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Item Type	Journal article
Authors	Lalli, Gurpinder Singh;Weaver-Hightower, Marcus B.
Citation	Lalli, G.S. and Weaver-Hightower, M.B. (2023) 'Why are they making us rush?' The school dining hall as surveillance mechanism, social learning, or child's space? Children's Geographies, 22(2), pp. 297-311. https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2023.2276280
DOI	10.1080/14733285.2023.2276280
Publisher	Taylor & Francis
Journal	Children's Geographies
Download date	2026-05-18 22:18:30
License	https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/2436/625356

‘Why are they making us rush?’ The school dining hall as surveillance mechanism, social learning, or child’s space?

Gurpinder Singh Lalli^a *

Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower^b *

^a *School of Education, University of Wolverhampton, Walsall, WS1 3BD, United Kingdom.*

glalli@wlv.ac.uk, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7493-4813>, Twitter: [@GurpinderLalli](https://twitter.com/GurpinderLalli)

^b *School of Education, Virginia Tech (USA), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1032-3757>, Twitter:*

[@weaverhightower](https://twitter.com/weaverhightower)

* The authors claim equal authorship of this manuscript.

Abstract

School mealtimes, for many schools, are characterized by behavioural difficulties, a problematic time of day requiring much attention and resources. Yet for many school food reformers, those who want food environments to be educative and pleasant, strict behavioural interventions are often contrary to the ideals of social learning. This paper presents an ethnographic case study conducted in Peartree Academy, an all-through academy school in England, to explore how schools and their staffs use the dining hall simultaneously as a community space for socialization and as surveillance mechanism. We deliberate on causes and variations of how this manifests. A Foucauldian lens, particularly viewing dining space as ‘heterotopia’ and ‘heterochronies’ (Foucault 1986), highlights tensions that shape the everyday for both students and staff in the school. As counter-spaces used differently by administrators, pupils, and food reformers, we show how rules and regulations imposed by staff work against the original intentions to develop the school dining hall into a community forum in which children develop positive eating behaviours and good citizenship. The children became subjected to power relations through which bodies became docile or resistant, with less opportunity for social learning. True progressive food reform thus requires, ultimately, deeply understanding and negotiating the multiple, overlapping functions of dining spaces. (←206 words)

Keywords: Surveillance, school food, community, power, heterotopias

**‘Why are they making us rush?’ The school dining hall as surveillance mechanism,
community forum, or child’s space?**

The central argument of this paper describes how the school restaurant can be conceptualised as different spatio-temporal units by different users—children and adults—and how these sometimes clash and need to be negotiated. This paper questions how a school dining space can function as a community forum, where students can develop pro-social attitudes and skills, while simultaneously functioning as yet another mechanism for school surveillance. Such questions about the role of food and eating during the school day emerged relatively recently, as concerns about the healthiness and appeal of school meals has captured the attention of publics worldwide (Weaver-Hightower 2011, 2022). Along with renewed attention to the *food* served in schools, the *setting* of the food’s consumption has garnered focus (e.g., Dimpleby and Vincent 2013; School Food Trust 2008), for widely divergent purposes, from increasing sales, teaching social skills, developing appreciation of nature, imparting culture, instruction in cooking skills, or making serving more efficient.

Yet viewing school meals as learning opportunities for pupils—what we endorse here—represents a massive shift in how mealtimes have often been viewed and enacted by adults in many countries. Many schools treat mealtimes as simply a necessary part of a long school day, an event to be managed rather than enjoyed. The dining space also presents certain dangers of disciplinary breakdown, as huge numbers of pupils are present and transitions happen frequently. As management, behaviour, safety, and security continue to be primary concerns of school administrators and other adults on ‘lunch duty’, the disciplinary functions of dining spaces unescapably stay at the fore of pupil-staff interactions.

The tensions created by duelling outlooks for the possibilities of dining spaces—as

learning and danger—reflects larger debates over the purpose of both school meals and schooling itself in Anglophone countries where neoliberalism, marketisation, and accountability frameworks have overtaken the educational sector (e.g., Apple 2006; Cannella and Koro-Ljungberg 2017). While progressive voices among school food practitioners, educators, and activists have striven for food to be a bigger part of the curriculum and socio-emotional education, these contend with conservative voices urging behaviour improvement and viewing food as a biological and logistical necessity rather than a teaching opportunity. In this paper we counterpose two notions, embedded in our title: the dining space as a *community forum* and the dining space as a *surveillance mechanism*. As a community forum, the dining space encourages multiple uses, centres learning, and focuses on creating mutual recognition, which accounts for all of a school's key stakeholders (Lingard et al. 2008). This utopic vision of the restaurant as a community forum must confront other realities of the school's functioning, namely surveilling children, to keep them safe and teach them social conformity. The power differentials implied in surveillance clash with the more egalitarian vision of the dining space as community forum. Even more though, pupils have their own ideas and discourses about mealtimes and food practices, and adult's duelling ideas must also confront this third narrative. In this paper, we discuss these three coexisting ideas of the school meal.

School meals as social learning

Against the modernist notion of school eating spaces as purely functional, minimal, and highly disciplined, more contemporary movements have encouraged using mealtimes as learning opportunities. These movements call for dining spaces more humanistic and humane, focused on aesthetics and appreciation. Tastings and etiquette rather than gobbling and not disrupting. Metal spoons and forks rather than plastic sporks. We group these

movements under the general term *social learning* (Lalli 2019a), the teaching of cognitive and behavioural skills needed to navigate pupils' social contexts, particularly about food, throughout a life.

