Moving Beyond Nutrients –

Nurturing Young People's Social Health and

School Connectedness through Food

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Abstract

Social health is emerging as an important component of health in the 21st century. Food plays a central role in social health on a daily basis, and contributes to the overall quality of life. Despite being deeply intertwined with social life; food practices and social health are rarely researched in health promotion. Young people are often a focus in food studies, yet less often is their social health within this realm explored. A comprehensive settings-based health promotion approach, as a promising strategy for addressing future health challenges, embraces an ecological and holistic perspective by acknowledging the interconnectedness between people and their environments; with schools being key sites for promoting young people's health. This thesis integrates these perspectives and frames food practices as important for social health by investigating the ways in which food practices foster school connectedness in young people.

A critical ethnographic methodology was used to explore in depth everyday food practices within a school setting. One year of fieldwork was carried out in an all-girls secondary school in New Zealand, and included participant observation and interviews as key data collection techniques. This approach gave insight into the habitual, everyday food practices within the school, and allowed the observation and attendance of school food events throughout the year, thereby incorporating seasonal variability and celebratory customs. The participants included 16 to18-year-old students and their teachers.

The thesis highlights that food practices play a vital role in social health, and are tacit but important vehicles for young people's social relationships. The findings show that food rituals enable young people to establish, maintain, and strengthen peer relationships in everyday interactions. The findings also suggest that food practices foster young people's school connectedness. Food practices in class- or school-bound structures contribute to school connectedness through enabling people to see their common humanity, creating an

informal environment, encouraging sharing, enabling inclusive participation, demonstrating sacrifice of time and effort, and allowing people to experience diversity. The results show how food practices can influence social health in a single setting, and suggest how the existing health-promoting schools framework can utilise food practices for social health gains. The findings support the value of a whole-school approach to health by highlighting the interconnectedness and synergies that may arise from a holistic approach in settings-based health promotion.

Overall this research suggests that focusing on social health aligns with health promotion goals and values, and indicates that deliberate health promotion activities related to food have the potential to contribute to social health dimensions. This thesis makes practical and theoretical advances in health promotion. Theoretically the thesis provides evidence for the benefits of viewing food practices through a social lens that extends how food is traditionally researched in health promotion, and proposes a way forward for holistic nutrition promotion. Social health, it is argued, forms a valid independent component of health alongside mental and physical health that is worthy of exploring in food studies. The research also contributes to health promotion practice by systematically exploring the potential for settings-based approaches and offering insight into food practices within a key setting for youth health promotion. This thesis provides an important contribution for understanding the mechanisms by which school food practices may contribute to school connectedness as a protective factor for young people's overall health and educational achievement.

Preface

"Food touches everything.

Food is the foundation of every economy.

It is a central pawn in political strategies of

states and households. Food marks social differences,

boundaries, bonds, and contradictions.

Eating is an endlessly evolving enactment of gender, family,

and community relationships."

(Counihan & Van Esterik, 1997, p. 1)

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This thesis is about food and social relationships. It goes beyond thinking of food in terms of nutrients, and considers how food may be used to nurture our social health. My own experiences and interests inspired the topic of this thesis. The two key factors that brought me to this topic were my exposure to the relevant research during my undergraduate studies and my personal passion for sharing food with family and friends.

During my undergraduate studies in health sciences I developed an interest in young people, food, and schools. I became interested in the health-promoting schools concept as part of the healthy settings approach in health promotion, and gravitated towards nutrition interventions due to my personal interest in nutrition. One thing I noticed was a persistent negative tone in the literature, inevitably characterised by a strong voice arguing that young people did not comply with nutrition standards, or bewailing the quality of their diets. While I absolutely agree that a nutritious diet is pivotal, especially for a young person's growing body, I felt dissatisfied with the negative energy surrounding young people and food practices. I felt like there must be a more positive aspect to the story about young people and food.

Another important aspect that contributed to my selection of this topic was my personal passion for cooking and sharing food. To me food is something beautiful: it is something to experiment with, something out of which to create wonderful dishes, and then to share them with the people I love and care for. Since my childhood I have always loved baking, and sharing the finished products with family, classmates, and teachers. I have always loved sitting with friends or family over a meal, sharing stories, and reminiscing over shared memories. Equally I have always found that food enables me to break barriers with people, establish new relationships, and help create a common point of interest. Reflecting on these little joys in my everyday life, I came to realise that precisely the same routines and rituals provide structure and security (or not) to many of our lives, and are used in relationships, in good and bad ways, all over the world.

My personal interest in food as something that enabled me to connect to people, interlinked with my knowledge of how important schools and social relationships are for young people, initiated my thinking on this topic. Because of my strong personal interest in this, I had to remind myself to remain critical of the subject, and not idealise the role food plays in "everybody's" life. Equally, however, I was confident that food played at least some role in everyone's life, and that I could use this knowledge to find evidence, or not, that food practices play a role in young people's social relationships. Once I started reading about young people and research paradigms, I realised that there was an approach underpinning my ideas; a strengths-based positive youth development approach to the health of young people. This research paradigm, combined with my awareness of, and frustration with, the dominant negative voice in research about young people and food, set me on the journey of discovering whether a social food practice perspective may shed more positive light on young people's food practices. This integration of my personal and academic interests into one endeavour represents to date the most fulfilling professional project I have accomplished.

Thesis Aim and Research Questions

The overarching aim of this thesis was to develop an understanding of how food impacts on social health, specifically through exploring how food practices may promote young people's social relationships and school connectedness in a secondary school setting. The specific research questions were:

1. How do young people use food practices to establish, maintain, and strengthen their social relationships?

2. How may food practices promote school connectedness?

3. Are food practices a viable strategy for a whole-school approach to building school connectedness?

Thesis Structure

The thesis is presented in ten chapters. Five chapters are written as journal articles (Chapters 2, 4, 7, 8, and 9); the remaining five bind the thesis to a coherent story. The journal articles are written in the style of the journals to which they were submitted, but have been reformatted to conform with the style of this thesis, and the references from those chapters have been included in the full reference list. Introductions to these chapters link them to the overall thesis narrative.

The first five chapters frame the thesis. Chapter 1 presents an argument for researching social health in health promotion, and illustrates this through a discussion of the role food has for social health. Chapter 2, submitted to *Public Health Ethics* builds on the importance of social health from a nutrition promotion perspective, and argues that a biopsychosocial frame in nutrition promotion would add scope and value to current nutrition promotion endeavours that primarily investigate physical health. Chapter 3 introduces the approach to youth health promotion adopted in this thesis, highlighting the

importance of social relationships for young people's health. Chapter 4 presents a thematic synthesis of young people's social relationships and food practices, published in *Appetite*. In Chapter 5 an ecological, settings-based health-promoting schools approach for promoting school connectedness is introduced, and evidence is included that indicates the value of food for promoting school connectedness. Chapter 6 presents the methodology and methods used in the study.

Chapter 7, submitted and currently under review in *Health Promotion International*, is the first of three results papers, and explores the use of food rituals in young people's everyday school lives. Chapter 8, the second results paper, is in press for *Health Education*, and examines how shared lunches within the school, a phenomenon that emerged from the data, contributed to school connectedness. The third results paper, also in press for *Health Education*, uses an ecological health-promoting schools lens to identify how food practices may act as a strategy for promoting school connectedness, and develops a framework to guide future endeavours in this area. The final chapter, Chapter 10, draws the argument of the thesis together. It summarises key findings and contributions to the literature, reflects on the research methodology, discusses implications for health promotion practice, and suggests areas for future research. Finally the thesis reflects on its findings and how they contribute to a holistic approach to nutrition promotion.

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celebrate the pros and cons of our PhD mummy lives. Thank you also to the great psychology postgraduate community at Massey; it was fantastic to have a support network during this time. And lastly, thank you to my amazing babysitters, Olivia, Maddy, and Kate: you three enabled me to focus on my thesis, knowing that my little girl was in wonderful hands.

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Chapter 1

Making a Case for Social Health

"Those who eat and drink together are

by this very act tied to one another by a bond of

friendship and mutual obligation."

Robertson Smith (1889, p.247)

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This chapter makes an argument for a focus on social health and food practices. To begin, it clarifies the understanding of health. Holistic health models are then discussed to clarify the components inherent in holistic health conceptualisations. Physical, mental, and social health, as the most common dimensions constituting holistic health, are then examined. A point is made that social health has been neglected as an equal partner in holistic health models, and it is argued that a renewed focus on social health may enable health promoters to view health as a more collectivist, rather than individualist, concept. Finally, the chapter examines the integration of social health with food practices, and explores the meaningfulness of food practices for social health. This section makes an argument for the feasibility of a social health focus in nutrition promotion.

What is Health?

According to the World Health Organisation (1986):

> Health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life;
> where they learn, work, play and love. Health is created by caring for oneself and
> others, by being able to take decisions and have control over one's life
> circumstances, and by ensuring that the society one lives in creates conditions that
> allow the attainment of health by all its members. Caring, holism and ecology are
> essential issues in developing strategies for health promotion. (p. 4)

There are many approaches to, and definitions of, health and health promotion. The definition of health adopted in this thesis is close to that pursued in a holistic, ecological, empowerment-based health promotion (Dixey, 2013; J. Green & Tones, 2010; Raeburn & Rootman, 1998). Such definitions state that health is not seen as a collection of individual risk factors, but a way of living. Common to definitions with this value is that health is comprised of physical, mental, and social dimensions, where each component is interconnected and contributes to the overall achievement of health. Wellbeing is a term often used in positive health models because of its connotations of feeling "well", trying to set itself off from a medical health model of physical disease and illness. Also, using the term "wellbeing" can be useful to elicit more holistic concepts of health amongst lay people because *health* is often associated with physical realms (Williams et al., 2007). However, "wellbeing" is often critiqued for its elusiveness and lack of conceptual clarity. Cameron, Mathers, and Parry (2006) argue that health promotion could easily do without the "add-on" of wellbeing because it confuses and overly widens the health concept. Furthermore, a holistic model of health can encompass a positive definition and incorporate dimensions of wellbeing if sufficiently defined. Overall it is not the term that matters, but the clarity of the definition. This thesis will adopt a holistic concept of health and refer to physical, mental, and social health.

Holistic health models

Holistic models view health as more than the sum of its components. A holistic perspective entails that elements function in synergy, where a system is irreducible to its individual parts (Tremblay & Richard, 2014). In practice one cannot always study complex phenomena in sum, and it is indeed legitimate to look at constituent parts, if one remains aware of the fact that the analysis of the parts, together, cannot holistically represent the whole. Seedhouse (2002) argues that health promotion has been divided into rational fields that allow us to make sense of things in an orderly way (e.g., mental health, exercise and nutrition, health education, etc.). However, these fields are artificial, and cannot promote health in a way that enables people to achieve their fullest potential. Seedhouse critiques the division of health promotion and mental health promotion; in a holistic sense the one does not function without the other. In order to enhance the human experience or the quality of life (QOL) through health, physical, mental, and social health must be considered together.

There are various health promotion models that support a holistic view of health. Green and Tones (2010), for instance, propose a working model of health that includes physical, mental, and social health in positive and negative dimensions (Figure 1). Based on Maslow's self-actualisation principles the authors propose that health can be seen as a state of being "all that you can be" (p.13), in which people strive to fulfil their individual health potential and ultimately have to negotiate needs across different dimensions of health. For instance, a person may achieve physical fitness to the detriment of their social health; or a lifestyle characterised by inertia and indulgence may nourish the mental and social dimensions of health, but lead to physical problems. Finding the balance within these health domains is a constant challenge in health promotion, and it is likely an ethical endeavour to decide which health domain to prioritise.
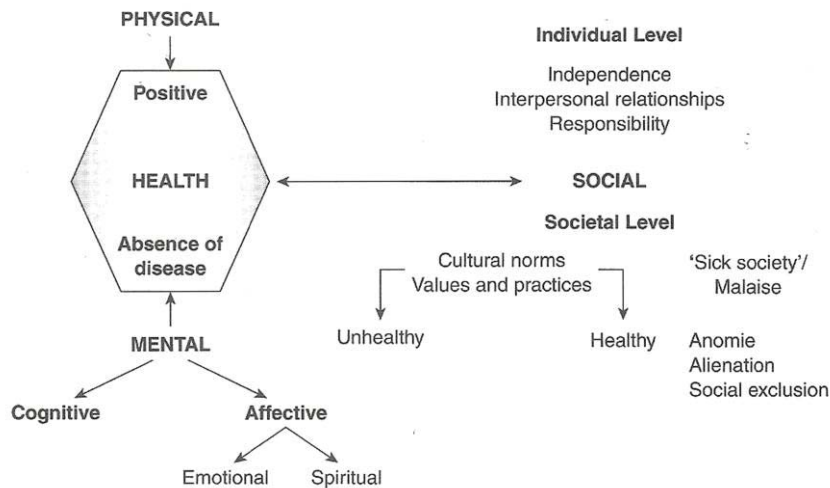
Figure 1. Working model of health (J. Green & Tones, 2010, p. 14).

In another model, Raeburn and Rootman (1998) see health as a component of QOL. The three components "being" (physical, psychological, spiritual), "becoming" (personal growth, leisure, practical), and "belonging" (social, community, ecological) make up nine QOL determinants. Of these, the physical, psychological, and social domains in the "being" and "belonging" components constitute the subcategory "health" (Figure 2). This is a useful compromise, since equating health with a good life in general can make the scope of health promotion too broad and applicable to virtually any area (Seedhouse, 2004). Dixey (2013) further supports a holistic model, and suggests that QOL, happiness, and social relations are the crux for health promotion in the 21st century.
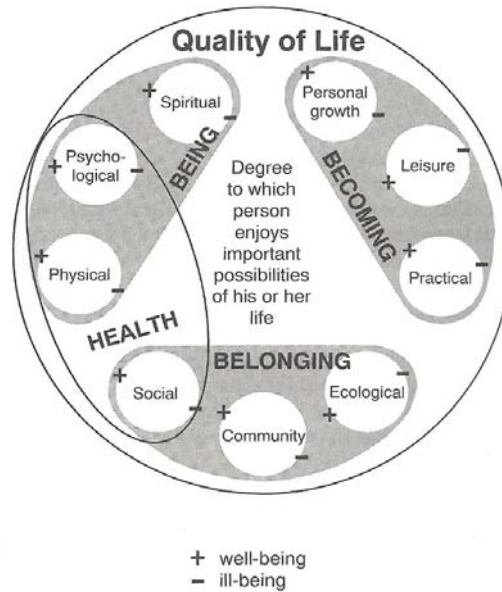
Figure 2. Health as a component of quality of life (Raeburn & Rootman, 1998, p. 59).

Māori health models guiding health promotion in New Zealand support the importance of holistic health. The most widespread models are Te Whare Tapa Whā, Te Wheke, and Ngā Pou Mana (Durie, 1998). Central to these models is the interdependency of health dimensions, in which physical health is not granted superiority but seen as an equal building block of health. The concepts of whānau (family and social health) and whanaungatanga (healthy relationships), which embody the "capacity to belong, to care, and to share" (Durie, 1998, p. 21), underpin the models. Durie posits that collective health and social relationships provide the foundation for any health promotion approach in New Zealand. Health is thus frequently conceptualised as holistic within health promotion, and most often incorporates physical, mental, and social health.

Physical, mental, and social health

Physical, mental, and social health each have defining characteristics. Physical health is the most straightforward dimension, and refers to a person's bodily function, physiological homeostasis, and physical fitness. Mental health can be divided into cognitive and affective (emotional, spiritual) dimensions (J. Green & Tones, 2010). While Green and

Tones acknowledge that most mental health promotion is concerned with the affective side, they see the realisation of intellectual potential as an important component of mental health (in the cognitive domain). Spiritual health is not central to this thesis, but deserves acknowledging, as it is a component in various holistic health models. Raeburn and Rootman (1998) for instance excluded spiritual as a health dimension in their model. On the other hand, however, an argument can be made that a spiritual connection elicits feelings of meaningfulness and coherence that feature strongly in positive health models. Some argue that spiritual health deserves a domain of its own in a holistic health model, as for instance in indigenous models (Agnew et al., 2009; Durie, 1998). This thesis will follow Green and Tones and include spiritual health within the mental health domain.

Social health differs from physical, mental, and spiritual health, as it can be seen as both an individual and collective asset. Green and Tones (2010) see social health at the individual level as constituting independence, interpersonal relationships, and responsibility. While theorists most frequently place social health in its own domain, some argue that an individual's social health is a component of mental health, because they relate the associated emotions to the mental domain (Reis & Gable, 2003). Keyes (1998) contends that social health is more than a determinant of mental health and should be a component in and of itself. Keyes argues for the division of public and private life spheres. He sees the domain of private psychological health as residing within the self (self-acceptance, self-determination, personal coherence), whereas the public life is realised through social health. On this individual level social health refers to the quality of social relationships between people. Keyes' dimensions of social health include social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualisation, and social acceptance. On a collective level, social health involves the health of a community or society, which includes aspects such as high levels of trust, norms of reciprocity, and valuing diversity (Edmondson, 2003). In their model, Green and Tones refer to cultural norms, values, and practices, together with levels

of anomie, alienation, and social exclusion, as determinants of collective social health (see Figure 1).

Overall, the physical, mental, and social dimensions of health may be intellectually defined, but the degree to which each domain is important in people's lives cannot be determined. An orientation towards achieving one's health potential is a useful way of allowing flexibility in this process of prioritising health issues. The Ottawa Charter states that all people should be able to reach their fullest health potential, realise their aspirations, and satisfy their needs (WHO, 1986). If health promotion has as its ultimate goal for people to be "all that they can be" then the definition of health must clarify how this goal links to the physical, mental, and social dimensions. Buchanan (2000) points to the importance of social health for achieving this goal, and writes that the ultimate end of health promotion is the life of integrity, in which people evaluate their aspirations, live closely to the values they hold, and realise their health "through engaging in social practices that cultivate the virtue (or disposition) of mindfulness, self-knowledge and self-possession" (p.104). Thus social practices, particularly those tied to institutions, are important settings in which people can collectively nurture their health and pursue mutual values of respect, solidarity, autonomy, social action, justice, and integrity. Social interaction that is created through these practices enables people to debate and deliberate on values. Buchanan therefore endorses engagement in social life as an essential tool to achieve one's health potential. If the ultimate goal is for people to realise their potential then we cannot prioritise promoting only one aspect of their health, because each dimension and the interaction thereof affects how well people can be all that they can be.

Bringing the social back in

Is human health indeed only an end in itself, or is it actually a means toward a greater goal? … Is the current drive towards physical health as the ultimate goal and

defense against death at any cost really the best and most satisfying way to live?

(Vargiu & Remen, 1979, p. 472).

Determining the end goal of health promotion is an ongoing debate. As Vargiu and Remen argue, physical health must not necessarily be the ultimate goal. This issue is central to health promotion; is health to be seen as a means or an end? That is, are physical, mental, and social health dimensions means for living the good life and being economically and socially productive, or is each dimension a desirable end state in itself? The words in the Ottawa Charter, where health is seen as "a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living" (WHO, 1986, p. 1), suggest the former. Overall quality of life forms the intrinsic, ultimate goal, in which physical, mental, and social health can each be seen as intermediary goals (see Figure 2). An intermediary goal can be distinguished from a means in that it forms a valid end goal to pursue, while contributing to the ultimate goal (quality of life). Alternatively, labelling health as a means to an end would imply that health solely contributes to an overall goal, rather than being important for its own sake. This perspective allows us to view quality of life as the ultimate goal, but still enables health promoters to focus on each health dimension as an independent component of health.

Placing equal value on physical, mental, and social health dimensions in terms of better quality of life then implies that each component must be considered as a determinant of overall health. The importance of social health, including dimensions such as social relationships and community, features frequently in health models, yet rarely is it given a comparable status to physical and mental health. Social health dimensions, whether on an individual or collective level, are most often seen as means for achieving physical and mental health. For instance, positive social relationships encompassing high levels of trust and mutual reciprocity are frequently linked to lower mortality rates and improved health behaviour (Berkman, 1995; Umberson & Montez, 2010). Following a holistic model that sees physical, mental, and social health as equal components, however, requires viewing

social health as an independent dimension. This view of social health is different from that of most health promotion literature because it sees social health as a valid goal, not merely as a vehicle for other health-related outcomes. In such a view social networks and relationships are health promoting in themselves, as well as being a resource for other health and life dimensions (McLeroy, Gottlieb, & Heaney, 2002). Viewing physical, mental, and social health as equal components in an interconnected system implies a belief that changes in one part of the system naturally affect the other parts. For example, social health can influence physical health, but equally, physical health affects social health. Furthermore, social health can be promoted as an entity in its own right, rather than just a vehicle. Quality of life models (e.g., Figure 2), together with theories such as attachment theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and Maslow's hierarchy of needs model (Maslow, 1968), allude to the significance of social health as an independent component on par with physical and mental health.

The "social" aspect is becoming increasingly important for health promotion in the 21st century, and many goals associated with the vision for a healthier society are dependent on good social relationships built on trust and reciprocity (Dixey, 2013). Baum (2008) writes that the key aim of the new public health paradigm is to achieve health for all individuals, communities, societies, and environments; incorporate sustainable development; and work towards equity between different groups. Hence, the demand for healthy, sustainable, and locally self-sustained communities will give rise to the need for more interdependence, community cohesion, altruism, non-materialism, humility, and kinship; all of these can be fostered through positive social relationships (Baum, 2008). Furthermore, strengthening social cohesion and mutual support, for which social relationships are the building blocks, is a strategy suggested to reduce health inequalities (Baum, 2008; M. Whitehead, 2007).

Social health for rebuilding community health

A social health focus could be a useful starting point for moving away from the individualistic connotations associated with holistic health promotion, which do not lie in the spirit of a social model of health. The notion of holistic health has been critiqued for its emphasis on the individual, taking the theory into the opposite direction of where health promotion aspires to be (Pilzer, 2002). This marginalisation of the "social" against the physical and mental domains can be explained through accompanying societal trends. In recent decades health has become increasingly individualised, privatised, and commercialised (Baum & Fisher, 2014; Carlisle & Hanlon, 2008; Pilzer, 2002). Having its theoretical roots in psychology, which tends to focus on individuals rather than populations, the emergence of holistic health or wellbeing has been driven by an emphasis on the individual's health potential (Carlisle & Hanlon, 2008; Huppert, Baylis, & Keverne, 2005). Furthermore, wellbeing is often pursued by the well-off and better-educated in their quest for self-indulgence and social distinction (Bourdieu, 1984; Ransome, 2005). Thus, societal trends and commercial interests have driven the holistic health movement, so that people aim to "be all that they can be" through consuming health goods and engaging in lifestyle practices. This trend is not what was intended in the original Ottawa Charter, which strove for holistic health alongside values such as empowerment and social justice (WHO, 1986). An individualistic focus is to the detriment of social health because the achievement of one's potential is considered fulfilled through a wellness portfolio rather than non-materialistic assets such as healthy social relationships. Although the idea is not part of the popular holistic health movement, it can be argued that nobody—neither the poor who cannot afford expensive wellness practices, nor the rich who can—can be satisfied without social health. Strengthening institutions, communities, and groups through a focus on social relationships could redirect the emphasis placed on the individual. Alster (1989) writes…

. . . . the self, then [in the individualised health model], replaces community. But, if Rieff is correct, if the self can only be realised and satisfied by commitment to communal purpose, what will nurture it once the social institutions which have served that purpose in the past have withered? . . . [t]he individual, shorn of the meaning a community can provide, is seeking fulfilment, not by building new communities and relationships, but by using various resources for personal nourishment, enhancement, and celebration. (p.142–143)

While Alster's view seems somewhat dramatic, there is certainly a point to be made regarding the conceptualisation of social health, and the lost value of social health as a component of health. If health promotion ought to pursue a holistic model that integrates social health in this sense, then greater emphasis should be placed on the communal aspect as an important component of people's health.

This discussion does not imply that social health is non-existent in health promotion. It is in fact widespread; many approaches aim to promote social relationships. The novel concept is the view of social health as an independent component in its own right, as opposed to being a vehicle for physical and mental health. As discussed above, social health is often seen as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, even when it is conceptualised as an equal component alongside physical and mental health. Therefore, the argument is made here that social health can be seen worthy of promoting for its own sake with physical and mental health, offering not only a positive health lens, but also an opportunity to re-emphasise the social in holistic health models.

Food and Social Health

Food practices are socially, culturally, and historically embedded (Beardsworth & Keil, 2013; Lupton, 1996). Food nourishes the physical body, but equally, the social practices associated with food contribute to mental and social health. Food practices are

meaningful for social relationships because they provide simple everyday opportunities to foster practical sharing and caring, reciprocal self-disclosure, and social interaction, allowing emotional closeness to be nurtured (Corr, 2002; DeVault, 1991). Conversely, the absence or denial of such shared practices may create distance or isolation. Given this social dimension of food, nutrition promotion, as a component of health promotion, may be ideally situated to introduce the social dimensions of health as a valid goal alongside mental and physical health. The following paragraphs will draw on relevant literature to further illustrate the feasibility of a social health focus in nutrition promotion.

Food and sociality

Sharing food is common practice in many cultures; it satisfies the need for connecting with others through a sociality that builds and strengthens social ties. "Commensality" is another term used to describe the practice of eating with other people (Fischler, 2011; Mars, 1997; Morrison, 1996). Commensal eating can reveal patterns of social relationships, such as closeness or hierarchy (Sobal & Nelson, 2003). Habitualised shared eating practices help build relationships, which can regulate social integration and nurture common identities (Mennell, Murcott, & Van Otterloo, 1992). Bildtgård (2010) discusses how for the French conviviality, the joy of eating with others, is important. For them, she argues, the rationale of mealtimes is getting together; in fact, the sociality of a French mealtime contributes to a better tasting meal; it is a way of cementing social relationships, and can represent belongingness. Bildtgård describes how sharing food makes most French people more relaxed and improves their enjoyment of company; the shared experience of a good meal can have a bonding effect similar to that of a vacation. Conversely, sharing food with certain people can be a way of excluding others and demarcating boundaries (Seymour, 1983; Valentine, 1999). Either way, the centrality of food to social relationships is apparent.

Food practices are communicative; they are a way of non-verbally mediating

feelings and revealing the intimacy of relationships. For instance, a study by Miller, Rozin and Fiske (1998) showed that partners of women were more jealous when women went out for a meal with an ex-boyfriend than they were when the meet-up involved coffee alone. Sharing food with someone else can be seen as giving something of oneself to the other, also referred to as consubstantiation. Hence consuming food another has touched may indicate an intimate relationship, and is a compelling method of non-verbal communication (Erwin, Burke, & Purves, 2002).

How food is transferred between humans depends highly on the socio-cultural context; however, the transfer of food appears to have significance in varying degrees for all human beings. In India for instance, Appadurai (1981) reports how exchanging food is seen as a homogenising act between two people and represents mutual trust. Overall, different means of sharing food may indicate different relationship types (Miller et al., 1998).

Food and gifting

Gifts are used to establish and strengthen social relationships (Cheal, 1988). Food practices can be used as gifts that help establish, maintain, and strengthen social relationships. Such practices can include food preparation for a shared meal, fixing something to gift, or taking somebody out to a restaurant. The particular appeal of food is that it can be easily integrated into everyday life, and since relationships routinely need maintenance, food is particularly appealing for this purpose (Cheal, 1988). A gift of food can be seen as giving something from oneself and can therefore play a powerful role within relationships (Miller et al., 1998).

Preparing food with and for others can be a pleasurable, communal experience (Daniels, Glorieux, Minnen, & Tienoven, 2012). Food provision has traditionally been located within the female domain; a variety of studies have investigated the symbolism and

use of food provision in the context of women caring for their families (Hocking, Clair, & Bunrayong, 2002; O'Sullivan, Hocking, & Wright-St. Clair, 2008; Sidenvall, Nydahl, & Fjellström, 2000). Food is in this respect oftentimes seen as a gift to significant others and an expression of care; for example, careful and detailed preparation of a meal may be followed by enjoyment of that meal in commensality with others (Sidenvall et al., 2000). Withholding food is also a powerful means for communicating feelings and demonstrating power. For instance, young people living in foster care or residential homes may experience increased contention when negotiating rights and relationships through food practices (Dorrer, McIntosh, Punch, & Emond, 2010; Kohli, Connolly, & Warman, 2010).

Shared meals

The experience of eating together invokes a sense of interdependence between participants. Meals serve different social functions. They delineate social groupings; act as an indicator of relationship characteristics (e.g., closeness, power and status, emotionality, and establishment); serve a symbolic purpose, such as indicating group belongingness; are occasions where roles are performed; and are a means of socialising, particularly significant in the primary socialisation of the child (Seymour, 1983). Sharing meals can also promote connectedness between participants through the fact they entail face-to-face contact, psychological participation, and mutual support (Keller et al., 2010).

Family meals reproduce and create a sense of family (Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991). Mealtimes may create meaningful memories and can generate positive and negative emotions, uniting families or being sources of conflict (Lupton, 1994). Food practices, including meals, fulfil different roles depending on the nature of the involved relationships. For instance, the family meal may be characterised by more authority and control compared to meals in peer groups, which are more likely to occur in an environment of equality, community, and rebellion.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has made an argument for the importance of social health as an independent component of health in a holistic health model; and food practices have been shown to play an important role in the social health dimension. They provide multiple opportunities to bring the community together, and emphasise the importance of social relationships for social health, contributing to a better quality of life. Little health or nutrition promotion literature has looked at the social aspect of food practices through this lens; historically, health promotion literature has merely linked the benefits of social food practices to physical and mental health outcomes (e.g., Boutelle, Eisenberg, Gregory, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2009; Neumark-Sztainer, Larson, Fulkerson, Eisenberg, & Story, 2010). There is thus much potential to explore food and social health to complement research on the existing physical and mental health aspects of food, with the ultimate aim of a holistic health model for nutrition promotion.

It must be noted here that while this thesis will concentrate on social health, the ultimate aim is to work towards a holistic approach to nutrition promotion. The limited scope of a single thesis requires compromises, and in this instance leaves no space to also explore the usefulness of a holistic approach to nutrition promotion. This thesis will concentrate on the underexplored dimension of the interaction of food practices and social health, without dismissing the interdependency of social health with other health dimensions.

Chapter 2

Framing Health

"Most analyses of public health communication

interventions accept their goals as givens.

Because such interventions are social phenomena,

we need to explore why the particular goals were chosen."

(Guttman, 2000, p. 9)

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The first chapter of the thesis made a case for exploring the underemphasised value of social health in health promotion, and illustrated this through examples in nutrition and food studies. The aim of this chapter is to further that argument by critically reflecting on how health is framed in nutrition interventions. It is argued that a frame incorporating social and mental health issues as valid outcomes alongside physical health would add value to nutrition promotion. The chapter is submitted as follows:

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Framing Health: A Biopsychosocial Frame for Nutrition Promotion

Abstract

Nutrition promotion is an important component of health promotion that aims to promote people's physical health, primarily through improving their food intake. It is argued here that the focus on physical health outcomes only partially pursues health as conceptualised within the 'new' health promotion, and fails to acknowledge the importance nutrition can have for mental and social health. Whereas nutrition promotion incorporates social contexts as a means of improving physical health through tailored interventions, we argue that mental and social health have value in and of themselves and, additionally, are potential correlates of nutrition promotion. As such, we propose that nutrition promotion could ideally be framed in a broader understanding of health. In this paper we outline a dominant nutrition promotion frame, and propose an alternative frame for nutrition promotion. We suggest that reframing nutrition intervention outcomes to include mental and social health increases the scope and importance of nutrition promotion.

Keywords: Health promotion, nutrition, holistic health, framing health, biopsychosocial health

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Introduction

A core goal in nutrition promotion is to improve the quality of people's food intake to enhance physical health. This focus on physical health seems straightforward, but is nevertheless informed by particular values. In general any health promotion activity is value-laden and seeks outcomes that are chosen within a particular way of framing health (Buchanan, 2000; Guttman, 2000). Health is a contentious and complex concept (Blaxter, 2010; Green & Tones, 2010) with many alternative conceptualisations. The definition of health adopted frames how problems are understood, what actions are taken and how outcomes are measured. A biomedical disease-oriented health definition, for instance, will focus on reducing certain disease risk factors, whereas a holistic, positive health model will have a broader focus on biopsychosocial dimensions of health. The need to incorporate a broader definition of health is supported in recent literature on health promotion and the 'new' public health (Baum, 2008). In this paper we argue that a holistic definition of health could broaden the measured impacts food practices have on health and provide a more accurate understanding of health outcomes that nutrition promotion has. That is, rather than seeing mental and social health as determinants of physical health, we consider them independent components of health.

Framing health

A frame is a cognitive shortcut that allows us to easily process an issue and endorse a specific conceptualisation of the problem (Goffman, 1974). Frames are socially constructed and gain a taken-for-granted status through repeated exposure to a certain line of argument (Benford & Snow, 2000). The more a frame is promoted, the more legitimate actions within that frame become (McInnes et al., 2012). Selecting a frame defines the issue and sets boundaries around what is conceived to be important. Such boundary judgements cannot be avoided, however, critically reflecting on how these judgements were made in the

first instance and testing their legitimacy, is an important moral endeavour (Midgley, 1992). The frame used to understand and drive actions about a particular health issue also delimits the evidence that informs practice by determining what types of data are collected. Evidence collection takes place within the frame boundaries, and is thus closely linked to the health definition. By critically evaluating the frame, new avenues for evidence in areas beyond the frame boundaries can be explored. For an ethical approach to health promotion, it is essential to critically investigate the health definition underlying health intervention goals within a particular frame (Guttman, 2000). We therefore ask whether a physical health focus in nutrition promotion is the most effective frame for understanding and improving overall health. We suggest no. We propose instead that reframing nutrition interventions to also include mental and social health outcomes would increase the scope and importance of nutrition promotion.

In this paper we will argue that framing health more holistically would allow an explicit focus on broader outcomes rather than seeing mental and social health merely as determinants. We discuss two frames, a dominant physical health frame and an alternate biopsychosocial health frame for nutrition promotion. The two frames are compared in relation to the concept of health, followed by an example that illustrates the value of a biopsychosocial frame. We acknowledge that a focus on physical health is the dominant view concerning nutrition and remains important. The goal of this paper is to move beyond rather than critique the dominant view, arguing that the broader health definition provides a better sense of overall health, and elucidates how the health definition shapes our perspective on interventions.

A Physical Health Frame

In nutrition promotion a physical health frame is concerned with the effects food has on the human body, such as body weight, which shapes the understanding of desired

outcomes. The dominant focus of the research literature (Larson & Story, 2009; Story, Kaphingst, Robinson-O'Brien, & Glanz, 2008) and of programme expenditure (Borys et al., 2012; Ministry of Health, 2004) evidence the primary concern with physical health in nutrition promotion. For instance, the main problems identified in young people's nutrition are undernutrition, iron deficiency, tooth decay, obesity, and other nutrition-related chronic diseases (WHO, 2005). Key outcomes of interest within interventions are often body mass index (BMI), calorie and nutrient intake, and behavioural factors, such as attitudes, beliefs or knowledge about 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' foods (Hewitt & Stephens, 2007; Sluyter, Schaaf, Metcalf, & Scragg, 2010; Utter et al., 2011).

The physical health frame has its origins in a medical model with emphasis placed on individual nutrient intake and physiological disease risk indicators (Hardy, 2001). Alongside the dominance of the medical model emerged the accountability for effectiveness and efficacy in evaluating interventions. The concern with validity of research and the use of the scientific method in health interventions was established as the dominant approach in nutrition promotion and required clearly measurable outcomes, most easily defined in the physical realm (Buchanan, 2004; Liquori, 2001). Buchanan (2004) explains how the emergence of positivism and claims about cause-and-effect relationships for explaining phenomena were pivotal in this development. Without doubt nutrition interventions have improved a range of physical health outcomes since. However, the physical frame delimits the knowledge base relevant to food and health.

A physical health frame recognises mental and social health as determinants of nutrition practices related to physical health (de Silva-Sanigorski et al., 2010; Moore, de Silva-Sanigorski, & Moore, 2013). For example, the 'social model of nutrition promotion' departs from an individualistic, objective approach and moves towards a community-oriented, context-specific model; and aims to be more relevant to people in their everyday lives (Beauman et al., 2005; Schubert, Gallegos, Foley, & Harrison, 2011). Within this

conceptual frame, the social context of participants, such as socioeconomic status and ethnic identity, are considered determinants of nutrition behaviour. The social context is used to consider matters such as access to food and food knowledge and attitudes, but remains to have the ultimate aim of improving physical health through dietary changes. Thus, mental and social health are generally seen as instrumental values contributing to the overall goal of physical health. We argue though that physical, mental, and social health can be seen as equal components, contributing to overall quality of life and fulfilment of people's health potential.

A Biopsychosocial Health Frame

In the 'new' health promotion (Baum, 2008), health is understood as holistic, embracing positive physical, mental, and social health (WHO 1986).. The term 'biopsychosocial' health is used to refer to the interaction between physical, mental, and social health domains. This provides a second and less utilised frame, which positions food practices as also relevant to mental and social health dimensions, rather than just as determinants of nutrition behaviour.

Mental and social health outcomes are important for human functioning, and deserve explicit attention in health promotion. Models (Green & Tones, 2010; Raeburn & Rootman, 1998) and theories (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1968; Ryan & Deci, 2000) applied in health promotion support the importance of people's mental and social health. Social health outcomes such as community cohesion, social relationships, altruism, and humility have been suggested as necessary for health in the 21st century to achieve healthy and locally self-sustained communities (Baum, 2008). Additionally, strengthening social cohesion and mutual support, for which social relationships are the building blocks, is a strategy suggested to reduce health inequalities (Baum, 2008; Whitehead, 2007). Mental health is equally important for a healthy society. For instance, young people's

mental health is increasingly becoming a burden and affecting all socio-economic groups (Patel, Flisher, Hetrick, & McGorry, 2007). Young people are often affected by feeling exhausted, lonely, hopeless, overwhelmed, or anxious to the extent that such feelings impact on their functioning in life (American College Health Association, 2013; Bernard, Stephanou, & Urbach, 2007).

The role of mental and social health in food practices becomes apparent in the literature, in which food practices are seen as one of the most important habitual everyday practices that serve many purposes (Rozin, 1996). The value of food reaches beyond nutrition, as for instance, mealtimes provide daily routines, and meal preparation offers opportunities for people to develop roles and attain skills (Hasselkus, 2002). Additionally, eating with others provides a valuable space for social interaction, negotiating power, solidifying social bonds, and creating a sense of belongingness to a group (Mennell, Murcott, & Van Otterloo, 1992; Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). From this perspective food is seen as a way to non-verbally communicate, and show (or not) affection and care, making it an important mechanism by which people manage relationships (Cronin & McCarthy, 2011; Kaplan, 2000; Sylow & Holm, 2009). Food practices also offer opportunities for young people to integrate into a new culture or group. For instance, eating the same foods or in the same place can serve as internal and external signs to demarcate belongingness (Chitakunye & Maclaran, 2008; Wills, 2005). Though anthropologists have long noted the value of food sharing as a ritualized, symbolic gesture to improve solidarity (Douglas, 1984), this aspect of food practices has received less attention within health promotion research.

Whereas the physical health frame views psychosocial variables as 'determinants' of physical health, the biopsychosocial frame views them as constituting health, and thus as outcomes of health interventions. This is not to minimise the effect of social grouping on physical health, but to also acknowledge the other dimensions of health that interventions affect. In the field of nutrition promotion, the biopsychosocial frame would have us ask not

only how nutrition impacts upon the human body, but also how it impacts upon social relations and mental wellbeing. Similarly, group attitudes towards food consumption would still be considered as a determinant of health, but equally the social practices that result from nutrition promotion would equally be considered health outcomes. Framing nutrition as nourishing biopsychosocial health offers a holistic understanding of food as it relates to health. This frame adds to the benefits that can be gained through the physical health frame.

We have briefly outlined two frames for nutrition promotion, first the predominant focus on nutritional intake for physical health and second, a focus on food practices with impacts on biopsychosocial health. We now compare both frames and illustrate the merits of a broader frame for nutrition promotion.

Nutrition Promotion Interventions

School garden interventions are one area of nutrition promotion that is increasingly incorporating the broader health outcomes of a biopsychosocial frame. For instance, school gardens have been linked to improved school connectedness, positive relationships, student bonding and teamwork, social inclusion, and holistic food and nutrition education (Blair, 2009; Block et al., 2012; Dyment & Bell, 2008). A review of school gardening projects found that gardens can improve social skills, confidence, community spirit, academic achievement and leadership, alongside positively impacting on nutritional attitudes and intake (Robinson-O'Brien, Story, & Heim, 2009). The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program (SAKG) has undergone a recent evaluation that illustrates the value a biopsychosocial frame may add to nutrition promotion.

The SAKG program offers a seed to table experience, where children sow, nurture, harvest, prepare, cook, and share food (Block et al., 2012), and adopts what we would call a biopsychosocial frame. The program evaluation included in-depth exploration of the effect of the program on various food preference and attitude dimensions as they relate to physical

health (Gibbs et al., 2013). There was also a key focus on psychosocial and learning outcomes (Block et al., 2012), such as student connections, engagement, and confidence. This broader focus of evaluation strengthened recognition of the program's effectiveness through showing improvements in diverse areas of social competencies, such as building social connections and skills, promoting teamwork, experiential learning, and improving links with the community. The social benefits were seen as critically important, and deemed the program's "most important outcomes and were a key motivating factor for school principals' ongoing commitment to the program" (Block et al., 2012, p.430). Looking beyond only physical health outcomes, in the case of SAKG program, provides a fuller picture of the value and effectiveness of the program. When programs such as the SAKG straddle sectors like health and education, it particularly makes sense to incorporate a wider range of outcomes.

A biopsychosocial frame could be useful for nutrition interventions in other areas such as the study of food environments, in which the density of food outlets is deemed detrimental to physical health (e.g., Pearce, Blakely, Witten, & Bartie, 2007). In this example, the biopsychosocial lens would add to the physical frame by considering the need for spaces for food sharing and social interaction to account for social and mental health alongside physical health. Similarly, in the area of community cooking programmes, a physical health frame sees nutritional inputs as the overall goal and social aspects as necessary considerations for successful implementation. The biopsychosocial frame acknowledges these aspects, but also looks for healthy social outcomes, such as community resilience or interaction as measurable health outcomes. Together these examples illustrate how a biopsychosocial frame could replace the current frame while not disregarding the value of physical health.

The Merits of a Biopsychosocial Frame

A biopsychosocial frame is less likely than a physical frame to pursue one health domain at the cost of other domains (Powers & Faden, 2006). For instance, it could be asked whether it is ethical to target physical health when it is known that food practices also impact on mental and social health. In a review on ethical objections in obesity interventions (with nutrition interventions being central to this) ten Have, De Beaufort, Teixeira, Mackenbach, and van der Heide (2011) found that interventions addressing obesity and overweight can have harmful side effects in multiple health domains that warrant investigation. Starting with physical health, the authors argue that nutrition interventions may encourage unhealthy dietary practices and eating disorders, and may even discourage overweight people from attempting weight loss. Besides the damage to physical health, they argue, mental and social health may also be harmed by creating uncertainty, fear, and concerns about weight, and endorsing stigmatisation, blaming, and unjust discrimination (ten Have et al., 2011). A third dimension the authors recognise is a threat to the cultural and social food values. Socio-cultural values associated with food, such as food traditions and a sense of community, are often minimised in nutrition interventions and may put people's cultural identity and sense of community at stake. A biopsychosocial frame in nutrition promotion has the potential to incorporate these current 'side effects' as legitimate goals in nutrition interventions, such as including a sense of community or self-esteem as valid health outcomes. In the SAKG program discussed above, cultural factors emerged as key benefits from the evaluation; Block et al. (2012) for instance found that "kitchen classes functioned as a natural environment in which to discuss and incorporate diversity children of all backgrounds" and found that children "enjoyed learning to use them [eating utensils] as well as talking about how other cultures might traditionally eat with their hands" (p.425).

Adopting a biopsychosocial frame also allows more flexibility for contextual variability, a key consideration in health promotion (Bull, Riggs, & Nchogu, 2013).

Recognising how physical and social environments affect biopsychosocial health gives a more complete picture of the achievements and challenges people experience in their lives. Settings-based health promotion, for instance, offers opportunities for nutrition promoters to integrate approaches, with a more participatory and empowering lens, and improving physical, mental, and social health simultaneously. Examples from health-promoting school projects illustrate how physical health outcomes may be achieved alongside mental and social outcomes. For instance, Rowe, Stewart, and Somerset (2010) found that a nutrition education intervention using a holistic approach improved biopsychosocial health, including enhanced relationships between parents, teachers and students and real-life learning experiences that foster educational achievement. Overall, there is emerging evidence on the value of a biopsychosocial lens in nutrition promotion.

Contributing to a New Wave in Public Health

Boundaries placed around issues act to define accepted and marginal knowledge and values (Midgley, 1992). A physical health frame sees physical health as the only outcome of interest in nutrition promotion with mental and social health comprising the marginal elements. Nutrition promotion was established as part of a biomedical agenda with the main goal being physical health improvement (Hardy, 2001). Health-related food research developed within this frame was therefore dominated by medical knowledge (Coveney, 1999; Liquori, 2001). Physical disease prevention then continued as the primary focus, which defined the boundaries of perceived nutrition intervention benefits. Hanlon, Carlisle, Hannah, Reilly, and Lyon (2011) describe the phases of public health improvements using the metaphor of waves. The emergence of a biomedical agenda is linked to their second of five waves, and describes the rise of "scientific rationalism" (p.31), which can be applied to nutrition sciences, arising during a similar time (Liquori, 2001). The origins of the physical health frame can thus be linked to Hanlon et al.'s second wave of public health and respond to society's needs in that particular era. They describe that a

new wave develops once the demands of society can no longer be met by the strategies of the current wave. In their paper they propose that a new fifth wave is needed to meet demands of the 21st century. Hanlon et al. posit that a focus on the objective, subjective and intersubjective is needed; allowing us to "rebalance our mindset: from 'anti' (antibiotics, war on drugs, combating inequalities) to 'pro' (wellbeing, balance, integration)"; and leaning towards "enabling the growth of what nourishes human life and spirit" (Hanlon et al., 2011, pp. 34-35). The biopsychosocial frame could contribute to this 'fifth wave' of public health by also moving away from the mechanistic view of health to enable "the growth of what nourishes human life and spirit, and supporting life's own capacity for healing and health creation" (Hanlon et al., 2011, p. 35).

