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The Nourishing Revolution: Exploring the Praxis of the Weston A. Price Foundation

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science at The University of Waikato by ISA PEARL RITCHIE

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Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it. – Karl Marx

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. - Margaret Mead

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Reduction (Abstract)

As consumers of food, we are faced with many choices every day. We are encouraged to make healthy choices, but ‘healthy’ in today’s supermarket can mean many things: heart healthy, light, lite, cholesterol reducing, gluten or dairy free, organic, locally made or biodynamic. The discourses around food are now expansive, confusing and contradictory. Using a lens of Freirean praxis, this thesis explores the dispraxia of modern food and the praxis of the Weston A. Price foundation (WAPF) and wider Nourishing Food Movement, (NFM), which offers an alternative. The movement calls for a return to more traditional ways of selecting, preparing and eating food. For example, it emphasises soaking grains, preparing meals from scratch, and using less processed saturated fat and non-pasteurised milk. The thesis also challenges and debunks the discourse of modern food by exploring the controversy around the consumption of animal fat and raw milk.

The praxis of the WAPF and NFM is explored more deeply through qualitative case studies investigating internet blogs. The blogs serve as a dynamic and interactive example of libratory education, in comparison with messages and recipes provided by the dominant, corporate, food industry. The interplay of multiple discourses and subject positions around gender and class in food blogging are examined in a reflexive blog-based discussion, highlighting the layered complexity which must be navigated and reconciled by individuals when making food choices. Overall, this thesis argues that the praxis of the WAPF acts to help empower consumers to make more genuine
choices by providing techniques and information with which they can navigate the modern food context.
Menu
(Contents)

Reduction (Abstract) 4

Amuse Bouche (Preface) 8

Entrée (Introduction) 11

Chapter One: Tapas - A Selection of Theory and Method 19
  o Sauces of Knowledge 19
  o A Recipe for Praxis 21
  o Voulevant: Case Study Method 23
  o Fusion: Social Movements and New Social Movements 24
  o Courses of Discourses: A Foucaultian Soup 28

Chapter Two: Perusing the Literature 40
  o Filling Up 40
  o The Research of Weston A. Price 42
  o Bloated: the State of Modern Food 47

Chapter Three: Digestive Difficulties: The Dispraxia of Modern Food 54
  o A Matter of Fat: Consensus and Dissent in the Scientific Paradigm 54
  o Raw Milk: Hard Sciences and Lay Understandings 71

Chapter Four: The Praxis of the Weston A. Price Foundation 84
  o Nourishing Values 84
  o The Weston A. Price Foundation as a Social Movement 91
  o A Brunch of Blogs 98
  o The Personal Meets the Political: Qualitative Blog Bites 110
  o Recipraxia or Dispraxia? 124
  o Back to the Kitchen: Gender, Class, Politics and Religion in Blogging 137

Dessert: A Petit Four of Reflections, Caveats, Discussions and Conclusions 150

References 164

Appendix 171
List of Tables

Correlation of fat consumption with coronary heart disease 59
Comparison of core food values 84
Comparison of science base and value based approaches 77
Amuse Bouche (Preface)

My story

I have been interested in health for a long time and because of this I naturally became interested in nutrition. I first came across Nourishing Traditions, the cook book, while I was studying nutrition as part of a herbal medicine course, but it wasn’t until a few years later, when my baby daughter had difficulty breastfeeding, that I acquired the book and became aware of the Weston A. Price Foundation. I was disgusted by commercial infant formula – it somehow simultaneously managed to have the quality of being both sterile and putrid, neither of which appealed to me. When I googled something along the lines of “baby formula recipe”, wondering if such a thing existed, I immediately found the raw milk formula recipe from Nourishing Traditions. It looked quite complicated, calling for ingredients such as homemade liquid whey, lactose, bifidobacterium infantis, high vitamin cod liver oil, unrefined sunflower oil and so on, which was a bit off-putting. I was concerned about feeding raw milk to a young child, because of the bacterial risk emphasised by health authorities, so I read a lot of material both in favour of and against consuming raw milk. My impression from this literature was that if the milk came from healthy cows, and was carefully collected, it was likely to be safe. Furthermore, intuitively, it made more sense to me to feed my daughter whole, natural foods instead of over-processed powder that smelled like pharmaceuticals.

I contacted a friend, Clare, who had similar food interests. She lent me a copy of Nutrition and Physical Degeneration, the published research of Dr. Weston...
A. Price, the foundation’s namesake. As a dentist, he had travelled the world studying the health of people eating indigenous diets and compared them to consumers of modern, processed foods such as white sugar, white flour and processed vegetable oils. I was surprised to learn that, in every case, the indigenous diets were correlated with superior dental health, decreased rates of deformities. In many cases, they were also correlated with decreased rates of diseases such as tuberculosis. Clare also put me in touch with a woman in Wellington, who referred me to a local woman, Rebecca, who was regularly purchasing raw organic milk from a farm. During this time, I had bought *Nourishing Traditions* and considered the formula recipe. I contacted the farmer, and drove out to pick up my first taste of organic raw milk. The farmer was particularly well informed. He told me that the milk was safe, and spoke of experiments in which pathogens had been put into raw milk and the enzymes naturally present in the milk had fought off the foreign bacteria. The raw formula I made smelled much better than conventional powdered formula, despite the fish oil. My daughter drank it, and was a particularly healthy baby. I must admit that I did simplify the formula, particularly after she started eating solids. Through Rebecca, I joined a milk group, taking turns to drive the forty minutes to the farm to collect everyone’s milk. I quite enjoyed the milk, and began to culture it, making yoghurt and kefir, and experimenting with cheese. I also felt like I was a part of a different community, with different understandings and practices with regard to food, by which I was increasingly influenced.
During this time I had become quite well acquainted with *Nourishing Traditions*, particularly the controversial advocacy of natural saturated fats and raw animal products. It occurred to me that the conventional nutritional information I had seen was confusing and often appeared to be skewed in favour of the food and diet food industries, which I found to be particularly unsettling. Furthermore, the rhetoric of the Foundation contrasted with much of the conventional information in convincing ways. This encouraged me to challenge the role that mass produced food plays in our life. As an example, it had frustrated me for years that every recipe for pumpkin pie I had encountered called for two cans of pumpkin – an ingredient not available in New Zealand supermarkets. After reading *Nourishing Traditions*, I realised that American recipes using relatively unprocessed ingredients must exist. I was inspired to use ‘nourishing’ as a key word in the google search ‘nourishing pumpkin pie’. Suddenly, I was in a new world of nourishing food blogs, overflowing with mouth-watering images of food and delicious recipes, using unrefined sweeteners such as maple syrup, honey and rapadura\(^1\) – and hardly a can in sight. I draw upon these Nourishing food blogs as a primary source for this thesis.

The combination of the above experiences, in conjunction with my passion for food, and the lack of any academic literature about the Weston A. Price Foundation, motivated me to focus on this topic for my Master’s thesis.

\(^1\) Dehydrated sugar cane juice
Entrée (Introduction)

Imagine you are a high class food critic seated at a three star restaurant. The white-gloved waiter lifts the silver dome from your entrée to reveal a disk of powdered egg topped with fried, grey chicken paste that is most obviously flavoured from a test tube. Your refined taste is offended by such a travesty. Your great-grandmother would likely feel similarly affronted by the kinds of foods many of us today consume on a daily basis. This example is designed to illustrate an angle of the dispraxia of modern food. On an intuitive level, we know there is something wrong with these over-processed, fabricated, food-like substances. Many people have come to this realisation, and sought out information and communities dispensing alternative discourses, that there are now social movements dedicated to highlighting the dispraxia of modern food and providing alternative ways of selecting, preparing and consuming food. The key argument of this thesis is the breakdown in praxis within nutritional science, and, as a response to this, the development of new praxis of the Weston A. Price Foundation and the Nourishing Food Movement.

Because of my personal journey, as mentioned in the preface, I set out to research the Weston A. Price Foundation, which was established in 2000, and the Nourishing Food Movement surrounding the Foundation. Given that the praxis of this social movement is predominantly visible on the internet, it was appropriate that my research explore online blogging communities reflecting the discourse of this movement.
Engaging in the field through the medium of the internet was an interesting experience. It opened up unexpected avenues of thought and question, which were not part of the original research design. This change in direction is best exemplified by an online discussion prompted by an abstract submitted for a Women’s Studies Association Conference, and the response that I received from the conference organisers. This is explored in depth in Chapter Four. The way that this discussion has become a key part of this research is an example of the embodiment of praxis within this research. This is also important because it sheds light on how discourse can both influence and be challenged by people in everyday life. These reflections and the direction influenced by the internet research have prompted the following research questions.

- How do mainstream nutritional science and the food industry represent a break down of praxis?
- How does the Weston A. Price Foundation provide a working example of praxis?
- How do the recipes in blogs express the praxis of the Weston A. Price Foundation?

**Background**

Food is among the most vital components for survival. It is fuel for the physical body and it is often studied from a scientific paradigm and defined in accordance with this discourse, but food is also an embodied experience, an
everyday performance of social ritual and is, therefore, central to individual and cultural identity (Fisher, 1988). It is a possibility that because food is so central to society and culture, so integral to daily life, that it has been largely overlooked by social researchers until recently. Despite this, topics around food are now among the fastest growing areas of social research, largely because of widespread concerns over the state of modern, industrially processed food, including environmental and social issues and, notably, links to contemporary epidemics of degenerative diseases (Germov & Williams, 2004).

What we eat may be determined by culture, class, family history or tradition. We may eat food we consider to be healthy, or 'junk' food. Our food choices may be guided by evolutionary background. This means we have learnt to trust, for example, the sweet and fatty foods which bring us energy the salty mineral-rich foods, and the sour foods containing vitamins. However, in recent human history, food has become so altered from its original state that these evolutionary cues are no longer consistent. The snacks high in refined sodium or sugar may provide energy, but lack the complexity of micro-nutrients that whole foods bearing similar tastes would have (Chapman, 1997, Fallon, 1999). Recently, a barrage of journalists, including Michael Pollan and Eric Schlosser, have become well known in the media for their shocking exposés on contemporary food and where it comes from. The food industry has been exposed as being exploitative of people, land and animals. Modern processed food, when put under the microscope, has been revealed to be high in toxins, nutritionally inadequate, and linked to many modern diseases
including diabetes, obesity, cancer and heart disease. In the case of heart disease, diet related causes are thought to be responsible for more deaths than any other identified cause (Germov & Williams, 2004).

Foods have been genetically modified, fortified or altered in other ways to increase cost of production, marketability, shelf life and, ultimately, profit margins. Many people and groups have raised concerns over genetically modified foods both on an individual level and also because of wider effects – the cross-pollination of genetically engineered crops rendering the seeds of the non-GM crops as belonging to the company which owns the modified DNA. This has devastated local farming economies in the US and has also had effects on a global level, where impoverished farmers in non-western countries have been held accountable for unintentionally growing patented seeds (Smith, 2003). The ability to produce tailor-made processed foods with enhanced nutritional quality is something that only large companies can afford, because it requires huge resources to fund laboratories, marketing campaigns and regulatory approval. This means that popular categories of cereals, snack bars, breads and even baking flour are controlled and owned by large corporations (Scrinis, 2008).

Many people, or 'consumers' as they are sometimes called, are waking up from their passive states and becoming more interested in food as an ethical, political and health issue. The rising awareness of the state of modern food has led to the rise in new social movements, such as the Slow Food (Honore, 2004) and Local Food movements, as well as vegetarian and vegan
movements which have developed alongside animal rights movements, and movements which focus on sustainable gardening like permaculture and Demeter, inspired by Rudolf Steiner. Farmer’s markets are becoming increasingly popular as ‘consumers’ seek out alternative local food sources. We have seen a boom in the organic food industry, a category that, prior to modern pesticides and chemical fertilizers, would have represented normal food. Paradoxically, many so-called 'organic' foods populating supermarket shelves are just as highly processed as their mainstream equivalents.

This thesis looks at the breakdown in praxis evident in mainstream nutritional science, and then looks at the Weston A. Price Foundation as a working example of praxis. The contemporary Nourishing Food Movement, associated with the Weston A. Price Foundation, is a highly political movement aimed at informing and educating the general public to make conscious food choices. As this is a very contemporary movement, little has been written about it so far, and for this reason this thesis will include a qualitative weblog-based inquiry into a few of the large number of blogs dedicated to disseminating this information.

I have not been able to find any academic publications about the Foundation thus far. According to the Foundation's website, it is a nonprofit, tax-exempt charity founded in 1999, by Sally Fallon Morrel and Mary Enig, to share and promote the research of Dr. Weston Price (Weston A. Price Foundation, 2010). “The Foundation is dedicated to restoring nutrient-dense foods to the human diet through education, research and activism” (Para 2). This activism
includes support for organic and biodynamic farming, pasture-feeding of livestock, community-supported agriculture, informative food labelling, and nutritional information in accordance with the research of Weston A. Price. The Foundation aims to establish universal access to clean raw milk and ban the use of soy formula for infants.

The key publication of the Weston A. Price Foundation is *Nourishing Traditions*; a compendium of recipes and nutritional information written by Sally Fallon Morrel (2001), with help from Mary Enig. The first sections of the book are dedicated to nutritional information in line with the views of the Weston A. Price Foundation. They include a critique of “politically correct nutrition”, claiming that the dietary advice promoted by mainstream authorities, including government authorities and health foundations (The ‘Diet Dictocrats’), advocating a diet high in grains with little animal protein or fat, is misleading and does not promote good human health. *Nourishing Traditions* argues that this misleading information is due to corporate interest in marketing supposed 'health foods' with a higher profit margin (Fallon, 2001). *Nourishing Traditions* encourages the dietary inclusion of high amounts of raw meats, cultured foods, mineral-rich sea salt, animal protein and fat, and the exclusion of industrially processed foods, particularly those high in additives. It includes recipe sections on cultured dairy products, fermented vegetables and fruits, sprouted grains, nuts and seeds, stocks, vegetable salads, soups, raw meat appetizers, a catalogue of vegetables, fish, poultry, meat, game, baking with alternative grains, legumes, sweets, and baby food, among other things (Fallon, 2001).
Chapter One includes a selection of theory and method considered relevant to this research. This chapter sets out the qualitative approach of this thesis, which begins by highlighting the subjectivity of knowledge. This is followed by an explanation of the theory of praxis utilised in this work. The last three sections of this chapter cover the central methods and concepts which are the case study method, the concept of social movements and the lens of Foucaultian discourse.

Chapter Two is comprised of a literature review which selectively covers the progression of food from traditional to modern in order to illustrate how food has changed in different cultures and different context resulting in the dispraxian state of modern food. This chapter also explores the research of Weston A. Price, which provides evidence of the difference between the praxis of traditional food and the dispraxia of modern food.

Chapter Three focuses on the two main points of nutritional advice promoted by the Weston A. Price Foundation and *Nourishing Traditions* that could be viewed as particularly controversial by mainstream scientific, medical and nutritional bodies: Raw milk and animal fat. These topics will be explored via case studies which illustrate the hegemonic discourse and counter discourse, both of which often utilise scientific principles. The purpose of this chapter is to emphasise categorically the dispraxia surrounding modern food.
Chapter Four will explore the Weston A. Price Foundation in more depth, particularly focusing on how it embodies praxis and constitutes a social movement. The key principles of the Foundation and the lived experiences of bloggers will also be examined through selective blog posts and blog recipes, the latter, in comparison with recipes for similar meals from the dominant food paradigm. Gender issues around blogging within this movement will also be explored in the final section of this thesis through a dynamic food blog discussion mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. This chapter ends with a personal reflection, discussion and conclusions.
Chapter One
Tapas: A Selection of Theory and Method

Because of the eclectic and emergent nature of this research, a diverse range of theoretical components will be explored in this chapter, including praxis; power and discourse. This work will draw on a wide range of resources, each with varying strengths and weaknesses, in order to bridge the gaps in the literature. The range of sources drawn upon serves to illustrate the subjectivity of knowledge. This is significant to this thesis because of the qualitative methodology which allows for exploration of depth and breadth. It also allows for both critical and interpretivist stances to be taken, which can incorporate multiple perspectives.

Sauces of Knowledge

Any source of information, regardless of how credible it is considered to be, will be based on assumptions and will, therefore, carry biases. Even academic peer-reviewed publications will be influenced by the biases of the system and of the academics involved in the writing and reviewing process. Newspaper and magazine articles can be influenced by the biases of their authors, the leanings of the publications, and the anticipated response of the target audience. I will use these sources of information to look at issues surrounding raw milk, a topic on which very little academic work has been published. I will use the work of well-regarded scientists, as well as scientific journalists, such as Gary Taubes, and marginalised scientists who are critical of the dominant paradigm, in order to examine the complexities of the relationship
between saturated fat and coronary heart disease. I will use weblogs (blogs) as a source of primary, qualitative data to obtain an in-depth understanding of a modern social movement involving food. I will even use the internet open encyclopaedia Wikipedia, at times, in order to obtain general understanding of topics which are new and difficult to find information about. Wikipedia, like blogs, is a dynamic medium of communication and information dissemination.

There exists a significant distrust within the academic community of the incredibly popular and continuously expanding Wikipedia. Although Wikipedia articles are not academically peer reviewed, they are reviewed in a far broader and, some would argue, less prejudiced way, by an unlimited number of 'peers' with no particular academic biases. Wikipedia articles do require references, and encourage readers to add to short and incomplete articles in order to improve them. Many academic articles have come to Wikipedia's defence, and studies have found that the articles are remarkably accurate and comparable with a library reference service (Garfinkel, 2008, Shachaf, 2009). Black (2008) argues that the traditional peer review process is due to be updated in line with the quick dissemination of knowledge characterising contemporary media – “The implications of such a concept would have a dramatic effect on the academic community” (Black, 2008, p. 73). Furthermore, the International Sociological Association are adopting a Wikipedia-like approach with their ‘Sociopedia’ project (International Sociological Association, 2010). Wikipedia is also a good example of praxis, as it encourages information sharing and evolves through the input of a variety of contributors. Articles also often include ‘criticism’ sections, allowing room
for subversive thought and giving a more balanced perspective than many encyclopaedias.

**A Recipe for Praxis**

Although the Greek work praxis originally meant "action" or "practise", it has come to signify something more complex, through the early work of Karl Marx. Marx saw praxis as revolutionary, as the ideal process by which social change could be created and a better, fairer world established. The theory of praxis can be seen as heavily influenced by Hegel’s dialectic, which proposes an alternative to the rigid laws of formal logic encapsulating the synthesis of theory and practice necessary for revolution (Ninnes, 1983). Praxis has since been used to describe activity in a wide variety of socio-political contexts, many of them differing from the original Marxist connotations. One of the theorists responsible for the development of ‘praxis’ as a framing device is Paulo Freire, and it is his conceptualisations of praxis which I intend to employ in this thesis.

Freire defines praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1970, p. 36). Freire considered praxis a central defining feature of human life as well as a necessary condition of freedom. He posited that human nature is expressed through activity which is intentional, reflective, and meaningful. History and culture are also important considerations in Freirean praxis, particularly the dialectical interplay between history and culture which are both created by and shape people’s experiences. The struggle for freedom can be humanising, but could also be dehumanising;
making people objects of history and culture, and denying their capacity to be self-defined subjects. Freire argues that overcoming the limits of situations can be achieved through politicising education, respecting everyday language and allowing people to voice their own experiences. This he calls a practice of freedom; a continuous cultural re-creation enabling the greatest expression of human existence, allowing people to become fully human (Glass, 2001).

Tom Heaney summarises Freirean praxis as follows:

Praxis is a complex activity by which individuals create culture and society, and become critically conscious human beings. Praxis comprises a cycle of action-reflection-action which is central to liberatory education. Characteristics of praxis include self-determination (as opposed to coercion), intentionality (as opposed to reaction), creativity (as opposed to homogeneity), and rationality (as opposed to chance). (Heaney, 1995 p. 10)

As Heaney states above, Freire saw praxis as a process of action-reflection-action, whereby the initial action is reflected upon and the reflection feeds back into the future action. This is a process through which theory can be utilised in a practical way. Freire’s work was focused on education and is well known for its implementation in the Cuban literacy campaign. Creativity is considered by Freire to be an essential component of the praxis of liberatory learning, along with ‘empowerment’: “Power is not given, but created within the emerging praxis in which co-learners are engaged” (Heaney, 1995, p.9), giving people the motivation to become critically conscious in order to take charge of their lives in a political sense.

Praxis is a useful construct for explaining how social change works or doesn’t work. For the purpose of this thesis, praxis will be defined as a working
system, whereby theory informs practice and practice feeds back into theory in a progressive way, so that both the practice and the theory symbiotically evolve. Praxis, in this case, also requires transparency in communication, a balance of power and an absence of the power exploitation which could be considered to be ‘dispraxia’: a breakdown of praxis.

This thesis is focused on the praxis of food and nutrition. The socially dominant perspectives on food and nutrition are largely dictated by the scientific paradigm, influenced by the food industry and administered by government and corporate advertising. In this thesis, the theory of praxis will be used to illustrate both dispraxia – in the case of nutritional science and the food industry, and a working model of praxis – in the case of the Weston A. Price Foundation and *Nourishing Traditions*.

**Voulevant: Case Study Method**

As a qualitative method, case studies provide in depth, exemplary slices of broader trends from the area being studied (Aull Davies, 2008). As such, they can be illustrative of key ideas and significant concepts set against the backdrop of the wider context. Even though case studies cannot provide causal knowledge, they can provide unique insights from which general observations can be made, adding to the body of knowledge around particular topics (Aull Davies, 2008). In this case, the method is employed in different ways to highlight, illustrate, expose and demonstrate both the dispraxia of modern food and the praxis of the Weston A. Price Foundation and the Nourishing Food Movement as described below.
The case studies presented in chapter three focusing on fat and raw milk illustrate conflicting discourses within the scientific paradigm. Chapter Four focuses on the praxis of the Weston A. Price Foundation and the Nourishing Food Movement by presenting case studies of blog posts and blog recipes. The latter, as a counterpoint, are compared to examples of recipes from the dominant nutritional paradigm. The final case study is a dynamic illustration of everyday bloggers' struggles to locate themselves in the intersection of discourses, some of which are conflicting.

**Fusion: Social movements and New Social Movements**

It is not the intention of this thesis to focus extensively on social movement theory, or nuances or debates around the terminology of social movements and new social movements, and, therefore, the term ‘new social movement’ is used to illustrate the contemporary nature and importance of new technologies – in particular, the internet – in the movement of focus which centres around the Weston A. Price Foundation. This section will begin by attempting to define social movements and new social movements both generally and in the context of this thesis. It will then explore some social movement theory in order to identify key characteristics of new social movements, and look briefly at social movement research relevant to this thesis.

The term ‘social movement’ covers a variety of collective action aimed at generating social change. (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000). Wikipedia provides a concise definition for social movements: “Social movements… are
large informal groupings of individuals and/or organizations focused on specific political or social issues, in other words, on carrying out, resisting or undoing a social change.” The entry goes on to mention the importance of education and dissemination of literature, as well as other factors of industrialisation which have given rise to modern Western social movements. Although social movements occur in all corners of the world, “Over the past 200 years, they have become part of a popular and global expression of dissent.” For the purposes of this thesis, a social movement is defined very broadly as any group of people who organise themselves in order to effect change on the world.

The term ‘new social movement’ (NSM) has emerged since the second world war to describe modern movements with a specific focus or interest group – for example, feminism or environmentalism. (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000). The Wikipedia entry on new social movements (NSMs) describes “a theory of social movements that attempts to explain the plethora of new movements that have come up in various western societies roughly since the mid-1960s (i.e. in a post-industrial economy) which are claimed to depart significantly from the conventional social movement paradigm.” This entry suggests that these NSMs may have been affected by the growth of the post-industrial economy, differentiating them from earlier movements under different economic periods.

Some qualities of new social movements have been said to include a focus on autonomy and qualitative life improvements, rather than material benefits and
resources (Steinmetz, 1994). NSMs are seen to be less oriented toward social-utopian projects or metanarratives of progress than previous social movements, and are not necessarily limited to class categories or other more solid identity boundaries. For this reason, identities in NSMs can sometimes be more flexible (Steinmetz, 1994). NSMs tend to manifest as decentralised organisational forms, in comparison with more centralised structures favoured by previous social movements, and they tend to rely on temporary or part-time membership and informal networks and work mainly outside of the parliamentary political system, although this is not particularly unique to NSMs (Steinmetz, 1994). NSMs politicise formerly apolitical aspects of everyday life (Steinmetz, 1994). Different NSMs can be brought together or unified through a common cause such as a shared opposition to a system – for example, capitalism (Steinmetz, 1994).

Some theorists have argued that new social movements are not particularly different from general social movements, pointing out that many of the qualities of NSMs have existed in historical social movements and therefore, are not confined to a particular time in history (West, 2004). One important factor in recent social movements is the use of the internet as a tool in communication, networking, education, organisation and mobilisation (Hsu, 2003, Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2002). Hsu examines the concept of self-reflexivity in relation to internet and social movement. He claims the self-reflexivity provided by the internet transcends the boundaries of the social movement and blurs the lines between the public and private spheres (Hsu, 2003).
Salter (2003) notes that one function of New Social Movements is to perceive problems and highlight them in the public arena, generating and publishing information independently from the needs of government and industry. The fast-changing and interactive capacity and nature of the internet provides a more suitable medium for NSMs than traditional media, which is more static and not interactive. The internet not only has a similar culture to social movements, in that both are dynamic and relatively decentralised, but it also provides an effective medium for facilitating online political activity which crosses over to offline activity. The internet may also share other characteristics with NSMs, including open protocols and communications, self-generated identities and information, and non-hierarchical qualities. “The internet enables social-movement groups and organisations to communicate, to generate information, and to distribute this information cheaply and effectively, allowing response and feedback” (Salter, 2003, p.130).

Subversive uses of weblogs have been documented in academic publications. For example, Kahn and Kellner (2004) discuss the internet as a political vehicle: “The internet may be deployed in a democratic and emancipatory manner by a growing planetary citizenry that is using the new media to become informed, to inform others, and to construct new social and political relations” (p.3). Many new social movements could be viewed as embodying praxis as they seek to change the world by re-interpreting information, generating new information and disseminating it. New social movements often seek to transform existing hegemonic structures, liberating people and
society from them. The decentralised nature attributed to new social movements is also in line with the ideal of power being shared as part of praxis. In these ways, and likely many others, concepts of praxis can be seen as deeply entwined with new social movements. This connection has been explored by social researchers. Atton (2003) considers the use of the Internet by NSMs as a radical, socio-technical paradigm challenging the dominant, neoliberal model of information and communication technologies. He examines Indymedia, an independent media organisation, as a radical manifestation of internet use, and looks at examples of praxis by anarchist groups (Atton, 2003).

Courses of Discourses: A Foucaultian Soup

Another theorist who will be drawn on in this thesis is Michel Foucault. Foucault is well known for his work on power, discourses and knowledge (Johnston, 2008). These concepts will be drawn upon with regards to the food industry, public health authorities and nutritional information. Foucault’s conceptualisation of power implied that it is not a simple centralised structure of a top-down capitalist system, but rather that it is more dynamic, coming from multiple avenues and normalised by the lower ranks (Johnston, 2008). This concept of power can be helpful in understanding the complexities of the food industry and the agency of social movements that rally against it. Governments also play a role in this web of power, and Foucault’s concept of biopower attempts to explain governments’ efforts to regulate the health of populations. Public health nutritional information is one example of biopower which is influenced by the dominant scientific paradigm and also often
sponsored by corporate interests (Warde, 1997). It is not the intention of this thesis to explore these concepts in great depth, however, they do make a useful framework for understanding the key points of the thesis.