Perhaps the best example of social learning around food comes from Sweden, where numerous groups advocate installing *pedagogic meals* into the school day. In pedagogic meals the cafeteria becomes a space of learning about nutrition, table manners, food attitudes, and socializing skills (e.g., Benn and Carlsson 2014; Dolby 2020; Truman et al. 2017). This includes 'eating behaviours' ranging from developing healthy attitudes toward food (Eliassen 2011) to manners and conversational skills (Lalli 2019b; Earl and Lalli 2020).

Other scholars think of school dining spaces as promoters of 'food literacy' (Truman et al. 2017), where students learn not only skills, behaviors, and food/health choices, but they also learn about culture, emotions, information seeking, tool use, and food systems. An example is The SAPERE method of food education was developed in the 1970s by Jacques Puisais, who became concerned with children and their limited palates and diets (Taste Education 2023). School gardens, sometimes an extension of a school's dining space and even classrooms, have also become popular in school meal reform efforts (Earl and Thomson 2020; Waters 2008), teaching food literacy but also incorporating lessons from the traditional academic curriculum—say, science class learning about tomato growing or English class exploring food writing.

We acknowledge that food literacies can be problematic, as well. One problem, whether the school restaurant or a school garden, involves the often largely middle-class tastes being proffered. Earl (2020, 77), for example, defines the *taste education* that goes on in gardens, classrooms, and dining spaces as activities that 'teach children what is good to eat, and how particular and food practices form part of specific lifestyles'. These are, of course, classed lifestyles (e.g., Bourdieu 1984). Earl's (2020) ethnographic work illustrates

the middle-class food practices in a rural primary school, which included shopping at farmers markets, cooking from scratch, and growing vegetables on allotments or school and community gardens. She notes that activities like farm-to-school and school gardening are increasingly adopted as ‘best practices’ of food education and offered to schools as ‘blanket solutions for food poverty and obesity’ (78), regardless of cultural variations, geographic constraints, or local food traditions. These activities nevertheless accumulate *culinary capital* (Naccarato and LeBesco 2012), where individuals are rewarded for being ‘good citizens’ for engaging in ‘good food practices,’ but those who do not are labelled as irresponsible. These societal norms and expectations are classed culinary capital which become normalised, and as discussed by Earl (2020), only when we learn to remove such normalised perceptions will we make progress to address issues of health, wellbeing, and hunger for all children and young people.

School mealtimes as part of ever-increasing surveillance

Recent pushes for school meals reform in England, the United States, and elsewhere, has coincided with a marked rise in school surveillance. Teachers and pupils in these countries have always been watched, but surveillance has increased as the demand for—and availability of—performance data grows in a marketised education field (Page 2017) and the perceived threats to the physical security of students, particularly in urban areas, has risen (e.g., Shapiro 2018).

Surveillance comes in many forms. As Monahan and Torres remind us, security technologies like CCTV, metal detectors, barbed wired, and fingerprint entries ‘harden’ schools’ physical structures, which are simultaneously designed for maximum ‘visibility and containment’ (2010, 1). Yet curricular and disciplinary systems like standardized testing, security or police officers, performance audits, zero tolerance behaviour policies, and more create docility. And of course ‘face-to-face human surveillance in schools is far from extinct’

(1), with staff and even peers recruited to monitor one another and report infractions. Thus, by *surveillance* we refer not only to discipline exerted by staff, but also to the self-regulation of behaviour by both staff and pupils.

This surveillance, naturally, also includes policing of school dining halls (Fossgard et al. 2018; Pike 2008), school lunchboxes (Cappellini, Harman, and Parsons 2018; Metcalfe et al. 2008), and food beyond the school gates (Wills et al. 2013). Local education authorities have, in many cases, subsumed evolving nutrition standards (Weaver-Hightower 2022) and social learning efforts (Lalli, 2019a) into new vectors for surveillance, new rules to enforce rather than civic curricular opportunities for social learning. This paper explores this dynamic, trying to understand how surveillance and social learning interact and clash within the cafeteria. Importantly, too, what happens when these duelling adult goals meet with a third intention, that of pupils to have this space to serve their ends?

Theoretical framework: The dining hall as *apparatus* and *heterotopia* / *heterochrony*

To better understand how surveillance and community forums might exist simultaneously in a single space like the school dining area (even if competing), we turn to important concepts from Michel Foucault. Surveillance in Foucault's sense is well-covered in theorisations of schools (e.g., Carter and Burgess 1992, 1993) and, more specifically, of school meals (e.g., Pike 2008; Pike and Kelly 2014). Generally, education scholars have used Foucault's (1977) work on the prison, particularly his example of Bentham's panopticon (though Foucault specifically explores schools, too) to understand the ways space, particularly architectural design, gets organized to produce docile bodies through ever-present surveillance—in sum, *power*.

Foucault, though, analysed power's circulation more broadly than just architecture.

He held that an ‘apparatus’ (*dispositif*) characterizes power’s exercise in an institution or scientific domain, namely related ‘discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid’ (Foucault 1980, p. 194). An apparatus responds to an ‘urgent need’ (195) to establish control. An apparatus also adapts to maintain its control—a process Foucault called *functional overdetermination* (195)—as challenges, resistance, and changes arise.