Conclusion

Nutrition is an important area in health promotion. When referring to 'health' the implicit assumption can be made that one is merely interested in the physical domain, while wellbeing is often used to incorporate notions of mental and social health (Carlisle & Hanlon, 2008). The variability of terminology highlights the value of an explicit definition of health in the early process of thinking about health promotion research and practice. We argue that within this process a critical reflection on one's definition of health is necessary because the definition of health itself frames the focus and outcomes of nutrition promotion. An analysis of the ways health is framed enables us to consider different ways of thinking about nutrition and opens up new avenues for nutrition promotion. Adopting a biopsychosocial frame in nutrition promotion to include mental and social health as separate yet interconnected and equal components of health, alongside physical health, could add value to current approaches. If nutrition promotion can adopt a biopsychosocial lens, recognitions of the meaning of food could go well beyond physical nourishment, to include mental and social attributes such as connectedness, trust, and mutual reciprocity.

We argue that the focus on physical health outcomes only partially realises health as pursued within the 'new' health promotion, and fails to acknowledge the importance nutrition can have for mental and social health. It is important to note that we are not proposing that diet and bodyweight are irrelevant issues in nutrition promotion. However, it is also critical to consider mental and social health, and acknowledge the interdependency of physical, mental, and social health for overall wellbeing. A biopsychosocial frame would broaden the knowledge base relevant to food and health, elevating the experience, practices, and meaning of food in people's everyday lives of people. While different frames are often seen as contentious (Kwan, 2009; McInnes et al., 2012), the current paper suggests that a biopsychosocial frame is commensurate with physical health concerns, whilst simultaneously incorporating mental and social health dimensions.

Chapter 3

Young People's Health

"The challenge for young people's health

and wellbeing is to understand

and value the role that young people

play in society *as young people*."

(Wyn, 2009, p. 127)

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Previous chapters have made an argument for a holistic health promotion, and highlighted the importance of social health as an independent component of health alongside physical and mental health, specifically in relation to nutrition promotion. It was argued that a biopsychosocial frame could broaden the relevant outcomes in nutrition promotion. The aim of this chapter is to continue the argument by making a case for a positive, holistic, and empowerment-based approach to young people's food practices within the discipline of health promotion. Young people, defined as 12–24-year-olds (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002), are receiving increased attention in health promotion globally (Spencer, 2013). Health-related risks associated with drinking, drug use, smoking, sexual activity, obesity, and unhealthy eating commonly feature in policy discourse, international literature, and popular media (AIHW, 2011; WHO, 2011). In New Zealand, issues such as alcohol and drug use and abuse, suicide and self-harm, teenage pregnancy, and obesity are some of the most frequently researched health issues (Ministry of Health, 2002c). Discussion of these issues largely represents a deficit discourse on young people's health; despite the Ministry of Health (2002c) stating that young people should not be seen as "at risk" and "a problem to be solved" but rather as "valued participants in the

community's efforts to create a healthier environment"; it sees "healthy connections" (p.1) as vital for young people's health. This chapter argues for a focus on psychosocial health alongside an assets-based youth development model, to provide a positive, holistic, and strengths-based youth health promotion approach. Within this discussion young people's social relationships with others and connectedness to family, friends, school, and community emerge as core determinants of health.

Young People as "Beings", not "Becomings"

Health promotion has shifted the focus from treating the ill to preventing disease and promoting health. As a consequence, interest in young people's health has grown, because early intervention increases the likelihood of disease prevention. It is thought that habits established early in life carry into adulthood, making young people ideal targets for interventions. However, this emphasis on prevention entails the danger of neglecting young people's present health issues (B. Evans, 2010). This preventative turn in health promotion has framed young people's health as the foundation for future health (Sawyer et al., 2012); from this perspective, young people are seen as "becomings rather than beings" (Burrows, 2009, p. 131).

Different developmental theories have contributed to this understanding of youth. In the 1950s, positivism was at its height in the social sciences, and theorists sought a scientific explanation for the mechanism by which young people become active citizens. Social roles came to be viewed as a confined list of attributes that young people needed to acquire. In this traditional development model, young people are viewed as incompetent, irrational, acultural, asocial, and immature beings who become competent, rational, cultural, social, and mature beings through adult socialising agents (Mackay, 1973). Within the traditional model this process is seen as a universally occurring development, isolated from the environment (Blum, 1998); and young people are seen as incomplete, without agency,

and unable to determine their own needs.

A key critique of the traditional model is the view of young people as incomplete, or "becomings". This is firstly problematic because it discounts young people's lived experience in the present (B. Evans, 2010). For instance, in nutrition promotion it is often argued that young people are at the stage of establishing dietary habits that will stay with them for the rest of their lives, as evidenced in this quote: "Obesity rates among children and adolescents are of particular concern as dietary and exercise patterns established while young typically continue into adulthood and affect lifelong weight and health" (Maubach & Hoek, 2010, p. 90). Burrows and Wright (2004a) refer to this trend as the "catch 'em early discourse" (p.90). While prevention of future diseases is important, it should not justify neglecting promotion of young people's present health. Research in nutrition and mental health provides an example of how a focus on present health concerns is valuable. For instance, there is increasing evidence that a healthy diet can improve cognitive functioning and better mental health in young people's present lives (Bellisle, 2004; Hoyland, Dye, & Lawton, 2009). In a similar vein, incorporating social health as a focus could put more emphasis on young people's present health concerns by acknowledging the importance of social relationships for their health.

The second problem with viewing young people as "becomings" is that it judges them as incompetent, in need of adult guidance. The traditional model assumes that young people need to be protected from market forces, are incapable of making the right decisions for their health, are immature, and cannot foresee the consequences of their actions. However, young people have valid views that need to be acknowledged. Increasing evidence supports this need to incorporate young people's perspectives (Burrows & Wright, 2004b; J. Moore & Harré, 2007; Stevenson, Doherty, Barnett, Muldoon, & Trew, 2007; Zivkovic, Warin, Davies, & Moore, 2010).

A paradigm known as the new sociology of childhood sets itself apart from the

traditional view discussed above and suggests that it is important to see young people as active agents in shaping their own culture, with needs in the present (Corsaro, 2011; James & James, 2004; Mayall, 2002a). For instance, in regard to nutrition, it has been shown that young people often have agency in co-constructing family and school food practices to fit their own present needs (Eldridge & Murcott, 2000; Nukaga, 2008; Travis, Bisogni, & Ranzenhofer, 2010; Valentine, 1999). Such research suggests that while prevention-focused agendas may prescribe food rules, young people nevertheless autonomously create their own food cultures relevant to their present, everyday lives, which are often not consciously lived in respect to their future health. A focus on young people as competent agents with needs in the present does not mean to exclude consideration of the future (Uprichard, 2008); nor should the focus on agency justify an emphasis on individual responsibility, but this perspective does afford young people a say in what concerns them, and what actions ought to be taken (Eckersley, 2011). Such a view is commensurate with the adopted health promotion perspective in that it aims to start with the target population's needs and grant them a voice in health promotion activities; it embraces an empowerment-based approach to young people (Spencer, 2013). Thus the new sociology of childhood supports tenets of empowerment and participation, providing an additional argument for the value of such an approach. The new sociology of childhood and the adopted health promotion approach support the need to focus on young people's present health, grant them agency over health issues important to them, and acknowledge the dynamic interaction with their surrounding environments.

Acknowledging Young People's Voices

Related to the issue of seeing young people as "beings" and active agents is the degree to which they are involved in setting the agenda on the issues deemed important to their health. The implication of seeing young people as incompetent and immature is that research into their health is often adult-driven (Wills, Appleton, Magnusson, & Brooks,

2008). Although research has provided much insight into young people's perspectives on health issues, such as mental health (C. Armstrong, Hill, & Secker, 2000; Johansson, Brunnberg, & Eriksson, 2007), physical activity (Brooks & Magnusson, 2007; D. MacDonald, Rodger, Abbott, Ziviani, & Jones, 2005), nutrition (Harrison & Jackson, 2009; Ioannou, 2009), alcohol (Bogren, 2006; Tutenges & Rod, 2009), and sexual health (Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Hyde, Howlett, Brady, & Drennan, 2005), less attention has been given to young people's views on health more broadly (exceptions include: Aggleton et al., 1998; Mengwasser & Walton, 2013; Spencer, 2008). Awarding young people agency to determine their health issues means that a broader definition of health is needed (Aggleton & Campbell, 2000). Spencer (2013) suggests that:

> the relative lack of attention given to young people's own frames of reference in terms of health is particularly pertinent given the now growing body of evidence that suggests current public health priority areas may not resonate with young people's own understandings of health and their health-related concerns (p.8).

Thus, broadly asking young people what health means to them is an important step in addressing health issues relevant to young people's lives. Researchers asking young people about health have found that young people often associate their health with positive concepts, such as feeling happy and having fun (Mengwasser & Walton, 2013; O'Higgins, Sixsmith, & Gabhainn, 2010; Spencer, 2014). Health meanings also extend into the social domain: being sociable; having friends; being fair, considerate and kind; and helping others is associated with being healthy (Burrows & Wright, 2004b). Sociocultural factors can however influence how "health" is defined. For instance, Woodgate and Leach (2010) asked young people about "health", and found that lifestyle practices such as being physically active or eating healthy emerged as dominant themes. When they rephrased their questions from a general definition of health to a specific application of the term to young people's own life situations, they found that young people considered a range of broader

factors as determining their health, such as the importance of family and friends and the desire for safe, green, and clean environments.

While it is not always realistic to conduct research free of a particular health issue focus, there is potential to consider a holistic definition of health as the starting point for topic-based inquiries to broaden the range of issues canvassed within health research. For instance, food may not necessarily be linked to physical health for young people. Food practices may be part of what Whitehead (2005) refers to as a "health journey", within which young people use (health) practices to express their individualities, experience pleasure, and promote their psychosocial health. Ioannou (2003, 2009) further supports this view by showing how young people ascribe food practices an everyday meaning associated with symbolism, socialisation, and self-image. From young people's point of view, nutrition thus may not necessarily be linked to physical health. Viewing health topics such as nutrition across physical, mental, and social health domains offers a much broader spectrum within which to explore health topics with young people.

While granting young people more agency in their health issues, it is nevertheless important to bear in mind that broader macro-level factors remain out of reach and impact on young people's health. Wyn (2009) identifies that economic (e.g., costs of living), political (e.g., new employment patterns), and socio-cultural (e.g., use of digital media, consumption patterns) changes in recent decades have significantly affected young people's lives, and this transformation is likely to continue steadily. The increasing importance and use of technology has implications for society that cannot yet be fully predicted. Young people's constant exposure to marketing (e.g., through television and the Internet) affects the way they perceive themselves and others. In the political arena, Wyn concludes that education and health systems have failed to adapt to changing technology accordingly, and do not adequately address young people's health. Mizen (2004) discusses a general post-WWII shift from Keynesian to Monetarist policies, which has narrowed down the

responsibility the state takes for young people (e.g., there is less resourcing for education) and increased associated surveillance (e.g., there is more control over school attendance), placing more responsibility overall on young people and their families at a time when many families are resource-poor. Policies affecting young people have largely remained focused on economic development, and been adult-centred (Wyn, 2009). Young people's health is complex and determined by a variety of factors beyond their reach. But in this area, also, it is possible to engage youth and give them a voice in macro-level approaches. Young people can voice their concerns about health policies in a sophisticated manner if granted an opportunity (Ott, Rosenberger, McBride, & Woodcox, 2011). For instance, in a collaborative action inquiry Percy-Smith (2007) engaged young people to visually represent their health issues and problems in a policy-making process that highlighted a gap between professional and young people's understandings of health. Hearing out young people's concerns can therefore inform local to large-scale interventions, including policy-making.

In the previous two sections the importance of young people's present health issues has been emphasised; and the need to incorporate their perspectives identified as a potential strategy in this endeavour. The new sociology of childhood provides a paradigm for such an approach in health promotion research. Going forward this thesis suggests that an open inquiry into what matters to young people in their health is ideally formulated through a positive approach using an assets-based model.

Building on Assets and Strengths

A further problem identified in the discussion above was that preventative health promotion takes a deficit-based approach and views young people's health behaviours as risky and troublesome (Burrows & Wright, 2004a). Wyn (2009) sees this as a socio-cultural discourse that has developed over the last century, which considers youth a time of deviance and risk mitigation. A focus on promoting present health rather than solely

preventing future ill-health provides a promising approach to also explore factors that keep young people healthy. Such an assets- or strengths-based approach (Brooks & Kendall, 2013; Morgan, Davies, & Ziglio, 2010) is supported in the new health promotion by being grounded in a positive and holistic concept of health, allowing a focus on young people's resources and building on what they do well (H. Moore, 1999).

A preventative health promotion approach sources information through epidemiological data and targets behaviour change accordingly. This emphasis on risks seeks to explain the causes for disease and illness, resulting in primarily deficit-based health promotion aimed at reducing risk behaviour (Peterson & Lupton, 1996). For instance, nutrition is typically promoted to reduce obesity, not to improve QOL (Brooks & Kendall, 2013). While in terms of health promotion goals, improving the quality of life may be an implicit assumption, as argued in the previous chapter, the framing of a health issue defines the outcomes valued. Deficit models can furthermore represent groups or communities in a negative light; they may be labelled as a problem cohort for this reason (R. Evans & Pinnock, 2007). Young people suffer this phenomenon in particular, to the degree that youth itself is inherently seen as problematic (Wyn, 2009). It is increasingly recognised that deficit-based models are not sufficient to generate health improvements, and do not adequately address the determinants of health (Morgan & Ziglio, 2007).

Assets-based models can provide a counter balance to deficit approaches in health promotion; in such models, a focus on assets and protective factors gives prominence to the positive (Morgan & Ziglio, 2007). Evidence increasingly suggests that assets-based approaches show greater long-term impacts than deficit-based interventions (Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011). An assets-based model is grounded in concepts such as resilience, social capital, and salutogenesis (Antonovsky, 1996; Kickbusch, 1986; Morgan, 2011). A focus on assets changes the question we ask from "what reduces disease?" to "what factors promote health and lead to a better quality of life?" A health asset can be a

financial, social, environmental, physical, or human resource, and can be defined as "any factor (or resource), which enhances the ability of individuals, groups, communities, populations, social systems and/or institutions to maintain and sustain health and well-being and to help to reduce health inequities" (Morgan & Ziglio, 2007, p. 18). Assets can be categorised as external or internal (Benson et al., 2011), or on individual (positive values), community (social networks), and organisational (environmental resources) levels to differentiate the locus of analysis (Brooks & Kendall, 2013; Morgan & Ziglio, 2007). Importantly, assets are not solely seen as located within the individual but rather as emerging in the transaction between person and environment (Granger, 2002); thus emphasising the importance of social and physical environments. It has been suggested that especially young people may benefit from an assets-based approach due to the negative characterisation society currently gives them (Lindström & Eriksson, 2010). An assets-based approach acknowledges that young people have an inherent need for experimentation and expression of their individuality as important for a positive development (Scriven & Stevenson, 1998). In such a model young people's practices may be viewed as developmentally essential rather than primarily as damaging to their physical health. Deficit-based approaches have the danger of being disempowering (Scriven & Stiddard, 2003), by being paternalistic and emphasising what is going wrong (Hagquist & Starrin, 1997). Conversely, and in line with empowerment health promotion approaches, building on strengths enables young people to develop a positive self-concept, and contributes to a greater sense of control over their own health (D. Whitehead, 2005).

Framing Young People's Health

The previous sections have given a brief overview of why there is a need to address young people's health issues from a different perspective than focusing on deviant health-related behaviour and overemphasising future physical health outcomes. An alternative perspective was identified, which provides the basis for a new story of young people's

health; one that still acknowledges the importance of future health risks, but builds on young people's assets and their current health needs. The following section will outline how incorporating psychosocial health and adopting ideas from a positive youth development model may be useful for a holistic concept of young people's health that focuses on the day-to-day challenges young people face, and allows room for positive stories to emerge.

Psychosocial health is an important component of young people's health. It affects young people's present lives, and has the potential to be promoted from an assets-based perspective. There is no unified definition of psychosocial health, making its use and measurement vast and diverse. In the broadest sense, psychosocial health is "related to one's intrinsic psychological state and one's relationships with other human beings and social institutions" (LeBlanc, Talbot, & Craig, 2005, p. 166). Psychosocial health is related to resilience, which has been defined as the ability to master everyday challenges successfully. Resilient young people have problem-solving skills, a sense of purpose and future, autonomy, and social competence (Benard, 1993). Psychosocial health thus offers areas for potential research associated with young people's assets; it allows health promoters to focus on positive aspects in young people's lives, while acknowledging challenges, and places value on young people's present health. Of course, a focus on physical health would not in itself do the opposite. However, physical health has been historically targeted by preventative health promotion and is thus generally more often associated with interventions targeting prospective health. Furthermore, physical health is a less apparent day-to-day issue for young people on the whole compared to psychosocial health (Hendry & Reid, 2000; O'Higgins et al., 2010). However, the final aim should be to incorporate a holistic perspective and allow room for present and future physical, mental, and social health issues to emerge.

The need to address psychosocial health is further supported by the fact that current trends predict psychosocial health to be a rising burden in the younger generations globally

(Patel et al., 2007). For instance, day-to-day challenges young people face compromise how they feel and cope with life. An Australian study found that while 89% of young people reported feeling happy overall, on average one third said they were lonely, stressed, had problems calming down, or worried too much (M. Bernard et al., 2007). Psychosocial health problems are not confined to lower socio-economic groups or the unengaged. In fact, over-engagement may also be a source of psychosocial distress in today's youth (Leahy et al., 2010). Feeling exhausted, lonely, hopeless, overwhelmed, or anxious to the extent that such feelings impair their functioning in life are often reported by college students (American College Health Association, 2013). Following such arguments Eckersley (2011) supports a greater focus on psychosocial health, moving beyond mortality rates as indicators of young people's health, because they do not take into account "non-fatal, chronic ill-health, and self-reported health and happiness" (p.627). As briefly mentioned above, emerging social changes affect young people's health in multiple ways that may not lead to pathological physical or mental disease, but affect them in everyday life. Eckersley goes on to argue that the emphasis currently placed on consumerism has led to a superficial reorientation from intrinsic to extrinsic values . This shift has contributed to a decreased appreciation of shared cultural practices that "distracts people from what is most important to wellbeing: the quality of their relationships with each other and the world, which, ideally, contribute to a deep and ensuring sense of intrinsic worth and existential certainty" (Eckersley, 2011, p. 633). Incorporating young people's psychosocial health into more health promotion endeavours thus not only supports an assets-based approach that emphasises young people's agency and present needs, but also addresses an emerging health issue in the 21st century.

A useful framework that captures the key components of psychosocial health is the positive youth development model (PYD). This is a strengths-based approach in which young people are seen as a resource (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005; Lerner,

Brentano, Dowling, & Anderson, 2002). The PYD perspective is derived from developmental systems theory, and views youth as developing in a context of reciprocal interactions between people and their environments. It takes into account internal characteristics, surrounding family, peer and, other relationships, and the norms and values within the culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lerner et al., 2002). Hamilton, Hamilton, and Pittman (2004) describe the key tenets of PYD as including a positive focus, an aim for all young people to thrive, an emphasis on healthy relationships and on mastering challenges over time, and engagement of young people as participants. The core goals of a PYD approach include: ensuring a consistent strengths-based youth development; building and maintaining quality relationships; enabling young people to contribute to society; facilitating feelings of connection to others and society; providing genuine opportunities for young people to participate and engage; building knowledge on PYD; and enabling all young people to believe they have agency in the now and for their future trajectory (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002). Positive social relationships and strong connections to social contexts are two core principles in international and national PYD literature, and can be seen as positive assets in their own right as well as mediators for other assets, such as competence and character (Hamilton et al., 2004). Overall, a PYD approach supports a positive, holistic, and empowerment-based health promotion approach to young people's health.

Relationships and Connections

Positive relationships and feelings of connection are important protective assets in young people's lives (Brooks, Magnusson, Spencer, & Morgan, 2012). Lerner (2004) argues that the key to a positive experience of youth and sense of self is relational. It is through relationships that character, compassion, confidence, and competencies are developed. Definitions and conceptualisations of relationships, social bonds, connectedness, or social ties vary considerably (Barber & Schluterman, 2008). Connectedness appears to be

the term used most frequently in the health literature referring to some degree of reciprocal relatedness between an individual and other persons (groups or institutions). Strong relationships are here often seen as a component of a well-connected individual; for instance peer relations and teacher support may be seen as two of nine constructs in school connectedness (Libbey, 2004). One could say, therefore, that positive social relationships with certain groups, such as family or school, comprise one component of being connected to that group (other such components include academic engagement and liking of one's school, often instigated through positive relationships). In this thesis positive social relationships are seen as essential to health and contribute to social connectedness in different domains.

Research into connectedness among young people is primarily carried out in four domains, namely family, school, peers, and community, and looks beyond the mere dyadic relationship between two individuals. Connectedness thus embraces the context of relationships and incorporates social relationships on a more collective level. Chapter 5 will discuss the connectedness literature from a health promotion perspective, whereas this chapter will examine the benefits and importance of young people's dyadic relationships on an individual level, and relate these to the previous discussion on young people's health.

Young people's social relationships

Having positive social relationships and feeling connected to different social contexts is essential for human health and survival (Maslow, 1968). As social beings, we have an innate drive to form social relationships to other human beings. It is difficult to pinpoint what exactly defines a relationship, but any kind of enduring, meaningful social interaction between two individuals may qualify. Relationships range from intimate to distant, and provide a variety of benefits for young people's development. Young people have relationships with different kinds of people; they are bound to time and place, are close or distant, are more or less driven by idealism, are practised constantly in everyday

life, and offer rich insights into young people's lives (Duck, 2007). Social relationships are meaningful and mundane at the same time, providing opportunities and challenges for social inquiry. Most importantly, social relationships are what matters to young people and, on this basis alone, are an essential component of young people's health (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011; Wagner, Cohen, & Brook, 1996).

The human need for affiliation starts at birth, where a strong relationship to the mother is sought, then progressively expanded to further family members (Ainsworth, 1969). With increasing age children form relationships beyond the home; this process increases rapidly once school age is reached. In youth, relationships undergo a significant transformation, in which young people individuate from their parents and establish independent relationships with peers as friends, cliques, crowds, or romantic partners (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Furman, Brown, & Feiring, 1999; Hruschka, 2010).

Managing and maintaining good social relationships is integral to young people's health (Berscheid, 1994; Majors, 2012). In a study, Hendry and Reid (2000) let young people voice their opinions on social relationships and health. They voiced the opinion that building close friendships could be challenging, as it involved the development of trust, and sometimes meant taking the risk of self-disclosure. Young people also faced issues such as being anxious about judgement by others, being teased or bullied, being worried about how to interact when building friendships or managing conflict, feeling lonely, being rejected, making decisions about engaging in certain behaviours with friends for acceptance, being confident enough, and handling eclectic emotions. On the other hand relationships also appear to provide a wealth of resources to young people: through relationships, they learn to negotiate and manage interpersonal skills, have someone to listen to them, acquire knowledge about the world and themselves, find reassurance and moral support, experience joy, gain optimism, develop a positive sense of self, and are more likely to successfully

master subsequent relationships (Hartup, 1993; Hendry & Reid, 2000; Hruschka, 2010; Murray-Harvey, 2010).

Whereas peer relationships can be seen as horizontal, marked by egalitarianism, relationships between young people and adults can be visualised as vertical relationships. It is important for young people to have a combination of vertical and horizontal relationships, as they provide them with different resources (Hartup, 1989). Vertical ties generally consist of relationships to adults with more power, knowledge, and experience. Young people have the most salient and close relationships with their parents or primary caregivers. Although it is clear that children's relationship to their parents changes in youth, parents remain an important resource for emotional comfort during this time, act as a stress buffer, and contribute significantly to young people's health (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Greenberg, Siegel, & Leitch, 1983). Furthermore, contrary to popular belief, parental relationships complement friendships and romantic relations if they are characterised by warmth and closeness (Collins & Laursen, 2006). Young people also benefit from a caring relationship with a non-parental adult, such as a teacher, family member, or coach. Young people may be more inclined to seek help or advice from a non-parental adult and see such a person as a role model (Werner & Smith, 2001). Positive, respectful relationships with teachers or mentors can reduce school dropout and improve academic achievement (Davis & Dupper, 2004; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011).

Building and maintaining relationships

Communication in everyday life is the substance of social relationships (Duck, Rutt, Hoy-Hurst, & Strejc, 1991). It is thus important for researchers to consider opportunities for nourishing existing and establishing new relationships. Routines and rituals, for instance, provide regular opportunities to maintain relationships. Rituals are common in family life, where they are emotionally charged and have a symbolic meaning to family members. Similarly, however, among friendship groups, rituals are enacted and form an important

method of furthering intimacy (Jamieson, 2011). Family rituals have been shown to forge intergenerational bonds, sustain family cohesion, convey family values, mediate a sense of belonging, foster closeness and offer opportunities for interaction, to name a few effects (Fiese, 2006; Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Family rituals have been linked to young people's health, mediated through family cohesion (Crespo, Kielpikowski, Pryor, & Jose, 2011). Young people may use rituals such as organising Christmas events to show agency in family life and actively promote their family identity (Cheal, 1988). Besides special occasions, researchers also ought to pay attention to the mundane, everyday rituals young people participate in. For instance, the everyday family mealtime can contribute to identity, structure, and connectedness in young people's lives, and has been found to be a developmental asset and protective factor for young people (Eisenberg, Olson, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, & Bearinger, 2004; Fulkerson et al., 2006; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010).

Little research has investigated how young people use rituals within different contexts beyond the family, such as in peer groups or school. A youth-centred approach requires acknowledgement that young people use and transform adult cultural practices, including rituals, to shape their own relationships. In young people's peer cultures shared practices are important, as they strengthen relationships and mediate a sense of belongingness (Corsaro, 2011), yet little has been explored in this area. The only existing research was conducted with younger children. Research in early childhood centres has found that the establishment of rituals by early childhood teachers created a sense of community and contributed to more positive relationships between teachers, parents, and children (Maloney, 2000; Scully & Howell, 2008). Katriel (1987) studied children's ritualised sharing practices in Israel and found that children used such exchanges as a "ritualized gesture that functions to express and regulate social relationships within the peer group" (p.307).

Gifting rituals are a common practice in relationships, which young people opt into

with increasing age. Gifting between young people tends to differ from that of adults; young people generally have fewer economic resources, and interpret greater symbolism into gifts. Gifts can solidify commitment in relationships (Cheal, 1988). For instance, Segev, Shoham, and Ruvio (2012) found that a group ritual of gifting helium balloons was an established practice within a certain friendship group that reinforced their identity and mediated an emotional expression towards the gifted person. For young people, consumption practices take on an important role in shaping individual and collective identities. "Consumption" can refer to anything from everyday food consumption to consumption of branded clothing and technology commodities. Rituals within young people's relationships are often intertwined with consumption practices in everyday life (Chitakunye & Maclaran, 2008; Roper & La Niece, 2009).

Overall the existing literature points to the role of rituals in young people's peer relationships, but provides little evidence for the range of existing rituals, with no research offering insights into the mechanisms by which young people create and utilise rituals. As a common everyday activity, food practices could be useful for investigating this phenomenon in more depth.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has made an argument for a positive focus on young people's health. The deficit thinking behind many health behaviour interventions in a preventative health promotion approach has contributed to a negative discourse on young people, and has also had the effect of dismissing the health issues they experience in their present lives. Nutrition promotion, in particular, has focused on preventing future diseases in young people, largely due to the current focus on obesity prevention. This chapter has suggested a framework for understanding young people's day-to-day health issues that does not emphasise the risks and deviance associated with their behaviour, but draws on an assets-

based approach; in particular the positive youth development model. The benefits of incorporating psychosocial health dimensions into young people's health are clear, and strengthen the argument for inquiring into young people's social relationships within health promotion research.

Chapter 4

Food Practices and Social Relationships

"Eating together is a prime emblem of solidarity,

and each day there is a fresh scramble

as kids deliberately choose

where, and with whom, to eat"

(Thorne, 1993, p. 42)

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The previous chapters provide a foundation for inquiring into social health, food practices, and young people. The aim of this fourth chapter is to integrate the topics discussed and explore the literature for findings in this area. The literature in this chapter was reviewed by applying a thematic synthesis approach since at the time of the review there was no literature available that explicitly examined young people's food practices and social relationships. The aim of the review was to explore how young people used food practices to establish, maintain, and strengthen social relationships. The chapter is published as:

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Young people's Food Practices and Social Relationships – A Thematic Synthesis

Abstract

Food practices are embedded in everyday life and social relationships. In youth nutrition promotion little attention is awarded to this centrality of food practices, yet it may play a pivotal role for young people's overall health and wellbeing beyond the calories food provides. Limited research is available explicitly investigating how food practices affect social relationships. The aim of this synthesis was therefore to find out how young people use everyday food practices to build, strengthen, and negotiate their social relationships. Using a thematic synthesis approach, we analysed 26 qualitative studies exploring young people's food practices. Eight themes provided insight into the ways food practices affected social relationships: caring, talking, sharing, integrating, trusting, reciprocating, negotiating, and belonging. The results showed that young people use food actively to foster connections, show their agency, and manage relationships. This synthesis provides insight into the settings of significance for young people where more research could explore the use of food in everyday life as important for their social relationships. A focus on social relationships could broaden the scope of nutrition interventions to promote health in physical *and* psychosocial dimensions. Areas for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Social relationships; young people; food practices; thematic synthesis

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Introduction

Food practices are socially, culturally and historically embedded in everyday life and go beyond nutrient intake (Beardsworth & Keil, 2013; Lupton, 1996). McIntosh (1996) explains that "people eat food, not nutrients. That is, they generally see the substances they ingest through the lens of culture and social relationships" (p.4). Food is said to possess dual power, sustaining the biological body while nourishing social relationships (Corr, 2002). This social nature of food is central in this paper; whether eaten while interacting with family members or offered to a friend, food is seen as a way of communicating and relating to others. Food practices are embedded in daily (e.g. breakfast, lunch) and celebratory (e.g. Christmas, birthdays) rituals, and are the cornerstone of human sociality (DeVault, 1991; Fischler, 2011). Food practices are here defined as any activity in which food is involved, ranging from food preparation, gifting food, sharing meals, or cleaning up, referred to by Symons (1994) as the human food cycle. The focus is on how the integrated daily presence of food offers opportunities for social interaction and acts as a vehicle in managing social relationships.

Young people's nutrition is well researched, and often concludes that dietary intake is not compliant with public health recommendations (Knai, Pomerleau, Lock, & McKee, 2006; Müller et al., 2013; Pearson, Biddle, & Gorely, 2009). There is little room for a positive, more holistic representation of young people and food practices within health-oriented research. A strengths-based approach to young people's health emphasizes that it is important to build on assets and resources, finding meaning in what can foster competence, confidence, character, social connections and caring in young people (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The new sociology of childhood pursues that young people's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right (James & Prout, 1997). Too often young people are perceived as passive participants in social life with little agency in matters concerning them. From this perspective it is important to acknowledge young

people's agency in food practices and their active role in negotiating family practices and routines (Valentine, 1999). Young people can resist and shape consumption practices and exert power this way. Given that food plays such an important role in everyday life there is much scope to consider young people's food practices as significant for their health and wellbeing beyond a focus on their nutrient intake. Additionally, social relationships themselves have been linked to improved physical health (Conklin et al., 2014). In this paper we will review previous literature to examine how young people may use food practices to establish and maintain their social relationships as an asset for holistic health promotion.

Importance of relationships for young people

Having positive social relationships and feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness is a fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1968). Building on Maslow, Ryan and Deci (2000) pursue in their Self Determination Theory that feeling related, autonomous and competent within one's environment is essential for better health and wellbeing. Relationships are important for good psychosocial (Lerner, 2004; Lerner et al., 2005; Maurizi, Grogan-Kaylor, Granillo, & Delva, 2013) and physical (Berkman, 1995; Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010) health. For young people positive relationships appear to be particularly important with most benefits gained in school, family and peer contexts (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Hruschka, 2010; Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998).

Social relationships are built and strengthened through shared practices and experiences; in particular through practical sharing and caring, taking joy in time spent together, reciprocal self-disclosure, talk developing familiarity and privileged knowledge associated with trust, emotional attachment and emotional 'closeness', and expressing affection and love (Jamieson, 2011; Jamieson & Milne, 2012). Such interactional practices

can be found in food practices, warranting a closer examination of young people's food practices and social relationships.

The aim of this review is not to cover the complete literature on food practices and social relationships; rather, it is to synthesize meanings of how young people use food in social relationships to initiate further theorizing and research in this area. The research question guiding the review is: how do young people use everyday food practices to build, strengthen, and negotiate social relationships?

Method

The review presented in this paper follows a protocol used by Thomas and Harden (2008). These authors argue that thematic synthesis provides a tested way to synthesize qualitative research in a transparent manner and achieve higher order thematic categories. The generation of new themes beyond the descriptive content of the articles is a crucial characteristic, and should lead to the creation of a whole greater than its constituent parts. Thomas and Harden (2008) outline three stages in thematic synthesis. These three stages provided the framework for the synthesis presented in this paper. Stage one involved line-by-line coding of the article findings, stage two involved the development of "descriptive themes", and stage three the subsequent generation of "analytical themes" leading to a synthesis of new interpretive accounts.

The study sample "is purposive rather than exhaustive because the purpose is interpretive explanation and not prediction" (Doyle, 2003, p. 326). Therefore, the aim was not exhaustive coverage of the literature, but conceptual saturation by including studies from diverse contexts and disciplines. The initial method for identifying studies was through keyword searches (adolescent* OR teenager* OR young people AND nutrition OR food OR eating AND meaning OR culture OR perspective OR choice OR influences OR identity OR belonging* OR connectedness) on ERIC, psychINFO, medline, CINAHL, and

Academic Search Elite. Subsequently research trails from both articles cited within a study and articles that had cited the study were traced. Original research articles were included if they were published in English, included young people (defined as 10-24 years) as participants, discussed food-related practices, employed a qualitative methodology, and presented a good range of quotes from young people throughout the article. Determining an age cut-off is arbitrary but necessary, as the emphasis within this review was placed on young people and relationships as they gradually become more independent from adults and gain more autonomy, which is most pronounced during this period. A further rationale for including this age range is that young people face many transitions during this period, starting from the transition to secondary school, going to university, and moving out, periods where maintenance of old, and establishment of new relationships are common (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007).

A total of 61 articles were identified in the initial search and included in a preliminary list after being screened for their relevance in the title and abstract. Following a more detailed assessment of the 61 papers, 26 were considered relevant, and these are summarized in Table 1. Papers were excluded if there were no relevant findings for the review topic. For instance, an article by Harrison and Jackson (2009) was excluded because the findings only related to perceptions and meanings of healthy and unhealthy foods, and no relevant data could be found regarding food practices and social relationships. If studies included children (under age 10) exclusively then they were excluded, if the age range covered children and young people then studies were included if the results could be identified by age group. The quality criteria applied to the articles was adopted from Mays and Pope's (2000) criteria for assessing qualitative research.

Identifying qualitative data for reviews can be challenging because data can be more intertwined with discussion (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Following Thomas and Harden's approach we included the results sections of the articles and extracted the

verbatim findings from the studies. The included studies utilised diverse research questions, addressed in various ways to young people's food practices. For instance, in some studies the interview questions directly addressed young people's social relationships and food, whereas in other articles the themes emerged indirectly. As the aim of the review was to gain greater understanding of the whole phenomenon, deliberate or chance elicitations were deemed relevant to how food practices mediate young people's social relationships.

The first step involved inductive coding of data line-by-line according to meaning and content. Any practice that involved food within the results was coded to reflect food-related interpersonal activities. Similar codes were subsequently clustered together, and overlapping codes were merged. A total of 67 codes emerged from the initial stage capturing food practices that occurred in social relationships. The second stage involved searching for similarities and differences in the codes and generation of new codes that grouped together codes from the initial coding. Codes were grouped into multiple codes if the finding related to more than one grouping, for instance practices were divided into familial and peer practices, but also into interaction types such as interacting with others through food. The second stage resulted in a set of related descriptive themes, which were drafted by the first author. Critical discussion of these with the other authors resulted in a final set of 28 themes. The third stage involved the development of analytical themes, which is the most challenging but also most defining stage of qualitative synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008). This was achieved by applying the descriptive themes that had emerged from the former stages to the review question, which further clustered similar descriptive themes into groups. This resulted in eight overarching analytical themes describing how food practices affected young people's social relationships (see Figure3 for example of data coding process). Independent coding by all three authors of all identified quotes according to the final set of themes resulted in 72% concordance.

Because the studies often had a different focus than this review, the quotes were read for findings beyond the interpretation of the article authors. We identified differences, commonalities, and themes to synthesize existing findings into a new conceptual framework of food practices and social connectedness.

| 1) Line-by-line coding | 2) Descriptive themes | 3)Analytical themes |

Having coffee with friends to hang out at a cafe

Staying at the dinner table beyond the time required for eating

Having a turn to tell a story at dinner time

Interacting with significant Others through food
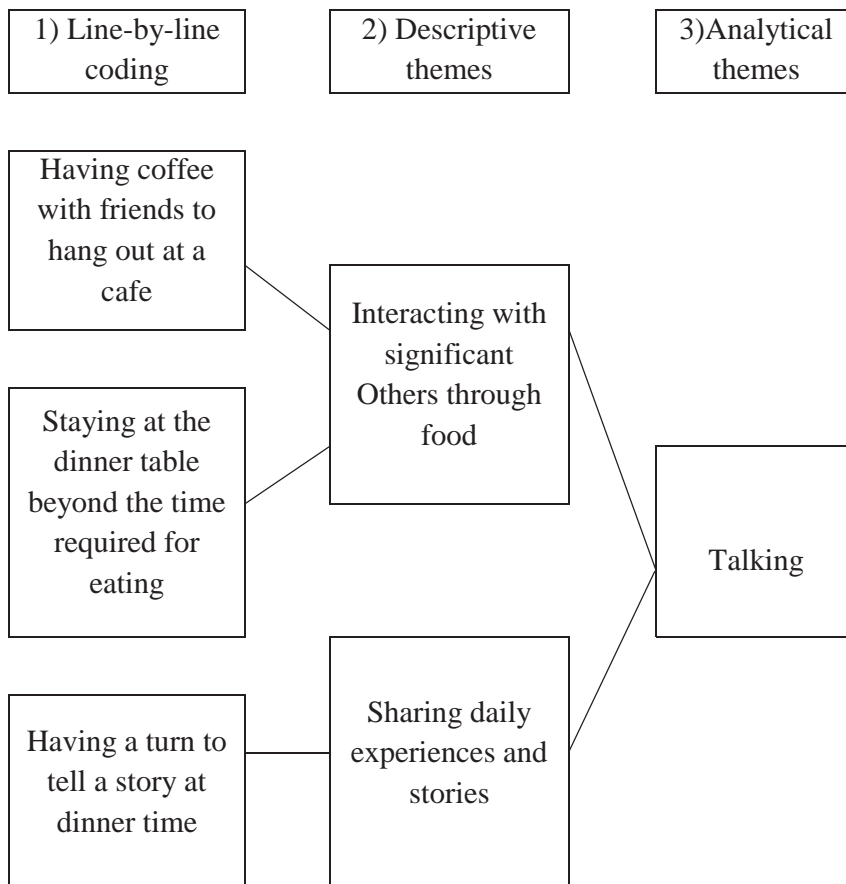
Sharing daily experiences and stories

Talking

Figure 3. Example of data coding and analysis.

Table 1

Summary of Reviewed Articles

	Authors	Aim/Objective	Context	Age	Method
(1)	Absolom & Roberts (2011)	To explore the meanings of social eating as an everyday occupation for young people	England, Caucasian, middle class, mixed gender, living with both parents	12-16	Interviews
(2)	Bassett et al. (2008)	To explore how adolescents and parents negotiate adolescents increasing food choice autonomy	Canada, mixed ethnicity, low-middle class, mixed gender	13-19	Interviews, participant observation
(3)	Bech-Larson et al. (2010)	To explore adolescent perceptions of the potential conventions and dilemmas involved in snacking	Denmark, ethnic Danish, mixed gender	13-15	Focus Groups
(4)	Bugge (2010)	To explore the role of food and eating habits as symbols of social and cultural belonging among youth	Norway, mixed ethnicities and gender, four settings rural to urban	15-16	Interviews, non-participant observation
(5)	Carey et al. (2010)	To explore the high school environment and its contribution to body image concerns	Australia, female, private girls school	14-15	Interviews
(6)	Chitakunye & Maclaran (2008)	To understand the meanings young people give to their food consumption practices in the mealtime interdependencies at home or at school	England, mixed gender	13-17	Interviews, participant observation, visual diaries
(7)	Cronin & McCarthy (2011)	How is food used to create identity and community for gamers during core rituals, and the self-concept dynamics underlying this symbolic consumer behaviour	Ireland, mixed gender, gamer community	18-23	Interviews, participant observation, netnography
(8)	Dorrer et al. (2010)	To show that a reflection on food practices can provide a critical insight into the complexity of the residential home, as well as the use of food as a medium of care	Scotland, mixed gender, residential home	9-18	Interviews, participant observation, focus groups, mealtime recordings
(9)	Hunt et al. (2011)	To consider more explicitly both the context and meaning of food in the lives of these young people, and the relationships between their family relations and eating practices, thereby increasing our understanding of the complexity of intra-familial processes that occur around eating in the home.	USA, female, mixed ethnicities, mainly unemployed or part-time jobs, income from state, family, friends and illegal sources, most attending some type of school, most living in extended family households	15-26	Interviews
(10)	Ioannou (2009)	To investigate in-depth beliefs and experiences relating to the choice of fast and/or healthy foods from a group of young people living in Cyprus	Greece, mixed gender, diverse socioeconomic backgrounds	15-17	Interviews
(11)	Kaplan (2000)	Meaning of food activities (sharing, receiving, cooking) and how they shape perceptions of family and school	England, mixed ethnicities and gender, middle class, school site, from one and two parent households	11-14	Interviews, focus groups
(12)	Kohli et al. (2011)	To develop an understanding of how food can provide a feeling of safety, belonging, and sanctuary	England, mixed gender and ethnicities, asylum seeking young people	12-21	Interviews

Chapter 4 – Thematic synthesis

(13)	McIntosh et al. (2010)	To explore the ways in which surveillance is conducted, managed and experienced within the contexts of three residential care homes	Scotland, mixed gender, residential homes	9-18	Participant observation, conversation recordings, interviews, focus groups
(14)	Neumark et al. (2000)	To increase knowledge about family meal patterns of adolescents	USA, mixed gender and ethnicities, primarily low socioeconomic status	12-16	Focus groups
(15)	Rees et al. (2012)	To explore the significance of food and mealtimes in relation to the transition into foster care	England, mixed gender and ethnicities, stable foster families	9-16	Interviews, audio-diaries
(16)	Roper & La Niece (2009)	To assess the usage and preference for branded food and beverage products and peer/social pressure	England, urban, mixed gender and ethnicities, low socioeconomic status	7-14	Interviews
(17)	Stead et al. (2011)	To explore the meanings and values attached to food choices	England, mixed gender and ethnicities, low to middle socioeconomic status, school setting	13-16	Focus groups
(18)	Sylow & Holm (2009)	To explore ideas of and understanding about food choice, and how activities around food fit into the social interaction that takes place	Denmark, mixed gender, after-school sports facility	10-17	Participant observation, short informal interviews
(19)	Taylor (2011)	To explore youth perceptions of school food, attitudes about overweight and obesity, and gendered food consumption behaviours	USA, mixed gender and ethnicities (high Mexican American), middle class, school setting	14-15	Interviews, focus groups, participant observation
(20)	Thorne (2005)	To uncover how the school lunch time is used to mark, mute, and negotiate social differences	USA, mixed-income, ethnically diverse area	9-11	Participant observation
(21)	Travis et al. (2010)	To gain a conceptual understanding of the food and eating routines of families with a female adolescent athlete	USA, females, middle to upper class, rural to urban contexts, athletes	15-16	Interviews
(22)	Wenzer (2010)	To get a grip of how youth interact with fast food in their local environment	Sweden, mixed gender, public and private schools in urban to rural environments	n/a (secondary)	Participant observation
(23)	Wills (2005)	To examine the social contexts encountered by young people and to investigate how these contexts were interconnected with the everyday experiences of food and eating	England, predominantly female, students enrolled in school of science and health	16-24	Food diary (24h) interviews
(24)	Wills et al. (2005)	To explore young teenagers' dietary worlds, looking at a range of social and cultural influences on food and eating practices within and outside the family	Scotland, mixed gender, low socioeconomic status	13-14	Interviews
(25)	Wills et al. (2008)	To examine how low SES young people perceive everyday food and eating practices within the home	Scotland, mixed gender, low socioeconomic status	13-14	Interviews
(26)	Wills et al. (2009)	To explore middle-class teenagers' relation to food and eating practices, weight, and height	Scotland, mixed gender, middle-class, 3 schools in urban to rural environments	13-15	Interviews

Findings

The findings of the review are organised into the eight analytical themes reflecting qualities of social relationships mediated by food practices, which include: caring, talking, sharing, integrating, trusting, reciprocating, negotiating, and belonging. There is naturally some overlap between the themes, but each one describes in itself a unique aspect in interpersonal relationships justifying a separate theme. The results are comprised of conceptual definitions, data from the descriptive themes, and illustrated by supporting direct quotes extracted from the reviewed articles. The quotes are also provided to support data sourcing in the progression from coding data, merging into descriptive themes, and organisation into analytical themes.

Caring

Food offers everyday opportunities to care about, and for, others. Care means showing concern and empathy, which reoccurred as a theme throughout the analysis. Food preparation proved to be a valuable tool for young people to demonstrate agency in family life, promoting emotional bonding, self-efficacy, and connectedness (1, 9, 11, 12, 18). Young people showed care through preparing meals for their parents and siblings, or as a special present for events like Mother's Day (9, 11).

