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Learning the Ropes, Resisting the Rules: Immigrant Children's Representation of the Lunchtime Routine Through Fotonovela

Abstract

Unfamiliarity with basic school routines and regulations may cause immigrant children to experience school in the host country as confusing and even traumatizing. In this article we present results from a school-based study that provided the space and means for immigrant children to explore and represent in a fotonovela both visually and textually their understandings and interpretations of the lunchtime routine. The central questions of the study were: How do immigrant children make sense of the conflicting laws that govern the formal and the informal curriculum of school rules, procedures and norms? How do they understand, interpret, and comply with or resist them? How do immigrant children's understandings of the routines of the use of school space depending on the time of the day and patterns and norms of correctness become part of their multiple identities? The results gained from the analysis of the *Lunchtime* fotonovela provide insights into how immigrant children understand the purpose and use of the physical school space during lunch, the school's enforcement of time, school norms of correctness about eating, and the rules about eating junk food. In our analysis of children's understandings of school structure we were informed by a theory of power (Giddens, 1984; Foucault, 1979) as it addresses the structure of adult-child relationships in institutional contexts such as schools. We argue that the fotonovela format itself allowed the embodied nature of school rules to be explored and represented along with the sometimes hidden contradictions between the "docile body" and the "true" intentions of the person who embodies it. We suggest that the process of developing the fotonovela was a form of active exploration or researching of the school rules that allowed the children both to question and to assert their own position in relation to the school lunchtime routine and the choice of food.

Introduction

Many immigrant children are not familiar with the Canadian school system before they start school. The most basic elements of school life that Canadian-born students take for granted such as school routine, social customs, how to use facilities, or how to get help when needed are new to these children. This lack of prior knowledge and/or experience may cause them to see their new schooling experience as traumatizing (van Ngo, 2004) or at least confusing. In a study that focused on immigrant children's adjustment to school culture in general and to peer culture in particular, we asked a small group of grade 6 children, all new immigrants to Canada, to develop a series of comic-like booklets in the form of fotonovelas that could help new children to find their way around the school. Based on their experiences as newcomers, the children identified the lunchtime routine as among the most confusing for a new student and decided to develop a fotonovela about this routine.

In this article we describe the process of developing the *Lunchtime* fotonovela and analyze its content in an attempt to raise critical questions about school rules and their role in both controlling children's behavior and providing space for resistance. We view immigrant children's acts of resistance to the official school rules and routines as an

expression of their agency in the process of negotiating their cultural identity and finding their place in the new school.

Theoretical Grounding

Historically, schools have been required to produce a citizenry strongly bonded to the state and its interests (Osborn, 1996; Sears, 1997; Ungerleider, 1992). Although schools are considered predemocratic institutions at best, despite their mission to produce citizens, they nevertheless consciously attempt to create communities of learning and of belonging, making extensive use of routines, social techniques, and power (Hebert, 2001). According to Hebert,

Central to the production of a sense of belonging as part of national identities, the transformation of spaces into places of human attachment depends on the particularities of place and requires conscious moments, routines, social techniques, and exercise of power over environment. (p. 7)

As institutions, schools are organized by sets of rules, incentives, and so forth that are produced by a legitimate authority (i.e., a school board) and that aim to secure a “system of organized actions and interactions of actors who recognize the given authority” (Dupriez & Maroy, 2003, p. 387). Thus rules and the sanctions and reward systems that uphold them are seen as central to the good order of all organized groups including schools (Merrett, 1994). For many children school is the first opportunity to experience regulation both as a structure (i.e., the various forms of institutional coordination) and as a process (i.e., how “the rules of the game” are constructed) (Dupriez & Maroy). These experiences may be confusing because although school is “a locus of discipline, control and power,” some manifestations of this are more obvious and clear cut than others (Simpson, 2000, p. 60). In addition, as Schimmel (2003) points out, there is a fundamental conflict between the formal or official curriculum taught through lectures, texts, and tests and the informal or hidden curriculum taught through school rules, punishments, procedures, and norms. “This conflict is especially evident in the informal civic and law curriculum—the way school rules (which are the laws that directly affect every student every day) are developed, taught, interpreted and enforced” (p. 17).

In this article we ask: How do immigrant children make sense of these conflicting laws? How do they understand, interpret, and comply with them or resist them? How do immigrant children’s understandings of the routines of the use of school space depending on the time of the day and patterns and norms of correctness become part of their multiple identities? In addressing these general questions we examine the lunchtime routine as an example of immigrant children’s understandings of the purpose and use of the physical school space during lunch, the school’s enforcement of time, the school norms of correctness related to eating, and the rules about eating junk food. In our analysis of children’s understandings of school structure, like Devine (2002), we are informed by a theory of power (Giddens, 1984; Foucault, 1979) as it addresses the structure of adult-child relationships in institutional contexts such as schools.

Giddens (1984) provides an understanding of structures and their influence on human action. He defines three types of structures: signification, legitimation, and domination: “The instantiation of these structures in practice positions individuals with respect to one another—shaping their identity, experiences and relations” (Devine, 2002,

p. 307). However, Giddens (1976) points out that agency is inherent in all social actions and that “social structures are both constituted by human agency and yet at the same time are the very medium of that constitution” (p. 121). From his point of view, power circulates between people in the course of social interaction depending on the particular configurations operating in the social setting. Foucault (1979) too asserts that not only is everyone affected by power, but also to some extent everyone exercises it. Thus the main assumptions inherent in these theories provide the foundation for our analysis of immigrant children’s agency in negotiating their multiple identities as they relate to the mealtime routine. We view immigrant children not only as being subjected to normalization and shaped by the school rules in an attempt to socialize them in the “norm,” but also as actors in the process of constructing the “rules of the game.” The theory of power allows us to see beneath the surface of the overt display of power in everyday school life and to uncover the multiple and complex forms of resistance in which immigrant children engage as they challenge the power relations played out in schools.