We conceive of the school dining area not simply as a space designed (architecturally) for surveillance, but as a larger *apparatus* in Foucault’s sense. While not as totalizing as institutions like prisons or psychiatric hospitals, school food environments are complex and multifaceted, featuring routinised events that are rarely purposefully disrupted by their managers. Dining halls, as spaces, respond to the urgent need to control large groups of children or adolescents, to make the distribution of food quick and efficient. Dining areas also take on pedagogical intent, whether through the offering of exemplar nutritious meals or through the explicit cultivation of ‘civilized’ people through table manners. Meals therefore happen in spaces subject to all manner of discourses and non-discourses, the said and unsaid—*apparatuses*, in other words.

Yet school dining halls are particularly complex apparatuses, we argue, because they exist as what Foucault called *heterotopias* and *heterochronies* (Foucault 1986, 2012 [1966]; see also Defert 1997). While not fully developed concepts within Foucault’s oeuvre (Johnson 2013), *heterotopia* and *heterochronies* provide some theoretical framing for spaces, like school dining halls, that contain heterogenous purposes and heterogenous uses of time.

Take *heterotopias* first. Foucault introduced the term briefly in the preface to *The Order of Things* (2012 [1966]), where *heterotopias* oppose *utopias*, both in their possibility

of reality and in the ‘disruption’ they present, for heterotopias ‘secretly undermine language’. Heterotopias ‘shatter “syntax” in advance,’ including the mental syntax that ‘causes words and things [they represent] ... to “hold together”’ (xix). Foucault provides as an example an invented animal taxonomy by Jorge Luis Borges from a fictitious Chinese encyclopaedia, including animals ‘belonging to the emperor,’ ‘trained ones,’ ‘mermaids,’ ‘those drawn with a very fine camel hair brush,’ and ‘those that have just broken the vase’ (xvi). Such wild categorical juxtapositions, Foucault points out, rupture our sense of order and challenge the seamlessness of language.

That first coining of *heterotopia* thus pertained largely to the linguistic or discourse domain, but later, in a lecture to architects, ‘Of Other Spaces’ (1986), Foucault applies heterotopias to the analysis of geographic space. A heterotopia in this sense indicates a place where the ideal (the utopian) clashes with Otherness to demonstrate alternative social orders. Heterotopias are spaces of contrast, where the space refers—implicitly or explicitly—to other spaces, the juxtaposition of which ‘provides an *unsettling* of spatial and social relations or an *alternative* representation of spatial and social relations’ (Hetherington 1997, p. 8, emphasis added). Foucault’s (1986) examples include, among others, the cemetery, where the treatment of human remains reflects the living’s sense of order; colonies, like the Puritan settlements in North America, where the ‘perfection’ of the new colony was meant to compensate for the iniquities of the departed society; and boats, ‘a floating piece of space, a place without a place’ (27), that in both economic history and the cultural imagination (like literature and film) has been a source of great treasure.

Foucault pairs heterotopia with our second theoretical framing, *heterochrony*, to highlight the importance of time, history, and change to spaces. Heterotopic spaces, he says, are ‘linked to slices in time’ (1986, p. 26), whether the accumulation of time, like museums and libraries where historic materials build up neverendingly, or ‘festival’ time, like the

fairgrounds that sit empty until the carnival arrives. Cemeteries, he says, also provide an example of heterochronies, for their historical changes in location and individualization of remains has closely followed modernism's changing social conceptions of death.

In examining school dining spaces, heterotopia and heterochronies provide a theoretical scaffolding for analysing the complex interplay of social relations that occur therein. While criticized for myriad reasons (reviewed in Johnson 2013), Foucault's concepts of *heterotopia* and *heterochronies* provide helpful methods of interpretation—sensitizing concepts, if you will—for unpacking how a space like the dining hall relates to other spaces (the rest of the school, commercial restaurants, pupils' homes) and duelling conceptions of time. We now turn to our analysis of one school's 'restaurant,' below, to illustrate this.

An Illustrative Case Study: Community Forum and Surveillance at Peartree Academy

To explore the complex space within a space that the school dining hall represents—a heterotopia, in other words—this paper draws on data from an ethnographic research project (approved by the University of Leicester ethics committee) carried out in the East Midlands in England by the first author (Lalli 2020; references to *I* and *my* are thus to Lalli). The focal school, Peartree Academy (a pseudonym), is an 'academy school' in the specific English sense that it receives its funding directly from the national Department for Education and is not under the local educational authority's control. Such schools are much like 'charter schools' in the United States or 'grant-aided schools' in Scotland. Peartree Academy was unique in that the school dining hall was rebuilt as a 'restaurant', and the study explored this space to understand how social learning opportunities shaped children's experiences in a deprived inner-city area.

To generate the study data, 54 interviews were carried out alongside 80 hours of structured observations between October 2013 and June 2014, using an opportunity sample

from within the school; while this data was collected nearly 10 years ago, we consider it to still be representative of ongoing struggles that other schools have in school meal reforms. Twenty-six of the 54 interviews were with a range of staff, including the leadership team, teachers, support tutors, and midday supervisors. Interviews were also conducted with 12 parents and 16 pupils.

