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Food, Media and Space: The Mediated Biopolitics of Eating

Michael K. Goodman, Josée Johnston and Kate Cairns

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Jamie Oliver—the global celebrity megachef *extraordinaire*—does not like sugar. Butter and olive oil, yes, but sugar is a serious problem because, as he puts on his website, '[o]besity is one of the biggest issues facing our children's generation, with huge consequences for our NHS and wider economy' (jamiesfoodrevolution.org, 2017). But what are we supposed to do about this problem given that, as he explains, 'in 2017, diet poses a greater threat to UK families' health and life expectancy than anything else'? Turn to Twitter, of course, to tweet our members of parliament using the novel hashtag of #GE2017—this because Prime Minister Theresa May has just called a General Election—but also that of Jamie's branded handle of #FoodRevolution. These exhortations come on the back of Jamie's relative success with his 2016 TV, internet and social media campaign blitz unironically called 'Jamie's Sugar Rush', in which he claimed to have single-handedly persuaded the UK government to institute a future tax on sugary drinks. Given this and his multitude of other media appearances—much like other celebrity chefs, terrestrial and digital food media (e.g. food TV, tweets, Facebook posts, blogs and Youtube) and more traditional food publications (e.g. cookbooks, magazines and books)—Jamie has contributed to the production of a thoroughly *mediatized foodscape*.

As we know from other work (e.g. Abbots, 2017; Jackson, 2015; Johnston and Goodman, 2015; Lupton, 2016) and the papers and commentaries in this themed section of *Geoforum*, this mediatization is not merely meaningless 'eater-tainment' or context-free 'food porn'. Rather, food media and the mediatized foodscapes that co-produce them are situated not just at the center of (food) capitalist assemblages but, more specifically, in the very biopolitics of everyday life. For what is food media but a multitude of circulating texts and images teaching us what 'good food' is and where it comes from, what we should be eating, how to prepare it and how to share it? Engagements with food media present eaters with a vague, but accessible means to resist the industrialized, corporatized mass food system. This can take multiple forms: a visceral craving for a grass-fed roast cooked in Jamie's virtual kitchen, a tweet in support of heathy school lunches, or an Instagram post of goods purchased at a local farmers' market. Food media is inextricably embedded in market relationships, but it should not be dismissed as simply another form of capitalism in action. It has prised open intellectual terrains and material spaces of food biopolitics worthy of substantive consideration by geographers, food scholars and other researchers.

In our introduction to this collection of papers and commentaries on food, media and space, we hope to accomplish several things. First, in order to contextualize the papers here, we briefly situate our contributions within allied debates.[1] Second, to lay more substantive conceptual groundwork, this introductory discussion presents a number of conceptual devices to understand and analyze mediatized foodscapes. In particular, building on Foucault and specific work on food biopolitics, we develop the concept of *mediated biopolitics* as a core lens through which to understand mediatized foodscapes. In essence, the concept works to

[1] We want to note that given our and the authors' geographical areas of research, much of the discussion and analysis in this themed section is confined to Anglo-American and Canadian English-speaking media foodscapes. There is a great deal of room for further research in the media ecologies of globalised and non-Western parts of the food world.

capture the 'vitalisms' (Bennett, 2010) of food media as both a set of commodified 'things' and the source of powerful and often contested food knowledges that have the potential to impact not just individual bodies but the social body writ large in the processes of eating, getting and growing food. Third and finally, we introduce the contributions and commentaries in this themed section.

Placing Mediatized Foodscapes

While our daily diet clearly shapes our physical and emotional selves, we are not simply 'what we eat'. We are also the virtual, mediated foods we consume, desire, and discuss on screen. We may think ourselves immune to media influence, but hear Jamie's scolding voice in our heads when we prepare chicken nuggets for the kids. We may derive dinner inspiration from our favorite food blog, or display our culinary capital by Instagramming an authentic food truck find. We may feel pride in cooking a roast chicken dinner, until we recall Hugh Fearnly-Whittingstall's lecture about the inhumane practices of confined animal feeding operations. Or we may read—in mainly right-ward leaning news outlets—about how people on food stamps or those who frequent food banks are 'takers' of questionable moral character. In each of these examples, food is not just a material object or an identity marker. It is also a media phenomenon that both reflects and reproduces food 'truths'. Our everyday food choices and understandings of the food system can be deeply personal, but we are not the only actors at the table. Each bite emerges out of the complex interplay and negotiation between our social location, the political-economy of food networks and the mediatized discourses that shape our and others' understandings of healthy, desirable, sustainable and forbidden foods.