Many school rules concern students’ bodily activities (i.e., ways of walking, talking, playing, using equipment, etc.) and many acts of resistance to these rules exhibited by immigrant children during the study were nonverbal (i.e., running down the stairs, eating junk food secretly, lingering in the cafeteria after finishing lunch, etc.). Therefore, in our analysis of the *Lunchtime* fotonovela we also draw on the understanding of the importance of the body to all children in power relations as they are lived in schools (Simpson, 2000). Kirk (2004) argues that “bodies matter in schooling” (p. 117) and that regulation of children’s bodies in school has been of major significance.

Based on Foucault’s (1977) concept of the necessity of “docility-utility,” which was an essential quality of the urban citizenry in capitalist democracy in general and to the smooth and efficient management of institutions such as schools in particular, Simpson (2000) states, “the underlying intent of the school curriculum is to ensure that schools are inhabited by ‘docile bodies’” (p. 63). She argues that the overarching goal of the curriculum is to order the spatial and temporal lives of children. Thus school rules such as the timetable and differentiation of space aim not only to determine the location of all students, individually or in cohorts, at all times (i.e., the “time-space path,” Gordon, 1996), but also to determine the correct kind of embodiment acceptable in that place and at that time (i.e., the “curriculum of the body,” Lesko, 1988).

However, from the point of view of the theory of power, “the body, although a subject of social power, is not simply a passive recipient of society mould, and therefore external to it” (Simpson, 2000, p. 63). We adhere to Lyon and Barbalet’s (1994) notion of social agency as emanating from the lived experience of embodiment: “persons experience themselves simultaneously *in* and *as* their bodies” (p. 54). Children’s embodied acts of resistance such as talking and moving when they are required to be quiet and still, running down the stairs or in the hallways, cutting in line instead of waiting, not eating the free meal provided by the school, or eating junk food in contravention of school rules can be interpreted as expressions of counterclaims on space, time, and bodies and thus as a manifestation of their social agency. In a more global sense these acts, which signify a shift of control and power, are “outcomes of struggle for ownership of space within the formal curriculum and struggles over policy in particular arenas” (Armstrong, 1999, p. 83).

Rules, Regulations, and Mealtime Practices: A Review of the Literature

Eating is often discussed in terms of commensality (Mennell, Murcott, & van Otterloo, 1992). Although communal meals may be seen as structures of socialization for children (Canterero, 2001; Ochs, Pontecorvo, & Fasulo, 1996), this approach to eating becomes complicated when children rework the structure of mealtimes (Canterero, 2001; Ochs et al.; Thorne, in press). Communal meals are often discussed in terms of eating together as a family at home (DeVault 1991; Ochs et al., 1996; Hochschild, 1997). From a parent's point of view, these shared experiences are important because mealtimes may be seen as providing the basis for establishing and maintaining the family as a group (DeVault). Much has been written on the parents' view of communal meals (DeVault; Ochs et al.; Morrison 1996a; Hochschild, 1997), leaving children's perspectives largely unexplored. Kaplan (2000), one of the few scholars who approaches the study of family meals from children's point of view, argues that children also see communal meals as the ideal. The study found that children who have positive meal experiences at home may focus on these brief periods of togetherness rather than on the time that their parents spend away from them at work. On the other hand, children who have tense meal experiences may not necessarily wish that they could eat alone, but rather lament that they cannot have positive communal meals (Kaplan, 2000). These findings suggest that children negotiate for idealistic family meals.

Although opportunities for commensality may vary at home, they are built into the schedule in school. Thorne (1993, in press) approaches schools as institutions where teachers exert strong control over activities. She asserts that lunchtime is a time when children tend to have more autonomy from adult control. But as Morrison (1996a) argues, schools still control the sociality of lunchtime through the enforcement of time. In her study of school lunches in the United Kingdom, she terms lunchtime the "conveyor belt system" to illustrate the hurriedness of the meal. So although there is more time to socialize and organize among peers, it must be done within the time constraints set by the school. However, although Morrison (1996a) is effective in providing an overview of the workings of control at lunch, she fails to examine the agency of children.

According to Thorne (1993), "eating together is a prime emblem of solidarity, and each day there is a fresh scramble as kids deliberately choose where, and with whom, to eat" (p. 42). Moreover, having to navigate through lunch alone without friends can sometimes be a painful experience (Thorne, in press). Whereas at home the social groupings at mealtimes may be more stable, in school children may have to work harder to negotiate their sociality. However, there is still a sense of stability in the social groupings at lunchtime. A geography of the lunchroom can emerge where particular groups sit in certain locations (Thorne, 1993). The prestige that comes with being part of a social grouping at lunchtime may lead some children to bring "desirable" foods such as candy and chips to use in negotiating a higher position for themselves in the social lunchtime hierarchy (Thorne, in press). Bourdieu (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997) points to the competitive dimension of taste and how eating practices are used to establish and reproduce distinctions between social classes.

The bargaining process engaged in by children at lunchtime suggests that among children junk food becomes associated with status. Trading junk food in particular can be an important way for children to negotiate acceptance into a social group (Thorne, in press). Thus children resist adult-imposed rules in order to maintain their social

organization of lunch (Thorne). Junk food itself also becomes the center of rules. At home strong rules may exist to control the consumption of junk food (Guo, 2000; Mennell et al., 1992). One way that children circumvent this rule is to eat junk food in other contexts. Thus if there are strict rules against eating junk food at home, children may eat it when they are not with their parents, for example, in school or in other social spaces with their friends (Mennell et al., 1992). Therefore, school may be seen as a space where children have more freedom to eat these forbidden foods (Guo, 2000; Mennell et al., 1992). However, as more schools move toward banning junk food, it is important to examine the implications of this on the contexts in which children consume junk food (Mohamed, 2005).