The main research question was What is the impact of the food environment upon social learning? Two subsidiary questions included 1) How do eating behaviours of staff and pupils impact on social learning, and 2) How do teaching staff promote social learning opportunities within a food environment? As the research proceeded, a new question emerged: How does the management of the cafeteria, by both pupils and staff, impact the school's stated goal of social learning? While other work addresses the findings related to the first questions (Lalli 2020), this paper addresses this last question.

Data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), a method of identifying and providing a rich, detailed analysis of patterns across the data set. Coding derived from a bottom-up process to capture descriptive elements and our more theoretically informed ideas, yet always grounded in participant meanings. We re-read, re-coded and modified as necessary to ensure the entire data set was coded consistently. We developed and refined themes in relation to our research questions and the literature, particularly informed by the ways the space(s) of the Peartree Academy restaurant worked as heterotopia.

The site

Peartree Academy replaced what was a deteriorating school, in a deprived area of a UK city. According to the 2020 statistics from the Department for Education, Peartree holds a capacity for approximately 1050 pupils, with just over 900 currently enrolled and nearly 275 staff. It is a mixed-sex school with a large proportion of White British pupils. The proportion of

children supported by the ‘pupil premium,’ an initiative allowing access to additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils, was well above average. Fifty-one per cent of pupils at Peartree Academy have access to free school meals, a key marker for eligibility for the pupil premium. In addition, 49 per cent of pupils have ‘special educational needs,’ which is above average for a school. According to the 2011 census, income, employment, health, and education deprivation was recorded as ‘high’ compared to the rest of the UK. The unemployment rate was measured at 13.3 per cent for the local area, higher than the UK average of 7.8 per cent at the time.

The entrance at Peartree Academy was unusual. On the left and built as part of the school, was a church, regularly used by the local community for ceremonies such as baptisms, marriages, and funerals throughout the week, even when the school was open. On the right was the school reception where all visitors were asked to sign in before proceeding. Walking straight ahead and through the doors into the school, visitors are faced with a surprise: a wide-open space filled with tables attractively grouped to provide seating from small to large numbers of people. On each table stood a small vase of fresh flowers and the whole eating area shone with cleanliness and care. Even before the start of the school day, I regularly saw children eating breakfast, parents talking to one another, and a few adults who I assumed to be teachers chatting in groups around the edge of the dining area.

This area was known as ‘the restaurant.’ This was no ordinary school dining hall; it was always ‘the restaurant’, a place which had been built for purpose, positioned in the centre of the school, the reason for which became clear to me as the research progressed (Lalli 2017). Peartree Academy had a special theme of business and enterprise, with a particular focus on food through its hospitality program. Local food-related businesses were also involved within the school, supplying the ingredients for the school breakfast club as well as sending their chefs to teach cookery skills. The restaurant was thus a teaching space, as well.

Social learning was defined by the school's founders as a new way of viewing school mealtimes in which children would be able to learn positive eating behaviours, specifically through food choices, manners, and civil discourses. According to the principal, 'Our vision was to make space for social learning opportunities outside the classroom'; it was, in fact, a 'vision that was set by the sponsors before [the principal] even started.' Yet it was here, in the school restaurant, that the multiple imaginaries of social learning, control, and surveillance collided quite clearly with students' realities. Pupils privileged recreation or rest, separation from 'normal' parts of the school day and its surveillances, and a sense of special ownership of the time associated with the meal.

Findings

Staff approaches in the restaurant: From social learning/community forum to surveillance

The role of staff during mealtimes is said to be an influential part of children's mealtime experiences (Sepp, Abrahamsson, and Fjellstrom 2006), and staff approaches to this time vary in the literature. For example, Osowski, Goranzon, and Fjellstrom (2013) identified different types of teachers in the dining hall: a) the social teacher; b) the educational teacher; and, less positively, 3) the evasive teacher. They found a positive association between particularly the social and educational teachers, as pupils had role models to admire.

During observations at Peartree, I noticed how some staff conducted themselves in their roles in the restaurant and how they interacted with pupils. In general, the staff took up two broad positions, with some staff encouraging pupils to participate in the restaurant by modelling certain behaviours (as might be expected from a *community forum* and *social learning* mindset), whilst others seemed focused on monitoring the restaurant for problematic behaviours (as in a *surveillance* mindset). In disaggregating this binary, however, staff clearly take up more nuanced roles in the restaurant.

There was, for instance, the ‘promotor of healthy eating’, who used body language to express his thoughts, such as ‘fist pumping’ to acknowledge a piece of chicken on a plate, signalling that it will make its eater stronger. Staff who took this role seemed to work under the *social learning* belief that they were primarily inducting and training pupils about what to eat. For another role, the ‘sociable’ member of staff created a communal occasion during the school lunch period, which involved a high level of social interaction with pupils. ‘How you getting on?’ she would ask, and she would engage in chats about football, music, or technology. The ‘Listener’ would observe and pay attention to the pupils’ wellbeing, both in and outside of school whilst monitoring the movements of pupils. He would find pupils sitting alone and ask, ‘How are things at home?’

The second, contrasting staff role I identified was the ‘behaviour support strategy,’ which involved spending time using body language to enable pupils to learn how to conduct themselves. The ‘observational’ member of staff took a step back and watched the pupils throughout the restaurant carefully, noting any misbehaviour, whilst discreetly challenging pupils where necessary. The role of ‘managing movement’ involved the staff member working to avoid any disruption, including collecting the trays from pupils and minimising the amount pupils moved around the restaurant.

