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An Investigation of Children's Mealtime Socialisation in a Primary School in Southwest England

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Declaration of any previous submission of the work

The material presented here for examination for the award of a higher degree by research has not been incorporated into a submission for another degree.

Declaration of authorship

I am the author of this thesis, and the work described therein was carried out by me personally.

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Abstract

School mealtime research in England has been preoccupied with the nutritional composition of a meal in relation to children's bodies and health education. Underlying these concerns is the assumption that if children eat the right food and receive the right discipline, they will be admitted into adult society. Children's socialisation is often reported from an adult-centred perspective, referring to children from the adult viewpoint or from a school management perspective, which underpins adults as the legitimate holders of knowledge on children's experiences. I seek to problematise this view, along with the tendency to regard mealtime structure and social life as a unified, monolithic mechanism that maintains individuals in their subjection to produce docile children, which analytically neglects children's individualised forms of knowledge and power. Rather, I will examine children's school mealtime socialisation from a child-centred perspective, which has received little attention in the current literature. My research will demonstrate how children experience the mealtime differently, in a constant and intense struggle between multiple coexisting voices.

Data are drawn from 25 months of ethnographic research conducted in a primary school in South West England. The analysis draws on a synergy of rich and varied data to explicate how children negotiate moral and social mealtime rules, the materiality of the meal hall and the temporality of social interactions in their peer produced social worlds. The findings demonstrate that children can be sophisticated and agentic when subverting the normative moral and social order, both for humour and camaraderie, and privately to alleviate discomfort. My research contributes an understanding that socialisation is an open, active and creative process of interdependence and experimentation with contradiction between the self and the other. In consequence, children's socialisation can be double-edged: learning the authoritative discourse of the adults and finding covert ways to temporarily disrupt and subvert the established order.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research purposes and questions

In this thesis, I examine children's school mealtime socialisation from a child-centred perspective to understand how children find belonging in the mealtime, improvise within the normative school mealtime order, decide when and how to subvert the solemnity of official discourse and navigate the ambivalence of unstructured peer relations. I argue that school mealtimes provide children with opportunities to define and enforce meaningful social interaction, where rules of conduct are more their own and social interaction stems from their own initiative. In doing so, children develop sophisticated relational and contextual knowledge in a creative process of interdependence and experimentation between the self and other. I use an ethnographic approach to collect empirical data in children's naturalistic school mealtime settings. By using ethnographic examples, my research aims to highlight phenomena that appear to be absent from nutritional, health education and socio-spatial school mealtime literature.

I draw upon a sociocultural perspective to demonstrate that children are not passive recipients of school mealtime knowledge (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). Children selectively and actively contribute to the meanings and outcomes of their interactions with each other, the materiality of their situated activities and the social and moral order. It is undeniable that children's mealtime socialisation involves negotiation and appropriation of common meanings, but at the same time, the school mealtime is a site of difference and conflict. I draw upon Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia and carnivalesque discourse, which present a strong challenge to unified social concerns. It is precisely the interplay of conflict among ideological diversity and the coexistence of voices that complicates unity (Bakhtin, 1981). I analyse how children can make strange the world of convention and gain critical distance to experimentally objectify the dominant discourse as part of their active mealtime socialisation (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003). In doing so, I challenge normative ideas about the rightness or wrongness of children's subversive interactions to suggest some ways of thinking about children's school mealtime socialisation alternative to those available at present, and amplify the possibilities open to children for social change.

In this research I have addressed the question as to how children socialise during the school mealtime from a child-centred perspective. My sub-research questions are theoretically informed in light of the literature review, which pertains to how children negotiate and organise their emergent interactions (Goffman, 1975; Resnick, 1994; Klemp et al., 2006) to temporarily subvert social and moral order, recognising a plurality in worlds (Bakhtin, 1969; 1981).

Research questions:

1. How do children interact and negotiate social and material relations?

2. How do children collaboratively experiment with and challenge the school mealtime structure and develop understanding in relation to others?

3. How do individual children challenge the school mealtime structure and maintain a sense of autonomy?

1.2 Research rationale

Almost every primary school in the UK has some form of compulsory mealtime and there has been little recognition of the social and educational value of children's mealtime socialisation. The current situation is troubling because the absence of school mealtime research that explores the social value of mealtimes underestimates the importance of mealtimes to children. Arguably, children are socialised into more than the mechanics of eating together, they learn interactional skills, how to communicate, collaborate and navigate noisy multifarious social contexts in a relatively safe way; gaining social experience that extends well beyond the meal hall. Sociological and ethnographical research on children's perspectives have raised awareness of the significance of informal social experiences (Hargraves, 1967; Ball, 1981) but few studies in these traditions have focused on the educational value of children's school mealtime socialisation.

Where school mealtime research has been taken up, the focus tends to be placed on nutrition and health education in relation to children's bodies and food choices. Using clinical methods and questionnaire-based designs, these studies emphasise children's consumption in relation

to the composition of a meal, which has led to certain methodologies and assumptions being made that overlook the context in which children consume. My research challenges some key assumptions in current school mealtime literature and indicates the virtues of an approach to researching children's eating practices using an ethnographic methodology. It is crucial that data is collected to provide a rounded picture of children's schooling during school mealtimes.

Current school mealtime research often reports children's interactions and learning from an adult perspective (predominantly presented from the teacher or mealtime assistant's perspective), referring to children in general terms or as an aspect of the adult view (Burgess and Morrison, 1998; Pike, 2008; 2010; Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010). Under the ideology of care, adults feel confident about making good decisions and judgements because they are well-equipped to know what is 'best' for children (Lee, 2001; Jenks, 2005). Challenges to adults' legitimate knowledge confirm the adult's completeness and competence, and position children as incompetent, vulnerable or ignorant (Lee 2001). What is missing from current socialisation literature and school mealtime research is an understanding of how children experience social interaction from a child-centred perspective in the school mealtime context. I challenge conventional notions of normative socialisation, which underpin adults as legitimate holders of knowledge on children's experiences. In doing so, I re-theorise the notion of socialisation and develop a nuanced understanding of children's specific socialisation in school mealtime practice. I analyse how children's socialisation takes place in relation to social and material conditions, as well as their changing relationships to everyday settings and institutional collectives with a child-centred approach (Hedegaard, 2009).

The field of school mealtime research has expanded in recent years in relation to socio-spatial strategies, practices and embodied identities (Valentine, 1999; Pike, 2010; 2014). These researchers consider how the institutional school mealtime carries meanings well beyond the food and influences children's fields of action. Despite this changing landscape, children's mealtime socialisation research remains under-researched. Where mealtime research has been taken up, the tendency is to deploy a Foucauldian framework that regards the school mealtime structure and social life as a unified monolithic mechanism that maintains children in their subjection (Valentine, 1999; Pike, 2010; 2014). I problematise the assumption that structure and normative discourse produces docile bodies, arguing that such a perspective analytically neglects children's individualised forms of knowledge and power (Smart, 1983).

I contribute theoretically to current school mealtime literature by demonstrating how children can be agentic and sophisticated, creating critical distance to temporarily become the powerful other.

In addition, there is currently limited educational research on the social conditions of the school mealtime perhaps because it is take-for-granted that children are 'just' eating a school meal. Health and Psychology research has explored the noise levels, ambience and how listening to music affects children's consumption of a school meal (Moore et al., 2010; Stroebele and Castro, 2004; 2006). However, I argue that the school mealtime has a distinctive social milieu that determines the possibilities and expectations for social action. I analyse the social conditions to reveal how they provide opportunities for children to creatively experiment with both the predictable and unpredictable, serendipitous and contingent aspects of social life in a relatively safe way. These ideas are currently missing from school mealtime literature and I therefore challenge the familiar and problematise often taken-for-granted aspects of the school mealtime social arena.

To engage in a child-centred perspective, it was essential to deploy an ethnographic methodology that was anchored in children's everyday mealtime activities. It was imperative to keep an open mind to build a contextualised account of children's interactions with others and the mealtime organisation. The fieldwork was exploratory. I concentrated my focus on children's attention, what they were looking at, participating in and concerned with, to gain an understanding about what was important and at stake for them during their school mealtimes (Hedegaard et al., 2012; Højholt, 2012). I assumed that children are people to be studied in their own right and not simply receptacles of adults' socialisation of children. I conducted 24 months of fieldwork, over a five-year data collection period, which has led to a deep understanding of children's lived experiences.

1.3 Significance of the research

School mealtimes have become an institutionalised daily meal in nearly every formal schooling establishment in the UK and greater attention needs to be given to the educational value of schooling during school mealtimes. It is essential to construct a more sophisticated articulation of the school mealtime context and children's socialisation to fully understand children's social consumption. My research contributes a child-centred perspective, which

would not be possible had I spoken only to adults about children's socialisation, because a lot of what takes place in their peer produced worlds is subtle and goes on under the radar of supervising adults. Thus, it is imperative that educational researchers consider how school mealtimes contribute to children's development, connection and disconnection from others and socialisation for educational purposes. To do otherwise is to impoverish our understanding of education during school mealtimes, which should be viewed as an integral component of children's schooling.

1.4 Thesis organisation

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Following this chapter, Chapter Two critically reviews existing literature to examine the educational value of children's school mealtime socialisation. In order to understand school mealtime as an institutional practice, I consult school mealtime policy literature in England to understand how it has transformed the way we think about the purposes of a school meal. I then outline how nutritional, health education and socio-spatial school mealtime research informs this research, and I identify current limitations in these fields. I then challenge an adult-centred view of socialisation, in favour of a child-centred perspective that conceptualises children as agentic and sophisticated social actors. Following this, I review the literature that forms the theoretical building blocks to conceptualise the affordances of school mealtime social conditions and the temporality of children's emergent interactions; I then examine literature that can explicate how children can pierce the dome of everyday existence to challenge the normative order.

Chapter Three provides a methodological discussion for framing the research on children's mealtime socialisation, describing my changing involvement in the research methodology, analytically and ethically. I outline the importance of including children's perspectives in my research methodology by discussing the philosophical underpinnings of this ethnographic inquiry. I discuss my research design, data collection methods, methods of analysis and the ethical considerations of this research.

Chapters Four, Five and Six present qualitative analyses of the data generated and gathered from this ethnographic fieldwork over a 5-year data collection period (2013-2017). Chapter Four draws on Goffman's (1975) frame analysis to examine how children negotiate their seating positions and establish the argument that children create particular dialogic

formations around a lunch table. Chapters Five and Six draw on Bakhtin's (1968; 1981) carnivalesque discourse to question why children might purposefully compete or collaborate to sit at particular tables or in a particular seat. Chapter Five investigates how children learn the authoritative discourse of adults and collectively contribute to sociodramatic interactions that disrupt the normative order. Chapter Six, conversely, investigates how school mealtimes can be isolating, hostile socialising experiences, full of unpleasant uncertainty and risks. More specifically, I focus in on how individual children subvert the normative order, not for notoriety but to alleviate themselves from oppressive mealtime rules or peer interactions.

Chapter Seven synthesises the research findings (set out in the analytical Chapters Four, Five and Six) to establish what can be learnt about children's mealtime socialisation and how it contributes to existing research. Chapter Eight provides a conclusion for this research, answers my research questions and summarises my contributions to knowledge. I will discuss the research implications and limitations of this study and make recommendations for future research directions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Rationale for Researching Children's School Mealtime Socialisation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the importance of researching children's school mealtime socialisation. Firstly, I review the historical formations of school mealtimes to illustrate how their remit and rationale has changed over time and how different political agendas have informed children's socialisation. Secondly, I critique existing mealtime research, arguing that a focus on large scale nutritional studies has led to a focus on meals and their impacts on children's bodies. I outline the limitations of current literature, particularly the way children's perspectives have been ignored. I then problematise some of the dominant discourses around children's socialisation, exploring key perspectives to outline my theoretical understanding of the term 'children's socialisation'. I explore the social conditions of the mealtime, concluding that what children can do is conditioned to an extent by the school mealtime setting. This is followed by a review of literature outlining children's social organisation, demonstrating the emergent aspects of children's interactions and the importance of transient mealtime opportunities for children to organise their socialisation with peers. Finally, I draw on Bakhtin's notions of carnivalesque and grotesque realism to argue that children can make strange the world of convention and gain critical distance to experimentally objectify the dominant discourse as part of their active mealtime socialisation.

2.2 Historical formations of the school mealtime

In this section I review school mealtime literature in the UK to illustrate how policy has shaped school mealtime practice and children's socialisation. I will argue that school meals originated from the necessity of feeding undernourished children. The school mealtime was then realised to be a powerful opportunity to educate children socially and to develop competencies relevant to participating in societal life. More recently, the governmental and research focus has shifted into health education and the important focus on children's mealtime socialisation has been lost.

Compulsory education in Britain (Board of Education, 1880) exposed concerns about undernourished children who had not received adequate subsistence to take full advantage of

their education because they were too hungry to learn. Thus, the school meal began as an educational issue, whereby basic meals were provided to enable the education of underfed children. Vernon (2005, p.701) argues that the introduction of school meals created an important shift in thinking, whereby 'the political spectrum recognized that hunger now had to be governed socially, especially that of schoolchildren in the wake of compulsory education'. Therefore, the school meal incorporated children's bodies into the regime of education.

The introduction of the 1906 Education Act (Board of Education 1906) permitted, but did not compel, all Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to provide meals for all children who were malnourished so that they could fully benefit from government resources (Audit Inspectorate, 1983; Passmore and Harris, 2004). Schools that offered meals ensured children received the necessary nutrition to build their growing bones, bodies and brains, at a time when children's rationed diets were deemed inadequate. Nutritional standards were introduced in 1941 to provide children with basic nutrition during wartime (Board of Education, 1941). Passmore and Harris (2004) argue that the Second World War created a shift in the design of the school meal service from a service provided to children so that they could benefit from their education, to a general service intended to benefit all children for health and welfare purposes.

The Education Act 1944 obliged all local authorities to provide a school meals service (although not necessarily free or subsidised). The Act marked a step forward in that 'the school meal was to become a social service in an educational setting, essentially part of the school day' (Hudson, 1975, p.10). This enabled hungry children to take advantage of their classwork but further intended children to develop good eating habits (Hudson, 1975; Vernon, 2005). These educational ideals were very much concerned with encouraging 'healthy, productive, and socially well-adapted citizens' (Vernon, 2005, p.711). The school mealtime would initiate children into social life and teach them about socially responsible forms of behaviour, self-control and thoughtfulness for one another (Vernon, 2005). Social conventions became enshrined in school mealtimes as a way of producing socially well-adjusted subjects. Middle class social and moral educational ideals meant that in some cases school meals were served in a 'family service system' (Metcalfe and colleagues, 2011, p.379) whereby teachers sat at the head of the table to demonstrate how to behave and disciplined those who failed to learn (Vernon, 2005). Older children were called upon to act as

exemplary students whose manners could be emulated by the younger children (Vernon, 2005).

At the same time, a growing awareness of nutritional requirements continued in order to improve the situation and conditions for hungry lethargic children, re-focusing policy attention towards the importance of a good diet. New concepts of a good society and a good meal developed from school mealtimes, purposefully shaping children's socialisation to help them become 'better fathers and mothers in consequence' (Vernon, 2005, p.719). The next policy shift occurred in 1980 when market forces were introduced into the school meal system.

The post war 1980 Education Act removed the compulsory obligation for Local Education Authorities to provide school meals to all children (except for those children entitled to free school meals) to a subsidised service that no longer needed to have a fixed price or adhere to nutritional standards (Noorani, 2005; Passmore and Harris, 2004). To save on public expenditure, market forces were introduced, and attitudes shifted towards competitive tendering, where catering contracts were given to the most competitive offers (Evans and Harper, 2009). According to Passmore and Harris (2004, p.223) 'instead of being a service provided for the child's benefit, it was now seen as a commercial service'. This meant that school meals were no longer a state-owned public service or conceived as an integral part of children's social education. Deregulation in the neoliberal era of choice brought many low-cost negative effects to school meal provision in terms of cheaper processed foods and children being able spend as much or as little as they wanted on their meal, with no method for controlling what children ate (Passmore and Harris, 2004; Morgan, 2006). This inculcated children with a sense of individual responsibility as the food itself did not protect children (Gustafsson, 2004). Children were identified as 'out of control', unable to pursue a heathy eating regime, which eventually led to moral panics about unhealthy eating, food choices and obesity.

In response, statutory nutritional standards for school lunches were re-introduced, implementing a 'good health model', with detailed guidance for school caterers on the national nutritional standards in recognition of the connection between health and dietary intake (Department for Education and Employment, 2001). Enmeshed in health education is the idea that children are incompetent to make their own healthy food choices. The UK

government formed a variety of policies and interventions to address the inadequacies of nutrition in children's school meal diets and to teach children about healthy eating habits (Department of Health, 2004; Department of Health, 2008; Vander Schee and Gard, 2011). Evans and Harper (2009) argue that the government's response is both an attempt to curb the 'global obesity epidemic', with many schools conveying healthy eating messages, as well as an attempt to provide a nutritional safety net for children on free school meals and to protect nutritionally vulnerable groups. Clear agendas were implemented to improve diet, which provided entitlement to fruit as a healthy snack and expanded the role of OFSTED to include a whole school approach to healthy eating (Naki, 2008). Naki (2008) argues that media interest was relatively scant and generally in favour of the government's position.

In 2005 a Channel 4 documentary featuring Jamie Oliver, the celebrity chef, raised the profile of school meals, calling for improvement with a national campaign called 'Feed Me Better' to save children from the alleged evils of fast foods and their manufacturers (Naki, 2008; Pike, 2014). The government responded by re-stating earlier commitments written in the 2004 White Paper and devised new policy initiatives for the underfunded system. Naki (2008) argues that the intensity of media coverage energised the debate and raised awareness in the public domain, which contributed to the promotion and development of the existing government agenda to provide health education to children. A report was commissioned in 2012 (Dimbleby and Vincent, 2013) and Pike (2014, p.12) argues that the recommendations are strategies to curtail and manipulate 'young people's fields of action by banning certain foods in schools, regulating foods that can be served and making it difficult for young people to leave the school premises to find food elsewhere'. This points to the government's commitment to manage children's consumption through health education (Department of Education, 2019).

This historical review of school mealtimes has shown that the resolution of one problem always gave way to another. What constitutes a midday meal has become more sophisticated and 'there is universal acceptance of the importance of a balanced diet' (Passmore and Harris, 2004), which has influenced school mealtimes in terms of health education. However, school meals are much more than just a source of nutrients. I have argued that school mealtimes were introduced as a family service that was not only about 'monitoring children's nutritional welfare but was also an apparatus of control, in that it was an attempt to civilise children by instilling in them table manners, and promoting particular forms of bodily control and

comportment that would allow them eventually to be admitted into adult society' (Valentine, 2000, p.259; Section 2.3). The political spectrum recognised that compulsory education had some responsibility for children's mealtime socialisation, with the underlying aim of producing socially well-adjusted children, which was attuned to political rationalities (Gustafsson, 2004).

If we are to take children's school mealtime socialisation seriously, then a fresh perspective and new forms of expertise are needed to understand the educational relationship between the physical, social and psychological aspects of school mealtimes. Incorporating the perspectives of children is at odds with the 'highly politicised and symbolically loaded [school mealtime] terrain' (Vander Schee and Gard, 2011). However, there is little sense in devising excellent educational packages, initiatives and school meal policies if the social contexts in which health-related decisions are made are ignored (Ross, 1995). My research will explore children's perspectives to better understand the complexities of not necessarily *what* children are eating but *how* they are eating their school meals. This will provide understanding and recognition of the educational value of school mealtimes and highlight the significance that school mealtimes have for children's socialisation.

2.3 Review of school mealtime research

Large-scale nutritional research has often focused on the composition of the school meal in relation to children's bodies. However, more research is needed to identify the educational value of children's social experiences when they are eating a school meal.

Nutritional research is often conducted using large scale quantitative surveys to tackle the increasing realisation that children need to be healthy in order to benefit from educational provision (Stewart, 1948; Watt, 1948). Therefore, school mealtime research has explored the quality of the food (Ruxton, Kirk and Belton, 1996; Rees et al., 2008; Rogers et al., 2007) in comparison to lunches brought from home (Evans et al., 2010; Stevens and Nelson, 2011; Harman and Cappellini, 2015), how it affects children's body weight (Scholder, 2013), satiety and food selection (Burgess and Morrison, 1998; Smith and Ditschum, 2009; Stroebele and De Castro, 2004) and how the school meal leads to overweight children and food waste (Balzaretti, 2018). What children eat and how it impacts their health should be at the forefront of concern, but consideration must also be given to what is happening (or not

happening) beyond the consumption of the food itself. Studies such as these often gather large datasets to measure the quality of school food, which offers no insight into the social experience of eating school food. But can the social implications of children eating a school meal be ignored?

Health education research has begun to explore children's relationships to food practices in schools. However, this research often continues to neglect the children's perspective on eating. For example, Burgess and Morrison (1998) used an ethnographic approach to understand the underlying complexities of food-focused education. They collected data from teachers, mealtime assistants, parents and children to illustrate the formal and informal processes of teaching and learning about food and eating. However, they predominantly present their argument from the teacher or mealtime assistant's perspective, referring to children in general terms or as an aspect of the adult view. In contrast, Ross (1995) conducted focus groups with children to elicit their perspectives on food choices and observed school mealtimes for one week. Ross (1995) acknowledges that it was impossible to immerse herself in the mealtime during the one week of observations, and as a result, children appeared to show unease in her presence. Nevertheless, by analysing the children's accounts she discovered that when children are well informed about healthy eating options, they do not readily incorporate this knowledge into action. Ross's data suggests that 'food choice was not determined by the health attributes of food but rather that values of preference, play, socialisation and convenience were given a higher priority than health by the children when making food choices' (Ross, 1995, p.313). Ross's research demonstrates that social dynamics while eating a school meal cannot be ignored and deserve equal importance in nutritional research when trying to understand children's school meal consumption behaviour.

Children's school mealtimes and lunch service is an under-researched area (Pike, 2010) but there is a small collection of geographical literature that uses a socio-spatial framework. For example, Valentine (2000) conducted research into the informal world of children (during the lunch break, which also includes lunch off-site and free time after the food is eaten) to understand how children navigate ambiguity and position themselves socially and spatially within peer group identities. Valentine (2000, p.258) argues that 'young people learn how to mark themselves out as the same or different from others and to manage tensions between conformity and individuality'. Moreover, she considers how adults produce the institutional space of the dining hall that locates children in particular narratives, whereby food practices

spatially organise and control children. According to Valentine (2000), implicit in the adult discourse is a need to control children in an attempt to instil table manners and promote particular forms of bodily control and comportment. She argues that this ideology is set up in a Foucauldian system of discipline and surveillance. Her findings suggest that children negotiate, construct and articulate their own identities (which are highly ambiguous and embodied) whilst conforming to peer group identities. In doing so, children are located in narratives of identity not of their own making (that are temporally and spatially specific) and construct their own narratives of the self within overlapping networks of adult and peer group relationships.

Valentine's (2000) research has been instrumental in conceiving how institutional school mealtime space is created and maintained, how children articulate individuality whilst maintaining conformity, and how they divide socially and spatially to produce particular social identities. Conceptually, I have similar interests to Valentine, but my research departs in how I have applied these ideas in my research. Valentine explores the adult framing of school food practices to understand how children and their peers manage social identities, but in a wider context, for example, on the football field, in the off licence, in the toilets and the library, to understand how children's narration of self is articulated. My research will add a more detailed account of how children negotiate their participation with others within the school meal hall, elucidating how children interact with peers and the mealtime structure and develop their sense of self.

Pike (2008; 2010) further elaborates on social and spatial interactions within school mealtimes. Deploying a Foucauldian analytical framework, Pike (2008; 2010) examines mealtime assistants' regimes of surveillance that regulate children's food consumption and waste, posture and movement, timing and manners to produce 'docile' bodies. Pike's (2010, p.276) school mealtime research assumes that children's 'bodies are regulated through a series of socio-spatial strategies and practices which seek to (re)produce dominant identities and govern bodies according to a predetermined set of social norms'. In doing so, Pike (2008; 2010) argues that adult surveillance and regulation of children's eating practices are regarded as a recurrent feature of school mealtimes. Pike (2010, p.278) writes 'children's food practices in school appeared to be highly regimented with instructions issued about where they [children] could sit, how they should sit, how they should eat, what they should eat and when they could leave, how they should leave and so on'. Central to these ideas, subjects are

constituted through discourse and act upon themselves and each other, drawing on various governmental technologies through which they conduct their own conduct (Foucault, 1982; 1991; 2000). In other words, children are subjected to social regulation that normalises and shapes action and thought, which is internalised to produce a self-awareness that controls children internally. Therefore, the correct training will give rise to docile bodies, docile bodies being pliant members of society and good citizens (Jenks, 2005).

A criticism of this theoretical stance is that 'regimes of governmentality' forces an understanding of power that is unified (Smart, 1983), downplaying children's agentic and creative capacity not only to contest but to become the powerful other. However, Wickham (1986) argues that discipline is not as despotic as Foucault suggests. Foucault's centralisation of power is almost synonymous with an adult discourse that favours authoritative knowledge and analytically neglects children's individualised forms of knowledge and power (see Sections 2.4.1; 2.4.3). Therefore, children are constituted in terms of the authoritative discourse, which undermines new forms of knowledge, power and revolution. Similarly, Pike (2008; 2010) recognises children as social actors with agency in their own right but predominantly reports her data from the perspective of teachers and mealtime assistants. In doing so, she illustrates how the hierarchical construction of the mealtime assistant within the school impacts on children's field of action and encourages conformity to convention. What is missing from Pike's mealtime research is an account of how children themselves experience the mealtime from their own perspectives. In order to acknowledge that children do have emergent and transformative capacity to disrupt normalised forms of discourse, knowledge and power, research into mealtimes would benefit from a theoretical perspective which can view sovereignty as not being monolithically powerful and which can also report from the children's perspective.

Daniel and Gustafsson's (2010) school mealtime research explored a mismatch between the agenda of children and the agenda of adults. They aimed to investigate whether school mealtimes are children's services or children's spaces, suggesting there is evidence of a disparity between governments' (and schools') priorities and those of the children. They argue that it is not the food that plays a central role for children but that the social value and opportunities for time and space during school mealtimes are at the top of the children's agenda. Their primary motive for conducting their research 'was not to conduct academic enquiry into children's experiences but to provide information for evidence-based policy

development' (Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010, p.269). The qualitative portion of their data was collected through non-participant observations of the mealtime process, semi-structured interviews with children and one focus group in each school with the parents (three primary schools were selected). Thereby, they explore how the school organised food delivery, the length of time taken for children in the lunch queue, the length of time each child had to choose their lunch and how the school managed packed lunches.

Their findings suggest that 'children viewed lunchtime positively as a space where they were able to relax, be with friends and have a break from the normal routine of the school day' (Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010, p.270). However, Daniel and Gustafsson (2010, p.270) suggest that school mealtimes are not children's spaces, based on their non-participant observations and semi-structured interview data with children, because eating arrangements are restricted and constrained, which often resulted 'in frustration because the mealtime did not fulfil its promise' of relaxation or reprieve from the normal routine of the school day. Daniel and Gustafsson argue that school mealtimes are contested because 'children see them as offering one of the few opportunities within the school day for a space within which to exercise their own culture/agency', whilst at the same time, the mealtime is designed and controlled by adults (Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010, p.273). Further research is needed from the children's perspective to understand why the children might view the mealtime positively, amidst adult restrictions and constraints.

Exploring children's experiences from the children's perspective, as far as this is possible, may lead to greater insights into the intricacies and educational benefits of children's mealtime socialisation. School mealtimes have become an integral way for schools to encourage and monitor the health of children, placing great emphasis on promoting nutrition and making healthy food choices. Metcalfe and colleagues (2011) conducted research on the school mealtime to discover links between governing children's bodies in terms of what children eat, as a way of civilising them, and as a means of leading their parents into making informed choices about being healthy and becoming 'good citizens'. Metcalfe and colleagues (2011) focus on three aspects of the mealtime: how the state shapes meal provision; how the school mealtime is organised by staff; and how children use food and space to manage relationships. Using ethnographic observations, they argue that aside from nutrition and the physiological aspects of food, children are incorporated into a culinary system that regulates and defines standards. They assert that interactions within the mealtime between staff and

children demonstrate that relationships are organised in terms of power and dominations, which to some extent are mutually agreed but which are not clearly bounded. Finally, they suggest that children manage identities and social relationships actively rather than simply reacting to dominant messages.

Metcalfe and colleagues (2011) illustrate how children gift each other with food to demonstrate generosity and the quality of friendship, and in contrast, to exclude other children. They expose how children organise space with their seating arrangements and wait for each other to finish their meals or finish their meals early in order to leave with friends. Significantly, they argue that children defined friendships by sitting together to reinforce in-groups and out-groups, which meant that 'some children sat together not because they were friends, but because they were not friends with others in their year who had signed up to be together' (Metcalfe et al., 2011, p.386). This research has been instrumental in drawing attention to the broader interconnection of actors, relationships and the conditions in which children consume a school meal. This implies that research needs to account for the social complexities involved in mealtime socialisation and points to the need for studies to conceptualise children as competent social actors.

In summary, I have illustrated that research has begun to focus on the social and educational value of school mealtimes, which relates to how children's socialisation is performed through the organisation of spaces, as opposed to health education (Ross, 1995; Valentine, 2000; Pike, 2008; 2010; Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010; Metcalfe et al., 2011). I have explored how school mealtime research has been taken up by researchers who are interested in children's geographies and their use of space (Valentine, 2000; Pike, 2008; 2010; Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010). For example, Valentine (2000) and Pike's (2008; 2010) studies have both been valuable in understanding how children are highly regulated, both temporally and spatially, within the school mealtime. Accordingly, Valentine (2000) reconsiders schools not simply as settings in which researchers might access children as research subjects, but as meaningful places in which children's lives are shaped individually and collectively. However, Pike's (2008; 2010) research considers how the institutional school mealtime carries meanings well beyond the food and influences children's fields of action, which encourages conformity to convention. Daniel and Gustafsson's (2010) research has been significant in conceptualising how children perceive school mealtimes as their limited and precious opportunities for interaction with their friends, amidst adult intrusions, restrictions

and constraints. Going one step further, Metcalfe and colleagues' (2011) research has been useful in considering how school mealtimes govern what children eat as a way of civilising them, but even more significantly, they provide a more nuanced account of how children actively manage identities and social relationships, valuing children as competent social actors.

Despite this changing landscape, children's school mealtime socialisation remains under-researched, and where researchers have taken up the gauntlet, children's agency tends to be tokenistic and research tends to be conducted from an adult or school management point of view (Burgess and Morrison, 1998; Pike, 2008; 2010; Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010). The child-centred perspective is predominantly absent from school mealtime research and children's socialisation is often taken for granted by adults during this time in the school day. My research will explore children's perspectives on their mealtime socialisation, bringing to the fore what children are concerned with and involved in during this seemingly mundane practice. In investigating this, I will demonstrate how school mealtimes are opportunities for children to explore their social worlds, rather than the mealtime serving an instrumental or deterministic purpose.

2.4 Re-framing children's socialisation

A definition of socialisation is far from straightforward because many implicit assumptions can be taken for granted when conceptualising children, and thus the purpose of socialisation, which affects what we expect from children and how we deal with them as individuals. Such issues reflect culturally specific sets of ideas and philosophies, attitudes and practices, which influence how policy is created, how we set about educating children and construct an idea about what might be a 'good' childhood (Stables, 2008; James and Prout, 2015). In this section, I will argue that the way children are conceptualised has changed over time, which relates to the ways in which children are understood and handled, depending on the social, cultural and historical groups that define them.

2.4.1 Adult-centred concern with children's socialisation

The normative definition of socialisation in existing research has the tendency to focus on adult concerns, which vary in relation to social, cultural and historical influences. Early sociological socialisation theory regards socialisation as a one-way process in which children

play a small part as they are taught to adapt and internalise society (Parsons and Bales, 1955; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). This section will review adult-centred concepts of socialisation and their basic assumptions.

Early theorists of socialisation tend to be devoid of any empirical account of children's experiences; instead they focus on the family to understand socialisation and how the child is appropriated into society. Family socialisation stemmed largely from an adult-centred perspective, conceptualising children as having a passive role and placing the focus on what they would become once endowed into the ways of adulthood. The child's nature was assumed to be different, lost in a social maze where adults offered children direction and guidance in order for them to become fully functioning and contributing members of society (Parsons and Bales, 1955). A child was conceived as 'something apart from society that must be shaped and guided by external forces to become a fully functioning member' (Corsaro, 2018, p.9). Specifically, the focus was placed on how adults' taught children about social roles in society. There were two subsidiary approaches within this perspective, which differed primarily in their views of society.

On the one hand, the functionalist perspective conceptualised children as adults in the making, socialisation was concerned with what children needed in order to internalise society. Parsons and Bales (1955, p.36) envisioned society as an 'intricate network of interdependent and interpenetrating' roles and consensual value, asserting that child-rearing should be used to train children and ensure the acceptance and appropriation of social norms and values. Primary socialisation occurs in the early years, during which children's personalities were moulded so that the core values of society became part of the child through a caregiver (Parsons and Bales, 1955). Secondary socialisation refers to the stabilisation of adult personalities when social patterns are acquired from an institutional system such as the school (Parsons and Bales, 1955). Therefore, the family is defined as primary socialisation, where communication skills develop, and identities and habits are formed. Secondary socialisation occurs at a later stage when children are introduced to hierarchies, social values, expectations and norms (for example when children are introduced to school). Children's emptiness is filled with knowledge to enable them to make sense of, and make sense to, other cultural members (Lee, 2001).

On the other hand, reproductive perspectives conceive socialisation as a set of predispositions, codes and practices that are transmitted to the child through the process of family socialisation, or in Bourdieu's terms, habitus. Habitus is an important form of 'cultural inheritance that reflects class position or a person's location in a variety of fields and geared towards the perpetuation of structures of dominance' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p.204). In general terms the functionalist approach was concerned with the maintenance of social order and keeping society ordered, whilst reproductive approaches focused on conflict and inequalities, where children had varying access to certain types of training and other societal resources.

These deterministic perspectives tended to concentrate on the outcomes of socialisation. The child is seen as 'a future adult' rather than a 'young human being' in his or her own right. In taking this view, they give little insight to the activities and capabilities of children, whereby the 'children's deviance from adult standards, norms and codes is then interpreted as a deficit in the child; there is something wrong with the child' (Sommer, 2010, p.120). Children's actions are not considered problematic because they are taken for granted. In contrast to children being conceptualised as empty vessels, the following section explores how children have a distinct way of thinking in comparison to adults, positioning children as active rather than passive learners.

2.4.2 Children's active role in socialisation

Jean Piaget (1932) recognised that children have a distinctive way of thinking and behaving that is different from that of adults, as well as different ways of thinking at different ages that correspond with more adequate ways of organising knowledge. Piaget argued that children's mental capacities develop in distinct stages, gradually acquiring logical competence until they eventually arrive at a regulated system of rational thought. For example, Piaget (1932) believed that children explore, interpret, organise and use information from their environments and construct schemas or mental models of their physical and social worlds. A schema or mental model is a set of related operations that children use to think and act in the world that is applied to situations or objects. Piaget was best known for his systematic study of cognitive development in children, which suggested that children progressively reorganise mental processes as a result of biological maturation and environmental experience (Piaget,

1932). To do this, Piaget believed that children change schemas or schematas through the process of adaptation, which involves two processes.

The first process is assimilation, where children transform incoming information so that it fits with their existing way of thinking. The second process is accommodation, which refers to the way in which they adapt their thinking to new experiences. According to Piaget, when assimilation and accommodation are in balance the cognitive system is in a state of equilibrium. It is this state of equilibrium (and disequilibrium when confronted with new situations) that propels children through different stages of development, assuming progress moves towards increasing complexity. Crucially, Piaget was not so much concerned with the presence or absence of mental schemas, but rather how children and adults differed in their reasoning about the world (Lee, 2001). Piaget's emphasis was placed on children's capacity to construct and reconstruct meaning, which illustrated differences between children and adult capabilities.

Piaget's ideas are useful to illustrate how children learn through discovery and play, whereby they actively explore, discover and rediscover, use and interpret their environment (Piaget and Cook, 1952). Piaget countered the 'mechanistic accounts of children's learning and training put forward by behaviourism' to emphasise 'children's active involvement in, and construction of, their learning environment' (Burman, 2017, p.238). Piaget's model presented development in interactionist terms at a time of dissatisfaction with the 'empty vessel' accounts of children's development (Burman, 2017). Therefore, children were conceptualised as active learners (through the process of assimilation and accommodation) rather than passive learners, because problem-solving skills cannot be taught, they must be discovered (Piaget, 1958). This is significant because Piaget countered some of the assumptions associated with the traditional adult-focused constructions of how children socialise and develop (Section 2.4.1). Most notably for children's mealtime socialisation, the focus of socialisation is placed on the process rather than the end product of their socialisation, whereby children actively acquire (in the states of equilibrium and disequilibrium) problem-solving skills as they explore, discover, rediscover and interact with the world around them. The role of discovery highlights that children's mealtime socialisation takes place through individual personal experience: 'children may believe themselves to be playing together but may in fact playing entirely different games in parallel, without seeing the need for a shared set of rules' (Burman, 2017, p.272).

A major criticism is that Piaget concentrated on the universal stages of cognitive development and biological maturation, which underestimated children's cognitive ability either to belong to more than one stage or to possess abilities at an earlier or later stage than Piaget theorised (Donaldson, 2006). Piaget's focus on the typical child meant that he did not take account of the individual differences between children. Moreover, conducting his research in an artificial context did not take into account cultural and social, situation-specific responses in the acquisition of learning in daily life (Schaffer, 1998). However, Piaget's research on genetic epistemology has had an enormous impact on education in terms of children's readiness to be taught at the appropriate developmental level and of recognising children as active learners. Moreover, he changed the perception of children's cognitive development and influenced methods of studying children. However, there are limits to Piaget's explanatory power with regard to the school mealtime because children possess many abilities at an earlier age than Piaget suspected. Conversely, a contemporary of Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, conceptualised development as a continual process of active involvement in social interaction with others.

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that development occurs through the internalisation of social processes, which means that the child's integral psychological functions are acquired through their engagement with material relationships and interactions. Children's active appropriation of sociocultural school mealtime activities has a profound influence on their cognitive and personality development. According to Chaiklin (2003, p.47), 'these two unities (material/mental and social/personal) are alternative ways of expressing the same idea, and they are both unities because the child's psychological structure (i.e., the mental, the personal) is always reflecting a relation to the social and material'. This means that in the child's social situation they engage in concrete tasks and specific interactions that contribute to their development by reorganising psychological functioning (Chaiklin, 2003). According to Vygotsky, 'a transition from one stage to another is accomplished not as an evolving process but as a revolutionary process' (Vygotsky, 1998, p.193). Changes in the child's interactive situation during the school mealtime require changes in strategies for dealing with those demands, and as a result, socialisation becomes an on-going process of negotiating beyond the child's current capabilities, which cannot be separated from the demands of the social situation.

Vygotsky's ideas broadened the notion of development beyond the acquisition of logic and skills. From this perspective, children's higher mental functions are a product of their interactions, collaborations and observations of more skilled mealtime members, which occur within their everyday sociocultural-historical circumstances. Language and other artefacts mediate communication and children's mealtime socialisation emerges through collective interactions with others at the interpersonal level. This means that children gradually appropriate the adult world through the communal processes of sharing and creating culture (Bruner, 1986). In other words, children's understandings from their school mealtime socialisation develop through social-contextual processes, whereby they learn all kinds of rules, initially from concrete social activities that become internalised and individualised activities.

Piaget and Vygotsky describe their ideas as 'universalist, decontextualized, ethnocentric and adultocentric', whereby children are inserted into these discourses and positioned in a state of becoming (Matusov and Haye, 2000, p.216). Nevertheless, they proved to be a potent blend of ideas that informed and inspired many empirical studies of children's lives because they provided new ways to think about children (James and Prout, 2015). Piaget and Vygotsky have made a major contribution to child development and increased interest in children as active participants. However, another step forward needs to be taken to combine developmental theories with children's concrete practices (Hedegaard, 2009).

2.4.3 Child-centred perspective

Philippe Ariès (1962) was a French historian who traced the emergence of childhood through an analysis of cultural artefacts. His well-documented publication 'Centuries of Childhood' had an enormous impact and initiated debate about European childhood (rather than children), claiming that childhood was socially and historical constructed and open to change (Hendrick, 2008). Ariès was one of the first historians to suggest that childhood is a social construction and not biologically or universally given, arguing that the experience of childhood varies in different societies and cultures. However, he was less concerned with aspects of development or socialisation, asserting that as soon as the child could live independently from his mother or nanny he belonged to adult society.

However, the new sociology of childhood declared itself as representing a paradigm shift within childhood studies, conceptualising children as individuals in their own right, placing a central focus on children's roles, experiences and activities, rather than children being an aspect of something else, such as the family, school or social policy (James and Prout, 2015). James and Prout (2015) argued that dominant accounts surrounding the research on children had the power to mute children, rendering them silent and invisible. For example, 'being at odds with a parent over some issues would indicate a need for further socialization rather than a genuine and well-grounded disagreement' (Lee, 2001, p.44). Children's perspectives and agency were overshadowed by adults. In other words, adults were positioned as legitimate authorities over children, rendering them as experts on the true nature of childhood, capable of knowing what children need and better able to speak on their behalf. According to Lee (2001, p.46), 'not only do theories of socialization and development provide some of the details of what supplements children are in need of, but also they allow adults to feel confident in their actions and thinking, confident that they know best'. In effect, these conceptions enable adults who are responsible for children to make 'good' decisions and judgements, confirming their own completeness and competence. Challenges to adult decisions 'are seen as nothing but examples of the incompetent, irrational or ignorant child' (Lee, 2001, p.46). In terms of children's mealtime socialisation (from the adult perspective on children's socialisation), adults are best equipped to know what children need and to guide them on the proper way to eat a meal during the school day. This presents a dilemma: should children be socialised in relation to existing values or given room to become people in their own right?

A central tenet of the 1990s paradigm shift was that children need to be regarded as competent actors with social agency in their own right, not only influenced by but also influencing their social worlds (James and Prout, 2015; Qvortrup, 1994). Widespread acceptance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) changed the status and position of the child because it drew attention to the implications of giving young children a voice and trusting them as competent individuals. The international regulation introduced a rationale that reflects children's ability to act independently and acknowledges children as people who can interpret their experiences, actions and worldviews, which may not necessarily be compatible with the way adults construe social worlds. Lee (2005, p.3) argues that 'to be informed by children's rights is to recognize that children might, as individuals, have unique points of view and interests that are worth pursuing, regardless of

adult agenda'. Children's views and ideas began to take a more central focus, which documented more broadly the change in children's status from objects of research to subjects in the research process (James, 2007; James and James, 2012). The conception of children and childhood shifted, constructing children as reflexive active agents and a distinctive group in their own right, able to negotiate, share and create culture with adults and with each other (Corsaro, 1992; Qvortrup 2015; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; James, 2013).

Corsaro (1985; 1992; 2018) was inspired by Vygotsky (1978) and argued that to comprehend how children socialise, it is essential to understand children's ongoing lives, needs and desires from a child-centred point of view. Corsaro (1985) conducted ethnographic research on friendships and peer cultures in the preschool setting. He discovered that 'children create and participate in their own unique peer cultures by creatively taking or appropriating information from the adult world to address their own peer concerns' (Corsaro, 2018, p.18). Corsaro argued that 'socialisation is not only a matter of adaptation and internalisation but also a process of appropriation, reinvention, and reproduction (Corsaro, 2018, p.18). Consistent with Vygotsky (1978), children's activities and interactions are always embedded in social context and always involve the children's use of language and interpretive abilities. In theorising children's socialisation, Corsaro (2018) provides an interpretive reproduction approach that places special emphasis on language as a tool to use and construct children's social worlds. It is interpretative because children do not simply internalise the school mealtime rules and norms, they innovatively and creatively participate, reproduce and contribute to their production, refinement and change (Ochs and Shohet, 2006; Corsaro, 2018).

Hedegaard (2009) argues that James, Jenks and Prout (1998), Corsaro (1997), Qvortrup (2005) and others anchor development in differentiated everyday practices to understand childhood rather than children's developmental psychology. Hedegaard (2009, p.70) rightly argues, 'without having concepts to analyze different points of view (especially the children's) and having only a narrow focus on societal conditions, a psychological approach to development as a continuing qualitative change that the children contribute to himself or herself is impossible'. Hedegaard (2009) takes a step further by considering societal conditions that form cultural practice in institutions, which shape children's social situations and provide the dynamics for their development (Fleer, 2010).

Hedegaard (2009) has been instrumental in elaborating on Vygotsky's original writings, drawing attention to the significance of children's participation in different institutional contexts (i.e., families, preschool, school, after school clubs), whereby new institutional practices provide new demands and possibilities for children's development. For example, the institutional practice of school mealtimes configures new institutional demands and expectations and 'when the child enters into a new relation to other people in her everyday life crises can arise between the child's own motives and the motives and values of others in the social situation' (Hedegaard, 2009, p.76). New possibilities for children's mealtime socialisation emerge as 'children's competences change, their capacities are restructured and new competences are demanded' (Hedegaard and Fleer, 2010, p.150). Institutional practices influence, initiate and restrict children's social relations and become the conditions for their development. The underlying assumption is that children's socialisation takes place in relation to social and material conditions, as well as their changing relationship to everyday settings and institutional collectives, rather than biological maturation. Therefore, children's localised, nuanced everyday activities change in relation to the expectations of the social situation, based on a diversity of traditions and values of a good life (Hedegaard 2002; 2009).

Children's mealtime socialisation is a process that evolves as they engage in everyday practices with different institutional expectations and demands. Hedegaard's conception of child development requires a methodological approach that can research the institutional conditions and observe children in everyday settings to gain insight into the social situations of their development. Hedegaard (2009, p.76) argues that development changes slowly over time in a dynamic interaction between the 'person's activities, institutional practice, societal traditions and discourse, and material conditions'. It is essential to 'include the child's perspective in a research methodology as this will enable researchers to investigate how children contribute to their own developmental conditions' (Hedegaard et al., 2008, p.5). In doing so, the focus is placed on 'the activities the child initiates, the demands that children meet and put on others, and the conflicts that the child experiences within his or her social relations with others' (Hedegaard and Fleer, 2013, p.8). Significantly, Hedegaard's approach to children's development gives researchers new ways to examine the children's perspective and bring insight into how children co-construct their own developmental conditions. For example, 'in order to contextualize the research about children, we have to investigate how children live their lives, what children *do*, what different social contexts *mean* to them, what concrete children are engaged in, and what this looks like from their perspectives' (Højholt,

2012, p.211, original emphasis). Exploring children's mealtime socialisation from the child's perspective will enable an investigation of subversive behaviours or crises, which may be directed towards the mealtime assistants or school rules. Such an analytical view would not be possible if only the adult perspective was deployed. For example, the purpose of the mealtime practice may be different for children than for adults.

For example, the purpose of mealtime for adults may include ensuring all children have eaten enough food in an appropriate culturally determined manner, within an allotted timeframe and limiting food waste and noise. However, the purpose of mealtime activity for a child could be to playfully interact with their friends and the child may have less interest in eating a meal (Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010). Focusing on the conflicts that children experience may reveal a disparity between the institutional demands of mealtime and what is important for the child. Moreover, a child may become multiply-motivated because they engage in the institution demands of eating, contribute to mealtime practice in a variety of ways and have the potential to fulfil their own motives, which may be different from that of adults (Lenoiev, 1978). To support this view, Elkonin (1999, p.27) argues that 'when a new activity becomes dominant, it does not cancel all previously existing activities: it merely alters their status within the overall system of relations between the child and his surroundings, which thereby become increasingly richer'. Children's relationships with each other and the materiality of the school mealtime may be experienced differently by individual children and thus afford different opportunities for their socialisation (Hedegaard, 2012; Hedegaard and Fleer, 2013; Hedegaard et al., 2008).

For example, Alcock's (2007) ethnographic research in children's centres found that teachers enforced some rules while the children re-created other rules. According to Alcock (2007, p.290) 'they [the children] transformed potentially mundane routines into playful collaborative shared activities which engaged their whole physical, intellectual, emotional selves in playing with rules and imaginatively re-creating new rhymes, words and concepts'. Significantly, children do not necessarily resist institutional demands but the object and outcome of the mealtime activity for children was togetherness and playfulness. Elkonin (1999) argues that children's play changes to become children's learning, which has implications for the developmental situation and their socialisation. It is during these playful moments that children develop new knowledge and understandings about existing practices.

It is through the children's activity that they gain local knowledge and understanding of their social world, and of their relationships to others.

While a child's perspective on their mealtime socialisation is important, it is impossible for adults to access children's direct experiences or the inner workings of their minds (Hedegaard, 2002; Hedegaard et al., 2008). However, seeking to empathise with and understand children's points of view and treating them as active partners will be an important feature of research, which hopes to understand their perspectives on socialisation. Therefore, when I refer to the children's perspective, I am striving to understand their point of view through my interpretive lens, which is not a direct representation of the child's experience. According to (Sommer et al., 2013, p.463), 'this means that despite the ambition to get close as possible to the children's experiential world, a child perspective will always represent an adult approximation'. I will come to know children's perspectives by examining how they interact and by investigating what kinds of activities these interactions are part of, what it is that children are engaged in, and what kinds of dilemmas are related to this (Hedegaard and Chaiklin, 2005; Højholt, 2012).

2.4.4 Socialising as part of participation

Children's mealtime socialisation can be a form of apprenticeship, whereby children learn through active observation and direct participation in activities with more knowledgeable participants as a form of guided participation. Rogoff (1990) argues that learning is a matter of changing involvement in sociocultural activities and insists that it involves distinct forms of guided participations. Importantly, guided participation builds on and extends Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development. Rogoff (1990, p.vii) writes, 'children's cognitive development is an apprenticeship – it occurs through guided participation in social activity with companions who support and stretch children's understanding of and skill in using the tools of the culture'. This means that more experienced others can build bridges between what the child knows and new information to be learned, through guidance, feedback and explanation, supporting children's development using culturally available tools such as words, gestures, acting and reacting to each other (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990). The concept also addresses tacit, distal, and non-verbal forms of communication and stands in contrast to models of socialisation based on didactic school lessons. As such, children are engaging in school mealtime activities while they are learning to manage them. According to

Rogoff (2003, p.284), 'one form of guided participation is explanation; another is teasing and shaming, when adults and peers point out children's foibles and missteps by holding their behaviour up to social evaluation – sometimes in humour and goodwill, sometimes not'. These socialisation strategies are common occurrences in school mealtimes where both children and adults' reference each other's social actions as examples of the right or wrong ways of doing things.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation places the focus on participation and not on the individual mind. They argue that internalisation is not a straightforward process; individuals are transformed through their focus of attention, continuously renewing sets of relations to increase participation from the peripheral (novice) to become more competent in the main processes of their communities. The term 'communities of practice' represents 'a way in which groups of people use their ability to share past experience to create joint understanding and co-ordinate ways of dealing with new experience' (Mercer, 2000, p.116). Members engage in joint activities, building relationships that allow them to learn from each other and share in a repertoire of resources and experiences. According to Lave (1993, p.5), 'situated activity always involves changes in knowledge and action and changes in knowledge and action are central to what we mean by learning'. Accordingly, the language of the community is part of its practice and to become a legitimate participant involves learning how to speak (or be silent), increasing participation over time to achieve full membership and a sense of belonging. From this perspective, 'we need to think about education not merely in terms of an initial period of socialization into culture, but more fundamentally in terms of rhythms by which communities and individuals continually renew themselves' (Wenger, 1998, p.263). Children's changing participation in everyday life is a process of altering understandings in practices that are relative to their situated activity, whereby children learn to belong, to do, to become and to experience.

Situated learning assumes that legitimate peripheral participation will lead to full socialisation, implying the smooth reproduction of knowledge and practice. However, it is problematic to make false assumptions about the uniformity of children's intentions and aspirations to become full members or about the extent to which it is possible to achieve full membership or homogeneity within communities (Handley et al., 2006). Wenger (1998) has also raised questions about the initial portrayal of situated learning, suggesting that there may be a number of forms of participation, including 'marginal' positions, which acknowledge the

possibility of conflicts. Children socialise and develop by moving into the unknown whilst simultaneously holding on to what they know. According to Jaan Valsiner (2007, p.349) 'every act of being is a process of potentially becoming'. All these events come together in a haphazard way, which allows children to emerge from inconsistencies to become coherent and continuous beings (Valsiner, 2015). Children's mealtime socialisation is a developmental phenomenon and the generative process of meaning making is a necessary aspect of children's development. The situated learning perspective offers important insights into how children socialise through tacit knowledge and experience with more experienced others to bridge and extend their understandings within the ever-changing social dynamics of the school mealtime community. Few researchers have explored the educational potentials of school mealtimes for their own sake, which is beyond the food itself or the learning that goes on in relation to the meal or food choices.

2.4.5 Mealtime socialisation

In this section, I gain a better insight into mealtime socialisation by drawing on mealtime research in the family context. Ochs and Shohet (2006) did ethnographic research into the cultural structuring of mealtime socialisation in various parts of the world. Their research is useful to our understanding of school mealtimes because they explore the complex interaction between socialisation and language acquisition in different cultures. They argue that language is central to a person becoming a competent member of society. This means that children are socialised through language and how to use language, which means that language is a symbolic system that encodes social and cultural structures and is a tool for establishing, maintaining and creating social and psychological realities (Ochs, 1988). Mealtimes hold a variety of meanings that are embedded in children's everyday lives, providing them with a sense of normative reality, which is embedded in their situated cultural practice. Moreover, children acquire certain sensibilities that reflect the roles that members play; for example, in different cultural settings children may be encouraged to speak up, remain quiet, be subservient or have equal status (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). Family mealtimes are imbued with understandings of sociality and morality. Children's recurrent participation in sharing food and eating with others in a social group socialises them into particular understandings of the world.

On the one hand, mealtimes dictate cultural expectations, norms, values and feelings about the way practices should be carried out, which highlights how understandings and practices are handed down through generations. On the other hand, children are able to modify mealtimes based on their own perceptions, feelings and experiences, creatively making choices about their mealtime interactions. This contributes to the composition of alternative understandings around the table that may coexist at one time during school mealtimes (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986). Children may intentionally or unintentionally modify or challenge existing practices, thereby contributing to their own their own and others' socialisation processes. Larson et al.'s (2006) research illustrates that rather than mealtimes being fixed scripts they provide a structure wherein slightly alternative ways of doing things are available. Further to this, researchers have explored parent-child relationships in dinner time conversation (Laurier and Wiggins, 2011), gendered practices (DeVault, 1991) and the use of mealtimes as a site for child bonding in the home and family environment (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986). All of this research points to important aspects of children's mealtime socialisation and development. What is missing from the literature is how children socialise in the school context of mealtimes to enable us to understand what children themselves are occupied with and how they are making sense of their school mealtime experiences.

In the context of family mealtime research, Grieshaber (1997) deployed a Foucauldian perspective to explore parent-child conflict. She used the power-knowledge-resistance relationship to analyse the construction of rules to understand how discipline is normalised and contested. Grieshaber proposes that rules invoked by adults are open to interpretation because children have a different understanding of the rule generating propositions of adults (Grieshaber, 1997). This refers to children and adults occupying different social positions and dispositions, which opens up the possibility of different interpretations and possibly resistance to rules created by the other. This is an interesting finding that accords with James (1982, p.295), who proposes that 'the process of becoming social involves a conceptual separation between "self" and "other"'. I believe that what James suggests here is that socialisation is a process of active experimentation with contradiction.

Children come to know who they are (and know the rules) before they can differentiate between themselves and the other (to subvert the rules), and this happens when experimenting with contradiction. Resistance is an integral part of everyday life and children's mealtime socialisation. Grieshaber (1997) defines resistance as contestations of

socially established meanings of dominant discourses. However, the Foucauldian framework is limited in theoretically formulating how subversive interactions might occur in everyday, non-revolutionary practices.

In summary, I have argued that over the past three decades, the conception of socialisation has socially and historically changed over time. My discussion explored ideas that on the one hand conceptualised children as vulnerable and incompetent, on a journey toward becoming adults, and on the other hand, conceptualised children as individuals with social agency in their own right, recognising that they have views and perspectives of their own. These ideas illustrated underlying assumptions about the purpose of socialisation (outcome focused or process focused) that act as a justification for alternative ways of regulating and interacting with children. These discourses do not necessarily conflict and should be seen as complimenting each other. After all, it is useful to theorise about children's socialisation processes and changes over time to understand how children develop into adulthood (Lee, 2001). This research conceptualises children as social beings with agentic capacity, in transition to adulthood.

Social interaction is crucial to the way children come to know and become part of social practice. I have argued that mealtimes are complex socialising situations that educate children about sociality and morality, and as a result, children construct their own frames for thinking, feeling, and acting in the world (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). In a broad sense, socialisation is concerned with how to belong to a community. It is essential to understand socialisation from the point of view of the child, to gain an insight into how they make sense, who they interact with, and how they understand the complexity of their social worlds and come to belong. According to Thomson (2008, p.1), 'the omission of these perspectives can easily lead to researchers making interpretations and representations that are very short-sighted and which miss the point'. Importantly, mealtimes are not simply about transmitting knowledge and assimilating children; rather, children interpret, create and negotiate their own places within practice (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). Children's changing participation in everyday life is a process of altering understandings in practice that are relative to their situated activity (Hedegaard, 2009), whereby children learn to belong, to do, to become and to experience (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; 2003). As a result of these theoretical insights, this research will investigate further how children are connected to other children and adults,

exploring the potential for children's agency and cultural continuity as well as change (James, 2013).