Recent research analyzes these complex interplays within mediatized foodscapes from a number of different angles. Nutritionists have been concerned with the impacts of multiple media forms, such as advertising, TV shows and social media on bodily weight and the diets of both adults and children (e.g. De Backer et al, 2016; Pope et al, 2015). Others have examined common media narratives about children and youth food choices (Best, 2017; Cairns, 2016; 2017; Evans 2010; Gibson and Dempsey 2015; Pike and Kelly 2014) as well as the pedagogical functions of food documentaries such as the Oscar-winning *Food, Inc* (Lindenfeld, 2011; Flowers and Swan, 2011; Pilgeram and Meeuf, 2015). Shugart (2016), a self-described 'cultural critic', has produced a compelling investigation of the dominant narratives and meanings of fat in US-based media.

Cultural, media and communications scholars have been at the forefront of research on food media (e.g. Collins, 2009; Rousseau, 2012a, b). Not surprisingly, 'food celebrities'—the term we (Johnston and Goodman, 2015)[2] use to encapsulate the multitude other food media personalities (e.g. health gurus and 'FoodTubers') who have appeared alongside celebrity chefs—feature heavily in these explorations. From the 'heterotopias' of food media (Leer and Povlsen, 2016), to the role of celebrity chefs in identity formation (De Solier, 2013), gender politics (Hollows, 2003) and as lifestyle gurus (Lewis, 2014), to the cultural and economic capital they generate (Naccarato and LeBesco, 2012), to celebrity chefs' contributions to austerity foodscapes (Potter and Westall, 2013) and their performances as moral entrepreneurs (Hollows and Jones, 2010a, b), much of this critical research has established the epistemological grounding upon which this themed section is built.

[2] See this special issue of *Food, Culture and Society* for a number of papers on the 'spectacular foodscapes' of food celebrities: Abbots (2015), Piper (2015), Rousseau (2015), Lewis and Huber (2015) and Leer and Kjaer (2015)

Food studies scholars and, specifically, geographers, have also played significant roles in the critical evaluation of mediatized foodscapes. [3] Herrick (2007) has explored the role of government and TV media campaigns in the context of healthy eating, Goodman (2010) analyzed the use of various types of celebrities in fronting fair trade campaigns in the UK, and Johnston et al (2014) examined how the culinary personas of food celebrities reproduce social hierarchies. The celebrity chefs Jamie Oliver and the UK's Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall are prominent figures of concern for geographers: Slocum et al (2011) lambasts Jamie for his poverty shaming in the US, Piper (2013) analyses his complex and class-related impact on audiences, Jackson (2016b) explores Jamie's pedagogical interventions and the conflicts they engender in the cultural spaces of the kitchen, and Bell (Bell and Hollows, 2011) sharply critiques the flaccid middle-class ethical consumerism of Hugh's TV shows. At the center of much of this analysis is the biopolitical effects of food media in its tacit and explicit approval of various forms of good food.

For geographers, the broad exploration of the biopolitics of food—in its multiplicity of meanings and theoretical leanings—is nothing new and, if anything, continues to expand. Building on Harvey (2003), Nally (2011; 37) analyses what he calls 'accumulation by molecularization' whereby the biopolitics of hunger have been captured by food corporations in efforts to 'quicken the reproduction of capital' rather than meaningfully confront the structural causes of hunger. The biopolitics of race and food have also come under increasing scrutiny and from several different angles: Slocum (2006; 2007) has explored the 'whiteness' of alternative food networks; Bobrow-Strain (2008, 2012, 2013) similarly explores whiteness (and Othering) but through the lens of American white bread; Guthman (2014) analyses questions of food justice and race in the context of epigenetics and biological difference; and Heynen (2009) engages with the antihunger biopolitics of the Black Panthers as a form of resistance to state power. Others have critiqued the bodily biopolitics of eating through interrogations of obesity (Guthman, 2012; Guthman and DuPuis, 2006) and alternative meats (Sexton, 2017; 2016), food choice and self-care (Mansfield, 2012a, b) and ecological health and food production (Guthman and Brown, 2016). A final strand of this work, and one that engages more with the productionist 'beginning' of food's biopolitics, can be found in Goodman's (1999) ontological and moral challenge to agro-food studies, a challenge that is being built upon through the turn to 'bioeconomies' (LeHeron et al, 2016) and its multi-variate concerns with the biopolitics of food assemblages.