**Discourse analysis**

Discourses colour and shape our understandings of the world. Discourse analysis is a useful tool in exploring the subjective worlds of meaning, truth, society and culture. Unravelling these can help to explain contradictions and disagreements and also to understand the nature of perspectives (Long, 2008). Many theorists, including Foucault, are known for their use of ‘discourse analysis’. Foucault claimed that discourses are entwined with social practice and may mutually co-exist or intersect “Indeed, the multiplicity and fragmentation of discourses, especially in conversation and dialogical exchanges, is more common than the clash of well-defined opposing viewpoints, beliefs, or rationalities. This also holds for the rhetorical content of official government statements drawn up by politicians and their “spin doctors” (Long, 2008, p.75). In this thesis, I will examine various food discourses in order to illustrate some of the various constructions of food and health and the way these can be incorporated or excluded. The incorporation of discourses can also be related to the Hegelian concept of synthesis, and can form a part of a praxis. This will be demonstrated in the case of the Weston A. Price Foundation.

**Food Discourses**
The following discourses are relevant to this thesis and will be drawn upon throughout.

**Hard Science, Reductionism and Nutritionism**

Food is seen as comprised of small particles of nutrients or anti-nutrients. There are macronutrients, such as carbohydrates, lipids (fats) and protein, and micronutrients, such as vitamins and minerals. These substances are considered to be 'good' or 'healthy' in the right quantities. Substances considered to be 'bad' may include toxins, dangerous or risky micro-organisms, or may be otherwise linked to the body (or what little is known about it) and how it requires and responds to these substances. The good and bad moral judgement placed on substances takes on a religious tone and may be a historical remnant of the Christian society from which Western science sprang. This critical perspective of science has been drawn upon by many social theorists and possibly dates back to the work of Nietzsche (Robinson, 1999). Scrinis is particularly critical of this perspective, which is the dominant perspective, in line with modern science and the bio-medical view of the body. The scientific perspective of food and nutrition focuses just on the physical level, looking, for example, at the biochemistry of nutrients or anti-nutrients (Scrinis, 2008). Scrinis coined the term nutritionism to describe the way the nutrition industry; scientists, nutritionists and public health authorities, have conceptually reduced food into its nutrient composition, connecting particular nutrients to health. This perspective has become so widespread that it has been adopted by the public (Scrinis, 2008). This is one of the key perspectives I will use to examine topics around food. Nutritionism is a critique of the
discourse surrounding nutritional science and the advice it produces. One powerful claim made by Scrinis is that this discourse has been co-opted by the food industry as a way to market their products. Packets are labelled with nutritionist slogans about vitamin content and other known nutrients enticing shoppers to purchase these products for the sake of their health (Scrinis, 2008).

Nutritionism has become a contemporary certainty, one that is taken for granted and mostly unchallenged, even among food and nutrition experts and institutions. While there is much contestation over the way nutrient-level knowledge is used and abused, few have questioned the reductive focus on nutrients per se. (Scrinis, 2008, p. 39)

Because of the complexity of human biochemistry, uncertainties and contradictions surrounding nutrient knowledge are evident: “nutritionism is nevertheless characterized by a sustained and confident discourse of precision and control. This discourse implies both a precise understanding of foods, diets, and the body and an ability to precisely control and manipulate them” (Scrinis, 2008, p.42). This results in greatly exaggerated representation of scientists’ understanding of food and health. Scrinis (2008) also claims that disagreements within the scientific community are either concealed from the lay public, or misrepresented.

The strong focus on the quantities of specific nutrients means that other, more qualitative ways of categorising different foods are given less importance, for example: processed and un-processed. The lay perspective viewing highly processed ‘junk food’ as unhealthy is undermined by the strong focus nutritionism has on the numbers of nutrients, which can be added into processed foods to make them more appealing: “when nutri-quantification becomes the primary or exclusive basis for evaluating foods, then some highly
processed foods may exhibit similar - even superior - nutrient profiles to unprocessed wholefoods. An important example has been the promotion of margarine over butter on the basis of their respective fatty acid profiles” (Scrinis, 2008, p.43).

The nutritionist discourse is also regarded as impervious to time, space and cultural situations, although it is predominantly a recent, Western, scientific discourse. In this way food is fragmented, rather than seen in a holistic sense. This perspective can obscure the value placed on local, seasonal foods, culturally important foods and environmental concerns about food production: “Foods that are central to traditional cuisines may be discouraged on the basis of their nutrient profiles. An example of such quasi-precise evaluations of wholefoods is the recommendation to switch from jasmine rice to basmati rice on the basis of the latter’s lower GI [Glycaemic Index] score as if such a substitution would make any meaningful difference to one’s blood sugar levels or overall bodily health.” (Scrinis, 2008, p. 44). The lay adoption of the nutritionist discourse may mean a combination of two paradoxical experiences of food knowledge: “Nutritionism creates ambiguous tendencies toward a disempowered, confused, and dependent individual on the one hand, and an active, empowered, and critically informed individual on the other” (Scrinis, 2008, p.46).

The following is an example of nutritionist discourse in relation to the foods traditional Maori were likely to have eaten:

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2 For more information about the health value of fats see the case study of fat in chapter three
The incidence of non-infectious diseases appears to have been low in these people, perhaps in part due to the presence of protective chemical constituents within their food plant supply... The seeds of C. australis, of some Astelia spp., and of hinau (Elaeocarpus dentatus) are good sources of various essential fatty acids, generally regarded as protective against cardiovascular disease. Shoots and leaves from a wide range of native species were traditionally eaten as greens, especially “sow thistle” or puha (Sonchus spp.), reportedly high in Vitamin C and various phenolics. (Cambie & Fergusson, 2001, p. 109)

In this example, specific active agents found in foods are emphasised and linked to health benefits. This kind of narrow focus can have many useful functions, allowing specific knowledge to be obtained; it also has the limitations of not being holistic. Despite the limitations of looking at nutrition under the microscope in terms of particular small components claimed to be connected to health or illness, it is still an important perspective in understanding the whole topic of food and health, and it is for this reason that this perspective will be used in this thesis, along with other perspectives.

**Indigenous, Holistic and Lay Understandings**

As Mason Durie (2004) points out, indigenous societies have more holistic perspectives, incorporating values and principles about food and health with other philosophies. An indigenous or traditional perspective to food might incorporate concepts of energies – for example, in traditional Chinese food and medicine, hot and cold or wet and dry energies are associated with foods (Koo, 1984). These traditional principles do not exclude other avenues of meaning, whereas, in a scientific, bio-medical perspective, one explanation or solution is sought to the exclusion of other meanings and experiences (Nettleton, 2006). It is not the intention of this thesis to attempt to encapsulate
the holistic perspectives of traditional societies relating to food, however, it is important to be aware of the different perspectives and how they may relate to or exclude each other.

Lay understandings are also often holistic in that they can incorporate more than one perspective to try to make sense of the world. For example, scientific information might be incorporated along with life experience, folklore and other kinds of knowledge. Contemporary lay understandings are influenced by contemporary culture, reproduced and reflected by media. These may include ideas about what ‘healthy food’ is and may be closely linked to ideal body image. One predominant contemporary discourse centres around fat as a negative phenomenon – both in terms of body fat and in dietary intake of fat (Cowley, 2006). Lay understandings will be examined later in this thesis, looking at the case study of the consumption of raw milk.

The Lay Discourse of Food and Health and Indulgence

According to Warde (1997) health was rarely a concern in recipes in 1967-8, with only four percent of recipes recommending food because it was healthy. This was before concerns over nutrition escalated; in the 1991-2 sample sixteen percent of recipes made reference to the healthy nature of foods. There was a common assumption that healthy food equated to light food which would (hopefully) equate to a lighter physical form. Nutritional information was increasingly supplied, alongside recipes, about factors such as fat, fibre and calories, following the trend of increasing obsession with health and healthy eating, particularly prevalent in the middle class and often more of a
concern for women. Warde (1997) asserts that this reflects government propaganda campaigns encouraging healthy eating. This is an example of the Foucaultian concept of bio power and has been challenged by new right (right wing) accusations of ‘food fascism’, criticising governments for attempting to control peoples’ private lives (Warde, 1997).

Warde (1997) discusses a gastronomic compromise: ‘Comfort food’ is a common term used to describe the consumption of (usually unhealthy) food for emotional pleasure rather than bio-physical health. This may be a way that lay discourse patches the divide between the puritanical good and sinful foods – allowing for some emotional pampering on the part of the unhealthy food, but only occasionally. Warde (1997) describes this as:

One of the most important mixed messages regarding contemporary food. We should eat healthily; but not if it makes us sad. Implicitly hedonistic consumption is justified in terms of what the mind and the body need. This juxtaposition of indulgence and bodily self-discipline identifies a profound contradiction. Its only resolution is by eating something different tomorrow. Bangers and mash is for a special occasion, when feeling blue; and that is a most important condition in the world of self. You deserve to be happy, and to be comforted when not. The indulgence may be craved for a transgression of the rules. Ultimately, this is a tale about good and evil, and what is being encouraged is evil. But you can be forgiven because you feel miserable; if you aren’t happy, try sin! (p.79)

Food advertising has played on this discourse, using religious and hedonistic terms such as ‘naughty but nice’, tempting, wicked, irresistible, indulge and so on. Often, these terms are used to promote processed puddings, pies and cakes (Warde, 1997). Perversely, this kind of discourse has increased along with the promotion of the super slim body shape as an ideal of feminine beauty, which adds to the stress of many women’s lives while they are being tempted to
comfort themselves with the pleasures of the consumption of supposedly sinful food (Warde, 1997). This could be a discursive throwback to the Biblical Garden of Eden where Eve was tempted by forbidden fruit.

**The Lay Understanding of Inherent Health**

With the exception of breast milk for a new born baby, there is no particular food that is necessarily healthy. Health is not a static property that can be definitively attributed to particular foods. Health is an abstract property, and whether or not food can promote or maintain health is relative to the context of the body in which it is digested (Germov & Williams, 2004). Despite this, much talk of ‘healthy food’ and of particular foods being healthy is evident in contemporary lay discourse resulting in much confusion around health and food. One may read in a newspaper article one week that coffee is healthy and reduces the risk of Parkinson’s disease – only to see on television the next week that it is carcinogenic. These kinds of contradictions are becoming increasingly common, stemming from the nutritionist focus on isolated substances along with the narrow scope of bio-chemical research, which often relies on testing lab rats as human beings are too complex in their activities and other factors to produce reliable outcomes. It is this kind of limited research that informs public health strategies, pressuring the public to conform to fragmented and often contradictory dietary advice (Germov & Williams, 2004).
Nourishing Discourse

The use of the terms ‘nourishing’ and ‘traditional’ in relation to food may bring to mind a warm, satisfying home-cooked meal. The discourse of the Weston A. Price Foundation utilises these terms to identify the essence of their message. These words embody not only what the Foundation practices, but also what it wishes to promote. It is important to point out that this is a modern reconstruction of ‘traditional’ which may bear some resemblance to foods of the past. The recipes from *Nourishing Traditions* (Fallon, 1999) are drawn from traditional cuisines and reflect the nutritional values of traditional cultures. This advocation of tradition differs from the notion of shunning all modern technology. The recipes have been adapted to fit a modern kitchen and lifestyle equipped with modern technology.3

The knowledge that the foundation draws on is predominantly from the research of Dr. Weston A. Price. This research, conducted in the 1930s, is written in a discourse appropriate to the time and context in which it was carried out. Although this discursive style may seem out of date, the research, conducted at a time when pockets of people consuming their traditional diets still existed in many places around the world, can still be seen as relevant. It is particularly important to the Weston A. Price Foundation which, in a contemporary setting, has taken the research conducted by Price and used it to challenge current dominant perspectives on food. The Foundation folds together scientific discourse and lay understandings which emphasise the

3 Nourishing Traditions provides a list of kitchen appliances which are recommended and those which are not.
intuitive aspects of identifying healthy food, and appeals to ancestral and
traditional wisdom. This allows the Foundation to provide a counter discourse
to the often contradictory messages surrounding food, as mentioned in the
section above. Their more inclusive approach gives recipients of their
information a way of evaluating the competing and often contradictory
discourses around food and health.

Social science discourses (food as identity)

This perspective looks at food in a social context. Food may be part of rituals
within cultures or families. It may hold meaning that relates to various aspects
of social life. Food may be portrayed as 'healthy' or 'junk food'. The
construction of food from various perspectives may be examined under this
approach – for example, a nutritionist perspective can be seen to be a modern
Western perspective to food. There are many perspectives within the social
sciences. A social geographer would place emphasis on place and space in
relation to food, an anthropologist would be likely interested in food culture, a
psychologist might be interested in individual food identity.

Despite the artificial categorisation offered by this example, and the potential
for social science perspectives on food and nutrition to be quantitative and
positivist, there is much more scope in the field of social sciences for broader
and more qualitative approaches. This thesis will be coming from a particular
‘sociological’ social science perspective.
The Social Construction of Food

As Germov and Williams point out, food habits are socially constructed.

What is considered taboo to eat in one culture may be common cuisine in another.

While hunger is a biological drive and food is essential to survival, there is more to food and eating than the satisfaction of physiological needs. There are also ‘social drives’, based on cultural, religious, economic, and political factors. The existence of national cuisines, such as Thai, Italian, Indian, and Mexican (to name only a few), indicates that individual food preferences are not formed in a social vacuum. (Germov & Williams, 2004, p.4)

Modern food is often constructed as commodity, and can also be linked to culture, sub-culture, socio-economic status and identity. Processed food is marketed to target consumers by promoting image, taste or health benefits. The theories described in this section will inform this research. It is now the appropriate time to open our menus and peruse the literature.
Chapter Two: Perusing the Literature

Filling up

Every culture has its own food history, inseparable from the rest of its history. Availability, as well as the technology to prepare food, and the structure of a society, play roles in the types of foods a group of people will consume (Warde, 1997, Caplan, 1997, Scholliers, 2001). Food is a topic so large and diverse that it would take the volume of many books to encapsulate its history. Because of the immensely broad nature of the topic, I will provide a very brief and general summary of food history, and then discuss some relevant topics in more depth.

The hunter/gatherer society, which is a typical modern reconstruction of what we retrospectively perceive older or more ‘primitive’ societies to be, is one in which there was no agriculture. Food was gathered from forests, or other areas – grubs from under rocks or rotting logs, fruits, nuts and edible bark or roots from trees, with eggs and honey having perhaps been luxuries. Birds, fish and animals would have been caught or hunted. These societies were often nomadic, as their diet dictated that they must move from place to place at different times of the year to find sustenance. Aboriginal Australian peoples are often associated with this diet, as it was typical before Western colonisation. This is sometimes called the Palaeolithic diet. It is much higher in vitamins and minerals (excluding sodium), and said to be the diet which human beings evolved to eat. As little has changed, biologically, in the human body over the last ten thousand years, it is considered by many experts to
remain the ideal diet for human beings (Eaton, Eaton & Konner, 1999). It may be noted that this kind of diet has been positively associated with health and not with the degenerative illnesses that are common in contemporary society. Although pre-modern times are often associated with short life spans, hardship and struggle in comparison with modern civilisation, alternative viewpoints exist. The anthropologist Marshall David Sahlins (2004) describes hunter-gatherers as the original affluent society, in contrast to the modern market economy and its institutionalisation of scarcity: “our problems are not theirs, the hunter-gatherers. Rather, a pristine affluence colours their economic arrangements, a trust in the abundance of nature’s resources rather than despair at the inadequacy of human means” (p.29).

If food was plentiful, it would have become possible for the Palaeolithic hunter-gathers to relinquish their nomadic ways and establish a more permanent settlement, and therefore a more structured, Neolithic society. The development of agriculture also made this possible, as more food could be intentionally produced to meet the societal demands. In Aotearoa, Maori tribes were known to grow their own vegetables as well as hunt birds and gather kai moana (sea food) and kai rakau (tree food). It is estimated that agriculture first appeared on earth around 10,000 years ago (Eaton, Eaton & Konner, 1999). However, it has only been in the last few centuries, since the industrial revolution, that the most significant changes have occurred in food production and, therefore, in the food itself.
The Research of Weston A. Price

Traditional Nutrition

One of the key assertions of the Weston A. Price Foundation is that traditional, pre-industrialised, diets often promote good health and fewer degenerative modern diseases in comparison with industrialised diets, which include high quantities of pesticides, refined wheat flour, sugar and processed vegetable oils, correlating to increases in type two diabetes, heart disease, cancers and many other health problems. Rapid dietary change in indigenous peoples has also been linked to these diseases (Kuhnlein & Receveur, 1996). Traditional food processing of various kinds has also been shown to enhance the bio-availability of nutrients while limiting anti-nutrients (Hotz & Gibson, 2007).

The work of Weston A. Price, the namesake of the Weston A. Price Foundation, focuses on this theory. As an American dentist, he noticed his child patients had far worse teeth than their grandparents. His hypothesis was that modern food, laden with sugar and other refined foods, was causing this deterioration in dental health. This was part of what he called the decline of modern civilisation. In an article he wrote, which was later published in a book of his research, he discussed the decrease in infectious diseases and the simultaneous rise in degenerative conditions, which he associated with the modern diet. Inspired by this, he and his wife set off to explore isolated areas of the world where traditional foods were still consumed. The research of Dr. Price was not an attempt to understand the complexities of cultural perspectives regarding food. His expeditions and information gathering outside of his dominant paradigm of Western society led him to conclusions about modern food and nutrition.
Dr. Price had many interesting theories about the relationship between environmental factors and food quality:

In order to study the possibility of greater nutritive value in foods produced at a high elevation, as indicated by a lower level of morbidity, including tooth decay, I went to Switzerland and made studies in two successive years, 1931 and 1932. It was my desire to find, if possible, groups of Swiss living in a physical environment such as that their environment would compel them to live largely on locally produced foods... Practically all the human requirements of the people in that valley, except a few items like sea salt, have been produced in the valley for centuries... the people of the Loetschental Valley make up a community of two thousand who have been a world unto themselves. They have neither physician nor dentist because the have so little need for them... It has been the achievement of the valley to build some of the finest physiques in all Europe... tuberculosis is the most serious disease of Switzerland... a recent short inspection of the valley did not reveal a single case. (Price, 2003, p. 23-25)

Price was obviously impressed by this valley and their traditional human ecosystem. He studied the teeth of adults and children and sent samples of food, particularly dairy products, to be analysed for vitamin and mineral content. They were found to be significantly higher in content of these than commercial dairy products in the US, Europe and lower Switzerland. The village subsisted largely on this milk, made into cheese for the winter, and locally grown rye: “A slice of whole rye bread and a piece of the summer-made cheese (about as large as the slice of bread), which are eaten with fresh milk of goats or cows. Meat is eaten about once a week” (Price, 2003, p.26). Price put their robust physiques and health down to high levels of calcium and phosphorous, as well as something he called the “fat-soluble activator” found in the superior milk. Levels of tooth cavities were 0.3, three people had to be examined to find a single one
Price went on to study many other communities, including the Gaels, 'Eskimos', ‘Indians', Melanesians, Polynesians, African tribes, Australian aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders, New Zealand Maori, Peruvian Indians, and the remains of the ancient civilisations of Peru. He compared modern and primitive diets. In every case, he found that not only was the dental health of these so called “primitive” people far superior to their industrialised cousins, but many other areas of health were also much improved and deformities were less common. Price also looked at primitive control of dental cavities and theorised about the origin of physical deformities and physical and mental deterioration, which he linked to diet.

**Kai: Price’s Observations of traditional Maori diets**

“Because of the fine reputation of the racial stock in its primitive condition, it was with particular interest that studies were made in New Zealand” (Price, 2003, p.201). Price began his studies in Wellington and journeyed up the North Island of New Zealand in a way which allowed him to reach both modernised Maori groups and the small number of people still living in isolated groups who ate their traditional diet. He made detailed examinations of twenty two groups of children. In the most modernised groups 31 to 50 percent had cavities whereas the most isolated groups had only 2 percent. Price found higher rates of deformity of the dental arches in modernised groups (40-100%) whereas older generations had 100 percent normally formed arches (Price, 2003). Price noted that early scientists who made contact with early Maori found only one tooth in 2000 attacked by cavities and 100 percent normally formed dental arches (Price, 2003).
The reputation of the Maori people for splendid physiques has placed them on a pedestal of perfection. Much of this has been lost in modernisation... The Maori men have great physical endurance and good minds. Many fine lawyers and government officials are Maori. The breakdown of these people comes when they depart from their native foods to the foods of modern civilisation, foods consisting largely of white flour, sweetened goods, syrup and canned goods. The effect is similar to that experienced by other races after using foods of modern civilisation. (Price, 2003, p. 209)

Price made a clear link between the consumption of modern foods and tooth decay. He observed that Pakeha who were primarily consuming modern foods had particularly high incidences of dental problems. He also noticed that similar deformities in dental arches were common with Pakeha and Maori people whose parents had adopted modern foods before their birth. In his other studies of modernised people, there was a very high incidence of facial deformity, approaching 100 percent in tuberculosis sanatoria where Western food was served. This was consistent with his results in New Zealand.

Price was interested in the types of food that Maori people ate:

It was particularly instructive to observe the diligence with which some of the isolated Maori near the coast sought out certain types of food in accordance with the tradition and accumulated wisdom of their tribes. As among the various archipelago and island dwellers of the Pacific, great emphasis was placed upon shellfish. Much effort was made to obtain these in large quantities... Much of the fishing is done when the tide is out. Some groups use large quantities of the species called abalone on the west coast of America and paua in New Zealand. In Fig. 74 (upper), a man, his wife and child are shown. The father is holding up an abalone; the little girl is holding up a mollusc only found in New Zealand, the toharoa; the mother is holding up a plate of edible kelp which these people use abundantly, as do many sea bordering races. Maori boys enjoy a species of grubs which they seek with great eagerness and prize highly. The primitive Maori use large quantities of fern root which grows abundantly and is very nutritious. (Price, 2003, p. 214)

He was particularly impressed with Maori people and their lifestyles:
The Maori race have developed a knowledge of Nature's laws and adopted a system of living in harmony with those laws to so high a degree that they were able to build what was reported by early scientists to be the most physically perfect race living on the face of the earth. They accomplished this largely through diet and a system of social organization designed to provide a high degree of perfection in their offspring. To do this they utilized foods from the sea very liberally. The fact that they were able to maintain an immunity to dental carries so high that only one tooth in two thousand had been attacked by tooth decay (which is probably as high a degree of immunity as that of any contemporary race) is a strong argument in favour of their plan of life. (Price, 2003, pp. 214-215)

The research of Weston A. Price inspired the formation of the Weston A. Price Foundation, which offers an alternative food paradigm to that of modern food, much of which is still laden with sugar and processed carbohydrates, lacking the complexity and nutrient density of traditional diets.

**Sweet Desire**

Particular tastes have been found to be appealing to people, regardless of culture. Sugar and sweet tastes are one of these, and as Mintz, in his book Sweetness and Power (1986) notes, even sucrose intolerant peoples\(^4\) continued to consume the substance despite it causing discomfort. The predilection for particular flavours, particularly sweet ones, is considered to have a biological basis, as sweet fruits and honey would have provided sustenance to human beings as we evolved (Mintz, 1986). As our technology has increased, we have been able to increase our production and refinement of sugar. Mintz (1986) considers this transformation of sugar from a rare luxury to a common every-day food to be an integral part of the growth of modern capitalism and industry.

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\(^4\) People Mintz refers to as northern Alaskan Eskimos
Food politics

Throughout history food has often been worshipped, demonised or otherwise co-opted for political purposes. Entire books are devoted to incidence of historical food politics and the present political state of food is even more exacerbated, as highlighted by popular food journalists such as Michael Pollan and Eric Schlosser. Aside from the ethical and health concerns associated with industrialised food, ‘consumers’ are bombarded by mixed, confused and often contradictory discourses, as previously mentioned, coming from industry marketing, the scientific community (who may or may not be funded to further the aims of industry) and public health propaganda campaigns. As Caplan (1997) points out:

Healthy eating is clearly a political issue, and the majority of ‘information’ about food and health is driven by commercial considerations, particularly in terms of advertising and product descriptions and, more implicitly, by the government’s reluctance to intervene in the ‘freedom’ of the market. (p.179)

It is clear that the state of modern food is incredibly confused and increasingly problematic, globally, socially and individually.

Bloated: The State of Modern Food

Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire

During the last century the problematisation of food has shifted, in the Western world, from scarcity and malnutrition to diseases associated with
over-abundance such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity\(^5\) (Caplan, 1997, Colquhoun, 2007). Although the lay belief in food scarcity is prevalent, industrialised countries actually over-produce and waste enormous quantities of food: “between 30 and 40 percent of the food produced in Britain is never eaten, and the amount thrown away has increased 15 percent in the last decade” (Colquhoun, 2007, p.372). The concept of food scarcity has been perpetuated by capitalist industry, which relies on it to sustain market value. An example of this can be seen in arguments for genetically modified food (Smith, 2003).

Michael Pollan (2006) claims that in recent years, real food has been largely replaced with what he terms ‘food like substances’. This heavily industrially processed food mimics the flavours and textures that human beings have evolved to crave and enjoy, yet lacks the nutritional complexity of whole foods. Large scale, industrially processed food is responsible for many global environmental and human rights problems. In areas of food production and processing, issues of exploitation of labour have been raised, along with criticism of unsustainable farming practice and the destruction of rainforests. The amount of fossil fuels used to transport food and the dangers of pesticides for both the producers and consumers are also among some of the problems that have been explored in relation to modern food (Pollan, 2006, Singer & Mason, 2006).

\(^5\) Often called ‘diseases of affluence’ despite their over-representation amongst lower socio-economic groups (Caplan, 1997).
The consumption of highly processed convenience foods has steadily increased (Warde, 1997, Colquhoun, 2007). The production of food has altered significantly along with advances in technology, and this change in production has also affected livestock: “Before the Second World War, the process of raising a chicken to feed a family of five took around twenty weeks. It can now take only a handful (of weeks) to raise chickens that cannot walk – prime fodder for the junk food industry…” (Colquhoun, 2007, p. 372). Ethical concerns have been raised around these ‘farming’ practices (Singer & Mason, 2006), demonstrating that ‘advanced’ technology may not necessarily lead to superior practice. Market conditions often mean that transporting fresh produce over long distances can be cheaper than locally grown equivalents, despite quality degradation from this practice: “Storage and transportation times means that even the fruits and vegetables in our supermarkets contain fewer nutrients than in the past” (Colquhoun, 2007, p.372).

Corporations responsible for the production and marketing of ‘healthy foods’ have profit as their primary objective, rather than a healthier population: “In a very competitive market, creating new ‘healthy’ foods or, more often, ‘healthier’ versions of popular foods is one strategy to increase market share… Products are often misleadingly promoted on the selective highlighting of supposed health properties… ‘low in fat’, but neglecting to also mention ‘high in sugar’” (Caplan, 1997, p.178).