> "Just last night I was hungry, and my sister, she kept on bugging me to cook some chicken or something like that and I did that for her, cause sometimes she does it for me. And if it's Mother's Day and I don't have any money I might make my mother breakfast in bed or something like that. (David, 12)" (Kaplan, 2000, p. 488)

Food practices can reflect the overall emotional involvement in family life, where young people with greater involvement will quite likely also participate more actively in food practices (6, 11, 21). Food appeared to be sensitive to the situational state of

relationships. For instance, being fed cold leftovers or exclusion from dinner after a fight reflected how food practices were important emotional tools in relationships to communicate care (11, 12, 21, 25). Adults showing interest in young people's food preferences mediated care through showing appreciation for their wishes.

> "On the weekends, like Sundays we'll cook for her. Sundays is like a surprise day. Like we'll just make, just make anything. So, I ask them like, 'What y'all wanna cook for Mommy?' It'll be like, they'll say something like some roast or something. Like roast is, I always burn it, every single time. . ..my mom just makes it so right, and I just, like, 'Can you help me, please. I need help here with this roast.' (Stella)" (Hunt, Fazio, MacKenzie, & Moloney, 2011, p. 399)

On the other hand, when parents do not cook meals young people may perceive a lack of care from their parents. The experience of food practices and the value placed on young people's opinions was one way of delineating a positive from a negative foster family experience (12, 15). For instance, changing festive traditions to accommodate a young person's preferences was a significant action that facilitated bonding in new relationships (12). However, the mere availability of food did not make a place feel like home, it was the emotions and thoughtfulness that went into food provision that were important and made young people feel cared for.

> "Only when my mum makes it is what makes me feel like I'm at home."(Thomas, 12, Interview, Wellton)" (Dorrer et al., 2010, p. 253)

Food practices also offer opportunities for young people to show care in frequent, habitual practices with peers. Ensuring friends have enough money available to participate in buying food, asking whether a friend has a sufficient amount to eat, or has eaten enough for lunch, were practices in friendships where care for others may be mediated by

communicating through food practices (6, 7, 11, 18, 20, 23). Further activities prevalent in young people's practices were buying food for friends, and hosting events, such as gaming parties (7, 18). These practices were emotionally charged activities that strengthened relationships and provided occasions to treat friends with special foods.

Talking

Social interaction – sharing ideas, stories, and thoughts – are central aspects of relationships. Food practices, such as meals and outings, may provide opportunities to talk about concerns and emotions, share experiences, take time out, and make plans (1, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15).

"We sit at the table and we have to spill it all out when we've got a secret. (Nadia, foster child, Family 2)" (A. Rees, Holland, & Pithouse, 2012, p. 106)

Within families, mealtime routines often indicated the closeness of relationships. Some families placed less value on talking to family members, resulting in more dispersed eating patterns, and young people intentionally tried to escape mealtimes to avoid talking to their family (1, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 25, 26).

"Sometimes you just don't want to be by them 'cause they just . . .Well, a lot of time families are like these people that need to ask questions . . . like 'What are doing in school? Well, did anybody say anything about your new shirt or something?' Leave me alone. Stop heckling me. (10th grade boy)" (Neumark-Sztainer, Story, Ackard, Moe, & Perry, 2000, p. 332)

Young people who reported regular family meals often also mentioned how much they looked forward to it every day, as a time to express emotions:

"My mom or dad would be like, 'I'm about to cook dinner tonight, we're having a family talk at dinner.' So like everybody's all whispering and stuff like, 'Oh, yeah, if she tell on me with this, I'm gon' tell on her with that.'. . . So then we at the table talking, everybody going around like, ''OK, Nita, it's your turn.' (Nita)" (Hunt et al., 2011, p. 398)

Food can also mark informal conversations as more significant. Young people were more likely to perceive conversations accompanied by food (e.g. tea and biscuits) as special events (6). Food provided a means for bringing young people together, where they have fun, share ideas, and make plans for future endeavours; and can serve as an anchor to ritualise social gatherings, such as after leisure activities in sports centres (1, 6, 7, 15, 18, 22). Such practices initiated social interaction in groups, which may go well beyond the time required for eating:

"I suppose the food brings everyone together but once you've eaten it doesn't matter so much. (Kate, 13)" (Absolom & Roberts, 2011, p. 343)

Food consumption structured social gatherings to the extent that food serves as an entry ticket to affiliate with peers at the table, and acted as a medium in establishing and maintaining friendship groups (4, 16, 18, 20). 'Hanging out' is a significant activity for young people and has a strong sociality factor. While young people certainly ate food to nourish themselves, their eating out practices were primarily driven by the desire for sociality and social interaction. Wenzer (2010) described the concept of fika in Sweden, which means consuming food in a certain place while talking and spending time with friends (22). Fika thus describes the whole practice, and shows that practices, such as buying coffee, are less concerned with the actual coffee but with the desire to be together in a pleasant space.

Sharing

Sharing resources and experiences strengthens social bonds. Food practices are activities that involve material to be exchanged and shared. In many cultures accepting and sharing food from each other is a sign of friendship (Lupton, 1995). Sharing the task of food preparation and/or consuming a meal together also strengthened relationships. Young people can hence solidify their relationships through sharing food and associated experiences.

Getting out some snacks and sharing them as a family was positive for relationships and enhanced the 'fun' factor of occasions, because it "helps jazz up the mood a little" (Bech-Larsen, Jensen, & Pedersen, 2010, p. 258). In diverse family structures food sharing can illuminate the dynamic relationships between young people and their (step-) parents. Sharing a meal with the new family, for instance with a father's new wife and children, may indicated acceptance of them as new family members (11, 14, 25). In such a case pasta did not just mean a tasty meal, but cooked and consumed in this context, it meant acceptance of the situation.

Sharing a meal at a friend's house strengthened ties with a friend as well as made young people realise that mealtimes run similarly in other families compared to their own:

"My parents are always telling me off and it's like nobody else's parents are like mine and then you go round to someone's house and you find actually they do, and so I think that way you can bond better with your friends. (Amy,13)" (Absolom & Roberts, 2011, p. 342).

Sharing food with friends was also used as a dieting strategy because less of the food had to be eaten (5). The 'non-sharing' of food also strengthened girls' relationships, where dieting became a group activity. In this case, having lunch together, but not eating at

all helped girls exhibit this behaviour:

> "Especially like the group of girls, like in our group, we'll go yeah, I'm . . . doing a
> diet do you wanna diet with me, like yeah okay we'll diet together. (Emily)" (R.
> Carey, Donaghue, & Broderick, 2011, p. 7)

Young people's rituals, such as gaming nights, were also often used as special events to share food with friends; for instance displaying food collectively on one table. Food sharing could be seen as a social mechanism to create connections with others, where shared pleasure and indulgence established and reinforced social ties.

> "Firing up the Wii or the Playstation and dumping all this stuff (food) on the floor
> in front of us and then it turns into 'Okay I'm going to kill you, but not yet – I need
> that chocolate!' (laughs) And the rest of the night would be kind of an orgy of
> eating and interactivity I guess! (Siofra, 20)" (Cronin & McCarthy, 2011, p. 730)

Sharing food with friends at lunchtime was an important time for young people to strengthen their relationships (4–6, 11, 16, 17, 19, 20). The sharing of food may possibly foster friendships and mitigate class differences through providing a point of commonality. Sharing mealtimes among friends appeared to happen in two ways: sharing the actual food and/or sharing the sociality while eating one's own food. For both scenarios the social groupings were initiated through food consumption. Yet the food may take on an active or passive role in the social grouping; in some it was more important that everyone ate the same food, while in others the food was less important and the act of eating merely occurred as a reason to sit down together.

> "I've chosen French fries because they're good and they're cheap. A hotdog doesn't
> fill you up, and French fries taste better. It's nicer too, because you can share them

with your friends (15 year old handball boy)." (Sylow & Holm, 2009, p. 225)

Reciprocating

Reciprocity is the act of exchanging goods and acts with others without any specified economic value, in the belief that one will receive something back for one's effort. While 'reciprocating' can be seen as closely related to 'sharing', the former theme is particularly concerned with the conscious effort made to gift someone food or a food-related task (e.g. cooking dinner), whereas 'sharing' emerges in everyday practices and refers to habitual sharing of meals and food.

Making or buying food appeared to be a readily accessible and affordable gift for young people to reciprocate to others, such as parents, peers or teachers (9, 11, 15, 15, 20). Food could be a standalone gift, but also be integrated into an experience through preparing and sharing a meal for friends or family. Among friends, food practices were easy ways to reciprocate because making or buying food for friends was an inexpensive way to give something back. Young people also used food practices as a way to 'repay' their parents and siblings. Girls in particular felt that through helping their parents out with cooking they could give something back.

> "My mom does a lot for everybody. My family they're really nice. So I make things that are simple, that I know they'll like. Like tuna. (Angela, 14)" (Kaplan, 2000, p. 489)

However, providing food for the family was not always a voluntary positive act of giving something back, and could also turn into a chore if young people were required to do it constantly. In a residential home context, giving young people responsibilities in the provision of meals allowed them to give back what they received from caregivers (15). Reciprocity can also be expressed through adapting food preferences to cater to others'

needs, for example accepting parents' changed dietary needs in return for food provision, or conversely running off with a meal without acknowledging it (2, 6).

Trusting

Trust in a relationship means reliance on, and confidence in, somebody important. In a number of articles food practices were used to mediate trust in a relationship, where relying on someone for food and in turn feeling responsible to make sure food is provided promoted trust in a relationship (2, 8, 9, 11–14, 15, 25). Furthermore, eating the food someone provides showed trust in the provider that it is palatable. Allowing self-sufficient food preparation and intake made young people feel trusted by their parents. If parents control food practices it was perceived as a sign of distrust, whereas granting more trust resulted in feelings of empowerment for young people (2, 12).

> "[M]y mum disnae trust me. Even when I make a cup o' tea, it's like 'watch that
>
> water!'"(Jodie) (Wills, Backett-Milburn, et al., 2008, section 6.4)

When young people became part of a new family (e.g. foster family, re-marriage of a parent), trying out new foods can reflect the level of trust in the developing relationship. Food was a source of negative past experiences for foster children, for instance through food insecurity or lack of nurturance in providing food. Therefore, young people took a long time to build trust; but once reliability was established, food was a powerful source to make them trust in others again (12, 15).

> "At the beginning he was very, very quiet, and I knew that was because he didn't
>
> know who to trust and who not to trust. Then one morning I was cooking paratha.
>
> And he quickly came out of the bathroom. Came quickly downstairs and said, the
>
> smell, the smell. . . My mum used to cook paratha and the smell used to come just
>
> like that. And I said, would you like some? And he said, oh yes. . . Stood there

watching me make the paratha, and said, that reminds me of my mum. And I could see tears coming in his eyes as he watched me. So I gave him tea and a paratha and said, tell me about it. Tell me what your mum used to do. And then he began to talk. About his mum, about home. And later about his journey. And he began to trust me. Then he could talk about all the bad things. The things that had happened on his journey here that had been kept locked inside. (Carer)" (Kohli et al., 2010, p. 242)

Involvement in family meal routines, including shopping, meal preparation, planning, and consumption also made young people more invested in food practices, and this participation generated greater trust in relationships (8, 9, 11–14, 15, 25).

Negotiating

Negotiating status, activities, and roles is a natural and essential process in relationship establishment and maintenance; and may be used to demonstrate independence and agency. Negotiation occurs through co-constructed interactions with significant others. Shared daily activities, such as food practices naturally occurred as instances where negotiation was required, and young people used these as opportunities to negotiate roles in their relationships (2, 6, 8, 9, 10–15, 20, 21, 25). For young people the desire for independence needed to be balanced with the desire for attachment to home. Food practices were utilised in various ways to negotiate this interplay. For instance, sharing a family meal was the anchor for security in everyday life, but competed with the desire to eat out with friends, for which new rules and norms were negotiated (1, 18, 23). Negotiation through food practices was often tacit and non-verbal, where actions concerning food practices mediated the status in a relationship.

"I don't make the decisions. My mom just usually buys the stuff. We usually have pretty well-rounded meals. I can cook some foods. My mom cooks most of the time,

like almost every night. ... I always wanted to cook cause I thought it would be fun. But being able to, you know, I couldn't touch the knives. There were rules. (Reed)" (Travis et al., 2010, p. 113)

How food is used in negotiations depended on socio-cultural, individual, and situational factors. In some families strongly controlled food practices where less negotiation takes place were the norm. But how much these norms were debated also depended on the individual and situational context. For instance, if friends were present young people felt more inclined to demonstrate their independence through opposing normal family food practices. The situational variability therefore depended on parents, environment, and the young person where food practices were the result of ongoing negotiations.

Inherent in the negotiation of rules and norms in most relationships was the distribution of power. In relationships with a strong power imbalance food can be misused as a tool for control. For instance, limiting the food available for consumption may elicit feelings of powerlessness and inferiority, at the extreme making young people question their own worth. Negotiating roles when new to a country and joining a family occurred through food practices. Young people did not feel capable of negotiating a respected role if they were denied the opportunity to eat with the rest of the family or to cook foods from their home country.

"In the foster carer's home it was like in prison. (…) I wasn't full and I didn't have enough food, has anyone else said they didn't have enough food? It is not your home and you just have to wait for that piece of chicken and for the person who just come it make you more sad. I used to cry a lot and not come out of my room. (Ayesha, from Afghanistan)" (Kohli et al., 2010, p. 239)

The context in which power is negotiated can vary significantly for young people, and food practices as tools for negotiating roles may then be of more importance for some than for others. In residential homes where 'home, 'workplace', and 'institution' are in one space the power dynamics are different. The whole environment is more controlled and caretakers fulfil multiple roles at once. The importance of personal food practices for young people in a more controlled environment and their use in negotiating roles illustrates how food practices were routinely utilised to negotiate rules, roles, and responsibilities.

> "Nothing about the food itself, it's just you can't eat it through in the living room and there's obviously certain times when they close the kitchen. I think it would be better if the kitchen was just open for whatever time." (Alex, 15, Interview, Highton) (I. McIntosh, Punch, Dorrer, & Emond, 2010, p. 297)

Power relations in families may also determine food practices. Mealtime routines can be a point of negotiation. For instance, the practice of eating with parents in front of the television mediated more equal relationships, where young people felt less interrogated and controlled by their parents. Feeling less controlled could also explain why grandparents had a less constrained relationship with their grandchildren concerning food. Young people had to negotiate between different contexts. For instance while some wanted to participate in food practices with friends in the afternoon, they also felt compelled to remain hungry for their family dinner.

The negotiation of independence was played out through food practices. Eating with friends was seen as fun and less controlled. Escaping a supervised school environment to eat lunch together in a 'secret' place showed how students used their agency. Through determining their food practices they felt in control and comfortable being in a space where they could be together and not be told what to do.

"I also do not like the fact that we are not allowed to eat outside. They always try to get you to eat inside. But I think I've had enough of it, it's just silly to be limited where you eating, and they always around when you eating (laughter). (Kelly, 17)" (Chitakunye & Maclaran, 2008, p. 222)

Going out to eat with friends also demonstrated independence and was associated with freedom and unrestricted eating rules, such as eating with an open mouth or shouting out loud. Such practices made young people feel autonomous through being able to choose a place to eat, and socialise with their friends whilst eating.

"If someone goes to Kentucky on Tuesdays he feels free and independent. (Theodoros, 15)" (Ioannou, 2009, p. 189)

The consumption of fast food was further appealing to young people because it resists the adult idea of a good diet, and hence allowed them to negotiate their autonomy (1, 2, 4, 10, 23, 24–27).

Integrating

Integration into a new place requires assimilating and becoming part of a new environment. Forming relationships with new groups of people when one has moved into a new town or country is not easy, especially if the new culture differs. Food practices can vary significantly, different foods may be eaten, school food practices may not be the same, or one's familiar family food practices change considerably. Young people used food practices to assimilate or distinguish themselves from others, which facilitated or hindered integration into new groups. For instance, adapting to the local culture's food practices was a way to show acceptance and showed the desire to be taken up by the community.

Food practices were valuable vehicles for foster families to bond with young people joining their families (12, 15). Food was also a first sign of hospitality in a new country,

where for instance the amount of care put into a first meal had the power to communicate a feeling of safety.

> "Food is about compassion. I left home and I left my parents to come here. Food is the thing that makes me feel security and like there is more love for me. I feel secure and protected here. I feel like when I am there I am at my fathers home and she (the foster carer) gives me love the way that my mother used to give me love and I feel good in this love. (Grace, from the Democratic Republic of Congo)" (Kohli et al., 2010, p. 239)

Trying new foods and eating the country's food was a sign of integration (4, 11, 12). Young people also felt more integrated and part of a new family if the family was open to their preferences and made them an equal member with a say in food practices (11, 12, 15, 25).

Integration into new peer groups also occurred through food practices. Being part of a group determined food practices, and reflected whether one was fully integrated into the group or not. Young people may adapt their food practices in order to integrate into a new group, for instance through going out for lunches or bringing different food to school (4, 11, 16, 17, 19, 20, 24). Offering food to new friends also facilitated integration into an already existing group.

> "I've never felt pressured but they've made me think that I should try that out. (Ads, 14)" (Roper & La Niece, 2009, p. 91)

Belonging

Food practices can impact on social relationships through creating a greater sense of belonging. Thus, food can be seen as a vehicle to promote belongingness and make young

people feel more connected to significant others. 'Belonging' is related to the previous theme 'integrating' in that it is concerned with being part of a group. However, this theme is also distinct because while 'integrating' focuses on the process of joining a group (e.g. where young people have geographically and culturally relocated and need to integrate into pre-existing groups) 'belonging' is concerned with the maintenance and strengthening of bonds in existing groups.

Young people valued the food they consumed for the social benefits it brought them through affiliating with their peers while eating the same foods (4–6, 10, 16–18). Shared food practices served as internal and external signs to demarcate one's group belongingness (4, 7, 16, 17). Young people adapted their food practices according to the norms of different friendship groups they belonged to, which indicated the centrality of food practices for group belongingness (5, 15, 20, 21).

Although not always harmonious, eating together as a family mediated a sense of home and belonging (1, 2, 6, 8, 9). Both routine daily meals and larger festive family gatherings were also associated with food and belonging together as a family.

> "When all your family is home then you have something to eat, that makes your actual home. And at Christmas. (Callum, 10, Interview, Wellton)" (Dorrer et al., 2010, p. 253)

For new young refugees, being incorporated into food shopping, preparation and consumption mediated belongingness to the new country and family, or contrarily mediated strong feelings of rejection and displacement (12). Also, eating with new family members, for instance with a parent's new partner and children, mediated belongingness (11, 14). Food by itself was not seen as something that made it feel like home. A sense of togetherness was created through the relationships and feelings associated with food (1, 6, 9, 12). Eating together around a table in residential homes makes "you just feel like a big

family" (Ryan, 15; I. McIntosh et al., 2010, p. 296).

Eating food with friends in a special familiar place was comforting and strengthened belongingness to a group (1, 6, 18, 21). In social gaming groups for instance food acted as a social connector and mechanism to establish a union and reinforce social ties (7). The desire to belong overrode personal food preferences, for instance craving oranges, or preferring a home-made lunch, was exchanged for pizza and French fries if this is what was consumed in the group to which one belonged (19).

> "People would buy drinks so they can fit in and people won't say anything to them in school. (Kat, 14)" (Roper & La Niece, 2009, p. 91)

Different diets, style, and aesthetics served as points of distinction and created a sense of belongingness in groups. For instance, eating fast food in public spaces with other young people mediated popularity, and was interconnected with belongingness to a youthful lifestyle (10).

Food practices reflected group dynamics and individual positions within groups, for instance stronger 'leaders' in groups had more confidence to diverge and eat different foods (4, 16, 17). Certain food brands also had different statuses within schools and served as a source of distinction between the students (16, 17). Belongingness to a group determined food practices. For instance, changing friendship groups changed lunchtime practices.

Belonging to a certain ethnic group also distinguished food practices. For instance, in a study in an ethnically diverse area black girls distinguished themselves and members of their culture as being better cooks, and having more flavoursome food. They showed pride for their food culture, and commented that white mothers did not have the appropriate skills to cook good meals:

"[My] dinner, it's off the Richter scale. Not like when I go to dinner with [my white friends], I need to bring seasonings with me. Cause I do not know why…the mash potato is so watery. I don't know why they do not know how to season food. They use that Swanson's broth. (Amanda, 14)" (Kaplan, 2000, p. 496)

Discussion

The review aimed to answer the question of whether young people use everyday food practices to build, strengthen, and negotiate social relationships through synthesising findings from multidisciplinary, geographically and ethnically diverse studies on young people's food practices and social relationships. While aspects of these findings may be found within the existing literature, this review generates new themes based on 26 individual studies, adding a stronger voice to the literature in this area. This synthesis goes beyond summary to contribute new ideas on the meaning of food practices in everyday life, which are particularly relevant for young people and their social relationships.

Overall, the analysis showed that food practices play complex roles in young people's social lives and impact on different aspects of their social relationships. Caring, talking, sharing, integrating, trusting, reciprocating, negotiating, and belonging can be described as characteristics of relationships that are affected through food practices. These eight themes do not have clear boundaries, and overlap in their meaning. For instance, through sharing food some integration may occur, or reciprocating with food may mediate care. Nevertheless each theme represents independently an important aspect of positive social relationships.

The development of young people's meaningful social relationships can be delicate and involve feelings of insecurity and self-consciousness. As evident in the results, food can act as a tacit and comfortable medium through which young people can express their feelings towards others. Actions such as sharing food or an invitation for dinner, may be

much more comfortable avenues for young people to show their inclination towards others than verbally articulating this. Food as a gift to express emotions in relationships was apparent across themes, whether it was used as a way to integrate into a new peer group or family through expressing interest in, and care for others, or as a way of establishing trust. This use of food can be found in the literature, where the gift of food can be seen as giving something from oneself, acting as a powerful practice within relationships (Miller et al., 1998). The expression of care through food, such as preparing meals and sharing them with others, promotes bonding between individuals (Sidenvall et al., 2000). Sharing meals can promote connectedness between participants through their face-to-face nature, psychological participation, and mutual support (Keller et al., 2010). The importance of sharing food with important others was highlighted in many of the included studies (1, 4-15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24-26). Greater emphasis on the relational aspects in young people's food sharing could provide more insight into the mechanisms through which food sharing events contribute to feelings of belongingness.

The results showed that food practices often involved routine and ritualistic events, such as mealtimes or friend get togethers, in young people's lives. Family routines have shown to have a protective role for young people through providing secure structures for social interaction (Fiese et al., 2002; Koome, Hocking, & Sutton, 2012). There is also some evidence suggesting family rituals, including shared mealtimes, may promote young people's connectedness (Crespo et al., 2011). There has been less research on peer rituals amongst young people. The themes frequently showed that activities, such as leaving school to get lunch, finding a secret place for eating lunch together, or going out for coffee acted as rituals young people had created themselves, which promoted stronger ties between young people.

The studies revealed that schools are sites of deeply embedded, ubiquitous socio-cultural food practices, where young people share food amongst peers on a daily basis.

Some of the reviewed articles showed meaningful social interactions between young people in the school context involving food practices (1, 4-6, 11, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24). A number of studies have identified that free school lunches for low-income students are a source of stigma within the school (Bhatia, Jones, & Reicker, 2011; Pogash, 2008; Stein, 2008). Receiving from and sharing food with a friend may be a technique for some young people to avoid eating a free school lunch and being stigmatized. Sharing food practices also indicated that they might be used in a negative way, such as reinforcing dieting or excluding others (5, 12, 15-18). Attention must be paid to ensure that food practices are not used in a detrimental way. A school's physical and social environments affect how food practices can be played out. It is widely recognised that young people's contexts affect their health and wellbeing, where positive social relationships and school connectedness are seen as important for a developmentally conducive social environment (National Research Council, 2002; Rowe & Stewart, 2009). Further research looking at how food practices and social relationships interact with the school social environment could be useful in unfolding the mechanisms by which food acts as a vehicle in social relations. Factors of the physical environment, such as seating arrangements, recess periods, or areas for social interaction have also shown to have an impact on opportunities for building and maintaining social relationships (S. N. Moore, Murphy, Tapper, & Moore, 2010; Rowe, Stewart, & Patterson, 2007). How exactly the physical environment plays a role in food practices and young people's social relationships was not included in the current review, but would pose an interesting area for future research. Whole-school and whole-class activities with food have shown to promote positive social relationships within a school community through providing a fun, inclusive, informal environment where members of the school community get to know each other better, and develop trust and mutual reciprocity (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). It would be interesting to further explore how food practices affect social

relationships in student-student, teacher-student, and school community-student-teacher relationships.

So far the "social" aspect in nutrition research has been concerned with the effects the social context has on food and nutrient consumption (Salvy, Jarrin, Paluch, Irfan, & Pliner, 2007; Wouters, Larsen, Kremers, Dagnelie, & Geenen, 2010). Food practices and social relationships as approached in this review could, however, also be an interesting avenue for nutrition research and promotion, for the following two reasons. First, there is increasing evidence that social relationships predict better physical health outcomes (Berkman, 1995; Umberson & Montez, 2010), including improved food intake (Conklin et al., 2014), although the exact mechanisms still remain unclear (Friedman, 2014). Umberson and Montez (2010) make a point that the development of positive social relationships during youth is particularly crucial for long-lasting health throughout life, where relationships affect health through improved behavioural, psychosocial, and physiological functioning. A focus on social relationships could therefore enhance health outcomes in nutrition promotion through improved food intake and enhanced social relationships. Second, a focus on improving social relationships could broaden the scope of nutrition interventions to promote health in physical and psychosocial dimensions. However, more research is needed to investigate the utility of such an approach.

It is important to remember that not all social relationships are beneficial to health. Relational problems, engaging with the 'wrong' friends, or being psychologically overloaded through relationship demands can all have negative effects on health. It may therefore be useful to differentiate between types of relationships in future research. For instance, it has been found that relationships with teachers and other non-parent adults can be particularly beneficial to young people (DuBois et al., 2011; Werner & Smith, 2001). The studies reviewed here showed that food often provided a fun, relaxed environment. Using food practices may facilitate relationship building in strongly hierarchical situations

so that the usual barriers of teacher-student roles may be less apparent. However, some studies also showed that food was used to reinforce these hierarchies when control over young people's eating situation was taken (2, 6, 8, 9, 11-15).

Four of the included studies were set in foster families and residential homes, both unique circumstances different from upbringing in one's biological family (8, 12, 13, 15). In these studies food played a central role and proved to be particularly sensitive to the closeness and power status in social relationships. On the one hand these studies showed how central food can be in creating a sense of belonging, trust, or showing care; on the other, it also demonstrates that there is much more to be discovered through young people's food practices and social relationships, such as identity formation. There has been much research on how food contributes to the creation of individual and collective identities (Fiese, Foley, & Spagnola, 2006; Stead et al., 2011; Valentine, 1999). A food practice focus could prove useful for such research. Cake decorating, for instance, can be an activity that contributes to personal satisfaction and wellbeing as well as being an expression of care when making a special cake for someone (Scheerer, Cahill, Kirby, & Lane, 2004), where habitual everyday practices are associated with food and can provide insight into young people's lives. Looking at how food practices through social relationships contribute to identity was beyond the scope of this review, but would be a stimulating area for future research.

Nutrition promoters may find these findings useful to incorporate. Drawing on 26 articles the review has shown that young people use food practices as a mechanism to mediate care, that social interaction is fostered in food practices, and that shared food practices help develop stronger bonds and a sense of belonging. In applying these findings nutrition promoters could, for example, prepare food with a group of young people. The shared practice of preparing food would encourage social interaction; foster a shared sense of accomplishment (possibly promoting group cohesion); and allow young people to

mediate their care through gifting their finished product. While these practices could foster social relationships they could simultaneously incorporate aspects important to current nutrition promotion. For instance, the activity could incorporate food preparation skills and knowledge about nutritious ingredients, making nutrition promotion a fun activity rather than a lecture on what to eat. Particularly this last point may reduce the resistance that young people are often found to exhibit towards healthy lifestyle messages (D. Whitehead, 2005). Indeed studies in garden-based nutrition interventions (Block et al., 2012; Robinson-O'Brien et al., 2009) and school feeding programmes (Kristjansson et al., 2007; Rodgers & Milewska, 2007) that have found this dual benefit of improving nutritional intake and social relationships simultaneously. Increased knowledge about young people's food practices and social relationships may extend nutrition promotion beyond nutritional intake, while not leaving the importance of a healthy diet behind.

A key consideration for future studies is the required methodology. A suitable methodology needs to capture mundane, taken-for-granted everyday food practices. Ten of the twenty-six included studies used participant observation as a data collection method, however very few engaged with the participants over a prolonged period of time to gain knowledge about what was actually habitual and what was situational. Methodologies such as ethnographic research with prolonged engagement in the field, building relationships, and participation in everyday life with young people have the potential to reveal in much greater depth how food practices tacitly build social relationships (Madison, 2005).

It is important to be aware of the limitations in qualitative meta-synthesis because the interpretations are far removed from the original data, and are also only one specific lens taken by the reviewers (Sandelowski, 2006). Additional limitations include a diverse sample of young people, who differ in age, culture, and socioeconomic status: a broad range of methodologies; and the agenda for the studies varied considerably. The inclusion of the

participant quotes is an attempt to remain close to the original data and keep true to their words rather than the researchers' interpretations.

Conclusion

The review has highlighted that food practices are embedded in everyday life and can be a useful vehicle in young people's social relationships. Although these studies revealed the breadth of food practices in social life, most studies did not explicitly investigate food practices and social relationships. The themes identified through the review showed how food practices intersected with a range of relationship characteristics. The review highlighted potential for future research into the role of food practices in young people's social relationships in the school and community setting. Potential benefits for broadening the desired outcomes of nutrition promotion were also discussed. Overall it can be concluded that food practices provide a new lens through which social relationships can be viewed, and offers a range of areas for future research.

Chapter 5

Promoting School Connectedness

"The inextricable link between

people and their environment constitutes the

basis for a socio-ecological approach to health."

(WHO, 2009, p. 29)

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So far, this thesis has explored the importance of positive social relationships for young people's health, and subsequently illustrated the role food plays in interpersonal exchanges. While food plays an important role in social relationships (see Chapter 4), analysis cannot stop at that point; such a micro focus is too narrow for a holistic, ecological health promotion paradigm. An ecological perspective in health promotion assumes a dynamic relationship between people and their environments. Furthermore, for optimal health, a good person–environment fit is desirable; a responsive and developmentally appropriate environment will more likely meet people's needs. This chapter introduces health promotion approaches with particular emphasis on a socio-ecological, settings-based approach, which includes the role of social and physical environments, and demonstrates the importance of schools as a key setting for youth health promotion. Thereafter, it discusses approaches to building school connectedness, located under a broad umbrella of strategies incorporating social and emotional competencies, social relationships, and mental health. Finally, the chapter reviews nutrition interventions in schools that have reported findings within the realm of positive social relationships and school connectedness.

Socio-ecological Theory for Health Promotion

Human beings do not live isolated from their social and physical environments, but in symbiosis with them. Socio-ecological theory is a view of human development that acknowledges this interdependency and posits that humans live in constant interaction with their surroundings. It suggests that a sound fit between person and environment will promote positive development. When considering young people's health, therefore, the physical and social environments they inhabit must be acknowledged.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) application of socio-ecological theory to human development has laid the groundwork for the now widespread use of this theory in health promotion (Golden & Earp, 2012; Stokols, 1996). Socio-ecological theory focuses on a "point of convergence among the disciplines of the biological, psychological, and social sciences as they bear on the evolution of the individual in society" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 13), suiting the interdisciplinary nature of health promotion well. Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceived of the ecological environment as a "set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (p. 3). A person's environment is therefore seen as layered; the different levels interact with each other and together form a unique combination of circumstances (see Figure 4). Each of these nested structures can be seen as a setting (e.g., home, school, playground), which is defined as a place where social interaction occurs. The immediate environment is the microsystem, which consists of a person's actions, roles, and relationships in a given physical and social environment. A defining characteristic of the microsystem is that it exists within the subjective experience of the individual and is accepted as valid knowledge in relation to the corresponding environment. Multiple microsystems in which an individual is an active participant then together comprise a mesosystem. Exosystems are environments in which the developing person is not actively involved, but where actions within that setting affect the individual (e.g., the parent's workplace affects the child). On the broadest level, the term "macrosystem" refers to large-

scale patterns including culture, laws, customs, and ideologies, which provide structure to

society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).
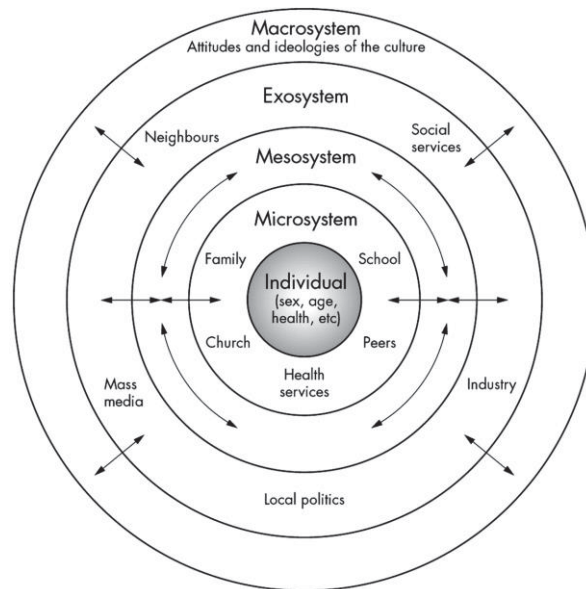
Figure 4. Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model.

Health as a socio-ecological concept was acknowledged in the early health

promotion literature (McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988), and played a role in the

development of the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986). The Ottawa Charter's five action areas

of building healthy public policy, creating supportive environments, strengthening

community action, developing personal skills, and reorienting health services reflect a

socio-ecological approach to health (WHO, 1986). Socio-ecological theory is thus

embedded in health promotion, and provides a useful approach, since human health is

equally the result of the dynamic interplay between people and their socio-physical

surroundings (Stokols, 1992, 1996). McLeroy et al. (1988) and Stokols (1992, 1996) made

the first explicit attempts to apply socio-ecological theory to health promotion. McLeroy et

al. identified five levels for health promotion interventions: intrapersonal factors,

interpersonal processes, organisational factors, community factors, and public policy.

Despite some critiques, the socio-ecological foundation of the Charter is still considered a guide for action in health promotion (Jakab & Galea, 2011). Hence, the socio-ecological model is not only well suited to health promotion, but also anchored in health promotion values.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) asserts that it is not necessarily the specific characteristics of a setting that are decisive but the interrelationship of different settings with each other. This aspect of the socio-ecological model is often not emphasised enough, resulting in a simplified notion of static layers surrounding an individual without consideration of the interaction between levels (Merzel & D'Afflitti, 2003). The constant interaction between individuals and their environments, including at the personal, social, cultural, organisational, and societal level, is however dynamic, and requires a comprehensive multi-level approach that is sensitive to changes between settings (St Leger, 1997). The increased recognition of this limited application of socio-ecological theory is visible in the recent use of complexity theory in health promotion (Dooris, 2009; Keshavarz, Nutbeam, Rowling, & Khavarpour, 2010). While complexity theory is not equivalent to a socio-ecological perspective, it does nevertheless account for the previously mentioned shortcomings in the use of socio-ecological theory to health promotion, through accounting for the interactions between settings.

Community-based Health Promotion

The "New Public Health" movement endorses a socio-ecological approach and sees people and their communities at the core of any health promotion endeavour (Baum, 2008); ideally addressing health issues across multiple levels. While health promotion programmes and campaigns often utilise approaches across a range of micro-, over meso-, to macro-level approaches, not all of them embed their approach within a socio-ecological perspective (Baum & Fisher, 2014; Golden & Earp, 2012; McLeroy et al., 1988). Individual (e.g.,

health education) and environmental (e.g., health policy) approaches can target specific goals effectively, however on the whole a comprehensive strategy that incorporates the interdependency between individuals and their environments has been shown to be most effective (Golden & Earp, 2012; Sallis, Owen, & Fisher, 2008). Community-based approaches allow for such multi-level interventions because they provide access to the places where people live, work, and play. These settings are where "life happens", and where people are considered experts on their own lives. Strengthening community action is one of the five Ottawa Charter strategies, emphasising empowerment and ownership, and drawing on "existing human and material resources in the community to enhance self-help and social support, and to develop flexible systems for strengthening public participation in and direction of health matters" (WHO, 2009, p. 3).

Any approach in health promotion can be worthless if the target population does not identify and engage with the initiative. Consequently, a key consideration is the process by which actions are planned, implemented, and evaluated. Health promotion operates from two levels: top-down and bottom-up. A top-down approach is characterised by external control (e.g., health promotion agencies, government), is generally large-scale and short-term, and is typically behaviour-focused. In a bottom-up approach, control and power lie within the community group, who largely determines the design, objectives, implementation, and evaluation of an initiative, and is more frequently small-scale and long-term (Laverack & Labonte, 2000). While a degree of top-down advocacy and leadership is certainly required, some argue that the true practice of health promotion can only be achieved through bottom-up approaches, led and designed by the community (Dixey, 2013; J. Green & Tones, 2010).

Dixey (2013) argues that there is a need to shift away from interventions and move towards working with people to create change. She sees people, relationships, and networks at the centre of a transformation towards health, and makes a call for moving away from

large-scale population interventions to increasingly more local, context-specific, and tailored health promotion strategies that promote local capacity building. This approach promises to be more effective, since the goal in health promotion is for people and communities to transform their health, and have ownership over and pride in what they are doing (Dixey, 2013; J. Green & Tones, 2010).

Community approaches largely facilitate a bottom-up approach through emphasising community development and capacity building. It is important not to mistake communities as mere points of access for health promotion programme delivery, but to engage with them to define problems and find solutions, aiming to work *with*, not just *in* the community (J. Green & Tones, 2010). The concept of community can be elusive, especially in an era of technology, commuting, and transience. A sense of shared identity may be one key aspect by which communities can be described. Institutions, such as schools, workplaces, churches, and prisons also constitute communities; in such contexts, there is generally a shared purpose, and some degree of collective identity. To add to the complexity, people often belong to multiple, overlapping communities in which they are active participants (J. Green & Tones, 2010).

A key priority in New Zealand health promotion is the reduction of health inequalities between Māori and non-Māori (Ministry of Health, 2002a). Addressing Māori health needs under Crown obligations and the Treaty of Waitangi is a further fundamental requirement. In terms of health promotion the Treaty obligations translate into the following objectives: achieving Māori participation in all aspects of health promotion; achieving the advancement of Māori health aspirations; and undertaking health promotion actions that improve Māori health outcomes (Martin, 2002). Furthermore the Ministry of Health (2002b) translates the five action areas of the Ottawa Charter into a Treaty perspective to guide health promotion practice; these action areas include "the right of individuals and communities to determine the health of themselves and their environments" (p.15). Thus all

health promotion in New Zealand ties into the Treaty, and should attempt to address Māori health disparities. While a multi-level strategy is needed to address health inequalities comprehensively, a bottom-up community approach is overall most consistent with Māori needs, and has been shown to be an effective strategy to engage with Māori on diverse health issues (Hamerton, Mercer, Riini, Mcpherson, & Morrison, 2014; Henwood, 2007; Tipene-Leach et al., 2013). Thus, a community-based approach is particularly endorsed in New Zealand health promotion.

An increasing problem with community-driven initiatives is that funding is often allocated for specific health topics, such as obesity prevention or mental health (Dixey, 2013), which does not allow the community to identify their own health priorities (G. Carey & Braunack-Mayer, 2009). An intermediary solution may be to define the broad topic funded, and then allow the community to take control over the design and implementation of a promotion plan. Furthermore, while giving a community ownership over its health is desirable, it is important to avoid shifting all the responsibility from the state onto the community, because some wider environmental factors impacting communities' health may be beyond the scope of their influence (J. Green & Tones, 2010). Critics of community approaches could find evidence to claim that they are ineffective and require more robust evaluation (Jackson et al., 2006). However this is likely due to the difficulty of producing measurable outcomes that are not easily captured within a community context. Newer evidence does suggest that community approaches have the potential to improve health through addressing a wide array of determinants, including policy advocacy (Israel et al., 2010), urban design (Semenza & Krishnasamy, 2007), and reduction of health inequalities (Adams, Witten, & Conway, 2007). A community approach also allows for cultural adaptability; community members can tailor their approaches to issues like nutrition to fit their cultural needs (Henwood, 2007). Working with communities can also further the health promotion values of participation, empowerment, and social justice.

A Settings Approach in Health Promotion

A settings approach is community-based, and locates itself primarily within institutional-bound communities. The idea of a settings approach emerged through the "New Public Health" movement, where it has been a vehicle to focus on the physical and social environments that shape health within the places where people live and work (Baum, 2008). A setting has been defined by the WHO (1997) as:

> the place or social context in which people engage in daily activities in which environmental, organizational and personal factors interact to affect health and wellbeing . . . where people actively use and shape the environment and thus create or solve problems relating to health. Settings can normally be identified as having physical boundaries, a range of people with defined roles, and an organizational structure. (p.19)

A focus on settings allows health promoters to adopt a more holistic and less individualistic approach to health; it acknowledges the reciprocity between people and their environments, and considers the importance of physical, social, economic, and political environments for health (L. Green, Poland, & Rootman, 2000). Typical settings are schools, workplaces, universities, and hospitals.

The term "setting" is not always used in the same way. Whitelaw et al. (2001) identified five categories of settings, differing in their assumptions regarding the role of the individual and the organisation in determining health. At one extreme the passive model is merely used as a point of contact for individually focused health promotion interventions (e.g., eating behaviour), whereas at the other end of the continuum the comprehensive model sees organisational factors (e.g., providing healthy canteen food) as the key modifiable determinants of health. Implementing actions across a range of these categories in the spirit of the Ottawa Charter promises to be most effective, however (Jackson et al.,

2006). Barić (1993) makes the distinction between "health promotion in settings", referring to any single health promotion activity an organisation is pursuing, and "health-promoting settings", meaning the use of a socio-ecological model and the whole organisation as a health promotion strategy. This thesis will apply the settings approach across multiple levels, incorporating a comprehensive settings perspective.

When using settings as a basis for health promotion, an important consideration is to ensure that no one is excluded through their non-participation in the most utilised settings (e.g., unemployed, youth not attending school). Since typical non-participants are often also those who fare the worst in terms of health and poverty, attention ought to be directed towards other settings, such as nightclubs, street corners, or other "sites of resistance" (L. Green et al., 2000, p. 25). To ensure a settings approach does not perpetuate health disparities, there have been increasing attempts to make use of a broader range of settings, including youth prisons (M. MacDonald, Rabiee-Khan, & Weilandt, 2013) or public housing for youth (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Anthony, Gonzales, & Jenson, 2014); which require consideration in settings-based health promotion.

Schools as a Setting for Health Promotion

Schools are possibly one of the most important and effective settings for promoting young people's health (Lister-Sharp, Chapman, Stewart-Brown, & Sowden, 1999; Stewart-Brown, 2006; Weare, 2000). In school health promotion a move towards the settings approach has meant a shift away from health promotion *in* schools (traditional single-topic, individual, curriculum-based health education) to health-promoting schools (inclusion of the whole school environment and community; Clift, Jensen, & Paulus, 2005). It is increasingly recognised that schools cannot be viewed in isolation, but must be seen as nested within other settings (Keshavarz et al., 2010; Stevens, Lupton, Mujtaba, & Feinstein, 2007).

The health-promoting school

In school health promotion whole-school approaches under a comprehensive settings framework have been shown to be most effective (Stewart-Brown, 2006; Wells, Barlow, & Stewart-Brown, 2003). A whole-school approach typically includes the school ethos and environment, relationships within the school and with the community, and learning and curriculum activities. At a minimum, a whole-school approach should embrace a holistic conceptualisation of health, examine multiple aspects within the school, examine underlying environmental determinants, include a range of stakeholders at various levels, promote teamwork and a coherent approach, focus on processes as well as content, and build life skills (Weare & Markham, 2005). Various models embrace a whole-school approach, including the health-promoting school (HPS) and the coordinated school health program (CSHP) frameworks (Allensworth, 1997; St Leger, 2005).

The most widely known approach is the health-promoting schools (HPS) model, which originated through the World Health Organisation's global school health initiative to improve young people's health (WHO, 1998), and is now being disseminated in 43 European countries (Buijs, 2009), Asia (A. Lee, Cheng, & St Leger, 2005), and the Pacific (Booth & Samdal, 1997). A HPS can be defined as a school that "constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working" (WHO, 2014). The HPS framework is based on the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986), incorporating healthy school policies, creating supportive school environments, encouraging student action, developing personal skills through the curriculum, and increasing access to health care through schools. The HPS model emphasises the importance of relationships between students, teachers, parents, and the surrounding community, including a wide range of stakeholders (St Leger, 2005). In summary, the HPS model pursues a values-based and non-prescriptive approach to allow for local adaptability. Figure 5 illustrates the three overlapping areas within the HPS model.

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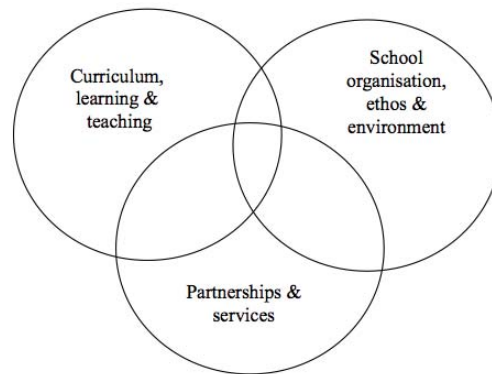
Figure 5. The health-promoting schools framework.