Both at home and in school adults play a major role in structuring communal meals through rules. The purpose of mealtime rules is to socialize children into “proper” behavior. According to Cantarero (2001), this may be because commensality is seen as the “symbolic manifestation of humanization” (p. 4). In school, although adults are often not part of the communal meals, they may be strongly present in the process through the rules that they impose. For example, adults who patrol the school lunchroom aim to maintain social and temporal order (Morrison, 1996a). One of the most important rules imposed on children, especially those who receive free school meals, relates to eating up all their food (Morrison, 1996a). The rule of *eating up* seems to be common in families as well (Cantarero; Ochs et al., 1996), although the strictness of this rule varies among households (Ochs et al.). However, children may resist this rule and refuse to finish their meal (Cantarero). This suggests that children do not always accept their role in the structure and may actively oppose rules about finishing their meals even if the rules are strongly enforced. In school, children may resist rules that interfere with their social organization by creating an unofficial version of lunch. For example, a common rule in school forbids exchanging food (Morrison, 1996a; Thorne, 1993, in press). Morrison argues that this rule is imposed because trading food is seen to undermine parents’ control over what children eat. However, children may undermine this rule by developing an “underground economy” for trading food (Thorne, 1993, in press).

Meal planning in schools usually includes foods from the dominant culture (Morrison, 1996b). Although the parents’ right to choose is seen as paramount, the provision of food is one aspect of home/school relationships that is considered a potentially sensitive issue by staff (Morrison, 1996a). While children’s eating is thought to be a private and family matter, when it comes to children’s lunch at school, staff can intervene if a case is perceived to be extreme. Cultural tensions between the private (home) and the public (school) views of appropriate and nutritious foods can clash in the case of immigrant families when the food choices are subjected to control and educational guidance on the part of the school. Thus selection of foods in general and of foods on school menus in particular is based on the ideology of caring for students’ health. Outlining a “political anatomy” of the body, Armstrong (1983) argues that children’s bodies are increasingly subjected to pedagogical and medical surveillance: school menus as well as recent increase in awareness and liability of school in North American in regard to life-threatening consequences of some food allergies can be seen as an example of medical surveillance. In relation to Foucault’s notion of “docility-utility,” dietary regimes can be seen as a form for schooling bodies (Kirk, 2004). However, issues about a sudden change of diet and its perhaps negative affect on the

health of immigrant children has only recently emerged on the research agenda. Of a particular interest to this study was that in immigrant family homes, the menu often included food of the parents' home country (Thomas, 2004). Thus children may encounter entirely different menus as they move between home and school, which suggests that they must negotiate these menus and meal structures differently on a daily basis.

The Setting, the Participants, and the Researchers

This study took place at Greenview, an inner-city elementary-junior high school in a large city in western Canada. Because of the large number of low-income students in the school, it had a free lunch program. Under the lunch program policy, parents were invited to contribute what they could afford toward the lunch program, but all children were entitled to receive lunch.

School regulations about lunch were stated in a school information booklet. According to this, students who wished to bring their own lunch or go home for lunch were allowed to do so. Along with the booklet, information is sent home about the "no junk food" policy of the school listing the foods that are considered unhealthy and thus not allowed at the school (i.e. pop, chocolate bars, hard candies, chips), and suggestions for healthy foods for lunch (i.e. cheese and crackers, milk, fruits, etc.). Lunch supervision was provided from 12:06 to 12:50 p.m. Students were expected to leave the building after lunch and remain in the playground until assembly. Elementary students who stayed for lunch were not permitted to leave the school grounds during lunch hour. Students who went home for lunch had to return to school at 12:30. Junior high students ran the school store under the supervision of a teacher. Soup, sandwiches, and beverages were available from the store, which operated during the noon hour (until 12:30) and after school. Elementary school students had to eat their lunch before going to the store at 12:15 or later. Junior high students could buy lunch or bring their own and eat it in the supervised lunchrooms before going outside.

The school had a high percentage of visible minorities. Some of the main ethnic groups were Aboriginal, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Arab, East Indian, and African. Many were first-generation immigrants. More than seven languages were spoken among the 204 children. Over the course of the study, which began in February 2004, we have worked with the same small group of eight children who were in grade 5 at the beginning of the study and in grade 6 when they developed the *Lunchtime* fotonovela. All but one child were recent immigrants from China, Japan, Cambodia, India, Korea, and Vietnam.

The research team comprised two education professors, one graduate student, and a sociology honors student. The major strength of the research team was its diversity of backgrounds and personalities. One of the principal investigators was an early childhood professor with a special interest in immigrant children's peer relationships, and the other was an arts education professor with a special interest in visual methodologies. One research assistant was a doctoral student in secondary drama education, and the other was a sociology honors student with a special interest in studying social relations around meals. Not only did the members of the research team have diverse professional backgrounds and expertise, but they also formed a culturally diverse group including three first-generation immigrants—one from East Europe, one from Kenya, and one from the United States—and one second-generation immigrant from Guyana. During the study, the team members engaged in various dialogues that were seen as a central feature of a

research method. These resulted in a rich fertilization of ideas, changing roles, and shifting leadership positions, all of which allowed for growth not only in the participating children, but also in each member of the research team.

In terms of involving the children in the study, the team's primary concern was to make the experience enjoyable for the participants. We offered a lunchtime photo club in which many of the children were eager to participate. Membership was seen by many children not only as fun, but also as prestigious. As a result, many children asked if they could join or use the cameras. On the whole, however, because at the beginning of the project we were knowledgeable about using digital technology, we were seen as the experts and thus in a position of power. As the children became more confident and independent users of technology, the typical power adult-child relationship that is often seen in researcher-participant relationships changed. The research team members gradually gained insider status with the students. This change was evident in that at first the children were quiet and more polite when they told the research team of their lunchtime experiences. Then they gradually opened up and began to share more intimate information with us, including details of how they sometimes broke school rules. This kind of sharing demonstrates that although we could not fully escape our adult identity, we were not associated with the adults in the school who were responsible for making and enforcing the rules (Mohamed, 2005).