**The Saga of Butter and Margarine**
Butter is created by churning cream. The first margarine was made with beef fat, sheep's stomachs and cows udders, soaked in milk then suspended in water and potash at blood temperature (Visser, 1987). This process was invented outside Paris in 1869 by food chemist Hyppolyte Mege-Mouries in an attempt to create a butter-like substance to compensate for a devastating European cattle plague which had made butter very rare. Modern margarines are made of entirely different substances (Visser, 1987). In the early 1900's a technique for hardening oil was invented, allowing previously runny oils to be reconstituted into spreadable form. Saturated fats are more solid because of the number of hydrogen molecules and the process of adding more hydrogen to any oil turns it solid (the process of hydrogenation creates harmful trans-fatty acids). This discovery meant that vegetable and fish oils came to be perceived as raw materials for the emulation of butter. This, directly and quickly, led to the development of oil plantations of crops such as cotton seed, coconut, soy, maize, sesame, peanut and rape seed (later called canola) (Visser, 1987). The source of the oil was unimportant as the process removes individual properties:

Oil seeds are crushed, heated, moistened, pressed, and filtered with the help of petroleum based solvents so that the meal husks, and so on are eliminated. (These are often pressed into cakes and sold as cattle feed). The oil is then degummed, and treated with caustic soda so that unwanted fatty acids are turned into a soapy substance and drained off. Next the oil is bleached of all colour and deodorized. It is then hydrogenated with pure hydrogen and a copper (formerly a nickel) catalyst, filtered, and refined a second time. By now the medium for the making of margarine has the same tasteless, colourless, uniform consistency no matter where the process began: at this point the milk bacteria, the aromas, and the colouring are added to make it as much like butter as possible. (Visser, 1987, p.104)
Visser (1987) points out that margarine, as a substitute for butter, is predominantly consumed in northern countries that habitually consume butter. Ironically, as many oil crops are grown in tropical countries and many non-butter cultures happen to also live in these zones, the crops for making margarine are grown by people who are unlikely to eat it: "more and more tropical land were turned over to raising lucrative crops for the north" (Visser, 1987, p.104). The power, in this situation, is in the hands of the buyers as any oil can be used to make margarine, and therefore margarine corporations can buy whichever oil is cheapest or fits in best with their marketing campaign. Visser links the mass production of vegetable oils and margarine to the beginnings of the globalised corporate food industry. Margarine, once tainted with inferior status to butter has, since the 1980s, been promoted as a healthier alternative, riding on the back of the diet-heart hypothesis:

"lightness" has become a giant food fad. Being thin... is a status symbol... Into the paradoxical gap between the capacity to spend money and the need to eat less steps a brilliant solution: "light" food. In buying "light food" we can pay more for what costs less to produce in the first place, eat less and so measure up to the desired norm, and receive as an added bonus the suggestion that our behaviour is "enlightened". So a multi-million dollar business is born: "light" beer, "slimming" fast-foods and snacks, "diet" pop and "light-tasting" margarine. (Visser, 1987, p.109)

The trick of producing high end margarines is limited to large industry. As Visser (1987) points out, "A cow is incapable of changing its ways to conform to fashion. Margarine, on the other hand, is versatility itself”.

**Food Options**

Rondale (1996) predicted that alternatives to the modern industrialised food system will soon become conventional because of the weight of consumer
power and the growing awareness of problems with modern food and food production. There may be evidence of this seen in the growth of organic food. Ethical eating, including focuses on ‘Fair Trade’, low carbon footprints, food miles, local food, organic food and other ethical production considerations, has become fashionable, and large corporations such as Starbucks have capitalised on these growing concerns. As Colquhoun (2007) describes, these corporations market “the tantalising illusion that we are increasingly in touch with the origins of what we put in our mouths, that our foods are ‘hand picked’, individual and unique, but it is still a pre-packaged easy-meal, the answer to an atomised and servantless society, and it is still competitive” (p.373). This is a prime example of the breakdown of praxis in the modern food system. The hierarchical structure of these companies and their abuse of power is in direct conflict to the concept of Freirean praxis. The distortion of information in favour of corporations and the alienation of the public from knowledge of the content and source of their meals is also part of this dispraxia.

A society which becomes so alienated from the direct production of its food leads to people becoming afraid to get their hands dirty: “The growing majority of us panic at mud, worms, beetles in the lettuce or the thought of gutting a fish, and we have forgotten how easy it is to make custard or ice cream that has a little goodness built in. It is not that we have stopped caring – seasonality and sustainability have become our watchwords – but few of us have their own smallholding on which to rear meat, and most of us haven’t a clue how to go about getting back to the land” (Colquhoun, 2007, p.374). This
statement may apply to many of the middle class ‘consumers’ concerned with ethical food – while generally eating for convenience, some have taken further steps towards ‘getting back to the land’ or at least getting back to ‘real’ or ‘whole’ food in which the ingredients are known and understood, and relatively unprocessed or processed in traditional ways in the home. The Weston A. Price Foundation provides a case study of some such efforts. The following chapter involves case studies of two topics about which the Foundation is concerned: opposition to the idea that saturated fat consumption leads to heart disease, and promotion of the consumption of raw organic milk.
Chapter Three: Digestive Difficulties – The Dispraxia of Modern Food

This section of the thesis will expand on the dispraxia of nutritional science and the nutrition industry by focusing on two case studies. The first is an investigation into the commonly held conviction that dietary saturated fat causes coronary heart disease. The second is an exploration of the consumption of raw milk. Both of these issues are important topics for the Weston A. Price Foundation, and both are somewhat controversial as they contradict the dominant hegemonic discourse. The following section on fat deliberately uses scientific discourse in a similar way to the Weston A. Price Foundation, utilising arguments and knowledge conducted within the scientific paradigm. A thorough understanding of the scientific basis behind this critique is important in recognising the value of this standpoint as it gives validity to position of the Foundation.

A Matter of Fat: Consensus and Dissent in the Scientific Paradigm

That saturated fat causes heart disease and that high cholesterol levels are unhealthy is often taken for granted as scientifically proven, yet, as Sally Fallon (2001) points out, there are many historical and cultural exceptions that continue to defy this view. The Masai tribe in Kenya who consume only blood, milk and meat have a diet high in saturated fat and yet have no evidence of coronary heart disease, as do the French on their notoriously fatty diet. Many other examples are included in the section on fat in Nourishing
Traditions (2001). It cites many studies that support their unconventional perspective. The Weston A. Price Foundation are not alone in their scepticism of the link between fat and heart disease. Many scientists and medical doctors, including Ravnskov (2000), are also unconvinced and openly critical of these theories. The International Network of Cholesterol Sceptics currently has eighty five members, most of whom are medical doctors and scientists (The International Network of Cholesterol Sceptics, 2010).

The Lipid Hypothesis

The lipid hypothesis is the idea that high levels of cholesterol in the blood leads to coronary heart disease. The diet-heart hypothesis, considered a partner to the lipid hypothesis, claims that saturated fat in the diet causes raised blood cholesterol and, thereby, leads to coronary heart disease (Ravnskov, 2000). Many scientific studies have been designed and run in order to prove this hypothesis, and despite its current popularity there still exists a group of outspoken critics who claim the evidence fails short of proving anything⁶. As Gurr (1991 b) states, “Critical examinations of the literature reveals that the 'Lipid Hypothesis' is not as simple or as well-founded as it appears” (p.1).

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⁶ Well qualified include Dr. Uffe Ravnskov (2000), a medical doctor with a PhD, and Mike Gurr (1991A, 1992B), PhD, and Chris Masterjohn (2008), also a medical doctor with a PhD. Despite their qualifications these critics are marginalised in favor of mainstream science.
What is Cholesterol?

Despite its prevalence in lay discourses concerning heart disease, the complexity of important functions of cholesterol in the human body is not frequently mentioned. Cholesterol is painted as a ‘bad’ substance, to be avoided, a lay-nutritionism concept that undermines the complexity of what is known about it scientifically. Cholesterol is a fatty substance found in every human cell. It is used by the body to repair damaged cells and involved in many necessary bodily functions (Gurr, 1991). According to the Merck Manual of Medical Information⁷,

Cholesterol and triglycerides are very important fats (lipids) in the blood. Cholesterol is an essential component of cell membranes, brain and nerve cells, and bile which helps the body absorb fats and fat-soluble vitamins. The body uses cholesterol to make vitamin D and various hormones such as estrogen, testosterone, and cortisol. (Beers, 2003, p. 836)

Despite its many essential, health promoting properties, cholesterol has a bad reputation. Because of the lipid hypothesis and its publicity, cholesterol has negative connotations associated with heart disease. The very low levels of cholesterol recommended by the dominant medical system and the cholesterol lowering drugs which achieve these low levels may be depriving the body of a valuable substance necessary for self-repair. This may be the reason why elderly people are much more likely to die from all causes if they have low levels of cholesterol (Ravnskov, 2000). Conversely, high cholesterol levels measured in the body might be a sign that the body is trying to repair damage, rather than the forwarding of atherosclerosis. It is, perhaps, the determined

⁷ Self proclaimed the world's most widely used medical reference for the twenty-first century.
focus of the medical industry to combat the prevalence of heart disease that allows for these other factors to be overlooked.

**Good and Bad Cholesterol**

Recently, the idea has been circulated that some cholesterol, LDL, is bad, while HDL cholesterol is good (Ravnskov, 2000). This is a further example of nutritionism and of moral judgments being applied to substances in the human body. Neither LDL nor HDL are actually cholesterol, but both proteins (lipoproteins) that transport fats around the blood stream (Ravnskov, 2000). LDL cholesterol transports fat into the blood stream. It is called low density lipoprotein because it has less protein density and more fat. HDL transports fat back from the blood stream and, as some of the fat has been stored in cells, it has a higher ratio of protein to fat (Merck, 2003). Because LDL transports protein into the blood stream it is considered to be bad, and the returning HDL is considered to be good (Ravnskov, 2000). This might seem an unscientific distinction\(^8\) but it provides a simple formula to the lay public and is particularly helpful in marketing a drug which is known to lower the 'bad' cholesterol. The industries involved will be explored later in this section.

**The Cholesterol Wars**

Before the lipid hypothesis eventuated, a young scientist named Ignatowski began working towards proving the hypothesis by Metschnikow that an excess of dietary protein was toxic and accelerated the aging process (Steinberg, 2007). Ignatowski fed rabbits a protein-rich diet (large amounts of meat, eggs,\(^\text{8}\) Or even a moral or religious one.
and milk) which had the effect of causing arterial lesions like those of human atherosclerosis. Later, Anitschkow and Chalotow found that a diet high in fat without the protein also caused these lesions. Steinberg (2007) refers to this as an unpleasant fact destroying an otherwise beautiful hypothesis. However, from these experiments the lipid hypothesis emerged. Critics of Anitschkow argued that the digestive systems of rabbits were not designed for a diet high in animal fat and demonstrated the limits of this research by running similar trials on dogs and rats which resulted in no arterial lesions. Dogs and rats produce bile, which breaks down fats during digestion, as do humans (Masterjohn, 2008). This was seen as sufficient evidence, at the time, to disprove the theory – however, devotees remained (Steinberg, 2007).

Ancel Keys is known as the founder of the lipid hypothesis. He used data collected from six countries to show an obvious correlation between the consumption of fat and the rates of death from coronary heart disease (Ravnskov, 2000). Keys has been criticized for excluding data⁹ from countries that did not support his theory (Ravnskov, 2000). A graph constructed from all the available data would show no obvious correlation.

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⁹ Reliable data from more than twenty countries was available at the time of Keys' research (Ravnskov, 2000)
For the next few decades after Keys published his Seven Countries Study, a serious debate ensued between the converts of the lipid hypothesis and those who remained unconvinced (Steinberg, 2007). Many new studies were funded, aiming to demonstrate the validity of the diet-heart idea and the lipid hypothesis, but each study was met with criticism. One such experiment, the Oslo Study, showed recurrence of heart attacks were lower on a diet high in polyunsaturated fats (soybean oil), however, the overall mortality was the same for both the control and the diet group (Steinberg, 2007). This could indicate that, within the diet group, participants died from other causes before death.
a heart attack could kill them. This demonstrates that the narrow focus on heart disease excludes the possibility that other conditions may be occurring from following diets low in saturated fat or high in polyunsaturated fats.

Steinberg has written a series of articles and a book covering this debate, in which he covers many influential studies, lamenting their flaws, but still convinced of the validity of their cause. The Oslo Study, which replaced saturated fat with polyunsaturated fat\(^1\), lasted five years and produced no difference in all-cause mortality but decreased the incidence of second heart attacks. This could be accounted for by the inconsistencies in the control group\(^2\) (Masterjohn, 2008). As Masterjohn states: “There are far too many confounding variables to suggest this study actually indicts saturated fat” (para. 53).

The Wadsworth Veterans Administration Hospital Study fed one group meals made with saturated animal fats and another group meals made with polyunsaturated vegetable oils for eight years (Steinberg, 2007, Masterjohn, 2008). The result was a reduction in cardiovascular events, but an increase in cancer of the same magnitude (Masterjohn, 2008). Autopsies showed similar atherosclerosis in both groups and more aortal plaque in the group that ate the vegetable oil (Masterjohn, 2008). The difference in the rate of cardiovascular

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\(^{10}\) Religious terminology is used by Steinberg, supporter of the lipid hypothesis: “The “nonbelievers” were largely confining themselves to the intervention trial data per se. The “believers,” if they had had a catechism, might have recited it…” (2004, p.1)

\(^{11}\) Including a pint of soybean oil per week

\(^{12}\) The control group started out with a higher number of older and overweight participants and by the end of the study it had twice as many heavy smokers. Members of the treatment group were counseled to cut down their intake of margarine and increase their intake of fruits, vegetables
events could be due to the higher rate of heavy smoking\textsuperscript{13} in the control group (Masterjohn, 2008). Members of the treatment group may have had a lower rate of cardiovascular events because they smoked less, “but had more atherosclerosis and cancer despite smoking less -- probably because of the vegetable oil they were eating!” (Masterjohn, 2008, para. 55).

Many other similar studies could be considered part of the lipid anthology. Steinberg cites seven and leaves out two which would damage his argument: Rose, et al. (1965, cited in Masterjohn, 2008) replaced animal fat with corn oil over two years lowering serum cholesterol by 23 mg/dL but, unfortunately, the cardiac and total mortality quadrupled. The Sydney Diet-Heart Study (1978, cited in Masterjohn, 2008) replaced animal fat with vegetable fat over five years, lowering cholesterol by five percent but increasing total mortality by 50 percent.

In examining any long-running controversy, it is important to determine whether the skeptics are just having trouble adapting to a new paradigm or whether their doubts are well founded (Taubes, 2004). Because this issue has two separate hypotheses, both must be taken into account separately: firstly, the idea that lowering cholesterol prevents heart disease. This idea has been assumed by some, including Steinberg, to be evidence (or proof) that cholesterol lowering drugs such as statins prevent heart attacks (Taubes, 2004). It is conceivable that statins have some other function that prevents heart attacks. Masterjohn (2008) explores this possibility by looking at

\textsuperscript{13} Smoking increases the risk of spasms that can lead to heart attacks
another function statins are likely to have; reducing the activation of the Rho enzyme which inhibits nitric oxide “a gas that protects against heart disease at every level -- it increases blood flow and vessel dilation, decreases the adhesion of white blood cells to the vessel wall, inhibits the migration of smooth muscle cells to the site of an atherosclerotic lesion, and decreases the formation of blood clots” (Masterjohn, 2008, para. 40). This theory has so far been untested. It still links high levels of LDL cholesterol with atherosclerosis, because the more LDL is in the blood, the lower the ratio of antioxidants to protect it from oxidisation. Oxidised LDL is known to cause damage to the arteries (Masterjohn, 2008). Oxidised LDL also inhibits nitric oxide production, further reducing the protection from atherosclerosis. If this is the reason statins reduce cardiac incidents, it may be wise to take into account the other main effect statins have: lowering the levels of cholesterol, a very important substance which repairs cells and is a precursor to hormones. Rather than taking statins, a better approach may be to increase the antioxidants in the blood which will also protect against LDL oxidisation (Masterjohn, 2008).

The second idea, that eating saturated fat causes heart attacks, is much harder to prove and further experiments have only complicated the issue more (Taubes, 2004). If indeed saturated fats directly lead to atherosclerosis, this effect should be obviously demonstrated in controlled trials. This is not the case. There do not appear to be any trials that can clearly demonstrate this theory (Masterjohn, 2008). Despite a lack of scientific proof, the idea that eating less saturated fat would reduce heart disease became part of a widely
publicised public health campaign\textsuperscript{14} (Taubes, 2004). This was followed by a 'Consensus Conference\textsuperscript{15}, led by Steinberg, designed to end the debate. Most of the experts invited were converts of the lipid hypothesis, although a minority of sceptics argued that equating the effects of drugs with diet was unscientific. The conference report did not mention any disagreement (Taubes, 2004). “There was "no doubt", it concluded, that low-fat diets "will afford significant protection against coronary heart disease to every American over 2 years old.” (Taubes, 2004, para. 30). A recent study, published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, concluded that “[a] meta-analysis of prospective epidemiologic studies showed that there is no significant evidence for concluding that dietary saturated fat is associated with an increased risk of CHD\textsuperscript{16} or CVD\textsuperscript{17}. More data are needed to elucidate whether CVD risks are likely to be influenced by the specific nutrients used to replace saturated fat” (Siri-Tarino, Sun, Hu, & Krauss, 2010, p.535).

**The Scientific Paradigm**

According to the highly regarded supporter of the lipid hypothesis, Steinberg (2007), the absence of a well-delineated hypothesis does not necessarily bar the acceptance of new directions of medical science. This seems to be the case in observance of the process of saturated fat being accepted as the cause of coronary heart disease. However, applying a critical perspective, one might

\textsuperscript{14} Even the idea that low fat diets are beneficial to weight loss is not well founded, although it is often held to be a religious truth. Despite the calorie density of fat being significantly higher than carbohydrate and protein, participants in low fat diet trials were found to lose weight initially and then return to their initial weight (Taubes, 2004).  
\textsuperscript{15} At a Consensus Conference a (supposedly unbiased) panel review the evidence given by experts (Taubes)  
\textsuperscript{16} Coronary Heart Disease  
\textsuperscript{17} Cardio Vascular Disease
question why this is the case. Although science presents itself as, and is often regarded as, being perfect and impervious to human failings and biases, this is not necessarily the case. One of the failings of science, could, in fact, be its narrow focus on the precise, to the exclusion of meanings and complexities.

In the scientific paradigm, quantities are important. Things that can be measured are given more significance than things that cannot. This may help to explain the popularity of the idea that something measurable like cholesterol could be considered the main or sole factor in heart disease, as opposed to something unquantifiable like stress, which may also be a factor (Ravnskov, 2000). It is under this paradigm that reductionism is utilised in order to simplify information. This is a prime example of nutritionism.

Often in the scientific process, a problem is first identified as worthy of investigation. In this case, the problem of heart disease has been identified, since the 1950s, as being of major concern (Ravnskov, 2000). Theories then emerge which may be based on research showing correlations, for example, the rise of available dietary fat (which is one of many dietary changes), or the correlation between the cholesterol found in arteries and atherosclerosis. Neither of these things are proof that dietary fat or blood cholesterol cause atherosclerosis, but it is evident that simple solutions are being sought. A molecule, such as cholesterol or saturated fat, is charged with the crime of murder, and a theory of how this happens is constructed. Then the implicated parties are put on trial. Correlations found in trials are considered (by some) to be proof (or as good as), and once the theory becomes well recognised it is considered factual. Once these things have been established, researchers look
for solutions to the problem, such as cutting down on dietary saturated fat or taking drugs which lower blood cholesterol.

Although this sounds simple and sensible, there are problems with this method. Firstly, when it comes to human biology and nutrition, the chemistry involved is seldom simple. There are always factors which are yet to be understood. To act as if all the available information is complete is naïve. Cholesterol-lowering drugs work against even some of the available information about the importance of cholesterol in health, ignoring the complexity of this molecule and its many functions in the body. As Taubes points out,

> [t]he catch has been that few involved in this business were prepared to deal with a complicated story. Researchers initially preferred to believe it was simple — that a single unwholesome nutrient, in effect, could be isolated from the diverse richness of human diets... But as contrarian data continued to accumulate, the complications became increasingly more difficult to ignore or exclude, and the press began waffling or adding caveats. The scientists then got the blame for not sticking to the original simple story, which had, regrettably, never existed. (2004, para. 37)

Another problem with this particular scientific process is due to the well known logical fallacy of Questionable Cause, which is when a correlation is taken to imply causation. It is possible that a third factor, such as stress, causes both the rise in blood cholesterol and atherosclerosis, or that the rise of blood cholesterol is actually a symptom of atherosclerosis, repairing damage to the arteries (Ravnskov, 2000).
Social Issues and Industries

As Taubes (2004) notes, since the 1970's, healthy eating in the US has become synonymous with avoiding saturated fat in the diet. And, as a result, “[t]he creation and marketing of reduced-fat food products has become big business; over 15,000 have appeared on supermarket shelves” (Taubes, 2004, para. 4). This growth of industry has not been confined to food; an entire area of food research has developed to back up the 'healthy' claims of food manufacturers (Taubes, 2004). This is supported by governmental policy recommending that saturated fat be eaten sparingly. “The low-fat gospel spreads farther by a kind of societal osmosis, continuously reinforced by physicians, nutritionists, journalists, health organisations, and consumer advocacy groups” (Taubes, 2004, para. 4).

Taubes discusses the social and political context of the rise of this phenomenon:

Like the flourishing American affinity for alternative medicine, an antifat movement evolved independently of science in the 1960s. It was fed by distrust of the establishment — in this case, both the medical establishment and the food industry — and by counterculture attacks on excessive consumption, whether manifested in gas-guzzling cars or the classic American cuisine of bacon and eggs and marbled steaks. And while the data on fat and health remained ambiguous and the scientific community polarized, the deadlock was broken not by any new science, but by politicians. (Taubes, 2004, para. 13)

Politics has played a large role in the dissemination of the diet-heart idea. Taubes explains how staff working for the US Senator, McGovern, were responsible for the first anti-fat legislation that spread throughout the US and
then the rest of the Western world “[t]urning the dietary fat hypothesis into
dogma” (Taubes, 2004, para. 14).

Other social and cultural contexts are also important to mention. Japan has
often been claimed as proof of the diet-heart hypothesis, because Japanese
people eat little saturated fat and have long life spans and low rates of
coronary heart disease. What is not noticed by these statistics is that the long
life spans in Japan are a fairly recent development, coinciding with higher
consumption of animal meat and saturated fat. Another notable point is that it
is considered dishonourable to be declared dead of heart attack in Japan, and
for this reason doctors are more likely to write the cause of death as a stroke
on death certificates (Ravnskov, 2000).

Upon researching this topic, I stumbled upon something that I considered to be
a good, succinct example of the industries involved in the promotion of the
lipid hypothesis. This occurred as a sidebar of a google search for 'coronary
heart disease' (Google search, 14th April, 2009).

**Coronary Heart Disease**
A resource for physicians and
patients about thrombosis!
www.Thrombosisadviser.com

**Heart Disease Facts**
The Source Of Professional & Up To
Date Info On Cardiovascular Health
www.heartfoundation.org.au

**Coronary Heart Disease**
Maintain a healthy heart with
Flora pro-active healthy recipes!
www.floraloveyourheart.co.nz
The first of these symbolises the medical industry involved in the promotion of this idea. Doctors, as experts, have a lot invested (in terms of their reputations) in the information they have been giving out to their patients. Drug companies make millions of dollars from the sale of cholesterol lowering drugs (Taubes, 2004). Heart foundations receive a great deal of funding for research based on the lipid hypothesis, much of it from pharmaceutical companies, governments and the diet food industry, represented here by Flora, which also flourishes under this dominant theory. Each of these industries, both profit and non-profit, has a vested interest in the promotion of this problem and in the theories that support it, regardless of whether they are accurate. As suggested in Steinberg (2007), dietary dogma functions as a money-maker for the food industry, generating funds for heart foundations and work for thousands of chemists.

**Truth and Science**

Despite the many scientists who continue to question the validity of the diet-heart idea and the lipid hypothesis, the supporters of the now-dominant theories receive the most credit. As mentioned in Steinberg (2007), the peer reviewed system rewards conformity while excluding criticism, resulting in dissenters going without funding. In this self-promoting system, dissenters are marginalised, regardless of the strength of their criticism, and the general public are unlikely to have access to this contrary information.

Aside from the lucrative industry around this theory, scientists may also choose to cling to it because they have already invested their time and other
people's money in it, as Taubes (2004) notes. This may be why the inability to prove the hypothesis was disregarded and a leap of faith was made, using the positive results of cholesterol lowering drugs reducing heart attacks as if it were proof of the lipid hypothesis (and the diet-heart idea), a process of which Steinberg (2007) is supportive. After all the money and time put into trials, the experts were expected to give advice, regardless of whether or not it was scientifically proven (Taubes, 2004). A good summary is provided by Masterjohn:

It is also interesting to contemplate the sheer movement of cash (representing real economic resources) into these studies and to consider how fruitless the use of these resources has actually been. The technology developed by private industry has saved more lives by making heart disease less fatal. Meanwhile, cattle-herding tribes like the Masai have protected themselves against heart disease far more effectively than we have, having neither hundreds of millions of dollars for even a single placebo-controlled trial nor any of the fancy technology that industrial capitalism produces. (Masterjohn, 2008, para. 79)

**Summary**

The lipid hypothesis has had a long history of failed experiments influenced by financial agendas. The idea that eating saturated fat causes a build up of fat in the arteries seems logical at first glance, but with further information about the digestive system and dozens of studies with no clear results proving this idea, not to mention the cultural anomalies, even the most dedicated scientists must admit this issue is more complicated that it was first proposed to be. Using the drug evidence of statins to 'prove' the lipid hypothesis is as unscientific as using a miracle to prove the existence of a god. The idea suggested by Masterjohn that statins appear to work due to another effect (inhibiting the Rho enzyme) is one which seems worthy of further exploration,
although, with so much riding on the lipid hypothesis, it may be one for which it is hard to find funding. This exposes one of the main flaws in modern science. The funding for research often comes from groups, organisations and corporations with financial agendas. Research that these parties find unfavourable is not readily released and experiments are designed to deliberately show a desired result. Scientists who do not support the dominant theory are marginalised and, as a result, their work is considered less credible: a thoroughly unscientific process which undermines scientific praxis and contributes to the widespread dispraxia of the food industry.
Raw Milk: Hard Sciences and Lay Understandings

The Case of Raw milk

Milk in its raw state doesn't look like what you buy at the store. It can have a slight yellowish tint. Also, the cream rises to the top, forming an inch-thick layer that you have to stir in. I sit down at the kitchen table, fill my glass and take a small, tentative sip, followed by a big, hearty one. I had heard so much about the taste of raw milk that I half-expected the heavens to open up and angels to descend upon my taste buds. That didn't happen. Still, raw milk is certainly richer and creamier than the store-bought whole milk I normally drink. You can't even compare it to skim. It's fuller somehow, almost like a milkshake. I see how you could get hooked on the stuff. For the sake of research, I pour myself another glass. (Bartlett, 2006, p.5)

The recent rise in popularity of raw, unpasteurised, milk has attracted the attention of journalists. Articles have been published both in favour of and against the consumption of raw milk, including articles in Time Magazine, the LA Times and the Washington Post, among others. Controversy has arisen between US states with strict regulations around the sale of raw milk and those who advocate its nourishing properties and health benefits. The journalist Thomas Bartlett had to order raw milk in Maryland as pet food and have it shipped from Tennessee because of Maryland’s particularly strict laws. “In Maryland, where I live, as in most other states, you can't walk into a store and buy raw milk. That's because, while possession of raw milk is legal, selling it is a crime. It's also a violation of federal law to transport raw milk across state lines with the intent to sell it for human consumption” (Bartlett, 2006, p.1). In 2002, a raw milk co-operative in Maryland was threatened with a fine of $10,000 and a one year jail sentence. In a phone conversation with Bartlett, an official compared raw milk consumption with cannabis and heroin. The major
concern from authorities is that a lack of pasteurisation will mean that dangerous bacteria are not killed and may make people sick. For this reason, many health authorities in the US claim that pasteurisation is crucial (Conis, 2009). The World Health Organisation warns of the danger of unpasteurised milk on their website (World Health Organisation, 2010).