2.5 The social conditions of the school mealtime

In this section I explore the social conditions of the school mealtime to illustrate how they are rule governed practices and malleable transitions for social interactions; I investigate how these social conditions organise time and space, which determine the chronotopic form in which children's actions and interactions occur. I will conclude that what children can do and become is conditioned by the school mealtime setting.

2.5.1 The school mealtime ritual

School mealtimes are communal, formalised, multi-layered activities and a locus for children's experience with language and sociocultural practices of eating together in social groups. Fiese and colleagues' (2006, p.68) school mealtime research highlights that 'much has to happen in approximately twenty minutes: food needs to be served and consumed, roles assigned, past events reviewed, and plans made'. In order to feed large numbers of children in a relatively short time frame, rules and expectations must be in place to enable the smooth running of the practice. As a result, recurring and value laden eating practices become patterned, repetitive and cooperative expressions of shared values and norms: ritualised moments in the school day. Marshall (2005) asserts that ritual is more than just religious ceremonies; he defines 'ritual as a type of expressive, symbolic activity, constructed of multiple behaviours that occur in a fixed episodic sequence, and that tend to be repeated over time' (Marshall, 2005, p.72). Marshall's definition is helpful to make sense of children's recursive participation in school mealtimes, which includes different roles, scripts and cultural artefacts.

Douglas and Nicod (1974) explored the cultural meal format of British working-class meals to argue that there is a temporal structure for meals (e.g. breakfast-lunch-dinner) with a specific temporal order within a mealtime (e.g. starter, main course, dessert). These conventions are socially approved ways of doing things, whereby children are incorporated into a culinary system and cultural order of consumption, which tends to be followed without conscious reflection. Mealtimes can be expressed by the ordering of a 'proper meal' mediated with material artefacts, such as cutlery, tables and chairs, which can be organised to afford

certain kinds of education about etiquette, social rules, norms and values about how to behave (Douglas, 1972). Furthermore, Elias (1978; 2000) traced the history of etiquette and manners to argue that children's table manners have been the focus of moral socialisation. Elias (1978; 2000) demonstrates how social norms and standards have changed over time, embodying shifts in the threshold of socially-instilled pleasure and fear, whereby behaviour was managed through feelings such as disgust and aversion, which reaffirm moral sentiments.

School mealtimes are rule governed practices that communicate to children what can be eaten (sandwiches or hot dinners), in which order (main course before dessert), how it is to be eaten (cut with cutlery and chewed), with whom (segregated by age), at which time of day (lunchtime) and the eating duration (30 minutes per sitting). According to Ochs and Shohet (2006, p.35), children are socialised into mealtime comportment through meaningful participation that 'produces sociality, morality and local understandings of the world'. They argue that food is saturated with meaning, which can be a form of social control that reinforces, undermines and transforms the way children think, feel and act in the world (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). Significantly, through the seemingly innocuous everyday rituals of eating together, interacting with one another in the course of nourishing their bodies, children can forge relationships that reinforce or modify the social order (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). This refers to children's agentic capacity to recreate, modify and transform their participation in school mealtimes.

2.5.2 School mealtime as a liminal phase

School mealtimes are ritualised interludes during the school day between the structured confines of morning and afternoon lessons. Drawing on the work of Turner (1969; 1970), I will explore school mealtimes as transitional periods that provide children with a sense of freedom, breaking free from their quiet formally structured classrooms to the flexibility of the mealtime, only to return to the classroom possibly rejuvenated by the experience. To understand and explore these ideas I turn to the concept of liminality which was first developed by Arnold Van Gennep (1960) in his seminal work, *Les rites de passage*. Van Gennep described rites of passage as a three-part structure consisting of pre-liminal (separation), liminal (transition) and post-liminal (reincorporation) (Van Gennup, 1960).

Turner (1969; 1970) expanded on the middle transitionary stage of liminality whilst researching rituals of the Ndembu tribe in Northwestern Zambia.

Turner (1969; 1970) argues that liminality is a cultural process that can explain transitions as a physical, structural, temporal or symbolic migration from one context to another. Liminality has the exploratory power to describe the social milieu and transitional states that are found between two phases, characterising the transition between leaving one clear state or position (classroom lessons) and attaining another (mealtime) (Turner, 1970). Significantly, the pre-ritual status of the teacher-student dynamic is on the threshold between children's previous way of structuring their identity, time and community and a new way during the mealtime, where these structures are relaxed relative to classroom conditions, and where children can expand normal limits to thought, self-understanding and behaviour. According to Howard-Grenville and colleagues (2011, p.535), the liminal 'temporarily suspends normal social dynamics and brackets everyday experience, such that interactions are no longer fully governed by the existing cultural repertoire'. Liminality provides the theoretical perspective to explain the emergent and temporal possibilities of children who restructure their identities and alter the status quo. Liminality (Turner, 1969) is a process orientated concept that opens a space to understand the bedrock of different socialising experiences where children's interactions can be dynamic and malleable.

These ideas lend themselves well to the school mealtime in understanding how children gain temporary equal status, which may provide refreshment and renewal from what is prescribed. Turner (1969) referred to communitas as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated community. A key component of communitas is a 'communion of equal individuals' who follow a shared ritual with similar but structurally independent individuals (Turner, 1969, p.96). When deploying liminality, I am concerned with the unstructured experiences of communitas that the structural constraints allow to elicit an understand of how 'men [children] are released from structure into communitas only to return to structure revitalised by their experience of communitas' (Turner, 1969, p.129). Inscribed in the liminal phase is the idea of a counterculture, which provides the social conditions for carnivalesque interactions (Section 2.6).

Describing the school mealtime as a liminal phase seems to offer endless opportunities for transformative results, where a counterculture has the ability to resist the dominant culture.

Moreover, my reading of this theory could suggest that children are supposedly released from normal constraints, endowed with agency to a dramatic extent, which could be seen as implausible. Moreover, Weber (1995, p.530) argues that 'Turner's vision of liminality issuing in "homogenous" communita followed by a regenerative turn to structure is essentially utopian'. Weber (1995) argues that the liminal is over simplified and idealised because it suggests that a person loses their individuality and gains equality in the process. By taking the children's perspective, I am not envisaging that all children are the same or will respond in the same way to the liminal phase.

Whilst I agree that all children experience mealtime as a transition between morning and afternoon classes, I do not intend to suggest that all children are necessarily equal in the mealtime and continually cohesive within an anti-structure or communitas. However, processual analysis 'emphasises that culture requires study from a number of perspectives, and that these perspectives cannot necessarily be added together into a united summation' (Rosalso, 1993, p.93). In providing a thick description (Geertz, 1973), I will offer a child-centred approach to gain insight into children's school mealtime socialisation. It is inevitable that at times these accounts may not cohere. The processual analysis perspective is useful to explain the symbolic milieu and transitional states that can be found between two phases of the school day. However, the following section will extend these ideas by exploring Bakhtin's notion of chronotope to illustrate how the school mealtime is a distinctive configuration of space and time in relation to human action (Bakhtin, 1981).

2.5.3 Chronotope of the school mealtime

In this section, I will firstly discuss the term chronotope, and then illustrate how I will apply the concept in my research. Bakhtin's concept of chronotope is a literary concept that distinguishes between different categories of literature. He viewed literary genres as specific modes of thought that have the power to understand and narrate different realms of experience and create 'specific form-shaping ideology for understanding the nature of events and action' (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p.366). For example, a Greek romance is a very different literary genre from Rabelais, where the words in each novel emanate a stylistic aura, fusing together a specific sort of time-space, which can be highly productive in shaping thought and experience (Morson and Emerson, 1990). This means the genre of the novel sets the parameters and shapes the possibilities for action in relation to context because all actions

occur in relation to time and space. In his chronotope essay, Bakhtin (1981, p.84) writes that 'we will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature'. Bakhtin highlights an interconnection between individuals in the novel itself, corresponding to particular genres, each with their own worldviews or ideologies that emerge into an artistic whole.

In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin forges a connection between the novel and the carnivalesque (Morson and Emerson, 1990). In this chronotope the human body is exaggerated, the life of the body enters new meanings, 'a new place for human corporeality' (Bakhtin, 1981). It is the body that engages in dialogue and under medieval circumstances, grotesquerie was a necessary extreme to confront, degrade, transform and bring creativity back into time and the body (Bakhtin, 1981). Within these ideas, potential is represented in an indirect way because comic characters wear the mask of public spectacle, 'sometimes their significance can be reversed – but one cannot take them literally, because they are not what they seem' (Bakhtin, 1981). This means that 'the rouge and the fool exercise the right to rip off masks and to survive any delimiting plot' (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p.436). Individual growth is shaped by historical and social forces, which are not just mere backgrounds because the characters change, become and develop within the boundaries of the chronotope. The chronotope forms concrete possibilities or living impulses where the collective body enters into new relations with the world.

Bakhtin did not discuss chronotope in terms of actual social formations; he metaphorically describes how literary genres provide the are grounds for activity and experience, 'the meaning that shapes narrative' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.250). What the hero or the fool can do is limited by the chronotope in which events take place. Steinby (2014, p.118) argues that 'the world in a novel appears temporally and spatially structured in a specific way in relation to the possibilities of human action'. Similarly, the school mealtime is not a neutral or passive background to action; it has a character that determines the chronotopic form in which children's social actions and interactions are embedded and embodied. According to Steinby (2014, p.120), Bakhtin indicates very clearly that 'a chronotope in a novel determines what the persons "belonging" to that chronotope can experience and how they can act'. In terms of children's socialisation, the school mealtime chronotope influences possibilities for thought, action and experience. A child has the autonomy to make possible choices and 'is ethically

judged accordingly – but the spectrum of his choices is chronotopically restricted' (Steinby, 2014, p.118). I include this point because children's behaviour will be judged in terms of expectations of the school mealtime chronotope where social interaction and boundaries are more relaxed than at other times in the school day, such as in classroom lessons. Children's choices are judged according to the meaning and expectations that are shaped by the narrative of the chronotope.

In summary, I have explored how the school mealtime structure dictates recurring and value laden eating practices that become patterned, repetitive and cooperative expressions of shared values and norms. However, through seemingly innocuous everyday rituals of eating together, children can forge relationships that reinforce or modify the social order (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). I have argued that school mealtimes are more relaxed relative to other parts of the timetabled day. The concept of the liminal (Turner, 1969) explains how the school mealtime temporarily suspends normal social dynamics, where children's previous way of structuring their identity, time and community is bracketed into a new way of being, where they can gain a sense of egalitarianism. To extend these ideas, I deployed Bakhtin's notion of chronotope to describe how the social conditions of the school mealtime chronotope influence children's actions, interactions and socialising experiences, which are neither neutral nor passive.

2.6 The social organisation of children's experience in the school mealtime

Firstly, this section will explore how space has been conceptualised to illustrate how it is endowed with meaning. Secondly, I will explore how children create frames for thinking and interaction. Thirdly, I will examine how children's emergent interactions and transient mealtime opportunities are key to children organising their socialisation with friends.

2.6.1 Theorising space

In this section, I will briefly explore how space has been theorised to illustrate how it may be endowed with meaning, with particular attention placed on seemingly invisible ways that children exert power when transacting themselves. The rationale is to understand how space shapes children's educational endeavours and how these endeavours, in turn, shape the mealtime space. Space has been a highly contested concept in social science (Lefebvre 1991; Harvey 2006; Massey 1994). According to Robertson (2010, p.16), the French philosopher

Henri Lefebvre and the British-born geographer David Harvey have both transformed how we understand space, 'from a largely geometrical/mathematical term denoting an empty area, to seeing space in more critical ways: as social, real, produced and socially constitutive'. Lefebvre (1991) was not clear about the relationship between mental space and material space or satisfied with a binary opposition between materialism and idealism. Lefebvre (1991) identify space as experienced, conceptualised and lived. He argued for a more expansive understanding of space that could explain 'the multiplicity of ways in which ideas are produced, humans are created and labours, histories are constructed and minds are made' (Robertson, 2010, p.17).

Harvey (2006) takes a more inward approach to conceptualising space, making important claims about internal relations and how they relate to what is going on around them. For Harvey, social practices and process create spaces, and these spaces, in turn, constrain, enable and alter those practices and process (Soja, 1999, p.78). This means that 'space is relative in the sense that there are multiple geometries from which to choose (or not) and that the spatial frame is dependent on what is relativised and by whom' (Harvey, 2006, p.272). He argued for a tripartite division between relational, absolute and relative space. However, arguing for space as 'absolute' implies that it is fixed and unchangeable, which is indeed a troubling proposition.

Doreen Massey (1994; 1999) has written extensively on this subject, making the geometries of power more explicit. She defines space as 'a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and co-operation' (Massey, 1994, p.81) within which place becomes tightly constrained by local patterns (Reay and Lucey, 2000). The term 'space' is used here to describe the intricacies and complexities of active practices that produce relations, which are material and embedded and continuously created in the process of becoming (Massey 1994; 1999). This means that space is relational and constituted through social processes.

McGregor (2004) researched the materiality of schools as a workspace to understand how spatial arrangements encourage or constrain the ways in which networks of people and things order the spaces and work together. McGregor argues for a more sophisticated articulation of context that will account for the reciprocity of the mutual construction of physical and social space (McGregor, 2004, p.267). Similarly to Harvey, space is seen as a container and

constituted through social action, while place is a construction of ongoing emergent and recursive relations that orders people and things in sets of relations to material conditions. Concordantly, 'in this common binary, agency is the property of the social (fluid, changing) and determinism the property of the physical, which is taken to be fixed and rigid' (McGregor, 2004, p.348). In other words, the school mealtime is set in the space of the assembly hall and comes into being through socially constituted mealtime practices. Within particular configurations of material space, children's ongoing emergent and recursive relations materialise as they negotiate who they are in relation to others.

It is not my intention to construct a tangible geography of the school mealtime in terms of how children's practices are shaped towards people and place, but to understand how space can become endowed with meaning that potentially forms togetherness and imagined social boundaries (Bakhtin, 1981; Valentine, 1999). Valentine's (1999; 2000) spatial thinking is a useful conceptual tool for understanding children's spatial relations, perspectives and how children construct their sense of self, sameness and otherness during mealtime socialisation. Valentine (1999; 2000) is concerned with imagined geographies and how individuals and collective actions are produced and reproduced in everyday life. She argues that these imagined geographies 'can produce very real material consequences in terms of social exclusion or discrimination if we transgress them' (Valentine, 1999, p.58). Significantly, imagined and material spaces create social boundaries which set the limits around how we imagine whose space it is; this is fundamental to how children construct their sense of self and other (Valentine, 1999). Valentine (1999; 2000) highlights the co-existence of difference in the spatial variation and assumes a plurality of children's orientations in the same setting. As Massey (1999, p.281) argues, 'an understanding of spatiality, in other words, entails the recognition that there is more than one story going on in the world and that these stories have, at least, a relative autonomy'. Imagined geographies are a useful concept because they recognise the difference between children's social situations and open the possibility to understand a multiplicity of alternative narratives and meanings that children attach to their material mealtime practices.

Territory, as a spatial form of organisation, is a powerful geographical strategy to control people and things by controlling an area. Sack's (1986) conceptualisation of territoriality theoretically engages with how imagined spaces and social boundaries are fluid and require constant enactment to maintain space as a territory (Brown, 2017). Sack (1986, p.19) defines

territoriality as 'the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area'. Territoriality has explorative power to explain how and why some children manage and govern space, with the power to assign some children their seat, and how other children are happy to be assigned. This means that territoriality is a geographical expression of social power and territories are actively constructed rather than passively inhibited (Agnew, 2000). Boundaries can act as a form of identification and the monopoly children have over others can be fragile and interchangeable. Territoriality can explain children's resourcefulness, resilience and competencies, which enables them to create strategies for controlling their own use of social, spatial and material resources.

Children's socialisation is constituted with social and spatial relations that are both imagined and material. According to Derr (2006, p.112), 'in contrast to children's outward exploration, children sometimes use place-making as a means of looking inward, of establishing something of their own and developing a sense of self'. These conceptual tools will illustrate that constellations of relations are produced when children choose their seats at the lunch table in relation to others, 'not to dramatize the difference between what is close and what is far away, or to contain and incorporate "the other"' (Valentine, 1999, p.58). The theorisation of space is useful for conceptualising how the web of social relations, territory and positionality constitute space. However, space discourse does not have exploratory power to fully explain how children's social interactions create frames for thinking and action. The following sub-section will explore Goffman's (1975) frame analysis to understand how children make sense of what is happening moment by moment.

2.6.2 The organisation of children's social relations

Erving Goffman (1975) theorised about the organisation of experience, which will be used to understand the flexibility of how children organise and make sense in terms of their frames of references through seating arrangements. Goffman (1975) posited that individuals interpret or 'make sense' of everyday events using two primary frameworks. He identified natural frameworks as unguided occurrences that are purely physical with no human influences, such as those found in physics, chemistry, and biology, whereas social frameworks are useful for understanding how mealtimes 'provide background understandings for events that incorporate the will, aim and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency' (Goffman,

1975, p.22). An example of a natural framework is the weather and an example of a social framework is a meteorologist who predicts the weather.

Goffman (1975) developed social frame perspectives to 'understand how individuals construct a definition of the shared social situations by organising their experiences and by reading the other interactants in the situation' (Persson, 2015, p.500). Goffman's frame analysis, which is anchored in social interaction, explicates how individuals make sense of 'what is happening now?' moment by moment in everyday life (Hill, 2014). Goffman (1975) argued that individuals repeatedly and continuously (if not always consciously) ask this question. Goffman (1975) assumes that definitions of a situation (or frame) 'are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them (Goffman, 1975, p.10). So, frame refers to the ways in which individuals organise and understand their experiences, by relating to other individuals interacting in the situation, which informs their future actions. Moreover, this concept emphasises various restrictions upon the individual and collective social actors, and relates to various resources such as time, group of interactants, organisation, competence, space and rules (Persson, 2015). The frame of an individual or group of individuals tends to guide the interacting individuals and influence group dynamics within the situation as they encounter everyday life. Significantly, 'observers actively project their frames of reference into the world immediately around them, and one fails to see their so doing only because events ordinarily confirm these projections, causing the assumption to disappear into the smooth flow of activity' (Goffman, 1975, p.39). This means that meanings become self-evident because they do not demand explanation, where individuals may be partly or fully aware. The following section will explore transformations that can occur within the frame.

Goffman (1975) describes two transformations within frames called keys and fabrications. He describes keys as 'the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else' (Goffman, 1975, p.43). Keys are relevant for understanding what is happening within activities. For example, play is a key; Goffman (1975) gives an example where one can discriminate between a serious fight and a play fight, which involves understanding the frame in terms of another. The mundane world of everyday experience can be transformed by such things as fantasy, play, competition

and ceremonies (Hill, 2014). The interactants involved have some degree of awareness in terms of the original activity and how it has been transformed.

Goffman (1975) was also concerned with fabrications and deceit, which disguise one experience in terms of another. For instance, 'fabrication refers to when at least one of the interacting individuals, for example, someone who is being the object of a practical joke or a con game, is unaware of or refuses to acknowledge the fabrications' (Persson, 2015, p.504). Activities can change their interpretive edge when a shift in meaning transforms understanding and activity. Consequently, several individuals can have a firm sense of what is happening in a situation, but in spite of this, change can happen suddenly and rapidly. Framing is essential for comprehending the openness and variability of knowledge, the definition of a situation, the vulnerability in interactions, recognising the plurality in children's dealings in the world and juxtaposing children's frames for thinking and action (Persson, 2015).

2.6.3 Children's emergent interactions

In this section, I will explore the emergent and transient dimension of children's mealtime interactions to reveal how school mealtimes are opportunities for children to creatively experiment with both the predictable and unpredictable, serendipitous and contingent aspects of social life in a relatively safe way. To do so, I draw on the research of Klemp and colleagues (2008), who explored the rhythmic ebb and flow of the jazz musician, Thelonious Monk, to understand how musical performances are organised and adjusted by the changing environments of their own making. In doing so, they explore how musicians converse in jazz improvisation, reframing 'the question of whether the note was a mistake and ask[ing] instead about how Monk handles the problem' (Klemp et al., 2008, p.105). They refer to a mistake as a note that might be heard as a wrong note and refer to a mis-take as 'an apparent deviation from patterns established by pervious notes and used in turn, and in time – just in time – to build a new pattern' (Klemp et al., 2008, p.108). This means that improvisation occurs when something is out of pattern and what makes a note a mistake or mis-take is what happens next, where 'the mistake, or better the *mis-take*, was "saved" by subsequent notes' (Klemp et al., 2008, p.105, original emphasis). The significance of this is that during children's mealtime socialisation, they learn interactional skills, how to listen and respond, collaborate and communicate in multi-layered social contexts.

This theoretical perspective has the exploratory power to understand how children relate to their peers and the normative order, exchanging ideas at a fast, sporadic pace, which provides no time to explain what just happened; they just keep moving forward in their interactions. Contingent interactions like this can occur because children make use of knowledge from past experience and build on insider information (Goffman 1975; Fiese et al., 2006). Structure and emergence do battle, simultaneously fused in connection with things that have already happened and things that are still to come (Klemp et al., 2008). Such interactional synchrony is an 'aspect of human sociocultural activity' rather than 'a property of individuals' (Rogoff et al., 1998, p.68), whereby children participate and socialise with more (and less) experienced others. Children's creative and collective improvisations are open ended, not organised in advance but organised moment by moment, where all children contribute to the flow of the interaction (Sawyer, 2004). Sawyer (2004, p.14) argues that improvisation allows children 'to experiment, interact and participate in the collaborative construction of their own knowledge', making rapid transitions between thinking and interacting. In the following, I will explore how children organise their collective interactional dynamics, recognising that children's socialisation speaks not with one single voice but with many.

Resnick (1994) explored the relationship between learning and technology to discover how patterns emerge and inform artificial intelligence, for example, by simulating ant colonies or traffic jams into a programmable robotic system. Resnick (1994) was deeply intrigued with the self-organised emergence of order out of disorder, arguing for a decentralised notion of learning and organisation. Underpinning Resnick's argument is the idea that a centralised mind-set is deeply entrenched and invariably assumes that complex group behaviour is the result of a central controller. One might assume that a traffic jam is the result of an accident rather than an emergent phenomenon, whereas a decentralised mind-set assumes that traffic jams are collectively caused by cars responding to the tail lights and speed of the cars ahead, embroiled in complex patterns of traffic. This is relevant to children's mealtime socialisation to understand how children coordinate their interactions through self-organising and responding to peers nearby, rather than having a central organising leader.

To explain the decentralised perspective, Resnick used the example of a flock of birds that sweeps across the sky in a V shape. The birds act in unison, perfectly coordinated, 'the flock

as a whole is as graceful – maybe more graceful – than any of the birds within it' (Resnick, 1991, p.3). He argues that most people assume that a flock of birds have a central leader but actually, orderly flock patterns emerge from simple local interactions. He states that 'each bird in the flock follows a set of simple rules, reacting to the movements of the birds nearby it … none of the birds has a sense of the overall flock pattern'. The bird at the front is not there in any meaningful sense, but because the pattern emerges through birds responding to others in close proximity, coordinating their interactions by self-organising, rather than having a central organising leader. To support this idea, Sawyer (2006) argues that in music there can be a tendency to attribute the creativity to the soloist or conductor rather than the group's emergent dynamics. However, group communication is the essence of live jazz, listening, interpreting and responding to contingent surprise, which can transform a mistake into a mistake by building a new pattern creatively, emergently and collaboratively (Klemp et al., 2008). The implications for children's mealtime socialisation are that when children locate themselves within the mealtime, they react to the children nearby, not always having a global sense of who sits where, but connections are emerging as they respond and coordinate with others in the vicinity.

My argument is not to disregard or replace a centralised mind-set but to explore children's mealtime socialisation from a decentralised perspective, which may lead to a richer understanding of how children interact and choose their seats at the lunch table. Children participate in a school system where power and authority is centralised, which serves as a strong model for a centralised mind-set, but in the school mealtime multiple voices can be heard, which are neither prescriptive not predictive (Resnick, 1994). However, Goffman's frame analysis (1975) has exploratory power to understand how children organise experience and make sense of what is happening now, moment to moment, in everyday life, by creating, sharing and restricting access to their frame of reference. Drawing on Goffman (1975) may reveal children's nuanced understanding of the meanings of who sits where that creates frames for children's thinking and action, which is informed by past, present and future interactions. In doing so, I hope to reveal how children gain a sense of belonging, articulate their individuality and negotiate the social, temporal, spatial and material arrangements of the school mealtime (Massey 1993; 1999; Valentine, 1999; 2000; Klemp et al., 2008).

2.7 A Bakhtinian understanding of school mealtimes

In this section I will discuss Mikhail Bakhtin's (1968) notion of the carnivalesque, which is linked to carnival, authority, discourse, laughter and grotesque. Firstly, I will discuss carnivalesque discourse to illustrate the exploratory power it has in understanding children's mealtime socialisation. Secondly, I will discuss carnivalesque laughter to illustrate how it is not an individual reaction but the laughter of all the people and that it is directed at themselves and those who laugh. Thirdly, I will discuss grotesque humour, which is a fusion between what is funny and what is frightening – apparent opposites united and held together in an ambivalent world (Bakhtin; 1968; Douglas, 1966; 2002).

2.7.1 Carnivalesque discourse

Born in 1895, Mikhail Bakhtin was famous for developing a series of literary concepts such as that of the carnival, heteroglossia, polyphony, and dialogism (Thorogood**,** 2016). His writings present a strong challenge to notions of a unified and a cooperative social life. Bakhtin argues that discourse is in a constant struggle and heteroglossia refers to 'the fact that cultures or societies are not naturally unified, monolithic entities, but rather the sites of an intense struggle for dominance between coexisting voices and their corresponding values and views of the world' (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003, p.281). Children's mealtime socialisation is an interplay of and conflict between diverse perspectives. While I do not deny that children's socialisation involves negotiation and the appropriation of common meanings, it seems equally undeniable that children's socialisation often constitutes difference and discord, which complicates a shared scenario (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003). In the following, I will begin to explore the concept of the carnivalesque and its relationship to children's school mealtime socialisation.

Bakhtin (1968; 1981) has written extensively about comic rituals and spectacles of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. According to Bakhtin (1968), carnival is a special condition that is organised on the basis of laughter and represents a second life for people to enter into some sense of freedom, equality and abundance. For example, 'no rest period or breathing spell can be rendered festive per se; something must be added from the spiritual and ideological dimension' (Bakhtin, 1968, p.9). In opposition to monolithic seriousness, children enter into temporary liberation (to some extent) from the norms and etiquette previously imposed in the established order. Bakhtin's (1968) concept of the carnivalesque breaks free

from monolithic, authoritarian and hierarchical patterns of thinking to find more egalitarian ways to break down barriers and overcome power inequalities and hierarchies (Cohen, 2011).

The underlying idea was that carnival spirit was the eternal incomplete unfinished nature of being, the very act of becoming and growth that creates change and renewal (Bakhtin, 1968). Bakhtin distinguishes between two discourses (authoritative and internally persuasive) when he discusses the process of ideological becoming. The officialdom of the school mealtime normative order is given and is similar to the authoritative discourse because 'it demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.342), whereas an internally persuasive discourse opens up new possibilities between one's own discourse and the discourse of others (Bakhtin, 1981). A characteristic of the carnival is an inside out world where social life becomes somewhat unpredictable. The developmental implications of Bakhtin's viewpoint are that children selectively assimilate the words of others and interweave them with their own words (Bakhtin, 1981). He refers to this process as ideological becoming. According to Duncan and Tarulli (2003, p.282), ideological becoming 'refers to a person's efforts to make a discourse initially received from others one's own, and to resist fully coinciding with others' discourse'. During carnivalesque mealtime interactions children actively establish their own voice by dialogically engaging with the discourse of others 'by redefining them, differing with them and developing them' (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003, p.283). Implicit within this account is the idea that children will experiment, question and probe officialdom and monolithic seriousness, which leads to the creation of the marketplace/carnival, whereby children's unmerged voices enter into free and familiar contact with those from whom they are usually divided.

Carnival is a temporarily existing life form that permits and releases a myriad of differing perspectives that can transform certain norms and prohibitions of usual life (Bakhtin, 1968). Moreover, these ideas cohere with Lave and Wenger's (1991) proposition that connects an individual's internal discourse to the discourse of the community of practice, whereby children gradually become more competent as they participate in the discourse of the community. Duncan and Tarulli (2003, p.283) argue that 'the developmental task facing the child is that of moving from an unquestioned, unconditional acceptance of the other's discourse to a more conditional, critically reflective orientation toward this discourse – a disposition that ultimately enables the dialogical relations of doubt, resistance, agreement or

disagreement'. In doing so, the internally persuasive discourse is a creative production in which discourse can be developed and applied in new contexts and conditions that go beyond the intention and purposes that were originally expressed.

The carnival and the school mealtime represent a plurality of worlds, where social life can intercross and cause ambivalence through disruption. Smile's (2013, p.50) research explored a loss of leisure in eating school lunches, which may sound harmless and frivolous, but Smile argues that it presents a serious dilemma. He argues that 'the school cafeteria should serve as the last bastion of the classical notion of leisure in schools, and its loss reflects a deeper philosophical loss in our quest for educating students (Smile, 2013, p.50). Smile defines leisure as a mindset and an approach to how children go about knowing and interpreting the world. He asserts that school lunches serve as a time and space for contemplation and consideration of ideas, which often occur in playful form 'because contemplation serves as its own end, ideas can be entertainment, compared, forgotten, rejected and reconsidered' (Smile, 2013, p.51). School mealtimes are essential for children to stop doing what is imposed on them and 'have time and space in which to break away, at least mentally, from the workaday world and enter into contemplation' (Smile, 2013, p.52). School mealtimes do have important utilitarian functions to satisfy the physical drive for survival, but they are also essential for the mind in providing poignant insights that pierce the dome of children's everyday existence to contemplate higher meanings and ask deeper questions of life (Smile, 2013).

2.7.2 Carnivalesque laughter

Carnival is organised on the basis of laughter, which is alien to monolithic seriousness because laughter belongs to the collective body of all the people. Carnivalesque laughter is directed at everyone and is 'directed towards something higher – towards a shift of authorities and truths, a shift of world orders' (Bakhtin, 1984, p.127). When children mock the moral and social normative mealtime order they elicit non-approval, dialogically engaging with social life, comic spectacle and shared merriment, which creates solidarity against the upholder(s) of the normative order. According to Bakhtin (1981, p.23), 'in this plane (plane of laughter) one can disrespectfully walk around whole objects; therefore, the back and rear portions of an object (and also its innards, not normally accessible for viewing) assume a special importance'. Humour is the language of the carnival that has the 'power to divide, unite and undermine the normative order, where laughter does not reproduce fear but

conveys feelings of strength' (Bakhtin, 1984, p.95). Carnivalesque laughter can be vividly felt as an escape from official ways of living, essentially related to freedom, amusement and a form of renewal (Bakhtin, 1968).

Michael Billig (2005) argues that the less pleasant faces of humour tend to be pushed to one side in order to accentuate the positives of warm-hearted humour. He argues that the emergence of this ideological viewpoint stems from people being conceived of as 'autonomous individuals, possessing enduring characteristics of individuality' (Billig, 2005, p.12). For Billig (2005), ridicule lies at the heart of social life, it is not good-natured and it is more important than social theorists have assumed. He states that 'if meaning has to be socially policed, then mockery and laughter are the friendly neighbourhood officers, who cheerily maintain order. And sometimes they wield their truncheons with punishing effect' (Billig, 2005, p.238). Ridicule is enmeshed with power, which can be a darker, less admirable side of laughter. The decision about what is funny is a moral one, whereby children develop an understanding of ridicule and laughter so that they can laugh appropriately and understand why others are laughing. Billig (2005, p.243) asserts that humour and seriousness remain inextricably linked and that there must be continual movement without a final resting place: 'neither can abolish the other without abolishing itself – or without threatening the social order'. Likewise, the mocking of authority can help to sustain rather than undermine power relations by validating and confirming who and what is in authority by merit of parody and other mockery.

Laughter is not an individual reaction or directed at an isolated comic event, it is laughing at themselves, at the situation and at those who laugh. Bakhtin (1968) writes that 'the carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators' (Bakhtin, 1968, p.7). This idea is significant because if footlights were shone on children's mealtime subversive interactions the carnival would be destroyed and the double-voiced aspect of children's social development would be lost. Double-voice discourse occurs when diverse voices interact and struggle against each other and enter into a hybrid of constructions. Bakhtin (1981) refers to double-voiced discourse in which two discourses or two responses are fused into one. I have interpreted this to mean that two intentions are present (official discourse and unofficial discourse), developing a sense of self and depriving adults or officialdom of absolute authority, in a dual form that passes from praise to abuse and back. According to Bakhtin (1968, p.426), 'it was, so to speak, the carnivalization of

speech, which freed it from the gloomy seriousness of official philosophy as well as from truisms and common place ideas'. These ideas relate to breaking up the hierarchical world to construct new concepts and revise old words, meanings and ideas. Children's carnivalesque mealtime subversions are not a spectacle simply to be seen by people; children belong to the carnival, they live in it and is one way they become aware of their own agency. Belly shaking laughter is a vital bodily aspect of carnivalesque interactions and the following section will discuss grotesque functions of the material condition that contradicts the idea of perfectionism.

2.7.3 Grotesque Realism

In grotesque realism everything is exaggerated; its principles are degradation, debasement, bringing down to earth, but this has a regenerating force as well as a destructive one. In inverting the normal functioning of order, the 'grotesque creates a different type of humour, one that is designed to shock the sensibilities, to dare the viewer to laugh at vulgar and crass representations of political issues' (Thorogood, 2016, p.225). Grotesque realism encourages carnivalesque ambivalence that dialogically reconstitutes new ways of thinking and understanding. Laughter unveils the material body and 'liberates not only from external censorship but first of all from the great interior censor; it liberates from the fear that developed in man over thousands of years; fear of the sacred, of prohibitions, of the past, of power' (Bakhtin, 1968, p.95).

Moreover, grotesque realism captures the ambivalent duplicity of the transgressive aspect of the carnivalesque, not only in vulgar corporeal vitality but also in moral terms. According to Stirling (1997), moral vulgarity was vital to carnivalesque degradation not merely to survive but to thrive upon it. He gives an example of Bakhtinian folk who 'not only picked their nose and farted, but enjoyed doing so' (Stirling, 1997, p.48). Children's mealtime socialisation is 'not only a fruit of imagination or abstract thought; they were experienced' (Bakhtin, 1968. p.10). Grotesque realism brings to the fore the importance of corporeal vitality in embodied dialogic interactions, whereby children can enjoy the functions and conditions of the material body. The body is 'thus not limited to individual, atomistic "selves", but is found in the excess and shared grotesqueness of many bodies participating in similar acts' (Thorogood, 2016, p.222). Grotesque realism holds apparent opposites in unity; if taken literally or seriously the humour will be destroyed.

Mary Douglas (1966) explores purity and danger to understand the concept of pollution, which she argues is a reaction to protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction. She states that what is unclean, disordered or offensive is contingent and socially determined on a shared idea and not on individual psychology. This means that something could be considered profane if it is out of place, which symbolically relates to a 'system of classification in which it does not fit' (Douglas, 2002, p.xvii). Defilement offends against order, and 'eliminating it is not a negative movement but a positive effort to organise the environment' (Douglas, 1966, p.2). In organising the normative school mealtime order, members positively conform to an idea and symbolic system of moral rules and values that are upheld by certain social rules and values, which reject ambiguity (Douglas, 2002). However, 'disorder spoils patterns, it also provides the material of pattern', which provides the means to recognise when a person should be praised and when they should be scorned. James (1982, p.295) argues that children's cultures frequently remain hidden from adults and 'by confusing adult order children create for themselves considerable room for movement within the limits imposed upon them by adult society'. What is perceived as sacred and profane, moral or immoral is context dependent and embodies socially instilled pleasures and fears. Grotesque humour provides children with the means to make strange the world of convention, so that they can explore contradiction, ambiguity and paradoxes within the mealtime structure and official adult social order.

In this section I have examined carnivalesque discourse to illustrate that during children's school mealtime interactions children can gain distance or otherness from the adult world by experimentally objectifying the dominant discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; Duncan and Tarulli, 2003). In doing so, carnivalesque laughter provides the means to unite with others and undermine the normative order, where laughter does not reproduce fear but conveys feelings of strength that can be vividly felt as an escape from official ways of living. Grotesque realism captures the ambivalent duplicity of transgressive carnivalesque interactions, allowing children to socially critique the social and moral norms and values that are made for them. Jenks (2005, p.127) argues that this 'is not a romantic and outmoded plea for us to be led by the "innocent creativity" of children but perhaps a recommendation that we might employ their disruption as a source of critical examination of our dominant means of control' (Jenks, 2005. p.127).

2.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have reviewed school meal policies to illustrate that the remit and rationale of school mealtimes has changed over time, informing children's socialisation in different ways depending on the political agenda. I have argued that the school meal was a way to monitor nutritional welfare, but later became an apparatus of control that would instil manners and eventually admit children into adult society. I have further argued that more research is needed to understand the value of children's mealtime socialisation.

Secondly, I examined different conceptions of socialisation to depict children as competent social actors who co-construct their own developmental conditions (Hedegaard, 2009; Hedegaard and Fleer, 2010). In doing so, I have argued that socialisation is a process that changes over time and informs adulthood (Lee, 2001). However, I place great emphasis on children's active construction and determination of their own lives, not only influenced by but also influencing their social worlds (Hedegaard et al., 2008; Ochs and Shohet, 2006). It is essential to understand socialisation from the point of view of the child, to gain an insight into how they make sense, who they interact with and how they understand the complexity of their social worlds. Children's changing participation in everyday life is a process of altering understandings in practice, whereby children learn to belong, to do, to become and to experience (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; 2003).

Thirdly, I discussed the social conditions of the school mealtime. I have argued that school mealtimes are rule governed practices, illustrating that meaning making and socialisation are based on a labyrinth of social suggestions through the education of children's attention. Liminality captures how the transitional states and symbolic milieu of school mealtimes can lead to moments of certainty and times of spontaneity, transformation and change (Turner, 1969). I extended these ideas by deploying Bakhtin's (1981) notion of chronotope to describe how social conditions determine children's actions, interactions and socialising experiences, which are neither neutral nor passive. I argued that chronotope forms concrete possibilities or living impulses where the collective body enters into new relations with the world (Bakhtin, 1991; Steinby, 2014). More specifically, the school mealtime chronotope signifies ways for children to interact, whereby social hierarchies are temporarily relaxed, and multi-toned narration becomes more normative.

Fourthly, I discussed the spatial and social organisation of children's interactive relations. Children gain a sense of belonging, articulating their individuality when they negotiate the social, temporal, spatial and material arrangements of the school mealtime. However, I needed a theoretical frame that could burrow deeper into how children organise experience and make sense of what is happening, moment to moment, in everyday life, by creating, sharing and restricting access to their frames of reference (Goffman, 1975). Children organise and understand their mealtime experiences by relating to other children in the interactive situation. Children's interactions emerge through responding to others in close proximity, coordinating their interactions by self-organising, rather than having a central organising leader (Resnick, 1994; Klemp et al., 2006). In doing so, children can creatively experiment with both the predictable and unpredictable, serendipitous and contingent aspects of social life in a relatively safe way.

Finally, I discussed a Bakhtinian understanding of school mealtimes (Bakhtin, 1968; 1981; 1984). In doing so, I intended to extend the Foucauldian understanding of school mealtimes, which centralises power into a unified, cooperative, monolithic mechanism that maintains individuals in their subjection, and facilitates the training and correction of individuals (Foucault, 1991; Smart, 1983). The theoretical implications of a Foucauldian framework are that school mealtimes produce trained, docile children; this analytically neglects children's individualised forms of knowledge and power (Section 2.3). In a Bakhtinian framework, the term 'carnivalesque' is used to depict the counterpoise, de-stabilising or reversal of power, albeit temporarily. The theoretical implications are that when various attempts are made to centralise and unify social order, the processes of decentralisation and disunification continue (Bakhtin, 1981). I conceptualise school mealtimes as diverse sites of constant and intense struggle for dominance between coexisting voices. In doing so, my research brings to the fore children's agentic and creative capacity not only to contest the authoritative discourse but to temporarily become the powerful and knowledgeable other.

I argued that the carnivalesque is linked to carnival, authority, discourse, laughter and grotesque (Section 2.7). I have illustrated that children's carnivalesque interactions can provide a temporary breathing spell in which to stop doing what is imposed on them and pierce the dome of everyday existence by contemplating, considering, reconsidering and rejecting ideas (Smile, 2013). In doing so, children can create distance or otherness from the adult world by experimentally objectifying the dominant discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; Duncan

and Tarulli, 2003). Children's laughter can be double-voiced, partly speaking to emancipation and partly to oppression, which can convey feelings of strength that are vividly felt, embodied experiences. Grotesque realism encourages ambivalence, which dialogically reconstitutes new ways of thinking and understanding and dares children to laugh at the vulgar. In doing so, children can make strange the world of convention, exploring contradiction, ambiguity and paradoxes within the official adult world (Douglas, 1966; 2002).

This chapter set out to explore the importance of researching children's mealtime socialisation and to demonstrate that school mealtimes are an important part of the school day for children's social education. Children's mealtime socialisation is imperceptible and yet all pervasive, occurring in the ordinariness of everyday life. I have demonstrated that school mealtimes are a fascinating educational phenomenon, and this research intends to open up new ways to understand this seemingly mundane practice and better inform future policy, research and practice. It is essential to deploy a methodology that is anchored in children's everyday social situations to gain insights into their interactions with others and the mealtime organisation (Hedegaard et al., 2008). The next chapter will provide a methodological discussion for framing the research of children's mealtime socialisation.

Chapter Three: Developing a Methodological Frame to Research Children's Mealtime Socialisation

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide a methodological discussion for framing my research on children's mealtime socialisation. Firstly, I provide a rationale as to why ethnographic methodology is the most appropriate means to understand children's school mealtime socialisation, discussing the philosophical orientation of this research and the importance of reflexivity. Secondly, I discuss the research design, the school where I conducted my research and the selection of participants. Thirdly, I explore my entry into the fieldwork, my position as a researcher and my self-presentation, and I highlight the on-going negotiation that was required throughout the data collection process. Research that has been in the making for many years depends on many different methods for data collection, such as participant observation, fieldnotes, individual interviews, group interviews and digital recording. I explain how I selected different data collection methods to fit the purposes of my ongoing inquiry. Following this, I discuss my methods of analysis. Finally, I discuss key principles of research ethics, namely informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, harm, issues that relate to researching children and other issues that arose as I carried out my fieldwork in the school. Pseudonyms have been created and used throughout this thesis to replace the names of the school and all participants.

3.2 Ethnographic methodology

I deployed ethnographic methodology to gain a comprehensive understanding of children's mealtime socialisation from the native point of view. Naturalistic inquiry enabled me to continuously capture, reflect, think about and analyse children's mealtime socialisation and produce 'thick descriptions', or in other words, detailed accounts of my field experiences and children's mealtime socialisation (Geertz, 1973). According to Geertz (1973, p.10) 'data collection is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render'. I am only able to produce knowledge according to my own subjective reality; children's mealtime socialisation has been constructed from my position as an observer in the mealtime. I have no direct access to

the inner workings of children's minds, nor the capacity to obtain universal truths about their lived experiences (Hedegaard, 2002). This means that my interpretation of children's mealtimes is not a direct reflection of their reality but rather my specific interpretation of their situated school mealtime practices.

In order to understand children's socialisation from the child perspective, we ought to reconsider the methodological repositioning of children as subjects rather than children being merely objects of research. Until the mid-1990s, 'children's research was dominated by the positivist paradigm with its emphasis on measurement, abstraction and statistical relationships' (Hill, 2005, p.62). Demands for a scientific approach led to several one-dimensional conceptions of children's development where the focus was on a 'bird's-eye perspective', conducted from an adult's perspective on children's lives. For example, attachment theory was formulated on the basis of a 'strange situation' which explored children's emotional attachment to their care-givers by conducting research in laboratory playrooms whilst adult researchers observed and theorised the child's reactions (Bowlby, 1958; Ainsworth, 1978). Researching children in controlled circumstances has allowed researchers to conduct rigorous experiments on children and construct valuable meta-theory. However, children were often positioned as objects of research in theory or practice and research was carried out *on* children (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008; Corsaro, 1985). Rather than postulating on the universal aspects of children's needs or experiences, we must be cognisant of children's sociocultural-historical situated practices in which they live and learn with others (Hedegaard et al., 2008). Thus, children's testimonies must be researched in their natural settings, rather than fragmented or studied through artificial means, because children's school mealtime socialisation relies on interrelated components of social action.

In the course of ethnographic fieldwork in the school, I have been able to elicit children's views and opinions, to pay close attention to how they interact and communicate, and to gain a sense of children's ongoing and changing relationships with each other within their situated mealtime. The experience of being in the research site for an extended period of time allowed me to share the same frame for sense-making, become aware of established and changing relationships and notice subtleties in how school staff and children interact with each other. I have drawn insights from how children respond in different exchanges and explore common, alternative and inconsistent understandings in children's mealtime socialisation. It is not sufficient to only observe adults' behaviour towards children to understand their

socialisation. James (2013, p.250) argues that an ethnographic approach 'allows children to be seen as competent informants and interpreters of their own lives and of the lives of others and is an approach to childhood research which can employ children's own accounts centrally within the analysis'. The flexibility of the fieldwork enabled me to achieve a closeness to participants and to make connections between myself and the children, piecing together elements of the children's mealtime organisation and the mealtime structure. When my attention was drawn to incidents that seemed strange, irrational, irregular or immoral, I gathered detailed descriptions of participants' explanations, interpretations and perspectives. Understanding the participants was an uncertain process that required and relied on my openness to the world. Similar to the findings of William Whyte (1993, p.301), 'I learnt the answers to questions that I would not even have had the sense to ask if I had been getting my information solely on an interview basis'. A strength of ethnography lies in its ability to encounter, respect, record and represent the irreducibility of human experience. The extended period of time in the children's naturalistic setting, going from naïve intruder to accepted marginal member of the school mealtime, opened up opportunities for me to observe the disparity between what participants say they do and what they do in practice.

3.2.1 Philosophical orientation

From the social constructivist perspective that this research takes, meanings are not fixed, uniform or waiting to be discovered; meanings arise out of social situations, interactions and negotiations in the interpretive process of children's deliberate, intentional and creative actions. Knowledge is socially situated and constituted through interactions with others, which highlights the significance of researching the native's point of view. Malinowski (1922, p.24) asserts that the ethnographer needs to grasp 'his relation to life, to realise *his* vision of *his* world'. In examining the irregularities in children's mealtime socialisation, I explored what concerns children, the institution and the customs in which they are embedded (Malinowski, 1922) to make sense of their mealtime socialisation in terms of the meanings that children create. Children cannot experience the world out there as it *really* is; children's perception, which is a process of continual action, is children's mode of engagement with the world (Ingold, 1996). Children and the school mealtime are reciprocally constituted; as children act, perceive and live in the school mealtime, different positions within the mealtime will afford different visions or views (Ingold 1996). Constructivist logic has been criticised for not generating replicable knowledge to create generalisable statements about human

nature (Hart, 1996). For example, if a child has a nut allergy but socially constructs meanings that say that objective knowledge is not true, he or she may die from swallowing a nut because objective knowledge exists outside of a person's consciousness. I am not arguing for the ludicrous irrelevance of objective knowledge, where children have no firm point of practical action, but that a representation of children's discoveries, perceptions, procedures and knowledge that is embedded in historical contexts is very important (Littlewood, 1996; Ingold, 1996). This requires moving away from searching for uniformities or making general statements about collectives to exploring children as complex, creative composites of selves.

I have deployed an interpretivist epistemology to uncover children's subjective and emerging mealtime socialisation. An interpretivist understanding is gained slowly over time with the aim of understanding the specific views of children and how they assign meanings to their mealtime practices and experiences. It was important to draw upon my 'human capacity to understand fellow human beings "from the inside" – through empathy, shared experiences and culture, etc – rather than solely from the outside in the way that we are forced to try to explain the behaviour of physical objects' (Hammersley, 2013, p.26). I made inferences beyond what I heard and saw and examined how children interpret and act on their interpretations of the ongoing mealtime structure. Creswell (2009, p.8) argues that 'the goal is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied'. In doing so, I responsibly suspended my own cultural assumptions about what I thought was happening, in order to learn the ways children, think, feel and behave in the school setting. Children interpret their sociocultural-historical mealtime socialisation from both explicit and tacit knowledge by watching others and participating themselves (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). In doing fieldwork, I came to understand the tacit knowledge that children cannot talk about or express in a direct way and so I made inferences by listening carefully to what they said (or did not say) and by observing their behaviour (Spradley, 1980). Children have their own knowledge, meaning-making and perspectives and, as far as possible, this research has aimed to construct an 'insider account' based on subjective views and interpretations from the children and my own interpretations of social interaction and meaning-making.

3.2.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a central issue in my research, especially because it underpins ethnographic methodology. A reflexive approach recognises the centrality of my subjectivity to the

production of and representation of ethnographic knowledge (Pink, 2007). It requires keen awareness of the full and uncompromising relationship between the researcher and the researched to understand how the process of conducting research affects the product of the research. Different elements of my identity, such as my age, ethnicity and gender, have impacted on how I have situated myself within the mealtime context. Being a middle-aged white female mother, I was similar to the existing mealtime assistants in this school and this will inevitably have influenced my relationships with participants, my ethnographic interpretations and the production of ethnographic knowledge. I am not a neutral channel of communication and the aim is to recognise how inextricably I am woven into the research agenda, the process and the product of this research (Davies, 1999; Emond, 2005; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). I have shaped the research with my own values, feelings, moods, interests, experiences, choices, interactions, theorisations and conclusions during the inquiry. Reflexivity is about recognising the partiality of my work as part of my perspective, embracing and engaging my subjectivity in order to understand children's mealtime socialisation. Davies (1999, p.4) argues that in broad terms, reflexivity means 'turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference'. The aim is not to neutralise my subjectivity, but to acknowledge how my subjectivity colours the experiences with the light I cast them in; data production and interpretations are always partly guided by my own experiences as a human being that inevitably includes blind spots. In doing so, I utilised subjective experiences as an intrinsic part of the research, but it was crucial to avoid sinking into a self-absorption that negates the possibility of any knowledge other than self-knowledge (Davies, 1999).

The specificity and individuality of the observer must be acknowledged, explored and put to creative use (Okely, 1996). Prior to embarking on PhD research, I worked for many years within the food industry, namely in corporate catering, weddings and other social events. Arguably, mealtimes in these social contexts are opportunities for contemplation, socialisation and celebration, where food is rarely the centre of attention. My participation and observation of celebratory and commercial mealtimes in a professional capacity influenced how I conceptualised school mealtimes as social consumption. I theorised the school mealtime as a time/space in which children can straddle both school life and leisure (Smile, 2013). However, I reflexively embraced contradictions that did not fit with my preliminary analyses, bringing to the fore an oppositional view that illustrated a more diverse interpretation of children's school mealtime socialisation. Moreover, my sociocultural-historical context forced me to question taken-for-granted assumptions about the

conceptualisation of children and childhood (James and Prout 2015; Qvortrup, 2005) and to inquire into children's perspectives, experiences and knowledge about their social world (Hedegaard 2002; Hedegaard et al., 2008). Notwithstanding, my age, gender, ethnicity and motherhood experience was similar to that of the school's mealtime assistants and will ultimately have affected the ways in which I have understood and conceptualised children's socialisation, the research process and outcome.

To understand my own impact as an investigator, reflexivity has been a feature of this research from the onset and for the whole duration. The remainder of the chapter provides detailed descriptions of how I have made a substantial investment of time and energy to learn the necessary skills to immerse myself deeply in the fieldwork and achieve methodological self-consciousness. Thus, the reader will be granted insight into the ways in which the data has been reflexively gathered and interpreted.

3.3 Ethnographic research design

My research is an ethnography of children's school mealtime practices situated in St Peter's Catholic Primary School in South West England. Pseudonyms have been created and used throughout this thesis to replace the names of the school and all participants. My focus was set within children's school mealtime practice, which seats approximately one hundred students per sitting. The ethnographic research design allowed close contact with the participants, enabling in-depth investigation into children's mealtime social life, whilst exploring multiple sources of evidence in its natural setting. My empirical inquiry investigated children's mealtime socialisation in its natural setting, where 'the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2018, p.15). Significantly, a constructivist approach and ethnographic research design allowed me to capture the perspectives of different participants and focus on different meanings to illuminate the topic (Yin, 2018). I was able to explore the interrelated components of children's mealtime socialisation and bring together different lines of action and enquiry, which are dependent on their embedded mealtime experiences. I was able to appreciate the uniqueness and complexity of the children's school mealtime socialisation, its embeddedness and relationships within the context, which may otherwise be missed with rigid questionnaires or in the controlled confines of laboratories (Stake, 1995).

The limitations of an ethnographic research design are related to the legitimacy, respectability or representativeness of the findings, as they are based on a small number of cases. I have been committed throughout the research process to following systematic procedures, which have demanded transparency and reflexive attention to acknowledge and limit my biases so that I can report on all evidence as fairly as possible (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, 'while ethnographers may not usually be very concerned with generalizing beyond the case under study, they still have to deal with generalizations within the case' (Hammersley, 1984, p.8). This has been a significant concern and I have tried to ensure, as much as possible, that a diversity of children's voices is represented within the data presented; I would strongly object to any claims that my data represents all children in the school mealtime or that children within the same mealtime have exactly the same socialising experiences, even when sitting in proximity to each other. I have interacted with a wide range of participants and the logical significance of children's school mealtime practices is the crucial aspect, rather than any statistical connection that represents the wider population (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Yin, 2018). The findings of my research represent a sample of the data I collected. To address the concerns that ethnographies are subjective, selective and biased, I have tried to suspend my own 'immediate inferences, common sense assumption and theoretical presuppositions, as far as possible, so as to try to take full account of what people say about their world and what they do', continually searching for my own blind spots (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.230). A high degree of reflexivity, procedural transparency and openness was needed for critical scrutiny throughout the research process (see also Sections 3.2.2; 3.5.4).

3.3.1 The research school

St Peter's Catholic Primary School is an average-sized voluntary aided primary school situated in South West England. It serves a relatively prosperous area with a mixture of rented and privately-owned homes. At the time of the research, the school had approximately 197 pupils (97 boys and 100 girls) on roll aged 4 to 11 years. The majority of pupils were of white British origin and 20 per cent were from minority ethnic groups (Ofsted report, 2015). The school catchment feeds into both public and private secondary schools. Please see Figure 3.3.1.1 for the particularities of the research school.

	St Peter's Primary School	National Average
Total number of children (school capacity 220)	197	
Number of boys	49.00%	51.00%
Number of girls	51.00%	49.00%
Percentage of pupils receiving FSM during the past 6 years	8.70%	26.40%
Children with special educational needs	4.30%	1.40%
Children whose first language is not English	18.50%	19.40%
Overall attendance	4.50%	4.00%

Figure 3.3.1.1: Particularities of the research school (Ofsted report, 2015)

The school mealtime lasts approximately one hour with two sittings; both sittings were approximately 30 minutes in duration, containing approximately 100 children. Typically, the first meal sitting was for infant children and had 2 or 3 supervising mealtime assistants and the second sitting was for junior children with 1 or 2 supervising mealtime assistants. During fieldwork (2013 - 2017) I came into contact with the whole school during mealtimes, which included children in all teaching year groups (from Early Years to Key Stage 2), mealtime assistants, cooks, parents, teaching assistants, teachers, cleaners, temporary staff, office staff and two headteachers, Mr Hutchinson (who retired in February 2015) and Mr Wilkinson. The core mealtime assistants and kitchen staff were white, female, middle-aged women, and all mealtime assistants held dual roles, also being parents, cleaners and classroom assistants. I have no knowledge of the existence of a single role mealtime assistant position in this school.

3.3.2 Participants

I had numerous brief informal conversations with approximately twenty children from different year groups in each mealtime visit, and more in-depth discussion with between five and ten children per mealtime. As the research progressed, I made gradual sense of the social phenomena around me by comparing, contrasting and building explanations, leaning in and

out of an angle of inquiry. Thus, participant selection was based on naturally occurring events, empirical intrigue and theoretical propositions (Davies, 1999; Yin, 2018). On this premise, participants were selected during naturally occurring events that shaped and funnelled my analytical framework. However, the process of selecting participants is not a one-way procedure and I was open and reflexive toward participants who wanted to share something with me (Davies, 1999). For example, when conducting drawing interviews with the children, I had a selection of children from my observation focus; children on the periphery of my focus (see Appendix Four); and children who were not in my observation focus but who repeatedly asked to participate, which elicited very interesting data and confirmed to them that I was genuinely interested in understanding their school mealtime lives. Older male participants were keen to talk with me during the mealtimes but were reluctant to engage in drawing interviews and so the 'selection of participants depends upon factors such as their accessibility and willingness to assist in the research, as well as their knowledge and insight' (Davies, 1999, p.79). My humility and gratitude developed relationships with children in the field where we could both engage in a mutual search for understanding. These relationships were sensitively managed and reflexively understood in order to interrogate the information received, whilst grappling with the social dynamics that led to identifying particular patterns of children's mealtime socialisation.

