FEEDING DISTINCTION: CONSTRICTIONS AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF DIETARY COMPLIANCE

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To Lucia, Luigi, and Francesca

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Publications

Earlier versions of the following chapters have been already published in peer reviewed ISI journals:

Chapter 2 – Oncini, F., and Guetto, R. (2017). Cultural Capital and Gender Differences in Health Behaviours: A Study on Eating, Smoking and Drinking Patterns. *Health Sociology Review*. Published online before print March 3rd, 2017. doi: 10.1080/14461242.2017.1321493

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Preamble

Working on food from a sociological perspective has become an incredibly challenging task, because of the many standpoints one could adopt. Not surprisingly, since the dawn of sociological imagination, food has been taken as a topic of enquiry (Sassatelli, 2004; Oncini, 2016). Food revealed the historical variability of table manners (Simmel, 1997; Elias, 1984), of the great social inequalities afflicting industrial societies (Engels, 2009; Halbwachs, 2014), and of the effects of poverty on the organisation and division of food within the family (Pember Reeves, 2008). In *The Condition of The Working Class in England,* Engels (2009) described the state of malnutrition of poorer workers, as well as their inability to acknowledge 'good' taste, as a result of material conditions. Halbwachs (2014) dedicated a chapter of his analysis of patterns of consumption among the *classe ouvrière* to describing the cost and composition of their diet. Their eating habits (and more generally their lifestyle) were central to definitions of them as workers, even more than the work itself. Simmel (1997), from a rather different perspective, envisioned the meal as a symbolic action, in which he found both the individual and social character of human interaction. During the 1970s, favoured by the success of cultural sociology, eating practices truly gained central attention in the sociological field of study (Mennel et al., 1992). The work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984) assumes significance in this context. In sharp contrast with the theory of 'liberal' taste suggested by Becker and Stigler (1977) and against the 'disinterested' Kantian aesthetic, the French author claimed that tastes could be understood as symbolic expressions of class interests, indeed as barriers that fostered the reproduction of social inequalities. Bourdieu thus paved the way to a relational understanding of food preferences and their consequence for health.

Today, the sociology of food is a multifaceted discipline that must come to terms with larger sociological themes: health and social inequalities, the sociology of scientific knowledge, cultural stratification, childhood development and the like, can all be summoned to tackle eating and feeding from different perspectives. In this work, moving back and forth along complementary perspectives, I aim to provide an in-depth analysis of the social stratification of eating and feeding practices in an Italian context, with a special focus on the school canteen as a possible enhancer of children's dietary compliance. Although the thesis cannot be read as a single monograph, the fil rouge that runs through the chapters presents new insights on the ways

eating and feeding are organised, regulated, differentiated, and reproduced in Italy by adults and children.

In fact, each chapter reads as an autonomous contribution, accompanied by a specific literature review, that distinctively adds to a branch of the research on food sociology, from health to consumption passing through childhood. This *modus operandi* is the result of two distinct lines of reasoning: first, it allows us to focus on very specific topics, contributing to lines of enquiry and gaps in recent theoretical and empirical research; second, it helped me to think in terms of journal contributions, which, apart from being of great importance for future labour market opportunities, are also the most common means through which knowledge can be disseminated to scientific audiences. Nevertheless, this does not imply that the chapters are disconnected, and the reader will often find cross references throughout the manuscript.

The thesis is constructed on two different blocks, divided by methodology, but held together by the first chapter, in which I discuss the socio-philosophical foundation of the research. Here I initially draw from Bourdieu's practice theory to discuss the theoretical and methodological foundations of the thesis, and I subsequently examine the concepts of eating and feeding practices, eventually outlining the contribution of each empirical chapter.

Therefore, the first block seeks to identify theoretically informed empirical regularities using Bourdieu's (2011) theory of capitals, and its adaptation to health behaviours as proposed by Abel (2007; 2008). This part aims to 'quantify' how capital constrictions shape food consumption and beyond. Chapter 2, focusing on gender differences in health behaviours among adults (Courtenay, 2000), analyses the determinants of dietary compliance, drinking behaviour and smoking, and how gender differentials change depending on the respondent's levels of cultural capital. Chapter 3, however, which paves the way for the subsequent ethnography, focuses on the determinants of dietary compliance among Italian schoolchildren, and specifically on the role of the school canteen as an equaliser that can mitigate health inequalities by improving the diet of most disadvantaged children.

In the second block, I focus on eating and feeding practices as social constructions. This part of the work allows me to go behind and beyond the empirical regularities shown in the previous chapters. Behind, because qualitative data provide an opportunity to consider the epistemological foundations and the political implications of the construction of dietary compliance, in school and at home; beyond, because they allow us to excavate *in vivo* how eating and feeding are part of a contested field of knowledge that depends on family

endowments. The three chapters are hence based on the ethnographic fieldwork and the in-depth interviews conducted in four Italian primary schools. Chapter 4, partially rooted in the Foucauldian tradition of governmentality studies, uses the concept of strategy and tactics (de Certeau, 1984) to analyse the construction and implementation of a healthy meal and the resistances that arise around and within the school canteen. On a different note, chapter 5 makes use of the in-depth interviews with parents and the fieldnotes gathered in Poversano and Goldazzo school canteens to study how cultural and economic family resources shape parental feeding practices, their perception of the school meal and children's knowledge of healthy food and cuisine. Finally, chapter 6 illustrates what happens to food education programs when they are applied in extreme contexts, such as the school of a poverty-stricken neighbourhood of Palermo.

In the conclusions, I summarise the most important findings of the manuscript, and I draw attention to the possible implications for school food programs as well as for future directions for research.

Chapter 1
Towards a Theory of Feeding Practices

1. Introduction

The cultural turn of the 70s has been characterized by the rise and success of the so-called practice theorists. In an attempt to overcome the long-lasting ontological and epistemological antinomies that have afflicted the social sciences ever since, an outstanding proliferation of accounts has been proposed. Heavily influenced by Marxism, phenomenology, structuralism, semiotics and late Wittgenstein these approaches have all suggested new paths for an understanding of the main dilemmas regarding what can be heuristically called the *formation* of *social action*. Whilst '*formation*' closely regards the dialectic between materialism and idealism, '*social*' and '*action*' are more deeply concerned with social theory itself, namely with the structure-agency debate and with the opposition between normative and utility oriented types of action (Reckwitz, 2002).[1] In sociology, 'bringing culture back in', as opposed to Homans' programmatic article for a neo-utilitarianism (1964), became a common feature of different approaches.[2] The landscape of practice theorists is all but coherent and devoid of conflict. Bourdieu's 'righteous wrath' against Latour (2004) or the amusing ditty composed by Shalins on Foucault (Sahlins, 2002: 20)[3] are just but a few patent examples. Yet, as Sherry Ortner (1984) elucidated, central axes of the theory can actually be retrieved. In presenting her concise essay on anthropological social theory since the '60s, she convincingly stated that those new practice theorists, amongst whom she put herself, were not bonded by a particular method or theory, but rather by a set of similar interests. As a matter of fact, they were drawn together by a common dissatisfaction with the antinomies that governed social sciences, and by the idea

[1] As for theories of practice, many different solutions have been proposed within these two approaches. Goldthorpe (2007b) outlines major tendencies within RAT; Joas and Knobl (2009) offer an overview of the debate between normativism and neo utilitarianism

[2] In this case, I admittedly refer solely to sociological theory, which at the time was not as aware as anthropology of the fundamental importance of culture in guiding social theory. Evidently, the internal debate in anthropology has always been on the definition of culture or cultural system, as well as on its relationship with nature (see Sahlins, 1994 for a critical reading): culture has always been, by definition, its research object. For anthropology, in this sense, it is maybe better to talk of interpretative or symbolic turn, mainly guided by Geertz (2006) and Turner V. (2002) (see Ortner, 1984). Nonetheless, this fundamental shift was evidently *in fieri* also in sociology, since boundaries between the two disciplines have never been set (with the comprehensible exception of handbooks). As a matter of fact, Geertz was a scholar of Parsons and drew fully from Weber; on the contrary, Durkheim played a major influence on Turner.

[3] 'Power, power everywhere/And how the signs do shrink/Power, power everywhere/And nothing else to think.'

that the answer relied on a particular view of the concept of *praxis*. *Praxis*, 'the whole of human action', was then to be interpreted as the theoretical *locus* where the alternatives to the conflicting dualisms could be formulated. They were by no means escaping the influence of their masters; rather, they were exploiting them to shape a third way. In this sense, the logic of *praxis* prepares the ground for establishing a dialogical relationship between the objectivism-subjectivism and the structure-agency dilemmas. This is not to say that those particular questions were ever solved, but new perspectives for their understanding eventually flourished. After all, also functionalism and utilitarianism can be very miscellaneous within their core, but common features can still be identified. Depending on authors, different aspects and influences can be highlighted. Reckwitz (2002), for instance, sustains that practice theory is a specific trend within the cultural turn, and makes explicit reference to Bourdieu, Giddens, Latour and Schatzki; Turner S. (1994), in his unsympathetic critique, labels all cultural theorists as practice theorists. Ortner (2006: 16), dissimilarly, points the attention towards those authors that stressed the intertwining of power, history and culture in constructing 'a theory of the production of social subjects through practice in the world, and of the production of the world itself through practice'.

As far as I am concerned, I see the strength of practice theory in its conceptual openness.[4] Nowadays, the term identifies a vague and large set of approaches that generally share the view that a loose set of organized, identifiable and intertwined activities (i.e. doings and sayings) are socially constituted and characterized by 'material, embodied, ideational and affective components' (Welch and Warde, 2015: 85). The focus on human praxis suggests indeed a possible pragmatic usage of these notions, eventually resulting in actual practical interventions in public policies for promoting change (Hargreaves, 2011; Shove, 2014). Nonetheless, since some authors within practice theory have admittedly proposed their own research program as one that by definition avoids issues of social stratification,[5] I find comfort in heading back to Bourdieu's theoretical framework whilst acknowledging some major problematic aspects of its

[4] As Lizardo (2007: 346) suggests practice theory seems indeed to fit with recent neuroscientific evidence on mirror neurons, showing how 'pragmatic' and 'conceptual' representations are more intertwined than previously thought, and by putting the accent on the tacit imitation process 'guaranteed' by those neural structures. 'Thus, tacit presuppositions regarding the goals and meaning of social action, rather than being 'locked' in the mind, are 'out in the open' being chronically transmitted from one embodied agent to another in the course of routine social interaction'.

[5] This point emerged quite clearly during the workshop '*Beyond Practices: Sustainable Consumption and Sociotechnical Systems*' held at the University of Manchester in 2015 and organized by Daniel Welch from the Sustainable Consumption Institute. Elizabeth Shove maintained that the study of practices does not entail social stratification issues, which belong, so to say, to another area of sociology.

work. The chapter is structured as follows: first I lay out the epistemological foundations of the research as a dialectic between structuralism and constructivism; second, I present the theoretical and conceptual backbones of the thesis through Bourdieu's concepts of doxa, capitals and habitus; third, I define and delimit feeding practices as the array of endeavours for the nourishment of infants and children; finally, I outline the methodological translation of this approach.

2. The Logic of Practice: Epistemological Foundations

Among practice theorists, Bourdieu's attempt at synthesis is of particular significance. Being a scholar much devoted to a systemic and theoretically informed empirical work, he left a coherent sociological toolkit that can be used on a variety of topics. Bourdieu's program had an accurate vocabulary (habitus, field, capital), a coherent and heterogeneous combination of methods (ethnography and Multiple Correspondence Analysis), and, most importantly, a proposal for the understanding of the subject-object dichotomy that could sustain his scientific approach to sociological research. This is not to say that his work is devoid of hurdles or flaws. All in all, thinking 'with Bourdieu' also requires thinking beyond and against him (Wacquant, 1992; King, 2000). As Wacquant (2014b) suggested, Bourdieu's methodological tools are still be able to accommodate certain problematic aspects of his theory as long as those very central concepts are considered as means (and not as ends) of the research process itself.

Bourdieu's theory of practice emerges as a consequence of his dissatisfaction with the objectivism of i) structuralism, which ends up neglecting 'the functional properties the message derives from its *use* in a specific situation, and, more precisely, in a socially structured interaction' (1977: 25) and with the 'biographical illusion' produced by ii) phenomenology (or, more specifically, ethnomethodology), which maintains that 'scientific knowledge is continuous with common-sense knowledge, because it is only a 'construction of constructions'' (Bourdieu, 1990a). These two points deserve a specification, since Bourdieu's theory of practice eventually results from their dialectic more than from their rejection *tout court*.

2.1 Structuralism

Structuralism, and especially its Marxist version, influenced the French sociologist right from the very beginning of his career, and particularly during his Algerian fieldwork (Bourdieu, 1990b). Bourdieu holds firmly that the major failure of the structural reason is the estrangement of agents from their conducts, that in turn annihilates the object of social research itself, *viz*

social action. Nonetheless, taken as a moment of the dialectic, it constitutes a necessary step of the research process because it sheds light on the unconscious 'grammar' of society. Macro-structures, that may take the form of *constructed* empirical regularities, delineate 'the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 54). Yet, the same process of formalization, if abstracted from the practical reason of individuals, is doomed to intellectualist fallacy: it fails to disentangle the difference between 'the model of reality and the reality of the model' it proposes (in Swartz, 1998: 58). The set of rules that emerge from empirical regularities of practices, are certainly 'heuristically useful', but they cannot be confused with their application, which must be meaningful for the subject that governs them (Crossley, 2001). This point is indeed at the base of Bourdieu's usage of a mixed methodology: whilst statistical analysis can discover actual distributions of practices by means of different endowments of capital, ethnographic insights give back to the actors partial 'authority' over their actions (Swartz, 1998; Vandenberghe, 1999; Robbins, 2007).[6]

The tension between the *opus operatum* and the *modus operandi* thus results in a proposal for the structure-agency resolution very much analogous to Giddens' structuration theory[7] (Giddens, 1979; 1984; Vandenberghe, 1999; Joas and Knöbl, 2009). Sociology, eventually, has to simultaneously take into account 'the things we *do* and the things which *happen*' (Louch, 1966). This is not to say that Giddens and Bourdieu have similar conceptions of structure and agency. Whilst the former holds that 'structure is implicated in that very 'freedom of action'' (Giddens, 1984: 174), and does not constitute an outer limit, the latter eventually gives a causal effect to structural properties. However, for both authors, day to day activities and routines represent a fundamental expression of this process of duality. Giddens (1984) stresses that routines are able to minimize sources of anxiety and that the repetitive nature of habits foster the reproduction of institutionalized practices. Bourdieu (1984), much more concerned with

[6] 'Statistical analysis of the numerical relations between elements are useful insofar as they allow the sociologist to break the illusory network of relation that are spontaneously spun in ordinary life, but they are only a first step and have to be inserted themselves in a relational network of a higher order that gives a rational account of the observed statistical relations' (Vandenberghe, 1999: 42). This does not necessary imply that quantitative analysis cannot provide insights about the actors' agency: for instance, one can ask direct questions on practices, but also examine deviations from predicted patterns. What, however, cannot be obtained through standardized questionnaires, which reflect the researcher's point of view (the scholastic doxa) is a still partial, yet closer, grasp of people's meaning making process, namely an emic account of their subjective knowledge.

[7] Giddens also clearly recognizes intellectual affinities, crediting Bourdieu for adopting 'a standpoint in some respects similar to that which I want to suggest here' (Giddens, 1979: 217)

empirical research, shows how daily practices are structured and reproduced through social classes, constrained by and contained in the habitus as an individual and collective feature.

A second major influence of structuralism, however, lies in the relational mode of thought, which Bourdieu directly draws from Saussurian linguistics. As the meaning of a particular word arises from its differentiation from other signifiers, practices make sense inasmuch they are defined in relation to one another. As de Saussure (1993) explains, within language, words are related by their syntagmatic linkage.[8] The juxtaposition of *magn-* and *animus*, or the formulation of a sentence such as '*s'il vous plait*' are examples of syntagmatic relations: not only the whole is more than the sum of its parts, but each unit gains its uniqueness from the position it takes within the chain. Similarly, according to Bourdieu (1990b: 8 emphasis mine):

> To give a complete account of the slightest rite, to rescue it completely from the absurdity of an unmotivated sequence of unmotivated acts and symbols, one would thus have to reinsert each of the acts and symbols which it brings into play into the system of differences which determines it most directly, and eventually into the whole mythico-ritual system; and also, simultaneously, into the *syntagmatic sequence* which defines it in its singularity which, as the intersection of all the sets of differences (crossroads, daybreak, quenching water, etc.), limits the arbitrariness of its own elements.[9]

But practices are not just differentiated within the structure. As Bourdieu (1984) indicates in *Distinction*, practices observe a hierarchical order which stems from particular combinations of cultural, economic and social capital within the social field. Consequently, this implies that certain practices (or different ways of engaging in the same practice) can be perceived as more 'appropriate' than others because they constitute the doxa (or doxais) at a given historical moment (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).[10] In this light, an addendum may be useful that helps

[8] Syntagmatic relations are opposed to paradigmatic or associative relations, which are a group, a series or a family of words which belong to a single category. *Animus*, *animal* and *anima* are examples of associative relations (de Saussure, 1993). According to Schäfer, paradigmatic relations in Bourdieu's thinking correspond to the relations '*between* the levels of position-takings, dispositions and social positions' (2015: 114). Vandenberghe (personal communication, August 15, 2015) provided me with a much more interesting and useful explanation: whilst syntagmatic relations that are to be found between practices, paradigmatic relations refer to the concept of field. Each field is a *system* of relations of differences. The position within a field is always defined in relation to other people's positions. Over time, practices reproduce and/or change the composition and the structure of the field.

[9] And continues: 'Thus one can describe the advance of any structural research in the very same words that Duhem uses to describe the advance of physical science: 'a symbolic painting in which continual retouching gives greater comprehensiveness and unity...whereas each detail of this picture, cut off and isolated from the whole, loses all meaning and no longer represents anything' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 8).

[10] Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu, naturally arises from the clash between opposite class world-views regarding practices and their conduct. However, although the term may be 'politically' efficient, it puts too much stress on coercion and conflict. In the case of eating practices, despite the fact that an actual symbolic fight may

to distinguish between two different forms of practice stratification. First, since practices 'compete for finite resources of time for the *practitioner*' (Watson, 2012: 493) they are 'horizontally' stratified. People with different socioeconomic backgrounds engage, *de facto*, in different activities (e.g. Alderson et al., 2007; Warde et al., 2007; Bennett et al., 2009; Chan, 2010; Tampubolon, 2010; Katz-Gerro and Jaeger, 2013). But also, I believe, practices can be 'vertically' stratified: that is, people may engage in the same activity in very different ways (such as listening to music: Bryson, 1996), or with a very diverse frequency (as in the case of the 'voracious' consumer: Sullivan and Katz-Gerro, 2006). Eating is a sound example of a vertically stratified practice: all people halt their hunger, but they do so in a different manner.

2.2 Constructivism

The second epistemological stream which informs Bourdieu's project can be generally labelled as 'constructivist' or, more generally, 'subjectivist' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In particular, Bourdieu refers to the philosophical works of Husserl, Wittgenstein, Merlau-Ponty, Heidegger and Schutz and consequently to their sociological application as proposed by Garfinkel's ethnomethodology and in part by Goffman's symbolic interactionism. As a 'phase' of his practice theory, Bourdieu (1990b) envisioned within phenomenological approaches the possibility to move from individuals as objects constrained by a structure, to actors as meaning-making subjects (Atkinson, 2010). As a mode of knowledge based on the relation between the object '*qua* experience', and the consciousness that tends to that object (*viz*, to its construction by means of perception), phenomenology certainly provides a fruitful framework for the depiction of practices, namely for the meaning they assume from the point of view of the carrier. Thus, Bourdieu shares with Husserl (1984, in Joas and Knöbl, 2009: 159) that

> The *ontic* meaning [*Seinssinn*] of the pregiven life-world is a *subjective structure* [*Gebilde*], it is the achievement of experiencing, pre-scientific life. In this life the meaning and the ontic validity [*Seinsgeltung*] of the world are built up – of that particular world, that is, which is actually valid for the individual experiencer.

This attention to the immediate familiarity and meaningfulness of the *hic et nunc* leads Bourdieu to focus on the taken-for-granted of the lived experience and of its routines. It is not by chance that the concepts of doxa, which I will discuss in a while, is directly drawn from Husserl. In sympathy with ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1963) and against Parson's top-down normative action, Bourdieu stresses that the *structural* order is maintained through the stable features of

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eventually be played out (see note 13 in chapter 5) it is probably excessive to talk of symbolic violence. Conflicts may arise, but rarely in a very pronounced fashion.

the ordinary and its 'perceived normality'. Following the rules, in the sense of being committed to 'motivated compliance' consists of having a grasp of and endorsing the natural facts of life in society (Garfinkel, 1964). And similarly, along with Goffman (1951), Bourdieu (2000: 184) is aware that the actors on the stage of life are conscious of their own position in the ranks. But whilst endorsing subjectivists' approaches for contextualizing the *praxis*, thus bringing *la parole* back into the 'anaemic' structural *langue*,[11] Bourdieu's criticism pointed toward the inability to account for the roots of people's natural attitudes. Without an intertwining with the structural conditions that produce particular 'taken-for-grantedness', sociological description ends up being in a partial state. The risk of such a micro-tenure is indeed that of a conservative glance, the construction of a sociology wherein homogeneity, regulation and harmony of common-sense overtake its endogenous, heterogeneous, unequal and conflicting dominant-dominated relationship (Atkinson, 2010).[12] Or alternatively, even when a Marxist stance is adopted (as in Sartre's description of the café waiter), the over-intellectualized reflexivity attached to consciousness ends up by producing the chimera of 'a waiter's body with a philosopher's head' (Bourdieu, 1981: 310). It is true that social constructions are perpetually re-produced, shaped and changed by social agents, but sociological analysis must not neglect that those very principles of organization of reality (categories, concepts and meanings; and consequently: definitions of the situations, typifications and interpretations) are not emergent creations of individuals. Rather, they result from the slow and unconscious incorporation of existing structures. The genetic bridge between societal and mental structures hence gives primacy to the former, yet relying on the latter for its reproduction and change. As Wacquant (1992: 13) puts it: 'an adequate science of society must encompass both objective regularities and the process of internalization of objectivity whereby the transindividual, unconscious principles of di(vision) that agents engage in their practice are constituted.'

2.3 Epistemological Vigilance

Bourdieu's concern with common language does not entail that scientific concepts are held in a continuum with ordinary ones (Vandenberghe, 1999). Of course, he follows Wittgenstein's philosophy of action in stating that words do not exist outside their usage. The same activity of thinking has to be posed as a practical quest: it is our acting that lies at the bottom of language; consequently, people learn that things exist by engaging with them, and not vice versa. In

[11] 'Saussure's work reduces individual practice, skill, everything that is determined practically by reference to practical ends, that is style, manner, and ultimately the agents themselves, to the actualization of a kind of historical essence, in short, nothing' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 33)

[12] With the important exception of Collins' conflictual micro-sociology (Collins and Sanderson, 2009).

accordance with a conceptualization of world-picture as the ground above which we define what is true and what is false, Bourdieu agrees with the pragmatist claim that 'every view is significant for the one who sees it as significant. Indeed, *in this sense*, every view is equally significant' (in Easton, 1983: 110, emphasis mine). In the same vein, playing chess or scoring a goal do not consist of 'blindly following the rules' that constrain the player (Sharrock and Dennis, 2008). Playing is irreducibly a matter of agency. At the same time, without the objectified physical limits of the chessboard in which those games are contained, and without the interiorized prescriptions, no game can take place. And since societal rules are not as clearly established in writing as those of chess or football, a break with the deceptive surface of those representations is needed. Unlike Wittgenstein, Bourdieu endorses the fight over the ordinary and calls for sociological suspicion and epistemological vigilance (Frère, 2004).

In this sense, the sociologist has to adopt a critical realist stance (Bhaskar, 2008). On the one hand, all social reality is interpreted reality. Its interpretation is valid for the subject applying certain categories to the portion of the real that surrounds him, the *realissimum* of his consciousness (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). However, since the original movement is from the real to its construction and from the ontological to the phenomenological, the possibility of an epistemological fracture (one that indeed overturns that relationship by construction of rational analytical models) is introduced. Sociology is therefore an attempt to go beyond the hidden, avoiding the antonymic illusion of immediate or absolute knowledge. Relativism can thus be embraced as a methodological means for producing scientific knowledge on condition that social life may be explained by its structural limitation.

3. Three Theoretical Backbones

Critically standing between phenomenology and structuralism can be theoretically disentangled using three of Bourdieu's most famous notions: first, the introduction of the concept of *doxa* within sociological analysis permits to overhaul the rupture between structure and common sense; second, *the theory of capitals* can be used as a methodological shortcut for modelling structural forces; third, adopting *the habitus* as a conceptual tool that can bridge both statically (as a set of practical dispositions that continuously guide people's world-views) and dynamically (as the main historical engine of societal reproduction and change), agents and their structures.

3.1 Doxa

As many other concepts in Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus, doxa[13] appears several times, and often in a slightly different fashion. For this reason, I find it useful to follow Myles's article (2004), where he distinguishes between two separate Husserlian adoptions of the concept in Bourdieu's work. On the one hand, there is doxa identified as the reflexive epistemology adopted by the social scientist. In using the particular theoretical baggage acquired from his academic status ('the habits of the intellectual') and from his personal experiences, the sociologist has to be aware of the hindrances that characterize the process of grasping someone else's point of view.[14] According to Bourdieu, this is particularly true when there is a gap in professional prestige (i.e. cultural legitimacy) between the researcher and the researched (Bourdieu, 1984: 318):

> One of the surest indications of recognition of legitimacy is the tendency of the most deprived respondents to disguise their ignorance or indifference and to pay homage to the cultural legitimacy which the interviewer possesses in their eyes, by selecting from their cultural baggage the items which seem to them closest to the legitimate definition […].[15]

However, Bourdieu seems to exaggerate the extent to which this process produces an over-intellectualized account of other people's 'pictures of the world'. Paradoxically, he winds up reifying the same reality he is trying to 'objectively' depict, whilst underrating the actual reflexivity of the actors (their inner discourses, as Archer, 2003 would put it).[16] It is true that the scientific language carried through the habitus of the academic always results in a biased interference pattern; but it is equally true that the researcher cannot help but establish a 'communicative action' with his research object, one oriented to reaching a common understanding of things in the objective, social and subjective world (Habermas, 2007). This is particularly true during ethnographic research: the initial disruption caused by the researcher

[13] Doxa (δόξα) derives from *dokein* (δοκεῖν) and generally refers to popular or common belief.

[14] 'A reflexive sociology is an exploration of the resources the social scientist brings to bear, allowing him or her to construct a social understanding which includes the location and motivations of the enquiring mind' (Jenkins, 2006: 46)

[15] According to Bourdieu (1984) this is an example of allodoxa, namely believing to act according to a sort of cultural legitimacy whilst not doing so. See also note 2 in chapter 4.

[16] Bourdieu is certainly aware of this: this is why he arrives to a reflexive sociology. In many writings Bourdieu tends to adopt a compassionate glance towards the 'wretched', as he calls them, and thus neglects what Giddens calls the 'dialectic of domination', referring to the ways in which the 'dominated' have room of manoeuvre (to a certain extent) (Giddens, 1984; Joas and Knöbl, 2009). Being himself a product of social mobility, he feels pity for the object of study and guilt for his social escalation from 'the rural to the cosmopolitan' (Jenkins, 2006: 49). Although he is rather frank in admitting this bias, he does not do anything to actively deal with it; rather, his sociological perception is totally hauled by that.

in the field slowly enters a phase of normalization. Although roles and power balances do not blur or disappear, a new equilibrium is eventually reached.

The second type of doxa refers more generally to the undiscussed nature of particular norms, the self-evidence of natural and social world. Doxa is a 'practical faith', an 'undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive, native compliance' with particular *presuppositions* (Bourdieu, 1990b: 68). Simply stated, 'there are many things people accept without knowing' (Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992: 114). In this light, it is possible to understand how doxa as reflexive epistemology is basically a particular case of this type of doxa, namely its formulation within the academic field, the 'presuppositions constituting the doxa generically associated with the *skhole*, leisure, which is the condition of existence of all scholarly fields' (Bourdieu, 2000: 10). This is indeed why Wacquant (1992) suggested using the plural term doxais, implying a different application of the concept depending on the practice (or field) we are looking at.