Leadership at Peartree generally saw the staff’s roles as modelling social appropriateness. The senior behaviour teacher, Mr. Wahn (all names are pseudonyms), described how

...I think pupils get to interact in a social way. The staff are very good; you may have seen them eating with the pupils. The staff then have a responsibility to model that social behaviour.

As the staff were eating with the pupils, they were presented with opportunities to promote positive eating behaviours. The mission was that staff would be responsible for inducting and

training pupils in how to conduct themselves in the restaurant. The restaurant in this view allows pupils to observe how to behave. The restaurant, in other words, depends on a certain learning to self-govern, both pupils and staff.

Yet some staff saw developmental differences among pupils, and they suggested that the line between social meals and regulation must be carefully trod to keep order. Year 7 teacher, Ms. Jones, discussed how pupils were able to observe staff on duty and identifies this as a form of interaction.

...in break and lunch times specifically, I think in the restaurant, there's people on duty so there's promotion there, of how to interact in a free environment. A lot of our students struggle with unstructured times, so there's staff there to reassign people and redirect people that are not coping in that unstructured time.

For Ms. Jones, this was about staff making a judgement about which pupils needed the social and behavioural support, promoting free association but also good behaviour for pupils who seem to struggle with supposedly 'unstructured times.'

Overall, this section has highlighted some strategies used in supporting the restaurant's original aim, to create social learning opportunities. Some pressures seemingly work against this, however, for whilst the intentions of some of the staff were positive learning, others appeared to be more concerned with monitoring pupil behaviour. Despite the many ways that the restaurant was planned and enacted as a site of social learning, ethnographic data indicates that pupils were also being surveilled and controlled by staff, led by the leadership team. We turn to that second use of the space next.

Structure and control: Restaurant surveillance

Surveillance and self-regulation techniques have become a fundamental part of life in Western societies, particularly in spaces where security cameras have been installed, like

shopping centres (Danaher, Schirato, and Webb 2002) and, of course, schools (Hope 2015). Peartree's restaurant has a camera installed in the far top corner, but, according to administrators, video footage is not actually being recorded. Even so, more surveillance is present than just cameras. At Peartree, administrators embody—quite literally—the surveillance.

Staff closely monitor the arrangement of the school restaurant in relation to behaviour and food choices. The structure of the restaurant—the rules and regulations imposed on pupils by staff—is a fragile one as it exposes both pupils and staff to conformity as well as resistance. It is fragile because staff appear to be patrolling pupils, and this goes against the aims of the dining space to allow pupils opportunities for more natural social learning (Lalli 2019a).

Foucault (1980) discussed how power comes with such hierarchical surveillance, such as through the means of 'correct training'. Visible physical presence proved important at Peartree, as the senior leadership team made sure their presence was known to pupils in the restaurant. The leadership team and the principal exercised power through visibility and invisibility, meaning they placed themselves under pupils' gaze whilst also removing themselves from it (Niesche 2011). The principal or leadership team could enter the school restaurant at any time, unexpectedly. Thus, they exercised power even when not physically present in the restaurant, just by the threat of their arrival.

Intentional surveillance monitors more than students, and it can be seen in the perspective of the deputy principal for finances and resources, Mr. Conte, who highlighted:

Yes, I line manage the restaurant manager...it's how I run the school, so I'm down there every day...I always, always, always have lunch in the restaurant, I always, always have informal meetings in the restaurant.

Mr. Conte had direct responsibility for ('line manages') the restaurant. He correlated his presence to the ability to control staff and pupils by emphasising that he always made time to eat and have informal meetings in the restaurant. He wanted to be seen.

The deputy principals' positioning in and around the restaurant signalled how behaviour management was a high priority, and the same principle determined how staff chose where they sat. The senior management team consistently positioned themselves at the circular tables (see Figure 1), in a position of visibility and presence in the restaurant. And like Foucault's (1977) analysis of Bentham's panopticon, their positioning meant that they could look out in all directions in the restaurant, including—crucially—being able to see the school entrance.

[[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]]

The deputy principals chose to sit in their spot regularly, and pupils would rarely sit at these tables, knowing it was usually used by staff. From time to time, some pupils would be sat with the staff on these tables, but this was rare.

Whilst they had their back turned to pupils, the deputy principals' mere presence was paramount to the social control. They were facing each other, with the table positioned in a dominant place, at the front and in between sets of tables where pupils ate. They spoke to one another frequently but had little conversation with pupils.

Staff would frequently walk into and across the restaurant as it was an unavoidable space in the school (see Lalli 2017, 246). So, of course, the staff were likely being surveilled by the leadership, too, as the restaurant was designed to visually expose everyone. Staff were surveilled, for example, against not being at their lunch duty position, not addressing uniform violations, or socialising too much with pupils. Furthermore, staff became subject to the same internalisation of control as pupils, meaning arguably they are also conforming to

expectations of teacherly conduct, pedagogically and disciplinarily. This links to the work of Foucault (1977) and docile bodies, which explores how systems work to manipulate individuals by modern technologies of power (systems Foucault, 1978, termed *biopower*), which proceed, remarkably without force (Simmons 2009, 55). This is the most recognised panoptic principle; ‘the basic nature of the exercise of disciplinary power involves regulation through visibility’ (Hannah 1997, 171).