Pseudonyms have been used to represent all participants, which include the core mealtime assistants: Mrs Perkins, Mrs Roberts, Mrs Sloan and Mrs Mathews. I also met several temporary mealtime assistants during the prolonged fieldwork: Mrs Lee, Mrs Dewhurst, Miss Robinson, Mrs Sanderson, Mr Starlin, Mrs Rivers, Mrs Connelly and Mrs White. There were typically six mealtime assistants employed at one time, so usually two positions tended to be filled with temporary staff per scholastic year. The following section will discuss issues relating to my access and entry into the field and draw attention to how the social world is guarded and requires sensitivity in order to gather data over an extended period of time.

3.4 Access and entry

My relationship with the school as a parent, without doubt, was the most significant factor in setting up my research at St Peter's Catholic Primary School. Several years prior to conducting the research, I volunteered once a week as a parent helper to listen to children read. I believed this established a respectful relationship with the school, where the school

felt confident in my value position, trusted my judgement and knew that I cared for the children's wellbeing. The headteacher, Mr Hutchinson, respected my proposed commitment to maintaining the confidentiality of the children's data and was supportive in legitimating my research to parents, teachers and mealtime staff. Staying in communication and building trust and rapport was what allowed me to continue to re-access the field. According to Davies (1999, p.50), 'researchers should be sensitive to the ongoing relationship that exists between gatekeepers and other participants and endeavour not to disturb it'. I was very mindful of valuing the existing and new relationships within the research school.

During my re-entry into the fieldwork in 2016 (see Figure 3.5 for visual data collection overview), I became acutely aware of the importance of the school receptionists as significant gatekeepers to the headteacher, Mr Wilkinson, and consequently to the school community. As with the findings of Kellet and Ding (2004, p.170), 'school locations require the researcher to negotiate multiple layers of gatekeepers' and the school receptionists were extremely powerful when it came to access. The receptionists controlled whether and when I could speak with the headteacher, even when the Mr Wilkinson was in the vicinity and especially at salient times, such as gaining formal access to update the ethical procedures (Section 3.5.8). I grew very fond of the office staff and from our interactions I learnt to be polite and friendly but not too friendly or chatty. I learnt to approach these gatekeepers with respect, sensitivity and caution, as my management of these relationships dictated my restriction or access to the headteacher and mealtime setting.

Good field relations are built and maintained on the premise of reciprocity and willingness to sample the superficial insignificance of everyday life. Neutral conversations provided mutual ease, access and the exchange of information. Gaining access through the school receptionists and headteacher was the first step, but the mealtime assistants were instrumental in championing the research cause to maintain my access and re-entry into the field. Significantly, good field relationships with my participants created trust and rapport and enabled the data collection to continue.

Initially and throughout, I communicated my research agenda to the children and mealtime assistants and discussed what interested me about mealtimes. I explained that my intention was not to evaluate their practices but to understand how the mealtime practice occurs for them in this school. Nearly all conversations were orientated around the research agenda

(02/2013 – 04/2013) and all mealtime assistants were vigilant and active, keeping the room tidy and tightly controlled. As my immersion into the fieldwork increased (2015 - 2017) I cultivated my sensitivity to changing situations, developed my skills of patience, diplomacy and sometimes boldness; conversations came to be formed more easily from natural occurring interactions. Small talk was really important because it can 'be very threatening to the host if one pumps them constantly about matters relating directly to the research interests' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.89). What stands out from my fieldnotes is the range of conversations I had with children about super heroes, families, individual school matters, hobbies, birthdays, friendship and jokes.

Neutral conversations played an important part in slowly building trust and rapport, which allowed access to a rich form of research data. The mealtime assistants and I often chatted about everyday life such as our own children, holidays, fashion, weekend pursuits and local knowledge. It was essential to find a balance between my research aims and their concerns and topics of conversation. Building trust by revealing more of myself appeared to make both the children and mealtime assistants feel more relaxed in our everyday interactions and I began to feel more accepted, which seemed to make my presence less noticeable and the mealtime practices around me more natural. For example, I noted how the mealtime assistants became more relaxed in their duties and chattier with each other, the floor and tables visibly contained more food droppings and the assistants tended to assert less control, particularly over the older year groups (fieldnote, 02/03/2015).

3.4.1 Researcher positionality

My researcher position (Davies, 1999; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) changed over the five-year data collection period (2013-2017). When I began the fieldwork in February 2013, I had a duel role as both a parent and a researcher, and I conducted non-participant observations from the periphery of the mealtime. My parent-researcher positionality impacted the way I constructed knowledge, posed questions and filtered information. Initially, my familiarity with the children, school staff and school setting meant that I shared some background knowledge with the participants. My existing knowledge of the children's friendship couples and groups helped me to develop greater insights and better understanding of how the children negotiated social relationships. There were many school mealtime rules and individuals at the mealtimes that were unfamiliar to me because I was not a mealtime

assistant with job responsibilities to look after the children. My unfamiliarity with the school mealtime context compelled me to ask questions that may have seemed irrelevant because they exceeded the bounds of common sense and decorum (Rock, 2007). I adopted an incompetent outsider position, not completely understanding what was going on, which positioned me as a strange adult who did not behave like a parent, teacher or mealtime assistant. I avoided 'going native' by periodically withdrawing from the field to the university library so that I could clear my head and regain perspective. I discussed my observations, fieldnotes and analyses with colleagues so that I could be as reflexive as possible about my own cultural assumptions about both schooling and mealtimes (Delamont et al., 2010).

When I started the fieldwork in February 2015, I conducted participant observations in a novice mealtime assistant role. Mrs White, a new mealtime assistant, greeted me and asked me to apply hand sanitiser and put on a disposable apron. She then gave me a bottle of milk and asked me to pour milk or water for the children. In the initial moments of putting on the disposable apron I felt embarrassed; I felt I was being assigned a new identity which made me feel uncomfortable and forced me to question how I had previously positioned myself. Sharp (1994, p.125) argues that lunchtime supervisors can sometimes be viewed as 'non-people' because no one knows their names and they are often ignored or contradicted. Concordantly, I began to feel less visible to adults in the community with whom I was already familiar, and instead of seeing 'Sam' they saw three mealtime assistants in disposable aprons. After a short time, I realised the disposable apron helped me to fade into the background of the mealtime setting. This was an exciting insight that to some extent communicated an institutional invisibility of mealtime assistants. Participating in the mealtime by pouring drinks brought me into a more natural interaction with children, where ethnographic observations and conversations were created much more freely. Participant observations in a mealtime assistant's role gave me a purpose within the mealtime and enabled me to gradually learn the ropes and become a core member of the mealtime practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

I gradually built relationships with children so that they were able to express their opinions without fear of reprisal. I chose not to participate in a full mealtime assistant role of disciplining or showing disapproval for children's misdemeanours because the children might have become reluctant to let me bear witness to their subversive mealtime interactions that

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contravened school mealtime rules. This choice allowed me to be a bystander to children's interactions and to understand the contexts in which they make decisions and interact in the ways in which they do. As an accepted marginal member I was able to maintain close relations with both the children and mealtime assistants and achieve a deeper sense of everyday life in the mealtime setting. My aim was to enter the children's world of understanding and allow my own understandings to change through the process of the research experience (Mayall, 2008). I especially wanted to understand children's mealtime socialisation from a child-centred view, which positioned me as an adult with less authority than the mealtime assistants, when I implicitly supported children's carnivalesque interactions with my silence. I embraced many roles in relation to the children, ranging from helper, parent, researcher, friend, entertainer, mediator, visitor, non-authoritarian and authoritarian, by proxy of being an adult (Davis, Watson and Cunningham-Burley, 2008). Flexible negotiation of these roles became a tool for understanding children's peer cultures (Agar, 1980).

My entry and re-entry into the field was continually developing and just when I thought 'I'm in', something new would happen that made me realise something different about my social position. Shortly after my re-entry into the fieldwork (02/03/2015), a child asked me if she could go to the toilet, which I thought was an easy question to answer. I confidently said yes and moments later another child asked. Within a few minutes, many more children asked until I had released approximately ten or so children from different tables in the surrounding area. I approached a nearby mealtime assistant, Mrs Mathews, because something seemed awry because so many children suddenly needed to go to the toilet. Mrs Mathews explained that only two children are allowed to go to the toilet at a time and left our conversation to check on the present toilet situation. Interestingly, once I had heard about the toilet rules no more children asked me if they could go to the toilet that day. According to Ritchie and Rigano (2001, p.742), 'as a story line unfolds participants are constantly engaging in positioning themselves and others through discursive actions'. This example illustrates the connectedness amongst children that allowed them to identify, probe, position and test for weaknesses in my positionality and utilise the benefits.

When I was in the field, I had to piece together the informal rules, norms and values of the school mealtime, and to test out my understandings by venturing into the unknown. Agar (1980, p.50) argues that when conducting fieldwork, 'many of the assumptions that form the

bedrock of your existence are mercilessly ripped out from under you'. Agar (1980) refers to this as a culture shock experience; I found myself in a role that required a high degree of tolerance for uncertainty and a willingness to make mistakes, because school mealtime rules were communicated both explicitly and implicitly. An example of an implicitly communicated rule that I learnt was during my eagerness to fulfil a mealtime assistant's role by wiping the table when the children had finished their lunch. I inadvertently showed too much enthusiasm for wiping tables. Firstly, Mrs Roberts commented that I was being very conscientious today, which pricked my conscious that my behaviour was not in line with the norm (fieldnote 08/03/2016). Secondly, on my next visit, the kitchen staff removed the washing bowl that containing the cloth (fieldnote 10/03/2016). I soon realised that mealtime assistants only wipe lunch tables if it is necessary because it is responsibility of the kitchen staff to wipe tables, which made me realise that I had overstepped my role as a mealtime assistant into the kitchen staff's domain (fieldnote 17/03/2016). The following week the bowl and cloth had returned, and they were not removed again because I became more aware about following the implicit rules of the mealtime assistants' duties. However, I did continue to wipe tables occasionally and the kitchen staff responded by re-wiping the table after me. Sometimes it was only through my misunderstandings or mistakes that I was able to realise the disparity between what I understood and the actual practice.

3.4.2 Self-presentation

To make a good impression when I started the fieldwork (2013) I wore formal clothing, such as grey trousers and a shirt, to reflect my impression of what I imagined school attire to be. Dressing formally masked my nervousness about starting the fieldwork and made me feel at ease during my initial immersion into school life. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.68) argue that 'while those engaged in overt research do not have to copy closely the dress and demeanour of the people they are researching, they need to alter their appearance and habits a little in order to reduce any sharp differences'. Later in the fieldwork (04/2015) I decided to wear more informal clothes underneath the disposable apron to attune more closely with the mealtime assistants' attire. These clothes were typically trainers, jeans and a long sleeved top and cardigan. Self-reflexive iterations of how I presented myself and influenced social relationships were important to reduce reactivity, gain acceptance and understand how I influenced my data. When I conducted classroom observations (04/2016 – 07/2016) I inadvertently chose clothes that reflected what I imagined to be more of a teacher style of

dress code. For example, I tended to wear boots, leggings and tunic dresses as I felt this would make me look a little smarter for classroom observations. Potentially, somewhere in the back of my mind, I wanted to elevate my status and be taken more seriously than in my mealtime assistant role, so I thought it 'necessary to use dress to mark oneself off from particular categories to which one might otherwise be assigned' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.68). However, on returning to the mealtime after the classroom observations, I noticed the mealtime assistants' abruptness and hostility towards me; I was surprised, as they supported the idea of my classroom observations as they wanted me to understand how different the mealtime setting is from the classroom setting. It was an unexpected reaction that made me a bit confused and very curious.

My loss of ease on returning to the mealtime context reminded me of the importance of self-presentation (Goffman, 1971) and on subsequent days of classroom observations I was more mindful of the impression that I was projecting to the children, mealtime assistants and teachers through the way I presented myself (fieldnote, 18/04/2016). I recognised that I needed to reflexively monitor the consequences of my decisions and address the possibility that after classroom observations, the mealtime assistants felt my demeanour change. My subjective knowledge and understanding of the mealtime assistant's role were a process that developed through my field encounters. I learnt how to be a mealtime assistant by reflexively analysing various reactions towards me that provoked doubts and questions, which enabled me to constantly re-position myself so that my exploration of children's socialisation became empirically possible. To bring myself back into alignment with the mealtime assistants, I became submissive and they reprimanded me for minor issues until the equilibrium that we mutually constructed was restored. These are subtle but fundamental details of how I gained entry into the lives of my research community, developed understanding and knowledge through reflexively repositioning myself through the creation of self-presentation and critically analysed reactions in ongoing relationships. It was through a combination of diligent commitment to become a competent mealtime assistant, and a splattering of mistakes and misunderstandings, that I gradually came to understand the unspoken role of the mealtime assistant, which enabled me to access children's socialisation.

3.5 Data collection methods

This research has been in the making for many years and depended on many different methods for data collection. In 2013, I conducted fieldwork for 5 days per week (Monday - Friday) and between 2015 and 2017 I conducted fieldwork twice per week between the times 12:05 and 13:20. This sub-section will outline my data collection methods. Firstly, I will discuss the subtle but important differences in my participant observer roles and how I recorded the data in my fieldnotes. Secondly, I will discuss my use of unstructured interviewing, group drawing interviews with the children and group interviews with the mealtime assistants. Thirdly, I will discuss the technology I used to record data, namely video, audio and photographic. In Figure 3.5 I provide a visual overview of the data collection timeline.
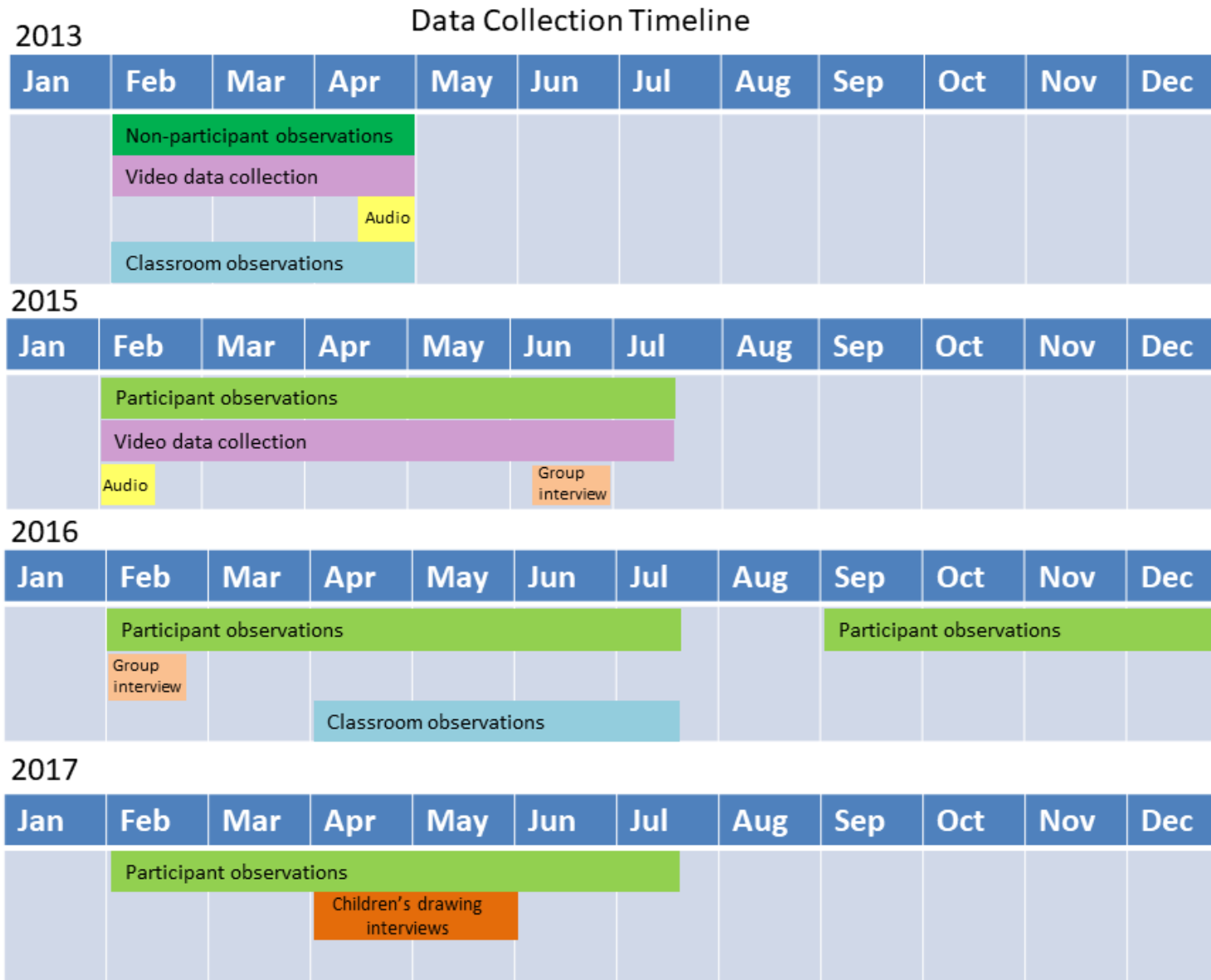
Figure 3.5: Data collection timeline

3.5.1 Participant observations

To examine the complexity and interconnectedness of children's mealtime socialisation, I conducted participant observations in a mealtime assistant role and assisted in menial tasks, such as pouring drinks, wiping tables, cutting up food and scraping food into the waste bin. It was essential to observe at first hand the superficial and insignificant details of everyday life and become competent in the mealtime practices to pass a threshold of acceptance (Davies, 1999). Thus, I patiently participated in the mealtime, observed children's interactions and gradually understood the significance of social relationships and material aspects of the mealtime. I shared in some of the amusements of children's interactions within the research community rather than observing from a position of detachment (Malinowski, 1922; Whyte, 1993). I interacted with many different children on many different levels; some interactions were superficial, others diffused or fleeting due to having conversations in and between children's social interactions; other interactions were highly focused on incidents, interactions, meaning-making or sequences of events. My participation in the mealtime led to new observations, and the new observations changed the way I participated in the mealtime, which led to new observations (Rabinow, 1977). These iterative cycles led me 'to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things that participants might not freely talk about in an interview situation and to move beyond perception-based data' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.256). It was not possible in every case, but when incidents occurred, I attempted to have meaningful conversations with children about what had happened to understand their perspectives and rival positions and to avoid making my own inferences. I had many naturally occurring conversations and found that children loved to be listened to and have their views taken seriously, which was simple for me as I had no job responsibility for them and had no authority position to protect (Pollard and Filer, 1996). My understanding of children's mealtime socialisation developed as I participated and observed in their everyday mealtime interactions over an extended period of time.

The unit of observation was children's interactions during school mealtimes, which involves their relationships with other children, mealtime assistants and the organisation of the mealtime. The observation focus was a process of moving from descriptive observations that orientated me to the field, to focused observations that refined my analytical framework, to selective observations that formulated and answered my specific research questions (Flick, 2014; Spradley, 1980). I observed to discover paradoxes, what problems faced children during their school mealtimes and how they responded to these situations (Delamont, 2002). As an accepted marginal member of the mealtime I was able to observe events as they unfolded naturally, to get a feel for unspoken topics, to ask questions to clarify my understandings and to generate a rich body of data. Beyond talking to

children or overhearing conversations, participant observations provided the means to explore movement, gestures and nonverbal communication such as a wink, a shrug, the gaze of eyes, a slight shake of the head or the raising of an eyebrow and to notice what was silently communicated or taken for granted.

This methodological strategy was a way to learn from children about their mealtime socialisation, but I also learnt to observe myself. I found participant observations challenging at times because they required me to be constantly attentive to maintaining rapport with participants, withstanding unwillingness to engage in ethnographic interviews, soaking up raw data and conceptually examining how it related to the research topic and my research questions; this could be an exhausting and confusing process (Spradley, 1980). Reflexive observation entailed being sensitive to the nature of my relationships within the research community to minimise distortions in the data. To bring awareness to how I might influence the collection of data on any particular day, I wrote a short account at the beginning of every fieldnote explaining any literature I was reading, my emotions, the weather and what my mind was occupied with in other areas of life. I found it essential to maintain that distance for reflection so that I could critically analyse my observation focus and recording of events, and understand how my intellectual interests, personal feelings and biases influenced data collection. I needed to become the 'other' in my own mind and maintain double vision all the time so that I could understand 'being here' because I had 'been there' (Geertz, 1973; Hobbs, 1993; Taylor et al., 2015; Davies, 1999). In doing so, I kept a record that tracked how my thinking changed over time, which influenced interpretations of the data in different ways.

3.5.2 Non-participant observations

During the first three months of data collection (02/2013 - 04/2013) I conducted non-participant observations, whereby I observed the mealtime from the side of the room and recorded observations in a notebook. At this point in the data collection, I was more aloof from the mealtime activities and maintained some degree of social distance. It was an important period of familiarisation that enabled me to slowly build relationships with participants (Barley, 2014). When children asked me about what I was doing, I explained that I was writing a story about how children eat their meals at school and that I was interested to know what eating a school lunch was like for children. Barley (2014, p.5) argues that time needs to be given to building the relationship between children and the researcher because 'it helps to create a safe environment where the child is able to express his or her true opinion without fear of reprisal or giving the researcher what he or she perceives to be the wrong answer'. Children could, and did, ask me lots of questions and it gave them opportunities to

teach me something about their perspective on the social world, which overall slowly and respectfully developed relationships. After a period of relatively unfocused observing, I started to note events as they happened in the mealtime, recorded procedural evidence about the mealtime organisation and identified repetitions and patterns in children's interactions.

3.5.3 Classroom observations

The data from classroom observations have not directly contributed to this thesis but they have given the comparative advantage to understand how the character of the school mealtime is configured. Classroom observations gave me insight into the differentiations of power and control between teachers and mealtime assistants that frame and configure the social conditions of the school mealtime in which children's interactions are embedded (Bernstein, 1977; 2000; Bakhtin, 1981; Steinby, 2014; Sections 6.3; 7.3). These observations informed my understanding in terms of how teachers established the children's attention to official rules and procedures in both settings. Hammersley (1990, p.16) argues that teachers 'do not merely require pupils to pay attention but they also want them to participate'. In the classroom setting children conform to certain rules: they cannot freely talk or move around without permission, they must listen to the teacher and follow what is said, whereby the teachers tended to reduce peer interaction, and their mistakes are held up to public scrutiny. The school mealtime does have structure, but it is not as structured as the classroom. The school mealtime is fast-paced, children have more freedom for movement, they choose the topic of conversation and to an extent what they consume, requests from mealtime assistants can be ignored and children's mistakes are often overlooked by their peers, whereby re-attempts can be deployed day after day until perfected (or not). These insights were significant and informed the refinement of my analytical framework, where I conceptualised children's flexibility to interpret and negotiate the school rules.

I conducted classroom observations between April and July 2016; this was instigated by the mealtime assistants. The rationale for their request was that the majority of mealtime assistants were also teaching assistants and they thought it was important that I understood how different the mealtime setting is from the classroom setting. I conducted classroom observations in one infant classroom and one junior classroom, one hour prior to the mealtime per week for just over 3 months (see Figure 3.5 for a visual overview of data collection). Mr Wilkinson, the headteacher, communicated with the teaching staff and asked me to liaise with the teachers to make further arrangements; shortly afterwards, two teachers approached me. I had previously conducted classroom observations for the last 10 minutes of lesson time prior to the mealtime to observe the

mealtime prayer in both an infant and junior classroom (02/2013 – 04/2013). I will not elaborate on these observations because these data have not been included in this thesis.

3.5.4 Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes were used to record concrete descriptions, collect substantive notes and as an on-going analytical device. Various doubts, concerns, questions and speculations provoked by the field encounters are the sources of the fieldnotes. Scott (1996, p.144) argues that ethnographers' 'descriptions of social reality are incomplete if they do not take account of the views and perceptions of social actors'. However, it must be acknowledged that fieldnotes provide a selective and partial record because I wrote about what seemed significant and relevant to my research topic and hence ignored other ways in which social phenomena could have been framed or presented (Atkinson, 1992). This means that 'the field' was produced as an outcome of my researcher gaze (what I overlooked as much as what I observed) and reconstituted through my ability to construct a text-of-the-field.

During 2013 (02/2013 – 04/2013) I conducted non-participant observations from the periphery of the room and wrote my fieldnotes in a small notebook. I wrote about how children interact, recorded the material layout of the mealtime, kept a record of the time in relation to social action and made notes of verbatim from children and mealtime assistants (see Appendix One for a sample of my non-participation fieldnotes – full viewings of the fieldnotes are available by consultation). Fieldnotes recorded my 'observations, conversations, interpretations and suggestions for future information to be gathered' (Agar, 1980, p.112). At this point in the data collection I did not anonymise my hand written fieldnotes; I wrote my fieldnotes at speed and sometimes in personal shorthand that might be cryptic for others to understand but that was sufficient to remind me of what had happened.

When conducting participant observations (2015 - 2017) I immediately wrote brief hand-written bullet point notes in an out-of-field notepad (approximately 5 minutes after the mealtime), which enabled me to trigger my memory so that I could expand on each bullet point note (10-20 minutes after the mealtime) while my memory was fresh enough to make sense of the original, cryptic notes. I anonymised my data at the point of entry into my electronic journal and kept a code book separately from my electronic journal and out-of-field notebook. I seldom wrote fieldnotes *in situ* when I needed to record a lot of information or very specific information. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.36), 'the longer time between observation and recording, the more troublesome will be the recall and recording of adequately detailed and concrete descriptions'.

My observational skills, memory work and fieldnote writing developed as the research proceeded. I developed a systematic method for recalling information (see Appendix Two for a sample of participant observation fieldnotes). Agar (1980) argues that fieldnotes are constantly moving exchanges between the researcher and the social world, and in my case, they continually progress towards a specific understanding of children's school mealtime socialisation. Writing regular, sustained, detailed records was essential to creating a systematic body of records (Sanjek, 2014). Fieldnotes are valuable in both the process and product of research. Thus, fieldnotes are not closed, complete final texts; they are indeterminate accumulative material, subject to reading, re-reading, interpreting and reinterpreting as a way of critically reflecting on children's mealtime socialisation.

In addition to making fieldnotes on my participant observations, I kept an out-of-field reflexive journal at irregular intervals, in which I reflected on and explored my analytical thoughts on the experience of researching children's school mealtime socialisation. These fieldnotes became a valuable resource for highlighting a need to analyse the phenomena observed, and to question theoretical or personal preconceptions in the process of interpreting fieldnotes. Delamont (2002, p.65) argues that 'fieldnotes mediate between the researcher and her respondents and between the scholar and her audience'. I used this journal to reflect on thought-provoking conversations that I had with my supervisory team and other learned scholars, which provided further opportunities to question my interpretations. According to Davis and colleagues (2008, p.202), 'team work reinforced the rigorous nature of the ethnographic process – not only did the ethnographer have to question his own interpretations but also he had to take account of the interpretations of the research team'. Academic and personal preconceptions that I held before the fieldwork became evident and I was forced to address my own assumptions and beliefs. I reflected on unanswered questions and the unsettling confusion that comes from 'doing' research. For example, I recorded and reflected on my feelings of detachment and loss of identity from living on the periphery of a community for an extended period of time, which enabled me to blend into the background and become a marginal member of the school mealtime community. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.72) insist that 'as a researcher one often has to suppress or play down personal beliefs, commitments, and political sympathies'. My out-of-field journal was essential to maintaining that distance to avoid going native so that I did not completely cross over ('being there' and 'being here' in Geertz's words), so that I could retain the perspective of the observer and fashion the fieldwork experience into a textual form (Geertz, 1973; Taylor et al., 2015). Writing memos helped me maintain my double vision by acknowledging and validating my struggle, whilst reminding me of my audience and why I was conducting the fieldwork (see Appendix Three for a sample of my out-of-field reflexive journal).

During the process of analysing the data and writing my thesis I occasionally stumbled upon blockages to thinking, analysis and writing. To remove these hurdles, I interviewed myself in a separate reflexive writing journal in an attempt to understand my own feelings and confusions that stopped me from making progress. The advantage of reflecting in this way was that I could be completely honest with and accountable to myself in a safe and private space. Information in these personal journals have not been used as data but they were fundamental to the process of conducting the research.

3.5.5 Ethnographic interviews

Ethnographic interviews are an active process in which the interviewer and the interviewee produce knowledge in the conversational relationship (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p.5) argue that 'it goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views in everyday conversations and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge'. My ethnographic interviews were flexible, containing many open-ended questions and allowing considerable freedom for answering, which was a way for both the interviewee and I to be involved in developing understandings (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Davies, 1999). Questions emerged from the immediate context in the process of naturally occurring mealtime practices, so there were few predetermined questions or wording. I strived for an open-curious position and avoided expressing a judgemental attitude so that we could explore the topic together. A strength of unstructured interviews is that different information was collected from different children, a situation that arose naturally during my ongoing participation. Significantly, participation, observation and ethnographic interviews were an iterative process whereby the data from each was used to illuminate the others, enabling me to check what I had understood with my participants. Ethnographic interviews were essential for understanding children's perspectives, reconstructing aspects of social interaction and providing the means to check the validity of my interpretations.

Situational knowledge and personal judgements developed my ability to establish rapport, to phase questions, to stretch a pause, and to know when to pursue an idea and when to let it go. Thus, I learnt how to research children's mealtime socialisation through direct exposure to the mealtime practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). My ethnographic interviews developed over an extended period of time, during which topics and incidents could be gradually discussed, which meant I was able to roll with resistance and re-contextualise my questions in different terms in future interviews.

Mayall (2008, p.110) argues that 'when working with children, in the sense that the adult tries to enter children's worlds of understanding, and her own understanding' my agenda was modified through the research experience. I actively listened, responded and encouraged participants to expand on their responses, digress or introduce their own concerns. I was able (to some extent) to hand over the agenda to the children so that they could control the direction and pace of our research conversations (Mayall, 2008). For example, if I introduced a topic that did not resonate in that moment, children sometimes refused to engage by openly rejecting my line of inquiry, deferred in response, redefined the topic or simply changed the topic to whatever they wanted to talk about. Davies (1999, p.101) argues that 'a good interviewer needs to be open to the possibility that respondents will not be able to discuss the subject in the terms that they suggest'. Interviewing is an active process that involves a complex form of social interaction where the data produced is co-constructed (Heyl, 2007), so it was crucial I developed rapport and involved interviewees how and when they wanted to engage. When conducting ethnographic interviews at a lunch table I would often interact with more than one child at a time, and even if other children did not verbalise or contribute to the interview, I acknowledge that their presence was part of the interview context (Davies, 1999).

Children's perspectives differed greatly on the same topic and contradictions existed within the same interview, so unstructured interviews were the most appropriate method for this research because I could examine rival explanations, triangulate my findings and develop in-depth understandings of their lived experiences.

3.5.6 Group drawing interviews with children

I conducted group drawing interviews with the children so that I could have a more specific conversations with friendship groups and pairs to understand how they locate themselves with others in the mealtime. Hedegaard (2002; 2009) argues that to understand the children's perspectives, children's intentional everyday activities need to be explored in relation to the demands that they are confronted with. Children's conversations can be fast-paced and change direction on a hairpin, so the drawing of pictures was helpful to anchor and sustain conversation, discuss their pictures and access how they produce knowledge in their own terms. I conducted 5 group interviews with 23 children, 4 male participants and 19 female participants (04/2017-05/2017). I tried to conduct group interviews with more males, but even when everyone agreed, if one participant changed his mind, all the boys refused shortly after. I selected friendship groups and pairs from both inside and outside of my observational focus. Children within my observational

focus were selected because they made some effort to sit with peers and their pictures largely represented friendships and social interaction. Children outside my observational focus seemed less concerned with their seating positions or social interactions and tended to draw more abstract pictures such as the food servery and the window. The interviews were conducted in the infant library, adjacent to the meal hall, immediately after the children had eaten their lunch (see Appendix Four for an example of the group interview and children's drawings). I made handwritten fieldnotes during the interviews and wrote expanded electronic notes afterwards.

Whilst the children and I discussed their mealtime experiences, I asked them to draw a picture of the mealtime for an alien or family member who had not being to their school, so that they could understand what eating a meal at school was like for them. I explained to the children that there were no right or wrong ways to draw their picture, their drawing ability did not matter and that it was ok if their picture was the same or different from that of the person sitting next to them. I provided a collection of coloured pens and pencils and they were welcome to, and did, use their own drawing materials. An advantage of interviewing children together was that conflicts and differences in opinions and perspectives could be addressed during the interview (Davies, 1999). Unlike a focus group, my aim was not to create a general consensus but to gain an impression of their mealtime perspectives that was shared, negotiated and dynamic (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). I created open-ended interview questions that loosely guided the interviews, which generated a range of responses, where children challenged and extended on each other's ideas and provided different versions of events. I was mindful of maintaining a balance between the children so that they all had opportunities to answer the questions if they wanted to, and they often prompted each other. Interactional group interviews with children provided data that would not have been possible to produce in a one-to-one adult-child interview (Hedegaard et al., 2009). Arguably, the dynamic of these interviews allowed children to articulate how they relate to the mealtime among themselves, rather than the children giving answers that they thought I might want to hear. It was a balance between structuring the process and offering children the opportunities to express themselves together with others (Hedegaard et al., 2009). The group drawing interviews were challenging in that the children often talked over each other, rapidly changed direction in conversation and were easily distracted. Nevertheless, these interviews were an important step to ensure children's voices were heard, and they allowed children to introduced new ideas into the discussion.

3.5.7 Group interviews with mealtime assistants

When my position in the school mealtime had become more established, Mrs Roberts approached me and requested that I interview her and others so that they could contribute a mealtime assistant perspective to my understanding of school mealtimes (04/2015). I believe her request stemmed from some frustration among the mealtime assistants that I had not engaged with their perspective on children's socialisation or school mealtime experience. I conducted two group interviews with the mealtime assistants (06/2015; 02/2016) as a response to the participants' requests. I consulted Mr Wilkinson prior to the group interview to gain permission. Mr Wilkinson asked about my intended structure for the interview and whether I had any set questions. I explained that I wanted to keep the interview as open as possible for the mealtime assistants to talk about what was important to them, and I offered to show him my interview schedule to guide the discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of being a mealtime assistant. Mr Wilkinson turned down the option to see my interview schedule but asked that I maintain professionalism throughout, stating that he did not 'want them just talking about anything they like, making it personal or mudslinging', so my questions must be asked in a broad sense (fieldnote 22/06/15). I agreed to his conditions and proceeded.

The first group interview (06/2015) included four mealtime assistants: Mrs Brown, Mrs Rivers, Mrs Perkins and Mrs Matthews. Mrs Sloan could not attend and asked that I give her some written questions that she could answer in her own time. I wanted to value Mrs Sloan's perspective, so I followed her request, but she did not return her answers. It was not within the research aims to elicit a mealtime assistant's perspective, but I wanted to honour, value and build relationships with them and yield a collective rather than an individual perspective. I wanted to understand the pressures and demands of being a mealtime assistant in relation to children's mealtime socialisation (see Appendix Five for the group interview schedule). Based on previous field observations, I wanted to understand their perspective on how they perceive and respond to children's interactions. I prepared several questions to use as prompts if the conversation became difficult or digressed wildly, but the conversation flowed naturally around my undisclosed prompt questions, so I did not explicitly have to use them. All members of the group interacted, and their contributions were a good balance. They respectfully challenged, agreed, supported and extended each other's ideas to introduce new ideas to the discussion. Although group interviews have a contrived nature, on this occasion, it was an appropriate context in which the participants could share their views.

The group interview led to a significant turning point in my relationship with the mealtime assistants. Unwittingly, during the group interview I sympathised about the everyday challenges

that the mealtime assistants faced, due to the stressful mealtime atmosphere and multiple competing demands. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.73) argue that 'a problem that the ethnographer often faces in the course of fieldwork is deciding how much self-disclosure is appropriate and fruitful'. The group interview allowed a longer and more in-depth conversation away from the meal hall and provided the assistants with feedback on my understandings of children's mealtime socialisation. I realised from the way our relationships changed after the group interview that my research position had previously been somewhat unintentionally ambiguous to them. During the fieldwork, prior to the interview, I had assured the mealtime assistants that I was researching children's socialisation and was not evaluating their role, which in retrospect I realised was received with some scepticism. In revealing my opinions, based on observations, and reminding them of my research aims, it seemed that my research position became less threatening. This was an unexpected development in building trust and rapport with the mealtime assistants, enabling them to feel more relaxed in my presence. My researcher positionality changed in that I became more accepted by the mealtime assistants as a marginal member of the mealtime community.

The purpose of the second group interview was to re-connect with the mealtime assistants after a period of separation in my fieldwork and to remind them of my research aims (see Figure 3.5 for visual overview). The purpose of the meeting was to re-build relationships and rapport and to discuss the school mealtime context with them. The group interview (02/2016) included five female mealtime assistants and one male temporary mealtime assistant (his employment was discontinued in 04/2016). The interview included Mrs Brown, Mrs Rivers, Mrs Perkins, Mrs Matthews and Mr Starling; Mrs Sloan did not attend the meeting. As with the previous group interview, I offered many alternative venues and times, but it was decided that we would conduct the meeting in the empty staffroom after the mealtime whilst they ate their lunches. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.116) suggest that 'with many people, interviewing them on their own territory, and allowing them to organize the context the way they wish, is the best strategy'. My interest in interviewing the mealtime assistants may have prompted reactivity with the headteacher. In the week that followed the group interview, Mr Wilkinson, the headteacher, held the first meeting with the mealtime assistants in seventeen years to ask them how they thought improvements could be made to the mealtime practice. Carspecken and Apple (1992, p.532) argue that 'if subjects can talk about feelings and thoughts in an interview that they feel are not "allowed" expression within the normative realms observed by the observer, then the researcher has learned something important about the norms operating in the routine contexts'. Potentially, the process of articulating tacit conditions may have helped the mealtime assistants to distance themselves from the mealtime practice in which they were embedded to envisage and articulate features for improvements for the

very first time. The mealtime assistants' suggestions were valued and practical improvements, such as applying sound proofing to the ceiling and implementing a new arrangement that permitted infant children to leave the meal hall as and when they finished their meals to reduce the noise levels.

3.5.8 Visual data

I collected video data over 8 months to observe children's spatial configurations, social relationships and non-verbal communication (2013; 2015; see Figure 3.5 for visual overview). I felt it necessary to video-record the school mealtime because the mealtime amasses a lot of varying social interactions, noise and movement, and I wanted to capture elements of children's social relationships with others and their spatial relationships to the materiality of the meal hall over time. Davies (1999, p.118) warns that visual methods can be granted greater powers to convince, 'thus confidence in their validity is normally attained more readily than the validity of the written word'. However, the main purpose of video-recording was to capture the essence of the mealtime movement, cross checking and clarifying observations and fieldnotes. The recordings were never used as a fact-collecting medium that might impair my critical reflection and analysis. However, there are several limitations to video-recording: reactivity to the camera can be a problem, transcriptions of video-recordings are very time-consuming and difficult to analyse, and data is inevitably lost from the original encounter (Pink, 2007).

During the fieldwork (2013; 2015), the video-recording device proved to be a useful tool over the long term for reminding both the participants and myself that I was a researcher conducting research. It was not that I had forgotten this information, but after my initial immersion into the field, my desire to be inconspicuous meant that potentially I was naturally communicating the purposes of the research less often. I moved the video-recording device around the room at different points in the fieldwork, always placing it in an obvious position at the side of the room. I noted in my fieldnotes (05/2015) that I was having more frequent conversation with the children about my presence and purpose of the video-recording device. Children asked questions such as whether I was going to use the video to show the teachers how naughty they were, or whether I would show Ofsted (fieldnote, 08/06/2015). I explained that I would not show the teachers or any Ofsted inspectors and that only I would watch the video data when I wanted to remind myself of the mealtime. I welcomed these questions because they sparked many interesting ethically orientated conversations with children and provided opportunities to remind both them and myself of the current purposes of the research, as well as to obtain informed verbal consent. I explained that the

video data would be stored in password protected files on firewall protected servers at the University of Bath, in terms they could understand. Davies (1999, p.50) argues that 'since gatekeepers usually have authority over other individuals their consent does not always signal the agreement of these others, and researchers should seek consent from them directly to ensure that their participation is in fact free of undue coercion' (Davies, 1999, p.50). These conversations were a good reminder of individual ethical rights and my own ethical responsibilities to the children.

When re-entering the fieldwork after a break in data collection, I always renewed the consent forms and discussed the current purposes of my research with the headteacher. In 2016, I had some difficulty with the school secretary that delayed my use of video-recordings. I received verbal informed consent during the meeting with the headteacher but prior to the fieldwork start date I was unable to collect the signed consent forms from the school secretary. As a result, I refrained from video-recording the mealtimes at the beginning of my re-entry into the field and the results were significant. Firstly, I observed a noticeable difference in the mealtime assistants' approach to controlling the mealtime, where they tended to be more vocal and abrupt, and secondly, the headteacher ate his sandwich lunch and chatted with the children on several occasions, neither of which I had previously observed. I had the sense that the headteacher, Mr Wilkinson, was observing me to ascertain what I was doing during the mealtime and what my focus was. Not video-recording the mealtime was a significant development that seemed to put the participants more at ease and I gained an understanding of their previous reactivity to the video-recording device. The development seemed to illuminate more natural mealtime interactions and so I decided not to video-record the mealtime for the rest of the fieldwork.

I initially used an audio-recording device in the centre of the table to collect the overall musicality of developing conversations during mealtimes (2013; 2015; see Figure 3.5 for visual overview). However, the audio-recording device created great excitement that never seemed to wane, due to a slightly different mix of children each time, that always seemed to invigorate new interest. Moreover, the quality of the audio recordings was extremely poor due to the overall deafening noise of the busy meal hall. High ceilings, wooden floors and tables, and approximately 100 children talking at the same time made this a futile method for data collection. I considered a lavalier mic, also known as lapel mic, which is a tiny microphone that could be clipped to the shirt, jacket or tie of the participant. I rejected this data collection option because I did not intend to analyse children's detailed conversations to answer my research questions. After a short time, I abandoned this method due to the device being extremely disruptive for the children and to the flow of mealtime interactions.

I collected photographic data throughout the fieldwork for illustrative purposes. I took photographs of the materiality of the school mealtime, children's spatial relations to each other, and religious art work that hung on the meal hall walls. There are many difficulties involved with making claims about the representativeness of visual data, because a picture can tell many stories depending on how it is interpreted. I used photographic data alongside my fieldnotes to create photographic representations of social and spatial relationships. The sense the researcher makes of the visual artefact may not be the same as the sense made by the members of the community, based on their personal knowledge or cultural assumptions (Davies, 1999). Again, this means that an image can be read in multiple ways and 'this slipperiness also means that any analysis of images must be a highly conscious activity' (Thomson, 2008, p.10). I collected a variety of relevant data from multiple sources that encouraged convergent lines of enquiry, which enhanced the interrelationship between visual data, fieldnotes, participant observations and ethnographic interviews (Pink, 2007; Yin, 2018).

So far, I have discussed a range of data collection methods that have been deployed during my prolonged engagement with the field. I have explained how I have selected different data collection methods to fit the purposes of my ongoing inquiry. The data collection process was very intense, lasting over several years, which required me to collect different types of data that enhanced the validity of my evidence to inform my research questions. A limitation of multiple data collection methods is that it amasses vast amounts of data, requiring mastery of multiple data collection techniques, and that it requires excessive amounts of time to organise and collate the materials collected.

3.6 Methods of analysis

The analysis of the research data was not a distinct stage. The analysis was an iterative process that guided data collection and formulated research questions, which became more formalised once withdrawn from the fieldwork (Agar, 1980; Davies, 1999; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Analysing the data in this way is a characteristic of ethnographic methodology because 'too great an intellectual distance [from the field] carries the danger of producing theoretical structures that are irrelevant to the lived experiences of people on the ground and neither grounded in nor answerable to ethnographic data' (Davies, 1999, p.193). Data were collected, conceptually organised, and evaluated, which was used as a spring-board for further data collection and analysis, until saturation was achieved. This illustrates my iterative analytical process, whereby I needed to be mindful of what does and does not go into the melting pot.

I began with a specific set of questions and general area of enquiry about children's mealtime socialisation that allowed me both to refine my research questions and to gradually develop theoretical explanations as part of my ongoing interplay between theorising and collecting data (Davies, 1999). For example, when I first entered the field, I was struck by the discipline of the school mealtime and theoretically engaged with a Foucauldian analysis to explore regimes of governmentality. In doing so, I was concerned with how mealtime assistants and children were constituted through discourse and acted upon themselves and each other, drawing on various governmental technologies through which they conducted their own conduct (Foucault, 1991; Dean, 1999). However, as the fieldwork progressed, I observed episodes where this was not the case and children seemed to purposefully subvert the school mealtime order, which meant that a Foucauldian analysis could not theoretically explain some observations. Children's unstructured subversive interactions led me to analyse the data using liminal theory to explore the notion of an anti-structure (Turner, 1969). Inscribed in the liminal phase is the idea of a counterculture, which provides the social conditions for carnivalesque performances, and I began to theorise about how children's mealtime socialisation was diverse and multi-voiced (Bakhtin, 1984; Shepherd, 1991). I then conducted classroom observations and explored how teachers and mealtime assistants' power and control framed children's interactions and configured the social conditions of the school mealtime in which children's interactions were embedded (Bernstein, 1977; 2000). However, this angle of analysis took me away from valuing and exploring children's mealtime socialisation from the children's perspectives. It is due to the flexibility of ethnographic methods that I gradually realised that children were telling me more about their felt freedom and the difficulties that they experienced during the mealtime and that I began to encourage this topic and pay more attention to how and why children subverted the mealtime rules. In doing so, the social conditions became an important aspect of children's mealtime socialisation, which I analysed using Bakhtin's notion of chronotope to understand how children's carnivalesque acts can create a distance or otherness from the adult world (Bakhtin, 1981; Duncan and Tarulli, 2003). The reflexive approach to the fieldwork produced analytical concepts and theoretical conclusions that were developed, extended, revised, refined, challenged and rejected in making sense of the data and moving back and forth between the data collection and theoretical insight.

Thematic analysis was the method used to analyse my data because it was theoretically flexible and supported my inductive approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2013), whereby I systematically recorded a variety of data that related to my analytical framework. Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) argue that the researcher has an active role in constructing themes and identifying patterns, as

themes do not simply 'emerge', but are actively sought out. I began the process by systematically reading and reflecting on my data, 'reading the words actively, analytically and critically, starting to think about what the data means' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.205). This was an essential process that enabled me to move beyond the surface of my data and develop analytical sensibility. I identified codes in relation to my research questions, but in all honesty, coding did not yield much insight in itself because coding a large amount of data was an overwhelming task. However, it was a useful process to systematically re-familiarise myself with the data: repeatedly reading, re-reading, interpreting and re-interpreting to identify recurring patterns and meanings that linked incidents across my data and captured important aspects of children's mealtime socialisation.

For example, I captured different elements of children negotiating or interacting when sitting down to the lunch table, which led to me develop the central organising concepts (analytical themes) that meaningfully explained features of children's seating interactions and arrangements. This theme included lots of different (and often conflicting) ways children choose a seat at the lunch table but represented a patterned response, where meaningful links can be theoretically explained. Braun and Clarke (2013, p.225) argue that 'searching for patterns is not akin to an archaeologist digging to find hidden treasures buried with the data … it's more akin to the process of sculpture'. With this in mind, I actively made reflexive choices as I crafted my raw data and my analyses. I chose episodes, like snap shots that crystallise the focus of the analysis and concretely convey a wealth of information about children's mealtime socialisation (Geertz, 1973). It is difficult to recognise what is unclear and generating the analysis was an iterative and active process, whereby I continually engaged with what interested me about the data and how the data distinctly related to the research questions. This recursive process took me in different directions, allowing me to review my patterns and themes because it was essential not to force the data into my analysis. Ultimately, this refers to organising the data into coherent meaningful stories, which were guided by my research questions, raw data and analytical framework (see Appendix Six for a sample of my analysis).

3.7 Reliability, validity and generalisation

To ensure reliability and validity in my research an examination of trustworthiness is crucial. Reliability refers to the replicability of my research findings and the potential for other researchers to replicate them, which is difficult, if not impossible, in ethnographic research because another researcher, under the same circumstances, may make observations that lead to a different set of conclusions (Hammersley, 1998; Davies, 1990). However, I ensured reliability within my data by using a variety of data collection methods to cross-check information to improve the quality of my data and the accuracy of my ethnographic findings. Validity refers to the extent to which my

account of the phenomena accurately represents children's school mealtime socialisation (Hammersley, 1998). Triangulation occurred naturally and gradually when working intensively within my data and during conversations with my participants. I often returned to the same topics or questions under various circumstances, verifying information from conversations with reference to my observations, which prevented me from making inappropriate and unnecessary value judgements about what I observed or heard. Whilst I cannot be neutral, the trustworthiness of my research was improved by adopted a non-judgemental approach to children's interactions, which enabled me to embrace differences that invalidated previous theories or assumptions (Fetterman, 998). Trustworthiness was enhanced by my long-term involvement in the field and participating alongside children's mealtime socialisation, which minimised participants' reactivity to my presence and helped me to gain confidence with the children so that they were not performing subversive acts for my benefit. This further enabled me to check misunderstandings, miscommunications and misinterpretations from day to day, week to week and month to month, which enriches the validity of my ethnographic conclusions.

I have not set out to make general claims about children's mealtime socialisation that relate to larger collectives. The focus of my participant observations has been on irregularities among children and has been concerned with complication, with complexity, with differentiation and not with fictive matrices of uniformity (Hart, 1996). Children's mealtime socialisation means different things to different children and different things to the same children at different times. In formulating his critique of generalisation, Hart (1996, p.30) asserts that we must 'be bold, ambitious, and look beyond the blandness of the general to the sharpness of the particular'. The specificity of my ethnographic findings does not discredit or devalue the knowledge that I have acquired. My ethnographic analysis has explanatory value to develop, refine, strengthen and extend relevant theoretical debates rather than leading to predictive casual statements (Davies, 1999). I have provided a clear, detailed and in-depth description of children's mealtime socialisation so that the readers and users of this research can make a reasoned judgement regarding the extent to which my ethnographic findings are generalisable to another situation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

3.8 Research ethics

In this section I will discuss the ethical procedures that I undertook during the process of this research. I consulted the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) framework for research ethics, which includes information and guidelines on good research conduct and governance. I also consulted with the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011), which outlined key

principles of research ethics, namely informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, harm and issues that relate to researching children. Denscombe (2017, p.358) argues that research ethics 'rests on the assumption that researchers have no privileged position in society that justifies them pursuing their interests at the expense of those they are studying – no matter how valuable they hope the findings will be'. Prior to any data collection I sought approval from my departmental ethics committee so that my research proposal could be scrutinised to ensure that the design of my research included appropriate measures to protect my research participants (Denscombe, 2017). This process enabled me to consider potential risks and make effective precautions.

3.8.1 Informed consent

Prior to the beginning of the fieldwork, I met with Mr Hutchinson, the headteacher (01/2013), to explain the purpose of my research, which was a good opportunity to gauge and engage his interest (see Appendix Seven to view my subsequent letter to arrange a further conversation). We discussed all aspects of the research process: what the research would investigate, how it would be conducted, how it was funded and the anticipated outcomes of the investigation (Denscombe, 2017). I wanted to provide significant details, in broad terms, so that he understood the purpose of the research and his involvement and could assess the likely effects of the research on the school community, in order to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate (Davies, 1999). The second meeting was planned two weeks prior to the fieldwork to issue formal information sheets and consent forms so that he had time to think the proposal through and the opportunity to ask questions, review and share with the school community. Deception was not a feature of this research.

I wanted to give the headteacher and school community time to understand and reflect on their potential or actual involvement, ask questions and make any changes to the agreement. The information in these documents was written in non-technical language and piloted on lay persons to ensure that they were understandable before issue (see Appendix Eight to view the information sheet and consent form). It was not anticipated that the physical or psychological wellbeing of participants would be adversely affected by participating in the research. I returned in the days prior to the start-date of my fieldwork to answer any questions and collect the signed informed consent forms. I duplicated copies for their own future reference. The same procedures were followed when I re-entered the fieldwork after a break (see Figure 3.5 for a visual overview of my entry and re-entry into the fieldwork). At the beginning of 2015 a new headteacher, Mr Wilkinson, was employed at the school. At this point, we discussed the research purposes together, as I had done

with Mr Hutchinson and I obtained informed consent again. Significantly, a signed consent form does not oblige participants to continue if at a later stage they change their minds: 'the consent from is not a contract that binds a person to the task of helping with the research' (Denscombe, 2017, p.349). Consent is not static, and I assured Mr Wilkinson that he had the right to withdraw consent at any time. I always consulted with Mr Wilkinson prior to conducting any additional data collection, such as classroom observations and group interviews with the children and mealtime assistants.

Mr Wilkinson agreed to the children's drawing interviews and suggested that I use a classroom or the infant library to conduct the interviews. He told me that if I needed to audio or video-record the interviews then I needed to obtain parental consent. Audio recording and video-recording was not necessary, and I recorded verbal data with handwritten notes and took photographs of the children's pictures. I obtained verbal informed consent from the children and made it very clear that their participation was voluntary and that they could leave at any time without giving me a reason, and some children did. I gave examples that if they felt uncomfortable, tired, bored or just wanted to play in the sunshine that was perfectly ok; I would not be annoyed in any way and they could leave their pictures unfinished if they wished. Some children took their pictures home with them and some children did not.

When conducting the group interviews with the mealtime assistants I provided information sheets and informed consent forms to the mealtime assistants, asking for their permission for me to audio record the interviews. I duplicated copies for each participant for their own future reference (see Appendix Nine to view the information sheet and consent form). I tried hard to be sensitive and approachable for my participants so that they felt that no question or answer was too big or too small and that their participation was voluntary, assuring them that they could leave at any time or refuse to answer any questions without judgement.

3.8.2 Informed consent from children

Gatekeepers are those who grant access to the research field, but it was my moral and ethical responsibility to inform the children about the reasons why I was observing the mealtime, seek their verbal consent and communicate that they did not have to speak with me (Alderson and Morrow, 2011; Alderson, 2008). Children are vulnerable to exploitation in interactions with adults due to the imbalance of ability and the power differentials in the adult-child relationship, which can make it difficult for children to refuse to take part in the research. According to Hill (2005, p.61), the United

Nations Convention on the Right of the Child and 'children's legislation emphasize the importance of enabling children to express their opinions on important matters and decisions affecting their lives'. My essential ethical commitment was to honour the rights of the children and constantly be reflexive so that I could recognise what the children understood by checking their interpretation of what I had said to them.

The difference in social status between myself and the children cannot be avoided or ignored, and I did not try to pretend to be 'one of them' (Geertz 2000; Fine and Sandstrom, 1988; James, 2013). I presented myself to them as an adult researcher, explained why I was observing their mealtime and why I wanted to speak with them in order to seek informed consent. I used informal language and sat, crouched or stood (depending on the situation) at levels and distances that were comfortable for the child/children. I tried to get to know children so that they could feel comfortable enough to refuse to talk to me. On a daily basis, it was common practice for me to ask children if I could speak with them before launching into conversation, and children did refuse. If I asked about something that had just happened or something that was said they sometimes told me 'it's private', 'it doesn't matter', were silent or introduced their own topic of conversation. In particular, children from the Reception Year group tended to be uninterested in engaging with me and Year Six tended to have a heightened sensitivity regarding their privacy. I was always prepared to stop my inquiry prematurely and I did not pressurise anyone into consent. I maintained adult identity but softened it so that children could refuse or change their minds whilst we talked and I was sensitive to children's body language. I ended conversations early when/if the child/children agreed to chat but later looked uncomfortable, so that I did not trespass on their privacy and could maintain respect for their sense of control. In my mealtime assistant role, I did not participate in disciplining children or solving their disputes, but asked questions rather than providing answers to gain partial access to the children's experiences and perspectives (Fine and Sandstrom, 1988; Christensen, 2004; Christensen and James, 2008; Mayall, 2008). Informed consent was an ongoing process with opportunities for children to withdraw both temporarily or permanently.

3.8.3 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality are essentially concerned with personal privacy and the treatment of information gained in the course of research. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.212) argue that 'a frequent concern about ethnographic research is that it involves making public things that were said or done in private'. I was continually mindful not to pressure participants in any way to divulge sensitive information that they felt uncomfortable about revealing. Moreover, anything participants

did tell me was not shared with other members within their school community. However, anonymity is more difficult to ensure because 'direct quotations makes informants recognizable, at least to themselves, and often to others who know them well' (Davies, 1999, p.51). Moreover, when having group discussions with the children during the mealtime anonymity was difficult to promise because others might overhear our conversations. However, participants' unique information that I collected has been handled carefully and protected throughout the research process. I never divulged information about children to their teachers or mealtime assistants. Similar to Christensen (2004, p.171), I explained to children 'that I would write about what they said but would change their names or make general points without naming particular people'. However, if a concern arose regarding a child protection issue, I would have explained to the child that I was bound by law and informed the necessary officials.

Confidentiality ensures that participant identities and information, which makes it possible to link particular participants to the research setting, is not placed in the public domain or shared with others within the community. It was a high priority from the start to protect the information that participants did share or information that I became aware of through my fieldwork. In writing this thesis, I have used pseudonyms throughout to ensure participants' names and their personal information are not identifiable to potential readers. Pseudonyms were created and used to protect the school identity, the location and the participants. I created a code book at the onset, which I updated each year, encrypted and stored separately from the research data. Participants' names have never been used as a means of identification in the research data, which on occasion caused me problems in the field when I worked intensely with the data, as I occasionally momentarily forgot participants' actual names. Informed consent forms were also kept separately from the research data. The research data in electronic form was stored on password protected files on firewall protected servers at the University of Bath. All hard copies were securely stored in a lockable cabinet and access to these data are strictly limited to myself and my supervisory team.