Health-promoting schools in New Zealand

In New Zealand the HPS model has recently undergone a redevelopment;
intensified efforts have been made towards widespread implementation and a better
infrastructure (Cognition Education, 2011). At the core of the new model is an inquiry cycle
aimed at making HPS more practice-oriented and avoiding barriers for implementation
through too little emphasis on procedure, compared to reliance on theoretical modelling (N.
Burton, personal communication, July 23, 2013). A set of values at the heart of the HPS
process in the New Zealand context include respecting the Treaty of Waitangi,
whanaungatanga (strengthening relationships), kotahitanga (partnership in learning,
reciprocity), and rangatiratanga (uplifting, growing, leadership). Placing values at the
starting point, instead of predefined issues, enables the HPS approach to be tailored more
towards the individual needs of each school community (Cognition Education, 2011). The
first step in applying the HPS model involves building relationships with the school
community and learning about the dynamics of the individual school. Following this, a
needs assessment is conducted in which the practitioner enables the school community
representatives to identify issues around school policies; the physical, social, and cultural

environment; knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours within the community; links with family/whānau and the community; and education, health, and social services (Cognition Education, 2011). Once the areas of action are identified, the changes are planned and implemented. The reflection phase then leads into the next HPS inquiry cycle. This strategic approach is designed to fit in with the New Zealand education system (e.g., it is designed not to be an add-on to schools, but to work with their current ways of working), and is a promising framework for the future success of HPS in New Zealand.

Implementation and evaluation of HPS

While engagement with HPS is increasing steadily, implementation has its challenges. Schools often hesitate to adopt HPS, as it is perceived to add to staff workload, and health is not necessarily linked to, or seen as contributing to, the school's core business (St Leger & Nutbeam, 2000). An enduring challenge has been to motivate schools to adopt the model, for example: through incorporating HPS into the core business of the school and linking to academic performance (Rowling & Jeffreys, 2006); developing guidelines and principles (St Leger, 2005); and evaluating effectiveness (Barnekow et al., 2006). Furthermore, there is dissension about what counts as desirable outcomes in HPS; often the more tangible health outcomes are prioritised (Barnekow et al., 2006). Simovska (2012) however argues that "outcomes of the health-promoting schools cannot, and should not be limited to narrowly defined health outcomes achieved through single health-promotion interventions" (p. 86). Funding for school health promotion (including HPS) is often provided on the basis of particular health issues (e.g., McLean et al., 2009) and health promoters are therefore generally required to report on defined outcomes, such as BMI or food intake. Little scope is then left to incorporate indicators that underpin the HPS philosophy, such as empowerment, participation, democracy, holistic health (in biopsychosocial spheres), inclusion, action competence, critical literacy, and equity. Not only would it be more in the HPS spirit to place increased value on these outcomes, but they

would also align more closely to educational outcomes. Participation, for instance, has recently been linked to school connectedness, academic performance, improved life satisfaction and happiness, and self-rated health (de Róiste, Kelly, Molcho, Gavin, & Gabhainn, 2012). Student councils, a common mechanism for providing students with a voice in schools, have been evaluated through an HPS model, and have revealed positive benefits for individual students and social relationships within the school (Griebler & Nowak, 2012). Student participation can also improve structural and cultural aspects of the school via the improvement of social relationships, leading to an overall improvement of the school ethos (Griebler, Rojatz, Simovska, & Forster, 2014). Linking HPS to the improvement of social relationships and school connectedness could make HPS more attractive to schools.

Health-promoting schools and social relationships

Positive, caring relationships are essential for a well-functioning school practising democratic, participatory, and empowering decision-making under a HPS model (Parsons, Stears, & Thomas, 1996; Weare, 2000). Social relationships lie at the core of many HPS approaches (Booth & Samdal, 1997; Cognition Education, 2011; Gray, Young, & Barnekow, 2006; WHO, 2014). A wealth of adapted HPS frameworks further emphasise the importance of social relationships within a school community. For instance, Konu and Rimpela (2002) formulate the "School Well-being Model", which incorporates school conditions (*having*), social relationships (*loving*), means for self-fulfilment (*being*), and health status as the key components of wellbeing in a HPS approach. Markham and Aveyard (2003) propose a model based on an Aristotelian interpretation of human functioning and cultural transmission. Capacities for practical reasoning and affiliation comprise two core capacities in their model, which are argued to act as the foundation of HPS. The underlying rationale of such models is that if the human desire for affiliation is met, and skills for building positive social relationships are fostered within the school

environment, students experience better health, academic, and developmental outcomes (Weare, 2000).

In New Zealand, a student wellbeing framework was recently developed comprised of educational policy and student and teacher perspectives (Soutter, O'Steen, & Gilmore, 2014). One of its seven key components, and one of three essential assets to wellbeing in the model, is "relating". Within their framework Soutter et al. identify aspects of "relating" similar to the HPS indicators just discussed. They note that in order to achieve wellbeing it is essential for students to feel they belong to school; that all cultural affiliations, beliefs, and ideologies are acknowledged and celebrated; and that student–teacher relationships are reciprocal, respectful, and supportive. Soutter et al. further highlight that in a well-connected school community there are engaging and meaningful ways for parents and the wider community to be involved, and that students experience diverse forms of learning within the curriculum. The fact that this particular framework, that is based on young people's perspectives and linked to educational policies, embodies so much of what has been discussed in HPS validates the essential role of social relationships for young people and the promotion thereof through a whole-school approach.

School Connectedness

School connectedness can be defined as "the quality of the social relationships or social 'bonds' within school communities" (Rowe, 2007, p.526), characterised by attachment, commitment, and involvement (Resnick et al., 1997). The idea of school connectedness encompasses a positive, respectful school ethos, how young people feel at school, the quality of social relationships they experience, and their engagement and participation in school life (Bond, Glover, Godfrey, Butler, & Patton, 2001). Thus school connectedness embodies the concepts of social relationships and schools, the two core concepts discussed in the previous sections. The following sections will give a brief

overview of the evidence generated from school connectedness research, conceptualise school connectedness from an ecological perspective, and draw on existing evidence of how whole-school approaches have been used to promote school connectedness.

School connectedness – the evidence

School connectedness research has increased in the last decade, due to the mounting evidence of connectedness as a predictor of better (physical and mental) health in young people (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Resnick et al., 1997). School connectedness has been found to be a protective factor for health issues such as depression, stress, and anxiety (Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006); behavioural problems and problems at school (Loukas, Suzuki, & Horton, 2006); substance use, violence, and sexual behaviour (McNeely et al., 2002); and low self-esteem (Boutelle et al., 2009). Promoting school connectedness is also important for young people's social health. Young people benefit from positive social relationships in a school in which mutual reciprocity, respect, and community are fostered. Young people who participate in and contribute to activities in school are more likely to acquire the skills they need to become active citizens (Broadbent & Cacciattolo, 2013); and those who experience the benefits from positive social relationships with peers and teachers are more likely to put trust into future settings in which social negotiation is required (e.g., university, workplace; Jose, Ryan, & Pryor, 2012). Furthermore young people need a feeling of affiliation with, and connection to, people in their everyday settings as a resource in their everyday lives (Hendry & Reid, 2000).

Increasingly research has investigated how connectedness promotes health assets (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Jose et al., 2012; McNeely et al., 2002; Osterman, 2000) including happiness, hope, and life satisfaction (Camfield, Choudhury, & Devine, 2009; You et al., 2008); and academic achievement (Niehaus, Rudasill, & Rakes, 2012). The recent emphasis

on positive factors is consistent with the positive youth development perspective, which aims to identify factors that make young people thrive (R. Larson, 2000).

Recent longitudinal studies have suggested that young people's social connectedness may be a better predictor of adult wellbeing than academic achievement (Olsson, McGee, Nada-Raja, & Williams, 2013). In their 32-year longitudinal study, the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study researchers found that developing social connectedness as a young person promotes maturation of pro-social values that foster the ability to positively relate to oneself, others, and the world in adulthood (Olsson et al., 2013). In another New Zealand study, over a three-year period Jose et al. (2012) found that connectedness across four domains (school, family, peers, community) predicted young people's present wellbeing, although wellbeing did not predict connectedness. However, on the domain level they found that school and family connectedness did reveal a reciprocal relationship with wellbeing, and that connectedness at one point in time predicted connectedness two years later. Overall, the most critical domains for young people appear to be family and school connectedness (Barber & Schluterman, 2008; Jose & Pryor, 2010), and the most prominent intervention sites for young people are school settings due to accessibility. Working with a socio-ecological model, however, necessarily incorporates aspects of the other domains, as the school is nested within these other settings.

An ecological perspective of school connectedness

The increasing evidence on the benefits of school connectedness for health has led to increasing exploration of this avenue from an ecological, whole-school perspective in health promotion (Rowe et al., 2007; Waters, Cross, & Runions, 2009). Traditionally, school connectedness has been conceptualised as the aggregation of individual data within the school social environment. Most studies refer to students' liking of their school or whether they feel part of their school, and see the school as a relatively isolated setting

(Libbey, 2004; Resnick et al., 1997). An ecological health promotion approach to school connectedness, on the other hand, requires looking beyond the individual to conceptualise connectedness as an asset of the whole school community, acknowledging the importance of the surrounding environment for individuals' health. In this perspective schools are seen as nested within a broader community that includes members beyond the geographical boundaries of the school (Waters, Cross, & Shaw, 2010). Inherently the ecological lens then also incorporates and acknowledges the importance of family, peer, and community connectedness for young people's health. In a further argument Wyn (2009) critiques educational policy for being too focused on individual student wellbeing, rather than acting as a "function of social processes such as school ethos, community environment and classroom practices" (p. 50). An ecological, whole-school approach therefore aims to integrate school connectedness into school structures and processes, and should be developmentally responsive to young people's needs.

An ecological, whole-school perspective requires identification of contextual aspects of the school social and physical environment that can promote connectedness within the whole school community, which include: physical and psychological safety; appropriate structure; supportive relationships; opportunities to belong; positive social norms; opportunities for skills building; and integration of family, school, and community efforts (National Research Council, 2002). Whole-school activities characterised by inclusiveness, participation, and democracy, accommodated by caring and supportive interactions, are the key factors for building school connectedness (Rowe & Stewart, 2011; Waters et al., 2009).

Promoting school connectedness through whole-school approaches

Within health promotion research there have been a few noteworthy approaches to research school connectedness as an ecological concept, broadly capturing the issue of how

a school can make students feel more connected (Roffey, 2008; Rowe et al., 2007; Waters et al., 2009).

Rowe et al. (2007) developed a comprehensive model that incorporates community development, health promotion, and social capital concepts. The model was developed through a cross-disciplinary literature review in the school health promotion literature, and further refined through empirical research (Rowe & Stewart, 2009). The research concluded that inclusive processes and supportive structures, characterised by inclusion, participation, and democracy, had the potential to promote school connectedness. Table 2 summarises these structures and processes.

Table 2

Structures and Processes at the Whole-School and Whole-Class Level (Rowe & Stewart, 2009, p. 401)

	Whole-school level
Structural aspects	Policies and organisational structures to prevent bullying
	Peer support programs
	Extra-curricular activities
	Support structures for school staff
	A fair behaviour management system
	A "welcoming" environment
	Significance of school–community partnership structures
Processes	Significance of school–community partnerships
	School partnerships with parents
	School partnerships with school staff
	School staff–parent partnerships
	School staff–student partnerships
	Whole-school community activity
	Classroom level
Structural aspects	Significance of class organisation activities
	Importance of class–community partnerships
	Class size
Processes	Significance of processes of working together
	Significance of class–community partnerships

Waters et al. (2009) further support the importance of school-level factors, such as pastoral care strategies or the physical environment, in building school connectedness.

Whole-school and whole-class events have also emerged as a potential strategy for promoting school connectedness. Rowe and Stewart (2011) found that, specifically, events that were positive, social, inclusive, well-managed, democratic, inexpensive, owned by the school community, relaxed and fun, as well as celebratory, and informal meetings that involved food and commensality increased social interaction between school community members. In this research it appeared that through increased social interaction school community members got to know each other better, developed trust and mutual reciprocity, and gained insight into others' lives, which increased tolerance of diversity within the school, and enhanced the perception of value within the school community. Health-promoting school structures and processes hence appeared to contribute to more social interactions within the school community through which the indicators of school connectedness were improved directly, as well as mediated through mutual reciprocity, knowing others, and perception of value.

Roffey (2008) addresses the interactional nature of the different levels; attempting to explain how actions and practices within one level carry over and affect others. For instance, she found that positive teacher interactions within the staffroom carried over to positive student–teacher communication in the classroom, which appeared to create more positive relationships throughout the school. Overall Roffey's research illustrates that effective change within a school community has to occur across multiple levels. A school's aspirational values for a connected school community must be explicit and incorporated into policies and practices. These factors are interconnected with the fluid nature of a school culture over time.

Overall the research suggests that whole-school approaches have potential to promote school connectedness. The findings are useful for thinking about and designing

future interventions to promote school connectedness, for which commonly shared social activities appear to be ideal starting points. It appears plausible that aspects as intangible as social relationships are best promoted through a comprehensive approach, addressing factors including: individual social interactions; school ethos and culture; structures and processes that support frequent and positive social interaction; and actions guided by inclusion, participation, and democracy. Although in its infancy, the literature suggests the HPS model is appropriate for promoting school connectedness (Rowe & Stewart, 2009, 2011; Sun & Stewart, 2007b; Waters et al., 2009). While there is a wealth of information on the need for, and benefits of, school connectedness, there is limited research concerning the ideal mechanisms for promoting school connectedness through whole-school approaches. Further, there has been no research that has explicitly investigated the value of food practices in this context.

Food Practices and School Connectedness

This thesis has already discussed the significance of structures and processes for embedding school connectedness promotion sustainably into a school's way of working, guided by values such as participation, democracy, and inclusion. The following section will build on this knowledge and further the scope by making a case for the potential value of food in fostering school connectedness.

Whole-school and whole-class events with food

Whole-school and whole-class activities are promising avenues for promoting school connectedness. Research has shown that recognising staff and student efforts, organising social activities for the school community, facilitating friendships across year levels, and encouraging positive/inclusive interaction practices contribute to improved school connectedness (Roffey, 2008; Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Rowe and Stewart (2011) found that amongst the structures and processes that built school connectedness according

to HPS theory, food and eating together stood out as a key mechanism by which indicators of school connectedness were promoted. For instance, food was used as a "a coin of exchange"; provided opportunities for school community members to feel comfortable being themselves; and generated an informal, relaxed social setting in which school community members had opportunities to gain insights into others' personalities. Shared food practices allowed them to see the positive qualities of others, which promotes tolerance of diversity at the very least, and may also lead to heightened perceptions of value in the school community (Rowe & Stewart, 2011).

Food events may provide opportunities for informal interactions amongst students and teachers in which students can interact with other students to whom they may have not previously spoken. Such events may also allow teachers to show their "humanness" and engage on a more genuine, casual level with the students, finding out more about their personalities (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Through these activities, teachers may learn about positive traits of their students in a sphere outside of the subjects they teach. Food can provide a collective interest that offers widespread participation and opens students up through a more relaxing environment (Katriel, 1987; Nukaga, 2008). However, research that investigates the range of food practices amongst young people, as well as the mechanisms by which these practices may promote school connectedness, is still limited.

Nutrition promotion and school connectedness

Most food-related health promotion in schools is concerned with young people's food intake (Jaime & Lock, 2009; Stewart-Brown, 2006). Nutrition promotion in schools is well established; a wide range of interventions have been implemented internationally and nationally (McLean et al., 2009; Wang & Stewart, 2012). School food policies, improving food environments, and curriculum activities are just a few of many approaches being undertaken (Drummond, 2010; Jaime & Lock, 2009; L. Moore & Tapper, 2008). Overall, nutrition interventions using a holistic HPS approach with multilevel strategies appear to be

most effective (Rowe et al., 2010; Wang & Stewart, 2012). Since most school nutrition promotion is concerned with food intake, the most frequently used outcome measures are nutrition behaviour, attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Very little nutrition research considers a role for food practices in psychosocial health domains. School gardens, school feeding programmes, and everyday food practices are areas in which psychosocial health benefits have been reported.

School gardens

Garden-based nutrition programmes are an example of food practice interventions in which improvements to students' health beyond dietary intake have been recognised, and have become popular in the last decade (Grow Together, 2011; Kids Gardening, 2011). Benefits reported include for example, school connectedness, promotion of positive relationships throughout the community, enhancement of student bonding and teamwork, social inclusion, and the provision of holistic food and nutrition education (Blair, 2009; Block et al., 2012; Dyment & Bell, 2008). Evidence from community gardens has shown that gardens have the potential to strengthen community capacity through the opportunities they offer to build social connections, interpersonal relationships, and mutual trust (D. Armstrong, 2000; Kingsley, Townsend, & Henderson-Wilson, 2009; Teig et al., 2009). One review of school gardening projects found that gardens can provide young people with improved social skills, confidence, community spirit, academic achievement, leadership, and nutritional attitudes and intake (Robinson-O'Brien et al., 2009).

Block et al. (2012) evaluated a "seed to table" programme, and showed how shared food practices fostered by the programme improved student engagement and confidence, provided opportunities for teamwork and building social skills, and increased connections between schools and their communities. The programme provided young people with the shared responsibility for growing and harvesting vegetables, and then subsequently bringing these into the kitchen to prepare and share meals. The evaluation showed that the

programme promoted trust, self-esteem, independence, ownership, and connectedness to the school among the students, and suggested that the resulting sense of empowerment translated into other spheres of life. Further, the programme fostered inclusion, offering students typically excluded from other school activities the opportunity to participate and contribute. Through the hands-on experiences provided by the programme some students who were less skilled in academic areas were able to shine and gain pride in their skills in the garden and kitchen. The natural, real-life environment was reported as one in which diversity was easily incorporated, and everyone was able to participate as an equal participant (Block, Gibbs, Macfarlane, & Townsend, 2015). It was also found that the programme promoted the growth of social networks beyond proximal friendship groups, enhanced student–teacher relationships, brought other adults into the schools to act as non-parent role models for the students, and considerably improved school–community relationships. The authors reported that these social health benefits provided greater value to the participants than the benefits bestowed by nutritional changes (Block et al., 2012). Some garden-based nutrition programmes thus incorporate a biopsychosocial food frame, and report nutritional/physical, mental, and social benefits.

School food programmes

School food programmes are another area within which young people's psychosocial health has been investigated. Studies of such programmes have reported enhanced psychosocial functioning and self-esteem, strengthened peer relationships, increased trust amongst school community members, heightened feelings of value and being cared for, more positive social interaction, and a greater sense of school connectedness (Kleinman et al., 2002; Kristjansson et al., 2007; McIntyre, Travers, & Dayle, 1999; Rodgers & Milewska, 2007; Yates & O'Brien, 2007).

An evaluation of the New Zealand-based "Food for Kids" programme, aimed at alleviating some of the nutritional and physical impacts of poverty on children, found that

providing healthy snacks to disadvantaged primary school students enhanced student–teacher relationships; improved school connectedness; augmented peer relations and psychosocial functioning; helped develop a stronger sense of community; and reduced differences between students through the inclusive nature of the programme (Kids Can, 2011). While sitting down with students and eating together, teachers were more likely to build positive relationships with students, an indicator of school connectedness. The evaluation found that although the main aim of the programme was to improve learning outcomes, in discussing their experiences the majority of participants emphasised the social effects, such as an improved school culture achieved through commensality. The qualitative nature of the investigation allowed unexpected findings to emerge, such as the improved culture of caring fostered by the programme. Further, qualitative research is necessary to capture the complexity of such effects. Bloy (2005) argues that breakfast programmes can be ideal settings to explore how relationships amongst school community members are consistently established, maintained, and negotiated. She also acknowledges however that the negative effects of such programmes, such as increasing inequalities, need to be considered carefully.

School food programmes illustrate the importance of ensuring inclusivity and participation in food practices. For instance, McIntyre et al. (1999) concluded that targeted feeding programmes can be disempowering for students, because they can elicit a perpetual reliance on the school for providing food, as well as stigmatise participating children. On the other hand, universal breakfast programmes encourage greater participation and through their universality remove the element of stigma associated with free school meals; in such programmes the social benefits and positive interactions outweigh the risks for reproducing inequalities (Wahlstrom & Begalle, 1999), compared to targeted programmes (Shemilt et al., 2004). Remaining cautious in the design and implementation of school food practices is therefore important. Evaluation of any programme must consider the unique context of each

school when examining the mechanisms by which the programme succeeds or fails (Greenhalgh, Kristjansson, & Robinson, 2007).

Everyday school food practices

Beyond planned and structured activities involving food, health promotion researchers should not neglect the routinised, mundane use of food in everyday life. Eating with friends at school, for instance, may form a valued routine in young people's lives, not only providing an important time to maintain friendships, but also being an "enabler of ongoing social contact and engagement in a range of leisure and social activities" (Absolom & Roberts, 2011, p. 344). Young people's "free" time at school is marked by occasions for food consumption – before school, at morning tea, at lunch time, after school – times when young people interact over, and with, food. Little research has focused on how young people make use of their school environment in their everyday food practices; particularly how these are played out in a routinised, mundane manner. In one UK-based study Chitakunye and Maclaran (2008) found that young people use food practices in school to negotiate a status of equality and rebel against teacher rules; however, little is reported in regard to peer relationships, and the study's exploration of the role of food practices in teacher–student relationships does not go beyond the lunch room. While the study's findings are certainly valuable, the New Zealand secondary school context is different in that New Zealand schools generally contain no prescribed lunch areas in which young people must eat. Furthermore, as Chitakunye and Maclaran note, young people also utilise informal eating opportunities, making eating an all-day phenomenon not restricted to the lunch hour. Research capturing students' food practices throughout their school days – in their peer groups, breaks, and leisure time – could add to the scope of these findings.

The HPS framework can have an impact on the way everyday food practices are conceptualised through, for example, incorporating the design of the physical environment, food availability (e.g., through school policies), or the use of food within the classroom.

While the literature referred to above has provided some insight into how the HPS framework can build school connectedness, little attention has been directed towards how everyday practices complement, contradict, or transform the HPS model. Furthermore, while there has been some exploration into the mechanisms by which connectedness is promoted, this area calls for further research. In light of the findings as to the significance that food can play in whole-school and whole-class activities as well as in everyday school life, this thesis suggests that food practices may act as an important mechanism by which school connectedness is built.

Food practices and school connectedness – A conceptual framework

This section presents a framework that integrates the previous discussion in this chapter. Specifically, the framework displayed in Figure 6 has been developed by building on Rowe and Stewart's (2009) model, integrating further school connectedness and whole-school approach literature, and incorporating food events and practices that have shown to promote school connectedness. While the aspects of the model describing how school connectedness can be promoted are supported by empirical evidence, the centrality of food practices in the model is novel to this approach and somewhat hypothetical, based on limited studies, still requiring further empirical research.

At the centre of the model are the core values underpinning a HPS approach to school connectedness, including participation, inclusion, and democracy. Surrounding these values are the food event characteristics that have shown to promote school connectedness (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). These include: positive, social, inclusive, well-managed, democratic, inexpensive, owned by the school community, relaxed and fun, as well as celebratory, and informal. These characteristics may be seen as guiding principles for positive school food events. Surrounding these principles are the indicators for school connectedness that have shown to be promoted through a whole-school approach.
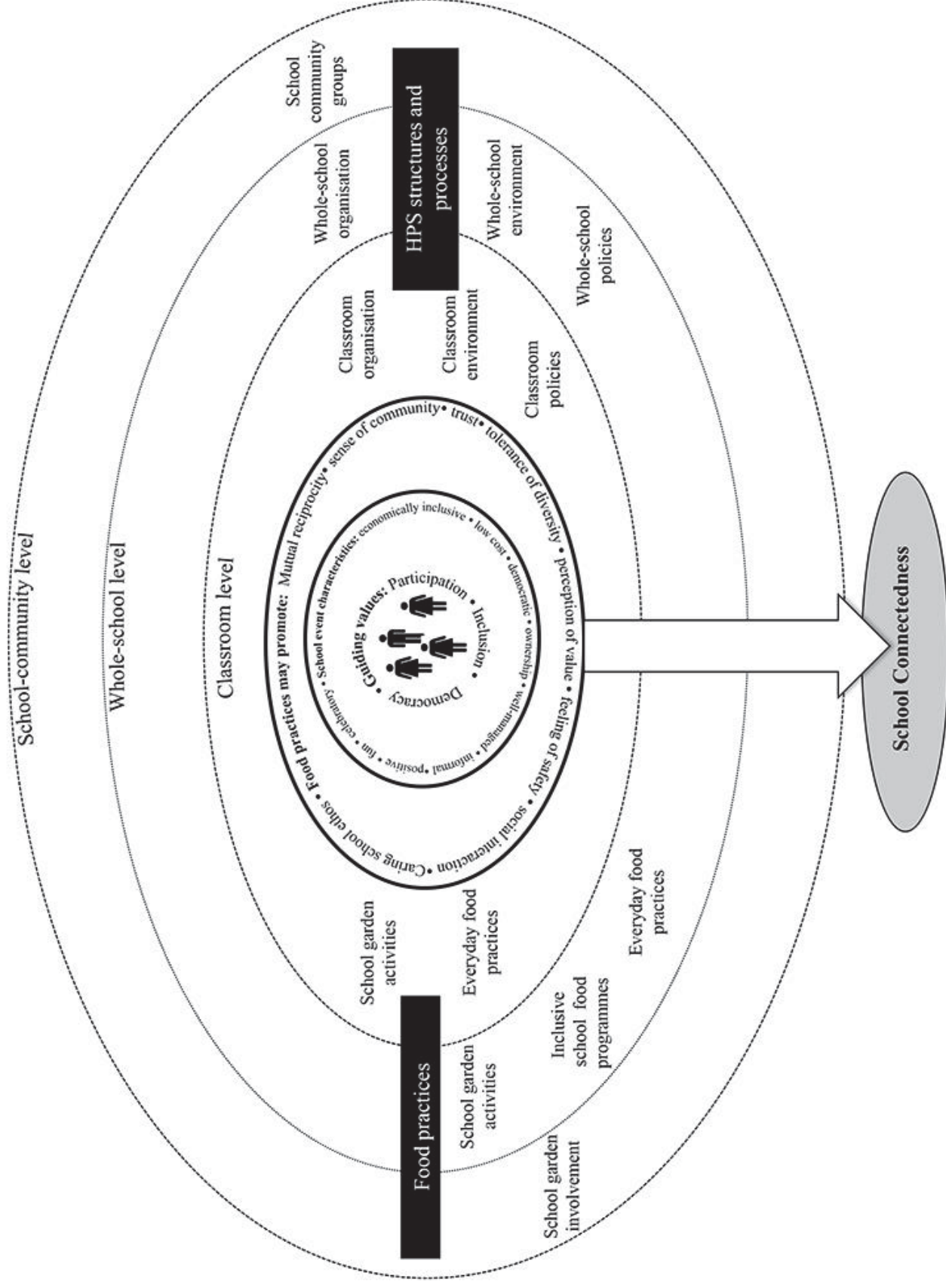
Figure 6. A preliminary conceptual framework for promoting school connectedness through food practices.

The diagram contains the following labels:

School-community level

Whole-school level

Classroom level

School community groups

Whole-school organisation

HPS structures and processes

Whole-school environment

Whole-school policies

Classroom organisation

Classroom environment

Classroom policies

Food practices may promote: Mutual reciprocity • sense of community • trust • tolerance of diversity • perception of value • feeling of safety • social interaction • Caring school ethos • fun • redemory •

School event characteristics: economically inclusive • low cost • democratic • ownership • well-managed • informal • positive • fun • redemory •

Guiding values: Participation • Inclusion • Democracy

School garden activities

Everyday food practices

Inclusive school food programmes

Everyday food practices

School garden activities

School garden involvement

Food practices

School Connectedness

The indicators include mutual reciprocity, trust, respect, knowing others, relationships that bridge social divisions, valuing diversity, a caring school culture, democracy, and participation.

Food practices are identified on the left of the figure, and defined as any food activity within the school. Structures and processes as defined in HPS thinking that have shown to promote school connectedness are on the right side of the figure. Food practices characterised by the core guiding principles have the potential to promote school connectedness, and occur at the classroom, whole-school, and community level. The physical environment determines the scope for food practices and hence is incorporated across levels.

The layered structure of the framework represents an ecological model of a school nested within other settings, and located within wider society. The school community is divided into the classroom setting and the whole-school environment, and overlaps with the wider community.

Chapter Summary

The first five chapters of this thesis have evidenced that food practices reach beyond their nutritional value and play a role in social health and, in particular, school connectedness. The socio-ecological theory was introduced and underpins the settings approach in health promotion. The appropriateness of the health-promoting schools framework for promoting school connectedness was evidenced, and the use of food practices within this realm reviewed. This chapter added to the previous chapters by exploring food practices and social health from a health promotion perspective; and completes the foundation needed for the study.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to develop an understanding of how food impacts on social health, specifically through exploring how food practices potentially

enhance young people's social relationships and school connectedness in a secondary school setting. The specific research questions are:

1. How do young people use food practices to establish, maintain, and strengthen their social relationships?

2. How may food practices promote school connectedness?

3. Are food practices a viable strategy for a whole-school approach to building school connectedness?

Subsequent chapters present the empirical research of this thesis.

Chapter 6

Methodology and Research Methods

"Does food just depend on the cook? No.

It depends on the utensils he has,

it depends on the building he lives in,

it depends on the amount of resources

that he or she is given by the authorities."

(Harré & Bhaskar, 2001, p. 29)

_____

In this chapter I will introduce the worldview underpinning my study, and the strategies and tools I used to conduct my research. I will describe the journey through my fieldwork with explicit reflection on the decision-making process I went through to make my research transparent. This chapter also discusses the ontology, epistemology, methodology, and method of the thesis; these are fundamental concepts and deserve explicit accreditation within research reporting (S. Carter & Little, 2007). I will first outline critical realism as the underlying epistemology and ontology in the thesis. In light of this, I will then introduce critical ethnography as my research methodology. This section will describe why this methodology is well suited to critical realism, health promotion, and food practice research. I will then outline my methods, which include the procedures, tools, and techniques I used to sample, collect, manage, and analyse data; as well as to represent the findings (Schwandt, 2001). This methods section is in narrative form, since the multiple methods I used unfolded during the study, and my explanation of them is thus best integrated into the narrative of my fieldwork journey. While initial analysis occurred during

data collection, a subsequent section outlines the comprehensive strategy of analysis. Thematic analysis is the key analytic technique I applied. Finally, I will discuss validity, my place in the research, ethical issues, and reflect on the methodology.

Critical Realism

A critical realist position has been deemed a valuable approach for health promotion research (Connelly, 2001), as well as for critical ethnography (Porter, 2002). Critical realism is an epistemological and ontological perspective that positions itself between positivism and constructivism. It acknowledges the existence of a reality beyond imagination, but sees this reality as contextual and emergent. Critical realism rejects the notions that all human action is a result of causal regularities governed by the natural world (objectivism), or a result of conscious mental states (subjectivism), but instead sees everyday practices as dispositional, rooted in social relations and dependent on socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts (Archer, 1995). Critical realists see structure and agency as distinct but interdependent; individuals are born into pre-existing structures and reproduce or change these within their lives. Thus, social structures do not exist independently from their actors' perceptions of what they are doing when they act. This has epistemological consequences in that such meanings cannot be measured quantitatively, but must be understood in context (Bhaskar, 1989).

Fundamental to critical realism is the transcendental question, which is concerned with how we know objects are objects a priori, before experiencing them (Collier, 1994). In the context of sociological inquiry this means that the focus is on the factors that shape patterns of human action. Acknowledging that actions are patterned, not random, means accepting that environments influence human behaviour to some degree. According to Bhaskar (1989), reality exists if it can be perceived or has an effect on material objects. For instance, gravity is real: it cannot be perceived, but the effects it has on objects can be

observed. This idea is transferable to the person–environment interaction, in which the aim is to understand the effects of the environment on human action, and vice versa. The critical realist believes that each case must be empirically investigated, and consists of fallible knowledge claims that may be revised continually (Porter, 2002).

Critical realism sees reality in three distinct, but interrelated realms: the real, the actual, and the empirical (Bhaskar, 1998). The real refers to the mechanisms that exist independent of human action; the actual consists of occurrences that take place when these mechanisms are mobilised without consideration of experience; and the empirical includes experiences, referring to observed events. The role of research across these realms is to observe and describe phenomena of interest, then to suggest potential mechanisms and outcomes based on the context at hand.

A critical realist disregards the positivist's certainty of causality, and rather sees things occurring in tendencies, aiming to identify mechanisms by which particular factors impact on the likelihood of something occurring in a specific context. For instance, a shared meal does not cause or ensure that positive social relationships will be fostered. However, under certain circumstances (generative mechanisms) the event has the potential to nurture positive social relationships. Generative mechanisms can be defined as processes that lead to observable events (Bhaskar, 1998), and tendencies are seen to emerge through contexts, including interpersonal relationships. The sum of the relations to others hence shapes actions in a non-deterministic but pre-dispositional manner, and often has the effect of reproducing structure (Collier, 1994). This has implications for research in that knowledge is seen as fallible and dependent on socio-historical factors.

Health promotion is concerned with people in their everyday contexts. A critical realist perspective puts people and their environments at the centre of inquiry, and captures the complexity of the social world. Critical realism offers a useful explanatory framework for health promotion through its context-dependent generative mechanisms (Connelly,

2001). Food practices are an example of everyday health practices that are universal to human beings but distinct depending on context (e.g., culture, age). Such practices can be usefully explained through a critical realist perspective, as outcomes specific to the situation of interest emerge from context-mechanism interactions.

The assumptions underlying a critical realist position appeal to qualitative methodologies, as both mindsets emphasise processes and meanings, aiming for explanation rather than quantification. Based on this, critical ethnography, which allows in-depth data collection over a prolonged period of time, appears a valuable tool for understanding food practices and social health.

Critical Ethnography

Critical thinking begins with the recognition that ideas possess a dual-edged capacity to both control and liberate, and adherents pursue knowledge by challenging conventional, taken-for-granted conceptions about the world and about how we think about it in order to move beyond 'what is' to a state of 'what could be'. (Thomas, 1993, p. 20)

Research methodologies and methods in health promotion research are diverse. Therefore in designing my research, I was faced with a plethora of methodology options. Because I was interested in the how and why of in-depth processes, and the dynamic interplay between people and their environments, the methodological position I needed to take was qualitative in nature. My interest in everyday routine practices and interpersonal relationships led me to ethnographic research. Ethnography is a qualitative research design concerned with people, meanings, and culture (Denzin, 1998). A critical realist position on ethnography can be created within a critical ethnographic methodology. Traditional ethnography is rooted in a constructionist epistemology, which sees subjective interpretation as the basis of all knowledge, and does not consider any reality beyond the

human perception thereof. A critical ethnography is commensurate with a critical realist perspective, since it considers a reality beyond the human mind, and links it to individuals' understandings (Porter, 2002). Critical realism and critical ethnography are well suited because they both accept:

> that there is a reality beyond individuals, but which does not over-extend its claims about how much we can know about that reality (in response to postmodernism) or about the degree to which external reality controls the decisions of individuals (in response to phenomenology). In short, what is needed is a realism that is not naïve. (Porter, 2002, p. 63)

Critical ethnography lends itself to a critical realist perspective because it allows in-depth investigation into the reciprocal relationship between social structures and social actions, thereby aiming to illuminate the complex relationship between structure and agency.

In-depth data collection helps "uncover the manifest interactions of the social world, which are then subjected to the transcendental process of theory generation to infer the structural conditioning of those interactions" (Porter, 2002, p. 18). Participants' subjective views are the starting point of the research process, which then proceeds into explanation of how the context affects the described phenomena (C. Rees & Gatenby, 2014). Rich description and detailed explanation serve then as a ground for understanding the multiple generative mechanisms and tendencies present in a given context. Rees and Gatenby (2014) describe a critical realist ethnography as the "connective tissue" between the subjective individual experience and the broader historical, social, and economic context.

Within any discipline there are power structures that determine disciplinary boundaries, which Pollner (1991) refers to as the outer rim of practice that delimits research endeavours. The rim can be seen as a constitutional ideology that provides a social control

mechanism to keep things orderly. Critical ethnography provides a methodology with which to question these perceived disciplinary boundaries and explore the meaning of a particular subject; in this case, the meaning of food practices for social health. The critical approach in this thesis aims to challenge current knowledge and forms of inquiry in nutrition promotion; exploring the meaning of taken-for-granted food practices to see what lies beyond current boundaries. Critical ethnographers do not select topics of study that differ from other methodologies, but often frame the subject of their study in a unique way, actively seeking alternative perspectives (Thomas, 1993). My approach is underpinned by a values-based approach to health promotion, which supports a critical stance and concern with power. In that sense exploring the meaning of food practices for social health as a component of biopsychosocial health offers a "juxtaposition of and dialogue about alternative images" (Thomas, 1993, p. 18). An inquiry into alternative ways of thinking about food practices allows separation from restricted perceptions, interpretations, discourse, and actions. It frees researchers from thinking about food only in terms of physical health, allowing them to see it as contributing to other health dimensions.

A critical (realist) ethnography is commensurate with health promotion values in that it is concerned with social justice, empowerment, and participation (Cook, 2005). Thomas (1993) describes critical ethnography as ethnography with a political purpose, in which ethnographers aim to contribute to "emancipatory goals or to negate their repressive influences that lead to unnecessary social domination of all groups" (p.4). The capacity for critical ethnography to be empowering and offer participation is not unique, and is broadly associated with emancipative qualitative approaches that aim to give their participants an active voice in shaping the research. However, the flexible and iterative approach inherent in critical ethnography is particularly valuable for the ability it gives young people (as the subjects of research) to show who they are, reveal constraints in their everyday lives, and voice issues relevant to them.

It can be challenging to capture the complexity of the mundane in everyday practices (Phoenix & Brannen, 2014). Ethnography offers a valuable lens for exploring food practices as mundane everyday activities, which Garfinkel (1964, as cited in Hasselkus, 2006) refers to as being "seen but unnoticed" (p.627). Critical ethnography with prolonged participant observation submerged in the cultural and social milieu is a useful research strategy to search for answers related to everyday practices. A combination of methods within the discipline of ethnography as a whole can allow to account for the differences in people's performances compared to their talk (Martens, 2012). Where for instance interviews give insight into the cultural norms and rules around practices, observations enable to understand the sequences and routines within those practices, and also help identify aspects the participants themselves may have overlooked or deemed irrelevant.

Ethnographic Methods

Ethnography typically involves prolonged social contact with participants in their natural context. I used various methods to collect data, including participant observation; informal, semi-structured, and photo diary interviews with participants; and school documents, to build a complete picture of the concerned context (O'Reilly, 2012). I conducted a ten-month (February – November 2012) period of fieldwork in one New Zealand girls' secondary school. In the following sections I will explain consecutively the steps taken, decisions made, and methods used. Subsequently, I will discuss data analysis, ethical issues, trustworthiness, and reflexivity. Pseudonyms are used throughout to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

Selecting the field or "going back to school"

Fieldwork is a defining ethnographic tool, in which data collection takes place in a specified physical setting (H. R. Bernard, 2006). In ethnography the choice of setting is often practical, and determined by what is accessible (O'Reilly, 2012). In choosing a setting

for my fieldwork, I first approached the geographically closest school. I sent a letter of inquiry to the principal (Appendix C), and then approached the next closest school when my request was declined for participation. The third school I approached agreed to participate, and the deputy principal signed the consent form (Appendix D).

The research school was a large, urban, state all-girls secondary school in New Zealand. New Zealand has a socio-economic decile ranking system for schools, where decile one indicates the most deprived and decile ten the least deprived school population, based on student home addresses against population census variables. The school in which my research was based was a decile ten school. However, it should be noted that due to the wide catchment area of many secondary schools, the decile system is not always a sound indicator of the socio-economic status of students. In 2013 the Education Review Office audit report for the school in which my research was based noted a school roll of 1322 students, of whom 65% were identified as NZ European/ Pākehā, 13% Asian, 8% Māori, 4% Pacific, 3% Indian, and 7% other ethnic groups. The school employed approximately 125 staff, of which 95 were teachers and 30 support staff. The majority of staff were female. Commercial, office, and residential buildings surrounded the school. There was a large supermarket a few minutes' walk away. Additionally there were other food outlets within minutes' walk, including: cafés, a bagel shop, a sushi restaurant, Asian food vendors, fish and chips shops, and a Mexican café. The only nearby fast food outlet was about 10 minutes' walk away, whereas all the outlets mentioned above could be said to be in the immediate surroundings. The supermarket was the most visited and popular venue for lunch, due to its wide variety of affordable choices. The school itself had a canteen with a range of snacks, fruit, baked goods, and sandwiches for purchase. No deep-fried food was on offer at the canteen.

The physical setting of the school included three main buildings; one with five storeys, and the other two with three storeys each, with two prefabricated buildings towards

the back end of the school. The school also had a school hall, a library building, and a sports hall. The buildings enclosed the main outdoor area for students, with a walkway to an open field between the library and sports hall. The outdoor area included two picnic tables and some stadium-type benches for students to sit together. The library and atrium (the main entrance area, which was spacious, with beanbags for students) were the two main communal areas indoors for students; additionally, many students spent their breaks in classrooms. There was one main staff room, but most departments also had a smaller staff area for their department.

The students offered participation were the Year 13 students. In New Zealand Year 13 is the last year of school, and the students are typically 16–18 years old. My choice to invite Year 13 students as participants was mainly practical, because students above the age of 16 do not require parental consent to take part in a study such as mine (which facilitated easier access to a large number of students). Year 13 students did also not wear a school uniform, which allowed me to blend in more amongst the group. Furthermore, this year group was particularly appropriate for my study because they were allowed to leave the school grounds during their free periods and breaks, which increased the scope and diversity of the food practices they engaged in (e.g., lunch outings, trips to the supermarket, etc.). While this meant that the food practices I studied would not be representative of all age groups, I did choose to remain focused only on this year group, to gain in-depth insight into young people's food practices. However, the whole year group was too large to serve as the group I would study. Therefore, I used a big-net approach to further refine the sample; such an approach starts with a "big picture" view (in my case the whole year group), and then narrows down during the duration of the study to focus on relevant micro-level interactions (Fetterman, 2010). All students were informed about the research and my presence in the school during an assembly, in which I gave a brief introduction to my

research project. I also sent out a letter to all staff to inform them about my research (Appendix E).

Ethnographers often go wherever they can "slip a foot in the door" (Fetterman, 2010, p. 35). I took up any offer I had to participate in a class. I sent out letters to all Year 13 teachers, eliciting interest for having me in their class (Appendix F). Of the approximately 20 teachers I addressed, five responded, including a psychology, a classics, an arts, a maths, and a form time teacher. I then met with each teacher, talked through my research and involvement, and distributed consent forms for signing (Appendix G). In discussing research with classroom teachers, it was agreed they would introduce me in the first lesson of the following week. In the first lesson I talked to the students about my research, and handed out the consent forms. We discussed the key points addressed in the participant observation information form (Appendix H) and consent form (Appendix I) in case some of the students did not read the forms completely. The teachers gave the students some time to complete the forms at the beginning of the lesson, but I also mentioned that they could think about it and give it back to me later.

I handed out a questionnaire (Appendix J), which had various purposes. First, it was intended to serve as an icebreaker; for instance, some girls asked me about the questions, and it initiated first interactions with them. Second, it allowed the students to get a better impression of the study topic, since the questions related to the research aims. Third, the questionnaire gave me an initial impression of food practices in the classes, including the context and factors to consider for participant observation. Finally, the questionnaire was useful in some of the student interviews (where I had an available questionnaire for the interviewee), providing another data source at a different point in time for the same student. Most of the students completed the questionnaire and consent forms straight away, and ended up taking them home. By the end of the week I had received all consent forms back from students in the five participating classes.

Building relationships

Building relationships is an essential component of ethnographic research, which can be seen as an ongoing process through the research and beyond (O'Reilly, 2012). Establishing relationships marked by trust, reciprocity, and respect also helps mitigate barriers (e.g., of age, culture, or education), and reduce power differentials.

While I had gained *official* access to the school and classes, I still needed to gain *unofficial* access to the actual participants; I achieved this through building rapport and establishing relationships. The classes involved less interaction as such; I sat in the class, and just observed. The main role of my attending the lessons was for students to acclimatise to my presence, which enabled relationship building. Spending time with the students in their class gave me credibility and showed them I was genuinely interested in them and their surroundings. Furthermore, the short times between classes offered valuable opportunities to engage with them. Within a day or two the students did not take much notice of me, and it very soon felt as if my presence was not impacting on their behaviour in any way. However, there was a step between merely sitting in a classroom and actually engaging and spending leisure time with participants. It is hard to distinguish the turning point at which I became not a newcomer but someone familiar; over the first two weeks I felt a gradual transition from feeling new to feeling part of the group.

As I had anticipated, the first relationships I managed to cement with students occurred in the form time, because of the interactional nature of the class. My first proper interaction occurred with Elli in the hallway. I was standing alone in front of the form time room, quite early, when Elli turned up, smiled at me and asked if I was waiting for class. She chatted happily to me about school and her new subjects, and she told me about her friends from youth club. Suddenly there was a fire drill. "Oh man, not a fire drill", Elli said. "What do we need to do?" I asked her, and she told me to come along; "we'll walk down to the field". Elli "took me by the hand" and walked down to the field with me. She was very

chatty and did not mind telling me all about her life. After the fire drill and a few minutes of standing on the field, she continued to stay by my side. Together we walked back up towards the classroom for form time. In the last minutes of form time I talked further with Elli:

> Me: "What do you always do for lunch?"
>
> Elli: "We're always here; you can come if you want."
>
> Me: "That sounds great."
>
> Elli: "Sweet, see you later."
>
> Me: "Ok, cool, I'll see you later."
>
> Only one week in was my first invitation to join some girls for lunch.

Spending lunchtimes with the girls was a great opportunity to chat and build relationships. They were very interested in me: in what I was doing, but also generally about my life. Because I was sharing personal details with them I felt they built trust in me and to some degree a friendship with me. The lunch group I became part of consisted of girls from my other classes, like Tui from psychology and Risha from classics. I decided to stay with this lunch group for a while. I ended up spending most morning tea breaks there as well, because form time rolled over into morning tea. The group was a great starting point, and led me to explore various other lunch activities through my key participants. The most frequent activity I participated in was joining them on outings to buy food; most often at the supermarket, but also at local food outlets. Some girls had other lunchtime obligations, such as committee or club meetings. When I asked them about their activities, they often said "you should come along one time", and I accepted. In one instance the girls were all talking about their peer support lunch. I asked them about it, and was invited to come along to learn all about it. Being part of this group thus branched out into many

different activities; I heard about a wide range of school events through the girls' talk, and came to feel part of everyday school life.

