

“WHAT’S IN A LUNCHBOX?”: A STORY ABOUT NEW ZELAND IDEALS OF  
HEALTH, SOCIAL CLASS AND ETHICITY TOLD THROUGH SANDWICHES AND  
THE CHILDREN WHO EAT THEM

BY

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## Abstract

*Through an ethnographic investigation of school lunchboxes, this thesis explores if and how difference and Otherness is understood by children. In three urban New Zealand primary schools I examine how children construct, affirm and/or challenge social inequalities and issues of inclusion by looking at the contents, concepts, narratives and activities related to the consumption and sharing of their lunch food. Literature dedicated to social class (Bourdieu, 1984) and identity (Rikoon, 1982; Stern, 1977) has documented the way in which food is creatively used to reaffirm unity and belonging within minority groups (Camp, 1979; Abrahams & Kalcik, 1978). In contrast to this approach, I review the role of food as a 'safe space' (Mercon, 2008: 5) where diversity may be allowed to symbolically exist for the purpose of affirming the unity of the nation state, while ultimately muffling deeper social differences. The thesis thus questions the assumption that food, identity and social cohesion are conceptually linked.*

*My overall argument centres on the "humble" sandwich, which I claim is constructed as the core, dominant component of the lunchbox, mutually constituting nutritional, social class and ethnic tropes, practices and values. I assess the discourses, behaviours and symbolism that historically situates the sandwich as iconically or emblematically "Kiwi", contending that via the creation of a dichotomized system (i.e. healthy, good, skinny, well-behaved, energetic, Kiwi versus junk-food, bad, fat, naughty, sick, Other) children are enculturated into the logics of work and socialized to be compliant with structures of inequality. Thus, while the sandwich appears equally accessible to all, the differences in its production can result in practices of class based distinction (Bourdieu, 1984) and ethnic exclusion (Hage, 2003). However, my analysis also reveals that children are not mere subjects of structure, but that they reproduce, challenge, mediate, and re-shape these discourses and behaviours.*

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‘Writing is a collective process, a co-operative venture, delighting in the gaps as well as the seams’ (Helen Kidd 1997: 37)

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## Introduction: Difference Through The Sandwich

*‘What is patriotism but the love of good things we ate in our childhood’ (Lin Yutang)*

Most New Zealand children carry a lunchbox to school. From colourful plastic containers and multi-compartment boxes adorned with cartoon characters to plastic bags, the lunchbox is a feature of New Zealand family life. It signifies the social, temporal and spatial practice and disciplines associated with schooling and weekday employment. Once at school the lunchboxes are hung outside the classroom, and are collected by children during lunchtime. Their contents are consumed, shared, returned or thrown away.

The contents of lunchboxes also have a nostalgic feel to them. The mention of a lunchbox can transport adults’ minds back to the sandpit. “Vintage” lunchboxes inhabit these spaces. Mum’s well-crafted slices, the craving for packed biscuits, the warm milk offered at schools, or the increasing use of whole-wheat and health products of the hippy lunchbox.

More recently lunchboxes have come to inhabit newspapers or glossy mainstream magazines. Lunch foods sometimes appear in these spaces as threatening objects that can make children obese, ‘The latest Australian statistics indicate that 23 percent of children aged two to 16 are overweight or obese... Given that the students spend almost eight hours a day at school, what they find in their lunchboxes is more important than ever’ (Southward, 2011). Such preoccupations have moved lunchboxes into the political arena, where their contents and regulations have been widely debated. Lunches have even acquired corporate attention with the country’s biggest company, Fonterra, offering to re-establish the free milk programme at schools (TVNZ, 2011).

In all of these spaces the role of the lunchbox as a fundamental aspect of school life is taken for granted, presented as normal and natural. The lunchbox might even appear unremarkable to outsiders. Instead, this thesis reviews the foods, practices, production, consumption, discourses, values and ideals of the

lunchbox as revealing broader notions about health, class, ethnicity and gender that enforce hegemonic obedience to the economic, social and political regimes of market capitalism and the nation-state. The lunchbox is used as a 'total social fact' (Mauss, 2002 [1922]: 102) that reflects broader ideals and practices of New Zealand society. Accordingly I explore the various fields in which the lunchbox appears in order to identify how government documents, school edicts, teachers and parents construct lunchbox contents, and how these decrees are received and enacted by children.

The thesis is an exploratory study that addresses the question: *how do the contents of schoolchildren's lunches reflect and indicate their understandings and practices of health, ethnicity and social class?* I also examine the following: what does *diversity* mean in the context of the New Zealand school, and for children in particular? How does it influence their relationships with others? How is difference — and indeed similarity or collectivity — enacted, mediated and challenged by children? Given the constraints of the MA process, the analysis should be taken as suggestive or indicative, rather than conclusive ([Babbie, 2007](#)). I chose to give central focus to a theoretical understanding of the topic, seeking to explore the applicability of Bourdieuan theory to the fields of the Lunchbox. Likewise, while I note issues of gender, the perceived influence of food on 'good' and 'bad' behaviour, personal preference, personal identity, and material culture, these are outside of the scope of this thesis.

The overall argument is that the sandwich, as the most common food item, is constructed as the core, dominant component of the lunchbox that mutually constitutes nutritional ideals, social class and ethnic tropes, practices and values. This is primarily enacted via a dichotomized nexus of the sandwich as healthy, good, skinny, well behaved, energetic, and Kiwi versus the non-sandwich as unhealthy, bad, fat, naughty, sick, and Other. Through various health discourses the centrality of the sandwich has persisted through time. Moreover, as a transportable, conveniently-consumed food it is associated with occupational disciplines and thus its centrality enculturates children into the compartmentalised disciplines of school and work.

Secondly, I argue the sandwich reflects and reproduces discourses of health, food, work discipline and education that are seemingly inclusive and egalitarian, and therefore appear to transcend differences or conflicts in cultural and social backgrounds. Yet these discourses actually create sanctioned and corralled spaces for difference, via the celebration of ethnic diversity through shared lunches, inclusion of Maori language, eclectic (Campbell, 1978), and omnivorous (Holt, 1997) consumption of food. Embedded in these discourses the sandwich is deployed as a tool for distinction (class, specialty, gender, luxury) as well as indicator of forms of economic, moral, cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984) by parents and children. The sandwich primarily signifies nationalism and belonging, encouraging children to produce sandwiches despite their ethnic background and to measure others by the production of sandwiches in ways that resemble Ghassan Hage's 'white nation fantasy' (1998).

A critical analysis of this nexus of inclusivity and diversity reveals that the socio-political homogenisation of the cultural, social and political scapes of the nation-state are managed through the allocation of truncated spaces that can be 'safely' inhabited by the dominant culture while allowing for certain forms of sanctioned heterogeneity. This is forged through the 'domestication of the other' (Hage, 1998: 171) which reduces ethnic Others into what I term 'accessorized culture'. That is, ethnic Others are perceived solely through token, aesthetic, symbolic, high cultural features (e.g. clothing, food, customs, "traditions") that are pleasing to white nationals, while agentic, social and political personas and practices which disrupt the 'white fantasy' are absented or corralled. Consequently ethnic diversity can be 'safely' enacted, commodified, celebrated, and enjoyed as a distinction-based practice of 'benign cosmopolitanism' (Howland, forthcoming), without challenging the 'whiteness' of the nation state (Hage, 2003). Within these discourses the sandwich operates as an 'illutio', maintaining 'belief in the game' (Bourdieu, 1984: 59) of New Zealand as an egalitarian and tolerant society, while also being deployed as a mechanism for distinction, exclusion and stratification.



This thesis conducts a field analysis (Bourdieu, 1990), systematically discussing throughout each chapter government documents, school environments, and parents' interviews to demonstrate the way in which these were reproduced, challenged, partially enacted, transformed and/or viewed by children who retained agency within their social and cultural worlds. Since my intent was to gain understanding about children's social worlds I dedicate each chapter to a core social feature. The first chapter provides a history of health and nutrition, explaining how the sandwich is constituted as a healthy food. The second chapter assesses the class dimensions of the sandwich, demonstrating the way in which class is constructed and yet veiled in New Zealand and how the lunchbox is used as a tool for distinction by parents and children. The third chapter canvasses the ethnic dimensions of lunchbox food, demonstrating that while ethnicity is celebrated in government documents and certain practices of school life (language learning, introduction to Maori culture, shared lunches), on a day-to-day basis children must bring sandwiches, and make their ethnicity 'palatable' (Morris, 2010). Children however recognise the stereotyped and token deployment of ethnicity by adults and instead creatively "play" with, experience partial competency of, and challenge ethnic identifications.

### ***Methodology: Doing fieldwork in the playground***

The study utilised a mixed method approach, including participant-observation, focus groups with children, informal and formal discussions with teachers and semi-structured interviews with self-selected middle-class parents, enabling data triangulation by presenting the lunchbox from different angles. It facilitated a developmental process of investigation, which was effective for capturing subtle nuances, attitudes and behaviours of children (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The ethnographic component has been deemed 'the most important method for studying children', as it enables the ethnographer proximity to children's everyday lives (James & Prout, 1997: xvi).

Since the intent was to collect comprehensive, detailed data, and to complete my thesis within one year, I limited the fieldwork to three co-educational primary

schools located in the central suburbs of Wellington. Participant-observation<sup>1</sup> at two of these schools, Old-Village and Lambton-Quay, took place for the duration of a month and only for two days at North-Hill School. I attended class daily at each of the schools. Throughout I have adhered to Mandell's (1988) 'new sociology of childhood' methodology, which entails lessening one's adult's features and qualities. I did so by participating in school activities as a child (e.g. sitting on the mat, colouring, singing and reading with children as opposed to teachers), stressing to children that I was not a teacher, and avoiding any adult-like responsibilities (e.g. dissolving conflict, telling children off, telling children what to do). I also tried to learn the sorts of behaviours and discussions that were appropriate for children (e.g. language use, game patterns). I then partially followed and copied them.

The method was selected with the purpose of understanding the way in which children's social worlds operate. It was also meant to encourage children to perceive me as one of them so that they would reveal practices hidden from teachers but of significance to them and my study (i.e. food sharing as this was discouraged at the schools, or comments about adults). Likewise the method could lessen the power dynamics experienced by children so that they did not feel pressured to answer my questions (MacNaughton et al., 2001). I believe the methodology was successful in overcoming most of these factors. My analysis of the dynamic nature of children's worlds should reveal my quest to understand their own views, and the similarities to and differences from those of adults.

Likewise the children were very active in participating in research and answering questions. In some cases however they excluded me from their games and refused to answer. I believe this demonstrates that I was treated as a 'least adult' (Mandell, 1988) and that children did not feel coerced into participating. Cognisant of the persuasive nature of the adult child relationship, as well as children's tendency to imitate adults' responses, I also sought to

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<sup>1</sup> As Descombe et al. (1993) have demonstrated, participant-observation is the only method capable of holistically capturing children's perceptions regarding ethnic identity, overcoming the issues of other methods which address ethnicity or social class as independent variables that merely affect children's social lives.

lessen my reactions to children's responses and provide as little information about myself as possible. For instance, if I asked them what food they liked and they said chocolate, I would just write it in my notebook without saying anything back. When kids asked me questions about my opinion I would say, "hmm, I don't know. What do you think?" This emulated the way in which children normally acted, as they often "didn't know" the answers to questions, so this response was accepted by them.

It was of great importance to me that children understood my role as a researcher, and that they were aware that the information they provided was to be published in my thesis and research articles. The approval of children's participation was given by custodians. However, following United Nations guidelines regarding children's rights, children were briefed on the project and given the opportunity in all instances to approve or deny their participation in research. However this endeavour often contradicted my 'least adult role' performances. I sought to resolve this by participating in school life as a child, but always carrying a notebook with me. I told and showed the children that whatever they said was recorded in the notebook, and explained that I wrote "the stories that children told me" and that what was written would be used for writing a book:

Rosie: what is that? (Pointing to my notebook)

Nathan: it is her notebook. She writes everything in there. See how much she has written already? That is all just from our class. She can tell you what you said before, like yesterday.

Academics have argued (see e.g. Morrow & Richards, 1996) that children are less likely to be affected by research related risks (e.g. misinterpretation, coercion, anxiety, embarrassment) if they are viewed as social actors in their own right, a feature that I sought to address through the use of the notebook. Since the children were just learning to write they found the book fascinating, and often saw it as an opportunity to direct my research:

Raiden: What is it that you do again? And how long are you at our school?

Carla: I am writing a story about your lunchboxes. I will be at school next week as well.

Raiden: You mean like you are writing a book that will actually get published?

Carla: Well, I guess some of it will. Like an article.

Raiden: Oh that is awesome! You could ask the children to bring out their lunchboxes and see what is in them. You could then make a chapter about the different lunchboxes.

I took the input of children seriously, and sought to include their recommendations wherever possible in my research. I also demonstrated my role as a researcher to children, and emphasised their inclusion in the research project by writing a child-friendly version of the thesis (see Appendix). The book was a short story that described to the children my main findings, mostly the prominent role of the sandwich in children's lunchboxes and the potential explanations for its pervasiveness. I read the book to them towards the end of the school year, with the scope of ensuring that they were aware of the contents of what would constitute this thesis, one of the noted difficulties in conducting research with minors (see Mac Naughton et al. 2001 ). It also allowed them to provide feedback. Mostly the children liked the story and agreed with my explanations, although they questioned me on why I had focused so closely on the sandwich.

It was difficult to maintain the 'least adult role' when teachers required my help. Teachers often sought my assistance when they could not discipline children, to help children who struggled academically, or for organising activities. These requests were difficult to reject, as I was grateful that the teachers had accepted me in their classroom despite their busy schedules and high number of students. Moreover the teachers often simply assigned me adult tasks. When I undertook an adult task I explained to the children that for the moment I was an adult, but then went back to acting as a child. I am sure that the children would have found these behaviours confusing. As was the case in Mandell's studies (1988), children often questioned my identity by constantly asking "what I was" or whether "I was a mummy" when I confirmed to them I was not a teacher.

The methodology also raised issues regarding school regulation. Similar to Nukaga's research (2008) I found myself passively engaging in activities that were illicit for children, mostly the sharing of food and minor damaging of school property (i.e. painting on desks or making holes in the school playground). I engaged in these activities despite the knowledge that they were frowned upon by the school and wondered if my behaviour would encourage other children. I sought to overcome this by engaging only briefly in the activities and telling children I did not enjoy them. A perhaps higher ethical dilemma emerged in cases when I would see children misbehaving and/or hurting each other. I sought to act upon these situations by asking other children to call the teacher for intervention and in none of the cases children were severely harmed. However, children did seem disappointed when they would have liked my help and I refused to intervene, and higher ethical issues would have been raised if children were in real danger.

Other aspects of the methodology included a one-hour focus group at each of the classrooms with teachers and children. I also conducted informal discussions with teachers and interviewed each teachers from the classrooms I visited separately. I also attended the teacher's morning tea once a week, as this was the space where school news and regulation were discussed. Once participant-observation was conducted at Old-Village School, I conducted interviews with three self-selected parents in their homes, with the intent of gathering demographic data in relation to their class position and ethnicities. Only one of the interviews included both the father and mother (all other interviews were only conducted with the mother). After my research at Lambton-Quay a similar round of interviews were conducted. In total five teachers, four mothers and one set of parents were interviewed. The length of the interviews ranged from fifteen minutes to half an hour. The scope of the focus groups was to allow more dedicated analysis with the children about their lunchboxes, while interviews with parents and teachers could provide contextual background to home and school habitus.

Finally, a note on style. I have used pseudonyms throughout to protect the privacy of participants and schools. Single quotation marks (') are used to signal information gained from texts, while double quotation marks (") identify participants' utterances.

Name	School Type	D e c i l e <sup>2</sup>	Sc hool Roll October 20 11	P a k e h a	M a o r i	P a c i f i c I.	A s i a n	M E L A A <sup>3</sup>	O t h e r	Ag e of pa rti cip an ts	Class compositio n <sup>4</sup>
Lambton-Quay School	Full primary (years 1-8)	8	231	139	30	10	48	3	1	8-9	Mostly middle to upper middle class.
North-Hill School	Full primary (years 1-8)	8	402	235	47	38	65	6	11	6-7	Mostly middle class but small population of working class refugee migrants.
Old-Village School	Contributing (Year 1-6)	4	230	61	68	44	31	8	18	5-7	Mostly working class but with a growing population of middle class

<sup>2</sup> It is also important to know, particularly for the third chapter, that all the school teachers identified themselves as having a New Zealand European ethnicity.

<sup>3</sup> Middle Eastern, Latin American or African.

<sup>4</sup> The ethnic information in this chart was retrieved from the Ministry of Education School directory. The class and age information is based on my observations.

											children.
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### ***Why sandwiches? The sandwich as New Zealand lunchbox icon***

While the schools visited presented a highly diverse (in terms of class and ethnic) population, most children brought sandwiches. There were however different types of lunchboxes that I will refer to throughout. One category was the *simple lunchbox* — this typically included a white bread sandwich with a maximum of two fillings (e.g. marmite and cheese, peanut butter and jam), often accompanied by other pre-packaged foods (e.g. muesli bars, yogurts, crackers) and one piece of fruit (e.g. apple, mandarin). This category emerged in contrast to the *luxury lunchbox* — which contained fruits that were not in season or generally more expensive (e.g. grapes, feijoas). The sandwich also included charcuterie meats (e.g. salami, prosciutto) or homemade preserves (e.g. chutneys or jams) that were perceived as ‘gourmet’, often on wholemeal or multigrain bread (although there were some white bread luxury lunchboxes that fulfilled all other criteria) or artisan/specialised breads such as ciabatas, croissants, pita breads etc.

FIGURE : SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS Other children did not bring homemade lunches but came to school with a *bought lunchbox*. In this case all of the lunchbox contents had been purchased at a food outlet such as supermarkets, bakeries, McDonalds or KFC. In these cases no fruit or yogurt was added but children were provided with juice. Children could also purchase various *ordered lunches*. In North-Hill Schoolchildren could choose foods such as pies, sushi or Subway. In Lambton-Quay Schoolchildren could have a hot dog or vegetarian stuffed pita bread. At Old-Village School they could buy a bread roll, popcorn or biscuits. Across all schools these items ranged from \$3 to \$5.

There were however some children who simply brought *no sandwiches*. This was either due to their personal preference, a desire for variety, or they were not sure as this was their parents’ choice. This also included children of second-

generation migrants who were sent with noodles, rice or stir-fries in place of a sandwich.

	Approximate percentage of lunchbox types per school (based on observation)		
Type of lunchbox	Lambton-Quay (Decile 8) N= 23 lunchboxes	North-Hill School (8) N= 25	Old-Village School (3) N=26
Simple lunchbox	10%	10%	70%
Bought lunch	20%	5%	15%
Ordered lunch	20%	50%	2%
Luxury lunchbox	40%	30%	20%
No sandwich lunchbox	10%	5%	3%

FIGURE : LUNCHBOX TYPES

### ***Playing with Bourdieu: Applying a relational model to children's lives***

Given this study addresses the intersection of educational institutions, food consumption and ethnic and class differentiation, drawing on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu was an effective approach. This allows for empirically-based observation that could generate analysis at the macro-level (Swartz, 1997) and integrates different fields of social action, positioning school lunches 'as a subject of study within a system of co-ordinates in which a plurality of discourses converge' (Pereda Perez, 2011: 34). I have sought to use the work of Bourdieu in a holistic manner, following his requirement to use his concepts as part of a relational model<sup>5</sup> and not just as separate entities or terms (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

According to Bourdieu a *field* is a network of relations between individuals, groups, institutions and objects. Each field has its own logic, determined by the forms of capital and transactions that are associated with objects, behaviours

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5 For Bourdieu 'the real is the relational: what exists in the social world are relations – not interactions between agents or inter-subjective ties between individuals, but objective relations' (1992, p. 97). Thus social agents cannot be studied in isolation, but must be understood in relation to their position within the social field, their history within the field and the history of the field. This is an aspect that I have sought to maintain throughout the thesis.



and social relations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This does not infer that each field has nothing in common with other fields, as forms of capital can be exchanged between them and the transactions of a field can have effects in others (i.e. the field of schooling has implications for the field of the family). For Bourdieu fields are 'spaces of conflict and competition... in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of capital effective in it... and the power to decree the hierarchy and conversion rates between all forms of authority in the field of power' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 17). This structure allows for the stability of the field, as agents that participate in it submit to its logic, as will be demonstrated in terms of production of school sandwiches through time. Yet this also encompasses change, as agents attempt to improve their relative position in the field, in this case by dynamically transforming the contents of lunchboxes to reveal middle-class distinction.

The *habitus* is a 'durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisation' (Bourdieu, 1990: 57). Habitus and field must be conceived as two sides of the same coin. The field is the 'structure that structures' the habitus, and thus shapes, to a given extent, the dispositions of individuals. The habitus is how those structures are internalised and embodied by the individual. It is the habitus that allows for the production and reproduction of the field. The habitus provides directions for future action, but, since it is produced through the field it seeks to organise a person's goals and desires to match the state that they are objectively likely to achieve (Bourdieu, 1977: 164). For Bourdieu this is not the product of conscious individual or collective effort, but the outcome of the durability of the dispositions (1990: 54), a feature of his work which I will critique by appealing to the current middle-class reflexive habitus (Sweetman, 2003).

Bourdieu has been criticized for the deterministic manner in which he utilises habitus and field (see Bouveresse, 1995; Jenkins, 1982; Schatzki, 1987; Warde, 2004). Indeed, Bourdieu places the agency-structure paradox at the centre of his theory, connecting the concepts in a dialectic manner. Bourdieu asserts that social agents act within rules by means of strategies, which they are free to

determine, to face the rules of the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). However, in his writing, he ontologically and causally positions the field as constituent of the habitus, rendering the model deterministic at times. For instance, in *The State Nobility* he explains: 'without doubt social agents construct social reality, (...) but they do so always with points of view, interests and principles of vision determined by the position they occupy in the very world they seek to transform or to conserve' (1996: 8). Thus, different expressions lead to granting the same priority to the structures (1998: 87–109). As I will demonstrate in chapter 1 such determinism is the product of Bourdieu's attempt to apply the concepts to advanced societies (see Swartz, 1997: 114) but can be overcome by recovering its use in its early work where the habitus is employed as 'strategy generating principle' (1977: 72) that allows for a practice based use of agency.

*Capital* can be understood as the possession of and access to resources which enable individuals to 'play the game'. The notion of capital requires specification into economic capital (the monetary product of one's labour, wealth, inheritance and assets), social capital (the relationships we forge with other individuals within and across fields, networks with people as well as social institutions), and cultural capital, which takes place in three states: as embodied state, that is in the form of habitus (e.g. dining manners, opera etiquette, knowledge of soccer chants), as objectified state in the form of cultural goods (e.g. paintings, books, a flat screen television) and as institutionalized state (e.g. access to educational and culturally legitimised and legitimising institutions of each field). Finally Bourdieu introduces the term symbolic capital to indicate the objects, practices, dispositions, embodiments, tastes etc, that are generated by the different forms of capital and become recognised as legitimate or authentic markers of social distinction (Bourdieu 1984: 101-116). While the other capitals might also play a role in determining one's position within the field and subsequent dispositions, economic capital is the most efficient form of capital in capitalist societies (Calhoun, et al. 1993: 5).

While I agree with Bourdieu's understanding of the existence of forms of habitus and cultural capital that are perceived as legitimate and legitimise those

of others (symbolic capital), not all individuals in society operate in the pursuit of elite forms of cultural capital. As Warde (2004) explains, 'Bourdieu tends to suggest that all conduct worthy of sociological investigation is strategic and competitive (...) However there is much conduct within the field of art which has not the same competitive logic. This is even more the case in other fields like cooking or caring' (15). I suggest therefore that each field encourages and creates its own systems of capital exchange and accordant positioning of individuals (from competitive, to submissive or unreceptive), between which potentially lie extremely different and incongruent legitimate and legitimating capitals. All individuals are not in the pursuit of the one legitimated capital, or compete to acquire legitimation within the fields of power (Peter Howland, Personal Communication).

Throughout the thesis I deploy Bourdieu's understanding of *social class* as a field (1984). Class can be understood as networks of individuals who 'represent similar positions in social space that provide similar conditions of existence and conditioning and therefore create similar dispositions which in turn generate similar practices' (Bourdieu, 1987: 6). Class constitutes assemblages of stratifying factors ranging from individual perceptions and the perceptions of others about them regarding class location, forms of conspicuous and symbolic consumption, parental and personal education, and relationships to means of production. It is the aggregate of these factors that constitute social class (Bourdieu, 1984: 483).

According to Bourdieu class analysis must assess class positions and what is foreseen or aspired to as one's future position. It should also include historical trajectories of the different classes (i.e. transformations of a class position in a given society not only in terms of composition but dispositions) in terms of upward or downward mobility, stagnation or intra-class evolution. This analysis has particular relevance to my study, as children's partial and developing competencies regarding to class are being formed through the school and family. As such their habitus, capitals and distinction must be viewed within their own trajectory. Despite the seemingly reductive nature of Bourdieu's

analysis, I will use it as an overarching framework and attempt to render it more complex and dynamic through the lens of ethnography.