3.8.4 Avoiding harm

Avoiding harm during the fieldwork and in writing this thesis has been a primary concern. During the fieldwork I was attentive about not being too intrusive, causing discomfort or stress to participants and I was always mindful about the possible consequences of asking questions. If I was ever in doubt about threatening participants' beliefs or about the sensitivity of a question, then I did not advance in that particular area until I was sure it was safe to proceed. For example, if a child or mealtime assistant told me one thing but did something different, I was tactful in challenging my

observations, waiting until I had more information or could relate my new questions to a similar incident so that my questions did not become too provocative or personal for them.

Practically, I prevented harm by reporting any immediate concerns or risks to one of the mealtime assistants. However, before I discussed a child's concern with others, I discussed it with the child first so that we could decide what was needed; when it was not an immediate risk, I asked advice from the mealtime assistant in hypothetical circumstances. These concerns tended to be issues regarding the children's wellbeing where children reported sickness or sadness for one reason or another or when children were having social difficulties or experiencing difficulties in eating their meals. Whenever possible, I always sought advice when dealing with difficult situations before, during or after the event, depending the circumstances. On occasions when a child directed extreme aggressive behaviour towards another child, I stepped out of my researcher role and into an adult role to intervene and keep children safe and free from harm (I was seldom required to do this). I updated my Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance at required intervals; these are enhanced criminal record checks on people working with children to ensure their safety; I also completed child protection training.

I saw the headteachers (both Mr Hutchinson and Mr Wilkinson) frequently on my field visits, either when entering the school or during the mealtime and we occasionally had brief conversations at the side of the meal hall. We had formal conversations at the beginning of each data collection phase (see Figure 3.5 for a visual overview of data collection). I was in constant contact with the mealtime assistants when reporting minor incidents and could have informed the headteacher of matters of a more serious nature (this situation did not arise). It was essential to ensure that participants did not suffer physical, personal or psychological harm as a consequence of their involvement in my research (Denscombe, 2017). In as much as possible, I interacted in an honest, transparent and caring manner and took the wellbeing of the people around me very seriously.

3.8.5 Ethical dilemmas

Moral dilemmas that arise during research are often dealt with by referring to certain ethical principles (BERA, 2018), but 'that does not mean that one can, as it were, read off from that code or those principles what exactly one should do on any one occasion' (Pring, 2001, p.409). Decisions on ethical matters are rarely easy and on occasion I made informed decisions on a case-by-case basis. For example, neutral topics of conversation with participants were critical in breaking down barriers, but sometimes they off-loaded pent up feelings or discussed difficult life situations.

Information from these conversations were never recorded or used as data. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.229) argue that 'by its very nature, ethnography forces one into relationships with the people being studied, and one may do things because of those relationships, over and above any connection they have with the research'. I planned the best I could to address ethical concerns prior to data collection, but some ethical matters arose because of my close connection with research participants, which required me to temporarily suspend my researcher role and balance my moral responsibilities with my research interests. As Pring (2001) notes, each research situation generates its own ethical questions and issues that demand their own, unique answers.

An ethical dilemma arose when an adult participant made a disclosure. When confronted with a difficult ethical situation, I consulted with my supervisory team and university officials because I came to know this information by being a representative of the university and working in a research capacity. I then sought advice from outside of the university from external services. I sensitively and carefully responded to another human outside of the obligations of my researcher role and capacity, not because it was an ethical 'principle' or 'requirement' but because I felt it was my moral ethical responsibility. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.228) argue that reflexivity carries important ethical messages and ethnographers must make 'the best judgements they can in the circumstances [because] they will have to live with the consequences of their actions; and, inevitably, so too will others'. I gave relevant information to the people involved so that they could make informed choices. It is salutary to remember that the ethnographer becomes part of the participants' social world, which requires reflexive responsibility to the well-being of others (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

3.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have explained the methodology of my ethnographic research. Ethnography is concerned with detailed first-hand experience that yields knowledge about the particular rather than the general (Pole and Morrison, 2003). The strength of ethnography is in its ability to burrow deeply into a restricted space and develop concepts grounded in the data that are capable of enhancing understandings about particular aspects of children's school mealtime socialisation; it yields a depth of knowledge about a given subject which surpasses that given by other approaches (Pole and Morrison, 2003). I have discussed how children construct their own meanings from their situated mealtime socialisation. I have slowly gained an interpretive understanding of children's school mealtime socialisation through observing what children do and listening to what they say. On the one hand, I immersed myself in feeling from the inside to understand what this particular social situation is like; I allowed myself to be absorbed into their particular way of looking at and

interpreting the world. On the other hand, I did not completely allow myself to cross over so that I was able to retain the perspective of the observer and maintain a form of critique. This required a double vision, but 'no matter how close the researcher might come to the quest for authenticity, he or she does not fully belong to that world' (Pearson, 1993, p.xi). Reflexivity is an inherent part of the ethnographic process that requires a full and uncompromising acknowledgement of the relationship between the researcher and the researched to understand how the process of conducting research affects the product of research.

I explained my ethnographic research design to investigate children's school mealtime practices. I argued that ethnography was the most suitable research design because it allowed close contact with the children, enabling an in-depth investigation into their mealtime socialisation, whilst exploring multiple sources of evidence in this naturalistic setting. Thus, different lines of inquiry could be converged to provide a complex and embedded understanding of children's school mealtime socialisation. I discussed the particularities of the research school and identified how participants were selected during naturally occurring events, which shaped and funnelled my analytical framework. Gaining access to the field is not just a practical hurdle to overcome, it is an on-going process of negotiation. I examined the importance of managing field relationships sensitively and reflexively. Good field relationships were built and maintained on the premise of reciprocity and willingness to sample the superficial insignificance of everyday life. Neutral conversations were fundamental in providing mutual ease, access, information and support for the research agenda. I argued that sometimes it was only through my mistakes that I was able to realise the disparity between what I understood and practice. I discussed how in my role as a researcher I sought 'not merely to be in a position to record what is seen, heard and experienced but also to interpret and to analyse' (Pole and Morrison, 2003, p.155). Research that has been in the making for many years depends on many different methods for data collection. I described how I have selected different data collection methods to fit the purposes of my ongoing inquiry. I discussed the iterative process of my methods of analysis that guided data collection, the formulation of research questions and how they became progressively more focused through refining the analyses. It is difficult to recognise what is unclear and generating the analysis was a recursive process that took me in many different directions.

The final section explored how ethical principles have been handled during the process of this research. I examined key principles of research ethics, namely informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, harm and issues that relate to researching children. I discussed how children are vulnerable to exploitation in interactions with adults due to the imbalance of ability and the power

differentials in the adult-child relationship. I explained how I gained informed consent from the children, frequently discussed the reasons why I was observing the mealtime and communicated that they were under no obligation to speak with me.

Chapter Four:

At Sixes and Sevens: Analysis of Children's Spatial Relations in the School Mealtime

4.1 Introduction

A phenomenon that has consistently caught my attention over the five-year span of fieldwork is the significance, pressure and attention that children place on their seating arrangements at the school lunch table and how sitting next to someone (or not) seems to represent *doing friendship*, with its associated moral pressures. I have seen seating positions excite, disappoint and momentarily disturb children on a daily basis. Consequently, seating positions seem to be very important to children and can be a divisive way to include some children at the expense of others. Underlying these interests, I seek to understand children's appropriation and transformation of the material world, to capture the social significance of the relationship between children and the materiality of their school mealtime. In other words, the material artefact (in this case a seat at the table) is 'not manipulated in advance but constructed during the interaction itself and thus open to change' (Glăveanu, 2016, p.165). Children are seemingly interested in the possession of a particular chair, but as the ethnographic observations continued, it became clear to me that their focus was on sitting next to, or at the same table as, a particular person. It is in the use of the material artefact (chair) that meanings and children's interests (seating positions) are created by sitting next to, opposite or at the same table as a friend, through which children come to understand the intricacies of their social worlds. During children's mealtime socialisation, negotiations (or sometimes non-negotiations) of seating positions provide embodied experiences that throw into question trust, reciprocity, acceptance, rejection and belonging.

It is important to understand the intricacies of children's socialisation during the mealtime in terms of how children negotiate their mealtime relationships, which are shared between groups of children, individual children and unwanted mealtime peers (according to children's own views). This will provide a basis for a detailed understanding of how children socialise by constantly negotiating space, positioning themselves physically, socially and morally in relation to others, without resorting to simplistic behavioural determinism. In exploring this, I focus on children's socially mediated interactions, where I observed microcosms swirl which elicited contradictory, fragile and continuously changing plans. Children's peer produced worlds are largely outside of adult control (although mealtime assistants do try and can influence children's interactions) and

research is needed to understand how children develop interactional social skills by collaborating and competing with each other as part of their mealtime socialisation. For children, seating arrangements are very important but to adults (or the naïve researcher) who have a normative attitude to children's mealtime behaviour and activities they may seem mundane, taken-for-granted aspects of the school mealtime and not noteworthy of scholarly attention. In this chapter, I address the socio-spatially mediated aspects of the overall research concerning children's socialisation by trying to answer the following question: How do children interact and negotiate social and material relations?

In order to analyse empirically the socio-spatially mediated formations of children's place in the worlds(s) as part of their socialisation during the mealtime, there are three-fold levels of ethnographic observations. Firstly, I will analyse the school mealtime structure to illustrate how school mealtimes are ordered rule-bound practices with expectations that become ritualised by its participants. The mealtime structure is significant because children's interactions are embedded, constrained and enabled by the rules of the school mealtime. Secondly, I will analyse how children's queue position influences how a group of children configure themselves around a dinner table. This will highlight that seating positions are important and purposeful for some children to manifest their place within table dynamics. Children who have socio-spatial awareness can tune into the subtleties of the mealtime organisation and gain certain advantages over their peers. Thirdly, I will analyse the socio-spatial connections between children to understand how seating arrangements are often not a matter of chance. I illustrate how children circumvent the material mealtime to enable dialogic interaction beyond the boundaries of a table, create their own frames of reference (or not) with friends and embrace the multiplicity of children's voices in the school mealtime.

4.2 The structuring of school mealtimes

I will explore the spatially mediated structure of children's mealtime socialisation at St Peter's Catholic Primary School to illustrate how it organises and constrains children's social interaction. School mealtimes have rules and expectations that are communicated in varying degrees of explicit and lore understandings. As children participate in shared, patterned, repetitive and cooperative mealtime practices they come to understand values and norms, which are constituted in ritualised moments in the school day (Ochs and Shohet, 2006; Alcock, 2007; Marshall, 2005; Rogoff, 1990). The school mealtime structure is inseparable from children's socialisation because neither are context-free nor de-contextualised skills (Rogoff, 1990). In the dynamic process of interdependence, children's interactions are interwoven with the mealtime context and form the

fabric of meaning in which social interactions are embedded. The importance of taking children's social milieus into account is that the mealtime practice and children's socialisation are mutually constituted (Rogoff, 1990; Lave and Wenger, 1990; Hedegaard, 2012; Ochs and Shohet, 2006).

School meals in the United Kingdom are typically eaten in purpose built dining halls or multi-purpose halls that have many other functions for school life, such as assemblies, physical exercise, drama or music performances (Pike, 2010; Gustafsson, 2002). At St Peter's Catholic Primary School, the meal hall is relatively small, and the tables are set up and dismantled before and after lunch (as seen in the photograph below).

Figure 4.2.1: Photograph of the physical mealtime organisation, taken by Samantha Stone, 14/07/2016.

Each year group is assigned four tables, with eight seats at each table, and the children can sit in any seat at those tables. However, it is implicitly communicated that children will sit on chairs at the table, eat with cutlery, eat their food in a particular order and make polite conversation with other table members within an allotted time (Douglas and Nicod, 1974; Fiese et al., 2006). Mealtime assistants support children by providing guided participation, for example, in how to hold and use their knives and forks, whereby 'children can make connections between what they already know and what they must learn to handle in a new situation' (Rogoff, 1990, p.66).

The children at St Peter's Catholic Primary School are organised into two sittings: infant children eat in the first sitting and junior children eat in the second sitting. Typically, at the end of morning lessons, children will sing a mealtime prayer in their classrooms and then queue up and go directly to the dinner hall or to the playground. The infant children are in the first sitting and enter the meal hall after their mealtime prayer, whereas junior children go to the playground and later queue in the playground for the second sitting. The term 'ritual' refers not to grand ceremonies but rather to the small, seemingly invisible, everyday interactions of rituals that organise daily school life (Marshall, 2005). The children's daily mealtime ritual is to enter the meal hall, in an orderly queue, one class at a time, from the youngest to the oldest year groups. The spatial organisation reveals the school community's norms and expectations in which children's socialisation takes place.

Valentine (2000) argues that two worlds make up the school system. The first is the institution, which is adult controlled and consists of formal, official structures, timetables and spatial segregation by age, and the other is the informal world of children's social networks and peer cultures (Valentine, 2000). Valentine states that the school mealtime 'represents one time/space where the institutional organisation, which is evident in the way food is organised and distributed and pupils are controlled on the school site outside of lessons, is the most strongly contrasted with the informal world of children's peer group culture and the ways they organise themselves around eating and relaxing' (2000, p.259). Significantly, children are embedded in the processes and practices of the official organisational structure, which allows a large number of children to be fed under limited time and space pressures. In parallel, the mealtime is constructed as a more informal space that gives children more autonomy and flexibility to create for themselves social interactions more than at other times during the school day. Within the boundaries of mealtime structure children have more freedom to structure their own activities.

On entering the meal hall children who have brought a sandwich lunch from home collect their lunch boxes from a trolley at the back of the hall and sit straight down to a table that is assigned to their year group. This resonates with the findings of Valentine's (2000, p.260) research in terms of creating a paradox whereby the 'school controls children's movements and behaviour by emphasising their freedoms and allowing them to articulate their individuality', in this case, by choosing where they will sit at the assigned tables and, to a degree, what meal they will eat. The children eating hot dinners queue around the periphery of the room and wait to be served their meal at a food servery counter that connects to the kitchen. According to Cohen (2000, p.85), 'education is the inculcation of standardized and stereotyped knowledge, skills and values, and attributes by means of standardized and stereotyped procedures'. In other words, the mealtime shapes children's

minds by embodying a social system that maintains order and organises the children's experience, whereby they adopt ways of living in the here and now and in the future. The picture below illustrates children with packed lunches beginning their meal and children in the hot dinner queue interacting in smaller groups whilst waiting to be served.

Figure 4.2.2: Photograph of children entering the mealtime structure, taken by Samantha Stone, 07/02/2013.

I took this photograph a week after I started working as a mealtime assistant. In the top left corner is the serving counter. Children queue in an orderly way to receive food from the cooks (the queue is part of the mealtime structure), and children with sandwich lunches sit down to the table. Children collecting a hot meal later join the children with sandwich lunches at the tables. Constraining children's activity in the mealtime 'involves the activity of placing boundaries upon something to limit how it is conceived and/or used' (Lawrence and Valsiner, 2003, p.727). Lawrence and Valsiner argue that constraining action is not a discrete process; it requires continual action over time, which may take on different forms. For example, an informal mealtime rule stipulates that children should not save seats for others and once children are seated they are not allowed to change their seats. Children do discreetly bend this rule and the mealtime assistants do not tend to challenge children as long as it does not cause a disruption. Daniel and Gustafsson's (2010, p.270) research found that 'considerable logistics were behind the organisation of processing the pupils through the

dining hall and ensuring they get fed'. Thus, certain rules and boundaries are created and give rise to acceptable or unacceptable possibilities. Smile (2013, p.50) argues that 'the values on display in the school cafeteria during lunch are interconnected with the realms well beyond the lunch tray'. Smile asserts that the way in which the mealtime is ordered reflects fundamental beliefs and assumptions about education and stems from how classrooms operate and order children's lives.

The governing purposes of the mealtime (feeding large amounts of children in an allotted timeframe) inform the physical organisation (staggering of year groups and assigned year group tables) that imposes constraints on children's behaviour and movement (eight chairs to a table, four tables per year group). Children manage and negotiate the mealtime order to find a seat and sit down as smoothly and as swiftly as possible to avoid unwanted attention from other children or to risk being assigned a seat at a table by the mealtime assistants. The physical constraints cannot be ignored as they generate apposing positions as children interact, locating themselves amongst others. Children are informed by the rules of the school mealtime and respond, which Goffman refers to as 'guided doing', arguing that 'all social frameworks involve rules, but differently' (Goffman, 1975, p.24). There is an inherent tension in children's socialisation as they relate to different aspects of the adult controlled mealtime structure and the multiplicity of meaning making in their peer produced worlds. Children have to decide 'what is going on?' in relation to their particular interests, which has the potential at times to be misguided or inappropriate depending on their differing frames of reference. Finding a suitable seating position (which differs between children) often leads to flurry of frantic activity in the moments between children collecting their lunch and sitting down at the lunch table. Once all the children are seated, the meal hall brims with movement and noise as children chat over tables and between tables, often communicating with their whole bodies.

This section has focused on the structuring of school mealtimes to illustrate how children are embedded in continual action over time, which organises children's socialisation. Standardised procedures organise where children will sit according to age (assigned tables for each year group, from youngest to oldest), stipulating rules and conventions about mealtime sensibilities and comportment. Children acquire knowledge and orientations that enable them to participate effectively and appropriately in social life and the mealtime community. However, Ochs and Shohet (2006, p.36) argue that 'rather than a bundle of mealtime traits, customs, symbols, and rules that experts transmit, and children and other novices come to master, cultural knowledge and practices associated with mealtimes are recreated and altered through socially and experientially asymmetrical relationships'. Inherent in children's interactions is an agentic capacity to negotiate,

contest, reproduce and transform mealtime rituals in their handling of everyday experiences within their peer produced worlds. The following sections will analyse how these intricacies are worked out when children divide and unite socially and spatially in the school mealtime arena.

4.3 Children's queue position in relation to seating positions

I will explore children's position in the dinner queue to understand the ways in which children configure themselves around a dinner table. Significantly, Daniel and Gustafsson's (2010, p.271) school mealtime research suggests that 'children were told to fill up the seats at the tables by lunchtime supervisors and would be unable to sit with friends unless they had made sure they were together in the queue'. In the first few months of fieldwork (02/2013) I became aware that the dinner queue order was significant to children when they were in close relationships with friends that they wished to sit with and with whom they had their own interests within shared endeavours. Pushing and shoving can occasionally ensue as children communicate with their bodies, embroiled in orchestrating their own plans for position in relation to others (Valentine, 2000). Despite the relative order of the queue, the seating options available are dependent on where their peers, ahead in the queue, choose to sit. Securing a preferred seat at a table (based on their particular interests) can involve an initial flurry of excitement, disappointment, affection, connection and rejection, which can often be fleeting, concentrated, contrived and emergent. Tensions between multiple pressures can manifest themselves as changing plans, collaborations and negotiations between each other and the materiality of the mealtime. The following episode will analyse an interaction between nine boys from the Reception year group coordinating their social and physical relationships.

> **Episode 4.3.1:** The episode begins when the reception class enter the meal hall. They are the first year group of children to collect their lunches and sit down to the table. I am stood at the side of the room taking notes.
>
> Two boys (Ben and Terry) sit down to the table with their lunchboxes and are shortly followed by another two boys (Alfie and Mark) with their sandwich lunches. The last boy in the foursome to arrive (Mark) hesitates and sits down whilst looking towards his friends in the hot dinner queue. He then stands up again, turning to look back and forth between his friend in the queue and the lunch table.
>
> Whilst he is stood up, he turns to the girls behind him (Sally) saying 'you can't sit there'. Sally is waiting by the table, looking back towards her friend, Gemma, who is in

the dinner queue collecting her lunch. When Gemma arrives, they walk together to a different table showing no interest in sitting at the table Mark is sitting at.

Mark pulls out the next chair and looks back and forth between the two chairs. Four more girls collect their meals and pass to a different table and Mark moves to the third chair, at the opposite end of the table to the three seated boys (Ben, Terry and Alfie), who are eating their sandwich lunches. Three boys arrive at the table (Harry, Oliver and William) from the dinner queue and with no hesitation sit down with their hot meals, leaving two boys queuing together from their friendship group and only one seat remaining at the table. The seated boys eat their lunches, looking towards the dinner queue, chanting at low level the names of the boy in the queue (Paul or Robert) that they wish to sit with, whilst pointing to the empty seat and occasionally shaking their fists in the air. The eighth boy (Robert) collects his main course and dessert and makes a dash for the seat, while at the same time, the ninth boy (Paul) leaves the food servery without some of his main course to collect his dessert. The dessert cook sends him back to collect the rest of his main course, by which time Robert has sat down. Paul walks past the table looking at the seated boys with a sad expression on his face. All the seated boys interact with the people opposite and next to them whilst they eat their lunch.

(9 male children from the Reception class, non-participant observation, 28/02/2013)

This episode illustrates the moment to moment complexities involved in children's position in the queue order for their inclusion in or exclusion from a particular table and friendship group. On this particular day, it revealed Mark exploring the order of the queue in relation to counting and moving between chairs to make sure he had the best available options for himself by surrounding himself with more than one empty chair on every side before sitting down to eat. I have interpreted his actions as a way of organising his mealtime experience, which is jointly constructed out of multiple choices (Goffman, 1975). Participant observations on the previous day observed Alfie pointing at and counting the remaining chairs around the table and pointing at and counting the people in the queue (Fieldnote, 27/02/2013). According to Goffman (1975, p.37), these 'discernments in turn seem linked to the fact that each kind of event is but one element in a whole idiom of events, each idiom being part of a distinctive framework'. Counting seats suggests that children have a good idea about which friends will be able to secure a seat at the table and where peers may sit in relation to themselves. In other words, they are constructing 'a definition of the shared social situation by organising their experiences and by reading the other interactants in the situation' (Persson, 2015,

p.500). However, sometimes children's interpretations of what is happening can be misconstrued, as discussed in the following (see also Sections 4.4; 5.7; 6.6).

The episode exposes a shared endeavour and group collaboration to ensure the table is guarded from non-desirable mealtime peers sitting down at the table in seats the group would rather other peers sit in, as seen when Mark re-directs Sally, whilst moving between chairs. The observation suggests that Sally and Gemma did not intend to sit down with Mark and were in fact enacting their own intentions by waiting for each other so that they could find a seat and sit down at the same time. Sally and Mark had different definitions of the situation and understandings about what was going on in that moment. This accords with Goffman (1975, p.8), who argues that 'when participant roles in an activity are differentiated – a common circumstance – the view that one person has of what is going on is likely to be quite different from that of another'. Nevertheless, Mark classified the table as belonging to him and his friends, creating a symbolic boundary when influencing Sally to choose a different table and enforcing control over access to the seats at his table (Sack, 1986; Valentine, 1999). These interactions are fast-paced and children are reacting and responding to the continuously changing landscape of the mealtime around them. Space and time are fundamental components of children's mealtime experiences, which are transformed and affect children's relationships with each other (Sack, 1986). Both co-operation and competition can be seen in the children's interactions when enacting their own agendas of gaining seats at a specific table.

When the table is almost full and only one seat remains, the seated boys begin to chant the name of the boy that they would like to sit with. Some seated boys called out Paul's name and other seated boys call out Robert's name. Paul and Robert are now in direct competition to get to the seat first, encouraged and intensified by the seated children. Goffman (1975, p.46) argues that 'when response is made in terms of the innermost engrossable realm of an activity, time plays an important role, since dramatically relevant events unfold over time and involve suspense, namely, a concerned awaiting of the outcome'. Suspense builds as Paul and Robert hear their names called, looking back and forth to the seated children, anxiously waiting to be served. Multiple pressures and demands are apparent when Robert manages to collect all his food items and leave the queue; at the same time, Paul becomes distracted and leaves the food servery before he has collected all of his main meal and has to return to collect what he has missed, before he can collect a dessert. Goffman (1975, p.9) asserts that 'it is obvious that in most "situations" many different things are happening simultaneously – things that are likely to have begun at different moments and may terminate dyssynchronously'. Ultimately, once all the seats are filled Paul has no other option but to sit at a different table from his friends. Children who have greater awareness and understanding of

temporal, spatial and social knowledge may be more capable of maintaining relationships and securing the seats of their choice. Nevertheless, even with that knowledge, children need to have a capacity for improvisation to handle the emergent interactions.

Paul's facial expression and gaze communicates his disappointment as he walks past the table. What is significant about this is that children's understandings emerge through collective interactions with others at the interpersonal level and children's higher mental function are a product of their interactions, collaborations and observations with more skilled others (Vygotsky, 1978; Chaiklin, 2003). My interpretation is that Paul's current capabilities coupled with his desires and the demands of the situation have been brought into conflict. From concrete, materially situated practices of navigating social relationships and seating positions his development may undergo changes to ensure that on subsequent days he will be more successful. However, in some cases children may even find themselves 'in a less favourable position over and over again, they may not obtain the status of ratified participants, they may be treated as peripheral, or they may not get the chance to carry through their own agenda' (Karrebæk, 2011, p.2929).

Almost four years after this episode, I asked Mark who he sits with and if there was anyone else he would prefer to sit with. This question was informed by my observations and understanding of their friendship group dynamics over time. Mark explained 'I always sit with William and Alfie, but I would really like to sit with Paul, but he never gets to the table in time' (fieldnote, 18/12/2016). Children's ability to understand and navigate the temporal and spatial knowledge of the mealtime further impacts on their social relations. Potentially, children may feel a sense of responsibility and guilt if they are unable to save a seat for a friend who cannot compete with stronger peers or the fast-paced social dynamics. Children's ongoing emergent and recursive relationships play out as they negotiate who they are in relation to others. Moreover, socialisation during the school mealtime may provide unwanted conditions where children may be socialised into marginalisation or other unfavourable and problematic positions (Karrebæk, 2011; Sections 5.7; 6.6).

This section has analysed how children's position in the dinner queue can influence their inclusion in or exclusion from eating a meal with a group of friends sitting at a particular table. The episode highlighted a tension between multiple pressures that can manifest fast paced, changing plans where competition and collaboration unfold. According to Karrebæk (2011, p.2913), 'it is, thus, not only a question of whether a child uses more or less adequate strategies, but of what goal the child aims for, how the child makes this goal accessible to others, and how it is received by the child's interlocutors; it is, thus, a social negotiation'. A group of children may establish some kind of

agreement but a social contract can never be assumed, and so emergent interactions and negotiation are required. As Corsaro (1985) argues, children are aware of the fragility of peer interaction and the difficulties involved in gaining access. Children can exploit knowledge of the inherent constraints of the mealtime organisation regarding the number of seats around a table or position in the queue order. Yet 'disagreement and conflict arise as participants display different and maybe even incompatible expectations or understandings vis-à-vis the activities in which they participate' (Karrebæk, 2011, p.2913). This episode has illustrated the co-construction and competition of children's socialisation, where social awareness and sensitivity are required to navigate the rapidly unfolding activity.

4.4 Social and spatial connections between sitting positions

This section will focus on the social relationships between children during the mealtime to illustrate how children appropriate and negotiate the rules to stay connected with friends. During the first four months of fieldwork (04/2013) I was a parent of a child at this school and had some understanding of friendship pairs in their particular year group. I began to notice that when friendship pairs were not able to sit together, they sat in the exact same seats at different tables or sat in seats exactly opposite each other at separate tables. As the fieldwork progressed, I became familiar with friendship pairs in other year groups and noticed other couples doing similar. This led me to theorise about how and why children may purposefully configure the physical space of the mealtime, which seemed to allow for different kinds of affordances and interactions. The following episode will analyse a situation where it was not possible for two friends to remain sitting together and opposite seats on different tables were chosen. This is episode is important because it reveals children's agentic capacity to maintain dialogic connection in an otherwise adult controlled day.

> **Episode 4.4.1:** I was stood at the side of the room taking notes when I noticed an altercation between Mrs Perkins, a mealtime assistant, and two boys, Mason and Liam, from Year One. Mason and Liam frequently sit together and had been very giggly, playing whilst eating their lunch.
>
> Mason and Liam are sitting next to each other and kicking each other under the table whilst giggling. Mrs Perkins walked over to the boys and asked them to move onto separate tables, ushering them to the other end of the hall. As Mason moved he asked 'why have you moved me? I don't know why you have moved me?' Mrs Perkins replied as she was walking away 'because you were messing about instead of eating'. The boys took seats at their new tables and sat down.

The diagram below illustrates the seats where the boys were sitting and where they moved to in the meal hall.
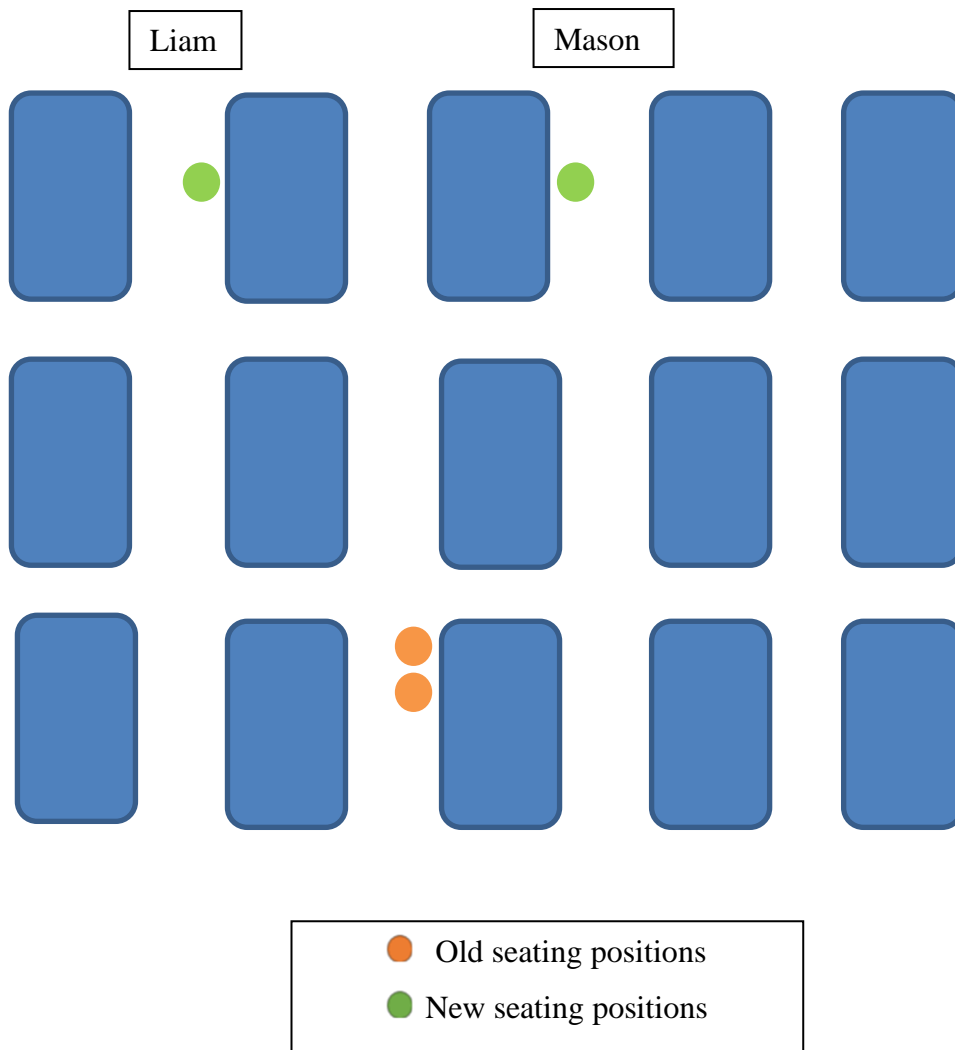
Figure 4.4.1: Diagram of seating overview of the mealtime, including seating positions of Liam and Mason

There were a few other children sitting at both tables but once the boys had sat down they looked for each other across the tables and beamed a big warm smile and waved to one another when they saw each other. They both ate their lunch quietly, often looking to each other, smiling and occasionally waving. Liam finished his lunch before Mason

and took his lunch box to the trolley and returned to his seat and waited until Mason had finished his lunch. Both boys left the hall chatting together.

(Non-participant observation, two male participants from Year One, 04/03/2013)

This episode illustrates that children can be decisive in choosing seats that allow them to maintain connection, even when sitting at different tables, potentially providing support and reassurance to each other. By facing each other, Mason and Liam set up a frame that affords dialogic interaction, where they can continue to communicate through gaze, gesture and bodily orientation. When children are sitting in a seat opposite to a particular friend at a different table they can continue to interact and maintain social connection. This suggests that social relationships are configured and reconfigured within the boundaries of mealtime practice. Many friendship pairs match their eating partners' pace and will often leave the hall together having mirrored each other's seating position. Daniel and Gustafsson (2010) argue that several strategies are sought to resist the imposition of adult control, and adjusting the speed of eating is one small element. Moreover, sitting in the same or an opposite seat at another table may further suggest a symbolic connection between two children, enacted through the materiality of the meal hall by mirroring each other's seating positions. I noted that when friendship pairs did not sit together, they occasionally talked between tables and periodically looked for each other; they might both get up and have a brief conversation between the tables or whisper in each other's ears at the table before returning to their seats. Children are able to maintain and negotiate different social relationships, accessing more than one dialogic formation at the same time.

Furthermore, episode 4.4.1 demonstrates how children come to realise the expectations for mealtime decorum. Mason and Liam perhaps thought that they could not be seen kicking each other under the table (and Mrs Perkins did not suggest she had seen this activity) yet Mason potentially regarded it as a friendly interaction that both seemed to be enjoying, represented by them both giggling during the interaction, so could not understand why Mrs Perkins was separating them. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), internalisation is not a straightforward process; individuals are transformed through their focus of attention, continuously renewing sets of relationships to increase participation from the peripheral (novice) to become more competent in the main processes of their communities. Mrs Perkins implicitly communicated a shared understanding of the mealtime, namely that if the children are 'messing about instead of eating', a punishment of being separated, or similar, may follow. Ochs and Shohet (2006) support this reasoning in that 'mealtimes facilitate the social construction of knowledge and moral perspectives through communicative practices that characterize these occasions'. Mrs Perkins's interruption and moral guidance for the

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boys' mealtime interactions may facilitate a change in their knowledge and action for future experiences and if they co-operate and respond to the pressures of conformity, by learning how to behave (or be silent) over time, their legitimate participation may increase so that they achieve full membership and increase their sense of belonging.

Nevertheless, the two boys adhered to their punishment whilst deploying their own knowledge of the mealtime, whereby their new physical configuration of seating positions maintained the dialogic formation of their interaction. This is represented by their non-verbal communication during eating, waiting for each other to finish their meals, and thereby leaving the hall together. Children have some degree of control over the interactive situation, communicating with friends, whilst at the same time challenging the authority of the mealtime assistants in order to pursue their own interests. These findings cohere with the findings of Daniel and Gustafsson's (2010, p.271) school mealtime research in that 'being able to be with one's friends was an important feature of this time of day for children but the seating arrangements did not always satisfy this wish'. Daniel and Gustafsson (2010) call for an acknowledgement of the children's agenda when envisaging how school mealtime spaces are shaped.

With this in mind, children are required to divide spatially and socially into smaller groups when sitting down to eat their meals, but what remains unclear is how these interactions are worked out and what is important to different children in their configuration of dialogic interaction. I conducted group interviews with children to understand their connection to each other and the materiality of the meal hall. I began to understand that for some children different seats and tables have different values in relation to where their friends sit and that children have multiple, similar and diverse ways of taking a seat, as the girls explain in the following episode. However, the intention of this thesis is not to categorise the range of strategies that children deploy, nor to suggest that children deploy only one strategy per mealtime or that the participant's retrospective account is the same as the event in which they secured a seat. This is consistent with Goffman (1975, p.8), when he argues that 'players will come up with five or ten rules, but there are no grounds for thinking that a thousand additional assumptions might not be listed by others'. The aim of this episode is to bring to the fore the multiple, overlapping and emerging pressures that children create, negotiate and transform when choosing a seat at the table.

> **Episode 4.4.2:** This episode is an extract from a group conversation with six female participants from Year Four. The children are drawing pictures of their mealtime immediately after they have finished their lunch, whilst discussing their experiences of the school mealtime.

SS:	So, are there any seats at the table that you usually sit in or do you just sit anywhere you can find a seat?
Poppy:	With friends, I like to sit together with friends and do stuff.
Pippa:	It's cold by the door. I sit on this one [pointing to her drawing]. It's calm at the sides.
Danny:	Yeah it's calm at the sides but cold by the door. I like sitting here [pointing to her drawing]. I don't know why I always sit on this table but I either sit in this chair or that chair
Darla:	The best seat is opposite my best friend and then after that the second best seat is next to my friend. If I can't, I sit somewhere else near my friends, either next to or opposite or somewhere, anywhere on the table.
Kim:	I want to sit next to you and you and you and you.
Danny:	Eve promised to sit with me and then she didn't.
Pippa:	Yeah, once Flo did that to me and then blamed me.
Kim:	I get my food and then I wait for them to get their food and then we sit down together.
Jenny:	I like it when I can sit with my best friends but sometimes there might not be a seat for me.
SS:	Do you all queue up together then?
Kim:	No, in the playground everybody pushing in but when we go inside we're not allowed to do that because the dinner ladies watch us. When I am in the queue inside [the dining hall] I watch to see where my friends are going and think about what food I will ask the dinner lady [cook] for when it's my turn and then get a seat.
Darla:	If I get to the table first I can choose and pick friends to sit with.
SS:	What do you mean?
Darla:	I look at em weirdly and they sit somewhere else but then we'll be friends when we go to the playground.

(Six female participants, Year Four, group interview 3, 24/02/2017)

In this episode the children explain their different material preferences, from the practical temperature and noise experienced in a seating position to the value and significance of social relationships between friends. The children act in conventional ways, yet they do not necessarily share a common understanding or knowledge of the situation and have different intentions, social awareness and strategies for sitting with friends (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). For example, Darla explains that for her, different seats have different significances, outlining her optimal positions to be sitting in relation to her best friends. According to Margret Somers (1994, p.606, original emphasis), 'all of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives *rarely of our own making'*. This highlights that social action and agency are temporally, spatially and relationally significant and a best friend today may not be the same person Darla wishes to sit with next week because relationships are formed, rehearsed and remade in response to discursive practice and social interaction (Sikes, 2006).

Co-constructed plans between children and the situated activity are continuously changing and enacted in relation to each other within the mealtime on a daily basis. Continuously changing plans can be pre-defined, but they are fragile and open to change when intentions are in flux; for example, Danny talks about Eve promising to sit with her and then sitting with someone else. Interactions such as these are imbued with moral perspectives where, for example, Pippa was blamed by Flo for not having an available seat for her to sit in close to her. Meaning emerges through situated activity and children can become upset when unable to sit with friends, particularly when plans and promises are made prior to the mealtime. This aligns with Corsaro's research (2018), where he argues that children demonstrate reciprocal if not necessarily intentional regulation of each other's behaviour. Aside from being socialised into the institutional rituals of mealtime, children create and recreate their own activities, socialising with each other through socially and experientially asymmetrical relationships from active observation and direct participation in their peer produced worlds (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Ochs and Shohet, 2006; Corsaro, 2018). Social competence, resilience and a capacity to understand the mealtime organisation may play a pivotal role in child's ability to navigate the mealtime space.

Awareness of the organisational structure of the mealtime can be seen in Kim's comments when she says that once she has entered the meal hall 'dinner ladies watch us'. She deploys a social strategy to delay sitting down, which potentially avoids blame from friends if she is unable to save a seat (seat saving is generally prohibited in this school) until they have their lunch. So they find seats together. I have interpreted that Kim's priority is to know what she wants to eat before she gets to

the cook so that she can pass through the food servery quickly to meet up with friends and ensure success in sitting together. Daniel and Gustafsson (2010, p.271) noted that 'being able to sit with your friends was something that required considerable effort and planning for most of the children'. For Kim, time and the awareness of others is of the essence when finding a seat. Earlier in the conversation, Kim explained that she is happy to sit with four of her friends in particular; potentially she has formed stable relations with these friends, which maximises the probability of success in always having someone to sit with during the mealtime (Corsaro, 2018).

On the other hand, Darla deploys a social strategy whereby if friends outside of her friendship group attempt to take a seat she will look at them weirdly and hope they move to another table. The materiality of a 'scowl' can be a subtle bodily communication that can be seen but not heard and may be difficult to re-tell, should other children find it unpleasant or hurtful. Children's expressive gestures are used in place of, or in conjunction with, speech and can subtly communicate a variety of thoughts and feelings as a way to embrace, disregard or reject others. This sentiment was echoed by Alexandra, who explained 'when you go to a table and someone doesn't want you to sit down, you just know; they make a face that is obvious that you're not welcome to sit down' (Year Five participant, fieldnote, 21/04/2016). Rogoff (1990) argues that children are very good at understanding tacit communication, such as glances, winces and direction of gaze. Non-verbal communication may not always be a means to instruct but it is a powerful way to give and gain information (Rogoff, 2003).

However, a 'look' can only be powerful if it is understood by the recipient and may be dependent on the child's status in relation to others. Littleton and Miell (2005, p.97) argue that 'children's interactions with other children are an important context for development as it is through such interactions that children learn skills such as how to co-operate and resolve conflicts, and share in the task of constructing their social understanding'. When all the seats are filled and only a few seats remain children may have to sit with undesirable peers (based on their interests) to eat their lunch. Clara explains what happens when she has to sit with undesirable peers (based on her particular interests): 'if I don't like them, I don't look at them or speak to them' (Year Three participant, fieldnote, 06/04/2013). In situations where children have different frames for organising their thinking, preferences and experiences, if someone is not aware of the imagined boundaries of others then they may end up sitting in hostile territory (Sack, 1986). The creation of social boundaries is a powerful means of exclusion that protects an interactive space.

Darla establishes and maintains her discrete territorial space by sitting down and staking a claim to the other seats at the table (represented by looking at non-desired peers weirdly to discourage them from sitting down) for her friends (who have not arrived yet); she creates an imagined boundary. It is imagined because Darla's mental construct endows the materiality of eight chairs around the table with meaning, ultimately constructing a sense of 'self' and 'otherness'. Children construct and contest for themselves whose space it is on a daily basis, depending on what is temporally, spatially and relationally significant to each child or small group. As undesirable peers (depending on the interests of the children involved) approach the table, sameness and otherness is constructed and contested, which 'produce(s) very real material consequences in terms of social exclusion or discrimination' (Valentine, 1999, p.58).

However, Corsaro (2018) suggests that children often protect their interactive space from the intrusion of others so that they can maintain control over shared activities. He argues that the child's perspective is especially important here because rather than these children been perceived as selfish or resistant, they are intensely involved in defending and creating a space for sharing (Corsaro, 2018). The significance of imagined boundaries is that they exist in a complex web of relations where other children may be compelled to sit down or they may have their own imagined boundaries that conflict with Darla's. In the fast-paced changing landscape of the mealtime, social boundaries require constant enactment from children to maintain their interactive territory. From children's active involvement, with both collaborators and competitors, children gain experience in organising their interactions according to the situational and relational demands.

In this section I have explored how children do not take for granted the seemingly mundane practice of sitting down to the lunch table. Episode 4.4.1 was instrumental in illustrating how informal expectations for mealtime behaviour can be communicated indirectly, whereby children internalise the school mealtime norms and values subtly and over time. Children create their understandings of the expected practice for school mealtimes over time. Accordingly, Ochs and Shohet (2006) argue that 'in some cases, the sociocultural messages are conveyed explicitly to the less experienced participants through speech activities such as directives, error corrections, and assessments' as well as less direct communicative strategies. Nevertheless, in this episode Mason and Liam demonstrated how they enacted their own knowledge of the mealtime to maintain dialogic interaction by configuring their physical seating so that they are facing each other to remain in relationship.

This finding led to a discussion about how other children configure their seating arrangements. Ochs and Shohet (2006, p.36) argue that 'both direct and indirect strategies can co-occur in the

same mealtime' and this was evident from the children's social strategies for locating each other in the mealtime. Episode 4.4.2 illustrated that children can be decisive and divisive in deciding where to sit within the boundaries of their assigned year group tables. However, how children manage and negotiate sitting down to a table differs between children, and this is also not to say that children consistently deploy only one strategy per mealtime. Rather, children are active agents in using multiple ways to understand and negotiate their seating arrangements in relation to others. What this means for children's socialisation is that children act in relation to situational and relational demands, which are dependent on temporal, spatial and relational interactions in their situated mealtime activity. The analysis has found that some children are purposeful in choosing their seats and that the stakes are relatively high when protecting their shared interactive space. What remains unknown is what children are avoiding when they enact their deliberate plans to sit with friends. The following section will explore how children purposefully compete with others to sit at a popular table.

4.5 Using the social conditions of the mealtime to gain a seating advantage over others

In this section I will analyse how children use spatial and temporal knowledge with purpose to gain advantage over others and a seat at a popular table. In doing so, I will analyse how some children avoid the dinner queue situation and compete rather than collaborate with peers to get their ideal seat at the table. To recap, rule governed mealtime practices (the frame) assert that children should sit at tables within their year groups but within this practice children are free to organise themselves; both the children's response and the mealtime structure can be observed. During children's handling of the world they make sense and transform activities in relation to their own interests (key). According to Goffman (1975, p.83) 'keying intendedly leads all participants to have the same view of what it is that is going on [acknowledging a plurality of frames or sense making] whereas a fabrication requires difference' (Goffman, 1975, p.84). A fabrication is a 'special kind of key in which one or more participants in an on-going situation is/are purposefully duped or "kept in the dark" as to what is "really" going on' (Hill, 2014, p.5). The following section will explore three Year Six children who have brought a lunch from home and use time and space as a resource to enact their own plans to sit with friends.

> **Episode 4.5.1:** Second sitting has begun, and I have been wondering around the hall chatting to children and wiping a few tables. Year Four and the majority of Year Five children are eating their meals. The last few people in Year Five are waiting to collect their hot dinners and I am making polite conversation with Mrs Roberts, a mealtime assistant, about the weather today.

As I spoke to Mrs Roberts, I noticed a Year Six girl loitering behind us patiently waiting to speak but seemingly in no hurry. The next moment, Mrs Roberts was called away to another matter and so I stepped forward and asked Harriet if she was ok because she looked a little awkward. Harriet was talking and pointing to the junior entrance door but struggling to find words and I couldn't understand what she was referring to. I asked if she wanted to show me something as it might then be easier for her to explain. She agreed, and we approached a poster that had been drawn by one of the children from a younger year group. In the moments that followed, Mrs Roberts invited the year six children (who were queuing outside) into the hall to collect their lunch. Harriet mid-sentence said, 'it doesn't matter' (or maybe she didn't even say that, she may have just rushed away without saying a word). I wondered what was happening, so I watched Harriet dash to pick up her lunchbox and quickly sit down at a table, opposite a girl who had just come in and sat down with her lunchbox.

I felt a little bewildered and I turned with curiosity and noticed, on the opposite side of the room, Nathan, a Year Six boy standing at the back of the hall looking towards the food servery, holding his lunchbox. By now all the year six children had flooded into the hall and the first few children who were eating hot dinners were beginning to sit down. I waited and watched Nathan to see who or what he was waiting for. When Nick (the most popular boy in this friendship group) approached with his hot meal, Nathan rushed forward to a table and sat down next to Simon, who had just sat down with his hot meal, ahead of Nick. Nick sat down, and the table was full within seconds as everyone crashed into seats.

Particularly Alexander, Nathan and Jerry are three boys that regularly battle for a seat at this table [which means that seven of the boys regularly get a seat and one seat is competed for by Alexander, Nathan and Jerry]. I took a picture today because Jerry chose to sit alone, opposite the table he wanted to sit on, when he didn't get a seat at the popular table [see picture below]. He sat opposite this table instead of sitting with the other boys from his class, who were on the next table. Half-way through the mealtime Jerry got up and went to talk with Nick to tell him something about the table behind them (where Alexander was sitting with four other children). Nick briefly turned and chatted to his peers on the next table and then all the boys laughed, and Jerry merrily returned to his seat. One thing that surprised me about the situation was that no one on

the 'popular' table seemed in the slightest bit interested in Jerry's seating predicament. They did not look in his direction, talk to him or make eye contact to my knowledge.

<div align="right">(Participant observation, 02/05/2017)</div>

The photograph below shows Jerry sitting opposite a table that is full of eight boys and on the table to the left are the remaining five boys from his year group.

Figure 4.5.1: Photograph of Year Six dialogic formation, taken by Samantha Stone, 02/05/2017.

Prior to sitting down children blend into the background of the mealtime to avoid being noticed by the mealtime assistant and/or their peers, which illustrates that children can comprehend the multiple and competing demands of others. Alexander, Nathan and Jerry regularly compete for the final seat on the most popular table for this year group and there are a number of reasons why they

delay sitting down and opt to blend in to the background of the mealtime. For example, they avoid attracting attention from the mealtime assistants, which may result in being forced to make a premature seating decision if they are directed to sit down. They avoid attracting the attention of other peers, which may reduce opportunities to dart into a preferred seating position on any particular day; children who are less popular may do this if they do not have sufficient pulling power because peers will not necessarily join them if they sit down first. An advantage of momentarily delaying sitting down is that children can know where their peers will sit and what options are available for them.

The first incident in the episode observed Harriet loitering in the meal hall before her year group had entered the hall. She spent time talking to me about a poster on the wall when 'officially' she should have been outside in the queue with her year group peers. In Goffman's terms, this activity was managed as a fabrication with strategic moves, the poster was her distraction and her peers and I had been contained. It was only when the other children entered the hall that her intentions become more evident as she rushed to a seating position opposite her friend. There could have been a number of unknown reasons for Harriet being in the hall before the rest of her year group. Nevertheless, she gained an advantage over her peers by being the second person to sit down to the lunch table, with multiple seating options.

Nathan used a similar strategy by using a timing advantage when he darted forward and sat down at just the right moment before the table is filled within seconds. Klemp and colleagues (2008) argue that 'real time inhabits the iterative, reflexive, and reticular work of sequencing activities with activities'. Klemp and colleagues are referring to how time is handled as consequential and emergent moments, which is distinct from linear time. Thus, children's understandings of transiency opportunities are potentially key to organising mealtime experiences with friends. I have interpreted this to mean that children construct knowledge from former experiences and gather social information from immediate social dynamics through scanning and responding to others in close proximity (Goffman, 1975; Resnick, 1994). Children's changing participation in everyday mealtime experiences is a process of altering understandings in practice that are relative to their situated activity, whereby children learn to belong, to do, to become and to experience (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Hence, children increase their social knowledge of the situated activity from their recursive participation in the mealtime, which enables some children to become more successful in securing a seat at their chosen table, resulting in their social inclusion in the table dynamics and access to interaction with friends. However, as was seen in the second half of the observation, Jerry did not get a seat at the table but did access the interactive situation to some extent.

Jerry arrived too late to get a seat at the 'popular' table and decided to sit on his own, directly opposite the popular table. One reason for him sitting alone could be to differentiate himself from the stigma of sitting with children on the less popular table. For example, Corsaro (1985) would interpret Jerry's rejection from inclusion in mealtime experiences at either table as the fragile and shifting nature of friendship. However, it is apparent that Jerry's purposeful configuration of the material space, by sitting opposite the full table and alone, in fact allowed him to be a part of the activity in many ways and to maintain some kind of connection and interaction. It seemed from my observation that no one on the full table paid any attention to Jerry; however, Jerry had them in his full gaze. Rogoff (2003) argues that listening in and observing is an important form of support for children's socialisation and is a preferred way to learn in some communities. There was a point at which Jerry got up to speak with Nick and caused raucous of laughter on their table. Jerry straddles both non-participation and participation, which does not necessarily imply exclusion but could however imply unrealised wisdoms (Wenger, 1998). This suggests that in some ways, Jerry's dialogic formation maintained social bonds to overcome the physical constraints and remain in dialogue with his friends.

This section has been important in exploring how children use the social conditions of the mealtime to wait for the 'right moment' to secure a seating position and gain advantage over others. It has been shown that children can be very skilful in becoming invisible amidst the noise and take full advantage of transient opportunities to enact their own agendas. However, when the timing is off and emergent moments do not go as anticipated, children find different ways to circumvent the material constraints of the mealtime to remain in dialogue with friends and share their frame of reference. These ideas are consistent with those of Wenger (1998, p.96), who argues that communities of practice 'come together, they develop, they evolve, they disperse, according to timing, the logic, the rhythms and the social energy of their learning'. Socialisation is an accumulation of experience with enough discontinuity to continually negotiate and renegotiate meaning, adapting to everyday changing situated activities.

4.6 Children creating their own frame of reference for mealtime experiences

On the other hand, there are children who choose not to participate in the race for a 'popular' table and purposefully choose a different table. This section will analyse why children create their own dialogic formation within the mealtime. Children can create boundaries between cliques in the school mealtime and particular tables may be used as boundary objects (Wenger, 1998). In this way, the school lunch tables can enable coordination, each child with their own perspective and

agenda, and it is the meeting of perspectives (or not) that creates the frame of reference for table activity and not the table itself. With this in mind, the following episode will analyse why two boys, from Year Five, regularly sit in the same seats to eat their sandwich lunches every day.

Episode 4.6.1: This episode is an extract from a conversation with two male participants from Year Four. The boys are drawing pictures of their mealtime immediately after they have finished their lunch, whilst discussing their experiences of the school mealtime.

SS:	So, are there any seats at the table that you usually sit in or do you just sit anywhere you can find a seat?
Richard:	Friend sit everywhere, they don't have certain places.
Ethan:	Yeah, we do.
Richard:	Yeah, we do but our friends don't.
Ethan:	We sit there ((pointing to his map)) because it is quiet and not messy.
Richard:	We have a new place, table second in, no third in. We like it, it's really quiet.
Ethan:	No one sits there, so it's not as dirty.
Richard:	Like, there are three seats, they don't have lasagne or something all over the table [these children eat their lunch in second sitting].
Ethan:	Yeah.
Richard:	Yeah, people shout around the edges. The middle is quiet. They [friends] mostly sit on the right or they sit behind.
Ethan:	People don't want to sit there ((pointing to their middle table, where they sit)).
Richard:	Three seats are not touched.
Ethan:	Cool people sit around the edges.
SS:	So, does that mean that you're not cool then?
Ethan:	They think they are cool.
Richard:	No, no.
Ethan:	They are show offs.

(Two male participants, Year Five, group interview 2, 02/05/2017)

In this extract Richard and Ethan explain their preferred conditions for eating their lunch. Richard and Ethan's usual table and seating position choices are typically more predetermined, and they are based on a rationale that favours cleanliness and quiet that the middle tables have to offer. Moreover, I have interpreted from their conversation and Ethan's drawing below that they have awareness and understanding of vectors, relationships and movements of their peers in both their own year group and other year groups. This demonstrates their awareness of others and the sophistication of holding a whole mealtime sitting plan in their heads regarding where they sit in relation to others. This demonstrates how children can be reflexive active agents and a distinctive group in their own right, where children negotiate, share and create culture with adults and each other (Corsaro, 1992; Qvortrup 2015; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; James, 2013). Richard and Ethan's understandings illustrate that children have different frames of reference for their mealtime experiences, on the basis of which they locate themselves among others. Similarly, Goffman (1975) refers to players holding the checkerboard in the mind as a matrix within which to locate a move, requiring physical competence and wilful use of voice, within a multitude of frameworks.
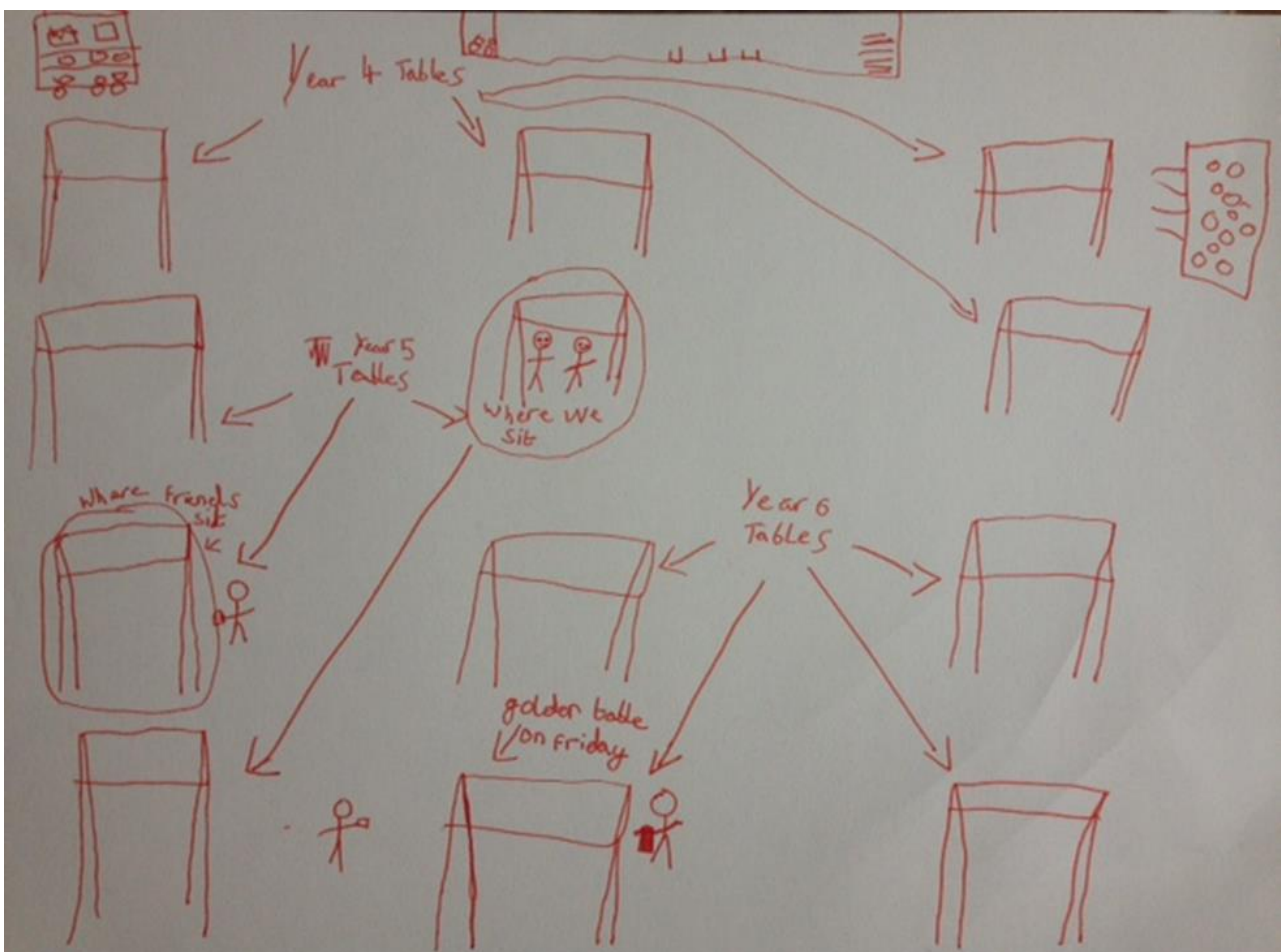
Figure 4.6.1: Ethan's drawing of the mealtime experience (Year Five participant, 02/05/2017).