The act of recognition of a particular order has a twofold implication: on the one hand, it establishes the 'legitimate' perception in a given historical moment. As in religion, 'heresy', as a form of heterodoxy, is not an essentialist concept, but can be defined only *vis-à-vis* orthodoxy (Berlinerblau, 2001), the same applies in the 'cultural' game (Bourdieu, 2000: 102).

> All those who are involved in the fields, whether champions of orthodoxy or heterodoxy, share a tacit adherence to the same *doxa* which makes their competition possible and assigns its limits (the heretic remains a believer who preaches a return to purer forms of the faith). It effectively forbids questioning of the principles of belief, which would threaten the very existence of the field.

On the other, and complementarily, it establishes the perception of one's limit in relation to that legitimacy, because it is a form of knowledge-ability derived from experience (Myles, 2004).[17] At the same time, the act of recognition does not necessarily imply endorsement or adherence to the doxa, which is always subjected to critical change over time and to resistance (Bourdieu, 2000).

[17] 'The knowledge supplied by incorporation of the necessity of the social world, especially in the form of the sense of limits, is quite real, like the submission which it implies and which is sometimes expressed in the imperative statements of resignation 'That's not for us' ('or not for the likes of us) or, more simply, 'It's too expensive' (for us).' (Bourdieu, 2000: 185 in Myles, 2004).

3.2 The Forms of Capital

The distinction between forms of capital is one of Bourdieu's widely acknowledged contributions to sociology (Bennett et al., 2009).[18] In maintaining that cultural, economic and social resources are central tools for the study of society, Bourdieu combines two perspectives that cohabit uncomfortably under the same sociological roof. On the one hand, he dismisses the reductivist view of culture advanced by vulgar Marxism, yet relying on the notion and the properties of capital itself. In this respect, any type of capital is related to different forms of labour, whether 'in its materialized form or its incorporated, embodied form', and can therefore be accumulated over time (Bourdieu, 2011: 83). In this light, there is a tight analogy between hoarding wealth, reading books, and associating with a particular group of people. On the other hand, as Bourdieu clearly maintains in *Distinction* (1984), his attempt is directed toward a reformulation of Weber's opposition between class and status. Lifestyles are therefore to be interpreted as direct links to class positions, as expressions of the habitus structuring structure inasmuch as classes themselves are structured in social space through combinations of social, cultural and economic capital (Weininger, 2005). The synthesis between Marx and Weber hence suggests that the distribution of cultural preferences should be seen as actual balances of power through which social classes tend to reproduce their positions by transmission of the various capitals to their descendants (Swartz, 1998).

More specifically, the three forms of capital are the means through which the sociologist can account for the structure and functioning of the social world. Social capital refers to the network of more or less institutionalised relationships 'of mutual acquaintance and recognition' people access as members of a group, which are based on the exchange of material and symbolic resources and that concur to the maintenance and reproduction of one's position in the social space. This type of capital however, despite being relevant for the analysis of consumption patterns (e.g. Ball et al., 2009; 2010) will not be used in the present thesis.[19]

[18] Given its widespread use within many areas of sociology, the concept of cultural capital can be considered as a keystone of the discipline. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning the harsh and violent critique advanced by Goldthorpe (2007a) in Sociologica 2/2007 and 1/2008 followed by a series of responses and counterarguments. Goldthorpe ultimately refuses the concept *tout court,* preferring the notion of cultural resources. In this thesis, I will use both the terms interchangeably, because I do not see many conceptual clashes in stating that they represent almost the same thing. The value of the concept, I believe, has indeed been confirmed by the huge amount of studies that employed the measure to evaluate how family investments yield return on children's skills, opportunities and tastes (see Jæger and Breen, 2016 for a review and application on longitudinal data).

[19] There are two main reasons for this choice. First, despite the notion of social capital has been widely used in the study of food consumption (Ball et al., 2009; 2010) and food deprivation (Martin et al., 2004), boundaries between social classes and within class fractures have been mainly studied contrasting economic vs cultural

Whilst economic capital refers to money and properties, the definition of cultural capital is less straightforward, which partially explains the harsh debates and criticisms. Given the influence of structuralism on Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus, it is worth first remembering that cultural practices are hierarchically structured and mutually defined in relation to legitimate culture.

Despite cultural capital plays a major role in the habitus formation process, it also gained a certain deal of theoretical independence. As a matter of fact, many authors generally speak about cultural capital theory without referring it to the wider conceptual framework (e.g. Barone, 2006; Prieur and Savage, 2011). Most importantly, cultural capital, just as much as economic capital, is transmitted to offspring thus guaranteeing its reproduction. People who can draw on cultural capital possess and hand down to their progenies a certain knowledge about legitimate tastes and practices. This is why cultural capital cannot be seen as a monolithic concept, but is revealed by a set of different abilities: appropriateness of language, aesthetic dispositions, possession of particular goods and so forth (Swartz, 1998). Bourdieu (2011) himself proposed a threefold distinction cultural capital: the *institutionalized*, the *embodied* and the *objectified* state.

The *institutionalized* form refers to educational credentials. Academic credentials do not only function as legalized barriers that mark differences and shape life opportunities among members of a society (for example, sanctioning the difference between the self-educated and those who hold a real qualification), but also, they are a 'certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value' (2011: 88). Different levels of education hence institutionalize the sense of place we discussed above, and tend to be reproduced over generations (e.g. Breen and Jonsson, 2005).

The *embodied* state 'in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, *Bildung*, presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labour of inculcation and assimilation, costs time [...]' (Bourdieu, 2011: 244). The intergenerational transmission of the embodied state is largely unconscious and takes place over time. The embodied state thus refers to the long-lasting dispositions of mind and body and creates cultural distinctions which are perceived as natural.

capital. Jarness (2015) offers a remarkable example in this regard. Second, focusing also on the relation between social capital and eating practices would have been hard to incorporate in the quantitative part, given the structure of the data, and would have required additional questions (and therefore interviewees' availability) in the interview guide.

With *objectified* cultural capital, Bourdieu refers to the material objects owned by the family which carry a highly symbolic meaning. Although these objects are immediately transmitted physically, they also function as cultural signals that indicate which position individuals hold in social space in relation to cultural legitimacy.

These resources permit the actors that possess them to acquire a strategic position within a particular field and to act in line with the legitimate culture. What makes the dominant class dominant is hence the ability to handle those resources, namely a capacity to translate, interiorize and transmit what is commonly accepted as 'morally superior', 'right', 'cultivated' or 'refined'. Moreover, Prieur and Savage (2011; 2013) argue that cultural capital is a dynamic concept. It changes with and through societal transformation and has to be related to the particular field in which is at play.

One of the problematic aspects of the relationship between cultural and economic capital, is the seemingly determining effect of the latter on the former. This is specifically stated in the essay on the forms of capitals, when Bourdieu explains that economic capital 'is at the root of all the other types capital' (2011: 91). This aspect of the theory is problematic for two main reasons: on a theoretical base, it appears to jeopardise the great effort Bourdieu himself makes to 'disentangle' economic and cultural resources. He seems to successfully walk the fine line between 'economism' and 'semiologism' then to reduce the latter to the 'brutal fact' of the former. Methodologically, it does not leave space to the different effects they could exert within the same social class or educational level.[20] Quite paradoxically, Bourdieu's exemplification of the individual's space through axes seems to suggest that these resources actually shape social space in different ways and that indeed they could exert different effects. Interestingly, the concept of cultural capital was originally conceived understand the different educational achievement of pupils within the same social classes, thus suggesting that different capitals could exert different effects on life chances (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This is probably the reason why many studies concerned with cultural capital have tested its predictive power as an independent variable on children's educational attainments (Andersen and Hansen, 2012; Barone, 2006; Di Maggio, 1982; Kraaykamp and van Eijck, 2010; Sullivan, 2001) next-generation cultural choices (Kraaykamp, 2003; Kraaykamp and Nieuwbeerta, 2000) or next-generation cultural goods possession (Kraaykamp and van Eijck, 2010). Moreover, as Yaish

[20] In this regard, my position is very kindred to Di Maggio's (2007) when he states that Bourdieu's emphasis on class *fractions* (hence not just 'classes') offered an enduring valuable insight very close to the Weberian concept of status.

and Katz-Gerro (2012) have shown, the analytical disentanglement of cultural and economic capital suggest that the former predict cultural preferences, whereas the latter drives participation in cultural activities. Since taste and participation are analytically distinguishable, they can both be used to analyse how the habitus dispositions and practices are organised (Katz-Gerro and Yaish, 2008). In the realm of food consumption, as I will show in chapters 3 and 5, this distinction can be applied in a similar manner: food taste, which here is studied as compliance to dietary recommendations, is mostly associated with cultural capital; food 'participation', namely the type of store where groceries are purchased, however, is better predicted by economic capital.[21]

3.3 Habitus and Beyond

The concept of habitus is an amalgam of methodological hurdles. The notion has accompanied the French sociologist since the first phases of his career, and immediately assumed a pivotal role throughout his theory of practice. In this light, it might be useful to distinguish between two levels on which the habitus comes into play: within Bourdieu's social philosophy, the habitus is the tool that establishes a dialogical relationship between objectivism and subjectivism, the two points of the research I illustrated in the first part of the chapter. Practices result from the intertwining of subjective perceptions and structured positions (Bourdieu, 1990b: 52):

> The theory of practice insists, contrary to positivist materialism that the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorder, and contrary to intellectualist idealism, that the principle of this construction is the system of structure, structuring

[21] Yet Bourdieu (1984: 97-125) explicitly rejects the language of variables as a manifestation of positivistic logic, preferring to use Multiple Correspondence Analysis in order to avoid the dependent/independent dichotomy. Bourdieu's preoccupation is well expressed in this excerpt (1984: 94):

> The principles of logical division which statistics uses to produce its classes and the data it records about them are thereof also principles of 'socio-logical division'. The statistical variations associated with the (immediately defined) two main variables – educational level and social origin – can only be correctly interpreted so long as it is remembered that they are bound up with the antagonistic definition of legitimate culture and of the legitimate relation to culture […].

In his view, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) can overcome this problem. MCA, as a form of geometrical data analysis, can satisfactorily depict the homologies between the space of individuals and the space of properties (i.e. the manifestations of their preferences), pledging, so to speak, each actor's uniqueness. In Bourdieu's words, MCA helps to 'think' in relational terms (Rouanet et al., 2000). Thereby cultural, economic and social capital are not treated as independent variables, but as spatial dimensions defining the means of production of the habitus.

> dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented to practical functions.[22]

The sociological level, which is of greater concern in this part of the chapter, may be seen as the specific application of the concept within empirical research. Given that Bourdieu provided several definitions of the notion in many of his works, I take comfort in marking a dividing line between a *synchronic* and a *diachronic* interpretation of the habitus (see Wacquant, 2014a). With the former, I refer to its definition as a (Bourdieu, 1990b: 53)

> system of durable, transposable dispositions, *structural structures* predisposed to function as *structuring structures*, that is, principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the *operations* necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of conductor.

I see this as the *synchronic* interpretation of habitus because it regards the matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions through which individuals and/or groups *at a particular moment in time* share and generate similar practices (or manners of conducting them).[23] Habitus consists of differentiated and differentiating principles of classification that guide subjects within the structure on the base of the capitals they possess.[24] Different habitus dispositions produce contrasting and differentiated visions, hence creating the infrastructures for the sociological divisions of tastes and conducts (Bourdieu, 1998). In this light, the habitus is the juncture between structure and agency. The former is internalized and incorporated in terms of possibilities and impossibilities, hindrances and opportunities entailed in the objective conditions (such as physical environment, language, endowments of capital, social relations).[25] The latter 'informs' the habitus by carrying the practices, enabling the achievement of diversified tasks which are meaningful, self-evident and natural for the actors themselves.

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[22] Or similarly: 'The 'subject' born of the world of objects does not arise as a subjectivity facing an objectivity: the objective universe is made up of objects which are the product of objectifying operations structured according to the same structures that the habitus applies to them. The habitus is a metaphor of the world of objects, which is itself an endless circle of metaphors that mirror each other ad infinitum' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 77)

[23] 'Habitus are generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices – what the workers eat, and especially *the way* he eats is, the sport he practices and *the way* he practices it, his political opinion and the way he expresses them are systematically different from the industrial owner's corresponding activities' (Bourdieu, 1998: 8 emphasis mine).

[24] Some authors (e.g. Crossley, 2001) would add 'within a specific field'. I have already submitted that the notion of field can be profitable and useful for studying struggles among competitive actors in a particular field of production. However, when we move to analyze consumption practices, such as daily eating practices, the notion of field seems less appropriate.

[25] This structure can be conceived as a set of different structures (Nash, 1990).

Hence the habitus is a generative grammar: generative, because it possesses inventive capacity for altering the structure itself. Grammatical, because only from the structure can it inherit the means for cultural reproduction and change over time (Nash, 1990). This paves the way for a dynamic understanding of the concept, namely its diachronic aspect.

The *diachronic* aspect of the habitus regards its trajectory over time. Here, in particular, I refer to its formation and transformation through the tempo of social life by two major agents of socialization. Families and schools are in this view the main catalysts of societal reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Parents, right from children's birth, exert a pedagogical action which is directed to the transmission of sexual orientations, preferences, tastes and dispositions. Children interiorize the structure and their social position within the structure (Bourdieu, 1990b: 54):

> Through the economic and social necessity that they bring to bear on the relatively autonomous world of the domestic economy and family relations, or more precisely, through the specifically family manifestations of this external necessity (forms of the division of labour between the sexes, household objects, modes of consumption, parent-child relations, etc.), the structures characterizing a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of the *habitus*, which in their turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences.

Familial economic, cultural and social endowments are hence physically transferred to and bodily embodied by the progenies, thus shaping their 'statistical fate' (Nash, 1990), their subjective expectation and their objective probabilities. The habitus formation process hence regards the construction of children's identity and their acquisition of competences: they become socialized to engage proficiently with the practices surrounding them (Harker, 1984).

The second major source of socialization, the education system, tends to act as a conservative, legalized force within the structure. On the one hand, it generates the distinctive habitus of the culture, its 'master patterns' and internal fractures: what is rewarded and valued, what is to be avoided and condemned. School provides students with particular schemes of thought that can be later generalized and applied elsewhere: what may be called 'cultured habitus' (Bourdieu, 1967). In this light, schools may seem to potentially offset the effects of social origin and to actively shape and transform children's habitus. On the other hand, however, since education is to all intents and purposes secondary to the family environment, it inevitably starts 'reshaping' the habitus from an existing structure (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 134)

> The *habitus* acquired in the family is at the basis of the structuring of school experiences…the *habitus* transformed by the action of the school, itself diversified, is in turn at the basis of all subsequent experiences…and so on, from restructuring to restructuring.

Family 'priority' over the formation of habitus is what transforms the production of habitus into a theory of reproduction of social groups. Schools, far from being the fly-wheel of equal opportunities, tend to confirm the existing differentiation by privileging students who already possess the tools for being successful and inadvertently excluding the others. A middle-class family milieu hence predisposes children to scholastic success, transmitting codes, manners and notions that fit in better with teachers' expectations. Empirical studies on educational inequality confirm that family socio-economic status exerts a great influence on children's academic performance, educational transition and final educational attainment (e.g. Breen and Jonsson, 2005). However, although the evidence suggests that inequality tends to be reproduced, Bourdieu failed to acknowledge the process of educational expansion and the partial role that schools have in offsetting social background, contributing themselves to the major role they can play in the creation or transmission of cultural capital (Goldthorpe, 2007a). Along with Crossley (2001), I believe that this is due to his proclivity to explain reproduction over transformation. Yet the way Bourdieu uses the habitus does not help in explaining success against the odds of failure, (and even more so in accounting for failure against the odds of success) and thus exposes itself to a double-side criticism: determinism and lack of action creativity.[26]

Determinism, according to Jenkins, emerges because the concept of habitus fails to conflate the objective positions of the actors with their subjective choices. Social practices emerge as an epiphenomenon of material conditions (or better, social class positions within the social space), hence leading to a theory that 'ignores class's internal differentiation and stratification and underestimates the importance of the possibility of mobility, limited in scale and scope, in the legitimation of patterned domination' (Jenkins, 1982: 278). Such a materialistic view of socialization excludes an *a priori* conception of family life as being culturally mediated. Habitus 'turns out to be more like a Trojan horse for determinism. Time and time again it is

[26] Despite the fact that Bourdieu frequently defended himself from this accusation, there is incontrovertible evidence in his words that people are unconsciously driven by structural forces. This is especially tangible in his first writings. For instance, in the Bachelor's Ball he uses the very strong metaphor of unaware puppets: 'Sociology would not be worth an hour of effort if its sole aim were to discover the strings that move the actors it observes, if it were to forget that it is dealing with people, even when those very people, *like puppets*, play a game of which they do not know the rules, in short, if it did not assign itself the task of restoring to those people the meaning of their actions.' (Bourdieu, 2008: 95, emphasis mine).

explained not as a site for voluntarism – for improvising, within certain limits – but as the reflection and replication of exterior structures' (Alexander, 1995: 136).

Strongly tied to determinism is the lack of agents' creativity that stems from the psychological conception of habitus as 'an acquired system for generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted...' (Bourdieu, 1977: 95). Although the definition leaves room for some sort of generative attitude, the resulting theory of action does not envisage the possibility of creativity as a sort of adjustment that is always present in routinized actions (Joas and Knöbl, 2009). Since the habitus represents the introjections of certain 'rules' for 'playing a game', all subsequent behavioural variations during the course of life have to be tied in some manner to that 'structuring structure'. Despite individuals *owning* and *being owned* by their habitus, the focus on material conditions as a source of will is so often stressed that we are left with the impression that people exist under the spell of the ruling class, deprived of their agency.[27]

Although many authors rejected those positions defending Bourdieu from his accusers (e.g. Potter, 2000), it is rather evident that his grand-theory was not able to account for some evident and beneficial changes that occurred in western democracies during the last 50 years (i.e. educational expansion and greater social mobility). At the same time, there is no need to throw the baby out with the bathwater, as some have argued (Goldthorpe, 2007a). Bourdieu's methodological toolkit is an enormous resource for empirical research, as long as we use those concepts as pragmatic means for empirical research, and not as blind theoretical tracks (Wacquant, 2014).

4. Eating and Feeding Practices

The theory of practice outlined above needs to be encapsulated into a theoretical framework suitable for the study of eating and feeding practices. First, it is useful to *conceptually* define and delimit what I mean by eating and feeding practices, as well as suggesting the legitimate

[27] When Bourdieu applies this notion to the study of taste, he quite closely follows the standard accounts of Simmel and Veblen, although his connotation is more politically marked. These authors find a common denominator in what Meyer (2000) calls the 'refinement theory of taste': the upper classes distinguish themselves by setting new standards for outdistancing the lower classes any time the old conceptions of high culture diffuse and therefore devaluate. Bourdieu even goes further, interpreting taste as a means through which symbolic violence is 'perpetrated by the strong to the weak' (1984: 165). Many authors however, have shown, in different ways, the vulnerability of such a theory, emphasizing that this process is not as deterministic as previously thought, but that it leaves room for negotiation between 'the strong and the weak'.

nutritional doxa in relation to which they can be interpreted. Secondarily, I illustrate how this theory *methodologically* shapes the research design.

Given the obscurity of Bourdieu's language, confusion may arise when trying to define a practice for research purposes. Warde (2004) proposes that a close relationship exists between the concept of practice and field, the latter taking the upper hand over the former during the later stages of the French sociologist's career. Following this line of thought is very helpful, because it allows us to disentangle the two concepts and to make use of them for different research purposes. Thus, on the one hand, we may identify the field as a game characterized by agents who strategically struggle, more or less consciously, in order to establish legitimate domination. Warde (2004) proposes four features around which a field is integrated:

1. Some stakes and a commitment to the value of those stakes
2. A structured set of positions
3. A set of strategic and competitive orientations
4. A set of agents endowed with resources and dispositions

Given this definition, it is possible to understand the benefits deriving from its use in the realm of *production*, as for instance in the artistic, scientific, literary or gastronomic field. Within this framework, practices can be seen as the components that mould the field: therefore, a close homology exists between the two.

On the other hand, and more important for this research, we may identify social practices that do not belong to a particular field, because no competition, nor strategic action is undertaken by agents. In the study of *consumption*, following Schatzki (1996) and Reckwitz (2002), Warde (2005) suggested a particular application of practice theory that can be summarized in four points:

1. A shift from *praxis*, intended as 'the whole of human action' (Ortner, 1984) to *praktik* as a routinized type of behaviour (i.e. doings and sayings) composed by several elements: bodily and mental activities, the usage of artefacts, 'know how' and 'know that', tacit knowledge, states of emotions and motivational knowledge (Reckwitz, 2002). The elements that constitute a practice are organized and constitute a (more or less loose) nexus through three components:

1. understandings, 2. procedures and 3. engagements.[28] But also, practice is always a performance that requires a carrier that sustains, actualizes and acknowledges its existence.

2. The actual application of this theory of practice in the realm of consumption, as a 'moment in almost every practice', 'as the process whereby agents engage in appropriation and appreciation, whether for utilitarian, expressive or contemplative purposes of goods, services, performances, information or ambience, whether purchased or not, over which the agent has some degree of discretion' (Warde, 2005: 137). Given the approach that guides this research, I also submit that consumption always presents a certain level of stratification, because it is contained and governed by the structural conditions delimiting the space wherein agents consume, and therefore their preferences and capabilities.

3. The understanding of practices as simultaneously characterized by inertia and change 'by virtue of their own internal logic of operation, as people in a myriad of situations adapt, improvise and experiment' (Warde, 2005: 141). Although conventions, norms and presuppositions – doxa and orthodoxa – push practices towards a static reproduction, the 'seed of constant change' is inherent in the practice itself. This characteristic leads authors to maintain that practice theory may inform actual practical intervention in public policies for changing behaviours (Shove, 2012).

4. Rewards are functional to the performance of practices. In this light, it is possible to distinguish between internal and external rewards (MacIntyre, 2007; Warde, 2005). The former refer to the beneficial aspect of the practice that does not confer an immediate recognition of social prestige: family commitment to eat together or feeding a child are examples of internal reward. Whereas the latter are related to status, prestige and money: the practice is carried out by the agent in order to be recognized for carrying out that practice (and not another one), as for instance eating in a particular restaurant. Hence, the *practical* value of the practice relies on its economic value (its scarcity). It should however be noticed that internal and external rewards do not stand in firm opposition: some activities within a practice may switch from internal to external (and vice versa) very quickly.

[28] Schatzki (1996) refers instead to teleoaffective structure, as the ends, means and moods that belong to a certain practice (or practices) and that are linked to its rules and understandings.

That said, how can eating be coherently formulated as a practice? In line with this logic, eating may be seen as a *compound* of integrative practices.[29] Performances of eating are 'emergent' from a set of loosely interrelated activities, a 'complex corollary of the intersection of four, relatively autonomous integrative practices' (Warde, 2013: 25): supplying food, cooking, the organization of meal occasions and aesthetic judgments of taste.

To this list I would like to add feeding practices, defined as the array of *endeavours* carried out by families and schools for the nourishment of infants and children. These endeavours are both tacit and dialogical.[30] The former correspond to those practices interiorized by children without a proper effort being made by parents or teachers: a straightforward example is the meal sequence. Italian children interiorize that meals generally follow a script that begins with salty courses and ends with sweets, even though adults do not really teach them why and how that that so. The latter refer to all those norms which are more or less intentionally conveyed by the agents of socialization for transmitting certain practices to children. Dialogical narratives can vary greatly in their level of institutionalization: for instance, the formalization of grammar or mathematical language are highly prescriptive. Families and schools do not question the usefulness or the benefit that derives from this transmission. On the contrary, dietary norms can be highly ambiguous and give rise to conflicting relationships between families and schools. The so-called 'Battle of Rawmarsh' (see note 6 in chapter 4) probably represents the most grotesque example of this, but conflicts between schools and families when food is concerned are all but rare (Allison, 1991; Karrebæk, 2012; Pike and Kelly, 2014).

In a sense, feeding practices represent a specific inflection of eating practices. On the one hand, they maintain the basic characteristics of eating practices. They are weakly coordinated and regulated, and they are largely informal, routinized types of behaviours that transmit an embodied competence by means of repetition and habituation (Warde, 2016). Feeding practices are also constituted by 'loosely interrelated activities': purchasing and negotiating children's

[29] Schatzki (1996) distinguishes between integrative and dispersed practices: the first constitute the bases of social practices. Examples include: describing, following rules, explaining, imagining. The second practices are more complex, and generally require specific forms of dispersive practices. Examples include eating, farming or cooking.

[30] These can be seen as the application of Giddens' (1984) practical and discursive consciousness to the study of the intergenerational transmission of practices. For if the former 'consists of all the things which actors know tacitly about how to 'go on' in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression' (xxiii), the latter refers to 'what actors are able to say, or to give verbal expression to, about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action; [it is an] awareness which has a discursive form' (374). I would like to thank Lucie Middlemiss from the University of Leeds for the suggestion.

meals (Gram, 2015), preparing lunch-boxes (Harman and Cappellini, 2015), spoon-feeding or simply explaining why certain meals are better than others are but a few patent examples.

On the other hand, they also require additional calculations and efforts: it is not surprising that the birth of a child is a major source of eating habit restructuring for couples (Darmon and Warde, 2014). In upper status families, as I will show in chapter 5, these calculations can be interpreted as culinary capital investments (Naccarato and LeBesco, 2012). Therefore, these endeavours always entail i) higher economic expenditure, necessary for buying and preparing additional food and ii) specific food-related activities, as the purchase and preparation of specific meals for the child, or the choice of kids' menus or kid friendly places when eating out.

Noticeably, these endeavours can be externalised, as constantly happens with the organization of school meals. Although it is true that 'eating' is largely informal and has not yet appeared on the school curriculum (Warde, 2016), the same cannot be said about 'feeding': chapter 4 will shed light on this. Feeding practices can then be seen as the actual intergenerational transmission of eating practices, their long-term dynamic component that guarantees their reproduction as well as their modification. Feeding practices are at the base of our nutritional habitus: our dispositions, openness to new tastes, or simply principles of classifications are largely inducted by our earliest experiences with food.[31]

Within this framework, the concept of nutritional doxa can be introduced. The 'universe of the undiscussed' of nutrition refers to the idea of eating and feeding healthily and from a quality perspective. Although people may have very different beliefs on what specifically constitutes a wholesome diet and families may adopt very diverse feeding practices, it is part of 'taken for grantedness' to acknowledge certain common legitimate principles without exactly knowing why, as, for instance, that vegetables and fruit are better than junk food. Intuitive proof of this may be found in the social desirability bias that affects dietary reports: respondents overstate the consumption of healthy edibles and underrate that of unhealthy ones (Baxter et al., 2004; see also chapter 3). The nutritional doxa is indeed a governmental doxa, since the existence of this *order of things* (Foucault, 1994) is ratified and endorsed by educational and scientific fields, which transform it into a 'conduct of conduct', hence a biopolicy (Foucault, 1998; Pike, 2008;

[31] At the psychological level, the transmission process can be explained through the social-cognitive theory. Not only children are taught how to eat and what to avoid, but through observation of parental models obtain information that will guide their future eating behaviour. Obviously, since social and environmental factors change depending on family's socioeconomic status, so will do the models observed by the children (see Ball et al. 2009 for an empirical application).

Pike and Colquhoun, 2009). This implies that food consumption patterns are strongly tied to health and its social construction. Public health naturalizes its objects (eating and feeding) and culturalizes its subjects (eaters and feeders) (Fassin, 2004).

However, acknowledging the presuppositions of a healthy diet does not mean being dietarily compliant. Doxa, which become ortho-doxa when transformed into a discourse (Myles, 2004), is continuously in tension between two models (Coveney, 2006: 18):

> The scientific information, provided by expertise, designed to raise the consciousness of individuals in relation to those factors in foods that promote health and reduce disease. In other words, what is needed for this approach to be successful is a self-reflective, self-regulating individual with the correct concern for themselves.

And, at the bottom, the social model, where

> the requirement is for a self-reflective individual, but one who, in this case, *actively* participates in the community in order to identify problems and reflect on the consequences for themselves and for others.

