

Article

Cooking as Inquiry: A Method to Stir Up Prevailing Ways of Knowing Food, Body, and Identity

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Abstract

The paper develops a method of research called ‘cooking as inquiry.’ This method seeks to add layers to the typically disembodied practices of social research that have long overlooked the body and the mundane rituals of foodmaking as sites of knowledge. Informed by autoethnography and collective biography, cooking as inquiry recognizes bodies and food as sites of knowledge and engages researchers as researcher-participants in reflexive, collaborative study that explores the ways in which the embodied self is performed relationally through foodmaking. In addition to a discussion of the epistemological and methodological frames of this method, this paper offers a case study that describes a project conducted by a colleague and the author.

Keywords: autoethnography; collective biography; cooking; cooking as inquiry; food studies; identity; embodiment

Author’s note: I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to Jacqui Gingras for believing in this project. Your inspiration, support, and guidance have allowed me to give life to this method.

It is to the artistic to which we must turn, not as a rejection of the scientific, but because with both we can achieve binocular vision. Looking through one eye never did provide much depth of field. (Eisner, 1981, p. 9)

Introduction

In an essay titled “Recipes for Theory Making,” Heldke (1992b) asks, “Could it ever make sense to think of cooking as a form of inquiry?” (p. 251). Answering yes, Heldke (1992b) contemplates the characteristics and uses of recipes to develop a feminist epistemological paradigm that disrupts the dichotomies of realism and anti-realism, foundationalism and relativism, and theory and practice that sit at the core of Western philosophical thought. While I agree with Heldke’s (1992b) assertion that we may gain knowledge through cooking, I wish here to offer a different take on how cooking might serve as a form of inquiry. In this paper I develop a method of research that I call ‘cooking as inquiry.’ This method seeks to add layers to the typically disembodied practices of social research that have long overlooked the body and the mundane rituals of foodmaking as sites of knowledge. Informed by autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) and collective biography (Davies & Gannon, 2006), cooking as inquiry recognizes bodies and food as sites of knowledge and engages researchers as researcher-participants in reflexive, collaborative study that explores the ways in which the embodied self is performed relationally through foodmaking. I propose that by cooking together we may bring into view the embodied processes by which we “do difference” and identity (West & Fenstermaker, 1995, p. 8) and by which relations of power emerge. It is in coming to see how we ‘do’ difference, identity, and power in this context that we may realize the potential to perform ourselves differently and thus effect positive change elsewhere and in other aspects of our lives. In this paper, I elucidate cooking as inquiry and explore the utility of this method as a means of conducting an embodied, relational exploration of identity and power.

This article unfolds in 5 sections. First, I elucidate the epistemological frame of the cooking as inquiry method, which centers food and the body as sites of knowing. Second, I review and discuss the two research methods -autoethnography and collective biography- that provide the methodological frame of cooking as inquiry. Next, I offer a detailed description of a cooking as inquiry project titled *Stirring the Pot* to illustrate the steps by which the method can be carried out. Finally, I discuss additional possible applications of cooking as inquiry and offer some criteria by which we might evaluate the usefulness of this method before making my concluding remarks.

Epistemological Frame

Food and foodmaking have long been marginalized in social research. Deutsch and Miller (2007) attribute the oversight to the “gender politics of academia” that dismiss food topics as the trivial, quotidian matters of domesticity not befitting meaningful scholarship (p. 393). Curtin and Heldke (1992) however, connect the longstanding disdain for food scholarship to the more deeply rooted binary thinking of Western, Cartesian philosophy that gender-codes as masculine and privileges reason, cognition, theory, and the mind over emotion, corporeality, practice, and the body. As manual work that is reliant on touch, smell, taste, and sound, food work has typically been relegated to women or otherwise marginalized peoples and excluded from the purportedly more sophisticated, abstract activities of knowledge production (Antoniou, 2004; Heldke, 1992a).