Methodology

In this study we used an arts-based methodology with still photography as the primary visual data-collection method. Photography in general has been defined as a valuable participatory technique for eliciting children's opinions (Ells, 2001). However, the visual methodology used in this study was unique because the still photographs were used not only as a basis of discussion, but were also manipulated and arranged in a narrative format as a fotonovela. As a storytelling form, fotonovela can combine the familiar framing devices, sequencing, and text balloons of the comic book with posed or candid photographs of the participants in place of pen-and-ink sketches. As a form of popular literature, the fotonovela was present in Mexico, Italy, France, Portugal, and Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s. This blending of a highly entertaining and approachable narrative structure with the naturalness or realism of photography (Emme, 1989) suited the melodramatic content of its popular form (Reed, 1998). Sometimes using the anglicized spelling the *photo novella* form has also proven a useful and important communication device in communities where literacy is a problem. As one example among many organizations dealing with public health issues, UNICEF has produced fotonovelas for use in Nepal to tell about AIDS and health care options (Emme & Kirova, 2005).

Current literature on the fotonovela as a research tool is found in the fields of health and nursing. For example, Berman, Ford-Gilboe, Moutrey, and Cekic (2001) used the fotonovela as a research method in encouraging Bosnian refugee children to represent their memories as well as their first experiences in Canada. Wang and Burris (1994) used the fotonovela to gain an understanding of the experiences of Chinese women. In both cases, and typical of the literature, the fotonovela is seen as a leveling and even liberatory medium in contexts where varying literacies create inequities and representational disparity. However, to our knowledge, we were using fotonovela for the first time in educational research with both immigrant and nonimmigrant children. For the purposes of this article, we use the process of creating one such fotonovela *Lunchtime* to illustrate

the methodology and to analyze the content of the fotonovela in order to gain insights into children's understanding of the lunchtime routine and the complexities of how they embody the physical school, as well as the multiple ways they actively negotiate their cultural identity in relation to mealtime.

In addition to using still photography, we also used elements of performative research in developing the fotonovelas. Acting scenes to be photographed as tableaux was one such element. As another form of arts-based research, performative research provided deeper insights into participants' lives. Originating from anthropology and communication and performance studies, "performance is regarded as both a legitimate and ethical way of representing ethnographic understanding" (Conrad, 2004, p. 9). According to Conrad, performances allow participants to depict and examine their real-life "performances," thus "providing insight into their lived experiences and their cultural world" (p. 10).

Other data-gathering methods used were semistructured and unstructured individual and group interviews conducted with the children on an ongoing basis. These interviews focused on children's experiences of mealtime as school and at home and took place during the lunch hour while the children were eating their lunch or when they had finished and returned to their classroom. Focused observations of lunchtime routine and field notes were also regular methods of data-collection. With one exception, all the children were fluent in spoken English, which allowed for the interviews to be conducted in English. To interview the child who had entered the school a month before the beginning of the study, we used both English and Mandarin with the help of a bilingual research assistant. Because English was a second language for most of the participants, some of the interview dialogue was not always grammatically correct. The original words and grammatical structure of their sentences were retained in the transcriptions of the interview data and edited in only a few cases. The primary concern was always to preserve what was perceived as the meaning intended by the children.

Developing the *Lunchtime Fotonovela*

Over the course of the study, the method of producing fotonovelas involved two distinct stages. First, children were invited to join a noon-hour photography club. Starting with the fun of learning a new (for some) technology, initial experiences allowed the children to play with the camera and keep thumbnail prints that their teacher incorporated into various class projects and journals. As researchers we understood these images to be the children's own and not data that we could take with us from the school. As the act of photography became familiar (and even boring), we invited the children to start taking photographs around themes such as "life on the playground," "the cafeteria," and "me pretending." Through interaction and observation we moved to the second stage by identifying students who seemed particularly committed to continuing with the photo club. This smaller group was engaged in conversations about their documentary images and some of the ideas they evoked. As part of this process the children were introduced to the fotonovela and asked if they would like to create a similar, photocomic-style story for children who were newcomers in the school.

The data from the individual interviews with the children about their experience of the first day in school in Canada showed that learning what to do, where to go, and when, as well as who everyone was in the school created frustration, anxiety, and fear. In a

group discussion with the researchers the children suggested that knowing the lunchtime routine would be helpful to a new student in the school because “the rules are so difficult to understand at first” (group interview, October 15, 2004).

In developing *Lunchtime*, the children first created a checklist of the various steps they followed during lunch. Using digital cameras they took photographs of the various items on the checklist and then coded their photographs accordingly. The children then planned a storyboard with us for the fotonovela using their coded photos. The frames of the storyboard were based on the sequence of the checklist, but students also added frames that did not appear on the checklist such as “stopping at the bathroom” on the way to the lunchroom. One of the researchers drew images for frames that had no photographs.

These candid photographs were useful for when students later acted out the frames of the fotonovela because they provided a model of lunchtime. Then the research assistant with the educational drama background worked with the children to create tableaux (posed scenes) for the fotonovela, while others photographed the scenes. Once all the photographs were taken, they were compiled into frames. Students were then given the opportunity to write text balloons for the story they wished to tell about navigating lunchtime. These balloons were incorporated into the frames to produce the fotonovela. Each child had an opportunity to write his or her own text; however, the whole group decided what text should go in the collective version of the story (the text is shown in the fotonovela included in the Appendix).