In particular throughout my work I refer to the middle-classes, their distinctions and habitus. In New Zealand the middle-classes are generally identified by their employment in white-collar or tertiary sector jobs (e.g. government bureaucracies, teaching) or because they own a small to middle sized business (dairy owners), and/or are tertiary educated. As such their habitus is typically characterised by 'greater occupational autonomy, creativity, mobility, affluence, and improved life chances than most blue-collar workers' (Howland, 2010: 64). New Zealand middle-class habitus also encompasses an emphasis on individualism and individualised reflexivity (Howland, 2008), as well as conspicuous, omnivorous and eclectic forms of consumption. I do not hold any official or statistical data regarding to participants' social class apart from demographic information provided by the few parents interviewed and the decile system of the schools. My analysis of children's and parents' class is purely based on my critical observation of aspects such as their clothing, language, estimated cost of ingredients sent in lunchboxes, narratives about activities at home, location and state of the houses where the interviews were conducted, questions regarding their parents' jobs and short talks with teachers about the "background" of some students. While this is ultimately reductive and partial, I have attempted to be transparent in my assertions by presenting the elements that I utilised to ascertain a given participant's social class.

According to Bourdieu, given that class is a field of action, individuals and groups engage in material as well as 'symbolic and social classificatory' struggles, to maintain or enhance their relative standing within the hierarchy and ensure their reproduction (Bourdieu, 1985: 725). The struggle between and within the classes is 'played out symbolically as a struggle for distinction and emulation that is based on perceptions of the social worth of different kinds of lifestyle' (Swartz, 1997: 115). The nature of *distinction* must however be understood as constructed, contextual and comparative, as it is relative to the fields of action, forms of capital and stakes of the individuals engaged. It is

through the analysis of the given forms of distinctions in a given field that the constructions of the field, as well as the forms of exchangeabilities of capital can be understood.

Taste plays a pivotal role in such struggle. First, as part of one's habitus, taste reflects the social class to which one is socialised. Taste is therefore not an aspect of individual free choice or completely abstract liking. Instead what is tasteful, beautiful, normal, good, tasty and equally what is ugly, disgusting, shocking and so forth are culturally constructed. They are guided foremost, although not exclusively, by individuals' social class habitus and especially by their socialisation into formative family and educational habitus, and more latterly by their occupational, elective social and leisure habitus. An analysis of lunchbox consumption through the dynamic lens of class and distinction thus enables a social yet agentic view to children's understanding and enactment of dispositions, taste, distinction, status, hierarchies and differences.

### ***Bourdieu's legacy: Ghassan Hage's white nation fantasy***

While Bourdieu's theories provide a rich framework for analysing class relationships, given the context in which they were written (1960s France) and Bourdieu's theoretical project, they did not offer sufficient grounding for an analysis of ethnic relations. Therefore I also engaged Ghassan Hage's theories of ethnicity (1998; 2003), which provide continuity with a Bourdieuan approach through understanding ethnicity as a field and ethnic belonging as an acquisition of given forms of symbolic capital. It also furnished an effective framework for the understanding of processes of 'domestication of difference' which were encountered during observation.

I will preface the discussion of Hage's 'white nation fantasy' as a 'fantasy position of cultural dominance borne out of the history of colonial expansion. Not an essence that one has or does not have' but an aspiration (Hage, 1998: 20). Hage argues that 'whiteness and Australianness [and in this case 'Kiwiness'] – of which Whiteness remains a crucial component can be accumulated' and

people can be said to be more or less white and Australian based on the social attributes they possess, such as looks, physical characteristics, accent, language, demeanour, taste, nationality, and so forth (53-54).

Moreover, Hage argues that although discourses of multiculturalism might seek to represent an inclusive view of the nation-state and promote the embracing of diversity, 'both white racist and white multiculturalist share in a conception of themselves as nationalist and of the nation as a space structured around white culture where... non-white 'ethnics' are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to the white nation will' (18). This creates a lasting impression that power, 'even if open for non-Anglos to accumulate whiteness within it, remains an Anglo-looking phenomena' (190- 191). The thesis will therefore argue that the sandwich is constructed as a 'white nation' apparatus, that can be deployed as symbolic capital by white nationals and ethnic Others to demonstrate their allegiance to the nation-state and market capitalism. Simultaneously the sandwich is a tool for domesticating Others to white neo-liberal middle-class norms and ideals (e.g. individualism, reflexivity, class appropriate behaviour, social divisions).

## ***Conclusion***

I began this thesis with the intent of joining my two biggest anthropological interests, children and food. The research has however grown well beyond this mere matching and has given me the opportunity to observe the world from a child's viewpoint, allowing me to learn greatly from their experiences. In these chapters I have collected their voices, actions and adventures and linked them to the lives of adults. Through this I hope to demonstrate the profound logic and creativity that lies within them.

## **“Sandwich Definitely...”: The Sandwich as Cornerstone of the Nutritious School Lunch**

Carla: Tell me just a little bit about the lunchbox and the sorts of things you pack.

(Parent) Nila: Well, obviously I believe in the healthy eating and all that, but also to treat him [her son] as well. And yeah, so I have a bit of a mix of everything. I try to give them a good, like three fruits in their lunchbox. Sandwich definitely, you know some sort of sandwich, and um, the one they would eat.

The prominence of the sandwich within school lunchboxes and in parents' interviews affirms its iconic standing and reveals its construction as a pragmatic exemplar and ideal representation of healthy food. I present a historical account of the emergence and embedding of these notions through schooling and children's food consumption. Based on this historical and political analysis I argue that the sandwich is constructed as an icon of nutritious food and well-being through a series of dynamically reproduced and contested discourses about health that permeate the field of the school lunchbox and which serve to veil or resolve difference and contradiction. Nutrition is therefore a form of 'biopower' that through 'technologies of control and of the self' (Foucault, 1977; Rose, 1999) enables 'social reproduction' (Bourdieu, 1998). This explains how, despite significant changes in nutritional knowledge, foodstuffs, and cooking methods available in New Zealand over the past 50 years; the variable knowledge and practices of food by parents and children; and the wide range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds of schoolchildren, the sandwich is routinely the 'core symbol' (Ortner, 1973) deployed to construct and decipher the ideal school lunch (Douglas, 1972).

I embrace Bennett's (in Silva and Warden: 2010) encouragement to broaden Bourdieu's key concepts of field, capital and habitus through Foucault's understandings of governmentality. Bennett explains that there is a 'close fit and historical filiation between cultural capital theory and the development of governmental and statistical apparatuses concerned with regulating and monitoring, through a variety of policy measures in both the education and cultural fields' (2010: 115). I therefore emphasise that governmentality takes place through historically structured state-funded

interventions regarding to populations' food tastes and the ways in which the cultural capitals of food are created, reproduced and exchanged. I also incorporate some of the ethnographic data collected through my participant-observation, together with a discourse analysis of government documents, media reports, cookbooks and webpages, in order to present the historical rendering of the sandwich as the cornerstone of lunchtime food. I deploy Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse in order to demonstrate how discursive narratives, dialogues and routines of talk (Billig, 1999) construct, challenge and help shape extensively accepted norms or "truths".

### ***Nostalgia: The roots of the healthy sandwich***

Parents' narratives about the school lunchbox frequently involved reminiscences of their own lunchboxes. Parents asserted that there were significant similarities between their lunchboxes and their children's. Beth, the mother of a child at Old-Village School, expressed this narrative:

Carla: Do you think that their lunch is in anyway representative of who you are?

Beth: Well I guess only in the extent that it is pretty much like the lunches that we had as kids... What goes in there reflects the kind of food that we eat; that we think is good to eat.

Carla: Is that in terms of like having a sandwich and some fruit and yogurt?

Beth: Yeah... it was basically sandwich and, you know, a piece of cake or something. And a few pieces of fruit. So, yeah, very similar.

Other participants likewise confirmed the enduring configuration of sandwich, fruit, yoghurt and "treat", yet they also identified change toward even healthier sandwiches:

Carla: What is healthy and what is not healthy.... How do you decide on that?

Annabelle: Oh I suppose our mother is a nurse so that was the sort of stuff she really knew about... She was into fresh, make yourselves... Not bought crackers like they have. Not bought biscuits... It was basic sandwiches, vegemite cheese, vegemite lettuce, cheese and something else... It tended to be either rolls, or wholemeal bread... We would have some sort of biscuit.

Such statements compel consideration of the question at the heart of Bourdieu's enquiry: Through what mechanisms are some structures maintained 'in and through change'? (Bourdieu, 1973). What Beth and Annabelle remember and deem as good for their children to eat demonstrates continuity in food types and configurations with



what their parents deemed as good or healthy. Yet Annabelle also highlights changes in terms of sandwich ingredients or constitutive healthy elements. Accordingly the sandwich as a 'healthy food' is passed down through the generations as a form of cultural capital, remembered and re-enacted as a durable disposition, while at the same time reforming, enhancing and transformative elements are incorporated. Furthermore this knowledge about "healthy food" is well received within the schools and is perceived to have positive physical and behavioural effects on children.

For Bourdieu (1990) one of the primary ways in which cultural capital is legitimised and transformed into symbolic capital is through its acquisition in and transmission by the family unit. Beth's and Annabelle's appeal to their families' robust sense of understanding and practices of healthy food demonstrate that the family is a key site for the accumulation of different forms of capital, as well as its transmission between the generations. Such social reproduction underlines the transmission of cultural capital through the family as one of the core strategies for the reproduction of the social system, maintaining social order and hegemonic structures (Bourdieu, 1973).<sup>6</sup> While there are a multiplicity of forces that can divide a family (e.g. inheritance disputes, geographic mobility) the transmission of cultural capital and associated practices may still persist, with subsequent generations sharing similar habitus and associated "healthy lifestyles" (Bourdieu, 1998: 69).

The family can constitute itself as a primary guide for individual choice orientation. For instance in *Whitcombe's Cookery Book* (1966) the authors state, 'Food habits established in the home will govern choice of food. Pies and cakes may be good but they do not in themselves provide a lunch containing good factors essential for good health. Meat, cheese or egg, wholemeal sandwiches or rolls are foods that should be chosen' (23). Such edicts can resolve the tension between media or popular culture and family-based habitus, in which case the 'unhealthy' foods such as pies and cakes are framed as exceptions to the ideal. Discussions with parents also demonstrated that similar government edicts have been internalised and perceived as personal choices, in ways that clearly exemplify forms of subjectivisation: 'The procedure by which one obtains the

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<sup>6</sup> The family can also be seen as a site for disorder and disruption of state power. For instance the consumption of the treat in many ways disrupts the edicts of healthy food consumption.

constitution of a subject ... or a subjectivity through the recognition of forms of thought and action that are taken for granted and internalised as one's own' ( Ashenden & Owen, 1999: 93).

This also resonates with Douglas' analysis of meal classification, where the continuity of foodways are reproduced by individuals who make and consume the meals relying on past models of meal constitution to guide them. Parts of the meal might reflect new capitals, here evident in that the past the fillings of sandwiches were "simpler", "inexpensive" and had "bland fillings" in comparison with those of today, which can include luxury and exotic foods (e.g. sundried tomatoes, olives, aged cheeses). This rhetoric reinforces a vision of a New Zealand past orientated toward a rural-based, simpler lifestyle (Bell, 1996), as well as constituting current 'gourmet' practices as forms of middle-class distinction (see Chapter Two). Nevertheless, the maintenance of the 'key symbols' of the lunchbox re-affirms Douglas' argument that the basis of the meal must remain recognisable.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a 'durably installed generative principle' (1990: 57) also helps explain the enduring nature of meal classifications; individuals are socialised within certain habitus and thus acquire cultural capitals that are internalised as objectified structures embedded within historical processes. According to Bourdieu the habitus ensures that, throughout the generations, enduring practices can be reproduced without critical reflection. As I demonstrate, notions about healthy food are constructed through time but become normalised through both discourse and practice. Once the position of the sandwich is cemented as the main food in the school meal its durability is secured. Moreover individuals believe that replicating such practices occurs autonomously from structures, and they are thus constructed as "personal choices".

### ***Cookbooks to nutrition, sandwiches to government intervention***

Given parents' appeals to the past, a critical exploration of the origins of the sandwich as the cornerstone food of the nutritious lunchbox meal is clearly necessary. I use cookbooks as historical clues for understanding the significant conceptual and historical changes in terms of food and nutrition over the last century (see Bell, 1962). Symons (2009) notes a change in cookbooks from a scientific and 'technological' interest to an increasing concern with exotic cuisines and cooking methods, and

everyday domestic foods/meals that can be prepared speedily. At the turn of the century recipes were mostly directed towards housewives and celebrated for their specificity, reliability, and proven qualities. However, by the end of the century, the emphasis has shifted to “everyday”, “easy to prepare” meals. These cookbooks also reference a “mother” who can produce a “healthy and balanced dish” and reward her family with “treats” (e.g. cakes). The discourses produced by the parents reflected these changes, mostly through the emphasis on treats and the search for a balanced diet.

Symons (2009) argues that the quest for ‘health’ is emblematic of this transition. While these terms made brief appearances in 1930s cookbooks, the transition began effectively with medically-directed discussions of health in the cookbooks of the 1940s and 1950s — in particular with the three editions of *Good Nutrition: Principles and Menus* (Gregory & Wilson, 1944). This educational and recipe book offered viable alternatives to housewives attempting to manage food shortages caused by World War II and to maintain the nutritional content of family meals. The book also sought to change the prevailing ethos of familial food distribution by ensuring the main recipients of nutritious foods were children rather than the male breadwinner. An entire section was dedicated to recommendations from the League of Nations, where milk, eggs, cheese, cooked vegetables, raw vegetables and fruit as well as fats (particularly butter), cereals and bread were recommended as the basis for children’s diets. The book signified the emergent association of food and nutrition, and its emphasis on fruit, vegetables and bread as staple components of a healthy diet are retained in contemporary discourses. However, notions about fats and sugar significantly differ with current Ministry of Health (MOH) regulations (2007), which recommend these only in moderation as part of a “balanced” diet.

In the 1960s New Zealand experienced a cooking liberation (Symons, 2009). A wider range of foods were available due to advances in food storage and transportation, and there was a corresponding increase in books concerned with preparing foreign cuisines, probably as the result of increased migration and the influence of global mediascapes (Appadurai, 1996). The introduction of blenders, food processors and other food preparation utensils freed women from time-consuming domesticity and coincided with an influx of New Zealand women into the workforce (Spyrou, 2009). Consequently the 1940s and 1950s were characterised by ‘austere’ and disinterested cooking, as well as elective food rationing that established conscious and portioned eating as symptomatic of a healthy diet (Burton, 1992: 19). The 1960s by contrast were

characterised by a hedonistic interest in food, its prevalence in public discussion and increased conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 2005 [1899]). 'In the new consumer era, eating joined cooking in book titles, along with diverse demands for healthy, favourite, tasty, and treat foods' (Symons, 2009: 231). The 'counter-cuisine liberation' (Belasco, 2007) that followed the lean war years promoted increased interest in food consumption, and consequently issues of obesity and over-eating emerged (Mitchell, 2008). There was a corollary interest in nutrition and several community and state campaigns were established against being overweight (Kulick & Meneley, 2005). 1960s cookbooks were characterised by two key foods, the salad and the "treat".

The celebration of the "treat" can be explained by the increase of women in the work force and the ambivalent relation between sugar as "unhealthy" and as an occasional luxury food. Symonds (2009) argues women provide "treats" to compensate their family for replacing housework with work and lack of time spent with them, or alternately as a "reward" for their and their family's hard work. Likewise with increased prosperity, the growing middle-classes displayed their status via consumption of food luxuries, thus emphasising their 'distance from necessity' (Bourdieu 1984: 56) from functional/filling foods designed to reproduce labouring bodies. The "treat" comes to be understood as following or complimentary to a "balanced diet", which like the contemporary ideologies of meritocracy and a "balanced life" contains similarly contradictory elements of hard occupational work that is rewarded with, or even is re-energised by, its opposite of leisure and play. The lunchbox of healthy foods and treats thus enculturates schoolchildren to these necessarily contradictory elements of market capitalism (Peter Howland, Personal Communication).

The introduction of nutrition principles into school lunchboxes follows a similar trajectory. Towards the 1940s cookbooks began to address issues of nutrition for children — the *Good Nutrition: Principles and Menus* cookbook (Gregory & Wilson, 1944) was one of the first to present the sandwich as a healthy lunch food for schoolchildren and working men. Other publications of prominence at this time were different editions of the *Cookery Book of the New Zealand Women's Institute* (1934-1975) used extensively in community-based cookery classes, which all dedicated a section to school lunches. This school food emphasis was significantly advanced by the emergence of fundraiser cookbooks

in the 1950s,<sup>7</sup> particularly with *The League of Mothers Cookery Book and Household Hints* (circa 1951) and *RSA Christchurch Women's Section Cookery Book* (circa 1960), which both dedicate a chapter to the school lunchbox. In the 1970s, the genre of the lunchbox cookbook was firmly established with famous tomes such as *Lively Lunches* series(1974), which included an entire booklet on lunchbox foods. The general ethos of these cookbooks was nutritional, and they often championed guidelines to improve the quality of the food eaten by children (Leach, Personal Communication).<sup>8</sup> For instance, *Whitcombe's Everyday Cookery* (1966) presented a clear statement on essential foods, categorising them into foods that supply energy, such as bread, cereal, butter and jam; foods that build and repair the body from illness, such as milk, cheese, meat, eggs and vegetables; and foods that promote the growth of children, such as protein foods like milk, cheese and vegetables (1966: 10).

These books also further cement the position of the sandwich as a key lunchbox component, as well as framing the composition of the lunchbox as a midday meal outside the home. For instance *Whitcombe* (1966: 22) discussed the following lunchbox suggestion:

Sandwiches of wholemeal bread (white for variety) buttered and spread liberally with two of the following fillings, one of each group:

- a) meat, cheese, egg
- b) dried fruit, nuts, grated raw vegetables, yeast extract (vegemite, marmite)

Sandwiches to be wrapped in greaseproof paper.

- c) Raw vegetables – greens, carrot strips, celery
- d) Pieces of fruit or a tomato

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7 Also called 'community books', fundraiser cookbooks are 'usually compiled by a women's association from recipes contributed by members, and are then sold for the benefit of a common cause' (Fleming et al., 2005: 410). These were particularly popular during the 1970s and 1980s but continue to feature today.

8 The information reported in this paragraph was produced by Helen Leach who consulted her private collection of 1500 New Zealand published cookery books (see Leach and Inglis, 2003).

A bottle of milk and a plain cake or sweet wholemeal biscuit are also suggested as accompaniments.

Commercially-published cookbooks enter the field of school lunches towards the 1980s, including the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly's Best of Baking* (1987) and Allyson Gofton's *Fernleaf Family Recipe Book* (circa 1990s). More recently *The Great Little Cookbook* (2006) was published by the Ministry of Social Development and specifically directed to people on benefits. This was similar to *The School Lunch Book* (1982) or *The Lunchbox - a guideline to fulfil the requirements of the National Heart Foundation* (1991). In these books the sandwich is presented as 'ideally suited for the job; it has trim dimensions, can be assembled quickly, is filling and doesn't require a spoon or a fork. It's a manageable meal for young hands. The sandwich can be zesty and nourishing' (Martin, 1982: 5). The cookbooks present alternative sandwich fillings, such as grated carrot and peanut butter, egg, cheese and ham, tuna and celery, and correlate children's increased intake of vegetables and protein, co-relating them with "good" food. By contrast the books condemn fats, sugars and salt. The cookbooks therefore reflect the formation of understandings about nutrition in New Zealand, and the movement towards a low fat, low sugar diet that is high in fruit and vegetables. Although the conceptualisation of food, nutrition, and cooking practices have changed, the fundamental structure of the school and workday lunch clearly endures; predominantly as sandwich, fruit, dairy element and treat. Moreover the positioning of the sandwich as a key foundational and symbolic health food has also been persistently reinforced.

Many of the cookbook publishers mentioned above are state entities (e.g. the Ministry of Health (MOH)) and other related non-governmental organisations (e.g. the National Heart Foundation). For the past 70 years nutrition education has been primarily conveyed to schoolchildren and their parents by the MOH, the rural welfare section of the Ministry of Agriculture, food technology teachers and more recently physical education and nutrition teachers, in addition to Plunket Nurses (Bell, 1962). Non-government entities have influenced food norms formally, through input into governmental laws and policies, and informally through cookbooks, what foods are accessible to children and suggesting which ones they should consume. They thus constitute themselves as forms of seemingly de-centralised governmentality and

secondary institutions for family guidance, while overwhelmingly reinforcing the same edicts as the state.

The most vivid example of state intervention into schools was the “Milk in Schools Scheme” (MISS) which began in 1937 and involved state-subsidised milk deliveries to schools (MacLean & McHenry, 1948). The project emulated similar strategies from Britain and Australia, and was based on medical consensus and political opinion that school milk would strengthen the future workers and protectors of the country (Anscombe, 2009). The programme was revoked in 1967 based on its high cost and because the health benefits of milk were being questioned. Free apples were also provided from 1941 because of over-supply following the closing of export markets during World War II. The apple scheme ended when exports resumed, around 1948 (New Zealand History Online, 2007), yet students were periodically provided with free apples in the low-decile school I visited. These were ritualistically cut up for consumption by teachers in either the playground or the classroom.

### ***Obesity epidemic: The state strengthens its position in the school lunchbox***

Although the government no longer directly provides food for consumption in schools, policies and legislation from the MOE and MOH have targeted schoolchildren’s health education and food consumption in recent years. In 1999 a new curriculum unit was created that identified food and nutrition as a ‘key area of learning’ and facilitated opportunities for students to ‘examine the influence of food and nutrition in relation to its physical, social, mental and emotional, and spiritual dimensions’ (Ministry of Education [MOE], 1999: 40). Likewise, through a ‘socio-ecological perspective’ students are expected to ‘examine the influence of culture, technology and society on food choices, food preparation, and eating patterns’ (ibid).

Health and associated policies are thus presented as a holistic philosophy of well-being, with four interconnected concepts positioned at the core of health: ‘Hauora, a philosophy of well-being that includes the dimensions taha wairua, taha hinengaro, taha tinana, and taha whanau, each one influencing and

supporting the others’;<sup>9</sup> positive and responsible attitudes and values; understanding of the relationships between the child, others, community, and society; and finally health promotion of processes that allow the development and maintenance of ‘supportive and emotional environments’ (MOE, 2010). Notions of health are correlated with the “complete being” that is attributed to Maori culture (ibid).<sup>10</sup> In this way health, and by default food, are integrated into school edicts, fomenting their social reproduction.

The 2002 National Children’s Nutrition Survey (MOH, 2003) raised further concerns about children’s food consumption in the media and within the political field. The survey was not, however, the sole cause of alarm for an emerging ‘obesity epidemic’ (Moffat, 2010), but rather was a consequence of the pervasive climate of concern towards children’s diets over the past twenty years. Media reports, popular books and magazines, academic and scientific interest, television shows and celebrity chefs have documented and stressed the notion that children, in developed and more recently developing countries, are ‘at risk’ (Petersen, 1996) or more vulnerable to ‘unhealthy’ (Burrows & Wright, 2007) behaviours. The appeals solicit immediate changes arguing that if no ‘intervention’ takes place, these food behaviours will lead to obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, heart failure, and other medical, as well as related social, issues. Whether or not New Zealand children are prone to obesity and present a risky scenario is outside the scope of this investigation.<sup>11</sup> It is important to note however that these perceptions have produced significant political and socio-cultural consequences for children, where they are perceived to be ‘at risk’,

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9 Wairua: awareness, Hinengaro: psychological/mental health, Tinana: physical realm, Whanau: family and broader community.

10 The adoption of this philosophy is indicative of recent changes in perceptions of health, from a biomedical stand point where health is viewed ‘as a matter of the presence or absence of physical illness’ to understanding health in a holistic manner, encompassing aspects such as personal, social, cultural and spiritual elements (Burrows & Wright, 2007: 3) .

11 For a discussion of this hypothesis see Flegal, 1999; Moffat, 2010; Ritenbaugh, 1982; Sacks et al., 2008; Wang & Lobstein, 2006.



‘vulnerable’ and in need of radically transforming their eating and exercise habits (Burrows & Wright, 2007; Burrows et al., 2002).

Prompted by the 2002 survey, which indicated that ‘over half of the 5-14 year-olds surveyed bought at least some of their food from the school canteen, with five per cent of children buying most of their food there’ (MOH, 2003), the Green Party (2009) inaugurated a campaign for state intervention in school canteens. The result was the formulation of two specific National Administration Guidelines (NAG), which stipulated that i) ‘where food and beverages are sold on schools’ premises, to make only healthy options available’ and ii) encouraging boards of trustees ‘to promote healthy food and nutrition for all students’ (MOE, 2007c). A food and beverage classification system (MOH, 2007), a booklet of guidelines for schools and parents entitled *Food and Nutrition for Healthy, Confident Kids* (MOE, 2007a), and promotional posters were developed. The schools where I conducted fieldwork displayed these posters on healthy eating and, during 2008 and 2009 sent the *Confident Kids* booklet home to parents. The teachers interviewed generally perceived these policies as encouraging “children to eat healthy food and to tell the parents that things like chocolates, chippies and lollies are forbidden at our school” (Teacher from Old-Village school).