Being not visibly older than the participants was advantageous to me for the purposes of blending in. In the spirit of this thesis, sharing food was a key facilitator in my building and strengthening relationships with the students. I was included in food outings, and offered food that was shared. For instance, chips were a food often bought and shared around, and in the first few days I spent with the first lunch group I became part of, I was offered some. I felt that the act of sharing food made our relationship closer, and that it meant they felt more equal with me.

I went on to establish some relationships with girls in the psychology class, especially through Tui, whom I knew from the lunch group. I sat with her and four other girls at a group table in psychology. In my third week in class, towards the end of the Monday morning lesson (period one), Anna asked me if I wanted to join her and Ulla for their free period (in Year 13 most girls had five subjects and one or two free periods a day). I said "sure, that would be great", and followed them out of the class. Anna told me that on Mondays she always had to go and check in her wages at the bank. So we walked across to the nearest bank, about five minutes from the school. Following this, we went to the next-door dairy and wandered back to school. At school we went to the atrium, and after about 20 minutes sitting in the beanbags it was time for form time. Spending the second Monday period with these two students turned into a routine. They generally asked me after psychology "what are you doing? Do you want to come with us again?" This process is illustrative of the way in which I became integrated into routines and rituals. After a week or two I was frequently being offered food when the girls came back with it. Feeling obliged to accept their offers, I took what was offered and thanked them kindly. These moments gave me a sense of belonging and acceptance into the group. I found it intriguing

that the subject of my thesis aided me in developing better relationships with the participants.

While I was benefitting from spending so much time in one classroom with certain girls, gaining a lot of insight into their everyday practices over a prolonged period of time, I also sought chances to spend lunch breaks with certain girls from other groups, so that I could experience a wide range of lunch practices. For instance, I spent a few lunchtimes with the Ukelele Club, some in the library, some with a few of the psychology class girls, and some outdoors. Overall, the established relationships I created were an essential vehicle for conducting the following methods, and allowed me to explore diverse avenues of research within the school.

Participant observation

Participant observation is the defining method in ethnographic research, and involves full immersion over a prolonged period of time (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). It can be daunting for the researcher, because data collection emerges as a more reactive process, and the researcher has less control, than in more formal data collection methods, but it allows in-depth insight into participants' everyday lives. Participant observation is a way of approaching fieldwork; a way of learning about a given environment, understanding social life, and establishing a context for sampling and subsequent method development. This section will discuss my experience of the practicalities of taking field notes, as well as the rich data that I collected.

It can be challenging as a novel participant observer to know what to observe. Blommaert and Jie (2010) note that observing "everything" can initially be overwhelming. However, it is necessary in the first phases of research, in order to find one's place and focus, before progressing towards observing specific targets. The first phase of participant observation serves the purpose of building a picture, and learning about the ways things are

done, the things people say, and the ways in which they engage with their environments. This initial knowledge is key prior to more in-depth observation on specific issues (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). My first observations were concerned with learning about the school, about lesson structures, about the environment, and about how students navigated their school lives. While I did include notes on food practices right from the beginning, I was a week or two into the research before I started concentrating more on the food practices.

Participant observation is a continual process of engaging and removing oneself from the field. During the school day I was part of the school life; for example, I immersed myself in lunch breaks and talked about the latest news. Once I had left school for the day, I tried to remove myself from the experiences and record all I had observed, which Bernard (2006) describes as a process to "intellectualize what you've seen and heard, and put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly" (p.344). My field notes included jotting notes (notes I had made during the day tracking thoughts I had considered important), expanded notes (descriptive notes, notes on methods, and meta- or analytic notes), journal/ diary notes (daily reflection of events and practices), and log notes (chronologically organised field notes that provided me with a calendar of events), which I recorded electronically in Microsoft Word (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). I took care not to take notes on girls who were not consenting participants in my study, except for unspecific observations about "general practices". The opportunity to just "be" in the school, and explore, gave me the flexibility to observe and participate in many activities.

In the first term, which consisted of 10 weeks, I participated in school and class activities and observed different lunch contexts, while spending the majority of my time with the core group I had become part of. During this time I reflected on my notes and the development of my role. Throughout the fieldwork, I continued to spend three to four days each week in the school. In term four I slowly felt the onset of data saturation. However, in

term four many food events were happening as part of the year-end activities. Therefore I continued to visit the school two to three days each week. On reflection, one school year was a useful time frame for fieldwork, as it allowed me to experience the whole cycle of the year, including different seasons and celebrations.

As part of my participant observations in the psychology class, I became involved in a health psychology project with Ms Gibson on holistic health and nutrition in term three. Ms Gibson gave me the opportunity to design her unit in line with my research topic as it suited the scope of this term's topic areas. In this unit the students learned about the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health impacts of food practices through readings and a small research project. They wrote personal reflections on the readings, and surveyed students and teachers about the school's role in promoting health holistically through food. It was insightful to learn about the students' perspectives on the issue, and to see them learn about the wider implications of food practices on health. The students consented for me to use their class products (reflections and research reports) in my research. The data available from this project were the girls' notes on the different health dimensions and food, the survey conducted, and their finished research reports.

Interviews

Interviews can take on many forms in ethnographic research, ranging from informal conversations to structured interviews or focus groups (O'Reilly, 2012). O'Reilly advises not to initiate any formal interviews too early in the research, as this can impact on the relationship development process. I waited until term two to start formal interviews. In the interim I engaged in daily informal conversations that provided me with rich insights into experiences and events as they naturally unfolded. Successful informal conversations can only emerge if rapport and cooperation have already been established (Blommaert & Jie, 2010); I facilitated this by placing emphasis on building relationships. The students appeared to be comfortable talking to me, sharing personal stories, and incorporating me

into their usual activities. I felt at ease asking them questions about their practices and activities, and since food consumption is a rather common and well-practised activity, I found ample opportunities to engage in conversations around food. Often the students themselves talked about food practices; it was easy for me to add a few questions on the topic without seeming too invested in interrogating them. I felt I needed to avoid an interrogatory conversation style in order to maintain egalitarian relationships; in achieving this, it did not feel like I was the researcher purely interested in recording data, but an equal conversation partner. Informal conversations were a valuable source of data throughout the year, and provided me with many situational emotions and thoughts that are typically lost once the moment has ceased, and are hard to recall retrospectively. DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) emphasise the importance of active listening, being non-confrontational (including through using one-word prompting), and repeating feedback in informal conversations with participants. I found that the greatest challenge at times was to avoid confrontation and keep my opinion to myself if it differed greatly to those of participants. Otherwise, my practice of listening, subtly prompting and eliciting insights into certain topics evolved naturally. The nature of food as an everyday topic of conversation certainly facilitated my efforts to gain insights into participants' views.

Although I constantly learned through the informal interactions with students, I felt that one-on-one interviews would provide valuable insight into their views, and offer them a private opportunity to talk about relevant issues. It would also give me the opportunity to hear about personal opinions, thoughts, and feelings from different students' perspectives about certain occurrences I had witnessed. Since food practices are habitual and often practised without much thought, I expected some answers to differ from what I had observed in the field. Martens (2012) explains that face-to-face interviews are useful for gaining insight into cultural norms and rules, and can add to the sequences and routines

observed in practices. I used field notes and reflections to identify areas for exploration in the semi-structured interviews.

I started with photo diary interviews, for which I provided a few girls with notebooks and a camera (if they did not have a phone camera) to complete a food photo diary over two weeks. I instructed them to make a diary not about *what* they ate, but rather about with whom, where, when, and how they come into contact with food (see Appendix M for instructions). I asked a range of girls from my classes—whomever I sat next to, or had been talking to—to participate. Of the ten girls I asked over a week, eight ended up doing the task. The reason for the photo interviews was to create prompts for starting the formal interviews, giving participants more power over what they wanted to talk about, and providing a materialistic focus. Sitting straight one-on-one can be uncomfortable for some, and I anticipated that the photo diaries would be a useful tool for easing the conversation, based on my previous experiences of using photos in interviews. After I had conducted the first few interviews, I felt that although the photos provided some prompts to start off the conversations, the girls did not seem to hold on to them much. Additionally, the amount of photos students took varied considerably. In some interviews there were enough photos to usefully guide the interview, and in others there were not enough, and I had to prompt the interviewees throughout. Consequently I designed a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix N) based on the first interviews I had conducted with photos. After conducting a few interviews with the interview guide I felt I had gained equal, if not better, insight into the issues I was interested in, because there was no superfluous talk about the specific food in the photos. The photos would have been more valuable if I had been interested in the foods eaten. For my purposes—the whole context around food practices—it was easy to elicit information without photos. Furthermore, taking photos was a barrier to participation for the students because of the associated additional work of taking the photos; in contrast, stand-alone interviews were easy and required no more than making a time to sit down

together for a chat. I still used the photos for the interviews with the initial eight who had taken them, but thereafter conducted semi-structured interviews with students. In the interviews, I benefited from being young, female, and at ease with the students. I connected with them easily, and rarely felt any awkwardness. This was further facilitated through the relationships I had built with them, depending on how much we had engaged previously.

At the beginning of each interview I read through the consent sheet with students and sought their agreement for participating and voice recording (Appendix K and L). I told them that they did not have to participate if they felt uncomfortable, and that they could choose not to talk about certain issues if they preferred. Overall I interviewed 18 students, most of whom I had recruited through the classes I attended, depending on who I had had a chance to speak to. I approached a few girls who were not in the groups I sat with as well. In addition, I used a list I had obtained from the deputy principal of girls who had just joined the school in Year 13, as I was interested in their views as new students, how they had experienced their integration into the school, and potential comparisons they made to their previous school. Finally, I included the head- and deputy head-girls, adding to the usual interview guide a few questions about their roles and responsibilities within the school. In all, the selection gave me a range of students with varying engagement in school life. The interviewees covered a range of ethnicities and living situations. Some lived with their parents, and many with one parent and a step-parent. One girl lived with her boyfriend and his family, and one was living in her house with family friends while her parents were living overseas for a year. The diversity of living situations provided a good range of food practices. The girls also engaged in different personal food practices, and differed in regards to their engagement with school food events.

For most students the set of questions I used included a few individual questions: for instance, questions on a recent event I had attended with them, a certain event I knew they had attended, or a group conversation we had engaged in recently. The interviews were

ideal for eliciting additional, personal opinions and experiences of certain events and practices pertaining to school life. The interview length ranged between 30 and 60 minutes, with one exception of 75 minutes. I conducted most of the interviews in empty classrooms or the closed-off library rooms, and one outside. After 16 interviews I felt the themes and practices saturating, then after two further interviews I did not see any major new issues emerging. The advantage of being immersed in the school was that I could gain information from participant observations and include it in the interviews, or relate to it when it was said in the interview. I had a feeling of being part of the school and knowing what was going on, which I felt eased the interviews. Especially with the students I had been spending more time with, there was a sense of knowing and trusting each other. One particular interviewee had quite a few personal issues, but felt very comfortable talking to me about these.

Since an ecological view of school connectedness incorporates teacher practices, I also conducted school staff interviews. With the aim of building a complete picture of the school, incorporating teacher and staff views, I developed a semi-structured interview guide to ask teachers about their ideas regarding health and the role of social health in the school, food practices in class, the school food environment, and their own food practices at school (Appendix Q). I approached a range of teachers, aiming to cover different teaching areas (social science, science, languages, drama, arts, etc.), and also included senior management staff. I also interviewed the librarians and canteen staff. Of the 21 staff interviewed, only two were male, which was due to the high proportion of female staff in the school. In the case of the teacher interviews, I went through the information sheet (Appendix O) as I had done for the students, and gained their consent to voice record the interview (Appendix P). I held most interviews in the staffroom during lesson time (when it was empty), or in teachers' offices or classrooms.

Documents

To gain an overview of the school's organisation and procedures, I interviewed one of the deputy principals. She provided me with access to the school's policy documents, formal reports, and development plans. In another of my teacher interviews, I was given documents on the school clubs and committees, and the school's vision for student participation and involvement. I also accessed an Education Review Office report that provided further data on the school. The documents provided me with knowledge on the school context, and enabled me to understand some of its practices in greater depth.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in ethnography is iterative, and requires "reading, thinking, and writing; and rereading, rethinking, and rewriting field notes and transcripts, each time with a particular question in mind" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, p. 179). My data analysis began with the fieldwork; taking notes already involved some degree of analysis, because I inevitably filtered what I noted. Overall, I used a variety of ethnographic data analysis techniques. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) propose that ethnographers begin analysis through close reading, open coding, and analytic memo writing, and then progress to focused coding and integrative memo writing. Although any analysis moves through multiple series of coding, these two phases serve as an overall orientation for the progression, also referred to as first and second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013). I used Dedoose, an online qualitative analysis software, for coding and analysis.

I started my formal data analysis by reading all the data, interviews, field notes, and contextual information I had accumulated, of which I included the first three for coding. Emerson et al. (2011) suggest that it is useful to see field notes as written by a stranger, to gain a sense of distance; in this regard, my break of over one year between collection and analysis (due to maternity leave) helped. The aim of the first cycle of coding was to capture

as many ideas as come up while staying very close to the data, regardless of whether it will be used later on.

I began thematic analysis by transcribing and reading through the data, before entering into the initial coding cycle (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding assigns a "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 262). This process can take many directions, and be applied in many ways. I sought a systematic method to assign codes that would help me organise and make sense of all my data (Saldaña, 2013). The coding methods I adopted are illustrated in Figure 7.

First cycle coding methods

Attribute coding
(for all data as a management technique)

Structural coding
(for all data as a "grand tour" overview)

Process coding
(to describe actions and practices related to food)

Descriptive coding
(for field notes as a detailed inventory of their contents)

Second cycle coding methods

Focused coding
(for categorisation of the coded data as an initial analytic strategy)

In vivo coding
(for interview transcripts as a method of attuning myself to participant language, perspectives, and worldviews)
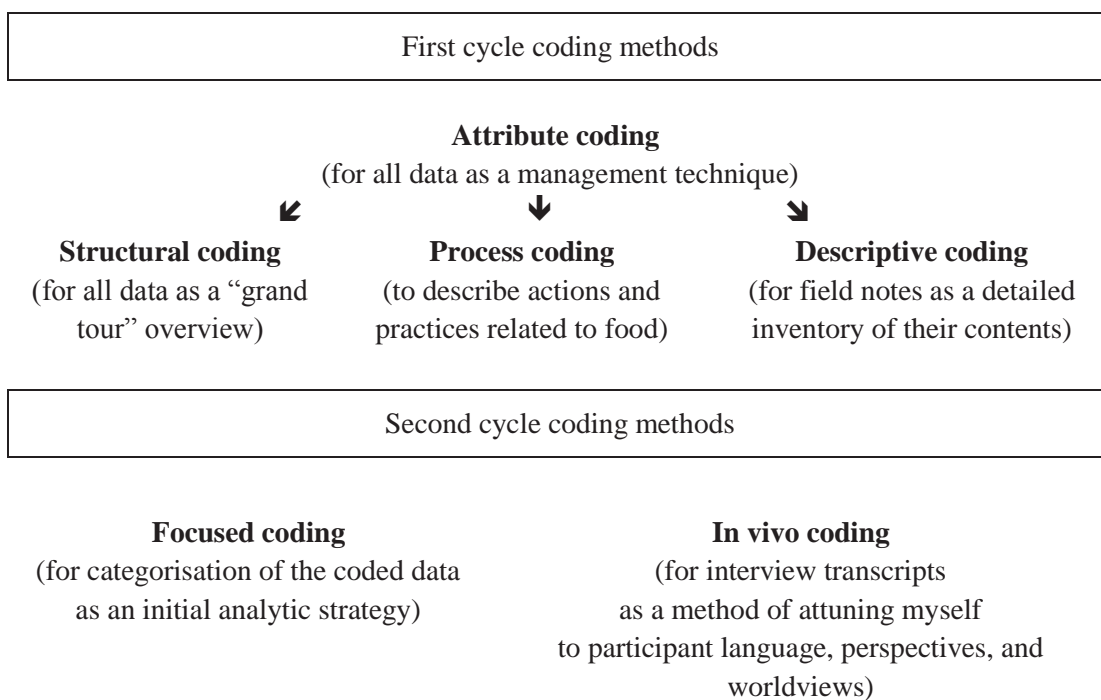

Figure 7. Coding techniques and progression.

I started with attribute coding, which "attributes" certain descriptive parameters to the data, such as participant characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, teaching area) and data

source (e.g., student interview, teacher interview, field notes, etc.). In the first cycle of coding I also applied structural coding to the data; this is otherwise known as content-based coding, which codes segments of data based on a specific research question, relating to a particular field of interest (MacQueen, McLellan-Lemal, Bartholow, & Milstein, 2008). For instance, I used the codes "whole school events" and "class events" to code all the food-related events that featured in the data. I used further sub-codes (for other particular events) to create a record of all the available data for certain occasions (e.g., all the data for shared lunches came under one code). To impose a theory-driven approach to my thematic analysis I also included codes informed by previous reading. I included the identified school connectedness indicators (Chapter 5), areas of the health-promoting schools model (Chapter 5), and ideas informed by my thematic synthesis (Chapter 4). I also applied process coding, to capture people's food practices as activities; this is a technique used to seek "ongoing action/interaction/emotion taken in response to situations, or problems, often with the purpose of reaching a goal or handling a problem" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 96-97), and is therefore well suited to the focus on interactions and relations in this study. Process coding did prove to be a particularly useful coding technique, since much of what could be found in the data related to people's actions (e.g., cooking, talking, caring, knowing others, going out, eating dinner, etc.). I further added descriptive coding in the first cycle to identify topics in the data. Here single short phrases or words were used to summarise a topic discussed. O'Reilly (2012) argues that descriptive coding is a useful first step for ethnographers, since it allows them to "get a feel" for the data. For instance, the codes "knowing others" or "bringing people together" referred to data in which people noted they got to know people through food events, or where these practices physically brought people to one place.

Once I had coded all the data in an initial cycle, I made an overview of all the codes I had applied and sorted them into areas of similarities, so that I could review them in a

second, and more focused, cycle of coding. This second cycle was useful to combine, eliminate, and subdivide codes, which allowed me to organise reoccurring ideas into broader themes (Saldaña, 2013). While coding with a more focused view I also applied new (or changed existing) codes through in vivo coding, to incorporate participants' language and perspectives. It was useful doing this in the second cycle, as at that stage I had less to focus on and a better sense of the data; I let participants' words guide me on deciding how and what to merge or eliminate. I reviewed and edited codes, refined excerpts, and considered the deeper meaning of codes. I had already achieved some hierarchical ordering during first-cycle coding, for instance grouping together all class food events (e.g., shared lunches or cooking with class) and school food events (e.g., father-daughter breakfast or wine and pedagogy). In this second cycle of coding I refined the system further through reading through codes and their extracts and revisiting what exactly comprised that code, and then I compared codes and looked for similarities and differences, to determine whether I could merge them. I reduced an initial 225 codes down to 128. For example, I read through the excerpts under the codes "food reduces/increases the feelings of risk" and "food makes other activities more comfortable" and "easing the awkwardness" and could see mutual meanings emerging. In these cases I merged the codes and either kept one of the existing titles or formulated a new one that more authentically captured the code. I also renamed some codes. Examples of merging included "food opens people up" and "food makes other activities more comfortable". I also created a new category called "Food . . ." to encompass all those codes that described the effects food had on people at certain times and events. I also added a miscellaneous folder into which I sorted 52 codes (including all the subcodes) for later use. This included codes I had generated for background information, and things I had found in the data that were not directly relevant for my research questions: for instance, body image talk, information to do with the value of ethnographic approach, or information on health with according subcategories. These areas

were less relevant for the key research questions, and it eased the initial process of sorting through the codes to remain focused on those relevant to the core research questions. Alongside coding I wrote memos that enabled elaboration of what the codes meant, how they linked, what they said about the data, and how they might be developed into a more comprehensive argument. Once I had exhausted the reading of the codes I checked in Dedoose for code co-occurrence to see if there were any codes that had high numbers, indicating that they had often been applied to the same excerpts. In the case of any co-occurrence over ten I checked to make sure the codes were not overlapping in meaning too much. I kept track of any codes I merged, so that I had a trail of my code, and ultimately, theme development.

To further refine the categorisation, and step into theme development, I exported the excerpts for each code within a certain category into a word processing file, read the excerpts in each code, took descriptive and interpretive notes on the excerpts, and used these interpretive memos to further guide my writing. During this activity I started to note down themes that emerged from my writing, jotting them onto a large A3 sheet in the form of a mind map to facilitate connecting ideas, drawing similarities and differences, and creating an overall picture. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that determining what makes up a theme is not "dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question" (p.82). Therefore in making judgement calls about merging codes and generating themes I repeatedly asked myself how a theme would contribute to the research questions. According to my research questions there were three central themes that emerged for further detailed analysis: young people's food rituals (Chapter 7), shared lunches and school connectedness (Chapter 8), and food practices within a whole-school (health-promoting schools) approach to school connectedness (Chapter 9), which are discussed in more depth in the according chapter.

Validity

Establishing validity is important in any research. However, as Phillips (1987) points out, "it must be recognized that there are *no* procedures that will regularly (or always) yield either sound data or true conclusions" (p.21, italics in original). As Maxwell (2012) suggests, I took a contextual and procedural approach to validity, which I achieved through attending to specific validity threats my study might have encountered.

My prolonged period of fieldwork and the wealth of data I collected provided a strong foundation for the study. That is, the observations I made were more likely to be an accurate reflection of students' everyday lives, because they were gathered over the whole school year. Furthermore, the fieldwork gave me time to reflect on my observations and questions, and to review them in the field. I kept a self-reflexive journal, in which I took daily notes on my relationship to participants, how I may have affected data collection, and how my perspective on the research context and questions evolved. The journal was valuable for the way it allowed me to critically reflect on my goals, making sure I was looking at the whole picture and not just trying to see the results I wanted to see. Re-reading parts of the journal every week helped me maintain a critical eye on my own behaviour and focus throughout data collection.

Personal transcription of the data ensured that the data analysed was contextualised and there were fewer chances for ambiguities to arise. I did member checks with a range of participants who volunteered to read a summary of their interview scripts. I also discussed my findings with the psychology teacher, who became my primary reference person, throughout my fieldwork. Peer debriefing with my supervisors helped me to delineate over- and underemphasised aspects, clarify vague descriptions, and critique my underlying assumptions and biases on the data.

I also sought discrepant evidence and negative cases. For instance, in the case of observations regarding social interactions during food practices, I critically questioned whether social interaction would have occurred without the event. I also used triangulation, offering different perspectives on the same event (e.g., from my observer view, a teacher's perspective, and various student experiences), to strengthen my conclusions. Throughout data collection, I used such different perspectives to critique and question my own observations. I often took notes from my observations to include in dialogue with participants, who offered me their perspective on the topic. I also compared observations and participant accounts across events and times of the year, to contrast findings and search for similarities and differences. I formulated a rich description of the research site, the participants, and all events, to ensure I had a detailed record of my fieldwork to fall back on in analysis. These descriptions enabled me to envisage the applicability of the research in other contexts.

My Position as a Researcher

My beliefs, values, and past experiences have influenced the framing of this study, the research design, the relationships with the participants, and the interpretation of the results. My personal interest in the topic laid the groundwork for the study and directed me towards school health promotion literature. My personal beliefs in holistic health and the values of the new health promotion, including a commitment to participation, empowerment, and social justice, likewise informed the framing of the study.

As in any research in which relationships with participants are established, my relationships with the participants shaped the data collection period and consequently affected the results (Maxwell, 2012). These relationships influenced the knowledge participants were willing to share with me, and enabled me to gain "insider" knowledge. The knowledge I gained from my fieldwork experience is valuable, but must be seen as a

result of the relationships I established.

A Reflection on Ethics

Ethical considerations were important at all stages of my research: early in the planning phases, throughout data collection, and at the stage of documenting my participants' voices. I will use these three phases as a basis on which to reflect on and discuss the key issues I encountered.

Ethical issues arose as early as my thinking about the research topic. As Chapter 2 discussed, a researcher's choice of topic frames his or her whole inquiry, and choosing is thus itself an ethical endeavour. My reflection on the issues I was interested in, and how I would frame my topic, was guided by my values as a health promoter of participation, empowerment, and social justice, as well as holistic health. Chapter 2 discussed the ways in which a biopsychosocial frame could broaden the scope of nutrition promotion; this guided my ethically informed choices early in this research project.

The next phase of considering ethical issues emerged in my preparation of the study and application for university ethics approval, in which I identified the potential risks of the research. I considered food practices to be minimally private and intimate, but saw the potential for students with eating disorders to feel uncomfortable when faced with my research topic. I made an effort to stress my focus on the social nature of eating for this reason. I also considered various scenarios in which students might engage in illegal behaviour while in my presence. As a researcher in a trust relationship with the students, I decided it would be appropriate to not report any such behaviour by default, and that I would determine my reaction to each situation on a case-by-case basis. An example of my trying not to judge behaviours was my experience when a smoking participant expressed to me her desire to quit. I remained silent on the issue; although I do not agree with the smoking, it was not my role there to tell her what is best for her health. Another example

was a participant's disclosure of an eating disorder. Through the talk it became apparent that teachers knew about her problems and that she was seeing someone to deal with her issues. I therefore did not see a need to offer judgement, refer or seek to intervene in this issue. In the case of students causing serious physical or psychological threat to other students or themselves, my stance was to seek responsible people in the school, which had existing procedures in place to deal with such situations. For my own safety I decided that if I were to attend any private events I would let one supervisor know prior to attending. I made sure not to take part in any events in which there was an indication of alcohol consumption, to minimise exposure to illegal behaviour. As it happened none of the risks I had anticipated arose during data collection; even so, these considerations helped me think through my role and positioning as a researcher carefully. I also consulted a Māori ethics advisor with whom to discuss Māori needs and issues in my study (see Appendix R).

During data collection the key ethical challenges for me were to respect students' privacy, their willingness to share with me (even if it was not related to my research topic), and equally their unwillingness to share anything with me. Throughout my fieldwork I acted as a friend, but took on a passive role within the friendships that evolved. Rather than leading conversations, suggesting places to go, or seeding my ideas with participants, as I would in my real-life friendships, I let the students take on these roles, and followed their lead throughout. The students seemed to feel responsible, and happy, to take me by the hand and show me their school lives. I feel that initiating these relationships in this passive way set the path for a rather equal relationship throughout, in which students never felt obliged to share with me. Although I was aware of the implicit power I had, in that I was collecting data that was of interest to me rather than them, I saw that food was part of their everyday lives—lunch breaks with friends, walking to the supermarket, or shared lunches in class. Food practices and the interactions and relationships arising through these practices were important to the participants, to varying degrees. In this sense I never felt I was imposing

my agenda on them; I paid respect to all their food practices, whether they were coherent with my personal preferences or not. I made sure to pay respect to their perspectives on any issues they wished to share with me. In informal conversations I let them lead the topic. Similarly in the interviews I was facilitative of their views and aimed to give them control over the process through listening to their stories and asking open questions.

As a health promotion researcher the values of participation, empowerment, and social justice guided my way. I aimed to be approachable to all students through talking to different groups of students and picking up on subtle signs that indicated an interest to talk to me, and I attempted to visit a range of subject classrooms, to enable many different students to participate in the research. It was important to me not to disempower participants, and ideally to contribute in some way to their sense of empowerment. Simply taking interest in their lives often seemed to be empowering for these young people. I felt they were excited about the fact that they were able to share many positive stories with me; it seemed they felt empowered to share these stories with me, in contrast to the way they might feel about being asked about things they were not doing well. Students often commented on society's perception of youth, and that the "world" thought of them as disobedient; this often led to feelings of powerlessness. I attempted to provide equal opportunities for students to contribute to the research, asking a range of students from different backgrounds to partake in interviews, and avoiding privileging any information I obtained.

Mayall (2002b) argues that issues of power inequalities between researchers and young people are most profound in the stages of interpretation and writing up: during research, researchers can deny or reformulate the research process, but once they have left the field it is the researcher's privilege alone to work with the data. I remained aware of this responsibility, and attended to it through considering every participant's perspective, and trying to avoid leaving out any detail because I deemed it irrelevant. For obvious reasons it

was impossible to report back the vast amount of opinions and voices I had in my data; however, I made sure to include at least one instance of each participant's voice in some way in the representation of the results. Because my results focused on school food practices, there was no space to include the wealth of stories the students shared with me about their food practices in family and community lives beyond the school. I plan to use this data for later publications, and facilitate young people's voices in this area also. In the representation of the results I attempted to include the perspectives authentically, letting participants' words speak for themselves.

Reporting back and disseminating my findings is a further task important to completing my ethical responsibilities as a researcher. Mayall (2002b) notes that youth researchers often miss the opportunity to report back to the participants themselves, and instead concentrate on disseminating the findings in the adult world. Besides publishing the research in journal articles, presenting at conferences, and presenting to groups at the research school, I therefore also made the results more readily available to the student participants. I have sent the students who contributed to the research in a more extensive manner a document including the abstracts of the papers I have submitted or published (with a note that I can make any of the articles available to them), as well as a brief summary in lay language of the key findings and conclusions of the research. I have also highlighted to them the ways in which their part in the research has contributed to the research world (see Appendix S). I plan to publish further articles in popular and practice contexts. I have already written a blog post for Neighbourly New Zealand on the social value of food, and plan to publish more in the New Zealand education and health promotion area.

Lastly, to ensure confidentiality I have stored all the data I collected on a password-protected digital drive to which only I have access. The consent forms, the surveys, and the photo diary booklets are stored securely in a locked cabinet.

A Reflection on the Methodology

Critical ethnography can create change in a variety of ways. It seemed to me that most participants broadened their perspective on food through participating in the research project. Throughout the course of my fieldwork several participants mentioned to me that they had never thought about the meaning of food in the sense in which I was looking at it.

"Eating something bad doesn't always have to make you feel bad, you have to really see all the benefits of something, eating food with your friend is just more important than the healthiness sometimes, it's a balance, but I just didn't realise why it made me feel so good sometimes, seeing food like this helps me find a balance without always feeling bad about eating bad stuff."
(S03)

My use of critical ethnography made my research journey a fulfilling one. Students often noted how much they liked this type of research; that is was "*so much better than a survey*" and that "*they could say what they wanted to say rather than tick a box*". Besides the research I have been able to generate from my fieldwork, I felt like I made a positive difference, even if in a small way, to some of the participants' lives. They valued me as a friend, even though it was a different friendship to the ones they had with their school friends. They saw me as someone to ask about broader questions; for instance, many asked me about how to make decisions regarding tertiary education. I was not a parent, not a teacher, not someone who would tell them off or make rules; but I was someone who was older and had a little more experience than they did. I carried with me the sense of responsibility this imparted at all times, and knew I had to consider all advice I gave carefully. In summary, while the methodology I chose came with a high responsibility and need for thoughtfulness, I also felt it came with many rewards.

I was fortunate with the school that accepted me, and the students I met. I do think there are certainly settings in which I may have encountered more difficulties and dilemmas. However, I would choose this methodology again for conducting similar research. It was a suitable methodology for exploring everyday practices and gaining insight into young people's perspectives. Students clearly indicated their trust in me several times, and I still have contact with some of them now, two years after finishing data collection.

The ongoing impact of my research is also rewarding. A while ago I heard from Ms Gibson. She told me that she now does social health and nutrition in social studies. She approached me and asked if I would come and talk to her Year 10 students about my research. She explained that when she was negotiating term topics with her class, the students asked if they could do something with food. In light of her engagement with my project she realised that food can of course be part of a social studies curriculum, and consequently designed a term plan in which the students learn about issues such as food and culture, and social relationships and food. At the end of their unit they held a big feast to which each student brought a dish meaningful to them accompanied by a one-page essay on the significance of their chosen foods. The relationships built and impacts generated through providing alternative insights into a topic were valuable assets of the methodology.

Chapter 7

Food Rituals in School Life

"Daily participation in ritualized sharing

is an invaluable practice ground for social living

and serves an important socializing function."

(Katriel, 1987, p. 317)

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The first results paper of this thesis aims to answer the first research question of how young people use food practices to establish, maintain, and strengthen their social relationships. As Chapter 4 highlighted, food practices offer young people a vehicle in everyday life for managing their social relationships. This chapter explores in-depth how such processes may occur in young people's school lives by examining their food rituals, which emerged as core food practices by which young people established, maintained, and strengthened their relationships. This then is the focus of this chapter, which will be published as follows:

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (2015). Fostering relationships through food rituals in a New Zealand school. *Health Education.* In press.

Fostering Relationships through Food Rituals in a New Zealand School

Abstract

Purpose - Food practices, including associated routines, rituals, and habits, are an unexplored area in school health promotion. In this paper we aim to fill this gap through exploring how food rituals act as vehicles for young people to establish, maintain, and strengthen social relationships.

Design/methodology/approach - Through an ethnographic inquiry, including observations and interviews with teachers and 16-18 year old students in New Zealand, everyday practices were explored in-depth across one school year.

Findings - The findings include three food rituals as significant for young people in managing their social relationships, including *the lunch walk, ritualised sharing, and gifting food.* The findings highlight the importance of everyday food rituals for young people's social relationships. For instance, gifting cake mediated care to friends, showed trust in the relationship, and allowed to reciprocate; the lunch walk encouraged social interaction and was a means by which young people could integrate into a new group; and ritualised sharing food involved negotiating friendship boundaries.

Research limitations/implications - The study is exploratory with findings reported from one school. Further research exploring how young people use food rituals in their everyday lives for managing social relationships is needed.

Originality/value - A focus on social relationships in settings such as schools could broaden the scope of nutrition promotion to promote health in physical, mental, and social dimensions. Implications for school health promotion are discussed.

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Introduction

Food practices are embedded in everyday life, play a central role in social relationships, and can be used to non-verbally communicate emotions (Beardsworth and Keil, 2013); they may be defined as any activity in which food is involved, ranging from food preparation, gifting food, or sharing meals. Food practices, including associated routines, rituals, and habits, offer potential for new areas of practice within health promotion. The focus of this paper is on the opportunities food practices, in particular rituals, offer young people as vehicles to establish, maintain, and strengthen social relationships.

Nutrition promotion is an important part of health promotion with the purpose of promoting people's physical health through improving dietary intake. Within this field young people's nutrition is often targeted to shape eating habits early in life (Currie *et al.*, 2012; Sawyer *et al.*, 2012). Social aspects of young people's food practices are most often researched to determine how social factors impact on dietary intake (Story *et al.*, 2002; Knai *et al.*, 2006), with less attention given to the rationale for, or importance of, using food practices in social relationships. While the importance of food intake for physical health cannot be denied, we argue that the emphasis placed on physical health outcomes may not utilise the full potential of food practices for promoting physical, mental, and social health holistically. Framing food practices as important for all health dimensions could increase the scope of young people's nutrition promotion. The philosophy of the new public health (Baum, 2008), as well as a range of health promotion models (Raeburn and Rootman, 1998;

Green and Tones, 2010) point to the relevance of a holistic health definition. Social health within these models may be seen as a mediator for mental and physical health, and as an important health dimension in its own right (McLeroy *et al.*, 2002).

Youth health promotion frameworks, like the health-promoting schools (HPS) model, also support the relevance of social health for young people (St Leger, 2004). Within the school setting for instance, school connectedness (positive relationships within a school), is deemed an important asset for young people's health as well as academic achievement (McNeely *et al.*, 2002). Assets-based approaches focusing on factors that create health and wellbeing (as opposed to factors that causes disease and illness) appear to be especially promising for maintaining health gains throughout the life course (Granger, 2002; Morgan and Haglund, 2009).

The study of food practices in schools as a health promotion setting has been largely concerned with young people's food intake (Carter and Swinburn, 2004; Taylor *et al.*, 2015). However, a recent thematic synthesis including studies from school settings found that social relationships were central to young people's food practices (Neely *et al.*, 2014), warranting further inquiry into this area. Furthermore, research addressing the underlying social mechanisms of food practices may be valuable for informing nutrition interventions in schools, which often do not take the importance of socio-cultural aspects for students into account (Beaulieu and Godin, 2011; Callaghan *et al.*, 2015; Waddingham *et al.*, 2015; Weare, 2015).

Rituals, relationships, and food practices

Feeling a sense of connection through positive social relationships is a fundamental human need (Baumeister and Leary, 1995), and social relationships are crucial for good physical (Berkman, 1995; Holt-Lunstad *et al.*, 2010), mental, and social (Lerner, 2004;

Maurizi *et al.*, 2013) health. Young people benefit from positive relationships in family, peer, and school settings (Roeser *et al.*, 1998; Collins and Laursen, 2004).

Rituals are important in maintaining and strengthening relationships, entail symbolism and cultural variability, and form a meaningful method of daily communicative practice (Bruess and Pearson, 1997). Rituals are common in family life, in which they are emotionally charged and have symbolic meaning to family members. Among friendship groups, rituals are enacted and form an important way of furthering intimacy (Bruess and Pearson, 1997). In young people's peer cultures shared practices strengthen relationships and mediate a sense of belonging (Corsaro, 2011). To date, most research on rituals has been within the sphere of the family. Some of the major areas covered have been how rituals forge intergenerational bonds, sustain family cohesion, convey family values, mediate a sense of belonging, foster closeness, and offer opportunities for interaction (Wolin and Bennett, 1984; Fiese, 2006). Family rituals have been linked to young people's health, mediated through family cohesion (Crespo *et al.*, 2011). Young people may use rituals, such as organising Christmas events, to show agency in family life and actively promote their family identity (Cheal, 1988). Besides special occasions, it is also important to pay attention to the mundane, everyday rituals young people participate in. For instance, the everyday family mealtime can contribute to identity, structure, and connectedness in young people's lives, and has been found to be a developmental asset and protective factor for young people (Neumark-Sztainer *et al.*, 2010). There is little research however, that has looked at how young people use rituals within different contexts beyond the family, such as in peer groups or school.

Research in early childhood settings has found that the establishment of rituals by teachers created a sense of community and contributed to more positive relationships between teachers, parents, and children (Maloney, 2000; Scully and Howell, 2008). Katriel (1987) studied children's ritualised sharing practices in Israel and found that they used food

exchanges as a "ritualized gesture that functions to express and regulate social relationships within the peer group" (p.307). Gifting rituals are a common practice in relationships that young people opt into as they age (Cheal, 1988). Gifts can solidify the commitment in relationships. For instance, Segev *et al.* (2012) describe a group ritual of gifting helium balloons within a friendship group that reinforced their identity and mediated an emotional expression towards the gift-receiver. For young people, consumption practices take on an important role in shaping individual and collective identities. Such consumption ranges from everyday food consumption to branded clothing and technology commodities (Stead *et al.*, 2011). Rituals within young people's relationships are therefore often intertwined with consumption practices in everyday life.

Overall, there is a scarcity of studies explicitly investigating the significance of food practices for social health, and none exploring the meaning of food rituals amongst young people for their social relationships in school and peer settings. This paper applies an analytic framework on the role of rituals in everyday food practices and their relation to social relationships and social health. This focus contributes to a broader framework of a holistic health understanding of food practices in young people's lives. We present ethnographic findings regarding food rituals and social relationships amongst students in a single secondary school with the aim to explore how young people use food rituals to establish, maintain, and strengthen their social relationships in everyday school life; and to investigate a rationale for using food practices and social relationships as an asset for holistic health promotion.

Methods

This study used a critical ethnographic methodology (Thomas, 1993) to explore young people's everyday food practices in a New Zealand secondary school. Ethnographic work in New Zealand school settings has shown to be a valuable methodology for

understanding health topics, such as obesity, physical activity, and body image, from a socio-cultural perspective (Burrows, 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Burrows and McCormack, 2013). The prolonged participant observations enabled to document food practices in their natural setting and determine regularities and the function thereof in young people's school lives.

The critical stance in this research was taken by going beyond power structures that determine disciplinary boundaries, which Pollner (1991) refers to as the outer rim of practice that delimits research endeavours. This rim may be seen as a constitutional ideology that offers a social control mechanism to keep things in order. Critical ethnography provided a methodology with which to question these perceived disciplinary boundaries and explore the meaning of food practices for social health. The critical lens in this research aims to challenge current knowledge and forms of inquiry in nutrition promotion; exploring the meaning of taken-for-granted food practices to see what lies beyond current boundaries. Our approach is underpinned by a values-based approach to health promotion, which supports a critical stance and concern with power. In that sense exploring the meaning of food practices for social health as a component of holistic health offers a "juxtaposition of and dialogue about alternative images" (Thomas, 1993, p. 18). An inquiry into alternative ways of thinking about food practices allows separation from restricted perceptions, interpretations, discourse, and actions. It frees researchers from thinking about food only in terms of physical health, allowing them to see it as contributing to other health dimensions.

Researcher reflexivity was maintained through daily journal writing and peer debriefing. Ethics approval was gained from the university ethics committee, but importantly, attention to ethical concerns in the field was present at all times. The issue of ethics is intertwined with concerns about representation (Madison, 2005). To ensure we kept close to the participants voices we conducted peer debriefing, member checks, and

made sure to include the full breadth of participants' voices in the results. Furthermore, we also compared observations and participant accounts across events and times of the year, to contrast findings and search for similarities and differences. We formulated a rich description of the research site, the participants, and all events, to ensure we had a detailed record of the fieldwork to fall back on in analysis.

Participants

The participating school was an urban girls' secondary school with approximately 1300 students located within a middle-to-high income area in New Zealand. The participants were 16-18 years old, and attending Year 13 (final year of secondary school). The first author (EN) spent the 2012 school year in five classes (in which teachers showed interest in the research), with the aims of being accepted into student peer groups and observing classroom activities. Once accepted into friendship groups, EN spent free morning and lunchtime breaks, study periods, and some after-school activities with students. EN spent the majority of time in one group of eight students, with frequent interactions across other groups. The participants were of New Zealand nationality with mixed ethnic origins (including but not exclusive to European New Zealand, Māori, Pacific Indian), proficient in the English language. The participants gave consent for participant observation, with independent consent sought for interviews.

Data collection

Fieldwork was completed over one school year (February-November 2012) with ethics approval granted by the university ethics committee. The data was collected through participant observation and interviews. The ethnographic approach enabled EN to build relationships with the participants and gain insight into their school food practices. The observations were valuable for identifying the mundane rituals embedded in young people's everyday practices, which could be followed up on in interviews. EN conducted 18 student

and 21 teacher interviews, which lasted between 30 and 90 minutes and were voice recorded with consent. An interview guide was used to prompt conversations into young people's food practices, exploring their everyday practices, and if possible referring to their observed practices. Over the course of the school year 600 hours of participant observations in school lessons, breaks, and after school were carried out, with EN attending school between 2-5 school days every week. The participant observations complemented the interviews by offering insight into the habitual food practices that included non-reflective actions in students' everyday contexts, such as the tacit interaction with food or the observed emotions associated with a situation.

Analysis

Field notes and interviews (transcribed verbatim) were coded thematically using the qualitative data analysis software Dedoose. All data were read and re-read in multiple cycles of coding for themes related to the overall project aim of how food practices affected social relationships. Practices related to everyday activities were grouped together and re-read to determine reoccurring patterns in young people's everyday practices. Interview data were triangulated with observation data to contextualise the findings and ensure the observations represented participants' voices and meanings appropriately. Verbatim quotes were used in the results to illustrate the themes (teacher and student quotes are numbered by interview, e.g., T02, S01). Names and places were changed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Results

Most New Zealand secondary schools have a tuckshop, but no canteen providing cooked meals for students. Consequently in New Zealand about 84% of students bring 'most', and 11% 'some' of their lunch from home; however close to 95% still purchase 'some' food from the tuckshop (a small school-based retailer) (Ministry of Health, 2003).

Within the study school there were two main breaks, a 20-minute morning tea break and a 50-minute lunchbreak. Rather than being centralised in one location (dining hall), the eating was dispersed throughout the whole school with no prescribed lunch area. The atrium[1] and library were the two main indoor amenities for eating, but did not provide enough space for all students. The remaining students spent their breaks in classrooms or outdoors, weather permitting. Most participants said that they liked being in the classrooms in their little groups, however teachers were often not in favour of their classrooms being used as eating spaces. Large groups were often the only group in the room (due to physical space available) whereas with smaller groups there were up to three or four in one class. Sometimes these groups interacted with each other, however they largely remained within their core groups. The group constellations were overall present during both, the morning tea and lunchbreaks. In lunchbreaks girls often joined their friends later on, either due to committee or club meetings, or because they had been out purchasing food for their lunch, since the Year 13 students were allowed to leave the school premises during their breaks. The majority of observations were carried out in one classroom to study the dynamics, rituals, and food practices within that group of students. However, frequently observations were also made in other classrooms in which entry could be gained through students EN knew from class.

Amongst the everyday practices related to food, three core rituals emerged as significant for young people in establishing, maintaining, and strengthening their social relationships. These were labelled *the lunch walk, ritualised sharing, and gifting food,* and each is described in turn below.

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[1] The atrium was the big, new entrance hall of the school where there were around 50 beanbags for the students to use during their breaks and free periods.

The lunch walk

> *"The Year 13s go out for lunch, and they wouldn't just go out for a walk, you know*
> *that's going to be the purpose of going out to get their food." (T12)*

Going out to buy food was an important ritual amongst many students. However, most participants preferred not to go out by themselves. Even if the accompanying person did not buy anything, they provided moral support and made the ritual complete. If someone wanted to go out they would often bribe their friend to avoid going alone, for instance through offering to buy them something.

> *"I was sitting with Jackie and Tui at lunch, Jackie was contemplating whether to*
> *go buy lunch now or after school. I hadn't brought anything with me, so I told the*
> *girls I needed to go to the supermarket to get a smoothie. In that minute Jackie*
> *decided to get a bagel and come with me, Tui quickly said 'ok, I'll come with you*
> *guys'. In the supermarket they both tried to find the smoothies for me and wouldn't*
> *let me search around by myself, it felt like a caring gesture to make sure I found*
> *what I was looking for. Then we went to get Jackie's bagel, and walked back, Tui*
> *was content not buying anything and enjoyed our chatter along the way." (Field*
> *notes, 6/6/2012)*

Students tended to have regular lunchtime practices. Most either brought lunch from home or were "purchasers" who went out most days to buy something. Amongst the girls who brought their lunches from home it was common that they still went on lunch walks to just accompany someone, or, quite frequently, buy something little as an extra treat or snack. Girls felt connected to each other through sharing the ritual, in which the act of walking out of the school to get food together was something that increased their bond through the shared experience.