While there are exceptions (e.g. Bobrow-Strain, 2008; Gibson and Dempsey 2013; Guthman, 2011), one uniting characteristic of geographers' engagements with the biopolitics of food is an absence of sustained engagement with media in its multiple formats and the biopolitical consequences of food media in the context of eating bodies and productive nature. Thus, it is our hope that this themed section of *Geoforum* will not just open up novel empirical and theoretical ground that food scholars might attend to, but also that a critical analysis of the mediatization of food becomes central to research on the biopolitics of foodscapes and the expanding media spaces of food's biopolitics. We now turn to briefly explore the concept of mediated biopolitics as a lens through which to engage food media and mediatized foodscapes.

Accounting for the Mediated Biopolitics of Food

[3] Is its therefore doubly perplexing that three recent reviews and manifestos on setting research agendas for food and agro-food studies (e.g. Belasco et al, 2011; Tregear, 2011; Haddad et al, 2016) have basically left food media completely off the table.

How should we think about the thoroughly mediatized foodscapes that have, for many, engulfed every media platform and vast spaces of everyday life? We argue for greater attention to the *mediated biopolitics* of contemporary foodscapes. Food media not only mediate—and thus work to govern through highly-charged knowledge, texts and images—the relationalities of individuals, food and society but the concept of mediated biopolitics enables a critique of the ways that food media solidify, facilitate and govern 'the politics of [food] life itself' (cf. Rose, 2006). In Foucauldian terms, food's mediated biopolitics '…embrace all the specific strategies and contestations over problematizations of collective human vitality, morbidity and mortality; over the forms of knowledge, regimes of authority and practices of intervention that are desirable, legitimate and efficacious' (Rabinow and Rose, 2006: 197). Crucially, as we envision it, this concept offers a starting point for resisting the commonplace choice-focused narrative of responsible eating. The popular, individualistic version of this narrative suggests that a person who makes responsible food choices deserves a long, healthy, happy life despite compelling evidence that health disparities are shaped by social, relational and spatial factors (Crawshaw 2014; Guthman, 2011). The lens of the mediated biopolitics of food challenges the model of the sovereign, responsible food consumer, who, more often than not, is told to simply watch celebrity chefs cook nourishing meals or download healthy eating apps to become healthy citizen-consumer-cooks for themselves, their families and the environment. A biopolitics approach situates everyday food practices within a media-saturated environment where responsibility for well-being—of the individual, nation, and planet—is downloaded to self-regulating individuals who navigate a foodscape filled with devastating inequality, powerful media and food corporations, contradictory advice, and the shame of "bad" food choices.

At its core, mediated biopolitics situates and affixes the more expansive concept of *biopower*, which encapsulates the management of life itself, an area critically although not exclusively related to food. Foucault's work traced the emergence of strategies to measure and monitor populations, such as birth rates, illness patterns and death rates, in order to "intervene upon the vital characteristics of human existence" (Rabinow and Rose 2006: 196). Food is clearly linked to our personal health as individuals and to our collective health as communities, cities, and nations. But an analysis of food's vitality—as perhaps Bennett (2010) would argue—goes much beyond the relational immediacies of eaters, commodities and food-y 'things' (Goodman, 2016a, b). Indeed, as Rutherford and Rutherford suggest, "a consideration of the geographies of biopolitics remains incomplete if a person's analytical eye stays trained only on human beings" (2013: 427). Put simply, the notions of biopower evoked in our concept of mediated biopolitics extend beyond the health of individual bodies: the management of food, the sustenance of everyday life, is inextricably relational to the governance of human *and* non-human life. As such, contemporary food system issues—like intensive livestock farming, the corporate control of foodscapes, overfishing, nitrogen runoff, carbon emissions and topsoil degradation—also relate to the future of non-human nature upon which human life depends. Thus, an analysis of mediated biopolitics can help us better understand food's significance within shifting terrains of governance, including ecological systems of sustainability, nutrition and extinction, as well as individual eating, population health and self-care. As we argue here, and as the papers in this issue demonstrate, media play a critical role in these governing processes.

Following Rabinow and Rose (2006), our approach to the mediated biopolitics of food media includes three key dimensions which we outline briefly below: *truth discourse*s, *intervention strategies*, and *modes of subjectification*.