The documents sent to parents particularly concerned “ideas” about what to pack for lunch and presented the sandwich as the most practical, healthy and adequate lunch food. This was clear in my discussion with parents:

Carla: Did you receive any information from the school about sending healthy lunches?

Beth: Yeah, I think there was a few years ago... there was a big thing in parliament when they changed all the lunches that schools offered and there was a big fuss and I think back then they sent us some information.

Carla: So in terms of healthy eating you decide based on what you think is healthy or do you follow any guidelines?

Beth: I do have, ages ago, I did get something. I am not sure if it was from school or kindy or something like that, a kind of a chart with different lunchbox ideas, and kind of different guidelines.

Son: I remember getting that.

Beth: Yeah... I think you could stick it on the fridge, and that was really helpful, but, yeah, I think that everyone knows what is healthy.<sup>12</sup>

Beth's interview demonstrates that parents positively recalled receiving these government guidelines and felt that they mirrored common understandings of health. However Beth's remark that health is "common knowledge" hides the open-ended, shifting, and contested nature by which various institutions and groups define health. Such an understanding actually requires knowledge of current and previous dominant discourses, as well as a critical assessment of continuities and discontinuities over time. This is most often achieved by reading newspaper and magazine articles, parenting and cooking books, and watching television shows, as well as the economic and cultural capitals necessary to "keep up to date" with the latest practices of food and nutrition. Beth's assumption of shared understandings also masks the dynamic transformation of cultural capital into 'moral capital'<sup>13</sup> (Žižek, 2011). Thus knowledge about healthy foods may allow individuals virtuous statuses as either good mothers or parents, or well-behaved children. The knowledge of these moralities and their internalisation is related to my informants' middle-class habitus,<sup>14</sup> as they rely on forms of cultural and economic capital that have been passed down generationally. Yet, as this thesis demonstrates, these have been appropriated and transformed dynamically.

### ***Conceptualising Nutrition: Health as sacred discourse***

Within these ministerial publications nutrition is presented as a process of decision-making between 'everyday foods, sometimes foods and occasional foods' (MOE, 2007a). Foods such as water, milk, bread, yoghurt, fruit and

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12 It must be noted however that all the information provided from parents was gathered through interviews. In narratives often an ideal presentation of the self is given (Goffman, 1999). This limits the data collected as parents would have been less likely to talk about breaking healthy food rules and not complying with guidelines of healthy eating.

13 Moral capital is a specific form of cultural capital by which 'moral dispositions' are constituted and naturalised and by means of which individuals can dispute higher moral/social standing in comparison to others (Valvedere, 2005).

14 It must be noted that parent's and teacher's habitus could only be explored superficially. I base my discussion on estimations based on the discussions with the few parents, comments from children and talks with the teachers. This needs to be understood thus as an imagined habitus as opposed to a real one.

vegetables are classed as everyday foods, while occasional foods include chocolate, deep-fried foods, fizzy drinks and high fat products such as pies. While ‘sometimes’ foods are occasionally mentioned, they are not categorised in a similarly systematic manner and are left to the assessment of children and parents. Government edicts reflect the previously ubiquitous food pyramid that set fruit, vegetables and carbohydrates at the bottom, as foods that should be consumed in larger amounts. Cereals, dairy and protein were in the middle, as foods that should be consumed in lesser amounts, while fats and sugary foods were at top.<sup>15</sup> Although the pyramid advocated the daily consumption of non-saturated fats they appear as an occasional food in the current Ministerial guidelines. Likewise the position of dairy has changed from an occasional into an everyday food. Nevertheless the general similarities between the two governmental approaches demonstrate an enduring ethos and content to these official discourses.

Given the lack of defined ‘sometimes’ foods, the current system is internalised by children in a dichotomised manner. Everyday foods such as fruits were perceived as “good”, while lollies and pies were typically deemed as “bad for you”. Foods were also perceived in behavioural terms, whereby “lollies would make children silly”, while eating sandwiches “gave them the energy to run around”.<sup>16</sup> These opposing categories were also perceived to have consequences in children’s minds and capacity to learn. For instance, during one of my observations at Old-Village School one of the teachers asked Joshua what he had eaten for morning tea. When he answered he had eaten a muesli bar the teacher encouraged him to tell his parents they needed to buy another brand of muesli bars as “these ones have clearly too much sugar in them and you have not been able to do any of your writing”.

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15 Until 2005 the food pyramid was actively used in curriculum documents and MOH edicts. The pyramid came under review in 2007 as it was thought to be misleading (Cumming, 2005).

16 This is a result of the scientific view of food, evidenced through an emphasis on calories, and perceived correlation between behavior and food. These represent two broader societal shifts that due to the constraints of this thesis will not be addressed.

There is, however, no clearly articulated definition of healthy food produced by these documents. Neither the Ministry guidelines nor the schools I studied provided a consistent or direct assessment of food, eating habits, nutrition or health. Rather the matter was always discussed via the deployment of ambiguous examples of healthy foods or via the Maori philosophy and values of *hauora*. While this initiative is incorporated with the purpose of fulfilling Treaty of Waitangi legislation,<sup>17</sup> the appeal to Maori “traditions” arguably constitutes the consumption of healthy foods as culturally sacrosanct and emblematic of an innately righteous morality. In other words, individuals are encouraged to consume healthy foods not only based on their government and media endorsements, but also because the discourse of health is ascribed long standing “traditional” roots in indigenous culture. Forged in this perceived solidity and imagined “traditionality” of what is considered health (i.e. consumption of lean foods, exercise, slim bodies), governmental changes can be introduced, seemingly even under their own initiative and thus remain mostly unquestioned by the populations they affect. Accordingly the symbolic content of the health message is clustered and condensed through time, making it socially unacceptable not to commit to it (Ortner, 1973). As a condensed message, such health discourses are therefore able to contain ambiguities and contradictions, such as the consumption of treats, and a lack of prescriptive definitions.

With New Zealand’s change of government in 2009 the NAG’s clauses relating to food came under scrutiny. Finally on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2009, then Education Minister Anne Tolley revoked the clause in NAG 5 that required schools to only make healthy foods available to purchase (Beehive online, 2009). According to the National Party, the policies of the previous Labour government had been too prescriptive — tantamount to resurrecting paternalistic “nanny state” practices (Johnston, 2009). The change was therefore part of a series of policy initiatives that the National-led government sought to pursue in an attempt to provide

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17 ‘This is part of the government’s commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and reflects the emphasis on significantly improving the educational status of Maori’ (MED, 2011a).

institutions and businesses independent governance, in what has been labelled 'the change from a welfare into a competition state' (Larner, 2009: 7).

### ***Nutrition at school: The guidelines of a hidden curriculum***

Having the NAG clause revoked was interpreted as the end of government-sponsored programmes on healthy food at schools. For instance, in our first meeting, Lambton-Quay teacher Miss Clay told me she did not understand why I had to spend time in the classroom, as she never discussed food or healthy eating. She explained that while they might dedicate some unit standards to learning about food around the world, this trimester any discussion about food was out of the question. These statements were consistent with what I witnessed in all classrooms during my participant-observation. Apart from a few MOE posters there were never any other episodes of formal instructions regarding "healthy" or "nutritious" eating. However via informal discussions between teachers, and with children, recommendations and assumptions about "healthy food" at schools were nevertheless very prominent and often presented as unrelated to specific issues of physical health. The process resonates with Billig's 'routines of talk' (1999: 322), or the use of common tropes, discursive narratives, and general comments that emphasise specific ideals (e.g. that all children are equally capable of consuming healthy foods), while silencing or diverting attention from disruptive notions (e.g. not all sandwiches are healthy; not all children have access to healthy foods). Teachers I spoke with did not seem to differentiate between the NAG clauses and the curriculum requirements in regards to teaching healthy food. Given both initiatives had been implemented at a similar time, the changes in NAG regulation were more openly understood as a general lack of interest and commitment from the National-led government regarding healthy food promotion at schools.

In the classroom, food was primarily discussed through informal yet routine conversations, such as when the teachers would encourage children to eat the food in their lunchboxes or discourage them from sharing with others. Likewise teachers informed me that parents could be educated about healthy food

through information sent in letters about shared lunches that the teachers organised:

Carla: Are there any instructions to what they can bring?

Teacher: No, but we do encourage healthy eating. For example when we have shared lunch we send them suggestions of what they can send. That doesn't mean that they have to buy that but it, is just a suggestion. There is also a limit to the things that they [the children] can buy from the office. For example they can only buy one pack of popcorn or a cookie (Mrs Kensington, North-Hill School)

The guidelines encouraged parents to send foods for the shared lunches that would be "enjoyed by all children but which were also filling and nutritious" such as fruits or meals rich in vegetables. They also provided examples of appropriate foods, such as fried rice, wholemeal muffins, fruit and vegetable salads, or vegetable curries. They often stated that lollies and other sweets should be considered "treats" and that they did not therefore constitute components of the meal the teachers were hosting.

Teachers approached health and nutrition more overtly with children and parents when they perceived that healthy food standards were compromised. All of the teachers presented me with examples of children who "did not eat adequately" or were only provided with "junk food". Miss Clay for instance informed me, "There is one kid who just brings lollies and cakes. I guess I am a bit judgemental of that". Correspondingly Miss Wigley explained that she had called a child's parents for a meeting because he only brought donuts and pies from Mr Bun<sup>18</sup> and she had suggested to them that "making vegemite and cheese sandwiches would be just as fast and cheaper, but more nutritious" (Old-Village school). This was a model of intervention to admonish and punish whenever teachers perceived a breach in what was tolerable and appropriate. As such they reaffirmed the neo-liberal model of "laissez-faire" correction only when the subject fails to operate in relation to pre-established norms.

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<sup>18</sup> A bakery situated within walking distance from the school.

When children misbehaved they were likewise reprimanded for consuming too much sugar. Through these informal methods the teachers disseminated standardised notions about nutrition that were framed as “common sense”. Teachers could thus be seen as arbiters of healthiness in children’s diets, encouraging them to take responsibility for what they ate within the institutional parameters of the school, which predominantly entailed not bringing “junk food to school” such as lollies or chippies. This ethos was maintained even when this contradicted parents’ perspectives regarding appropriate school lunch foodstuffs, evident in the previous extract between the teachers who encouraged Joshua to tell his parents to change muesli bars.

According to Bourdieu, the school is also a site of social reproduction and the second site for habitus formation, after the family:

The model of social mediations and processes which tend, behind the backs of the agents engaged in the school system — teachers, students and their parents — and often against their will, to ensure the transmission of cultural capital across generations and to stamp pre-existing differences in inherited cultural capital [...] Functioning in the manner of a huge classificatory machine which inscribes changes within the purview of the structure (Bourdieu 1973: x).

This process is achieved through the institutional imposition of a legitimating culture and particular exchanges of cultural capital. Here the school system rewards the middle-class habitus (e.g. restraint, individualism, the consumption and knowledge of healthy products that tend to be more expensive and require certain cultural capitals, the inclusion of extra-curricular classes that involve exercise) and condemns, through systems of classification, the lower-class habitus (for instance a love of chips and lollies, the consumption of large meals).

While the process of social reproduction in the school also entails an agentic and conscious role on behalf of students and parents,, it must also be emphasised that the creation of state-funded school programmes regarding food and nutrition is — as Bourdieu argues — a key strategy for social

reproduction. The school seeks to ensure that its understandings of health and nutrition are legitimised and celebrated, thus constructing it as a form of symbolic social capital and as part of being a “good student”. Embedding these features in the historical connection between government, schools and food suggest that these discourses of health might operate as a part of the middle-class habitus, therefore excluding students from lower socio-economic backgrounds who often lack the necessary economic, cultural and social capital to achieve these ideals.

### ***The neo-liberal agenda<sup>19</sup> enters the sandwich***

While the National government transformed the legislation regarding healthy foods, and emphasised its desire for schools and parents to make independent decisions about healthy food, the way in which health discourses operate nevertheless remain highly politicised — reflecting a shift towards neo-liberal forms of governmentality. According to Rose and Miller (2008), in the neo-liberal era, political regimes have ‘sought to develop techniques of government that created a distance between the decisions of formal political institutions and other social actors, conceived of these actions in new ways as subjects’ responsibility, autonomy and choice, and hoped to act upon them through shaping and utilising their freedom’ (212).

Rose identifies three specific shifts from previous liberal governments. First, a new relation emerges between expertise and politics whereby authority is scrutinised through entities that appear to operate outside the state. Secondly, the ‘pluralisation of social technologies’, whereby a seeming ‘de-statisation of the government’ takes place through the ‘adoption of a form of government through shaping the powers and wills of autonomous entities that enable the

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19 As Larner explains, while neo-liberalism is assumed to be a coherent regime, it takes place in particular ‘global assemblages’. Actors and processes involved in neo-liberal political formations are more diverse than expected and strategies of neo-liberalism are often also adapted by other forms of government. An analysis of neo-liberalism thus requires the identification of aspects of contemporary rule, its particular forms and manifestations (2011).



establishment of networks of accountability as well as relationships of self-governing between the “social citizen and their common society” (Rose, 1998: 66). Thirdly, Rose identifies a ‘new specification of the subject of government’ (2008: 214) whereby ‘active individuals [are] seeking to enterprise themselves, to maximise their quality of life through acts of choice [...] to fulfil their obligations not through their relationships of dependency and obligation to one another, but through seeking to fulfil themselves within a variety of micro-moral domains or communities’ (Rose & Miller, 2008: 214).

These neo-liberal tropes are evident in the promotion of healthy foods in schools. The MOE’s Review Office (ERO), which was established in 1989 to implement the Ministry’s school inspections programme, enforced the application of NAG 5.ii that encouraged boards of trustees ‘to promote healthy food and nutrition for all students’ (MOE, 2007c), thus ensuring that the Board of Trustees at each school maintains a policy regarding healthy foods. Since 1995 schoolchildren’s achievements and understandings of curriculum units, including food and health units, have been tested by The National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP), which produces four-yearly reports (Wright & Burrows, 2004).

However, policing of food at schools is also conducted through non-governmental programmes, such as *Feeding Our Families* (2011) promoted by the Health Sponsoring Council and *The Heart Foundation School Food Programme* (2011). *Feeding Our Families* promotes healthy eating by organising family workshops and school holiday programmes, and fosters community partnership through presentations at local festivals and gatherings and by actively reaching out to individual families. *The Heart Foundation Programme* promotes healthy eating by encouraging schools to sign up to gain access to a series of tools such as workshops and resources. School “health” achievements are then measured by assessing the development of school-based policies for health promotion, students’ understandings of health, and school-led activities in the community normally related to exercise (e.g. jump rope) that raise individual awareness of these issues.

Not all schools enter and participate in these programmes. However, the performance of schools involved is publicised and those that achieve gold status are presented as exemplars of how “easy” and feasible it is to produce a healthy school environment. Parents readily access the results, and high-performing schools may be able to transform their performance into economic revenue by attracting affluent middle-class parents. As such the ‘hidden curriculum’ (McGee, 1997) that informs children’s understanding of health, as well as their intervention in the health of the “wider community”, are of pivotal importance in several aspects of school life. Although the government’s influence on children’s nutrition seems to have dissipated in terms of direct campaigns and associated practices, this analysis demonstrates how the state can still be highly influential via various neo-liberal mechanisms and thus shape particular discourses about health and children’s personalised understandings of food.

Finally the apparatus can also be seen to operate as a form of ‘biopower’ a ‘field of more or less rationalized attempts to intervene upon the vital characteristics of human existence’ (Rabinow & Rose, 2006, p. 196). Instead of being concerned with the sovereign capacity to take life, biopower is exercised through regulation, correction and through normalising biological, psychological and social technologies that seek to exclude death and thus focus on the life and birth of populations. The technologies of biopower all operate on the human body, however they do so in different manners. Foucault (in Rabinow & Rose, 2006) explains that biopower operates both at the individual and collective levels. At the collective level biopower serves a regulatory purpose, it controls populations by focusing on the body as embedded in the mechanisms of life: i.e. birth, mortality, and longevity. In this case for instance discourses about obesity are often related to poor quality of life and mortality rates (see Burrows & Wright, 2007). Furthermore, biopower is a mode of subjectification, individuals are to take upon themselves the obligation to consume healthy food, and in doing so become good citizens, acting positively for the greater community.

### ***The field of play: Nutrition in the playground***

The primary way in which the above-mentioned understandings of nutrition appears in the playground is in a dichotomised manner, whereby “healthy food” is associated with being good, skinny, normal, behaving properly and achieving well at school, having energy and feeling well. In contrast, eating “junk food” is associated with being bad, fat, weird, not being able to perform well or play, becoming silly and feeling sick, as reflected in the following comments from schoolchildren:

Carla: Ok so why do you have to bring healthy food?

Lilly: So you don't get fat.

John: Because you need energetic stuff at school or is not really healthy to bring lolly stuff to school.

Sarah: So that you have enough energy to be like, to turn and run around and stuff.

Jamie: So you can run faster.

Kevin: So you don't get sick.

Dan: So you have lots of energy for the day (North-Hill School).

Stella: Because then we get fat and we look ugly (Lambton-Quay School).

Carla: And is not healthy food the same as junk food?

Lila: Yes, it is.

Carla: And why isn't this food healthy?

Lila: Because it has sugar in it.

Jason: It makes you silly and sick.

Jerome: And it hurts your head.

Sophie: No, it doesn't hurt your head, but maybe it makes you feel dizzy.

Jason: And it makes you a bully.

Maria: Orange juice is not healthy.

Carla: Why?

Maria: Because it has too much sugar and colouring in it (Old-Village School).

The above extracts demonstrate that the dichotomised perception of healthy and junk food is similar across different schools and different pupils. This dichotomous system of conceptual and moral classification has been registered by other academics working in the field of food in New Zealand schools (Burrows & Wright, 2007; Burrows et al., 2002; Petersen, 1996; Wright & Burrows, 2004). By classifying “healthy” foods as “good” and junk foods as “bad”, a nexus is created whereby children recognise all of the other moral

attributes that are related to being healthy, for instance skinny, energetic, beautiful, and well-behaved. Similarly attributes related to junk food, also often called “rubbish food”, are established as categories of negative judgement and “wrongness”, including fatness, sickness, ugliness and misbehaviour at school. While the simplistic system of classification might be targeted to children so that it is easy for them to understand, the narratives of parents, teachers and government evidence that these rhetorics are more widely shared.

Furthermore, the moralistic connotations of this dichotomised system are internalised by children. Given healthy foods are related to good behaviour, children acquire ‘moral capital’ (as defined by Žižek, 2011: 269) and ‘moral distinction’ (Bourdieu, 1984) by demonstrating their knowledge of healthy foods:

Carla: And does anyone bring weird food?

Maria: Yes, Gaia does. She brings apples.

Gaia: That is only because she (Maria) doesn’t eat much healthy food.

Maria: Yes I do!

Carla: Why do you think Maria doesn’t eat healthy food?

Gaia: Because she doesn’t. I don’t see her eat healthy stuff.

Carla: So what is healthy food?

Gaia and Lilly: Fruit skins, pears, bananas, apples, strawberries.

Carla: Ok, so fruit. What else?

Gaia: Carrots, carrots are healthy food.

Lilly: Yes, but carrots are a fruit. Others could be cauliflower, broccoli, and salad.

Gaia condemns Maria for her lack of consumption of healthy food, thus positioning herself as morally superior to her peer. This superior morality is further reinforced through Gaia and Lilly’s performative demonstration of healthy food knowledge.

When asked about weird foods it was common for children to discuss the unhealthy practices of others. The discussion was always about others and not themselves; in particular they discussed the foods of children who brought “ethnic” foods that were significantly different from their own. This mimics the absence of examples of healthy ethnic foods within the government guidelines.

Arguably health is assumed as hegemonically Pakeha or Kiwi, while ethnic Others are exotic and thus beyond normative health considerations (see Chapter Three). These forms of moral capital/distinction are also institutionally recognised, for example during school assemblies children were publicly congratulated and rewarded “for eating all their healthy lunch” or “remembering to bring lots of fruit and eating it all”.

More informally children who demonstrated their understanding of healthy food, and especially when contrasted to their parents “poor” understandings, were particularly acknowledged and rewarded in the classroom. For example the teacher at Old-Village School commented one day in class that she had seen Niko at a nearby shop decline an offer from his mother to buy him a fizzy drink, telling her that fizzy drinks were not healthy and that they were not allowed them at school. The teacher then showed the children that she had filled up Niko’s sticker chart to award him a prize. Although children become acquainted about food through the multiplicity of discourses from different fields, when the fields of the family and school are at odds, children are encouraged to internalise ‘official’ discourses through a system of institutional rewards and accordant possibilities for exchange of moral, cultural and even economic capital that privilege the “legitimising” teachings of the school, government and other agencies. This further demonstrates the ‘moral imperative’ that is at the basis of the healthy discourses (Lee & Macdonald, 2010).

The internalisation of the dichotomous system reflects the hegemonic influence of the discourses beyond mere understandings of this system. In several of my discussions with children they enacted an embodiment of healthy eating that not only reflected, but creatively deployed the principles of healthy eating in novel form:

Carla: Why do children have to eat healthy food?

Bella: I remember studying that like two years ago. Foods and digestion and lunchboxes.

Hannah: My healthy schedule is down to here (she points down to her hips) and it should be up to here (points to her shoulders).

Carla: How do you make it go up to there?

Hannah: By eating healthy things throughout the day. Like eating vegetables and fruits.

Claire: My healthy schedule must be down to here (points below her knees). I ate so much McDonalds during the holidays.

Bella: And mine too. I ate pies and fish and chips.

Carla: Where does this schedule come from? Like did the teachers show you this?

Hannah: No, I made it up.

Carla: But did you see it somewhere?

Claire: No, she just made it up right now.

Hannah: No, I made it up this morning.

Hannah: I've eaten my grapes so now my healthy schedule is up to here (points to her chest).

In this case the other girls perceive the healthy schedule to be in their bodies, by pointing to the higher or lower 'bodily' levels of attainment they thought they had achieved. The girls had come to understand the maintenance of a healthy body as a personal task and that following a healthy food schedule was inscribed within their own bodies, which have to be slim and subject to restrictions in terms of the amount and types of foods consumed — all of which clearly resembled Foucault's embodied 'technologies of the self'. Here children 'effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls' (1977: 151) in order to achieve the status of a "healthy" person.

The construction of the sandwich as healthy, and as the core of the lunch meal, is visible in the attitudes of children when they observed that someone else did not have a sandwich for lunch or was consuming "junk" food:

We go out to the playground to eat. Nareem does not have a sandwich. Instead he has something that looks like cake. As we sit down to eat a group of children start yelling, "Nareem you are not allowed to eat ice-cream".

Nareem: It is not ice-cream, it's cake.

Sarah: Yes, but it is sponge cake. You are not allowed to eat sponge cake.

Joni: He is allowed cake but you need your sandwich first.

Nareem: Who said it is sponge cake?

Thus the 'technologies of the self' do not only operate internally to correct the individual, but they are also used to police and supervise others. This could also reflect the guidelines and the school teachers' numerous references to children

as agents who can change parents', families' and others' notions of health (Burrows & Wright, 2007). As a result, in cases where the child's "healthy school" habitus clashes with that of other children or of the family as discussed previously, the child is meant to give preference to the former over the latter.

The different forms of policing beyond the state: of the self, of others, by non-governmental entities, between the schools and parents, all results in a robust, intersecting apparatus of governmentality. The reforms seem to signal what Rose (1996: 168) has characterised as 'distantiated relations of control' whereby the obligations and responsibilities of the state are seemingly diffused towards the individual. However, control of the population still emanates from a centralised state. While theorists (see Peck, 2002) and the general public typically characterise neo-liberalism through an absencing of state intervention, 'the state remains what it has always been — a set of contested understandings and contradictory institutions given a temporary coherent form by a dominant reason' (Lewis, 2004: 151). As with the children, past and recent discourses about health have entered the realm of the lunchbox in a diffused manner that nevertheless remains responsive to and reinforces overarching state messages.

### ***Questioning health: Children's responses***

The process of internalising these discourses is not, however, a passive one. Children actively contest and question instructions regarding health. For instance, when discussing healthy food Kenisha (8 years old) explained:

You need to eat lots of fruit and veggies, but also to do lots of exercise... You know, there are boys who are skinny too, even though they eat junk food, but maybe that is because they exercise more, they are always running like that, but I go to the treadmill a lot and I am still fat.

Kenisha questions why, while following health edicts, the expected results — in this case a slim body — are not achieved. Thus children do not simply passively internalise and reproduce messages about healthy food, but continuously test them against their own experiences and question their validity.

Children also individually negotiate the contradictions between the discourses provided by the school and those of their parents:

Raiden comes in to the classroom with a New World plastic bag.

Carla: What do you have today?

Raiden: A bun, I think there is ham in it, I can smell it. [Opens it]. Oh no, it's just a plain bun. It has cheese in it and it's pretty solid though. I also have a very disgusting banana.

Carla: Why is it disgusting?

Raiden: I just don't like bananas... and a pizza!!! [She puts the bun up to my face and starts squishing it]. I like the buns to be squishy instead of hard.

Carla: Who packs your lunch Raiden?

