone's keenness and orientation to learn and experiment, some dishes and people are less enthusiastically sampled. Some people and dishes are left to one side. In their study of eating migrant food, Robyn Longhurst and colleagues report how even though they as researchers wanted to try and like all the food served, their bodies betrayed them, and there were some dishes they could just could not stomach (2004). In reality, racialised relations are deeply complex, inflected by colonial histories and individual biographies which produce bodily encounters inflected by racism, anxiety, frustration and disjuncture (Ahmed, 2004; Wilson, 2013; Wise, 2011). But the intent of the WDP and its facilitated activity is to try to pre-empt or mediate these impressions.

On the facilitator's training day, the founder explained the purpose of the exercise:

> We haven't asked people to actually share their name or where they're from in the group. They've actually introduced their food. But we just found out a lot about that person from the story they told us about their dish. So it's kind of a nice way, that's not quite so confronting if you like, to find out something about each person right at the beginning. So they introduce their dish rather than themselves. But actually, they're introducing themselves in a way as well.

She tells us more about the aim of the activity.

> It's the role of the lead facilitator to get everyone to stand around the table, around the food and to start the process that way. We just find - we've been doing it at every welcome dinner, the same process, and it works really really well. It's just such a nice way to start off. To focus on the food is just a lovely way to begin. It's

> not confronting. Everyone is excited about trying everyone else's food. I think people who have been here and have been so isolated and felt like they're not making any contribution to anyone else in our society, for people to actually be really interested in their food and to be wanting to try something that they've made means a lot. There's just that feeling of contributing something that means something to other people. That's very simple but at the same time it can mean a lot.

The founder emphasises the excitement and 'gustatory relish' experienced at the dinners but also stresses how some newly arrived Australians can feel a sense of recognition through how their dishes are treated. Whilst this could be seen as a patronising gesture, the violence and racism experienced by some refugees in detention camps cannot be under-estimated and thus, kindness and interest, albeit temporary and short-lived can be important. In sum then, the activity prior to the commensal event of eating food, acts as the final stage of transition to the liminal relations of food intimacy and sharing, in which people move from being invited strangers to become 'equal' participants. Fraught with social and bodily risks, the activity and the sharing of food works to connect people, and as Wise notes, 'incorporating the other into a situation of conviviality which broadens [everyone's] community to incorporate the other' (2011, p. 99). The meal then marks the transformation of social relations, and for the WDP, like the Outward Bound courses, the liminal space of commensality works as a metaphor for a different kind of Australia in which everyone is welcome.

Speech bubbles

After the liminal event of eating, there is another import post liminal activity towards the end of the two hours of the event, and pre- the departure stage back into the outside world (Beeman, 2014). After everyone has served themselves to the food, mixed and mingled, the facilitator announces that sadly the meal is coming to a close and there are

a few things to do before the event finishes: the speech bubble exercise, the group photograph and swapping contacts. The instructions in the facilitator guide explains how to run the speech bubble activity:

> Ask people to write one word about how they feel, can be in own language. When you sense people have had enough time, move into sharing. Thank people for sharing and perhaps comment on some of the sharing.

The facilitators hand out coloured pieces of cardboard about half the size of a hand in the shape of a speech bubble, an oval shape with a tail at the bottom to indicate speech or thoughts coming from someone's mouth or head. It is one of 'most recognisable signs of the visual language used in comics and cartoons' (Cohn, 2013). They explain that we are to write a word to describe how we feel at the end of the dinner event. There are different coloured pens available. People are informed they can write in any language, not just English. Some people write quickly and are done, and others think and ponder. A few quietly ask for clarification. At Cranebook, we were in the living room and people wrote while sitting. It takes a few minutes until everyone is done. We are then asked in turn to read our feeling out-loud. Words vary from happy, positive, lovely, optimistic, blessed, proud, new faces, thankful, grateful to happy-happy- I find new friends. Once someone wrote boring! Some people simply read out their feeling words, people nod or smile, and others provide short explanations. Each time we have seen the exercise, people have written overwhelmingly positive words. Some people appear moved. Some people say quite meaningful things, for others it is just a nice activity. For a few it is quite strange but easy enough to go along with. After the litany is finished, each person recites their bubble word in turn - joy, happy, at home, hopeful. There is a warm atmosphere in the room, and the temporary sense of 'we-ness' more consolidated and embodied. The activity lasts around 15 minutes,

12.5% of the total time together. The bubbles are collected later and used for marketing, promotion, evaluation purposes and displayed in photographs and other events.

At the WDP facilitators' workshop it was explained as follows:

> Once the food is finished - so after the meal - then we do the speech bubble activity; which is kind of an icon of the WDP. You saw lots of them in the video. We actually collected them all last year. We had over 600 of them on display at our exhibition in Martin Place. It was really beautiful just to see hundreds and hundreds of these words with people describing their experience. So we're going to keep collecting them.

The focus for the activities is how we feel. Thus, we are asked to condense our experience of the event into a verbalised written emotional or affective response which we then share as a group with everyone. We can analyse this through the lens of humanist adult education and Rogerian approaches to facilitation and a focus on the expression of feelings. The direct expression of feelings has a long history in humanist therapy, interpersonal skills training and some forms of feminist consciousness-raising. Underpinning some of these practices is an assumption that feelings represent the unmediated truth about the self. In some models of friendship, the sharing of feelings as opposed to information or thoughts is understood as more intimate.