Importantly, again, the deputy principals were also able to see the main entrance into the school from this position. They occasionally walked through the restaurant throughout the school day as well as during the lunch period. This allowed staff to keep a watchful eye on those who entered the school as they passed through the restaurant on their way to the classroom. Indeed, the restaurant was utilised from the start of the day to the very end, not just during mealtimes. Its position and use as a thoroughfare between activities and other school spaces made it a highly surveilled area.

To illustrate the surveillance uses of the restaurant space beyond mealtimes, the field note below describes how the deputy principal welcomed pupils who arrived late. The usual experience of this would be that a pupil who arrived late signed into reception and provided reasons or evidence for their lateness. The *unusual* experience was that the deputy principal, Adam Walker, intervened to address pupils who arrived late.

Latecomers make their way, through towards the main corridor area, as the deputy principal welcomes them, taking a friendly approach—arm around the shoulder of the pupil, smiling—in conversing with them whilst walking along the main corridor, through the restaurant.

It was unusual to see a member of the leadership team working in this way. For me this seemed to be a way of ensuring someone could watch those who arrived late regularly.

Clearly, the leadership team was using visibility in the restaurant area to control pupils, and it was difficult to tell whether the interest and friendly approach was genuine.

In another instance of meeting a latecomer, Mr. Cravatt, a senior staff member, addresses a pupil making his way through to the school restaurant towards classrooms.

Mr. Cravatt (*deputy principal*)– *Have you been to lesson yet? You're late!*

Mason (*pupil*) – *Yeah.*

Mr. Cravatt – *What lesson?*

Pupil – *Enterprise.*

Mr. Cravatt – *Where's your tie?*

Pupil – *In my pocket, sir.*

Mr. Cravatt – *Good morning by the way.*

Pupil – *See you later.*

Two things go on here: firstly, the pupil is being quizzed regarding his lateness and, secondly, the member of staff is trying to get the pupil to conform, in a layered series of control discourses, by both asking him about his tie (uniform policy) and reinforcing the etiquette of greeting others (deference to those in authority).

The situational fragility here is with the use of the staff member's authority and learning to use it in a way that allows the pupil to respond to it. So, it is a question of whether this pupil will actually listen or choose not to, and it has already been said that pupils are not always inclined to conform (Danaher, Schirato, and Webb 2002). The fragility then lies in the balance between monitoring and managing behaviour.

Importantly Mason, the pupil, actively participates in this exchange, not by conforming to the control discourses, but by resisting them—a negotiation of sorts. Mason

could have put his tie on right away but did not. He could have said “Good morning” but did not (“See you later” instead). While not hostile—preventing his receiving punishments—Mason’s responses maintain this space as other than the sole domain of surveillance and adult control. Mr. Cravatt’s continued bids for conformity suggest that on some level he recognises this negotiation, too.

Clearly, the restaurant is a fragile space—a heterotopic space, as we will explore—both in negotiations between pupils and staff and how staff use this space for disciplinary surveillance. How these social relationships are being constructed and reconstructed—or even not being allowed to develop (Punch, McIntosh, and Emond 2013)—becomes the crux of the tension between social learning and surveillance.

Resistance, Conformity, and Surveillance Between Pupils

Thus far we have focused on how adults have created a dining space that undermines their own commitments to social learning during lunch. Yet the establishment of the food culture, despite adults’ intentions, can be dependent on relations among pupils, as well. The nature of the school meal is conflicting, and others have also questioned whether the dining space is ‘children’s services’ or ‘children’s spaces’ (Daniel and Gustafsson 2010; Moss and Petrie 2005; see also Fossgard et al. 2018). That is, governmental or school ideas of the future-oriented purpose of lunchtime clash with children’s own notions of lunchtime as a social space, for the enjoyment of the here and now. Student resistance to adult intentions and norms are key, particularly as pupils themselves have their own surveillance systems. The negotiations taking place between pupils who conform and those who choose not to are particularly important to understand pupil resistance. Whilst conformity is central to this debate, conformity takes many forms in small groups in society and it may be the result of explicit pressure, though perhaps unconsciously (Saldana 2013).

Consider the following scene, in which the catering staff try to rush two pupils to finish their meal and leave the restaurant.

The catering staff and other staff around the restaurant signal 2 minutes for 2 pupils who have been sitting at the table a while, still eating.

1:08 PM

As the older pupils prepare to enter the restaurant, two pupils, Lana and April begin finishing their food.

Catering Staff– Come on guys, you have a couple of minutes.

Ms James (staff member)– Guys, you came in the same time as us, there is no excuse.

Lana – Ok

April – Why are they making us rush?

Lana – I’m going to leave this food.

April – No, don’t you dare. They can’t do that, that’s child abuse. I am finishing my dinner, my pudding, how I want.

Ms James – Right, let’s get moving. Let’s go Lana. You’ve had enough time now; it’s ten past one!

The older pupils begin to make their way into the restaurant as they discuss their school day. Pupils from years 7 and 8 should have another 5 minutes to finish as their lunch finishes at 1:15.