Nevertheless, as evidenced by the advent of Food Studies, food is increasingly lauded as a rich area for critical scholarly inquiry that has wide reaching political, social, and cultural implications

(Deutsch & Miller, 2007). Food Studies scholarship explores the historic, social, cultural, symbolic, and political aspects of food to illuminate the role of food and food practices in social life (Nestle & McIntosh, 2010) including in the construction of identity (Jones, 2009). However, Food Studies scholarship tends to approach food and eating as *objects* of study. But in merely thinking about food, however, we risk reiterating the Cartesian mind/body, theory/practice, reason/emotion dualisms and perpetuating the very paradigms that originally proscribed food from academic study (Heldke, 1992a). Heldke (1992a) suggests that to resist these Cartesian binaries and bring food more fully into focus requires that we need to *actually make food*. Yet, even if cooking were added to the mix, currently available qualitative methods do not produce the kind of complex, embodied inquiry that Heldke is after and that I am proposing the cooking as inquiry method makes possible. Cooking as inquiry builds on the existing foundation of food scholarship by offering a methodological approach that understands food not simply as an *object* of study, but makes foodmaking the *means* of garnering understanding about food, identity, and the body.

Like food, the body is typically overlooked as a site of knowledge (Lupton, 1996). Despite the current emphasis on reflexivity and the emergence of the corporeal turn, researchers' bodies linger at the periphery of knowledge production (Ellingson, 2006; Lupton, 1996; Sandelowski, 2002; Sharma, Reimer-Kirkham, & Cochrane, 2009). As Sandelowski (2002) notes, "although qualitative researchers have become increasingly used to taking account of themselves in their research, these selves are rarely depicted as embodied selves" (p. 108; italics in original). Given the contemporary emphasis on reflexivity, researchers have increasingly taken to theorizing the body, but this rarely translates into embodied research practices (Sharma et al., 2009). Longhurst, Ho, and Johnston (2008) add that researchers sometimes theorize the meaning that their physical attributes (ie. race) have for their work, but rarely take note of the physical sensations (ie. smell, touch, feelings) involved in the research process. Rather, the researcher's body is typically regarded as an instrument for sensory data collection, which is then rationalized and given meaning as knowledge by the mind (Heldke, 1992a).

An embodied epistemology can enrich the breadth and depth of knowledge and is particularly helpful in exploring questions of power, identity, and the creation of Otherness. Longhurst, Johnston, and Ho (2009) propose that researchers adopt a "visceral approach" as a means of "thinking through the body" to enlist "the sensations, moods and ways of being that emerge from our sensory engagement with the material and discursive environments in which we live" (p. 334). The authors intimate that a visceral approach leads one beyond that which can be said, seen, or heard to that which is felt and is sometimes inarticulable (Longhurst, Ho, & Johnston, 2008). In other words, embodied research practices broaden the scope of what is knowable with a conventional research approach. Drawing on Hartsock's claim that bodies, power, and social relations, are co-constituted, Sharma and co-authors (2009) adds that "the physicality and emotionality of bodily experience...stand as signifiers of the social and power relations" that critical researchers seek to explore (p. 1648). Hence, an embodied epistemology can also yield a deeper understanding of how bodies and difference are interpellated through everyday ideological practices.

Why cooking? Cooking sheds light on identity, bodies, and knowledge that other activities such as gardening, dance, or sport do not. An abundant body of literature has firmly established that the study of food is imperative to understanding social phenomena. Long (2002) states, "Food as a subject for theorizing has a physical presence and pervasiveness that not only grounds theory but frequently illuminates it" (p. 81). For example, food has helped to illuminate the study of identity performativity (Fischler, 1988) such as in performances of gender and class (Beoku-Betts, 2002; Bugge & Almas, 2006; Cairns, Johnston, & Baumann, 2010; Hollows, 2003; Smith

& Wilson, 2004; Swenson, 2009). However, as mentioned this work largely takes food as an object to be thought about, rather than as a practice that can generate knowledge. Moving beyond these approaches, cooking as inquiry invites researcher-participants to actually make food as the means of exploring the processes by which identity is performed, or 'done' through the body. In this case, cooking as inquiry seeks not simply to establish that foodmaking is implicated in the 'doing' of identity, but to capture, in the moment, how identity is 'done' through the everyday bodily practices of foodmaking (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Actually making food as part of the inquiry process animates the already well-established link between food and identity and thereby makes accessible to inquiry the symbolic, social, historical, and cultural aspects of food as they are incorporated in embodied performances. Tye (2010) illustrates this point in writing of how it is not just by consuming, but through the routines of preparing her mother's recipes she that (re)produces and (re)members herself within the social and historical fabric of her family:

Making tasty food –some of which was once my mother's food- has become part of how my family sees me and how I see myself. This piece of my gender performance as daughter, sister, wife, and mother is part of my mother's legacy. Reproducing her baking reinforces my position as the family's eldest female, and it is a partial claim of her authority and a display of competency that everyone in the family recognizes. (p. 195)

In coming to see how we perform identity, we are better able to imagine alternative possibilities to story ourselves in other, perhaps more fulfilling, relational, socially just, wholistic ways.

In *My Cypriot Cookbook*, Maria Antoniou (2004) presents an example of how making food is a means of exploring the performativity of identity as an embodied practice and how this brings into view different possibilities for performing her Cypriot ethnicity:

Cooking is a performative act. And, as I'm cooking, I'm realizing that ethnic identity is also performative. I'm performing my Cypriotness through food. My Cypriotness is little more than a series of embodied practices. My Cypriotness only exists in my enactment of it. And it is therefore easily re-imagined. Through cooking -and other embodied activities- can I redefine and reclaim my Cypriotness? I'm realizing that my Cypriotness is many things. Found in many places. Experienced in many ways. There's a freedom in this realization. There's possibility. (p. 140)

Antoniou describes her Cypriotness as a "festering wound...stabbing my stomach...[and] tightening my chest...[that is] too painful to write" (p. 127). Unlike with her writing, Antoniou forgives flaws in her cooking. The private kitchen space provides refuge from the critical public gaze that scrutinizes her published works. Furthermore, cooking engages her body's knowledge. With foodmaking "the knots begin working loose," and new possibilities to perform her Cypriot ethnicity are realized: "cooking helps me to grasp and articulate my experiential complexity. Writing often traps me in my head, but cooking acknowledges the holism of my body. Recognizes my body as agent" (p. 130). Although Antoniou suggests that other embodied activities may similarly reveal the mutability of her Cypriotness, it is the aforementioned especially strong association among food, identity, and culture that makes cooking particularly well suited to this kind of inquiry.

Methodological Frame

In this section I discuss two methods that have been useful in helping me map out the cooking as inquiry method. The actual processes of cooking as inquiry, as informed by autoethnography and collective biography, are outlined in a later section of the paper.

Ellis and Bochner (2000) define autoethnography as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (p. 739). Ellis (2004) adds that autoethnography is “research, writing, story, and method...[that] feature[s] concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterization, and plot...[and thus,] claims the conventions of literary writing” (p. xix). In this way, autoethnography asserts itself against the dissociative, dispassionate, and disembodied orthodoxy of social science writing (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As Spry (2001) notes “the researcher is the epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the research process turns” (p. 711). Autoethnographers compose highly personal, evocative, and reflexive accounts of their own experiences as a means of studying “the ‘self’ to learn about the other” (Bochner & Ellis, 2000, p. 741). Such work has the potential to unearth a more intimate and emotionally rich narrative than other data-gathering techniques like interviewing that attempt to delve into the experiences of non-researcher subjects. A key purpose of sharing reflexive work that focuses on the researcher-self, is to inspire readers to also reflect deeply on their own experiences, and positionalities (Spry, 2001).

A similarly oriented method that draws on autoethnography is what Davis and Gannon (2006) call ‘collective biography.’ Like autoethnography, collective biography composes personal narrative, but departs from “the ethnographic I” (Ellis, 2004) in that the process of telling, interrogating, and contextualizing stories is conducted collaboratively in groups of researcher-participants. Collective biography seeks not to produce transparent accounts of individual storytellers’ lives, but to “provide knowledge about the ways in which individuals are made social, are discursively constituted in particular fleshy moments” (p. 3-4); to make known the “processes of selving” (p. 7). As Antoniou (2004) did in her autoethnographic study, collective biography “dislodges the familiar[,] making bodily and mental habits visible *as habits*, reflexively opening them up to scrutiny,” but in the context of collaborative work (Davies, 2006, p. 188).