Raiden: My Dad or my Mum. My Dad gives me pizza and good [nice tasting] food. You can tell from what I bring. Dad doesn't get me to have vegetables and fruit because they don't have energy in them...

Stella: Yes they do.

Raiden: They don't have, mmm, what is it called? It starts with a C...

Lexi: Carbon dioxin?

Raiden: What? No... mmm calories, that is it, calories. Vegetables have little calories and pizza has a lot of calories so it gives you more energy. Butter has no calories in it and is bad for you that is why you have to eat less or not so much of it.

Raiden's discussion is telling firstly because, although other children may denounce her for not bringing or desiring to eat healthy food, she has nevertheless dynamically appropriated the characteristics attributed to healthy food (i.e. that it gives energy) to her personal food preferences. Furthermore this appropriation serves to circumvent criticism by demonstrating her knowledge and competencies about healthy food. While this understanding might be replicated from what her father has told her at home, her example of the butter demonstrates that she has internalised and individually reconciled the school's and her father's contradictory understandings of health. This also demonstrates that contradictions can occur through the fragmented nature of the learning process.

Although government structures operate in powerful ways within the school lunchbox, these are not mostly replicated by the children, as his work on reproduction seems to suggest. Such dynamic use of structures can be explained through Bourdieu's employment of the concepts in his 'theories of practice'



(1977, 1979, 1990). As King explains, ‘for Bourdieu, social agents are “virtuosos”... who know the script so well that they can elaborate and improvise upon the themes which it provides in light of their relations with others’ (2000: 419). Crucial to this analysis is therefore the ‘sense of the game’ whereby social relationships are mediated by one’s interactions with other individuals (Bourdieu, 1977: 15). What other individuals regard as acceptable and tolerable regarding the broadly shared, but not static or definitive understandings of the structures, is what ultimately helps to shape and evolve habitus, thus what constitutes it is neither static nor determining.

As the ethnographic data demonstrates, the internalisation and reproduction of social structures always entails agentic processing. The maintenance of social stability and the reproduction of social structures, though always slowly changing, can be therefore attributed to the complex interaction of ‘virtuoso’ individuals. Children’s questioning and creative use of the structures, as well as the changes in food perceptions and practices, which are evident in the cookbook analysis and the parents’ interviews, stress that all individual meanings and associated practice are always social, learnt from others, and performed in dialogic reference to others (King, 2000). While fields significantly structure an individual’s habitus, the potentially varied understandings of these structures learnt through the habitus always contain the capacity to modify the field. Thus Raiden can reconcile two conflicting discourses about health and construct a new discourse from this. Moreover this new discourse, together with the prior discourses, all have legitimacy in the school playground as they are recognised and reproduced by practices in this field (i.e. knowledge about the particular elements of nutrition, such as calories).

## ***Conclusion***

I have argued that the sandwich is constituted as a cornerstone of a nutritious school lunch through a series of discourses about health that permeate the field of the school lunchbox. I discussed the way in which government legislation brings forward a dichotomised system of classification of foods and a holistic view of health, which is internalised by children and schools, but which can also be seen to mask — through the

neo-liberal apparatus — the influence of the state in constructing this health identity. I presented parents' understanding of nutrition, proposing that the sandwich comes to be constituted as healthy via meal patterns, and how the need to replicate those patterns to make meals recognisable, as well as maintaining the unity of the family by passing on cultural capital, encourages families to reproduce similar structures generationally. I have presented a historical analysis of the notion of nutrition in New Zealand, as well as documented the influence of state legislation on school foods. Through this I argued that the school can be seen to encourage the transmission of social structures, in particular the predilection for a middle-class habitus, explaining the maintenance of the sandwich in the lunchbox throughout the last 60 years and its understanding as nutritious. Finally I presented the way in which these discourses are perceived, internalised and made sense of by the children, emphasising the need to perceive them as agents of their own field and recovering the agency of the habitus through the use of Bourdieu's theory of practice.

## **Thinking Inside the (Lunch)box: Class and the “Illusio” of the Sandwich**

It was raining at lunchtime. The bell rang twice to announce that children should eat in the classroom. After washing their hands, returning to the classroom and performing a *Karakia* (prayer) they sat at the same tables they had been assigned to during reading time. As I sat next to Matt, who was wearing a green cardigan and corduroy pants, I noticed his oat biscuit:

Carla: Oh, Matt, you've got cookies, nice.

Matt: Yes, my mum made them.

Oliver: She's got her own website for food.

Laila: She makes yummy Mac and cheese.

Oscar: His house is cool too.

Carla: Hey, can you tell if someone is rich from what they bring in their lunchbox?

Allan jumps from his seat. He was always an avid student and loved what he called “reflection” questions such as this one. He looks at me and nods.

Allan: Yes. Matt, is your mum rich?

Matt: No, they owe the bank millions and millions of dollars.

Allan: Laila, are you rich?  
 Laila: I don't know.  
 Carla: Mmm, ok. Well what do you think a rich person would bring in their lunchbox?  
 Allan: Uhm, maybe chippies?  
 Laila: Or really expensive nuts, like pistachios or something?  
 Carla: What about if they were poor?  
 Laila: I think people would be poor if their lunchbox is a plastic bag.  
 Allan: They would eat crackers and if you are lucky maybe even a biscuit.  
 Carla: Are there many poor people in this class?  
 Laila: Uhm no, I don't think so.  
 C: How come?  
 Laila: Because then they could not afford things like Subway or McDonalds or things like that.  
 Carla: So what are they?  
 Laila: Everyone is about medium.  
 Carla: Ok then, who has the worst lunches?  
 Laila: Me, I don't have anything today. I only have yucky, yucky fruit.  
 Ella W: Yeah, but you have cake when it's your birthday or your mum's birthday. You are lucky!

This chapter argues that class structures were denied or obscured by government, schools and parents through a focus on egalitarianism (e.g. meritocracy, hard work, acquiring knowledge as a requirement for success); the universality of the health discourse; an emphasis on equal opportunities that are provided by the school curriculum; and the celebration and institutionalisation of the individual. Instead attention was directed toward other forms of difference, such as a representation of ethnicity primarily enacted via individual and/or familial variations of food knowledge, skills and consumption. As I will explain in Chapter Three, focus was directed towards 'special' or celebratory occasions for food production and consumption as opposed to the normative regimes of everyday fare. This chapter will pre-empt that discussion by illustrating how this emphasis on differences as ethnic, cultural, individual or contextual obscures the dominant valuing of middle-class status and/or aspirations. This occurred despite some children's *luxury lunchbox* consumption, which clearly reproduced the privilege and surfeit of capitals (economic and cultural) that emphasise 'distance from necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984) and the associated individual choice, decision-making and

autonomy-affirming nexus that is so highly prized by the new middle-classes (Roper, 2005).

An emphasis on distinction-making practices as fundamentally individual, ethnic, cultural and/or contextual effectively cast and valued children being “different” and “special” within the aspirational homogeneity of a classless society. Furthermore the seeming democratisation of foods and taste, as well as the inclusion of exotic ‘ethnic products’ is based on forms and structures of legitimation that are, in fact, associated with distinction. Forms of cultural and symbolic capital, in particular the emphasis on choice and authenticity, situate the production and consumption of the lunchbox as middle-class appropriate and the product of connoisseurship.

As the opening vignette demonstrates, children reproduce and contest forms of adult distinction, while also generating their own distinction practices, based on their understandings of money, consumption of fast-foods and exotic ingredients. Children were also aware of ethnic differences, but emphasised distinction based on the “special” quality of the foodstuffs they were sent, in particular homemade biscuits or cakes and purchased sandwiches, burgers or sushi. This is evident in Ella’s implication that Gaia was lucky for getting cake. In these distinctions, children openly correlated wealth with food consumption (e.g. poverty and an inability to afford McDonalds or Subway), which contradicts adult associations of routine McDonalds consumption with the working-classes (Valentine, 2004). This chapter will therefore contribute to the literature on class relationships in New Zealand (Pearson, 2000; Roper, 2005; Spoonley et al., 1990) by analysing the nuanced ways in which egalitarianism is used by the middle-classes to obscure class. This process is positioned as part of the neo-liberal hegemony discussed in Chapter One that promotes and values differences arising from individual endeavour in terms of merit and capacity for self-reflexivity.<sup>20</sup>

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20 Self-reflexivity is here understood as the cognitive awareness and enactment of phenomena through self-oriented perceptions, desires and significance (Giddens, 1991: 75).

Embedded in these discourses, the sandwich can be perceived as a class obscuring and class differentiating device. It is seemingly homogeneous in its egalitarian or democratic constructs of universal nutrition value, form and context appropriateness for lunchtime consumption. Yet, in its practice, can be used as a mechanism of subtle class difference via different types of bread and fillings, quality, cost, brands etc., that children may deploy to position each other in hierarchies of class stratification. The sandwich can therefore be understood as an 'illusio' (Bourdieu, 1984), as it promotes belief in and commitment to the game of classless society while obscuring and thus maintaining its antagonism regarding class relations.

### ***Class relations in New Zealand: 'Let 'em eat sandwiches'***

Throughout government documents that regulate the consumption of foods at schools there is no open or explicit discussion of social class. References to differences in levels of income and accessibility to food resources are made only seldomly. The potential difficulty for 'lower income families' (MOE, 2007c: 35) to purchase healthy food is diminished by claiming that the acquisition of healthy foods is cheaper compared to junk foods — an argument which is supported through comparative charts for the costs of making sandwiches and purchasing foods such as fruit or dairy versus pies, burgers or fizzy drinks. In such documents (see King, 2000) demographic data often presents the health of Maori and Pacific Island children as ranking lower in comparison to Pakeha children. However a connection is not made with the overrepresentation of these ethnic groups in lower socio-economic strata (Davis et al., 1997). The overall tendency of government reports is to minimise the significance of socio-economic capital as a fundamental determinant of the types and 'healthiness' of foods that can be acquired, and consequently unequal food consumption and health outcomes. Instead the documents reinforce discourses which place the responsibility for healthy food consumption and lifestyles onto the individual (Rose & Miller, 2008).

As discussed in Chapter One, governments constructed the sandwich as a universal healthy lunch food, equally and readily accessible by all. Its nutritive qualities are emphasised via the types of foods that it brings together (e.g. bread and fillings and thus facilitating the consumption of carbohydrates, vegetables and proteins), yet no analysis is presented in terms of costs of the varied foodstuffs required for the constitution of a healthy sandwich. The reports' lack of discussion about alternatives to the sandwich, as well as the lack of alternatives in practice (such as in cookbooks, children's books, food outlets such as supermarkets and cafes), serve to make it ever-present in the school playground. This positions children as socio-economically equal and homogenous via their consumption of the same product. These discourses of the sandwich obscure, however, the diversity that the sandwich enables in practice (e.g. differences in price, quantity, quality and nutritional value of varied breads and fillings), which reinforce class differences.

The government, through school curriculums, re-emphasises notions of equal opportunity. For instance, the document *English in the curriculum* specifies:

The New Zealand curriculum provides all students with equal education opportunities. The school curriculum will recognise, respect, and respond to the educational needs, experiences, interests, and values of all students: both female and male students, students of all ethnic groups; students with different abilities and disabilities; and students of different social and religious backgrounds. Inequalities will be recognized and addressed (MOE, 1994: 13).

Through the assumed equal understanding and adoption of the curriculum in schools across the country education, as equality of opportunity if not outcome, is established. Yet class differences are only alluded to in terms of differences in "social backgrounds". Class inequalities are primarily related to ethnic, religious or disability categories, once again shifting the attention from social class to other forms of difference. This ethos of equality may also be identified in ideologies such as equal lunches, equal transport to school, equal clothing, equal equipment.

These documents should be interrogated in the light of salient inequalities in the New Zealand social structure. As Roper (2005) explains, income and wealth

have been unequally distributed in New Zealand ever since European colonial settlement. Recently however, with the transition from the welfare state (1945-1974), characterised by significant decline in income inequality, into the neo-liberal state (1976 onwards), inequalities have increased sharply (O'Dea, 2000). Strikingly, in 2003 the top one percent of individuals owned 16.4 percent of the total net worth (\$467,668 million) in New Zealand while the bottom 50 percent owned 5.2 percent total net worth (Chaung, 2007: 5-6). More recently, the average weekly household expenditure of the higher quintile was \$1,972, while for the lower quintile<sup>21</sup> it was \$408 (Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

These economic transformations also affect class structures. As Hayes (2005) demonstrates, the trend towards increasing proletarianisation ceases in 1971, when the working-class<sup>22</sup> constituted 76.6 percent of the working-age population, whereas by 1996 the working-class had declined to 66.6 percent. This results in a 6.46 percent to 11.35 percent increase of the middle-classes, probably due to a structural shift from employment in manual to service/knowledge industries. The increase in the number and economic importance of the middle-classes, urbanisation, and the solidification of neo-liberal policies has resulted in an emphasis, within public discourses, media and institutions, on normative middle-class habitus. This habitus entails an emphasis on individualism, omnivorous forms of consumption, self-promotion and competition.<sup>23</sup> The government's lack of direct discussion of socio-economic inequalities could be understood as following a neo-liberal agenda. The state is not meant to intervene in economic practices but rather mitigate its worst excess, while maintaining hierarchy. It is this 'illusio' (Bourdieu, 2000: 102) and hegemony that keep people believing in 'playing the game' (Žižek, 2011).

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21 Each quintile represents 20 percent of the subject population (2.9 million), or approximately 586,000 individuals.

22 Haye identifies a proletariat class location using labour force statistics from the New Zealand Census based on categories of employment status (generally manual labour), wage and salary earner.

23 See Campbell, 1978; Howland, 2008; Sweetman, 2003 for a fuller discussion of what this means in terms of individualism, seekership, identity/ distinction awareness etc.

Lack of reference to social class can also be understood in light of social myths of New Zealand as an egalitarian society (Easton, 1983: 188). As Belich explains, this was premised on the mythologised formation of New Zealand as a 'Better' and 'Greater Britain' (Belich, 1996: 300). Life would be based on the 'return' to a much simpler, rural, golden, agrarian society, where technological advancements as well as economic and political progressiveness (particularly a laissez-faire approach) would allow for the suppression of class conflict. This theme is also explored by Bell (1996), who explains that from colonial times settlers were 'wooed' to New Zealand with promises of a society in which class conflict was absent. This, along with other 'myths of origin' form the basis of contemporary New Zealand national identity, through governmental policies and discourses, media and popular culture reports.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Children are all different: The "unique" experience of the school classroom***

Similarly, discussions of class within the school were absent. This was evident in the first focus group conducted, when I raised the question "can you tell if someone is poor from what sort of food they bring in their lunchbox?". I had asked this question ad hoc to children throughout fieldwork, generally in small groups in the playground. When I raised the question this time, in the classroom and in front of the teacher, she looked at me incredulously. Two or three children answered a bit vaguely, saying things like "sometimes people will just bring fruit and forget their sandwiches" or "Udaian once brought leftover rice". The teacher decided to take control of the question and simply said "you know, we don't really see children that bring poor lunches, not in this class at least, so is too difficult for them to answer" (Old-Village School). In this way children also

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24 Bell's argument also emphasises the masculinity of this discourse. This was also evident in my ethnography as the instrumental consumption of the sandwich (in terms of its working context, form, and emphasis on energy production) can be seen to relate to the working sphere of men as opposed to the domesticity of home, or both, taken from (female) domesticity into (male) public/working sphere.



learnt the tensions surrounding this “thorny” issue, and consequently were often weary of bringing forward claims about social class even in a latent manner, particularly in the presence of (disapproving) adults.

Rejection of the category of class was also apparent in my conversations with teachers. For instance:

Carla: In the other school students were sent rules and the teacher confiscates their food if...

Teacher: Yes, but that is a lower-decile school. We don't have those problems here because most parents can afford good food. Also if a child doesn't have good or enough food we send them to the cookie room or we find them a sandwich.

However, there are some children at this school from lower-decile [families]... Their children get given breakfast. We also keep extra muesli bars or raisins that children can have.

The teacher here substitutes “class” for decile — using the terminology for school funding classifications — <sup>25</sup> in a discourse that obscures the real social nature of these factors.

The teacher's comments allow for a connection between social class understandings and the rhetoric of the sandwich. As the teacher went on to explain, in all schools children who did not bring lunch were provided with sandwiches for consumption. This practice was also promoted at the local level, ‘For children who come to school hungry or without lunch, having a supply of bread in the [school] freezer and a jar of marmite or peanut butter is a healthier alternative to a pie’ (Canterbury District Health Board, 2005). It was also an activity that was encouraged at the schools. For instance there was a person assigned to keep and distribute foods for those children whose parents “had forgotten to send their lunch” (as children explained during fieldwork). They were then generally given a sandwich, in most cases of white bread and jam,

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<sup>25</sup> The decile system ranges from 1 to 10, 10 being the highest, and is calculated on factors such as household income, household numbers, number of people who share the room of a house, as well as educational and employment background of the parents (MED, 2011b; Turner & Edmunds, 2002). This determines the level of funding provided to the school by the Ministry of Education, where lower-decile schools are determined to be in higher need (due to diminished ability of parents to pay fees) and given proportionately higher funding.

reaffirming its status as the basis of the lunchbox. Moreover, the euphemism used to indicate the lack of food exemplifies the way in which class divisions can be discussed at school. It renders visible individual differentiation while obscuring its relationship to class. This emphasis further displaces blame from social structures/ institutions. Rather than saying “couldn’t afford to” or “was working long hours”, “forgetting” to send food to school indicates a bad/problem parent and thus re-replaces the blame on the individual (Corinna Howland, Personal Communication).

The obscuring of class relationships through egalitarian and meritocratic discourses was also common in school websites:

Our school is on the Capital’s doorstep. We have... an enrolment scheme in place, most of the whanau live in Richmond.<sup>26</sup> This is a decile 8 school, multicultural in nature, so enjoys families from diverse backgrounds. It reflects the wider world and we strive to ***Create Thinkers & Celebrate Diversity***.

Once again, class is not articulated. Emphasis is placed on the “diversity” of the school environment, which is perceived in terms of wide ranging ‘ethnic backgrounds’ of students and linked to the necessity for children to experience multicultural environments. These are constructed as fundamental aspects of the globalised world in which “we” live. The statement also hints to an assumed class status of the pupils, as the decile of the school indicates mostly a population of well-educated, financially secure, white-collar parents. This, combined with the price of inner-city housing (McClay & Harrison, 2003) results in an upper middle-class student population. Furthermore, the use of the word “whanau”, which appeals to a Maori ethos, obscures proximate anonymity of expensive urban housing with reference to the familial/communal, shared and therefore egalitarian notions. ‘Whanau’ reinstating the emphasis on and primary valuing of indigeneity, ethnicity and multiculturalism, seeks to disassociate the school from white middle-class features. Instead the school positions itself as a relaxed, welcoming and seemingly inclusive and tolerant ‘Kiwi’ (Bell, 1996) institution serving the ‘diverse’ local community.

The appeals for awareness of difference in terms of ethnicity and multiculturalism can be understood as the current trend towards a form of ‘benign cosmopolitanism’ (Howland, forthcoming). Howland contends that

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26 An affluent suburb in the vicinity of Wellington city.

current institutional discourses encourage the romanticisation of some (though not all) ethnically different groups as a means of understanding the self. In this understanding, the ethnic Other is benevolent, authentic, equal and must either be celebrated, as in the case of Indian silk or Chinese opera, or pitied, as in the case of starving children from the Philippines. The view is of a world that is globalised, where further connections between people from different places and 'cultures' are possible and in some instances desirable, where everyone is mobile and connected, urbanised and transnational (Hall, 2007). Consequently, the negative and unequal aspects of globalisation, poverty, unequal distribution of resources, depletion of natural resources, enforcement for people to adapt hegemonic structures and market driven economies, are absented.

Within the school's visited, the "uniqueness" of each child, a product of the construction of the self as individual (Rose & Miller, 2008), was both encouraged and celebrated. This ethos is evident in one of the songs learnt by children at Old-Village School as a way to incorporate the state program "Keeping Ourselves Safe" (New Zealand Police, 2008):

In the whole of the world  
There is only one of me  
There are things that I am good at  
So let my star shine bright

Chorus:

Like a bright star I am awesome  
Like a mountain I am strong  
Like a river I can go places  
In this amazing world  
Like a bright star  
I am awesome  
Like a mountain I am strong  
I've a place here with my friends and helpers  
In this amazing world is where I belong

I know it's enough  
To do the best I can  
Walking tall and confident  
I remember who I am, yes I am...

The song emphasises the notions of individuality and personal growth. It assumes that through adventurous experiences, and above all, the commitment to do the best one can with innate capacities that everyone is equally assumed to have, individuals will be automatically socially valued and successful. Through these discourses individuated meritocracy is idealised. Mobility and strength, neo-liberal values attached to the ethos of 'benign cosmopolitanism' are unquestioningly attributed to children, despite the fact that they mostly rely on parents for these. The appeal to parents or teachers as "helpers" positions children as the centre of their social universe. As I will demonstrate, such teachings were interpreted by children as overemphatic of their worthiness, and often resulted in children requesting teachers and parents obey their demands.

The song likewise recalls Beck's notion of 'institutionalised individualism' characteristic of the current form of Western modernity (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: xxii). A process whereby 'central institutions of modern society — basic civil, political and social rights, but also paid employment and the training and mobility necessary for it — are geared to the individual and not the group' (ibid). This disrupts group categories of social life and imposes a system where individuals must seek to negotiate social relations and institutions by and for themselves. Transformed from its Enlightenment origins where it entailed a greater social, altruistic and ethical sense, in the twentieth century individualism has come to acquire an egoistic sense. Individualism seeks self-oriented reflexivity, the constant project of re-making the individual in response to institutional changes in knowledge, authority, ethos, information etc, and the desire for individual mobility (social, experiential, economic, geographic etc) (ibid: 2-3).

The school is a site for legitimising individualism as the righteous, normal and necessary form of behaviour. Reflexive individualism and reflexive habitus are instilled, through the celebration of seekership, creativity, self-awareness, autonomous regulation, and independent thought as an ethical duty (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Campbell, 1978). The ethos of individualism and 'benign-cosmopolitanism' tend however to be class-mediated, as they are more sustainably internalised and replicated by a middle-class habitus, given they require economic as well as cultural capital in the market-mediated dispositions such as competition, exposure to ethnic diversity, or mobility.

### ***Parents: On training the palates of our future***

Carla: Do you think his lunch is similar to what other children bring?

Monica: No, because he has never had nutella... I don't let him have chocolate yoghurts or all those sweet ones... which is just like (getting) all that rubbish and chucking it into the lunchbox... He doesn't have all those muesli bars... Or those baked sticks, he doesn't have those jelly things with fruits in them... I think his food might be similar to some kids but a lot of kids have like little packets of Tiny Teddies, he doesn't have those... He always has fruit, so it will be apples or grapes or mandarins. And then he will have a sandwich, and he will have crackers, maybe homemade biscuits... recently I brought some Lebanese Pita pockets and he really liked that plain. And then he would have whatever, his carrot and his cucumber and he would kind of eat it separately but we would put some organic yogurt just for him to dip the bread.

Throughout the interviews parents engaged in distinction-making discourses where they stressed the differences between their child's lunchbox and those of others. Given the parents interviewed<sup>27</sup> were mostly situated within the New Zealand middle-classes, their discourses can be understood as connected to this class habitus. For instance 'distance from necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984) is exemplified in the discussion of exotic foods (Lebanese bread) and organic products, as well as the child's personal preference. The lack of a 'taste for

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27 My original intention was to include a broad range of interview participants. However, only middle-class parents responded to my interview appeal, potentially a marker of the time and cultural capital that were necessary to partake in my research. It is important to note that working-class parents could have had a very different view of lunchbox contents as signifiers of status.

freedom' (1984), generally due to the middle-class dependence on paid work or alternately relatively unstable small business economies, is reflected in Monica's awareness that other children might bring similar lunchboxes to her child's.

Nevertheless some parents denied any active desire to proclaim their family's high social standing through the lunchbox:

I arrived to Nisha's house, only a few blocks down from Lambton-Quay School, at around 11am. We began the interview with general comments about what she packed in the lunchbox and a brief discussion of her childhood in India. Interested about her life as a first-generation migrant I asked:

Carla: Do you think that what you send in the lunchbox represents your identity?

Nisha: Oh God! I didn't even know that anybody was there watching their lunchbox (both laugh). No, I just think, this is what they should have. I guess if it did [represent identity] my lunchbox would be fancier, it would have lots of different exotic things, you know... It is just a simple lunchbox... Jasmine likes mandarin and apple, but she doesn't like banana, and Yogesh likes grapes and mandarin... Sometimes it just depends on their mood, on what they are wanting to eat. So the lunchbox is just simple because they are kids and they won't really eat fancy things.

These comments demonstrate the instrumental features of the lunchbox, not always understood or used as a marker of ethnic or class distinction. However, Nisha's comments also to express her own 'distance from necessity', her husband is the owner of a dairy chain whose earnings allow her to forgo paid work. While she explains that she does not see any reflection of her identity in the food sent, she justifies this by appealing to the taste and mood of her children, not yet formed. She stresses that what is sent in the lunchbox is a product of this personal taste and unrelated to economic or physical necessity, as her discussion of exotic foods demonstrates.