The pupils had to leave without finishing their food. Two processes were shaping this scenario; Lana is conforming and participating whilst April is resisting and encouraging the Lana to challenge the staff's understandings. Of course, pupils operate in different ways in the restaurant; some are co-operative and eat quickly and leave the restaurant, whilst others do not like to be rushed. Still, although the example above highlights how resistance was worn down, conformity ultimately succeeded, at least for the moment. It is important to consider this, however, as a moment of peer socialisation, one in which April may ultimately be helping Lana learn to resist surveillance in the future.

In this moment, the school restaurant became another site for surveillance, based on conformity to 'kid food culture' (e.g., Ludvigsen and Scott 2009) and a food environment built on efficiency rather than enjoyment. Not just the adults are surveilling; multiple surveillers surround pupils, including other pupils. The moments of socialisation—what adults profess wanting—are lost, and the school restaurant essentially produces spaces of socialising resistance.

The restaurant had been created to allow for social learning to take place away from the pressures of the classroom (Lalli 2019a), and the sign of success here, perhaps, is that these pupils wanted to have nice conversations and enjoy the food rather than stuffing it down quickly. If the goal truly is social learning about and through meals, staff should be encouraging them to do this, engaging pupils about food and foodways. Instead, the staff member solely focuses on timing and logistics, missing the opportunity of allowing pupils to enjoy the meal event, and instead moving the girls along in a conveyor belt fashion.

Pupils were frequently being pushed out of the restaurant to make way for other year groups. As discussed by Wills et al. (2015), for schools with dual purpose dining halls (i.e., used for dining and teaching), the 'times of using the dining hall for eating became restricted' (82). After all, catering staff are wiping tables down in preparation for the next group of

pupils to arrive. Staff and pupils around the restaurant were tucking in chairs to maintain a level of cleanliness and appearance of the restaurant. This meant time for eating was significantly reduced. Thus, pupils have even less time for eating and conversing, so the restaurant then becomes diminished as a space for fostering social learning.

Another pressure working against the restaurant was that pupils were discouraged from eating lunch anywhere other than the restaurant, including not being allowed to leave the premises. This highlights another form of surveillance, shaping the school food space beyond the school gates. Whilst most pupils conform to this regulation, others interfere in the process and try finding ways out of the school. For example, the principal describes how *'We don't allow our pupils out for lunch, although we have a few who climb the fences....'* In a conversation with him, he noted that truancy had been an issue, so one regulation was that children should not eat anywhere outside of the restaurant.

Even with prohibitions against eating elsewhere, some pupils who choose to stay in the restaurant still found ways of resisting. As Amber, a Year 7 pupil said, some pupils *'get a baguette yeah, and they get away with this. They wrap it up in tissue, put it in their bag, go outside, and eat.'* The pupil described how maybe this could be something to do with a lack of time, wanting to spend more time playing outside, or even escaping the surveillance in the restaurant. So, the pupils are both active in their resistance and their own surveillance.

The standard critique of increasing surveillance places a focus on the presumed changes it might cause in space and social practices, such that surveillance could lead to a vicious circle of defence and resistance (Koskela 2003). Despite Peartree's idealised naming of the space as 'restaurant', pupils were frequently being treated as if they exist on a conveyor belt, especially compared with a 'normal restaurant' where people have more time to eat and converse. Yet for the adults, Peartree's restaurant still exists under 'school time,' not pupil time.

Discussion of the social learning/surveillance tension: Heterotopias and heterochronies

Our argument highlights two narratives running in parallel, firstly that the restaurant allowed pupils to converse and interact and, secondly, that the pressures of lunch break timings and staff surveillance worked against pupils conversing. Like many other schools, maintaining behaviour was highly prioritised by Peartree staff, particularly compared with trying to influence pupil's social eating behaviours during the lunch period. The level of monitoring and surveillance taking place often appeared highly focused on managing pupils, evidenced by the pupil resistance it provoked. Nevertheless, some staff did take opportunities to model positive eating behaviours and encourage sociality. How can one make sense of this tension between social goals, managerial goals, and resistance to conformity, all while realizing that the same space quite often accomplishes all these goals, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes separately?

We contend that analysing school dining spaces through the lens of Foucault's (1986) heterotopia and heterochronies, described in the theoretical framework, helps illuminate the sources of tensions. Indeed, we might combine the *-topia* and *-chronies*, as Defert (1997) does, into 'spatio-temporal units, ... [or] space-times' (275), for, in practice, users conceptualize the dining space as actually differing spaces depending on the time of its use. The Peartree restaurant was a space of eating at some times, of conviviality and communal gathering at others, and a space of tracking student movement at still others.

As Defert (1997, p. 275) summarizes, heterotopias are 'space-times' where either 'I am and yet I am not' or, secondly, 'where I am another.' For the former, Defert gives the much-discussed example of the cemetery, where one alive *is* as a visitor but *is not* as an interred body (yet). His examples of the latter, 'where I am another', are spaces where one shakes off normality and routine, including brothels, vacation resorts, or festivals. School dining spaces, like the Peartree Academy's restaurant, evince signs of both being present and

not, as well as being outside of routine. The pupil is physically there as a child, but their future adult self, while not tangibly present, resides in the space as a spectre. The adults who are physically there—the staff, the leadership team—train pupils toward becoming these future adults through modelling, surveillance, and control. The staff and leadership view the restaurant as both a pedagogical space and a behavioural space, not unlike the rest of the school that surrounds it. Indeed, some staff might hardly see a distinction between the pedagogical and the behavioural, for they often see controlling behaviour as didactic, a path ultimately toward self-governance by pupils. Staff use the restaurant, like the classroom, to teach lessons about sociality, etiquette, uniform maintenance, and sometimes food and nutrition. Unlike the classroom, though, at times the restaurant functions as a heterotopia of behavioural danger, where, depending on the ‘slice’ of time, pupils gather in impossibly large groups to do the messy business of eating or where individual late pupils could sneak into class or other areas.