Sowing Truth Discourses: The Performance and Framing of the Mediated Biopolitics of Food

To understand the production of knowledge about "good" eating and "bad" foods in mediatised foodscapes, we turn to the role and creation of truth discourses. At a basic level, biopower involves the circulation of truth discourses about life (and death), and a range of experts who are authorized to speak on these matters. The contemporary foodscape is rife with truth claims about the relationship between food and life: certain diets are linked to longevity, while others are linked to poor health and mortality. Government experts speak authoritatively in these discourses – for instance, by establishing guidelines on the nutritional components of a healthy meal – but they are not the sole authority in the production of food truths. Images of "good eating" proliferate throughout television food programming and healthy living blogs, while newspapers provide a steady flow of columns on the latest superfoods and food celebrities speak authoritatively as public health advocates. The foods we eat (and don't eat) and our relationships to food more broadly are fundamentally shaped by mediated accounts of shopping, cooking and eating. If biopower relies upon the circulation and legitimation of truth discourses, food media are a key source in which we encounter, evaluate and incorporate such discourses into our everyday food lives and bodily projects. Notably, this is not a seamless process yielding fixed understandings, but a dynamic relation characterized by the ongoing production and contestation of food truths from so-called experts, food celebrities, corporations and official sources.

An analysis of the mediated biopolitics of food examines how particular food discourses come to be legitimated as "truths" and sheds light on aspects of the foodscape these truths obscure. This analytic perspective is particularly important in the context of celebrity culture, where individuals are celebrated as heroic saviors, overlooking their connections with wealth and privilege (e.g., Littler, 2008; Prudham 2009). Multi-millionaire chefs like Jamie Oliver work to discursively connect their individual brand with biopolitical goals—children's health, nutritious diets on a budget—and also position themselves as "moral entrepreneurs" (Hollows and Jones 2010a). Food celebrities wield considerable influence in shaping public understanding of healthy eating, as seen in Gwyneth Paltrow's best-selling book, *It's All Good*, which has been hugely popular despite promoting a heavily restricted diet. While maintaining public confidence, food celebrities have been critiqued for their tendencies to overinflate their health credentials, dispense questionable 'quick-fix' solutions alongside fad diets, and endorse pseudoscience over evidence-based medicine (Rousseau 2015). Rousseau's work (2012; 2015: 268) suggests that in a climate where there is a "large (and growing) disparity between the information that we have available to us, and the limited resources we have to navigate that information," we may devolve decision-making to influential authority figures like food celebrities. As several of the papers in this issue show, food celebrities hold a powerful presence in lived experience as pseudo-experts, even as consumers converse directly with these celebrities, identifying the contradictions that occur when millionaire chefs present themselves as 'everyday' people (cf. Goodman and Barnes, 2011). In short, appreciating the mediated biopolitics of food media involves studying the undue, often problematic, celebrity influence on truth discourses around food and health, even as critical nutritionists insist that the strategies for healthy eating can be understood in relatively simple and straightforward terms (Nestle, 2006: 8; but see Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2013).

The mediated biopolitics of food are about the biopower exercised by various foodscape actors in the *framing* of food, eating, health, ecologies and, again, life itself. Framings are, as

Lakoff (2010; 74) describes them, 'communicated via language and visual imagery'. Yet, as seems rather obvious, mediatized foodscapes are, more often than not, actualized and circulated via *visual* registers rather than through the textual. Food documentaries, vegan activist video shorts, celebrity chef cooking programs, tweets about homemade dinners and, of course, the food porn that litters many an Instagram feed: food's mediated biopolitics work across the grammars of the visual, especially given our continually increasing techno-social capabilities to produce, circulate and consume visual media. And, because of this emphasis on the visual, mediatized foodscapes are equally framed through emotive and visceral registers: food media frames affect our visceral reactions to the foods we buy, make and eat, the foods we watch others make and eat, and even the foods, chefs and eaters we emote about on screens. The media framings of food are, thus, both about an emotional capitalism in the markets facilitated and circulated across mediatized foodscapes, but also a kind of *visceral biopower* that situates our mediated feelings about food front and center through the affects and effects of the truth discourses framed and expressed through food media.

Mediated interventions: At least [enter celebrity chef name here] is "doing something"

In addition to the production and circulation of truth discourses, food's biopower and mediated biopolitics involve intervention strategies designed to sustain life or manage death. As Kurtz et al. (2013: 137) explain, "[b]iopower refers to the capacity to manage the health of human populations through the use of vital statistics (and other less quantitative interventions) and the resulting emergence of 'population health' as a political object". Food strategies may target the health of individual eaters (e.g., "fight cancer with your fork!"), but these interventions are commonly justified through societal-level measures. Individual eaters are encouraged to lose weight for their own health, but also to avoid being a drain on the nation. For example, a 2014 headline from *The Guardian* reads, "Obesity bigger cost for Britain than war and terror" (*Guardian* 2014). Efforts to manage the population through food are evident in state-sponsored initiatives such as food stamps or school lunch programs. Indeed, Gibson and Dempsey write that food-based "public health interventions are key exemplars of biopower" (2015: 44).