Appeals to children's tastes were common across interviews, where parents stressed the difficulties of pleasing children's fickle taste. The valuing and provisioning of children's satisfaction can be closely related to modern understandings of motherhood as pleasing and caring (see Apple, 2006). It can also be placed in the context of individualism, where each child deserves to

express and enact his or her individual preference. The pursuit of children's alimentary and taste requirements and *luxury lunchboxes*, denote what I term a 'doubling of the distance from necessity' as they require not only sufficient economic and cultural capitals for the parents to consume, as the ingredients used are often expensive, gourmet and signal connoisseurship, but their sharing with children as well as the extra time dedicated to making these items available to them (e.g. spent with children instead of at work, socialising children rather than socialising with other adults), denotes an extra layer of 'distance from necessity'.

Distinction based on children's taste was also often produced through discussions of their taste for exotic or "different" foods. As Karen, a divorced mother of three explained:

Karen: I mean my whole thing with food is about trying to keep it healthy but also about trying to send them with stuff they like, but also, you know, introducing new foods. My boys, they love ratatouille. They love olives, they love feta, they like gherkins, they love, a lot of things that actually a lot of other kids don't like. And I think that is because we have always, well it has always been around them. You know? And, that the boys like it. That it is healthy but that they like it... So it is fruit, their sandwiches, but I will throw things in like sundried tomatoes or gherkins or olives... to mix things up a bit and surprise them and for them not to get bored at the same time. Oh, and things like almonds you know, dried fruit and nuts, which they love.

The sandwiches here contained culinary delicacies, enabling Karen to create a distinction based on her children's palate in comparison to those of others. A discourse is created whereby children's taste and routine practices of consumption are essentially so sophisticated that they effectively transcend the limitation of childhood. This can be perceived as a further marker of distinction, revealing sophisticated parents and parenting techniques.

These practices can be understood as eclecticism, or the desire for children to seek the connoisseurship of a wide range of foods. As has been theorised by Holt (1997), and Paterson and Kerr (2002; 1996), in the last 30 years the Western middle-classes have begun to reject the former distinction based on a single

tradition, for example French 'haute cuisine', as the only legitimate form of elite cultural capital. Instead, cultural capital within the middle-classes is demonstrated through the connoisseurship and experience of a variety of culinary forms from different ethnic and class backgrounds (Johnston & Baumann, 2007). For instance, the children who brought *luxury lunchboxes* would eat sushi one day and croissants the next. Likewise in her interview Karen indicated that she purchased "Mallow Puffs" or "wafers" but only when these were on special, as a treat, additionally indicating the consumption of budget foods and the middle-class practice of encountering a "good deal" (Peter Howland, Personal Communication). Distinction is reinforced here by Karen through stressing that she is the owner of this form of capital, which she linked to her profession as a system analyst by saying that she is used to "checking labels" and "verifying information", but she has been even capable of passing it onto her children, further signalling the 'doubling of the distance from necessity'.

Karen's comments also demonstrate the recent seeming democratisation of foodstuffs previously exclusive to elite classes, which are now more openly available to the general public.<sup>28</sup> Social mobility, the broadening of the market through commodity expansion, and technological advancements (e.g. faster modes of transportation and food-keeping) have all allowed access to now-globalised foodstuffs, not available to New Zealanders a decade ago. Likewise, the advent of food labels, recipe books, food magazines and food-related television programmes have familiarised New Zealanders with the uses and preparation of international foods, making more widely available the cultural capital necessary for the consumption of these products. A democratisation within the field of consumption has also taken place, through tasting notes, informative waiters, the increase of taste consultants, as well as the increase of credit economies (see Howland 2008a, for a full discussion of these changes regarding wine).

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28 E.g. gourmet foods such as patê, specialty cheeses etc, that can now be purchased in the supermarket.



These discussions, however, obscure a further layer of distinction that prioritises authentic connoisseurship above appreciative democratised consumption. Not all foods are legitimated as indicative of middle-class distinction or status-bearing. As Johnston and Bauman explain, ‘boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate culture are redrawn in new, complex ways that balance the need for distinction with the competing ideology of democratic equality and cultural populism’ (2007: 170). While democratised consumption is encouraged and may form part of routinised middle-class consumption, authentic connoisseurship still trumps democratised consumption. Authentic connoisseurship requires specific economic, cultural and social capitals in order to access such products. One must be able to choose between the authentic examples (Italian olive oil bought in Lepanto) and the ‘copies’ found in local food outlets — not to mention the ability to travel to procure such items at the ‘source’ and to understand culinary terms in different languages. It thus demonstrates higher amounts of economic and legitimised cultural capital.<sup>29</sup>

The emphasis on “exotic foods” is related to such quests for authentic connoisseurship and the significant cultural valorisation of exotic experiences. As Heldke emphasises, the exotic has become related both with a concern for foreignness and an interest in ‘striking, remarkable features that are excitingly unusual’ (2003: 18). As MacCanell (1976) argues, many of his participants (tourists on the lookout for ‘authentic’ experiences) were motivated by a desire to see the ‘life of natives as it is really lived’; they presented a desire for ‘truth’ and sought intimacy and the possibility of sharing experiences with ‘natives’. A similar will is presented here, whereby through consuming “authentically” exotic foods participants felt a connection was constructed between them and the societies that they signified. “Exotic foods”, as markers of ‘benign cosmopolitan’, e.g. feta cheese, olives and almonds, are legitimate, particularly as they continue to assert ‘distance from necessity’ and relate to the ‘euro-chic’ that has come to symbolise high middle-class status in New Zealand (Howland,

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<sup>29</sup> Though it may be situational, for instance only available in leisure time and not as part of everyday consumption (Howland, 2008a).

forthcoming). Eclecticism is in this way solidified as a form of distinction; it signifies both connections with varied Others (social capital) and middle-class seekership. Conversely, bland, familiar or readily accessible products are delegitimised, as can be seen in Nisha's justification of the elements in her children's lunchboxes. Distinction is not only asserted through emphasising that "mainstream taste buds" are not capable of appreciating exotic foods, but also linking oneself to the most current cultural forms, in this case eclecticism. These are often legitimised by institutions with cultural authority, such as the culinary field<sup>30</sup> (Bourdieu, 1984: 177).

### ***Allergic distinction: Re-fetishising through food***

Also common amongst parents was the discussion of their children's food allergies or dietary restrictions that required large amounts of time, cultural knowledge and monetary investments:

Carla: So tell me about what you pack in the lunchbox.

Margaret: Raymond has food allergies, so the foods that he is not allergic to, that is the number one thing. So that is quite tricky. And most processed food has Soya... So he doesn't tend to eat them. Like if we buy say a bread, we only buy certain types like Vogels,<sup>31</sup> we will [also] give him Molenberg...<sup>32</sup> or we buy artisan breads because like, is the same with things like sausages. If he eats sausages I have to get Blackball sausages from Moore Wilsons<sup>33</sup> because they don't have flour in them, or a vegetable protein injected in them. So there's certain foods I know he can eat and

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30 Throughout this chapter the culinary field will refer to the ensemble of institutions that are related to the production of discourses about current trends in food production, preparation and consumption — mostly restaurants, celebrity chefs, newspaper sections dedicated to cooking and food, cookbooks, food magazines, food critics and critiques, food writers, reality and cooking television programmes, movies about the topic.

31 This is a multigrain bread. It costs \$5 for a bag of 12 slices compared to the \$2 for 14 slices of the budget brand.

32 Another type of multigrain bread, which costs approximately \$6 for a bag. Both breads use a German formula for baking, therefore reinforcing a 'euro-chic' ideal (Howland 2012a).

33 Boutique-style supermarket in the centre of the city.

I have to ask every single time at the supermarket. Say we buy something like ham, I still get them to print out the label, I still check for things.

The existence of allergies is a bio-physical condition that is medically determined and thus appears beyond contestation. Margaret feels that her everyday shopping is constrained by these allergies, arguing that her food purchasing practices are always aimed at pleasing the maturing palate of her child while ensuring the allergy restrictions are respected. However, the abundance of reference to allergies from parents, as well as the way in which they are discussed, allows for an analysis of these as practices of distinction. In this fragment, for instance, Margaret emphasises the high level of cultural and economic capital required. She alludes to the brands of these items, which are more expensive than budget foods, and stresses the time required for purchasing and cooking. She arguably deploys her child's allergies to justify the purchasing of these items so that spending money on them is morally righteous — a necessity.

Moral distinction in the realm of food expenditure was often asserted regarding the purchasing of organic, free-range, un-processed, local products that were sent in the lunchboxes:

Carla: Do you ever think about healthy food when you are packing lunch?

Amanda: Yeah, well that is what he has. I mean he eats a lot of more unprocessed food anyway which is what I think is much more healthy. Just because of his allergies is made us eat more... what they call, quote, slow food? We do a lot of cooking anyway; we don't buy ready-made meals... unless we are going out or something. But for him it would be something like Quali Cafe.<sup>34</sup> That is about it really. So we mainly cook. We cook through cookbooks. We don't buy all these pre-packaged anythings, no budget meats, caged-eggs. And I buy organic milk and organic yoghurt because it is one of the only things that I think, because it can have so many chemicals you know?

Most parents interviewed, even those whose children did not present any allergies, tended to frame the acquisition of similar products as a necessity. A

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34 Pseudonym for Turkish restaurant located close to the school.

way to protect their children from diseases, pesticides, or chemicals, and to introduce them to “good food” or “food that tastes the way it should be”.

Emphasis on ‘ethically righteous’<sup>35</sup> products, and to an extent, the discourses about allergies, can construct a second layer for the veiling of class difference. These discourses attempt to de-fetishise forms of production while effectively re-fetishising the relationships of production and consumption (Howland, 2011). For Marx, commodity fetishism entailed an obscuring of the social relations of production based on the notion that ‘participants in commodity production and exchange... understand their social relations as relations between the products of their labour... rather than... [between] people’ (Hudson & Hudson, 2003: 413). In contrast, ‘ethically righteous’ products, claim to reveal to consumers the techniques, tools and philosophies of production, product provenance, locus of production and biographical details of producers (Howland 2008a, 2008b). The intention is to collapse the distance between consumers and producers and ensure socially and environmentally ‘responsible’ market transactions. Through food labels and associated pamphlets, consumers are informed about who, where and how the product is manufactured. The knowledge about the producer is here also utilised as a form of distinction. In fact whenever the parents interviewed discussed the ‘ethically righteous’ products, they gave descriptions such as “we buy our meat from the Lower Hutt butcher” or “the pig is produced by a small family farm in Whakatane”, “Claire is the one that runs the organic orchard”.

Yet, while promotional and branding discourses might attempt to de-fetishise the means and forms of production, they re-fetishise the class-based relations upon which the production and consumption of these products is based. First, armed with an awareness of the alleged health, ecological and social benefits of these products, parents and children have reconstructed them as the best consumer choice and practice. During the interview for instance, Margaret did

35 From here on ‘ethically righteous’ products will stand for free-range, organic, un-processed, local, cruelty free, Fair-trade etc foods that were named by children and parents. This is premised on propaganda-based branding of these products to consumers as “ethical choices”.

not simply hint at the high economic cost of the foods she purchased, she openly discussed her weekly food expenditure. After telling me she spends around \$1000 a week for her family of three, she argues:

In fact we probably spend more money on food than other things. Like other people would buy a new car to change their old car. For us it is more important to have good healthy food, real food, than other things. So that is just our priority, and we would often have people around to eat and some other things like that. It is just a philosophy I suppose.

High level of expenditure seems justified in the search for “real food”, therefore creating a dichotomy whereby non-healthy or poor-quality food, is not “real” or even immoral. The financial cost of ‘ethically righteous’ products is often three or four times higher than a similar non-ethical product (Taylor, 2011). Thus, the economic capital as well as the cultural capital (in the form of knowledge about the benefits of consuming organic foods, the spread of pesticides, transgenic and so forth and their effects on the human body) that are necessary for the purchasing of these goods is obscured or veiled — and hence the products are re-fetishised. Margaret’s discussion is based on the assumption that everyone has the same level of disposable income. That some choose to partake in consumption by erroneously and immorally “choosing” to utilise other industrially-produced commodities instead, rather than healthy food for their children, for this is just a personal “philosophy”. The food items are in this way embedded in a different moral sphere. Class inequalities are arguably obscured by framing consumption as an individual and moral choice.

### ***Children also play with capital***

At schoolchildren were warned not to share food, as this might cause students to go into an “allergic shock”. While children understood the magnitude of such health problems, like parents they also used allergies as a form of distinction. For instance, during assembly at Old-Village Schoolchildren were asked who had allergies. At first children with allergies such as peanuts, eggs, or dairy raised their hands. However, as the teacher kept asking children, other children presented allergies such as “too much milk”, “too much white bread” or “rain”. I

also often heard children accuse those kids who were “naughty” of being allergic to school, perhaps a distinction based on disciplining others. In this case allergies were used as an individualising distinction, and were not related to reflexive habitus. For children allergies constituted a form of capital that resulted in extra attention from caregivers and teachers as well as a general sense of being “special” (either distinctive or rebellious). Since these features reinforced the forms of individualism previously discussed, allergies were a legitimated form of bio-cultural embodied capital, and thus naturalised.

Children’s allergy discourses were not always mechanistic or subservient. Children often questioned the validity of adults’ claims regarding allergies:

When I arrived at school the teacher was telling Leutu off for sharing food:  
Teacher: Do not give other people nuts. It is dangerous. Do not share your food with anybody. People have allergies and you may not know about it. This is why you don’t share.  
(Yogesh raises his hand)  
Teacher: Yes, Yogesh?  
Yogesh: I’m allergic to butterflies.  
Teacher: Don’t be silly, you can’t be allergic to butterflies.  
Niko: But what if they are not allergic to anything?  
(Teacher does not answer).

The children actively contested their own and their friend’s claims of allergies through sharing:

Carla: Hey, Gaia, do you ever share food?  
Gaia: I only share my food..  
Carla: Whom do you share it with?  
Gaia: My friends.  
Carla: What sort of foods do you share?  
Gaia: My milkies, I share them with Bianca because she can’t eat milk or eggs.  
Carla: So how come you can give them to her?  
Gaia: Oh, because they are special.  
Carla: Does she get sick?  
Gaia: No, she is fine.

Children therefore disrupt parents’ proclamation of their child as allergic by sharing “forbidden” foods with them, in ways that also emphasise their identity

as friends. They identify the sometimes exaggerated nature of the allergy discourse, and are avid at both engaging and challenging parents' middle-class reflexive distinction.

Children also actively discussed money to assert distinctions. This was related to financial possibility and therefore closer to socio-economic class divisions evidenced in parents' discourses. While this practice was not common in the lower decile schools visited, 'money talk' (Ruckenstein, 2010) was very prominent amongst higher decile students, who often discussed the cost of their new games, clothes and particularly amounts spent on holidays. This can be exemplified in the following statement from a boy to one of his classmates: "Oh, I remember Dylan. I once showed him a \$10 note and he was like this (boy makes a surprised face, opening his eyes wide). He started saying "Can I have that money". The other kid laughed about it and they continued talking about bets and other money games they played. Some anthropologists (see Zelizer, 2002 for an overview) have characterised these discussions as a generational change related to the increase in television programmes, advertisements, and practices (tooth fairy, grandparents gifting money) that constitute children as active consumers. Throughout fieldwork, it was evident that children were aware of monetary expenditure and spent money for and by themselves. Children actively underlined their 'distance from necessity' by boasting to other children about their economic position, for instance by commenting "you know, my mum gets paid like millions and millions a week" .

Children from higher decile schools also frequently discussed 'ethically righteous' foods:

Carla: And is there anyone who is a vegetarian?

Ella: No, but I choose what things to eat.

Grace: I eat free range stuff. If it isn't free range I won't eat it. Because its cruelty free you know?

Ella: I normally eat New Zealand meat. Only made in New Zealand because meat from overseas we don't know where it has come from or how it is treated.

Just as was the case with parents, consumption of ‘ethically righteous’ products was constructed as moral, and legitimated high economic expenditure. For instance children often discussed the costs of organic yoghurts or free range sandwich meat with me. It is important to underline Ella’s appeal to choice, which reaffirms her individualised preference and her middle-class status that allows her to access a multiplicity of foods and to select ‘ethically righteous’ products. Likewise, such consumption is perceived by the children as a critique of foreign production systems, and a need to buy and consume only New Zealand goods. The element of xenophobia in these discussions positions the consumption of local foods as a form of moral distinction, where those who purchase national foods are held in a higher moral regard than those Others who purchase outsider foods. Thus allergies and organic foods become linked with discussions about money and nation. They serve as moral forms of capital, mediated through the ethical expenditure of economic capital and the deployment of symbolic cultural capital which ideally results in individuated moral distinction.

### ***McDonaldisation: How the happy meal became a healthy lunchbox***

Children also engaged in practices of distinction based on fast-food that seemingly contradict the ethos of healthy, ‘ethically righteous’, and gourmet middle-class distinction. Visits to McDonalds, KFC or Subway were the most popular topic discussed by children during the school “news”. Likewise, as explained in the introduction, the higher decile schools visited conducted an *ordered lunch system* which contained fast-foods.<sup>36</sup> Children were often rewarded with these foods, taken to these outlets as a “treat”, or thrown birthday parties in these places. The celebrational ethos of these visits constituted these foods as indicators of moral value and signified children’s individuality and merit. Fast-food was also an active component within

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36 The consumption of these forms of fast-foods at this school however also signaled forms of middle-class consumption as these fast-foods generally use higher quality ingredients and are more costly than McDonalds or KFC.



children's lunchboxes. It was brought to school by children, or either children or maybe their parents would put in the lunchboxes various toys that were acquired through visiting these outlets. This act in a way transformed the lunchbox into a "happy meal" and it allowed children to initiate discussions about visiting these outlets. Fast-food could thus be transformed into social capital, through sharing or by deciding who to invite to one's birthday party. It therefore constituted one of the most important systems of distinction amongst children.

Yet, for some children fast-food meals were part of their everyday lives, as they ate them regularly (2-3 times a week) at home. These foods nevertheless acquired an exotic value at school:

Carla: Ok, girls tell me what is better, stuff that is brought for lunch or home-made?

Jamaika: It depends...

Carla: Mmm, ok, for example biscuits.

Jamaika: Homemade (all the other girls nod in agreement).

Carla: What about a sandwich then?

Jamaika: You buy. Unless my mum works at Subway. Because that is the best.

Ella: I'm going to get Subway for my birthday.

Children thus stratified the value of their lunchboxes in ways that both praised homemade products, such as the biscuits, while valuing purchased sandwiches. The sandwich denotes 'distance from necessity' of instrumental care that takes place by making staple foods. The favouring of the homemade biscuits relates to being able to afford the time and cost of baking. Yet the emphasis children placed on fast-foods was indicative of a difference in the capitals and forms of distinction used by parents and children, as fast-foods have been generally considered by adults as markers of lower-class habitus (Valentine, 2004).

The consumption of fast-foods also functioned for children, and particularly amongst boys, as a form of resistance to their parents' distinction:

Before Morning tea:

Carla: Niko, what did you have for dinner?

Niko: KFC.

Carla: Do you have some for morning tea then?

Niko: Yes, but we ate most of it. We are a big family. I have three brothers and two sisters.

Carla: When do you get KFC?

Niko: When my brother or sister come over. Like in the weekends or Thursdays, that is when they come over and when we have KFC.

Carla: What about McDonalds?

Niko: No, we don't get McDonalds that much.<sup>37</sup>

#### Morning tea

Andrew is eating Niko's KFC.

Carla: Andrew, do you ever have KFC at home?

Andrew: No, I'm not allowed to.

Carla: Why?

Andrew: Because my parents say it is not good for us to eat.<sup>38</sup>

Fast-food products therefore gain currency among children as exotic goods that can be traded. This allows middle-class children to access them, and enabled children who more often consumed fast-food products to acquire the 'ethically righteous' products which might be rare to them. The practice disrupts schools' regulations, by contradicting the healthy eating policy as well as the rules against sharing. Likewise, the children challenge their parents' prescriptions, accessing foods that contradict their home habitus and challenge class distinctions. This demonstrates children's socialisation into and awareness of, compartmentalised authority, activities and identity, as well as the friction of habitus (Bourdieu, 2005)<sup>39</sup> which children are negotiating.

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37 While lower-class families more often consumed KFC, middle-class families were more likely to take their children to McDonalds. As Niko's talk demonstrates this is probably the result of differences in value for money and family arrangements. KFC provides more quantity for money, thus making it a better economical choice for larger lower-class families. In contrast the McDonalds menu is generally targeted to individual consumption, providing more variety but making it more expensive if the intent is to feed a family of five or six.

38 Most of the time Andrew brought organic yoghurts, fruit and vegetarian sandwiches.

39 Friction of habitus emerges when 'each field (which an individual is part of) is engaged in a symbolic struggle to impose the definition of the social world most in comfort with their interest' (Bourdieu, 1997: 15). Andrew has resolved such friction by understanding that the habitus of the home requires him only to consume organic products, while at school he can acquire and demonstrate a comparatively rebellious habitus by partaking in the consumption of fast-foods.

It must be noted, however, that since the consumption of fast-foods was also used as a form of reward, middle-class parents and family members are likely to attend these outlets and eat these foods. This can therefore be perceived as a form of omnivourism, whereby 'contemporary elites no longer consume only legitimate culture but are... happy to incorporate both high and low cultural forms into their consumption' (Friedman, 2011: 350). Yet, just as was the case with eclecticism, distinction is still present here. As Holt (1997) explains, in post-modern societies popular cultural features become aestheticised and elite objects become popularised. Distinction is re-established at the embodied level, through emphasising elite status in the form of consumption. "To consume in a "rare" distinguished manner requires that one consume the same categories in a manner inaccessible to those with less cultural capital' (103 see also Bourdieu, 1984: 40). This is where the rhetoric of choice operates. While lower class families are perceived to eat fast-foods because this is a cheap option to feed their families, and thus their choice of meal is constrained by their economic capital, middle-class families consume fast-foods because they "choose to". They could eat 'ethically righteous' meals or fast-food meals. Since the consumption of fast-food meals was often elicited by children, parents' visits to these outlets were framed as a way to please them, thus recalling the 'doubling of the distance from necessity' by giving preference to their children's desire.

While potentially contradictory of the discourses on health and 'ethical choice' products, children often reconciled the status of fast-foods by presenting them as good and nutritious:

Rachel: McDonalds... It is good for lunch...

Carla: Really? Why?

Rachel: Because is yummy! You can buy fruit and wraps. And already cut apples. They sell fruit and wraps and fruit salad things.<sup>40</sup>

Carla: So is good for you?

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40 McDonalds has responded to criticism made of the healthy status of its meals by introducing health-based products (Pressler, 2005).

Rachel: Yes, but the burger ones are not good for you. Unless is for a party or something like that.

Carla: Do you have to be rich to buy McDonalds you think?

Lexi: No, not really. It can be cheap like two dollars.

Rachel: It is really cheap. Like for a happy meal it's like two dollars or something.

The children certainly adhere to advertising strategies by which these products are promoted to resolve their questionable health standard. They also recall the moralistic status of the treat (Symons, 2009), further reinforcing the exotic status of these foods as a way to justify their consumption and compartmentalised habitus. The assimilation as a "good" lunch may also be related to the forms in which children experienced fast-food (e.g. burgers, Subway or Wholly Bagels), as they replicate the structure of the sandwich (by means of presenting a form of bread that holds a filling) that they have come to understand as healthy. In this way fast-food can maintain its exotic currency, without disrupting children's understandings of what "good food" is.

### ***It all comes back to the sandwich: Children unveil the fillings of social class***

While government policies, school regulations and parental discourses have constructed the sandwich as equally accessible to all children, and universal in terms of its form and nutrition value, children can be seen to acquire and transform capital based on the content of their lunchboxes. The research indicates that they create understandings of the socio-economic positionings of one another through their constructions of the sandwich and through their comprehension of other individuated consumption such as clothing:

Carla: Hey, what does being poor mean?

Ana: It means they have no family<sup>41</sup> or clothes.

Nadia: It means they have no money to buy things. Maybe they have some but not enough.

Ana: Maybe they have only one cent, and they can just buy pants and knickers.

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<sup>41</sup> The relationship that the children make between the lack of family and being poor could respond here to a 'logic of care' (Mol, 2008). Given the family is the only source of economic provisioning for children a lack of it will signal absence of economic sources.

Nadia: Maybe just knickers.

Carla: Do you know anyone who is poor?

Nadia: Yes! Blanket man...

Mia: I know that people in the Philippines are poor.

Carla: Can you know if someone is poor from their lunchbox?

Mia: Yes, if they bring dry bread and nothing else then you know they are poor. If they bring a sandwich of dry bread with just butter in it you know they are poor.

Carla: What about rich? How do you know that someone is rich based on what they bring?

Mia: They probably bring something like white bread and something expensive, like ham, and other expensive foods.

Carla: What sorts of expensive foods?

Mia: Maybe sandwiches and ham. And fruit. Fruit that isn't bruised and that is yum. And pistachio nuts.

Carla: So what do you think most people in this school are?

Mia: Probably something in between. Also poor people might bring bruised food that isn't nice.