The legitimacy of the scientific knowledge, which hierarchically stems from the indications of international authorities, then to be deciphered by national governments and finally translated into easy-to-use advice for families and school meals, reinforces, protects and eventually constitutes the legitimate doxa from which families adopt certain eating and feeding practices. The school system hence fulfils a moral as well as a cognitive integration function (Bourdieu, 1967; Lizardo, 2008) establishing or reinforcing the categories of thought that create the nutritional doxa in a given historical period. In chapter 4, using de Certeau's concepts of strategy and tactics (1984), I will illustrate better how this biopolitical strategy is transformed into a healthy meal and then resisted by parents, teachers, children and cooks.

5. From Practice Theory to Research Practice: Methodological Implications

The present work takes advantage of both quantitative and qualitative methods: using regression techniques, I first give evidence of a structure (the constrictions), thus showing how food consumption is shaped by economic and cultural constraints. Regression analysis, contrarily to Bourdieu's favourite technique (i.e. Multiple Correspondence Analysis), provides the most straightforward approach to distinguish the net effects of cultural and economic capital. Secondly, I employ ethnographic fieldnotes and in-depth interviews to throw light on the construction, reception and transmission of dietary norms and food boundaries, both at school

and in the family. Crucially, although each chapter reads as an autonomous contribution equipped with its own literature review, the whole manuscript aims to examine (the social stratification of) food consumption from two intertwined perspectives: on the one hand, it focuses on dietary practices as a health-related issue. In this view, eating and feeding practices are examined i) as consequential to certain ideas and credos people retain regarding the salubriousness or harmfulness of diets or food items and ii) in their potential consequences for adults' and children's health status, and therefore as contributors of health inequalities.

On the other hand, food consumption is envisioned as a set of culturally-embedded practices: this allows to explore more in depth culinary choices, the breadth of food knowledge, or the types of products purchased, and more importantly how these are exploited to demarcate differences between social groups.

The structure, which along with Giddens (1979) I conceptualize as both the constraint and the facilitator of action given certain rules (nutritional doxa) and resources (cultural and economic capital), consists of two parts:

1. Using data from the Multipurpose survey on daily life by Istat (2012), I concentrate on the determinants of adults' dietary compliance and drinking behaviours (chapter 2), especially focusing on how gender differences are shaped by cultural capital endowments. Here I also focus on smoking behaviour, that, along with eating and drinking, is a major cause of noncommunicable diseases (Riley and Cowan, 2015). In fact, it is widely acknowledged that people with higher socioeconomic positions and women smoke less, avoid alcohol abuse and eat more healthily. Yet far less is known about the interaction of socioeconomic status with gender, especially in an Italian context. I address this issue by employing Abel's (2007; 2008) adaptation of Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and Courtenay's (2000) theory of gender construction and health. Hence, I look at the interaction of gender with cultural capital measures in order to determine how gendered forms of consumption change with increasing levels of cultural capital.

2a. Making use of Bourdieu's (2011) threefold conceptualisation of cultural capital, this chapter examines and disentangles the association between social origins and children's food consumption. The aim of the work is twofold. Using data from the Multipurpose survey on daily life conducted by Istat (2009-2012), I first show that children's compliance with dietary advice is mainly influenced by family cultural resources. Secondly, I concentrate on the role of the school canteen as a child-centred investment strategy intended to reduce health inequalities

by providing a wholesome lunch for all children. These findings are discussed in the light of future research on sociology of health stratification and health promotion programmes (chapter 3).

2b. In the same chapter, using data from the Survey on family consumption (2012), I show how the expenditure on food and the type of store where groceries are purchased are stratified by means of economic capital (again, proxied by the EGP social class scheme and the total expenditure for durables).

Point 2 paves the way for an ethnography of food taste transmission, as the phase of the research that 'restores' agency to the actors involved in the feeding process. The findings of the fieldwork are divided into three separate chapters; each contribution furnishes details regarding field access and methods, as well as a specific frame of reference:

3. In chapter 4 I concentrate on the fieldwork conducted in Fedrata (Marche), Poversano and Goldazzo (Trentino). I use de Certeau's (1984) concepts of strategy and tactics to examine how the biopolitical construction of a healthy meal is subjected to resistance by parents, teachers, children and cooks. I first illustrate how the top-down nutrition model that stems from global and national organizations is deciphered and transformed by local agencies, and eventually becomes a healthy meal, perfectly balanced in its nutrients. Later, I show how subjects involved in its reception challenge the top-down model and develop intentional tactics that withstand the scientific knowledge of the nutritionists that construct the menu: parents and teachers contest the experts' authority, cooks cheat on grams, children eat more (or less) than they should. Taking a different approach from studies that highlight the undesirable and coercive outcomes of biopower, I argue that in these school canteens subjects are not trapped by biopedagogies, but deploy their agencies by questioning, eluding and even subverting the rationale of the school meal.

4. The chapter that follows is prevalently based on the material collected in Poversano and Goldazzo. First, making use of 40 in-depth interviews with primary caregivers (mostly mothers) from different socioeconomic milieus, I outline how their feeding practices can be analysed along the lines of economic and cultural capital, distinguishing between two different forms of symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Fournier, 1992; Lamont and Molnár, 2002): the first concerning the places where groceries are bought and the food brands selected (economic boundaries), the second related to the nutritional principles guiding feeding choices and the perception of the quality of the school meal service (cultural boundaries). I then draw on the

ethnographic fieldwork conducted in two primary school canteens to highlight three ways used by their children to display knowledge and draw boundaries while eating the school meal. These 'immature' conduits for distinction indicate that food can be used to demarcate boundaries right from the very early stages of life. I conclude by outlining some limitations of the chapter and some possible policy implications of the results.

5. Finally, the last chapter presents some explorative findings on the fieldwork conducted during break and lunch in a Palermo school located in a poor neighbourhood. Focusing mostly on a second graders section, this extreme case study explores what happens to food education guidelines when they are applied in problematic classroom and encounter children coming from severely deprived households. When the taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the role of pedagogy, teachers' relationships with their pupils, and eventually childhood itself fall apart, food education is emptied of its original meaning: teachers' arbitrary food rules, when applied, target the same children repeatedly. Break and lunch, far from being didactic experiences or convivial breaks, are mainly moments of tension between teachers and the most problematic children. Most often, food itself is not a matter of concern for anyone, since violent episodes between children monopolize the attention of all the adults nearby. I conclude by reflecting on the limits and capabilities of nutrition education programs applied to deprived contexts.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

During the after-dinner entertainment of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth in 1993, Marshall Sahlins amused the guests through a series of short and spicy anecdotes on a variety of issues. One in particular, titled 'Postmodern Terrorism', attracted my attention (2002: 48):

> One of the more poignant aspects of the current postmodernist mood is the way it seems to lobotomize some of our best graduate students, to stifle their creativity for fear of making some interesting structural connection, some relationship between cultural practices, or a comparative generalization. The only safe essentialism left to them is that there is no order to culture.

I believe that the search for structural connections, relationships between cultural practices and comparative generalization should lie at the heart of any social science, regardless of the methodology used. Finding order in the data, whether analysed through statistical techniques or gathered, systematized, and interpreted through interviews and field notes, is the quest of any social science.

The structural part of the research will concern, so to say, subjects without heads. The aim of this part is to show how eating and feeding practices are subject to empirical regularities: people are constrained by their capitals. Cultural capital helps to explain the degree of dietary compliance; whereas economic capital is a better predictor of the type of store where groceries are bought. Those familiar with Bourdieu's *Distinction* will see how this is directly inspired by the map described in the book (1984: 186). However, in opposition with his methodological consideration, I will specifically look to disentangle the different influence each type of capital plays in the compound of eating and feeding practices I am taking into consideration. Most importantly, this part of the research will allow us to see how these endowments play a role in the intergenerational transmission of food preferences. I will focus in particular on primary school children, to evaluate if the school canteen has an effect on children's diet and how this is related to their social origins.

This last point paves the way for the second part of the work, namely the constructivist part. The ethnographies respond to the need to put back 'the heads' onto the abovementioned subjects. How do actors subjected to the school meal respond to it? How do cultural and economic constraints become 'distinct' eating and feeding practices? What happens to food education guidelines when applied 'at the margins'? Through document analysis, participant observation during break and lunch, and in-depth interviews with the actors near or in the school canteen, this section highlights how eating and feeding come to life as socially constructed practices. Table 1.1 below summarizes the general framework of the thesis.

In the next chapter, I will therefore begin my investigation of the constrictions of dietary compliance by focusing on the Italian adult population. At risk of taking a detour from the chief focus of the thesis, I have decided to broaden the inquiry to include smoking and drinking behaviours, as well as gender differences. Apart from the inherent interest in understanding how gender and cultural resources interact and shape health behaviours, I deemed that extending the application of Bourdieu's theory of capitals would have further strengthened the argument of the thesis.

	Data	Methods	Chapter title
CONSTRICTIONS	– Multipurpose survey on daily life (2012).	Cragg's double hurdle model, OLS regression, logistic regression.	1. Determinants of Health Behaviours among Italian Adults: A Study on Eating, Drinking and Smoking Patterns
	– Multipurpose survey on daily life (2009-2012) – Survey on family consumption (2012)	OLS regression, logistic regression.	2. Determinants of Dietary Compliance among Italian Children: Is the School Meal an Equaliser?
CONSTRUCTIONS	– Fedrata – Poversano – Goldazzo	Participant observation and fieldnotes, document analysis, in-depth interviews.	3. The Holy Gram: Strategy and Tactics in the Primary School Canteen
	– Poversano – Goldazzo	Participant observation and fieldnotes, in-depth interviews.	4. Feeding Distinction: Construction and Reproduction of Food Boundaries
	– Palermo	Participant observation and fieldnotes, in-depth interviews.	5. 'Do You Pay for the Lunch'. Eating the School Lunch at the Margins: An Extreme Case Study.

Table 1.1 Outline of the empirical chapters.

Chapter 2
Cultural Capital and Gender Differences in Health Behaviours: A Study on Eating, Smoking and Drinking*

1. Introduction

The WHO considers tobacco, alcohol abuse, and unhealthy dietary patterns as leading causes of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). In Italy, the last WHO global report estimated that more than half a million people die every year from NCDs (Riley and Cowan, 2015: 99). It is well documented that differences in health and health behaviours are stratified: both people with a higher socioeconomic status and women tend to have healthier life-styles, to be less affected by fatal chronic diseases, and to live longer (Chao et al., 2015). Gender and socioeconomic status are in fact the most prominent factors affecting life chances: as differences in educational levels, the relation to the formal labour market, and the commitment to the domestic sphere change, it becomes even more relevant to examine how they interact (Macintyre and Hunt, 1997). However, despite studies on how health chances for men and women are differently affected by education (Ross and Mirowsky, 2010; Ross et al. 2012), still lacking is understanding of how gendered health behaviours are shaped by social positions, especially when using cultural capital as a theoretical backbone.

Accordingly, using 2012 data from the Multipurpose survey on Daily Life (MDL) conducted by Istat, this contribution analyses health stratification in a threefold manner. Firstly, following Abel's (2007; 2008) adaptation of Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, it disentangles the socioeconomic determinants of health behaviours. More specifically, the concept of cultural capital provides a compelling explanation of why a higher socioeconomic status is associated with healthy behaviours. It is therefore likely that cultural capital (in its institutionalized and embodied dimensions) is the main driver of smoking, drinking and eating patterns, beyond the effect of economic resources (proxied by the EGP social class scheme).

* **Author's note**: an earlier version of this chapter has been already published in the Health Sociology Review (doi: 10.1080/14461242.2017.1321493). This chapter has been co-authored with Dr Raffaele Guetto, who assisted me with data analysis and manuscript format.

Secondly, given Courtenay's (2000) suggestion that men and women engage in practices affecting their health chances as means to reaffirm their masculine and feminine identities, I examine gender differentials in the three above-mentioned health practices.

Thirdly and most importantly, as research indicates that the gender gap in physical impairment, self-rated health, and mortality is reduced with increasing educational levels (Ross and Mirowsky, 2010; Ross et al., 2012) I analyse how gendered forms of consumption change with increasing levels of cultural capital. In doing so, I stress the importance for health researchers to disentangle the components of individuals' socioeconomic status, and analyse its impact across gender. This yields a more nuanced understanding of social stratification and health inequalities, and consequently helps to better target health policy measures.

2. Socioeconomic Status and Health: The Role of Cultural Capital

It is widely known that differences in health behaviours are strongly related to individuals' socioeconomic status. In developed countries, less educated and less affluent people suffer more from cardiovascular diseases and diabetes (Kavanagh et al., 2010). In fact, people from higher social strata tend to smoke less (Hiscock et al., 2012), avoid binge drinking (Kuntsche et al., 2009) and eat more healthily (De Irala-Estevez et al., 2000; Darmon and Drewnowski, 2008; Beydoun and Wang, 2008; Skuland, 2015).

Drawing on Bourdieu's (2011) theory of capitals, Abel (2008) furnishes a compelling explanation of why people engage or not in healthy practices. For Bourdieu, social, economic, and cultural capital are three fundamental types of resources determining individuals' choices within the social structure. Capitals can be accumulated, converted and transmitted to the offspring, thus guaranteeing the maintenance and the reproduction of social inequality over time. Following Abel (2008), application of the threefold distinction among kinds of capital in the study of health inequality is indeed promising because it provides a theoretical framework for pinpointing different causal paths through which health inequalities may arise. Social capital can be beneficial for health by reducing stress and isolation, or by easing access to information and health facilities (Pinxten and Lievens, 2014). Concurrently, economic resources may be used to obtain a better insurance plan or organic food (Abel, 2008). However, in the study of health inequalities, the concept of cultural capital has proved to be an important theoretical lens on its own (Mackenbach, 2012). Cultural capital generally refers to the stock of symbolic and immaterial information held and shared by people as high-status signals (Lamont and Lareau,

1988).[1] According to Bourdieu (2011), there are three forms of cultural capital: the embodied state, which refers to the implicit embodied dispositions enacted through behaviours and perceived as legitimate or superior in a given culture; the institutionalized state, represented by educational credentials; the objectified state, existing in the form of cultural goods such as artworks or books. These mutually interdependent resources drive values on health and lifestyle choices, simultaneously serving 'physical health and subjective well-being through physiological effects and social distinction' (Abel, 2008: 2). Differences in normative beliefs and knowledge on health risks among opposed socioeconomic groups may hence be important in shaping individuals' behaviours, and in turn their health chances.

As some studies have shown, cultural capital is a good predictor of health and unhealthy behaviours such as heavy drinking, smoking, and dietary non-compliance (Cutler and Lleras-Muney, 2010; Oncini and Guetto, 2017). Moreover, the focus on cultural resources as different from – although related to – economic capital is particularly useful from an analytical point of view. First, it helps to disentangle different components of socioeconomic status, a notion too often used without considering its multifaceted nature (Braveman et al., 2005; Oncini and Guetto, 2017). Secondly, it makes it possible to put forward specific hypotheses regarding engagement in health behaviours in particular contexts.

In Italy, tobacco and alcohol consumption are less strictly regulated than in other European countries, and prices tend to be lower than the European average (Brand et al., 2007; Joossens and Raw, 2013). Similarly, a healthy diet in Italy does not necessarily entail a higher expenditure compared to other dietary patterns. As shown by Conforti and D'Amicis (2000), shifting the diet to the recommended daily allowances (RDAs) does not require an extra budget and may even cost less. Moreover, other authors suggest that the Mediterranean diet could help to halt the obesity epidemic especially because of its combination of salubriousness and affordability (Drewnowski and Eichelsdoerfer, 2009). Hence, I may expect that, in Italy, smoking, drinking and eating patterns are related more to cultural resources than economic

[1] In this chapter, I use the institutionalized (educational level) and the embodied (books read and participation to cultural activities) states as predictors of health behaviours because they together offer an analytical tool more complex than the educational level *per se.* However, it remains very difficult to disentangle the mechanisms underlying the effect of these dimensions, especially given their interdependence (Abel, 2007). As a tentative interpretation, one may suggest that the embodied state reflects behaviours related to the symbolic consumption of healthy food, especially in public circumstances, or, more generally, the exhibition of self-care; differently, educational credentials may be interpreted as the official knowledge on healthy behaviours which is channelled through the school and academic system.

ones. Thus, the first hypothesis (H1) states as follows: *health behaviours are more strongly related to cultural capital than economic capital.*

3. Gender Differences in Health Behaviours

Women have longer life expectancy than men and suffer less from life-threatening chronic conditions such as coronary heart disease, cancer, and cirrhosis (Ross et al., 2012). Differences in health behaviours, and especially those investigated in this chapter, can explain much of this gap. Women are more likely to be abstainers, to avoid alcohol abuse and binge drinking, and generally drink smaller quantities and less often than men (Kuntsche et al., 2004). Similarly, prevalence of smoking behaviours is more often observed in men, and partially accounts for the gap in mortality rates (Preston and Wang, 2006). As for dietary compliance, research shows that women eat more fruit and vegetables, pay more attention to dietary intake and body weight, and generally prefer healthier options for their everyday meals (Arganini and Saba, 2012; Inglis et al., 2005; Roos et al., 1998).

As Courtenay (2000) posits, men and women are socialized to practices as means to construct and affirm their gender identities. These practices entail very different risks, and consequently affect health chances. Hegemonic masculinity, on the one hand, is associated with the denial of pain and weaknesses, the downplay of safety, and the dismissal itself of health concerns. Femininity, on the other hand, prizes fitness, body composure, and avoidance of extremes (Connell, 2005; Courtenay, 2000). Although this theory has been rightly criticized for proposing an insufficiently nuanced account of gender relations (Creighton and Oliffe, 2010), it still helps to explain why traditional masculine norms are associated with alcohol abuse and tobacco use (Mahalik et al., 2007), and also why 'real men don't diet' (Gough, 2007) and 'don't eat vegetable quiche' (Rothgerber, 2013). Hence the second hypothesis (H2) is as follows: *men are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviours than women.*

Moreover, as Courtenay (2000) recognizes, ideals of femininity and masculinity change 'within' gender on the basis of the social position. This relation, as several authors have suggested, should be analysed in detail (Chao et al., 2015). In fact, it is important from a public policy perspective to understand how increasing resources – defined in terms of cultural and economic capital – affect gendered forms of consumption. Moreover, the literature has to date mostly focused on unhealthy behaviours as depending on contextual factors – such a country's egalitarian attitudes toward gender roles (Dahlin and Härkönen, 2013) – while neglecting how they change between men and women according to individuals' social positions. Since research

shows that 'education provides exposure to egalitarian ideas and counters acceptance of gender myths and stereotypes' (Davis and Greenstein, 2009: 94), if H1 and H2 hold true, I may expect that *for increasing levels of cultural capital the gap between men's and women's unhealthy behaviours reduces* (H3).[2]

This could be the result of two different processes. First, it is possible that men with higher levels of cultural capital distance themselves from traditional masculine identities that lead to unhealthy practices (Coles, 2009; Courtenay, 2000; Mahalik et al., 2007). Secondly, women with higher levels of cultural capital may either i) benefit less or not at all, because femininity implies healthy behaviours no matter what the level of cultural resources is, or ii) start adopting less healthy behaviours as a sign of empowerment. Thus, smoking or heavy drinking may be adopted as signals of independence from traditional gendered patterns of consumption (Amos and Haglund 2000; Greaves, 2007; Lyons and Willott, 2008).

4. Data and Methods

The empirical analysis is based on the 2012 Multipurpose survey on Daily Life (MDL) conducted by Istat. The MDL is a survey of a nationally representative sample of Italian families, and each year collects information on individuals' daily habits. All components of the family are required to fill out a personal questionnaire regarding their habits, among which are food, alcohol, and cigarettes consumptions. The response rate in 2012 was around 80%. The final sample was restricted to the adult population (aged 25-60) and included 19,356 individuals (84.4% of the original sample with missing values ranging between 0 and 5.3%). In all models, clustered standard errors were used to correct for non-independence within primary sampling units.

4.1 Dietary Patterns

The MDL survey collects information on dietary habits by asking respondents to state how often they eat or drink certain edibles. As shown in Table 2.1, I used 9 dietary items in order to construct an index of compliance with dietary norms based on the Mediterranean food pyramid (Bach-Faig et al., 2011; Oncini and Guetto, 2017). The Mediterranean diet, in fact, is well

[2] Due to the existence of specific gender norms, it can be theoretically justified to expect reduced gender differences in health behaviours at higher levels of cultural capital. It is not straightforward, instead, to derive hypotheses on the role of economic resources, net of different endowments of cultural capital, in attenuating the gender gap. To corroborate this argument better, in the empirical section of the paper I briefly refer to additional models (available in the appendix) wherein the interactions between gender and all dimensions of cultural capital and gender and social class are simultaneously estimated.

known for its beneficial aspects, and it is associated with lower mortality rates, deaths from cancer, and coronary heart diseases (Trichopoulou, 2003). Each variable was recoded so as to give 0, 1 or 2 points according to its compliance with the food pyramid. I then summed all the new variables to construct a normally distributed scale ranging from 0 to 18, with higher values of the index corresponding to healthier dietary patterns.[3] I then applied an OLS regression model.

Food Variable	Frequency
Salty snacks	Once per day or more = 0 Sometimes per week = 1 Less than once per week = 2
Sweets	Once per day or more = 0 Sometimes per week = 1 Less than once per week = 2
Fish	Every day/Never = 0 Less than once per week = 1 Sometimes per week = 2
Vegetables (leaf)	Less than once per week = 0 Sometimes per week = 1 Once per day or more = 2
Vegetables (fruit)	Less than once per week = 0 Sometimes per week = 1 Once per day or more = 2
Fruit	Less than once per week = 0 Sometimes per week = 1 Once per day or more = 2
Cured Meat	Once per day or more = 0 Sometimes per week = 1 Less than once per week = 2
Soft Drinks	Every day = 0 Sometimes per week = 1 Rarely/Never = 2
Pays attention to salt	No = 0 I have reduced over time = 1 I have always paid attention = 2
All the seven items are summed so as to obtain a (normally distributed) index ranging from 0 to 18.	

Table 2.1 Variables recoding applied to build the index of dietary compliance.

[3] The Cronbach's alpha for the dietary and alcohol scale is between 0.5 and 0.6. This value is below the minimum threshold for a reliable scale (Hair et al. 2006). However, in this case the alpha is not necessarily a good measure of reliability. In fact, both indices are just the sum of compliant/noncompliant nutritional and drinking choices. They are not meant to measuring a latent construct such as a complex cultural orientation (e.g. traditionalism), which might be instead conceptualized and operationalized as the 'result' of a set of highly correlated attitude items. The histogram of the diet index and diagnostic measures are available in the appendix.

4.2 Smoking Status

I distinguished between non-smokers or former smokers (72.9%) and smokers (27.1%) and I applied a logistic regression model.

4.3 Alcohol Intake

The MDL survey asks questions on the frequency of drinking 5 different types of alcoholic beverages: wine, beer, aperitifs, tonic liquors and hard liquors. I recoded each variable so as to distinguish between non-drinker, occasional drinker (i.e. sometimes per week), and everyday drinker by type of alcoholic beverage (Table 2.2). I then summed all the variables so as to have a scale of drinking behaviour ranging from 0 (non-drinkers) to 10. Although this index does not consider different types of drinker and flattens out the variety of each alcoholic drink, it is useful for considering the overall amount ingested by the respondents, which may impinge on their health status.

The new variable is zero-inflated, meaning that there is a high number of non-drinkers in the sample (40.3%). Following Cragg (1971) I implemented a Double Hurdle Model, which is particularly useful with two-step decisions, and has been successfully applied for expenditure patterns on smoking and drinking (Garcìa, 2013). The model consists of two parts: first, one decides whether or not to use certain substances (the participation decision); second, one decides how much to consume (the quantity decision). Assuming linear parameters α and β for both hurdles, v and u as randomly distributed errors, and z and x as the variables influencing the participation and the consumption equation respectively, the bivariate model can be exemplified as follows (Jones, 1989: 24):

(a) Observed consumption $y = d.y^{**}$

(b) Participation equation $w = \alpha' z + v,\ d = 1 \text{ if } w > 0$

$d = 0 \text{ otherwise}$

(c) Consumption equation $y^{**} = max\,[0, y^*],$

$y^* = \beta' x + u.$

Assuming that the participation equation dominates the consumption equation – that is, zeros never result from the consumption equation – the model can be decomposed into two parts (Cragg, 1971; Jones, 1989). The first part is a probit regression that determines whether or not the respondent is a consumer by using all the observations, whereas the second one is a zero-

truncated regression model that estimates the quantity of alcohol ingested using only non-zero observations (59.7% of the analytical sample).

Drink Variable	Frequency
Wine/Beer/Aperitif/ Tonic Liquor/Hard Liquor	Every day = 2 Sometimes = 1 Never/almost never = 0

Table 2.2 Variables recoding applied to build the index of alcohol consumption.

4.4 Independent Variables

I included the interaction between age centred at the sample mean (43.3) and sex, marital status, region of origin (north, centre, south), place of lunch (home or out), social class and three forms of cultural capital. For social class I relied on the Italian adaptation of the EGP scheme (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) as proposed by Cobalti and Schizzerotto (1993): I distinguished among bourgeoisie, white collars, rural and urban petty bourgeoisie, rural and urban working class, and I also took people who had never worked (i.e. housewives and first time unemployed) into account. As for cultural capital, I distinguished between the institutionalized state, namely educational credentials (up to lower secondary, upper secondary, and tertiary), and the embodied state. The latter has been operationalised distinguishing between a private and a public dimension: for the former, I considered the number of books read per year; for the latter, I constructed an index of cultural participation ranging from 0 to 4, considering the frequency with which each respondent had been to theatres, museums, archaeological sites and classical music concerts in the previous year. The original response categories of the four variables ranged from 0 (never) to 5 (more than 12), but given the rare occurrence of each cultural activity, I recoded the ordinal response categories into a dummy variable (0 = never; 1 = at least once). This permitted to create an aggregate scale ranging from 0 to 4 (Cronbach's alpha= 0.7). Both the number of books read, and cultural participation are variables commonly used in cultural capital studies (Pinxten and Lievens, 2014; Zimdars et al., 2009).

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2.3 presents, separately for male and female respondents, descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis. The average age is 43.2 and 43.5 years respectively for men and women. Women score higher values than men on all the dimensions of cultural capital: they

read on average more books per year (4.1 against 2.6 books), participate more often in cultural activities (8.8 against 7.6 points in the index) and more frequently hold a tertiary degree (19.6% against 14.9%). Not surprisingly however, women are underrepresented in the bourgeoisie (10.0% against 17.8%) and urban working class (19.2% against 37.9%), while being more frequently among the white collars (31.5% against 23.1%) and those who have never worked (29.7% against 2.2%). The latter discrepancy can be easily explained, since in Italy the female labour-force participation rate is one of the lowest among OECD countries (Esping-Andersen, 2012). This may also explain why 77.3% of the women eat lunch at home while only 59.3% of the men do so.[4] As regards marital status, 33.9% of men are single, whereas it is more frequent for women to be in a couple or separated/widowed. Place of origin is instead almost equally distributed between the genders: around 44% from the north, 18% from the centre and 38% from the south.

Most importantly, the raw data show that the women respondents behave more healthily than men, thus providing an initial confirmation of the second hypothesis. First, the index of dietary compliance is more than 1 point higher for women. Second, only 44.3% of women drink at least one drink per week, while 75.8% of the men does so. Moreover, among drinkers, women have an average of 1.8 points in the alcohol index, while men score 2.4 points. Third, the percentage of women who smoke is substantially lower than that of men: 33.3% of men against 21.1% of women.

[4] One additional reason could be that – when employed – women tend to work less distant from home, making their comeback at home for lunch more feasible (see Crane, 2007).