"Usually at lunch, um, quite a few of us go out to [supermarket] together or go to Wholly Bagels or something, yeah, it's really good, at first I really felt quite grown up being able to like go out and having food with friends, it's quite cool being together." (S05)

Some lunch walks were instigated because of a special occasion, celebrating good grades, the end of the week, a birthday, or something else students could think of, that deserved a little celebration. On birthdays, for instance, the students made the birthday girl feel valued and expressed their excitement by going for a special lunch walk for her birthday.

There were two main types of lunch walks, scheduled and spontaneous. Scheduled lunch walks were (mainly) weekly planned lunch walks with a certain friend or group, and were more often between smaller groups of two or three students. Spontaneous lunch walks occurred frequently, but not at particular times, as scheduled ones did, and often involved a larger group of girls. Scheduled rituals frequently occurred in free study periods as the same students had their free periods together every week, as opposed to lunchtime when everyone was available, and the group dynamics were more eclectic. The second period on a Monday morning was an example in which EN was invited to participate in a lunch walk, a few weeks into the fieldwork. Anna and Ulla had a ritual of going over the street to the supermarket to buy something to share, after which they walked back to the atrium to relax in the beanbags. Once invited to join, there was a sense of commitment with scheduled lunch walks; it was necessary to provide an explanation if something else was scheduled during that time. Spontaneous rituals on the other hand were often initiated at the beginning of lunch when someone was looking for a lunch walk buddy, or students expressed a reason to celebrate. Most students appeared to be engaged in both types of rituals.

"Yeah, well every Wednesday, with one of my friends I catch up with her every Wednesday and we just go somewhere, so yeah, and it's just nice cause yeah to catch up." (S17)

The rituals were primarily associated with the event rather than the food consumption, that is, the lunch walk was seen in terms of socialising with friends rather than having the primary goal of eating or buying food. Thus, food practices were the rationale but not the main focus of lunchtime rituals. Lunch walks were utilised as, and ideal for, fostering social interaction. Young people often meandered on their lunch walks chatting away about everything and anything.

Lunch walks generally involved spending money, which did influence the frequency of some students' participation. However, even though some did not have the money or disliked the fact of spending all their money on food, they nevertheless joined in on lunch walks so that they would be included in the group outing. The purchased food was often shared with them although they had not spent anything themselves.

Lunch walks were used as a technique to establish new relationships. It was a gesture of kindness and inclusion to ask someone if they wanted to join in on a lunch walk. The most personally salient example was the first time the students asked EN to come along for a lunch walk.

"It is the second week in, and I have had a few chats with the girls, and they seem to be getting used to me. Today was the first time though that Zoe asked me to join them for their walk to the shops....after the walk, when we sat down again, it felt like I knew them better, it felt like I was more included and part of their group. We had gone to the supermarket and I had bought a juice, it didn't seem to matter what exactly I bought, but our shared experience of a simple walk to the supermarket appeared to have an impact on our relationship." (Field notes, 28/02/2012)

The ritualised lunch walk was a way of establishing, maintaining, and strengthening relationships through the shared purpose of food purchasing. Not every lunch walk participant was required to purchase; instead the act of joining in appeared to be the key mechanism by which the ritual functioned as a bonding practice.

Ritualised sharing

Food sharing was ubiquitous throughout the school, during breaks, while walking to the next class, and even during class. Food sharing also happened naturally without much overt attention paid to food exchange, and with much more sharing observed than recalled in the interviews.

Sharing was a key indicator of social relationships with situational variation. In one instance there had been a slight disagreement between a few friends with mutual denial of sharing food, even though in other situations they had frequently shared. Jackie passed around chips, however she did not offer any to Elli, with whom she had the disagreement, this rejection was reciprocal though, with Elli having no desire to accept any chips either.

The frequency of food sharing varied between students, depending on their character and friendships. For instance, one student had her closest friendships outside of school, and felt uncomfortable sharing food with most of her school friends. If she shared food, she chose to do this in an intimate circle of one or two friends whom she trusted most.

"It's [sharing food] kinda like a close friend thing, like you just sort of, in a way you're kinda of like…you kinda remember that they're you're close friends, it's kinda just in the back of your head when you're sharing food with someone." (S03)

Some students appeared to share more than others, although most seemed to be comfortable sharing with close friends. The students who were sharing with acquaintances appeared to be those who had a larger friendship circle, made friends quite easily, and also

fluctuated with whom they spent most of their time. Here the sharing was indicative of their relationship network and their feelings towards others.

There were certain foods that were seen as more "shareable" than others. Taking a bite from a bagel was more intimate than sharing chips. Foods like French fries were often shared with larger groups, for instance Nicole frequently walked around offering the different groups within her classroom some. In closer friendships girls often shared the same meal, which they purchased together and both ate from. The type of food shared, thus, also indicated the closeness of friendships.

Sharing food was a means by which young people could non-verbally communicate their feelings towards each other. Offering somebody a piece of chocolate was much easier than telling them what an important friend they are on an everyday basis.

Besides the ritualised sharing of food throughout the day, young people also organised food-event rituals. For instance, a number of groups had a ritualised practice of going out to buy food to share.

"Um, I went out cause I was doing media studies and then I was helping my friend with it and we decided to put all our money together to get some food, and so everything everyone liked." (S17)

Multiple student groups had established their own shared lunch ritual in which once a term or month they organised everyone to contribute something towards a shared meal. Most of them had a ritual of organising who would bring what, or they would collect money to get shared pizza or fish and chips.

"A while back we had like a shared double study, we had like a shared lunch with ourselves, like, they like everyone brought food and shared it and stuff which is so much fun." (S01)

Offering friends something from one's own lunch demonstrated commitment towards the friendship; the action of having less to enable a friend to eat communicated a meaningful gesture. Statements such as: *"wow you're giving me the first bite!"* (S10), or *"and you really don't want this last bite, are you full enough?"* (S12), indicated that students felt grateful for being offered some of their friend's lunch. Homemade and purchased foods appeared to be equally valued in this ritual.

Ritualised food sharing was a good opportunity for new students to integrate into the group. Through offering food to others students were able to gain entry into a pre-existing group. It had an aspect of breaking the ice, sharing the same food, and being willing to do something towards a new friendship.

> *"Um, sometimes when I first got here I always had heaps of food on me, so like sometimes like try and help make friends bit better, I used to like bring extra food in at lunchtime or whatever, and kinda used to do that sometimes." (S05)*

A few girls who had joined the school that year had reflected on their first weeks of school in the interviews. They recalled how being offered some food, or offering other girls food, allowed a smooth transition into first meaningful conversations and broke down some barriers between them.

Bringing food to share mediated care to friends, but also made the sharing person feel good about themselves as being a good friend. In the interviews there were a few girls who talked about their generosity and how they enjoy the praise offered through sharing their food with friends.

> *"It's quite nice to share with people, yeah, it makes me feel like, I feel I was really good about bringing food, and they're like "yes I love that" and I'm like "oh that's good", yeah." (S18)*

Gifting food

Gifting food was a third ritual in which the students regularly engaged. Compared to ritualised sharing, gifting food was marked by the explicit effort of making or buying somebody food that was presented to them as a gift. The most overt food gift in the school was the cake. Making a cake for friends was a well-practised ritual in the school amongst all age groups, for birthdays, to cheer friends up, or "just because". Many young people expressed how they enjoyed going to the effort of baking something special for their friend.

> *"It was someone's birthday and Tess had made her a really nice cake and all her friends gathered round and they all came in and shared the cake and it was really nice, it was a really nice thing to do, everyone was commenting on how nice the cake was and everything and that was good." (T12)*

The ritual of gifting cake to friends was a way of symbolising friendship boundaries. In one instance, a girl from another group in the classroom had brought in a very attractive looking chocolate cake. Once she started sharing with her group, she called over two girls from across the classroom, who were in their usual group. In this instance the girls clearly demarcated their friendships through calling explicitly two other girls from a different group over. The gifting, and subsequent sharing of the cake, served to include and exclude particular students.

The cake gifting ritual symbolised emotional connections to others, in which young people could use minimal financial resources to mediate their feelings and friendship to others. Gifting cake was also a way of representing one's own skills and care for one's friends publicly. The pride associated with the baked goods was an important aspect of the ritual.

> *"I think it's just quite nice that you're taking like just these basic ingredients and you can make something really special and you usually put in a bit more effort and*

thought, like it takes you five minutes to go buy something from the supermarket, but it will take you like an hour and half to bake a cake or cupcakes, so yeah."

(S16)

Furthermore, teachers frequently observed these practices and noted that this ritual *"reveals their friendships to each other"* and *"shows them that they care"* (T07). Some teachers also benefited from this ritual and were invited to share a piece of cake.

Other food gifts were a little less overt and had to be carefully observed in order to notice them. These rituals could be distinguished from sharing through the concerted effort of gifting something to a friend in a ceremonial way. One other difference was that often the gifted product was not consumed immediately, but stored in the school bag for later. Food gifts that were not baked goods were generally chocolate products and drinks. In one example, Rosie had been away on holiday and had brought back "Dunkin donuts" from the airport, taking them on her domestic flight and into school for her best friend Sara, who she knows loves these donuts. She came in with a bright, slightly damaged box and got all the attention. Sara was so excited that Rosie had gone to all this effort to bring her donuts. This public gesture symbolised the close friendship between the two to everyone else, and in this instance created a boundary between their friendship and the others in their group.

In food gifting rituals a balance was important; some students did not feel comfortable receiving food, as they were not always financially able to reciprocate. Although students often said that they did not expect anything in return there was an unspoken expectation that at some stage something would be reciprocated. This appeared to be more pronounced in gifting than in sharing rituals.

"It depends, if they buy something, and they're like 'oh here have some of mine' I don't mind that because you're eating some they're eating some but if someone goes up to you and goes like "ok I'm going to buy you a meal", it's like I don't want

it, cause that's happened to me a few times, and it's just like "I don't want you to

spend money on me because, like first of all you don't need to, second I can't afford

anything at all and I feel like I need to pay them back ...." (S08)

Discussion

The findings suggest that young people create their own food rituals in their everyday school life to establish, maintain, and strengthen their relationships. The *lunch walk*, *ritualised sharing*, and *gifting food* were three rituals young people created in their peer groups.

The findings showed how young people actively used food to manage their relationships. For instance, gifting cake mediated care to friends, showed trust in the relationship, and allowed to reciprocate; the lunch walk encouraged social interaction and was a means by which young people could integrate into a new group; and ritualised sharing involved negotiating friendship boundaries. Young people practised all three types of rituals to create a sense of belonging to a group, or conversely to exclude others. Previous literature supports the findings that young people are active participants in a gift economy, use ritualistic gestures to establish or strengthen friendships, mute and mark ethnic boundaries, and reaffirm and delineate social solidarity (Katriel, 1987; Neely et al., 2014; Nukaga, 2008). School food rituals, in which young people feel in control over their own actions and choices, may be an important mechanism by which they learn the value of rituals and gain tools for managing their relationships. The findings show that the meaning of young people's food practices goes beyond food intake, and can be seen from a holistic perspective. Incorporating such a lens into health promotion could offer studies that focus on the social aspects of young people's food intake, a broader lens for understanding their food practices, and increase the respect for the role of food rituals in young people's lives.

Sharing food was a popular ritual amongst the participants. Students used food to negotiate their relationships and non-verbally mediate their feelings towards others. In health promotion, ritualised food sharing has only been examined in terms of physical, not social health. Food sharing has traditionally been investigated as a strategy to limit or maximise food intake (Taylor, 2011), although some have noted friendships and sociality as the main rationale for food sharing (Hill, Casswell, Maskill, Jones, & Wyllie, 1998). The focus on food sharing as a ritualised practice amongst young people, thereby contributing towards their social health, is new. In light of these findings it would be interesting to explore how certain health promotion activities impact on sharing rituals, for instance how school food policies and the consequent availability of healthy food impacts on sharing rituals. How may food sharing still be encouraged through the availability of "shareable" foods while complying with certain nutrition standards? The most popular foods for sharing amongst larger groups were purchased foods, such as chocolate or chips. Considering the importance of food rituals for young people, it could be worthwhile investigating which foods could be offered in schools that meet criteria to promote both, physical and social health simultaneously.

The most overt difference compared to previous literature on food rituals was the emphasis placed on food. In the current study the food played a more passive role than what has been previously reported (Katriel, 1987; Nukaga, 2008). Although the food was crucial for the ritual to occur, and the type of food was certainly not insignificant, the students appeared to focus their conversations less on the food consumed than studies with younger children have shown. It appeared that the act of sharing, walking, or gifting was of primary importance, above and beyond the actual food involved.

Young people's rituals were influenced by their school surroundings. The possibility of leaving school and the proximity of food outlets was conducive for young people to create their lunch walk ritual. The current findings showed how young people

worked within their constraints to create rituals that helped them manage their social relationships, which was enabled through their physical, temporal, and social environments. The participants had the whole break (temporal) to spend their time where they wished (physical), with whom they wanted (social). The atrium and library for instance provided spaces for groups to meet, as well as the classrooms throughout the school. Furthermore, Year 12 and 13 students could go beyond the school physical boundaries, and "escape" briefly from school life. This stands in contrast to schools in which dining halls require regimented seating and consuming of school lunches, and eating becomes a rushed, utility-based activity, rather than an enjoyable social practice with friends (S. N. Moore et al., 2010). Granting young people time and space in their breaks to create their own food rituals is one step towards autonomy in school life, where young people can learn to negotiate different options and make choices for themselves.

While the physical and social environment frequently feature in health-promoting schools (HPS) approaches, little attention has been awarded to these aspects in terms of food practices. The results clearly showed how the social environment was important in enabling young people's food rituals. Thus, the food social environment may warrant future investigation. For instance, rather than merely measuring the obesogenic (obesity-promoting) environment of a school (M. A. Carter & Swinburn, 2004), it may be useful to holistically capture the school food environment for its health promoting capacity. Beyond measuring the healthiness of the available food, the school food environment, including physical (objects, places), social (activities, feelings, actors), and temporal (events, time periods) dimensions, could more holistically represent the quality of young people's lunch breaks as relevant for their physical, mental, and social health. Examples could include assessing the spaces available to young people for eating together, the array of activities and choices they have available, and the time students have to their leisure during their school days to eat and interact. Such an approach would also be coherent with an HPS approach

through incorporating aspects of the whole school ethos and environment (St Leger, 2004). Furthermore, it would complement the current measures of the physical and social environments in HPS models (E. Y. Lee, Shin, Choi, & Cho, 2014), and add the temporal dimension that would assess how much time young people have to themselves during the school day. This may provide new ways of promoting the physical, social, and temporal aspects of young people's whole food environments.

As the results have shown food practices feature frequently in the everyday management of social relationships. To date, the social dimension in nutrition promotion has emphasised the social influences on food consumption (Wouters et al., 2010), rather than the potential benefits for social and mental health. While physical health is crucial, good mental and social health is equally important for young people's health. Umberson and Montez (2010) argue that positive social relationships during youth are important for health throughout life through improving psychosocial, physiological, and behavioural functioning. Furthermore, young people themselves value their social relationships as important assets in their lives (Hendry & Reid, 2000). As a discipline that is concerned with a positive, holistic conceptualisation of health and aims to address health issues people themselves deem important in their lives, health promotion may benefit from incorporating a holistic view when working with young people and food practices.

There are some limitations to this research. The findings are relevant to an urban, middle to high socio-economically situated girls high school in New Zealand, and may translate differently into other school settings. Although the methodology can entail differing interpretations, based on the authors' representation of the data, the in-depth engagement with participants, continual observations over a prolonged period of time in their natural setting, and an open-ended aim that left space for young people's voices were strengths of this study. Ethnography is an asset to health promotion research as it allows building a complete picture of people's lives and capturing their practices in context. It has

been proposed that focusing on health practices rather than health behaviour in health promotion may more authentically capture "the emergent and contingent properties of people's activities in particular situations" (Cohn, 2014, p. 157).

This paper highlights the important role of everyday food rituals for young people's social relationships. A focus on social relationships in settings such as schools could broaden the scope of nutrition promotion beyond an exclusive focus on nutrients and physical health to promote health across physical, mental, and social dimensions.

Chapter 8

Shared Lunches and School Connectedness

"The rite of eating and drinking together...is clearly

a rite of incorporation, of physical union...the sharing of meals

is reciprocal, and there is thus an exchange

of food which constitutes the confirmation of a bond."

(Van Gennep, 1960, p. 29)

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The second results paper of this thesis aimed to answer the second research question of how food practices can promote school connectedness. Throughout the fieldwork shared lunches were frequently practised and emerged as a key site for exploring the phenomenon. This chapter explores the diverse range of shared lunches that occurred throughout the school during data collection, and is published as:

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shared lunches. *Health Education, 115*(6), 554-569. doi: 10.1108/HE-08-2014-0085

Shared Lunches as a Site for Building School Connectedness

Abstract

Purpose - School connectedness is a well-established protective factor for young people's physical, mental, and social health. This paper explores the promotion of school connectedness through the practice of shared lunches within a secondary school context.

Design/methodology/approach - An ethnographic methodology was used to explore in-depth the mechanisms by which food practices included indicators of school connectedness, and used interviews and observations with teachers and 16-18-year-old students in a New Zealand secondary school.

Findings - The results describe six key mechanisms by which shared lunches fostered school connectedness: showing common humanity, creating an informal setting, encouraging sharing, enabling inclusive participation, demonstrating sacrifice for the communal good, and facilitating experiences of diversity. These mechanisms contributed to increased social interactions in which people got to know each other better and were able to gain insight into others' personalities. This allowed for opportunities to establish and strengthen social relationships, and contributed to indicators of connectedness.

Research limitations/implications - The study is exploratory with findings reported from one school. Further research in other contexts on the value of shared lunches for building school connectedness is required.

Originality/value - Shared lunches, as part of an overall strategy to develop a well-connected school community, are adaptable and can fit into a multitude of situations

to meet different needs. The findings of this study contribute to understanding the mechanisms by which shared lunches can affect indicators of school connectedness.

Keywords – Schools, connectedness, relationships, children, young people, health, health promotion, nutrition, ethnography

Paper type - Research Paper

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Background

Introduction

This paper explores the practice of shared lunches within a secondary school context, as an embedded school activity, with its potential to promote school connectedness; where shared lunches are defined as non-habitual, organised events in a class-bound structure that mainly occur during lesson time, and involve teachers. School connectedness, the quality of social relationships within a school community, is important for young people's physical, mental, and social health (McNeely et al., 2002; Resnick et al., 1997). School connectedness reduces mental health problems, such as depression, stress, and anxiety (Shochet et al., 2006), mitigates against risk-taking behaviours reducing physical health impacts (Springer, Parcel, Baumler, & Ross, 2006), and positively affects academic achievement (Bond et al., 2007). Increasingly research has been investigating how school connectedness promotes health assets (Jose et al., 2012; McNeely et al., 2002; Osterman, 2000), including happiness, hope, and life satisfaction (You et al., 2008). Besides improving physical and mental health domains, school connectedness is a core component of social health itself, where positive social relationships, good interaction skills, and a sense of belonging to groups is crucial for young people's overall health (Keyes, 1998; Lerner et al., 2005). School connectedness thus has a promising role in young people's physical, mental,

and social health with more evidence-based avenues for promoting school connectedness needed.

Within health promotion, school connectedness has been conceptualised as the quality of social relationships within the whole school community (Rowe et al., 2007), characterised by commitment, involvement, and attachment (Resnick et al., 1997). Through increased positive social relationships that bridge age and social divisions, a well-connected school community will exhibit a positive, caring school ethos through which school community members feel safe and trusted, tolerate diversity, perceive value in themselves and others, and easily acquire mutual reciprocal relationships, resulting in a sense of community (Roffey, 2008; Rowe et al., 2007). This definition of school connectedness embodies an ecological perspective that acknowledges the interaction between different levels within a school community. For instance, shared teacher practices and values affect classroom practices and values, which again translate into relationships across the school. Thus, a comprehensive, ecological view of school connectedness acknowledges the importance of positive social relationships amongst the whole school community for creating a well-connected school. School connectedness as a concept must however be used carefully to avoid becoming a label for young people's entire social experience (Barber & Schluterman, 2008). Thus it is important to remain focused on the school as the key domain in which positive relationships are fostered, and define precisely the characteristics of interest. An ecological perspective of school connectedness would generally incorporate school organisational (e.g. policies, built environment) as well as interpersonal characteristics (Rowe et al., 2007; Waters et al., 2009). In this paper we focus primarily on the interpersonal mechanisms by which shared lunches may promote school connectedness, while acknowledging the organisational aspects.

Whole-school approaches with multi-component approaches are the most effective for building school connectedness (Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan, & Shochet, 2013; Rowe &

Stewart, 2011). Characteristics of these approaches include school and class activities that encourage participation, are inclusive, and allow democratic decision-making (Rowe & Stewart, 2009). Factors that contribute to improved school connectedness include: positive and inclusive interactions, recognition of staff and student efforts, social activities for the school community, and friendships across year levels (Roffey, 2008; Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Weare (2000) points to the importance of allowing space for autonomy and diversity in school activities which promote social relationships, thus enabling all members of the school community to feel empowered and able to, form social relationships. We suggest that shared lunches as class and school activities include these characteristics and may be an effective tool to increase school connectedness.

Young people & commensality

Eating as a social activity is substantialised in most societies through formal and informal food events (Seymour, 1983). Eating with others, or commensality (Sobal & Nelson, 2003), fulfils the human need for social interaction, thereby allowing the establishment and reinforcement of social relationships (Symons, 1994). Commensal eating may thus be seen as a tool to achieve social integration and communal solidarity, build group identities, develop socialisation, and draw boundaries around kin- and friendship patterns (Bloch, 1999; Mennell et al., 1992; Sobal, 2000). Commensality can also promote connectedness between participants through its face-to-face nature, psychological participation, and mutual support (Keller et al., 2010). For young people these social, emotional and symbolic functions of commensality play an important role (Stead et al., 2011). Young people use commensal events for establishing and maintaining their social relationships through talking, sharing, caring, negotiating, integrating, reciprocating, trusting, and belonging (Neely et al., 2014).

Family meals are one of the most researched commensal sites, and have long been known as a core ritual for building family ties. Shared family meals increase valuable

opportunities for social interaction, strengthen family relationships, enable information

sharing, and reinforce a sense of family belongingness (DeVault, 1991; Fiese et al., 2006).

Besides enhancing family ties, evidence suggests that shared family meals promote

psychosocial health, academic outcomes, and better dietary intake (Neumark-Sztainer et al.,

2010; Skeer & Ballard, 2013). However, many meals no longer occur in the family home.

The change in family structure, employment and living arrangements has led to a

transformation in eating patterns (Sobal, 2000) and many new forms of commensality are

evolving. Fischler (2011) argues that research has not kept up with this change, leaving

many evolving forms of commensality underexplored. Some exceptions include the study

of commensality in a women's prison (Smoya, 2015), the use of social computing to

connect people during meals (Grevet, Tang, & Mynatt, 2012), community kitchens

(Iacovou, Pattieson, Truby, & Palermo, 2013), and church suppers (Crepeau, 2015).

Institutions, such as schools, workplaces or sport clubs, may also use food events to

create a greater sense of belonging to the organisation and enhance social relationships

(Humphrey & Humphrey, 1988). Watland, Hallenbeck, and Kresse (2008) found that

regular shared meals within an organisational context can bring about similar benefits to a

family meal, with increased social interaction, improved social relationships, and bridging

of different professional rankings. Studies on commensality in the school setting have

mainly explored the designated lunchroom as a site of commensality, in which sharing

meals does appear to exhibit a sense of belongingness between students, but may also be

used to exclude others (Persson Osowski, Göranzon, & Fjellström, 2012; Stead et al.,

2011). To date, organised school shared lunches have not been explored in this context, and

the potential for such events to promote school connectedness has not been studied.

School food events have the potential to be a key mechanism to promote school

connectedness. For instance, Rowe and Stewart (2011) illustrated how food may be used to

generate an informal, relaxed social setting. In their study sharing a meal fostered

interaction, and allowed students, teachers, and parents to see the positive qualities of others, which promoted tolerance of diversity and perceptions of value in the school community. In the increasing diversity of cultures within schools, shared lunches may also work to integrate different cultures and increase acceptance of diversity (Nukaga, 2008). Food can be a collective interest that offers inclusive participation and puts students at ease through a more relaxing environment (Katriel, 1987; Nukaga, 2008). In a study in Canadian coastal communities Tirone et al. (2007) explored how food events provided opportunities for youth to connect with one another, their community, and school. In one of the studied communities, participation in homemade potluck dinners strengthened students' connection to their school community. Despite such positive findings there remains very little research that investigates the range of food practices amongst young people as well as the mechanisms by which these may promote school connectedness. The shared lunch is likely a widely practised event in schools, and a rich site for social interactions and cultural practices; however, very little attention has been paid to the characteristics and benefits of a shared lunch in building school connectedness. The aim of this study was therefore to explore whether and how shared lunches may impact on school connectedness.

Methods

This study used a critical ethnographic methodology to explore how shared school lunches impact on school connectedness in a secondary girls school in New Zealand. This approach enabled to gain insight into the multiple generative mechanisms in how shared lunches contributed to school connectedness, by using interpretive accounts and observations of their context.

Sample and recruitment

A large urban girls' secondary school with approximately 1300 students located within a middle-to-high income catchment area was recruited (the third local school

approached agreed to participate). The Year 13 (final year of secondary school) girls formed the participant pool. The first author (E.N.) spent the 2012 school year in five classes (based on the five teachers who responded to the recruitment letter), with the aims of observing classroom activities and being accepted into student peer groups. EN gained entry into friendship groups with whom she spent free study periods, morning and lunchtime breaks, and occasionally after-school activities. EN spent the most time in one core group of eight students, with frequent interactions with other groups surrounding the core group. The participants were aged 16-18 years and were of mixed ethnicity with most being New Zealanders or first generation New Zealand born, and proficient in the English language. The participants in all classes gave consent for participant observation, with separate consent sought for interviews.

Data collection

Fieldwork was carried out over a full school year (February-November 2012) in an urban secondary girls school in New Zealand with ethics approval sought through the university ethics committee. The research question of whether and how shared lunches impacted on school connectedness focused data collection on social interactions, relationships, and other indicators of school connectedness. Attention to negative cases was equally included throughout. The data was collected through interviews and participant observation. Martens (2012) argues that face-to-face interviews are useful for gaining insight into the cultural norms and rules around practices, but cannot elicit the sequentiality and routineness occurring within practices. Hence, the interviews offered a perspective on participants' views on shared lunches, while the observations allowed examination of the food events as they occurred. The observations also enabled identification of practices that participants had not mentioned in their interviews. The ethnographic approach allowed E.N. to develop relationships with the participants and gain in-depth insight into their food practices in school life. Not being visibly older than the participants allowed E.N. to be

accepted into the group and be perceived as a 'new friend' who was also a researcher with an interest in their opinions. To establish internal validity E.N. reflected on the observations made and questions asked throughout data collection. The co-authors acted as critical friends throughout, calling into question observations made. Furthermore negative cases were sought, for instance in observations regarding the social interactions during food practices it was always critically questioned whether social interaction would have occurred without the event. This enabled to further clarify whether indicators of connectedness were influenced by shared lunches.

E.N. conducted 18 student and 21 teacher interviews, which lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, and were voice recorded with consent. An interview guide was used to initiate conversations about food practices, prompting participants to report their commensal activities within and beyond school. A total of 600 hours of participant observations was carried out in school lessons, breaks, and after school throughout the school year with school attendance between 2-5 school days every week.

Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Field notes and interviews were coded thematically using the qualitative data analysis software Dedoose. All data were read and re-read in multiple cycles of coding for themes related to the overall project aim of how food practices affect social relationships. The shared lunch emerged as a core practice in the field notes and interviews, with many codes being located in these events as relevant to social relationships and school connectedness within the school community. Subsequently, extracts assigned to illustrate themes were re-read to uncover the mechanisms by which shared lunches contributed to school connectedness. During the second round of coding the themes were linked to connectedness indicators. The relationships between the mechanisms and connectedness indicators were established through contextually embedded conversations, observations during the events, and explicit mentioning in interviews. For

instance, the opportunity for everyone to participate resulted in increased social interactions and establishment of social relationships that would have not occurred without that particular event. Observed data were triangulated with interview data to increase the validity of findings. Verbatim quotes are used in the results to illustrate the themes (teacher and student quotes are numbered by interview, e.g. S01, T02). Names and places were changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Results

The findings describe the key mechanisms by which shared lunches fostered school connectedness. Shared lunches at school enabled students and teachers to recognise and show their common humanity, create an informal environment, encourage sharing, enable inclusive participation, demonstrate sacrifice for the communal good, and facilitate experiences of diversity. These mechanisms contributed to increased social interactions in which people got to know each other better and were able to gain insight into others' personalities. This allowed for opportunities to establish and strengthen social relationships, and appeared to contribute to indicators of connectedness, including a positive, respectful school ethos, increased levels of trust, mutual reciprocity, tolerance of diversity, a sense of community, perception of value, and a feeling of safety.

The occasions for shared lunches included beginning or end of term, birthday, or farewell celebrations, but were also sometimes practised to finish off a learning unit or tied into curriculum content. Shared lunches were organised in different ways, although most of them were a 'potluck', in which everyone contributed to the meal. Some teachers organised what foods each student should bring, while others allowed the students to bring whatever food they chose. There were a few events in which the teachers or school provided the full meal. Some teachers decorated the tables. Most rearranged the seating to make a circle around the food, which broke up the normal class structure. In a few observed lunches the

teachers remained at their desks, but in most cases the teachers joined in and sat in the circle with the students. Most shared lunches occurred during school lessons, with some events occasionally happening during the lunch break or before school. Most meals were lunches, with a few being breakfasts. The data is exclusively from Year 13 students, however the shared class lunch appeared to be a school wide phenomenon based on observations, teachers talk about shared lunches, and student recall of events throughout their time spent at this school.

Showing common humanity

A key mechanism by which shared lunches contributed to indicators of school connectedness was the recognition of participants' common humanity:

> *"It's [food] something that everyone relates to, it's something that everyone needs, it's something that puts us all on equal footing, you know, we all have to have it, we don't have it, we die, you know, um, and it's something that a lot of the time as a teacher you're always trying to connect or engage, you know different kids in your class when you've got them from you know right across the globe and different ages etc., this is a way that does connect everyone." (T16)*

Eating together revealed something inherently human everyone had in common, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or age. This commonality at food events appeared to create an atmosphere of equality, in which people were able to connect on one level: *"I think it's just that human, like seeing someone eat or, you know just really human things like that, you just remember who they are and yeah" (S03).*

Shared lunches also revealed common humanity because the associated rules and practices were familiar to participants. The simple act of eating something, for instance, seemed to operate tacitly as a common denominator in which human qualities were easily exposed.

Many teachers said food allowed them *to "break down the professional façade and let out the personal one" (T02)*. Some teachers felt that students often failed to see them as human beings because of their authority position, whereas food events were a vehicle for them to be "humanised" in their students' eyes. This was understood as an important aspect of successful relationships with students.

> *"Oh I think anything that as a teacher you, students often make the mistake of, of not thinking of you as a human being ultimately because you're obviously an authority figure and there's a whole lot of stuff that comes with that, but eating is one of those things, which I suppose you eat and take a drink at a meeting, you talk over food, it becomes another thing which humanises you in their eyes, which I think is really important to successful relationships with students." (T07)*

From students' perspectives shared lunches were times in which teachers seemed *"way less intense and intimidating" (S03)*. The overt realisation that, regardless of gender, age or background, everyone ate, made many students feel like they could just talk "normally" to their teachers at shared lunches. The security of knowing how to eat, how to talk about food, or how to offer someone a drink, gave many students, who otherwise felt awkward or anxious about interacting with others, a common and familiar role to play, one in which *"you are doing something and you can talk about it" (S16)*.

Creating an informal environment

Shared lunches were found to facilitate social interactions by changing the *"educational environment to a social environment" (T02)*. Through the change in environment most people felt relaxed, students and teachers felt everyone could be more *"natural"*, others appear *"less scary"*, and food *"put everyone at ease"*. The change in environment that shared lunches brought about was an opportunity for people to talk and enjoy each other.

At shared lunches the normal classroom structure was broken up, when students were not at their desks, but sitting in a circle. Consequently new interactions arose between members of the class. Equally teachers were not physically separated from students, which made them more approachable. The practice of sitting in a circle with food in the middle was important for creating a greater sense of belonging, it was perceived to create a *"community environment rather than departmentalised, where you feel the whole class is one"* (T05).

Spending time in a non-teaching setting allowed for social time that was missing in the busyness of school life. The presence of food signified to many students and teachers that it is not time to work or learn, but a social time, in which *"you can just be yourself and talk to each other normally"* (S02). The availability of such social time enabled rich conversations to emerge in a relaxing and safe environment that would likely not have occurred in a direct teaching situation. Teachers saw this time as valuable for fostering student–student and student–teacher relationships, which were considered *"really important because it's sometimes those connections that you need to be aware of that, um, may impact on what's happening educationally"* (T02).

The social setting further encouraged conversations across the whole class to emerge on topics beyond curriculum content, ranging from issues within the school to current news debates. Teachers sometimes initiated such conversations, at other times the conversations emerged through food comments, but also random comments sparked collective conversations. Overall, it appeared that the time for conversations, facilitated through the informal, social setting, made more students feel comfortable participating in discussions, which facilitated a stronger sense of class community.

> *"I find that there is a difference like I find that being, well for me anyway, when it comes to having just a class discussion, it's more, mmm I don't know how to put it, um, more kind of self-conscious about asking questions and stuff like that, but I find*

when you're eating like people are mostly concentrating on the food, so it's easier

for me to like reveal my opinion, like I mean I'm quite an opinionated person but I

mean, I find, I'll do my opinion in class but I find it easier to do when people aren't

concentrating on me." (S04)

Food encourages sharing

Shared lunches involved students sharing food with their classmates and teachers. This act of *"breaking bread together"* signified a sense of group membership, not so easily established through normal classroom practices.

Through, sometimes literally, eating off the same plate, students appeared to perceive fewer boundaries for interacting with each other, which gave rise to different kinds of interactions shown throughout the interviews and field notes. For example:

"People bring like something real nice, and it's like "oh my gosh, who brought

that" and you're like "I did" and you're "oh cool", you don't know them really,

but, um it's normally like that is the case and it's like you talk to them a bit, "oh

where did you get it from", it's just like you answer questions about it and that's

how you can sort of start off talking to someone you haven't really, so it's good

social aspect as well." (S02)

Sharing food seemed to encourage other types of sharing. For instance, many teachers found that students were quite inquisitive during shared lunches, asking them personal questions and being equally willing to share stories about themselves.

"Um, it helps as a teacher to build relationships with your students because you

find that you actually, you don't talk to them about maths during this time, you talk

to them as an individual, you find out a bit more about them and you know, maybe

they're amazing at sport and didn't know about it or something, so you often find

out more about them as a person, and even if maths isn't their strong point, you find

out what their strong point is, which is always great to know too and to see the
other side of them." (T01)

The extension of such conversations into whole class discussions seemed to exhibit a sense of commitment to one's class through knowing others and feeling more confident to participate in lessons. One teacher also reported that since she had been doing regular shared lunches the students had been more cooperative and sharing with their work, with the overall impression that food sharing had increased reciprocity between the girls. An important consideration is that the bond created through shared food practices was not intimate, but the overall culture of the class was affected and brought about a greater sense of community through acceptance and knowing others.

It is also important to note that food sharing was not always perceived positively. Some students expressed feelings of anxiety and awkwardness during food events, because they either did not feel comfortable eating in front of others, or did not like eating food from people they did not know very well. The two students who mentioned this had different strategies at such events. One said she just ate a few little things while still engaging with the other students, but she felt very aware of others judging her for eating. The student who felt uncomfortable eating food from an unknown person tended to exclude herself, and eat in the corner of the room. At a food event organised by the researcher, both students (who were friends) remained seated with one other classmate while the whole class was making and eating waffles. Once most girls had left, the three students came over and asked if any food was left. In this instance their willingness to try the food the researcher (EN, who she had known for most of that school year) had prepared indicated their trust; for one girl feeling comfortable eating in front of EN, and for the other, trusting the food EN had prepared.

Inclusive participation

An important mechanism for fostering school connectedness was the overall inclusive nature of the events. Whether it was planning the event, contributing something, or simply attending and eating, students and teachers were generally all able to participate in some way.

Some teachers emphasised the importance of inclusive participation from early on in the school year; some considered, and some actually used, food for this reason. For instance, one teacher explained that she often begins the year with a shared breakfast so the whole class can *"get to know each other on a different level" (T02).* Students likewise considered shared lunches to be good activities for the start of the year, instead of the end, because it allowed them getting to know more people in class.

> *"I would have had a much easier time in class, you know the whole year, but that's ok cause I still enjoyed it but now it just feels like you're, uhh, something about being involved you feel encouraged to be involved more, cause you know what you say and your output it's like your friends are receiving that and I don't know, there's something about, you feel more confident about being engaged in class."* (S03)

Through being an activity in which everyone was able to frequently participate, a sense of give-(contributing)-and-take(eat) facilitated mutual reciprocal relationships. In a few instances some participants forgot to bring something, which often appeared to make them feel a little ashamed. In a story told by one of the teachers, her student was so ashamed she did not want to eat anything. Her teacher convinced her that there was enough for everyone, she was part of the class and could participate nevertheless. She then happily joined in, and for the next event she brought double the amount to make up for the previous time. This open give-and-take nature of the events seemed to facilitate a sense of mutual

reciprocity between school community members where contributions did not have to be made in direct return.

The inclusionary participative style of shared lunches was able to account for different types of inclusion and accommodate different student needs. It was often emphasised by teachers and students that shared lunches enabled everyone to *"participate in their particular way" (T08)*. Students were able to participate in many different ways according to their preference, in which exclusion was not impossible, but unlikely. Teachers were often aware of barriers to participation and aimed to enable wider participation through rules, such as always having *"healthy options because then they [students who wish to eat healthily or with different dietary needs] can feel like they can participate without singling themselves out" (T02)*.

Sacrificing time and effort

Shared lunches provided teachers and students with non-verbal mechanisms to demonstrate commitment towards their class or group. For instance, making the time for shared lunches involved personal initiative from teachers and students. This gesture of sacrifice was a mechanism by which commitment and care were mediated.

The students often felt that teachers who organised shared lunches valued them beyond what they "needed to". Teachers felt that giving lesson time towards shared lunches with their students showed them that *"you give them something out of the ordinary, more than you have to" (T16)*. It appeared that students often noticed how much effort teachers were putting into the event, which was seen as a caring deed on the teacher's part. One student commented for instance, *"it was so cute that Mr Leonard specially brought in all that food for us" (S10)*.

Shared lunches also allowed students to demonstrate their commitment toward the school community. For instance, food events organised for students by students as a thank

you or farewell, were perceived as a gesture of kindness. In an instance in which a student was leaving the school, her peers saw it as important to organise a shared lunch to show that they were sad about her leaving. Such deeds created a culture of reciprocity in which students and teachers were more likely to do something for others.

Homemade food had particular value. The time and thought put into a homemade dish demonstrated commitment and care, and often elicited a feeling of mutual contribution to a communal good (the shared lunch). One student noted that the value of homemade food overrode the need for good taste. . .*"even if it doesn't taste any good, it is still more valuable than something bought because of the care put into it" (S03).* It was apparent that homemade food elicited more engaged conversations between people. The interviews and field notes both commonly featured notions of emerging conversations around homemade food, including praising, recipe sharing, or sparking an enduring conversation.

> *"I've got a girl, Lisa, who is very quiet, and she brought something that she'd made, and, doesn't speak often to other people in the class, but she brings this thing along and everyone was like "oh wow, you gotta try that, that's amazing" and then they were all like, "oh Lisa did you make this?" And then they've got people talking to her that she doesn't normally talk with, and then she'll share the recipe and then they'll talk about what it reminds them of and then you know, it's good to see that interaction happening, um, cause you don't get that, even if we did a quiz in class." (T02)*

Homemade food enabled students to reveal something personal about themselves, making their food be the vehicle for others to engage in conversations with them.

Experiencing diversity

A further mechanism by which shared lunches allowed students to learn about different characteristics of their peers and their cultures was through consuming diverse foods, practicing customs, and sharing related stories.

While the mutual desire to eat and experience taste was a commonality, the specific food customs and traditions also individualised people. This dual nature of food appeared to be particularly useful in connecting diverse people in shared food events.

"Having a cup of tea in your hand makes you realise that everyone just has the same needs and practices, you realise that you are all the same in the end." (T10)

Food events were a way of celebrating different cultures in which students were able to gain insight into other customs. The nature of a shared meal, the food consumed, and how it was consumed, was subject to cultural variation, making shared lunches an ideal hub for learning about, and possibly increasing tolerance for these differences. For instance in one shared lunch, in which traditional Cook Island foods were prepared and consumed, the students learned about the cultural importance of the big Sunday meal, came to appreciate the culture through taste, and experienced eating with their fingers. Gaining insight into a culture this way was seen to increase acceptance of others amongst the students, *"it helps everyone realise that we are all different, and there is never only one way of being or doing things" (S11)*.

Diversity was not confined to different cultures, but also to different customs and traditions within the New Zealand culture. Whether the ways of baking a cake or the means by which food was consumed differed, they gave students insight into each other's differences. For instance, in one shared lunch a girl brought a dish she claimed to be her family's traditional Christmas dessert. Other students commented on this, which developed into a conversation about how everyone celebrated their Christmas meals. It was insightful

for the whole group to learn about all these different ways of celebrating Christmas, even within one culture. Experiences like this allowed students to not only learn about, and accept their peers' distinctiveness, but also realise how diverse people are, and be more accepting of other ways of being and doing.

Discussion

Findings from this study suggest that shared lunches may promote school connectedness through enabling people to see common humanity, creating an informal environment, encouraging sharing, enabling inclusive participation, demonstrating sacrifice of time and effort, and experiencing diversity. Shared lunches provided many opportunities for different social interactions to occur that likely contributed to improved relationships within the school community.

The present study identified that shared lunches may provide a valuable tool for building school connectedness through enabling relationships between diverse school community members. Some of the lunches included different years and classes, initiating diverse people to interact together over food. Students made new links and increased their network through shared lunches. Although these bonds were not close, they were enduring enough to positively benefit the classroom (e.g., students felt more comfortable asking questions in class), and whole-school (e.g., students greeting each other through social interactions during shared lunches) environment. Offering such opportunities to link school community members has been shown to be an important contribution towards school connectedness (Rowe & Stewart, 2009).

Shared school lunches contributed to students' tolerance of diversity through providing insight into other cultural customs and personalities. In a world of growing multiculturalism, tolerance of diversity is key for a school in which diverse students can feel connected (Onyx & Bullen, 2000). Shared lunches brought together people who would

not have necessarily socialised otherwise, and may promote the acceptance of others through the mutual experience of sharing a meal (Shinew, Glover, & Parry, 2004). This finding could be valuable to schools with high student diversity, and provide means by which diverse students can find a common ground.

Nukaga (2008) notes that food can also be used to mark boundaries and exclude others. In the findings there was no recorded occasion in which students actively excluded others, in all observed instances students keen to participate appeared to be inclusive of the whole group. There were two occasions in which students excluded themselves from the event, however in no events participating students were seen to actively exclude peers. More research is therefore needed to determine how shared lunches could contribute to exclusion and inequalities.

This research suggests that students and teachers both found the time provided through the shared lunch a valuable "off time" from the normal school chores and allowed conversations beyond curriculum content to emerge. Through increased interactions young people got to know others in their class better and appeared to feel a greater sense of community. The shared school lunches fostered social interaction between students and teachers, enabling relationships to develop. The majority of the school food literature so far has dealt with the power differentials and controlling role of teachers over students' school food practices (Daniel & Gustafsson, 2010; Metcalfe, Owen, Dryden, & Shipton, 2011; Persson Osowski et al., 2012). In contrast our findings indicate that food and shared lunches have the potential to create more egalitarian student-teacher-relationships, which broke down boundaries between students and teachers. This is consistent with Watland et al. (2008), who also found that shared meals can break down hierarchical boundaries. In terms of promoting school connectedness, shared meals could be an interesting avenue to explore in other settings to bridge vertical relationships. School health promoters could utilise these findings and use shared lunches as a tool to bridge relationships between different school

stakeholders. For instance, when groups are formed to work towards a common health goal, the establishment of new relationships is crucial for the success of projects. Here shared lunches could be useful to facilitate this process and equally help school health promoters, new to a school, to develop relationships with school community members.

Good teacher – student relationships are important for school connectedness. For instance, research has shown that more trust between teachers and students leads to improved school connectedness (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). Sharing meals enabled teachers and students to get to know each other, and facilitated a reciprocal genuine interest characterised by mutual respect and trust. Tobbell and O'Donnell (2013) point to the difference between learning- and interpersonal relationships, and emphasise the importance of teacher-student interpersonal relationships for students' school connectedness and academic achievement. The practice of sharing meals at the start of a school year could enable student-teacher interpersonal relationships to develop through allowing teachers to temporarily step away from their teaching role and show their human side to students. However, the findings also indicated that for these benefits to emerge it was important that teachers had interest in organising and participating in the shared lunch. School administrators could consider incorporating shared lunches into routine school practices, in which teachers would share a lunch with their students at the beginning of a school year to break the ice and build relationships.

On the whole, shared lunches appeared to promote inclusivity, participation, and democracy. Most participants shared the joy of eating food and found it easy to participate and be included. Food enabled even those students who may not shine in class participation to join in and contribute to the conversation. The collective food contributions mediated an overall sense of democracy, through everyone having a say in creating the event. However, sharing food was not always seen as an enjoyable activity. Uneasiness about eating in front of others or non-interest in conversing with classmates created hesitation about participating

in shared lunches. Fear of eating in front of others could be mitigated through offering a broad range of foods at the event. For instance, availability of healthy foods such as fruit, allowed even those with calorie aversions to participate while not facing the conundrum of being coerced to eat high-calorie foods, or not participating at all. Although only two participants elicited negative feelings towards shared lunches this is likely a valid point to address since eating disorders and unhealthy dieting practices are not uncommon in young people (Neumark-Sztainer, Wall, Larson, Eisenberg, & Loth, 2011). On the other hand, given that friends and broader cultural norms play an important role in eating behaviours, particularly within schools (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, & Perry, 2005), shared lunches have the potential to act as a tacit mechanism by which a healthy relationship with food is modelled and normalised, providing situations in which young people can feel comfortable about eating in a group setting. Similarly, shyness or reluctance to socialise may be addressed through the informal and caring culture engendered by shared lunches. Further research focussing on these barriers to participation and connection with schoolfellows through food in particular is warranted by these findings.