The history of milk, as reported in Bartlett’s article for the Washington Post, is long and colourful. “In the late 19th century, bad milk was killing babies by the thousands in American cities. In New York City, nearly a quarter of babies died before their first birthday, and tainted cow's milk was largely to blame” (Bartlett, 2006, p.3). In response to this, pasteurisation, invented by Louis Pasteur in the 1860s, was introduced and promoted in the US as a way of making milk safe, eventually becoming mandatory, which makes pasteurised milk a relatively modern food. Raw milk advocates claim that the problem with milk in the late 1800s wasn’t that it was raw, but that it was not properly refrigerated, mixed with additives, and came from unhealthy cows. Laurie Winn Carlson, attests that "[m]ilk was commonly mixed with additives to gain profit. Then, to make it look whole, additives were mixed in, such as carbonized carrots, grilled onions, caramel, marigold petals, chalk, plaster, white clay and starch. To replace the cream that had been removed, emulsions of almonds and animal brains were dissolved in the liquid to thicken it.”” (p.4). Modern technology and regulations have improved the ability to produce safer raw milk: “Organic Pastures Dairy Company, based in California, one of the handful of states where raw milk sales are legal, claims to have sold more than 40 million servings of raw milk without a single
In many states where it is illegal to buy raw milk, but not to drink it from one’s own cow, people are investing in cow-sharing programmes where they buy shares in a cow from a local farm and the receive the raw milk of said cow.

The demand for raw milk is not limited to the United States. Many other milk-loving countries are seeing a rise in raw milk consumption. In New Zealand, unpasteurised milk can be sold in small quantities ‘from the farm gate’ (Stoddard, 2009). Raw milk enthusiasts often drive out of their way to collect the milk. Some have even organised methods of collection such as ‘milk groups’ where people take turns to pick up the milk of the others to cut down on driving. “It is however a limited network, relying almost entirely on word of mouth and operating largely under the radar of relevant authorities” (Stoddard, 2009, p.17). There have even been reports of a health shop risking prosecution by selling it from the back of the fridge (Stoddard, 2009).

**Milking Discourse**

Very little has been published academically on this topic. Wynne Wright and Gerard Middendorf (2008) discuss raw milk in the introduction of The Fight Over Food: “A growing number of consumers, often from urban locales, are seeking out the warm, white liquid straight from the udder for what they perceive as its superior nutritional value” (p.1). Wright and Middendorf (2008) cite some of the same journalistic articles in this section, and use raw milk as an example of conflict between producers, consumers and state resulting from
a radically changing food system: “The case of raw milk suggests that we are increasingly confronting a food system that is being restructured in both subtle and highly political ways” (p.2). Non-academic books have been published in favour of the consumption of raw milk. A book review of The Raw Milk Revolution, by David E. Gumbert, a journalistic review of the raw milk debate, was published in the Journal of Agriculture & Food Information (Heinis, 2010). The book is said to focus on positive health effects of consuming raw milk, for which it cites peer-reviewed articles while denigrating cases where raw milk is linked to illness. This review claims that the scientific community is “virtually unanimously opposed to the consumption of raw milk because it is regarded as a source of preventable food infection” (Heinis, 2010, p.168). It is possible that this is another example of the dominant paradigm rewarding conformity and silencing dissent, as mentioned in the ‘fat’ section of this thesis. The review warns the reader that this book is not peer-reviewed and cautions libraries to accompany this book with more standard sources of information about the safety of raw milk.

There is a common social tendency to consider the dominant perspective superior. Even social scientists can be prone to adopting the dominant approach and dismissing other perspectives. For example, Western anthropologists have been accused of ethnocentrism when studying other cultures (Van Der Geest, 1995). The assumption of dominant superiority has often been proven false, as dominant views tend to be periodically replaced, although sometimes not before doing significant damage. This can be seen in
the case of the carcinogen DDT, which was widely used until discovered to be particularly dangerous (Moore Lappé & Collins, 1977). Although the dominant scientific and medical discourses adamantly oppose the consumption of any raw milk, it is possible that this perspective will change in time. The pro-raw milk campaign employs lay discourses, including a form of ‘lay immunology’, which promotes ‘natural’ micro-organisms in contrast with scientific sterilisation (Enticott, 2003 b). It also employs scientific discourse in order to engage with the dominant paradigm.

Sage (2007) suggests that, because our political systems depend on statistics and intensive surveillance, there is a strong focus on legislating against known risks, for example micro-organisms, and less concern over unknown risks involved in genetic engineering or animal growth hormones. He talks about raw milk as an example of an ‘alternative food network’, mainly operating outside of the dominant food system. He stresses that safety is a relative concept, and not an inherent property of certain foods. He is critical of the hygienist no-germ focus of scientists and food safety authorities.

Enticott (2003 a) is concerned about a dualistic approach of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ food, rather than accounting for fluid and multiple identities. He draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in an English village in an attempt to understand the consumption of scientifically ‘risky’ raw milk. The fast-changing and often contradictory world of experts and science has generated distrust and led some consumers to develop their own criteria of food safety which may, for example, place emphasis on ‘natural’, ‘local’ or ‘organic’
qualities (Enticott 2003 a). He argues that lay discourses of rural identity protect against infiltration by external scientific discourses of safety. He links this discourse with a form of rural identity and morality which emphasises the importance of ‘nature’. Enticott (2003 b) published a similar paper focusing on lay immunologies, as mentioned above. This paper argues that official health and safety discourses can be incompatible with alternative constructions of health, including lay immunologies, which emphasise the importance of natural bacteria and dirt in promoting health. In both of these articles, Enticott suggests that scientific recommendations around food safety are resisted in order to safeguard rural identity. Enticott looks briefly at the medicalisation of health and Foucault’s concept of ‘bio-power’, which demonstrates the interconnectedness of medical supervision and bodily discipline with the rise of capitalism. Despite the dominance of the mainstream ‘scientific’ perspective, counter-hegemonic consumption and discourses continue to exist, creating alternative meanings (Enticott 2003 b).

Nestle (2003) compares science-based and value-based approaches to food safety, although she points out that there is some overlap between ‘science’ and ‘value’ approaches.
An alternative discursive perspective is offered by West (2007), who argues that raw milk advocates use science to support their perspectives as well as those of proponents of pasteurisation, measuring both the potential risks and benefits. He also looks at the different values and fears which motivate both positions. Examples of scientific discourse being used by raw milk supporters are prevalent on the internet. The following quote is an example of pro-raw milk use of scientific discourse:

Through the process of fermentation, several strains of bacteria naturally present or added later (Lactobacillus, Leuconostoc and Pediococcus, to name a few) can transform milk into an even more digestible food (Real Milk, 2010). Paxson (2008), coming from an anthropological perspective, draws on the concept of pasteurian and post-pasteurian cultures, the former describing a culture emphasising sanitation, afraid of ‘germs’ or microorganisms; the latter employing a conflicting discourse, implying that not all microorganisms are bad and that some may be beneficial.
The Raw Milk Debate

Authorities, including the FDA, claim there is no benefit to drinking raw milk – however, raw milk is promoted by its supporters as having many health benefits. They claim that it is easier to digest than pasteurised milk, causing fewer digestive complaints; that it makes children more resistant to illnesses and allergies (Bartlett, 2006); and that it helps to alleviate Crohn’s disease (Cole, 2007), asthma and eczema (Park, 2008). “Proponents argue that the milk naturally contains an array of beneficial bacteria and enzymes that give the immune system a workout and aid with digestion -- and that are destroyed by pasteurization. Meanwhile, dairy scientists such as Bishop argue that such beneficial bacteria (such as acidophilus and bifidobacterium) occur only in small amounts in raw milk, and that any enzymes the milk contains have no proven benefit for humans” (Conis, 2009, p.1). Raw milk enthusiasts see the risks of drinking organic unpasteurised milk from healthy cows as very low, and cite research showing that the milk, as a living food, can actually protect itself from pathogens as the microorganisms in raw milk can inhibit pathogens in dairy products (Nero, Matto, Beloti, Barro, Ortolani & Franco, 2009). Health authorities have an interest in making sure that everyone is as safe as possible, and therefore do not want to take any risks by allowing something they perceive as potentially harmful to be sold, whereas the consumers of raw milk are interested in maintaining and improving their own health and the health of their families, in which raw milk plays a part. These discourses differ considerably in what they advocate, but both share a primary value of health.
Data about the actual incidence of bacterial outbreaks from raw milk is difficult to decipher. In the US, "[a] report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2007 traced 45 outbreaks, causing more than a thousand illnesses and two deaths, to bacteria in unpasteurised milk or cheese between 1998 and 2005" (Conis, 2009). Apart from the concerns about bacterial outbreak, it seems likely that there are corporate interests involved in closing down the raw milk trade. Many raw milk operations are small organic farms, out of the control of the powerful players in the dairy industry. As Duff (2004) notes, corporate interests play a large role in food regulation and policy. An example of this corporate pressure in action could be represented in the case of the FDA recently determining milk of cloned cows as safe to drink, a new and murky area of food production, while it takes a stance against unpasteurised milk straight from a cow – something that has been consumed without dire consequences for thousands of years (Cole, 2007). It is safe to assume that this stance of cloning is not something pushed through by small organic farmers, but by the lobbyists employed by large corporate food companies. This may partly explain the recent crack down on the raw milk trade (Cole, 2007): “advocates accuse the agency of relying on outdated information and harassing raw-milk producers in order to protect the pasteurizing industry” (Park, 2008, p.1). The Real Milk campaign claims that a return to real (raw) milk can save family farms: “Pasteurization laws favor large, industrialized dairy operations and squeeze out small farmers. When farmers have the right to sell unprocessed milk to consumers, they can make a decent living, even with small herds”18 (Real Milk, 2010).

18 The raw milk debate is covered in some detail on Wikipedia.
Real Milk

The Real Milk campaign is one of the projects of the Weston A. Price Foundation. On their website, they are critical of mainstream industrial dairy farming: “The source of most commercial milk is the modern Holstein, bred to produce huge quantities of milk--three times as much as the old-fashioned cow. She needs special feed and antibiotics to keep her well. Her milk contains high levels of growth hormone from her pituitary gland, even when she is spared the indignities of genetically engineered Bovine Growth Hormone to push her to the udder limits of milk production” (Real Milk, 2010). The Real Milk website offers information, encourages people to research their options, and works as a networking tool to help people to find raw milk suppliers in their area, including four listings in New Zealand. The campaign encourages people to know their farmers and to purchase raw milk from organic farms – differentiating this kind of raw milk from the kind which could come out of large, conventional farms. It also emphasises the cows be ‘pastured’19, eating grass, which they have evolved to eat, rather than the processed corn by-product of large industry.

The Real Milk campaign argues that pasteurisation damages milk and reduces its nutritional value: “Pasteurization destroys enzymes, diminishes vitamin content, denatures fragile milk proteins, destroys vitamins C, B12 and B6, kills beneficial bacteria, promotes pathogens and is associated with allergies, increased tooth decay, colic in infants, growth problems in children,
osteoporosis, arthritis, heart disease and cancer” (Real Milk, 2010). It also claims that homogenisation, another very common process for milk, is linked to heart disease. Raw milk is advocated by the Weston A. Price Foundation as a substitute (in a recipe with other ingredients) for baby formula, as was discussed in the preface.

**WAPF rebuttal to Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**

The Weston A. Price Foundation claim that the FDA has used biased studies in an attempt to indict raw milk. They present a counter-analysis showing flaws of the studies, which all assume that the raw state of milk caused the foodborne illness. The WAPF raises the point that, although pasteurisation will kill off pathogens, it is a process which may leave the milk vulnerable to further contamination: “Not one of the studies showed that pasteurization would have prevented the outbreak” (Real Milk, 2009). They also regard the demonisation of raw milk as unfair, as it accounts for a very low percentage of foodborne illness: “Between 1998 and 2005, there were over 10,000 documented outbreaks that contributed to 199,263 documented cases of foodborne illness. Raw milk was associated with 0.4% of these cases. Adjusting for the aforementioned biases, raw milk may have been genuinely associated with between 0.03% and 0.19% of these cases” (Real Milk, 2009).

They point out that raw milk is clearly no more dangerous than many other commonly consumed foods: “There are no FDA warnings about the inherent dangers of deli meats; there are no executive orders prohibiting the interstate

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19 An uncommon term in New Zealand where the cows usually eat grass in pastures, however, in the United States the prevalence of feed-lot farming means that pastured cows are rare and
transport of chicken; no state legislation banning the sales of spinach; no consumer education campaigns to eliminate the attendance of flea markets; and no farmers being fined and jailed for the sale of root vegetables. Producers and consumers of raw milk have a fundamental right to be treated fairly under the law that they are clearly being denied.” The WAPF accuses the FDA of “addressing the safety of raw milk outside of the context of general food safety and addressing pasteurization as the only means of making milk safe.” Despite supporting the consumption of unpasteurised milk, the WAPF are not naïve regarding potential risks: “That the consumption of raw milk carries some risk is undeniable. The question is whether raw milk carries a unique risk that distinguishes it from other foods ordinarily consumed – such as pasteurized milk, produce, hot dogs, or deli meats. The FDA does not make this comparison” (Real Milk, 2009).

**Milk, Fat and Praxis**

The synthesis of scientific and lay understandings by supporters of raw milk is an example of praxis, as opposed to the dispraxia represented by the exclusionary, reductionist approach used by authorities. The power wielded by food authorities, with backing from industry, and the way it attempts to dominate discourse as well as legislation, in the case of raw milk, is an example of biopower, as well as dispraxia; of having power over a population rather than empowering people to become critically conscious and make their own informed decisions. It is perhaps for this reason that the raw milk campaign has grown in the last ten years. Its praxis has incorporated the often lead to a more expensive product.
campaign for the rights of individuals to consume raw milk and for farmers to
legally supply it without fear of legal persecution.

The arguments against the consumption of saturated fat represented in the case
study of fat, pushed by governments and organisations such as the Heart
Foundation, are another example of biopower, where citizens are
disempowered through the dominant discourses, which are difficult to
understand and, therefore, to challenge. Freirean praxis is inseparable from
liberatory education, and both the case studies presented in this chapter
provide examples of the types of knowledge employed by the Foundation to
educate people. The praxis of the Weston A. Price Foundation and the
Nourishing Food Movement will be further explored in the following chapter.
Chapter Four: The Praxis of the Weston A. Price Foundation and the Nourishing Food Movement

Nourishing Values

The Weston A. Price Foundation and the Nourishing Food Movement represent a range of food values which often differ from conventional nutritional values. Because the information surrounding these values is vast and complex, this section of the thesis will attempt to communicate the core values in a clear and simple format. The following table was constructed as part of this research to describe the values of the Weston A. Price Foundation and the Nourishing Food Movement in comparison with values based on observations of the dominant food discourse, as evidenced in Western public health information and mainstream media.

Comparison of the Core Food Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dominant values</th>
<th>WAPF values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>Recommended, including those containing regulated levels of pesticide residue</td>
<td>Recommended: Preferably organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated fat</td>
<td>Considered dangerous</td>
<td>Recommended when natural (unprocessed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyunsaturated fat</td>
<td>Recommended, including highly processed oils</td>
<td>Only undamaged oils are recommended. Highly processed oils are considered dangerous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw milk</td>
<td>Considered dangerous</td>
<td>Recommended when organic and pasture raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>Considered dangerous: restricted</td>
<td>Unrefined sea salt is recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermented foods</td>
<td>Possibly dangerous: Highly regulated.</td>
<td>Recommended, considered to aid in healthy digestion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grains</td>
<td>Recommended*: preferably wholemeal</td>
<td>Recommended if soaked or traditionally processed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Wholemeal grains are the preferred choice, as they are more digestible and contain beneficial nutrients.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light, ‘Lite’ or diet foods</th>
<th>Recommended.</th>
<th>Considered dangerous due to hidden processed sugars (in place of fat) and artificial sweeteners.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>Considered dangerous: Restricted, artificial sweeteners sometimes used instead.</td>
<td>Considered dangerous if refined. Unrefined natural sweeteners such as honey and rapadura are preferred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soy</td>
<td>Recommended.</td>
<td>Considered dangerous due to high quantities of phytic acid, recommended only if fermented (eg: miso, tempeh, tamari, natto).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>Moderate intake of lean meats recommended. Does not differentiate between intensively farmed feedlot animals and pastured.</td>
<td>Pasture raised meats recommended, preferably organic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*It must be noted that highly (industrially) processed grains are often recommended in the dominant paradigm but are not recommended by WAPF.

The differences between the two value paradigms are striking. Both values sets are concerned with risks to health and with good health, but in very different ways. However, it is of particular note that the foods considered dangerous by the dominant paradigm are generally highly regulated, and tight control is considered necessary. This is despite the understanding that many of these foods have been consumed for generations and do not correlate to the high rates of modern diseases, as do modern foods. The foods considered dangerous by WAPF are modern and highly processed, while more traditionally prepared foods, reflecting pre-industrial diets, are recommended in accordance with the values of the foundation.

As mentioned in the table above, the Weston A. Price Foundation takes the view that natural saturated fats are not unhealthy, and the scientific explanation of this view can be seen in the case study of fat in chapter three. Butter from grass-fed cows is highly recommended as it contains the fat.
soluble vitamins A and D (Fallon, 2001). Processed oils, on the other hand, are considered dangerous because of the trans-fats created in their processing, which have been shown to cause cancer (Fallon, 2001). *Nourishing Traditions* claims that fermented foods are found in all traditional diets, and recommends regular consumption of foods including yoghurt, lacto-fermented pickles and beverages. The micro-organisms in these foods are said to help to colonise the digestive system (Fallon, 2001). Many traditional societies also used liberal amounts of salt in their food. Unrefined sea salt contains many important minerals, unlike refined table salt, which is usually sodium chloride with added iodine\(^{20}\). As mentioned in the table above, the WAPF recommends soaking grains and fermenting soy in order to make it more digestible. *Nourishing Traditions* explains that seeds including grains, beans and nuts all contain phytic acid, which binds to nutrients, inhibiting their digestion. The soaking and fermenting processes neutralise the phytic acid and allow for better absorption of minerals (Fallon, 2001). For more information on the WAPF values mentioned in the table, see *Nourishing Traditions* or the WAPF website.

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\(^{20}\) Some unrefined salts naturally contain iodine
**Nourishing Praxis**

The WAPF has a strong critical educational focus, which can also be seen as praxian, in alignment with Freire’s concept of liberatory education. They allow and encourage people to voice their own experiences, both on their website and in individually created blogs. The WAPF promotes individual empowerment over the food one consumes and, through criticism of the dominant food paradigm, also promotes the development of critical consciousness. The ideal of freedom from the corporate food industry is central to the WAPF, and in line with Freirean praxis. The WAPF is also involved in political activism. Their website links to many other related websites and blogs, and promotes petitions and other political actions related to their nutritional values and in support of small farms and farmers.

The WAPF has an active Facebook page, which sends out updates on political activism. The Weston A. Price Foundation and The Nourishing Food Movement appear to have revolutionary intentions, in line with the Marxist conceptualisation of praxis, intending to create social change and a better, fairer world in the case of food, nourishment and nutritional information. The process of learning and considering the alternative perspectives offered by WAPF encourages reflection upon previously held knowledge about food, and can lead to further action, both on a personal and political level.

*Nourishing Traditions* (Fallon, 1999), the key publication of the WAPF, can be seen as an example of praxis, incorporating scientific nutritional information with lay understandings and recipes, and encouraging readers to
practise the theory presented in the book in their own lives. The first seventy pages of *Nourishing Traditions* are devoted to nutritional information and debunking conventional nutrition:

Clearly something is very wrong, even though many Americans have been conscientious about following orthodox dietary advice… take exercise seriously, many have stopped smoking, consumption of fresh vegetables has increased, many have reduced their intake of salt, and a good portion of America has cut back on red meats and animal fats. But none of these measures has made a dent in the ever-increasing toll of degenerative disease. We buy foods labelled lowfat, no cholesterol, reduced sodium, thinking they are good for us. Why, then, are we so sick? (Fallon, 1999, p.2)

The ‘Diet Dictocrats’ are described as “doctors, researchers and spokesmen for various government and quasi-government agencies, such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA); the American Medical Association (AMA)…” (Fallon, 1999, p.2). In *Nourishing Traditions*, Fallon (1999) does not contradict everything these experts have to say, agreeing with the recommended reduction in the consumption of sweets, but notes that many people suffer as a result of consumption of diets high in grains, which are recommended by food authorities. She also refutes the reductionist perspective that fats, carbohydrates and protein have equal nutritional value, based on calories, “regardless of how much or how little they are processed” (Fallon, 1999, p.3). In this way, *Nourishing Traditions* highlights the dispraxia of modern food as part of its own alternative praxis:

The experts make no distinction between whole grains and refined, between foods grown organically and those grown with pesticides and commercial fertilizers, between unprocessed dairy products from pasture-fed cows and pasteurised dairy products from confined animals raised on processed feed, between fresh and rancid fats, between traditional fresh fruits and vegetables and those that have been irradiated or genetically altered, between range-fed meats and those from animals raised in crowded pens; between natural and battery-produced eggs; in short, between the traditional foods that nourished
our ancestors and newfangled products now dominating the modern marketplace. (Fallon, 1999, p.3)

_Nourishing Traditions_ (Fallon, 1999) links this ‘politically correct nutrition’ with exploitation by the food industry, claiming that research is co-opted in favour of big business, and that many members of powerful organisations such as the FDA have previously worked for the industry which the organisations are supposed to regulate. _Nourishing Traditions_ includes a section about fat, citing studies that contradict the diet-heart hypothesis. It recommends consumption of natural fats and oils that are undamaged, including saturated fats, which are more stable and therefore less prone to oxidisation.

_Nourishing Traditions_ also recommends, and contains recipes for, traditional fermented and cultured foods such as sauerkraut, kimchee, butter milk, yoghurt, kefir, kombucha and many others. The natural micro-organisms and lactic acid in these foods is known to aid digestion and, thereby, promote good health. Very little processed flour or refined sugar is included in the recipes of _Nourishing Traditions_, even in the sections on desserts, which call for maple syrup, unrefined cane sugar, honey and other natural sweeteners. Spelt and kamut flour is preferred over wheat, and is often soaked before use, as are other grains, seeds and legumes. The reason given for this process is that phytic acid, which occurs naturally in seeds, binds to minerals including iron, copper, calcium, magnesium and zinc, stopping their absorption and, along with enzyme inhibitors, can interfere with effective digestion. Although scientific research has brought this understanding to light, _Nourishing Traditions_ also links this new knowledge to ancestral wisdom: “Traditional
societies usually soak or ferment their grains before eating them, processes that neutralise phytates and enzyme inhibitors and, in effect, predigest grains so that all their nutrients are more available” (Fallon, 1999, p.25). Traditional wisdom is then linked back to the modern kitchen: “Sprouting, overnight soaking, and old fashioned sour leavening can accomplish this important predigestion process in our own kitchens” (Fallon, 1999, p.25). This combination of traditional wisdom with science and personal practice is an example of praxis in line with the Hegelian concepts drawn on by Marx.

Many other books have been written and published which are consistent with the values of the Weston A. Price Foundation. A Change of Heart, by Kay Baxter and Bon Corker (2009), is a New Zealand-based example of this. It includes recipes and instructions for making cheese and lists recipes in accordance with the seasons in which ingredients are easily obtained. Sally Fallon reviewed this book on the WAPF website:

Kwis (and non-Kwis) will enjoy the recipes for boiled kahawai fish heads, kumara hash browns, mussel chowder, puha greens with butter or mutton bird fat, corn and kamokamo bake, karengo (seaweed) kahawai steaks, smoked kahawai roe salad, whitebait fritters, mutton bird with karengo, and paua (abalone) fritters. British favorites are also well represented with roast hogget (year-old lamb), beef in stout, brawn (pig head cheese), Kiwi boil up, steak and kidney pie, venison stew and pickled pork. There are lots of wonderful fruit crumbles and ice creams too. All fats used are good fats like butter, lard and tallow. A final treat is the section on meat and fish preservation, including bottled kahawai, home cured bacon, salami, corned beef, biltong, smoked fish and dried shark fins and stingray wings. Change of Heart is a great addition to our ongoing reconnection with traditional foodways. (Weston A. Price Foundation, 2010)

The flexibility of the nourishing food discourse allows it to be adapted and promoted by various groups and individuals in a praxian way, with the WAPF
not hoarding the information, but encouraging its distribution and re-conceptualisation.

**Nourishing the Internet**

While *Nourishing Traditions* can promote praxis, its static form as a printed book is not ideal for the dynamic reflection and change important for praxis. The reflexivity offered by the internet provides a unique medium through which to enact praxis. As mentioned above, the WAPF is active on the internet, and many independent websites and blogs promote Nourishing Food Movement values. This will be explored in more depth in the section looking at Nourishing food blogs.

**The Weston A. Price Foundation as a Social Movement**

The official membership of the Weston A. Price Foundation stands at over 9,000, with around 200 new members every month (Weston A. Price Foundation, 2010). However, from my observations of blogs and involvement with the local chapter, it is evident that many more people are knowledgeable of the principles of the Foundation and are interested in implementing them. It is difficult to estimate the number of people who could be considered unofficial members of the Foundation, or non-Foundation members of the Nourishing Food Movement. For this reason, I contacted the publishers of *Nourishing Traditions* who informed me that over 350,000 copies have been sold. However, this is not necessarily an accurate representation of the size of the Nourishing Food Movement, as some people may have purchased the book without practising its principles, and other people may not own their own copy
– a family may share a copy, people may have borrowed it from the library or may source all of their information online, and many may be yet to purchase it.

The Weston A. Price Foundation can be considered a social movement insofar as that it represents collective action aimed at generating social change (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000). The Foundation has been very effective in its campaigns to educate and disseminate literature. This effectiveness can be seen in the Foundation's chapters in many countries, all over the world. The official dissemination of information comes largely from international sales of *Nourishing Traditions*, and also from the Foundation’s website. Unofficial dissemination comes from local chapters and the workshops they provide, and particularly from nourishing food blogs, some of which will be explored in the next chapter. The Weston A. Price Foundation and the Nourishing Food Movement can be viewed as promoters of global expression of dissent. The intentions of this movement are to change the world; to move away from industrialised food and towards nourishing, traditional, whole foods. Although the focus of the Foundation is particularly on food, it can also be seen as an anti-corporate movement, critical of large industry and corporate-political control.