Children are thus often aware of the contents of each other's lunchbox, and can correlate the costs of these items with distance from material constraints and necessity. This is signified in the emphasis on words such as "expensive" and "nice" as well as on monetary indicators. Likewise, the discussion about fruit demonstrates how items that are found in all lunchboxes can become features of distinction, unbruised fruits in this case signifying quality but also the possession of a good lunch box and care being taken on what is sent.<sup>42</sup>

Children's discussions also emphasise an early or nascent appreciation of 'benign cosmopolitanism'. The categorisation of "people from the Philippines" as poor, probably related to charity-driven television campaigns that highlight the exotic poor so that material attributes related to poverty (e.g. lack of clothes and food) are revealed to children, especially the relationships between the Other and unequal outcomes of globalised capitalism. The people from the Philippines are here Other, exotic and poor. As Mia's talk demonstrates, children also constructed distinction by producing knowledge about these features. During fieldwork lower-class children seemed less likely to discuss social differentiation. Instead middle-class children tended to be more aware of it,

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42 Keeping fruit from bruising in a school lunchbox which is normally thrown around by children is quite a difficult task.

were prone to engage in my discussions, and prided themselves in being knowledgeable about these issues. This behaviour signals once again a middle-class habitus whereby, through family and education, children are encouraged to be critically reflective and demonstrate their class distinction through awareness of others and themselves.

Social class distinctions were also asserted through the way in which children discussed the contents of their lunchboxes. Research would suggest that lower-class children were more likely to use simple language and be more vague about the foods consumed, emphasising instead the quantity of the items. This recalls the 'taste of necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 168) given food is understood as instrumental for overcoming hunger. These were some of their responses and discussions regarding my question "What is in your lunchbox?/What do you have today?":

Nadia: Bread and cheese.

Yogesh: A banana, a sandwich and a sponge cake.

Andrew: (asks a girl) Did you get double yoghurt today?

Sammy: No, but I did yesterday.

Carla: Does she normally bring double yoghurt?

Andrew: Yes, sometimes.

Taylor: Sandwiches and fruit and yogurt, sometimes bars.

Carla: And what do you eat at home?

Taylor: I eat what Mum cooks.

In contrast middle-class children tended to use elaborate language, emphasising the brands and types of products consumed and their quality:

Finn: Dried prunes, a baguette, some bread, sultana cake, cheese and carrots.

Carla: Oh, yum, did your mum make the sultana bread?

Finn: No, my Nana did for my Dad's birthday which was this weekend. She makes it with molasses and buckwheat flour.

Poppy: An apple, a mandarin, a peach. I like things that are citrusy.

Carla: What about you?

Josh: I had a bagel that I ate and multi grain waves. I now have a fruit bar, spicy ham, organic juice and some sultanas.

Sophie: Raspberry homemade jam sandwiches and a salami stick. Also in this small container I have pretzels and seaweed. Oh, and a cookie.

Johni: A salami sandwich, a little milk, *Le Snack*, mini carrots and chips.

The research raises thus the possibility that lower-class children distinguish themselves through the quantities of food they get sent with, whereas middle-class children use the quality of the ingredients to demonstrate their cultural capital. In this case the sandwich would allow for a manifestation of distinctions whereby everyone can be “different” within the paradigm of homogeneity.

### ***Conclusion***

Throughout the chapter emphasis has been placed on how the sandwich can be understood as an ‘illusio’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 59) of New Zealand as an egalitarian society, in terms of equal opportunity, structured competition, individual merit and stratification. Following the previous chapter’s discussion I demonstrated that the construction of the sandwich as symbolic of universal value, and its iconic status as the healthy food to send in the lunchbox, forges an apparent social and economic homogenisation of food consumption in the playground. Likewise, the school re-emphasises the universality of the sandwich by providing sandwiches for those who “have forgotten” their lunch, seemingly making it a level playing field for competition.

The sandwich is, however, also deployed as a form of stratification and distinction-making practice by middle-class parents interviewed. They highlighted their ‘distance from necessity’ when seeking to purposefully socialise and accommodate their children’s individuated tastes through the varied provisioning of exotic, healthy, allergy-specific and expensive fillings of the sandwich, as well as engaging in eclectic forms of middle-class distinction by making the sandwiches “surprising” and “exciting”. Ultimately the sandwiches were constructed by middle-class parents as foods that legitimated the superior palate of their children in comparison to those of others. Finally, for children the sandwiches operated as clear markers of distinction. This was evident in their understandings and discussions of social class, their awareness of other

children's foods and the way in which they engaged in distinction practices through relating the contents of their lunchboxes. The veiled dimension of class was then further fetishised by claims about children's individual allergies and new 'ethical' consumption practices, where consumption is legitimated in moralistic terms, and differences between producers, manufacturers and consumers are understood in equalistic ethnic rather than class terms.

The 'illutio' of the sandwich is fostered in an environment that can obscure and veil class relationships, as this disrupts notions of democracy and egalitarianism at the core of the New Zealand national identity. For instance the transformations brought forward by neo-liberal policies, changes in the economy and the New Zealand class structure have resulted in an emphasis on institutionalised and reflexive individualism. The chapter sought to anticipate the analysis of ethnicity that will follow, as it exemplified how these factors have been internalised as part of the middle-class habitus, and tend to privilege a 'white' ethnicity while appearing inclusive. As such they are veiled as unrelated to social class and ethnic differences through mechanisms such as 'benign cosmopolitanism'. Since these practices and discourses enable space for ethnic differences to exist, as long as they are sufficiently 'domesticated' (Hage, 2003) the chapter broadens Hage's analysis by providing a class dimension to the 'white nation fantasy'. Here what is underlined is the moral righteousness of middle-classness.

While children are closely embedded in such class veiling, their discussions of class difference are much more transparent and direct. This factor could be understood as related to insufficient socialisation into the taboos of class and the naïve way in which children still see the world. I hope however that my discussion has illustrated that, for children, class relationships are much more visible and outspoken than they are for adults, that they are identified and can be discussed with a bluntness that would be perhaps more useful for the final de-fetishisation of the class paradox.



## **The Ethnic Lunchbox: How “Indian Chicken” Ended Up In the Sandwich**

While the plain sandwich with Western fillings (e.g. ham and cheese, vegemite and lettuce, jam, peanut butter) was the most pervasive lunchbox item, a continuum of diverse/ethnic foods were also present. There were “Indian chicken sandwiches” — as Abdi, the Somali girl who brought it explained. This comprised two slices of white bread filled with an Indian chicken curry her mother made the night before. The sandwich had then been toasted by her big sister and put in her lunchbox. Ethnic and Pakeha children also consumed sushi, while second generation “Chinese” children often brought noodles or rice. However, the most striking instance of school-lunch ‘multiculturalism’ was the shared lunch. Children had explained that these took place to commemorate events of the school year (e.g. the last day of term, when the class achieved an award or when a trainee teacher completed their training with them). At the completion of fieldwork I was invited to a shared lunch that celebrated my stay at Lambton-Quay school:

When I arrived, around noon, the children had each been assigned a task (e.g. washing plates, moving tables, getting tablecloths, putting food out), which they were busy doing very seriously. On the tables I could see a broad range of foods, including bought biscuits and chippies, a great amount of lollies, but also small “pink girlie” cupcakes, which Ella informed me she had baked. These were accompanied

by more “unusual” dishes: Arjun had brought a “Nimona curry with Brariaere”,<sup>43</sup> Pakon had some chicken satay from his father’s restaurant and Chan had some pork dumplings. The teacher brought a vegetable Thai curry, while the teacher aide brought spicy Malaysian fried rice. There were no sandwiches to be seen.

Before eating the children prayed the *Karakia mo te kai* and a couple of well-known *waiatas*. While we were singing, Kevin’s father, a second-generation Chinese restaurant owner, arrived with a bag containing Peking duck and BBQ pork. The teacher greeted him and accepted the bag, bowing to thank him. She put the food on the table, to the delight of the “Asian corner”<sup>44</sup> who identified the foods straight away and could not take their eyes off it. After being instructed only to eat one satay and one dumpling each, the teacher gave the children turns to go and get some food. A bit fearful at the beginning, after about 20 minutes the children openly tried and enjoyed the different foods. Of particular popularity were the dumplings, which the children then insisted they would order their parents to get. The lunch finished with further singing.

Thus, a broad range of ethnic foods were also consumed during lunchtime. These ranged from the adoption and reproduction of the white sandwich by children from ethnic backgrounds to their self-‘domestication’ of foreign foods within the sandwich idiom, to the consumption of ethnic foods that reject the assimilating sandwich and can be celebrated and consumed by all in compartmentalised spaces. Yet, throughout this continuum, the ‘white’ sandwich discourse reappears as a key symbol of “Kiwiness” and a key referent in constructions of Otherness. This sandwich reinforces engagement with a ‘white’, unifying, homogenous national identity. The chapter thus argues that government, schools, parents and children, through their strategic promotion of both homegenic and diverse foodstuffs — through the ubiquitous consumption of sandwiches punctuated with ‘special occasions’ where ethnically diverse foods are consumed — enables forms of ‘abridged ethnicity’ (Howland, forthcoming) to exist. While the hegemony of New Zealand, or New Zealander, is often glossed as an inclusive “Kiwi” identity, in practice it covertly references

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43 Arjun explained this was a “cool curry sauce” of peas and potato from Northern India and a specific type of chickpea flour bread. He made sure I spelt it correctly, although I have failed to find this in any of my searches.

44 Children and teachers used this term to classify a group of 5 students, 1 of which identified as Malay, 1 Korean, 2 Chinese, and 1 from Hong Kong. These children often sat together, particularly at lunchtime.

and privileges the 'white' or Pakeha middle-class habitus (Hage, 1998).<sup>45</sup> Ethnic diversity is celebrated, exhibited, consumed (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009) and engaged via truncated 'pockets of diversity' (e.g. food, song, prayer) that emphasise and reinforce the dominant hegemony. Simultaneously, the possibility for significant or enduring forms of socio-cultural diversity are corralled. This framework of diversity generates a complex relationship with ethnic identity for the children, who are forming tools of inquiry and classification for the understanding of theirs and other's ethnic/national identity. These consist mainly of physical traits, language, stereotyped cultural objects and food, as well as discourses about belonging and place of birth.

### ***Domesticating the Other***

This chapter relies on theories of the 'domestication of difference' (Hage, 1998; Urry, 1995; for the original usage see Van der Veer, 1996: 321) whereby the cultural, social and political homogenisation of nation-states is purposefully managed through discourses of multiculturalism. Here 'white' and Other are re-framed as mutually constitutive and beneficial. As Hage explains, in Australia and other late settler societies such as New Zealand, the rhetoric of multiculturalism emphasises tolerance and equality of rights and 'values' difference. However, this also determinedly positions ethnically dominant groups as the prime arbiters of ethnic Others within the nation-state, via either proclaiming their inclusion and/or exclusion within the nation, policing tolerance and conviviality between differentiated ethnic groups, or doing the 'valuing' of their consumable 'traditions'. The state is therefore premised on, structured around and mastered by 'white' culture. Accordingly, non-white ethnics can be moved or removed at the white national will. Furthermore, 'white multiculturalism' mystifies and obscures multicultural realities that do

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45 The ideals of the white nation fantasy in New Zealand also relate to the rural, encompassing a working-class ethos of hard work, collectivity, family-orientation, bound to the land and so forth (for further details see Bell, 1997). However more recently, and particularly amongst my participants, middle-class ideals and forms of distinction addressed in Chapter Two appear increasingly incorporated into the white nation fantasy.

not position white people as central master occupiers of the national space (Hage, 1998: 19).

The notion of 'white' in Hage's work raises some questions. He attempts to overcome its limitations by explaining that:

'White' is a dominant mode of self-perception, although largely an unconscious one [...] 'Whiteness' [is] itself a fantasy position of cultural dominance born out of the history of European expansion. It is not an essence that one has or does not have [...] [it] is an aspiration.... [It] can be accumulated [up to a certain point] and people can be said to be more or less white' (1998: 20).

The accumulation or level of whiteness is based on and measured against a series of social attributes and cultural capitals (Bourdieu, 1986) that configure a specific form of national capital. While Australian and New Zealand white nationalism are not precisely interchangeable, Hage's theory can be applied to the New Zealand context. Here, the ideal white subject is a New Zealand national, born to the dominant ethnic group (Pakeha), who has accumulated dominant linguistic capital (speaks English with an accent recognised as New Zealand English). This also includes physical characteristics, namely white skin and the absence of what are popularly considered 'non-European' traits (e.g. Asian 'almond eyes' or the 'frizzy hair' of Melanesians). With the post-World War II rise of the urban middle-classes, it also encompasses a cultural disposition, including an agentic perception of personhood as individualised, autonomous and aligned with market capitalism and meritocracy. Crucially this does not exclude other subjects who do not embody all of these traits from pursuit of or engagement with the 'white nation fantasy' (WNF), as migrants can acquire features of national capital (e.g. English language) and cultural dispositions, to a greater or lesser extent.

Furthermore the categories of 'white' and 'whiteness' are not homogenous. As Jackson (1998) argues, the composition of white groups and the way these are imagined entails profound diversity (i.e. white rural working-classes: community and hard work; urban middle class whiteness: individualism and consumption). Issues of 'whiteness' also intersect directly with generation, gender and social class, making 'white' contextually specific (Acker, 2006).

Ethnic relationships cannot therefore be reduced to a dichotomy of 'blacks' versus 'whites' or ethnics versus non-ethnics.<sup>46</sup> Theories of ethnicity must engage the privileging of some identities, rather than simply discuss racialised binaries. This chapter will therefore extend my previous analysis by demonstrating how discourses of ethnicity in New Zealand are intimately linked to neo-liberal governmentalities that privilege an ideally constructed white-middle class habitus.<sup>47</sup>

According to Doty (1996), despite the diversity and particularity of the historical renderings of whiteness, this is often portrayed as a homogenous ideal. Likewise, the qualitative (i.e. level of fluency in the English language), and quantitative (i.e. white skin as well as individualistic pursuits) accumulation of tropes results in differences in the accumulation of governmental belonging.<sup>48</sup> Engagement with the 'white nation fantasy' (WNF) is therefore a successful strategy to enhance one's position within the national field.

Corollary discourses of multiculturalism operate through the apparent inclusion of ethnic Others into the national sphere. Yet its processes and initiatives ultimately serve to politically, economically and socially muffle them — or direct their speech and therefore abridge their identity and expression. This domestication is therefore a form of governmentality (Rose et al., 2006) whereby states appeal to the process that Saint Hillare named 'la sauvegarde de la sauvagerie' (safeguarding savagery) (1861: 157). In neo-liberal multicultural states the issue is 'how to tame (make less savage) something with a value

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46 It must also be noted that the scope of this chapter is not to define ethnicity, but to explain how it operates and is understood by participants.

47 There is also a prioritisation of a male habitus within these discourses, but the constraints of this thesis do not allow for a thorough discussion of this topic beyond my previous point that the sandwich is historically associated with the time and space compartmentalisations of male employment undertaken away from the home.

48 According to Hage, 'the belief that one has right over the nation, involves the belief... of the right to contribute... to its management such that it remains one's home. This is what I call governmental belonging' (2003: 46).

which relies on its savageness' (Hage, 1998: 136). This is achieved by reducing potentially disruptive differences (e.g. class, religion, political views, anti-capitalist practice) to symbolic cultural difference (Povinelli, 2002). This deflects attention, and therefore practice, away from these differences and ultimately unifies people.

As Mercon explains, through the facilitation of spheres of diversity, cultural difference can be assimilated, whilst the impression that distinct cultures are being preserved is maintained:

General acceptance and interest towards symbolic and stereotypical cultural features are cultivated [...] serving as confirmation of the nation's multicultural status. What is perceived as 'culture' and delineated as authentically different is to be found primarily in the corporeality of the new members, on mute objects, food and few habits that have been popularised as signs of ethnicity (2008: 5).

Consumer culture is a site for the domesticated exotic, where "traditional" clothes, artefacts, dance, etc, can be purchased, sold and used. Food plays a significant role within such processes of domestication, operating as a marker of difference that can also be readily 'whitened'. This relates to the processes of domesticating the Other. On one hand the integration of "ethnic products" into consumer spaces (i.e. the appearance of Asian food sections in supermarkets) are effectively 'whitened' by their acceptance and celebration as a form of 'benign cosmopolitanism'. Food is here utilised as a prime marker of acceptable ethnic difference, apparent in children's identification, although not always accurate, of ethnic categories with ethnic foods (i.e. Japanese or Chinese eat sushi). There is also a compartmentalisation of the ethnic Other into restricted and manageable spaces. This is a domestication that takes place as migrants reach the national space, and is a process of integration into the WNF. For instance, the consumption of ethnic foods is compartmentalised to the domestic private sphere, to the ethnicised restaurant (identifiable through the appearance of distant/exotic land photographs, artefacts, clothing, and music)

or to 'special occasions' such as the school shared lunch. Here, the consumer can readily differentiate the Other, which is corralled to sanctioned and non-consequential social and political spheres (Corinna Howland, Personal Communication). Domestication therefore refers to two processes. One, the wild, alien, unknown, and dangerous aspects of the Other come under control. Two, the compartmentalisation of Others into the 'special' — that is a fleeting and truncated or break from the norm, primarily relegated to home, household and/or leisurely spheres, as opposed to the public and everyday (Urry, Personal Communication).

### ***A state of diversity: Multiculturalism at stake***

In government documents, ethnicity appears through discourses of socio-cultural diversity and the adoption of Maori philosophies of health. The former emphasises the diversity of ethnic backgrounds of children who attend New Zealand schools and in particular the richness of their 'food traditions' (MOE, 1999). For instance, one of the MOH foundation documents for parents explains, 'children living in New Zealand come from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds including European, Maori and Pacific Island, each with their own traditions and beliefs about food and health' (1997: 3). Diversity is here presented as a non-threatening, positive feature, one which New Zealanders can enjoy and learn from. The ethnic differences between children, presented at stereotypical level as befits 'benign cosmopolitanism', are stressed. This underlines not only that "traditions" and foods can be wide ranging, but that there are a series of beliefs and philosophies (i.e. Maori's holistic understanding of health) that make these ethnic groups essentially different. Furthermore, ethnicity is reduced to traditions and beliefs. By subtracting culture to a symbolic level, social practice or involvement in social power are only viable under the terms of the WNF (e.g. white conceptions of what health and eating are as opposed to those of Others). The ethnic Other is reduced to 'accessorised culture', all that can be seen is his or her stereotyped symbolic cultural tropes, the clothing, the food, the language, but not the politically or socially-engaged agent or tropes that disrupt the WNF.

Such frameworks resonate with recent global and national turns towards policies and discourses of multiculturalism. In New Zealand multiculturalism emerged with the Labour's government review of immigration in 1986 (subsequently the Immigration Act of 1987), which sought to 'enhance New Zealand's multicultural society' (Burke, 1986: 9) by emphasising the economic profitability of short and long-term migrant labour. It modified entry requirements to de-emphasise previously preferred connections with Britain, and assessed migrant's viability based on skills, capital and labour inputs that would match market requirements (Pearson, 2000), clearly ascribing to the WNF. This resulted in profound demographic changes. A notable feature of migration flows after 1986 has been the gradual decrease of permanent/long term migrants<sup>49</sup> from Britain and Australia, and the increase of migrants from the Pacific, Canada and Asia. Furthermore the volume of emigration has increased significantly, constituting a net loss of New Zealand citizens (Zodgekar, 2005). As a result the New Zealand population is increasingly ethnically diverse, evident in the ethnic composition of the schools (see Fig. 1).

The Immigration Act also frames New Zealand as an 'ethnically diverse society' (Burke, 1986).<sup>50</sup> As Pearson notes, 'core civic citizenship rights supposedly replace the belief in a British "ethnic core" that New Zealand's immigration policies were previously built on [...] Assimilability was still an issue but there was now an acknowledgement that ethnic difference was not necessarily a debarment for entry' (2000: 105). Other objectives mentioned in later official documents indicate the desire to 'enrich the multicultural fabric of New Zealand

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49 These are migrants who stipulate they intend to stay in New Zealand for 12 months or more. This includes New Zealand residents as well as students or work permit holders (Statistics New Zealand, 2003).

50 Due to emerging opposing views about multiculturalism in New Zealand, policy documents often refrain from using the term 'multiculturalism' and instead frame New Zealand as as an 'ethnically diverse society' (for examples see Ministry of Ethnic Affairs, 2006; Ministry of Social Development, 2008). Both discourses however centre on 'pluralistic images of cultural diversity and equality that seek to establish a framework for right claims of aboriginal and immigrant minorities' (Pearson, 2000: 101).



society', as well as facilitating active and comprehensive participation of immigrants in New Zealand life (Zodgekar, 2005: 141). The movement towards multiculturalism corresponds to changing paradigms in international policy. With the 'flows' and 'scapes' of globalisation (Appadurai, 1996), the global market requires the "management" of multiple and polyvalent forms of social relationships, "cultures" and "nationalities". Multiculturalism is therefore perceived as the apt governmentality for such a configuration.

First formulated in North America as an attempt to manage mass immigration after WWII,<sup>51</sup> multiculturalism was one of the core emphases for the United Nations during the 1960s, and was exemplified in the inclusion of Article 27 to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights:

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities should not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language (in Inglis, 1995: 22).

The UNDHR evidences Wright's analysis of the increased use of 'culture in an anthropological sense' as a tool in political and media discourses. The notion of culture as a 'whole way of life' is seemingly adopted (1998: 11), while it is simultaneously relegated to its symbolic features (e.g. religion, language). Such political uses 'mobilise culture to reinforce exclusion... with profound implications for public policy and people's lives' (Wright, 1998: 11). 'Culture' is employed as a self-evident term, whose explanation relies on the expert knowledge of those politicians who deploy it. The implication of these statements is that it is up to those who can understand and coin culture, politicians, government agents, teachers, middle-class parents, to determine what is and is not cultural, to move and remove the Other, to assert when an ethnic minority has a culture. The salience of multiculturalism in politics was

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51 For an overview of the origins of multiculturalism and its relationship with America's "melting pot" see Palmer (1975).

crystallised in the 1970s (Inglis, 1995), when it became an official policy in other settler societies such as Canada and Australia. It is characterised by a perceived state desire for the preservation and sharing of cultural diversity and particularly the promotion of tolerance (Esses & Gardner, 1996).

In New Zealand, multiculturalism acquired a more pervasive, albeit informal, standing during the Labour Government of 1999 and 2008 which, as a response to global economic pressures, sought to redefine the role of New Zealand within the international context and forge a unitary national identity. New Zealanders were urged, through the frequent use of terms such as 'we', 'us' and 'our', to operate as contributors to a 'meaningfully shared national response' (Skillings, 2011: 69). Given the diverse nature of the New Zealand population, in terms of social class and ethnic composition, the government sought to construct a national identity that could unify and legitimate internal difference. Migrants and ethnic minorities became valued for the 'ethnic and cultural diversity [that] enriches New Zealand Society' (Labour Party of New Zealand, 2002), and the Pacific and Maori heritage of the country was celebrated as a valuable point of difference (see Creative New Zealand, 2002). The politics of nationalistic multiculturalism shape profoundly national discourses of belonging, establishing it as one of the fundamental forms of national capital.

Despite such emphasis multiculturalism has no official legislative mandate in New Zealand. An official statute was suggested in 2008, but the initiative was turned down, rejected on the grounds that government had already implemented a number of initiatives, including the establishment of the Ethnic Affairs portfolio and the Office of Ethnic Affairs (Parliamentary Discussion, 2008). This reasoning encompasses the particular manner in which multiculturalism operates in New Zealand, not officially legislated by an Act of Parliament but always apparent in government papers (see for instance Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2007), school edicts, parliamentary discussions, political speeches and in agencies such as MEA. Multiculturalism in Wellington is made visible through council initiatives for the celebration of

ethnic festivals and holidays, such as Chinese New Year, Positively Pasifika,<sup>52</sup> and Culture Kicks.<sup>53</sup> These initiatives include the display, consumption and production of foods and “authentically ethnic” artefacts, all symbolic markers of culture. Within them multiculturalism is assumed to be an everyday reality and a state policy.

### ***From multiculturalism to biculturalism and back: The nuances of localised multiculturalism***

The absence of specific multiculturalist legislation is a partial product of the debate about multiculturalism denying the special position of Maori in New Zealand society. While multiculturalism appears first in New Zealand during the 1970s, with discourses that focused on pluralistic notions of cultural difference and equity, these were quickly replaced by claims of biculturalism. As Pearson (2000) explains, this relates to the magnitude and unity of the Maori population (approximately 15 percent of the population) in comparison to other ethnic minorities, the existence of a group of well-educated and politically savvy Maori spokespeople that generated increasing pressure on the state to formally recognise and resource Maori as the indigenous people of New Zealand (Sissons, 1992) and the introduction of the Waitangi Tribunal (Pearson, 2000). The relationship between multiculturalism and biculturalism in New Zealand has been tense, characterised by arguments (see Spoonley & Pearson, 2004) claiming that by rights of indigeneity, the conditions of Maori were and should be different from those of migrants, and that the Treaty of Waitangi entails particular obligations of the New Zealand state to Maori populations (Pearson & Ongley, 1996).