While biopower relies upon state efforts to measure and monitor populations in order to identify risks, biopolitical interventions critically involve non-state actors such as food media. Together, these actors and their truth discourses promote a broad shift towards health interventions targeting individual behavior (Crawshaw 2012; 2014) as the source of, and solution for, food system problems (Johnston and Cairns 2012). In a neoliberal context, state interventions are greatly underfunded compared to corporate marketing and may be viewed skeptically by the public as nanny-state intrusions. Consider, for example, how former NYC Mayor Bloomberg's failed effort to ban the sale of large soft drinks was shouted down by the likes of the conservative media maven Sarah Palin in the name of 'freedom'. By contrast, the interventions spearheaded by food celebrities are regularly celebrated as genuine efforts to create positive change and publicize the shortcomings of the state and the market.[4] In this themed section, Bell et al. argue that the campaigning culinary documentary (CCD) genre got its start with Jamie Oliver's 2002 program *Jamie's Kitchen,* which focused on efforts to help unemployed youth by offering work at Oliver's new charity-status restaurant, Fifteen. Since that time, Oliver's targeted interventions have extended to other food system issues like children's health and school lunches (Gibson and Dempsey 2015; Pike and Kelly 2014) and have expanded geographically to target eaters in the United States, Canada, Australia and

[4] So-called 'state-less' solutions are also part of the discourses of support for celebrity environmental and humanitarian interventions; see Goodman (2013) and Rojek (2014) for more on this.

myriad other places where his syndicated programs are televised. In addition, the CCD format has expanded beyond Oliver to include various food celebrities interested in multiple food system issues such as poverty, sustainability, factory-farmed chickens and over-fishing. Certainly, scholars and eaters—and even other celebrity chefs such as the UK's Jack Monroe—have critiqued Oliver's interventions, especially on the topic of poverty. Even so, Hollows and Jones (2010a: 307) write that, much like other politicized celebrities (e.g. Boykoff and Goodman, 2009), "a consensus emerged that 'at least he's doing something' about a range of social problems in the face of the perceived inertia of government and the passivity and cynicism of the British public".

If we look across the mediatized foodscape, we can identify numerous instances where particular populations are categorized as a collective "problem" to be managed through mediated interventions. The poor, the young, the uneducated, the unemployed and the "obese" are all targets for intervention programs, and the biopolitical nature of these programs has received scholarly attention (e.g., Evans 2010). Reflecting on the case of obesity, Guthman writes, "the idea that fat people weaken the nation is the stuff of biopolitics" (2009: 1126). Biopolitical interventions seek to manage populations through the production of responsible citizens and cooks who make consumption decisions that nourish the body—and also consider the needs of distant others like overfished tuna, caged chickens, and "the nation" writ large. Certainly, the targets of mediated food interventions vary widely and their projects often fail to generate significant reform (Malpas and Wickham 1995); this is not a Big Brother vision of food governance. What we are suggesting is that contemporary food biopolitics are powerfully and irrevocably intermediated. Food media circulate critical messages about what to eat, what foods to avoid and who is to blame for sickness, disease and ecological destruction. Biopolitical interventions fundamentally rely upon mediated understandings of blame, health and responsibility. Media actors shape collective conceptions of food-related social problems, and offer diagnoses and solutions that transcend multiple borders and bodies. They present eaters with notions of idealized food choices, they chastise some market actors while celebrating others and even tell governments how to act. In these ways, food media contribute to the continual measuring, monitoring and managing of populations and ecological vitality.

Food choices, subjectification and foodscape media ecologies

Rabinow and Rose point out that biopower operates not only at the "molar" level of population control, but also at the "molecular" level of subject formation. As Gibson and Dempsey (2015: 44) write "[b]iopower is a way of regulating social life 'from within' as individuals are trained to self-discipline and mitigate risk". In other words, biopower involves struggles over subjectivity, as individuals work on themselves in the interest of vigor, well-being, and longevity, drawing upon available truth discourses and interventions to produce themselves as healthy, ethical subjects. Importantly, this is not an exercise of top-down repression but rather a process of subjectification. One of Foucault's central insights was to challenge a view of power as simply negative and constraining to instead attend to the ways in which power operates *through* the actions of the free subject. For example, one of the key themes of contemporary diet discourse is that women should not restrict or punish themselves through diets of deprivation; instead, women should actively and joyfully choose foods that are delicious, health-promoting *and* slimming (Cairns and Johnston 2015b). An analysis of the mediated biopolitics of food thus reveals how bodies are disciplined through individual food choices and the spaces of the everyday. These processes of everyday corporeal discipline are connected to an array of institutions and actors, including not only public health

institutions, but also celebrity chefs, food blogs, food television and Instagram food shots that enter the intimate spaces and places of our lives and subjectivities and those of our friends, families and audiences at large.

