



SEMINAR SERIES

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Schooling Lunch: the Pedagogicalization of the Lunchbox

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Guest Host | Dr. LeAnne Petherick

▶ **October 24** | Scarfe 310 | 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.

Light refreshments will be served at 12:00 p.m. | Lecture will commence at 12:30 p.m.

What children consume in schools has become one of the most popular public health issues of our time (Pike & Leahy, 2012). In this paper, we position lunchtime as a specific curricular phenomenon and critically examine international school lunch policies and practices that guide the enactment of this pedagogical space, with a focus on schools and schooling in the United States and Australia. We argue that contemporary school lunch policies are guided by a desire to regulate and control consumption as well as to transmit particular ideological values around food and notions of what constitutes (un)healthy eating practices and (un)healthy bodies (Gibson & Dempsey, 2015; Harman & Cappellini, 2017). Throughout our analysis we consider the cultural, sociopolitical, and economic forces that render these surveillance and regulatory practices commonsensical.

Drawing on the insights of Michel Foucault, particularly around his writings on governance and governmentality (Foucault, 2003), we critically examine the ways in which particular rationalities, ideologies and discourses (occurring in multiple sites) are levied to form and constitute particular modes of being and justify potentially programmatic and/or harmful action. Our findings come from an international investigation of lunch policies occurring in three countries. Drawing on data collected from a range of sources, including empirical investigations with families and children, academic commentary, government reports, media releases, and curricular materials, our analysis attends to the existence of local narratives located within national contexts and discourses on the topic.

We argue that the school lunch experience is being enacted as a global strategy to instil ideological and normative messages about health and education. These messages invoke particular regimes of truth regarding appropriate foods and consumption habits, ideal body forms and functions, as well as the schools' justifiable level of intervention to influence these. Our findings suggest that common anxieties around consumption, health and obesity drive these kinds of transnational 'lunching' policies, practices and pedagogies. While such campaigns are largely based on altruism and 'good intentions', on closer analysis we suggest that there are some very troubling effects that are produced as a result of implementing such initiatives, including an endeavour to shift the responsibility (and blame) for (ill)health onto individual children and their families.

Deana Leahy is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Australia. Her research interests are framed by a concern about the political and moral work that is 'done' under the guise of improving health. Her research is interdisciplinary, drawing from a range of social and cultural theories to study the intended and unintended effects of attempts to govern and educate about health. She has authored numerous articles and book chapter and is the lead author of *School Health Education in Changing Times* (2016, Routledge) and a co-editor of the Routledge Book Series *Critical Studies in Health and Education* (2018).

Carolyn Pluim is Chair and Associate Professor of the Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology, and Foundations in the College of Education at Northern Illinois University. Her research examines the ways in which contemporary health imperatives are translated into formal and informal school policies and explores the implications of these policies for young people, school personnel, and democratic decision-making. She has authored numerous articles and book chapters on the subject and is co-author of the book, *Schools and Health: Past, Present, and Future* (2014).