The children perceived the development of the fotonovela as their own creative work and were actively engaged in constructing and negotiating their collective understanding of the lunchtime routine in the school. The sense of ownership of the final product was reinforced by the opportunity created for the group to go to other classrooms in the school (grades 4 and 5) and share their story. After the group presentation, the children in grades 4 and 5 were given the black and white copies of the fotonovela without the text. They were asked to respond to the visual narrative as it was told in the fotonovela and write their own text according to their understanding of the story. These fotonovelas became sources of data for our analysis of elementary schoolchildren’s understandings of the lunchtime routine and the multiple and complex ways they followed or resisted it. Thus the analysis provided in the section below includes not only the fotonovela developed by the eight grade 6 children, but also those developed by students in grade 4 and 5 whose families had recently immigrated to Canada.

Insights From the Content of the Fotonovelas

In their discussion of the physical school, Gordon et al. (1999) stress the importance of children learning the correct routines in a new school in order to adjust. These routines are time-space paths that indicate to children not only the correct routes to take at certain times, but also the correct activities in which to engage. The frames of the fotonovela developed by the grade 6 children indicate the general routine of lunchtime at Greenview (see the Appendix). As a possible handbook for newcomers to the school, the fotonovela not only conveys the official time-space paths to be undertaken during lunchtime, but also the behaviors in which students are expected to engage as part of the routine. Although the pictures and the narrative of the fotonovela generally support the official lunch routine of the school, the comic balloons that all the participating children filled in

indicate that not all parts of the routine are strictly followed. Indeed, some of the comic balloons provide insight into the resistance that children exercise toward the lunch routine in school. Therefore, in this section, drawing mainly on the fotonovelas that the children filled in, along with some of our observations and interview data, we examine the rules about time, space, and eating practices at lunchtime and how the rules are resisted and negotiated by the children.

Time

Many authors have written about the importance of timetables in relation to school rules (Christensen, James, & Jenks, 2001; Devine 2002; Gordon *et al.*, 1999). According to Christensen *et al.*, discipline at school involves control of the body and its activities, which is achieved most effectively through a timetable. In Greenview, for example, lunchtime is scheduled precisely from 12:06 to 12:30 p.m. Alerby (2003) argues that school bells play a powerful and central role in this process because they signal to students and teachers the appropriate times to change their activities. The children's comic balloons in the fotonovelas suggest that they have internalized the importance of bells as markers of lunchtime. For example, when we shot the first scene of the fotonovela where the teacher dismisses the students for lunch, we carried these pictures about 10 minutes into the lunch hour. Later, when the grade 6 students were writing the text balloons for that frame, several took note of the time. In the frame one girl is thinking, "Awww ... we're 10 minutes late for lunch ... Great! At least we get to eat," whereas another, who is ready to go for lunch, thinks to herself, "Hurry up Mr. T!" which suggests that the teacher was responsible for their being 10 minutes late for lunch. The fotonovelas demonstrate that although bells were salient markers for signaling to students when certain activities should begin and end, the teacher also played a role in determining when students should engage in these activities. For example, in some of the fotonovelas filled out by grades 4 and 5 students, some of the children in the opening frame of the fotonovela were asking the teacher if it was time for lunch. In several of the fotonovelas, the teacher character in that frame was officially announcing that it was lunchtime. Our observations in the school also showed that sometimes students were dismissed for lunch before the lunch bell rang and sometimes after. Therefore, in the fotonovelas, by emphasizing the role of teachers in dismissing students for lunch, some of the children in the study conveyed an unofficial rule that teachers had the authority to negotiate the official timetable that was marked by the school bells.

However, the children's anxiety to go for lunch suggests an unforgiving regimentation in the school schedule. Further reference to this is found in the opening frame of some of the fotonovelas where students indicate that they are unable to finish their work. For example, a character in one girl's fotonovela in the opening frame says, "I can't finish my work" when the teacher announces that it is time to go for lunch. In another a girl says, "I am coming ... Just wait! I am almost finished." Timetables can sometimes cause stress for students because there is not enough time to finish everything, and as a result schoolwork must be done hurriedly (Alerby, 2003). Through the fotonovelas some of the children conveyed the complexities of balancing their workload with lunch in the regimented timetable of the school. Moreover, as the fotonovelas indicate, lunchtime itself is rushed. The fotonovelas seem to evince a language of hurriedness. Expressions such as "can't wait," "hurry up," "let's go," "finally," "walk

faster, OK!” are common in most of the frames. This suggests that children need to go to the lunchroom at a particular time in order to have enough time to eat. This language is strongest in two frames showing the children being dismissed for lunch and standing in line at the food table with their trays. In the line-up frame children wrote, “What is taking so long?” “I can’t wait to eat,” “I am like at the end of the line,” “The line is too long,” and “go faster, OK!” This same frame also shows children’s resistance to the rules by showing certain characters in the fotonovelas contemplating cutting in line, presumably to reduce the length of time they have to wait. In one frame where the language of hurriedness is noticeably absent, the children are sitting together eating lunch. This suggests that this is one part of the lunch break that children do not wish to rush despite the restrictions of the timetable. Children’s desire for this social aspect of lunch may lead them to resist the regimentation of the school timetable. For example, at Greenview the time to go outside was 12:30, but some children prolonged their lunches. They continued to eat beyond that time or talked to one another in corners of the lunchroom or in the hallway. Sometimes teachers who were enforcing the time schedules would tell them several times to go outside before they complied. This shows the importance of staff authority in maintaining the timely structure of the lunch hour.