Attention to subjectification is crucial for understanding the relationship between biopower, food and structural inequalities. While discourses on vitality operate through population level measures, the associated intervention strategies do not address the population as an undifferentiated mass. Rather, vulnerable populations are summoned to work on themselves in a spirit of self-improvement and individual responsibility—a focus that belies stratification along axes of gender, race, class, age, ability and body size. In the context of food discourse, Mansfield (2012:589) notes that "the 'individual' whose self-discipline is the cornerstone of population health and security is a highly-gendered individual". Her analysis of seafood advisories identifies a *gendered food biopolitics* wherein mothers and mothers-to-be are encouraged to exercise their freedom by assessing and regulating potential risks in their seafood consumption. *Classed food biopolitics* are evident in Crawshaw's work (2012; 2014) on social marketing health campaigns in the UK that promote healthy eating and physical activity. He suggests that targeting individual behavior changes in "vulnerable" populations represents a form of biopolitics that pathologizes those "who are presented as unwilling to take responsibility for their bodies and selves" (2012: 2016). Crawshaw's (2012: 204) interviews with unemployed men demonstrate that while disadvantaged groups may draw upon neoliberal discourses of individual responsibility for their health, they also point to structural causes underlying health disparities, such as poverty and economic inequalities.

Yet, the biopower embedded in mediatized foodscapes is not a totalizing force. The concept of mediated biopolitics draws analytic attention to ongoing struggles over truth discourses, the legitimacy of population interventions and fraught processes of subjectification. While basic tenets of healthy eating are widely regarded as common sense by average citizens (Beagan et al., 2014), truth discourses about "health" and "healthy food" are the site of frequent contestation and conflict. Food media are populated by myriad dissenting voices about what truly constitutes life-promoting food (e.g. raw food versus cooked food; paleo diets versus vegetarian diets; raw milk versus pasteurized milk), controversies around who has legitimacy as a food expert (e.g., the contested authority of Dr. Oz), and critiques of the centrality of food restriction in healthy eating discourse. An understanding of biopolitics as an active, contested process helps us to avoid conceiving of mediated biopolitics through a sovereign model of power that operates in a top-down, monolithic fashion and to consider the agency of audiences, the public and outputs of multiple media platforms. Mediated biopolitics involve powerful social messaging from corporations and well-financed food celebrities, but it also involves subversive health claims, blog posts celebrating fat bodies and twitter feeds about where to contest received wisdom through, for example, (illegally) purchasing raw milk.

Importantly, our approach to mediated biopolitics draws insight from a media ecology perspective. A media ecology approach allows scholars to see food media not as a singular, indoctrinating 'thing'—as captured by the metaphor of a hypodermic needle injecting meaning into its audience—but as a complex system involving interactions among multiple media actors, media consumers and political-economic power (Scolari 2012). A media ecology approach also helps us avoid a "Foucault machine" tendency towards neoliberal determinism (Cairns and Johnston 2015a; 2015b) since it sees media consumers as actively co-constructing the media system through their own bounded agencies. While we suggest that media representations of healthy eating reflect and reinforce particular truth discourses, and

thus contribute to biopolitical processes, we do not assume that media consumers uniformly and uncritically internalize such discourses. This is apparent in our (Cairns and Johnston 2015b) own research on women's relationship to healthy eating discourses. On the one hand, we find that an understanding of healthy eating as a positive choice (rather than a negative restriction) circulates as "truth" in much contemporary food media—a discourse that we call the "do-diet". Yet, on the other hand, individual women relate to this discourse in diverse ways, from enthusiastic embrace, to weary skepticism or playful critique. Finally, a media ecology approach highlights complexity in the media environment: there is not just one media actor, but multiple actors and in the Internet age, influential agents have sometimes emerged from unexpected places through food blogs, twitter accounts, and Instagram photos.