Variable	N	Male (48.9%)	Female (51.1%)	Significance (t-test & χ^2)
Diet (mean)	19,356	12.1	13.2	***
Currently Smoking				***
No	14,116	66.7	78.9	
Yes	5,240	33.3	21.1	
Currently Drinking				
No	7,804	24.2	55.7	
Yes	11,552	75.8	44.3	
Alcohol (>0) (mean)	11,552	2.4	1.8	***
Age (mean)	19,356	43.2	43.5	***
Education				
Up to lower secondary	7,827	42.1	38.9	***
Upper secondary	8,186	43.0	41.6	
Tertiary	3,343	14.9	19.6	
Cultural Participation Index	19,356	7.6	8.8	***
Books (mean)	19,356	2.6	4.1	***
Social Class				***
Bourgeoisie	2,672	17.8	10.0	***
White Collars	5,308	23.1	31.5	
Petty-Urban Bourg.	2,023	13.8	7.3	
Petty-Rural Bourg.	309	2.3	1.0	
Urban Working Class	5,486	37.9	19.2	
Rural Working Class	412	2.8	1.4	
Never worked	3,146	2.2	29.7	
Place of Lunch				***
Home	13,255	59.3	77.3	
Out	6,101	40.7	22.7	
Place of Origin				
North	8,432	44.0	43.2	
Centre	3,514	18.0	18.3	
South	7,410	38.0	38.5	
Marital Status				***
Single	5,486	33.9	23.1	
Married/Cohabiting	11,564	56.6	62.7	
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	2,306	9.5	14.2	

Source: calculation based on MDL Istat survey (2012).

Table 2.3 Descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis, by sex.

5.2 Determinants of Health Behaviours

Table 2.4 shows the results of an OLS regression on the index of dietary compliance, the Average Marginal Effects (AMEs) for the logistic regression on smoking status, and Cragg's Hurdle Model on alcohol intake. [5] For this latter model, I simultaneously present the AMEs of the probit model and the coefficients of the truncated regression. As for dietary compliance, the first hypothesis is fully confirmed. Social class does not have a significant influence on individuals' eating style, whereas all the three dimensions of cultural capital affect the index. Educational level has a positive monotonic effect, improving the index by 0.35 points for individuals with a tertiary education and 0.14 for those with an upper secondary qualification. Similarly, cultural participation (0.09) and the number of books read (0.17) have a positive influence on the index.[6]

As for cigarettes, the educational level evidently plays the most important protective role. However, the effect of economic resources cannot be entirely dismissed, as the urban petty bourgeoisie and the urban working class are around 5 percentage points (pp) more likely to smoke than the bourgeoisie. Moreover, those who have never worked are 4.2 pp less likely to smoke than the highest class.

[5] Differently from all the other covariates that can be conceived as exogenous, having lunch at home could be seen as a mediator of the relationship between social background and dietary compliance. The average differences between social categories, should not be interpreted as the 'total effect', but as the direct effect net of one practice (having lunch at home). However, as the model in the appendix confirms, differences between the estimates with and without the variable 'having lunch at home' do not substantially change.

[6] Compared to the range of variation of the index (0-18), one may wonder whether these effects are also substantially significant (Bernardi et al., 2017). Given the arbitrariness of the measure, responding to this question is not an easy task. However, two reasons suggest that they are: first, since the index aims to measure the healthiness of a daily practice, the effects could be imagined as small differences between people with opposite levels of cultural capital which are constantly operating. In a sense, healthy or unhealthy routines cumulate over time and only become manifest in the long run. Second, the effects of the different measures of cultural capitals are often additive, which imply a higher potential influence of cultural resources on individuals' dietary compliance.

	Dietary Index	**Smoking**	**Alcohol Index**	
	OLS	Logit	Probit	Trunc. reg.
Social Class				
White Collars	0.0615	-0.0110	-0.0216	-0.0390
	(0.0627)	(0.0110)	(0.0116)	(0.0367)
Pet-Urb	0.0950	**0.0465*** **	-0.0205	0.0879
	(0.0816)	(0.0140)	(0.0148)	(0.0505)
Pet-Agri	-0.259	-0.0367	0.0137	0.132
	(0.159)	(0.0253)	(0.0285)	(0.0979)
Work-Urb	-0.0483	**0.0503*** **	**-0.0484*** **	0.0741
	(0.0704)	(0.0120)	(0.0127)	(0.0432)
Work-Agri	-0.0687	0.000945	**-0.0585** **	0.161
	(0.143)	(0.0231)	(0.0257)	(0.0916)
Never worked	0.0269	**-0.0417*** **	**-0.0842*** **	-0.0755
	(0.0789)	(0.0136)	(0.0146)	(0.0539)
Education				
Upper secondary	**0.143*** **	**-0.0565*** **	0.0137	**-0.0879*** **
	(0.0467)	(0.00829)	(0.00844)	(0.0305)
Tertiary	**0.346*** **	**-0.125*** **	0.0113	**-0.130*** **
	(0.0685)	(0.0111)	(0.0126)	(0.0443)
Cultural Participation	**0.0913*** **	**-0.0100*** **	**0.0413*** **	**0.0287** **
	(0.0198)	(0.00345)	(0.00364)	(0.0118)
Books Read	**0.165*** **	**0.00655** **	0.00004	-0.0189
	(0.0154)	(0.00270)	(0.00278)	(0.00973)
Female	**0.874*** **	**-0.0859*** **	**-0.300*** **	**-0.607*** **
	(0.0389)	(0.00686)	(0.00740)	(0.0261)
Observations	19,356	19,356	19,356	11,552
R^2 and Pseudo-R^2	0.11	0.043	0.098	0.074

Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05. Base categories: Bourgeoisie, Up to lower secondary, Male. Models also control for age (centred at the sample mean) interacted with sex, place of origin, marital status, and place of lunch. Given that cultural capital measures might overlap substantially multicollinearity test is applied on all models. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test shows that VIFs associated with social class and the three measures of cultural capital are comprised between 1.0 and 3.0, below standard cut-off points. Full models in the appendix. Source: calculations based on MDL Istat survey (2012).

Table 2.4 OLS, Logistic and Crag's Double Hurdle Model applied on Dietary Index, Smoking Status and Alcohol Index respectively. Average marginal effects reported for the Logit and Probit regression.

However, educational credentials have a higher monotonic effect. People with a tertiary and upper secondary qualification are respectively 13 pp and 5.7 pp less likely to smoke than those with, at best, a lower secondary qualification. Also, cultural participation has a significant negative effect on smoking behaviour, although the effect is much weaker compared to educational credentials (-1 pp for each unitary increase of the index). Surprisingly, the number

of books read has a positive, weak effect on the probability of smoking. However, as I will see below, this effect is entirely driven by women's behaviour.

The last two columns show the AMEs derived from a probit model and the coefficients of the truncated linear regression on alcohol consumption. The urban and rural working class are respectively 4.8 pp and 5.8 pp less likely to drink compared to the bourgeoisie. Consequently, I cannot exclude that economic resources play a role in the probability of drinking. But it is also possible that those in higher positions are more likely to participate in work-related activities (e.g. business dinners, meetings, or conferences) where drinking is the norm. Analogously, those who have never worked are 8.4% less likely to drink alcohol at least sometimes per week. Interestingly, and consistent with the second interpretation, cultural participation has a positive effect on the probability of drinking (4.1%). This result indicates that participating in cultural activities is associated with alcohol consumption. Other studies have in fact shown that drinking alcohol is a common habit among higher educated people, although this does not end up in abusive practices such as binge drinking, which are instead more common among the lower educated (e.g. Huerta and Borgonovi, 2010). In fact, the truncated linear regression shows that, although participation in cultural activities still increases the score of the index, educational level has a protective effect on the quantity of alcohol consumed. Tertiary and upper secondary educated individuals score respectively -.13 and -.09 points less on the index.

Taken together, these findings are of interest for two main reasons. First, they indicate that economic resources are less important than cultural ones when considering health behaviours, which are mostly but not exclusively associated with cultural resources. Apart from the probability of drinking, which is not an unhealthy behaviour *per se*, social class does not have a strong monotonic effect on the other behaviours under consideration. Second, these findings imply that cultural capital may not have solely a protective effect, especially when its different dimensions are considered simultaneously.

5.3. Gender Differences and Cultural Capital

Table 2.4 also shows the net effects of gender on eating, smoking and drinking patterns. Tests for the statistical significance of the interactions can be found in the appendix. As expected, women behave more healthily than men, thus confirming the second hypothesis. Women, at the age of 43.3 (sample average) eat better (.87 points more in the index), are 8.6% less likely to smoke and even 30% less likely to drink alcoholic beverages. Moreover, among drinkers, they

score -.61 points less than men. It is however interesting to see what happens when the three dimensions of cultural capital are interacted with gender.

Figure 2.1 shows linear predictions for the index of dietary compliance and the alcohol index and the predicted probabilities of smoking and drinking. As regards eating patterns, hypothesis 3 is partially confirmed, since the gender gap – i.e. differences between conditional mean estimates – reduces when comparing the extreme categories of the educational level (from .96 to .68 points) and the number of books read (from .90 to .76 points, but the interaction is not significant). However, the effect of cultural participation seems to slightly augment the gap from .89 to 1.14.

The gender gap reduces also when I consider the results for smoking, thus confirming the third hypothesis. In this case, however, I need to distinguish the processes that bring male and female behaviours closer. Educational level decreases the probability of smoking for both men and women, but for the former the reduction is stronger, especially for the tertiary educated: the gender gap in the probability of smoking decreases from 12.0 to 4.5 pp. In a similar manner, the cultural participation index has a protective effect only for men who, also in this case, get slightly closer to women's behaviour (from 8.6 to 5.5 pp), although the interaction is not significant. The number of books read shows instead a different pattern: while men are less likely to smoke, women show an opposite trend and increase the likelihood of smoking. Interestingly, this is the only case in which the gender gap completely disappears.

Finally, also when considering the probability of drinking and the score on the index of alcohol intake, the gender gap decreases at increasing levels of all the three dimensions of cultural capital. Educational level does not have a significant effect for men but increases the probability of drinking for tertiary educated women, as well as their score on the index. The reduction in the gap diminishes from 32.1 to 26.2 pp, while the gap on the index decreases from .77 to .58 points. In like manner, cultural participation increases the probability of drinking and the quantity drunk more for women than for men, thus reducing the distance. The difference in the probability of drinking shifts from 30.0 to 21.9 pp, while the difference in the index score slightly diminishes from .63 to .61 points. Finally, the number of books read only lowers men's index score, thus reducing the gender gap from .68 to .44.

Before moving on to the discussion, it should be said that I estimated additional models by including simultaneously the interaction between gender and social class alongside gender and cultural capital measures. However, the results shown in Figure 2.1 do not change substantially.

This means that differences in health behaviours between higher and lower social classes are not shaped by gender, thus reinforcing the hypothesis that cultural capital, and not economic capital, 'reconstructs' masculine and feminine health practices.

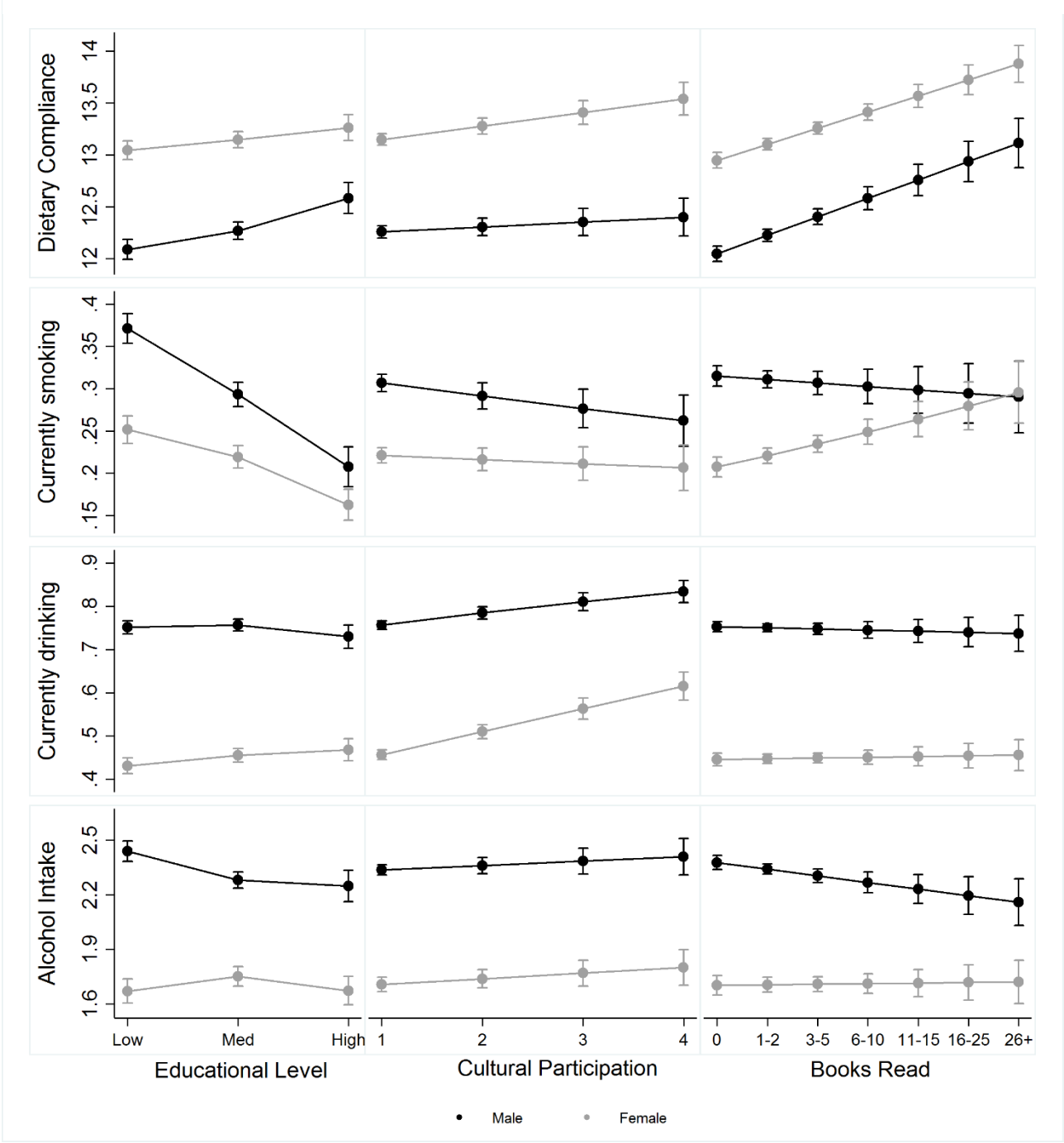
6. Discussion and Conclusions

Drawing on Abel (2008) and Courtenay (2000), I analysed the determinants of dietary compliance, smoking, and drinking among Italian adults. From a theoretical standpoint, this chapter indicates that studies on the stratification of health behaviours can be improved by considering simultaneously Abel's and Courtenay's positions, which reinforce and complement each other. In other words, while the latter provides a fundamental insight on the relational, dynamic and changeable nature of gender constructs and health practices, the former helps to explain why health behaviours are stratified and how they vary. In a way, cultural capital seems to 'reconstruct' gender differences by making them less pronounced.

Furthermore, contrarily from most studies that treat socioeconomic status as a unidimensional concept, here I disentangle its different dimensions. The distinction between cultural and economic capital, besides being theoretically important, enables to capture different determinants of health behaviours in a more precise way, and in turn suggests a more adequate framing of health policy campaigns.

Overall, the results show that cultural resources exert a defensive effect on individuals. However, like other studies (e.g. Huerta and Borgonovi, 2010) I find that this does not always apply: participating in cultural activities, differently from the educational level, is associated with both the higher probability of consuming alcohol and the frequency of consumption. In effect, it is well known that drinking is a common and widespread social activity in the Mediterranean context: alcohol is an integral part of the daily life of Italian families, and people are socialized to it when they are still very young (Beccaria and Sande, 2003). The distinction that I draw between a private and a public dimension of cultural capital seems promising indeed, because it indicates that these variables can capture other facets of individuals' social position that net of the educational level contribute to (or impinge on) health status.

Figure 2.1 Linear predictions for the dietary compliance and alcohol indices, and predicted probabilities for currently smoking and currently drinking.



Interactions between gender and all dimensions of cultural capital are simultaneously estimated. All models control for age (centred at the sample mean) interacted with sex, social class, place of origin, marital status, and place of lunch.
Source: calculation based on MDL Istat survey (2012).

Moreover, cultural capital seems to have a stronger effect than economic capital on health behaviours. However, this is not always the case: for instance, the urban and rural working classes are significantly less likely to drink than the upper classes. In any case, the findings do not imply that cultural capital is at the basis of all health behaviours regardless of other types of resources. Income can grant access to better quality food (e.g. organic), whereas social capital can protect from household food insecurity and binge drinking (Martin et al., 2004; Weitzman and Kawachi, 2000). In addition, the contextual characteristics of the study should be kept in mind: eating healthily, drinking and smoking are not very expensive practices in Italy. Things may work very differently in countries outside the Mediterranean basin depending on many factors, such as a climate unfavourable for growing vegetables, taxation policies, or expenditure on health promotion programmes.

Most importantly however, this paper sheds light on how cultural capital and gender are intertwined. Like many other studies, I find that women eat better and are less likely to smoke and drink. Yet this contribution goes a step further, and discloses how trends in the different behaviours change depending on cultural capital levels. Indeed, although the study focuses on a single country, the results might be generalizable to the Mediterranean area, which is still characterized by the male-breadwinner model and by traditional attitudes towards gender roles (Guetto et al., 2015). Eating, smoking, and drinking show a substantial reduction in the gap when I move from lowest to highest levels of cultural resources. In most cases, the gap reduces because men benefit more from cultural resources compared to women. This is clear when I look at the relation of educational level and cultural participation with the probability of smoking and dietary compliance. On other occasions, however, the gap is reduced because women start to adopt unhealthy behaviours as their level of cultural capital increases. In addition, when I consider reading books and alcohol intake or smoking, I find that both processes are at work, and in the latter case the gap entirely disappears. It may be the case that cigarettes still symbolise, as they have done in the past due to the efforts of the tobacco companies, a 'torch of freedom' towards gender equality (Amos and Haglund 2000). Moreover, there is macro-evidence that female emancipation and empowerment are associated with the diffusion of smoking among women (Hitchman and Fong, 2011; Schaap et al., 2009). These results, using individual data, strengthen this interpretation by suggesting that unhealthy behaviours may be taken up by women with higher levels of cultural capital. Qualitative research using in-depth interviews might increase the understanding of why and how cultural capital ends up by exerting a 'harmful effect', and reveal which mechanisms influence women's

health behaviours in unexpected ways. This, in turn, might be of help for a more nuanced targeting of health policy measures. For instance, campaigns against tobacco could be tailored on women with higher levels of cultural capital, or in locations that are more often frequented by women (e.g. libraries and bookshops).

Some important limitations of this contribution should be nevertheless underlined. First, given the absence of a reliable measure of income or other indicators of economic well-being, I have used social class as a proxy. Future research on health behaviours would benefit from the simultaneous collection of income and social class measurements, and it could highlight the distinction between their different effects. Even so, I am confident that social class captures the temporal aspect of the former – i.e. income security, short-term stability and longer-term prospects (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2013). Second, it is well known that dietary and drinking reports tend to be affected by social desirability and memory bias. However, it is likely that this issue produces lower bound estimates of cultural capital effects, since there is some evidence that under-reporting of unhealthy items is more prevalent among people from lower social strata and women (Herbert et al., 1997; Macdiarmid and Blundell, 1998). Third, I lack a precise measure of alcohol intake, and especially of abusive practices. Hence, although the index that I have constructed can roughly capture the frequency and amount of alcohol drunk by Italian adults, I cannot really separate high alcohol use from abuse. This might be solved in future surveys by making a distinction between the amount of alcohol drunk during weekdays and the amount consumed during weekends, by computing the frequency of binge drinking and by capturing the moments of the day in which people consume or abuse of alcohol. Fourth, the use of a dietary compliance index inevitably flattens out an integrative and multidimensional practice such as eating (Warde, 2016), and does not take into account how other aspects related to food (e.g. type of cuisine) may affect health. Future development of this study, using clustering techniques such as latent class analysis (McCutcheon 1987) or mode-based cluster analysis (Frailey & Halsey 1998), could help profiling types of ‘eaters’ while classifying different forms of compliance to dietary advices.

To conclude, I believe that future research could further analyse cross-country variations in men’s and women’s patterns of consumption as moderated by cultural capital, especially over time, in order to explore how contextual factors such as the development of more egalitarian attitudes toward gender roles, taxation policies, or health promotion programmes influence gender differences in health behaviours.

Appendix

	Diet regression	Smoking margins	Drinking margins	Drinking Trunc. regression
White Collars (Bourgeoisie)	0.0615	-0.0110	-0.0216*	-0.0390
	(0.0627)	(0.0110)	(0.0116)	(0.0367)
Pet-Urb	0.0950	0.0465***	-0.0205	0.0879*
	(0.0816)	(0.0140)	(0.0148)	(0.0505)
Pet-Agri	-0.259	-0.0367	0.0137	0.132
	(0.159)	(0.0253)	(0.0285)	(0.0979)
Work-Urb	-0.0483	0.0503***	-0.0484***	0.0741*
	(0.0704)	(0.0120)	(0.0127)	(0.0432)
Work-Agri	-0.0687	0.000945	-0.0585**	0.161*
	(0.143)	(0.0231)	(0.0257)	(0.0916)
Never worked	0.0269	-0.0417***	-0.0842***	-0.0755
	(0.0789)	(0.0136)	(0.0146)	(0.0539)
Upper secondary (Lower sec. or less)	0.143***	-0.0565***	0.0137	-0.0879***
	(0.0467)	(0.00829)	(0.00844)	(0.0305)
Tertiary	0.346***	-0.125***	0.0113	-0.130***
	(0.0685)	(0.0111)	(0.0126)	(0.0443)
Cultural participation	0.0913***	-0.0100***	0.0413***	0.0287**
	(0.0198)	(0.00345)	(0.00364)	(0.0118)
N of Books read	0.165***	0.00655**	0.00004	-0.0189*
	(0.0154)	(0.00270)	(0.00278)	(0.00973)
Lunch out (Lunch at home)	-0.197***	0.0206***	0.0278***	0.0849***
	(0.0452)	(0.00750)	(0.00803)	(0.0273)
Female (Male)	0.874***	-0.0859***	-0.300***	-0.607***
	(0.0389)	(0.00686)	(0.00740)	(0.0261)
Age centred	0.0595***	-0.000896**	0.00124***	0.00338*
	(0.00306)	(0.000384)	(0.000403)	(0.00186)
Sex*Age	-0.00791**			-0.00316
	(0.00355)			(0.00234)
Centre (North)	0.448***	0.0223**	0.00361	-0.0353
	(0.0598)	(0.00950)	(0.0102)	(0.0331)
South and islands	0.116**	0.0464***	-0.0353***	0.0752**
	(0.0495)	(0.00797)	(0.00854)	(0.0302)
Married (Single)	0.257***	-0.0773***	-0.00512	-0.144***
	(0.0524)	(0.00866)	(0.00895)	(0.0322)
Separated/divorced/widowed	-0.0174	0.0266**	-0.0184	-0.0334
	(0.0710)	(0.0127)	(0.0125)	(0.0451)
Constant	11.62***			2.412***
	(0.0887)			(0.0540)
Observations	19,356	19,356	19,356	11,552
R-squared	0.110	0.043	0.098	0.074
Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1				

Table 2.5 OLS, Logistic and Crag's Double Hurdle Model applied on Dietary Index, Smoking Status and Alcohol Index respectively: full model.

	Diet Regression	Smoking Logit coef.	Drinking Probit coef.	Drinking Trunc. regression
Female (Male)	0.919***	-0.542***	-0.935***	-0.892***
	(0.138)	(0.128)	(0.0716)	(0.0876)
White Collars (Bourgeosie)	0.0595	-0.0357	-0.0317	-0.0813*
	(0.0858)	(0.0775)	(0.0473)	(0.0469)
Pet-Urb	0.0980	0.249***	-0.0835	0.0542
	(0.104)	(0.0887)	(0.0566)	(0.0625)
Pet-Agri	-0.305	-0.0731	0.0986	0.107
	(0.195)	(0.169)	(0.109)	(0.110)
Work-Urb	-0.0385	0.254***	-0.188***	0.0514
	(0.0913)	(0.0771)	(0.0486)	(0.0535)
Work-Agri	0.0421	0.0951	-0.189**	0.113
	(0.186)	(0.150)	(0.0939)	(0.108)
Inactive	0.0421	0.130	-0.247**	-0.410***
	(0.216)	(0.166)	(0.102)	(0.149)
Female*White Collars	0.0156	-0.164	-0.0784	0.0880
	(0.125)	(0.121)	(0.0662)	(0.0730)
Female*Pet-Urb	0.0249	-0.161	0.000723	0.0489
	(0.160)	(0.147)	(0.0847)	(0.0960)
Female*Pet-Agri	0.175	-0.735**	-0.223	-0.00278
	(0.303)	(0.360)	(0.176)	(0.213)
Female*Work-Urb	-0.000724	-0.118	0.0640	-0.00491
	(0.141)	(0.128)	(0.0726)	(0.0862)
Female*Work-Agri	-0.297	-0.466*	-0.0203	0.123
	(0.274)	(0.278)	(0.150)	(0.186)
Female*Inactive	-0.0206	-0.473**	0.0176	0.479***
	(0.238)	(0.195)	(0.115)	(0.162)
Observations	19,356	19,356	19,356	11,552

Note: Interactions between gender and social class and gender and all dimensions of cultural capital are simultaneously estimated. All models control for age (centred at the sample mean) interacted with sex, social class, place of origin, marital status, and place of lunch. Source: calculation based on MDL Istat survey (2012). Reference categories in brackets.

Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 2.6 OLS, Logistic and Crag's Double Hurdle Model applied on Dietary Index, Smoking Status and Alcohol Index respectively: social class and gender interaction.

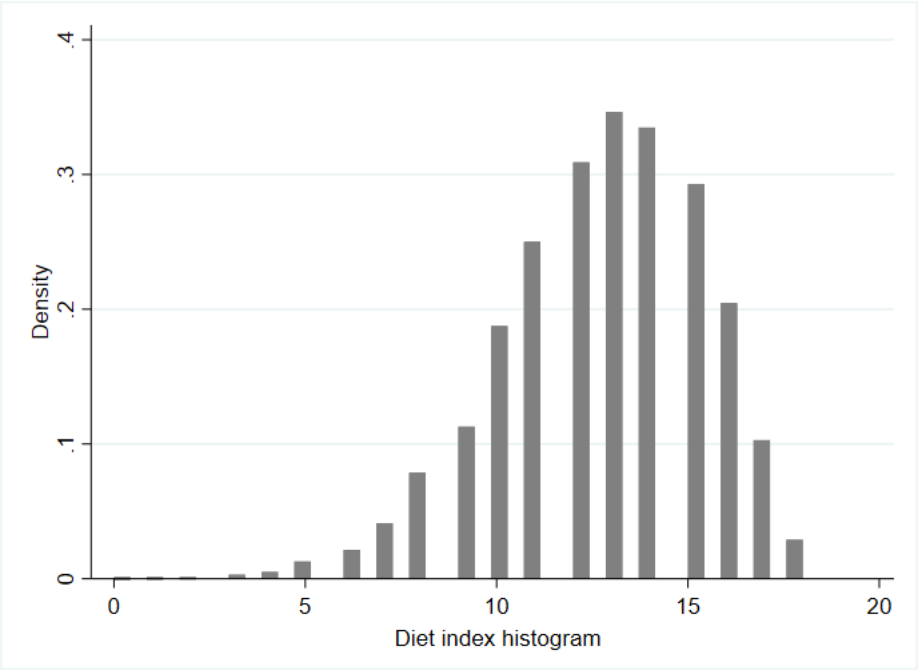


Figure 2.2. Histogram of dietary compliance index

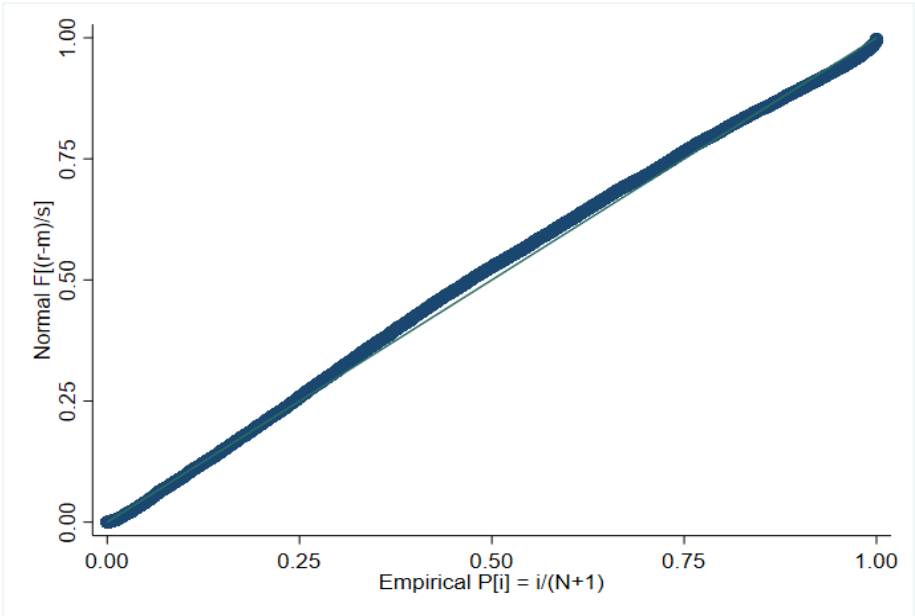


Figure 2.3. Standardized normal probability plot of dietary compliance index residuals.