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52 Festival that celebrates Pacific Island populations of New Zealand through dance performances, food and ‘island-style activities’ (Wellington City Council, 2011)

53 Food, dance, crafts and activities fair which includes the soccer final for “global kicks”, a Wellington City Council initiative that promotes the inclusion of ethnic minorities into sporting activities by creating a football competition over the summer between different “ethnic” teams.

This tension is clear in the inclusion of a Maori philosophy of health within government documents above those of ethnic Others. As explained in Chapter One, the MOE and MOH have promoted a holistic understanding of health that arguably follows Maori values. Such policies, however, do not sufficiently include Maori perspectives, behaviours or beliefs regarding health. As Durie explains, for Maori prominent issues of health are dynamic, and health priorities are mostly articulated by elders at Marae meetings (Durie, 1985: 484). Thus, the very rigidity of these guidelines dismisses the dynamism of “Maori Health”. Maori health entails ritualistic production and consumption of food (Durie, 1985), which is never stipulated within the guidelines. Neither are foods “traditionally” attributed to Maori, such as kunikuni (breed of pig), hue (gourds), kumara (sweet potato), or pua (sow thistle), (Whiu et al., 1995), discussed in the document. Additionally, the ritualistic principle of *manaakitanga*, the belief that individuals must share and be hospitable, was actively denied by school regulations. The introduction of the policy is therefore a clear case of seeming engagement with ethnic or cultural differences, while in reality these are ‘whitened’ to fit within hegemonic structures.

These discourses of inclusion strikingly contrast with the information received by newly-registered residents or long-term migrants to New Zealand. These migrant groups receive *The guide to living and studying in New Zealand* from MOE (2007) where they are informed that a ‘typical day’ (32) in New Zealand includes an hour-long lunch, which is ‘a light meal, often just a sandwich and some fruit... it is rare for people to return home for a large meal’ (2007b: 41). This document clearly encourages engagement with the WNF in the public and the everyday. Such discourses are further emphasised throughout other government documents that celebrate diversity within the domestic sphere, ‘at home try foods from different countries and regions’ (MOE, 2011c), while positioning sandwiches as the only fundamental health food component within the lunchbox.

The emphasis on the sandwich can also be a tool for domestication into employment and its compartmentalised time and place disciplines. This is

particularly evident in discourses that emphasised the pragmatic aspects of the sandwich, such as its “easy to make” and transportable features, or its hygienic and fast consumption, as well as the possibility of consuming it “at your desk”. As the immigration document identifies, the sandwich is closely related to the work environment. Thus it can operate as a marker of the separation from the leisurely, more elaborate lunch that might be eaten at home for enjoyment and companionship, and which may require sophisticated cooking, cutlery and dishes. Instead, food consumption in the workplace or school environment is constrained, in terms of cooking and consumption facilities as well as time, and is primarily engaged for the maintenance of energy levels and productivity. It can therefore be argued that the consumption of sandwiches at school socialises children into future routines of employment that are at the basis of the WNF, such as productive and consumptive citizenship.

### **Schooling difference**

All schools visited engaged with discourses that celebrated the diversity of their students. This was captured in a teacher’s comment following the shared lunch described in the initial vignette:

Carla: Hey, Sandy, I really enjoyed the lunch. You’ve got such a good class!

Teacher: You know, I love this class. I love the diversity of students. All from so many different heritages it is just really special. And they all get on so well and are so respectful; they get to learn from each other.

The teacher therefore reinforces national discourses of multiculturalism, with her emphasis on valuing ethnic diversity and emphasising tolerance.

Multiculturalism at school was, however, only enacted in a compartmentalised manner, through episodic and truncated activities and rituals. My first encounter with such practices took place within the very first hour of field work, with the calling of the class roll:

Teacher: Good morning, Lilly.

Lilly: Good Morrow, Mr. Ferguson.

Teacher: Oh Good Morrow, that's an old one. Kia Ora, Josh.

Josh: Kia Ora, Mr Ferguson.

Teacher: Kia Ora, Yogesh.

(Yogesh<sup>54</sup> giggles in embarrassment): Kia Ora.

Teacher: Talofa Lava, Niko.<sup>55</sup>

Niko: Talofa Lava, Mr Ferguson.

Teacher: Talofa Lava, Thao.

Thao:<sup>56</sup> Nihao.

Teacher: Kia Ora, Maria.

Maria:<sup>57</sup> Kia Orana, Mr Ferguson.

In this case the teacher functioned as the facilitator and arbitrator of sanctioned diversity, encouraging children to learn the different languages. Yet this was restricted to an initial greeting and thus reinforced the nexus of 'benign cosmopolitanism' and 'white nation' hegemony. There was also an attempt on his part to seek and greet the children in the language of the ethnicity to which they belong, which was indicated in the class roll and was based on the demographic information required by the school and provided by parents upon enrolment. When referring directly to Pakeha children, Mr Ferguson would use good morning or "kia ora". For the children from Pacific Islands he sought to use the language appropriate to their ethnicity. Yet, when the teacher encountered a child from an ethnicity whose greeting he was not aware of, as was the case with Yogesh and Thao, he enforces the multicultural discourse by greeting them in another equally Other or non-English language.

The enculturation of children to identify ethnic "heritage" with a greeting is evident in the replies of the children, who corrected the teacher by replying with the appropriate greeting for their actual ethnic background. The normativity of the correlation between greeting and ethnicity can be perceived

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54 Yogesh is a first-generation Indian boy.

55 Niko's grandmother was born in Samoa and he often told me he was proud to be Samoan.

56 Thao's ethnic categorization will be discussed throughout this chapter. It is important to note here that she "looks Asian" according to the children and is registered as a Vietnamese New Zealander.

57 Maria is a third-generation Cook Islander from her mother's side.

in Yogesh's bemused answer of "kia ora", for as a first-generation Indian he is aware this is not the appropriate greeting. Diversity is therefore not only compartmentalised, but children are enculturated into correlating token, even erroneous, linguistic and cultural features as appropriate, sanctioned and sufficient institutional markers of ethnic identity.

Biculturalism was also engaged through compartmentalised activities within the school. This included initiatives such as singing in Maori language as well as dedicated Maori language lessons. The introduction of Maori language at schools was an issue of significant debate (see Hornberger, 2006) during the 1970s and 1980s, as some posited that it could address disparities in educational performance between Maori and non-Maori, as well as resulting in greater recognition of Maori cultural identity and further enhancing tolerance of cultural difference (Sissons, 1993: 104). While the teaching of Maori language is not compulsory, since 2003 curricula have been developed for teaching Te Reo, and most primary schools in New Zealand engage at least with the first two units of the curriculum (MOE, 2005). Through Te Reo activities and lessons, children learnt basic Maori vocabulary, such as colours, numbers, parts of the body and place names. However, abstract concepts and discussion of the history of Maori language or heritage were largely absent, and Maori language was not used actively in any other realms of the school curriculum or classroom learning. Thus, the inclusion of Maori language at schools can be perceived as a convenient signifier of diversity, beneficial for the production of a pan-New Zealand, and hence nationalistic, identity (Hinton, 2001).

Such abridged initiatives do not sufficiently address issues of Maori language revival; if anything, it feigns to do so while disarticulating in-depth knowledge and practice. As children have typically learnt these basic concepts when they were very young, and the learning does not transcend into more complex words, Maori culture might be also cast as infantile. This ethos is also apparent in the absence of Maori food, even in shared lunch day, when all other ethnic foods are celebrated and consumed (see also Morris, 2010 for this phenomena in New Zealand restaurants). I thus argue that Maori food is placed at a spiritual

level, rather than at a pragmatic one. This further exemplifies the complex ways with which Maori culture is engaged within the New Zealand school system, domesticated to offer certain forms of sacredness, but also to fit within hegemonic structures.

### ***Administering diversity***

The primacy of the white nation/middle-class habitus as arbiter of appropriate forms and contexts of ethnic diversity was also prominent within the school. These assertions initially emerged through discussions between the teachers or in informal talks between the teachers and myself. In some of these episodes teachers referred to problematic features of non-white students. For instance, halfway through my stay at Old-Village, the students conducted an exercise about whether it was better to have cats or dogs and to justify their answers. Children provided reasons such as “cats are better because you don’t have to clean up after them” or “dogs are better because they are good friends”. However, when the teacher asked Yogesh to give his opinion he could not answer the question in the way expected. He said dogs were better but, even when pressured by the teacher, did not explain why this was the case. After this exercise the children left for morning tea. I went back into the classroom where Miss Neeland and another teacher were talking. Miss Neeland turned to me and said:

Did you see how Yogesh was having problems presenting his ideas? It is a very Indian thing. He is the oldest boy so he is not allowed to have an opinion... For instance, if he were to go to a party, not that he would ever be allowed to, his Mum will grab the food and put it on the plate for him. He wouldn’t be able to choose... Sometimes we get around it by telling them “this is school, you must have an opinion here”.

Similar episodes took place within other schools, where teachers told me that ethnic children did not understand their instructions and that this could either be a language problem or that they could not cope with certain activities because they were not used to certain learning approaches. In all cases the



difficulty of the student to cope with school activities was blamed on “ethnic” features. As these cases always referred to students with an Asian or third-world background the teachers’ assumptions rested on stereotyped views whereby certain attributes, in this case the view that these “cultures” rely on a collectivist ethos, are attributed to a population group (Chock, 1987). The “ethnic deficiency” of the student was perceived as significant when it related to the incapacity to fulfil school ideals, such as individualism, and the expression of one’s own opinion. The compartmentalisation and reduction of ethnicity to the domestic sphere is again made clear, children are allowed to enact such cultural traits at home, but at school “they must have an opinion”.

### ***Shared lunch: Carnival and the Other***

Perhaps the clearest moment of compartmentalisation and ‘white’ arbitration of diversity was illustrated in the introductory shared lunch vignette. The predominance of ‘ethnic foods’, lack of sandwiches, the shared consumption of foods, inclusion of restaurant foods, use of plates and cutlery, as well as the consumption of foods within the classroom as opposed to the playground, reverse the general order of the school lunch. The shared lunch therefore can be understood as a ritual of inversion and parody of the dominant culture, a ‘complete [although momentary] withdrawal from the present order’ (Bakhtin, 1984: 275). During carnival, in the Bakhtian sense, the ‘norms and prohibitions of usual life are suspended so that an atmosphere of freedom, frankness and familiarity reigns’ (1984: 275). Within this context, official truths are relativised, even reversed, in this case regarding the policy not to share and valorisation of ethnic foods over the Pakeha school lunchbox norm of the sandwich, fruit, and treat. Within this carnivalesque episode people become ‘organised in their own way’ and the individual self is constructed and perceived as an ‘indissoluble’ part of the collective (1984: 15-16). Thus, not only did children organise themselves into different tasks, with only minor inputs from the teacher, but the environment for sharing meant lessened individualised consumption. The sharing of food often constituted the basis of *communitas* or relationship building (Larson, Branscomb, & Wiley, 2006).

Within the carnivalesque, Bakhtin perceives the possibility of a ‘complete withdrawal from the present order’ (1984: 118). Given the carnival inverts official rules and hierarchies, the carnival functions as a crystalliser of a utopian world in which relativity of values, questioning of authority, openness, anarchy and deconstruction of dogmas can take place. Participants are thus encouraged to understand the viability of a different social world. Others such as Scott (1985) have pointed out, however, that the thesis of the carnival as a ‘dry run’ or glimpse of an alternative better order is highly problematic. It does not explain why power brokers would encourage such a potentially radicalising event, and largely dismisses the compartmentalised nature of the carnival — especially the removal and return to the norm — that hegemonically emphasises the determinative power and seemingly innate necessity of the status quo. Likewise I argue that the shared lunch and the reversal of the everyday school lunch must be understood within the dominant context of the WNF, and that it operates to reposition white middle-class habitus as central and prevailing.

Firstly, while the shared consumption of food and drinks may articulate internal solidarity, this takes place foremost because commensality allows ‘the limits of the group to be [conservatively] redrawn, its internal hierarchies to be restored and if necessary to be redefined’ (Scholliers, 2001: 24). This is evident in the choice of food that the teacher made, namely the Thai curry. While she had encouraged other children to bring foods that reflected their “ethnic heritage” she had herself transgressed this rule, given she identified as New Zealand European. In this way the teacher positioned herself as an authoritative and leading facilitator of diversity, adopting the foods of Others to construct a more “enriching” shared lunch. The teacher can adopt this position, not only due to her position of power in relationship to the children, but also because she has sufficient national capital as a professional, educated, middle-class Pakeha that will not be undermined by her appropriation of the ethnic food of Other. This is further demonstrated by comparison with the Malay rice dish chosen by the teacher aide who is from Malaysia, confirming that it is the teacher’s position as

undeniably white, and not just her position of authority, that enables her to take the place of arbiter.

Secondly, the shared lunch reiterates the categorisation of ethnics as passive providers of raw materials for enrichment. As Hage (1998) explains, such carnivalesque episodes:

Far from putting 'migrant cultures', even in their 'soft' sense (i.e. through food, dance etc), on an equal footing with the dominant culture, the theme conjures the images of a multicultural fair where the various stalls of neatly positioned migrant cultures are exhibited. And where the real bearers of the White Nation are positioned in the central role of the touring subject, walk around and enrich themselves(196).

For instance, while all of the children had been encouraged to bring foods that represented their heritage, not all of them did so. Ethnic families had embraced the edict very seriously, presenting some of their best foods (in particular the Peking duck and the Nimona curry which were not otherwise featured in their school lunchboxes). On the other hand, most of the Pakeha children contributed bought goods, such as chippies and cookies. Since the dominant culture is the norm it does not need to articulate itself. For the Pakeha children the shared lunch is carnivalesque as an inversion of the normative homemade based lunch foods, as it implied the purchasing of lunch products to share. As Hage explains 'the opposition which is maintained at the level of ingredients is not maintained at the level of agency. And it is mainly at this level that the White Nation fantasy [...] begins to transpire' (Hage, 1998: 120). It is the role of the Other to provide the elements for an enriching lunch and society, while by contrast it is the role of the dominant ethnic groups to facilitate and consume these goods.

### ***Multiculturalism in the family: Compartmentalising the Other***

A similar tension between the facilitation and assumption of diversity, and a restriction of diversity through the compartmentalisation and domestication of

the Other, was apparent in the interviews with parents. They often assumed that the lunches consumed by the children at school encompassed a variety of foods:

Carla: Ok now, what do you think that the children in the school bring?

Beth: I imagine that just at Old-Village there must be thousands of different foods and lunches there because there are so many nationalities. I imagine there is huge variety of food that the kids eat.

The general perceptions emphasised difference rather than similarity across children's foods, as was not actually the case in the playground. This difference could be related to the belief that ethnic minorities would maintain their "traditional" foods, reinforcing the bounded and static manner in which ethnicity is perceived. Likewise, when asked "what does multiculturalism mean to you?", parents emphasised the necessity to "adapt" to and consume different ethnic foods:

Beth: Multiculturalism.... Oh every so often they get sushi [laughs]... I'm trying to think. If you are thinking about it in terms of food we will eat lots of different types of food. It is probably not reflected in the lunchbox so much, but we eat at different restaurants quite a lot as a family, so the kids get to try different types of food.

Nisha: Adapt, uhm, yeah, different cultural stuff in your life. [Do you mean] Like in any way?

Carla: Yes.

Nisha: Well we eat all sorts of food, not just Indian, we have all sorts of food like Mexican and Chinese. I don't cook Chinese at home because I am not that good about it, but Thai, Mexican and different European, a lot of European stuff, pastas and lasagnes and things like that.

Given the nature of the interview topic and questions there was probably a desire from the participants to frame their responses in regards to food. Yet the framing of multiculturalism in terms of food stuffs points out the way in which ethnic products and identities have been actively commoditised. It also signals the role that food plays as a significant, yet ultimately token item for multiculturalism. As Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) have identified, 'ethnic incorporation rides on a process of homogenisation and abstraction: *the* Zulu

(or *the* Tswana or *the* San [or in this case the Thai, Mexican, or the Maori]), for all their internal divisions, become one; their “lifeways” withdrawn from time or history, congeal into object-form, all the better to conceive, communicate and consume’ (12). In this way ethnic food becomes synonymous with unitary, static, benign and ultimately ‘abridged ethnic identities’ (Howland, forthcoming). Even European is presented as homogenous. Once transformed into object form, such identity can be neatly included and unproblematically consumed in everyday life.

Consumption of ‘ethnic foods’ was also emblematic in parents’ discussions of home practices:

Carla: What do they normally have for lunch during the weekend?

Karen: It will really change.... There are times when I can do cheese and some nice crackers, they have yogurt, if it is the summer time a lot of fresh fruit... And also, a little bit of Asian. Actually Nick loves sushi; he would love to have sushi in his lunchbox if he could every day. In fact I have done that to him when I take him out of school on his birthday to go to Love Sushi, or even get it from the supermarket. We have even talked about getting the whole kit and throwing it in his lunchbox. But now that I am working it is quite a bit. I am pretty busy; there will be after school stuff, homework, dinner... I mostly prepare the lunch boxes at night, so the idea then of making sushi is not so appealing... I have started introducing them to curries more and more.

This parent’s narrative can be analysed as a form of ‘benign cosmopolitanism’, ethnic foodstuffs are purposefully included in the dominant white middle-class culture as markers and practices of cultural diversity. This inclusion within family life is strategic and involves domestication and compartmentalisation to fit within the hegemonic structures. Ethnic foods are, for instance, only consumed within the domestic sphere and the restaurant, but not readily transported into the public arena of the school playground. The discussion about the difficulties of sushi-making only serve to emphasise the practicality of the sandwich as an appropriate lunch meal, thereby reinforcing the dominant paradigms of WNF concerning compartmentalised activities (re: domestic, occupational/ educational etc) and restricting the inclusion of ethnic foods to those that are likewise easily transported and consumed at school.

As the participants make clear, however, the consumption of sushi at school was common and desired. Sushi was the only foreign food that children did not consider weird and that they consumed in the playground. Children openly expressed a love for sushi and were rewarded by parents with trips to sushi outlets to celebrate birthdays or achievements. Sushi was particularly normalised at North-Hill School where it was presented as one of the *ordered lunch* options. As in the case of McDonalds and fast-foods, sushi can be considered a form of cultural capital that children used to demonstrate their distinction, as it is available in outlets where the food can be easily consumed for a small amount of money. It fulfils the same mandates of 'predictability, rationalisation, efficiency, and calculability' as McDonalds (Ritzer, 1998). As such sushi can be seen to fit the palatability of the white taste, fulfilling the requirements for a food that is both healthy and "easy" to transport and consume, therefore respecting the enculturation into work-habitus. Sushi has therefore been domesticated and as such is allowed to enter the school lunch box.

Sushi can additionally fulfil cosmopolitan forms of middle-class distinction. It implies access to and knowledge of "exotic" foods. As Lu and Fine explain, in settler societies dominant sections of society who 'value' cultural diversity demonstrate their tolerant ethos by enjoying ethnic food (Lu & Fine, 1995), further signalling a form of cosmopolitan sophistication (Warde et al. 1999). 'Through this practice such eaters distinguish themselves from those other members of society who, only being willing to consume their own food, they consider to be less tolerant' (Morris. 2010: 17).

Yet, while the discourse of multiculturalism seemingly emphasises tolerance, the positioning of the dominant Pakeha ethnicity, as the arbiter of such tolerance, effectively sanctions and enables the removal of "ethnics" whenever thresholds of tolerance have been surpassed. This was evident in discussions regarding the "dangerous" aspects of the infiltration of foreign products into mainstream society. In these cases the category of Chinese was foremost used as a signifier

of the dangerous, alien, weird, Other that has threatengly penetrated the boundaries of New Zealand society:

Annabelle: You know... there was a stage when we went to the supermarket and we wouldn't buy anything that was made in China. It was after that Fonterra scandal<sup>58</sup> and all of that. And also, we were trying to buy locally so that we will support the economy and all of that. Well I got completely anal about this. And then Charlie wanted to know about Deng, one of the Chinese children at school. What did he do then, if he couldn't eat Chinese food? So it brought up a whole can of interesting worms.

These comments demonstrate the ethos of ethnic compartmentalisation. When compartmentalised ethnicity can be organised, controlled and enjoyed within sanctioned aspects of the domestic sphere (e.g. ethnic meals) and likewise within specific public domains (e.g. ethnic restaurants) it is palatable. However, when found in public arenas, especially if indistinguishable from the dominant culture, it represents a moral threat. The possibility of the ethnic Other moving beyond dominant control and superseding their status as an object-form or practice that is constantly subject to will and approval of the nationalist manager indicates a form of trespassing that cannot be tolerated (Hage, 1998). Under these circumstances individuals should attend to their moral duty fortifying the dominant culture from external threats. The response in this case entailed the consumer boycotting of Chinese products, forcing the re-compartmentalisation of the Other, and privileging a perceived independent and sovereign New Zealand economy. The discussion demonstrates children's questioning of ethnic categories and their relationship to cultural tropes, which will be discussed in the following section.

### ***Understanding ethnicity: A child's-eye view***

Recent migration trends, the development of self-determination movements (for a more detailed discussion see Pearson, 1990; Urry, 1995) and the

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58 In September 2008, the Shijiazhuang Sanlu Group, 43 percent owned by Fonterra, recalled more than 10,000 tons of infant milk powder after a food safety scandal involving the criminal contamination of its raw milk supply with melamine (Sommerville, 2009).

promotion of ethnic diversity, manifest themselves in school through the complex selection of children's ethnic categories upon enrolment. As children enter the school system, parents are encouraged to provide information regarding theirs and their children's ethnicity as part of the information provided in enrolment forms. At Lambton-Quay, for example, parents are required to specify the ethnic group, home language, country of citizenship and country of birth of their children at the beginning of the application. There is also a separate section dedicated to Iwi affiliation; the form specifies that 'up to three Iwi affiliations can be entered'. The information obtained from these forms is then utilised for funding purposes<sup>59</sup> and to establish the ethnic composition of the school, later promoted in school edicts and websites. This information also conveys another aspect of ethnic composition, namely claims for a multiplicity of ethnic and national identities. It was not uncommon to find children who were registered as Pacific-Island Chinese with an Iwi affiliation, Fijian-Europeans, New Zealand-born Indians etc. Thus the valued notions of multiculturalism were embodied in the pluralistic ethnic identifications of the children.

This association with multiple ethnic backgrounds was a discourse children often engaged:

Carla: Hey Hannah are there children from other countries in this school?

Hannah: Yes, Sally and Bree are kind of Irish and Scottish.

Sally: I am half Scottish and a quarter Irish and a whole Kiwi.

Bree: Yes but everyone is half Kiwi (Old-Village School).

Carla: Did your mum make your lunch Chan?

Chan: No, it's from our restaurant.

Carla: Right. What sort of food is it?

Chan: Thai.

Carla: And are you Thai.

Chan: Aha...[nods].

Carla: Is your Mum Thai?

Chan: Yes she is.

Carla: But was she born in Thailand or in New Zealand?

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<sup>59</sup> There are specific scholarships and school funding available to schools based on ethnicity and ethnic composition.



Chan: In New Zealand.

Carla: And what about your Dad?

Andrew: He [Chan's Dad] was born here [he was Pakeha]. He [Chan] is Thai but half-kiwi (Lambton-Quay School).

Children thus celebrated and valued diversity, but also negotiated their relationship to dominant discourses of national belonging by claiming that they were "Kiwi" or "from here", making white national dominance evident. It could be claimed that "Kiwiiness", as the most prominent ethnic identification in New Zealand, might be easier to grasp by children. Yet the fact that children privilege this position over the others suggests that adult behaviour has promoted such association in a salient manner (Toren, 1993), whereby being Kiwi becomes synonymous with the WNF ideals and belonging.

Children were also aware of the correlation between 'object-based' ethnic features (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009) and ethnic categories, and used these to define ethnicity:

The children and I sat around in a circle in the playground.

Carla: Hey so do you know any children from different countries?

Abby: Yes, Yogesh is from India.

Navneet: Yes, my Mum was born in India and then we came here.

Carla: Abby, but how did you know he was Indian?

Abby: Because his Mum has one of those red dots on her head.

Carla: Who else is from another country?

Abby: Thao. She is Chinese.

Carla: Why?

Abby: Because she looks like it.

Mary: She eats sushi sometimes. She loves it! I know she loves it because one time I brought it to school and she beat me for it, she wouldn't stop moaning until I gave it to her.

Abby: Also Daniel is Samoan.

Carla: How do you know?

Abby: His Mum is Samoan and he speaks Samoan.

Children therefore used a wide range of criteria to assign and collectively negotiate ethnic identity — language, dress, place of birth, parents' ethnicity. It was common for the children to correlate certain foods with ethnic belonging, for example samosas with India, pasta with Italy, and, as in this case, sushi with

Japan or China. Food can therefore be seen to assist in the ‘imagination’ of national identity (Anderson, 2006), providing a “traditionally” grounded basis for group delimitation. As Mintz and du Bois explain ‘ethnicity, like nationhood, is also imagined (Murcott, 1996) — and associated cuisines may be imagined too. Once imagined, such cuisines provide added concreteness to the idea of national or ethnic identity. Talking and writing about ethnic or national food can then add to a cuisine’s conceptual solidity and coherence’ (2002: 109). Perceptions of ethnicity can therefore remain stereotyped, essentialised and static, and construed as the accumulation of cultural traits. However, as this chapter demonstrates, ethnicity is ‘imagined but not imaginary’ (Jenkins, 2002). Identification, and the awareness of the differences and similarities between self and Other have mundane, individual as well as collective and historical consequences (118).