That collective biography is collaborative calls attention to the relationality of identity performance and embodied experience. Others’ stories demarcate difference and highlight the “gaps and silences in one’s own story” (Davis & Gannon, 2006, p. 12). In other words, the ‘doing’ of identity and difference is reciprocally performed in relation to others. As Davies (2006) explains of collective biography, “The full knowledge of self that is implicated in humanist ideals of ethical practice, must, in this understanding, be put aside in favour of an awareness of the emergent process of mutual formation” (p. 183). Although not addressed by collective biography specifically, some claim that embodiment is also iterative and mutually formed through interactions with others; that is, the experience of being embodied is “inter-corporeal” (Burns, 2003, p. 232). Attending to this experience in the collaborative research context elicits visceral knowledge that is beyond the reach of cognitive contemplation and reveals how power manifests in and operates through our bodies. As a collaborative method, collective biography adds an additional layer to the individually focused autoethnographic self-studies exemplified by Antoniou’s (2004) exploration of her ethnic identity.

Cooking as inquiry draws on both of these methods to generate collaborative, introspective narratives that bring to light the process by which our embodied selves are relationally performed, or ‘made social,’ through foodmaking. Of course, researchers interested in studying the processes

of identity performativity may use traditional phenomenological methods, like participant-observation. As participant-observers, researchers immerse themselves in the lifeworlds of those under study and may even take part in everyday activities, such as foodmaking, to produce rich, in-depth accounts of participants' lives (Anderson, 2004). However, cooking as inquiry differs from participant-observation in a number of ways. First, as with autoethnography and collective biography, the purpose is not to describe a 'researched other'. Rather, it is researcher-participants' own narratives and experiences that are subject to interpretation and analysis. While participant observers often produce a confessional tale in which they reveal their personal feelings and experiences of conducting a project, essentially, their focus lies composing realist tales that describe and interpret the lives of others (Sparkes, 2002). Hence, the writing conventions of participant-observation tend to maintain a clear separation between the research and the researcher's presence. In contrast, cooking as inquiry, like autoethnography and collective biography, situates the researcher as the focal point of inquiry.

Cooking as inquiry also differs substantially from participant-observation with respect to the role of the body of the researcher. Cooking as inquiry engages the body as a "locus of discovery" to "excavate the nexus of knowledge, insight, and understanding" (Cancienne and Snowber, 2003, p. 240, 239). Cooking as inquiry is necessarily a sensual method. Foodmaking requires us to attend with our eyes, ears, noses, mouths, and hands and draws on the knowledge we hold in our bodies. As Heldke (1992a) explains: "I *know* things literally with my body, that I, 'as' my hands, know when the bread dough is sufficiently kneaded, and I 'as' my nose know when the pie is done" (p. 218). Participant-observation privileges sight and reason while the sensate experiences of research that comprise touch, smell, sound, movement, and emotion, may or may not be written into confessional tales (Sandelowski, 2002). By engaging the researcher as a foodmaking body, cooking as inquiry is what Sandelowski (2002) describes as "full-bodied qualitative research...inquiry that entails and values full use of our bodies and senses," and thus has the potential to produce knowledge that is fundamentally different from and richer than that produced by participant-observation (p. 105).

Stirring the Pot

I had recently completed the final phase of my dietitian training when a colleague –also a dietitian and a professor with whom I had studied and worked as a graduate student- and I decided to undertake a cooking as inquiry project. Our objective was to problematize dominant dietetic discourse. Gingras and Brady (2010) contend that dietetics is shaped by "control discourse" that "constitutes individuals' eating patterns as a series of reasoned, discrete, and quantifiable choices (i.e. weigh, measure, limit, and avoid) in direct contrast to views that eating is determined by emotion, hunger, appetite, and sociality." In other words, control discourse fundamentally privileges nutrition science over people's embodied and experiential understandings of preparing and eating food and serves to obscure the socio-political dimension of dietitians' work. The result has been a "collective professional hush" among practitioners on social justice issues such as food sovereignty, the biopolitics of the obesity epidemic, and the impact of neoliberalism on food and health care systems (Gingras, 2008, para. 2). It should be said that some have offered critical perspectives of dietetics' epistemological and ontological orientation (Aphramor & Gingras, 2009; Buchanan, 2004; Gingras & Brady, 2010; Liquori, 2001; Travers, 1995), but this work has yet to be taken up more widely by practitioners or dietetics' professional organizations. Given the potential for dietitians to further social justice, we set out to unsettle and politicize dominant dietetic discourse.