Foucault (1986), too, noted this social importance of heterotopia as spaces of containment. Pre-modern societies, he said, created ‘crisis’ places for adolescents, menstruating women, the elderly, and so on, to contain transitions, impurities, and other dangers. Modern societies, though, have created places of ‘deviation’ like psychiatric hospitals, prisons, and retirement homes to contain social threats thought to be posed by people committed therein. In a sense, all heterotopias have a containment function; they not only provide space-times for alternate versions of the social order, but they also keep them located within a certain location (such as the dead contained to a cemetery or non-productive sex for pay contained and secret within the brothel). For schools, the heterotopic space of the dining hall provides similar containment. The disruptive potential of hundreds of Peartree pupils gets concentrated in only one location, for the leadership have eliminated the

possibilities of both eating elsewhere on campus and leaving campus to eat. As noted, though, pupils resist and subtly negotiate such containment.

For many pupils, the restaurant (and the other places they surreptitiously eat) represents a space-time more akin to the festival. Mealtime represents a fleeting break in the routine of lessons. It is ‘their’ time to choose friends and seats, choose foods, choose activities, choose what to talk about, and choose their pace pursuing all these. The rest of the school day rarely presents them such choices. One can therefore understand the resistance to being hurried, especially when part of “their” precious time is being curtailed.

Heterotopias, remember, are ‘counter-spaces’ where the social order is or can be challenged, where (sometimes competing) concepts of utopia can be tried out or negotiated, and where over time spaces might shift and transform as the social order does. Perhaps we are at a transition point, where reformers are introducing a utopic vision of nutrition and social learning into a heterotopia whose entrenched utopic visions are, on one hand, pupils’ visions of a midday festival apart from school’s rigors and, on the other, leadership’s visions of ideal discipline and control. One could easily, from this point of view, anticipate conflict among these visions. As this singular space shifts visions and functions, even within a single school day, tensions flare and the (discursive, spatial, punitive) power dynamics adjust.

The tension between providing social learning opportunities and surveillance carried out by staff presents limits on the pupils’ ability to develop social eating behaviours. Whilst some evidence suggests that social learning could take place in the restaurant, the pressures against this generally prevented it from happening.

We would also note that pupils and staff created their own, smaller heterotopia within the boundaries of the restaurant. School food policy and practice is classed, gendered and racialised (Earl 2018; Robert & Weaver-Hightower 2011; Weaver-Hightower 2011), and

heterotopia can be created to either contain these or counter these. During observations, Lalli often noticed children of colour, particularly Black pupils, congregating together. He also noticed a gender divide based in a clear gender binary. So the lunch period proved critical as identities were both negotiated and contested. And as noted earlier, groups of administrators sat apart from pupils. Table by table, islands of sameness and difference were constructed along lines of demographics, affinities, positional power, and perhaps more. As these heterotopias contact one another, though, larger dynamics of surveillance, power, and resistance reiterated themselves. These are spaces with layered meaning that, we contend, likely characterises all school dining spaces. To truly, deeply understand such spaces, then, scholars must understand how to peel back those layers and understand the multiple meanings always at work—though in differing ways at different times—in the dining hall. Heterotopia, we suggest, can be a productive way to do this.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that school dining spaces have become a complex heterotopia, a site for surveillance and resistance that oppose the newer historical shift toward viewing these spaces as a community forum through which social learning can be fostered. Potential moments of socialisation are missed as the school dining space gets used as a site for surveillance while also as a site of “children’s spaces” (Daniel and Gustafson, 2010).

We can observe that most school headteachers are required to and tend to focus on behaviour management daily, and Peartree Academy is a telling case of this phenomenon. Peartree also simultaneously provides a warning to those who want to intervene in school meal cultures of discipline and punishment, for even with the will to create pedagogical meals, utopic visions of control (for adults) and freedom (for pupils) still require disrupting.

The ‘meal’ is quite often a site of surveillance by those with age, position, and power, so we ask why should the school meal turn out any differently—turn out as spaces to learn about food and culture as pleasure—if these are at play? Without a change in mindset and approach by the adults, meals are still ‘pedagogic’—they always teach something—but they teach students to resist or hurry rather than to savour the food and fellowship. Pupils will always, we suggest, try to recapture school lunchtime as “children’s spaces”; the question becomes how adults might honor children’s spaces and simultaneously accomplish the “children’s services” goals for public health and civic education (Daniel and Gustafson, 2010). If we prioritise this space in schools and consider school mealtime as equally important as ‘classroom’ time, yet also focused on addressing student needs within this heterotopic space, then we might be able to properly nourish—in the many senses of *nourish* (e.g., Trapp 2018)—the young people in our schools. We would be able to develop positive eating behaviours that are lasting. We would be able to create a platform for fostering social relationships that transcend simple adult-child divides.

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Figure 1. Map of the Peartree Academy Restaurant