**New Social Movement?**

The Nourishing Food Movement has a specific focus, as new social movements are said to have (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000), on food and

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21 In a local WAPF chapter meeting I attended few members owned Nourishing Traditions but
nutrition. This movement also focuses on autonomy in relation to food, both
in the case of seeing good nutrition as a human right and in encouraging
individual food empowerment (Steinmetz, 1994). Like many NSMs, the
Nourishing Food Movement is less oriented towards social-utopian projects or
metanarratives of progress than previous social movements, and it is not
necessarily limited to class categories or other, more solid identity boundaries,
although it does tend to be a middle class movement due to lifestyle factors.
This will be explored in the last chapter, in relation to gender, class and
blogging. NSMs prefer decentralised organisational forms. Although the
Foundation in itself is structured, and has a form of centralised hierarchy,
including a president, the wider Nourishing Food Movement, which has grown
due to the Foundation’s dissemination of information, is decentralised.
Individuals and groups, who have set up their own blogs and organisations in
line with the nutritional and political principles of the WAPF, are not receiving
orders, and are not under the direct control of the Foundation. In this way, the
Nourishing Food Movement can be seen as the wider social movement
sparked by the WAPF, consisting of varied informal groupings of individuals
and organisations with shared political and social aims: resisting corporate
industrialised modern food, and promoting traditional nourishing food. The
Nourishing Food Movement, like many NSMs, relies on part-time
membership and informal networks. It works mainly outside of the
parliamentary political system, but attempts to lobby it on food related issues
(Steinmetz, 1994). Like other NSMs, the Nourishing Food Movement
politicises formerly apolitical aspects of everyday life, notably food

all were interested in or currently implementing its advice.
(Steinmetz, 1994). Different NSMs can be brought together or unified through a common cause, such as a shared opposition to a system – for example, capitalism (Steinmetz, 1994). This could be possible of the Nourishing Food Movement, and can be seen in the cross-over of political interests represented on blogs.

The use of the internet in the Nourishing Food Movement is particularly important as a tool in communication, networking, education, organisation and self-promotion, as is the case for many recent social movements (Hsu, 2003, Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2002). As Hsu (2003) claims, the self-reflexivity provided by the internet transcends the boundaries of the social movement and blurs the lines between the public and private spheres. This is particularly true in the world of nourishing food blogs, which will be explored in the next chapter. The Weston A. Price Foundation and the wider Nourishing Food Movement perform the role Salter (2003) describes: to perceive problems and highlight them in the public arena, generating and publishing information independently of the needs of government and industry. This can be seen in their political activism. The fast-changing, interactive medium of the internet works particularly well for the Nourishing Food Movement, as with other NSMs. The internet not only has a similar culture to social movements, in that both are dynamic and relatively decentralised, but also provides an effective medium for facilitating online political activity which crosses over to offline activity. The WAPF website, as well as other similar websites, and the plethora of related food blogs, are evidence of this. WAPF-inspired nourishing blogs may be included in the group of subversive weblogs, promoting
information that contradicts the dominant paradigm. This is evidence of what Kahn and Kellner (2004) describe as the use of the internet as a democratic and emancipatory political vehicle.

According to Goodwin and Jasper (2003), “the most frequently asked question about social movements is why they emerge when they do” (p. 11). The emergence of the WAPF has obvious links with the state of modern food, as discussed in chapter two. It is a direct response to “the diet dictocrats and politically correct nutrition” (Fallon, 2000, cover). The membership of the Weston A. Price Foundation is another aspect which can be explored. Goodwin and Jasper (2003) note that many environmentalists work in the non-productive service sector, including doctors, social workers and teachers. They postulate that this middle class sector is on the periphery of Western society, and that their social alienation from decision making may encourage them to become involved to strengthen their political role. The people involved in promoting the values of the Weston A. Price Foundation, who appear, from observations of related blogs, to be primarily women, usually mothers, and often not in full-time paid employment, may be similarly marginalised and motivated by this marginalisation. Goodwin and Jasper (2003) also mention that the best prediction factor of who is likely to join a social movement is whether people know other people already involved. The accessibility of internet networking can mean that ‘knowing’ a person may transcend the boundaries of physical space. Online social networking may encourage the growth of the movement. Nourishing food blogs will be explored in more depth in the following section.
Critiques of the WAPF

A google search of “Weston A. Price Foundation” revealed a large number of websites, including a Wikipedia entry which, on the one hand, reflects very similar information to the Foundation's own website (“Weston A. Price Foundation22”, 2010). On the other hand, it also mentions that the Foundation has received criticism: “The anti-vegetarian and anti-soy views of the foundation have also attracted counter-views by some in the vegetarian and vegan communities” (“Weston A. Price Foundation”, 2010). These critiques are largely ad hominem and straw-man arguments. For example, Gerald Pugliese claims that the Weston A. Price Foundation 'diet' limits fruit and vegetable intake in favour of animal products. Even a quick glance at *Nourishing Traditions*, with its many recipes calling for a wide variety of fruits and vegetables and a section devoted entirely to vegetables, disqualifies his claim.

In researching the wider topic, I stumbled upon a review on amazon.com of *Nourishing Traditions*, which covered the main criticisms I had also encountered on various blogs (Steinlage, 2008) (see appendix I). This review goes through main criticisms one by one, and expresses counter-arguments to each. I chose to include this review in the appendix because it appears to express similar sentiments to those I would write myself. In the absence of any literature on the topic, I have chosen to use this form of lay publication, which follows similar lines to the blogs which are explored later in this thesis.

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22 The reference is in quote marks because it is a Wikipedia reference
Steinlage (2008) first disputes that the WAPF way of eating is dangerous, by disputing the diet-heart hypothesis using information from NT (Nourishing Traditions) and goes on to dispute the idea that WAPF are anti-vegetarian, clarifying that they consider veganism dangerous, but not vegetarianism which includes specific, non-meat, animal products such as good quality eggs and dairy.

One claim I have encountered on various vegan blogs is that meat eating is bad for the environment, as the resources required to feed animals far outweigh the value of vegetable-growing resources. This argument is also made by Singer and Mason (2006), although this book goes on to explore the difference between intensive farming where cows are fed corn, which has to be grown for this purpose, to more sustainable farming practices in which cows eat grass, which they are more adapted to eat. The argument is much weaker from this perspective. A blog post by Cheeselsave (Annmarie, 2008) demonstrates that eating processed vegan food can be equally problematic. She refutes the idea that the labels ‘vegetarian’ or ‘vegan’ are necessarily equivalent to ‘environmentally friendly’ by taking a closer look at the ingredients lists and processes involved in manufacturing some highly processed alternatives to meat. A repeated criticism I have encountered, also on vegan blogs, claims that the WAPF is sponsored by ‘the meat industry’. This phrase is generally used to refer to large scale intensive farming of animals. In contrast to this, the Weston A. Price Foundation accepts small donations from small businesses, which function in accordance with their principles, by invitation (Weston A. Price Foundation, 2010).
A Brunch of Blogs

Blog Buffet

This section utilises critical and interpretivist research perspectives and qualitative analysis to examine weblogs (blogs) relating to the Weston A. Price Foundation and the Nourishing Food Movement. Using blogs for qualitative data collection will give a personal context and depth to the research. I will begin by discussing blogs and blog research, and providing an overview of nourishing food blogs. Four blog posts will be used as case studies to highlight both personal and political aspects of this form of blogging. A selection of recipes from nourishing food blogs will be examined in relation to praxis, in comparison (juxtaposed) with similar recipes coming from the dominant food paradigm, in this case, Food-in-a-Minute, a short New Zealand television cooking demonstration which screens just before the evening news on Channel 1. The data available for this kind of research is so vast and easily accessible that the process of sifting through it can be quite overwhelming. It is the intention of this thesis to provide examples and commentary, rather than a complete, comprehensive, definitive study. The latter would be impossible to accomplish of a constantly changing, evolving movement with regularly updated blogs such as this.

Type “weblog” into the google search engine and the first listing is “blog” from Wikipedia. Not only is this an example of the new language used in regards to the internet, it is also an example of the ease at which one can tap into information. Wikipedia describes a blog as follows:
A **blog** (a contraction of the term "**web log**") is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog (“Blog”, 2010).

Blogs can be described as democratising, because anyone with internet access can start one with a free blog provider and voice their opinions. Few academic books about internet research which I have come across include ‘blogs’ in the index. This is possibly because blogs are relatively new, gaining popularity in recent years. Wood and Smith (2005) describe blogs as follows:

> From the mundane to the idiosyncratic, blogs are journal-like Web sites, where authors may, for instance, record their day-to-day experiences, publish new poetry, or post links to sites of interest they have found online. For example, while news organisations were boasting of “embedded” reporters during the Iraqi war, a number of bona fide military were blogging the events from an even more immediate first hand account of the events. (p. 53)

The same authors also mention the political influence blogs can have, citing a Baghdad blogger who challenged the Bush administration’s perspective that US presence in Iraq was welcomed, claiming that instead of parading in the streets, people were in their homes hoping not to be bombed. In the theory section of this thesis looking at new social movements, blogging and the internet were discussed as vehicles for political dissent.

> The weblog varies in shapes and sizes since its birth and it distinguishes itself as dynamic interaction, active collaboration and sharing. There are various types of blogs, and each differs in the way its content is written and delivered.” (Xu & Farkas, 2008, p.1)

There are many ways of researching blogs, ranging from particularly quantitative approaches, which might categorize large numbers of blogs, to
qualitative approaches which focus on the meanings reflected in blog posts. Berendt and Navigli (2006) claim that ‘syntax based’ approaches exist, which analyse text and network structure, but that these are insufficient for understanding the use of different wording or relationships between discourse and larger topics. They propose using semantics-enhanced analysis, which allows integration of background knowledge as well as domain specific information. Penderson (2007) used surveys to compare the experiences of UK and US bloggers. This illustrates that there are many possible avenues of blog research. As stated earlier, this thesis is taking a qualitative approach, selecting particular posts, recipes and focuses of blog posts in order to explore the meanings therein.

Although significant research has been carried out on weblogs, much of it appears to utilise a more structured methodology. I have come across very little that focuses specifically on food blogs. The research most similar to my focus which I have come across was recently presented at a conference by Isabelle de Solier (2010), who mentions in her paper that she is not aware of any academically published research on food blogs to date. De Solier (2010) examines the language used in selective blogs and the way identity is constructed through blogging. She claims the medium of blogging is particularly accessible (to people who have internet access). In the case of food blogs, this allows people outside of the food industry to participate and informally publish alongside it:

Blogs are a fundamentally more democratic form of media from the point of view of production, as anyone with internet access, and a certain level of IT skills, can produce a food blog on one of the free blogger websites… In particular, it opens up the field to individuals
who do not work in the food culture industries, so that alongside the blogs of chefs, restaurant owners, and journalists we find food blogs produced by university students, accountants, lawyers and housewives. (De Solier, 2010, p.2)

De Solier (2010) has observed significantly higher numbers of women with food blogs in comparison to men. De Solier’s research focuses on Australian food blogs, of which she has identified 70, run by people in the age range of 20-50, with many between 20 and 30 and a high proportion of Asian descent.

De Solier (2010) identifies the self imposed ‘foodie’ label as a type of alimentary identity, which she calls a ‘gustatory identity,’ “in which taste – in both its sensual and its aesthetic connotations – is of utmost significance” (p.3). This could be an example of a lay construction of food and food identity which differs vastly from the nutritionist perspective of food, because sensual and aesthetic values cannot be easily quantified. De Solier claims that this identity is established on the basis of particular culinary wisdom, and that the food blog provides a space for this kind of cultural capital to be displayed. Expertise can be admired or drawn upon by commenting on a blog post, and this kind of interaction can also form closer social connections between fellow bloggers and blog readers than would be possible between professional food authors and their readership (De Solier, 2010). In this way, food bloggers can be seen as a new form of culinary expert, despite often not being professionals. Furthermore, the popularity of some blogs and the expertise they display can lead to wider recognition such as interviews for magazines or even offers of publishing deals (De Solier, 2010). De Solier claims that “As producers of media, foodie bloggers gain a significant degree of cultural power to influence the taste cultures and culinary practices of other foodies and blog readers” (p.
6). This point is of particular relevance to the blogs studied in this thesis, as they tend to promote messages beyond the enjoyment of food, which relate to politics and health. Having some power, in promoting these messages, even if it is just to a small number of readers, and the ability to publish in the accessible public domain of the internet, is pivotal to this form of food blog.

In my research, as well as in my own online adventures, I have come across many kinds of food blogs - among them, diet blogs encouraging a particular kind of diet plan, health-focused blogs with various interpretations of ‘healthy’, experimental food blogs which document personal culinary adventures, sustainable food blogs which focus on the ethics of sustainability with regards to food, blogs linked to particular shops, restaurants, food writers, cook books or organisations, special interest or subculture based food blogs, informatively or historically focused blogs, blogs centred around ethnic or cultural food, and decadent blogs with artfully taken pictures and recipes high in sugar and chocolate and cream - these have been referred to as gastro-porn (De Solier, 2010). There are often also blogs which overlap between these themes, or incorporate some of the other, non-edible, interests of the blogger.
Nourishing Food Blogs

I chose to use the term ‘nourishing’ in referring to these blogs because of its reference to the *Nourishing Traditions* cook book. All the blogs I would class as ‘nourishing food blogs’ are associated with and link to the Weston A. Price Foundation. Some of the blogs also have nourishing in the title. Most of the blogs I will explore combine the following four components in varying ratios: recipes, tips and resources, politics, and health information. The recipes are usually in line with *Nourishing Traditions*, are sometimes adapted from the book or from less nourishing recipes, but are often created or heavily influenced by the creativity of the blogger. This is an example of praxis, which will be explored in more depth later in this section.

A vast array of food blogs pepper the internet, yet finding them can be difficult. Search engines (such as Google) favour sites which are well linked-to, and unless a blog is part of a web of links it can be nearly impossible to find. In my search for nourishing food blogs, the term ‘nourishing’, used as a key word, was invaluable as it led me straight to a large community of them. Once I found one blog I used the comments section at the bottom of posts to find others. One of the first nourishing blogs I became acquainted with was The Nourishing Gourmet (TNG) (Harris, 2008\(^{23}\)), with its beautiful, mouth-watering pictures and inspiring recipes. TNG is a great example of a nourishing blog with many recipes, comments, and handy tips for shopping and pantry management, as well as resources and information on nutrition, health and safe food, and occasionally more personal posts. Like many US-

\(^{23}\) This reference uses the date of the first blog post
based nourishing blogs I have come across, it also has strong religious
(Christian) overtones in some of the posts. TNG also runs carnivals – a blog
term for a process by which other bloggers link their related posts so that the
links all appear on one page – called the Pennywise Platter. Not only does this
provide access to a range of affordable, nourishing recipes, it is also a great
way to find other, similar blogs.

Kelly the Kitchen Kop (Kelly24, 2007) is a blog I came across through the
Pennywise Platter. This blog is mostly information-based, including some
recipes but focusing more on health, what traditional food is and how to
prepare it, and the safety of cooking equipment. Kelly the Kitchen Kop hosts
a carnival called Real Food Wednesday – another good source of nourishing
recipes and blogs. Some of her posts include ‘menu plans’, which
demonstrate the meals planned throughout the day without necessarily giving
recipes, for example: breakfast: scrambled eggs with butter on sourdough toast. This blog also has some religiously themed posts. On the side of the
blog is an extensive list of all the themes of blog posts, including:

- Abstinence & Purity (1)
- acne (1)
- adapting recipes (1)
- ADD (2)
- allergies (2)
- Alzheimer's Disease (2)
- artificial colorings-Feingold Assoc. (4)
- Ask Away (1)
- asthma (1)
- Autism (3)
- baby basics/natural parenting (2)
- Back to School (1)
The Nourished Kitchen (Jenny, 2007) is another blog I came across in the aforementioned carnivals. It is an example of a nourishing food blog with (seemingly) no religious overtones, unlike many US-based blogs. It does, however, have many delicious-looking recipes, including one for olive oil ice cream with blood oranges. It also includes an online discussion forum, and a cultures and starters exchange. Although this blog is focuses mostly on recipes, it does have some information-based posts. Food Renegade (KristenM, 2008) is also among the community of US nourishing blogs. It has a more political focus, featuring posts on court rulings related to nourishing foods and farmers producing them. Food Renegade also hosts the Fight Back Fridays carnival, incorporating blog posts which promote the nourishing movement in all four components mentioned earlier. Some of these US based blogs are members of Real Food Media (Real Food Media, 2008), a network associated with the Weston A Price Foundation promoting nourishing food.

The New Zealand based nourishing blogs were much harder to find. I recalled across which I had happened a few years ago when searching for a sourdough starter, but could not remember its name. I tried various key-word combinations in my search, and eventually re-discovered Star-Cooked (Knox, 2008), a blog devoted to solar cooking, food foraging and traditional food. This blog tends to be political as well, containing posts on global change, food security and climate change. Through Star-Cooked, I found another related NZ based blog, Farmlet (Flaherty & Flaherty, 2006). This blog is managed by a well-educated couple, who decided to buy some land up north and live a

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24 In the case where no full name of a blogger can be found a pseudonym is used in
simple, sustainable life, complete with gardening, small scale agriculture and traditional food. The New Zealand nourishing blogs that I have encountered tend to have more of a left-wing political leaning, and focus on sustainability much more than the US blogs, which appear to be more conservative.

Not all blogs in line with the Weston A. Price Foundation include recipes. Some have a strong scientific focus, such as The Daily Lipid blog written by Chris Masterjohn (2008), who is currently pursuing a PhD in Biochemical and Molecular Nutrition at the University of Connecticut. This blog is featured on the Weston A. Price Foundation’s website, focuses mainly on fat, supporting the same views on fat as the Foundation, and is referenced in the fat case-study in chapter three. Masterjohn’s blog is located on his website, Cholesterol and Health, which also contains articles he has written about fat and cholesterol.

I would have liked to include Maori food blogs as an example of traditional food praxis. However, I have been unable to find any. It is possible that blogs are more individualistic, which does not appeal as much to Maori, who are known to have a strong emphasis on whanau25 and community (Ritchie, 1992). It may also be the case that belonging to a close knit community or whanau means there is less individual need to seek out online communities.

I have had difficulty finding nourishing blogs in countries other than New Zealand and the US. I did, however, find a UK blog, Real Food Lover (Winkler, 2008), which has many themes in common with nourishing blogs,
although it’s not openly associated with the Weston A. Price Foundation. This blog is written by a journalist and communications specialist turned food writer, and includes posts on farmers’ markets, organic food and a recipe for spelt loaf, although the latter is neither sourdough nor soaked as it probably would be in a nourishing blog. This blog also links to some of the nourishing food blogs mentioned earlier. Other non-WAPF blogs which have similar nourishing principles include blogs associated with the slow food movement. The Slow Cook (Bruske, 2007) is an example of this. It includes posts on smoking a whole brisket, farmers’ markets, disagreement with US dietary guidelines, and vegetable gardening.

Carnivals

Some of the larger nourishing blogs have ‘carnivals’, where they invite other bloggers to contribute recipes and list the links to the recipes in one place. The Nourishing Gourmet has Pennywise Platter Thursdays and Kelly the Kitchen Kop hosts Real Food Wednesdays. There are sometimes occasion-based carnivals, such as the Christmas gift-making carnival hosted by the Nourishing Gourmet. This is a very effective networking and dissemination tool, as it allows people to access a large number of recipes and also explore and become acquainted with other nourishing blogs. This is also how I selected blogs and recipes for my research.

My Blog: The Nourishing Revolution

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25 Family and extended family
As part of this research, I was advised to start a blog to be written simultaneously with my blog research. This could be seen as a type of participant observation (Bryman, 2004), as I have the potential to be an active agent in the communities which I am exploring. This could be considered a form of research as praxis in the action-reflection-action involved in blogging. My blog discusses the research for this thesis. It also includes my own reflections and recipes. I have found the process of blogging to be slightly narcissistic, in that I feel as if I am always writing about myself, my research and my blog. However, it has also been a great tool for introspection, gaining clarity and collecting fascinating data.

One of the most interesting things about the process of writing this blog was receiving comments from other food bloggers with similar interests, and becoming part of a network of New Zealand food bloggers. A quick look at the statistics of my blog provides some general information about visitors. As of the 5th of November, my blog has received 1420 visits. Most of this traffic was directed from Google, which prompted over 300 visits, Facebook, at 118 visits, and links made by other New Zealand food bloggers, particularly Star-Cooked (Knox, 2008) which referred 42 visits. Most visits to my blog were from New Zealand based computers (540), and many visits were also from the United States (273) and the United Kingdom (135). I am surprised that the post that received the most views was one entitled ‘why am I here’ (116 views), which is essentially the same as the preface to this thesis. I am quite intrigued by the fact that so much traffic has gone through my blog, although it is impossible to tell how many people have actually read content. As outlined
in chapter one, over the course of this research my blog shifted from being a supportive device to providing unique and interesting discussions. The material from this now forms a key part of the findings of this thesis, which will be explored in the section on gender.
The Personal Meets the Political: Qualitative Blog Bites

In selectively reviewing nourishing blogs, I have discovered an enormous wealth of qualitative data. These blogs come in many layers - underneath the focuses of cooking and nutrition, the personal stories of the bloggers emerge, sharing the embodied experiences of their day-to-day lives to varying degrees.

I have chosen blog posts that illustrate a variety of different topics and themes. I have also included a selection of comments about each post to demonstrate the interactive, community aspects of blogging. I have kept blog posts unadulterated so that small aspects of the stories of the bloggers can come though. Blogging, in this case, represents a living, growing, evolving social movement, connected by a virtual community.

This is the earliest post I could find from the Cheeseslave blog (Ann Marie, 2007). It talks about the homemade infant formula which I used to make.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goodbye cradle cap?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cheeseslave » 01 November 2007 » In Uncategorized »</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I'm excited to announce that I have gotten Sweet Pea off the commercial formula totally. I'm still breastfeeding — but I had been feeding her the Enfamil formula. I just could not produce enough breast milk each day so I was supplementing.

I just didn't have a good feeling about commercial formula. How can I trust the same companies who are producing products laden with high fructose corn syrup and hydrogenated oils to create a decent infant formula? The truth is, you can't. Based on my research, none of them are really any good.

Which explains why Kate got cradle cap after we started using commercial formula. I couldn't say for sure that it came from the Enfamil — until we stopped using it and started supplementing with homemade raw milk formula (from the recipe on the Weston A. Price Foundation website — http://www.westonaprice.org/children/recipes.html).

It's been about a week and a half now that she has been on breast milk and homemade formula — with NO commercial formula — and guess what? Yep, you guessed it, the cradle cap is GONE. So is her excess mucus — which she is also had since she started on the Enfamil three months ago.

We were putting natural aloe on it (from a plant I have in the kitchen), and we put dandruff shampoo on a few times like the doctor said to do. But it really cleared up within a week or so after I stopped giving her the Enfamil. I am convinced that that was what did it. She never had cradle cap before the Enfamil — and once we eliminated it, the cradle cap disappeared.
And I'm eating a lot better now, so I can make my breast milk better. I'm eating almost NO processed foods and no unhealthy oils (vegetable, soy, canola, etc.). I'm eating lots of grass fed organic beef and chicken and turkey, organic pastured eggs, raw milk, cheese and butter, organic fruit smoothies with colostrum kefir, whole grain crackers and cereal (oatmeal and kashi), whole grain sprouted bread, spring water, kombucha, and lots and lots of organic fruits and vegetables. I'm eating 1-2 salads a day now! With organic cider vinegar, high quality organic olive oil, and natural sea salt.

I still have a couple of cups of coffee in the morning but it is organic and I'm using spring water instead of tap — and I'm doctoring it with stevia and raw milk. I have a glass or two of (usually organic) wine in the evening. I think all of that is fine.

Oh and I'm taking 2 teaspoons of cod liver oil daily and 4 organic liver tablets. Plus I am cooking with organic coconut oil and raw butter.

Here's what's weird — now that I am eating this way, I really don't get cravings. I mean, not at all. Don't crave alcohol or sugar or carbs. And I have a lot more energy. I'm feeling so much happier, too. It's like something happened and my serotonin got boosted.

Anyway. I'm happy that doing this is making my breast milk that much better and helping Kate build strong bones and all of that. I'm starting her on semi-cooked egg yolks and next week I'll be adding organic homemade chicken liver pate, and the week after that grated raw liver (frozen for two weeks to destroy any pathogens). Also going to start giving her mashed bananas, avocado, melon, and cooked apple. One at a time, like they say, just to be safe. She LOVED the watermelon I let her taste the other day.

I'm going to bed now.

The following is a list of important aspects of this post in relation to the themes of this thesis.

Key aspects of this post:

1. Distrust of commercial formula – linked to cradle cap. This example reflects many of the views nourishing bloggers express about the food industry and commercial, industrially processed food. The way this affects a baby can be motivation enough to seek out alternatives.

2. Distrust of companies who also create high fructose corn syrup and hydrogenated oils. Mentioning these issues may inform the reader of problems the blogger has with food corporations. This post does not link directly to allow readers to access more information about these issues, but it may encourage them to research further on their own.

3. Weston A. Price Foundation formula linked to disappearance of cradle cap: this is a form of testimonial for the recipe and for the foundation,
similar to the pictures of healthy home-made formula babies shown on the WAPF website.

4. Change in personal diet: positive reflection on the effects of the WAPF diet. This also works as a testimonial, indirectly encouraging readers to find out more in order to make similar changes in their life.

5. WAPF principles are expressed both in her description of her own diet and in the formula recipe, and in the last paragraph about what the blogger is feeding her baby. She is following the instructions in *Nourishing Traditions*. She doesn’t directly state this, although she links to the WAPF website earlier in the post, which may provide a lead for readers to follow to find out more.

6. Parenting: the importance of parenting is not explicitly stated in this post but it is underlying. Cheeseslave went to the trouble of researching and prepare formula for her daughter, Kate, after being troubled by the cradle cap.

7. This blog post did not have any comments.

From Star-cooked (Knox, 2008a):

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2008
Fermenting juice with milk kefir (Cheat's Apple Cider)
Hooray! I've just heard that Rebecca has some water kefir ready to send us - so soon I'll be able to ferment all sorts of different sweet drinks (assuming I can keep the kefir grains alive this time.)

In the mean time, my son and I have been fermenting apple juice using milk kefir. The apple juice is from our CSA and is very sweet and concentrated so it lends itself well to fermenting with kefir I think.

Opinion's divided over whether milk kefir grains can or should be used to ferment anything except dairy products. In *Wild Fermentation*, Sandor Katz writes that you can use them to ferment almost anything you like, as long as you give them some time to recuperate in dairy straight afterwards - so we thought we'd give that a go.

We've developed a system where we use half our grains to ferment apple juice, while the other half
ferment milk or cream. Then we do another dairy ferment with all of the grains in together, then divide them in half again and go back to the beginning of the cycle.