This section describes our project titled *Stirring the Pot* and is accompanied by photographs. We drew on Davies and Gannon's (2006) steps for doing collective biography to guide our process. *Stirring the Pot* may serve as an illustrative example of how the cooking as inquiry method can be carried out, but the steps I outline here can be simply adapted to suit the particular needs of other projects. I have included some possible adaptations of our process in what follows for readers to consider.

Gather the group

After reading Antoniou's (2004) paper I was inspired to explore the possibilities for cooking as a method of inquiry and conducted a project that would use cooking as the means of exploring themes relevant to a course that was taught by my co-investigator of the current project, Jacqui. Inspired by the method, Jacqui invited me to conduct another project, which we later called *Stirring the Pot*.

Our interest in this project arose from our shared interest in autoethnographic methods and concern for the place of food, foodmaking, and the body in dietetic practice and research. We also wanted to develop the cooking as inquiry method as one that is particularly well suited to our future research interests and that would likely be useful to others. Although we had much in common, we were positioned quite differently – she, an experienced dietitian and university professor, and I, a new dietitian and her former graduate student – in relation to the themes we sought to explore. The obvious power differential between us added an additional layer to our inquiry.

Future visions for the method include playing with the size of the group. A slightly larger group might yield a richer, more complex inquiry; however, practical considerations such as the time involved and the facilities available to carry out the foodmaking portion of the method are important limiting factors. Although my co-investigator and I had a background in nutrition and food, groups may include those who do not normally undertake studies of food or nutrition, but may have an interest in collaborative, autoethnographic, and/or embodied methods, identity performativity, or the role of the body in research.

Identify the theme, problem, or question

Our theme – food, power, and dietetic discourse – readily evolved from our common research interests and concerns. For me, this project was an opportunity to explore possibilities for reconciling my dietitian identity and consequent knowledge of the science of food and nutrition with my experiential everyday understanding of making food and eating. Moreover, conducting our study as a cooking as inquiry project was a means of engaging collaboratively and corporeally with food in a way that resisted dietetic “control discourse” (Gingras & Brady, 2010, para. 2). We were both familiar with Antoniou's (2004) paper and dietetic literature offering more conventional and critical perspectives of dietetic discourse (see DeVault, 1999; Gringras & Brady, 2010; Liquori, 2001; Travers, 1995), and thus did not review any additional literature specifically for the project prior to coming together to cook. For future projects, particularly if researcher-participants hail from more divergent backgrounds, it would be useful to circulate reading materials pertinent to the question or theme at hand at this stage to ground and further guide the dialogue and writing activities during the foodmaking session.

Select the menu and prewriting activities

We decided to independently choose one or two items that we felt were meaningful to us and to the chosen theme and that we wanted to prepare during the cooking session. We also agreed to each write a brief, preliminary reflexive piece that explained the significance of the item and explored the feelings, thoughts, emotions, and bodily responses that lead us to our menu choices. To illustrate, I have included an excerpt of my reflexive writing:

After continued deliberation I arrived at cherry jam. With that thought the nutrition/dietitian part of me took hold demanding that I prepare a lunch or at least something more substantial than cherry jam. Where is the green? The orange? There are four missing food groups (since cherry jam is an Other¹ food)! It is not however, only the food itself that is important to me; it could be strawberry jam, cucumber pickles, or corn relish that we preserve today. Rather, it is the preserving or 'putting up' of food that I feel a connection to. Canning is a preservation of many things, only one of which is the delicious foods that make their way into the jars. Preserving foods, is for me, also an act of preservation of knowledge, specifically women's knowledge. It is also an act of remembrance; remembering the hardship and necessity with which women developed and passed on this knowledge. I also remember my mother line; I learned to can from my mother; my mother learned to can from her mother who undoubtedly learned it from hers.

We intended this preliminary writing exercise to become part of the research record that we would analyze in the final stages of the research process. Alternate approaches might include selecting the menu items collaboratively or selecting items with the intention of preparing a composed meal rather than discrete items.