Ethan's drawing incorporates awareness of his guided doings within the organisational practice of the meal hall, whereby he discusses his own frame of reference vs. the official social order by identifying 'where friends sit' and 'where we sit', which are different labels from 'year 5 tables' (Goffman, 1975). In doing so, he identifies the adult controlled order of the mealtime, represented in his table layout and spatial segregation by age and the informal world of children's social networks (Valentine, 2000). During the conversation whilst they drew their pictures, Ethan and Richard explain how they handled some of the mealtime rules, the rules for children eating sandwich lunches, and that they prefer to eat sandwich lunches because they can sit down as soon as they enter the hall. Furthermore, they explain which peers sit on the popular table and the unpopular table and that both tables are always full. I have interpreted their drawing and conversation as their ability to identify and understand multiple frames of reference, embedded within their own experience and the key to other groups within this peer group (Goffman, 1975). The boys go on to explain what happens if they attempt to sit at the popular table.

> **Episode 4.6.2:** The boys have just explained that they always get to the front of the queue so that they can get to the seats that they want before anyone else. Given that they are usually the first children to sit down, due to being at the front of the queue and having many options available to them, I enquired about whether there is anywhere else they would rather sit.

SS:	Is there somewhere else that you would rather sit?
Richard:	Yeah, I would rather sit with everybody but there is no space and a stampede.
Ethan:	Yeah.
Richard:	Once I tried to sit on this table ((pointing to the map of where his friends sit)) and there was a stampede and my face got stamped to the floor.
Ethan:	Or you're sitting on your own or on a Year 6 table [meaning no space is left with his own year group].
SS:	What do you mean your face got stamped to the floor?
Richard:	I almost broke my back on his knee.
Ethan:	He tripped [said in a droll tone of voice] … Sometimes there is space, and everything is calm.

Richard:	I picked up my lunch box and I am walking. I can see space. Then you're walking and a stampede.
Ethan:	Yeah there's a stampede and you're going to get run over.

(Two male participants, Year Five, group interview 2, 02/04/2017)

I have interpreted the boys' use of dramatic language to signify the perceived brutality experienced and the fierce competition that is involved when competing against potentially stronger peers. Richard suggests that if he were to attempt to sit on the popular table with his friends he risks being completely excluded and having to eat on his own or with a different year group. This sentiment was echoed in episode 4.3.1, when Mark talks about Paul not being quick enough to get a seat at the table with him. The stakes are high for children when competing for scarce resources to avoid the stigma of being left out or to gain the prestige of being included within the popular group (Højholt, 2012). To avoid being caught up in the velocity of this situation, Richard and Ethan create for themselves their own dialogic formation. They illustrate their awareness of the existence of other frames for thinking and doing but they choose to coordinate their mealtime experience differently. As illustrated in episode 4.6.1, the boys prioritise certainty, consistency, cleanliness and calm. It is within these parameters that the boys enjoy quiet conversation and play amongst themselves.

This episode has highlighted the importance of children's social awareness and sophisticated negotiation with social, temporal, spatial and material arrangements of children's activities within the school mealtime. This section has contributed an understanding that children have sophisticated knowledge about the ordering of the mealtime both in the institution's rule governed practice and the informal social relationships in peer produced culture. The significance of this is that Richard and Ethan negotiate and create their own mealtime experiences, within the conditions of the mealtime, which illustrates how children can be competent actors with social agency in their own right (James and Prout, 2015; Qvortrup, 1994). Moreover, these socialising experiences provide children with knowledge about when to meander and when to be direct.

4.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have analysed how children negotiate seating positions around a lunch table to create different dialogic formations. In doing so, I have illustrated that the school mealtime structure dictates sociocultural ways of eating together that express shared values and norms, which stipulate clear rules and expectations to the children. However, children's mealtime socialisation is not simply transmitted from adults to children; children recreate and alter sociocultural mealtime

knowledge in their handling of the situated practice (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). The analysis has explored how children negotiate and transform the materiality of the mealtime and their social relationships with others, which can often pose challenges for children who wish to sit with specific friends.

I analysed how children respond, negotiate and transform the materiality of the meal hall in their handling of everyday interactions with peers. In doing so, I illustrated how children can manage and negotiate the material constraints to achieve their desired seating positions (according to what children deemed to be important to them). The analysis did not aim to capture or evaluate the advantages or disadvantage of any particular social strategies that children deployed as that would detract attention from focusing on how dialogic formations are created, maintained and modified. Nor did the analysis attempt to catalogue the different ways in which children negotiate the mealtime to get an optimal seating position because it is plausible that children deploy more than one strategy during the same mealtime and deploy more strategies than are included here. The focus of the analysis was on how children negotiate the social, temporal, spatial and material arrangements of the school mealtime to achieve different dialogic formations. Significantly, the analysis demonstrated how children navigate the tensions between multiple pressures, which can manifest in fast-paced, changing plans where competition and collaboration unfold. The analysis found that children can purposefully exploit knowledge that is inherent in the material constraints of the mealtime (eight seats around a table) with their position in the dinner queue order and gain advantage over their peers; and, moreover, that children can be purposeful in choosing their seats in relation to friends (either next to or opposite).

The data illustrated that the stakes are high for children when targeting and protecting their shared interactive space, which can create imagined boundaries. The flurry of activity in these interactions is organised in time and happens at just the right time, because a table can be filled within seconds, which is different from linear time. Children can be very skilful in becoming invisible amidst the noise and movement to take full advantage of transient opportunities and enact their own agendum. However, when children find themselves on the periphery, they can find new ways to circumvent the physical constraint of the mealtime to create dialogic formations that maintain access to interactions with friends by sharing the same frame of reference. Counter to this, there are children who refuse to share the same frame of reference as children on the popular table and instead choose to create their own dialogic interaction. These findings are significant because children negotiate and create their own mealtime experiences, within the existing material and social conditions, which illustrates how children can be agentic and competent social actors (James and Prout, 2015;

Qvortrup, 1994). Children's mealtime socialisation is an accumulation of experience with enough discontinuity to continually negotiate and renegotiate, adapt and readapt to their everyday changing situated activity. These socialising experiences equip children with the skills to increase their social knowledge and respond to others; to secure seats at their chosen table, resulting in their social inclusion in the table dynamics and access to interaction with friends; and to achieve different dialogic atmospheres and configurations around a lunch table. What remains unknown is why children strive to create different dialogic formations around a lunch table.

Chapter Five:

The Feast of Being: A Carnivalesque Analysis of School Mealtimes

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will analyse children's interactions around a lunch table to understand the dynamics of everyday existence, where children's dialogic configurations can create frames for thinking, doing and belonging in the mealtime practice (Goffman, 1975, Lave and Wenger, 1991). More specifically, it will investigate children's non-legitimated voices, analysing the dynamic and conflictual nature of children's interactions during school mealtime socialisation. In doing so, this chapter aims to answer research question 2: How do children use the dialogic formation around the lunch table to collectively subvert the normative order and develop self-understanding in relation to others?

Firstly, I will analyse the normative order of the mealtime to show how all mealtime members contribute to and maintain the school mealtime order. When children develop experience and competence they do so in relation to their sociocultural-historical situated practice of knowing and doing (Ochs and Shohet 2006; Wenger, 1998). The mealtime is not random or unstructured and it is in relation to imposed order that modification, experimentation and transgression are created. Secondly, I will draw on liminality theory (Turner, 1969) to examine the school mealtime as a temporary phase that suspends normal social dynamics and brackets everyday experiences, where interactions are no longer fully governed by the existing cultural repertoire. The social conditions of the school mealtime are significant because it is within these conditions that the subversive episodes occur. This section will provide the background information in which subsequent episodes are embedded. Thirdly, drawing on Bakhtin's (1984) concept of the carnivalesque, the analysis will explore children's interactions and collusions in their peer produced worlds. This will reveal how social dramas are fertile social hierarchies can be temporarily overthrown and how a plurality in worlds can be recognised. The analysis explores children's interactions within the dialogic formations that frame the table, to comprehend how children subvert the normative social and moral order in all the excitement and heteroglossia of the school mealtime.

This chapter will extend upon the analysis from the previous analytical chapter (Chapter Four), which argued that children have agentic capacity to strategically organise themselves socially, temporally, spatially in their materially situated practices; coordinating (or not) their actions with

others to enable them to sit together with desirable peers (depending on their interests) to eat lunch. This chapter will now analyse what children can achieve within particular dialogic formations around a lunch table and illustrate children's differentiated experiences of emergent, experimental and ongoing activities in the school mealtime. In doing so, this chapter will address how children use the social conditions of the mealtime as a resource to defy pre-defined rules, revealing how children are capable of understanding complex situations and can act with that understanding, responding in sophisticated and imaginative ways to express their disempowered voices.

5.2 Establishing the social order of the school mealtime

This section will consider the normative order of the school mealtime to illustrate how children come to master knowledge and skills through complex engagement within their situated practice. The mealtimes at St Peter's Catholic Primary School are communal, formalised and confined activities that have a specific temporal order as to when and how the meal should be eaten. According to Wenger (1998, p.47), communities of practice constitute a way of doing, 'but not just doing in and of itself, it is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do'. Significantly, the historical, social, cultural and institutional contexts develop the conditions in which children are embedded, facilitating their 'social construction of knowledge and moral perspectives through communicative practices' (Ochs and Shohet, 2006. p.36). The structuring of the mealtime, which is communicated both explicitly and implicitly, has a set of boundaries, demands and expectations for children's participation in the social situation (Ochs and Shohet, 2006; Douglas, 1966; 2002). The following episode provides an impression of the daily mealtime routine at St Peter's Catholic Primary School and illustrates that all participants contribute to the emergent structure, which is neither inherently stable nor randomly changeable.

> **Episode 5.2.1:** The following extract is a combination of participant observations and an informal unstructured interview with Mrs Sloan, a mealtime assistant.

12:10	The bell rings and the Reception year group are the first to enter the meal hall; they are initially assisted to sit down and cut up their food by the reception class teachers.
12:15	Mealtime assistants arrive, along with the infant year groups one, two and three.
12:20	Half of the tables are filled.

12:25	The first hands go up [infant children are expected to raise their hands to show that they have finished and for the mealtime assistants to check what they have eaten]. Children begin to scrape their plates and go out to play.
12:30	All children are seated in the first sitting.
12:27	Kitchen staff wipe the tables.
12:30	Children begin to congregate in the playground next to the meal hall ready to form a queue for second sitting.
12:45	Junior year groups, four, five and six enter the meal hall in staggered succession when the preceding year group has left the food servery.
13:15	The mealtime ends, and all children have left the meal hall.

(Non-participant observation, 06/02/2013; Mrs Sloan, mealtime assistant interview, 09/10/2018)

The episode illustrates key events in this fast-paced, dynamic process, where all participants contribute to and maintain the structure and stability of the mealtime. At 12:10, it can be seen that the reception children receive special assistance as newcomers to the mealtime, being given support as they are inducted into the social, historical and cultural conventions of school mealtimes. At 12:15, reception children, as peripheral members, are exposed to more experienced mealtime members, who provide them with a sense of how the mealtime community operates. According to Douglas (2002, p.45), 'in perceiving we are building, taking some cues and rejecting others', and as time goes by children build confidence from consistent experience, absorbing the normative assumptions of the school mealtime community. Children become part of practice, socialising with explicit, implicit and tacit knowledge. Wenger (1998, p.47) argues that practice 'includes what is said and what is left unsaid; what is represented and what is assumed'. Children come to know practice though their embodied engagement with the mealtime community, accumulating experience of meaning and a sense of competence over time. The guiding assumption is that individuals need to be able to coordinate smoothly for the school community to function as an integral whole.

This episode illustrates that the rhythm of the school mealtime is not random; approximately 197 children, reception teachers, mealtime assistants and kitchen staff contribute to the mealtime practice in different ways. As can be seen at 12:30, junior children begin to gather ahead of being instructed to form a queue for their lunch; they do not need to be told to do this because they have internalised the mealtime framework. My interpretation of this is that children are making sense of what is happening in the communal regime, which is an enterprise that 'both engenders and directs

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social energy' (Wenger, 1998, p.82). Mealtime rituals are multiple sequences of collective actions, which are established, accepted and dependent on the compliance and internal control of the community members (Mercer, 2000). However, Wenger (1998) does not assume an idealised view of communities where shared practice is a harmonious collaboration; he asserts that disagreement, conflict and tension are part of the repertoire for negotiating meaning. Wenger (1998, p.76) argues that 'mutual engagement does not entail homogeneity, but it does create relationships among people'. Coherence can be found in a shared practice because it connects people in diverse ways; joint enterprises are communally negotiated over an extended period of time. Joint enterprises create a normative order as the mealtime progresses; participants are mutually accountable, which becomes an integral part of practice.

In sum, school mealtimes mediate social, historical and cultural meanings, which children come to master and negotiate through their engagement with practice, sharing knowledge and interpersonal relationships in their situated mealtime participation. In other words, children's socialisation occurs through the process of their observation and participation with others in their sociocultural-historical situated activity. Ochs and Shohet (2006, p.36) make a significant point when emphasising a 'mutual organising influence, whereby the mealtime structure pervades children's development but also children have agentic capacity to influence practice by the way they think, feel and act during mealtimes'. The negotiation of meaning is an open process and children adapt with respect to their shared practice (Wenger, 1998). In some senses, social continuity gives an impression that school mealtimes are unified monolithic entities. However, Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia is concerned with the irreducibility of diversity, which has implications for comprehending school mealtimes as sites for inevitable difference and struggle, with co-existing voices that correspond to different values and world views (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003). This section has given some sense of collective order during the school mealtime, which is needed in order to recognise how children transcend the edges of acceptability (Jenks, 2005) and engage in multi-voiced interactions.

5.3 Mealtime as a liminal phase

This section will introduce the social conditions of the mealtime to argue that the school mealtime is a transition between the structured confines of morning and afternoon classroom lessons. Children experience some degree of release from the social bonds of the student-teacher relationship, to a more informal and less hierarchical relationship with the mealtime assistants and each other. Thus, during the school mealtime, children and teaching assistants suspend their classroom statuses to pass over a symbolic threshold and enter into other significant roles that may

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be more ambiguous than the past or coming states (Turner, 1969). What I am suggesting is that the mealtime hour is configured as a transitionary period, in between, with chaotic and ambiguous elements, which creates a temporary suspension, both ideal and real, which allows for more loosely defined boundaries. A data-driven reason for the looser boundaries is that the ratio between adults and children is approximately two mealtime assistants supervising approximately one hundred children per sitting. As a result, it is impossible for the mealtime assistants to have the same level of control over every individual in the meal hall as teachers in the classroom, and so the mealtime authority and expectations are enforced but with less consistency. My interpretation is that the school mealtime affords different interactive possibilities for children.

On entering the liminal mealtime children enter into a new self-concept, which allows normal limits to thought, self-understanding and behaviour to be relaxed. They gain a sense of egalitarianism and comradeship as they navigate the ambiguity of the meal hall, restructuring their identities and altering the status quo. The following sections will illustrate how interactions within this transitional space are dynamic, fluid and malleable, whereby children often become narrators of their life stories and animators of their games. Like skilled musicians or dancers, the mealtime provides opportunities for children to cultivate discrete skills, habits and resources that enable them to interact freely and frankly, liberated from the decency imposed at other times during the school day. The social conditions provide a resource for creativity, child-initiated learning, invention, multi-toned narration, rejuvenation and reprieve. A data-driven reason for the medley of children's agentic interactions is that the bedlam of noise and the movement of other children provide the social conditions and opportunities to be incorrigibly plural, similar to a musical instrument within an orchestra. This is significant because it is during the temporary social milieu, with its abundance of all things being various, that a particular type of communication is possible (Bakhtin, 1984). It is because of the social conditions in these bracketed times of the school day that the mealtime permeates a sense of familiarity, intimacy and playfulness. Liminal states are useful for understanding the conceptual transitions that children undergo during the school mealtime, providing the background theoretical context in which the following examples are embedded. With this in mind, the following section will analyse children's interactions under these social conditions more specifically.

5.4 Subversion of the normative order

This section will analyse how children temporarily challenge and subvert the established normative order of the school mealtime. I will use a Bakhtinian perspective to explore the notion of carnival in children's spontaneous and powerful interactions that may be 'inappropriate in the eyes of some

adults precisely because play is not rational and escapes adult control' (Cohen, 2011, p.177). The analysis will refrain from interpreting children's subversive actions as deviant because the aim of the chapter is to understand how children collectively subvert the normative order and develop self-understanding in relation to others, and not to make moral judgements about these interactions.

Moral boundaries are transgressed in multiple ways during the school mealtime as children negotiate and enact their own agendas and merriment together. I will explore children's unscripted, flexible and powerful existential experiences within the school mealtime to illustrate how children can think critically and re-interpret the collective values of the normative mealtime order. In comparing Bakhtin's (1984) concept of the carnivalesque to the children's mealtime interactions I will illustrate the complexities of children's socialisation, which enables children to develop self-understanding in relation to others as they experience rebellion on the edges of the normative social order. To explore these ideas further the following episode will analyse a group of Year Three boys engaging in dynamic interactions and comic spectacles that are both self-motivated and self-directed.

> **Episode 5.4.1:** The episode begins whilst I am walking between the tables chatting to children and pouring beakers of either milk or water for those who want it.

> I am pouring milk in a beaker for Alison when a startling loud noise bellows out from the piano, which creates a sudden shift in the room to near silence. Like meerkats, both mealtime assistants immediately react: asking the room 'Who has made this noise?' they walk this way and that, intensely scanning the room to find anyone out of place. I am in close proximity to the piano and look up to where the children are queuing near the piano. The mealtime assistants call out names of children: 'Kate, was that you?' 'Mike, did you do that?' Daniel emerges from between the queuing children; eyes fixated on the two mealtime assistants, he quickly moves between the tables with a straight back and bent legs. His contorted body position gives the appearance that he is the same height as the seated children that he passes. He scurries past me to his seat. When he arrives at his seat, he slips into his chair and he and his friends laugh, giving a brief silent cheer, whilst shaking their fists at a low level. Moments later, the mealtime assistants abandon their search because they are unable to detect anything out of place and the mealtime resumes.

> (Participant observation, observation of five Year Three participants, 02/03/2015)

In this episode, Daniel's transgression mocks the school mealtime authority, de-crowning the mealtime assistants and subverting the normative order. The target of his joke is not a specific person; he challenges the establishment, which is to be enjoyed by everyone. Daniel searches, provokes and tests an idea about a truth within the official world of the school mealtime. Bakhtin (1981, p.348) suggests that when someone strives to liberate himself from the authority of another's discourse 'it is questioned, it is put in a new situation in order to expose its weak sides, to get a feel for its boundaries, to experience it physically as an object'. Children's carnivalesque acts in the school mealtime create a distance or otherness from the adult world by experimentally objectifying the dominant discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; Duncan and Tarulli, 2003). It is in this objectification and distancing that children encounter dialogic multi-voiced-ness and hence deprive 'the adult's authoritative word of absolute authority' (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003, p.283). The episode illustrates that children can understand, evaluate and provoke school mealtime rules by enacting their own agenda, amidst the discourses of others, to achieve their own voice. This means that as children dialogically engage in social life, they begin to achieve some critical distance, actively distinguishing between one's own authority and the discourses and authorities of others (Bakhtin, 1981).

Daniel's individuality, in opposition to official seriousness, is expressed and experienced, where he escapes from the official ways of life. This can be seen in the episode when Daniel breaks the rules to play the piano, challenging and experimenting with the school mealtime authority and amusing his friends. Daniel temporarily disrupts the status quo, his actions being more powerful than the normative discourse in those moments, creating a 'world inside out' with gay relativity (Bakhtin, 1984, p.11). The world upside down is achieved through playful mockery of the hierarchal order by people who are oppressed by it (Cohen, 2011). The children push in the direction of freedom and playfulness; whilst the mealtime assistants strive to maintain an adult controlled sense of order. Daniel creatively experiments with carnivalesque humour, which 'resides underneath solemnity and emerges out of it' (Gabriel, 2016, p.371), liberating himself from oppression of the normative order. Daniel escapes punishment, creating temporary liberation from and subversion of the normative order, whereby he develops social awareness of otherness in the social system in which he is embedded.

During mealtime socialisation, Daniel and his peers produced a range of voices that contribute to their worldview perspectives. Daniel orchestrated a very sophisticated manoeuvre that highlights his ability to conceive the mealtime assistant's gaze and the perspective of his peers. In understanding what the mealtime assistants' eyes would be able to see, Daniel was able to disappear

into the crowd and become 'invisible' to both assistants on duty that day. This explains why footlights would destroy the carnival (Bakhtin, 1968). Similar to a shoal of fish, he stayed close to his fellow peers, contorting his body so that from a distance he could not be identified when out of place. I have interpreted this as Daniel's intentional rule breaking and recognition that Daniel is aware of where the established power in the normative order resides.

Carnivalesque experiences are vividly felt and Daniel is aware of the risks, which intensifies the experience and creates feelings of thrilling excitement. This delight can be felt in the material body, affirming corporeal vitality, which is not simply imagined but experienced, leading to refresh and renewal (Bakhtin, 1968). This coheres with Billig (2005, p.207) when he argues that 'if the social world is full of codes that restrict what can be said and done, then delight can be taken in breaking the rules that constrain social actors'. Significantly, Daniel is mock crowned as the carnival king when he returns to his peers, who join him in triumphant celebration hidden from sight. The significance of Daniel's symbolic and temporary crowning is that his peers can appreciate how he exercised an element of control, mobilising power by intentionally finding ways to express humour outside of the gaze of adults, and his peers can share in and glorify those triumphs with him. It is in Daniel's active dialogic engagement with other perspectives and discourses that he is able to re-define them, differ from them, develop them and establish his 'own' voice (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003). In a creative process of interdependence, socialisation requires a conceptual separation between the self and other and is an active process of experimenting with contradiction (James, 1982).

In real time, the episode was fleeting, causing minimum disruption, but Daniel's actions turned power inside out, enacting the victory of laughter over fear. To achieve this, Daniel's timing was crucial as he reacted and adjusted to his interactive mealtime situation. Klemp and colleagues (2008) researched the rhythmic ebb and flow of jazz musicians to understand how musical performances are organised and adjusted by the changing environments of their own making. When Daniel struck the piano keys, he used his mastery of the dinner hall to skilfully adapt to the silenced – and yet – fast paced, risky and changing environment. Klemp and colleagues (2008) suggest that improvisation occurs when something is out of pattern and what makes a note good or bad is what happens next. Daniel spontaneously responded to an interactive situation of his own making, agentically delivering a second wave of excitement by returning to his seat without detection or punishment.

Children's socialisation during school mealtimes consists of opportunities to understand and experiment with the predictable and the unpredictable, serendipitous and contingent moments. Like a skilled dancer or musician, Daniel controlled the shape of his body, the speed at which he travelled, fine-tuned his awareness of the gaze of the mealtime assistants and the environment around him to produce an undetected carnivalesque subversion of the normative order. Familiarity and uncertainty were significant features in Daniel's revolt because his actions combined the predictable format of the mealtime with the unpredictable and unexpected to create a contingent event (Van Lier, 1996). From children's mealtime socialisation they acquire skills from the familiarity of what is given and what is shared to create and navigate the unexpected, so that risks and security are in balance. So, in this sense, a missed note or rebellious manoeuvre is not necessarily a 'wrong' note but an opportunity for something new and innovative to happen.

In sum, during the school mealtime children encounter a range of voices that contribute to their worldview perspectives (Bakhtin, 1981; Ochs and Shohet, 2006). The social conditions of the mealtime provide opportunities for children to question and provoke the normative order. Daniel thwarted the more powerful others, which is a way to break down barriers and temporarily escape from structures that constrain the individual. According to James (1982, p.83), 'by confusing the adult order children create for themselves considerable room for movement within the limits imposed upon them by adult society' (James, 1982, p.83). I have argued that school mealtimes provide children with opportunities to achieve some critical distance between their own authority and the discourses of others. As a result, carnivalesque experiences contribute to children's feelings of empowerment and control over their own bodies and voices.

These socialising experiences are a way for children to be visible to their own selves, their selves as the other, and to distinguish between themselves and the children and adults around them. Socialisation is an open, active and creative process of interdependence and experimentation with contradiction between the self and other. Carnivalesque acts define for a moment what and who is the centre of everyone's attention, which is not usually possible for children in lesson time without reprimand from the teacher. James (1982, p.83) argues that 'it is through this creative reordering of adult perception, often achieved through a process of inverting elements of the adult order, that the social world of children generates its own system of meanings'. During school mealtime socialisation children acquire knowledge, skills and temporary identities from their evolving, overlapping and dynamic interactions, which are self-motivated and self-directed for their own collective enjoyment. From these experiences, children can develop their own voice and become aware of others' multivoicedness within the official order. In consequence, children's socialisation

can be double-edged: learning both the authoritative discourse of the adults and covert ways to disrupt and subvert the normative order.

5.5 Subverting the normative order with laughter

Following on from the previous section, this section will explore children's collective laughter during school mealtimes to understand how laughter contributes to children's social and moral development. Bakhtin (1968) recognised carnival as an act of rebellion and belly shaking laughter that unites people; laughter is not an individual reaction but is the laughter of all the people and is directed at themselves and those who laugh. Bakhtin, who lived most of his life under tyranny in the Soviet Union, sympathised with the anarchic counter-world, theorising carnivalesque laughter as a form of positive humour that brings people together in moments of pure creative enjoyment. Cohen (2011, p.120) argues, 'laugher can arise in a mock crowning of a symbolic and temporary ruler' and that it illustrates whose power individuals are taking an oath to uphold and support. The following episode will explore the significance of laughter for children's embodied socialising experiences in the school mealtime.

> **Episode 5.5.1:** This incident followed shortly after the previous episode (episode 5.4.1) in the same mealtime. The boys involved had already rejoiced once in successfully undermining the authorities, which perhaps conveyed a feeling of strength and encouraged the hilarity that ensued.
>
> I am pouring a beaker of water for Leah, when I hear an almighty crash at the next table. All the boys are uncontrollably belly laughing because a whole jug of water has been tipped over and the table and floor are flooded. Immediately, Tom, one of the boys at the end of the table, stands up and puts his hand up, saying to the approaching mealtime assistant 'It was my fault'. The seven boys around the table are laughing frantically. Mrs Perkins says nothing to Tom [the boy who took the blame for the incident] and shouts with a shrill tone at Harry, who is laughing hysterically, "You think it's funny do you? If you think it's so funny, then you can clean it up". Harry and Daniel continue to laugh uncontrollably. Tom looks remorseful to Mrs Perkins but when his head is down he is laughing with his friends. Mrs Perkins tells Tom and Harry that they can both clear up the table. The other four children leave the flooded table. Daniel moves to an adjacent table to finish his lunch and the other three boys sit together elsewhere. Tom and Harry mop up the mess and Mrs Perkins stands with her arms folded and watches, prompting the boys where they have missed bits. Tom and

Harry seem to have quite a nice time cleaning up the water, occasionally remarking to each other about how funny it was. When they have finished, Mrs Perkins asks them to find somewhere to sit to finish their meal. Some children in the surrounding area are still intermittently watching and laughing. Harry and Tom go to a table slightly further away, towards someone they know, who greets them, saying how funny it was. The boy on the next table leans over and agrees it was hilarious.

(Participant observation, observation of seven Year Three participants, 02/03/2015)

In this episode, there is an uncontrollable aspect of the boys' laughter that temporarily liberates the children from external and internal censorship of the normative order; the liberating effects are the source of its humour (Bakhtin 1984; Quartz et al., 2011). This means that it is the laughter itself that liberates, revives, renews and degrades power; it is laughter for laugher's sake, and in this episode, there are moments that could not be contained by the children. I have interpreted the non-legitimate laughter of the boys as double-voiced, partly speaking to emancipation and partly to oppression. According to Tam (2010, p.177), 'the spontaneous and elemental nature of laughter is capable of defeating routine and doctrine, as well as the seriousness and abstractness of an oppressive social world'. Designed to elicit non-approval from authority figures, the unofficial laughter emerges in opposition to and because of the positioning of authority. If the mealtime assistant turned a blind eye or subtly communicated compliance then the carnivalesque purpose of the laughter would be lost (White, 2014).

Tom seriously confesses and then descends into hysteria again, which has a doubling element that is the 'mirror of comedy', reflecting two aspects of one world (Bakhtin, 1968). Tom can be seen as the joker who is very much part of the joke, yet his apology seemed to temper Mrs Perkins' response to the situation, because potentially she interpreted the incident as not being an outright rebellion. My interpretation is that Tom could appreciate the point of view of Mrs Perkins and navigate the power struggle so that neither of the parties would lose respect in the exchange. Cohen (2011, p.121) argues that one strength of carnivalesque laughter is its ability to 'hold multiple and contradictory elements in tension'. Tom's admission of guilt placated Mrs Perkins and facilitated the continuation of the laughter, identifying himself as the carnival king by taking responsibility for the merrymaking. As a result, the boys' playful atmosphere continued as they merrily cleaned up the water and Mrs Perkins contained the situation, monitoring their every move until relative order was resumed.

It was the boys' laughter and amusement that was out of control and Mrs Perkins reduced and somewhat stopped it from escalating further but did not extinguish the vitality of laughter (Bahktin, 1968). In another sense, if Mrs Perkins had attempted to extinguish the laughter, she might have risked losing respect, power and the appearance of being in control if she had not been able to completely stop all the children from laughing. Communal laughter ensued in the area surrounding the table of focus, making it very difficult for Mrs Perkins to identify exactly who was laughing or to punish each and every child. During carnival, all were considered equal and children participate in much the same way during the school mealtimes as it brings together different year groups for free and familiar contact. Bakhtin (1968, p.7) argues that 'carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators'. The amused children in the surrounding area who are laughing belong to the laughter, creating social community between themselves. Laugher can be used to form and maintain solidarity, at the same time as excluding others who are not in the group (for example the mealtime assistants) demonstrating that laughter has the power to revive and deny. However, Mrs Perkins' initial interaction with Harry communicates to all the observing children that if they think the incident is funny there is potential for them be held accountable, when she says "You think it's funny, do you? If you think it's so funny, then you can clean it up". I have interpreted her statement as an attempt to end the vicarious enjoyment of the merrymakers.

Collective school mealtime laugher creates a temporary comic spectacle to be enjoyed as spectators and as interactive participants, who in some sense swear their allegiance to the laughter in those fleeting moments. This could be seen when not all children heeded Mrs Perkins' warning that laughing could be punishable, as with Harry. At this point some children curtailed their outbursts but mutual outspokenness remains as other children continued to laugh and comment to each other and the boys about the hilarity of the incident. These transient moments of carnivalesque humour embrace everyone; children respond to the visceral sociodramatic event and the weakening of resolve of the moral and social order of seriousness. Moreover, when ridiculers are told that their humour is not funny, it redoubles and intensifies their mocking laughter (Billig, 2005). This captures the ambivalence of laughter, which, Bakhtin (1968, p.12) argues, '...is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding'. Carnivalesque laughter invokes a number of heterogeneous emotions where social and moral norms and values of the normative order become permeable and ambivalent.

The decision about what is funny is a moral one and as children socialise, they develop an understanding of laughter so that they can laugh appropriately and understand why others are

laughing. According to Billig (2005, p.196), 'it is reasonable to assume that, in common with other aspects of language, children will learn through interacting with and intimidating older speakers, particularly adult care-takers'. Children may learn how to ridicule, which is enmeshed with power dynamics and can be a darker, less admirable side to laughter that is not always good natured (Billig, 2005). Mocking laugher is a powerful means to make playful what is officially serious from the adult point of view, which disrupts the hierarchical distance, fearlessly and freely creating a new orientation to explore and expose the world and lay it bare (Bakhtin, 1981). It also defines solidarity with the group of those who are laughing, which in this case is against the upholder of proper order.

Children's carnivalesque school mealtime laughter can be an opportunity to stand out from the crowd or to form solidarity with others. I have demonstrated that the main actors in the initial event have the ability to understand and evaluate the normative order. In doing so, they are able to wield their own power, which is shrouded with laughter, and to 'try on' different identities in order to cope with the shifting power relations, manage the unfolding event and facilitate the continuation of laughter. Significantly, laughter is a vital bodily aspect of collective carnivalesque interactions because laughter has the power to demolish hierarchical distance and temporarily free children from those in power. From these outspoken, humorous, embodied socialising experiences children can critique the authoritative order and expose its weaknesses. In this episode, they expose knowledge that mealtime assistants are not as powerful as other adults within this school system and acquire understandings for themselves about social organisation and who they are in relation to others.

Children on the periphery who are less bold or do not want to involve themselves in such risk-taking behaviour (similar to episode 5.4.1) have a less intense carnivalesque experience and develop an understanding about shifting power relations from their observation and felt corporeal vitality. Children on the periphery can take social pleasure in the follies of others and form solidarity by interacting together to subtly mock the mealtime rules and upholders of the official order. These collective moments are irregular, unforeseen and spontaneous events that are experienced as moments that should not happen. School mealtimes are 'pervaded by talk oriented toward reinforcing what is right and wrong' (Ochs and Shohet, 2006, p.42), which aims to socialise children into mealtime conventions and moral perspectives through their everyday interactions and through observation of their peers. Hence, children's socialisation occurs in a close interaction between order and chaos, where laughter is a means for children to relate to the world, to touch it, to bring it in close and experiment with it, forming their own social critique and uncovering what is not easily explainable or changeable.

5.6 School mealtimes and the grotesque body

This section will analyse how children engage in grotesque humour during school mealtimes to distort, exaggerate and transgress social boundaries. I am interpreting the grotesque as a fusion between what is funny and what is frightening: apparent opposites united and held together in the world of ambivalence. Drawing on Mary Douglas's (1966) investigation of purity and danger, this section will consider dirt or disorder as 'matter out of place', which is socially determined on the basis of a shared idea and not individual psychology. Douglas explored the symbolic meanings of dirt and cleanliness in different cultures, arguing that defilement offends against order and 'eliminating it is not a negative movement but a positive effort to organise the environment' (Douglas, 1966, p.2). In organising the normative school mealtime order, members positively conform to an idea and symbolic system of moral rules and values that are upheld by certain social rules and values, which reject ambiguity (Douglas, 2002). The significance of this is that while 'disorder spoils patterns, it also provides the material of pattern'; in other words, dirt, disorder or children's offensive behaviour is 'out of place' and does not uphold moral and social norms or values. It is a danger to the normative order and provides a means to recognise what dangers can be ignored and what kind of behaviour should be stopped.

Grotesque humour exaggerates to uncrown the normative order and remove it from untouchable-ness so that social order can be explored and renewed (Bakhtin, 1969). Bakhtin's (1968) concept of the grotesque celebrates the functions of the material conditions of the body that contradicts the idea of perfection in its overeating, defecation, belching and farting. Children make natural what is often seen as undesirable, exercising freedom from societal constraints (Cohen, 2011). This means that the carnivalesque reverses the order of the world; in the grotesque, the concept of reversal is applied to the body; the inside becomes the outside, and the outside becomes the inside (Thorogood, 2016). In inverting the normal functioning of order, the 'grotesque creates a different type of humour, one that is designed to shock the sensibilities, to dare the viewer to laugh at vulgar and crass representations of political issues' (Thorogood**,** 2016, p.225). The body is dialogic and symbolic, found in excess and shared because the functions of the body are an integral part of everyday life.

School mealtimes signify a contrast with the 'mental' time of classroom lessons because the body can spill over well-defined boundaries with all its grotesque imperfections. For Bakhtin, 'the grotesque life of the body is not a pure negativity but a warning about any system of thought that renders the body either abstract or easily perfectible' (Hitchcock, 1998, p.85). During class time, children's bodies are constrained in terms of bodily functions but the mealtime is a whole-body experience where expectations for the body are more tolerant, accepting and even celebrated. The

following episode is an interaction around the lunch table between both boys and girls and their use of grotesque humour.

> **Episode 5.6.1:** Six Year Three children are having a game around the table with food. My attention was initially drawn to this table because of their short loud outbursts of laughter but I had no idea what was causing their laughter, so I hung around to find out. When these children noticed me watching their interactions they stopped until I looked away again; therefore, I captured this incident by looking busy around the neighbouring tables.
>
> Six children were throwing a piece of pasta to each other around the table today. The pasta was hurled in random directions, falling on the children's food, the table and the floor. Ella picked the pasta up off the floor again and immediately flung it across the table to continue the game. There was a lot of giggling between the children, especially when the pasta landed on their own plate of food. When Mrs Roberts walked close to the table all the children resumed eating, stopping the game and the laughter. Once she had walked past, Ben squeezed mousse out of his mouth and the whole table laughed wildly. Ella, who was sitting at the opposite end of the table, squeezed yogurt out of her mouth, causing all the children to laugh again. This continued a couple of times in short intervals between Ella and Ben and all the children seem very amused.

<div align="center">(Non-participant observation, observation of six Year Three participants, 08/04/2013)</div>

In this episode the children's laughter increases when the pasta lands on someone's plate of food. I have interpreted the children as laughing because the act provokes social and moral values of the normative order, which is funny because it infringes on basic adult prohibitions. This is an example of children turning the seriousness of eating into an opportunity for gaiety, where they are aware that throwing food or eating food that has touched the floor is considered unsanitary and unsavoury. Mary Douglas (2002) suggests that polite conventions are an attempt to guard against the dangers of dirt (and disorder) which are not necessarily dangerous. Throwing food around the table and eating possibly contaminated food is an idea that is social and culturally constructed. The interaction shocks normative sensibilities and is grotesque because it threatens the school mealtime conventions of children's expected mealtime comportment.

Children's double-voiced discourse is demonstrated by understanding the sacred seriousness of the social world (shown by their reluctance to be seen by the mealtime assistant or myself) and how it

can be entwined with the profane and with comedy (throwing food and eating food that has touched pasta that has been on the floor). The 'carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid' (Bakhtin, 1984, p.123). Grotesque humour invites children to question and challenge the meanings that are made for them and encourages their capacity to make meaning for themselves.

Moreover, the children's mealtime interactions are a way to temporarily re-create the boundaries and work out the tensions and paradoxes of the official adult world. Children make new meanings using grotesque humour to overcome fear and distaste and renew the ritual of eating together. These carnivalesque experiences and freedoms are not just thoughts about the interrelatedness or the unity of opposites (Bakhtin, 1984); they are concrete sensual experiences of expressing themselves, experimenting with and challenging normative conventions of eating and socialising together. This chimes with Bakhtin's belief that 'new ways of being help people to see alternatives of possibility and justice' (Shield, 2007, p.104). Children experience multiple temporary moments during the school mealtime to experiment, question and challenge dominant understandings and distort prevailing truths about the normative order so as to create their own.

For example, Ben and Ella can be seen mocking the normal ritual of eating when they squeeze food out of their mouths, as opposed to ingesting the mousse or yogurt. I have interpreted this as the children's grotesque and ambivalent humour, squeezing excrement out of the mouths. In an observation of Jack and Oliver, Jack tells Oliver to 'eat that pooh', referring to his lunch (fieldnote, two participants from Reception, 28/02/2013). Both incidents are examples of what would be commonly rejected as grotesque and undesirable parodies and profanities of carnival humour, which violates societal constraints. The significance of their laughter is that it revives the children from the seriousness of dogma in institutionalised school life. Bakhtin (1968; 1981) wrote about the importance of incorporating the grotesque into carnival because it has the ability to teach us not to take ourselves too seriously, reforming and renewing both personal and institutional relationships. This sentiment is echoed in Shield's (2007, p.109) research when he argues the grotesque is particularly significant to children's education because it gives them 'permission to bring all of their life experiences to the learning situation'. The school may perceive mealtimes as opportunities for the children to learn the sensibilities, values and orientations of healthy eating habits. However, Hedegaard (2018) argues that the children's orientation is influenced by all the institutions they attend, in relation to the people and practices they participate in with others, a new developmental world can emerge. This means that children can creatively and innovatively use their knowledge

and experiences in relation with others to explore alternative possibilities, which may be contradictory to the desired school mealtime comportment.

The subversive nature of the children's interactions illustrates how they can collaborate together to observe their surroundings and communicate with each other, whilst playing, to avoid punishments and sanctions. This was seen in the episode when the interacting children used subtle non-verbal communication to warn each other, initially about my gaze and then about the presence of Mrs Roberts. For example, when children are bound together on a joint enterprise it unifies the goal and coherence of their actions, where a flick of the eyes in the direction of potential danger can be understood as a warning against an intruding eye (Wenger, 1998). Children are sophisticated social actors who can understand the gaze of others and collaboratively enact a smokescreen, temporarily demonstrating socially appropriate behaviours when the official spot light of attention is on them. This was seen in the episode when the mealtime assistant was in close proximity to their table and all the children quietly ate their lunch and had conversations at low level, until she had passed. This behaviour signifies the children's awareness of breaking moral and social rules about acceptable and appropriate ways of eating together, where they avoid being seen squeezing food out of their mouths and on to their plates. The subtle change in their behaviour illustrates their awareness that they are distorting the normative order of the mealtime ritual. Arguably, this illustrates that children need to be able to understand the official rules of the school mealtime and non-verbal communication before they can collaboratively subvert and avoid punishment. The multimodal nature of children's communication and interactions relates to how children socialise and develop multiple discrete skills to be able to read the abundantly changing mealtime situation and avoid punishment.

Grotesque humour is essential to children's socialisation because it provides opportunities to make strange the world of convention, to explore contradiction, ambiguity and paradoxes within the official adult world. In doing so, children's grotesque humour threatens polite convention that encodes respect and children's expected mealtime comportment within the normative order (Douglas, 1966). However, the selection of what is inappropriate during the school mealtime is socially dependent and thus relative. In drawing on Bakhtin's (1968) concepts I have illustrated how the grotesque exaggerates to uncrown the normative order and remove it from untouchable-ness, so that social order can be explored and renewed. In uncrowning school mealtime conventions of the normative order children can touch the forbidden, shock each other's sensibilities, and thwart the authorities and codes of conduct.

The investigation into children's embodied experiences of grotesque humour brings to the fore the less glamorous aspects of children's endeavours and the regenerative power of their laughter, which might otherwise go unrealised. Grotesque interactions are a way for children to release themselves from the dogma of institutional life and examine the world in new ways. When using grotesque humour, children do not 'speak or act in guarded, artificial ways that preserve the identities they have carefully constructed – or that have been constructed by others and imposed on them' (Shield, 2007, p.105). The episode illustrated children-initiated interactions, where it can be speculated that the children did not negotiate the rules of the interaction beforehand or decide who would do what or how they would handle the situation if they were interrupted. This illustrates that children can be sophisticated, reflexive, active agents and a distinctive group in their own right, negotiating, sharing and creating culture with adults and each other (Corsaro, 1992; Qvortrup 2015; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; James, 2013). Moreover, the grotesque in children's interactions is transient and ambivalent; children are socialised into these understandings during their ongoing participation in the mealtime (Bakhtin, 1968; Ochs and Shohet, 2006).

5.7 Resistance of the comical figure in the school mealtime

This section will explore children's ambivalent carnivalesque interactions to understand what happens when the stars fall out of alignment and the creative power of the comical figures falls flat with other children. In medieval festivals it was the responsibility of the carnival fool to carry either a pig's bladder on a stick or a bundle of straw bound together and to keep the dance from getting too serious. The Fool would hit people with this until it got the people laughing and into the festival spirit or at least until it had the amusement of the crowd. The comic figure made himself a source of amusement and was provided with significant privileges to abuse and poke fun at even the most exalted. In episode 5.4.1, Daniel orchestrated a sophisticated manoeuvre by playing the piano and mocking the authority of the mealtime, turning the social order inside out, much to his amusement and that of his friends. In the following episode, I analyse how Daniel annoys the children nearby and uses a subtle technique to watch the world that surrounds him.

> **Episode 5.7.1:** The following episode lasts for approximately 5 minutes. It has been transcribed almost entirely because it illustrates one continuous episode of Daniel's creative process and interaction with the children on the tables around him. Significantly, it reveals how sometimes Daniel simply cannot get the carnivalesque party started.

16:14	Daniel dusts off his chair and sits down without hesitation.

16:16 – 16:43	He gets up, walks around to each table, seemingly looking for something, then comes back to his table, pours himself a drink and chats to his friend, John, next to him. John and Daniel seem deep in conversation and both boys are looking into Daniel's cup.
17:08	Gary at the end of the table gets up with his sandwich lunchbox to leave and says something to Daniel and they stare at each other as he walks past.
17:10	Daniel leaps from his seat and chases Gary out of the hall; the other two boys (John and Chris) momentarily look around and then resume eating.
17:26	Daniel re-enters the meal hall and does a jump kick into an empty chair that causes a clash when it bumps into Chris's chair (who was sitting next to Gary). Daniel sits down and briefly looks into his cup again with John.
17:45	Daniel gets up and pours a new beaker of water, and both Chris (sitting opposite) and John (to his right) leave the table. In the same moment, the mealtime assistant rings the bell to ask the children to be quiet and, in this moment, Daniel switches his water cup with Gemma's when she turns around towards the mealtime assistant (she sits on a different table to the right of him).
17:58	Daniel slides Gemma's cup up his table to the other end.
16:02	Pippa taps Gemma and changes her cup for her, then points to Daniel, explaining what had happened. The girls talk together and eat their lunch.
16:08	Daniel shrugs and drinks his water, looking in their direction until 18:28.
18:28	Daniel begins to eat and talk to Tekla (sitting to his left). They are the only children at the table now.
19:12	Mrs Sloan rings the bell, this time more loudly and slowly.
19:13	Daniel shouts to the room 'shut up everyone'.
19:16	When all the children are quiet, Mrs Sloan speaks. She asks them to bring the noise down, especially the children in the dinner queue. She uses her hand to gesture to the area and children she is

	referring to and comments that they couldn't even hear the bell ring because they were talking so much.
19:19	Daniel copies her actions to the same area in an exaggerated way; he then turns around and drinks his water continuously until 19:39 and returns to eating. A mixture of boys and girls sit down to the table.
19:52	He kicks the chair opposite him from under the table and it knocks into the chairs at the next table, where two girls are sitting.
19:57	He kicks a chair to his right towards the next table and Lee, who is sat at that table, gets up and pushes it back to its place at the table.
20:04	Daniel gets up and turns around and kicks another chair behind him towards Lee's table and again Lee pushes the chair into its place at the table.
20:16	Daniel gets up and goes over to the chair and all the chairs in the area and pushes them in neatly and abruptly under the table. The children in the surrounding area are looking around at him. Daniel sits down and begins to eat again.
21:22	Daniel stops eating and offers his pudding to anyone at the table who wants it. He talks to the other people at his table until he leaves at 24:21.

(Transcribed video footage, 15/06/2015)

In this episode Daniel is the protagonist who tries to open up the inside out world of the carnival, but his efforts fail because the children around him do not respond. In the first instance Daniel sits down for a matter of seconds before he has a walk around the tables. It is unclear if Daniel is looking for something but it can be seen that he pays particular attention to each and every table in the room before sitting again himself. Perhaps he is familiarising himself to gain an overview of where other children are sitting in relation to his seat. Potentially Daniel is exploring his own field of vision and the viewpoints of others, interpreting and evaluating his relationship with others in the mealtime situation that surrounds him. According to Bakhtin (1981, p.159), 'the rouge, the clown and the fool create around themselves their own special little world, their own chronotope'. With them, these figures carry the mask of public spectacle to struggle against convention; as the harbinger of the carnival, these masks:

'grant the right *not* to understand, the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolize life; the right to parody others while talking, the right to not be taken literally, not "to be oneself"; the right to live a life in the chronotope of the entr'acte, the chronotope of theatrical space, the right to act life as a comedy and to treat others as actors, the right to rip off masks, the right to rage at others' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.163).

In Bakhtin's terms, Daniel is transformed into the protagonist with an authorial point of view as he arrives and surveys the mealtime context. The significance of conflicts between children during the mealtime is that comic figures are not to be taken literally but help to shatter the idea of static unchanging figures, highlighting that a person is unfinished and never completely revealed to the world (Bakhtin, 1968). In doing so, renewal can be born from the ashes of one form or another as a way to move comic interactions forward in the school mealtime (Cohen, 2011). The following sections will analyse how the rights laid out by Bakhtin play out in Daniel's interactions.

During school mealtime interactions, children can take advantage of the temporal and spatial expanses of the social conditions in the open, to estrange and alienate each other, creating their own conditions and parameters for social engagement. This can be seen at 17:45 when Daniel takes advantage of Mrs Sloan ringing the bell to switch a beaker of water with Gemma whilst she was turned towards the mealtime assistant. The provocation of switching Gemma's cup did not penetrate Gemma's dialogic formation because Pippa intervened and exposed what Daniel had done whilst her back was turned. Pippa poured Gemma a new beaker of water and Daniel shrugged, his efforts to confuse and tease having come to an early end. Significantly, Daniel held his beaker to his mouth for a couple of minutes whilst he looked in the girl's direction; his roguish deception is 'life's perpetual spy and reflector' (Bakhtin, 1981), but neither of the girls reacted to his actions and simply continued their conversation, ate their lunch and did not look in his direction again. Here, 'carnival celebrates the shift itself, the very process of replaceability, and not the precise item it is replacing' (Bakhtin, 1984, p.125). Gemma and Pippa created their own impenetrable dialogic formation of their own fun that Daniel was not privy to, replacing his humour with their own gaiety. At this point, the carnivalesque fire still burns in Daniel and he turns his attention elsewhere.

Parody is inherent in the tradition of the fool, as when Daniel mocks Mrs Sloan's usage of words by using them for himself (Hoy, 1992). This can be seen a few minutes after the first incident (19:12), when Mrs Sloan rings the bell again, much slower and louder than before. Towards the end of the bell ringing, Daniel can be heard shouting to the room 'Shut up everyone' as if he is the real

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authority in the hall at lunchtime. Daniel's behaviour suggests he wants to be seen as the 'Lord of Misrule' but the rest of the children do not always go along with this. Bakhtin (1981) argues that the clown and the fool can exploit their position, possessing special privileges and rights to be laughed at by others and by themselves. The whole room becomes quiet when the bell stops ringing and Daniel stops speaking, almost as if he has commanded the room into silence. Daniel contests Mrs Sloan's authority by turning in the direction she is pointing and imitating her hand gestures in an exaggerated comical way. Daniel parodies the symbols of authority of the official world, creating a dialogue between contradictory perspectives.

Parody embodies the subversive potential of laughter by distorting and transgressing the boundaries of the official discourse. Daniel's words are not spoken from the point of view of his own intentions; they are a deliberate imitation and reference to Mrs Sloan's vantage point. As a result, 'the parodied discourse rings out more active, exerting a counterforce against the author's [Mrs Sloan's] intentions' (Bakhtin, 1984, p.198). The laughter of the carnival feast is not just a personal strategy for coping with social order but a social strategy to celebrate and overcome fear and oppression (Quartz et al., 2001). However, Daniel turns and scans the room around him, but no one seems to have noticed him, is laughing or interacting with him in any way. Potentially, the other children resist the resister by displaying compliance and appreciation for adult order. Significantly, the very idea of 'crowning already contains the idea of immanent decrowning: it is ambivalent from the very start' (Bakhtin, 1984, p.124). This interaction demonstrates that Daniel's attempts to distort the official order for comic release and freedom from oppression are denied by other mealtime actors.

In the entr'acte after the incident with Gemma and parodied taunts towards Mrs Sloan, Daniel drinks his water and holds the cup to his face for an extended period of time. I have interpreted this as his way to 'look natural', using his cup like a telescope to be able to observe the people that he has provoked or teased. According to Bakhtin (1984, p.53), 'the hero from the underground eavesdrops on every word someone else says about him, he looks at himself, as it were, in all the mirrors of other people's consciousnesses, he knows all the possible refractions of his image in those mirrors'. This means that Daniel tries to anticipate the possible actions and evaluations people make towards him to stay one step ahead in the game. He observes the room over the top of his cup and remains still 'to guess the sense and tone of that evaluation and tries painstakingly to formulate these possible words about himself by others, interrupting his own speech with the imagined rejoinders of others'. However, Daniel has the final word as his thoughts about himself can only be perceived and not finalised (Bakhtin, 1984).

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Children can resist each other's efforts to hyperbolise the school mealtime, as was seen in the interaction when Daniel provoked the boys at the next table by kicking chairs for the second time in the mealtime. Lee did not retaliate to taunts of simpleminded rage and pushed the chairs back into place (Bakhtin, 1981). The children in the surrounding area looked more concerned than amused and so Daniel evaluated the world around him and made their evaluations of him inadequate by going himself to push all the chairs neatly back under the tables (Bakhtin, 1984). Once again, this ends the interlude; the comic spectacle is not realised, and laughter is not heard. Valsiner (2015) suggests that resistance is fundamental to children's development because it occurs through distancing, friction, conflict and conflict resolution, not through joining in happy harmonious communion. Daniel subverted the mealtime rules for the final time by offering his dessert to the children with whom he shares his table. The subversive offering is accepted, he eats his lunch and has quiet conversation with others at the table until he leaves.

Carnivalesque laughter does have its limitations and with this episode I have argued that the comical figure of the mealtime is not always able to ignite the carnivalesque spirit in others with his humour. The episode illustrated that Daniel's unofficial voice and carnivalesque acts fizzled away rather than entertained the crowd. Like the medieval comic figures tasked with livening up the crowd, Daniel did not to give birth to laughter as a liberating force of oppression. This highlights that whilst 'mock crownings and uncrownings may be comical, they are not necessarily so; the effect of such acts is context-dependent, a matter of the circumstances in which they are performed' (Stevens, 2007, p.2). Significantly, one should not necessarily assume that children always want to resist adult authority, as agency is as much about inactivity as it is about activity (Brenwell, 2013; Punch, 2016). Children are socialised into democratic possibilities, social tensions and counter-homogeny, where conflicts and ambivalences between the multiple voices of the children should be expected. A plurality of voices amongst their peers makes socialisation open ended; ongoing negotiation and joyful relativity exists, but not always within the control of the comic figure. Importantly, this section has illustrated that children can acquire subtle techniques to observe the world in covert ways, for example, by peering over the top of a cup after engaging in subversive behaviour to evaluate the responses of others. In many ways, children can be highly skilled and innovative, creatively pushing the boundaries and disappearing back into the chronotope of the school mealtime.

5.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have analysed children's interactions around a lunch table to understand how children collectively contribute to sociodramatic interactions when subverting the normative order. Firstly, I analysed the normative school mealtime order to illustrate how all members of the mealtime contribute to and maintain the normative way of doing and knowing (Wenger, 1998). Children's socialisation occurs through the process of their observation and participation with others in their sociocultural-historical situated activity (Ochs and Shohet 2006). I have argued that it is in relation to the imposed order that children transcend the edges of acceptability (Jenks, 2005) and engage in multi-voiced interactions (Bakhtin, 1981).

Secondly, I argued that the mealtime hour is configured as a transitionary period in between academic lessons, which creates a temporary suspension that is both ideal and real (Turner 1969). The findings suggest that the social conditions of the mealtime are significant because they contain ambiguous elements, which provide a resource for child-initiated learning, creativity, multi-toned narration and reprieve (Turner, 1969; Bakhtin, 1981). In the abundance of all things being various, children can have agentic capacity to restructure their identities and engage in carnivalesque interactions that subvert and disrupt the status quo of the normative order.

In doing so, I argued that the dialogic formations around the table are important for children's interactions in terms of what can be achieved collectively. I supported my argument with an example of Daniel playing the piano, where he subverts and objectifies the authority of the mealtime to achieve some critical distance, actively distinguishing his discourse from the discourse of others. The critical distance is crucial for children's socialisation to allow them to develop self-understanding in relation to others. Socialisation is an open, active and creative process of interdependence and experimentation with contradiction between the self and other. In consequence, children's socialisation can be double-edged; learning both the authoritative discourse of the adults and covert ways to disrupt and subvert the normative order.