At other times children used the rigidity of the time schedule against the staff in order to negotiate how long they could stay in the lunchroom. For example, once at about 12:27, teachers started telling children who had finished eating and were sitting or standing with their friends who had not yet finished to go outside. Many chorused back, “It’s not 12:30 yet, we have three more minutes.” In this case the children used the regimentation of the lunch hour as an excuse to stay inside longer even though they had finished eating (Mohamed, 2005). This is indicative of a larger pattern of time tied to space. The lunch schedule is so regimented that students know where they should be at a certain time. We even used this as a discussion tool with the students. When members of the research team were planning the storyboard with the children, we asked, “What happens at 12:06? Where are you at 12:07?” in order to gain a sense of their routine. On the one hand, time became a useful research method for gathering information about lunchtime, but at the same time our research methods reproduced the importance of the strict time schedule in school (Mohamed, 2005). These time schedules are closely interrelated with the use of school space because “the division of time is mirrored by the division of children’s space into regions” (Devine, 2002, p. 309).

Space

As the structure of the fotonovela indicates, children occupy diverse spaces as they move through the lunch routine. We argue that although the school channels them through a certain spatial path at lunchtime, children may resist this path. From the first frame of the fotonovela, some of the children were thinking ahead to the recess in the second half of the lunch period. For example, in one student’s fotonovela a student said, “Victory will be mine at recess.” Other students who were thinking about recess at the end of lunch were not so positive. For example, in one fotonovela when lunchtime was announced, one girl said, “But I don’t want to go outside.” Children who are not happy with the spatial path established for them by the school may find ways to resist by moving to spaces other than those where they should be. For example, as Gordon et al. (1999) point out, many children who do not wish to go outside for recess will find places to hide

inside. At Greenview the hallway doors were locked shortly after lunch started in order to reduce students' access to indoor space and thus presumably to prevent them from hiding indoors during recess. However, as discussed above, this was seen at Greenview when some students would linger in the hallways until a teacher told them to go outside.

Hallways are a prime example of polymorphic spaces during lunchtime. Jones (2000) argues that polymorphic spaces can have strong, clear boundaries, but "sustain alternative uses by children even in the presence of the dominant use" (p. 38). For example, we noted that shortly before lunch hallways were relatively quiet. A few children would be roaming the halls, but they were quiet enough not to disrupt classes. Sometimes a class would be moving from one part of the school to another, but this usually happened in an orderly way such as in a line-up. Conversely, the hallways shortly after the children were dismissed became noisy and chaotic. As one boy told the researchers, as they blasted through the hallways at lunch, "They don't care who gets hurt." So although activities in the hallway are controlled during class time, shortly after the lunch bell rings the hallway becomes a site of diverse social activity. Gordon et al. (1999) too observe that during breaks at school, hallways and corridors change and become like busy main streets in small towns.

Moreover, going to the lunchroom is a time not only for planning social activities, but possibly also for engaging in social activities. In several fotonovelas, in the frame where the children were going down the stairs to the lunchroom, they start races with one another. Text balloons saying "Let's race downstairs" were most common. So going toward the lunchroom may become a form of play for the children. However, as one girl's fotonovela indicates, these races may actually go against school rules. In her fotonovela, when one student initiated a race down the stairs, another remarked, "No, we'll get in trouble." However, soon after children have started downstairs, the hallway doors are locked to channel them into the lunchroom. This serves to prevent children conducting further social activities in the hallways during lunchtime and to direct them outside once they have finished eating. So although children have more control over negotiating their sociality during the lunch hour, the school still influences this negotiation process by channeling them into certain spaces (Mohamed, 2005). In this case, hallways become a polymorphic space because of the various kinds of social activity (and lack thereof) that occur there over lunch hour.

Another example of polymorphic space is the school lunchroom itself. The frames of the fotonovelas indicate some of the diverse activities that occur in this space. Certain activity in the lunchroom is carried out in a more orderly manner because it is more strongly controlled by the school. As in many schools, a principal symbol of order was the line-up. Lining up is a practice that originates largely from adult authority because as the fotonovela indicates, children do not line up voluntarily as they progress through lunch (Mohamed, 2005). In order to collect their lunch-program meals, the children had to stand in one of two line-ups that led to the food table where the two lunch staff members distributed the food. If students did not follow the rules of lining up, they could not access the food. Conversely, at the student-run school store, children did not line up, but rather just crowded around the window. Because lining up was not imposed on the students wishing to access the store, they did not form a line.

Although the line-up in the lunchroom represents a site of order as the fotonovelas indicate, children may behave in ways to resist this order. Such behavior may be subtle or

overt. For example, in several fotonovelas, although all the children were standing in an orderly line, some were thinking about how to disrupt it by asking, “Can I bud [sic] in line?” This is an interesting text balloon because during the planning stages of the fotonovela, the children told the researchers that no one cut in line. However, the text balloon suggests that some students at least contemplate cutting in. Our observations confirmed that cutting in line was practiced in some cases. By initially saying that no one cut in line, we see that children understand the rules that adults expect them to follow. Moreover, these rules mediate interactions between adults and children in that students are reluctant to tell adults that they break the rules. This reluctance suggests that children are aware of adults’ expectations of them to progress “properly” through mealtimes in school (Mohamed, 2005).

Schools sometimes tell children what they may do in certain spaces by posting notices in these areas (Simpson, 2000). However, because there may be expectations about an activity that occurs in a certain area of the school, students may be able to subvert the rules by carrying out their activities in another space. For example, at Greenview there is a no-junk-food rule that applies to the entire school. In that particular school context, the rule meant that no pop was allowed to be consumed and/or sold at the school so the contract with *Coca Cola* that the school had for the vending machines had to be re-negotiated in order to replace *Coke* with other, healthier *Coca Cola* products such as *Dasani* water and *Five-Alive* juice. In addition, no candy, chocolate bars or chips were sold in the school-operated store, and children who were seen to eat them were asked to give them to the teachers for the rest of the day and were sent home with the children after the school day was over. If these items were brought from home for lunch, they were also taken away for the rest of the day, and the child was given a free lunch from the school program. Although the rules were reinforced through such actions, most signage for this rule was limited to the lunchroom. This rule was not addressed in the fotonovela, but the children were well aware of it. For example, when they were taking preliminary photographs of the lunchroom, all the students focused on the signs that read “No Junk Food.” However, in the final version of the fotonovela, the students decided to focus only on what one should do rather than on what one should not do during lunch.