Cook together

At this stage we came together in my kitchen to cook and write. We used a digital audio recorder to document the cooking session. At the start of the cooking session we revealed the menu items we each had chosen and then shared and wrote responses to each other's preliminary reflexive writing pieces. Jacqui added tomato and bocconcini salad drizzled with olive oil, Cypriot Olive Bread, lemon squares, and espresso to the cherry jam I had chosen. We then had to decide how to prepare the items we chose given the limited space and cooking facilities available in my kitchen. How menu items are prepared (ie. order) and by whom (ie. collectively or individually) may be decided based on what makes sense given the complexity of each item and the extent of the facilities available. We decided to prepare the cherry jam first given the time investment required to pit the cherries, prepare and can the jam, and then let it cool.

At appropriate times throughout the cooking session, we took



digital photographs and partook in additional timed writing exercises that were guided by emergent questions, feelings, ideas, and sensory experiences. The timed writing exercises, including the preliminary writing, offered us moments to reflexively engage with and document the research process. Our intention of peppering the foodmaking activities with photography and timed writing exercises was to interlace the cognitive and corporeal knowledges that emerged from our thinking about and actually making food. The timed writing material and photographs also served as field notes that were incorporated in the analysis of themes conducted at the next stage. Researchers conducting cooking as inquiry projects in the future might consider using a combination of different audio (ie. digital recording) and visual (ie. film, photography) technologies to document this step of the method.

Analyze and compose an account of the research

The final stage of our project was to analyze the project materials, including the audio recording of the cooking session, the photographs, and writing from the timed exercises, and compose an account of the research for dissemination. We decided to collaboratively prepare a multimedia presentation of the project, which we presented together at Double Dialogues: 2010 The Hunger Artist – Food and the Arts in Toronto, Ontario. Researchers may alternatively choose a more conventional mode of dissemination like a written text for publication or might explore other

more innovative and creative methods available such as digital storytelling, or web-based publication.



Our aim at this stage was to make meaning of the writings, photography, and audio recording as well as our shared experiences of the research process. This project allowed me to experiment with ways that I might (re)story my relationships with food and cooking at a time when my developing dietitian identity was changing those relationships. Becoming a dietitian meant becoming versed in the control discourse of the profession, which unavoidably altered how I related to food, eating, cooking, and my body. Analysis of our research materials reveals our shared struggle, albeit situated differently within the power structures of the profession as a new dietitian and an experienced dietitian-researcher, to reconcile our dietitian-selves with our embodied experiences of food, cooking, and eating. To illustrate, becoming a dietitian meant becoming versed in the control discourse of the profession, which unavoidably altered how I related to food, eating, cooking,

and my body. During my training I learned how to perform dietitian properly, to deploy the positivist, science-focused discourse by which I produced myself as a member of the profession. Performing my dietitian identity meant stifling my embodied understanding of preparing, eating, and sharing food as sensual and historically and socially located experiences while foregrounding my cognizance of macro- and micro-nutrients, chemical equations, and metabolic processes. The knowledge gained from this project provided insight into ways that my co-investigator and I might support each other in acting upon ways that we might bring together our personal and professional connections with food and foodmaking.

Evaluation and Application of Cooking as Inquiry

Sparkes (2002) notes that the tendency among disciplines toward a particularly conservative status quo inhibits the development of a “polyvocal research community” that supports creative methodologies and research products (p. 223). He argues that advancing ‘polyvocality’ within qualitative research requires that innovative, emergent criteria be used to assess equally innovative methods like cooking as inquiry. However, the very need to define evaluation criteria for alternative ethnographic research methods such as autoethnography is contentious. Bochner (2000) argues that the drive to do so is rooted in fears about the legitimacy of our work being dismissed as not scientific, objective, or rigorous enough to count as research, and that the effort to define criteria springs from an impulse to rationalize and assert authority. In addition, Bochner (2000) maintains that the preoccupation with being ‘scientific’ has distracted concern from “whether our work is useful, insightful, or meaningful-and to whom” and adds, “we get preoccupied with rigor, but are neglectful of imagination. We hold on to the illusion that eventually we will unanimously agree on the culture-free standards to which all evidence must appeal, so that we won’t have to rely on our own ‘subjectivity’ to decide” (p. 267).