I think that means that, taken over time, each milk kefir grain is spending roughly a third of its time in apple juice and the rest in dairy. (Any mathematically minded person able to confirm that?)

Here's some apple juice we fermented - with the grains still floating in it.

We call it our Cheat's Apple Cider. Apparently milk kefir can be very slightly alcoholic, so I suspect this apple juice is too, but only a little. When you take the first gulp, you get that warm feeling flowing through your veins ... but none of us have ever managed to get tipsy from it!

POSTED BY JOHANNA KNOX AT 8:16 AM 1 COMMENTS
LABELS: FERMENTING FOOD, LOW-TECH, SWAPPING AND SHARING

1 comments:
Anonymous said...
I have been fermenting apple cider with milk kefir grains for a few months now. I let it ferment so almost all the sweetness is gone and it has a nice head of foam when you pour it. If I drink a large glass of it, I do feel it. If I drink three, I'm very tipsy. However, it is a different sensation than I get if I were to drink beer or wine. I wonder if the alcohol created is the same, or if it has a slightly different chemical structure. BTW, I've also done grape, orange, and cranberry. They all work well, but my kefir grains are all purple now.

Key aspects of this post:

1. Fermenting food: Johanna mentions milk kefir and water kefir in this post; two cultures (colonies of yeast and bacteria) that help to ferment, in this case, apple juice. This is promoted by Nourishing Traditions and is an important value of the Weston A. Price Foundation. Fermentation breaks down some of the sugar in foods and eating fermented foods encouraging
microflora grown in the digestive system – this is not mentioned directly in the post.

2. Sharing cultures: Culture like kefir grow when looked after and are shared – in this case between bloggers. Johanna mentions Rebecca (of Farmlet) has water kefir ready to send to her. This is a combination of online communication and real-life sharing.

3. Linking to other blog: When Johanna mentions Rebecca she links to her blog, allowing readers to learn more and potentially increasing the traffic to Rebecca’s blog. It may be a courtesy or sign of respect to link to other blogs in this way.

4. Linking to other websites: Johanna links to her CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) [The URL does not appear to be working anymore], a collective of farmers and organisers who supply boxes of produce to the (usually suburban) people who invest in their group. This provides background information without the blogger needing to go into detail and informs the reader about other interests she has in local food (etc). Johanna’s link to ‘wild fermentation’ has a similar function and allows the reader to follow up and find out more about something the blogger has read.

5. Labels (fermenting, low tech, swapping and sharing): Labels help to categorize blog posts – not all blogs use this system – it allows readers to easily access all posts with similar themes. This is particularly helpful in blogs with varied interests like Johanna’s which focuses on solar cooking, sustainability and environmental issues as well as WAPF related topics.
The following post is from the Nourishing Days blog (Shannon, 2010), it was originally published in April 2009 and was re-published in July 2010 on the same blog.

Live Responsibly, Live Sustainably: Homestead

By Shannon on July 22, 2010

{from our garden: lettuce, potatoes, beets, onions, cilantro}

NOTE: Gardening and preserving is keeping me pretty busy these days. A few articles that bear repeating will fill in the gaps on the days when the to-do list is too long. This post was originally published in April 2009.

Throw out the word homesteading in a crowd and you will get very different reactions. Some look at you like you’re crazy – picturing the pioneers crossing the prairie in search of land, only a covered wagon as your shelter. Others (myself included) perk up at the thought of a sustainable, self-sufficient lifestyle. The good life. The simple life. Call it what you will. We are entering a time when sustainable and self-sufficient living may not be just another option – suitable for some and not others. Soon it will be the only option, lived out of necessity, not just desire. Going green is quite chic these days. Buy organic, reuse grocery bags, change your light bulbs, cook from scratch, don’t buy plastic water bottles. All good ideas – but they don’t address a deeper need for change. These are all answers to the question "What if you changed your habits?" Difficult habits to break, indeed, but perhaps we should pose a different question: "What if you changed your life?"
In order to change the way we live, we must first change the way we think. The truth is that the life we have been living is not sustainable. The way that we grow our food, transport ourselves and all of the goods that we rely on to survive cannot be sustained.

Our way of life almost entirely depends on finite resources that will soon be so depleted as to cause world wars.

That is unless we do something about it. **What if the American dream involved massive gardens, chickens in the backyard, clotheslines and piles of compost?** What if we replaced our expensive homes with modest ones, (saved for, not mortgaged), surrounded by a little bit of acreage? What if we tore up our pretty lawns and turned them into sweet June strawberries and juicy August tomatoes? What if we traded our eggs for our neighbor’s milk, bypassing battery farms and rBGH? What if we could share our bounty with those in need, instead of placing jars of hydrogenated peanut butter into the food bank?

Through homesteading we have an opportunity to do all of the above plus learn truly useful skills that go untaught in universities. We can know exactly where our food comes from because our sweet little toddler’s hands are the ones picking the cucumbers. By not supporting them we can vote against big-agribusiness, plastic corporations, pharmaceutical companies, and a government that is heavily lobbied by all of the above.

**We can set aside the old American dream of working for 35 years and then retiring, consuming mass quantities of unsustainable goods along the way.** We can teach our children that every day processes of sustaining life through food, water, cleanliness and shelter are to be learned from, not dreaded. We can empower one another to rely on God and each other, not big businesses that simply see us as dollar signs. We can stop destroying our resources and start showing our children how to steward them.

**It is called homesteading and I believe it is the only responsible way to live.**

34 responses to “Live Responsibly, Live Sustainably: Homestead”

1. Kimi @ The Nourishing Gourmet
   April 20, 2009 at 11:14 am | Permalink
   Lovely post! And inspiring too.

2. Sarah
   April 20, 2009 at 3:26 pm | Permalink
   Actually, ummm, that is my American dream! All I want is a little bungalow or farmhouse or cottage with a few acres, a lovely garden and some chickens. A big plus if I have a basement/cold cellar area and a place to put a clothes line.
   I’m looking forward to reading this series!
   Best,
   Sarah
3. kirwin
April 21, 2009 at 7:59 am | Permalink
That, actually, sounds very, very cool. What a concept!… Smaller houses, bigger yards. Hopefully, we [as a nation] will move in this direction by choice before it becomes out of necessity.

4. jill
April 21, 2009 at 10:39 pm | Permalink
You are very persuasive. I’ve only got like 2 drops of “crunchiness” in my whole pop-tart loving body… but this post is so beautifully written. You make me want to ponder living a better way.

5. Nic
April 22, 2009 at 7:05 am | Permalink
I’m from the Netherlands and it’s surprising to me how many things that are very logical to us in Europe are still “new” to Americans. Like, using a clothesline. I have a dryer too, but I won’t use it on a sunny windy day. Why waste the money and energy? Many people over here have little vegetable gardens and several people in my town (myself included) raise a few chickens. Everybody recycles because our town’s trash service offers containers that have a “green” (compost) side and a “grey” (non-compost) side. Glass bins are in every grocery store parking lot, every town has a paper-pick-up service (usually a local charity that makes a little money selling the paper to factories) and we’ve been doing this for ages. Thanks for helping the rest of the world become more earth aware as well! Sounds like you’re doing great already.

Key aspects of this post:

1. Homesteading: This post promotes the virtues of homesteading, which seems to be conceptualised as living on a small farm and/or growing one’s own food. This could be introducing a new concept to some readers, or possibly one they are strongly interested in already. It may provide motivation for further research into this topic. This also seems to be a concept that the blogger is putting into practice and wants to share with others. This ties in with the post being recycled (re-posted) from the previous year, as the blogger is too busy gardening and preserving to create a new post.

2. Sustainability: going green is also promoted by this post. This is not specifically linked to the Weston A. Price Foundation’s core aims, but is in line with their ideas.

3. Criticism of the ‘American dream’: This post is critical of the American consumerist dream, promoting, instead, a new dream revolving around
self-sufficiency and “massive gardens, chickens in the backyard, clotheslines and piles of compost”.

4. Political references: “big-agribusiness, plastic corporations, pharmaceutical companies, and a government that is heavily lobbied by all of the above”.

5. Subtle religious tone: “to rely on God and each other” – also quite fundamentalist assertions “the only responsible way to live”. This post could be seen as an example of traditional conservative values, which seems to be common with many of the US-based nourishing blogs.

6. Community trading/sharing: trading farmer’s milk, etc.

Kimi Harris, of The Nourishing Gourmet, writes of her ongoing pregnancy (Harris, 2010):

**Pregnancy Update (and my food plan for the next 12 weeks)**

by KIMIHARRIS on AUGUST 8, 2010

(Our first glimpse of our new baby)

This blog is mostly for sharing recipes and thoughts on food, but I know that many of you have both wanted an update from me on my pregnancy as well as asking me how I try to continue a nourishing diet while pregnant. I thought I would answer both of those questions in one post.
I am now (drum roll please) 28 weeks pregnant! I only have 12 more weeks to go. Life never goes as
planned, or so I have found, and that has certainly been true for this pregnancy. I definitely knew to
expect morning sickness as that has been the case for my other two pregnancies. There is always the
vain hope that if I just got “healthy enough” I wouldn’t experience it, but after three years of rebuilding
my health after Elena was born and eating very well, I still had pretty harsh nausea the first few months.
I was just starting to feel like a normal human being again when we found out about Sono’s cancer and
then the next two months, until her death, was really focused on spending time with her and helping her
in anyway we could. I was really thankful this all happened in my second trimester as it was when I had
the most energy and was able to most engage with both her and the family. Those were precious times,
though hard.

Pregnancy is a special time and a lot of work for your body and having that stress and sorrow during this
time has been hard on me and my body. I’ve taken this last month to try to rest, reconnect with Joel and
Elena as our own little family unit, spiritually rejuvenate, and to eat as well as possible for this little one
coming.

My plan for the next 12 weeks is to eat as well as we can afford and as well as my energy allows. Now
that I am in the last trimester, I am started to slow down and get fairly sleepy at inopportune times. Here
are my priorities for how I eat (and how I feed the rest of the family too. They need to get “built back up
again” too).

1) Protein: My understanding is that protein is what really helps grow your baby and the placenta. I’ve
really been trying to concentrate on getting adequate protein. This has generally meant eggs and toast or
turkey sausage and zucchini for breakfast and some type of meat and/or beans as part of lunch and
dinner. I don’t normally eat this much animal protein, but I really feel like I need that much when
pregnant on most days right now. And without dairy in my diet right now (having too many reactions to
it), I am a little more limited on good protein options. We’ve also been enjoying quinoa, a higher
protein “grain” in the form of chilled salads. Delicious!

2) Healthy Probiotic Food: Since the baby receives her first “dose” of probiotics from you when she is
born, it’s important that you have a healthy gut (which is what populates the birth canal with health
flora). I am taking a good probiotic as well as really starting to concentrate on probiotic foods.
Homemade sauerkraut, coconut water kefir, lacto-fermented salsa, and recently lacto-fermented green
beans, are all on our menu right now. I try to eat or drink one of these food items once a day at least,
preferably once a meal. There are so many important things that lacto-fermented foods does for you that
I can’t even list them all, but suffice to say it’s one of the top priorities for me.

3) Cod liver oil: I have continued to take my fermented cod liver oil for important omega 3 fatty acids
(very important for brain development) as well as vitamin A and D. (If you are pregnant, make sure you
ask your health care provider about this supplement.) I also plan on continuing to incorporate low
mercury seafood in our diets as well.

Other then that, I am trying to eat lots of fresh vegetables (I am craving them, and I take cravings as a
sign that I need something) and also trying to incorporate as much bone broth as I can. It’s a little harder
since it’s summer right now, but I am going to try out some new chilled soup recipes this week. We will
see how they go! If any turn out well, I will be sure to share them here.

Resting, getting the house ready, blogging (and continuing to lead my ecourse), eating well, and
spending time with my family is what’s on the agenda! I have plenty to do for sure and I know that next
12 weeks will zip past.

I would love to hear from you too! Each pregnant woman is unique (and her pregnancies too). What was
your last trimester like? How did you try to eat well? I know that many of my readers are pregnant right
now. I would love to hear an “update” on you too.

{ 43 comments… read them below or add one }

Renee August 9, 2010 at 12:32 am
Hi Kimi, I’m a long-time reader but a first-time commenter! Thanks so much for the pregnancy update!
This is mostly a “food” blog, but more importantly a health blog, and making healthy choices is so
important in pregnancy! And it’s great to see you sharing your thoughts and experiences on the topic
because A) other women who are or may become pregnant stand to gain a lot by learning from you and
others who are walking that road, and B) we care about you and how you’re doing!

Sonia August 9, 2010 at 4:10 am
It’s lovely to hear about your pregnancy plans; it’s such an exciting time! I’m still a way off from that stage in my life, but have realised that one of my favourite things to do is read about nutrition for pregnant women, and different people’s experiences… Congratulations and good luck with the rest of it!

Sonja

Julie August 9, 2010 at 4:28 am
I have 8 weeks left. Congratulations on your little one. We are having boy #4! This pregnancy has been soooo different. So much morning sickness and it really leveled me. It has been hard to keep up on all the great food because an extreme tiredness accompanied this pregnancy as well but I have been doing the best I can. I like your simple list. It sums up the important things for the next several weeks. Good luck getting ready!!

Jendeis August 9, 2010 at 5:43 am
I’m in my last trimester as well (29 weeks as of tomorrow). I’ve been concentrating on making sure that I’m getting a variety of good foods and especially fruits and vegetables. For me, a daily dose of yogurt has done wonders for my heartburn.

Janey August 9, 2010 at 6:29 am
Are you taking a probiotic supplement as well? There is a specific one for pregnancy, by a UK brand – http://www.optibacprobiotics.co.uk/shop/item.asp?itemid=10. I think these little magical bits of bacteria are marvelous!

Congratulations on the pregnancy, what a lovely blog.

Erin August 9, 2010 at 7:25 am
I was blessed to never have morning sickness. Unfortunetly, with both pregnancies, we weren’t concerned with eating healthy (at least not in the way we do now with “real” foods). With the first, we ate out almost daily. Very bad. And my oldest likes more junk food than her baby sister. The youngest gave me a gestational diabetes scare, so I ate decently (lot of lean protein and fruit, decently for what I knew at the time). She is also more into good food. One day my husband went and got pan dulce, as a special treat we get it still once in awhile, and Jasmin wanted the pastured eggs I scrambled for myself as I didn’t want to eat pan dulce. Made me proud. She also loves raw onion, lettuce leaves, and sucking on lemons and limes (lol, such a mexican, Graciela like sucking on limes too lol).

Key aspects of this post:

1. Pregnancy: as an important life process, the pregnancy experience of a blogger is likely to feature in blogs which include personal information. In a blog about healthy food, the nourishment of the growing baby is important, as can be seen in the above post. This post was written in response to questions on the blog about which kinds of foods Kimi had been eating during her pregnancy. She had posted earlier about her difficulties with morning sickness, and the people following her blog wanted to know how she was getting on. Some wanted advice and tips about what to eat while pregnant. Kimi describing her pregnancy is an example of the voicing of embodied experience through blogging.
2. Nutritionist discourse: Terms such as Protein, Omega 3, and vitamins A and D are used in this post, which refer to nutritional components. Kimi has incorporated scientific, nutritional information, which fits into the nutritionist discourse, with her own lay understandings of nutritional requirements in a similar way to the *Nourishing Traditions* cookbook.

3. Weston A. Price Foundation Principles: This post mentions a few things considered by the WAPF to be important, including protein-rich foods and fish oil. The paragraph on probiotics stands out as particularly in line with WAPF, especially the mention of lacto-fermented foods and kefir.

4. Family: Kimi mentions her family twice in this post: at the beginning she talks about reconnecting with Joel and Elena, her husband and daughter, and near the end she talks about spending time with family being on the agenda. She also mentions Sono, her mother in law, who died of cancer. This is another example of how bloggers’ personal lives can bleed into their blogs. This can allow blog followers to feel a personal connection with the blogger and his or her life.

5. Comments: Kimi asks readers to contribute their stories about pregnancy, encouraging them to share ideas, experiences and information. Both bloggers and non-bloggers contribute comments to this blog, and as the bloggers get to know each other by reading and commenting on blogs, there is a sense of community.

6. Linking to previous blog posts: Kimi links to two of her own previous posts about morning sickness and her mother in law Sono’s cancer. This gives background to the reader if they are not already familiar with the previous posts.
Summary of the Blog Posts

Each of these blog posts promote some of the values of the WAPF and also other personal, political and social values of the blogger. Some of these values, such as the environmental values represented on the Nourishing Days post, commonly intersect on nourishing food blogs, and are in line with the principles of the WAPF. Some of the values are highly personal and reflect the family of the blogger. An example of this can be seen in the Nourishing Gourmet post above, where Kimi reflects on her pregnancy. Each post is educational and informative in its own way. The blog posts encourage comments and, therefore, online interaction between bloggers and blog readers, which can be seen to create online communities. Nourishing food blogging, in its synthesis of the personal and political aspects of people’s lives, is demonstrating one of the many qualities of praxis.

Praxis on a Platter

The educational element of these blog posts can be linked to Freire’s concept of liberatory education and, thereby, to praxis. The reflexive nature of blogging also lends itself to Freirean praxis. Discussions through blogs can be seen as a dynamic way of sharing information. Blogging itself can represent a type of praxis, of action-reflection-action, as the reflection from one post may lead to another or influence the practices involved in people’s daily lives. In this way, nourishing food blogging could be seen as a form of micro-praxis, contributing to and expanding the praxis of the Nourishing Food Movement. Recipes could be seen as another example of a micro-praxis within the broader
praxis of the nourishing blog movement. Blog recipes will be explored in more depth in the following section.
Recipraxia or Dispraxia?

Recipes as Praxis

Recipes can be used to provide simple and essential nourishment. Cooking can be a pastime, and serving food can be seen as a way of being connected to family and community, particularly as many social rituals involve food. Recipes can be viewed as a form of praxis: ideas and experience feed into the construction of the recipe which then allows other people to produce the same or similar food products. Action-reflection-action occurs in the adjustment of recipes to suit different needs or experiences, and the creation of new recipes based on prior experiences. They can empower people with the knowledge of the ingredients and processes involved in the preparation of the food they eat. Preparing food can be an innovative and creative process and recipes can be adapted to the cook’s advantage. The following is an analysis of recipes to illustrate both praxis and dispraxia.

A Comparison of Recipes

For this section, I wanted to find three different recipes from three different blogs. I also chose three different types of ‘meals’ – dinner, a snack and a dessert – to compare with three similar recipes from Food-in-a-Minute, the New Zealand television cooking program which commonly uses sponsored processed foods as ingredients. I found the Food-in-a-Minute recipes on their website (Food in a Minute, 2010 a). These recipes represent the dominant discourse of modern food through which even home cooked meals contain various packages of industrially processed foods. The recipes from Food-in-a-Minute are based on branded products which are advertised through the
programme, and there is therefore an underlying corporate interest that is covertly rather than overtly stated; presented as a cooking show rather than an ad for Watties or other brands. This lack of transparency is an example of the dispraxia of modern food which is also represented in the way that full knowledge about the contents of the ingredients, and therefore power over what is being eaten, is withheld.

Whereas a blog is a dynamic, personal vehicle of communication, the Food-in-a-Minute programme and website are constructed marketing tools supporting corporate interests. This difference is reflected in the disparity between the recipes, the most noticeable of which being that the Food-in-a-Minute recipes are obviously constructed around particular branded items, whereas the nourishing recipes are unlikely to use any ‘packet’ ingredients, it being likely that the ingredients will instead be simple ‘whole foods’ like vegetables, milk, meat and grains, and all the ingredients are known to the recipe maker through reading the recipe – not listed in small print on the back of the packet. The nourishing recipes are contextualised by the blog posts in which they appear. The blogger often supplies a personal story or a reflection of the season that inspires the publication of the recipe. In this way, the blogger is demonstrating their own empowerment over their food and sharing this empowerment with blog readers in a praxian way.
**Deciphering Dinner**

I wanted something hearty for my dinner recipes. I was browsing the Food-in-a-Minute website when I found a casserole recipe and decided to search for a similar ‘nourishing’ alternative. I typed “Nourishing Casserole” into google and found a comparable nourishing recipe (Jenny, 2009). The following Food-in-a-Minute recipe is labelled as a “Healthy Choice”, probably because it contains a small amount of fat. It also includes more vegetables than many of the Food-in-a-Minute recipes I have encountered, which, some might argue, makes it healthy (or healthier). In comparing these two recipes, the ingredients listed for the Nourishing Beef Burgundy are transparent. The reader (or cook) knows that the organic vegetables aren’t grown with dangerous pesticides, and that the pastured animal products came from animals that were eating grass (unlike many animals in the US). One could choose to use organic vegetables to cook the Food-in-a-Minute recipe, however, the packets and cans of processed food used contain many other ingredients, as shown below, some of which are easily recognisable in lay vocabulary, while others contain numbers and words that leave the lay ‘consumer’ guessing. The ingredient lists of processed foods are also incomplete in that they are only required to show ingredients that appear in particular quantities. Many of the listed ingredients could contain vast, hidden, ingredient lists of their own (Lawrence, 2004).
Food-in-a-minute Recipe: Beef & Chorizo Casserole with Cauliflower Mash

Cooked slowly in the oven or crock pot and served with this easy cauliflower mash, this is a warming meal to look forward to on those cooler days.

**Time & Serves**
- Preparation time: 10 minutes
- Cooking time: 2 hours
- Serves 4-6

**Ingredients**
- 500g casseroling beef, trimmed and diced
- 2 Tbsp flour
- 1 Tbsp oil
- 2 chorizo sausages, sliced
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 stalks celery, sliced
- 1 parsnip, peeled and sliced
- 420g can Wattie’s Condensed Minestrone Soup
- 1 cup wine or stock

**Cauliflower Mash**
- 1/2 cauliflower, cut into florets

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Nourishing Blog Recipe: Nourishing Beef Burgundy

It’s starting to get cold out – stormy and chilly all afternoon – and the aspens are turning gold again. When summer turns to autumn, my thoughts turn to comfort food: meatloaf, pot roasts, roast chicken and, of course, beef burgundy. It’s wonderful with the deep flavor of mushrooms combined with robust red wine and grass-fed beef. A nice, slow stewing keeps the grass-fed beef (which some consider to be tough) tender. Beef burgundy is an excellent way to use up homemade beef stock with all its micronutrients like calcium, zinc, glucosamine and naturally occurring gelatin while pairing it with other nutrient-dense additions like ghee which is rich in CLA (read more about CLA, disease and diet) and mushrooms which contribute a fair amount of selenium to the dish.

This recipe for beef burgundy serves 6.

**Ingredients Needed to Prepare Beef Burgundy**
- ¼ Cup Clarified Butter or Ghee from Grass-fed Cows (see sources)
- ½ Cup Sprouted Grain Flour (see sources)
- 1 lb Grass-finished Beef Stew Meat (see sources)
- 5 Organic Carrots, Scraped and Chopped
- 5 Organic Celery Stalks, Chopped
- 1 lb Organic Mushrooms, Sliced Thin
- 2 Organic Yellow Onions, Chopped
- 3 – 4 Bay Leaks
- Handful of Thyme and Marjoram
- 1 Tablespoon Whole Organic Black Peppercorns
- Unrefined Sea Salt to Taste
- Bunch of Fresh, Organic Parsley for Garnish
- 1 Cup Burgundy or Pinot Noir
- 2 Cups Homemade Beef Stock

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26 diphosphates
Method
1. Preheat oven to 160°C.
3. Add chorizo, onion and celery to pan and cook for 2 minutes. Return the meat to pan and add parsnip, Wattie’s Condensed Minestrone Soup and wine.
4. Cover and place in oven for 1 1/2 - 2 hours or until beef is tender.
5. Make cauliflower mash by boiling or steaming cauliflower until cooked, then mash. Cook Wattie’s Frozen Homestyle Mashed Potatoes in microwave according to the directions on the packet. Stir through the mashed cauliflower and serve with the casserole.

Crockpot / Slowcooker instructions:
Place the ingredients from Step 2 & 3 with only 1/2 cup wine into a slow cooker, cover and cook on LOW for approx 8 hours (refer to your user manual). Serve as above.
(Food in a minute, 2010b).

A Smooth Snack

The following Nourishing recipe contains a list of ingredients promoted by *Nourishing Traditions* (Fallon, 1999). I haven’t found many recipes using raw milk as an ingredient, probably because raw milk is often consumed freshly or fermented to make kefir or yogurt and then consumed on its own or as a condiment. I was able to find the following recipe for milk shakes using raw milk (Millie, 2010). I chose this recipe because it uses raw milk which is one of the key case study areas of this thesis. I found it by looking through the Pennywise Platter carnival hosted by the Nourishing Gourmet (Harris, 2010) for recipes that were likely to require milk. The following Food-in-a-minute recipe is promoted as a “Healthy Pick” presumably due to the 99% fat free status of the creamed rice which also appears to have a Heart Foundation tick on the can.

Instructions for Preparing Beef Burgundy
1. Melt ghee in pan over medium heat. In the meantime, dredge the beef stew meat in the sprouted flour until well-coated.
2. Brown the stew meat in the ghee, and remove from the pan using a slotted spoon. Place the meat in a covered casserole, clay cooker or oven-safe dutch oven.
3. Fry the mushrooms in the remaining ghee, and pour them plus any leftover fat onto the stew meat.
4. Add vegetables, bay leaf, thyme, marjoram and peppercorns to the casserole.
5. Pour in the wine and beef stock.
6. Bake, covered, at 350 °F for three hours. Alternatively, you may toss ingredients into your slowcooker and cook for 8+ hours.
(Jenny, 2009).
### Food-in-a-minute recipe: Banoffee Smoothie

A high-energy smoothie made with caramel creamed rice, milk, and banana.

**Time & Serves**
- Preparation time:  
- Cooking time:  
- Serves 2

**Ingredients**
- 220g can Wattie’s 99% Fat Free Caramel Creamed Rice  
  - Low Fat Milk, Rice (41%), Sugar, Vanilla Flavour\(^{27}\), Stabiliser (339)\(^{28}\).  
- 1/2 cup milk  
- 1/2 banana, peeled

**Measurement Conversions**

**Method**
1. Place all the ingredients in a blender and process until smooth and creamy.

**Tips**
Keep cans of Wattie’s 99% Fat Free Caramel Creamed Rice in the fridge as the smoothie will become creamier if the...

### Nourishing blog recipe: Milk Shake Magic

A favorite treat from before we started changing over to real, more nutrient dense foods was Magic Milk Shakes from the Hillbilly Housewife website. They tasted remarkably like a Frosty from Wendy’s and we would have them a few times a week as a snack or dessert. But with the ingredient list (powdered milk, vegetable oil, vegetable spray) they needed to be reworked in order to fit into our ‘new’ style of eating. My little Lulu was broken hearted over the idea of not having her favorite shakes so she became our Official Milk Shake Maker and took on the task of tweaking the recipe (I helped a little but it was mostly Lulu).

The milkshakes that we now enjoy have eliminated those questionable ingredients and embraced healthier choices. The flavor is wonderful and makes for a very nice treat.