Ethnographic research is open to different interpretations, based on the authors' representation of the data. The authors however provided detailed description of the context and triangulated data through two data sources that added strength to the findings. This study was exploratory in nature and provides meaningful findings for future research on shared lunches in schools. These findings are limited to an urban, middle to high socio-economically situated girls' high school in New Zealand. Other schools practice shared lunches, however, different contexts will include different dynamics. This said, due to the generally sociable nature of shared meals, it is likely that shared school meals could promote school connectedness in other contexts. Since there is no research on shared lunches in schools it would be interesting to explore the prevalence of shared lunches, whether they occur in other types of schools and social strata, and whether these observed

benefits would present elsewhere. It would also be useful to explore the role of shared lunches in promoting young people's physical, mental, and social health, thus providing a site to not only build social relationships but also incorporate nutritious food more overtly.

Strategies to promote school connectedness are evolving. Overall system-level, whole-school approaches have been shown to be most effective (Chapman et al., 2013), although implementation of such comprehensive approaches is not always easy. Shared lunches, as part of an overall strategy to develop a well-connected school community, are easily embedded, can be practised frequently with little organisation, and may be based on certain values and guidelines to ensure good practice. Shared lunches are adaptable and can fit into a multitude of situations to meet different needs. For instance, shared lunches can be used in classes, committees, extracurricular clubs, and amongst teachers. Future research could build on this work and further identify how food practices, such as the shared lunch, could assist in a whole-school approach to building school connectedness. The identified mechanisms give good reason to believe in the value of shared lunches as a way of facilitating social interaction and relationships within school communities. The findings of this study are an important first contribution towards understanding the mechanisms by which shared lunches can affect indicators of school connectedness.

Chapter 9

A Whole-School Approach

"The powerful influence of the HPS model

on school connectedness is

more than the sum of its parts."

(Rowe & Stewart, 2009, p. 411)

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The third results paper aimed to answer the third research question by exploring how the observed food practices could be a viable strategy for a whole-school approach to building school connectedness. The findings presented in Chapter 7 and 8 provide a more detailed view of the observed practices, whereas this paper aims to take a broader view across the range of practices observed. This chapter is published as:

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (2015). Food practices and school connectedness: A whole-school approach. *Health Education.* In press.

Food Practices and School Connectedness: A Whole-School Approach

Abstract

Purpose – The health-promoting schools framework has emerged as a promising model for promoting school connectedness in the school setting. This paper explores the potential for food practices to promote school connectedness within a health-promoting schools framework.

Design/methodology/approach – This study explores food practices within a New Zealand secondary school by using an ethnographic methodology, with interviews and observations, to explore in-depth the range of food practices that occurred within the school across a whole school year. Thematically the data were read for school connectedness indicators across the recorded events, and categorically the practices were coded according to their level of occurrence within the HPS framework.

Findings - The findings showed that food practices occurred across class- and school-level organisation, ethos, environment, and community partnerships, and indicated that they may be valuable assets for a HPS approach to promote school connectedness. By integrating the findings of the present study with previous literature we suggest a HPS framework for promoting school connectedness through food practices.

Originality/value – This paper contributes to the emerging research on whole-school approaches to building school connectedness, and provides a first contribution on the value of food practices for school connectedness.

Keywords – Social environment; health-promoting school; food and nutrition; ethnography; New Zealand

Paper type – Research paper

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Background

Introduction

School connectedness is important for young people's physical, mental, and social health (Jose et al., 2012; Resnick et al., 1997; Weare, 2010). School connectedness has three core elements: the quality of relationships amongst a whole school community, high achievement expectations and learning support for students, as well as students' physical and emotional safety (Wingspread Conference, 2004); with social relationships ideally characterised by acceptance, care, and respect (Roffey, 2008). Within an ecological view, a well-connected school community features high levels of trust, mutual reciprocity, tolerance of diverse cultures, a feeling of safety, perceptions of value, a sense of community, and a positive, caring school ethos (Rowe et al., 2007; Sun & Stewart, 2007a). Whole-school approaches, such as the health-promoting school (HPS), promise to be highly effective in building school connectedness (Rowe & Stewart, 2009; Waters et al., 2009), with food practices emerging as an important mechanism by which school connectedness can be promoted (Rowe & Stewart, 2011).

In the HPS literature the importance of food for building relationships within a school community has been acknowledged (St Leger, 2004), however, little has been explored in this area. Food practices are embedded and already widely practised in school life. Amongst the literature available it has been found that school food practices may provide mechanisms by which school connectedness, and social relationships more generally, can be fostered (Block et al., 2012; Neely, Walton, & Stephens, 2015a, 2015b; Rowe & Stewart, 2011). By applying a HPS lens, this paper looks at how a focus on food practices can be incorporated into health promotion practice, with the aim of enhancing school connectedness.

School connectedness and HPS

Whole-school approaches, such as the HPS, have been found to be most effective in promoting young people's health within a school setting (Stewart-Brown, 2006). HPS works through a holistic approach to health, combining school ethos and environment, classroom activities, and community links. Positive, caring relationships are essential for a school practicing democratic, participatory, and empowering decision-making under a HPS model (Parsons et al., 1996; Weare, 2000). Positive relationships, as a core component of school connectedness, are central to all areas of the HPS model.

A HPS inspired model of school connectedness embraces an ecological view, through taking a "whole-school orientation designed to foster interaction among school community members of the entire school community" (Rowe & Stewart, 2009, p. 396), and is promoted by collaborative whole-school and whole-class activities. The key structures deemed important for promoting school connectedness include class- and school-level organisation, policies, and environment; characterised by processes that are inclusive, promote active participation, and enable democratic and egalitarian relationships amongst all members of the school community (Rowe & Stewart, 2009). An emphasis is placed on linking diverse school community members through, for instance, bridging the class-school interface; facilitating partnerships between students, staff, and the wider community; and enabling cooperative working relationships between students. Incorporating student-centred and real-life learning activities is furthermore important for school community members of all backgrounds and skills to work together (Patton et al., 2006; Rowe & Stewart, 2009).

Rowe and Stewart (2011) note that food and eating together endorsed the connectedness-promoting potential of whole-school events through being inclusive, and creating a relaxed environment. In this paper we build on this observation to explore in more depth whether the connectedness-promoting qualities of food practices may operate across multiple levels throughout the school. Specifically, we aim to explore how food

practices across classroom- and whole-school levels can impact on, and interact with, a whole-school orientation.

HPS and food practices

Nutrition is a commonly addressed topic in HPS with a wide range of interventions being implemented (McLean et al., 2009; Wang & Stewart, 2012), in which the primary concern is young people's diets (Jaime & Lock, 2009; Stewart-Brown, 2006). A school addressing nutrition through an HPS approach would typically consider school food policies, food environments, and curriculum-based nutrition activities. Within such approaches there is limited evidence of mental and social health outcomes achieved through school food practices. School gardens and inclusive school feeding programmes are the two main areas in which such benefits have been reported (e.g., Block et al., 2012; Kristjansson et al., 2007), although not explicitly within an HPS model.

School gardens have been shown to improve school connectedness by promoting positive relationships, student bonding, teamwork, and social inclusion, while providing holistic nutrition education (Blair, 2009; Block et al., 2012; Dyment & Bell, 2008). A recent review found that school gardens can improve young people's social skills, confidence, community spirit, academic achievement, leadership, and nutritional attitudes and intake (Robinson-O'Brien et al., 2009). The value of incorporating 'real-life' and 'hands-on' activities is seen as central to the inclusionary nature of school garden activities, and facilitative of developing social relationships (Block et al., 2012).

Inclusive school food programmes are another area in which benefits to young people's mental and social health have been noted. Studies have reported enhanced psychosocial functioning and self-esteem, strengthened peer relationships, increased trust amongst members of the school community, heightened feelings of value and being cared for, more positive social interaction, and a greater sense of school connectedness (Kleinman et al., 2002; Kristjansson et al., 2007; McIntyre et al., 1999; Rodgers & Milewska, 2007;

Yates & O'Brien, 2007). For instance, a New Zealand-based 'Food for Kids' evaluation found that providing healthy snacks to disadvantaged primary school students improved student – teacher relationships, enhanced school connectedness, augmented peer relations and psychosocial functioning, helped develop a stronger sense of community, and reduced differences between students through the inclusive nature of the programme (Kids Can, 2011).

Shared lunch events have also been shown to contribute to school connectedness by facilitating participants to show common humanity; providing an informal environment; encouraging sharing; enabling inclusive participation; demonstrating personal investment of time and effort; and enabling the experience of diversity (Neely et al., 2015a). These mechanisms were shown to increase social interactions and foster relationships by contributing to indicators of school connectedness.

Beyond planned and structured activities involving food, there is also the routinised, mundane use of food in everyday life. Everyday practices are important for young people to foster relations in daily contexts; however, these are often not overtly incorporated into an HPS framework. Eating with friends at school, for instance, may form a valued routine in young people's lives, not only being an important time to maintain friendships, but also an "enabler of ongoing social contact and engagement in a range of leisure and social activities" (Absolom & Roberts, 2011, p. 344). Young people's "free" time at school is marked by occasions for food consumption- before school, morning tea, lunch time, after school- times when young people interact over, and with, food. Furthermore, young people utilise informal eating opportunities, making eating an all-day phenomenon, not confined to the lunch hour. Young people create their own daily food rituals, such as going out for a "lunch walk" to buy food, to establish, maintain, and strengthen their relationships in everyday practices (Neely et al., 2015b). In developing an HPS framework of food practices and school connectedness, it is important to consider the role such everyday practices play

in schools. For instance, how do they affect organised practices within the school, or conversely, how are everyday food practices affected by certain activities that are promoted within the school? Everyday food practices must interact with active efforts of a HPS and reflect certain values promoted through an HPS approach to be effective in promoting school connectedness.

In sum, previous school food research suggests that food practices can promote aspects of school connectedness through being inclusive, providing non-academic activities, facilitating communication, incorporating diversity, broadening social networks beyond immediate friendships, increasing school community involvement, fostering teamwork, and showing common humanity. Given the effectiveness of promoting school connectedness through a HPS approach, the connectedness promoting potential of school food practices may provide an effective new strategy. Drawing upon an ethnographic study in a secondary school, this paper will explore the potential for food practices to promote school connectedness across the whole school. In our discussion we consider ways in which health promotion practice can utilise food practices within HPS approaches.

Methods

This study used a critical ethnographic methodology (Thomas, 1993) to explore how food practices influence school connectedness in a secondary girls school in New Zealand. This approach enabled insight into the habitual, everyday food practices within the school, and allowed observation of school food events throughout the whole year, accounting for seasonal variability and celebratory customs. The areas within the HPS framework developed by Rowe and Stewart (2009) were applied to the data to investigate the potential for food practices to promote school connectedness within a whole-school approach. The associated structures of class- and school- organisation, policies, environment, and community partnerships, guided by inclusive, democratic, and participatory processes, served as a starting matrix within which to code the data. The

rationale for using this framework was to start with, and build, on existing knowledge in this area. This study adds to the framework by providing specificity of food practices within HPS-school connectedness.

Sample and recruitment

The research was conducted in a girls' secondary school with approximately 1300 students located within a middle-to-high income area in an urban New Zealand city. Year 13 students (final year of secondary school), aged 16-18 years, formed the participant pool. Year 13 students were chosen, because students above the age of 16 did not require parental consent (which facilitated access to a larger number of students), and because these older students were allowed to leave the school grounds during their free periods and breaks, which increased the scope and diversity of observable food practices (e.g., lunch outings, trips to the supermarket, etc.). The first author (EN) was the principal and external researcher. The school was recruited based on proximity and the school's willingness to participate. The researcher was granted access to five classes for participant observation (through the 2012 school year) with the aims of observing classroom practices and being accepted into student friendship groups. Developing relationships with the students then enabled EN to spend free study periods, breaks, and after-school activities with students. A group of eight students formed the core group throughout the research through which EN was able to make further connections and attend other events with these students; while EN also spent time in other groups throughout the year. The participants were of mixed ethnicity, proficient in the English language, with most being New Zealanders or first generation New Zealand born. The participants consented initially for participant observation, with independent consent sought for interviews. As is common in New Zealand secondary schools, the school had a small shop for purchasing food, but no school cafeteria. Student eating spaces included outdoors, classrooms, library, and atrium area with some seating. No free or subsidised school breakfast or lunch programme was in place.

Data collection

Fieldwork was carried out over a school year (February-November 2012) and data were collected through interviews and participant observation. The key focus of the observations was students' and teachers' food practices in everyday school life; special food events and outings were also important sites for observations. The observations were particularly valuable for understanding how school events unfolded, and an opportunistic approach to interview recruitment enabled EN to talk to students and teachers who had attended certain events. The ethnographic approach enabled EN to develop relationships with the students and gain comprehensive insight into their food practices in school life. Overall, 600 hours of participant observations throughout the whole school year were carried out within the school and immediate surroundings, and field notes were recorded electronically. EN conducted 21 teacher and 18 student interviews within a broad range of subjects and characteristics, which lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, and were voice recorded with consent. A semi-structured interview guide was used to begin conversations about social food practices. The conversations varied across individual interviewees, according to particular events each had attended. The interview questions generally explored the school food practices across the whole school and focussed on social interactions and relationships arising from food practices. Ethics approval was granted through the university ethics committee.

Analysis

Interviews (transcribed verbatim) and field notes and were coded thematically using the qualitative data analysis software Dedoose. The data were coded categorically and thematically. Thematically the data were read for school connectedness indicators across the recorded events, including trust, mutual reciprocity, tolerance of diversity, sense of community, perception of value, feeling safe, positive and caring school ethos; as well as increased social interaction and relationship building between participants initiated through

food practices (Rowe & Stewart, 2011; Sun & Stewart, 2007a). Statements such as "it just makes us feel like a whole big community" or "it allows me to get to know my class better" are examples of interview data that were coded as school connectedness indicators. With observation data more caution was maintained, for instance implying that trust or a sense of community were present due to the food event was carefully noted and followed up on in interviews to have more certainty of awarding food practices certain connectedness promoting capacities. Categorically, the practices were coded according to their level of occurrence within the HPS framework (classroom and whole-school). Subsequently each event or practice (e.g., Market day) was merged into one document and re-read multiple times for the occurrence of HPS structures and processes across the whole HPS model (Rowe & Stewart, 2009), and linked to the school connectedness themes. The data for each event were triangulated. We utilised the range of data sources to illustrate the occurrence of phenomena, as well as to compare the findings across data sources (observations, teacher view, student view) for similarities or contradictions. Constant reflections on the observations made and questions asked throughout data collection aimed to reduce further threats to validity. The co-authors acted as critical friends (Costa & Kallick, 1993) throughout the fieldwork. Verbatim quotes are used in the results to illustrate the themes (teacher and student quotes are numbered by interview, e.g. S01, T02). Names and places were changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Results

The results are presented according to their level of occurrence at classroom or whole-school level. . The results are presented according to their level of occurrence at classroom or whole-school level. Given the absence of direct reference to policies in the data, but the prevalence of data relating to the classroom and school ethos, and the relevance of ethos within a HPS approach, we substituted ethos for policies when examining the results from a HPS perspective. At each level, the food events were

examined for their influence on school connectedness across the HPS model and categorised under the levels of the model. The categories of classroom organisation, classroom ethos, classroom environment, and classroom-community links; and school-organisation, school ethos, school environment, school-community links, are based on the framework developed by Rowe and Stewart (2009), adopted for our purposes. Each level further describes the school structures and accordingly the processes within those structures, such as the existence of school clubs and the processes within these that may promote school connectedness as relevant to food practices. The results highlight how food practices may enable health promoters to embrace a whole-school orientation towards building school connectedness.

Classroom level

Classroom organisation

Throughout the observations food practices within the classroom offered a range of learning, teaching, and curriculum methods that have been shown to promote school connectedness. Classroom-based food practices frequently involved real-life or experiential learning activities that were based on a student-centred approach to learning. Students were often included in food events through organising and contributing, which mediated ownership and facilitated collaboration between students. Food activities further encouraged hands-on learning, while being fun and inclusive. For instance, a Roman feast lunch was a whole-class activity that broke up the normal class structure, provided a technique for alternative curriculum delivery and informal teaching, involved experiential learning activities, gave ample opportunities for student participation and involvement, and fostered whole-class discussions. The observations and teacher interview evidenced that the lunch enabled the teacher to involve her students in lesson planning, and encouraged participation in curricular matters, which contributed to students' perceptions of being valued and heard at school. One of the defining features reported in interviews was the

inclusive nature of the event, in which participation was not seen to be dependent on certain skills, but proved to be an activity in which everyone could take part. The participation encouraged class discussions conducive for building relationships between students and teachers. Moreover, the act of sharing food and contributing to a shared purpose created a positive and caring environment.

The theme of working together featured in many food activities. For instance, one German teacher talked about her custom of making a "Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte". Here students designed cakes in small groups, compared the finished products, and shared them in the German custom of "Kaffee und Kuchen". This activity prompted students to negotiate, plan, and work together towards a goal, which encouraged cooperative learning between students and enabled inclusive participation. The interviews revealed that learning about the diversity of food cultures also appeared to contribute to a greater tolerance of diversity amongst students.

> *"Food adds um, is another dimension to any activity, it's, because you're sharing food it's um, it gives a deeper, it's a deeper level or I guess a deeper understanding of relationships cause of what you share and that's often from our cultural background as well, where we come from, how we relate, such as looking at different cultural influences."* (T06)

When nutrition is the primary topic for learning, a focus on social relationships can facilitate learning on wider impacts of food. In cooperation with the psychology teacher, EN developed a learning unit that examined nutrition and its role in holistic health. The students reported that investigating food from this perspective widened their views on the role food plays in their lives. Instigated by this project the teacher subsequently introduced a whole unit called "Food and Us" with her Year 10 social studies classes, in which they learned about the role of food in social relationships. The unit was completed with a shared meal to which each student brought a dish significant to them for sharing, and wrote a one-

paged assignment explaining the importance of that dish. Besides learning about the social value of food, the final shared meal itself had the potential to contribute to indicators of school connectedness.

Classroom ethos

Food practices enabled teachers and students to embrace and transmit class values. Throughout the themes, shared lunches for instance, showed to be whole-class events that facilitated class discussions with mutually respectful conversations, and encouraged democratic partnerships between teachers and students through the informal nature of the event. Shared lunches were a way for teachers to practice their teachings, such as including the whole class, promoting a tolerance of diversity through describing the diversity of eating customs, and modelling healthy eating practices.

Beyond organised food events, there was a range of food practices that occurred on a more regular, habitual basis, such as sharing rituals, food as rewards, and food integrated into learning activities, which were observed throughout the year. Incorporating food-sharing practices routinely into school life was seen to contribute to an environment in which people care for, and value one another. Some classes had their own weekly sharing rituals, such as 'Monday morning cake day', or 'Friday fun day'. One teacher for instance organised weekly hot drinks for her students, and turns were taken to provide food. This simple sharing ritual resulted in students spending most of their form time interacting and sitting together as a group, compared to other classes where this did not seem to be the norm.

> *"It just provides a little bit more relaxing break in the day and just the time when you can have informal chats with them about what they're doing, that's really what I use it for, and they use it to build those relationships and to get to know each other and get more comfortable."* (T10)

The practice of contributing something for the communal good appeared to create an atmosphere in which everyone was perceived as having a stake in the group and valuing others, contributing to a positive classroom ethos.

Classroom environment

The classroom physical environment was often recreated for food events in the class, such as setting up a circle of chairs around a table of food. Data from first-hand participation, as well as student and teacher accounts indicated that the restructuring of the normal classroom environment was conducive to new interactions because students often sat in different groupings and faced each other. This inclusionary seating arrangement also enabled teachers, who were normally physically separated from students during class, to have a more egalitarian teacher-student relationship during such events.

> *"It almost puts you on the same footing with them for that small amount of time, um, changes the dynamic and the boundaries a little bit, um, and it helps them to see you, you know, as a human being not just as a teacher, and when they see that, they sort of, I don't know, think they have a different perspective." (T01)*

Some classes were decorated (e.g., table cloths, flowers, balloons), depending on the reason for the event, which further helped create a relaxed and "non-school" environment. The change of the physical environment was an important component of many food events in classrooms, as it symbolised the move away from a "normal" lesson, and students often expressed that it allowed them to create a space that was comfortable to them. Most classrooms offered sufficient space, such as tables and chairs or a water faucet for food activities. Not all teachers could use food practices in their classes; for instance, in computer labs there was no food permitted. Some teachers saw a school kitchen as a desirable facility to increase the opportunities for food-related activities with students. The small staff kitchen was occasionally used for student purposes, however, it was not expected that students should use these kitchen facilities regularly.

Another environmental aspect emerged as relevant for food practices: the temporal environment, which refers to timing for transitions, routines, and activities (Gordon & Williams-Browne, 2000). In some instances food practices were part of curriculum activities, in others, curriculum time was sacrificed for subject-unrelated food practices. Overall, the time available for food practices within the classroom context was dependent on teachers. Many teachers saw the benefits outweighing the time lost for curriculum content because it impacted positively on the classroom atmosphere, encouraged interactions, and facilitated lesson participation beyond the actual food activities. The availability of classroom time for food practices was seen as particularly beneficial because it enabled students and teachers, who did not normally spend their free time together, to engage in a shared activity, encouraging social interaction amongst diverse school community members. A few teachers in more "content dense" subjects, such as Maths or English, felt they could not spare any time for social food activities.

Class-community partnerships

There were a few events that included parents in class food events. For instance, the school held parent introduction evenings at the beginning of the school year, which started with a communal talk in the school hall after which the students and parents went to their classes to meet the teachers over supper. Within interviews, teachers described that even providing a cup of tea and a biscuit created a welcoming environment, in which everyone felt more appreciated in a supportive community. Some teachers included barbecue meals in their introductory weeks, or used them to celebrate achievements or projects with students and their parents. Such events were ideal for building class-community partnerships as they encouraged participation and were likely to be inclusive of diverse people.

> *"For new students as introduction we used to do a barbecue, the students would be*
>
> *out there barbecuing and the parents would be inside, and it used to pull a lot more*

people in cause they knew they were coming for a barbecue, but yeah I guess the

food is really, it is really important for the social function, yeah." (T09)

Teachers considered shared meals like barbecues attracted a larger number of parents compared to any other kind of parent evening.

Whole-school level

Whole-school organisation

Extra-curricular activities. School clubs (e.g., ukulele, singing, Polynesian) and committees were the main extra-curricular area that incorporated food practices within the school. Food practices, primarily shared lunches, appeared to impact on the functioning of school clubs and committees by promoting inclusive participation and allowing members to get to know each other better by providing time for informal conversations and solidifying relationships. Because school clubs and committees spanned different classes there was often a diverse range of students involved. The interviews revealed that food practices were conducive for the development of relationships through creating a relaxing and informal environment in which younger students felt less intimidated in interacting with older students. The "café book club" for instance, was designed around food. Here food helped create a welcoming environment in which people felt comfortable and secure, provided a complementary focus while conversing about books, and was used to initiate or bridge conversation gaps. Such extra-curricular activities were seen to benefit from including food through facilitating interactions between diverse school community members. An event associated with the committees was the "Year 13 leaders lunch" towards the end of the year. Here the parents' association organised a major lunch event for all the leaders of the committees, to thank them for their hard work throughout the year. It was a formal sit-down lunch with decorated tables and an attractive buffet.

"I didn't, I, in that situation I didn't really know, I didn't sit with my friends, cause like everyone had their, sat down and I just like took the first seat I could find, but it was with people that I kinda knew but I not like was friends with, so that was cool cause I actually did talk to them more, and yeah, it was, I liked it." (S11)

This lunch was an example of bringing otherwise unrelated students together for one event at which they initiated conversations with new students to whom they had never spoken previously. The lunch celebrated students' efforts and success, and mediated a perception of value to students.

Peer support program. From the interviews and field notes it emerged that the school's peer support program utilised food activities to celebrate success and provide time for social interaction. The shared lunches at the end of peer support activities for instance, appeared to consolidate relationships by enabling young students to relate personally to their mentors, and bridging the age gap. The three observed shared lunches seemed to facilitate a breakdown of the mentor-mentee divide and provide a basis for the development of egalitarian relationships.

"I think it's just that human, like seeing someone eat or, you know just really human things like that, you just remember who they are." (S03)

In this instance the shared lunches appeared to be important for strengthening enduring relationships by allowing conversations beyond the normal peer support content to emerge.

Support structures for school staff. Food practices were incorporated into many support structures for school staff. The observed food activities appeared to impact on school connectedness through fostering staff relationships, encouraging a collegial community, and contributing to an environment in which people value each other. Teachers' food events across the year included staff morning teas, professional development, happy hour, social club activities, and teacher-only days. Organised staff

morning teas, for instance, at which food was provided, changed the staffroom attendance considerably. Teachers who were normally dispersed throughout the school joined in and spent their breaks interacting with colleagues across departments, also often mentioned by teachers in interviews themselves. The good turnout, combined with the informal environment created through food, facilitated social interactions between staff members.

> *" I think that the departments that um, eat together tend to have a bit more healthier professional relationships as well, um, yeah cause they get to see, get to know people a little bit more outside of their professional role as a teacher, you know."*
> (T02)

Teachers who organised a fortnightly professional development series also made use of food practices through offering wine, cheese, and other snacks, with the aim of creating an informal atmosphere in which teachers were able to relax together while learning about different topics. Teachers reported that the food at the event appeared to make a difference, and contributed to indicators of school connectedness by fostering relationships and mediating a perception of value to school staff.

Whole-school food events. There was a range of events that originated as class-based activities in the planning process but involved the whole school for the actual event. For instance, Market day was an annual event at which Year 9 students had to plan a product and marketing strategy that included advertising, pricing, and packaging. Within the organising classes it was a co-curricular activity that included student-centred and experiential learning opportunities with student participation and small group work. On the whole-school level the event provided an opportunity for diverse school community members to interact and build relationships across social divisions. The positive, celebratory atmosphere was conducive for creating a sense of community within the school and celebrating student success. Market day was said to *"make school feel like a happy place of community"* (S08). There was no evidence that the event led to lasting

relationships, however it did seem to contribute to a positive atmosphere in which younger students felt respected by older students, and some students indicated how this affected their commitment to school. An increased commitment appeared to be particularly valuable because Year 9 students had just joined the school that year, and the event offered an ideal opportunity to build a sense of connection to their new school. The Year 10 Bake-off and International day were two other whole-school events that appeared to positively impact on school connectedness through connecting diverse students and celebrating success with all school community members. Such whole-school food events link to a HPS through impacting on the whole-school atmosphere.

Whole-school ethos

Food practices within the whole-school environment embodied school values that interacted with the school ethos. Observations revealed that whole-school food events promoted student participation, either as organisers or attendees of the event, through offering different avenues for engagement. In events like Market day students could participate through merely walking the stalls and purchasing a product, while experiencing the atmosphere surrounding the event. The event also enabled more involved participation, in which some students spent time talking to multiple "organisers" about their products and gaining insight into the preparation involved. Through the low threshold required for participation, and the wide range of products available, most whole-school food events aimed to be inclusive. The organisation of events themselves fostered democratic decision-making in which students were required to negotiate with teachers and peers. Thus, overall, the observed food events appeared to embrace the school values of participation, democracy, and inclusion, with the potential to promote multiple indicators of school connectedness. From the recorded data it seemed possible that the increased social interactions between school community members further enabled the experience of, and appreciation for, cultural diversity. Food practices provided ample opportunities for

students to participate, interact in a positive manner, listen to others speak, and accept others.

> *"It's the events at which all students come together, they make the school feel like a community, they make the students feel more connected to the school."* (T04)

Food events contributed to a welcoming environment for the wider community, such as parents and caregivers. For instance, the use of a Pōwhiri (a Māori[2] tradition that involves speeches, dancing, singing, and is completed through sharing food) to welcome new students, parents, and teachers into the school mediated a perception of value for Māori families, and on a broader level contributed to a school environment in which the cultural importance of Māori students was recognised and promoted.

Whole-school environment

The physical environment contributed in various ways to food practices and school connectedness within the school. The urban setting limited the size of the available spaces for breaks, with the library and atrium entrance area being two limited indoor areas for young people. The older year groups (Year 12 & 13) could leave the school grounds during the school day and had access to a range of cafés, food outlets and park areas surrounding the school. Most students preferred to spend their breaks on the school grounds to be in proximity for the next class, making the whole school very busy and occupied in most spaces. Despite the limited space on the school grounds there seemed to be a plethora of opportunities for students to eat together. The change of the library from a pure learning space to one in which food was allowed created a relaxing social environment. The library was also a resource for students' committee meetings, shared lunches, and self-organised arrangements with two closed-off, furnished rooms available for bookings. The atrium was the second large indoor space available to the students in which beanbags enabled

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[2] Māori are New Zealand's' indigenous population and seen as an equal partner in a bicultural partnership.

configuration of group seating. However, these two spaces were not sufficient for the whole school, and many students spent their breaks in classrooms. A consequence of students being dispersed in classrooms was that persistent groups of people occupied one space while being physically separated from others. The walls created a barrier between the students, and mixing with other students was more difficult. Some also saw it as intimidating to enter a room with an established clique "owning" the classroom, and although this did not allow cross-group communication, the groups within their classrooms appeared to have a sense of belonging to a group and place through their defined meeting space evidenced by their expressed affiliation with their lunchtime groups.

Many teachers saw the school physical environment as inhibiting students' opportunities to eat together and connect during their breaks, with some teachers expressing the desire to have a shared lunch space with chairs and tables for students. In summer, the outside environment was seen as an asset in which young people could use the outdoor picnic tables, stadium-like benches, and the field.

> *"In the summer, if you go out on the field, it's fantastic cause you know there are groups of people sitting having their lunch, and those picnic tables create somewhere for people to sit around in a way that they can eye ball each other cause it's not just sitting, you know you sit looking out on the quad, girls will sit there having their lunch but it's actually that active sitting in a way that you can eat and talk and see each other that makes the connection."* (T03)

In one school building there were kitchen cubicles available to the students, where they could use microwaves or boil water. Although this was seen as an asset, it was also perceived as contentious because not everyone had access to these facilities, creating unequal opportunities within the school. The school also had a small canteen at which simple items such as sandwiches, pies, muffins, and chips were sold.

The temporal whole-school environment includes the time young people have

available during the school day without prescribed activities. The students had a 20-minute morning tea break and a 50-minute lunchtime break. Most Year 13 girls also had "study periods", one a day (50 minutes) with one double session per week. These periods were primarily used to "hang out" with friends, giving students more time to themselves during their school day. This temporal aspect was important for formal and informal food practices. For instance, a range of student groups frequently organised their own shared lunches, in which they either purchased something together, or brought something along to contribute. This practice was facilitated through the physical surroundings, such as the opportunity to purchase at nearby shops and the availability of classrooms or park picnic tables to sit together and have a shared lunch; as well as through the availability of time during the breaks and study periods to organise and act out shared lunches.

School-community partnerships

Food events featured throughout themes as avenues for bridging school-community links and promoting positive relationships amongst the wider school community. Activities that brought school community members together, including parents, caregivers, and organisations within the community provided opportunities for fostering relationships between diverse members. Food practices appeared to be effective at bringing parents into the school, and creating a safe environment conducive to social interaction.

> *"It [food events] is a way of de-mystifying school for parents because lots of parents have lots and lots of contact with primary school but they're less so with secondary, and because we're centre city and we have people coming from all over the place here, it's not the hub of a community or a particular suburbs."* (T03)

One event for which parents were brought into the school was an organised Father-Daughter breakfast. This event, designed as a social activity, brought an impressive number of fathers (including grandfathers, and step-fathers) into the school (with some flying into town for the event). The event enabled diverse members of the school community, who are

not often drawn into the school, to get to know each other better. Some fathers remained mingling, even though their daughters had to leave for class. The school planned to extend this event into other year levels in the coming year because of its popularity. Beyond the immediate relationship-building effects of the event itself, the event organisation was student-led, which encouraged students to work together and feel ownership. This example indicates that the process of engagement alongside the event itself can be important in HPS activities to bring about the full range of benefits.

Discussion

The findings from one school indicated that food practices may be valuable assets for a HPS approach to promoting school connectedness. For instance, food practices connected diverse students and teachers through shared activities, created a relaxed setting in which people felt comfortable, incorporated real-life and student-centred activities, and fostered positive relationships throughout the school community. Food practices also encouraged school community members who had not previously been engaged in school activities to participate, for instance, parents who were enticed to visit the school through participating in a food event, or students who felt no academic pressure was required for participation. The value of food for whole-school celebrations was illustrated through various school food events throughout the year, and promised to have an impact on the school's sense of community by contributing to a positive, caring school ethos. Overall, food practices influenced multiple indicators of school connectedness, such as trust and tolerance of diversity, across HPS areas through facilitating social interaction, including that of diverse school community members. The findings showed how activities in one area of a school interacted with, and influenced another. For instance, curriculum-related activities in the classroom (e.g., Market day) had an impact on the whole-school environment through providing a whole-school celebration at which food was sold to students and teachers across the school.

Food practices featured across most areas of the HPS model as developed by Rowe and Stewart (2009), although the policies level was not evident in our data. As our findings were limited to the values in interaction with the ethos across classroom and whole-school food practices, no explicit policy references were apparent throughout the data. However, ethos was found to be an important aspect of school food practices. The aspect of ethos is an addition to the model and so we recommend future exploration across the five areas of policies, organisation, ethos, environment, and community partnerships. Furthermore, in some areas there was little recording of processes, for instance in the class and whole-school environment. These aspects were largely absent from the data, due to the observatory nature of the research. Future research needs to explore the role of these processes more explicitly.

Food practices incorporated a wide range of classroom and whole-school organisational structures, accompanied by inclusive, participatory, and democratic processes that have shown to build school connectedness, such as student-centred learning in the classroom or fostering relationships on the whole-school level in school clubs and committees (Rowe & Stewart, 2009; Waters et al., 2009). The results illustrated how food practices can be incorporated into existing structures within a school, thereby integrating into a school's current 'ways of working'. However, beyond supporting existing structures, we also found whole-school community food events to be independent structures that promoted a whole-school orientation to school connectedness through being accessible to diverse school community members. Food practices could therefore be seen as supporting existing structures within a school, as well as providing "food events" as an additional avenue to embrace a whole-school orientation to school connectedness.

The processes by which food events and practices were organised and carried out were pivotal for achieving their connectedness-promoting capacity. Student participation and democratic decision-making in an inclusionary environment enabled social interactions

and relationships to emerge within the identified structures. Food practices were shown to be activities into which such processes could be well integrated. However, it cannot be taken for granted that such processes exist within schools and any approach to promoting school connectedness through food practices must be carefully guided by processes that incorporate the identified values of participation, inclusion, and democratic decision-making.

The temporal and physical environments across classroom and whole-school level appeared to facilitate food practices that were conducive to school connectedness indicators. The inclusion of the temporal environment is new and emphasises the importance of time for connectedness-promoting activities. Overall, the factors deemed important for fostering food practices throughout the school were the availability of enough eating spaces for students, time for students to foster relationships in their breaks, a degree of student agency to plan and create food events; teachers who dedicate time for food practices, and creating a welcoming environment through room reconfiguration and decorations. Our findings add environmental characteristics that appear to impact on the connectedness promoting capacity of food practices, and broaden the environmental determinants that need consideration in a connectedness-promoting school. Future research could explore the variability of these factors between schools and determine in more depth their impact on promoting school connectedness.

A HPS framework for promoting school connectedness through food practices

By integrating the findings of the present study with previous literature (Rowe & Stewart, 2009, 2011) we have developed a HPS framework for promoting school connectedness through food practices (Figure 8).

Within the framework, the current findings are displayed in the different levels on the left-hand side. We have included events that involved parents or the wider school community into a third level to visually demarcate events that involved the wider school community. In the results we described in detail some examples that are displayed in the framework, for a detailed description of all events please refer to the supplementary document (link to supplementary document). The HPS values and food practice mechanisms that promise to support this connectedness-promoting potential are displayed in the centre (Rowe & Stewart, 2009). On the right-hand side of the figure we included the HPS structures that featured in food practices; that, guided by HPS processes, promise to promote school connectedness. For instance, a shared class lunch was an organisational structure that reorganised the physical environment and utilised the temporal environment, and interacted with the classroom ethos.

The guiding values of participation, inclusion, and democracy lie at the core of the model. Food practices provided opportunities to embrace and transmit these school values within classrooms and across the whole school, and provided an avenue for the incorporation of the values into school life; for instance, students were involved in the organisation of food events, food events required student decision-making, and facilitated the inclusion of all students regardless of academic skills. Thus, our findings support previous literature (Rowe & Stewart, 2009, 2011), and can be seen as useful for guiding HPS models to promote school connectedness.

The food event characteristics support the school's values and help maximise the benefits gained through food practices. These characteristics include being economically inclusive, being owned by students and teachers, promoting teamwork, being positive and fun, easy to organise, including a broad range of foods, being celebratory, and involving good hygiene.
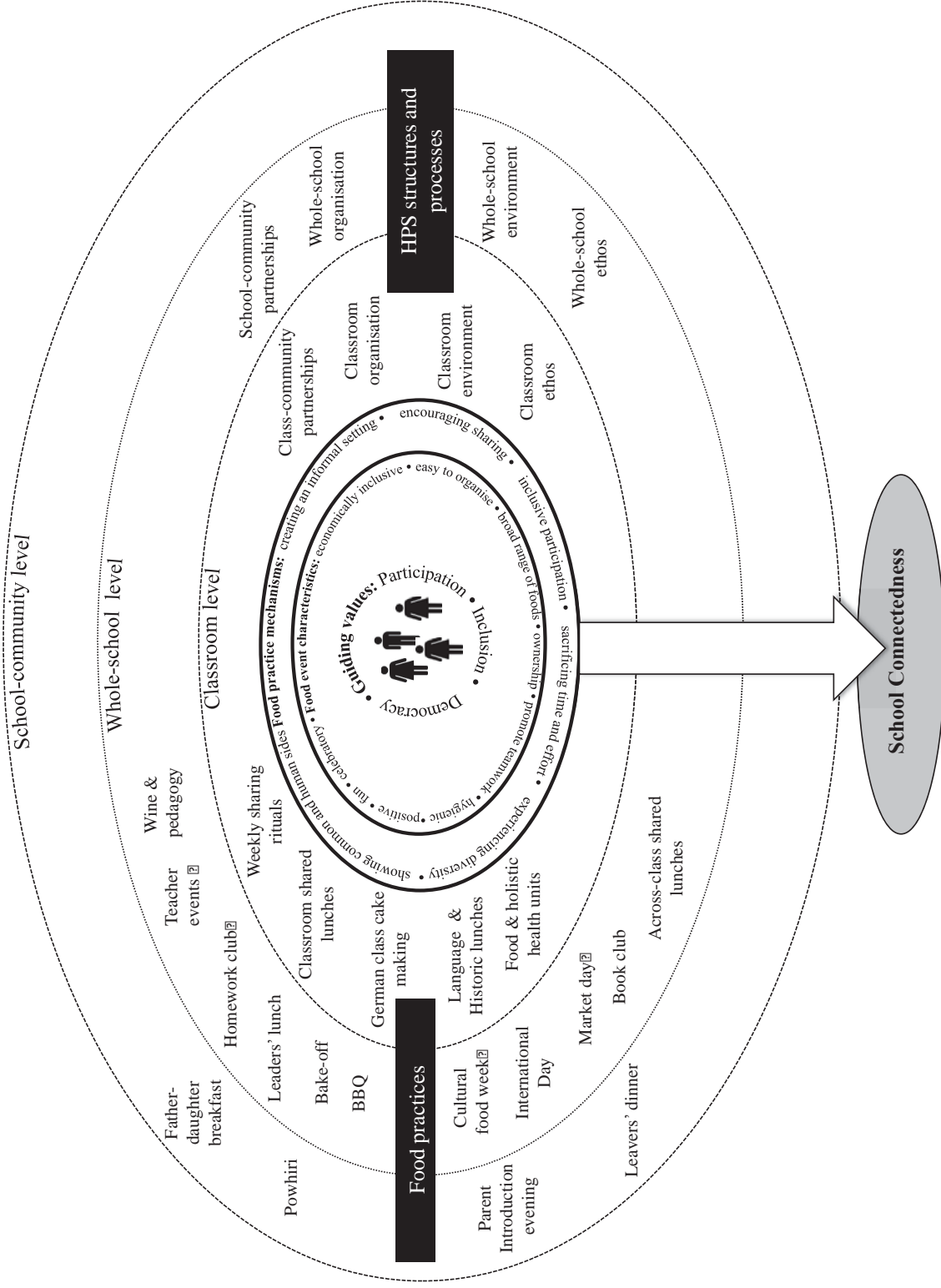
Figure 8. A HPS model for promoting school connectedness through food practices

The characteristics increased the connectedness-promoting potential of food practices by enabling the transmission of values, for instance inclusion was fostered when events were designed to meet more students' dietary needs through a broader range of foods; or participation was encouraged when events were easy to organise. The characteristics were drawn from the observed food practices and appeared to increase the connectedness-promoting potential of food events.

Encircling the characteristics in the model, are the mechanisms by which shared lunches have shown to promote school connectedness, which include showing common humanity, creating an informal environment, encouraging sharing, facilitating inclusive participation, sacrificing time and effort, and enabling the experience of diversity (Neely et al., 2015a). Food practices guided by the HPS values and characteristics and fostered by these mechanisms are likely to promote school connectedness. Overall, the developed framework provides a whole-school approach for schools to include overt consideration of food practices as contributing to school connectedness.

Our HPS framework of food practices for promoting school connectedness is a step towards holistic nutrition promotion. In this paper we concentrate on the social value of food practices but do not mean to neglect the importance of widespread efforts to promote good physical health through food. Rather, we see the potential to embrace tools to promote health holistically. A holistic nutrition model would need to include the nutritional quality of foods and their connectedness-promoting potential. These must not necessarily be contradictory, and avenues for promoting healthy diets alongside the social value of food for school connectedness should be explored. For instance, it has been shown that school gardens or inclusive school feeding programmes can promote nutrient-rich food intake as well as school connectedness (e.g., Blair, 2009; Kristjansson et al., 2007). However, broadening the use of food practices to include school connectedness would require more research into the conundrums a health promoter could face when pursuing both goals. For

instance, promoting a wider use of shared lunches would require greater emphasis on the quality of foods consumed in such lunches; a few of many ideas could be to balance foods, through ensuring savoury as well as sweet options for instance; or through a 'coloured lunch' with the goal of bringing many different naturally coloured foods. Student-formulated policies for shared lunches or themed events (e.g., a focus on fresh, raw foods, or contributions of different ingredients towards one shared food such as a sandwich bar) could also be useful, but need to be explored in future research.

The framework may act as a tool to health promoters rather than as a full strategy to be implemented. Understanding the benefits of food practices may aid the promotion of social interaction and positive relationships within existing activities. For instance, the finding that food practices created an egalitarian partnership between students and teachers could be useful when establishing a health team in a school that includes teachers, to break down existing boundaries, and facilitate communication between members. Additionally, health promoters may find it useful to use food practices to build relationships with the school community themselves. The activities described in our examples may also be useful to health promoters who wish to engage a broader school audience in their activities. Health topics may only appeal to some student groups, whereas organising and participating in food events may be more attractive to a wider range of students, who do not see themselves as health advocates. For instance, de Róiste et al. (2012) found that organising school events provides important opportunities for students to participate in school life and feel part of their school. Our findings showed that food events offered students a range of meaningful ways to contribute, from a small scale shared lunch, to an event that involved the whole school.

Bearing in mind that food is a strong marker of economic and cultural capital and can be used to demarcate these boundaries (Bourdieu, 1984), it was interesting that there was little notion of exclusion and inequalities created through food in the findings. This

could be explained through the tacit level on which such mechanisms operate making it hard to detect them, or it could have been that the research school was a school with few issues in terms of inequalities. Another factor could have been the participant pool; it may have been possible that some inequalities were reduced by exclusion from school. Since Year 13 is not compulsory schooling, there may have been less diversity in those who remain in Year 13. Nevertheless, it is an important factor for health promoters to take into account. We do consider the core values of participation, inclusion, and democratic decision-making, alongside the key characteristics as important to avoid some degree of exclusion and inequalities. Future research is required to determine the utility of the model for this purpose, as well as explore how food practices may play out in contexts in which greater inequalities exist.

This exploratory research requires future endeavours in other settings to further develop the proposed framework. It would also be interesting to incorporate parent and wider community voices into the research to elicit their views on the value of food practices for their involvement in school. Our framework is the first approach to comprehensively consider the role of food practices in promoting school connectedness through a HPS model. We have shown how food practices can help embrace a whole-school orientation to fostering relationships throughout the school community by offering events and activities that are inclusive to diverse interests and needs, enable widespread participation, and foster democratic partnerships between school community members. Food practices featured throughout organisational and environmental factors shown to promote school connectedness, and appeared to facilitate the transfusion of values in creating a positive ethos across the school. This research has made an important contribution to broadening HPS approaches to school connectedness.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

"Opportunities to celebrate with food provide people

everywhere with the means for connecting on many levels.

They help solidify ties … and [food] connects people with their

past and fosters an appreciation for the gathering

and dissemination of knowledge … critically

important for building resilience in times of change."

(Tirone et al., 2007, p. 159)

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The broad aim of this research was to develop an understanding of how food practices impact on social health. This was explored through studying young people's everyday food practices in a secondary school, viewing school connectedness as a proxy for social health. The importance of school health promotion, school connectedness, and food practices in young people's lives, combined with the scarcity of knowledge of the social value of food, provided a strong rationale for studying this topic. The study sought to answer the following three questions:

1. How do young people use food practices to establish, maintain, and strengthen their social relationships?

2. How may food practices promote school connectedness?

3. Are food practices a viable strategy for a whole-school approach to building school connectedness?

Overview of Findings

Overall, the findings of this thesis suggest that food practices play a role in young people's social relationships and contribute to school connectedness. The following sections will briefly recap the findings to provide an overarching picture of the study's contribution to current health promotion research and practice.