The most common characteristic utilised by the children to identify someone’s ethnicity were physical appearances:

After I had asked the children a series of questions on ethnicity I saw Mary and Niko back in the classroom asking each other about where Thao might come from. They are discussing whether she is Chinese or not. At some point Mary turns around and says to Thao:

Mary: Thao are you from China?

Thao: No...

Niko: Yes she is!

Thao: Nooooo I’m not.

Mary: See, I told you she wasn’t.

Carla: Why did you think Thao is Chinese?

Niko: Because she looks like it.

Thao: I don’t even come from China. I was born here.

Sandy [turns around and tells Niko]: You look like Samoan!

Niko [shrugs his arms and looks towards me]: Are you from South America?

Carla: Yes, I’m...

Niko [celebrates getting the right answer by doing a little dance]: Ha! Yes, I knew it! I knew it!

Carla: How did you know?

Niko: Because you look like it.

Physical appearance was indicated by children as the key determinant of ethnicity. This was used even in cases when the physical cues were not obvious.

For instance I had told the children that I was from South America when I introduced myself to them and there are no major physical features popularly related to such an ethnic belonging that Niko could have drawn from. I also doubt he had come across many other South Americans to make such a comparison. Furthermore, Niko claimed Thao was Chinese “because she looked like it” despite her refusing this classification. Claims to physical appearance therefore exemplify a physical naturalisation of cultural and social difference. In other words people who “look different” must necessarily be different from “us”. By Othering the visibly different, children can construct others as ethnically different and themselves as ‘normal’ or not different (Spyrou, 2009: 166).

The capacity to correlate tokens of ethnicity with ethnic categories also allowed children to tap into the arbitrary nature of ethnicity. It was not uncommon for children to appropriate a diverse range of ethnicities through greetings or words in a given language. For instance, during swimming class at Old-Village school two children spent most of the hour calling my name and, as I turned around, they would say “konnichiwa”, dive into the pool and then come back up to surface and say they were Japanese. Children could also readily change their ethnic identity in accordance to their friend’s comments:

Carla: Where are you from Maria?

Niko: She is from Samoa as well.

Maria: No, I’m not!

Niko: Yes.

Maria: No.

Niko: Yes.

Maria: No.

Niko: Yes.

Maria: I’m from here. I think.

Philip: I’m from Japan.

Maria: I’m from China.

Oscar: No you are not from China. If you were from China your eyes would have to be like this [pushes his eyes to the sides].

The children therefore utilised ethnicity in a much more dynamic and fluid manner than their adult counterparts, but they maintained the popular stereotypes and essentialised views of ethnicity, always associating it with given

cultural and physical/racial features. The appropriation of ethnicity appeared to create distinctions that engaged with parents and school discourses of attraction for the exotic that recall 'benign cosmopolitanism' and 'abridged ethnic identity' (Peter Howland, forthcoming). These utterances also included joking and playful aspects, and were constructed in the same way as other children's games (for further details see Mac Naughton et al., 2001). Since joking and playfulness are often considered a sign of intimacy (Dormann & Biddle, 2006), the appropriation of ethnicity can be understood as a game for the forging of friendship, through the exercise of difference and commonality.

Yet, as the previous quote demonstrates, there were some limitations to the dynamic use of ethnicity, and children often contested Other's claims to ethnic belonging:

Carla: So who brings different food?

Jeremy [points to Johni]: Him, him.

Carla: Why is it different?

Katie: Because he is Chinese.

Carla: Do you bring Chinese food?

Johni: I bring noodles.

Carla: Are you Chinese?

Johni: No... I'm not.

Carla: Then what are you?

Jeremy: Maori, I am Maori and Kiwi.

Katie: You are not Maori. How can you say that? You have nothing Maori. You are Chinese (North-Hill School).

While Johni was registered as Cook Island-Maori in the school enrolment form, the fact that "he looked" Asian and did not present any of the characteristics that Katie associated with being Maori, allowed Katie to deny his ethnic claims.

Likewise, while children and teachers often classified her as Chinese, Thao always rejected these forms of classification. This became clear during focus group discussion:

Carla: Are there any children from other countries in our class?

Mary: Yogesh.

Teacher: Where are you from Yogesh?

Yogesh: India.

Maria: I am from Samoa.

Sophia: I am from kind of Irish.

Isa: I'm from Cook Islands.

Teacher: Thao, where does your family come from?

Thao: Uhm, here...

Teacher: What?

Thao: From here...

Teacher: No, but what about your Mum?

Thao: She is from here.

Teacher: Uhm okay.

Sarah: I'm from here, I was born in Auckland. But Thao is Chinese.

Thao: No.

Sarah: But you speak Chinese.

Thao: But I was born here.

[...]

Carla: Okay, so now, think very carefully, this is a difficult question. I want you to think if people from different countries bring different foods for lunch, ok?

[...]

Teacher: Thao sometimes brings, in fact quite often brings things that are from the Chinese supermarket in Kilbirne, you know all that sort of little biscuits, cupcakes, drinks.

In this case both the students and the teacher continued to classify Thao as Chinese, despite her persistent claims not to be so. In both this and the previous discussion between Katie and Johni, a disagreement over what constitutes ethnicity (place of birth versus behaviours or looks) takes place, yet it is up to the 'white national' to reject or accept the claims of sanctioned ethnicity and national belonging. Despite Thao's claims, the position of power of white(r) children and the teacher result in an overall rejection of her claims. Thus, the dominance of certain ethnic groups is also asserted within children's groups. The statements reveals how, despite discourses of tolerance and egalitarianism, children might continue to reproduce 'white' positions of dominance.

As the discussion signals, while children managed quite a nuanced understanding of ethnic difference, the category of "Chinese" was the most prominent form of classification assigned to those who were alien/weird Other. "Chinese" in these cases was used as a comprehensive category for the significantly different Other and it was mostly applied to children who "looked Asian", particularly based on the colour of their skin, straight silky dark hair,

and eye shape. While it is also clear that children identified some of their school peers as belonging to ethnic categories different from their own, mainly European or Pacific Island, these allowed for an inclusion of claims to be “Kiwi”. However, as it is evident in the case of Thao and the discussion between Kerri and Johni, the category of “Chinese” was often denied claims to such belonging, therefore constituting it as the “negative Other”. Whereas Kiwi is the dominant identity, and as such being Kiwi is a master signifier of acceptance and ethnicity within the white nation.

The differentiation between “Kiwi” children and “Chinese Other” was demonstrated in the discourse of the sandwich, and children’s identification of those who did not bring one as “weird”:

Carla: What about... all of you have sandwiches, is there anyone who brings really weird foods to school?

Jamie: Not really... Some people from China bring weird food, like Mike.

Carla: Yeah, what sorts of food?

Jamie: Like they bring rice, dumplings.

[...]

Carla: So who brings dumplings?

Jamie: Johni.

Laura: Some Chinese people in our class.

Steven: We don’t have any Chinese people.

Laura: Yes, We’ve got Johni!!!!

Second-generation “Asian” migrants were likely to bring containers with rice or noodles in their lunchbox instead of the *de rigueur* sandwich. This could be because some of the parents of these children managed, owned or worked at “Asian” restaurants, a typical sign of second-generation acquisition of economic stability. It could also be related to the well-documented “revival of tradition” (see Harbottle, 2004) of second-generation migrants.<sup>60</sup> Here, aspects of cultural life that are deemed “traditions” or related to the formation of one’s cultural

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60 However, others (see Wilson, 2004) find that it is not until the third generation that the revival of tradition takes place. As I only had information provided by the children regarding their parent’s origins and this was often vague, it was difficult to assess which was the case.

“heritage” are reinvigorated in the land of migration. Such attachment to “tradition” is related to a concern with the “loss of culture” — a response to the adaptation and attempted assimilation of first generation migration. The emphasis placed on such revival can mean that cultural traditions are lived ever more strongly in the antipodes than in the “homeland”. For instance, the parents could have chosen to send rice and noodles for, as these foods are more likely to be part of the family environment, sending a sandwich would seem unfamiliar to the child.

### ***How the Indian chicken sandwich ended up in the lunch-box***

While second-generation migrants promoted their ethnic foods, children of first-generation migrant parents tended to adapt to the sandwich discourse by sending their children with sandwiches, despite the fact that this was not typically a food consumed at home. This issue was further complicated by the teacher’s views in relation to the Other’s consumption practices:

Carla: I was asking Magdalena why she doesn’t bring Somali food to school.

Teacher: I guess the other children will embarrass her. And also, they mostly eat rice and curries, that sort of thing. So you need a fork and a spoon for that, it kind of gets in the way.

The notion that the schoolchildren will embarrass those who brought “ethnic” food was also reiterated by some Somali girls, who explained to me that their parents did not provision food eaten at home because other children would laugh. When I asked them if this was the case, they said that no one had ever laughed at their food. It is thus clear that through multiple discourses, the possibility of bringing foods other than sandwiches to school is discouraged.

The enforcement of the sandwich was also particularly evident in the case of Yogesh. While I never saw him bring a sandwich to school he always told me he had brought one. In exercises where I asked him to draw the contents of his lunchbox Yogesh produced a cheese and lettuce sandwich, despite the fact that

he had a samosa for lunch that day. The sandwich appeared even in cases where the children openly declared a dislike for it, as was the case with the Somali girls who told me they hated their peanut butter and jam sandwiches, but ate them because it was all their parents sent. Similarly, a teacher told me about a Korean child who would never eat his lunch. In an attempt to get him to eat the teacher had called in his mother and encouraged her to put similar food to that which the child ate at home, in this case noodles and rice. The changes in the lunch food meant the kid always ate his lunch, the teacher explained. The positioning and understanding of the sandwich as a form of capital towards national belonging is here evident, where the adoption of the sandwich by (particularly first-generation) migrant groups is pivotal in their self-domestication into national culture.

Perhaps the most telling example of WNF adoption is the “Indian chicken sandwich” of this chapter’s introduction. In this example, the items connoting the “ethnic heritage” of Abdi were “camouflaged” within the cover of white bread, thus making a ‘domesticated’ sandwich. Contrary to how Bourdieu presented the consumption of foods in minority groups (1998: 6), food is not here used to display belonging, but rather is employed covertly within a system that silences diversity to enable the consumption of foods that are enjoyed by children. This could therefore be an example of ‘veiled ethnicity’ (Peter Howland, Personal Communication), white on the outside but Somali in the middle. The sandwich serves here once again as a “token” of identity, further allowing children to “play” with ethnic categorisation:

Carla: What is in your sandwich?

Abdi: Indian chicken, my mum makes it. I’m from India.

Carla: Are there other children from India in the school?

Alofa: Yes, Kallim, Natia and Michelle.

Carla: How do you know that they are Indian?

Alofa: Natia’s house is next to mine.

Carla: And are you Indian Abdi?

Alofa: No, she looks like she is Somalian.

Abdi: Yes I am Somalian.

Carla: How did you know she was Somali Alofa?

Alofa: Because she looks like it.



Thus, contrary to the way in which food and ethnicity have been theorised by scholars (see Camp, 1979; Abrahams & Kalcik, 1978), the sandwich does not represent the participant's single ethnic identity, but several of the identities she can access. The sandwich demonstrates her ethnic differentiation from the other children, while also playing with and conforming to the notions of the Kiwi sandwich.

Yet, just like the shared lunch, this seeming disruption of hegemonic structures takes place only at a superficial level. While the children are bringing food that demonstrates "their" ethnic identity, they do so in ways that significantly conform to the strictures and structures that have been promoted as ideal. They are subjectively seeking to integrate or self-domesticate their Otherness within the 'white' paradigm. This is an effort to make the chicken curry palatable to the White Nation.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter engaged theories of the 'domestication of the other' (Mercon, 2008; Urry, 1995; Van der Veer, 1996) and particularly Hage's (1998, 2003) 'white nation fantasy' to demonstrate that, while processes for the seeming inclusion of ethnic Others are encouraged by the government and schools, the exclusion of ethnic Others at the level of agency and holistic practice remains. This exclusory inclusion was demonstrated through a brief historical overview of multiculturalism in New Zealand, and the tensions with biculturalism. Throughout this section I emphasised that government documents sought to appropriate the concept of 'culture' and claimed the inclusion of different ethnic traditions and beliefs, but that their approach reduced ethnic differences to pure symbolic signifiers that operate at an aesthetic level, what I termed 'accessorised culture'. These processes of aesthetic inclusion but agentic exclusion were also present at school, where small pockets of difference (use of greetings in different languages, Maori lessons, Karakia) were allowed to exist but served to reinforce the dominance of the WNF. This was particularly

exemplified in the shared lunch, where ethnic diversity was celebrated and encouraged, but it was mostly the teacher and white children who seemed to arbitrate, critique and facilitate difference. Interviews with parents revealed a close correlation in lay understandings between multiculturalism and food, which enforced the reduction of ethnicity and 'culture' to token, static, stereotypical and homogenous features. They also demonstrated the compartmentalised spaces in which Others are expected to exist, for when the practices and tokens of Otherness were encountered in mainstream society without any form of differentiation they were received with fear and suspicion.

I identified the views and practices of children regarding the discourses of ethnicity and multiculturalism in ways that demonstrated both their reproduction of a similar ethos, particularly the reduction of ethnicity to cultural tropes, and white children's adoption of the position of arbiter of ethnic differentiation. I also emphasised the creative manner in which children used their partial understandings of ethnic tropes, through physical characteristics and a 'playful' appropriation of ethnicities. Within these discourses the sandwich was highlighted as a cornerstone of Kiwi belonging, against which children were measured. A range of responses to the sandwich were provided by migrant parents. First-generation migrants tended to adopt the sandwich, even though this was not a food the children consumed at home. Conversely, second-generation parents tended to send more "traditional" foods, and as a result were identified by children as ethnic Others, through labelling them "Chinese". The supremacy of the sandwich as a marker of whiteness was seemingly disrupted by some children, who brought sandwiches which were white on the outside, but ethnic in the middle. This final contestation demonstrates the complexity of the process of domestication, where the Other is never completely silenced or subjectified, that there is still agency in the domesticated lunchbox, and yet that this agency should be secured through the vessel of the white bread.

## Conclusion

I have argued that through interconnected fields (government, schools and family) dichotomised discourses of health and nutrition have positioned the sandwich as the iconic item of the Kiwi lunchbox. This exemplifies Hage's (1998) 'white nation fantasy'. As such the production and consumption of lunchbox foods enculturates children into logics of work (time and space appropriateness such as productivity, subservience to hegemonic structures, commitment to work), neo-liberal ideals (such as meritocracy, individualism, competition) and has class and ethnic consequences. I suggested that while these discourses were embedded in pre-existing government and social ideologies about health, the production of the sandwich entails both durable disposition and playful change.

I examined this tension through Bourdieu's 'theories of practice' and his theoretical proposal to recover the 'agent's active role in the rupture with objectivism without succumbing to the limitations of subjectivism' (1977; 1990: 244). I contended that discourses, behaviours, and routines of the school lunchbox are embedded in the logic of fields as well as school and home habitus. At the same time, individuals' agency — in this case particularly children's challenges or partial reproduction of tropes — also entails logics that are particular to children's social worlds and are contextually negotiated. The thesis has therefore contributed to the 'anthropology of childhood' (Mandell, 1984; Robinson, 2000; Turner et al., 1995) by seeking to comprehend children's knowledge on its own terms, as ways of revealing patterns of socialisation, the complexities of cultural understanding and the social and cultural dynamics in which children are active agents. I have however also noted that this particularity needs to be understood as embedded in adults' worlds.

It could be argued that the lunchbox epitomises the process whereby the contradictions inherent to the ideals of capitalism are seemingly resolved and actually displaced to avoid contestation of the social order (Žižek, 2011). In terms of health, the “treat”, while contradicting and in fact reversing understandings of healthy eating, served to re-affirm the neo-liberal ethos of hard work and was presented as a reward for following the rules and achieving highly. Likewise, while the school lunchbox was framed around discourses of equal opportunity and equal accessibility (to healthy foods, economic and cultural capital), school foods were used as forms of distinction by parents (in terms of luxury, exotic foods, eclectic consumption, authenticity) and children (as “specialty” and more visible class differentiation). This tension is resolved by situating difference in terms of individual achievements as well as ethnicity, as opposed to the more contentious issue of social inequality. Yet, as the final chapter demonstrates, the seeming inclusivity of the ethnic Other is contrasted to discourses and behaviours of Othering and exclusion. This contradiction is resolved through the inclusion of the Other in truncated (the Indian sandwich), domestic (consumption of ethnic foods at home), and ‘special’ spaces (the shared lunch) where they can be clearly identified and where their political and social agency might be muted unless it is expressed in ‘white nation’ terms (the sushi).

Each of the chapters addressed a different aspect of identity. Through health discourses I evidenced the neo-liberal subject. The Second Chapter focused on middle-class habitus while the Third reviewed the stereotyped manner in which ethnicity can operate. Studies on food and identity mostly present a single and static correlation between these aspects (for examples see Bettinger-Lopez, 2000; Devine et al., 1999). In contrast I presented a dynamic understanding of difference and similarity. I questioned the assumption that food and identity are permanently linked, or that food is used as a tool for the display of one’s identity. I have demonstrated that children were aware of and could actively ‘tap into’ different class and ethnic identities by consuming foods that were outside of their home habitus, disrupted discourses about health and allergies,

and appropriating Other's foods and language to claim ethnic belonging. Likewise, I contributed to Hage's (1998) theories by demonstrating how the 'white nation fantasy' permeates health, work and class identities.

The discussion should demonstrate the fertility of the largely overlooked field of children and food.<sup>61</sup> As a 'total social phenomena' (Mauss, 2002 [1922]) this approach enabled me to draw links between practices that took place at the micro-level — for example children's consumption of organic products — and broader social aspects, for example the advent of omnivourism and globalisation. Given the limitations of this thesis, aspects such as gender, notions about science and pollution as the basis for allergies and consumption, materiality, and home habitus were only alluded to. These topics present a wide range of opportunities for future studies.

Finally, I would like to give the last word to the children, and share one of their thoughts that beautifully summarises the core argument of my thesis regarding the 'white nation fantasy':

Mark: I would like to go to Congo.

Carla: Oh really... that is nice. What sorts of food do they eat in Congo?

Mark: I don't know. Basically nothing. They are dying of hunger. They are poor. Really poor. But they have cool animals.

Carla: Why are people in the Congo poor?

Mark: I guess... [stops and is pensive] They don't have resources. Oh wait, well they actually do. Maybe... mmm. They don't have the food. Maybe because they don't have things like gold or silver. Maybe that is why. But they have oil...

Grace: No they don't have oil. Dubai's got oil!!!

Mark: Oh I wouldn't like to go to Dubai though. It's too modern. I would rather go... to Italy and eat pizza. Oh no wait, I would like to go to Japan because my favourite food is there, sushi!!

Carla: What about if someone asks you what we eat for lunch in New Zealand?

Mark: Well, we all eat sandwiches of course

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61 For exceptions that demonstrate the effectiveness of this research focus see Allison, 1991; Donner, 2006; Kelly et al., 2010; Nukaga, 2008.

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## Appendix

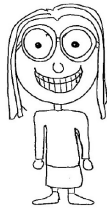
This book was written to thank the children at Newtown, Karori West Normal and Clyde Quay school who welcomed me into their classrooms and helped me research the contents of their lunchboxes. I could have never written my MA thesis without your help and your friendship. This is your story.

One day Carla with the big eyes woke up with a question. You see Carla was an anthropologist. That's a big word, like hippopotamus. But it means someone who studies the world, people in it, and what they think. Of course, you already knew that. Being an anthropologist means asking lots of questions.



3

Anyway, Carla started with a big question. She wanted to know what children ate at school. You see Carla, with the big eyes, also loved to eat. Sometimes her eyes were bigger than her tummy... and she couldn't finish her dinner.



4

But a big question soon creates other questions. What Carla especially wanted to know was what children had in their lunchboxes. Did children eat all their food in their lunchboxes? Or did some of it - or all of it, get thrown in the bin? Did some get taken home? Did children share their food with their friends?



5

The more Carla thought about such issues the more and more excited she got. There are so many interesting questions to ask about lunchboxes. There is so much to learn and to understand. With her big question and thoughts, Carla decided to investigate. She decided to visit three really cool schools in Wellington, and to spend time with children there. She spent lots of time in some schools and only a few days in others. But at all of them, and the children she talked to, were great. They all really helped her with her question.



6

One of the first things that Carla with the big eyes learnt at these schools was that there were all sorts of children, some from places all around the world. There were Maori children, Samoan children, Somali, American and French too. There were English and Scottish and Cook Island children. Some were from Hong Kong and Taiwan, Japan and China.

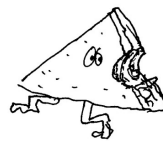
7

There were so many different children from so many different places. The children did lots of things to learn about other cultures. For example, the children at one school could say "Ni hao ma" when the teacher called their name for the roll. Ni hao ma? ?? Carla with the big eyes didn't know that this meant before she visited this school. Other children could sing in different languages. Some children even knew the difference between Cantonese and Mandarin. Yet, when Carla looked into their lunchbox guess what most of them had .....



8

**Sandwiches!** But of course you knew that. Carla with the big beautiful eyes saw some big beautiful sandwiches.



9

There were interesting fat sandwiches, little skinny sandwiches, unusual and even weird sandwiches. She saw sandwiches with pickles and ham, others with honey, There was lettuce and peanut butter and jam - but not always all together. There were some delicious sandwiches with tomato and egg and others with marmite or nut spread. She even saw sandwiches with chips in them and some with curry or Chinese pork.



10

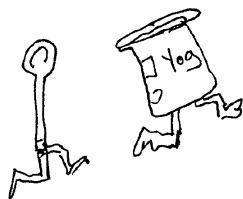
So Carla started to wonder why so many of the children had sandwiches. A few brought rice, or noodles but sandwiches are still the most popular thing in lunchboxes.



Can you help her figure out why sandwiches are so popular?

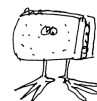
11

At first Carla thought maybe it was because sandwiches and the things to make them are the only foods available in New Zealand shops. But when she went shopping she discovered there were many, many other foods other than sandwiches. But still most of the children had a sandwich for lunch.



12

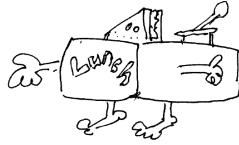
Then, she thought that it could be because the children's Mums only wanted children to eat sandwiches. To find out she talked to one Mum, who told her: "I don't pack a sandwich in my boy's lunch box because that is all I want him to eat. I also pack fruit and yogurt and sometimes cake too". "That is true" Carla thought, she too had seen those other foods in the kid's lunches. So mums were happy for their children to eat other foods.



But still most of the children had sandwiches.

13

At last Carla started to think about what all the children had said to her. Maybe she could find some answers here. "Well", she thought, "there were lots of children who told me about the importance of healthy food". One had said to Carla "You have to bring healthy food to school because you need energetic stuff at school. It is not really healthy to bring lollies. They don't have enough energy for you to run around."



14

Another had told her that "Healthy food gives you energy and it makes you even skinnier". And finally, one said "Children should eat healthy food so that they won't get sick, and have to stay in bed for many many days"



Are all sandwiches healthy food?

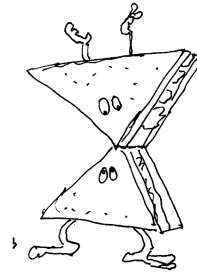
15

Sandwiches certainly gave children the energy and enjoyment they talked about. Yes, so that could be reason. Children, and their mums and teachers all said it was important to have lots of healthy food so that they could run around and pay attention in class. That is why they sent them sandwiches. "Lollies" they said "could make children silly". This was looking more and more like it could be one of the reasons. Sandwiches are healthy and good for you.



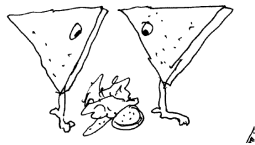
16

But what do you think? Could there be any other good reasons to bring sandwiches in your lunchbox?



17

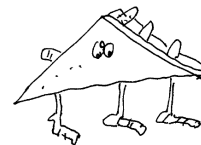
Well, Carla with the big eyes then thought that perhaps children brought sandwiches because sandwiches are easy to eat. Two bits of bread hold the contents together. With sandwiches in their lunchboxes children can eat fast and then go and play and dance as much as they wanted.



Do you think this why you eat sandwiches?

18

The last reason Carla thought why so many children eat sandwiches was that they really enjoyed them. For example, Carla noticed that children sometimes shared food with other children, like their biscuits, or their chippies, (shhhhhhhh don't tell the teacher). But they never swapped their sandwich. They must really, really like their sandwiches Carla thought.



But, is it true? Do you ever share your sandwiches?

19



The best thing about Carla's research was the children she got to meet, and how nice they were to her helping her find out about their lunch foods. She really made good friends. And then she realized that it didn't matter whether she had found out the right answer or not. After all, she is an anthropologist and they are always happy whenever they are asking questions!!