**Milk Shake Magic**

1. 1/2 cups dairy kefir  
2. 1 1/2 cups raw milk  
3. 1/3- 2/3 cup Sucanat (or other sweetener)  
4. 1/4 cup baking cocoa  
5. 1 teaspoon vanilla\(^{29}\)  
6. 3 Tablespoons coconut oil (melted if solid at room temperature)  
7. 1-2 trays of ice cubes

Put everything but the coconut oil and ice in the blender. Turn on blender to mix it all together. With blender running, add the coconut oil. When...

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\(^{27}\) Does not specify whether it is natural vanilla extract or artificial  

\(^{28}\) Sodium Phosphates. According to Wikipedia this product is used in cleaning and to enhance paint. It was once used as a major component in detergents but is not commonly used now due to damaging environmental effects.

\(^{29}\) Also does not specify natural vanilla extract but it can be assumed to be because of the Nourishing context of the recipe.
mixed, add the ice cubes a few at a time until shake has reached the consistency you desire.

We tend to use two full trays of ice to make a very thick shake that needs to be eaten with a spoon. This makes a full blender which provides us with four generous servings and usually seconds for the shake maker :-(

If you have not yet started making dairy kefir (here is a great article on dairy kefir) you can use milk instead and go with the lesser amount of sugar.

The coconut oil is an essential ingredient. It helps the shake emulsify properly and makes it creamier. Plus as a healthy fat, coconut oil is very good for you and can even help with weight loss (read about a few of the benefits here).

If you are looking for a simple and wonderful snack or dessert this just may be it.

This post is a contribution to Real Food Wednesdays hosted this week by Kelly the Kitchen Kop.
(Millie, 2010)

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**Just Desserts**

Not all nourishing blogs use raw milk. In my exploration of Nourishing blogs I have noticed that many people who run them are intolerant to dairy or have family members who are. Being dairy-free can, therefore, be a characteristic of a blog. This recipe for Deep Dark Chocolate Tart (Harris, 2009) is an example of this. I found this recipe through my own personal Nourishing blog exploration – it was quite memorable, and although I’m yet to make it I’m sure it tastes as delicious and decadent as it looks.

The following Food-in-a-minute example contains high quantities of fat and sugar. For this reason it does not have the ‘healthy pick’ label that the low fat options have in accordance with the dominant discourse that fat is unhealthy.
If one were to follow this discourse one might be confused about recipes such as this – perhaps this ‘unhealthy’ food is an exception or an occasional indulgence, perhaps after eating a low fat casserole made with canned soup one has earned some health points which may be spent on a cheesecake treat. This could be an example of the ‘comfort food’ discussed earlier.
Food-in-a-minute Recipe: Baked Berry Cheesecake

Cheesecakes are a real Kiwi favourite and I'm going to show you an easy to make cheesecake with a twist - it's baked...

**Time & Serves**
- Preparation time:
- Cooking time:
- Serves 8

**Ingredients**
- 250g wine biscuits
- 150g butter, melted
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds
- 500g pottle Tararua Cheesecake Filling

**Filling**
- *Cream, Sugar, Skim Milk, Milk Solids, Halal Gelatine, Salt, Acidity Regulator (270)\(^{30}\), Emulsifiers (450, 452, 451, 339)\(^{31}\), Thickener (401)\(^{32}\), Flavour\(^{33}\)
- 1 egg, beaten
- grated rind 1 lemon
- 1/2 cup Craig's 3 Berry Jam

*Sugar, Berries (43%), Gelling Agent (pectin), Food Acid (Citric Acid).

**Method**
1. Place wine biscuits in a food processor, process into crumbs, add melted butter and almonds and pulse to combine.
2. Press the crumb mixture evenly into the base and halfway up the sides of a 22cm

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Nourishing Blog Recipe: Deep Dark Chocolate Tart (Gluten, Grain, Dairy, Refined Sugar free)

Because it’s so rich, it’s nice to serve this with something to cut the richness. Raspberry sauce, like pictured above works well, as does orange segments (which is how we serve it in the winter). You can also easily vary the sweetness of this tart. I love it bittersweet, but you could certainly sweeten it more.

I’ve made this in tart pans, pie pie pans and springform pans, but have found that pans with removable bottoms work the best. So use either a tart pan with a removable bottom, or a springform pan.

**Crust:** Grease a springform pan with coconut oil, and set aside.

- 2 cups of almonds (or choice of nuts)
- 1/4 cup of cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup of arrowroot powder, or sprouted wheat flour (only use wheat flour if you can have gluten)
- 2/3 cup of coconut oil softened (or butter)
- 1/4 cup of coconut sugar, honey, rapadura, maple sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract (make sure it’s gluten free, if needed)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Place almonds in a food processor, and process until a coarse flour, add the rest of the ingredients and process until it forms a uniform dough. Press down into the greased pan and bake for 8-12 minutes or until the top is slightly browned.

Take out of the oven and cool. Once the crust is cool, making the filling.

- 8 ounces of unsweetened chocolate

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\(^{30}\) Lactic Acid

\(^{31}\) Diphosphates, Polyphosphates, Triphosphates, Calcium Lactobionate.

\(^{32}\) Sodium Alginate

\(^{33}\) Does not specify which flavour
3. Turn the **Tararua Cheesecake Filling** into a microwave proof bowl and microwave on full power for 1-2 minutes. Beat until smooth, before adding the egg and grated lemon rind.

4. Pour half the cheesecake mix into the springform tin. Spread the **Craig's Three Berry Jam** carefully over the cheesecake mix, reserving 1 tablespoon, top with the remaining mixture. Swirl the remaining jam lightly over the surface of the cheesecake.

5. Cook at 160°C for 30-40 minutes or until the centre is firm. Allow to cool, then chill at least 1 hour before serving.

**Tips**

To avoid any butter dripping onto the oven, cook the cheesecake on a baking tray.

(Food in a minute, 2010d)

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2 tablespoons coconut oil (butter can be substituted)
1/4 cup of coconut sugar, plus two tablespoon honey, or more coconut sugar (all honey can be used as well. Honey will be sweeter than coconut sugar. Rapadura or maple syrup/sugar are also options).
1 1/2 cups of coconut cream (if you can’t find coconut cream, you can use a full fat coconut milk and skim the fatty top of the top. You will need two 14 ounce cans for that. Cream can be substituted.)
Dash of salt
2 tablespoons brewed coffee or espresso

1-Finely chop the chocolate and place it in a medium size, heatproof bowl. Add the coconut oil and the sweetener, mix it into the chopped chocolate a little.

2-Heat the coconut cream on the stove until very hot. Pour over the chocolate and tap the bowl on the counter to settle the chocolate. Let this sit for about one minute to start melting the chocolate. Using a rubber spatula (heatproof), slowly stir in a circular motion, starting from the center of the bowl. Stir for about two minutes (the mixture should be melted and the temperature 90 degrees, though I never check the temperature).

3- Add the coffee and stir until incorporated. Pour this over the crust and carefully place it in the fridge to set. It will take about an hour to set. Cover with plastic wrap once all the way cool. Will keep at least three days in the fridge (if you can resist that long!).

(Harris, 2009)

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**Reci-praxia**

Although any recipe could be enacted as a form of praxis, of action-reflection-action, the nourishing recipes contribute to the praxis of the movement, encouraging their readers to put the nourishing principles into action. Stock, as used in the nourishing dinner recipe, is particularly promoted by the WAPF as is the consumption of raw milk, included in the nourishing smoothie. Comprehensive knowledge on the content of a meal is provided by the nourishing recipes. This knowledge over what’s really in our food can be
empowering in a praxian sense, as is the lack of reliance on particular pre-packaged, processed foods.

The nourishing recipes include opening explanations in their blog posts, ranging in length. These often include relevant nutritional information, and give a context to the recipe. The commentary for Kimi’s Deep Dark Chocolate Tart was quite long and, as such, was not included in the comparison table:

I hate it when I make this tart. Really….I do. Because every time, I want to have just a “little more” of the delicious, bittersweet tart, and then……just a little more (and the struggle goes on). It’s hard to resist with its chocolate nut based crust, and it’s creamy, dark chocolate, decadent layer of pure chocolate goodness.

Very hard to resist.

Really, I can’t even believe that I am sharing this recipe at all. There are a few recipes a cook should always keep to themselves as “chef’s secrets”. Signature dishes that only they know how to make. Yet, here I am sharing it with the world (well, whoever of the world wants to read my blog, that is). Know, dear readers, that you are loved, as I give you one of my most loved recipes.

I served this for my husband’s birthday party, and it may have just been my imagination, but it seemed like all of the guy’s were hungrily looking for more after their piece was eaten (oh yes, there was more, but the leftovers had already been whisked into the fridge for …..for me to have later. (Hey, there wasn’t enough for them all to have a second piece, so I was just protected them from having to fight over the last pieces * wink*).

This recipe was adapted from the book The Secrets of Baking by Sheryl Yard. The book has everything sweet and unhealthy in it, but made very well and gourmet. While I no longer use white sugar and refined flour, I have often been able to adapt a few of her recipes, and this is one of them. I’ve taken the crust recipe from Sally Fallon (altered to become a chocolate crust), and made this recipe a grain free, gluten free, dairy free, refined sugar free, delicious dessert.

I hope you enjoy it as much as we do. (Harris, 2009)
This commentary includes the lay discourse of food as indulgent and hard to resist. It also gives personal context and an explanation of where the recipe came from. In this case, it was adapted from two other recipes and altered to meet complicated dietary requirements. This recipe includes the use of coconut fat and unrefined sweeteners which are promoted by the WAPF (Fallon, 1999).

The Food-in-a-Minute recipes, on the other hand, demonstrate dispraxia in the lack of transparency of the nature of the ingredients. Even though many of the ingredients appear to be harmless, people who purchase, use and consume these products are likely to be unaware of the exact nature of the additives, let alone their actual names, which are often only listed as numbers. Food-in-a-Minute recipes also convey mixed messages about fat. Fat-free food is paraded as healthy alongside fatty and supposedly unhealthy recipes such as the cheesecake recipe above. These recipes which include packaged, pre-processed foods promote the corporate interests of the food company sponsors.
Back to the Kitchen
Gender, Class, Politics and Religion in Blogging

Unlike the earlier two sections focusing on nourishing food blogs, which were intentionally planned as part of this thesis, this section presents an unexpected cornucopia of insights. The blog discussion which follows is an example of the dynamic enaction of praxis — of action-reflection-action — by bloggers and blog commenters through a critical and reflexive blog discussion based on gender. The issue of gender was brought to my attention when I noticed the many women involved in the official and unofficial dissemination of information supporting the principles of the Weston A. Price Foundation, thereby contributing to the wider Nourishing Food Movement. The Foundation was started by two women, Sally Fallon Morrell and Mary Enig, and although it appears to have many male supporters, including those with scientific leanings like Chris Masterjohn\(^{34}\), observations of individually run blogs show that many women are involved in this movement. As mentioned earlier, many blogs appear to be written by middle class women who are often not engaging in full time work. I found this observation particularly interesting and decided to present a conference paper for a women’s studies conference entitled Back to the Kitchen, looking at women’s roles in this new food movement and suggesting that, in this instance, the kitchen has become a place of empowerment, rather than oppression. I received an interesting response to my abstract from the conference organisers, raising the issue that various social pressures may be contributing to women’s roles rather than

\(^{34}\) As referenced in the case study on fat in chapter three
empowering them. I posted both my abstract and the response to it on my blog (Ritchie, 2010 a), interested in feedback.

**Back to the Kitchen**
**Middle class women’s role in a new social movement**
Despite the second wave of feminism’s emphasis on freeing women from the confines of domesticity, a new generation of middle class women are now reclaiming the kitchen in an effort to take control of their lives and their health as well as the health of their families. Modern industrially processed food has reached the point where it has become a political issue in terms of its indigestibility, negative health affects and unethical production – unjustly harming communities, the land and animals. Not only are these middle class women empowering and educating themselves and changing their own lifestyles and diets, armed with PCs and the internet, they are sharing what they know through weblogs, producing information and networking to form online communities. This presentation will look at the transformation of the kitchen as a place of confinement to a place of empowerment, explore the role of middle class women in this new social movement and draw parallels to other historical social movements that middle class women have been influential in such as the anti-apartheid movement and the US civil rights movement.

**The Response**
The title of the paper was intended to be slightly controversial, coming from a ‘third-wave’\(^{35}\) feminist perspective (reclaiming) rather than a second wave perspective. The person in charge of submissions had a few concerns.

While your abstract is accepted, I do feel I should warn you that you are likely to receive some interrogation of your argument. A return to the kitchen on the bases you outline, while perhaps experienced by women as freely chosen and even ‘empowering’, could also be a response to new pressures on middle class women to be 'good' mothers who actively protect their families from external 'dangers' posed by processed food and other environmental contaminants – and thus is not dissimilar to 1950s moral panics about physical (and social) hygiene – 'dirt danger'. So middle class women are called upon to be more concerned than ever about their family's and children's health, diet, and wellbeing, as well as the planet's wellbeing, with a new set of

\(^{35}\) The second wave of feminism is characterised by the women’s movement which began in the 1960s. The third wave is contemporary. For more information see the wikipedia entry for “feminism”. 

136
expectations and disciplinary practices emerging to replace the old. At the same time, such a choice fits with contemporary neo-liberal requirements in terms of taking full responsibility for the care of the self as a condition of citizenship. So in these two senses, the return to the kitchen might not necessarily be progressive or emancipating, or at least has a dual aspect to it which may simultaneously entail hegemonic recuperation… (personal communication)

**Blogging about it**

I was surprised by this response and decided to blog about it on my research blog:

This raises some interesting points about feminism and choice. While many food bloggers probably wouldn't identify as feminists, from what I have read there is a sense of agency in their chosen lifestyles and the blogging process. There is also recurring conflict that occurs between the second wave feminist emphasis on leaving behind traditionally female roles and, particularly on participating in skilled, full-time, paid employment…

I would agree that taking full responsibility is a typically neoliberal concept, which is probably why this movement is common in largely neoliberal countries – it is also an example of rebellion against the corporate domination of neoliberal countries.

From my perspective, feminism - or any human rights based movement is about freedom and choice. It is possible that these women are still shackled by patriarchy or pressured by moral panic, perhaps some are more than others, and that is something worthy of investigation, but social pressure applied from the other side has the potential to be just as disempowering. From my interpretations of the perspectives of these women, there is a sense of empowerment in knowing what is in their food, where it came from and that the processes involved in preparing it to make it more nourishing. There is a creative outlet in cooking and a sense of sharing and community in blogging as well as the satisfaction of contributing to the growing body of alternative nutritional information available on the internet. There is the sense of security in feeding their families and themselves safe, healthy food. (Ritchie, 2010a)

While I intended to write about these themes as part of this thesis, I was unaware that the process of blogging about this topic would result in so much rich data.
Blogging Responses

Among the responses I received was a comment from a US based food writer and blogger, Addie (thefeministkitchen.wordpress.com), who said she was fascinated by the response I had received: “I need to do some more thinking on the argument that this return to the kitchen is just in response to another patriarchal pressure to be good mothers or good wives, but on the surface, I’m not convinced” (Addie comment in Ritchie, 2010).

The following comment was part of my response to Addie:

Most of these new food movements are anti-corporate, but they can have a strong emphasis on tradition (particularly WAPF which I’m focusing on) and tradition can be tied in with patriarchy easily enough. The two women who started the WAPF – Sally Fallon (activist) and Mary Enig (bio chemist), seem very self-empowered, although many of the bloggers have very strong emphasis on religion and family which comes across as patriarchal sometimes. Assuming that feminism has given these women the freedom to choose their own destinies – is it not a bit hypocritical to then criticize their choices? (Ritchie comment in Ritchie, 2010 a)

A male food blogger commented:

On the sidebar of my blog, I have links to around 20+ NZ food bloggers – they are all run by women. The only time I've encountered men talking about food online is on hunting/fishing sites or (very rarely) wine/beverage sites; no bloggers (as yet). There are a few male professional chefs with blogs, but they tend to be based abroad & are very commercially-oriented (a means of shifting product, whether it be kitchen equipment, books, food or as a promotional vehicle for their restaurants). Could you posit a reason for the lack of male food bloggers? Is it a case of traditional roles manifesting themselves in a new form? This is quite intriguing. (Nigel Olsen, comment in Ritchie, 2010 a)

This raised an interesting question that I hadn’t thought about before. I had noticed the prevalence of female bloggers, but not the lack of male ones. I wondered if perhaps there is less ‘social credit’ involved in food blogging for men, or whether it might be related to the community culture of the blogs –
seeing women involved in blogs could encourage more women to start them. I became interested in food blogs after finding them while looking for recipes on the internet, and I wondered if that was something women are more likely to do. Perhaps there could be a gender division of food-labour, with women voluntarily taking on much of the unpaid blogging, while there might be more professional male chefs. I also mentioned on the blog that middle class women tend to have more time, although many New Zealand based female food bloggers whose work I had read also worked full-time, unlike many of the US ones who are stay-at-home.

Conflicting feelings

Johanna Knox of Star-Cooked wrote quite a long, well thought-out response expressing conflicting feelings that were raised by my post:

I have mixed feelings about all this!! I identify as a feminist and I see a return to natural, traditional foods as a feminist act – because I see escape from industrial consumption of any sort as being heavily intertwined with feminist ideals. But I confess to a niggling and ever so slowly growing level of discomfort with the growing number of women's homemaker blogs around (even though I guess I have one), which generally either focus on food or craft or both. I can't quite articulate my discomfort properly yet, but I think it is both a gender and class thing. Re class – yes, us middle class women are busy, but you still have to have a certain amount of privilege in terms of leisure time, access to hardware and software, and education in order to blog – and to join the networks of women blogging about such things. You also have to have a certain amount of privilege to lead the kind of lives we are blogging about living. (Johanna, comment in Ritchie, 2010 a)

Johanna also questioned how much social change could be enacted through blogging about domestic activities:

Regarding the gender issue around these blogs ... I don't know. How much political and societal power do we have these days as homemakers who are thrifting, crafting, cooking food from scratch? How powerful is it really to be doing this? And is it distracting us from other
political actions we could take – that would perhaps make more impact? Those questions seem to recur through the decades, and I still don't know the answers to them. (Johanna, comment in Ritchie, 2010 a)

In response to this question, I suggested that this kind of blogging could be part of a social movement away from corporate or industrialised foods:

One way that someone, otherwise isolated in an individualist society, can protest, offer alternatives and add to these social movements. I see it as a kind of activism (I'm not talking about all domestic blogs here). It's true that the kind of lifestyles people blog about are generally under the privilege of the middle class – I also think this is important because the educated middle class have the time and the consumer power to have a huge influence on society if they are so inspired. Blogs can help to inform other people and convert them to the religion of real food. (Isa Ritchie, comment in Ritchie, 2010 a)

Prompting other Blog Posts

My blog post also generated responses on another blog (Sandra's).

Sandra questioned the concept of ‘reclaiming’ the kitchen:

Who did you have to wrestle with to get some time back in that kitchen? Come on, pour out your stories, the long evenings of heated and tortured debate where your partner sulked because he wanted to do the cooking (yes yes heterosexual assumptions), the frustration as you wondered when indeed he would finally allow you to do the food shopping, the jealousy when he seemed to have spent all the time finding out about wheat allergies or lactose intolerance or clicky hips or dodgy children or poisonous toilet cleaner when actually you wanted to be that nurturer. Fill my comments box all millions of you. (Sandra, 2010 a)

She also questioned ‘empowerment’ in the kitchen, and went on to discuss how her blog is empowering:

I wouldn't go so far as to say I feel empowered in my kitchen, though I do like to cook and experiment sometimes… The thing which I think, for me, is empowering, is writing my blog. I make food and they/we eat it. Ditto dishes. I'm not sure I can even bear a sentence about laundry… But, unlike laundry and dishes and meals… my blog is still here the next day and the week and month after that. In an existence where everything that is practically vital seems to disappear in an instant and need repeating again and again and again, the permanence of my words, the link with the rest of the world, the sense that I can string a sentence together even if I cannot summon the energy or
willpower to clean off the toilet roll papier mache pulp on the bathroom basin and windowsill, matters to me. (Sandra, 2010 a)

A comment on this post offered a different perspective on ‘reclaiming’: I personally do have a sense of "reclaiming" my kitchen, although having never left it, and not having had to kick anyone out of it. Certainly it feels as if I'm fighting off the colonising attempts of the industrial food complex and the invasion of the easy packaged foods. So reclaiming it from dominant STRUCTURES, yes? From other AGENTS, no;-) The structure versus agency has always been an interesting distinction for me when finding moments to analyse what I see around me. (Sharonnz, comment in Sandra, 2010 a)

Johanna, of Star-Cooked, commented that she had mixed feelings about empowerment:

I feel both empowered and disempowered in the kitchen (which one dominates depends on my mood, what's for dinner, and whether I've managed to co-opt someone else into helping). (Johanna, comment in Sandra, 2010 a)

She also offered a different perspective on ‘reclaiming the kitchen’:

No, I never left the kitchen and came back and reclaimed it – I was always there... what I did reclaim, to some extent, was the power over what I and my family ate. (More natural stuff, vs corporate processed stuff). But it is more time consuming, and sometimes I just want to stand in the middle of the kitchen and yell, 'A little help here??!!!' (Johanna, comment in Sandra, 2010 a)

Johanna also commented about “this insane privileged middle class life where time-wise you feel completely poverty stricken”, identifying with my assumptions about middle-class female bloggers. Johanna brought up the point that she chooses to engage in typically feminine activities out of choice, despite thinking of herself as a feminist:

This is one thing that niggles away at me. I AM doing a lot of the things I like doing these days, by and large, and it so happens that quite a few of the things I like doing are traditionally women's things – cooking, gathering, children's literature work, a bit of fibrecraft... perfumery for gods sake... So, on the one hand I have agency, but on the other hand – why is it that all these things I do are traditionally women's areas? How freely did I REALLY choose this? I'll never know, it's so engrained now. (Johanna, comment in Sandra, 2010 a)
Johanna brought up a sense of community among women in female dominated areas:

Another thing I like about being involved in traditionally women's areas, is that you get to hang out with lots of groups of women – whether in real life or on the net... And this thing people say about groups of women together being bitchy and tearing each other down???
Where are these groups? I have never met them... In my experience women are extremely supportive to each other – and that includes on all these women's blogs... For me anyway, a key value of the blogs is in the networking with other women. (Johanna, comment in Sandra, 2010 a)

In this comment, Johanna also clarified that the “growing level of discomfort”, mentioned above in her comment on my blog, “…wasn't the blogging per se, but what they are representing… it's the double-edged sword ... spend more time on food and craft to fight the corporate systems ... but at the same time, spend less time on other stuff…” (Johanna, comment in Sandra, 2010 a)

Johanna posted a follow-up comment, bringing up the point that she experiences subtle pressure to write about her life positively:

You feel like you have to be a bit of a poster child for the values you support, and that includes always talking positively about the great stuff you made or cooked or did... I never really write about the times when, for example, I am slowly filled with rage at the seemingly perfectly reasonable excuses people make, one after another, and horribly regularly, for not being able to help with housekeeping stuff... I think there's a feeling that you (well, I) don't want to show the chinks in the armour, because then you open yourself for people to actually put the knife into your whole value system ... So the overall result of this (if as I suspect, many people feel and act like I do on their blogs), is that you get a whole lot of happy homemaker blogs from women on the net. Sorry, I don't mean to sound so flippant, and I count myself in amongst those blogs ... But it is making me feel a bit uncomfortable ... although I love many of these blogs I'm referring to!!!!!.” (Johanna, comment in Sandra, 2010 a)

Another comment alluded to social pressures against traditionally female roles: “For me 'reclaiming the kitchen' strikes me as the same feeling I get
when I confidently state my occupation as 'housewife' or 'SAHM'. I feel empowered to stay at home, I feel that it is not looked down on by society the way it was as little as a decade ago.” (Marty, comment in Sandra, 2010 a). This attitude is reflected in a number of blog posts I have encountered, some of which call for more social value to be placed on traditionally feminine roles and the women who choose them.

The ‘Happy Women’ Blogs

Sandra responded to these comments in another blog post, focusing on the way bloggers represent themselves and their lives in a deliberately positive way. She called these ‘happy woman blogs’, explaining that one reason for the exclusion of more negative life aspects is privacy:

I've been thinking about the parallels between happy woman blogs and those posters of happy housewives in the 1950s. I've met women who raised children in the 1950s, who spent their lives caring for others, based at home. They never worked outside the home after they married. They loved it. Not every second, because who loves every second of their life, but it was fulfilling for them. But for women in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s who wanted a life outside the kitchen, they had to fight damn hard and I certainly appreciate the changes those women achieved. (Sandra, comment in Sandra, 2010 a)

Sandra commented that the traditionally female role of nurturing is devalued in our society “[d]eliberately in my view, because it does not feed the capitalist system, most notably in the lack of a tax contribution, but also in other refusals to buy 'value-added’ commodities” (Sandra, comment in Sandra, 2010 a).

Sandra also mentions a particular ‘happy woman blog’ to illustrate the way blogs are deliberately constructed:
Heart Felt is a very lovely blog of a very happy family. It is written and photographed by the Mum, who is nameless, though we know the names of her children well and we do learn the name of her husband. I will call the author Heartfelt as that is her identity on the blog. Heartfelt is a superb photographer and a gifted op-shopper and crafter. Her children and her home constantly look so completely gorgeous that you could eat them up. She was always out of my league. But one day I read a reference to her job and realised that she worked outside the home as well as producing such gorgeous children, crafts and homelife more generally. Oh, I thought, she is like me, she works outside home and she wants to value home life as well. I find it interesting that she said/says so very little about her life outside the children and crafts. Blogging is definitely a place where we construct our identity as mothers. (Sandra, 2010 b)

Johanna commented on this post, drawing on dynamic power relationships similar to those described by Foucault, as mentioned in theory section:

Seems like there are all sorts of external and internal forces conspiring to make us start sounding like 50s housewives, albeit with a green bent... We are pulled in so many different intersecting directions. There's the tug-o-war between public and domestic spheres, and then the conflict between wanting to opt out of the system, and needing to stay in it for many things. (Johanna, comment in Sandra, 2010 b)

Nova_j commented that she particularly enjoyed blogs “filled with little tidbits that i can utilise to make my thoughts/house/crafts a little bit better, but that are tempered by a good dose of reality!! i've been deleting all of the 'perfect life' ones from my feed because i've noticed that they really do increase my sense of insecurity & discontent at my own, fairly reasonable, life, house & family. not a good scene.” (nova_j, comment in Sandra, 2010 b)

Sandra wrote another follow-up blog post, which mentioned the prevalence of women in the blogs she reads:

In my blogging world, women feature strongly. The male blogs I read are mostly political, all written in the third person and concerned with public rather than private life. The women in my blogging world are cleaners and cooks and school lunch makers and dental appointment taxis and nose-blowers. But that is not what they write about. They
write about their passions. They write about the things which they find enabling and which give them dignity. (Sandra, 2010 c)

Religion in the Kitchen

Sandra’s post went on to discuss religion – both established religion and the way other convictions, such as environmentalism, can function as religion:

On the whole, a little religion is necessary to give passion to homemaking. We all need a bigger picture to know why we are vacuuming, cooking, washing dishes and doing laundry again. In my blogging world, happy woman bloggers subscribe to one of two creeds, with several subscribing to both: Christianity and Environmentalism. 'Cos it is surely about time we noticed that environmentalism functions as a religion for a significant group of people. Whereas many Christians base and assess their actions and opportunities on the question "What would Jesus do?", in a very similar way many Environmentalists base and assess their actions and opportunities on the question "Is this good for the environment?" (Sandra, 2010 c)

The comments on this post also portrayed Weston A. Price Foundation principles as another form of religion adopted by bloggers.