Children’s knowledge of the reasons for implementing the no-junk-food rule was evident in one of the interviews.

Interviewer: Why do you think they have [the no-junk-food] rule?

Girls: ‘Cause candy’s bad for you ... but it tastes good ... and some people, if they’re really addicted to candy or something, they’re like, “I’m going to mini mart.” (group interview, December 1, 2004)

In this case, the girl showed that she understood why candy would not be allowed, but at the same time she justified her desire for candy stating, “it tastes so good.” In the interviews the children also talk about how some would try to get junk food by going to the convenience store off the school grounds. Children would also defy the rule on school property if they could find “safe” spaces to do so. For example, a girl once had a McDonald’s lunch that someone had dropped off for her. Instead of eating it in the lunchroom in the presence of many teachers, she ate it upstairs in the hallway, which was largely empty. Another time, when we were working on the fotonovela in the grade 6 classroom, Takeshi, one of the boys, took a package of candy from his backpack and ate it. Presumably the other students and the adults who ran the photo club were in his mind

“safe” people to see him eat candy. Sometimes excitement could be derived from secretly breaking the rule near people who were not safe. For example, Amy boasted about breaking the rule right in front of her teacher and told the researcher, “Sometimes when teacher talk, I eating candy at my mouth.” So as Mennell et al. (1992) and Guo (2000) argue, children negotiate junk-food rules by finding spaces where they can consume it without being reprimanded. As discussed above, this consistent defiance of the junk food rule may be linked to food choice.

Although the time and space as part of the lunchtime routine were understood, represented, and used similarly by all research participants regardless of their cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or religious backgrounds, the differences in food choice between immigrant children and the nonimmigrant children from the majority culture were more pronounced.

Food Choice

Overall, both immigrant and majority-culture children’s assessment in the fotonovelas of the school food was positive. This may be related to unspoken social norms about politeness when discussing food. Many of the students expressed a great degree of politeness in criticizing food because they seemed to understand that it was not socially acceptable to criticize food, especially in the presence of adults. For example, after asking Laura what part of the school lunch she liked that day, the interviewer asked her if there was anything that she disliked. She replied, “Sort of, I don’t really like the celery [in the beef stew] ... I mostly only like the, uh, beef and the, um, carrots.” In this case Laura was apprehensive about saying she disliked certain foods and quickly returned to listing the foods that she enjoyed in order to remind the researcher that she did not dislike most items. In another part of the interview Laura suggested that she really made an effort to eat whatever she could from the meal.

Interviewer: But do you finish [meals that you don’t like] to be nice?

Laura: *Sometimes* ... if it's not that bad, but if it's like really bad, then I don't.
(individual interview, December 1, 2004)

As Laura became more comfortable with the researcher, she revealed more about the food she disliked. So although there is no explicit rule that students must express positive viewpoints about food, they may be aware of social norms against talking negatively about food and may feel more pressure to follow these norms when around adults (Mohamed, 2005).

Analysis of the text produced by the immigrant children individually when not under pressure to conform to the social norm of politeness in the presence of an adult authority demonstrated that they did not find school food appealing. For example, the text on the frame showing students attempting to smell the food on the way to the cafeteria like “I don’t think I like it!” “That’s stinky!” and “I don’t like this lunch” was more common in immigrant children’s fotonovelas than in those of the others. The frame showing children throwing leftover food in the garbage also indicated that they did not enjoy the lunch. Text examples include “I don’t like my lunch,” “Me too,” “I am going to throw my food,” “Yucky!” “Stinky,” “Nasty,” “Gross,” or “It doesn’t smell right!” In contrast, the text on the frame showing a child eating food from home always indicated immigrant children’s appreciation (e.g., “It’s good!” “I like this food,” “I like home food,” “Yummy peas,” “Home food is better,” “My rice is delicious!”).

This difference between the expected way of discussing school food and immigrant children's honest assessment of it was confirmed through the individual interviews with grade 6 immigrant students. In her interview, for example, Amy described the food at the cafeteria as ugly. When asked how she decided which new foods to taste and which not to taste, she said, "If I don't like the smell, and I don't like the way it looks, I touch it, and then I decide" (individual interview, December 1, 2004). When the researcher asked her if she had ever tried anything from the cafeteria, she said No. She always brought her lunch from home.

Thus both the text of the fotonovelas and the individual interviews showed that one way immigrant children resisted the food that they were served was through claiming that it was unpleasant or saying that they did not like it. Perhaps one of the greatest indicators that the children did not particularly like the food was our observation of the large amount of food thrown out by the children every day. This had become such a problem that the teachers had talked to the students about wasting food. Children realize that they are not expected to like all the food, but they are expected to be polite when they decline it. In the fotonovelas a section reads, "You only have to take the food you want to eat ... just say 'no thanks!'" This is the "official" way for children to deal with food they dislike. However, a significant amount of food was still being thrown out. Some teachers had talked to their students about just saying "no thank you" if they did not want something rather than accepting it and then throwing it out. However, Jill, one of the girls, offered a valid explanation for this behavior. She said that sometimes something looked good at the food table, but then it ended up tasting really bad: that was why so much food could be thrown out. This suggests that children may break rules because they see their social reality differently from the adults who set the rules.

Some of the children's fotonovelas also suggested that children did not have complete freedom over their lunch food choices. Lunchroom staff were portrayed in a wide variety of ways. In most portrayals the two staff members asked the children what they wanted. However, in some fotonovelas, the way the two staff members spoke to the children as they were getting their lunch was quite different. One was more forward with her value judgments of the food. In some of the fotonovelas she was portrayed as saying to the children, "Drink milk" and "This is good to eat," and so forth. So the children were not completely free to make their own decisions about what food went on their plate. Certain expectations may be imposed by staff members. The differing messages in the comic balloons for the two staff members indicates that children were aware of the differences between them in how they enforced the lunch routine. However, although children may have felt compelled to take food that they disliked, many still threw it out.