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*
Variables	**Diet Index**	**Diet >0**	**Diet >1**	**Diet >2**	**Diet >3**
Upper secondary (Lower sec. or less)	0.143***	0.141***	0.135***	0.135***	0.139***
	(0.0467)	(0.0466)	(0.0465)	(0.0464)	(0.0462)
Tertiary	0.346***	0.344***	0.335***	0.330***	0.338***
	(0.0685)	(0.0684)	(0.0684)	(0.0683)	(0.0679)
Cultural capital index	0.0913***	0.0911***	0.0902***	0.0898***	0.0850***
	(0.0198)	(0.0198)	(0.0197)	(0.0197)	(0.0196)
Books read	0.165***	0.165***	0.166***	0.167***	0.164***
	(0.0154)	(0.0154)	(0.0154)	(0.0153)	(0.0153)
Female (Male)	0.874***	0.871***	0.870***	0.866***	0.864***
	(0.0389)	(0.0389)	(0.0388)	(0.0388)	(0.0385)
Age (Centred)	0.0595***	0.0595***	0.0595***	0.0592***	0.0583***
	(0.00306)	(0.00305)	(0.00304)	(0.00304)	(0.00302)
Observations	19,356	19, 354	19, 350	19,325	19,282

Note: Since the diet index is slightly skewed on the left tail, additional analyses are provided. A small left-skewness is confirmed by the small presence of mild outliers (left: 0.84% and right: 0.01%) and the irrelevant presence of severe outliers (N=3). The analyses here provided suggest however that the bias is overall negligible. In Table 8 I present the results of the OLS regression applied on the index truncated of the extreme values of the left tail. As these models suggest the estimates are only slightly biased by these outliers. Moreover, in model 3 severe outliers completely disappear, whilst estimates remain basically the same. Reference categories in brackets.

Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 2.7. OLS regression applied on the dietary compliance index (original, >0, >1, >2, >3).

	Model 1	Model 2
White collars (Bourgeoisie)	0.0570	0.0615
	(0.0628)	(0.0627)
Pet-Urb	0.121	0.0950
	(0.0815)	(0.0816)
Pet-Agri	-0.209	-0.259
	(0.159)	(0.159)
Work-Urb	-0.0371	-0.0483
	(0.0705)	(0.0704)
Work-Agri	-0.0543	-0.0687
	(0.143)	(0.143)
Inactive	0.0791	0.0269
	(0.0783)	(0.0789)
Med Edu (Low Edu)	0.141***	0.143***
	(0.0467)	(0.0467)
High Edu	0.337***	0.346***
	(0.0685)	(0.0685)
Cultural Capital Index	0.0882***	0.0913***
	(0.0198)	(0.0198)
Books read	0.164***	0.165***
	(0.0154)	(0.0154)
Lunch out		-0.197***
		(0.0452)
Female	0.902***	0.874***
	(0.0383)	(0.0389)
Age (centred)	0.0606***	0.0595***
	(0.00305)	(0.00306)
Age*sex	-0.00840**	-0.00791**
	(0.00355)	(0.00355)
Centre (North)	0.461***	0.448***
	(0.0599)	(0.0598)
South	0.153***	0.116**
	(0.0487)	(0.0495)
Married	0.253***	0.257***
	(0.0524)	(0.0524)
Separated/divorced/widowed	-0.0280	-0.0174
	(0.0710)	(0.0710)
Constant	11.52***	11.62***
	(0.0861)	(0.0887)
Observations	19,356	19,356
Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1		

Table 2.8. Dietary compliance model with and without the variable 'having lunch at home'.

Dietary compliance index (Base = male)				
sex#c.cultural capital index				
F (1, 12250) = 6.26				
Prob > F = 0.0124				
sex#c.books				
F (1, 12250) = 0.64				
Prob > F = 0.4225				
sex@edu	Contrast	Std. Err.	t	P>t
Lower secondary or lower	0.913416	0.0632923	14.43	0.000
Upper secondary	0.8382124	0.0683359	12.27	0.000
Tertiary	0.6384438	0.1090607	5.85	0.000
Currently smoking (Base = male)				
sex#c.cultural capital index				
chi2 (1) = 1.99				
Prob > chi2 = 0.1581				
sex#c.books				
chi2 (1) = 13.78				
Prob > chi2 = 0.0002				
sex@edu	Contrast	Std. Err.	z	P>z
Lower secondary or lower	-0.728923	0.0584998	-12.46	0.000
Upper secondary	-0.5505137	0.0646219	-8.52	0.000
Tertiary	-0.454047	0.1122755	-4.04	0.000
Currently drinking (Base = male)				
sex#c.cultural capital index				
chi2 (1) = 4.98				
Prob > chi2 = 0.0256				
sex#c.books				
chi2 (1) = 0.64				
Prob > chi2 = 0.4239				
sex@edu	Contrast	Std. Err.	z	P>z
Lower secondary or lower	-0.9181723	0.0335494	-27.37	0.000
Upper secondary	-0.8703747	0.0367753	-23.67	0.000
Tertiary	-0.7532307	0.0596974	-12.62	0.000
Alcohol intake (Base = male)				
sex#c.cultural capital index				
chi2 (1) = 0.09				
Prob > chi2 = 0.7587				
sex#c.books				
chi2 (1) = 5.29				
Prob > chi2 = 0.0215				
sex@edu	Contrast	Std. Err.	z	P>z
Lower secondary or lower	-0.8197736	0.0463526	-17.69	0.000
Upper secondary	-0.58071	0.0438903	-13.23	0.000
Tertiary	-0.6277867	0.0682988	-9.19	0.000

Table 2.9. Wald test of the interaction between sex and cultural capital measures.

Chapter 3
Determinants of Dietary Compliance among Italian Schoolchildren: Is the School Canteen an Equaliser?*

1. Introduction

Because it is on everyone's lips, food is a topic of interest for many scholars. Within the sociology of stratification, major contributions began to appear during the 1980s on the wave of cultural studies (Mennell et al., 1992). Concurrently, nutrition and medical scholars enriched the literature on food stratification through their interest in the persistence of health inequalities (Murcott, 2002; Mackenbach, 2012) and globally increasing trends in childhood obesity (e.g. Shrewsbury and Wardle, 2008).

Research on health stratification has not paid much attention to disentangling the specific factors that may affect dietary compliance, especially with regard to children and their social origins. Following authors who stress that a Bourdieusian theorization may be of relevance to understanding health inequalities and their determinants (e.g. Pinxten and Lievens, 2014), I first examine whether cultural capital, in its threefold form, contributes to dietary compliance and mediates the association between social class and dietary compliance. Secondly, I evaluate the effect of eating lunch at the school canteen, and how this interacts with family resources. In the conclusion, I discuss some implications of the findings for the development of empirical research on childhood food habits and health promotion policies.

2. Background

2.1 Children, Food and Social Origins

It is widely accepted that a balanced diet helps prevent children's weight gain and health problems, and positively influences their wellbeing (Weichselbaum and Buttriss, 2014). In this regard, many authors have studied the effect of social origins on children's eating patterns. Broadly speaking, a higher socioeconomic status of parents is associated with healthier children's diets: more fruit and vegetables (Rydén and Hagfors, 2011; Skafida, 2013), less junk

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food and soft drinks (Hupkens et al., 1998; Aranceta et al., 2003; De Coen et al., 2012). Parents play a direct role through their behaviours, eating practices and attitudes towards healthy foods (Patrick and Nicklas, 2005). Moreover, results suggest that families of higher socioeconomic status tend to eat together more often, which is associated with a healthier quality of the meal and with positive nutritional outcomes (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2003).

Domestic food consumption is indeed a fundamental catalyst of familial identity reproduction, children's socialization, and class identity formation (O'Connell, 2010). In particular, 'mothers' food-work' (Wright et al., 2015) is of prominent importance for comprehending the relation between familial eating practices and social class because women are more commonly responsible for family eating practices, from the purchasing of food to its serving (Miranda, 2011; Reay, 1998). This is particularly the case in Italy, a country still characterized by the male-breadwinner model. The Italian rate of female participation in the labour force, in fact, is one of the lowest among OECD countries (Esping-Andersen, 2009), and attitudes towards the gendered division of paid and unpaid work are among the most traditional in western Europe (Guetto et al., 2015).

Mothers' feeding practices are evidently shaped by their socioeconomic status, which contributes to the formation of children's eating preferences. As I will argue in chapter 4, children's 'nutritional habitus' is moulded by the cultural and economic environment of the household, which is in turn associated with particular food practices and eating ideologies. In this regard, some authors have examined how mothers' feeding practices are influenced by their social position, and they have generally obtained similar results. On the one hand, middle class mothers feel pressure to follow nutritional advice to serve healthy food, thus experiencing guilt in the case of negligence or failure. Conversely, working class mothers are primarily concerned with the daily satiation of their children, and they more often question dominant discourses on healthiness (Lareau, 2003; Wills et al., 2011; Wright et al., 2015).

However, despite the strong evidence of a relation between social position and food practices, still lacking is clear comprehension of the factors that mainly contribute to their association. Understanding social disadvantage as a multidimensional concept may then suggest to use several measures for dealing with its complexity. In this light, a Bourdieusian framework can help to single out which dimensions of social origins influence children's degree of dietary compliance.

2.2 Bourdieu, Food and Health

Bourdieu's (1984) reflections on food taste division in '*The Distinction*' probably represent the first sociological study on food stratification. The pages where he outlines how cultural and economic capital shape individuals' food preferences have attracted much attention over time, and many authors have fruitfully drawn on his conceptualization (Sato et al., 2016). Generally, whilst economic capital is associated with higher expenditure on food and eating out (e.g. business dinners) (Warde and Martens, 2000), larger endowments of cultural resources are better predictors of healthy and exotic diets; those poorer in cultural capital tend instead to prefer filling and energy-dense food (Øygard, 2000).

To date, Bourdieu's theory has never been used for quantitative assessment of the influence of social origins on children's diet. This matter has mostly been examined by health and nutritional experts, who have understandably neglected the relevance of sociological insights. The concept of socioeconomic status is often loosely treated (Braveman et al., 2005; Zarnowiecki et al., 2014), and few studies consider its multiple dimensions in an attempt to disentangle the net effects exerted by particular variables on dietary patterns. Yet, as many authors have argued, the simultaneous use of different indicators of social position may be greatly beneficial for the study of health inequalities, especially when adopting a Bourdieusian framework (McGovern and Nazroo, 2015). In fact, the theorization offered by the French sociologist seems particularly appropriate in this context, because contrarily to other multidimensional frameworks regarding the stratification of attitudes and lifestyles (e.g. the neo-Weberian distinction between social class and status made by Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007a), it also provides a plausible account of its dynamics over time, namely the reproduction over generations of particular behavioural patterns.

In '*The Forms of Capital*' (2011) Bourdieu distinguishes among economic (wealth and income), social (the network of people that surrounds the family), and cultural capital. This last is then specified in three different dimensions: the *institutionalized*, the *embodied* and the *objectified* state. The first corresponds to the educational credentials acquired by individuals during the life course; the embodied state refers to people's compliance with legitimate cultural knowledge and tastes. Finally, the objectified state concerns the possession of cultural goods which carry a high symbolic meaning and function as cultural signals for the offspring. These three forms of cultural capital are usually correlated; and, together with the other types of capital, they determine the position of an individual or a family within the social structure. Most

importantly however, cultural capital is identified by Bourdieu as the key mechanism through which social class positions are reproduced over generations.

Bourdieu's capital theory has been widely used in health research. For instance, Veenstra and Patterson (2012) showed how cultural, social and economic capital are all negatively and significantly related to mortality risk, thus suggesting that health inequalities may stem from different causal paths. Similarly, Pinxten and Lievens (2014) have simultaneously used measures of those three capitals to assess their net effects on mental and physical health. In particular, the concept of cultural capital has recently become of key importance for identifying the mechanisms that link social and health inequalities (Abel, 2008). Many authors show that educational level is significantly related to health and healthy behaviours (Cutler and Lleras–Muney, 2010), or that cultural participation positively affects self-rated health, mental health or mortality (Pinxten and Lievens, 2014). Also, Pampel (2012) finds a negative association between higher body weight and time dedicated to cultural activities. Due to a lack of data however, the effect of the objectified state on health has been generally neglected.

With regard to eating practices, it has been argued that possessing the legitimate knowledge on what constitutes a healthy meal influences people's food choice towards greater compliance with nutritional advices, which in turn can result in a divide in health status. Cultural resources, as Abel (2008: 3) posits, drive 'values attached to health, knowledge about health effects of certain food products and norms that guide health behaviours'. On the other hand, economic resources could be associated with the type of food brands acquired, or the store where most often groceries are purchased.

Consequently, determining how exactly familial economic and cultural resources shape children's food environment and relate to school meal policies may shed further light on the phenomenon. Parental cultural capital could, in fact, explain a good portion of the association between social class and children's eating patterns, while at the same time furnishing a plausible explanation for their transmission. A focus on the disentanglement of social origins effects on food choice could indeed be particularly helpful from a public policy perspective, because it may permit a more accurate framing and evaluation of health policy programmes and interventions (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007b; Skafida, 2013).

2.3 The Role of School Canteens

In order to fight the obesity epidemic among children, the World Health Organization recommends that governments intervene through the implementation of health promotion programmes in schools (WHO, 2008). In Italy, the 'Fruit in Schools' programme aims to incentivize the consumption of fruit during school breaks instead of snacks (MIPAAF, 2014). As I will more fully describe in chapter 3, the Italian ministry of health has produced specific guidelines for the correct management of school canteens, setting the amount of daily nutrients intake for each age group (MIS, 2010). Moreover, the Italian school meal service benefits from a dietary and constitutional framework which guarantees 'children's rights to local and healthy food' while promoting teaching programmes on salutary nutrition and sustainable consumption (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008: 68).

Due to the recent implementation of school-based health promotion programmes and because of a lack of survey data, few quantitative studies have focused on how school canteens intervene on youngsters' nutrition and how this could be related to their social origins. Overall, scholars agree that children benefit from a healthy school food environment: vending machines and a canteen menu in line with nutritional advice can contribute to improving pupils' health (Story et al., 2009; Weichselbaum and Buttriss, 2014). The evidence suggests indeed that a healthier school environment is associated with a reduction in the consumption of soft drinks and snacks, and with a general improvement of food habits (Raulio et al., 2010).

The school canteen should therefore be seen as part of the so-called 'child-centred investment strategy' which serves the purpose of mitigating differences in social origins by providing universal access to high quality child-care (Van Lancker, 2013). In Sweden, for instance, school canteens started providing free meals in 1965 in order to fight health disparities (Andersen et al., 2015). Similarly, several Danish schools offer free lunches with organic and local food as a strategy to improve the nutritional quality of children's diets (He et al., 2012). Contrarily to lunchboxes prepared at home, which usually reflect the family's food culture, the school meal can thus be employed as a 'great equaliser' that guarantees universal access to a wholesome meal whilst transmitting values on how to eat properly and in a well-balanced manner (Gullberg, 2006). Nonetheless, as Van Lancker (2013) contends, these policies are often effective only on paper, since children from less affluent social strata are less likely to access those services, which in turn may perversely fuel social inequality by increasing disparities.

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The present study has two main objectives. First, I am interested in understanding how different dimensions of social stratification – namely, cultural and economic capital – affect the degree of compliance with dietary indications and the (perceived) quality of the food purchased. Second, I examine whether eating lunch at the school canteen has an effect in line with dietary indications, and whether it can offset a lower degree of compliance with dietary guidelines among children of low social origins. Dietary compliance is understood as conformance with nutritional advice stipulated by nutrition experts, and it is proxied by the Mediterranean food pyramid for children (Iaia, 2005; Caroli, 2010). As for food quality, I distinguish between expenditure for food and, most importantly, the type of store where groceries are usually bought.

Given that cultural resources are usually considered better predictors of the type of diet (e.g. Øygard, 2000), I posit that economic capital, proxied by the EGP social class scheme, has a small or null net effect on children's degree of dietary compliance. Thus, the first hypothesis can be summarized as follows:

H1a: *Higher social origins positively influence children's dietary compliance, but the effect of parental social class is accounted for by cultural capital in its threefold form.*

Moreover, considering that the Italian context is still characterized by the male-breadwinner model (Esping-Andersen, 2009) and by traditional attitudes towards gender roles (Guetto et al., 2015), I contend that mothers' and fathers' characteristics should be taken into account separately. Since mothers usually take care of the family's eating practices, the first hypothesis can be further specified as follows:

H1b: *The characteristics of mothers have a stronger influence than those of fathers*.

In the third specification of the hypothesis, I instead surmise that the type of store where groceries are bought is more strongly associated with economic resources.

H1c: *Economic resources, net of cultural ones, are stronger predictors of the type of store where families purchase food.*

The second research question concerns the role of the school canteen as an 'equaliser' of parents' feeding choices. This equalizing effect will operate if the school meal a) improves children's dietary compliance, b) is equally accessed by children of different socioeconomic

backgrounds, and c) is of particular help to children of low social origins.[1] As far as the first two conditions, considering that all Italian schools must provide meals in line with dietary guidelines and with the explicit aim of fulfilling the right of children to a wholesome diet (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008), I can expect that:

H2a: *Children eating lunch at school have a higher degree of dietary compliance than those eating at home.*

H2b: *Access to school canteens does not depend on parents' socioeconomic characteristics*.

Finally, if hypothesis H2a is supported, I surmise that eating at school canteens has more positive effects among the children who should benefit the most from health promotion programmes – that is, children of low social origins. This is due to the fact that school meal programs are always complemented by teaching modules on nutrition education and more generally by a whole series of healthy eating policies targeting both children and parents (see chapter 4). Thus, I can expect that:

H2c: *A positive interaction effect exists between having lunch at the school canteen and belonging to lower social strata.*

4. Data and Methods

4.1 Data

The analysis is based on the Multipurpose survey on Daily Life (MDL). The Italian Statistical Institute (Istat) has been collecting yearly data on the daily life and cultural consumption of random samples of Italian families since 1994. All family components are asked to complete a personal questionnaire regarding their dietary habits. In order to have a sufficient number of cases, I pooled datasets from 2009 to 2012 and restricted the investigation to primary school children (aged 5-11) with both parents present in the household.[2] The final pooled sample consisted of 8,515 cases with non-missing values for all selected variables (78.9% of the

[1] Another way to frame the same research question is to imagine what would happen to inequalities in dietary compliance among children in the absence of a school meal program. From this angle, it is likely that without the service inequalities would be much larger. A future development of the research might therefore use a simulation study to investigate this issue. I am thankful to Dott. Moris Triventi for this suggestion.

[2] The exclusion of single-parent households implies that the results are not directly generalizable to the whole population of Italian primary school children. However, nonmarital births, separations and divorces in Italy have started to spread only in recent years. As a result, among children aged 5-11, about 87% were found among two-parent households.

original sample with a random distribution of missing values, which constituted around 3% for each variable).

If children were not able to read or write, their parents helped them fill out the questionnaire. This might have worsened the social desirability bias which affects dietary reports, because people, children included, generally know what is healthy and unhealthy (Baxter et al., 2004). Nonetheless, authors find very little empirical evidence of a relation between children's socio-demographic characteristics and dietary misreports, thus suggesting that this bias is randomly distributed across the population (Forrestal, 2011). Moreover, among adults, there is some evidence that the underreporting of the consumption of 'bad' foods is actually more common among the less educated and among people from lower social classes (Macdiarmid and Bundell, 1998). This problem, besides memory bias and measurement error, may lead to underestimation of social differences (hence decreasing the predictive power of the model), since respondents overstate the consumption of healthy edibles and underrate that of unhealthy ones, thus levelling out responses.

An additional validity issue concerns how accurately parents can report on how their children eat at the school canteen. Apart from the direct information gathered from children themselves, to be pointed out is that school canteens in Italy provide parents with seasonal, and sometimes yearly, menus. Moreover, parents can often visit specific websites to check on the daily meal consumed by their children.

Concurrently, to analyse the determinants of food expenditure and type of grocery store, I use Istat Survey on Household Consumption from 2012 (SHC). Since 1997, Istat collects data on household expenditure over a period of 12 months so as to avoid seasonality purchasing of goods. The reference person in the household is required to fill in the weekly record of purchasing for goods and services considered, which Istat subsequently converts into a monthly estimate. Since retired people are not required to state their former profession, I restricted the analysis to households where the referral person is currently employed. The final sample consists of 10.490 households with non-missing values for all variables considered.

4.2 MDL Dependent Variables

I considered respondents' consumption of salty snacks, sweets, fish, fruit, leaf vegetables and fruit vegetables as dependent variables, and I combined them so as to obtain an index of compliance with dietary norms, which I name the Pyramid Index (PI). I selected these food

items because of their central position in a diet. Each person in the family was asked to respond to the question: 'How often do you eat …' and they could choose among 5 different answers.[3]

To create the index, I relied on the Mediterranean children food pyramid (Iaia, 2005; Caroli 2010). I recoded the 7 variables assigning two, one, or zero points to the dietary habit according to its compliance with the food pyramid (see Table 3.1). I then summed all the recoded variables together so as to have an aggregate, normally distributed, scale ranging from 0 to 14, and I applied step-wise OLS regressions.[4]

Food Variable	**Frequency**
Salty Snacks – Sweets	Once per day or more = 0 Sometimes per week = 1 Less than once per week = 2
Fish	Everyday/Never = 0 Less than once per week = 1 Sometimes per week = 2
Vegetables (leaf and fruit) – Fruit	Less than once per week = 0 Sometimes per week = 1 Once per day or more = 2
Cured Meat	Once per day or more = 0 Sometimes per week = 1 Less than once per week = 2
Note: All the seven items are summed so as to obtain a (normally distributed) index ranging from 0 to 14.	

Table 3.1 Variables recoding applied to build the Pyramid Index.

4.3 SHC Dependent Variable

In the survey, the referral person is asked to state where does the family usually buy bread, pasta, fish, fruit and vegetables. Possible answers to each edible are: hard discount, supermarket, hypermarket, traditional shop, street market. I recoded the variables so as to create a dummy variable that indicates whether the family acquires at least one food item in the hard discount (12.4%) or not (87.6%), and I applied stepwise logistic regression.

[3] More than once per day, Once per day, Sometimes per week, Less than once per week, Never.

[4] The Cronbach's alpha for the dietary scale is 0.6. This value is just in line with the minimum threshold for a reliable scale (Hair et al. 2006), yet in this case it is not necessarily a good measure of reliability. In fact, the dietary scale is just the sum of right/wrong nutritional choices, which are derived from the Mediterranean Pyramid. In this case, the scale is not measuring a latent construct such as a complex cultural orientation (e.g. traditionalism), which might be instead conceptualized and operationalized as the 'result' of a set of highly correlated attitude items.

4.4 MDL Independent Variables

In addition to a dummy variable for each survey year, all models included a range of socioeconomic background indicators, separately for mothers and fathers.

Children's variables included age, sex and place of residence (north, centre and south). Moreover, I controlled for the location of their lunch: at home with parents or at the school canteen.

For each parent I included age, social class and three forms of cultural capital. For parental social class, I relied on the EGP scheme (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) and, more precisely, on its adaptation for Italy as proposed by Cobalti and Schizzerotto (1993): I distinguished among bourgeoisie, white collars, rural and urban petty bourgeoisie, rural and urban working class and I also took first-time unemployed and housewives into account.

The concept of cultural capital is rarely treated in its threefold dimensionality; however, as Kraaykamp and van Eijck (2010) demonstrate, it can be very useful to consider all its dimensions simultaneously. For the institutionalized form, I distinguished among three levels of educational attainment: tertiary, upper secondary, and lower secondary or less. Many authors have effectively used 'cultural participation' as a proxy for embodied capital (e.g. Pinxten and Lievens, 2014). In the analysis, I used the frequency with which each parent had been to theatres, museums, archaeological sites and classical concerts in the last year. The original response categories of the four variables ranged from 0 (never) to 5 (more than 12). Given the rare occurrence of each cultural activity, I recoded the ordinal response categories into a dummy variable (0 = never; 1 = at least once). This permitted to create an aggregate scale ranging from 0 to 4 (Cronbach's alpha= 0.7). As for the objectified cultural capital, authors have used different variables. For instance, Barone (2006) used the PISA index of cultural possession, while Kraaykamp and van Eijck (2010) made a scale of possession with four cultural objects. I operationalised this dimension by means of the number of books in the home, which was a variable attributed to all family members.

Finally, I controlled for parents' PI score. In this way, I could determine whether the children's compliance with dietary advice was uniquely channelled by what their parents ate, or whether there still remained a direct effect of the different dimensions of social origins just described.

4.5 SHC Independent Variables

In this survey, the only cultural capital measure available is the educational level of the referral person in the family (tertiary, upper secondary, and lower secondary or less). For the economic capital, I instead use two measures: on the one hand, the EGP social class scheme adaptation used above; on the other hand, I use the quintiles of household expenditures (minus nondurables) as a proxy to household total financial resources. This is common practice in the econometric literature, even when theoretical models are based on current income (Barigozzi et al., 2012).

Additional control variables include the family type (single, couple with/without children, lone parent), area of residence (north, centre, south or islands), number of people in the household, the percentage of the total expenditure spent on food, age and sex of the referral person.

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

When not simultaneously considered, both social class and each type of cultural capital exert a positive effect on the PI index (Figure 3.1).

Higher educational level and participation in cultural activities by both parents increase children's PI score by 0.7 and 1 point respectively, considering the full range of both variables. The number of books in the home displays a similar pattern, increasing the index by 1.5 points when the family possesses more than 400 books compared to none. Similarly, social class is related to children's PI score: when I compare the bourgeoisie with the urban or rural working class, the index decreases by 0.5 and 1 point respectively for both parents.

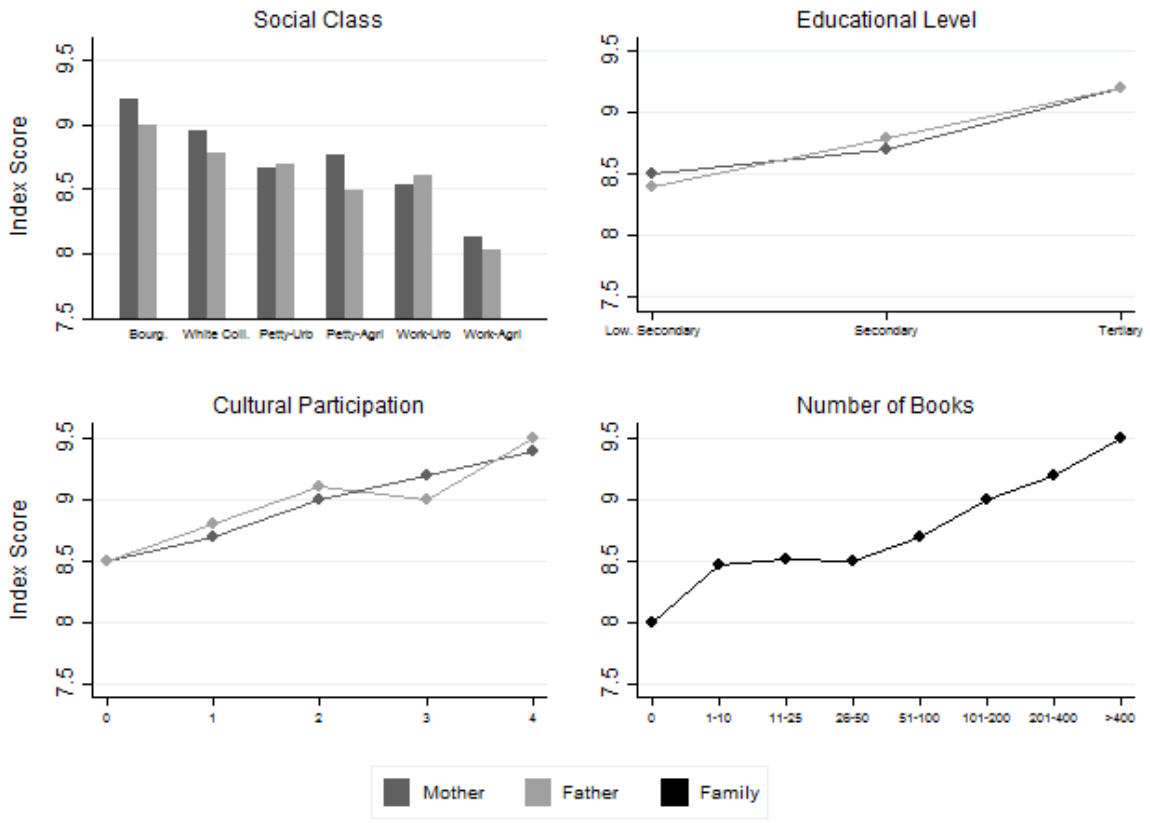

Figure 3.1 Relations between children's PI score and parental social class and children's PI score and the three forms of parental cultural capital.