I argued that children can understand and evaluate the normative order and in doing so they are able to wield, develop, adapt and play with different identities to cope with shifting power relations and manage the unfolding events that contribute to the continuation of laughter. I illustrated that laughter is not an individual reaction but the laughter of all the people and that it is directed at themselves and those who laugh (Bahktin, 1968). Significantly, it reveals the powerful force of laughter, which is not necessarily a harmless exuberance. The decision about what is funny is a moral one, enmeshed with power, which can include a darker, less admired practice of ridicule,

where laughter is not always good-natured, and children may also learn how to intimidate (Billig, 2005).

I have considered the significance of grotesque humour for children's socialisation and how it provides opportunities to make strange the world of convention, and to explore contradiction, ambiguity and paradoxes within the official adult world. Children can be sophisticated and know when and how to subvert the solemnity of the official discourse. They can collaboratively subvert the normative order proficiently, communicating non-verbally to avoid punishment. However, collaborative socio-dramatic interactions are not something that can be taken for granted because a performance with no audience or engagement can fall flat if the social conditions for dialogic interaction are not optimal (dependent on children's agendas and interactions on any particular day). There may be a hierarchy between peers, but the final section illustrated that to some extent there is no single authority, boss or comic figure that ignites the carnivalesque fire. This chapter has contributed to a panoptic view of children's carnivalesque interactions during the school mealtime; the following chapter will refocus the analysis to gain a more idiosyncratic perspective on children's transgressions.

Chapter Six:

The Oppressive Abundance of the Carnival: Analysis of Individual Subversions of the Normative Order

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse children's personal ritual performances of transgression during the school mealtime. The intention of this is to refocus the discussion of the analyses to investigate children's more private and elusive subversions of the normative social and moral order. This chapter will focus on episodes where individual children enact clandestine subversions when dealing with the abundance and ambivalence of the school mealtime. In doing so, this chapter aims to answer research question 3: How do individual children challenge the school mealtime structure and maintain a sense of autonomy?

Firstly, I will explore the everyday situation of the school mealtime in relation to Bakhtin's marketplace of the carnival, arguing that children in the same school mealtime setting have diverse voices and different perspectives that are equally valuable (Hedegaard, 2018; Bakhtin; 1981). Bakhtin did not explore a single reality but rather recognised how reality differs and appears differently to each character. The social conditions of noise and movement are important for children's socialisation, but much can also be gleamed from analysing their silence and inactivity. Secondly, I will analyse data where children refuse to devour the food and refuse to be devoured by the normative social order, asserting their own authority over what they consume (physically and symbolically) into their bodies. In doing so, I will explore how children can usually only exercise their power to say no in a partial form, because adults are in the social position of having legitimate knowledge, soliciting children's attention with social and moral tales that are designed to instruct (Lee, 2001; James and Prout, 2015; Ochs and Shohet, 2006). Thirdly, the analytical focus will explore how children contingently participate and enact their own agendas. In recognising that children are autonomous authentic social actors who may have different concerns or agendas from adults, this research does not intend to reinforce an adult-versus-child scenario but to interrogate and appreciate the intricacies and complexities of children's mealtime socialisation. The analysis will explore how children may well appreciate the accompaniment of adults to navigate unstructured peer produced worlds (Bremwell, 2013).

This chapter will give a different account from the previous analytical chapter (Chapter Five), which argued that children socialise collectively, objectifying the dominant discourse in order to explore, experiment, subvert and temporarily alter the status quo of the moral and social school mealtime order. The analysis in this chapter will extend the understanding of children's mealtime socialisation by incorporating children's idiosyncratic and clandestine transgressions of the normative order. In doing so, I will provide a perspective of children's socialisation that is not fuelled by gaiety, collaboration or celebrations of subversive humour.

6.2 Children's stillness in the marketplace of the school mealtime

The mealtime ritual creates specific physical and social conditions for children's socialisation, but different children enter and experience the school mealtime differently (Hedegaard et al., 2008). Similar to Bakhtin's (1968) marketplace of the carnival, the school mealtime is an open space with many different voices that simultaneously and separately exist. This means that children's unmerged voices create a multitude of contested meanings and voices within a single mealtime composition or in the marketplace of the carnival (Bakhtin, 1968). So, in the polyphony of the school mealtime, social actions vary; children sit by themselves, interact in small groups or larger social networks, or interact alongside their peers without engaging directly (Luckey and Fabes, 2005). Thus, the degree to which children engage and interact with each other varies.

Children influence their own developmental pathways, which are woven together with the social relationships of the situated activity (Vygotsky, 1998; Hedegaard et al., 2008). For example, children gradually acquire routines in relation to the temporality, spatiality, and materiality of the room, allowing some friends to gather together to enjoy conversation and interaction, whilst others prefer more exclusive private interactions or to sit alone. Children's socialisation is influenced by the normative shared activities of mealtime, but children also contingently enact themselves in relation with others, contributing and creating their own conditions for socialisation (Hedegaard, 2018). Co-existence and interaction are fundamental principles of children's school mealtime socialisation and dialogues.

Bakhtin (1986) argued that silence is an important part of discourse that can assume various forms of expression. With this in mind, I observed children during the mealtime who seem to experience a degree of temporary solitude. Goffman (1971) argues that when a person enters the presence of other people, he or she is subject to a set of very strong obligations that shape and constrain actions. In Goffman's (1971) terms, being with others but briefly absent from the present moment might be identified as time 'off stage'. Larson (1990, p.155) argues that 'solitude is a separation from others,

a separation from immediate participation in the social activities of talk, sharing, loving, judging and being judged'. Temporary solitude is a process of being absent from immediate social demands, constraints and social engagement. Moreover, Luckey and Fabes (2005) explored non-social play in the early years of children's development, defining non-social play as interactions where children are not occupying their time with activity or interaction with others. Their research discovered that children's solitude is related to independence and the increased alertness and maturity of the child, arguing that 'not all children who choose to play alone lack social skills crucial for optimal development' (Luckey and Fabes, 2005, p.68). During my observation of the school mealtime over an extended period of time, the focus of my attention found a stillness within the movement, noise and activity of the meal hall. The following episode is an example of how children fade in and out of interactions during the mealtime.

> **Episode 6.2.1:** I was stood at the side of the room observing the mealtime at a distance.

> I noticed lots of children zoning in and out of interaction with the peers around them. These children are not isolated or sitting alone but with their friends chatting and then taking a substantial pause, staring into space for some time whilst the world carries on around them, before re-joining the interaction sometime later.
>
> (Participant observation, 18/12/2018)

During these brief absent encounters, children may gain relief and take a pause from the pressures of social interaction and potentially give the 'inner self time to think, explore and feel what lies behind one's public persona' (Larson, 1990, p.170; Goffman, 1971). Luckey and Fabes (2005) argue that when children find social interactions tense and stressful, solitude can be a way to regain regulatory balance and some control over their participation in an activity. There are not necessarily distinct ways of participating in the mealtime and children quite often interact flexibly with others in a whole range of ways at different times during the same mealtime sitting (Hedegaard et al., 2008). Similar to the marketplace of the carnival, school mealtimes can be lively situations in which to let off steam, but for some children, they can be noisy and overwhelming as they drink in the complexity and bedlam of the unfolding organised chaos (Bakhtin, 1968). School mealtime situations brim with diversity and complexity of all things being various, which can lead to an ever-growing abundance that can flood the senses. Children of all ages can occasionally complain about the noise and become upset when submerged into excess. On these occasions, a temporary pause is a useful way to manage the overwhelming abundance of the polyphonic school mealtime conditions.

This section has argued that stillness can be a useful means for children to navigate the polyphony of the school mealtime where microcosms swirl. Temporary solitude, either sitting alone or with friends, may provide relief and opportunities to regain balance and control when participating in the mealtime. The marketplace of the school mealtime creates a polyphony that is heard on different levels, which means 'multiplicity is seen even within the same character, since a person has a different voice and point of view at different times, in different situations and contexts' (Viswanathan, 2010, p.58). The structured chaos of the school mealtime provides children with an experience of polyphonic open-endedness during which children experience transient ambiguity, uncertainty, instability and unfinishedness around them and within them. Children experience these mealtime situations and find their own ways to manage or cope with the bedlam that ensues. What is special about the stillness in the mealtime chronotope with regard to children's socialisation is that it provides children with an experience of abundance and ambiguity in a relatively safe and supportive space. If children's experiences become too difficult or unsettling, they can turn to a mealtime assistant for help. Moreover, it can provide a breathing space for contemplation (Smile, 2013). The following section will analyse how children can use the stillness within the noise and movement of the mealtime as a resource to transgress social and moral mealtime rules.

6.3 Moralising eating practices in the school mealtime

The abundance of food during the school mealtime may feel excessive to some children, which inevitably leads to them avoiding eating some of their meal. Similar to the carnival, hunger becomes feast as festival folk are lavished with an abundance of food, where waste is inevitable (Bakhtin, 1968). At St Peter's Catholic Primary School, it is the normative convention that cooks put food on children's plates in some quantity (which they may or may not want to eat) and it is the convention of the mealtime staff that children should try the food on their plates before they are allowed to refuse it. According to Jenks (2005, p.123), 'the negotiable character of these conventions is a question of power, which children can only exercise in a partial form'. How children are defined (conceived as incomplete, lacking in social experience or as complete reflexive social agents in their own right) relates to the children's opportunities for response. Assumed in this school mealtime convention is the understanding that adults are positioned as legitimate authorities over children, capable of knowing what children need and better able to speak on their behalf (James and Prout, 2015; Lee, 2001). Arguably, the purpose of the school mealtime for mealtime assistants is to feed children.

Children's satiety during the school mealtime can often be negotiated and fullness interactionally achieved (Laurier and Wiggins, 2011). Children avoid being asked to eat more, either by hiding food on their plates in little piles or by spreading it widely across the plate to give the impression that the majority of the meal has been eaten. Mealtime assistants often prepare 'mini-meals' by portioning up the remaining food on their plate into food to be eaten and food that can be left uneaten (fieldnote, 27/02/2017). Daniel and Gustafsson's (2010, p.272) school mealtime research argues that it is the duty of mealtime assistants to ensure children have eaten enough, yet they found in some cases, 'restrictions on children remaining in or leaving the dining hall [was] being imposed as punishments'. Within school mealtime practices, moral sensibilities are conveyed and transformed as children are socialised and guided into understandings about their bodies and how to comply, or not, with social mealtime conventions (Laurier and Wiggins, 2009; Ochs and Shohet, 2006; Rogoff, 1990). The following episode is an interaction between two Year Two, boys and a mealtime assistant to illustrate how mealtime assistants can socialise children by soliciting their attention with moral tales.

Episode 6.3.1: The episode begins as Mrs Matthews walks between the tables and notices two boys eating the icing off the top of their iced bun.

Mrs Matthews	You haven't touched your bun or drunk your milk! ((Loud bold tone))
Harvey and Justin	((both boys look at Mrs. Matthews whilst picking the icing off the top of their iced buns))
Mrs Matthews	Have a bite of your bun or you can't leave the table, otherwise it'll be a waste.
Harvey and Justin:	((Both boys take a bite of their buns and screw up their faces. I have interpreted from their reaction that they did not enjoy the mouthful of food.))
Mrs Matthews	Well, now you know for next time, if you don't like it and it's iced buns, get yourself fruit or a yogurt or it's a waste. ((Mrs Matthews walks away after speaking.))
Harvey and Justin:	((Both boys ate a little more icing off the top of their buns and left the table.))

(Non-participant observation, 08/03/2013)

This episode illustrates that meals and feeding practices mediate children's socialisation into moral and social understandings of what it is to eat and the consequences of not eating. Ochs and Shohet (2006) argue that social, cultural and moral understandings of eating are communicated through recurrent social participation. However, for less experienced members, messages are conveyed through assessments, directives and error corrections (Ochs and Shohet, 2006, p.37). In this episode Mrs Matthews is positioned as a legitimate authority over the boys, educating them into the moral obligation of what it means to take food, insisting they take a bite before they can leave the table. Mealtime staff have a system of knowledge about children and routinely evaluate the needs and competencies of each child, assessing how much food should be eaten and how children should respond to their requests. Assumed in the relationship is that Mrs Matthews is more capable of knowing what is best for the boys. However, if the two boys were to be conceived as reflexive social actors with agentic capacity to know what is best for themselves, reaching satiety would be accepted as legitimate knowledge.

Not all directives to eat more food originate in the belief that a child might still be hungry. I suggest that Mrs Matthews was aware that the boys knew what the bun tasted like and that they chose this dessert because of the sugary icing. According to Lee (2001, p.46), 'the dominant framework acts as a supplement to adults in authority, confirming their completeness, competence and ability to make good judgements whenever it might come into question'. Mrs Matthews can confidently ask the boys to take a bite of an iced bun knowing that it will not necessarily increase the boys' fullness but that it will deliver a moral message so that the boys understand the consequences of taking food and not eating it. Barbra Rogoff (2003, p.284) argues that 'one form of guided participation is explanation; another is teasing and shaming, when adults and peers point out children's foibles and missteps by holding their behaviour up to social evaluation – sometimes in humour and goodwill, sometimes not' (Rogoff, 2003, p.284). Mrs Matthews draws the boy's attention to their moral mistake by conveying a directive and error correction for future behaviour. This can be seen when Mrs Matthews comments 'Well, now you know for next time', explicitly reprimanding the boys.

Food can be in abundance during the school mealtime and children's consumption for the sake of pleasure can be questioned. I have analysed how mealtime assistants affirm and re-affirm moral sentiments of eating food and waste, according to historical, sociocultural practices in this community. Through this, children are socialised into mealtime talk where sociality and morality are 'oriented towards reinforcing what is right and what is wrong' (Ochs and Shohet, 2006, p.42). Arguably, Mrs Matthews perceives her moral lesson as part of her mealtime role and moral duty to

remind and educate children about mealtime comportment, which can take precedent over hunger. I analysed her exchange as a narrative from the dominant framework, which recognises that children are treated as incomplete, irrational and in need of guidance. Lee (2001, p.44) argues, 'just as it mutes children, the dominate framework grants adults the position of legitimate authorities over them, capable of knowing better than them and speaking more fully on their behalf'. On this occasion, the two boys agreed to take a bite when asked. However, this is not always the case and children can sit for relatively long periods of time with an expression of sadness (fieldnote, 20/02/2017), pushing food around their plates instead of eating or leaving the table (fieldnote, 20/04/2015) or not eating in the allotted timeframe (fieldnote, 13/07/2015). Significantly, in these incidents, what is important and concerns the children can become invisible and ignored by the supervising adults. James and Prout (2015, p.8) argue that 'children must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives'. If the children's perspectives continue to be unrecognised children may be educated to over-eat and/or ignore their authentic selves and ownership of their own self-understanding. The concern here is not with the consumption of food per se but with comprehending what social and moral understandings children may consume from these interactions.

6.4 Personal ritual performances of transgression

Feasting is indissolubly linked to the mediaeval carnival, not only in terms of the physical nourishment of taking food into the body but in its unavoidable consumption of ideas about the self and the other, which are imbued with cultural and social norms and values. Children's consumption of food is a conceptual reflection of the consumption of the social world. According to Bakhtin (1968, p.281), during the carnival 'man tastes the world, introduces it to his body, makes it part of himself'. Bakhtin (1968) insists that man is awakened during the carnival feast to devour the world (as opposed to being devoured by it), victoriously feasting on the manifested food. However, in this section, I will explore how children refuse to devour the food during the school mealtime and refuse to be devoured by the normative social order, asserting their own authority over what they take (physically and symbolically) into their bodies. This will illustrate a deep awareness that children have, when they routinely, purposefully and philosophically transgress the mealtime expectations. The following episode will focus on one Year Three participant named Andy, who transgresses the meantime ritual in a quiet and private manner.

Episode 6.4.1: The episode began as I was walking between the tables.

I was looking around the room generally when my eyes met with Andy's. He was looking directly at me with big eyes and a concerned expression, but he immediately looked away. It was an unusual expression because he appeared to be completely still and rigid for a moment, startled by something.

I walked past Andy's table to the side of the room to see if I could understand his peculiar expression and fathom what was going on. I stood with a table length between us, in line with him but slightly behind, just outside his peripheral vision so that I did not interfere with Andy's interactions. I noticed that Andy had a piece of bread in his hand. He put the bread into his lap and paused for a moment, casually looking around the room and then he dropped the bread to the floor and scuffed it with his foot under the table away from him. He then picked up his fork and ate some of his lunch.

(Participant observation, Year Three participant, 06/02/2017)

What intrigued me about this episode was that the bread is an optional accompaniment to the meal; children are not obliged to take the bread, whereas it is mandatory to take a meal of some description and quantity. It made me curious about why Andy would take the optional bread and in a downward movement put it to the floor, so I initially interpreted Andy's behaviour as a silent rebellion and provocation of the normative order of the mealtime. To support this interpretation, Quartz and colleagues (2011, p.58) argue that 'disempowered people, when forced to live within a stable, hierarchical system, often turn to the carnivalesque for rejuvenation'. However, I was unsatisfied that Andy was rejuvenated by the incident because he did not display any gaiety and instead seemed rather serious. With this in mind, Andy became part of my observation focus, where I continued to observe him discard food under the table, which led to the following observation.

Episode 6.4.2: My attention was called when Andy asked me if he could start to eat his dessert.

I said that he could but noticed half of a discarded jacket potato under the table. The potato was one chair away from where Andy was sitting. I walked around the table to pick it up, just as Mrs Matthews walked past and stopped to ask me what was going on. I explained that I had found half a potato on the floor. Mrs Matthews said that she

thought it might be Andy's because she asked him to eat his potato and she saw him cut it in half and then thought she saw him putting it in his coat pocket. Mrs Matthews walked over to Andy and checked his coat pocket but couldn't find the potato. She looked around and found a half of potato at the side of the room. Mrs Matthews took the potato to Andy.

Mrs Matthews:	Is this your potato?
Andy:	No.
Mrs Matthews:	But no one on your table is eating a jacket potato.
Andy:	[There were three empty seats] Yes, but the person sitting opposite me ((pointing to the empty seat)), they had a jacket potato too.
Mrs Matthews:	Did they?
Andy:	((nods in agreement))

Mrs Matthews went to talk to Mrs Dewhurst (the other mealtime assistant on duty) to explain what had happened. Mrs Matthews did not return to Andy and I walked around the tables and came back to talk with Andy because he looked a bit upset. I knelt down beside Andy to quietly talk to him about the potato on the floor. The surrounding boys on the table quietly listened and said nothing as they ate their meals.

SS:	Was that your jacket potato on the floor?
Andy:	((Shook his head to say no))
SS:	Did you not want to eat your potato today?
Andy:	((Shook his head to say no))
SS:	Why have a jacket potato [his regular choice] if you don't like them? Why not choose something else?
Andy:	I don't like the lunches.
SS:	None of them?
Andy	Well some of them but not many and I like the tuna on top of the potato, but I don't want to eat the potato.
SS:	But do you get hungry if you only eat the tuna?
Andy:	I never get hungry, I don't want to eat them, but I did eat my tuna and bread today.

When the conversation had ended, Andy ate his yogurt and was gone within the minute. Andy refused to admit to Mrs Matthews that he threw the potato onto the floor. I made a considered decision not to participate in punishing children's transgressions so that I could gain insight into what was important and what concerned the children. I asked Andy about the food on the floor because I was very sure that the potato was his, based on many previous observations where his potato or other items had been sent to the floor. Andy shook his head twice instead of using words to answer me, which I interpreted as his desire for discretion or perceived risk of punishment and perhaps his reluctance to be seen or heard overtly breaking the rules. Ochs and Shohet (2006) remind us that children's mealtime socialisation must be seen in relation to the production of sociality, morality and local understandings of the world.

I have interpreted Andy as being in a dilemma. The normative discourse and the mealtime staff assume children will be in the mood to eat, be hungry and eat the food that is provided for them. This is reflected in the maxims of mealtime staff that children should eat and value the food that has been provided for them. Refusing the food on their plates or refusing to eat during the school mealtime violates the social and moral norms and values of the normative order (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). However, when children refuse to consume by taking food or throwing it on the floor or in the bin, this also violates social and moral norms and values (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). Moreover, prior to the mealtime children sing a mealtime prayer reciting the words 'We're happy and we're grateful for every spoon and plateful, we're sitting at the table because we're your family' (fieldnote, 01/03/2013). Andy is not only breaking a social and moral rule of the normative order by taking food and wasting it, he is also committing an implicitly communicated religious sin. Andy, like other children in the school mealtime, is in a dilemma, where he would like to become a member of the mealtime community by displaying appropriate behaviour (Ochs and Shohet, 2006; Rogoff, 1990; Lave and Wenger, 1991), but he is aware of his own disparity, in terms of refusing consumption of the normative order and the authoritative discourse over his own (Bakhtin, 1981; Duncan and Tarulli, 2003). Children can understand the demands of the mealtime situation and develop competencies to participate in the fellowship of the mealtime (Hedegaard, 2018; Lave and Wenger, 1991) by transgressing the normative order to avoid consuming more food than they want to eat.

I have interpreted the struggle in Andy's interactions with food and the normative order of the mealtime as double-voiced. The action of taking the bread is a way for him to meet the institutional

demands where he can be perceived as a 'good boy'. This means he can publicly display desirable and acceptable behaviour by following the mealtime rituals in front of the cooks and mealtime assistants, taking a meal and the additional accompaniment of bread (Ochs and Shohet, 2006; Hedegaard et al., 2008). Similarly, quietly discarding the bread or potato, whichever he does not wish to eat on any particular day, because 'he never gets hungry', or for any other reasons, is his way of fulfilling his own personal interests. Two voices exist simultaneously, taking into account the counterviews and concerns of others as well as his own (Bakhtin, 1968). This can be seen when Andy reconciles his transgression by explaining that he has eaten his bread and tuna today, justifying, in some ways, his transgression. As a result of taking the bread, Andy gains bargaining power when the power play between children and the mealtime staff occurs over what needs to be eaten to fulfil social and moral expectations.

Significantly, I rarely observed Andy in an altercation with the mealtime assistants because of dropping food to the floor, but I often observed food on the floor around him or after he had left the table. The mealtime assistants periodically test different strategies to find the culprits for food waste on the floor, but Andy continues to go undetected. An example of this is when Mrs Matthews re-explained to me which tables were assigned to which year group, correcting me for allowing students to sit at a table not assigned to their year group, arguing for the importance of these rules because 'we get to know where people sit and then when there is lots of food under the table we will know who put it there' (fieldnote, Mrs Matthews, 06/02/2017). Arguably, the purpose of these rules is to protect the community from moral and social dangers and communicate a general view of moral and social order (Douglas, 1966). Moreover, this highlights that children can be sophisticated and highly skilled in subverting the mealtime ritual; they can understand the adult gaze and institutional demands and can act in elusive and creative ways to achieve their own agendas, whatever their reasons.

Moreover, Andy received stealthy support in the silence of other mealtime members around the table. According to Fiese and colleagues (2006), 'when family [mealtime] members are generally supportive of each other, an identity is formed that values group membership and is built around themes of inclusion'. Each mealtime member contributes to the frame of thinking around the table (Goffman, 1975); they have awareness and compassion for Andy's situation, shown by quietly listening and refraining from incriminating him in any way. Moreover, Andy disposes of food into a communal space under the table, which is an inventive way to hide his transgression amongst his peers. From my on-going participation in the mealtime it is my judgement that the children who sit with Andy are aware of who put the food on the floor. There is some degree of camaraderie and

control among mealtime members where complicit members act as a group to support each other with their silence. Significantly, it is through school mealtimes that relationships are forged and 'children are endowed with the agentive capacity to appropriate culture within their own frames of thinking, feeling and acting in the world' (Ochs and Shohet, 2006, p.36). The egalitarian position of the carnivalesque is especially appropriate here because it celebrates being human with all its failings, opportunities and features of democratic possibilities during the school mealtime (Bakhtin, 1968).

Andy's frequent personal ritual performances of transgression are a silent voice that subverts the normative order. In this section, my interpretation is that children do not throw food to the floor for humorous effect but because they are authentically circumventing the authoritative discourse. Children can claim their own authority over moral and social norms during the school mealtime because of the opportunities within the abundance of discourse and the excess of noise, movement and activity in this liminal period of the school day (Turner, 1969). According to Quartz and colleagues (2011, p.58), 'carnivalesque behaviours must be understood as having potential for emancipation and the kernels of transformation: they must be seen as the self-preserving actions of people seeking dignity'. Children put food down on the ground just as it goes down through the digestive system, engaging in self-preserving actions to maintain their dignity by not consuming food, or social and moral norms or values, for whatever reasons for each individual child. For Bakhtin, the focus is on 'the downwards': all actions of the physical body move down to the ground, the underground where rebirth and renewal are possible.

Children's socialisation during the mealtime involves opportunities to experience moral reasoning and negotiate their participation in social and moral values and norms under the radar of the adult gaze (Douglas, 1966). Children may agree or disagree, conform or not conform to collective influences and respond to counter positioning within the self and society (Hermans, 2012). This means that school mealtimes facilitate a different rhythm of life where contradictions can lead to the facilitation of critical thinking. For Bakhtin (1968), the dialogic process of 'outsidedness' is a pre-requisite for creatively understanding alternative points of view. Children's socialisation emerges from an interconnection between the social experiences of the mealtime that are bound to a particular position in time and space or, in Bakhtin's terms, chronotope. Moreover, children can be seen to be continually negotiating and re-negotiating what is important to them (Hedegaard, 2009), acquiring skills that may not be intended or that cannot be easily taught or changed. This section is not an example of playful mockery of the normative order; what specifically makes this episode

carnivalesque is that children are liberated from adhering to the normative order, subtly using the mealtime conditions to hide transgressions that enable their emancipation.

6.5 Transgressing through trial and error

As discussed in the previous section, timing and the social conditions of the mealtime are important resources for children, who seem to be capable of using them to their advantage when subverting the mealtime ritual. However, for everything that is true, the opposite can also be true (Bakhtin, 1981). The following episode analyses an incident with Sara, a Year Two participant, who is less adept at navigating the mealtime or transgressing the normative order. The episode will illustrate a fluidity in the social conditions of the school mealtime, where children socialise through experience and the process of doing (Lave and Wenger, 1991), analysing what can happen when the social conditions are not an optimal resource within which to hide.

Episode 6.5.1: The Reception class and some of the Year One children are seated and Year Two children are beginning to enter the meal hall, either joining the dinner queue or sitting down with their sandwich lunches. Mrs. Matthews is overseeing Year One children sitting down to the table, directing them if they hesitate and are not sure which tables are assigned to their year group.

Sara, a girl from Year Two, has a sandwich lunch and sits down to a table whilst some of her friends join the dinner queue. She opens her lunch box and a few moments later gets up from her table and begins to cross the hall towards the bin. Her table is situated on the opposite side of the room from the bin and Mrs Matthews is stood in the centre of the room, in line with the serving hatch, which is between Sara's table and the bin. When Sara turns to walk, she sees Mrs Matthews and pulls her hand (in which she holds her pitta bread sandwiches) closer to her side. She does a couple of quick steps and then pauses when Mrs Matthews turns toward her general direction, then speeds up her walking pace whilst Mrs Matthews is talking to Tabatha, a girl from Year One. As Sara gets closer to Mrs Matthews, she is nearly half way there and she pauses. It looks as if she is having second thoughts or hesitating for a moment, perhaps adjusting her walking pace before she continues. As Sara walks behind Mrs Matthews, she immediately turns around and asks in a loud voice 'And where do you think you're going?' Sara lifts her hand to show Mrs Matthews her pitta bread and replies, 'I'm going to the bin because I don't like it'. "No, back in your sandwich box, take it home and show your parents,'

Mrs Matthews retorts. Sara returns to her table and a few minutes later Mrs Matthews tells me 'You have to watch them and have eyes in the back of your head.'

In this episode Sara attempted to throw her food away before the other children were seated and the room became a bustle of activity, so her actions were easily noticeable. As she crossed the hall Sara paused, sped up and slowed down her walking pace depending on which way Mrs Matthews was facing. This illustrates that Sara knew who was in the authority position in the room and demonstrates that she had a good understanding of the adult gaze and that her actions were breaking the rules of the mealtime ritual. However, in this instance the social conditions were not optimal for her to blend in with other children and become invisible, or perhaps this was all part of the excitement and risk experience.

When Mrs Matthews and Sara came into conflict, instead of entering into a conversation, Mrs Matthews turned around and said, 'And where do you think you are going?' I have interpreted this as preparing the ground for reprimand and not as the syntax of a genuine request for information; her tone suggested sarcastic irony and the question resonated with incredulous rhetorical effect. Mrs Matthews did not ask where Sara was going, she asked Sara, 'And where do you "think" you are going?' This subtly implied that Sara had made a mistake and had an idea about going somewhere but that this was not about to become a reality. Mrs Matthews may not have known exactly what Sara's plans were, but she knew that something was 'out of place' which needed her attention (Douglas, 1966). There is often so much diverse activity during the mealtime, which leads to a social abundance and much stimulation; the mealtime assistants do not always have the time or capacity to attend to all ruptures (mealtime assistant group interview, 06/2015). The essence of this is heard when Mrs Matthews tells me 'You have to watch them, you need eyes in the back of your head', which captures the idea that Mrs Matthews may not have the time or capacity to engage with all children in a compassionate authentic real-time conversation to ascertain any underlying reasons for children not wanting to eat. Mealtime staff tend to pick up on activities that seem unusual because they break a pattern, and respond in an automated manner. This observation further supports the view that Mrs Matthews may have underlying assumptions about children being deviant, in need of control, observation and protection from themselves as they cannot be trusted to follow the rules alone (Lee, 2001; James and Prout, 2015).

What is significant for children's socialisation about these small and numerous conflicts during school mealtime is that children are learning through the process of doing, through making mistakes, and within that, they are learning how to manage conflicts and understand themselves in relation to others (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In a Bakhtinian sense, these conflicts pierce the routine, where children are developing dispositions that welcome the spontaneous and irreverent participation that can lead to intense socialisation (Shields, 2007). The flexibility of the carnivalesque mealtime socialises children to live fully in the chronotope of time and space, where the social conditions temporarily permit new ways of interacting in the new context (in comparison to the academic domain or playtimes). This attunes with Shields (2007, p.128), who argues that 'when we live in carnivalesque ways, we are living dialogically – open to difference, to other, to possibility'. However, due to the social abundance of the mealtime, sometimes mealtime assistants respond to these interactions in a slightly automated way, which is imbued with socially and culturally defined ways of structuring the mealtime (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). Moreover, these conflicts highlight the differentiation between institutional practice and children's agendas in their everyday activities. According to Hedegaard and colleagues (2008, p.19), 'the easiest way to understand a child's intention is to note when there is a conflict where the child cannot do what he or she wants to do and cannot realise the projects in which he or she is engaged'.

Through exploring the children's perspectives insights can be gained which do not necessarily support or confirm the adult's authority. The children's perspective enables the recognition that 'the environment in this relation must not be conceived as something outside of the child, as an aggregate of objective conditions, without reference to the child and how they are affecting him or her by their very existence' (Hedegaard et al., 2008, p.14). This means that children's socialisation is woven together with the materiality of the school mealtime and the social conditions in which children eat. Significantly, children's ability to navigate the shared mealtime practice is diverse and multi-faceted. Conflicts during the school mealtime enable children to acquire competencies and solve problematic situations for themselves. However, if mealtime staff are not aware of the children's perspectives, conflicts can be continuous and ongoing and if children become fixated in negative interactive patterns, this may hinder their social development, which may lead to unintended outcomes of school mealtime socialisation.

6.6 Socialising outside the frame of peer interaction

This section will explore how children may find it difficult to interact within dialogic frames of peer interaction and may find other ways to participate in the mealtime to get their needs met. The complex theme of figurative masks during the school mealtime enables children to 'struggle against

conventions, against all that oppresses or marginalizes or disempowers because it provides the possibility of liberation and new identity' (Shields, 2007, p.114). However, children may feel oppressed, marginalised and disempowered by other children during the school mealtime. Children may put on a figurative mask to hide feelings, insecurities or confusion from the people around them.

The following episode will explore a situation where children may find it very difficult to participate with other children in the unstructured peer world of the mealtime. Izzy, a Year Three participant, often has complications in sitting with friends or sitting in the seat that she wants to sit in at the table. She tends to find it difficult to interact with her peers and will either sit alone or radiate sadness about sitting with undesirable table members (fieldnote, 06/07/2015). At the same time, Izzy is frequently seen cuddling the mealtime staff and involving them in her plans to achieve an advantage over peers. For example, she may have difficulties in being able to stand next to her friends in the dinner queue and may elicit a mealtime assistant's help to take her to where she needs to go or to assist in moving her between tables (fieldnote, 06/02/2017). It is crucial to not simply assume that Izzy is being manipulative and deviant in order to gain an advantage over her peers. For example, Jenks (1996) argues that children should not be judged in relation to the yardstick of the normative structure, which ignores the specific and coherent meanings of the child. The aim of the analysis is to explore some of the difficulties that Izzy might face when it comes to negotiating the unstructured arena of the mealtime. The following episode is a circumstance where a child may find it difficult to understand how individuals contribute, share and read the other interactants in a frame for understanding experience (Goffman, 1975).

> *Episode 6.6.1:* I am stood at the side of the room observing the Year Three children collect their lunches and sit down to the table.

> Izzy approaches a table and Jenny, the girl at the end of the table, tells Izzy that she cannot sit next to her, so Izzy moves her tray a couple of seats down the table. Seconds later, three more girls arrive and shove Izzy's tray up another seat so that they can sit together. My attention is called elsewhere and the next time I look over, the table is full of children and Izzy has moved to another table. A few minutes later I notice that Izzy has left the room and is looking into the hall through the glass of the meal room door with a sad expression. I speak to Izzy and ask what she is doing, and she explains that her friends do not like her because they never want to sit with her. She points to Oliva (who was not at either of the tables that she has already sat at and is sitting at a third

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table where there are seats available). Izzy goes back to her seat and the children around the table suggest that she moves to where Oliva is sitting. Izzy asks Mrs Roberts if she can move tables (because she has started her meal) and Mrs Roberts agrees and carries Izzy's plate to the table where Oliva is sitting. For the remainder of the meal no one on Oliva's table talks to Izzy and she doesn't eat much food.

(Non-participant observation, Year Three participant, 06/03/2013)

In this episode, Izzy moves between three different tables and does not display any signs of being happy about sitting at any of the tables. In the first analytical chapter (Chapter Four) I used Goffman's (1975) frame analysis to analyse how children organise their experiences and create social frames to understand 'what is happening now' by constructing a shared social situation and by reading the other interactants in the situation (Goffman, 1975; Persson, 2015). This episode differs because Izzy seems unable to participate within the group dynamics around the table and unable to enter into and negotiate her involvement in the interactional situation.

Potentially, Izzy feels rejected by some of the children at all three tables. Social situations such as this can be unsettling, and Izzy responds by taking some time away from the table or moves to a different table. Izzy later seeks assistance from the mealtime assistant to be united with her friend. The adults in the child's interactive situation provide valuable support when children find it difficult to engage with others in the unstructured environment. Adult intervention does help Izzy to move tables, but it does not assist her in interacting with her peers because Oliva and the other children around the table ignore her and she is unable to involve herself. Izzy's advantage has reconfigured her understanding about how she can gain entry into the interactive space around the lunch table, but, potentially, she misses out on understanding how to gain entry into the peer-led dialogic frame. Significantly, in as much as possible the children themselves define the dialogic formation around a table and control the access to their collective groups, which the adults do not preside over (Sections 4.3; 4.4; 4.6; 7.4). The following episode occurs approximately two years later and illustrates how Izzy has become pre-occupied with interacting with the adults instead of her peers.

> **Episode 6.6.2:** The episode begins as I am walking around the hall wiping empty tables between the first and second sittings. I notice Izzy sitting on her own looking very sad and she indicates that she wants to talk to me. She starts speaking to me as I approach her:

Izzy	I can't eat my dinner because it has gravy on it.
SS:	Where is your dinner? ((Izzy has no food in front of her))
Izzy:	Over there. ((She points to the PE benches at the side of the room))
SS:	Why is it over there?
Mrs Sloan:	What's up Izzy? ((in a loud cheerful voice))
Izzy:	((mumbles something quietly))
Mrs Sloan:	What? I can't hear you. ((Mrs Sloan exasperatedly puts her hands up in the air, sighs and walks away))

Izzy gets up from the table and goes into the playground. I go to the window to see where Izzy is going, and Mrs Sloan goes to help the younger children scrape their plates. I hover at the window for a moment where I can see Izzy sitting alone on the bench outside the lunch hall looking sad. Mrs Sloan approaches me:

Mrs Sloan:	What was all that about?
SS:	(I explain what happened in my interaction with Izzy)
Mrs Sloan:	Well she can't eat nothing, where has she gone?

Mrs. Sloan hovers in the doorway for some time, signalling to Mrs Sanderson who is on playground duty and explaining the situation. Mrs Sanderson and Izzy talk for a while and Izzy comes back into the hall and sits with her plate of food and is given a pudding. Izzy eats her pudding but not her roast dinner with gravy. Mrs Sloan asks Izzy why she hasn't eaten her roast dinner and Izzy explains she doesn't like gravy, so Mrs Sloan asks the kitchen for a plate of food with no gravy (it is very rare for the kitchen staff to re-plate food). Two girls have now sat at Izzy's table, they eat and shortly after they leave. Izzy sits alone again. I collect Izzy's old plate of food with gravy on to take it to the bin and we exchange a couple of words. A minute or so later, I am stood in the vicinity of the bin because I have just thrown away Izzy's old plate of food. Izzy looks this way and that, picks up her new meal and takes it to the bin. I notice that she has eaten a small amount of chicken and nothing else. I don't say anything, but she looked at me and smiles, saying 'I don't like roast dinners anyway, I only like chips and crisps' and merrily skips out of the door and into the playground.

What was different in this episode is that Izzy wanted to be noticed for not eating. She had ample opportunities to leave the meal hall without eating but instead sat at her table until someone noticed, and perhaps called me over when this did not happen. It is not usual for a child to be sat alone in the meal hall with no meal in front of them and a mealtime assistant would typically notice this kind of unusual behaviour. My interpretation is that Izzy engaged in this behaviour on purpose to attract an adult's attention. On this day, at this time, there was only Mrs Sloan on duty, and she has a friendly, informal and relaxed demeanour towards the children. When Izzy mumbled it was unclear if Mrs Sloan's exasperation was a reaction to the abundance of multiple competing demands during the mealtime or to this child in particular. However, Izzy seemed to have a good understanding of how the adults would react to her sad expression. I had previously observed Izzy interchange emotional expressions, depending on the situation. Shields (2007, p.115) argues that 'the use of masks provides a time when we actually can construct our own identity rather than having others construct it for us'. Izzy received support and conversation from Mrs Sloan, Mrs Sanderson and from the cooks, who seldom offer a new meal to anyone. At no point did I observe any peer interaction.

Initially, I interpreted Izzy's words 'I don't like roast dinners anyway, I only like chips and crisps' as the punch line to a wild goose chase because she had somehow managed to subvert many of the mealtime rules, openly and in full view, and most significantly, with the support of the surrounding adults. To do this, Izzy presented the adults with a problem and an expression that inspired their compassion and encouraged them to find a solution. Bakhtin (1981, p.163) argues that masks give us the 'rights to betray to the public a personal life, down to its most private and prurient little secrets'. I have understood this to mean that Bakhtin recognises the interconnection of life, in which joy is not separated from sadness, where we need not fear who we are, as the masks reject conformity to ourselves. During the school mealtime it is permissible to relax and be oneself, no longer needing to live in guarded and self-censoring ways; this allows children to gain a sense of egalitarianism and comradeship as they navigate the ambiguity of the meal hall, restructuring their identities and altering the status quo (Turner, 1969).

Children can find multifarious social situations overwhelming, experiencing difficulties when interacting with peers. Hedegaard (2009, p.77) argues that 'conflict and crises can cause children to develop motives and coping mechanisms' that result in silence and withdrawal, even though children want to have warm relationships with peers. When children are marginalised from their peers or cannot involve themselves in the frame for thinking and understanding peer worlds,

figurative masks can help children to manage what is difficult to negotiate in ordinary everyday life. Significantly, some children may prefer and can excel in more adult structured environments (such as the classroom) and find the unstructured-ness of peer worlds during the mealtime unforgiving and difficult to navigate. During the mealtime situation, children find new ways to be connected with others. For example, children may turn towards adults for comfort and support to make them feel connected and less isolated. However, there are inevitable consequences for children who pretend to conform, whilst feeling forced to hide and feeling shame about not wanting to eat their lunch or being unable to navigate the ambivalence of the unstructured peer produced world. These experiences can produce adverse socialisation effects, where children muddle through, contributing to unintended outcomes to children's socialisation. For some children the school mealtime is not a fun collaborative experience of belly laughter and games, it can be an isolating, hostile environment full of unpleasant uncertainty and risk that provides a different socialising experience.

6.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have analysed children's idiosyncratic ritual performances of transgression, which are more private and clandestine than those in the previous analytical chapter. I have argued that, similar to the mediaeval carnival, the polyphonic school mealtime has an abundance of food, noise and movement, containing a dynamic social interplay of diverse collective and individual interests. As a result, food waste is inevitable, the social conditions can be unforgiving, and conflicts are to be expected. Within this abundance and ambivalence, children can interact alongside peers without engaging directly and can use stillness and silence as a resource. The chapter has recognised complexities in children's diverse voices, different experiences, competences and agendas. The key point is that the carnivalesque atmosphere does not mean that everyone is having fun all of the time. Children have different strategies for managing and subverting adult-imposed discipline at mealtimes. Some children push the boundaries overtly, others pretend to comply and break the rules surreptitiously. A peer-constructed social order can result in some children being outcasts who do not succeed in the game of popularity stakes.

I have argued that mealtime assistants provide social and moral tales about food that express normative expectations through their assessments, directives and error corrections (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). In doing so, children come to understand what is right and wrong about eating in communal situations. I have illustrated how adults are positioned with legitimate knowledge and children tend only to exercise their power to say no in a partial form (Lee, 2001; James and Prout, 2015). The concern here is not with the consumption of food per se but to comprehend what social and moral messages children consume from these mealtime interactions. I have explored episodes

where children are in a dilemma, on the one hand conforming to the social and cultural norms of the mealtime, but on the other, experiencing difficulties with those ideas for various reasons. The analysis in this chapter has shown that school mealtimes are opportunities for children to experiment with and question the practice of consumption and distinguish their own authority over the authority of the others. Children can respond creatively by finding innovative ways to maintain their sense of independent identity and comfort themselves when managing conflicts. However, unlike in the previous chapter, this is a serious business because it is not a shared endeavour with others and carries greater risks that can see children sat at the table pushing food around their plates for a relatively long time if they misjudge the situation or cannot / do not have the skills needed to subvert the mealtime rules.

There are inevitable consequences for children who pretend to conform, whilst feeling forced to hide and / or feel shame about not wanting to eat their lunch or being unable to navigate the ambivalence of the unstructured peer relations. These experiences can produce adverse socialising effects, where children muddle through, which contributes to unintended outcomes of children's socialisation. For some children the school mealtime is not a fun collaborative experience of belly laughter and games, it can be an isolating, hostile environment full of unpleasant uncertainty and risks that provide different, potentially negative, socialising experiences. For some, the classroom is a place of safety and pleasure and the mealtime an overwhelming and distressing social situation. Some children may prefer and appreciate the adult-imposed order when navigating the ambivalence and abundance of unstructured peer produced worlds.

Children's socialisation is a process of living and doing, learning to belong through experience. Experience of bending the rules is a vital part of the developmental process in children's socialisation because it gives them the opportunity to live authentically and become critical of moral and social reasoning in a relatively safe way. The school mealtime is full of irreconcilable tensions and paradoxes where children have opportunities to be human, with all their failings, because the carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people, but lived in (Bakhtin, 1968).

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore what can be learnt from my analytical chapters (Chapters Four, Five and Six) about children's school mealtime socialisation from a child-centred perspective. I start by providing an overview of each analytical chapter, summarising my key findings. I then read across my chapters and discuss specific episodes in relation to broader theoretical areas, situating my findings in relation to existing research.

Firstly, I discuss the distinctive configuration of space and time in relation to children's mealtime socialisation to understand how children experience the school mealtime social milieu differently from other times in the school day. Secondly, I examine how children can create collaborative social interactions or individually interact side by side to fulfil and live out their own agendas, which vary between children and require different dialogic frames for thinking and interaction. Thirdly, I discuss how children explore and exceed the limits of adult controlled order, develop criticality and cultivate their own sense of self within the diversity of voices during the school mealtime. Fourthly, I explore how children are socialised into moral and social sensibilities about food and the body and highlight children's competency in using grotesque humour to challenge the meanings that are made for them. Finally, I discuss the emergent dimension of children's interactions to reveal how school mealtimes are opportunities for children to creatively experiment with both the predictable and the unpredictable, serendipitous and contingent aspects of social life in a relatively safe way.

7.2 Overview of the analytical chapters

The first analytical chapter (Chapter Four) revealed that the configuration of children around a lunch table is not assumed nor taken for granted by the children. In general, some children plan their seating arrangements prior to the mealtime or in the moments prior to sitting down within the mealtime. In terms of children's socialisation, the findings suggest that children can be sophisticated and adaptable when enacting their own agendas to sit with friends. The accumulation of experience, fluidity within the mealtime and continual maintenance of relations are important to children's socialisation. Chapter Four was essential for comprehending how children purposefully configure the material and dialogic space of the mealtime to enable different kinds of interactive situations. The analyses in Chapters Five and Six were pivotal in revealing why children may make

an effort to sit at a particular table (or a particular seat) and in understanding what is important and at stake for children during their school mealtimes.

The second analytical chapter (Chapter Five) demonstrated how, when children purposefully configure themselves around a table, they construct together the dialogic formation, which varies between tables. Children embody the carnival, freed from dogma to disappear into the abundance of noise and movement of all things being various, to challenge and experiment with the established moral and social order. The mealtime social conditions provide an important backdrop for children to collaborate with friends and subvert the moral and social order of schooling (Section 7.3). When children configure themselves around a particular table with likeminded individuals, they create safe spaces to fulfil and live out their own agendas. To explicate these ideas, the analysis drew on a Bakhtin's notion of carnival to understand how children transgress moral and social boundaries, joining in gaiety to mock the hierarchical ordering of the school mealtime.

The third analytical chapter (Chapter Six) argued that school mealtimes can be isolating, hostile social experiences, full of unpleasant uncertainty and risks that provide different socialising experiences. The analysis of data in this chapter revealed children's idiosyncratic experiences of transgression in their dealings with the abundance and ambivalence of the school mealtime. In contrast with Chapter Five, Chapter Six illustrated how children can engage in risk taking behaviour and misjudge the social conditions; it delved into children's inactivity to understand how children observe the world around them to transgress the normative moral and social order in private and clandestine ways rather than for notoriety or hilarity.

The vantage point of the analyses is a panoramic view of the school mealtime, which offers a composition of children's collective mealtime socialisation experiences and zooms into their idiosyncratic socialisation, all within the marketplace of the carnivalesque mealtime. Both viewpoints are essential because reducing children's multiple worlds into one viewpoint would have provided a distorted view of their mealtime experiences (Bakhtin, 1984). I have argued throughout that carnival is for the release of normally supressed desires, but this is not about the mindless unleashing of desire; children's interactions are controlled (Bragg et al., 2015) and rule governed (Vygotsky, 1978). My analyses have investigated children teetering on the edge of rule breaking, as children's rule breaking and punishment within the school system is already well-documented.

The data represents children's subversive interactions, which have been valued rather than criticised. This coheres with Jenks (2005), who argues that children should not be judged in relation

to the yardstick of the normative structure, which ignores the specific and coherent meanings of the child. The analysis in all three analytical chapters has taken an egalitarian perspective to argue for the innocence of carnival, in the sense that children have been valued for what they bring, their innovation and creativity, to grapple with the process of their socialisation during the school mealtime. This aim allowed the research to focus on what is important and at stake for children during their mealtime experiences.

7.3 Belonging to the school mealtime chronotope

The analyses have illustrated that during the school mealtime, temporal and spatial relationships fuse together like a kaleidoscope in which the social conditions are neither as formal as those of a classroom nor as informal as those of playtime. Chronotope is understood as a distinctive configuration of space and time in relation to human action (Bakhtin, 1981). The school mealtime chronotope is unlike the official conception of time and space because it has an element of change and renewal, and as a result, children experience the school mealtime social milieu differently. This means that the chronotope or social milieu determines what the children 'belonging' to that chronotope can achieve or experience within the conditions of their surroundings (Steinby, 2014). The significance of the school mealtime chronotope is that the social conditions determine the chronotopic form in which actions and interactions occur, which are neither neutral nor passive. This section discusses how the time-space of the school mealtime is an important resource for children's socialisation.

The analysis supports the work of Valentine (2000), arguing that two worlds make up the school system, which are most strongly contrasted during the school mealtime (Section 4.2). The analysis illustrates that the official school mealtime structure is organised, ordered and monitored by adults who communicate, both explicitly and implicitly, the expectations about behaviour and activities that are appropriate and expected in this environment (Sections 4.4; 6.3; 6.5). Moreover, all individuals contribute to the emergence of social practice, which is neither inherently stable nor randomly changeable (Sections 4.2; 5.2). The significance of investigating the structuring of the school mealtime at the beginning of each analytical chapter (before analysing children's peer produced worlds) was that children's interactions needed to be put in context in order to understand how children internalise proper rules of behaviour and exploit rather than ignore these conditions. The chronotope and mealtime structure creates frames for children's thinking and action, which requires an understanding of how the mealtime rules and social conditions constrain and enable children's actions and interactions (Sections 4.2; 5.2; 6.2).

Children are embedded in the processes and practices of the organisational structure, which enables large numbers of children to be fed in short time and space conditions; however, at the same time, children are eating, relaxing and have some flexibility to influence and create social interactions of their own. Significantly, Smile (2013, p.51) argues that school mealtimes are essential for children to stop doing what is imposed on them and 'have time and space in which to break away, at least mentally, from the workaday world and enter into contemplation'. School mealtimes are not as structured as classroom conditions in this school, yet children are still involved in normative, patterned, repetitive and cooperative activities, rules and expectations. However, they are not as unstructured as playtime, in which children have opportunities to let off steam and choose their own activities within broader limits (Blatchford, 1989; Thomson, 2007), free from more sedentary activities. The school mealtime is somewhere in between, not completely free from adult control but not completely in the children's domain to do or behave in any way they wish. Within this fertile ground structure and emergence do battle, which manifests tensions in which children have agency to modify, undermine and transform social practice in the give and take of everyday mealtime interactions.

The school mealtime provides heteroglossic social conditions in which children can challenge and experiment with the school rules and surreptitiously explore their own autonomy. For example, children experience the freedom of choosing where to sit but this freedom is limited to assigned tables (Valentine, 2000). Children do not have the same degree of freedom found in the more unstructured conditions of the playtime and mealtime assistants do not have the same degree of control over the meal hall as in the more structured conditions of the classroom (Section 5.4). However, from these more loosely controlled mealtime conditions children can gain opportunities, experiences and knowledge of how to monopolise the school mealtime structure (Sections 4.3; 4.5) and gain advantage over both mealtime order (Sections 5.4; 5.5; 5.6; 6.4) and their peers (Sections 5.7; 6.6). This is significant for children's socialisation because children have displayed their own authority and sense of self as narrators and creators of their own knowledge and understandings. In doing so, children enter into a new self-concept, which allows normal limits to thought, self-understanding and behaviour to be relaxed (Turner, 1969). The significance of liminality and self-making in the mealtime is that children's concepts of self are being constituted and reconstituted as a process in which the self is transitionary and therefore tolerated by the official established order. It is through the procedural and conceptual transition that children gain a sense of egalitarianism and comradeship to navigate the ambiguity of the meal hall, restructuring their identities and altering the status quo.

Partially liberated from the restrictions imposed at other times of the school day, children can make strange the world of convention, exploring contradictions and paradoxes within the official adult world of social and moral order (Sections 5.4; 5.6; 6.4). The chronotope of the school mealtime 'open(s) up to the characters a certain time-space of possible action, which is conditioned by a locality or a social situation but still leaves the individual the freedom of ethical choice' (Steinby, 2014, p.122). In this context, children gain experience and knowledge of the social world for themselves to resolve and confront their own curiosity, difficulties and mishaps, as opposed to adult guided moral and social order that is external and imposed. Significantly, these experiences (which are not free from constraints) are significant for children's socialisation because children develop their own understandings of moral and social norms and values, to touch them, to bring them in close and experiment with them, forming their own social critique and uncovering what is not easily explainable or changeable (Bakhtin 1968; 1981).

In sum, this section has discussed how school mealtimes are somewhere in between the official business of the classroom as defined by adults and the more unstructured playtime as defined by children. I have argued that through seemingly innocuous everyday practices of the school mealtime children are socialised into mealtime conventions and comportment, but children also gain opportunities and freedoms to make strange the normative conventions of moral and social order. The chronotope of the school mealtime belongs to the children and facilitates dialogic interaction within the seriousness of the mealtime structure, where children can turn their experiences into opportunities for rejuvenation and reprieve. As a result, children are informally socialised, experiencing multiple discourses, finding solutions for their own agendas and objectifying the authoritative discourse to form their own social critique. The social conditions of school mealtimes are essential in children's socialisation to create a temporary suspension, both ideal and real, whereby children test the boundaries of what is permitted with relative freedom to think for themselves, experiment and refine and redefine their subjective world view.

These findings are relevant to childhood studies research. The findings offer a viewpoint on how children experience, understand and structure their school mealtimes. Children have been conceptualised as active and reflexive social actors who are not entirely dependent on adults to frame and construct the world for them (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). However, Daniel and Gustafsson (2010) conclude that school mealtimes are not children's spaces because children are limited, constrained and controlled by adults who place an instrumental value on their lunchtime. Significantly, they also identify that this finding is contested from the child's perspective, because 'children see them [school mealtimes] as offering one of the few opportunities within the school day for a space within which to exercise their own culture/agency' (Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010,

p.273). My research supports the conflict that Daniel and Gustafsson (2010) identified between adults' control of mealtimes and children's perceived agentic experiences. In addition, the findings from this research extend knowledge into the ways in which children belong to the school mealtime chronotope, operate under the radar of supervising adults to challenge the normative discourse and experience multiple discourses, creating and finding solutions for their own agendas to form their own social critiques.

7.4 The social organisation of children's experiences and the dialogic interactive space around the lunch table

Chapter Four explored how children purposefully configure the material and dialogic space around a lunch table to enable different kinds of interactive situations. The analysis drew on Goffman's frame analysis (1975) to understand how children organise experience and make sense of what is happening now, moment to moment, in everyday life (Hill, 2014). The analysis explored how children make sense of, share and organise their mealtime experiences according to their interactive situations and personal agendas. I argued that tables form boundary objects (Wenger, 1998) that relate to the social experience of creating frames for thinking and interacting, where perspectives meet, and agendas are created together, which are largely outside of adult control (Sections 5.5; 5.6). Here I argued that children purposefully construct their material, social and dialogic interactive space, which enables certain kinds of interactions or microcosms.

For example, the social dynamics of Daniel playing the piano to disrupt the social order and amuse his friends (Section 5.4) is extremely different from the social dynamics at Andy's table, where he discards unwanted food under the table (Section 6.4). However, the episodes were similar in that Daniel and Andy were sitting with other children who were complicit in their particular subversions. The significance of these episodes is that children can create collaborative social interactions or individually interact side by side to fulfil and live out their own interests, which vary between children and require different frames for thinking and interaction. In other words, what is permissible at a single table is in some ways dependent on the shared experience or social milieu that is created between children. For example, if a child is not in company that wishes to rise against oppression for whatever reason, gaiety is almost impossible to administer, as observed when Daniel's comic jibes are unrequited (Section 7.7). Likewise, if Andy sat at a table with children who were opposed to discarding food by throwing it on the floor or who held different values from Andy, his transgression could be more easily identified and punished. Where children locate themselves in the meal hall and who they sit next to is important for children's interactions, mealtime opportunities and sense of belonging (or not). Nevertheless, these interactions force

children into many ways of solving disputes between themselves in their own peer produced worlds (Sections 4.3; 5.6; 6.7).