As some of the fotonovelas indicated, children sometimes took food that they disliked. Several fotonovelas had a comic balloon describing a food on a tray that the children disliked. For example, in one fotonovela frame a girl was looking at her tray and saying, "I don't want my milk." Clearly children did not take only the food that they wanted. The girl may have taken the milk even though she did not want it for one of many reasons. Perhaps, as alluded to above, she took it at the urging of the staff. Perhaps she took it because she was thirsty. As Jill, said in an interview, "I don't like milk. But when I'm thirsty, I love it." So when choices are limited children may feel compelled to take something. Students may also take food that they do not like to avoid drawing attention to themselves. For example, in one boy's fotonovela, a child was sitting at a

table and looking at her food. Her comic balloon said, “I’m just going to play with my food.” Christensen et al. (2001) assert that children can escape the watchful eye of teachers by engaging in the correct body postures, but not actually carrying out the task. In the case of lunch, it is arguable that perhaps the appearance of proceeding through the lunch process in a regular manner would better enable children to resist the meals.

However, conforming to the accepted social norms of eating in school as an example of children’s “docile” bodies can also provide refuge for some children as they strive to remain invisible and not stand out as being different in how they eat. For example, in her interview Jill explained the importance of having a fork because “You don’t want to eat with your hands.” Although using a fork may not be an explicit rule, and certainly not her traditional (Vietnamese) way of eating, Jill understood the social unacceptability of eating certain foods with one’s hands. Her interview demonstrated her awareness of the expectations that adults have of the children not only to progress “properly” through mealtime at school, but also to embody a particular way of being according to the schedule of the school. This might present difficulties for a child from a culture where eating most dishes with the hands is the norm (Mohamed, 2005).

The analysis of the text of the fotonovelas also showed that students could use the enforcement of consumption to their advantage. For example, in one fotonovela, as the students were waiting in line, one girl said, “I don’t like milk,” and another girl behind her thought to herself, “I hope a teacher says ‘drink your milk.’” The text showed not only the role the teachers play in enforcement, but also how children may use these teachers’ rules to their advantage. One fotonovela suggested that children were faced with the expectation that they must eat up their lunch. In the fotonovela, a line reads “and eat!” next to the frame where children are sitting down to eat with friends. In this particular fotonovela the boy who wrote in the comic balloons changed this directive from the more friendly “and eat!” to a more authoritarian “And eat!!! Please.” This change suggested that perhaps children are encouraged to eat their lunch by the staff in the lunchroom. However, as mentioned above, much of the food was thrown out and some children ate little from of their trays. Some had internalized the school rules against throwing out food. For example, in one fotonovela a girl says, “You [waste] food,” and a boy chimes in “good food.” Moreover, another fotonovela suggested that some children might not eat a satisfying lunch. In a frame where three children are scraping their trays into the garbage, one says, “I’m full,” whereas another says, “I’m not” followed by another who says, “me neither.” This frame suggests that some children may resist the food served at lunch to the extent that they would rather go hungry than eat it. Bringing food from home like Amy or buying food at the school store like Yan were not only strategies for making sure that they had enough to eat, but also ways of actively resisting the food choices enforced on them in the school menu. What was not represented in the fotonovelas but was observed on several occasions at lunch time was some parents’ practice to bring their children food from home. Without exceptions, these were parents of immigrant children who would sit at the table while their children eat the food brought from home. Although one of the study’s participants was experiencing this “parental intervention” on a regular basis the fact that there was no mention of this practice in the lunchtime script presented in the fotonovela, reveals that children’s understanding of the “normal”, institutionalized way of eating lunch did not include parents coming into the

school and bringing food. In the internalized and represented dominant school lunchtime script parental presence was seen as conflicting with the acceptable norms.

Closing Thoughts

Schimmel (2003) argues that children are not given formal spaces for questioning school rules, but that they create their own spaces for resistance. The study represented in this article demonstrates both children's understanding and resistance of school rules about lunchtime. The combination of visual and textual forms of representation of these rules produced through the fotonovela provided a space for the immigrant children to convey multiple layers of understanding and interpretation. As well, the processes of documentation, interpretation, tableau, graphic design, and negotiated dialogue opened possibilities for multiple forms of depicting their active resistance. This included the use of the physical school during lunchtime, the school's enforcement of time, school norms of correctness about eating, and rules about eating junk food. Thus the fotonovela format itself allowed the embodied nature of school rules to be explored and represented along with the sometimes hidden contradictions between the "docile body" and the "true" intentions of the person who is embodying it. We suggest that the process of developing the fotonovela was a form of active exploration or researching of school rules that allowed the children both to question and to assert their own position in relation to the school lunchtime routine and the choice of food. Thus in the process, the children became aware of the "twin processes of discipline and liberation which shape their everyday time at school" (Cunningham-Burley, 2001, p. 221). The fotonovela as a research tool also allowed us to explore the complex ways immigrant children make sense of these twin processes as they relate to the mealtime routine. On the one hand, many of them had to learn a new way of being as the timetables, defined use of space, and norms of eating both in its content (e.g., what is eaten) and its form (e.g., acceptable/proper ways to eat) were imposed on them. On the other hand, through this process immigrant children were forced to become self-reflective as they compared what was familiar (i.e., home food, customs, and practices related to eating) with what was unfamiliar (i.e., school routines, rule and regulations, and new types of food) and made choices that allowed them to shape their multiple identities. The grounding of the analysis in the theory of power showed how these contradictory tendencies were intertwined and embodied in one aspect of the everyday lives of immigrant children in school.

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