Sandra commented on her own post:

I think the WAPF devotees form a third religion amongst happy woman bloggers I have encountered… I have been thinking about how we construct and reconstruct our lives through the blogging lens. I am interested in the relationship between what I term happy woman blogs which elevate and endorse traditional familial structures and home based traditions and those which assert their voices from less traditional perspectives. I'm not making myself clear enough as my thoughts are going way faster than my ability to express them clearly. But I wonder if it could be argued that female Christian mother nourishing revolution blogs re-assert the primacy of not just mothering, home-creation & food growing and making, but of a nuclear family focused on procreation and traditional gender roles. I had to give up Down to Earth (which is not overtly Christian but eventually I could not enjoy the gendered messages). I remember my friend Gilly (I can't believe I haven't actually met you face to face Gilly!) mentioning on her gillybean blog that she was now solo parenting and the inference in her next post was that people had dropped her from their feed or 'following' her after this revelation. (Sandra, comment in Sandra, 2010 c)
As mentioned earlier, in the process of researching these kinds of nourishing blogs, I noticed that in many of the US blogs religious themes were evident. I mentioned this in a blog post:

My original intention for the section on gender was intended to look at women being empowered by food blogging, subsequently I realised that the kind of empowerment that comes from food blogging may be an entirely different issue from the hegemonic forces governing the individual lives of the bloggers. It is possible that these messages are being reinforced through blogging – along with information about nourishing food. (Ritchie, 2010 b)

Sandra’s comment, in response to my post, mentions a concept she calls the pastoral idyll:

Have you seen reference anywhere to the 'pastoral idyll'? It's a hazy memory, but basically the idea that going back to nature will bring happiness, serenity, spiritual fulfilment and health is in poetry and art and goes back hundreds of years. I think nourishing food blogs fit within the same framework… the specific food rules assertions (e.g. eat lots of animal fat) are radical by the standards of mainstream dietary advice… the idea of getting back to the land, looking after our resources carefully, nurturing communities… (Sandra, comment in Ritchie, 2010 b)

She also provided other reflections on the virtual world of blogging in comparison with offline life:

... Blogging allows a person to create their own world with visitors, preferably admirers, to drop by and endorse that world. It can function as a useful antidote to a world which does not 'understand'. Conformity pressures within blogosphere are slight compared to those in non-internet life. (Sandra, comment in Ritchie, 2010 b)

In a more recent blog discussion, Sandra mentioned that nourishing blogs tend to come from a particular kind of family, noting that she had not come across any of these blogs written by gay or lesbian families. This comment was a
reflection on the heteronormativity in the culture of this particular food blogging community.

**Summarising blogs**

This section on blogs has become a kind of sampler, due to the vast number of blogs and blog posts available. Some general comments can be made: that many intersections between personal, political, religious and nutritional values occur on different blogs, presented in a variety of ways; that nourishing food blogs contribute to the Nourishing Food Movement by providing easily accessible information and recipes, promoting the principles of the movement; that the process of blogging, itself, can be seen as a form of praxis, reinforcing the wider praxis of the Nourishing Food Movement; and that the internet provides a dynamic, reflexive medium suitable for the growth and action of this praxis.
Dessert: A Petit Four of Reflections, Caveats, Discussions and Conclusions

Now we have come to the final course of our meal: a petit four dessert. The personal reflection and caveats that follow were originally written as a blog post.

A mixed parfait of personal reflection

Right now on my kitchen bench, I have a jar with an inch of water and a bouquet of fresh asparagus from the farmers market. I have a loaf of my own sourdough bread, baked this morning; a coffee plunger containing freshly picked herbs from my garden: lemon balm, rosemary and comfrey, ready to be made into tea; I have the large sealable glass jars I used to use to collect raw milk in, now filled with culturing water kefir and kombucha; and next to them, looking rather embarrassed, is half a steak and mushroom pie and paper bag of fries from the bakery – which have been deep-fried in cottonseed oil and seasoned with chicken salt, which likely contains MSG. This is left over from my breakfast, and I feel abashed. I can hardly think straight at the moment, let alone cook, and while my intentions with food are often good, sometimes the low blood sugar and lack of appetite from stress combine in truly evil ways that allow me to seek out and consume the disgusting, deliberately tasty, fast foods that I’m supposedly opposed to. I feel a lot better when I’m eating real, fresh, whole foods, but it seems to be at odds with the society that I live in. Going to family functions can become difficult when I’m morally opposed to the food being served – supermarket rotisserie chickens or hollandaise sauce.
from the packet (main ingredient: canola oil). I feel like a fussy child when I request butter instead of margarine.

Throughout the process of my research into food I have eaten better and worse food, alternately. The more I know about food, the more difficult simple tasks like shopping and eating out become, because of my concerns for my individual health and also wider moral concerns. I read the labels on packets fanatically and struggle over the knowledge that most eggs served in restaurants and cafes are from caged hens. Food has become something of a religion to me. I sway between nutritional fundamentalism and nihilism. My junk food sins are, in part, due to stress, business, laziness and the budget constraints of being a student. However, if I did have more time and energy, I am sure I could eat much better despite my limited income. This brings us back to that slightly uncomfortable class issue.

**Caveats and Crème Brûlée**

The Weston A. Price Foundation is largely a middle-class, female dominated movement; borrowing wisdom from our global, pre-industrial ancestors and implementing it in the modern kitchen. For this reason it is important to emphasise the role of middle-class women, who may be educated and have free time, in creating social change. Although some foods recommended by the WAPF, for example pasture fed meats in the United States, are known to be very expensive, overall, the principles of the WAPF are dynamic and there are many cost-effective options which could be applied by people of varying socioeconomic status. The individualism of modern, Western culture means
that meals are often the sole responsibility of one person to prepare on one or two incomes, whereas various communal arrangements can be more cost effective, enjoyable and require less individual time and effort. Other factors such as knowledge, access to local farms and the space to grow vegetables can also be important in determining the quality of food. These can be linked to socioeconomic status, but can be more flexible than equations of income. Modern society is designed to reinforce the dominant corporate industries, and we are encouraged to spend much of our time working in order to feed our income back into processed foods and other consumables, rather than having the satisfaction of growing and making things ourselves. I feel it is important to emphasise that these problems are social problems and cannot merely be reduced to the level of the individual, although the purchasing patterns of ‘consumers’ can have an effect.

One of the limitations of researching a broad, complex topic such as the one on which this thesis is based is that many concepts can be drawn upon, but few can be covered in any depth. Further research could be conducted, both on food blogs, which seem to be lacking in literature, and the Weston A. Price Foundation, for which no literature exists to my knowledge. However, much literature already exists covering many issues with modern food and the industry that surrounds and controls it. The problematisation of this topic has been thoroughly explored and yet few solutions are offered. The work of the Weston A. Price Foundation could be considered among the small but growing number of solutions. Although its focus is largely on the nutritional content of food, it extends into political activism and complements other social
movements which are focused on solving different food problems. *Nourishing Traditions* is so vital to the Nourishing Food Movement that it ought to be included as an appendix to this research, despite the impracticality of doing so. I can only recommend that it accompany the reading of this thesis and that any further questions are directed to the plethora of information provided by the internet.

**A Discussion over Dacquoise**

As illustrated by the blog conversation about gender and my own personal reflection above, the dispraxia of the modern food industry reflects into personal dispraxia. The intersecting and competing discourses around food often create contradictions and confusion on a personal level. It is perhaps for this reason that the relatively consistent discourses of the Weston A. Price Foundation and the Nourishing Food Movement with their basis in traditional, pre-industrialised diets is so appealing to those seeking respite from the corporate food discourse chaos. The communities formed around the principles of the Weston A. Price Foundation may be another factor encouraging engagement, involvement and participation, both online and offline, in local chapter meetings. In re-connecting with the diets of their ancestors people may also feel a sense of personal fulfilment juxtaposed to the disconnection created by the conflicting discourses around modern food and health. Knowing what’s in your food, as well as critical analysis of the dominant food and health discourses, and the practices of blogging and engaging in blog discussions can be empowering. However, even nourishing
discourse cannot provide complete isolation from the dispraxia of modern food.

Key elements of dispraxia evident in the modern food industry include the contradictory discourses and advice that people struggle to understand, with various foods, including highly processed products, being promoted as intrinsically healthy, while simplistic messages about the health dangers of other foods, such as saturated fat are constructed as obvious truths. The complexity of human biochemistry means that the simple messages about nutrition promoted by public health campaigns are dilutions or misrepresentations of what can actually be scientifically verified. The corporate funding of research has the ability to influence supposedly scientific findings in order to support the promotion of processed food items with high profit margins such as margarine, while eating butter, as an indulgent saturated fat, is discouraged. The industrial processing of modern foods often means that they are very different from the nutrition our bodies have evolved to eat, even if they are designed to appeal to our primitive taste buds. This lack of transparency is demonstrated in the chapter two exploration of the dispraxia of modern food, and is also evident in the case study of fat in chapter three and, to some extent, in the Food-in-a-Minute recipes presented earlier in this chapter.

The openness of The Nourishing Food Movement stands in stark contrast to the dispraxia of modern food. The popularity of this movement around the world, along with its strong anti-corporate focus, typifies it as a global
expression of dissent, as mentioned in the New Social Movements theory in chapter one. The Nourishing Food Movement has a strong focus on perceiving problems and highlighting them in the public arena, and generating and publishing information independently from the needs of government and industry. The NFM also can be seen as a new social movement in its reflexivity and decentralised spread of information through the internet, although the movement is partially centralised in the structure of the Weston A. Price Foundation, the generation of information and promotion of the central values of this movement through food blogs and independent websites is evidence of its decentralisation. Their emphasis on creating social chance forms part of the praxis of the Foundation.

The praxis of the Weston A. Price Foundation can also be seen in the action-reflection-action involved in the political activism of the organisation and wider social movement. The nourishing food blogs can be seen as an extension of this activism in their dissemination, sharing and building of information, which allows blog readers to educate themselves and become more empowered over their own food choices and preparation. The empowerment associated with blogging is exemplified in the blog discussion earlier in this chapter by Sandra, who said:

The thing which I think, for me, is empowering, is writing my blog. I make food and they/we eat it. Ditto dishes. I'm not sure I can even bear a sentence about laundry… But, unlike laundry and dishes and meals… my blog is still here the next day and the week and month after that. In an existence where everything that is practically vital seems to disappear in an instant and need repeating again and again and again, the permanence of my words, the link with the rest of the world, the sense that I can string a sentence together even if I cannot summon the energy or willpower to clean off the toilet roll papier mache pulp on the bathroom basin and windowsill, matters to me. (Sandra, 2010 a)
The transparency in the praxis of the Nourishing Food Movement can be seen in the recipes presented earlier in this chapter, as can the consistency of the values which fit in with the ideas promoted in *Nourishing Traditions*. One example of this can be seen as the milkshake recipe which calls for the ingredient of raw milk, which is promoted by the Weston A. Price Foundation as shown in the chapter three case study on raw milk.

The two previous sets of points illustrate polarities of the dispraxia of modern food and the praxis of the WAPF, but what the comments in the blog discussion reveal is the numerous intersecting discourses around food which they have to navigate and balance in order to find, or not, their own sense of place. This highlights the complexities, even for food bloggers, some of whom deliberately apply WAPF principles to their nutritional practices, reflecting another side of the personal tensions I spoke of at the beginning of this section in my personal reflection.

I have mixed feelings about all this!! I identify as a feminist and I see a return to natural, traditional foods as a feminist act – because I see escape from industrial consumption of any sort as being heavily intertwined with feminist ideals. But I confess to a niggling and ever so slowly growing level of discomfort with the growing number of women's homemaker blogs around (even though I guess I have one), which generally either focus on food or craft or both. I can't quite articulate my discomfort properly yet, but I think it is both a gender and class thing... Regarding the gender issue around these blogs ... I don't know. How much political and societal power do we have these days as home-makers who are thrifting, crafting, cooking food from scratch? How powerful is it really to be doing this? And is it distracting us from other political actions we could take – that would perhaps make more impact? Those questions seem to recur through the decades, and I still don't know the answers to them. (Johanna, comment in Ritchie, 2010 a)
Although, as Johanna points out, the practice of living an alternative lifestyle and blogging about it may have limitations in terms of its scope of political activism, this thesis argues that the blogging contributions are significant and important in facilitating learning and generating the growing body of information that makes up the a significant part of the Nourishing Food Movement. The realities of applying the WAPF principles can be challenging in a world which largely contradicts them in favour of fast, cheap calories in bright packaging available in a variety of flavours. But what the movement can do for those seeking a different path, is to provide a more substantive roadmap with which to navigate the confusing and contradictory messages of modern food. The blogs, more specifically, not only offer advice consistent with the roadmap, but can also offer companionship and reassurance to those who struggle to maintain their commitment to *Nourishing Traditions*. Furthermore, it is the blogs which really provide a platform where ideas can be freely challenged, refined and altered to resonate more strongly with the bloggers and blog readers, reflecting the grassroots nature of the blogs and therefore the wider Nourishing Food Movement. For example, as mentioned in the discussion of blog recipes chocolate which is not advocated by the foundation features often on different blogs in recipes that reflect the essence of the foundations ideals but also the practice of everyday life. This can also include adapting the ideas of the Nourishing Food Movement to fit with the bloggers' other personal convictions, such as religion, environmentalism, thriftiness and other political and personal values, typified in the blog posts provided the previous chapter. This freedom of expression demonstrates how the internet enables the praxis of the Foundation to operate on another level:
dynamically expanding, expressing the ultimate of Frierean praxis which is the active and emancipatory engagement of individuals in the re-development of material, contributing to the wider Nourishing Movement.

**Concluding Confection**

Each element of the menu presented sheds light on the key research questions. The literature review, focusing on modern food, demonstrates some of the many elements of dispraxia evident in mainstream nutritional science and the food industry. The case studies on saturated fat and milk also focus on some more particular break downs in praxis. While the food related values of the dominant paradigm are influence by the profit driven food industry, the values of the Weston A. Price Foundation are based on traditional nourishment in alignment with the research of Dr. Weston A. Price on the differences between pre-industrialised and industrialised diets. The Weston A. Price Foundation can be seen as a working model of praxis because their values are cohesive, integrating scientific discourse with lay understandings and their focus on critical education. The praxis of nourishing food blogging also contributes to the praxis of the WAPF and the Nourishing Food Movement. The process of writing my blog was an interesting, introspective, reflective, reflexive journey. Through it, I was able to unintentionally solicit and engage in critical discussions about gender, class and religion that were interesting and informative to this research.


Research Questions

- How does mainstream nutritional science and the food industry represent a breakdown of praxis?

Mainstream nutritional science represents a breakdown of praxis in that the advice provided by diet-dictocrats tends to reflect research that is paid for by corporate interests. This has led to the development of a discourse that is confusing, contradictory, often misleading, and potentially harmful to everyday consumers. The artificial and highly processed products promoted by the vegetable oil industry and also largely by the medical profession, is an example of this. The overly-complicated scientific nutritionism discourse leaves consumers in a position where they are often unable to decipher scientific publications or even ingredient lists on packages whereas the oversimplified public health information is obviously incomplete placing consumers uninformed at both ends of the spectrum. The immensely powerful food industry has the resources to lobby governments to influence laws in its favour and has been revealed to be exploitative of the environment and human rights. This abuse of power and lack of transparency, functioning on many levels and taking many different forms is the fundamental way in which the food industry and mainstream nutritional science represent a breakdown in praxis.

- How does the WAPF represent a working example of praxis?

The Weston A. Price Foundation and the Nourishing Food Movement represent praxis in a number of ways. The work of the Foundation represents praxis in that they provide consistent, transparent, personally meaningful
information. It also represents praxis because it draws on a range of different lay understandings of food which provide a basis through which the discourses of modern food can be critiqued robustly. The way that the foundation draws on historical meaning and ancestral wisdom constitutes praxis in that it highlights meaningful knowledge and, together with critical analysis, allows people the freedom to make informed decisions. It is the way that the work of the foundation lends itself to political activism that most importantly embodies the qualities of praxis and it is this element that is reflected in the Nourishing Food Movement. The grass roots elements of the movement epitomises the action-reflection-action of Freirean praxis. The way that the Nourishing Food Movement is open to involvement from independent bloggers is also important way through which it embodies praxis. Overall what is significant is how the both the Foundation and they Movement by sharing information empowers everyday people to decipher the many food discourses that our globalised world bombard us with.

- How do the recipes in blogs express the praxis of the Weston A. Price Foundation?

This question was intended to outline my blog research which was originally focused just on looking at Nourishing blog recipes and the way they express the praxis of the WAPF. Over the course of this research my focus has expanded somewhat. In a discussion with one of my supervisors I was asked what makes these recipes unique – could I compare them to those from the dominant food paradigm? This led to the idea of comparing them to similar recipes from Food-in-a-Minute in order to highlight the evident differences.
Some time later I stumbled across a post card describing a book on mothering blogs which focused on the embodied experience of motherhood and its expression through blogging. The quotes on the post card influenced the introduction of the blog post section of this thesis and the blog discussion section seemed to occur of its own volition as explained in the introduction to that section. Because of the evolution of the blog focused part of this thesis I have been unable to extrapolate in great deal on any one part, but each has its own value and enhances the overall understanding of food blogs in general, Nourishing blogs in particular, and the way that the praxis of the WAPF and NFM is enacted through them.

The blog posts embody not only the values and reflection of the praxis of the WAPF and the NFM but also of the personal praxis of the bloggers incorporating their own values and embodying their own experiences and communicating and engaging with their readers in multiple dimensions. This produces new knowledge in a narrative form that can highlight synthesis of the information and the different discourses as well as telling a story about the lives of the bloggers creating a context which is easy for readers of a similar ilk to relate to. The dynamic form of blog comments also reveals the way that blogs and bloggers can form communities around ideas enacting elements of NSM and translates to Freireian praxis.

The food in a minute and the nourishing recipes reflect both dispraxia and praxis respectively. The nourishing recipes reflect the values of the foundation and therefore praxis but also because the recipes are about acting
out and experiencing the values not just understanding them, they represent praxis on a more embodied micro level. By understanding ingredients and processes the knowledge gained by recipe users can empower individuals into action that contributes to the NFM in a fashion that is non-threatening and could lead to stronger political action at a later date. This process in conjunction with the blog publications on the internet enables the NFM to grow constantly, steadily but also at an exponential rate. It should also be noted that the context provided in the recipes also links to another element of praxis, that of familial or social connections rather than disconnection, of valuing rather than devaluing. The recipes are shared in conjunction with the stories alluded to above can create links between bloggers and their readers and then in turn between readers and the family and friends for which they create the food and often share recipes with.

Finally the blog discussion, while capturing the tensions and contradictions of gender and class, continue to reflect praxis in that they exemplify the critical, emancipatory, political engagement and reflection that Freire emphasises. This section also embodies praxis in the sharing and creation of knowledge evident in the discussions. The satisfying way the blog discussion took the research in a new and different direction can be seen to represent praxis in the dynamic, evolving and ultimately empowering creation of a new platform for learning within the construct of the thesis.

A Wafer Thin Mint
The work of the Weston A. Price Foundation enables us to be reflective on our own values and views; it enables us to be critical of nutritional discourse and public health information; it even enables us to be political if we so choose. But, on a more personal level, nourishing discourse allows us to indulge. It frees us from the shackles of guilt we have been taught to associate with butter and other delicious foods, and sends us home to the comforting values of our grandmothers and great grandmothers. By advocating traditionally prepared whole foods, it resonates with our primal intuition, providing an academic and informed basis that answers the discomfort often felt by myself and others in relation to modern food. I entered into the nourishing world through seeking support as a parent and found so much more. My personal journey led me to learn about and engage in this material, strengthening my already existing critique of modern food. Beyond this critique the movement offered a solution through its provision of a cohesive, comprehensive food value system. This journey has not only affected my life but also the lives of those around me. As I share my research, but also as I share my food, the ideas I have explored expand out through my own social networks. As I said earlier, food has become something of a religion to me, and *Nourishing Traditions* is my Bible, thus permanently altering my own personal praxis of food.
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Responding to some objections UPDATED. July 13, 2008
By D. Steinlage

This review is from: Nourishing Traditions: The Cookbook that Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and the Diet Dictocrats (Paperback)
While the front matter in the book is pretty earth-shaking in terms of toppling most dietary shibboleths erected in recent years, the sidebar information as you go through the book is just as eye-opening. But let me deal with some objections I noted when reading Amazon reviews of this book. There are over 200 reviews, which says something about this book: it may not be on airport book racks, but people are reading it.

The NT way of eating is downright dangerous.
This is in the eye of the beholder. Most studies showing a decrease in heart disease deaths due to cholesterol-lowering drugs or diets show an increase in death rates from all causes. Which one are you going to take your chances with? Several well-done studies audited by independent researchers show no correlation between deaths related to heart disease or artherosclerosis and the consumption of butter, eggs, and red meat. A few studies show that butter and saturated fats appear to have a protective effect.

What happens is that the government, the American Heart Association, the American Dietetic Association, and others (the Diet Dictocrats), cherry pick the studies they will publicize and which aspects of these studies the public will learn about--which the MSM then dutifully report to John Q. Public. Studies whose results seem to defy the diet-heart hypothesis are silenced, starved of funds, and ultimately shuttered. Hence you have people like my father-in-law who says he's not supposed to eat organ meats because they are high in cholesterol. There is absolutely no relationship between the amount of cholesterol in a food and the likelihood of it contributing to artherosclerosis. The one exception is a form of oxidized cholesterol (present in powdered milk and powdered eggs, and in liquid lowfat milk), which did produce artherosclerosis in rats. These are the foods we are supposed to eat to lower our cholesterol, and they actually contribute to heart disease!

Sally Fallon et al. have a thing against vegetarians.
This criticism was the most prevalent among the reviews. The reviewers were very emotional in their comments...but that should not be construed as reflecting an emotionalism (can I say that?) in the book. The book is unemotional. However, vegetarianism is the most deeply established alternate diet we have--many people are invested in it body, heart, and soul. I won't debate here whether vegetarianism is a good diet or not, but I will say that there are several points in the book where it's pointed out that pure vegetarian (vegan) diets are likely to contribute to a deficiency in fat-soluble vitamins (which come from animal products, primarily), some B vitamins and, if the grains/beans/legumes are unsoaked and unfermented, to the lack of minerals. Children in particular are profoundly affected by the lack of animal fat in the diet, and this is very sad to see.

On the other hand, a form of "vegetarianism" is followed in some cultures (more out of necessity than choice) which includes animal products in the form of eggs, raw and cultured dairy products, seafood, shrimp and fish eggs, and insects. These high-vitamin foods are sought-after commodities in these cultures, since they contain the all-important fat-soluble activators necessary for strength, long life, and healthy reproduction. The book notes that these more vegetarian cultures tend to suffer more from dental caries (as noted by Dr. Price) than others, but there are no diatribes.

The book is not well referenced.
I do not get this one at all. There are 63 footnoted pages of text explaining traditional foods, the role of certain substances in the diet (with an emphasis on fats), and the shortcomings of modern food processing and what can be done about it. There are 188 references listed in a separate section; most of these are research periodicals.
Sally Fallon is down on working moms.
"No one in modern America deserves more sympathy than the working parent on a limited budget....While it is not necessary to spend long hours in the kitchen in order to eat properly, it is necessary to spend some time in the kitchen. Simple, wholesome menus require careful planning rather than long hours of preparation...nutritious meals can be prepared very quickly when one lays the groundwork ahead of time. If your present schedule allows no time at all for food preparation, you would be wise to re-examine your priorities." There are two pages of simple hints and advice that anybody could follow.

Sally Fallon is down on moms who don't breastfeed.
"If, in spite of these measures, your milk supply is inadequate, don't feel guilty. Lack of adequate milk supply sometimes does occur, especially as baby grows and his appetite increases. You have done the best you could and your baby can still grow up healthy, strong and smart on a homemade, whole-food baby formula."

Soaked baked goods don’t turn out.
There may be some credence to this criticism. I don't know all the recipes (there aren't many bread/baked goods recipes in the book). The one recipe I made produced some very decent sourdough bread. It turned out just as the book said--it was different, and boy was it sour! The good news is, you don't have to be a purist. Although refined flour is bad for the body, you don't have to eat it by the truckload. Making your own bread (even if it breaks the NT rules) is still better than buying stuff from the store; it's fresher, tastes better, and you can buy a bag of top-quality flour for the same price you'll pay for a loaf of the good stuff. If you do that, you will rely less on pre-made bread products for the foundation of your diet--lowering your overall intake of refined carbohydrates. Without all the flour-based products from the store, and with a few home-made loaves and a batch of cornbread or muffins now and then, your protective fats will take care of you.

Sally Fallon and Mary Enig reference their own works. This is to be expected, after one has written a number of extended/scholarly works (which Mary Enig has done) and is now contributing to a book intended for a general audience.

The recommended foods/supplements are too expensive.
After reading The Maker's Diet, I had the same thought: how is everybody supposed to get a hold of raw milk and grass-fed meat? We don't all live in California and have Silicon Valley-sized incomes, bub. Don't even get me started on the supplements. This is not the case with NT. While it's true that if you want the ultimate cod-liver oil, it can get kinda spendy, the emphasis here is on putting the highest quality of food you can afford on the table. A philosophical shift might be helpful here. You will become convinced, reading this book, that the epidemic in degenerative disease afflicting Americans is due to our long-distance, highly processed mode of food production. A dollar spent today on high-quality food may save thousands in medical bills down the road. It is an investment, and you get to choose where you need to spend and where you can pull back. There are many, many simple ideas and techniques in the book that you can incorporate right now in your kitchen, lots of basic recipes and just a few key ingredients you can stock right away. Like lard.

The recipes/cooking methods take too much time.
This also would seem to be a criticism that sticks. But here again, we need to examine priorities. Do we really need to watch 3 hours of television a night? Do the kids really need to be trucking here and there to a different activity every afternoon/evening? Why can't Mom get some help in the kitchen? Perhaps the family needs to spend more time together, planting a square foot garden. Then everybody can get excited about eating food that tastes good and is good for you. And if all that Pollyannish stuff doesn't work out, Mom can just get sneaky. Pull out the margarine and substitute butter. Put liver in the tacos. Use brown rice pasta and less of it. More rice and potatoes and less bread. No more bottled salad dressing. Soak everything.

Personally, I used to stress about every meal when I first started using this book. Then I realized that if I just took 5 minutes every night to think through the next day's meals,
everything went so much more smoothly. I could soak the oatmeal or the beans, get some stock going to simmer through the night, pull out meat from the freezer, or if all else fails, make a shopping list and figure out how I can procure the stuff I need. Sometimes it can be difficult to locate a crucial ingredient. NT has a Sources page that is invaluable, especially if you want to try making something exotic, like kombucha. The Internet, of course, offers a lot of different packaged goods. And then again, different areas of the country have access to different foodstuffs. I could go to Trader Joe's and Wild Oats in Washington but they don't have that here. On the other hand, I can buy meat and milk directly from a farm. And lard from local hogs.