Still, even when we rely on our own subjectivity, the question remains, how do you know you have carried out or read a good autoethnography? Likewise, how do you know when cooking as inquiry has been done well? While I agree with Bochner’s (2000) position, I still feel it is valuable to identify some guidelines for practice if only to help guide researchers towards a deeper, more insightful, and rewarding project. As Sparkes (2002) asserts, “the differences between alternative forms of inquiry, in terms of their processes and products, need to be acknowledged so that each can be judged using criteria that are consistent with their own internal meaning structures and purposes” (p. 199).

Based on the epistemological and methodological framework outlined above, I offer the following questions that could be used to plan and steer cooking as inquiry projects and then to reflect on or evaluate the texts produced.

1. The research process: Does the research process provoke researcher-participants to risk vulnerability, but maintain a willingness to interrogate their own and others experiences? Do the researcher-participants engage in the process in a critical and self-reflexive way? Are the researcher-participants engaged in the process emotionally and bodily? Is the embodied knowledge of the researcher-participants made known during the research process?
2. Impact on the researcher-participants: Does the process invite researcher-participants to think about their identity in new ways, and to appreciate the potential to story themselves differently?
3. Quality of the text: Is the text written clearly? Is it evocative, creative, and inspired? Does it capture the richness of the researcher-participants’ corporeal experience? Does it adequately describe the research process? Does the text reflect a research process that is critical, self-reflexive, and embodied? Is the body of the researcher made present in the text? Does the text have the capacity to move the reader emotionally, intellectually, and bodily? Does the analysis produce useful insights about how the researcher-participants perform identity?
4. Impact on the reader: Does the text inspire readers to reflect on their own experiences, identities, and bodies as storied, performative, and relational? Does the text give readers a sense of the possibility to story themselves or relationships to food or others in different ways? Does the text rouse readers to imagine possibilities for using the cooking as inquiry method in their own collaborative research work?

Although not meant to serve as definitive criteria, these guiding questions will help orient researchers planning a cooking as inquiry project. These guiding questions may also assist researchers in deciding if cooking as inquiry is a suitable method given their research interests and the project they plan to carry out.

While cooking as inquiry may be useful for researchers in a variety of disciplines, it is apparent that, like any research method, it is practicable in certain instances. Given the centrality of food and foodmaking, this method of inquiry is particularly suited for research in food studies, health studies, nutrition or dietetics, and home economics. Cooking as inquiry is also valuable for researchers interested in autoethnography generally, and those interested in conducting critical self-study through foodmaking specifically. Other uses include public health or community action research projects as well as therapy especially in relation to food and eating. For example, this method could be used to develop and conduct research with a community cooking program.

Conclusion

As noted, cooking as inquiry may be useful to other researchers whose research interests do not necessarily include food and foodmaking. For those interested in studying the processes of identity performativity and embodiment, or who wish to experiment with collaborative, autoethnographic methods cooking as inquiry may also be appealing. For example, as was seen in Antoniou's (2004) self-study, she was primarily concerned with how she experiences and performs her Cypriotness, and not with food or foodmaking per se. Rather, foodmaking serves Antoniou's purpose as an embodied practice through which she brings to light the processes by which she performs her ethnicity.

My purpose here has been to propose and elaborate a research method I have called cooking as inquiry. I have proposed that foodmaking offers an entrée to explore the processes by which identity is storied through the body and in relation to others. This method serves to centre foodmaking and the body as sites of knowledge and thereby challenges the Cartesian separation of mind and body, theory and practice, intellect and emotion, and cognitive and sensual awareness. Unlike much of the current food scholarship, cooking as inquiry invites researchers to move beyond *thinking* about food and to take up Heldke's (1992a) insistence that we *actually make food* as a means of garnering knowledge. Ultimately, I have ventured here to devise an approach that may allow scholars to resist prevailing ways we have come to know food, foodmaking, identity, and the body.

Notes

1. 'Other' food refers to a category of food previously used to distinguish foods that were not included in the four main food groups and that should be rarely eaten due to the high caloric density and/or fat content and lower nutritional value.

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