Each of the results chapters addressed one of the research questions. Chapter 7 explored how young people used food practices to establish, maintain, and strengthen their social relationships. Food rituals emerged as a key practice by which the participants negotiated their social relationships in everyday life. To answer the question of how food practices may contribute to school connectedness, Chapter 8 used the example of shared lunches. Shared lunches contributed to school connectedness by enabling people to see common humanity, creating an informal environment, encouraging sharing, facilitating inclusive participation, demonstrating sacrifice of time and effort, and enabling people to experience diversity. The third research question was addressed in Chapter 9, which applied a health-promoting schools framework to the findings. It was found that food practices spanned the HPS areas, and appear to be a viable approach for building school connectedness. Together these findings suggest that incorporating social health dimensions into health and nutrition promotion efforts may be a promising avenue.

This research is built upon the premise (developed in Chapters 1 and 2) that social health is a valid focus for health promotion; both as a single area of focus, and in interaction with physical and mental health domains to influence overall health. The findings show how food practices can contribute to school connectedness, and, by implication, social health, which supports this premise. The research found that food practices were a common shared social practice throughout the school, and were a vehicle for fostering social health. Food practices provided students and teachers with opportunities to engage with others in situations where a shared interest and conversation may have not occurred otherwise.

Events that celebrated the school, student success, or different cultures offered a basis for interacting with, and learning about, others in school. Food practices were an important vehicle in many interpersonal interactions, and enabled young people to connect to others (e.g., through shared food rituals), as well as contribute something to the collective group (e.g., over shared lunches). Overall, the findings provide some initial evidence for the value of food practices for social health, and it would be useful to further explore how food practices, and health promotion more broadly, could contribute to and promote dimensions of social health.

The results show how food practices can influence social health in a single setting, and suggest how the existing HPS framework can utilise food practices for social health gains. The challenge now is to consider the implications for future social and holistic health promotion approaches.

Implications for Health Promotion Practice

The findings show that focusing on social health aligns with health promotion goals and values, and indicate that deliberate health promotion activities related to food have the potential to contribute to social health dimensions. The thesis initiates thinking about food practices and social health, the ubiquity of those practices in everyday life, the implications for other areas of health promotion (e.g., how does social nutrition promotion interact with physical nutrition promotion), and how social health could be incorporated into health promotion practice. The following sections will draw on these ideas and address the challenges and opportunities that may arise for promoting social health through food practices.

Settings-based health promotion

The findings indicate the value of food practices for social health within a school setting. This thesis offers a contribution for understanding the mechanisms by which school

food practices may contribute to school connectedness as a protective factor for young people's overall health and educational achievement. While the research findings only give insight into the phenomenon at one secondary school, they provide future directions for research in other school settings. For instance, the frequency of shared lunches at the school was compelling, and the enthusiasm for whole-school food events convincing. It would be interesting to investigate how common shared lunches are across other schools and whether the observed mechanisms occur in different contexts. Future research may explore potential challenges and benefits if food practices, such as shared lunches or whole-school food events, were to become a more widely used tool in school health promotion. The focus on food practices as part of a whole-school approach also offered some valuable insights into how food practices may be an asset to school health promoters using a holistic approach. Future research could gather more large-scale evidence on school food practices to examine the utility of such activities in the developed HPS model for building school connectedness.

The current study reinforces the versatility and benefits of a health-promoting schools approach, and presents how the holistic nature of the framework can be usefully applied to a social food practice approach. The findings support the value of a whole-school approach to health by highlighting the interconnectedness and synergies that may arise from a holistic approach in settings-based health promotion. The three areas of curriculum; school organisation, ethos, and environment; and community partnerships proved to be important areas of action within the developed framework. Given that settings-based health promotion operates in many other contexts, such as cities, workplaces, hospitals, churches, and marae, and also in non-school settings for young people, such as youth prisons (M. MacDonald et al., 2013) or youth in public housing (Forrest-Bank et al., 2014), it would be interesting to explore whether food practices are, or could be, used for promoting social health in these other settings through a comprehensive settings approach. Furthermore young people's social connectedness in family, peer, and community contexts is also

important. While beyond the scope of this thesis, the data indicated that there is still much to be explored in these other domains. Family food practices featured frequently as important to young people, and many students belonged to different sport and youth groups beyond the school context. The incorporation of these contexts would be valuable for building a complete picture of young people's connections and the role of food practices therein. Future research and publications arising from this study should be directed towards young people's domains of connectedness beyond the school.

Within a comprehensive settings approach it is important to consider ways in which food practices can promote teachers' social health. In the present study, the findings indicated that teachers also benefited from sharing food with their students and colleagues. Since this was only a partial aspect of this study, future research could explore in more depth how teachers' health could be promoted through food practices.

Holistic nutrition promotion

The first chapters of this thesis suggested that health is ideally promoted holistically, because the whole together forms more than its constituent parts. The point was made that a biopsychosocial frame would broaden the scope and value of nutrition promotion, and it was argued that more knowledge about the social aspect in nutrition promotion is needed. This thesis provides initial evidence for the value of social health for nutrition promotion that complements the widespread existing research on physical and mental health. In light of the findings, a holistic nutrition promotion model could be feasible, however further research is required to explore these possibilities.

This study was unusual in that it offered a social health perspective on young people's food practices. It is unlikely that the knowledge this study gained from students would have been elicited in a conventional study on physical health. However, likewise, the current study had a particular focus on food practices and social health, so did not take into

account nutritional issues or other health concerns the participants may have faced. In future research a holistic health frame that incorporates physical, mental, and social health could be further explored, as it could accommodate the range of health issues important to young people related to their food practices. While it may be beyond the scope of any study or intervention to address all issues at once, a holistic health approach nevertheless allows a space for issues relating to physical, mental, and social health to emerge. Furthermore, such an approach would enable health promoters to connect challenges and barriers young people face and possibly link these to broader outcomes. However, as a novel and emerging perspective, holistic nutrition promotion with a biopsychosocial frame still needs to be thoroughly explored.

With the suggestion of a focus on physical, mental, and social health in nutrition promotion then comes the question of how to balance tensions and contradictions arising from these different spheres. For instance, how shall it be decided whether physical health is more important than social health in a given situation, or vice versa? For example, chips were a favourite food for sharing in the research school, but would never be recommended from a physical nutrition perspective. These tensions could be further explored with those impacted. For instance, young people could be included in the discussions on balancing health priorities, in line with an approach to health promotion that reflects participation, empowerment, and social justice. More research is needed to find innovative strategies for a holistic nutrition promotion, and it is suggested that means for weighing out the benefits and risks between different health dimensions could be included in such an approach.

Funding and evaluation must also be considered. As emerging areas, little is known about social and holistic approaches in nutrition promotion. Health promotion is often funded on certain health issues—for instance, on improving nutritional intake or physical activity levels. Ideas for moving beyond such a model must be explored. A place within existing funding models needs to be found for integrated areas, such as nutrition and school

connectedness. Arguably a comprehensive settings approach would be ideal for this purpose, as each setting could define priorities and address multiple health areas as desired. However, accountability and evaluation of effectiveness are also important factors. Approaches such as realist evaluation are already being used to evaluate broader outcomes specific to different contexts (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Pommier, Guével, & Jourdan, 2010), and could be useful for evaluating social and holistic nutrition promotion approaches. Furthermore, benefits related to school connectedness, such as student participation, student councils, or an improved school ethos (de Róiste et al., 2012; Griebler & Nowak, 2012) are emerging as advantages of an HPS approach. Building on such approaches, the findings of this thesis suggests that further research into social and holistic nutrition promotion could be a promising pursuit for evaluation and funding purposes. In particular, synergising approaches could be appealing to funders for their potential to promote multiple dimensions of health within one initiative, meaning cost-saving and greater effectiveness.

Reflections on Critical Ethnography for Health Promotion

It is claimed that critical ethnography is a well-suited methodology for this study. There were naturally strengths and limitations to this research with resulting implications for health promotion research and practice, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Strengths

The methodology of the research proved ideal for the research questions and aim. Overall, the in-depth study of everyday life over a whole school year provided rich data and meaningful insights into habitual food practices. Furthermore, the ten months of fieldwork allowed for relationships and trust between researcher and participants to develop, and particularly the gradual increase in intimacy encouraged the participants to share their stories. The ethnographic approach enabled the researcher to learn about young people's

lives before posing research-related questions, and consequently allowed the tailoring of questions, making them relevant to participants' everyday lives.

Critical ethnography provided a framework for the incorporation of core health promotion values, including a participatory, bottom-up approach, and offered the researcher a unique way to learn about young people's everyday lives, often key to health promotion issues. It enabled the incorporation of an approach in line with the adopted youth health promotion perspective; that is, it incorporated a holistic, ecological, empowerment-based perspective of health, as well as a strengths-based, presence-focused approach to young people's health. The overarching epistemology and ontology were also commensurate with the methodology and health promotion paradigm simultaneously, in that reality was seen in context. Overall, ethnography is an asset to health promotion research, as it allows a health promoter to build a complete picture of people's lives, while capturing their practices in context. It has been proposed that focusing on health practices rather than health behaviour in health promotion may more authentically capture "the emergent and contingent properties of people's activities in particular situations" (Cohn, 2014, p. 157).

Besides being an ideal research methodology, an ethnographic approach may also be valuable for health promotion practice. For instance, it could prove a useful approach for health promoters to spend time and observe in their settings to learn about the everyday life of their target population, using their observations to define issues and set priorities.

Limitations

While the methodology provided a range of benefits, it also entailed some limitations. The findings apply to an urban, girls' high school in New Zealand situated in middle to high socio-economic circumstances. To inform health promotion practice and funding of health promotion, future research needs to explore the studied phenomenon in more diverse settings; in different socio-economic areas, age groups, gender constitutions,

and locations. This would be a good start for establishing a baseline on the value of such practices within schools.

A further limitation to the transferability of the findings is that ethnographic research is open to different interpretations, based on the author's representation of the data. In this case, a detailed description of the context and triangulation of data through two data sources aimed to address this limitation. In-depth engagement with participants, continual observations over a prolonged period of time in a natural setting, and an open-ended aim that left space for young people's voices further aimed to combat this limitation. To widen the sample of perspectives it would have also been useful to include members of the wider school community. Going back into the field to test the findings, such as the benefits of the shared lunch mechanisms or rituals, using a "middle range theory" (Merton, 1968) found in a grounded theory approach, would be a useful step forward. Future research in this area could test health promotion action in schools by applying these findings to see if they can build school connectedness.

An ethnographic approach requires extensive resources. While a doctoral project allows for multiple years of in-depth research and data collection, outside of this context there is often less time and money available for such projects. However, compromises may be made; for example, fieldwork does not need to last a whole year. The key message is that ethnography could be promoted as an avenue to pursue, its value disseminated, and more ethnographic research in health promotion instigated.

Final Words

This study found that food practices within a particular school were the basis of everyday rituals that helped establish, maintain, and strengthen relationships. While they were explicitly seen as a time away from the curriculum, implicitly they appeared to offer broader benefits for young people's social development as well as their belonging to school.

Food practices also offered benefits to teaching staff, in staff–staff and staff–student relationships. Overall, food practices may provide a useful foundation for a whole-school approach for building a more connected school community.

This thesis has explored the role of food practices in social health, using school connectedness as a proxy for social health in the school setting. Using an in-depth methodology, seemingly mundane everyday practices were explored, and their role in interpersonal interactions and relationships revealed. In addition, the approach applied by the research invites future researchers and practitioners to view nutrition in a more contextual and holistic way. The thesis has added an important contribution to understanding the means by which food practices can promote school connectedness, which has positive effects on young people's physical, mental, and social health.

Food practices are valued but taken for granted in everyday life; they are one of life's true joys. To finish with the words of one of the participants:

> *"I think there's just something really human about people just sitting together eating." (S03)*

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Appendices

Appendix A: Statements of Contribution to Published Articles

Appendix B: List of Publications and Presentations Arising From This Thesis

Appendix C: Letter of Inquiry to School

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Appendix A: Statements of Contribution to Published Articles

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION
TO DOCTORAL THESIS CONTAINING PUBLICATIONS

(To appear at the end of each thesis chapter/section/appendix submitted as an article/paper or collected as an appendix at the end of the thesis)

We, the candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the *Statement of Originality*.

Name of Candidate: Eva Neely

Name/Title of Principal Supervisor: Professor Christine Stephens

Name of Published Research Output and full reference:

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (2015). Framing health: A biopsychosocial frame for nutrition promotion.

Manuscript currently being revised by reviewers for the Journal Public Health Ethics as at 5/2/2015.

In which Chapter is the Published Work: 2

Please indicate either:

- The percentage of the Published Work that was contributed by the candidate:

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Eva Neely	13/01/2015
Candidate's Signature	Date

Christine Stephens	09/02/2015
Principal Supervisor's signature	Date

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Name of Candidate: Eva Neely

Name/Title of Principal Supervisor: Professor Christine Stephens

Name of Published Research Output and full reference:

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (2014). Young people's food practices and social relationships – a thematic synthesis. Appetite, 82, 50-60. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2014.07.005

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Name of Candidate: Eva Neely

Name/Title of Principal Supervisor: Professor Christine Stephens

Name of Published Research Output and full reference:

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (2015). Fostering relationships through food rituals in a New Zealand school.

Manuscript submitted for publication in Health Promotion International.

In which Chapter is the Published Work: 7

Please indicate either:

• The percentage of the Published Work that was contributed by the candidate:

and / or

• Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the Published Work:

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Christine Stephens	09/02/2015
Principal Supervisor's signature	Date

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STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION
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(To appear at the end of each thesis chapter/section/appendix submitted as an article/paper or collected as an appendix at the end of the thesis)

We, the candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the *Statement of Originality*.

Name of Candidate: Eva Neely

Name/Title of Principal Supervisor: Professor Christine Stephens

Name of Published Research Output and full reference:

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (in press). Building school connectedness through shared lunches. Health Education.

In which Chapter is the Published Work: 8

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- Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the Published Work:

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13/01/2015
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Date

Christine Stephens
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Principal Supervisor's signature

09/02/2015
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Date

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Name of Candidate: Eva Neely

Name/Title of Principal Supervisor: Professor Christine Stephens

Name of Published Research Output and full reference:

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (in press). Food practices and school connectedness: A whole-school approach. Health Education.

In which Chapter is the Published Work: 9

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- Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the Published Work:

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Eva Neely

Candidate's Signature

13/01/2015

Date

Christine Stephens

Principal Supervisor's signature

09/02/2015

Date

Appendix B: Publications and Presentations Arising From This Thesis

Mengwasser, E. (2011). Youth glocal foodscapes and nutrition practices in New Zealand – A review. Presented at Sociological Association Aotearoa New Zealand Conference. Wellington, New Zealand.

Mengwasser, E. (2012). Nutrients or nurturance - What's food all about? A conceptual model. Poster presentation at the Society of Nutrition Education & Behaviour conference. Washington DC, USA.

Mengwasser, E. (2012). Sharing the participatory research experience- from the other side, co-presented with two research participants. Presented at Public Health Association of New Zealand Conference. Wellington, New Zealand.

Mengwasser, E. (2012). Ethnography for health promotion – An unexplored avenue. Presented at the 2nd International Contemporary Ethnography Across the Disciplines Hui. Hamilton, New Zealand.

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (2014). Young people's food practices and social relationships – a thematic synthesis. *Appetite, 82*, 50-60. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2014.07.005

Neely, E. (2014). Shared lunches as a site for building school connectedness. Presented at Health Psychology Research Day, Massey University. Wellington, New Zealand.

Neely, E. (2014). Bringing the social back in- Shared lunches and school connectedness. Presented at Psychology Research Day, Massey University. Wellington, New Zealand.

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (in press). Building school connectedness through shared lunches. *Health Education.*

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (in press). Food practices and school connectedness: A whole-school approach. *Health Education.*

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (2015). Framing health: A biopsychosocial frame for nutrition promotion. Manuscript currently in revision.

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (2015). Fostering relationships through food rituals in a New Zealand school. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Appendix C: Letter of Inquiry to School

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

11 November 2011

XXXXXX
Deputy Principal
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX

Inquiry about doctoral research project: Nutrients or nurturance- what's food all about?

Dear XXXXX,

My name is Eva Mengwasser and I am a doctoral student at Massey University in Wellington. I am interested in finding out more about the role of food and nutrition practices in young people's everyday lives. The school is such an important setting for this because students eat at school everyday in company of their peers and friends.

For this purpose I would like to ask you whether I could spend the upcoming school year (2012) at your school and become a member of the school community. This would involve lunchtime observations on the school grounds, observations in some selected Year 13 classes/groups, and some interviews and focus groups with participating students, and potentially teachers, throughout the year.
In detail this involves:

1. At the beginning of the school year (February 2012) I would consult with you and your Year 13 teachers on which classes or extracurricular groups would be suitable for me to attend. Furthermore, I would negotiate with you how to best inform the school community (staff, students, parents) about the project (e.g. information evening, school assembly).
2. Once three to four classes/groups have been negotiated I will attend the first lesson with the teacher, introduce myself to the students, hand them the information sheets, a short questionnaire, and consent forms, as well as verbally introduce the project. I will leave the students to think about participation until the next lesson. They will be able to complete the questionnaire in their break or at home (estimated to take about ten minutes).
3. In the next lesson I will collect the consent forms and filled in questionnaires from the students who wish to participate. If some students do not wish to participate, they will not be included in any notes I take. If they change their mind they are able to opt in or out of the study whenever they like.

4. <u>Throughout the year, I will conduct non-participating observations</u> in the school breaks to look at the range of nutrition practices among the students. For this I will not interact with any students nor take notes of particular individuals. I will just look at where, what, and how students eat and spend their breaks.
5. <u>In the selected Year 13 classes/groups I would attend and conduct participant</u> observation throughout the year Through observing and participating in these lessons I aim to build relationships with the students and find out what is important to them and how food plays a role in this. Depending on the class/group and teacher I am also willing to participate (e.g. in a PE class in sporting activities). Non-participating students will not be included in any notes.
6. <u>Focus groups and interviews (including photos):</u> The Year 13 students, with whom I engage more, may be asked to participate in group and individual conversations with me if they consent to this (outside class time). I may ask them to take photos of certain topics we talk about, to provide discussion points in the interviews. If any people are included on photographs they will be blanked out if I use the photos for any publications, hence nobody will be identifiable. I might also ask the teachers for an interview. I will voice record the interviews and focus groups. I will negotiate with you if there are any spaces in the school I may use. For each interview or focus group the students will give separate consent.

The school will not be named in the research, however I cannot guarantee confidentiality. Due to the amount of public secondary schools in the Wellington region; there is the possibility that people familiar with the region and the schools may be able to identify your school when reading or hearing about the project. I am happy to discuss any concerns you may have and how we could make sure you feel comfortable with this.

If I experience any illegal or non-conformant behaviour when I am with students (in situations where they could harm themselves or others) I will take action. First by making sure there is no immediate risk, then consulting with the students, and finally if required disclose information to the responsible people in the school. I will consult with you and your responsible staff about the school's procedures and protocols to follow.

As an appreciation for partaking in my research I would like to offer a $250 donation towards your cooking/kitchen facilities. Furthermore, the research findings will present a student perspective on nutrition issues and policies around the school and inform you and your staff on students' opinions. Further benefits include a better understanding about the social, cultural, and symbolic meaning of food and nutrition practices in young people's lives.

If you disagree with any of the conditions that I have outlined above or you wish to make amendments I am very happy to discuss these options and allow you to guide me more closely in conducting research within your institution. If you have any questions regarding the project you should feel free to contact me at any stage.

This project has been reviewed and provisionally approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 11/66. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone: 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

In summary, if you allow me to conduct research within your school:

- All observations and written data will be treated confidentially. Staff, students or school names will not be used in any report or discussion of the data.
- Information will be held in locked storage.
- You may request to withdraw your school's participation from the project at any point prior to data analysis.
- You may ask any questions regarding the project and your participation. For this purpose my contact details are given at the bottom of this form.
- A summary of the findings and final thesis will be available to you, if requested, at the end of the project.

Thank you very much for your time.

Eva Mengwasser

Researcher: Eva Mengwasser
                    evafoodstudy@gmail.com
                    0278568445

Supervisors: Dr Christine Stephens, Associate Professor School of Psychology
                    c.v.stephens@massey.ac.nz
                    04 801 5799 ext 2081

                    Dr Mat Walton, Lecturer School of Health & Social Services
                    m.d.walton@massey.ac.nz
                    04 801 5799 ext 6714

Appendix D: School Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
PRINCIPAL

Nutrients or Nurturance – what's food all about?

Please tick the following boxes to indicate that you have agreed to this project:

As the Principal of XXX School:

☐   I have been provided with an explanation of this research project and the methods that it entails (participant observations, interviews (including photographs), and focus groups).

☐   I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

☐   I understand that the nature of the research may make my school identifiable, but characteristics of and events in the School not relevant to the research will not be included in the data.

☐   I understand that Eva will spend time in the school breaks doing general participant observations to look at the range of nutrition practices within the school, and this will not specifically focus on individual's behaviour.

☐   I understand that any information gathered will be kept confidential and that results will be written up in a way that will not cause any harm to the School, staff, or students.

☐   I understand that if Eva experiences any illegal or non-conformant behaviour when she is with students (in situations where they could harm themselves or others) she will take action. First by making sure there is no immediate risk, then consulting with the students, and finally if required disclose information to the responsible people in the school. She will consult with me and my responsible staff about the school's procedures and protocols to follow.

☐   I would like to receive a summary of the research findings

☐   I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time, at which point all data collection will stop

I consent for the researcher, Eva Mengwasser, to conduct participant observation, focus groups, and interviews within the premises of XXX School. She may approach any staff or Year 13 students who attend the school to seek consent to participate in this research.

The staff at XXX School or I myself will seek to provide advice in regards to this institution or queries that the researcher may have in terms of conducting her research within our premises.

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree / do not agree (please circle the option you want) to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet

Signed:

Name of Principal: Date:

Nutrients or Nurturance – what's food all about?

STAFF INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Eva Mengwasser and I am a doctoral student at Massey University in Wellington. I am interested in finding out more about the role of food and nutrition practices in young people's everyday lives. The school is such an important setting for this because students eat at school everyday in company of their peers and friends.

For this purpose I will be spending one school year at your school with Year 13 students and become a member of your school community. I would like to attend three or four classes/extracurricular activities. Through observing and participating I aim to build relationships with the students and find out what is important to them. Some students will be asked to participate in group and individual interviews with me if they consent to this (outside class time). These are opportunities for students to voice their ideas and opinions around nutrition and health and to provide a platform for discussions.

The school will not be named in the research, however I cannot guarantee confidentiality. Due to the amount of public secondary schools in the Wellington region; there is the possibility that people familiar with the region and the schools may be able to identify your school when reading or hearing about the project. I am happy to discuss any concerns you may have and how we could make sure you feel comfortable with this.

If I experience any illegal or non-conformant behaviour when I am with participants (in situations where they could harm themselves or others) I will take action. First by making sure there is no immediate risk, then consulting with the students, and finally if required disclose information to the responsible people in the school or other legal authorities.

For most of you this does not have any immediate implications. I will be around at school, but mainly among the students. If there is anything you would like to approach me with, however, please do not hesitate.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 11/66. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone: 04 801 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me on evafoodstudy@gmail.com or 0278568445

Kind regards,
Eva Mengwasser

Appendix F: Class Teacher Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Nutrients or Nurturance – what's food all about?

CLASS TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

In allowing me to observe and participate in your lesson,

- I will attend most lessons throughout the whole school year.
- I will require a few minutes at the beginning of the first two lessons to introduce the project, hand out information sheets and consent forms; and in the second lesson to collect these from students who agree to participate
- I will observe and participate in the lesson; I will take notes on events that involve talk around nutrition, food consumption, or any other health or food-related talk. Students that do not wish to participate will not be included in any notes.
- However, I will not take notes of any other events in class, and all the information within the class will remain confidential.
- I am not interested in any form of evaluation or judging of teaching practices.
- I may approach you during the year and ask if you would participate in an interview, but for this separate consent will be sought.
- You can involve me in the usual class activities (playing sports, cooking, etc. – *here the information sheet will be tailored towards the specific class/activity that the researcher would like to attend)*
- You can ask me to leave or not attend a certain lesson any time
- You can ask me to not take notes of certain events in class
- Some participants will also be asked to participate in interviews or focus groups. These will be held outside of class time in some designated school area, negotiated with the Principal. Some participants may be asked to take photos as a basis for interviews. If any people are included on photographs they will be blanked out, hence not be identifiable. I might also ask the teachers for an interview. I will voice record the interviews and focus groups. I will negotiate with you if there are any spaces in the school I may use. For each interview or focus group the students will give separate consent.

     This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 11/66. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone: 04 801 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz. If you have any more questions please do not hesitate to contact me on evafoodstudy@gmail.com or 0278568445.

    Kind regards,

    Eva Mengwasser

Appendix G: Class Teacher Consent Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Nutrients or Nurturance – what's food all about?

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

CLASS TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree that Eva spends time in my XXX class this year, observes and participates in the lessons. I understand that she will be taking notes on what we do in class and the discussions we have that related in any way to nutrition or health, but I also understand that she will keep personal information private and not name me by my name in her results or publications.

I agree / do not agree (please circle the option you want) to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

Full Name - printed ....

Appendix H: Participant Observation Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS

NUTRIENTS OR NURTURANCE – WHAT'S FOOD ALL ABOUT?

I would like to ask you if you would like to be a participant in my study, but before you decide check out what it involves and ask me any questions where you are unsure about stuff, so...

Who am I?

Name: Eva Mengwasser
From: Massey University
Job: PhD Research Student
Task: Understand what role food plays in everyday life
Email: evamengwasser@hotmail.com

What am I doing here?

People eat for many different reasons, and often think there is a right or wrong way of doing it. Is there a right & wrong, good & bad, healthy & unhealthy way of eating? Because you as young adults are not asked often enough in research, I'd like to find out what is important to you when it comes to food.

What does it mean for you if you participate?

✓ It means I will be in your class all year and spend some time finding out what is important to you.
✓ I would like to take notes of my impressions and stuff we talk about.
✓ You only have to talk to me and spend time with me if you want to.
✓ If you get to know me a little more and feel like it, I might ask you about doing a group conversation or an interview with me, but you can decide this later on...
✓ I would also ask you to fill in a 10 min questionnaire about food for me

If you decide to participate…

This means..I will...

1. Sit in your class all year, participate, get to know you, and take notes about anything related to nutrition
2. Hang out with you in breaks or free time if you feel like it
3. Later on, I might ask you if you would like to participate in an interview or group discussion, and potentially ask you to take photos on a topic we talk about

…and…

✓ You can always still change your mind
✓ You don't need to answer any questions if you don't want to
✓ I will keep everything we talk about anonymous and confidential, however it is quite likely that people will know about the school's involvement in the project as such
✓ You should know that if I am with you in any situation where there is a risk of harm to you or any others I am required to report this to third parties for help, that means for instance, if I experience any bullying or illegal activities I need to report this
✓ You do not need to participate in any interviews or group conversations with me if you don't want to
✓ I will not use your real name and will keep anything you tell me confidential, nobody will be able to tell it was you who said something
✓ You will get a summary of the findings & a presentation
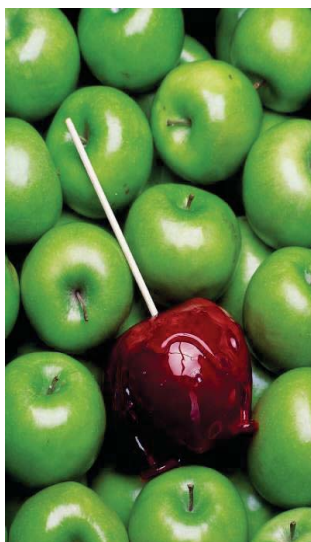
This project has been…

reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 11/66. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, ph 06 350 5799 x 8729, or humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Appendix I: Participant Observation Consent Form

STUDENT CONSENT FORM –

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Nutrients or Nurturance – what's food all about?

Eva has told me that:

- ✓ I can stop my involvement in the project anytime I like if I don't feel like it anymore.
- ✓ I do not have to answer any questions I do not want to.
- ✓ she will be spending time in our class this year, observing and taking notes of any food and nutrition related topics and talk.
- ✓ If she experiences that I could cause harm to me or other(s) she will have to report this to third parties for help
- ✓ I will not be identified in the research, and she will keep all personal information private and not name me by my name in her results and publications.
- ✓ I have read the information sheet and Eva has told me everything I need to know. She has answered any questions I had and I know I can ask her more at any time.
- ✓ I will get a summary of the findings and a presentation at the end if I like.

I agree that Eva spends time with us in our class and school this year.

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree / do not agree (please circle the option you want) to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signature: **Date:**

....

Full Name – printed

....

Appendix J: Student Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

Nutrients or Nurturance – What's food all about?

How old are you? _____

Please indicate your ethnicity:

☐   ☐ Māori   ☐ Pacific   ☐ Asian   ☐ Other…
NZ/European

Please specify:_____

    1. What are the first five words you think of when you hear the word "food"?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

    2. How many meals do you eat a day?

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

These are:

    3. What is your favourite meal of the day? Why?

4. **Who do you typically eat this meal with and where?**

5. **What do you think of the food sold here at school?**

6. **What's your school lunch on most days?**

7. **What role does food play in your life, how much do you think about food?**

8. **What is the most important thing for you when it comes to food?**

9. **Where do you think you can get the most reliable information about food from?**

10. **Is there anything you love about food?**

11. **Is there anything that really annoys you about the talk of food?**

Thanks heaps for your time! ☺

Contact: evafoodstudy@gmail.com

Appendix K: Student Interview Information Sheet

NUTRIENTS OR

NURTURANCE

INTERVIEW INFO 4U

You have received this pamphlet because

I have asked you for an interview for my

study…here a few facts you need to

know:

- ✓ The interview will be tape recorded
- ✓ You can ask me to turn off the recorder at any stage
- ✓ We will arrange a suitable time for the interview after school to meet up
- ✓ The interview will take about 45-90 minutes
- ✓ If you say something you didn't want to say you can tell me to delete it from the recorder
- ✓ After the interview you may read the transcript and will also have the chance to review if I understood what you meant

evafoodstudy@gmail.com

Appendix L: Student Interview Consent Form

![Massey University logo]

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

STUDENT CONSENT FORM –

INTERVIEW

Nutrients or Nurturance – what's food all about?

Interview topic:_____

Eva has told me that:

- ✓ I can stop my involvement in the project anytime I like if I don't feel like it anymore.
- ✓ I do not have to answer any questions I do not want to.
- ✓ she will be recording our conversation, but I can ask for the recorder to be turned off any time.
- ✓ I will not be identified in the research, and she will keep all personal information private and not name me by my name in her results and publications.
- ✓ I have read the information sheet and Eva has told me everything I need to know. She has answered any questions I had and I know I can ask her more at any time.
- ✓ I agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I agree that Eva has a conversation with me, where we will discuss a food-related topic that Eva has asked me about (as stated above). I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I wish / do not wish (please circle the option you want) to review my transcripts from the interview

I agree / do not agree (please circle the option you want) to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signature: **Date:**

....

Full name - printed

....

Appendix M: Instructions for Photo Diary Interviews

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Instructions for photo diaries

Thank you so much for making a photo diary! I really value your opinion and look forward to talking to you about it!

To make a photo diary it is best to just carry the cam with you for the next weeks and use it as a diary throughout the day….this is a much easier way to remember every occasion because you will have a photo that will help you remember.

So..whenever anything food-related occurs take a quick pic or take a little note (if you can't take a photo) – see it as a food diary, but not as a diary on *what* you eat, rather with whom, where, when, and how do you come into contact with food. This also means it does not have to involve you eating any food, it can be preparing, buying, giving away, or receiving food…anything you like…text me on XXXXX if you have any questions ☺ Eva

Appendix N: Semi-structured Student Interview Guide

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Semi-structured student interview guide

School:
- Where and with whom do you have breakfast each morning? Weekday vs weekend vs holiday?
- What school lunches do you have, home or bought? Who makes your lunch?
- Where do you eat your lunch? With whom?
- Do you share food with friends?
- Are there enough lunch spaces at school?
- How do teachers use food with you? How do you like it? Why?
- At what occasions is food shared at school, formal vs informal?

Family:
- Where do you have dinner most nights? How does it proceed?
- Do you cook or bake? When? Why?
- How long does dinner last?
- How well do you get on with your family?
- Do you ever eat with people you dont like? How is that?
- Do you eat food from anyone who cooks?
- If you cook for the family for what reasons?

Friends:
- Do you go out with friends for food and drinks? Often? Why? Where do you go to? (prompts: who, how often, where, type of food eaten, other activities involved)
- How do you like eating with your friends? Why?
- If you change friend groups do you find food practices are in anyway different, or does food play any role in how you get to know new friends?

Appendix O: Teacher Interview Information Sheet

Teacher interview information sheet

My name is Eva Mengwasser and I am a doctoral student at Massey University in Wellington. I am interested in finding out more about the role of food and nutrition practices in young people's everyday lives. The school is such an important setting for this because students eat at school everyday in company of their peers and friends.

To find out more about these practices and document some opinions you have on this, I would like to interview you on a range of topics about food practices amongst students and teachers at school.

      Further information on the nature of the interview…

- ✓ The interview will be tape recorded
- ✓ You can ask me to turn off the recorder at any stage
- ✓ We will arrange a suitable time for the interview after school to meet up
- ✓ The interview will take about 45-90 minutes
- ✓ If you say something you didn't want to say you can tell me to delete it from the recorder
- ✓ After the interview you may read the transcript and will also have the chance to review if I understood what you meant

Appendix P: Teacher Interview Consent Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Nutrients or Nurturance – what is food all about?

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

TEACHER INTERVIEW

Interview topic:_____

Eva has answered any questions I had and I know I can ask her more at any time.

I understand that she will be recording our conversation, but I also understand that she will keep all personal information private and not name me by my name in her results and publications. I also understand that I can ask her to stop the recording at any stage during the interview.

I wish / do not wish (please circle the option you want) to review my transcripts from the interview

I agree / do not agree (please circle the option you want) to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

Full Name - printed ....

Appendix Q: Semi-structured Teacher Interview Guide

Teacher Interview Guide

- What subjects do you teach?
- How long have you been at this school?
- What is your role at the school?
- What does health and well-being mean to you?
- What does social health mean to you? Social connectedness? Is this important and does the school play any role in this?
- Does food play any role for social connectedness among students, and between students and teachers?
- What role does the school have in your opinion to promote young people's health and well-being?
- Can food be used or useful in teaching?
- Do you use food practices at all with girls in your classes? (E.g. sharing food, preparing food, food as a reward, etc)
- If so, how, why, what effects/benefits do you think they have, and how do you think the girls perceive it?
- Is there any value of sharing food with students?
- What are your experiences, for example how girls interact with food, the role of food in their relationships, with girls and food practices, e.g. in breaks, on school trips?
- Do you think there are enough spaces for girls at school to gather and eat their food?
- What's your opinion on the school food environment around school?
- Does food seem to play an important role within the school for the girls?
- Eating practices in class- do you allow food in your class, why or why not?
- Teacher breaks- where do you normally eat lunch?
- Is there generally enough time for you to socialize with other teachers during lunch?
- Are there any events or occasions where food is provided for you?
- Do you think teachers' well-being is valued enough, and looked after enough?

Appendix R: Māori Advisor Ethics Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Thursday 23rd September 2011

Trish Young
P O Box 24177
Manners Street
WELLINGTON 6142

Chairperson
Human Research Ethics Committee
Massey University
WELLINGTON

Tena koe

Re: Eva Mengwasser – Ethics Application: Socio-cultural food – The meaning of nutrition practices in young people's lives

I wish to verify that Eva and I have met and had email communication to discuss the development of her research project that is the subject of this ethics application.

We discussed the scope of her project, the bearing the research may have for Maori and possible approaches. We also talked about the involvement of Maori teachers or Maori community members who Eva could approach to be involved in supporting this research project to ensure ongoing relevance for Maori participants and their families.

If you have any queries regarding my role or input to this application please do not hesitate to contact me.

Heoi ano
Na

Trish Young
Research Advisor – Maori
Mob: 021 265 7481
Email: tewairereahiahi@vodafone.net.nz

Appendix S: Student Results Letter

Dear XXXX,

Thank you again for participating in my research in 2012. I have finally finished my analysis and have some results I want to share with you. You provided valuable information that contributed to an interesting study, and from which others will benefit.

Overall I found that the food practices in the school were important for establishing, maintaining, and managing social relationships. I have written three papers that represent the core findings as they relate to the research aim. The first paper is about food rituals. In the data, to which you contributed in your interviews and by allowing me to join you in your everyday school life, I found that rituals were used to manage relationships. The three main rituals I found were the lunch walk (walking together to go buy some food in breaks), ritualised sharing (the habitual sharing of food between different friends), and gifting food (the practice to make or buy food for friends). These three practices appeared to help bond with new and existing friends.

The second paper was on shared lunches. I found that at school many classes, but also students independently, organised shared lunches. Across all the data on shared lunches I found that they contributed to students' feeling of connectedness to school (feeling like you belong to school, having good relationships with peers and teachers, etc.). I found that there were certain things shared lunches enabled that helped different people talk to each other and foster social relationships. These included: enabling people to see common humanity (meaning food and eating made everybody feel like others were also just people with needs like themselves); creating an informal environment (making it less school-like and more fun); encouraging sharing (encouraged everyone to share, even if they weren't good friends); enabling inclusive participation (an easy way for everyone to participate not dependent on academic skills); demonstrating sacrifice of time and effort (contributing showed a degree of sacrifice, such as going to the effort to bake a cake); and experiencing diversity (this involved things like experiencing different things people eat on different occasions). So overall the shared lunches seemed to bring about a range of positives that were conducive to social relationships.

The third paper was about all the food practices I observed across the year, and how this would fit into a health-promoting schools framework, which is a framework used in health promotion to engage schools in health-promoting activities through a whole-school

approach. This includes activities within the classroom, the school environment, the school culture, and the links with the broader school community. I investigated whether the food events I attended across the year would fit into a health-promoting schools model. The goal was to determine whether it could be useful to draw on food practices in health promotion to promote school connectedness and social relationships within schools. Overall there was a range of practices from the classroom (e.g., shared lunches, language breakfast, etc.) to whole-school events (such as Market Day or the big bake-off) that are likely to be useful for a whole-school approach to school connectedness.

I have attached the abstract of each of these articles, and of course can provide you with the articles if you are interested. I am also happy to talk to you about anything you are interested in. Also if you decide you would like your interview transcript, I am happy to send that to you via email.

Thank you again for participating in my research, it was an amazing experience I will never forget!

Best wishes for your future.

Eva

Appendix T: University Ethics Approval

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

28 November 2011

Eva Mengwasser
2 Severn Street
Island Bay
WELLINGTON 6023

Dear Eva

Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 11/66
        Nutrients or Nurturance – What's food all about?

Thank you for your letter dated 21 November 2011.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc   A/Prof Christine Stephens   Dr Mat Walton
      School of Psychology   School of Health & Social Services
      PN320   **WELLINGTON**

      Dr Carolyn Morris   A/Prof Mandy Morgan, HoS
      School of People, Environment & Planning   School of Psychology
      PN331   PN320

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

Appendix U: Example of Field Notes

8/3/2012

Morning tea
When I came in Karla said: where have you been? i said i had stomach ache yesterday, and she said 'well at least you don't get absence'

Got to school for morning tea, Tui, Karla, Anna, Jackson, Sarah, and Lara were there. Jackson had sandwich from home, with chippies, and plum,
Tui had tuna and little bag of digestives, she gave hannah one to share and Anna held it up and commented how cute it was, Anna had a bag of tiny teddies and told us how she always ate the sleeping ones first, Jackson also had a tiny teddies in her bag and wanted to give it back to Anna but Anna said she should keep it,
Karla was eating a rice salad made at home and then some biscuits that were wrapped in glad wrap, think they were bought ones though.

One girl from the group in the room centre had a baked choc cake, Sarah and Lara were called over to have a piece, they both came back with a piece, I asked if it was her birthday, and Sarah said 'no, i dont know why she has it'. They were singled out and called over because they were known to the girl who had the cake, the others were not included. It didn't seem to bother anyone else, but seem to be accepted as the norm since they did not know the girl with the cake. The two girls ate their pieces and were not asked to share nor did they offer to share any.

Psychology:
Miss Gibson had lollies to reward girls for answering questions, which made a lot of them be quite enthusiastic and beg to be taken, might have been a bit of show with it though, but they had heaps of fun and enjoyed scavenging for the lollies.
Sat next to Tui again, really feel she and I get along quite well, we walked from the break to class and after psych back to the class room, Tui lives in xxxx, has just only got internet at home and her mum has a laptop, she is getting an iphone for her birthday though, she said thats all she needs, told me about their family friends where the dad works at apple in california, they want her to visit for 3 months, she said its crazy they're very generous but also very greedy.
Lee got a piece of paper from a girl walking round school rooms during the class, she got up and came back with a little box opened it and had a cute cupcake, and ate it (no idea what that was, will have to find out, Tui didn't know)

Lunch:
While I was still alone 3 girls came in (one from psych, other dont know) with a bag of fries each and sit down in opposite corner. I had bit of a chat with Heidi from other group (mr XX was also in room and talked a bit), came up that i was half german and lived there, ...
I was first, then Tui and Anna (Tui had gotten her lunch from the locker) came in. Anna asked Tui to go to the fish and chip shop with her because she wanted to make the most of this week because next week she is going to only buy fatty lunches once a week because she needed to lose weight, she convinced Tui to go because she didn't want to

go alone, they wanted to wait with me until the next one came in so I wouldn't be alone, but I said that's fine they should go. They asked if I was sure and i said yes.

But just when they were leaving Jackson came in and sat down next to me, we had a good 10min chat only her and me, talked about her work that she didn't have to work once this week, and was going away with church youth group to xxxx this weekend, she lives with her mum and brother (16) and mums partner, who she does not really like and get on with, every thursday and every 2nd weekend she stays with her dad and wife and step sister who she all likes and gets on well with, she said she has a proper sister relationship with her and likes her step mum. Talked about gateway and that she liked the work experience, would help her know if she really wanted to become an ECE, wants to go to xxx or xxxx (tertiary study) next year, has been at school since year 9, likes girl school although a bit bitchy sometimes. asked me if I liked their school and I said I did, she asked if it was the first school I tried I said it was the second the first said no, she looked as if 'why would they say no' and I said I think they had stuff going on with new principal and so, but that I was really happy this school worked out because it's great, she said she really liked it too. Jackson also told me about Anna and the lunch thing (Anna told me that ash has 'not allowed her' to buy lunch and food so often anymore, to lose weight) that its bad to buy food so often, although in the last week ash had bought food every day, but she had bought bagels, maybe she thought of that as healthier or so, I commented that it must also be expensive she then slipped from talking about Anna to herself and said that she needs to start making her lunch in the evening because she is always running too late in the morning to do it and ends up having to buy her lunch. For lunch she was having a box of satay peanut noodles left over from lunch yesterday (I asked if they were leftover), Jackson had kept it in her locker and brought it with her into the classroom.

Anna and Tui came back, Anna with big thing of chips and 2 hotdogs, Tui with new world bag and a big bottle of lipton ice tea and 2 kinder surprise eggs. When Anna got chips out she said "theres heap i got them all for us to share" and put them in the middle, Tui placed her tupperware next to it with homemade pizza in it and said Anna could have some of that if she wanted too. Anna ate hotdog and once finished said she didn't really feel like chips (ah she offered me some too, and I took a few), she offered Jackson some but ash just said no and didn't turn around (this happened again when Anna offered her some of the choc kinder egg..this is linked to another story I think, Tui was quite upset because Rosie (a girl I don't know) had apparently told round that Tui had said that she didn't like Elli and Jackson said "I'd never say that I love you all, that's why I hang out here, I would never say that" not sure why she had said this (I guess just girls) and Lara (who had joined us shortly after as well) hugged Tui and asked if she should have a work with Rosie, anyway when Jackson later left before the others did (she had done school work all the break and not talked in the group, which she did do at morning tea) Tui said that she probably wasn't talking to her because of Rosie and that Jackson was probably talking behind her back badly about her (Tui) So Jackson had denied both food offerings from Anna, where she normally quite happily shared food from and with others, *this may show how acceptance and non-acceptance of food from friends indicates current moods*, it was as if Jackson was not happy about them at that time, so she also did not accept any food, *of course I am just inferring this, but judged from how Jackson normally shares food, this seems quite likely*)

Anna got up and shared all the chips around and encouraged the girls to take as many as they like, even two girls that just poked their heads into the classroom, she told them to

take some, Ange took quite a few, Lisa commented that Ange had just had a huge lasagne (Ange and Lisa had bought a lasagne type thing from xxx deli, Kara was spooning an avocado, and the Leslie was eating pasta salad type thing from home), girls enthusiastically took chips though from Anna, when Anna got back with the remaining ones, Tui said "that looks about right for us now" meaning the amount left in the box. Anna also said to Tui that it was her hotdog, Tui said "oh for me? thank you Anna...they're such good hotdogs" (after biting into it), Tui had one piece of her 2 pieces of pizza and snacked quite a few chips, Lara also snacked quite a few chips without needing explicit invitation to do so. Anna also prompted me a few times to take some more. Lara asked if she could build Anna's toy from the egg, Anna said sure and opened it up, Anna gave me and Lara a piece of chocolate broken off the egg, shared it quite evenly out, (offered Jackson, see above), Tui also told me to have her second half, I felt I couldn't totally say no, so I said 'ok I'll take a piece of it'

      Lara said initially she didn't want chips because she had her lunch, but she ended up eating about half her sandwich and quite a few chips, they shared around the ice tea.

      Talked a bit about different nationalities we had in us, and that no one is 100% anything, Tui said she had 7 nationalities in her, her dad is currently away travelling somewhere.

      When we walked out of the classroom and I turned left and said see ya to Tui, she said 'ah (short surprising sounding ah) where are you going?' I said to art, she said 'ah ok, c ya' (some expectations about walking together and being part of their group already)