What do these two episodes reveal in terms of children's socialisation? How do children manoeuvre in and negotiate space and socially organise their experience through interaction? It is the children themselves who define the dialogic atmosphere collectively and emergently in their groups or interactions around a table, which shapes their frames for thinking and action. The diagram below illustrates an example of potential dialogic formation around a table, but it is not an exhaustive example. There are many possibilities of dialogic formations that include more than 3 children and not as many as 8. However, I have avoided adding these interactive frames because it would overcomplicate the diagram. So, for example, a game where children are tossing a piece of pasta around the table may include all the children on the table or children may separate into smaller groups of twos and threes for conversations that can be heard over the noise of others. At busy times during the mealtime the noise can be immense, so a child's position at a particular table can be very significant if they want to hear and be heard by others. Children who top and tail the table may stand and shout down the table from time to time or use non-verbal communication.
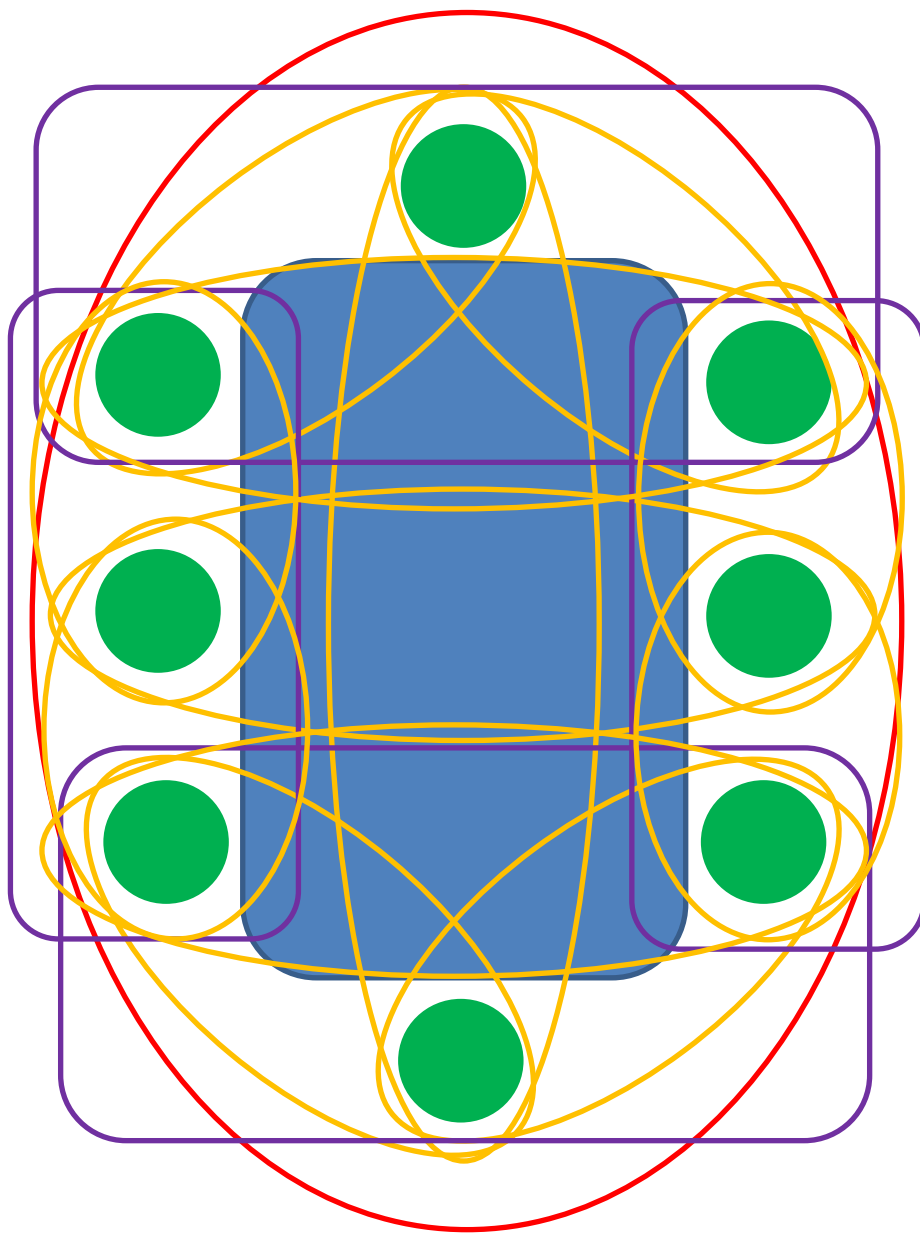
Red line represents a whole table interaction
Purple lines represent dialogic interaction within threesomes
Orange lines represent dialogic interaction between two children

Figure 7.4.1: A diagram of children's interactive dialogic formations around a lunch table.

In Figure 7.4.1 I provide a visual representation of children's interactive dialogic formations around a lunch table. It should be noted that children flit interchangeably back and forth between different interactive dialogic formations, which means that dyads constantly break and re-form over a period of 'sitting together'. Children make varying degrees of effort to achieve advantage over others and acquire a particular seat at a particular table to participate in dialogic interactions with friends. There is typically a fluidity to table dynamics and seating positions whereby children engage in a frenzied flurry of activity that exudes both excitement and disappointment in the moments before taking their seats, but once children are seated the dialogic configuration tends to be accepted. Day after day, similar battles are won and lost when trying to achieve their ideal seats at the table in relation to others. However, in some cases children may find themselves 'in a less favourable position over and over again, they may not obtain the status of ratified participants, they may be treated as peripheral, or they may not get the chance to carry through their own agenda' (Karrebæk, 2011, p.2929).

Socialisation in the school mealtime may produce unwanted conditions where children may be socialised into marginalisation or other unfavourable and problematic positions (Sections 4.3; 5.7; 6.6). What is significant about children's socialisation here is that from these experiences children may develop resilience and by 'confronting resistance to their access attempts, children acquire complex access strategies that allow them to enter and share in play' (Corsaro, 2018, p.194). Moreover, children may acquire complex strategies to neutralise and subvert the mealtime structure and the peer world by recruiting adult support to initiate and maintain connection (Section 6.6). The analysis revealed that seating positions are contested and sometimes children do not always achieve their desired seat in relation to others (friends and non-friends); their relation to others matter a lot to children, often more than the food they are eating. Concordantly, Daniel and Gustafson (2010, p.265) argue that 'when it comes to school meals we suggest that it is the social rather than the nutritional aspects of school lunch which are at the top of children's agendas'.

These findings are relevant and significant to both school mealtime policy and research. The concerns of school mealtime policy and current research are largely nutritionally orientated, focusing on what food children are consuming to improve their nutritional health (Ruxton et al., 1996; Rees et al., 2008; Rogers et al., 2007; Smith and Ditschum, 2009; Scholder, 2013). However, the social contexts in which children consume cannot be ignored if health campaigns and policies are to maximise their success. For example, Ross's (1995, p.313) school mealtime research found that 'food choice was not determined by the health attributes of food but rather that values of preference, play, socialisation and convenience were given a higher priority than health by the

children when making food choices'. Therefore, nutritional school mealtime research could be improved by understanding the social complexities and dynamics in which children consume. Significantly, the findings suggest that from the adult perspective in this research, children essentially appear to be eating healthy nutritionally balanced meals. For example, Andy receives a nutritious lunch every day and often has the accompanying bread, but he covertly and regularly throws part of his lunch on the floor (Section 6.4); consumption for children like Izzy, who may feel socially isolated from their peers, tends to be limited because they can be pre-occupied with initiating social relations (Section 6.6); children like Sara discreetly throw their sandwich lunches in the bin (Section 6.5); and some children eat for pleasure and only intend to eat the icing off the top of their dessert (Section 6.3). The children in these examples are satisfying the school mealtime requirement to take a meal and display the appropriate behaviour during its consumption. Nutritional school mealtime research represents a similar view to the adult perspective on children's consumption.

The analysis has argued that, on the one hand, children can understand the demands of the mealtime situation and develop competencies to participate in the fellowship of school mealtimes (Hedegaard, 2018; Lave and Wenger, 1991). They can display appropriate behaviours, but on the other hand, children regularly seek to get around several constraints, transgress the normative order and relieve themselves of consuming unwanted food. Jenks (2005. p.127) correctly argued that 'their [children's] transgressions should not merely complete and affirm our constraints; they might better make us think again about the moral basis of our social bonds'. Children's disruptions, transgressions and subversions bring significant insight and critique to the normative life. Jenks (2005) asserts that children's transgressions need to be listened to and valued, critically examining what is missing, unexpressed and disempowered by the normative life. I have provided a more sophisticated articulation of children's socialisation to fully understand children's educational experiences of schooling during the school mealtime. It is imperative that educational researchers consider how school mealtimes influence children's eating habits, well-being and socialisation for educational purposes, which could inform and bring valuable insight to how eating practices impact on children's nutritional health.

7.5 The development of self in children's dialogic interactions within the carnivalesque school mealtime

Children cannot escape from the watchful gaze of adult surveillance during school mealtime, but they can seize opportunities to make fun of the 'official' social order and thus express a resistance

to and freedom from its rules (Sections 5.4; 5.5; 5.6; 5.7). I have argued in the second analytical chapter (Chapter Five) that collective carnivalesque transgressions require some degree of social confidence, camaraderie and sense of egalitarianism that is shrouded by humour (Sections 5.4; 5.5; 5.6). From the analyses, it is conceivable that children who participate in humorous carnivalesque interactions have some awareness of themselves in relation to the other, to feel entitled to provoke democratic sensibilities and objectify the normative order. This relates to Bakhtin's (1981, p.341) notion of 'ideological becoming', whereby children establish their own individual voice and authority amidst the voices of others. For example, Bakhtin (1981) argues that the authoritative discourse is passively received as information, directions, rules, expectations and so forth; the authoritative discourse demands that it be acknowledged and is already infused with authority. Conversely, the internally persuasive discourse is tightly interwoven with one's re-telling, assimilation and transmission of others' words into one's own words. During socialisation in the chronotope of the school mealtime children can question the authoritative discourse and deprive it of absolute authority. In doing so, children create ideological struggle and 'fertile soil for experimentally objectifying another's discourse' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.348) to critically examine, poke fun at and comment upon authoritative discourse (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003).

This section discusses how children socialise with others and interact with the normative discourse to develop their sense of self. For example, the analysis explored how Daniel's piano playing transgression (Section 5.4) mocked the school mealtime authority and temporarily disrupted the status quo and hierarchical order. Daniel challenged the upholders of order before disappearing back into the abundance of the mealtime to celebrate his success with his friends. In doing so, he confused the adults, evaded punishment and for those fleeting moments he was more powerful than the mealtime assistants. In episodes such as this, children can exercise control and emancipate themselves from the authoritative grasp (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003) to question the authoritative discourse and reveal its weaknesses or limitations. The example illustrates that children can understand the authoritative discourse, can be aware of its gaze and can creatively fuse and develop these understandings into an internally persuasive discourse to temporarily liberate themselves from oppression. James (1979, p.3) argues that 'by confusing the adult order children create for themselves considerable room for movement within the limits imposed upon them by adult society'. These episodes show children's empowerment to address the power differentials that exist between adults and children, depriving them of their absolute authority.

When children mock the moral and social normative order, they elicit non-approval, dialogically engaging with social life, comic spectacle and shared merriment, which creates solidarity against

the upholder of the normative order. As a result, children 'may begin to appreciate that social reality is a much more complex and contradictory phenomena than any single authoritative discourse might suggest' (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003, p.285). Carnivalesque interactions are sources of development in themselves, whereby children develop self through engagement with others, mediating not just ideological and cognitive struggle but embodied and affective aspects too. Significantly, laughter is a vital bodily aspect of collective carnivalesque interactions because laughter has the power to demolish hierarchical distance and free children from those in power. According to Bakhtin (1981, p.23), 'in this plane (plane of laughter) one can disrespectfully walk around whole objects; therefore, the back and rear portions of an object (and also its innards, not normally accessible for viewing) assume a special importance'. Carnivalesque laughter can be vividly felt as an escape from the usual official way of living, essentially related to freedom (Bakhtin, 1968).

Comic spectacles are a powerful means for children to disrupt the hierarchical distance, fearlessly and freely creating a new orientation to explore and expose their social worlds. For example, Tom knocked over a large jug of water and hysterical laughter ensued, radiating out to the surrounding children (Section 5.5). Laughter is of special importance because it has 'the power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.23). From these outspoken, humorous, embodied socialising experiences children can critique the authoritative order and expose its weaknesses. For example, children could expose knowledge that mealtime assistants are not as powerful other adults within this school system and acquire understandings for themselves about social organisation and who they are in relation to others. This finding coheres with the research of Pike (2010, p.285), who argues that during mealtimes children 'may well be aware of the internal hierarchies that operate within schools and fully cognisant of the limits of the authority of the lunchtime staff'. Nevertheless, when another's discourse becomes internally persuasive new possibilities open up and children can re-purpose existing knowledge to generate their own systems of meaning (James, 1982). Children can redefine the purpose of school mealtimes in their own terms by finding fleeting moments to liberate themselves from dogma and 'make playful' a supervised activity that has a designated purpose in the school day.

The findings suggest that carnivalesque episodes are transient moments that are irregular, unscripted and spontaneous, experienced as moments that should not happen. Tom and his friends displayed social confidence that provoked and placated the mealtime assistant, resulting in inflated laughter and kudos from their friends (Section 5.5). I have interpreted the boys' interaction as

ambivalent because they spontaneously collaborated to undermine the upholder of authority and at the same time were protected by the laughter because it belonged to all the children and not just to a particular child. Their transgression posed less personal risk to each character as the laughter and risk belonged to all the children. So, carnivalesque laughter has a protective factor that diffuses risk because it is shared and allows children to not understand, to confuse and to not be taken literally. However, these socialising experiences are very different from Andy's subversive interactions in Chapter Six (Section 6.4), because he acts in isolation and without humour. For example, Andy avoids being noticed and will receive very little, if any, kudos from his friends, not necessarily because he is an outsider or in a loner position but because his friendships and dialogic formations are configured differently from those of Tom and his friends. Andy does not display the same amount of social confidence as Tom or Daniel to stand out in the crowd and we can imagine that his intention was not to make other children laugh. Moreover, the consequences of Andy's subversion are not shared or diffused by the involvement of the surrounding children (as oppose to Sections 5.4; 5.5) and convey more personal risks because his transgressions are not shrouded by humour.

Nevertheless, his mealtime transgressions degrade the authoritative power over him and provide experiences of 'outsidedness', which is a pre-requisite for creatively understanding alternative points of view (Bakhtin, 1968). The mealtime assistant checked Andy's coat pockets for the potato, but Andy confused the adults by tossed the potato to the side of the room away from his table, and later, when it was found, insisted that the potato on the floor had belonged to someone who had already left the table. During the carnival, strange behaviour was welcomed and celebrated but the significance of the 'deflection of adult perception is crucial for both the maintenance and continuation of the child's culture and for the growth of the concept of the self for the individual child' (James, 1982, p.3). Children's deflections (Section 6.4) or disappearances (Sections 5.4; 5.5) into the heteroglossia of the school mealtime are transformative in that children can surreptitiously retain and maintain some sense of autonomy and independent identity, whilst challenging the moral basis of their social bonds. These everyday carnivalesque interactions are transformative, self-preserving and dignity seeking, and as such are fundamental in children's socialisation to allow them to develop their own conceptual separation of voice (Bakhtin, 1968; James, 1982).

In sum, this section has illustrated how children push in the direction of freedom, leisure and reprieve, whilst the mealtime assistants strive to maintain an adult controlled sense of order and a functional mealtime. This tension is significant because it is during carnivalesque interactions that children achieve some critical distance from the established rules and normative discourse, realising and embodying the subversive potential and social power of their humour (Sections 5.4; 5.5; 5.6).

Crucial to this viewpoint is that it 'involves an active dialogical appropriation of the other's word; for it is only by dialogically engaging in the discourses of others – by redefining them, differing from them, developing them – that one establishes one's "own" voice' (Duncan and Tarulli, 2003, p.283). However, there are different intensities and assertions of self between the children's transgressions of the mealtime order. Children's self-motivated and self-directed carnivalesque interactions (Sections 5.4; 5.5; 6.4) resolve and gratify their desires and elicit non-approval from the upholders of proper order.

Children in the school mealtime have no choice but to consume social and physical aspects of the school mealtime, but to some extent they can choose which aspects and how much they consume. On the one hand, Andy's transgressions are individually focused, his actions being subtle and hidden as he fundamentally challenges the normative social and moral order and oppressions around food and the body. On the other hand, Tom and Daniel's transgressions are socially focused; they relate to entertainment and contemplation and also challenge the consumption of social and moral ideas. For example, Smile (2013, p.52) argues that these moments are fleeting but essential, where 'children come together at the feast to satisfy their physical drive for survival, but the communal feast also serves other, higher functions'. Throwing a potato across the room, playing the piano or tipping a full jug of water over the lunch table are not merely mindless deviant acts. In their own ways, children are making use of contingent moments whilst cultivating and expressing their sense of self and political agenda. Jenks (2005, p.155) argues that 'as social theorists we must attend to the messages encoded in such behaviour'. The analysis of the data from this research illustrates the application and theoretical usefulness of the carnivalesque discourse in which children actively socialise and transgress the normative order.

My research advances existing knowledge of children's mealtime socialisation by using a Bakhtinian perspective to illustrate how children actively engage with the normative discourse, can create their own dialogic space, be critical of the authoritative discourse and cultivate their own sense of self within the diversity of voices during the school mealtime. Pike's (2008; 2010) school mealtimes research deploys a Foucauldian perspective to explore how the discourse around school mealtimes and adult regimes of surveillance shape the actions of children's food choices, intake and food waste. As a result, Pike (2008; 2010) argues that children become self-regulating through technologies of power. Pike reports (2010, p.278) that 'children's food practices in school appeared to be highly regimented with instructions issued about where they could sit, how they should sit, how they should eat, what they should eat and when they could leave, how they should leave and so on'. However, the analysis tends to be adult-centred, exploring how mealtime staff may limit or

enable children's field of action, encourage conformity and conflate the status of mealtime staff with their perceived deficiency of authority. Pike's (2008; 2010) research brings new insight into children's agency and subordination, illustrating how mealtime supervision allows staff to regulate a range of disciplinary practices and techniques with the aim of producing docile bodies.

My initial observation focus found Foucault's perspective on governmentality valuable in exploring how children are regulated and regulate themselves to follow the disciplinary code. However, over time I began to observe and become more interested in the occasions that could not be fully explained with Foucault's notion of governmentality. The findings suggest that the 'regime of governmentality' is not monolithically powerful because children explore and exceed the limits of adult controlled school mealtime order on a daily basis. Limits and transgressions are meaningless in isolation but together they are overwhelmingly complex and 'there is a sense in which children are both destined and required to transgress in a way that tests both society and social theory' (Jenks, 2005, p.122). My research builds upon Pike's mealtime research by directing attention towards an understanding of the children's perception, experiences, utterances and actions (Sommer et al., 2013) in the mealtime to understand how children's socialisation is a process of dialogically engaging in the discourses of others to establish their own voices, and to bring insight and rationale to explain why children might engage in overt and convert carnivalesque transgressions (in as much as is possible) from children's perspectives.

7.6 Children's socialisation into moral and social sensibilities

The analyses have argued for two propositions; that children are socialised and guided to become competent members of school mealtime community (Sections 4.2; 5.2; 6.2) and that children have the capacity to modify and challenge existing practices (Ochs and Shohet, 2006). In doing so, children may intentionally or unintentionally contribute to their own and others' socialisation processes. However, these viewpoints are not a dichotomy and tensions have been recognised as children act in relation to their social situation of development, between the institutional and social demands of the situation (Ochs and Shohet, 2006; Hedegaard, 2012). The composition of alternative perspectives during school mealtimes contributes to children's social construction of knowledge and moral perspectives (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Ochs and Shohet, 2006). This section will discuss how children are socialised into moral and social sensibilities about food and the body and highlight children's competency to use grotesque humour to challenge the meanings that are made for them.

I have argued that school mealtimes are communal, formalised, socially regulated and mannered activities, which facilitate cohesion, continuity and social order. Social conventions are approved ways of doing things, expressed by the ordering of a 'proper meal', which educates children about mealtime comportment, etiquette, social rules, norms and values relevant to children's membership of the community. Moreover, socialisation is performed through the organisation of space, where mealtime rules communicate to children that they are expected to sit on chairs at the table, eat with cutlery, eat their food in a particular order (savoury before sweet) and make polite conversation with other table members in an allotted timeframe (Douglas and Nicod, 1974; Elias, 2000; Fiese et al., 2006; Metcalfe et al., 2011). Moreover, it is expected that chewed food will stay in children's mouths and that they will not talk whilst eating or throw food. According to Wenger (1998, p.47), communities of practice constitute a way of doing 'but not just doing in and of itself, it is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do'. For example, moral judgements are made about how much and what types of foods are eaten, which links to the rightness or wrongness of children's consumption habits. Mealtime assistants support children by providing situated sociocultural guidance, whereby 'children can make connections between what they already know and what they must learn to handle in a new situation' (Rogoff, 1990, p.66). Children are not merely consuming nutritious meals, they are consuming tastes, symbolic meanings of food and social positions.

The abundance of food during school mealtimes can feel excessive to some children and after they have fulfilled their hunger they may not want to eat anymore or may only eat to satisfy pleasure (Sections 6.3; 6.4; 6.5; 6.6). These findings cohere with both Metcalfe and colleagues (2011) and Daniel and Gustafsson's (2010) school mealtime research, where they both argue that children being able to leave the table when they feel they have finished their meal is a matter of debate. Both articles discuss how children can have difficulties when trying to leave the table because it is the duty of mealtime assistant to ensure children have eaten enough, yet they found that in some cases 'restrictions on children remaining in or leaving the dining hall [were] being imposed as punishments' (Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010, p.271). Metcalfe and colleagues' (2011) rationale for such negotiations is that children 'are still viewed as not fully-formed creatures, lacking in the comprehensive knowledge needed to make proper decisions, and also lacking self-knowledge about what they would "really like" if only they tried it properly'. Metcalfe and colleagues (2011) highlight assumptions that children do not know what food tastes like, have their own preferences or perhaps even know when they have satisfied their hunger. During these negotiations with mealtime assistants, children are socialised into social constructions of knowledge and moral understandings about food and the body. They acquire certain normative sensibilities,

understandings and competences about what is expected from them and when they can speak up, remain silent or have equal status (Ochs and Shohet, 2006).

Adults have legitimacy over knowledge, the power to evaluate the needs and competences of children (Lee 2001), and consequently the decision about whether, and when, children can leave the table. Under the ideology of care, adults respond to children's challenging behaviour in complex and pervasive means of control (Jenks, 2005). In Section 6.2, the mealtime assistant provided a moral tale about the meaning of taking food and wasting it, insisting the boys must take a bite of their iced bun before they could leave the table. Similarly, in Section 6.5, the mealtime assistant stopped Sara from throwing part of her sandwich lunch away, insisting that she take it home and show her parents. Arguably, in both incidents Mrs Mathews had a good idea about the children's avoidance of food, but it is her role and duty to ensure that children are fed. The analysis argued that Mrs Matthews potentially holds assumptions that children are deviant and in need of control, observation and protection from themselves as they cannot be trusted to follow the rules alone (Lee, 2001; James and Prout, 2015). I interpreted Mrs Mathew's communication with the children as disingenuous in that it prepared the ground for reprimand rather than genuinely requesting information or explanation. In doing so, these incidents mediate to children the consequences for not eating, confirm adult authority, adult legitimacy over knowledge, and their 'completeness, competence and ability to make good judgements' (Lee, 2001, p.46).

The normative discourse requires mealtime members to positively conform to an idea and symbolic system of moral rules and values, which are upheld by certain social rules and values that reject ambiguity (Douglas, 2002). Social and moral rules are powerful because they are adhered to and depend on compliance. Significantly, 'disorder spoils patterns' and provides the means to recognise what dangers can be ignored and what kind of behaviour should be stopped (Douglas, 2002). In other words, disorder or children's offensive behaviours that do not uphold moral and social values are a danger to the established order and disorder can be noticed because it deviates from a normative pattern of behaviour. Due to the multiple competing demands of the mealtimes, the mealtime assistants cannot respond to every issue, so they identify and address disorder. To avoid such altercations, children master the art of 'appearing' to be doing the 'right' thing, whist exploring, modifying, re-creating and challenging normative understandings of moral order for themselves.

7.6.1 Grotesque transgressions of moral and social order

Interestingly, Douglas (2002) argues that polite convention is an attempt to coerce against the dangers of dirt as 'matter out of place'. For example, I analysed an episode where the children were throwing a piece of pasta around the table. It dropped to the floor, and the children's laughter intensified when the pasta landed on a plate of food (Section 5.6). It is not the pasta that is dirty, nor the table, but the pasta being somewhere other than on the plate, where it is supposed to be. The game is unhygienic and inappropriate in the eyes of others because mealtime comportment is out of place. Tossing the pasta around the table is a danger to social and moral order, and not because it is dangerous in a bacterial sense. I interpreted the children as laughing because the act provokes social conventions of the normative order. Moreover, when Mrs Roberts is in the vicinity and walks past the table the children pause the game and resume 'normal' pleasant eating and low-level conversation until she has passed. Children demonstrated double-voiced discourse both by understanding the sacred seriousness of the school mealtime in front of adults and by engaging in profanity for the sake of humour in the children's world (when no one is looking). In doing so, children are combining the lofty with the low to distort prevailing truths about the normative order and to explore paradoxes in the adult world for themselves. Transgressions such as these could be thought of as benign. However, I have argued that grotesque transgressions are significant to children's socialisation because they come to understand that adult or normative social and moral rules are not finite. When children combine the lofty with the low, social and moral rules move away from the normative centralisation of power, the legitimacy of adult knowledge and the understanding of civility as value-neutral.

Moreover, I interpreted the grotesque as a fusion between what is funny and what is frightening: apparent opposites held in unity in the world of ambivalence (Bakhtin, 1968; Douglas, 2002). The significance of the grotesque is that it celebrates the functions and conditions of the material body, contradicting the idea of perfectionism. To illustrate this point, I analysed Ben and Ella (sitting opposite one another) squeezing mousse out of their mouths and on to their plates like excrement to make their friends laugh (Section 5.6). Thorogood (2016) argues that the 'grotesque creates a different type of humour, one that is designed to shock the sensibilities, to dare the viewer to laugh at [the] vulgar and [the] crass'. The funny aspect of their laughter is that it's not funny (in a normative sense) because it defiles the unassailable normative conventions, creating ambivalent heterogeneous emotions and raucous, thrilling laughter. Bakhtin (1968, p.94) asserts that 'laughter is essentially not an external but an interior form of truth; it cannot be transformed into seriousness without destroying and distorting the very contents of the truth which it unveils'. In other words, the grotesque cannot be understood in the logical relational realm, as the humour would be destroyed if

it were taken literally or seriously. The grotesque brings to the fore the importance of embodied dialogic interactions, revealing how children can temporarily embody many powerful fleeting moments that violate societal constraints. Moreover, Vygotsky (1978) stressed the role of children's social environment and the internalisation of social dialogues for the development of children's self-regulatory inner speech. These socialising experiences of joyful relativity that shift and renew power and order socialise children into other points of view, which expand their own concepts and develop a sense of their own subjectivity (Cohen, 2011).

These sections have argued that children's socialisation is not a linear process. School mealtimes are multiple sequences of collective actions, which are established, accepted and dependent on the compliance and internal control of the community members (Mercer, 2000). The normative discourse relies on conformity to an idea and children's experience of the collective order regulates their presentation of self and integrates them into the world of adult conduct (Jenks, 2005). However, Wenger (1998) reminds us not to assume that shared practices are harmonious collaborations, as disagreements, conflicts and tensions are necessary parts of the repertoire for negotiating meaning. I have illustrated that children are able to modify mealtimes based on their own perceptions, feelings and experiences, creatively making choices about their school mealtime interactions (Ochs and Shohet, 2006).

I have argued that the material, social and self-driven aspects of children's socialisation modify and challenge existing practices. These interactions are integral to children's socialisation because they provide understandings that moral and social rules are not finite. Jenks (2005, p.122) argues that 'there is a sense in which children are both destined and required to transgress in a way that tests both society and social theory'. In other words, it is children's role and responsibility to identify weaknesses, celebrate the uncrowning of the normative order and remove moral and social rules and values from their untouchable-ness. In doing so, children become critical of the unquestionable adult dominance over knowledge and the idea that social and moral values are value-neutral. Grotesque interactions shock the sensibilities and exaggerate the grotesqueness of the body, which is deeply positive and not for private pleasure, but represents 'the collective ancestral body of all the people' (Bakhtin, 1968, p.18). Grotesque realism transgresses its own limits and is inappropriate in the eyes of some adults precisely because it is not rational, and it escapes adult control (Cohen, 2011). The findings have illustrated that children are competent social actors, who have the capacity to demonstrate conformity with the purpose of avoiding attention, so that they can subvert the school mealtime moral and social rules without detection or punishment.

Traditionally, the school meal system was a response to children's malnutrition and crucial to the success of government educational provision, in that fed children could fully benefit from their education. However, Vernon (2005, p.711) argues that the school meal system was a means of addressing children's hunger and nutritional health, as well as training minds and manners, which meant that school mealtimes had to 'become in every sense part of the educational system'. The reasoning during this time was that civility was a habit that required daily practice and mealtimes could encourage the 'acquisition of gentle manners, courtesy and respect in many ways fostered social harmony and happiness' (Vernon, 2005, p.711). These particular social values and manners are favoured by the ruling class as a means to uphold the existing social order. Vernon (2005, p.711) argues that 'it was repeatedly suggested that the school meal should have a civilising effect upon the children, enshrining moral and spiritual as well as mental and physical values, it would train children in habits of self-control and thoughtfulness for one another'. As a result, children would consume the school mealtime atmosphere and imposed discipline to become healthy socially well-adjusted children, and later, adults. Arguably, this perspective subscribes to a functionalist conceptualisation of socialisation where children are passive and mouldable, in preparation or training for adulthood (Parsons and Bales, 1955). From Parsons and Bales' perspective, children are a threat to society and should be trained to accept and follow social norms so that children will eventually internalise the social system and maintain the status quo (Parsons and Bales, 1955).

My research contributes new knowledge of the ways in which children are competent social actors and can transgress the school mealtime discourse with sophistication – not from a position of weakness but from a position of power and for their own humorous grotesque pleasure. The findings build upon Metcalfe and colleagues' (2011) school mealtime research, which explores three themes of the mealtime: current state discourse and meal provision, how mealtimes are organised and managed by mealtime staff and how children are competent at managing identities and relationships. They discussed how 'feeding them [children] the right types of food will, it is implied, ensure that they are properly shaped and disciplined, becoming competent social actors who will contribute positively to society' (Metcalfe et al., 2011, p.378). They explore more closely the food discourse that underpins the school meal system and how 'the more powerful have sought to impose ideas of civility upon the less powerful' (Metcalfe et al., 2011, p.387). Similarly, this research supports and contributes to an understanding of how children's peer interactions and agendas shape the mealtime, which are often independent from those of adults and frequently hidden.

7.7 The emergent dimension of children's interactions

This section discusses the interactional process of children's participation in the polyphonic composition of school mealtimes. The discussion will illustrate how children can improvise in the moment of encounter, emergently socialising into collective school mealtime practices. The school requires all children to participate in the mealtime regardless of their understanding or membership and they are transformed through their focus of attention and participation in meaningful practice. Each child socialises at his or her own pace, increasing participation from the peripheral (novice) to become more competent and gain a more central role or achieve mastery of situated social practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Situated learning places the focus of learning on participation, not on the individual mind, whereby children are socialised through their participation and guidance in practice with more experienced others (Rogoff, 1990; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Children's improvised and emergent carnivalesque interactions require both uncertainty and familiarity with shared conventions.

I argued in episode 5.4.1, when Daniel played the piano, that his timing was crucial: he did not relax his attention as he reacted and responded to the silenced, fast-paced, changing landscape of the mealtime (Section 5.4). The analysis applied jazz literature to articulate how musicians engage in improvisational ensembles, where they make rapid transitions between thinking and playing (Klemp et al., 2008; Sawyer, 2006). According to Sawyer (2006, p.150), 'in their musical conversations, musicians constantly balance coherence and innovation, borrowing material from the previous phrase and then transforming it'. Daniel's initial outburst on the piano created shock, silence, risk and surveillance across the meal hall, and he responded in the way a skilled dancer controls the shape and speed of his body, by maintaining balance and constant poise. I imagine there was a thrill of excitement for his friends, as they watched him precariously cross the meal hall, teetering on the edge, threatened with punishment should he become visible to the mealtime assistants. For Daniel's creative and interactive manoeuvre to be successful he had to apply his knowledge from meaningful participation in the mealtime and combine many aspects and understandings from his surroundings.

For example, Daniel used the social conditions and busyness of the meal hall to disappear into the crowd; he demonstrated recognition of the adult's gaze so that he could appear to be the same height as the children sitting down at the tables; and he had some knowledge about how the surrounding children (whom he passed) and the mealtime assistants would respond. Daniel demonstrates that, like skilled musicians, children can make rapid transitions between thinking and actions that arise, change and fade away in the process of their interactions with the social situation

(Klemp et al., 2008; Sawyer, 2006). In contrast, Sara attempted to cross the meal hall to throw her pitta bread sandwiches into the bin, but she did so when the mealtime was just beginning and the hall was relatively quiet and empty (interaction was sparse, and noise was at a minimum), so her transgression was easy for the mealtime assistants to detect (Section 6.5). Sara tried to negotiate herself in relation to the adult gaze but because she was initially unaware of her surroundings, she could not use them as a resource to hide within. Sara's episode illustrates how the structural constraints impact on children's capacity for improvisation and agentic emergence; she had a good opportunity for manoeuvrability but made an important mistake.

Sara hesitated at the mid-way point, and perhaps if Daniel had hesitated, he too might have identified himself as being out of place. Klemp and colleagues (2008) argue that creative endeavours require difficult moments, with a spontaneous concern for the future and the past, where mis-takes can be carried forward to figure out what to do next. I am identifying Sara's hesitation as an important mistake that she will grow from; whereas Daniel's piano playing is a mis-take, where he intuitively responded to his surroundings, deploying his mastery of blending into the social conditions, carrying forward what had happened to figure out what to do next. Significantly, the performer can recover from several mis-takes, so that the average listener of jazz would not detect the variation (Sawyer, 2006; Klemp et al., 2008). Likewise, the average observer of the school mealtime would not detect Daniel returning to his seat amongst the medley of children, whereas Sara's transgression was easy to spot against the quiet unmoving backdrop. This finding is significant because Klemp and colleagues (2008, p.18) assert that 'if schools catch and record mistakes and use them to sort kids institutionally, the very place that promises learning also produces constant and often debilitating failure'. The school mealtime represents a crucial safe haven for children to experience the fullness of life, to make mistakes or mis-takes and to make imperfect contributions to the polyphonic school mealtime composition.

7.7.1 Collective emergent interactions

Sawyer (2006) argues that group communication is the essence of jazz, which is often wrongly attributed to the soloist rather than the group's emergent dynamics. Sawyer (2006) draws on Resnick's (1994) example of a flock of geese, migrating south in a 'V' shape. Resnick argues that decentralising theories have been largely undervalued or overlooked in favour of centralising theories that assume a central controller. For example, he argues that most people assume that the bird at the front of the V shaped flock is the leader and the other birds are following. However, Resnick (1994, p.3) challenges this perspective, arguing that all the birds are acting together by following simple local interactions and 'reacting to the movements of the birds nearby'. The flock

of birds are self-organising and leaderless, a notion that can be applied to how children coordinate themselves when finding seats at the dinner table. Children create a variety of different microcosms within the mealtime, and in doing so, they collaboratively interact with their peers around them. This research assumes that filling up a table with like-minded peers is not random or to be taken for granted and requires a targeted coordinated effort. Resnick's (1994) perspective is useful in understanding how children coordinate their interactions through self-organising and responding to peers nearby, rather than having a central organising leader. This means that there may well be a status hierarchy amongst children, but quite often there is no single authority, boss or central leader.

The analyses grappled with how children negotiate the moment-to-moment complexities involved in finding a seat at the table (Chapter Four). The findings support Daniel and Gustafsson's (2010, p.271) research in that 'children were told to fill up the seats at the tables by lunchtime supervisors and would be unable to sit with friends unless they had made sure they were together in the queue'. Children deployed many different techniques to enact their plans and the analyses did not attempt to categorise or encapsulate a list of strategies or suggest that children only apply one at a time. Rather, the findings revealed children's nuanced understandings of the meanings of who sits where, which creates frames for children's thinking (Goffman, 1975) informed by past, present and future interactions (Sections 4.3; 4.4; 4.5; 4.6). Some children prepare prior to the mealtime and can control some initial aspects of their plans, such as queuing in order, counting chairs, waiting for each other, saving seats, redirecting undesirable eating partners or swooping in at the perfect moment. However, the children cannot control where their peers will sit who are ahead of them in the queue, or where the children with sandwich lunches will sit. Children who want to sit in particular places or with particular friends engage in spontaneous and emergent interactions, improvising as they respond to the other children in their vicinity.

7.7.2 Children's coordination of emergent interactions

The analyses provided many examples of children observing and hearing those around them, coordinating themselves through gesture, facial expressions and bodily movements. For example, Harriet and Nathan loitered in the meal hall for the optimal moment to rush forward and achieve their ideal seats with friends (Section 4.5). Children can understand these transient opportunities and use them to gain a social advantage over their peers. However, Richard and Ethan created their own interactive space at the table because of the brutality that they perceived as being involved when competing with stronger peers (Section 4.6). For example, Richard recalls a time (similar to Harriet's and Nathan's experiences in episode 4.5.1) when he tried to sit at the 'popular' table but was unsuccessful because one minute everything was quiet, and the next, a stampede occurred

where he got his face stamped to the floor (group interview 2, 20/04/2017). The stakes are high for children when they are competing for scarce resources to avoid the stigma of being left out or to gain the prestige of being included within the popular group (Højholt, 2012). The findings suggest that some children are more adept than others at reading gestural communication and performing rapid bodily movements.

Children's interactions and plans can be multiple, overlapping and divergent, which can lead to co-constructed and collaboratively enacted plans which favour some children and exclude others. Meanings emerge out of children's situated activity and the analyses highlighted that children can protect a particular table by giving unwanted peers a 'weird' look or by directing or re-directing non-desirable peers (based on their preferences) to another table (Sections 4.3; 4.4; 6.6). In doing so, children may use a raised eyebrow, a turned shoulder, a prolonged gaze or may avoid contact in order to communicate with each other (Sections 4.4; 5.6; 5. 6.6). Rogoff (1990) argues that children are very good at understanding tacit communication, such as glances, winces and direction of gaze. These phenomena were apparent when the children were throwing a piece of pasta around the table. The children worked collaboratively together with facial expressions and direction of gaze to notify each other of adult presence (Section 5.6). Non-verbal communication may not always be a means to instruct but it is a powerful way to give and gain information (Rogoff, 2003). However, a 'look' can only be powerful if it is understood by the recipient, and may be dependent on the child's status in relation to others. The ability to read, understand and communicate with gesture and tacit knowledge can play a pivotal role in children's being able to navigate the mealtime and sit with friends.

For example, I interpreted Izzy as finding it difficult to access children's social frames for organising and understanding experience (Goffman, 1975), potentially because she struggled to read other interactants in the situation or because she was continuously rejected by her peers (Section 6.6). In episode 6.6.1, Izzy elicited the mealtime assistant's help and changed tables three times during one mealtime. She received valuable support from the adults when she found it difficult to engage with her peers. However, when Izzy finally sat with her friend, Oliva, she was ignored by her and the rest of the children around the table. Clara offers one explanation for this lack of interaction when she explains what she does if she must sit with someone she does not want to sit with: 'if I don't like them, I don't look at them or speak to them' (fieldnote, 06/03/2013; Section 4.4). Children can use gestural communication to create and communicate imagined and social boundaries. Freezing someone out by ignoring them is a powerful form of exclusion and highlights that it is not the seating position alone that matters but being accepted into a dialogic group for playfulness and belonging. These social and imagined boundaries need constant

enactment from children to maintain and protect their interactive space (Valentine, 2000; Corsaro, 2018). Sawyer (2006, p.162) asserts that 'in collective improvisational activities, children may learn a deeper … understanding than they would from structured activities', but successfully socialising with friends is fluid, changeable and not always possible.

The findings suggest that children who regularly gain entry into the table dynamics of a particular table or friendship group often have good socio-spatial and temporal knowledge. They are often proficient at managing their social relations because they have a good understanding of the mealtime organisation and the social organisation of experience (Sections 4.3; 4.5; 4.6; 7.3) that allows them to gain social advantage over their peers. Mark's comment supports this viewpoint: 'I always tend to sit with William and Alfie, but I would really like to sit with Paul, but he is too slow, so he never gets to the table on time' (fieldnote, 20/04/2015; Section 4.3). School mealtimes are not happy occasions for all children. Some children are at a social disadvantage and experience social isolation, such as Mark (Section 4.3), Daniel (Section 5.7), Izzy (Section 6.6) and many others. In these cases, children deploy other strategies to make sense of and navigate the experience around them. In Section 5.4, I conceptualised Daniel as being very proficient at reacting and responding to his social situation; in Section 5.7 his efforts to collaborate with others were unsuccessful, which highlights the unpredictable and emergent nature of children's interactions within the school mealtime.

The analyses explored how Izzy socialises outside of the frame of peer interaction (sometimes physically, by leaving the room to observe the mealtime through the window of the door), interacting with mealtime assistants instead. This is a significant because one should not necessarily assume that children always want to resist adult authority, as agency is as much about inactivity as it is about activity (Brenwell, 2013; Punch, 2016). Moreover, Izzy was very adept at transgressing the mealtime rules with their assistance (Section 6.6), illustrating that children do want to interact with adults and do not necessarily perceive them to be a nuisance. Moreover, in episode 5.7.1, many of the children who surrounded Daniel were resilient to his jibes, which may have left him feeling excluded or isolated. However, Daniel provided another significant insight into his subtle and efficient observation of the room around him. Daniel disguised himself by drinking slowly from his cup to 'look natural' whilst observing the reactions of the children he had provoked (Sections 5.7; 6.2). This enabled Daniel to evaluate and anticipate the reactions of others and stay one step ahead in the game. Variations between children's agendas were also acknowledged, identifying children as resistant to each other's efforts to subvert the normative order or enter into dialogue with one another. Crucially, these examples demonstrate the fragility and fluidity of children's school mealtime interactions: each day there will be new battles won and lost.

In sum, during school mealtimes children are socialised into more than the mechanics of eating together: they learn interactional skills, and how to communicate and collaborate in noisy multifarious social contexts. This section has argued that children can be extremely proficient at improvising in the moment of encounter, often to achieve their own self-directed agendas. When socialising in the school mealtime, children can drink in the complexity, abundance and ambivalence to develop discrete skills that enable them to negotiate and disappear into their continuously changing surroundings. The interactive process transforms school mealtimes into creative socialising experiences that are felt with corporeal vitality. The discussion illustrated the collaborative nature of children's interactions and demonstrated how individuals respond to other children nearby, as opposed to having one central organiser. In doing so, children hear and see gestural communication and tacit knowledge, anticipating what their friends and non-friends will do and how they will respond. I have argued that these unscripted experiences require control and mobilise an element of power which is largely outside of the adult gaze. Children can inspire and encourage each other to interact in ways they would not do alone or may not have previously considered. The outcome of such alliances and collaborations included some children at the expense of others. The school mealtime can lead to unpleasant experiences for children, which may have adverse effects on their socialisation. However, children can recover from mistakes, acquire the skills to make mis-takes and make imperfect contributions to the polyphonic school mealtime composition.

7.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has argued that the school mealtime chronotope is a distinctive configuration of space and time that is not as structured as a classroom nor as unstructured as playtime. Moreover, all individuals contribute to the emergence of social practice, which is neither inherently stable nor randomly changeable. It was necessary to outline the social conditions of the school mealtime to understand how children internalise proper rules of behaviour and exploit rather than ignore these conditions. In doing so, I have shown how school mealtimes are a fertile ground in which structure and emergence do battle. The school mealtime chronotope creates another world for children that operates under the radar of adults and the normative discourse, where children can experience multiple discourses, find solutions for their own agendas and form their own social critiques.

I have discussed how children purposefully configure their physical and dialogic interactive space around the lunch table, which enables different kinds of interactive situations. Where children locate themselves in the meal hall and who they sit next to is important because children create safe spaces to fulfil their own agendas and gain a sense of belonging (or not). The significance of these

incidents is that children can create collaborative social interactions or individually interact side by side; these interactions vary between children and require different frames for thinking and interaction. In other words, what is permissible at a single table is in many ways dependent on the shared experience or social milieu that is created between children. The discussion revealed that seating positions are contested and children do not always achieve their desired seat in relation to others (friends and non-friends), but their relationships to others matter a lot to children, often more than the food they are eating.

Partially liberated from the behavioural constraints imposed at other times of the school day, children can question the authoritative discourse, deprive it of absolute authority and, in doing so, socialise with others and the normative discourse to develop their sense of self. When children strive to liberate themselves from the authority of others, they question, challenge and probe to get a feel for its boundaries and weaknesses (Bakhtin, 1981). Moreover, carnivalesque laughter has the special power to demolish distance and elicit experiences of freedom, which can be vividly felt as an escape from official ways of living (Bakhtin, 1968). Amongst the diversity of voices, values and viewpoints of the school mealtime, children explore and exceed the limits, highlighting the openness and unfinished-ness of their ideological consciousness and the inexhaustibility of their dialogic interaction to create meaning (Bakhtin, 1981).

I have argued that through seemingly innocuous everyday practices of the school mealtime children are socialised into convention and mealtime comportment, but children also gain opportunities and freedoms to make strange normative conventions of moral and social order. According to Jenks (2005, p.127), 'children explore the very limits of consciousness and highlight, once again, the indefatigable, inherent and infinitely variable human capacity to transgress'. The grotesque exaggerates the uncrowning of the normative order and removes it from its untouchable-ness, which is essential for examining and critiquing the moral basis of our social bonds. Finally, I have argued that children are competent self-regulating social actors who can transcend the edges of acceptability with sophistication – not from a position of weakness but from a position of power and for their own humorous grotesque pleasure.

Arguably, children may experience release from normally suppressed desires, but they are not reckless; children embody the carnival and mock authority with control. They come to master multiple discrete skills over time that enable them to read the abundant, changing, interactive mealtime situation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and avoid punishment. Socialisation is an open, active and creative process of interdependence and experimentation with contradiction, which contributes to children's feelings of empowerment and control over their own bodies and sense of self. The

emergent dimension of children's interactions illustrated how children improvise in the moment of encounter. School mealtimes were revealed as opportunities for children to creatively experiment with both the predictable and the unpredictable, serendipitous and contingent aspects of social life in a relatively safe way. School mealtimes give children the freedom to think and stop doing what is imposed on them, develop self-understanding and social critique, and make an imperfect contribution to the polyphonic school mealtime composition.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

I set out in this research to examine how children socialise during the school mealtime from a child-centred perspective and justified my view of children as sophisticated agentic social actors. In this chapter I provide a conclusion for this research, answer my research questions and summarise my contributions to knowledge. Firstly, I provide a synthesis of the findings as answers to the research questions. Secondly, I discuss the implications of my research findings for educational practice, theory, methodology and school mealtime policy. Finally, I discuss the limitations of this research and make recommendations for further research.

8.2 Answers to the research questions

I set out to investigate three research questions, each of which are answered in this section. My first research question asked: **How do children interact and negotiate social and material relations?**

The first empirical chapter (Chapter Four) demonstrated that children seldom take their material conditions around a table for granted because where they sit in relation to others matters a lot to them. Successful inclusion into a specific table dynamic is not a foregone conclusion and depends on children's ability to manage changeable interactions, multiple pressures and often competing demands. Children are socialised into more than just the mechanics of eating together; they learn interactional skills, how to communicate and collaborate in noisy multifarious social contexts. Thus, children navigate the social, temporal and material arrangements of the mealtime by self-organising, making plans and coordinating their interactions by responding to peers nearby. The findings demonstrate that children make sense of what is happening, moment by moment, through sharing a frame of reference with friends, and reading and responding to other interactants in the social situation. In doing so, children can be purposeful when choosing and negotiating seating positions because their positions offer a sense of belonging (or not) to a particular friend or friendship group.

Children create an emergent social order that is not pre-planned or controlled by anyone specific but that is shaped by the totality of their collective interactions. I observed a fluidity and fragility in children's school mealtime interactions, where children often socialised through trial and error; emergently responding, adjusting and re-adjusting their actions in relation to the children around them. Significantly, a child's agendum does not ensure entry or success to specific table dynamics if

other children are faster or more able to manage multiple, competing demands to get the upper hand. However, the findings demonstrate that children can be extremely proficient at improvising in the moment of encounter to achieve their own self-directed agendum.

Children's spatial configurations around a lunch table create microcosms of social activity, which determine what is optimal and permissible at each table. It was important to investigate what happens after children have taken a seat at the table to understand why specific table dynamics are important for them. What makes children want to collaborate, compete and navigate considerable demands to achieve specific seating positions? The second empirical chapter (Chapter Five) set out to answer research question 2: **How do children collaboratively experiment and challenge the school mealtime structure and develop understanding in relation to others?**

The analyses of data in Chapter Five (the second empirical chapter) demonstrated that, as children respond to each other and the mealtime around them, collective carnivalesque subversions emerge, which are not pre-discussed or planned. Individuals contribute to the emergence of social practice that relates to the social experience of creating frames for thinking and interacting, where perspectives meet and agendum are created together. The spatial configuration and social dynamics around a table vary, which can create safe havens for children to experience the fullness of life, to make mistakes or mis-takes and make imperfect contributions to the polyphonic school mealtime composition. I have shown that children's socialisation is a process of thinking and doing, learning through discovery, where children actively acquire problem solving skills as they interact with the world around them (Piaget, 1932; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Klemp et al., 2006). These findings reveal how carnivalesque episodes are transient moments that are irregular, unscripted and spontaneous, experienced as moments that should not happen.

Children cannot escape from the watchful gaze of adult surveillance during school mealtimes, but they can seize fleeting moments to liberate themselves from dogma and 'make playful' a supervised activity. Masked with humour, children can redefine the purpose of mealtimes by transcending the edges of acceptability and imposed order. It is through dialogically engaging, redefining, developing and differing with the discourses of others that one establishes one's own voice (Bakhtin, 1984; Duncan and Tarulli, 2003). Children's subversions of the normative order objectify the authority of the mealtime, but more importantly, children achieve critical distance to actively distinguish between their own authority in the discourse and the authority of others (Bakhtin, 1968; 1981). This critical distance is crucial for children to gain self-understanding in relation to others and to see alternative possibilities. Thus, children experience multiple temporary mealtime

moments to experiment, question and challenge dominant understandings, distort prevailing truths about the normative order and create their own understandings.

The findings demonstrate that carnivalesque laughter has a protective factor that diffuses risk because it is shared and allows children to not understand, to confuse and to not be taken literally, which bypasses straightforward serious engagement. Grotesque humour is essential to children's socialisation because it provides opportunities to make strange the world of convention, to explore contradiction, ambiguity and paradoxes within the official adult world. This means that children's mealtime socialisation is an open, active and creative process of interdependence and experimentation with contradiction between the self and other. In consequence, children's socialisation can be double-edged: learning the authoritative discourse of the adults as well as covert ways to disrupt and subvert the established order. Significantly, the capacity to improvise within the normative order and understand how to subvert the solemnity of the official discourse is important in knowing how to interact with others in everyday life. The findings in the second analytical chapter (Chapter Five) illustrate how children use spatial configurations and dialogic interactions around the lunch table to collectively subvert the normative order. Children push the boundaries, learning when meander and when to put on speed, when experimenting with local understandings in relation to the social and moral school mealtime order.

Collaborative subversions are often loud and disruptive in some way and we can imagine the intention of the actors is to make themselves and others laugh. In contrast, the third empirical chapter (Chapter Six) examined children's individual and more clandestine subversive interactions that evaded notoriety or laughter. Thus, Chapter Six set out to answer research question 3: **How do individual children challenge the school mealtime structure and maintain a sense of autonomy?**

Chapter Six demonstrated that children's individual transgressions are subtle and often hidden when challenging the normative social and moral order of oppression around food and the body. I have shown that children can covertly refuse to devour the food and refuse to be devoured by the normative order, asserting their own authority over what they consume (physically and symbolically). A key finding is children's agentic and sophisticated capacity to fuse together the official discourse and the unofficial discourse, which develops their sense of self and deprives adults or officialdom of absolute authority. Children's deflections or disappearances into the heteroglossic nature of the school mealtime are transformative in that children can surreptitiously retain and maintain some sense of autonomy and independent identity, whilst challenging the moral

basis of their social bonds. Furthermore, I demonstrated that when children are driven into solitude there are pitfalls for the powerless and marginalised (Bakhtin, 1984). Children who pretend to conform, feeling forced to hide and feel shame about not wanting to eat their lunch or being unable to navigate the ambivalence of the unstructured peer produced world, learn covert socialising skills to get their needs met. These may be unintended socialising outcomes (in relation to the adult perspective) but they enable children to develop their sense of self, their autonomy and their own political agendum.

8.3 Implications for educational research and practice

School mealtimes do more than enliven the school day, give a break from the mental exertion of classwork and nourish the physical body: when children freely interact, they reveal much about themselves and their social worlds (Sharp and Blatchford, 1994). I contribute a more sophisticated articulation of the social complexities and dynamics that surround children's consumption of a mid-day meal in school. I have illustrated heterogeneity within school mealtime conditions and children's interactions, which can be volatile, mundane, unpredictable, contradictory and dynamic. There are important opportunities and insights to be gained from education researchers who conceptualise school mealtimes as an integral component of the ecology of education (Weaver-Hightower, 2011). The school mealtime setting is an important context in which to learn something new about children's socialisation and employ children's disruptions as a source of critical examination of our normative understandings. I have argued throughout that a superficial look underestimates the sophistication of children, which leads to adults' misunderstandings about what is happening. Approaching children in an open-minded and responsive way can, to some extent, gain privileged access to children's social worlds (Sharp and Blatchford, 1994). An implication of this is that if school staff were more open and responsive to children not wanting to eat their meals, they could have a conversation rather than children subtly discarding unwanted food. Positioned as legitimate authorities over children, adults are identified as being capable of knowing what children need and better able to speak on their behalf (James and Prout, 2015; Lee, 2001; Valentine, 2000; James, 2013). Under the ideology of care, adults tend to respond to children's challenging behaviour with complex and penetrating means of control (Jenks, 2005).

The way in which children are conceived has very practical consequences for how they will be handled in everyday life. If an adult believes children are not fully-formed creatures, but that they lack both self-knowledge and comprehensive knowledge, they are unable to make proper decisions (Metcalfe et al., 2011) and may be restricted from leaving the dining hall as a punishment for not eating enough food (Daniel and Gustafsson, 2010). This means that children can only respond in

partial form because negotiation is uneven in the adult-child dynamic, in which case children may feel it necessary to throw food under the table to avoid the exchange. Children are not merely incorporating food into their bodies during school mealtimes; they themselves are incorporated into the implicit and explicit social and moral order (Ochs and Shohet, 2006; Douglas and Nicod, 1974).

An implication of the findings derived from my empirical chapters (Sections 8.2; 8.3) is that mealtime assistants would be better equipped if they approached children in a way that supports children's agentic capacity as reflexive social agents, who do have self-knowledge to make autonomous decisions about how much food they can eat, which may even ensure that food is not wasted, and children do not go hungry. These findings suggest that children are active in the construction and determination of their own lives (James and Prout, 2015; James, 2013; Hedegaard, 2009; 2012). In other words, school managements need to work with mealtime assistants to facilitate an approachable demeanour where children can feel more comfortable with openly and honestly rejecting food without fear of reprisal. There is often little formal training given to mealtime assistants as to how to deal with children's behaviour or how to manage and be responsible for large numbers of children in an environment that is far less structured than the classroom (Pike, 2010; Sharp, 1994).

Schooling is not only the learning of academic subjects; it has a function of socialisation, fostering the social development of children. It is imperative that school mealtimes are valued for the integral part they play in children's education and schooling. If this were so, mealtime assistants would be recognised as valuable, capable members of the staff, who are responsive to changing demands when caring for children. Currently, mealtime assistants are an invisible casual workforce in the school system, they can be viewed as 'non-people' because no one knows their names, and they are often ignored or contradicted (Sharp, 1994). Mealtime assistants may be completely left out of behaviour management schemes that teachers access, which implicitly suggests that they are not credible managers of behaviour (Sharp, 1994). However, mealtime assistants are an untapped resource and if they were given more credence, they might become entitled to the professional development that they deserve to ensure that staff are better equipped to manage everyday challenges that arise during the mealtime (Baines and Blatchford, 2019; Fell, 1994; Sharp, 1994).

The power of a few hours of training should not be overestimated in resolving all problems. As Pike (2010, p.285) argues 'pupils may be well aware of the internal hierarchies that operate within schools and fully cognisant of the limits of the authority of lunchtime staff'. Too often, mealtime assistants have no voice in school matters, and when this is combined with their low status in the

school hierarchy, a perpetuating devaluing cycle can occur (Sharp, 1994). More needs to be done to raise the profile of mealtime assistants and to value their commitment and contribution to the care and management of children within the school structure. This is important for children's mealtime socialisation because mealtime staff are part of an interacting system that reflects the collective attitudes and values of the school, the community and the wider social and political context that contributes to children's schooling. An implication of these findings is to raise the status of mealtime assistants within the school system and to improve the institutional visibility of mealtime assistants.

During my fieldwork, the headteacher did consult the mealtime assistants about how the mealtime could be improved, and implemented their suggestions, which benefitted both the children and mealtime assistants in this school (Section 3.5.7). Involving mealtime assistants in the improvement process recognises and values their knowledge, understanding and responsibility in relation to the children. An implication of this is that school leaders need to engage in meaningful discussions with children and mealtime assistants to identify problem areas and pressure points and to elevate the role of mealtime assistants within the school (Fell, 1994; Sharp, 1994). Evaluation and feedback should be included in any changes to ensure that aims are being met and a clear sense of direction is maintained. An inclusive community-based policy is needed in schools that includes all staff and empowers them to contribute to the quality of experience of children's social development. School mealtimes are invariably the sideshow to the main event, but more can and should be done to appreciate the educational value they have for children.

8.4 Theoretical implications

First and foremost, I set out to ethnographically capture the particularities and complexities of children's school mealtime socialisation from a child-centred perspective. My conclusions are generalisable in the context of particular theoretical debates rather than being concerned with extending them to a larger collective (Davies, 1999). I re-theorised children's socialisation in order to re-think how children interact with each other within the materiality of the meal hall and the normative mealtime structure. I developed a nuanced understanding of children's specific socialisation in school mealtime practice, which conceptualises children as competent social actors who co-construct their own developmental conditions (Hedegaard, 2009). My research raises important theoretical considerations for how children are conceptualised, expanding the literature on children's active school mealtime socialisation.