So, does all of this leave us hopeless in a foodscape dominated by "Big Food" *and* "Big Media"? We don't think so. While existing scholarship has tended to focus on the coercive elements of biopolitical interventions, mediated biopolitics and its concerns with the biopower of food, this should not be interpreted as a crude form of discipline imposed from above and absorbed by unthinking subjects. In fact, we suggest that studies of mediated biopolitics may usefully identify sites of contestation within contemporary food struggles. For example, Barnes' contribution to this volume demonstrates how social media spaces like Twitter create opportunities for "dialogue" between celebrity chefs and their audiences, facilitating the co-construction of truth discourses. We certainly do not want to romanticize the radical potential of the Internet or suggest that the average Instagram user holds the same power as a transnational food corporation. However, we do want to reiterate the point that biopolitics inevitably involves contestation. The governance of mediated biopolitics is always incomplete, always at risk of failure (Malpass and Wickham 1995). Taking inspiration from the articles in this special issue, we urge food and media scholars to investigate the struggles over truth, intervention strategies, and subjectification that characterize our mediated foodscape—struggles that range from the intimate spaces of kitchen tables, government regulation of school lunches, and transnational understandings of the obesity 'crisis', to the alarming health of the planet.

Food, Media and Space: The Papers

This special section of *Geoforum* on food, media and space opens with the paper by Barnes (2017) who, through an audience survey and social media reactions, conceptualizes celebrity chefs as 'talking labels' whose words and deeds pronounce on 'good food'. One of the first scholars to study the relationalities of celebrity chef interventions and audience responses, Barnes analyzes the ways that the public has 'talked back' to Jamie Oliver in the course of his controversial comments on food poverty. She examines how these two-way communications work into Jamie's own social media feeds as 'ordinary' cooks take his recipes, make them their own and tweet about them. For Barnes, these relationalities create 'moments of possibility' whereby audience members can 'prosume' (i.e. produce and consume; see [Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010]) food's mediated biopolitics in both its socio-material resistances and acceptances in people's everyday lives. In this, Barnes points to the emergence of what we might think of as 'food 2.0'—the theoretical cousin of Buscher's (2013) 'nature 2.0'. As more food media is produced, food biopolitics continue to go digital and everyday prosumers are able to more easily communicate with food celebrities and each other.

The next two papers from Bell, Hollows and Jones (2017) and from Abbots and Attala (2017), continue this theme of contestation but in different formats and with somewhat contradictory outcomes. Bell et al explore what they call the 'campaigning culinary

documentary' (CCD) as a novel food TV format that has celebrity chef interventions as the solution to the various food crises that confront society. Through a critical analysis of a suite of different CCDs they suggest that while the biopolitics of neo-liberal responsibilization and celebrity chef brand expansion are foregrounded in many of these shows, problem-solution narratives are more complex than this. As they put it, the 'CCD cannot simply be understood as the straightforward working-out of neoliberal logic' through the responsibilization of consumers; rather, celebrity chefs have taken to holding the state up as a responsibilized agent of change 'subject to the pedagogy of' the biopolitical mediation of food celebrities. This is, of course, good for the 'permanent persuaders' of CCDs and food celebrities who are able to expand the moral authority of their brands through these acts of food media resistance that have food celebrities 'talking back' to the state. Abbots and Attala discuss the ways that social media is used to contest the dominant discourses of 'disciplined eating' in the sport of competitive eating. But more than this: social media has become a space of autonomy where competitive eaters practice their sport, construct their digital identities and both challenge and uphold normative narratives of 'normal' eating. As they put it, competitive eaters 'contest … mass media representations of competitive eating as grotesque and disgusting, while also showing how this contestation simultaneously reproduces normative discourses on food, health and the body that propound discipline and equate thinness with healthiness'. And, while like us they are cautious in attributing social media with democratizing agency, they show how the 'talking back' of their participants through the mediated biopolitics of food 2.0 works to 'potentially destabilize hierarchies and add their voices to discussions about what constitutes good and proper eating and healthy bodies'.

Lavis's (2017) paper turns on the ways mediatized foodscapes are deployed in yet another form of contestation, this time in the form of resistance *to* eating through food-porn friendly, pro-anorexia websites. Situated within debates on food, affect and viscerality, Lavis offers up a richly textured, theoretically-informed take on what it means to 'eat' in cyberspace in the lives of online anorexics. The eating of food porn is not material, but rather digital, visual and disembodied yet still viscerally felt, affective and identity-forming in ways that ask us to question what is meant by food, eating and embodiment in a digital age. The mediated biopolitics of food is here, more than anywhere else, particularly acute and heightened in the (un)health of the anorexic bodies and identities that populate pro-anorexic social media. As she concludes, '[i]nterrogating eating in, or perhaps through, cyberspace, and cyberspace through eating, casts light on the intimate geographies and embodied subjectivities of the everyday, illustrating these to be always virtual and material'.