5.2 Are Social Class Effects Accounted for by Cultural Capital?

Table 3.2 above displays the results of step-wise OLS regressions on the pyramid index.[5] Model 1 shows the effect of social class without accounting for the three forms of cultural capital. Compared to the bourgeoisie, all other social classes record lower values of the index, with stronger effects among urban working class mothers (-.53). The effects of social class are indeed highly significant and monotonic when I do not control for cultural capital variables.

In Model 2 I introduce the education level, which weakens the effect of social class for both parents. In the case of fathers, significance disappears for social class, while the lower the education level, the stronger the negative impact on children's index score. The effect of mother's education is still negative but not significant.

[5] For easiness of interpretation we separately present coefficients for mothers and fathers even if they belong to the same regression model.

Father	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
White Collar	-0.0975	-0.0188	0.00208	0.00835	0.0377
	(0.0846)	(0.0867)	(0.0867)	(0.0867)	(0.0786)
Pet-Urb	-0.127	0.0325	0.0681	0.0849	0.109
	(0.0948)	(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.0918)
Pet-Agri	-0.235	-0.0742	-0.0267	-0.0118	-0.103
	(0.197)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.181)
Work-Urb	**-0.219*** **	-0.0380	0.0128	0.0446	0.0662
	(0.0821)	(0.0917)	(0.0925)	(0.0928)	(0.0841)
Work-Agri	**-0.459** **	-0.267	-0.216	-0.175	-0.245
	(0.185)	(0.191)	(0.191)	(0.191)	(0.173)
Housewife					
Unemployed	-0.0519	0.128	0.140	0.173	0.175
	(0.346)	(0.349)	(0.348)	(0.348)	(0.315)
Upper secondary		**-0.282*** **	**-0.246** **	**-0.213** **	-0.104
		(0.0976)	(0.0982)	(0.0986)	(0.0894)
Lower sec. or lower		**-0.430*** **	**-0.375*** **	**-0.332*** **	-0.169
		(0.112)	(0.114)	(0.114)	(0.103)
Cultural participation			0.0362	0.0257	0.000227
			(0.0373)	(0.0374)	(0.0340)
N. of books (both par.)				**0.0715*** **	**0.0691*** **
				(0.0200)	(0.0181)
Index Score					**0.250*** **
					(0.0137)
Mother	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
White Collar	**-0.199** *	-0.112	-0.106	-0.105	-0.0552
	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.102)
Pet-Urb	**-0.364** **	-0.243	-0.218	-0.205	-0.182
	(0.145)	(0.149)	(0.149)	(0.149)	(0.135)
Pet-Agri	0.0188	0.193	0.252	0.294	0.368
	(0.341)	(0.345)	(0.345)	(0.345)	(0.312)
Work-Urb	**-0.525*** **	**-0.387*** **	**-0.342** **	**-0.318** **	-0.0902
	(0.127)	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.122)
Work-Agri	-0.442	-0.291	-0.249	-0.223	0.00962
	(0.301)	(0.304)	(0.304)	(0.304)	(0.276)
Housewife	**-0.259** **	-0.123	-0.0809	-0.0509	-0.0315
	(0.111)	(0.119)	(0.119)	(0.119)	(0.108)
Unemployed	-0.0200	0.0646	0.112	0.153	0.328
	(0.260)	(0.261)	(0.261)	(0.261)	(0.237)
Upper secondary		-0.161	-0.110	-0.0738	-0.0756
		(0.0898)	(0.0905)	(0.0910)	(0.0825)
Lower sec. or lower		-0.119	-0.0381	0.0246	0.0123
		(0.108)	(0.110)	(0.111)	(0.101)
Cultural participation			**0.0884** **	**0.0724** **	0.0329
			(0.0361)	(0.0364)	(0.0330)
Index Score					**0.368*** **
					(0.0144)
School lunch	**0.167** **	**0.164** **	**0.161** **	**0.155** **	**0.175*** **
	(0.0658)	(0.0658)	(0.0657)	(0.0657)	(0.0596)
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.23
Observations	8,515	8,515	8,515	8,515	8,515

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Note: Base categories: Bourgeoisie, Tertiary Education, Lunch at home. The model also includes controls for the interaction of sex and age of the children, age for both parents, place of residence and survey year. Full models in the appendix. Source: elaboration based on MDL Istat survey (2009-2012).

Table 3.2 Pyramid Index Step-wise OLS Regressions.

In Model 3 the embodied cultural capital is introduced. To be noticed is that the scale of cultural participation weakens the effect of social class for the mother and substantially decreases that of education for the father. However, its effect is only significant for mothers. Considering that the index for embodied cultural capital ranges from 0 to 4, the maximum effect of the latter variable is comparable to that of mother's social class (.09*4 = .36 vs .34). Overall, these first results only partially support the hypothesis that mothers' characteristics have a stronger influence than those of fathers.

In Model 4 I take into account the objectified cultural capital of the family. Considering the full range of the variable, cultural goods supposedly have the greatest influence among the types of cultural capital under observation (.07*8 = .56). However, the strength of this effect is also driven by the 'shared' nature of the variable, which necessarily improves the accuracy of its measurement. The effect of social class, apart from children of working class mothers, almost totally disappears at this point, thus confirming the hypothesis H1a.

In the last model, I consider father's and mother's scores on the PI: this control makes it possible to understand whether the effects registered so far are fully mediated by parents' dietary compliance.[6] Model 5 suggests two major points to discuss. First, the introduction of parental PI increases the R-Squared from 6% of Model 4 to 23% of Model 5. This sudden leap presumably implies that, to a large extent, children's compliance with dietary norms is transmitted by what their parents eat. Nonetheless, despite a decrease in the magnitude of the coefficients, objectified cultural capital still maintains a significant effect. In practical terms, this means that parents make an actual effort when feeding their children. Secondly, the results give some further support to the hypothesis that the mother's influence exceeds that of the father (H1b), despite not being mediated by socioeconomic characteristics: the effect of the mother's PI score, in fact, is much greater than that of the father (.37 vs .25). This result is in line with those of many studies that suggest a greater influence of mothers on children: from cognitive development to behavioural patterns (e.g. Cabrera et al., 2011; Zarnowiecki et al., 2014).[7]

[6] Given that cultural capital measures and index scores of both parents might overlap substantially, a multicollinearity test is applied on Model 5. The VIF test shows that variance inflation factors range from 1.07 to 4.35 (mean VIF = 2.6), well below standard cut-off points.

[7] The conclusion that mother's PI has a greater influence than father's PI may be due to the mothers helping children complete the questionnaire more than fathers. Holding this true, it is reasonable to assume that differences between parents should reduce with children's increased autonomy in answering the questions. In fact, additional analyses, available in the appendix, show that the greater influence of mothers remains substantially unchanged even when children are aged 11.

Bourdieu himself described maternal feeding as 'the archetypal relation to the archetypal cultural good' (1984: 79).

In line with hypothesis H2a, the last regression model provides robust evidence that eating at the school canteen improves children's PI score (.18) no matter what the parental resources are. This result is particularly important because it suggests that the school canteen effectively enhances the children's diet.[8]

5.3 Economic Capital and Type of Store

Table 3.3 below shows instead the marginal effects of cultural and economic capital measures on the probability of acquiring at least one food item in the hard discount. Overall, the model confirms the hypothesis H1c on the stronger role played by economic capital. As the step-wise procedure shows, when the model does not take into account social class and the income proxy, those with a lower educational level are 9.3 percentage points (pp) more likely to make a purchase in the hard discount compared to those with a tertiary title. However, when social class is introduced in Model 2, the distance reduces to 5.8 pp. Conversely, the urban and agricultural working classes are respectively 8.8 and 12.0 pp more likely to purchase in the hard discount than the bourgeoisie. Finally, Model 3 introduces the income proxy in the regression. Despite the effect of cultural resources is still significant (those with a lower title are 4.6% more likely to make a purchase in a hard discount compared to those holding a degree), the magnitude of the effect is negligible when compared with economic resources. Although the effect of social class decreases, the urban and rural working class are still 7.4 and 10.0 pp distant from the upper class; concurrently, quintiles of total expenditure have a strong monotonic effect on the probability of acquiring edibles in the hard discount: those in the fifth quintile are 13.5 pp less likely to enter hard discount for one of the edibles mentioned above. In chapter 5 I will go more in depth, showing how the store where groceries are bought can be used to mark boundaries depending on the economic resources of the family.

[8] To better to evaluate the effect of eating at the school canteen I tried the same regression model on an index constructed taking solely wholesome products (i.e. fish, fruit and two types of vegetables) into consideration. As a matter of fact, school canteens do not serve snacks and sweets but cannot prevent children from eating them at home. As expected, the results showed a stronger effect (0.169 on model 4 and 0.180 on model 5) of the school canteen on this second index, thus confirming that it improves children's degree of dietary compliance. Conversely, eating at school does not have any effect on the index constructed with sweets and snacks. Results are available upon request.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Educational level			
Upper secondary	**0.0342*** **	**0.0233** **	**0.0193** **
	(0.00767)	(0.00909)	(0.00951)
Lower secondary or less	**0.0931*** **	**0.0580*** **	**0.0464*** **
	(0.00812)	(0.00981)	(0.0101)
Social class			
White collar		**0.0293*** **	**0.0262*** **
		(0.00858)	(0.00901)
Petty-Urb		**0.0288*** **	**0.0218** *
		(0.0109)	(0.0112)
Petty-Agri		0.00801	0.000012
		(0.0246)	(0.0242)
Work-Urb		**0.0875*** **	**0.0735*** **
		(0.00978)	(0.00996)
Work-Agri		**0.120*** **	**0.0996*** **
		(0.0258)	(0.0246)
Total expenditure quintiles			
2nd			**-0.0660*** **
			(0.0148)
3rd			**-0.102*** **
			(0.0146)
4th			**-0.110*** **
			(0.0149)
5th			**-0.135*** **
			(0.0151)
Pseudo R^2	0.028	0.040	0.054
Observations	10,490	10,490	10,490

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Note: base categories: tertiary or higher, bourgeoisie, 1st quintile. The model also includes controls for type of family, area of residence, number of people in the household, percentage of total expenditure spent on food, age and sex of the referral person. Full model in the appendix. Source: elaboration based on SHC survey (2012).

Table 3.3 Average marginal effect of educational level, social class and income on the probability of buying at least one edible in the hard discount.

5.4 Is the Canteen an Equaliser?

In order to address this question, I first examine how access to the school canteen is stratified by cultural and economic capital. Drawing on the results of a logistic regression, I present the odds of using the canteen compared to eating at home depending on children's social origins. This model makes it possible to identify the children that more often take advantage of the public service. I then examine the interaction effects on children's PI score between eating at the school canteen, social class, and cultural capital: in this way it is possible to see whether the school meal can positively mould children's dietary compliance, counteracting less compliant familial eating habits.

	Father	Mother
White collar	-0.00387	-0.00144
	(0.0141)	(0.0185)
Petty-Urb	-0.0262	**-0.0458***
	(0.0165)	(0.0247)
Petty-Agri	-0.0547	**-0.120****
	(0.0334)	(0.0592)
Work-Urb	-0.0213	-0.0159
	(0.0152)	(0.0222)
Work-Agri	**-0.0641***	-0.0616
	(0.0352)	(0.0583)
Unemployed	0.0564	**-0.0934*****
	(0.0660)	(0.0197)
Housewife		**-0.0966****
		(0.0459)
Upper secondary	-0.000963	-0.00675
	(0.0155)	(0.0145)
Lower secondary or less	0.00744	**-0.0368****
	(0.0182)	(0.0180)
Cultural participation	0.00852	-0.00420
	(0.00594)	(0.00580)
N. of Books	**0.00664****	
	(0.00329)	
Observations	8,515	

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. *Note*: Base Outcome Category: Eating at Home. Base Control Categories: bourgeoisie, tertiary education. The model also includes controls for the interaction of the sex and age of the children, age for both parents, region of residence and survey year. Full model in the appendix. Source: elaboration based on MDL Istat survey (2009-2012) data.

Table 3.4 Marginal effects of social class and cultural capital measures on the probability of having a child eating in the school canteen.

The results of the logistic regression are presented in Table 3.4, which shows the average marginal effects for mother's and father's socioeconomic characteristics. The results indicate that it cannot be taken for granted that schools provide a universal service: ensuring everyone has equal opportunities does not automatically imply that everyone takes advantage of those opportunities in the same way.

In line with H1b, mothers' characteristics seem to outplay that of fathers' in determining children's participation to the school canteen. More importantly however, the results indicate petty bourgeoisie mothers are less likely to make use of the canteen (urban 4.6 and rural 12 pp). Moreover, children whose mothers are not employed use the service less often: 9.7 pp for housewives and for 9.3 pp for first-time unemployed. One likely mechanism underlying these

effects is that when parents have flexible work schedules (as may happen with housewives and among the self-employed) they prefer to provide lunch for their children.

With regard to cultural resources, the results are rather striking. Mothers with at most lower secondary education are 3.7 pp less likely to use school canteens than mothers with tertiary education. Moreover, objectified cultural capital exerts a positive effect, thus suggesting that those richer in cultural resources willingly send their children to the school canteen. These results do not support the hypothesis H2b, suggesting that those children who would benefit more from the healthier school food environment are actually those who less often use the service. A tentative interpretation might be that lower-educated mother tend to have more traditional values, and therefore prefer their children to eat within the familial context. Conversely, families with higher endowments of cultural resources more willingly send their children to the school canteen because they may have the same eating values as the institution.

I finally move to the interaction effects. Whilst the step-wise regression had shown that school meals positively affect everyone net of their social origins, the interaction would reveal whether eating at the canteen is more beneficial for children with a more disadvantaged background. Consequently, I separately interacted the dummy variable for lunch at school with social class and with the three types of cultural capital (Table 3.5). The interaction models were applied on the fourth model of Table 3.2, in order to check whether the total effect of social origins variables is partially curtailed by eating at the school canteen.

Contrarily to the hypothesis H2c, the coefficients show that the school canteen does not counterbalance 'less compliant' parental feeding practices. In fact, the effects are similar across social classes and levels of cultural capital. This is indeed confirmed by tests of the overall statistical significance of the interaction, available in the appendix. These results hence suggest that there is no such thing as a beneficial counteracting force. In short: eating at school improves dietary compliance, also among children of lower social origins; but once children are back at home, their eating style is still determined by parental food attitudes and serving. This may suggest that parents remain conservative when it comes to eating and feeding practices, no matter how healthy and beneficial the school meal may be. Whilst these results are in line with those of a body of studies showing the benefits of a healthy school food environment (Jaime and Lock, 2009) still more research is needed to quantitatively assess the interplay between family characteristics and school canteens in determining children's dietary compliance (Lytle et al., 2006).

Canteen*Social Class	Father	Mother	**Canteen*Cultural Capital**	Father	Mother
Canteen	**0.342***		Canteen	0.272	
	(0.204)			(0.308)	
Canteen*White Collar	-0.202	-0.108	Canteen*Upper secondary	0.0728	**-0.322***
	(0.172)	(0.220)		(0.194)	(0.178)
Canteen*Pet-Urb	-0.123	-0.145	Canteen*Lower sec. or lower	0.333	**-0.357***
	(0.196)	(0.297)		(0.217)	(0.216)
Canteen*Pet-Agri	0.255	**-1.403***	Canteen* Cultural participation	-0.024	0.0196
	(0.441)	(0.838)		-0.0389	-0.0379
Canteen*Work-Urb	-0.0683	-0.246	Canteen*N. of Books	**0.0604***	
	(0.167)	(0.255)		(0.0334)	
Canteen*Work-Agri	0.213	-1.204	Observations	8,515	
	(0.462)	(0.742)			
Canteen*Housewife		-0.005			
		(0.226)			
Canteen*Unemployed	0.503	-0.511			
	(0.782)	(0.614)			
Observations	8,515				

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. *Note*: base categories: Bourgeoisie, Tertiary Education. The model also includes controls for the interaction of the sex and age of the children, age for both parents, place of residence and survey year. Source: calculations based on MDL Istat survey (2009-2012) data.

Table 3.5 Interaction between participating to the school meal and social class and participating to the school meal and three measures of cultural capital.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, this chapter shows that children's dietary compliance is influenced by social origins, even when a supposedly universal measure, such as the school meal, intervenes in their nourishment.

Given the limited availability of data, I was able to examine a small aspect of the *compound* of practices that shape eating patterns (Warde, 2013): many others could be taken into account when studying dietary choices, as for instance cooking methods or dressings most often used. Some additional remarks with regard to the limitations of this study should be made. It is widely known that dietary reports tend to be biased by social desirability (Baxter, 2004). The latter, along with memory bias, certainly affects parents' and children's answers, especially when the former help the latter to fill in the questionnaire. However, I am confident that these possible methodological flaws actually yield lower-bound estimates of social origins effects, because the responses of individuals with different socioeconomic backgrounds tend to be levelled out. A second minor concern regards instead the lack in the MDL survey of a direct measure of economic capital like family income. Although I agree that income and social class entail two different dimensions of socioeconomic status, it is equally true that social class proficiently

captures the *temporal* aspect of the former – i.e. income security, short-term stability and longer-term prospects (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2013: 1025) – while at the same time providing other important insights on the phenomena under investigation.[9]

Two main conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, the degree of dietary compliance is substantially driven by cultural resources. The models on the PI (Table 3.2) indicate that each dimension of familial cultural capital positively influences the degree of children's dietary compliance, thus supporting the hypothesis H1a. In this regard, two further considerations are in order: on the one hand, the effects found are very often cumulative, thus implying a higher potential influence by the entire family's cultural capital on children's diets. All forms of capital are usually correlated and, due to educational and occupational assortative mating, parents' effects tend to be additive (e.g. Schwartz and Mare, 2005). On the other hand, since the patterns of consumption that I have considered are weekly, the relatively small effects that I have identified possibly reveal damaging trends in the long run. These two factors hence suggest that besides being statistically significant, the findings are also meaningful (Bernardi et al., 2017). Crucially however, economic resources, more than cultural ones, are associated to the type of store where usually families buy groceries. In chapter 5 I will explore more in detail this specific disjunction.

Second, this study has shed light on the possible beneficial role of the school canteen. *Prima facie*, the canteen seems to exert a positive influence on children's eating styles, hence supporting the hypothesis H2a. As a matter of fact, meals in Italian schools must be wholesome and balanced by regulation (MIS, 2010). Nonetheless, in this contribution I have provided evidence that this form of intervention may be only partially effective because it impacts less on the eating behaviour of those who would need the most modification according to the PI score (Table 3.4 and Table 3.5). This finding does not corroborate the hypothesis that the school canteen may act as a 'great equaliser'. On the one hand, contrarily to the hypothesis H2b, parents seem to choose to use the canteen on the basis of occupational constraints. Possibly,

[9] The present thesis does not take into consideration sport-related activities, which contribute at least as much as dietary choices to children's health status. This is motivated by the need to focus on one precise topic while developing the main argumentation throughout the text. The theme is however very relevant, especially considering that Bourdieu (1978) himself examined the patterns of participation in routine and organized sport activities (see also Warde, 2006). For this reason, I have added in the appendix the preliminary results, based on the same sample, of a logistic regression applied on a dummy variable that measures whether the child engages regularly in sport activities. The theoretical framework here applied seems to work also in the case of sport activities. The results indicate that contrarily to dietary compliance, economic capital (proxied by social class) plays a very relevant role. It is likely that the costs associated to sport services (e.g. enrolment fees, equipment and so on) become for many families an insurmountable obstacle. See table 3.11 in the appendix for further information.

when the work schedule allows them to have lunch with their children, they prefer to do so. On the other hand, cultural resources increase the likelihood of using the service, thus implying that those who take advantage of the service already eat more healthily at home. Finally, those from more disadvantaged backgrounds do not benefit more than the others, thus disconfirming the hypothesis H2c. These findings are consistent with the results obtained by Van Lancker (2013) showing that, in Europe, children from more disadvantaged backgrounds are everywhere but in Denmark less likely to be enrolled in formal child-care services. This implies that social investment strategies are not directed to the right targets.

The results have two main implications for health promotion policies. Since the degree of dietary compliance is mainly driven by cultural resources, families should be more involved in food and nutrition policies applied in the school context. This would allow to increase awareness on how to feed children in a salubrious manner (Jaime and Lock, 2009), and in turn could incentivise families to send their children to the school canteen. This can be done in several ways, by discussing the school menu *before* its implementation or by organising occasional school meals with the active participation of parents. Moreover, although school meal fees already depend on families' socioeconomic status, additional subsidies can be applied to make the school meal more attractive for those in need. For instance, lunch fees could decrease with higher levels of attendance to the school canteen.

To date however, as I will show in the next chapter, families and schools are still distant when it comes to nutrition education. More efforts are needed understand the reasons behind families' hesitation, so to tailor new and more effective intervention.

Appendix

Table 3.6 Pyramid Index Step-wise OLS Regressions: full model.

Father	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
White Collar	-0.0975	-0.0188	0.00208	0.00835	0.0377
	(0.0846)	(0.0867)	(0.0867)	(0.0867)	(0.0786)
Pet-Urb	-0.127	0.0325	0.0681	0.0849	0.109
	(0.0948)	(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.0918)
Pet-Agri	-0.235	-0.0742	-0.0267	-0.0118	-0.103
	(0.197)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.181)
Work-Urb	-0.219***	-0.0380	0.0128	0.0446	0.0662
	(0.0821)	(0.0917)	(0.0925)	(0.0928)	(0.0841)
Work-Agri	-0.459**	-0.267	-0.216	-0.175	-0.245
	(0.185)	(0.191)	(0.191)	(0.191)	(0.173)
Unemployed	-0.0519	0.128	0.140	0.173	0.175
	(0.346)	(0.349)	(0.348)	(0.348)	(0.315)
Secondary		-0.282***	-0.246**	-0.213**	-0.104
		(0.0976)	(0.0982)	(0.0986)	(0.0894)
Primary or lower		-0.430***	-0.375***	-0.332***	-0.169
		(0.112)	(0.114)	(0.114)	(0.103)
Cultural participation father			0.0362	0.0257	0.000227
			(0.0373)	(0.0374)	(0.0340)
N of Books				0.0715***	0.0691***
				(0.0200)	(0.0181)
Parental index					0.250***
					(0.0137)
Age	-0.00116	-0.00123	-0.00170	-0.00202	-0.0133**
	(0.00692)	(0.00692)	(0.00692)	(0.00691)	(0.00629)
Mother	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
White Collar	-0.199*	-0.112	-0.106	-0.105	-0.0552
	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.102)
Pet-Urb	-0.364**	-0.243	-0.218	-0.205	-0.182
	(0.145)	(0.149)	(0.149)	(0.149)	(0.135)
Pet-Agri	0.0188	0.193	0.252	0.294	0.368
	(0.341)	(0.345)	(0.345)	(0.345)	(0.312)
Work-Urb	-0.525***	-0.387***	-0.342**	-0.318**	-0.0902
	(0.127)	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.122)
Work-Agri	-0.442	-0.291	-0.249	-0.223	0.00962
	(0.301)	(0.304)	(0.304)	(0.304)	(0.276)
Housewife	-0.259**	-0.123	-0.0809	-0.0509	-0.0315
	(0.111)	(0.119)	(0.119)	(0.119)	(0.108)
Unemployed	-0.0200	0.0646	0.112	0.153	0.328
	(0.260)	(0.261)	(0.261)	(0.261)	(0.237)
Secondary		-0.161*	-0.110	-0.0738	-0.0756
		(0.0898)	(0.0905)	(0.0910)	(0.0825)
Primary or lower		-0.119	-0.0381	0.0246	0.0123
		(0.108)	(0.110)	(0.111)	(0.101)
Cultural participation father			0.0884**	0.0724**	0.0329
			(0.0361)	(0.0364)	(0.0330)
N of Books				0.0715***	0.0691***
				(0.0200)	(0.0181)
Parental index					0.368***
					(0.0144)
Age	0.00902	0.00654	0.00406	0.000291	-0.0125*
	(0.00794)	(0.00794)	(0.00796)	(0.00802)	(0.00728)

Table 3.6 (continues)

Common variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Lunch at school	0.167**	0.164**	0.161**	0.155**	0.175***
	(0.0658)	(0.0658)	(0.0657)	(0.0657)	(0.0596)
Child's age (6)	-0.318**	-0.302**	-0.310**	-0.314**	-0.383***
	(0.144)	(0.144)	(0.144)	(0.144)	(0.130)
7	-0.425***	-0.420***	-0.434***	-0.432***	-0.445***
	(0.148)	(0.147)	(0.147)	(0.147)	(0.133)
8	-0.412***	-0.397***	-0.413***	-0.417***	-0.382***
	(0.149)	(0.149)	(0.149)	(0.148)	(0.134)
9	-0.425***	-0.410***	-0.430***	-0.426***	-0.409***
	(0.147)	(0.147)	(0.147)	(0.147)	(0.133)
10	-0.268*	-0.246	-0.274*	-0.272*	-0.322**
	(0.151)	(0.151)	(0.151)	(0.151)	(0.137)
11	-0.727***	-0.704***	-0.724***	-0.727***	-0.785***
	(0.150)	(0.150)	(0.150)	(0.150)	(0.136)
Female	0.369**	0.366**	0.359**	0.361**	0.259*
	(0.148)	(0.148)	(0.148)	(0.148)	(0.134)
Female * 6	-0.0721	-0.0809	-0.0736	-0.0690	0.0738
	(0.207)	(0.207)	(0.206)	(0.206)	(0.187)
Female * 7	0.134	0.142	0.150	0.148	0.132
	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.189)
Female * 8	0.0509	0.0544	0.0549	0.0491	-0.0615
	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.208)	(0.208)	(0.189)
Female * 9	-0.0688	-0.0590	-0.0558	-0.0659	-0.0229
	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.189)
Female * 10	-0.245	-0.247	-0.238	-0.253	-0.126
	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.189)
Female * 11	0.234	0.249	0.252	0.248	0.352*
	(0.208)	(0.208)	(0.208)	(0.208)	(0.188)
2010	0.0632	0.0654	0.0543	0.0614	0.129*
	(0.0782)	(0.0782)	(0.0782)	(0.0781)	(0.0708)
2011	0.170**	0.166**	0.157**	0.158**	0.168**
	(0.0778)	(0.0778)	(0.0778)	(0.0777)	(0.0704)
2012	0.256***	0.240***	0.252***	0.261***	0.222***
	(0.0781)	(0.0782)	(0.0782)	(0.0781)	(0.0708)
Centre	0.0892	0.0750	0.0823	0.102	-0.155**
	(0.0808)	(0.0809)	(0.0808)	(0.0810)	(0.0736)
South and islands	-0.848***	-0.854***	-0.822***	-0.791***	-0.807***
	(0.0676)	(0.0676)	(0.0680)	(0.0685)	(0.0621)
Constant	9.135***	9.435***	9.298***	9.032***	3.540***
	(0.291)	(0.300)	(0.301)	(0.310)	(0.309)
Observations	8,515	8,515	8,515	8,515	8,515
R-squared	0.051	0.054	0.056	0.057	0.226

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Upper secondary	0.0342***	0.0233**	0.0193**
	(0.00767)	(0.00909)	(0.00951)
Lower secondary or less	0.0931***	0.0580***	0.0464***
	(0.00812)	(0.00981)	(0.0101)
White collar		0.0293***	0.0262***
		(0.00858)	(0.00901)
Pet-Urb		0.0288***	0.0218*
		(0.0109)	(0.0112)
Pet-Agri		0.00801	1.20e-05
		(0.0246)	(0.0242)
Work-urb		0.0875***	0.0735***
		(0.00978)	(0.00996)
Work-agri		0.120***	0.0996***
		(0.0258)	(0.0246)
2nd			-0.0660***
			(0.0148)
3rd			-0.102***
			(0.0146)
4th			-0.110***
			(0.0149)
5th			-0.135***
			(0.0151)
Couple without children	-0.0415***	-0.0423***	-0.0246
	(0.0161)	(0.0159)	(0.0152)
Couple with children	-0.0707***	-0.0715***	-0.0535***
	(0.0214)	(0.0213)	(0.0202)
Lone parent	-0.0277	-0.0265	-0.0175
	(0.0200)	(0.0199)	(0.0189)
Centre	0.0151*	0.00990	0.00636
	(0.00912)	(0.00899)	(0.00929)
South and islands	0.0200***	0.0168**	-0.00547
	(0.00753)	(0.00756)	(0.00765)
Number of people in the household	0.0212***	0.0211***	0.0274***
	(0.00585)	(0.00583)	(0.00579)
Percentage of total exp. spent on food	0.000974***	0.000668**	-3.37e-05
	(0.000317)	(0.000316)	(0.000325)
35-49	-0.0528***	-0.0423***	-0.0368***
	(0.0128)	(0.0122)	(0.0118)
50-64	-0.0666***	-0.0515***	-0.0446***
	(0.0129)	(0.0124)	(0.0120)
65 +	-0.119***	-0.0952***	-0.0878***
	(0.0181)	(0.0196)	(0.0197)
Female	0.000299	-0.00153	-0.00611
	(0.00941)	(0.00939)	(0.00921)
Observations	10,490	10,490	10,490
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1			

Table 3.7 Average marginal effect of educational level, social class and income on the probability of buying at least one edible in the hard discount: full model.