But we suggest a different way into understanding this ritualised activity: through the concept of emotives. Thus, scholars write that we can understand emotional expressions as emotives: speech acts which perform feelings. They are verbalised feeling words that operate performatively: they do things (Ahmed, 2004; Reddy, 2001). Rather than seeing the emotives as expressions of inner feelings, we can theorise them as conventionalised feeling words which bring emotions into being. Emotives appear descriptive but are, in fact, performative. This is partly because bodily feelings are fugitive, inchoate and messy and in labelling them we reconfigure them (Wetherell,

2012). It is also because they need to be rendered intelligible culturally and contextually and hence fit in with social norms and emotional regimes. As William Reddy puts it: an emotional expression is an attempt to call up the emotion that is expressed; it is an attempt to feel what one says one feels. Thus, in expressing a feeling in the first person, the feeling becomes formulated and in so doing, is transformed. The utterance itself changes the feeling. As Margaret Wetherell sums it up pithily, emotives 'describe, perform and reformulate subjective experience (2012, p. 98). Or according to Reddy (2001), emotives change the state of the speaker and the world around them. Emotives make meaning out of our sensations but through conforming to imposed ways of expression.

Going round one after another creates a litany of positive feelings which then make the group feel those feelings of positivity, bonding, and we-ness. The repetition aims to generate a sense of embodied communitas. Indeed, Ahmed (2004) shows feelings are performative in the sense that the circulation of feelings can bring into being a sense of 'we'. The words on the speech bubble express warmth, appreciation, and happiness which perform gratitude for 'the welcome'. Unlike the diversity training of which Wilson writes and dark feelings in Morrice's study of migrant education, there is not talk of racism or negative feelings. To kill the joy, with newly arrived migrants expressing feelings of alienation, sadness or anger, would not return the gratitude nor attune to the affective atmosphere or we-ness.

Conclusion

In this paper, we respond to the call for papers by presenting the WDP, a community organisation which undertakes food hospitality activism by bringing established and newly arrived Australians together for a facilitated potluck dinner. We argued that it is helpful to analyse the detailed exercises run as part of the dinner in similar vein to

anthropological and geographical studies of training activities which explore how facilitated activities can be understood as rituals which enable embodied, cognitive, affective experimentation and new knowledge practices. We augmented these analytic ideas with theorising on everyday multiculturalism, particularly studies of intercultural food sharing. Whilst everyday multiculturalism differs as a mode of encounter of difference from training courses in that many of its practices are not designed, planned or facilitated as intercultural pedagogies, Wise suggests that an intercultural potluck dinner involves experimentation. And the work of Beeman shows how home dinners with invited guests are designed and staged, deploying spaces of liminality and practices of transformative relations. Drawing on these theories, and our fieldnotes from the WDP facilitation training, dinner events and interviews, we showed how the conversational rules and activities encouraged social and embodied experimentation. These can produce a temporary sense of embodied connection, we-ness and learning through the collective sharing of food, stories, and feelings, and the liminality of the activities and the commensal event.

There are questions about the effects of the events on attendees and wider racist politics in Australia. Our study, to date, has not analysed the interview data from attendees, although we interpret our observation of attendees in this paper. The aim of this paper is to examine the aims of facilitator-led activities. In relation to the question about wider effect, the WDP offers attendees a one-off event with fleeting connections. It expects people at the events to follow up, by running their own events, or by connecting in other ways. Hence, in contrast to certain forms of everyday multiculturalism - for instance the community gardeners in Shan and Walter's study (2015) - the WDP creates a pop-up pedagogical space and group bond. Indeed, scholars and activists question the longevity and wider resonances of such projects including

Wilson of the diversity training she studied. Moreover, both Gillian Valentine (2008), and Christina Ho (2011) question whether everyday multicultural acts of neighbourly exchange is equivalent to respect for difference and 'scaled up beyond the moment' (Valentine, 2008, p. 334). But another way to look at this is that the temporary, fleeting, experimental and short-term has its place, and can create helpful effects through liminal relations and experimental sociality (Collins, 2004). For instance, from quite different perspectives, Wise, Eve Giraud (2015) and Jenny Molz (2012) argue that ephemeral socialities across difference can be understood as such but still experienced as intense, meaningful and significant.

At the same time, it is important not to exaggerate the uneven distribution of emotional, economic and social capital in the events. Minoritised people may not feel or give any of the positive feelings expected. Indeed, the work of Ahmed suggests that emotions are unevenly distributed in social encounters, including in pedagogical spaces and homes, such that racialised minorities may be experienced as unfriendly, frightening or threatening. Ahmed (2004) show how impressions based on collective past histories, colonialism and individual biographies create bodily senses of proximity and strangerliness which are difficult to control or resist. In this paper, we are concerned with the WDP intentions, and the 'experimental set up' (Hinchcliffe, 2000) of their food hospitality activism through their training and activities and more research needs to be done on the experiences and effects of those that attend.

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