The thesis includes theoretical insights into the findings from the ethnographic analysis and highlights a richer, nuanced understanding of the socialisation processes of children in schooling, and particularly the mealtime. I have given detailed accounts of how children socialise outside the gaze of supervising adults. Firstly, I have discussed how children feel that the school mealtime offers opportunities to relax and exercise their own agency, which Daniel and Gustafsson (2010) could not theoretically or empirically explain because of the degree of adult control over the mealtime. Secondly, I have made visible a child-centred perspective of how children create a space for relaxation and for their own autonomy under the radar of supervising adults. In doing so, children make strange the world of convention to explore contradictions, ambiguities and paradoxes within the official world. I have demonstrated that children are sophisticated and agentic, learning tacit understandings of social rules from their concrete mealtime interactions that become internalised and individualised, outside of the adult gaze. The theoretical implication of children's agentic and sophisticated mealtime socialisation is that children learn a lot about themselves and others outside of the normative adult gaze.

I have added theoretical insights into children's individualised forms of knowledge and power in the school mealtime context. School mealtime research is predominantly reported from Foucault's perspective of governmentality, which centralises power into a unified, cooperative, monolithic mechanism that supports an adult perspective to maintain children in their subjection (Foucault, 1991; Smart, 1983). The theoretical implications of a Foucauldian framework are that school mealtimes produce trained, docile children. I expanded on this analytical perspective to argue that children's dissident interactions can temporarily de-stabilise the social order and reverse social power. In deploying Bakhtin's carnivalesque discourse in the analysis I have argued that various attempts are being made by the authoritative discourse to unify social order, but children have the capacity to deliberately contest and temporarily become the powerful knowledgeable other (Bakhtin, 1981). Power is not a categorical position but is created, negotiated and modified in social interactions, which theoretically contributes to children's mealtime socialisation in the field of school mealtime research.

8.5 Methodological implications

A methodological implication of my research is that research should focus on children's everyday lived experiences, to understand the conditions in which children socialise and see the possibilities for their interactions from a child-centred perspective. In doing so, I made transparent aspects of both children's mealtime socialisation and the mealtime assistant role to contribute a rich analysis of how mealtime staff interactionally produce (and children subvert) the normative order. Thus, I

had to listen, observe and participate over an extended period of time to build relationships in order to make the invisible visible, opening up a world that is locked to outsiders.

Non-participant observations were crucial for familiarising myself with the research setting, social relationships and everyday activities (Barley, 2014; Davies, 1999). However, unbeknown to me at the time, the school mealtime community was on its best behaviour, with my constant observation from the side of the room with a note book acting as a control mechanism for individuals to monitor and regulate themselves (Foucault, 1982; Pike, 2008). It was only from these initial observations that I was able to develop awareness and understanding to recognise how my relationship with the research community changed over time, which allowed me to gain greater insight into the ways in which children subvert the normative order of the mealtime (Davies, 1999). Participant observations in a mealtime assistant role gave me a new sense that the mealtime was more relaxed, where generally only the younger children would raise their hands to ask for permission to move on to their dessert or to leave the table. Mealtime assistants shouted and rang the bell a lot more to bring order to the mealtime, the lunch table layout was often out of alignment and more food was observed on the tables and on the floor after the children had eaten. I noted that children were less compliant with the rules and mealtime assistants were less vigilant in supervising the children. Participation and observation were iterative, whereby new observations led to changes in participation, which led to new observations, and so on (Rabinow, 1977). The implications of conducting research in this way were that as data collection was refined, I started to share in the lives of the research community rather than observe from a position of detachment, which elicited new insights (Whyte, 1993).

A reflexive methodological insight came from building complicit relationships with the children. I found that children loved to be listened to and to have their views taken seriously. They played practical jokes on me, tested the boundaries and to some extent initiated me into their social worlds. This resulted in a significant moment for me, when Daniel playing the piano and scurried straight past me to get back to his seat undetected by the mealtime assistants (Section 5.4). From attuning to children's sense making I could observe their subversive games, complicit in their rule breaking with my silence. Had I not kept an open mind, valued children's points of view on their school mealtime socialisation and suspended my adult judgements about the rightness or wrongness of their interactions, I would not have gained access to their covert mealtime socialisation. An implication for fieldwork that explores a child-centred view is to develop reflexive, accepting researcher relationships that can hold a space for children to fill and honour with their knowledge and sense-making.

8.6 Implications for school mealtime policy

My analysis of the data (Chapter Six) demonstrates that children can be sophisticated and competent at understanding and satisfying school mealtime requirements to take a meal and purposefully display consumption behaviour, but not necessarily eat their meals. In contrast, nutritional policy and research predominantly focuses on food choices, school meal uptake, nutritional content and procurement, which are all adult-centred perspectives on mealtimes (Department of Education, 2019; Evans and Harper, 2009) that place little emphasis on the social dynamics in which children consume. I demonstrate that children's social interactions can sometimes be more important to them than the food they are eating. I also go one step further and provide significant insights into what happens after a child has taken a meal. I have identified how children have agentic capacity to deploy covert tactics to avoid eating their meals. For example, children may take food and not eat it or opt for a sandwich lunch on the premise that they have more seating choices, showing how difficult social relations can inhibit children's consumption. Policy makers are entranced with the macro level of school mealtimes, but without drawing from ethnographies and smaller qualitative research, nutritional research can only play a partial role in explicating what children eat, and thereby risks only partially fulfilling political nutritional objectives (Evans and Harper, 2009). Future research should develop richer understandings of children's mealtime activities that address underlying issues of children's consumption.

From what principles should school mealtime policies be developed and implemented and what kinds of relationships between schools and children will be articulated in them? I have argued that children develop their voices by experimentally objectifying another's discourse or normative order. This occurs through distancing, friction, conflict and conflict resolution, not through joining in happy harmonious communion (Bakhtin, 1981; Duncan and Tarulli, 2003; Jenks, 2005; Valsiner, 2015). Children and school staff value the school mealtime differently, which can sometimes lead to conflict. It is significant that Baines and Blatchford's (2019, p.10) recent national survey of state and independent primary schools found that there has been a marked reduction in children meeting with peers outside of school, which 'highlights that school is increasingly the main, and in some cases, the only context where young people get to socialise directly with peers and friends their own age'. It is essential that policy makers consider a fundamental review that explores the social value of the school mealtime and the impact it has on children's social development. Legislation is needed to provide a positive construction of how school mealtimes contribute to children's social development. Returning to the main point of this thesis, we need to consult with children and consider their perspectives to ensure that changes are not made just for the convenience of adults.

Taking insights from children is still at odds with policy development, but it is essential because children are the main participants in the mealtime and have a wealth of valuable knowledge.

8.7 Limitations and recommendations for further research

This research uses an ethnographic research design and provides an in-depth investigation into children's socialisation and the school mealtime context, in one school site. I was committed to capturing the uniqueness of children's school mealtime socialisation to provide a 'thick description' that contextualises children's diversity, individuality and variability (Geertz, 1973), which is not easily transferable. I have represented a distinct group of children who attend a primary school in South West England. It would be interesting to conduct research in a school with a different ethos to explore how the school discourse may or may not alter children's mealtime socialisation. For example, it might be interesting to research a large inner-city school or conduct research in a school where teachers sit down and eat the same food with the children. Such research may elicit an understanding of how the school setting conceptualises autonomy and ownership, and how educational discourses operate in the mealtime.

My ethnographic interpretations are not neutral nor are they a passive instrument of discovery (Davies, 1999). Whilst I have made every effort to be accountable through reflexivity, my subjective interpretation of the children's perspectives is inescapably partial, inevitably presented from my perspective, albeit with significant input from participants. In trying to understand children's meaning making and interactions within the school mealtime, I often took note of behaviour that was routinely ignored or not even noticed, and that the children might not have been aware of themselves (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). A limiting consequence is that the research findings provide important knowledge about children's socialisation that is not easily open to judgement or evaluation.

Research is needed to explore interesting phenomena in children's mealtime drawings with elicitation interviews that was outside the central argument of this thesis. In the present research, I was only able to analyse and represent a proportion of children's ideas in relation to my research questions. Furthermore, more male children could have been recruited into the sample to offer a deeper understanding of larger male friendship groups or I could have delved deeper into the experiences of marginalised children by conducting individual drawing interviews. More research is needed to further explore children's use of space in relation to their socialisation, which may stimulate interest in re-conceptualising children's agency. My research recognises the importance of the children's private underworld, which complicates debates on how best to construct and

effectively facilitate children's school mealtime education. Further research is needed into the situated nature of children's socialisation, which could shed light onto other informal school spaces.

School mealtime prayers were sung before lunch, religious artwork was purposefully hung on the dining room walls to reflect changes in the religious calendar and small religious shrines were erected in the background of the mealtime (for example, positioned behind the cutlery containers or on small tables in the corners of the meal hall). Children paid attention to the changing artwork and shrines around the dining hall, and much could be gleamed about how the materiality of the school discourse implicitly communicates moral lessons and how children interpret those messages. These phenomena were outside the central argument of my thesis, but more research is needed to understand how religious artefacts and routines convey subtle messages about food and the body, which also contributes to children's mealtime socialisation.

8.8 Concluding remarks

My research has revealed that the social conditions of the school mealtime are a special configuration of time and space (chronotope) that is interactionally produced and constitutes children's socialisation. In the interplay of intense struggle between coexisting and equally valid discourses, children develop their own understandings of moral and social norms and values. Children test the boundaries of what is permitted, with relative freedom to think for themselves, discover, experiment, modify and redefine their subjective world views, forming their own social critiques to uncover what is not easily explainable or changeable. As a result, children's mealtime socialisation carries deep symbolic significance because it is through carnival that the reveller is transported into another place. Carnivalesque discourse creates a critical distance for children's active socialisation to develop self-understanding in relation to normative moral and social order. I have argued that children's mealtime socialisation is an open, active and creative process of interdependence and experimentation with contradiction between the self and other. It enables children to develop sophisticated relational and contextual knowledge, whereby the children use the mealtime as a resource. The school mealtime enriches children's social development and I want to encourage others to recognise, from a child-centred perspective, the educational value that school mealtimes have for children's socialisation.

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Appendix One: Sample of non-participant observation fieldnotes
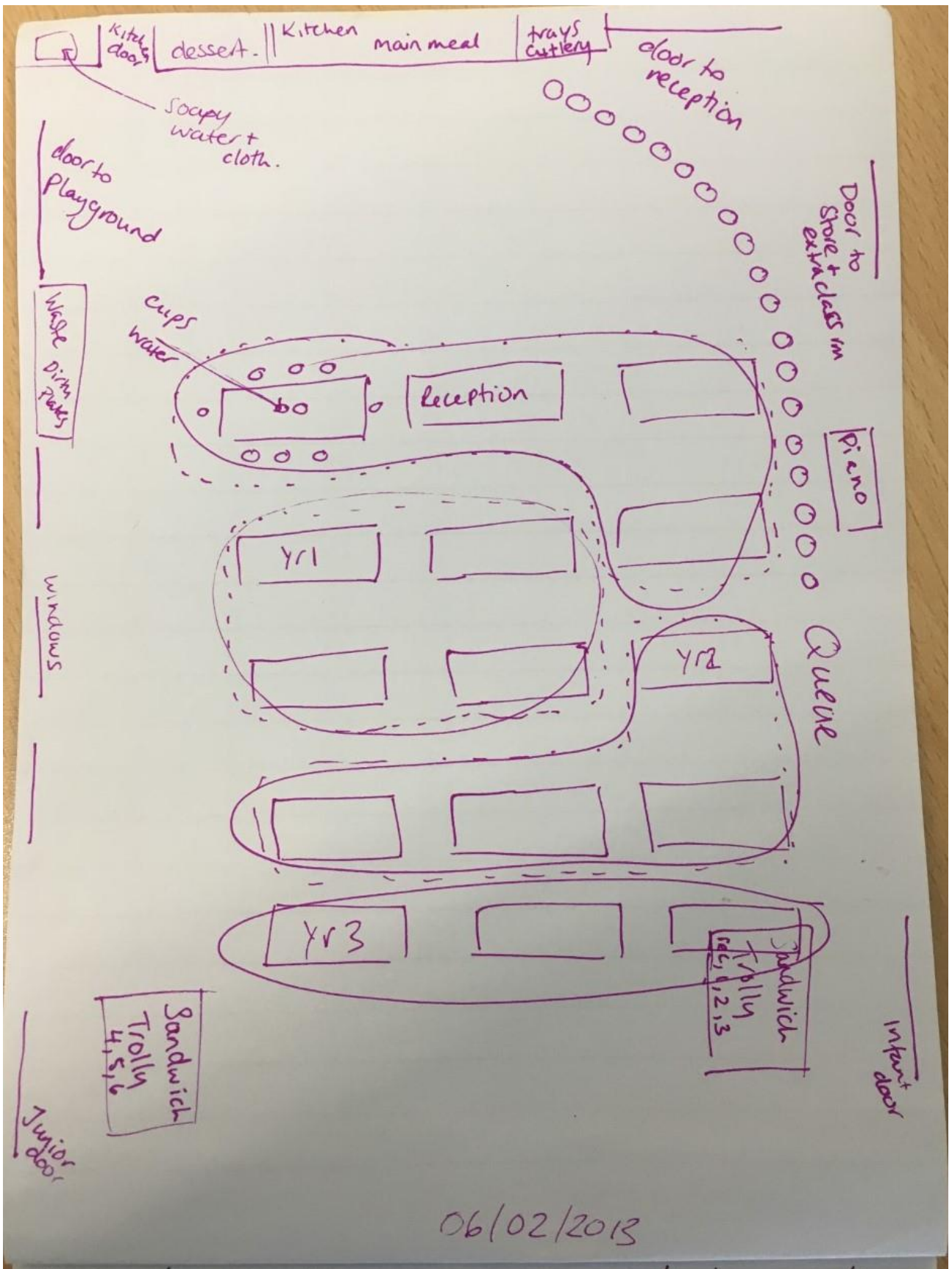
06/02/2013

first Row → Reception

2nd " → Yr 1

3rd " → Yr 2

4th " → Yr 3.

06/02/2013

first Sitting.

Yrs 4,5,6   Second Sitting.

Collect knife /fork/spoon + tray. in line

Just before
12·26 12·27 first hands go up.

Just After
12·30 — All children are seated.

12:33 Just after first children finish +
               scrape trays.

Begin a line for the play ground.

Sandwich boxes get checked.

- letter home about - no choc in
Sandwich box.

12.37 - kitchen staff wipe tables

12.39 - kids go out to play - 1 dinner
with lady.
less than half the children left

children skipping / laughing /
very noisey - lots of chatting.

[4]   2nd Sitting.
[5]
[6]   Children line up outside.
Dinner ladies outside check them in
       "   " inside makes sure
they bch when they come in.

1st Sitting - Can't leave until
12·35.

2nd " Can leave when They're
finished. after hand up.

3 dinner
ladies.

12·50

line up outside come in according
to beh.

Sit anywhere in there section.

12·55 first hands go up.

12·58 Bin goes out.
first ppl leave.

1·05 half the rm left.

mostly Y4

16 Y4   5 Y5   5 Y6

1.07   2 YR6

7/02/2013 . Moved the Camera

feel more relaxed today wondered round
taking pictures .

12.20 half tables filled up.
12.23 1st hands.

Sandwich lunch peanut sarnie.

macaroni ×3 far   favourite dinners.
        ×1 pizza

12:40 Sandwich trolly brought in 4/5/6.

— Dinner ladies_ Miss
   chatted about/Sending one
girl to the front/because shed
eats slow. ← — Contraversial
        that's because ??so+
                              so
is a special helper. Good idea
                     but put her behind
                     special helper.

lunch time the hardest part of the job;
there are parts I love working with kid
because it unpredictable, but there are
no boundaries - well less boundaries
at lunchtime. - they push the limits / of
the boundaries.
or I think they do.   DL3

08/02/2013.

Friday - family lunch day.
2 children from every year.
only small ones at the moment   12:20

numbered tables.

Dinner ladies help cut up their food small ones.
Older children take offer with getting
the younger kids to eat
            DL Prefer it much quieter

Appendix Two: Sample of participant observation fieldnotes

9/3/15

- Apron
- HT chatting
- Milk lid - grannie
- Invisibility
- Pouring milk - Meth.
- MIs Stone
- Have a drink, you cant force them.
- food on floor - Noise - D1 response + reflection
- Hands up
- Sweetcorn tooth
- Pudding - Standard answer
- He keeps staring at me

MA = Mealtime Assistant (numbers refer to different mealtime assistants)
Pseudonyms were created at the point of fieldnote entry and used throughout.

[09/03/2015]

I had a good restful weekend to clear my mind. I felt much stronger and together today than I've been feeling for a while. The sun is shining with a cold crisp breeze.

Aprons - When I arrived last week, I met MA6 who I've never seen before, she asked my name etc. and gave me a plastic apron to wear and hand sanitiser. She said this was the procedure. If I'm honest, at the time, I hated it. I felt a bit demoralised as I felt like I was being assigned a status that I wasn't comfortable with. Now I love it, it is almost the cloak of invisibility! Even some of the other mealtime assistants look beyond me. Also, I think it is only the "mealtime assistants" that wear aprons and not the "TA mealtime assistants" but I'm not sure, we will see with time.

Mr Hutchinson - When the lunch started, I started to pour milk and Mr Hutchinson came in. He greeted me. He seemed to loiter around chatting to the children, almost checking me out pouring milk. He spoke to the children about their meals I think, I didn't pay too much attention purposefully. The children always generally tend to seem quite relaxed talking with him.

Milk Lid - Granny - I was pouring milk for children on a table. Jimmy had a sandwich lunch and so doesn't qualify for a cup of milk. As I am pouring milk for the other children, he tells me he has his own milk in a little bottle. When I pass by later, he takes the milk lid and puts it against his ear.
[Year Two boys]
Jimmy: Listen you can hear the sea.
SS: What like a shell from the beach?
Jimmy: Yes, just like a shell from the beach. It's a Spanish beach because my granny gave me this milk. You can hear the waves.
Matt: Can you? Can you hear the sea?
Jimmy: Yes, here listen. [he handed Matt the milk bottle lid]
Matt: Yes! I can hear the waves crashing on the sand. [Hands it back to Jimmy]
SS: Can you really?
Jimmy: Yes, I can hear the waves crashing against the rocks by my granny's beach.

This was a pleasant interlude where the boys were creative with artefacts that connected to personal relationships.

Invisibility - It is so very different this time in comparison to my last period of fieldwork. I seem to be invisible to many people. They either look through or beyond me. People that used to talk to me before now don't really. Not as much attention on the video camera either.

Pouring Milk - No Note-taking - Not taking notes seems to have made a huge difference in the way things are going. I wonder if there are ethical implications to not being so explicit. Not taking notes has helped me to disappear into the crowd. Likewise, having a purpose or role within the mealtime takes the limelight away from me because I am not standing around like a spare part, almost waiting for people to talk to me. I feel differently and the research site seems to be responding to me differently too. The MAs thank me for my help, saying how easy things are having an extra pair of hands. On Monday and Tuesdays, the children are offered milk with their lunch and in the past weeks, they told me they have been under staffed. I also enjoy pouring milk because it gives me a logical reason to be talking, listening and observing children's interactions in a closer proximity (I have carried this experience over to my other research school and it is working well there too).

Mrs Stone - I asked a boy if he wanted milk, he said yes and asked me what my name was. I hesitated, thinking about the school protocol on first name or surname terms, then I said. Mrs Stone and gave him the milk. He said, Thank you Mrs Stone. It was a heart-warming moment.

Have a drink - One boy didn't want a drink and the other aproned MA6 was insistent that he have a drink of some description. She asked many times and said she thought he should, but he continued to refuse, and the MA relented – saying to me after, you can't force them although I think he probably should have a drink.

Food on floor – Noise – MA response – reflection - The room is so noisy today. The MA4 rang the bell (9:32 on audio) today and selected a few people by name to be quiet. I think she rang it three times in total. I also noticed how much food there was on the floor. It was peas and sweetcorn today, but it was everywhere, all over the tables, all over the floor. I also found half a bag of French fries from someone's sandwich lunch and a piece of orange on the floor. I picked up the

orange as the tables started to move, and also some wet blue roll from an earlier water spillage. The blue roll must have been on the floor for 20 mins. The room was noisy and messy today. (2.14 on video - girl not happy)

Lot less hands up - I have noticed in comparison to last time that not so many people ask to move on to their next meal or if they can leave the table. The room feel a lot less tightly controlled and the children more autonomous.

Sweetcorn Tooth - A jovial table of boys seem to be having fun. Casper approaches me

Casper: Mrs Stone, Mrs Stone

SS: Yes?

Casper: Zak's tooth has come out when he was eating his food.

SS: Really? Whilst he was eating, wow!?

Casper: [Gestures for me to follow him over to the table]

James: [Is waving his hands signing no and laughing]

SS: [I follow Casper back to his table]

Casper: See, Mrs Stone?

Zak: [Looks up at me laughing.] See, here's my tooth! [He pulls a piece of sweetcorn from his mouth]

ALL: [We all laugh]

SS: aaaaahh you were having me on lads, very funny [said with a friendly tone and a smile].

MA2: [the boys are still laughing] What's going on? Are they being silly?

All: [We all just laughed, and no one answered.]

Pudding? Standard answer - A girl asked me if she could move on to her pudding but still had a lot of her main meal left. I asked, 'Do you not want anymore?' She said no. I said something like 'Have you had enough?' she just shrugged and looked at me blankly, 'I don't know, have I?' I find this is quite common and sometimes I struggle to answer the question because I feel it requires me to make a standardised judgment.

He keeps staring at me - MA2 said she had been chatting to some children and one had said 'He keeps staring at me!' I asked MA2 'What did you say?' 'I asked the other child to not stare at her, what else can I do? I often get things like this where they might say, so and so won't play my

game, what can you do? They just have to sort it out themselves, you can't intervene in everything.'

Appendix Three: Sample of my out-of-field reflexive journal

07/04/2017

****** commented that the children's drawings were very static and looked very ordered, which seemed at odds with how I have described the phenomenon. ****** also noted that only one picture showed children queuing for their lunch, most likely because I asked them to draw a picture of their mealtime and maybe it is difficult to draw in motion. We discussed what I expected and found interesting, disappointing and surprising about the drawings. This raised significant critical questions about the assumptions that I'd made in the preliminary analyses and why. I was happy that I admitted that one set of drawings were disappointing as they were central to my observation focus and their drawings were very systematic and plain. It was an insightful conversation that revealed new understandings.

24/02/2017

Today I went to ******'s leaving do. I spoke to a lady from the innovation and research dept. She was asking me about my research focus, so I was telling her about what I find fascinating about children's mealtime socialisation. She said it was interesting and told me about her daughter being a teacher and the Year 6 girls taking a job as helpers for the whole year over lunch period. It was a strange conversation to be honest as I was saying that I was interested in the wonderful noisy spaghetti structure and she was replying about how these girls liked the structure and therefore the lunch time job was really good for them so they didn't have to do that noisy thing, play, fall out or make friends. I say again it was a strange conversation because we were saying opposite things, or was it that, yes, I think so, she was saying structure and order is good because it avoids messiness, noise and any upset and I was arguing for the value of messiness. I wonder what that says about me, is it something I need to think about? I think she may, or I may have said some other things worth noting.

17/02/2017

Three weeks ago, I did some coding and today I was writing up some of my records and wondered to myself what on earth, I had put in a code, titled: mealtime activities! It seems rather vague, doesn't it, which reminded me what Braun and Clarke (2013, p.210) had to say about 'what makes a *good* code? Codes should be as concise as possible. A code captures the essence of what it is about that bit of data that interests you'. Do you remember the conversation that ***** had with you about oil? He said that if an examiner asked me on what grounds did you find something interesting then you must have an answer. So, for example, oil under the North Sea was of little interest to anyone until let's say 1880 and then someone decided it was interesting for the sake of mining or money etc. and THEN it became interesting. Interests reside in the person finding it, not in the oil. So therefore, something in the mealtime could be interesting because previous research says x, but you have found y and that is really interesting because of blah blah. 'Codes should "work" when separated from the data (imagine that you lost your data – good codes would be informative enough to capture what was in the data and your analytical take on it)' (p.211). This means that developing codes may take some more thought. They gave an example that 'times have changed' is a better code than 'different lifestyles'. So, this brings me to my point about 'mealtime activities' – even when I haven't lost my data, I don't have a clue what that refers to unless I go back through and look at each piece of data under that code. So, I need better codes, right!

The other interesting and significant thing I wanted to mark is that I have come to my data today after a 3 week break from the raw data and I have found a smiley face code! What on earth does that mean? It means I have to re-read each extract to know what made me smile because it is a completely useless indicator!!! but it also reminds me that it's good to step away from the data and come back because thankfully, today, my head isn't trying to capturing the essence of my data with smiley faces or make assumptions that I will intuitively know what the hell I was thinking about 3 weeks earlier!!

08/12/2016

I have been struggling recently. I have low energy and feel waterlogged, like I have a headache from thinking too hard. I feel like I need to stare into space, exhausted and fed up. As I left school today, I wondered if this was a methodological challenge. I've worked hard to slip into the background, like a fly on the wall, and build relationships, blending with others, and in some ways, I don't voice my own opinions or judgements. Not necessarily like a blank canvas but not necessarily being forthright in expressing my own thoughts or feelings on matters and if I do ever give an opinion on the mealtime in some way, it is reflected back to me in later conversations. I don't want this to happen because I'm not just interpreting what I observe, I'm constantly trying to get to know what it means to live in the school mealtime, to see the world through the eyes of others and feel from the inside. Not that I abandon myself entirely to stepping out of my shoes but to maintain a double vision and I wonder if living 'neutrally' on the periphery of social life for a prolonged period of time is not only exhausting, but in some ways erodes my sense of self? In puzzlement I looked back at the beginning entries of my fieldnotes today, where I note my mood, what I'm reading, thinking about around me, etc., and I noticed at the beginning of the term I make more energised comments and by the end of the term I am dull, unsettled and deflated. Today, I feel overloaded and exhausting from straddling the liminal self-conscious world between multiple identities, saturated and glitching in a spinning doughnut of death wondering if an ethnographic PhD should come with a health warning!

10/03/2016

Today I arrived at school like I had left my head at home thinking like some out of body experience. My brain felt like it was screaming, and I needed to lift the scalp slightly to hear the release that a pressure cooker might make. I am still cluelessly grappling with Bernstein.

Today the receptionist welcomed me with a cheerful voice. My body arrived before my head, so as I signed in the attendance book I said, gosh I feel like I am away with the fairies today floating on a fluffy cloud somewhere. Out the corner of my eye the receptionist looked very serious and concentrating on her work said 'don't worry Sam, we are not going to test you on your observations'. I looked up from what I was doing – she continued to look serious and concentrated on her work – the comment popped my dream state and I felt a bit puzzled by what she had said, thinking about what it could mean. I don't think I replied, I just walked into the hall. It occurred to me later that the children were singing in the meal hall when I arrived. Whilst signing in at reception, the throw away remark that snapped me back into reality seemed to reach into something deep and significant. I don't know the answer.

10/05/2017
Interview record 4

A3 Paper
Coloured pens and pencils
6 female participants from year one teaching group
Held in the infant library – minimal interruption

Time: 12:20 - 12:55 – This is the longest session yet due to the steady succession of three new participants.

I invited four year one boys at this table, and they declined with a polite 'no thank you', to which I replied, 'ok, so, you don't want to draw with me?' 'No thank you,' the boy answered. The other boys were disinterested like they didn't understand what I was asking or couldn't hear, and none replied, only looked at me blankly. However, three girls at the table soon jumped in and volunteered themselves. These girls had not been central to my observation focus, but I did notice, as I was talking to the boys, that one of the boys' friends took a seat that the girls were saving for their friend, who had to sit at another table. I invited the girls at the other table to join us as they were part of the friendship group, but none of them seemed interested. So, I went ahead with the 3 year one female participants, who eagerly volunteered themselves. They were excited. As I moved around the hall, they came to me a few times to ask me questions. When the 1st girl had finished she cleared her dishes and told the 2nd girl and nudged the 3rd girl to finish her lunch, standing next to her. When all were finished, they called to me that they were ready. Unbeknown to me at this point, other girls in their friendship group who were sat at a different table joined us after the interview had begun.

We went to the infant library:
- I introduced myself, who I am and explained why I come into their school at lunchtime.
- I told the children I was interested in their experience of eating a meal at school and that I had noticed that where children sit in the mealtime seemed to be important to them. Many children nodded in agreement.
I explained:
- That I wanted them to draw me a picture of the mealtime as if I was someone from home who had never been to your school, or an alien from outer space. How would you explain to them what your mealtime was like?
- I assured them that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' ways to do this and their drawing ability didn't matter, nor if it was the same or different from that of the person sitting next to them.
- That I wasn't going to trick or lie to them
- That they could leave at any time without giving me a reason. I also gave examples that if they felt uncomfortable, tired, bored or just wanted to play in the sunshine that was perfectly ok, I wouldn't be annoyed in anyway and they could leave their picture half way if they wished, that was fine too.
- That I would keep their drawings safe and not put their name on them so that no one would know who drew which picture, giving examples.
- That they could take their drawing home if they wanted to and that I would take a photograph and dispose of the photograph when the research is complete.

The overall session is relatively calm, and I ask the girls a couple of questions as they begin to draw. After perhaps 10 minutes P4 arrives, there is a seat at the table, and I agree for her to join us and go through the information above with her. 5 minutes later, P5 arrives. I say, 'sorry there is no space – maybe we could do it tomorrow?'. P2 instantly responds 'I can get a chair from over there'. So, I say, 'No it is ok, she can have mine' and go through the information/ethical procedures as above with her. P2 offers to get me a seat but I say I will crouch by the table instead. 5 minutes later P6 arrives. I say, 'Ahh I'm really sorry but there really isn't space for anyone else'. P2 jumps to her feet and rushes to bring her a chair, saying there is space next to me. I say, 'There isn't room for her paper' (they overlapped a little). 'No that's ok, there is room,' P2 replies. So, I talk with P6 to go through the information/ethics as above and the other girls continue to draw, not speaking until I have finished my introduction and P6 has given me informed consent. I recap some of the questions to the new arrivals and they all continue drawing and chatting together.

P3 announces she is finished – I think someone questioned/doubted her – she responded saying 'Well I'm allowed to leave whenever I want'. With that P2 says, 'Yes I've finished too' and then P1 'Yes and me'.

I offer the options of me taking a picture of their drawing so they can take it with them or leave it with me and P1 especially wants me to take a picture of her with the drawing. I explain that isn't what I mean, and she says she knows. She doesn't want to keep the drawing but wants her photograph to be taken with it before she leaves. Then, so does P3. So, I take a photograph of them together and after P1 insists on an individual photo of her, on her own, with her drawing, P3 does the same (P2 has gone to the toilet). P2, P4 and P5 don't want to take their drawings either and P6 wants to take hers home.

I have no clue if they participated generally equally because of people arriving and leaving.

I have labelled the participants 1- 6

Questions Asked:

1. Can you start by drawing me the meal hall? You can use coloured pens if you want to show different areas or things, it's up to you.

2. Can you draw yourself on the picture?

3. Do you normally sit in the same place every day? Is there anything you like about where you sit in the hall? Like, why there?

P3: Normally, I get to choose who to sit next to.
P2: Not on family lunch days [she went on to explain the process in detail]
P1: [confirmed what p2 was saying as she spoke]
1/2/3: [all talked about Tues /Thurs lunchtimes basketball club]
P3: normally, normally, normally, normally I sit next to P1
P2: My favourite thing is basketball.
P1: I don't like the end table or the first table, the middle table is the best.
SS: So, what do you like about the middle table?
P3: It's boring at the back but the middle is all squashed up together, it's cosy

Participant 4 enters

P3: Someone do a disco ball.
P1: I'm doing that.
P2: me too.
P4: me too.
P4: Do you know why the disco ball is there?
P1: Yes, it's for the play
[They all go on to talk about the play and their roles and stories of what happened]
P3: I have drawn P1 and P2 on my picture, hang on who has short hair?
P2: ooo please can I be on your picture?
P1: Yes, draw me on your picture.

Participant 5 enters

4. So, do you save seats then? (Mealtime assistants say children are not meant to save seats. I think this means we don't worry too much unless it causes a problem.)

P2: No.
P3: No – today I did but today it didn't work.
P4: Sometimes I save seats.
P5: Yes – I just put my hand on the seat.

5. What if there are no seats left for you to sit on when you get to the table?

P3: Each table has 8 seats normally, so it is the right amount.
P2: Normally a different table to sit on or like P3 says.
P3: Yeah fine, normally sad, no one to chat to.
P2: We don't care, we are normally available for everyone.
P5: Yeah, we don't care.
P1: Yeah, we don't care.

Participant 6 enters

6. What if you have to sit on a table without your friends, what happens then? What is that like?

P2: I say, sorry my friend is here can you move to a different table [*post interview reflection: At the time, I thought she was saying she was sitting and saying to someone who was approaching the table, can you go and sit over there because my friend is sitting here. Now I am thinking she was referring to when the table is full and trying to move someone with a sad face – I need to go back and check my fieldnotes on this.*]
P4: I stand next to the table and make a sad face.
P5: I don't care. I do nothing. I always sit with others.
P6: I can always find friends to sit with.
P4: I say that I will sit with them next time.
P3: Sorry I have bussed. [Post interview reflection: *I don't know what that means or why I wrote it*]
P1: I say, why don't you go and sit over there?

7. So how do you make sure that you get to sit with each other then? Like, is there anything you do to ensure you can sit with friends?

P6: See what happens really or move to a different table, see if any…
P5: See if any space. Call someone to come and take a space. Then they can be your friend.

8. What is the best thing about mealtime?

P6: The best thing is if I am sitting with friends.
P1: Eating pudding, playing games and going outside.
P2: Going outside.
P3: [says she is finished]

Participant 3, 2 and 1 leave.

P4: I don't know.
P5: Everything.
P6: I like to be inside better than outside.
SS: Why?
P6: Well I like them both, but I like outside when it is hot.
Res: So, do you think it is normally cold outside?
P6: Well I like it outside when it is sunny but otherwise, I like to be inside.

Participant 4 leaves

P5: Guessed who the boys were on P6's drawing [The boys are the two people at the end of the table].
P6: Smiled and said one of them was her cousin.

SS: Why is there a sun on your picture?
P5: Because the summer time comes quite quick. The winter time is much slower but summer is quick, it comes quick, it comes quick. [*Post interview reflection: I wonder if she is referring to the mealtime as summer time and its fast pace and the class time as winter time? I'll see if I can ask her next mealtime*]
SS: Is that you on your picture?
P5: No, it is my dad.
SS: And is this your house?
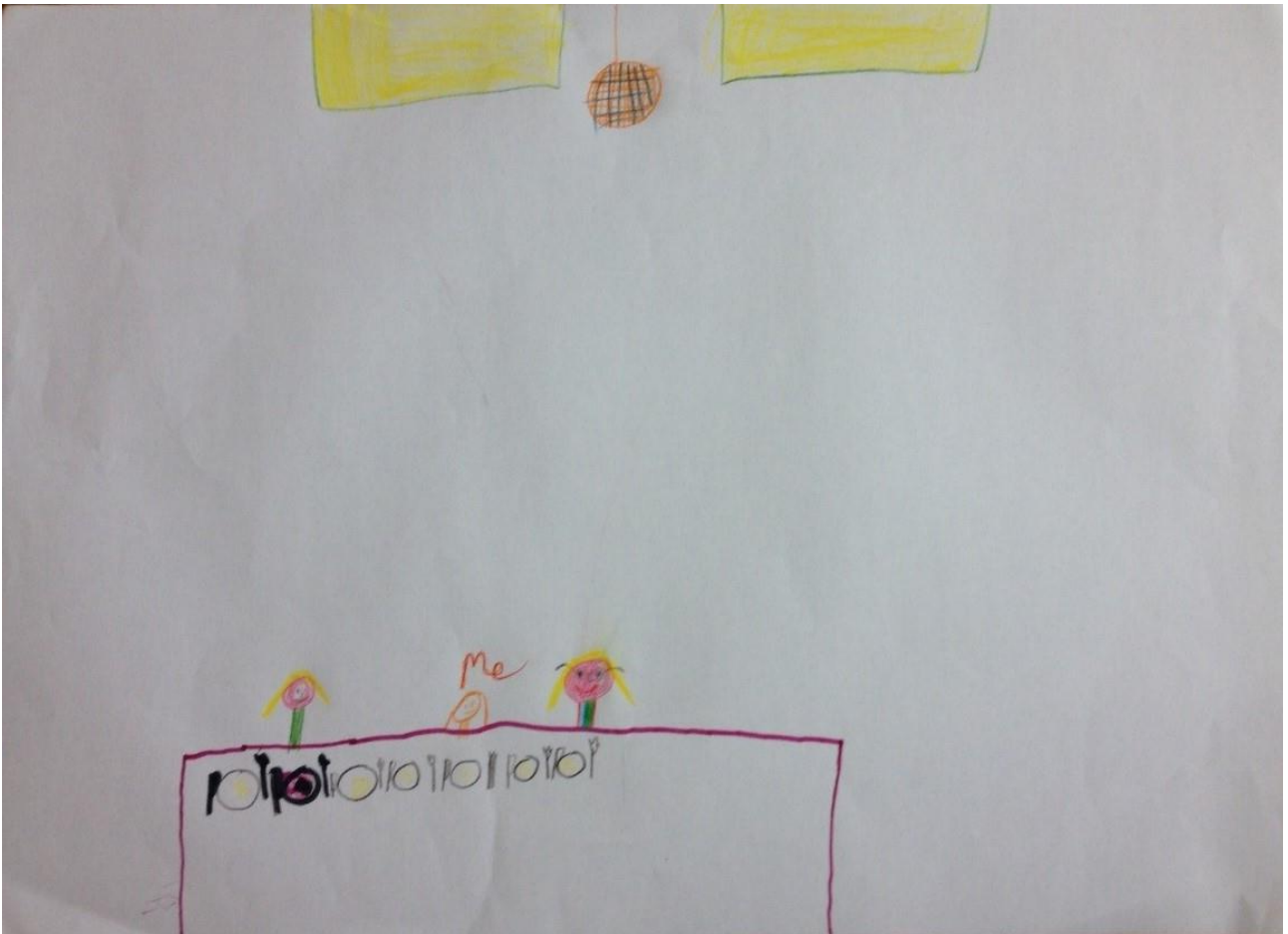P5: No that is the dog kennel
SS: In your last school did you used to eat your school meal outside then?
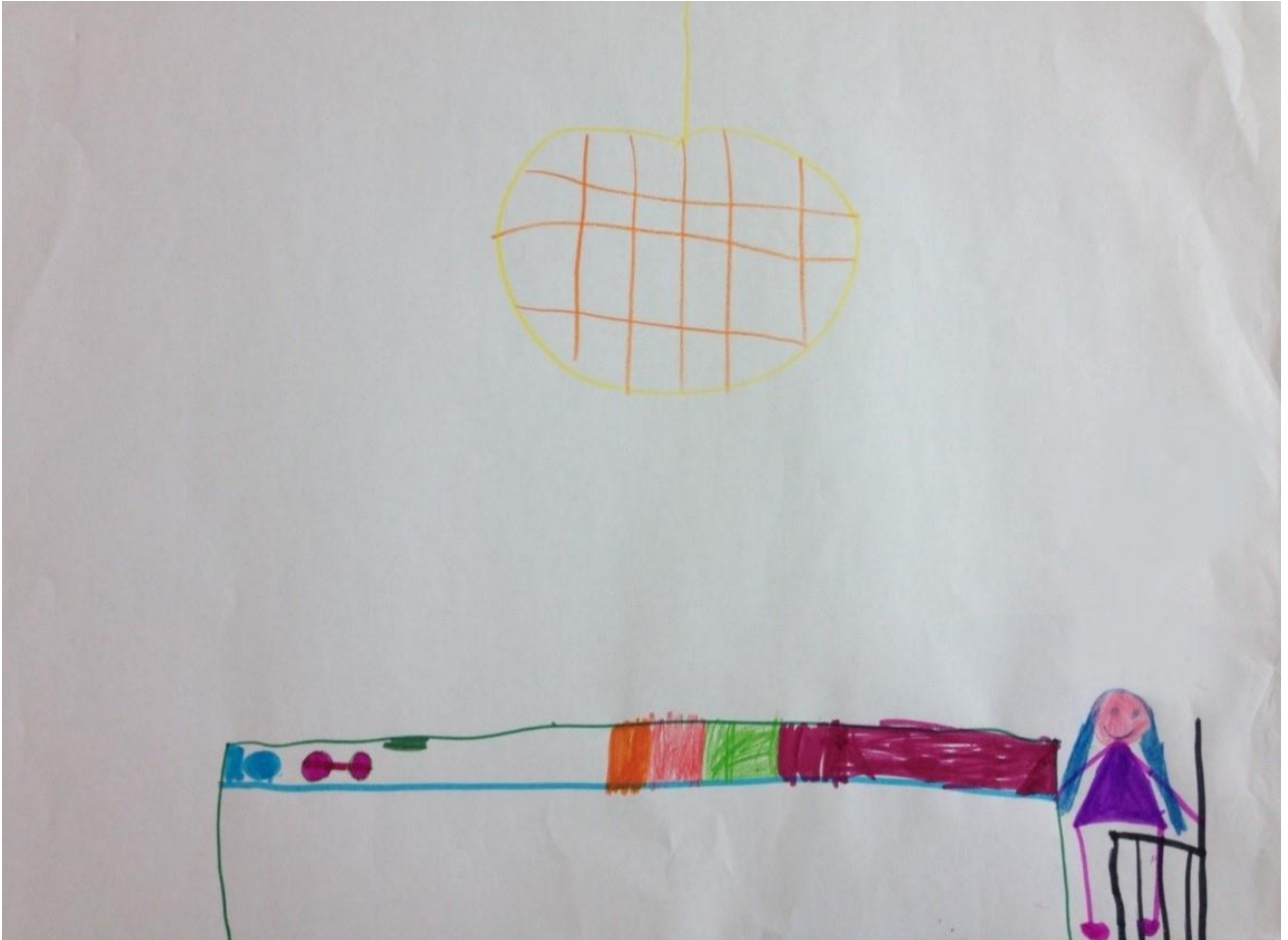P5: No. Well I don't remember, I left when I was very young.
P5: I just wanted to do my picture outside [*Post interview reflection: Perhaps this has some connection to the more unstructured playtime after lunch. I will ask her.*]

Pictures in the order of P1 - P6:

P1:

P2:

P3:

P4:

P5:

P6:

Appendix Five: Group interview schedule with the mealtime assistants

Mealtime Assistant Group Questions.

24/06/2015

Purpose: Gain an adult perspective on children's school mealtime socialisation

Interview Focus: **A day in the life of a dinner lady**

1, What are the pros and cons of being a dinner lady?

2, Do you find the children's behaviour more challenging during the mealtime?

3, Do children behave differently during mealtimes compared to classrooms?

4, How do you think the mealtime could be improved?

5, What sort of things do children learn during mealtimes?

6, Whose job is it to teach children how to eat a meal?

7, Do you find deciding if a child is full (has eaten enough) or not, difficult?

Appendix Six: Sample of analysis

All names have already been changed to pseudonym and a separate code book exists.

Bold writing is the bullet point notes immediately after the session

21/04/2016

Today I feel alright, still trying to apply Bernstein in my writing.

researcher positionality

Class Obs: reception

First Impressions: The teacher greeted me nicely and introduced me to the class. She called me to go to the front of the children and asked the children if they knew me and where from. The children replied the dining hall.

name
status
title

Access Entry

Mrs West: Yes, that's right, she is a dinner lady

Hierarcy within the school + Staff.

[She turned to me and discussed my name as part of my introduction to the class]

Mrs West: What should the children call you?

SS: (and as with Mrs Drake, I said) they can call me Mrs Stone.. (The conversation ended here with Mrs Drake, she introduced me as Mrs Stone).

Comparison to Yr 4.

Mrs West: Or... (She said, lingering for my first name)

Classification/ Power framing

SS: Sam, I said.

Mrs West: Well, which would you rather be called?

distinction.

SS: I don't mind (as she didn't accept my first answer)

Mrs West: Ok, let's call you Sam then

doing social Position

Mrs West: So, Sam, would you like to tell the children why you are here in the classroom with them?

Directive: Previously, she intended for me to take readers out of the classroom but when she heard I was interested in how children's socialisation she suggested I stayed in the class and got to know them. I said to her to feel free if she would like me to assist in anyway whilst I am in the classroom and she reiterated that they are doing observations and that I should get to know them and the children's names (perhaps so I can do later observations for her).

Access Ownership.

Gatekeeper Access Entry

names.

Play orientation: children are separated into 5 groups. And then the teachers take one small group at a time to teach them literacy or math. There are 3 teachers, consisting of 1 Class teacher, one student teacher and one teachers assistant.

Very directive with me: She was generally very directive with me. She kept her eye on me, and occasionally gave me pointers about the structure of what was happening. She was teaching Math. I tried to just settle in today.

watching me watching you.

doing structure

She asked me at one point if I wanted to go out with a reader or watch a collaborative game: I opted for the game of course.

why of Course?

children's interaction negotiation

Lead to lunch: She asked me to lead the class to lunch.

Student teacher: She is referred to by her first name

Mealtime:

More food to be eaten: Both DL's seemed a little irritated and were asking children to eat more. I didn't give permission to the children in case I was caught making a wrong decision. I think this must go some way to understanding how the children sometimes feel. Especially last week with the reception girl who would not allow me to give her permission to move from main to pudding because I wasn't a teacher and she didn't want to get into trouble with Mrs Matthews.

Bidding – Friends: I am conscious that friendship is not something I am 'meant' to be noticing at the moment but it does catch my eye as something interested. I was repeatedly reminded today how children bid for each other's attention and continually reject or sneak up on each other.

Queen – Queen's birthday. I had a very heartfelt conversation with an oriental boy about the Queen's 90th birthday. He wondered how she got to that age in such good health. He spoke about it being down to eating fruit and veg and I wondered if it had anything to do with exercise. He also wondered about the King and didn't know his name. He wondered why the king wasn't so important and we had a conversation about royal blood. He thought that perhaps she was old enough now. We wondered about how many presents she might get and where Winsor castle was.

That's a shame I can't hear myself think because your all shouting.. : The DL's chap their hands and the children repeat. Then Mrs Perkins says in a clear shrill voice the above line. As she starts to speak, some children continue to chat, by the time she has finished what she is saying everyone is silent and still and she lowers her voice. [When she finishes, she turns immediately to my direction and thankfully I was looking away. I say thankfully because I didn't want her to think her performance had my undivided attention. Like I'm always watching behavioural management].

Second sitting

Classroom choice: So, when I met with Mrs Roberts, she talked to me about my classroom choice. She asked why I was going into reception because mealtime isn't so much of a stark contrast as the junior classes. I said I was going into the Year Four class too, but this didn't

Handwritten margin notes:
- *Its all in a name names seem interesting*
- *Maybe understanding dynamics + sense making*
- *This is telling →*
- *Child-led conversation*
- *Discipline (control)*
- *Behaviour management*
- *CP*
- *Applying B. restricts seeing more important things.*
- *goffman? Hedegaard – what are the kids doing here?*
- *researcher positionality METH Avoiding Precieved judgement.*
- *difference between CL + MT*
- *ω*

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All names have already been changed to pseudonym and a separate code book exists.

Bold writing is the bullet point notes immediately after the session

So MT has some sense of play + humour for the DL

seem to satisfy her either (Mrs Drake is playful and uses humour a lot). I asked if she had a *recognition*

recommendation. She said not really but why don't you go into Year 2? I told her that the

teachers in reception and yr4 approached me and so I went with those classes and reception

might be useful to understand how children first pick up the school rules and routines. She

reaffirmed year 2 would offer a better contrast.

Participate led inquiry understanding what was important to them for me to know.

DL really seems to be at the window: Today as I observed the room I thought about

classification and framing. I thought about how loosely controlled the room was. Yes,

children ask for permission about this and that but generally the room runs itself as children

Cl + MT different structure Boundaries

are in a familiar routine, it's almost rare for anything major to be out of the ordinary apart

from the general minor problems. It is like a finely tuned machine. *All participants Contributing to the flow of Soc prac*

Brief words with reception – kept convo to a min: So here again, I am keeping

Meth – fitting in with ppl. Creating Sustainable relationships Rapport.

conversation to a minimum so's not to make people think too hard when talking to me. Just

because recently I feel like I have been navigating power/status/respect in many relationships.

Almost like, people are on guard a little, I just wanted to take the pressure off our

interactions.

Post Fieldnote reflection: Nothing to see here move along: After being in the classroom *obs.*

I felt like the mealtime was dull and uninteresting. I found the classroom

Previous HT Comment.

experience very exciting. Perhaps this was a novel experience, but I almost saw for the first

time what other saw in 'its just kids eating and chatting,' move a long please, there's nothing to

see here! Of course, this is not the case but it made me come at things from a different

perspective.

19/04/2016

Today I feel quite good, fabulous actually, I have energy, space and interest.

Class: Yr4

Quiet Speaking: I noticed children ask the same questions as each other but usually with a

quiet voice. Perhaps this is so that they don't get picked out as not knowing the answer.

Caught out: It could also be in case they get caught out, <mark>a light is shone on their mistake</mark>. *to MT*

Example of to get message across: Several times the teacher selected good and bad

Education of attention

examples of speaking, thinking.

Different to MT Where mistakes trial /error happens frequently

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Appendix Seven: Introductory letter

21 January 2013

<div align="right">

Samantha Stone
** *********
******, Bath
B** ***

University of Bath

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Dear Mr *********,

I am a final year student at Bath University, currently studying the Childhood, Youth and Education course. The course focuses on psycho-social development of children and as part of my studies, I am required to conduct a small piece of research.

Over the years of being a parent and occasional volunteer at ********* school, I have become very interested in how children are prepared for the lunchtime meal, with prays and songs that radiate Catholic values. I feel mealtimes are an important phenomenon to study because they are complex situations where children learn a lot about themselves and the communities in which they participate. They are cultural sites that facilitate psychological, social, and cultural development, creating identities through moral sentiment that connects children to a deeper meaning of life and their purpose within it.

I am writing to ask if it is possible to visit the school daily and assist the dinner ladies with the mealtime practice. The purpose of this, is to observe the children eating their lunchtime meal, and investigate how mealtimes contribute to the development of children. Through observations and occasional interviews, I would like to construct a comprehensive and contextualised account of social action, specifically, within the mealtime practice. The participant's identities and responses will be protected.

Ideally, I would like to begin as soon as possible and continue until the end of April. I hope in the very least to be helpful to you and ********* School, whilst conducting my research. I hope you will find these ideas interesting and I would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you and discuss in more detail at your convenience.

Best Wishes,
Sam Stone

Appendix Eight: Information sheet and consent forms

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Information sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Research Project Title
How does the school mealtime facilitate opportunities for children's socialisation processes to become competent members of the school community?

Purpose of the research
Mealtimes are more than just nourishment of the physical body. They are complex situations where children learn a lot about themselves and the communities in which they participate. The aim of this research is to understand and explore children's socialisation processes and how children come to learn the rules of social interplay during the flexibility of school mealtime interactions.

I would like to come to your school twice a week for the rest of the academic year to observe your mealtime practices. During this time, I will take on a small role in assisting lunchtime duties as a way of becoming a member of your community. This will allow me to engage in the activities that I would like to observe. Primarily, my focus will be on how the children eat their lunch and interact with each other.

Who will I talk to?
I will speak with children, dinner ladies, teachers and kitchen staff. Selecting people to speak with will be a mutual process. I will always ask the person for verbal consent and if someone does not to speak with me, they will not be questioned to ensure they can legitimately refuse to take part.

What will participating involve?
I will observe the mealtime practices of the school hall and occasionally make notes. I will have informal conversations to deepen my understandings. I will gain additional formal signed consent for any recorded conversations.

Do I have to take part?
Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you have the right to withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I will be in continual contact with the dinner ladies and will consult with them about any concerns, queries, risks, incidents or challenges. I will keep in regular communication with the Head teacher,

teachers, and mealtime assistants where appropriate. I will report serious issues, accidents, incidents or risks of harm to the Head teacher.

There are no intended foreseeable disadvantages or risks of taking part in this research. If this changes during or after my engagement, in the first instance, it should be brought to the immediately attention of myself, primary researcher, Samantha Stone (sls27@bath.ac.uk). If the complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, you must contact, Lead Supervisor: Dr Kyoko Murakami. Email: K.murakami@bath.ac.uk

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Whilst there are no immediate benefits for taking part in the research, it is hoped that this work will raise awareness of good practice and offer a deeper understanding of children's mealtime socialisation processes.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

The identities and information that people share with me, the school and location will be kept confidential and participant's information will never be shared within the community or named in any publications or reports. Fictitious names will be chosen for all individuals, the schools and location of the participants. All information will be anonymised at the point of data collection.

However, anonymity is difficult to guaranteed due to participant information being entangled with context. This means participants may be identifiable to people within their own community.

The research data will be archived. All personal information in electronic form will be stored on password protected files, on a password and firewall protected server at the University of Bath. Any hard copies will be securely stored in a locked cabinet. Only I will have access to these electronic and hard copy file. Information will be retained until the completion of the PhD thesis, 2019, after which time all research data will be disposed of in a secure manner.

Who is funding the research?
This research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Who has ethically reviewed the project?
The research has been reviewed by the departmental ethics review committee and has been approved.

Contact for further information

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact me:
Samantha Stone, Tel: 0xxxx 4xxxx2, 07xxxxxxxx2, Email: sls27@bath.ac.uk
Lead Supervisor: Dr Kyoko Murakami. Email: K.murakami@bath.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Education | UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Researcher: Samantha Stone
Course Title: PhD Research in Education.
Project Title: How does the school mealtime facilitate opportunities for children's socialisation processes to become competent members of the school community?

I, the undersigned, confirm that:

I have read the information sheet dated 09/02/2015 and the nature and purposes of the research project has been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my school's participation is voluntary and that we are free to withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that you will not be questioned to ensure I can legitimately refuse to take part.

The procedures regarding confidentiality and anonymity have been clearly explained to me. I understand that research data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in an anonymised form.

I understand that information from observations and informal conversations will be used for my Master's dissertation and contribute to a PhD thesis and any subsequent publications, reports or conferences. You will never be named in any publications, reports or conferences. The collected data will be held until the completion of the PhD thesis, 2019, after which time all research data will be destroyed.

The researcher will seek separate terms of consent for any additional recorded interviews or changes to what has been agreed. Video, audio and photographic data will not be used in publications, presentations or conferences without written consent.

The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.

I agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree for my school to take part in the above study.

Participant:

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Researcher:

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

Appendix Nine: Mealtime assistant information sheet and consent forms

Information sheet

Department of
Education

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24/06/2015

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Interview Focus: A day, in a life, of the dinner lady

Purpose of the research
Mealtimes are more than just nourishment of the physical body. They are complex situations where we learn a lot about ourselves and the communities that we participate. The aim of this research is to understand and explore children's socialisation processes and how they come to learn the rules of social interplay during the flexibility of mealtime interactions.

Why have I been invited to participate?
I would like to understand what it is like to be a dinner lady, to gain a fuller description of the mealtime practice. If you decide not to take part, you will not be questioned to ensure you can legitimately refuse.

What will participating involve?
We will have an informal group conversation. You do not have to speak and can refuse to take part at any time.

Do I have to take part?
Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no intended foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages or risks. If this changes during or after my engagement, in the first instance, it should be brought to the immediately attention of myself, primary researcher, Samantha Stone. If the complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, you must contact, Lead Supervisor: Dr Kyoko Murakami. Email: K.murakami@bath.ac.uk

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will raise awareness of good practice and offer a deeper understanding of children's mealtime socialisation processes.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

It is essential to go as far as possible to hide the identity of people, schools and locations. All information that I collect during the course of the research will be kept confidential and participant's information will never be shared within the community or named in any publications or reports.

To ensure anonymity, fictitious names will be chosen for all individuals and the schools to anonymise the identities and location of the participants. However, anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to participant information being entangled with context. This means participants may be identifiable to people within their community.

I will archive the research data. All personal information in electronic form will be stored on password protected files on a password and firewall protected server at the University of Bath. Any hard copies will be securely stored in a locked cabinet. Only my supervisors and I will have access to these electronic and hard copy file.

Who is funding the research?
This research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Who has ethically reviewed the project?
This research has been reviewed and approved by the departmental ethics review committee.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions or concerns at all, please contact me:
Samantha Stone, Tel: 01*** *****2, 07*********2, Email: sls27@bath.ac.uk
Lead Supervisor: Dr Kyoko Murakami. Email: K.murakami@bath.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

INFORMED CONSENT

Researcher: Samantha Stone
Course Title: PhD in Education.
Interview Focus: A day, in a life, of the dinner lady

I, the undersigned, confirm that:

I have read the information sheet dated 24/06/2015 and the nature and purposes of the research project has been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving reasons and you will not be questioned to ensure you can legitimately refuse to take part.

The procedures regarding confidentiality and anonymity have been clearly explained to me. I understand that research data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in an anonymised form.

I understand that the research data from observations and informal conversations will be used for my Master's dissertation, contribute to a PhD thesis and any subsequent publications, reports or conferences. You will never be named in any publications, reports or conferences.

I agree to the focus group being audio recorded.

I have a right to request to see the interview transcripts. I have the right to request to see the Master's dissertation and PhD thesis.

The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been fully explained to me.

I agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the focus group.

Participant:

_____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Researcher:

_____   _____
Name of Researcher   Signature   Date