	Father	Mother	Common variables	
White Collar	-0.00387	-0.00144	Child's age (6)	-0.236***
	(0.0141)	(0.0185)		(0.0177)
Pet-Urb	-0.0262	-0.0458*	7	-0.299***
	(0.0165)	(0.0247)		(0.0178)
Pet-Agri	-0.0547	-0.120**	8	-0.317***
	(0.0334)	(0.0592)		(0.0178)
Work-Urb	-0.0213	-0.0159	9	-0.336***
	(0.0152)	(0.0222)		(0.0179)
Work-Agri	-0.0641*	-0.0616	10	-0.322***
	(0.0352)	(0.0583)		(0.0182)
Housewife		-0.0934***	11	-0.486***
		(0.0197)		(0.0166)
Unemployed	0.0564	-0.0966**	2010	-0.000550
	(0.0660)	(0.0459)		(0.0128)
Secondary	-0.000963	-0.00675	2011	-0.00807
	(0.0155)	(0.0145)		(0.0128)
Primary or lower	0.00744	-0.0368**	2012	-0.0194
	(0.0182)	(0.0180)		(0.0128)
Cultural participation	0.00852	-0.00420	Centre	-0.115***
	(0.00594)	(0.00580)		(0.0143)
Age	-0.00197*	0.000232	South and islands	-0.331***
	(0.00112)	(0.00132)		(0.0105)
N of Books	0.00664**		Female	0.0121
	(0.00329)			(0.00910)
Observations	8,515			
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1				

Table 3.8 Marginal effects of social class and cultural capital measures on the probability of having a child eating in the school canteen: full model.

Index	
Father PI Index	0.218***
	(0.0245)
Father PI Index*child age	0.0108
	(0.00682)
Mother PI Index	0.388***
	(0.0257)
Mother PI Index *child age	-0.00643
	(0.00719)

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Model controls for all variables, and their interaction, as in Model 5 in Table 3.2. Note: the interaction coefficients between children age and both parents' indices are non-significant, which confirms our argument made in note 4. However, the signs of the interactions are might imply that at older children's age, the difference in the impact between fathers and mothers decreases (because the influence of fathers increases while the influence of mothers decreases). In this model, the variable concerning children's age has been rescaled so that the main effect of Father and Mother PI Index concern children aged 5: as it is possible to see, the difference in the coefficients for Mother and Father respectively (.388-.218=0.170) is slightly larger than that found in the chapter and concerning the average children's age (8), which was .368-.250=.118. Even ignoring the statistical insignificance of the coefficients, results suggest that differences in mothers' and fathers' effects remain even among children aged 11 (.349 and .283 respectively).

Table 3.9 Interaction between mother's and father's PI index and child's age.

Lunch@edu father	Contrast	Std. Err.	t	P>t
Tertiary	0.046233	0.276572	0.17	0.867
Secondary	0.119068	0.212078	0.56	0.575
Lower secondary or lower	0.379041	0.204043	1.86	0.063
Lunch@edu mother	Contrast	Std. Err.	t	P>t
Tertiary	0.407529	0.268517	1.52	0.129
Secondary	0.085803	0.215874	0.4	0.691
Lower secondary or lower	0.051009	0.207649	0.25	0.806
Lunch#c.cultural capital father				
F (1, 8466) = 0.01				
Prob > F = 0.9126				
Lunch#c.cultural capital mother				
F (1, 8466) = 0.89				
Prob > F = 0.3442				
Lunch#c.books in the household				
F (2, 8466) = 6.39				
Prob > F = 0.0017				

Table 3.10. Wald test of the interaction between sex and cultural capital measures.

	Model 1		*Model 2*	
	Father	**Mother**	**Father**	**Mother**
White Collar (Bourgeoisie)	-0.0196	-0.0179	-0.0244*	
	(0.0151)	(0.0198)	(0.0135)	
Pet-Urb	-0.0167	-0.00380	-0.0316*	
	(0.0173)	(0.0256)	(0.0177)	
Pet-Agri	-0.108***	-0.0435	-0.138***	
	(0.0352)	(0.0622)	(0.0403)	
Work-Urb	-0.0759***	-0.0406*	-0.120***	
	(0.0159)	(0.0231)	(0.0166)	
Work-Agri	-0.147***	-0.0911*	-0.195***	
	(0.0340)	(0.0504)	(0.0408)	
Unemployed	-0.122*	-0.104***	-0.219***	
	(0.0637)	(0.0209)	(0.0748)	
Housewife		-0.201***		
		(0.0460)		
Secondary (Primary)	0.0294*	0.0236	0.0272	0.0107
	(0.0173)	(0.0161)	(0.0171)	(0.0157)
Primary or lower	-0.0297	-0.0265	-0.0316	-0.0437**
	(0.0199)	(0.0194)	(0.0193)	(0.0185)
Cultural Capital Index	0.0133**	0.0168***	0.0140**	0.0173***
	(0.00639)	(0.00620)	(0.00639)	(0.00621)
Number of books	0.0285***		0.0297***	
	(0.00330)		(0.00330)	
6 years old (Age = 5)	0.132***		0.133***	
	(0.0175)		(0.0176)	
7 years old	0.234***		0.233***	
	(0.0176)		(0.0177)	
8 years old	0.254***		0.254***	
	(0.0176)		(0.0176)	
9 years old	0.297***		0.294***	
	(0.0176)		(0.0176)	
10 years old	0.277***		0.275***	
	(0.0178)		(0.0179)	
11 years old	0.273***		0.271***	
	(0.0179)		(0.0179)	
Female (Male)	-0.0526***		-0.0521***	
	(0.00935)		(0.00937)	
Observations	9,419		9,419	

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: MDL Istat Survey 2009-2012. Note: The model controls also for place of origin, survey year and father's and mother's age. The sample comprises only children 5-11 with both parents at home. Missing values between 0 and 5.7%.

Model 1 controls for social class of both parents whilst Model 2 uses a dominance approach (i.e. the higher social class between among the parents is selected). As it is possible to see, social class as a high negative monotonic effect on the probability of engaging in sport activities. Although also cultural capital has a positive effect, the magnitude of economic resources outplays that of cultural capital. This is even more evident in Model 2, where children with a urban and the rural working class background are respectively 12 pp and 19.5 pp less likely to do sport.

Table 3.11. Marginal effects of the probability of engaging in sport activities on a regular basis. Preliminary results.

Chapter 4
The Holy Gram: Strategy and Tactics in the Primary School Canteen*

1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, children's nutrition has gained increasing public attention. In attempting to tackle the worldwide obesity epidemic among children, global institutions such as the World Health Organization have urged national governments to intervene through school food policies aimed at improving parents' and children's dietary compliance and health (WHO, 2008). Despite national and regional variations, the implementation of school food policies can be considered as part of the social investment turn, and in particular one of the so-called child-centred investment strategies designed for mitigating social and health inequalities in childhood and in later life (Esping-Andersen, 2002). In fact, a few years ago *The Guardian* saluted Michael Gove's plan for restoring free school canteens in the UK as a 'socialist masterplan' in defence of universal public service provision, coming in a period of public spending cut-backs (Butler, 2013). In addition, considering that meal preparation is generally one of the chores carried out by women, the provision of lunch during school hours also coincides with the policy framework of the adult-worker model, which promotes women's individual autonomy and a dual-earner household model by outsourcing families' duties to other providers (Daly, 2011). Hence, getting children to eat at school is not just a fill-in moment, but an actual political action aimed to govern and regulate the collective body of citizens (Leahy and Wright, 2016).

As seen in the previous chapter, large part of the research, mainly employing quantitative methods, and rooted in the medical and nutritional field, has attempted to evaluate the efficacy of school meals in improving children's eating habits. Yet emic approaches have risen, focusing on the everyday practices and on the narrative surrounding children's nutrition and health. In this ethnography of three Italian primary school canteens I show how the top-down production of a healthy school lunch is subjected to several forms of resistance by the subjects involved in its reception. This chapter thus contributes to the sociological literature on school meal programs (Fletcher et al., 2014), and more generally to the debate on health governmentality

* **Author's note**: an earlier version of this chapter has been already published in the Journal of Contemporary Ethnography (doi: 10.1177/0891241617726577).

and its reception (Pickard, 2009; Renedo and Marston, 2015). Drawing from the notions of biopower, strategy, and tactics (Certeau, 1984; Foucault, 1998), I first illustrate the steps through which the organization of children's meals takes place. The top-down medical model on nutrition (Crotty, 1995) initially stems from WHO's manuals and scientific studies, which are then progressively interpreted, deciphered, and transformed by several agencies and institutions until they materialize into a healthy school meal. Then, I move on to illustrate how parents, teachers, cooks and children challenge the medical model and develop intentional or unconscious tactics that withstand the scientific authority of the school menu developed by nutrition experts. In contrast to studies highlighting the undesirable and coercive outcomes of biopower, I argue that in these school canteens subjects are not trapped by biopedagogies, but deploy their agencies by questioning, eluding, and even subverting the rationale of the school meal.

2. Politics of the School Meal

The school meal should epitomise a collectivistic and universalistic form of state intervention: that is, a common good paid by citizens' taxes, equally accessed by all children and capable of mitigating social origin influences (Oncini and Guetto, 2017a). The public provision of a nutritionally balanced meal, along with educational efforts, is therefore intended to be a panacea for food-related diseases, obesity, and more generally health inequalities (Pike and Colquhoun, 2009; Weaver-Hightower, 2011). It has been argued that sharing the same meal at school may also create cohesion and reduce tensions, smoothing over socio-economic differences and their material display (Andersen et al., 2015). However, Fletcher et al. (2014) brought evidence that unintended consequences can emerge despite the overly optimistic premises and goals of such a welfare intervention. Drawing on a qualitative study in several UK secondary schools, the authors bring evidence of an emerging underground trade, counteracting and resisting the new health standards in the school cafeteria. The removal of vending machines that sell junk food or high-calorie, sugar-based items has led some students to see the opportunity to profit from an impromptu black market for junk food and energy drinks.

Recently, several studies delved deeper into the practical realization and implementation of food pedagogies by explicitly adopting a Foucauldian framework, especially with reference to the concepts of governmentality and biopower. Generally speaking, governmentality refers to all the procedures, techniques and forms of rational knowledge used by a number of agencies and authorities that aim at controlling the whole of human conduct, such as customs, habits,

and ways of thinking and acting (Foucault, 2009). Biopower is then better understood as a peculiar form of governmentality, which developed in the 18th century to meet the demands connected with governing a new 'statistical' object in a scientific fashion (Foucault, 1991).

Stemming from the management and rationing of diets in prisons and workhouses, biopower is strictly connected to the dawn of scientific studies on people's nutrition (Coveney, 2006). The institutionalization of the concern regarding the relation between children's dietary intakes and public health well exemplifies this conceptual legacy. On the one hand, scientific studies produce a statistical truth which highlights the growth in obesity rates among children. This might, hence, constitute a health hazard and an economic burden for the social system ('species body'). On the other hand, intervention measures are introduced in order to regulate and normalize the individual bodies contained in the population aggregate ('anatomo-politics') (Nadesan, 2008). Following Harwood's (2009) theorization, it is important to underline that these pedagogies directed towards bodies may work as strategies for direct intervention (such as removing vending machines from schools or applying a sugar tax) as well as modes of subjectification. The latter term suggests that they do not solely function as coercive or persuasive forces placed outside the individual, but also as a 'technology of the self', namely as an inner pulse to which subjects are socialized in order to apply principles of self-regulation and self-control (Leahy and Wright, 2016). Awareness campaigns on health risks linked to obesity, drinking behaviour, or junk food consumption takes advantage of precisely these modes of subjectification.

Especially after the 50s, nourishment at home and school has become increasingly influenced by the scientific knowledge produced by nutritionists and home economists, thus reinforcing a discourse that is rational in tones, but moralistic in content. Being a good parent intertwines with a new disciplinary role on how to properly eat and provide nourishment. In fact, when preparing lunchboxes for their children, middle class mothers 'feel on display' and under examination because of the content of the meal (Harman and Cappellini, 2015). But also, the home-packed lunch functions as an objectified marker of children's ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender cleavages that hold them accountable for familial feeding choices (Karrebæk, 2012). Eating at school consequently involves several aspects of social control, ranging from teachers' and diner ladies' necessity to 'feed' the children in a short time-span, to the teaching of a 'formal' model of nutrition, comprehensive of table manners, hygienic standards, and knowledge of nutritional principles. For instance, food pedagogies are central to the analysis of lunch boxes preparation by Japanese mothers (Allison, 1991). While living in Japan with her

son, the American author scrutinises the indoctrination process of the new school culture through the lens of the home-made lunch box she has to prepare daily. Making use of Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatus, she shows how the complex and well-finished composition of the *obento* is surrounded and informed by a system of codes and rules brought about by magazines, guidelines, and teachers' feedbacks that reinforce gender roles and instil deference towards the school authority. Through the *obento,* the conduct of the mother-child dyad is thus subjected to a process of acculturation with the Japanese societal order, involving a submittal to gender roles and school rules, and to the creativity process entailed in the aesthetic guise of the *obento*.

At the same time, nutritional recommendations are more and more codified by governments into school lunch programmes, with the explicit aim of forging a healthier citizenship and fighting health inequalities by teaching children to prefer healthy and wholesome food. Several critical voices challenged the ostensible neutrality of these health interventions, condemning them as being rather 'saturated with moral meanings and judgments about acceptable citizens, bodies, foods and ways of eating' (Leahy and Wright, 2016: 11). Teachers, for instance, can find themselves stretched between the promotion of body acceptance, and the concurrent model of a fit and lean body shape (Gard and Wright, 2005). Accordingly, Leahy (2009) identifies three major biopedagogical devices that exploit children's feelings of 'shame, guilt, pride and disgust' for the government of their bodies: self-regulation, which is enacted by asking pupils to work out personal parameters by comparing their actual food intake with dietary guidelines; mobilization of disgust, emerging from classroom discussion on the drawbacks of being unfit; active surveillance of the packed lunchbox, which is accompanied by teachers' praise for compliant foods. These strategies, according to the author, are disgusting indeed, because of the feelings of inadequacy and guilt they might elicit in those pupils who are not compliant with those norms. However, far less attention has been paid to tactics of resistance against these policies of health intervention.

2.1 De Certeau in the School Canteen

Despite the ubiquitous and pervasive nature of nutritional messages, room for contention emerges (Fletcher et al., 2014; Leahy and Wright, 2016). The dining room can be pictured as an arena where governmental efforts are at once deployed and resisted, and even a 'battleground […] in which particular types of knowledges and understandings of food, health, childhood and youth become accepted, and function as 'truths' (Pike and Kelly, 2014: 6). In this light, de

Certeau's (1984) famous dichotomy can be helpful in pinpointing the disjuncture between state intervention on health and its targets' reactions. In *The practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau draws a distinction between strategy and tactics: the former refers to the goal-oriented calculation carried out by a subject 'with will and power', such as a scientific institution; the latter, conversely, identifies the set of isolated practices through which the actors in the strategic field resist and take distance from it. While the strategy finds a formal place to master and regulate, the actual physical space is tactically reconfigured by its 'dwellers'. This dichotomy has been proficiently used for describing the tensions between the institutional regulatory processes and the resistance that arises when they are implemented. For instance, McQuiller Williams (2014) applied the model to analyse the tactics used by sex-workers in upstate New York streets to respond to the strategies of control imposed by police officers and residents. Similarly, Renedo and Marston (2015) identified three classes of tactics, used by the participants in healthcare improvement projects, to become engaged in acts of citizenship. Here I extend this literature by using the distinction to study the construction, implementation, and reception of school meal programs.

School meal policies are, to all intents and purposes, a biopolitical strategy, namely 'actions which, thanks to the establishment of a place of power (the property of a proper), elaborate theoretical places (systems and totalizing discourses) capable of articulating an ensemble of physical places in which forces are distributed' (de Certeau 1984: 38). The school canteen, as other healthcare realms (Pickard 2009; Renedo and Marston, 2015), is one of those settings where scientific knowledge and power strategically intertwine to accustom children to dietary standards. But, at the same time, tactics oppose strategy, being the former 'an art of the weak', that is to say, a space of autonomy and agency that individuals subjected to the meal policy carve out within the imposed strategy. Therefore, if the top-down model gives shape to a strategy based on nutritional science, tactics are forms of strategic reversibility and 'the adaptive response and the unpredictable outcome of the exercise of power' (Flohr, 2016).

3. Data and Methods

This article draws on the ethnographic fieldwork I have conducted in three public Italian primary schools in the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. These primary schools are located in the Marche and the Trentino regions, provide a full-time education program, and nearly all the children eat at the school canteen. Significantly, in these schools children are not allowed

to bring a home-packed lunch.[1] In each setting, the school principal was the first person to be informed about the study, which was then ratified by the school board and by the meal service provider. I then explained the project to all the teachers during their weekly meeting, highlighting that their point of view would be extremely valuable. Secondly, I organized an open meeting to introduce the project to the parents: I informed them about the nature of the research and the data I would be gathering. All the adults involved in the ethnography study were given a summary, in Italian, of the research project, where I described the theoretical framework, the general purpose of the ethnographic methodology, and the two main objectives of my fieldwork, and namely:

1. Comprehend the processes and practices that parents use to convey certain food preferences to their children, and how they relate to their past and current preferences.
2. Shed light on the role of the primary school in the construction and modification of such preferences, so as to highlight possible conflicts or collaborations with children's families.

Finally, I met the children in their classrooms and explained the reason why I would be spending time in their school, introducing myself as an older student doing a research on children's food at school. In every instance, I stressed the point that I was a social researcher, without any training to address diet and nutrition-related issues.[2]

In all three schools, the organization of the canteen is basically the same, with the only difference that in Poversano and Goldazzo the school canteens are managed by the same cooperative, whereas in Fedrata the municipality takes care of children's meal through a municipal undertaking. I chose these specific three towns based on several considerations. First and foremost, the comparison between Poversano and Goldazzo allowed me to observe children and interview parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds, as the two schools have on

[1] For the entire duration of my fieldwork, Italian schools had the right to decide whether children were allowed to bring a home-packed lunch as an alternative to the school meal. Things have changed since the Court of Appeal of Turin pronounced a ruling on this matter in June 2016, allowing parents to prepare home-packed lunch for their children and let them eat the food at school (*Corte di Appello di Torino 2016*). Despite the fact that this decision does not apply to all Italian schools, many more canteens are now giving this possibility to parents to avoid possible legal issues.

[2] I believe that this admission halted, or at least diminished, any feeling of uneasiness that parents or cooks might have had if confronted with a nutrition expert. For instance, during an interview with a mother in Goldazzo, she confessed that before knowing precisely what the project was about, she was worried about my judgment regarding their children's food habits. Similarly, during another interview I was asked if cured meat sandwiches were the right choice for feeding her daughter during the morning recess.

average an opposite social composition: the former is prevalently attended by children from working class and petite bourgeoisie families; the second is mostly attended by children from upper bourgeoisie families. Second, the school-meal providers and school directors were very proud and confident in the organization of their canteens, and welcomed the idea of an external person with an outsider view on their programs: as a matter of fact, according to a recent assessment of Italian school canteens, organised by the National network of Local Canteen Committees, they all ranked in the top ten (RCM, 2016). Lastly, for each school I could count on strong ties and recommendations, which facilitated and streamlined my access to the fieldwork.

In all schools, there is one cook responsible for the food preparation, table set up and cleaning, and from one to three assistants. Cooks and assistants serve the meals at the table, to all the children, starting from the first classroom to arrive in the canteen. Teachers sit and eat with the children, since the school meal is a didactic moment. In Fedrata and Poversano children have lunch at school five times per week, while in Goldazzo only four times. However, in Goldazzo the high number of children required two lunch shifts. In total, I ate around 120 lunches with children.

Following Fletcher et. al. (2014) I started my fieldwork through a short pilot trial of a month in a school in Fedrata, a mid-sized town in the Marche region. I hence moved to the primary schools in Poversano and Goldazzo, two small towns in Trentino. While the Marche region can be considered an average case, Trentino is particularly interesting for analysing children's dietary compliance, since it can be considered as an extreme positive case. Descriptive statistics using children's PI index (see chapter 3) show that the score is the highest among Italian regions (9.6), and much higher than the Italian average (8.7). Similarly, if we take into account overweight and obesity prevalence, Trentino performs better than most other regions, with 'only' 22.9% children who are overweight or obese against the Italian rate of 30.7%.[3]

I spent around four consecutive months in each school, coming in every day before the early morning break and leaving after the school meal. Crucially, the hours of lesson between the break and the lunch gave me the opportunity to have small chats and informal conversations with teachers on coffee break. The decision to stay for four months in each school is the result

[3] All statistics are available in the appendix of the chapter.

of a methodological compromise between the time extension needed to gain trust and collect interviews, and the time constraints of the PhD project.

The ethnographic fieldwork can be divided into five different stages (Table 4.1). First, I ate lunch sitting with the children, changing table daily to ensure heterogeneity in the observations and to make sure that nobody would feel neglected. Like Nukaga (2008) and Thorne (1993), I told children to consider me more like a friend than a teacher, thus trying to reduce the inevitable power imbalance that rises between an adult and a child. I soon realized that children enjoyed talking with me, since my presence often guaranteed a safe zone to talk freely without teachers' reprimands. During lunch, I discussed with them their likes and dislikes, healthy and unhealthy foods, while openly taking notes of their opinion and behaviours.[4] Generally, I would ask a very general question to the children around me (e.g. Do you like the school lunch? What do you think about coke?) and wait for the conversation between them to get underway, trying as much as possible not to influence their responses. Second, I helped the canteen personnel to set the tables and to clean before and after each lunch, thus gaining an additional and probably deeper insight into the organization of the school meal. Third, I conducted formal interviews and I had occasional conversations with many of the actors involved in the school canteen: nutritionists and medical doctors who worked in the construction and monitoring of the menu, public providers of the service, and the canteen committees in charge of food quality controls. I asked them to explain to me how the canteen is organized, which principles drive their choices and which problems they meet in the implementation of the school lunch. Also, I organized formal in-depth interviews with 44 primary caregivers (mostly mothers)[5], and several focus groups[6] with teachers to openly discuss their views about the menu and school food policies. The interviews and focus groups were audiotaped and subsequently transcribed *verbatim*. Fourth, in order to describe the governmental top-down model, I collected and analysed official documents produced by the agencies involved in the development and implementation of school nutritional policies, and particularly those referring to the school meal. In analysing these

[4] In Fedrata I used a normal diary, while in Poversano and Goldazzo I started taking notes on disposable paper table covers. This amused the children, and helped me obtain information and eat at the same time, which I believe is a more ecological and a less invasive means for writing down behaviours and statements. Initially, children were very curious about the content of my notes, but soon everyone got used to that.

[5] In the interviews, I mostly concentrated on the way cultural and economic capital affect eating and feeding practices and the perception of the school meal program. However, this issue will be tackled in the next chapter.

[6] I have used the focus group during the last days of my fieldwork for two main reasons. First, after four months the relationship with teachers had become more candid, and meeting with them removed some inhibition and political correctness from their responses. Second, I could openly discuss with them the contradictions that I had noticed during my fieldwork.

documents, my focus was not on how they are constructed, but rather on their function within the top-down medical model, and namely which nutritional choices they justify (Coffey 2014). All these documents are freely accessible online, and I cite them only when this does not reveal the schools where I did my fieldwork.

Data collection, data analysis, and literature review proceeded simultaneously as iterative processes. The interpretation I here propose is in fact directly inspired by the sensitising concepts emerged from the literature on governmentality and school canteens, and by the theoretical works of Foucault (1991; 1998; 2009) and de Certeau (1984). All data were analysed thematically and coded in QDA miner. I selected from fieldnotes, interviews, and secondary sources all the elements concerning the school meal and its actors. I then categorized the material into different themes, distinguishing between the formal rules behind the making of the school meal, complementary pedagogies, actors involved, and reactions to the school meal. The present interpretation is thus the outcome of a dialectic process between the raw data of the registered experience and the pre-existing theoretical views on the topic (Willis and Trondman 2000).

Ethnographic moment	**Methods**
1. School lunch	Informal conversations, fieldnotes
2. Helping the canteen personnel	Informal conversations, fieldnotes
3. Actors surrounding the canteen	
Nutritionists and admins	Informal conversations, interviews
Mothers	In-depth interviews
Teachers	Informal conversations, focus groups
4. Analysis of documents	Thematic analysis

Table 4.1 Ethnographic fieldwork and methods.

Doing research with children requires a great deal of ethical scrupulousness, which does not solely pass through paperwork and authorizations. In this study, children were active participants of the project, a level of involvement which they usually enjoy more, and which produces more accurate reports of their views and experiences (Alderson, 2000). Even though I reduced my influence over their conversations to a minimum, on a few occasions I decided to intervene when I felt that someone at the table was being deliberately excluded or teased by their peers. Moreover, in addition to the open meeting, I sent to all parents a letter where I informed them about my presence in the school. All names and locations are fictitious to maintain the anonymity of all the research participants.

4. From Global Guidelines to School Meals

The discourse on children's health imperatives is produced and promulgated by several sources: in classrooms or at the school canteen by teachers, in television by cartoons or celebrity chefs, even in digital devices by videogames (Leahy and Wright 2016). At the same time, they follow a precise hierarchy when entering the school canteen. Taking a cue from Crotty's (1995) critique of the top-down model on nutrition, the creation of the school meal can be seen as a concatenation of governmental steps, from general guidelines all the way to the actual food preparation. The strategy thus comes to life as a global 'mode of administration' which is then translated into policies and practices within a given place. The final product is thus much more than a simple plate of food for children, and it is surrounded by a series of complementary pedagogies on the importance of healthy eating for a normal developmental path (Table 4.2).

The top of the hierarchy is formed by those agencies that arrange global schemes for population-based health intervention or prevention. These regulatory practices can be seen as sound examples of global biopolitics, namely the administration of health on a planetary scale (Bashford, 2006). For instance, the WHO (2006) jointly with the FAO developed science-driven dietary guidelines to be applied throughout the world at regional (e.g. East Mediterranean region) or national level, with the explicit aim of promoting appropriate diets and nutritional wellbeing using the available food in each area. Regarding school and food policies, the WHO has produced several documents as part of the '*Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*' indicating how and where to intervene to counteract unhealthy food habits among children. For instance, one of the global initiatives indicates to member states how to increase the number of nutritionally friendly schools, specifying the correct procedure for implementing the policy. Also, the document suggests 'some general guidelines for healthy eating that, after adjusting for cultural specificities, could be considered for the development of national nutritional standards for schools' (WHO, 2008).