Flowers and Swan (2017), through the lens of an ethnic food tour website in multi-ethnic Sydney, Australia, critically deconstruct and analyze the power-laden, mediated biopolitics of race and gender and the 'Othering' work done on the website's representations of food culture. Explored through the notion of 'cybertyping'—how offline racial and gender stereotypes become stable categories in digital spaces—they analyze the ways that Othering is multi-layered in its racial and gendered texts and visuals and the ways that this Othering matters in both online and the 'real' worlds. As they argue, in these food tours, a 'racialised femininity is mobilized to touristify a region and counter racism about that region'. Here, the social mission of the taste tour—the desire to diffuse racial and ethnic tension in southwestern Sydney—is complex and contradictory. Commercial imperatives can stand in tension with a mediated biopolitics of pity and sympathy. As Flowers and Swan write, the tours aim to '…educate users about the racialized conditions of southwestern Sydney, the problems faced by its residents, racist processes in the labour market, harsh politics towards refugees and asylum seekers or the histories of migration…'. Their research points to the

ways this work might raise wider questions of how 'food social enterprises can involve racialized Others in the representation of themselves and their lives'.

Silver and Hawkins (2017; see also Hawkins and Silver, 2017) critique mediated narratives of sustainable seafood in North American media through the lens of the cultural politics of sustainability as part and parcel of neoliberal capitalism. Taking a textual and visual storylines approach, they explore the dominant problem and solution narratives of National Geographic's TV and internet mediations of sustainable seafood. They suggest that there are three dominant discourses that emerge in these biopolitics: stories about the productive spaces of fish harvest, those of ecological crisis and those of the biopower of individual choice (and celebrity chefs!) in saving the ocean by buying, cooking and eating sustainably produced seafoods. Here, rather than mega-chefs, sustainable seafood celebrities are those more 'ordinary' experts such as scientists, food personalities and fishermen who suggested the everyday ease of buying, preparing and eating sustainable seafood in ways that '… support the argument that celebrity plays a key performative role in fusing the actors and structure of neoliberal capitalism with those of conservation and development'. In the end, they make the rather sobering argument that 'the political economic structures and material practices of fisheries management may be re-made through the reverberations of cultural politics'. The authoritative truth discourses they interrogate provides little option beyond shifting consumers to more sustainable choices and third-party certification in the form of the Marine Fisheries Council.

The final paper in this themed section by Wells (2017) analyses how food nutritional information is framed, developed and circulated in the media. Looking at the processes of the intermediation of a particular press release about the connections of fiber consumption and bowel cancer, her paper 'follows the science story' in the media ecology that developed to trace the shifting geographies of responsibility that result as the story spread across different social media platforms. In effect, as Wells shows, this becomes a story of individualized aspects of diet (i.e. fiber intake) that doesn't just 'nutritionalize' and simplify questions of health, but also responsibilizes individual eaters in ways that eschew broader structural social, economic and political drivers of diet. Geographers, she argues, along with a more critical, social model of public health, have the potential to play a crucial corrective role in the representations of health research and its mediated biopolitics.

Finally, we are delighted that a set of commentaries from three critical food and media scholars round out this themed section. Jackson (2017) refracts the papers' arguments through Warde's (2016) question of what it means to 'eat well' in light of the 'compound' and complex social practices that surround food. For Jackson, the contributions here raise critical questions about food's media representations in their 'embodied, affective and visceral qualities' of what it means to eat well, but also that food media's penchant for pointed moralizations might be blunted through a more practice-focused approach to the everyday social and material life of food. In her take, Phillipov (2017) suggests the papers reveal media's growing role in the 'production of food practices and politics' at the same time food offers up space for media industries to colonize and extract value. Importantly, she provides up a critical yet hopeful reading of the papers by pointing to media's potential to lead the way in the development of novel food imaginaries that might support the critical work of remaking food systems. The final commentary by Probyn (2017) provides a personal take that both situates and refracts the papers across wider theoretical debates. Food media, for her, is an assemblage that has not only changed how and where we eat: food—to paraphrase—has emerged as a 'thing' not in spite of media but significantly *because* of it. As

Probyn concludes, the contributions here offer up promising openings for food geographies, a prospect that we and the authors in this themed section fully agree with.

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