Secondly, the model is constituted by those standards which collectively provide the legal and cultural boundaries for the implementation of the school meal and its related policies. In Italy, as Morgan and Sonnino (2008) argue, the constitutional framework provides a sound basis for educating children both to a 'sense of taste' and to the valorisation of local cuisines. Moreover, the country has a tradition of public food provisions: right after the second world war, school lunch programs were implemented (Helstosky, 2004). However, if at that time food policies were meant to tackle undernutrition among children, nowadays they aim to mitigate exactly the

opposite issue. This makes the Italian case somewhat paradoxical: despite the Mediterranean food pyramid is still considered the ultimate healthy diet, childhood obesity rate is among the highest in Europe (Wijnhoven et al., 2014).

Agencies, institutions or individuals	**Actions and artefacts**	**Document examples**
i. Agencies, usually international or transnational, providing schemes or frameworks for population-based policies of prevention or intervention (e.g. WHO, FAO).	Scientific findings, handbooks, reports, school initiatives	*School policy framework implementation of the WHO global strategy on diet, physical activity and health* (WHO, 2008)
ii. National policies, protocols and guidelines for the targeted population (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education).	Scientific findings, guidelines for restoration, suggested nutritional intake, school initiatives	*National guidelines for serving food in schools* (MIS, 2010; 2016a; 2016b). *National guidelines for nutrition education* (MIUR, 2015)
iii. Standards of nutritional intake and food quality developed by the Local Health Authority personnel in each district or region.	Children's nutritional intake, seasonal menu guidelines, call for tender for school meals provision contract, technical documents, purchasing contracts, quality report	*Capitolato tecnico, Quality report*
iv. Private or public firm responsible for the management of school meals in a town, city or area.	Seasonal menu, management of allergies, equipment and foodstuff.	*Seasonal menu, List of ingredients*
v. Cooks and assistants responsible for the preparation and distribution of the school meal	Dressings, meal preparation, serving and cleaning	

Table 4.2 The top-down medical model on nutrition.

At the same time, the conjoint role of the Education (MIUR) and Health (MIS) Ministries should not be neglected: they make the panoptic practice possible by constructing 'objects that can be observed, measured and thus controlled' (de Certeau 1984). The former produces guidelines for nutrition education within the school, providing the general methodologies and educational tools to be used by teachers (MIUR, 2015). The latter, through the National Health

Institute (NHI), monitors children obesity rates and eating behaviour, provides schools with initiatives on healthy practices and, most importantly, carries out a protocol for a correct management of school meals. This protocol (MIS, 2010) defines the roles and responsibilities of all the operators involved, provides the criteria and technical indications to set up the contract with meal service providers, and illustrates the best practices for conveying good nutritional habits to children good nutritional habits (e.g. forego a second helping). On top of that, it also identifies the recommended intake of energy, nutrients and fibres (MIS, 2010) for a healthy lunch, and sets the ideal range of grams for each nutrient (e.g. between 18 and 27 grams of fats per lunch).

At this point, the Health Minister indications are adopted by regional or provincial Local Health Authorities (ASL) which then develop the technical documents to be used in meal service purchasing contracts. Using the recommended grams as a starting point, preventive healthcare professionals within each ASL develop their own precise standards as a basis for the call for tenders through which the service provider is selected. This document, called '*capitolato'*, contains details for the school meal organization: prices, venues and equipment, raw materials, cooking methods, hygiene standards, and compliance check methods. Inevitably, the document also sets a rather precise indication of the grams for each food type (e.g. bread: 60-70 grams). In this way, each pupil is supposed to receive an almost perfectly balanced portion of nutrients containing around 30% of the daily recommended intake of kilocalories, wisely distributed among fats, carbohydrates, sugars, meat and vegetable proteins, iron, and fibres. These nutrients are then transformed into a seasonal menu by nutritional experts within the ASL or from the service provider, so as to provide a palatable and flavourful meal, compliant with the food-group gram recommendations.

Once the yearly menu is set, cooks are provided with the equipment and ingredients needed for the daily preparation of the meal. Depending on the organization, meals can be prepared within the school or in a specialized production site. In any case, before starting to prepare lunch, the exact number of pupils present for the school meal is transmitted to the meal staff. Cooks must closely follow a pre-set procedure for each course, without any room for variations. This way, the service provider can keep dietary principles intact, while keeping costs down. Also in the case of basic cooking preparations (such as broths or sauté bases) and dressings, their margin of manoeuvre is limited by a list of prearranged ingredients, which hangs from the kitchen's wall.

Eating lunch at the school canteen thus appears as an integrated 'nutritional panopticon' (Coveney, 1999). A perfectly balanced meal, surrounded by strategies for moulding children's dietary conduct, is served under the auspices of nutrition science and education.

5. At the Edge of the Canteen: Parents and Nutritionists

Every time I asked doctors and nutritionists to explain me the steps that eventually lead to the school meal, I could not help but notice the internal coherency and functionality of the top-down model. Despite small variations in the menu due to nutritionists' personal – but scientific-based – views, its rationale seems capable of monitoring and guaranteeing an almost perfect food intake for all children. Yet, as I soon realized, this 'nutritional panopticon' (Coveney, 1999) remains largely uncontested and unquestioned, at least, until it is transformed into a warm meal for children.

Nutritionists and mothers, despite being at the edge of the school canteen, unwittingly face each other in their respective roles as 'feeders': the former as a guarantor of the diet for an anonymous collective, the latter as a procurer of vital care for their child. Both are concerned with the children's wellbeing, but their perspectives on food substantially differ. The meal envisioned by the nutritionist materializes by merging scientific principles and collective needs. Although their efforts towards palatability aim to transform 'grams' into taste, in the end, dietary standards must drive choices, even if that implies throwing food away. In fact, according to a recent study, 23% of all food prepared usually goes to waste (Boni et al. 2014). Marco, one of the nutritionists who develops the menu in Goldazzo and Poversano, states this clearly:

> Dr Marco: 'We are educating children to taste, not to avoid waste. Otherwise we'd cook schnitzel and French fries every day.'

Conversely, mothers attach to feeding times and choices a subtext of protection, love and motherhood. Especially in infancy, food is a realm mostly controlled by parents: children can only ask in the hope of being pleased, or at most they can steal food from the kitchen's pantry. Taste and salubriousness may stand in antinomy or in a precarious balance, leaving room to anxieties, conflicts, and adult-child negotiations (Gram, 2015). Rather often indeed, nutritional convictions are related to familial socioeconomic background (Wills et al., 2011; Wright et al.,

2015), and campaigns for changing children's diet for the better can be seen as an intrusion in familial eating choices – as in the case, for instance, of the infamous 'Battle of Rawmarsh'.[7]

Eating at school thus becomes a sensitive topic which unwittingly leads to discussion and objection. During the school year, nutritionists organize meetings with parents to explain how the meal is planned, which nutritional principles have guided their choices, and more generally how parents themselves should feed their children. And inevitably, as these excerpts testify, these meetings reveal an underlying conflict.

> Dr Marta: 'Parents drop jaws when we tell them that they don't need to cook "stacks" of meat, but just small portions like this [makes an oval-shape using thumbs and indexes of both hands]. They think it's not enough.'
>
> Dr Marco: 'Often meetings are surreal. You would like to discuss things other than "whether the pasta is overcooked or not" [...]. But adults, when they check how their children eat…they are not objective. Teachers are adults, but they also hold a point of view which is not objective. And often during these meetings they discuss whether the pasta is overcooked or not, so the discussion lowers to a very basic plane.'

Marta and Marco, the nutritionists in charge of the menu at the schools of Poversano and Goldazzo, express their frustration when confronting parental knowledge or concerns (the size of the piece of meat and the consistency of the pasta) with the scientific principles driving the choices.

Through the meal, the nutritionists engage in a 'battle' on behalf of the state, aimed at correcting or developing children's palate and improving mothers' feeding practices. Their arguments and actions well exemplify the administrative logic behind this strategy, embodied in the identification of the *proper* nutrition in the *proper* place (de Certeau, 1984). Yet, even if mothers may agree on the final goal of the intervention, their confidence in the school meal is much fuzzier. Many of them just do not care, considering the canteen as a 'mouth filler' for their children while they are at work: to them, a 'proper' meal is what a child eats at home with the family (Charles and Kerr, 1988). On some occasions parents even ask for fake certificates of intolerance from paediatricians to make sure that their children avoid their most disliked foods. Interestingly, even if, as my fieldwork reveals, everyone knows the ones that are not

[7] The Battle of Rawmarsh refers to an episode at a secondary school in the UK in 2006. Three mothers protested against the new healthy meal proposed by the school canteen by passing junk food to children through the school's railings. This event captured the attention of media and public opinion, and many journalists depicted the three mothers as inadequate and retarded (Pike and Leahy, 2012).

motivated by a genuine food intolerance, nothing can be changed, since parents have the last word in this matter. Parents' tactics thus 'elude discipline' by bending the scientific authority of the paediatrician to their own ends. Dr Silvana, who manages the security control of the local ASL of Poversano and Goldazzo aptly admitted this:

> Dr Silvana: 'Parents ask paediatricians to write false intolerance certificates for their children. There is a tendency by parents to equalize distastes and intolerances…we are fighting a battle with blunt weapons.'

But that is just the tip of an iceberg made of small pieces of tactical resistance. Other parents only request alternatives on account of personal convictions, such as religious precepts, vegetarianism, or veganism. In Italy, parents' pressure has become so intense that the Ministry of Health had to issue two statements in order to assure parents that their food beliefs are respected when children eat at school (MIS 2016a; 2016b).

Often, in fact, junk food, candy, or extra supplies of food make their way to the school inside pupils' bags, even when teachers make rules regarding the type of food that can be brought from home. Paradoxically, the special status of nutrition as an in-between subject, mostly learnt in implicit practices between home and school, makes it much more difficult to pigeonhole and control. Whilst the top-down process appears as a perfectly integrated panopticon, its practical application makes the government of nutrition and bodies much more loose and elusive. And the closer one gets to the dining room, the more resistances become visible.

6. Entering the Canteen: Teachers, Cooks, and Children

Since the top-down model proposes an almost uniform system of education and thought (Bourdieu, 1967) applied on nutritional conduct, physical and social spaces tend to be organized along the same lines. In all schools, dietary principles are echoed in posters and drawings hanging on the walls. In Poversano, a very big poster titled 'A positive time in the canteen' recalls the most important ones (Figure 4.1). Fruit and vegetables cartoons embellish the walls in Fedrata. In Goldazzo, fourth graders' drawings list the rights and duties of the children that eat at school. Pencilled and coloured food pyramids are often displayed around the building (Figure 4.2), and throughout the year many school activities are organized with the purpose of teaching how and what to eat. During my fieldwork, teachers in Poversano also invented a challenge, ranking the four tables were children sat from the quietest to the loudest, promising a last-day muffin to the table with the most positive evaluation. This is somewhat ironical: the

reward for good behaviour in a canteen that proposes a healthy menu is a supposedly unhealthy sweet.

Children are thus invited to learn bodily posture and are given dietary advice, from basic table manners to the categorisation of unhealthy meals. As already mentioned, nutritional education is part of the National curriculum, and follows precise guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education (MIUR, 2015). Hence, apart from classroom lessons, the lunch break is to be considered a teaching opportunity, where children learn to appreciate the 'taste of health', hands-on: appropriate portions sizes, a strong presence of vegetables, constant diversification of the diet, etc. And yet, teachers, cooks, and children are not passively affected by the top-down model, since their personal belief and appetites inevitably interlace with the biopolitics of the school meal.

Figure 4.1 The poster in Poversano reminding children of the school canteen rules.

6.1. Teachers

On paper, the teachers' role is clear when it comes to nutrition education: their duty throughout the primary school is to make children internalize the right nutritional conduct every time this is possible. In a sense, they should be one of the means through which the strategy 'takes place' (de Certeau, 1984). Several didactic modules outline exactly how this occurs: for instance,

science teachers are supposed to explain the benefits of vegetables for the digestive system when teaching human anatomy. When I presented the project in the schools, they all seemed to agree: 'The morning break and the lunch break are to be considered teaching opportunities'; 'Our role is to teach food education during lunch, and not just monitor children's behaviour; 'It's an educational moment, not just picnic time'.

But their role as 'guardians' of this panopticon is not as clear as it may seem. When scientific principles are transformed into eating practices, nutrition becomes a much more contested field of knowledge. Parents would not question Italian grammar or mathematical rules, but, unlike ordinary school subjects, eating is a topic that inevitably overlaps with the household sphere: family eating habits cannot be estranged from the school context. Marta, a teacher in Poversano, openly admitted this ambivalence:

> Marta: 'School topics are unquestionable. Parents wouldn't dare discuss vowels, or history or geography. But when it comes to nutrition, especially in the canteen, the entanglement with school falls into a residual area, a borderland of formal education […]. Parents don't teach language, history or geography. They are not educators, so that most cases they keep quiet. But not with food: it's a daily family routine, and they can have their opinion and their competence.'

Although parents would not even think of contesting the arbitrary nature of school subjects, eating practices can be disputed. This comes clearly into view in the canteen, where parents treat distastes as intolerances, sneak junk food in children's bags, and ask teachers not to force children when they do not want to eat a certain food item. And teachers, as this conversation recorded during a focus group in Goldazzo testifies, have no choice but to comply with parents' requests:

> Lucia: 'Beyond a polite request to try, there is not much you can do.'
> Giovanna: 'Of course I always tell them to try it. But if you have parents who work against you, who tell you "my child doesn't eat that" you just take note of that.'
> Lucia: 'Yes, if they tell you "he doesn't eat fruit and vegetables, you shouldn't insist", you accept that.'

Teachers can transmit theoretical knowledge on nutrition, but the practice is contradictory even for them. They find themselves in an educational limbo. On the one hand, they are formally appointed to teach nutrition education in the school canteen. On the other, they lack the will or power to do so when real food comes into the school. They cannot force feed children, and they cannot be totally sure that they will abstain from unhealthy food items they bring at school. Eating with children should be an educational moment, but it is not lived as such by many

teachers. In theory, they should invite them to have a taste of everything while setting a good example by eating all courses. In practice, as I was told several times, most of them just want to get to the end of lunch as soon as possible, as dozens of children chatting excitedly create an almost deafening noise.[8] Teachers can have preferences and dislikes like children do, with the difference that they can potentially ask assistants not to fill their plate. Some might just have yogurt or fruit for lunch. They can hold contrasting eating values with the ones the school proposes (e.g. vegan or vegetarian), hence they can select what to eat on this basis. Or conversely, they can leave food on the plate if they don't think it is palatable enough. This contradiction is subsequently noticed by the assistants when they clean up, and often used as a topic of discussion.[9]

Moreover, since they eat at school for the whole school year, they gain an insight that allows them to contest and criticise nutritionists' choices or cooks' culinary skills. The teachers in the three schools confessed, in several conversations with me, their doubts about the school menu.

> Maria: 'These nutritionists are bigwigs…I don't understand; they seem out of the world. On Mondays, the teachers eating at school say food is not enough, and that they need to go back home to finish their lunch […]. Last year these bigwigs tried to put millet in the menu, it all went wasted. As for the salads, we know that salt is bad, but I always need to put more dressing, because it feels I am eating air. […]. Yes, they check grams, they keep everything under control, but then there are days when children waste everything, days when they just eat bread, and days when they eat too much.'
>
> Francesca: 'We talk too much about nutrition, there are too many ideas. Medical doctors themselves, the ones we all revere, they too follow trends.'
>
> Roberta: 'In my opinion, the important thing is that they don't go hungry. It's not a matter of quality, they just need to eat.'

[8] This is the reason why the walls and the ceiling of the canteen in Fedrata are covered with curtains and foam rubber acoustic panels respectively. Mario even told me that he reported a 30% hearing loss on one ear since the beginning of his work as a cook in the school.

[9] In this conversation between two assistants in Goldazzo one of the teachers is criticized for her lack of coherence.

> Arianna: 'Do you think it's fair to tell children to eat it all up when teachers always leave the food on their plate? [Shows me the plate with food inside]. She's always like that. She didn't touch one piece!'
>
> Vittoria: 'You know how it is, they [the teachers] always want to try all courses, and then they just taste it and leave it.'

Several times I witnessed similar conversations while clearing the tables. On the one hand, grumbling and gossiping alleviate the monotony of the clean-up and the weariness after a day at work. On the other hand, they contribute to shifting the blame for children's left-overs to teachers who fail to set a good example. This way, the food prepared by the cook can remain unquestioned.

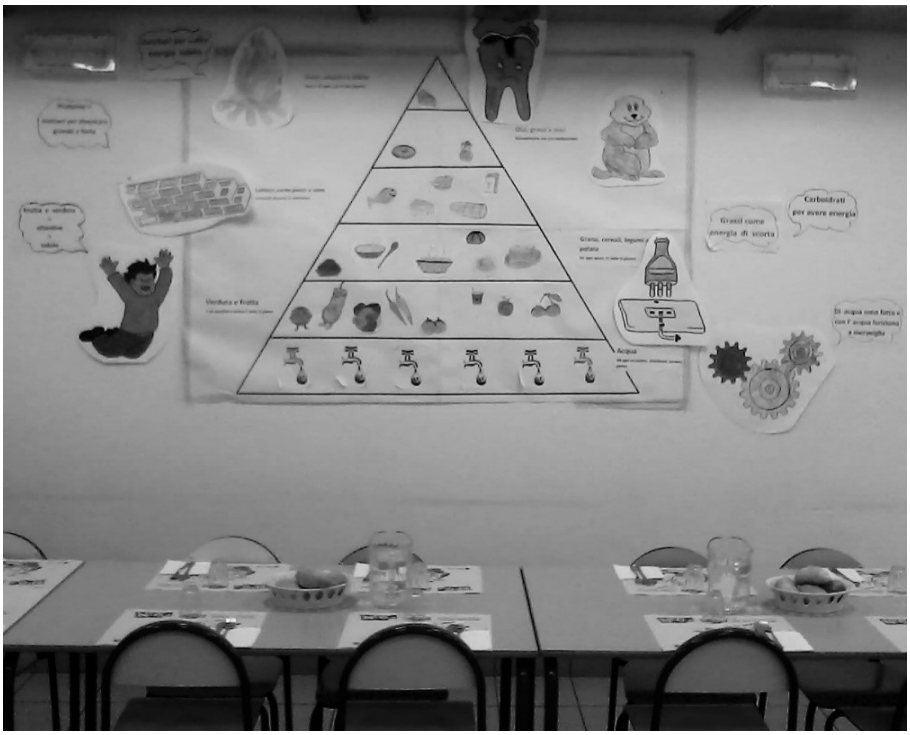

Figure 4.2 The food pyramid in the school canteen of Poversano.

In the first excerpt, Maria, a teacher in Goldazzo, expresses her frustration regarding the menu. Millet, which is a rarely eaten grain, was inserted in the menu so as to educate children to a very uncommon taste and to provide them with diverse nutrients such as copper, manganese, phosphorus, and magnesium. Paradoxically, Maria uses this example to contest the authority of the nutritionists ('bigwigs') and their methods ('controlling grams'). Interestingly indeed, she locates teachers and children on the same side. Thus, even as it is expected that teachers serve as one of the mechanisms of the top-down model, they end up being subjected to it.

6.2 Cooks

According to official documents, cooks do not have an active role in educating children to nutrition education. They should prepare the daily lunch keeping to the given recipe and the grams, serve the meal to children, and finally clear up the table. Undoubtedly, cooks move in a gastronomic field that may be rigorous and coercive. Although many parents and teachers like thinking that 'the cook makes the difference', most often they conform to nutritionists' choices. Caterina and Mario, who respectively prepare lunch in Fedrata and Poversano, several times questioned the meals they had to prepare.

> Caterina: 'Did you taste the cake with rice flour? It sucks, right? Those guys that write the menu all have a degree…but then it's down to us [cooks] to deal with all the bullshit that they write.'

> Mario: 'Today I cooked savoy cabbage, but even teachers don't eat that. How do you think you can make children eat that?'

Caterina, in particular, highlights the hiatus between the formalization of the top-down model by experts (the 'guys with a degree' that write the menu) and her manual effort (it's down to us to cook). Cooks resentment rises because their only gauge to assess their work is children's appreciation of their meal. In turn, their knowledge of what children like or dislike ends up in a substantial transgression of all the rules on grams. Despite Caterina and Mario doing their best for making the food as palatable as possible, they also know in advance when a dish is going to be a complete success or a total failure. Thus, grams start to be based on considerations other than those contained in the *capitolato*, like fondness for children, reduction of waste or personal advantage.[10] At times, cooks might leave some pasta without sauce so as to prevent picky children to go without food. Vegetable portions, especially when the 'difficult ones' are on the menu, (like broccoli or eggplants), are reduced to a minimum. Conversely, when they know that a dish is going to be particularly appreciated, they increase portions to allow everyone to have a second and even a third helping. This happens especially with children's favourite dishes, like pasta or *canederli*:

> Caterina: 'If I know that a dish of pasta "is popular" I put in some extra kilos, or I make more portions of *canederli*. Children ask me to "put more in! [laughing while she talks], and I give them a few extra, is that bad?'
>
> Mario: 'You saw it for yourself, they raise hands, and they are hungry. How can I give them just 60g of pasta…and plus, if they go home hungry then parents come here and complain.'

Also, when it comes to portioning, cooks tend to listen to children's requests. Especially when children ask for a supersize portion of an unsuccessful meal, the cook fills the plate up to the brim. Sometimes, parents concerned with their children's weight directly ask teachers and cooks not to give a second helping. Even in that case, if the child begs for the second helping, it is likely that he secretly receives it. As Caterina admitted to me, she often hurries along the

[10] As I learned after a while, in one school the cook prepares more food portions so that the canteen personnel can take it back home. This theft is furtively accomplished during the final clean up, once children and teachers are back in their classrooms. The best daily meals are equally divided and poured into plastic containers they bring from home for this purpose. From time to time, the janitor who cleans the bathrooms, down the hall, is invited to the distribution to buy their silence. I found this out by chance in my second week of fieldwork. The diner ladies thought I had left, and when I returned to say goodbye I opened the kitchen door right when two of them were putting some stew aside. I did not realize immediately what was happening, but the cook removed any doubt: 'Filippo, do not say anything. Don't say anything, or they'll fire us. They'll fire us if they knew what we are doing here.' She offered me some stew, bread, and several pieces of rice-flour cake which I accepted to reassure them about my connivance. A few days later she told me about the extra portions she cooks.

tables and doesn't have time to notice who she is giving the second helping to. However, it may also happen that she knows perfectly well when she is giving a smaller second helping to a child that should not get it, just to avoid feeling guilty.

6.3 Children

Children's lunch usually lasts less than 45 minutes. The bell rings around 12:30 and marks the beginning of a daily ritual. First and second graders are guided by teachers to the bathroom, where they supposedly wash their hands before eating. Starting in third grade, children can do this on their own. The bathroom represents a moment of private detachment from school activities because very rarely do teachers enter with them. In Fedrata, Poversano, and Goldazzo children are not allowed to bring home-packed lunches, so the bathroom becomes the perfect place for eating 'bad' food items like candies or crisps behind the adults' back.

Lined up in pairs, children move to the dining room, where they are repeatedly, but vainly, asked to be quiet. In all schools, each classroom is assigned a table or a set of tables, but children can choose where to sit and consequently they tend to organize themselves by gender and friendship, as also Nukaga (2008) reported. From time to time, teachers decide to prevent the liveliest children from sitting side by side, and force them to eat close to the teachers or at least away from their best friends.

All children know and understand a set of shared rules: bodily posture, table manners, and voice volume, just to name a few. And of course, they know very well that they should eat – or at least try all the courses. From time to time, a reward can be even gained for the after-lunch, such as getting a longer break time. Yet the lunchtime is a place that opens to a legitimate challenge to the adults' authority, since it is not perceived as a lesson. The canteen, despite rules, didactic posters, and teachers, is far from being a classroom. Not surprisingly, some authors associated school lunchtime with Durkheim's 'collective effervescence' (Nukaga, 2008), with Geertz's famous Balinese cockfight (Thorne, 2005) and even with a battleground (Pike and Kelly, 2014).

The easiest way children can exercise their agency is by refusing to eat. Rather simply, they do not respond to teachers' reprimands or invitations. Alternatively, they can even trick them, as this field note demonstrates:

> In Goldazzo: 'Lunch is getting to an end. In the table nearby, the teacher Francesca is eating with two children. She shouts out loud against Arianna "It's not possible

> that you don't eat anything. [Increasingly loud, getting angry] TRY SOMETHING! IT'S INCREDIBLE. EAT!" Arianna lowers her glance and crosses mine, slightly embarrassed. Francesca looks at me and says: "She never eats, never, you should sit with her [to see]". Then she looks away, and does not notice (is she pretending?) that Arianna is slyly sliding her portion of meat and salad onto her tablemate's plate.'

In Goldazzo, as in the other canteens, the secret donation of food to a hungry tablemate is a common tactic that children can use to avoid eating something they do not like. And donation can quickly become sharing when other children want to participate in the gift–giving. Occasionally, however, children can also organize food exchanges with other tablemates, trading meals on the basis of their preferences. These 'three forms of hidden social exchange' are strikingly similar to the rituals that Nukaga (2008, 361) describes in his ethnography of school lunchtime.

In extreme cases, as these two field notes show, children can even modify the same food they are eating, so as to have a reason for refusal, or, alternatively, to make it tastier:

> In Fedrata: 'Today I'm sitting with a group of fifth graders […]. They start telling me that they don't like the food, so I ask: "How do you get to 4 pm [without any food]?". One of them explains: "For instance, our parents give us two snacks, and we save one for lunch. Sometimes we bring crisps, that's why we sit at the end of the table". They then go on: "Why don't they cook us a *Carbonara*? We eat better at home; mom is better at cooking". But what's fascinating is that some of them would cut a small strand of their hair, and place a few hairs in the dish to get a perfect excuse not to eat it. The cook told me that this situation is creating tension between him and their parents, who struggle to believe him.'

> In Fedrata: 'Today's lunch prescribes broth, boiled potatoes, chicken with lemon sauce, and orange slices. The girl sitting in front of me explains that her parents own a restaurant. She then takes out from her pocket two small plastic bags with balsamic vinegar and extra-virgin oil "to season the cook's tasteless cuisine", as she fiercely claims […]. The oil is used on the broth and the vinegar is poured over the chicken. She offers the dressings to her three closest peers, and all but one accept. She also offers me some vinegar, and I accept to become part of the group.'

In every school, however, a small minority of children appreciate everything the menu proposes. These hearty eaters usually ask and receive very abundant portions of all the meals, and they endear themselves to the cooks. In a sense, their resistance is complementary to the one exerted by their peers: they take unwanted food from their tablemates, they ask for a third

or a fourth helping, and even elude the teachers' surveillance by quickly gulping down left-overs from other tables:

> In Goldazzo: 'Today there's pizza. Francesco immediately eats up his slice, and quickly rushes to the next table with his empty plate. When he comes back, he proudly shows four portions of the mozzarella that was on the top of the others' pizza slices. He eats it all. […]. The teacher asks children to stand up and follow her to the classroom. Francesco waits for her to be out of sight, then takes from a plate on another table a second untouched slice. He furiously takes four or five bites, and runs of with his mouth full of pizza.'

Francesco, a second grader, is thus able to eat much more than what he is supposed to: first he asks and obtains the unwanted toppings from another table; and then, once he is sure that the teacher is not looking, he steals another child's leftovers. His behaviour, characterized by stealth and speed, perfectly illustrates the temporal characteristics of the tactics which '[pin their hopes] on a clever utilization of time, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power' (de Certeau 1984, 39-40).

7. Discussion and Conclusions

In Italy, as in other countries, nutritional concerns are at the centre of health campaigns in schools. These policies, however, are far from being uncontested. Fletcher et al. (2014), as already mentioned, brought evidence of different forms of resistance to a new healthy meal program. My data, from a different angle, analogously suggest that tactics emerge in opposition to the governing strategies of those who construct the menu. While previous studies on school biopedagogies have mostly underlined the perverse outcomes of school meal policies, here I take a different approach. The concerted use of Foucault (1991; 1998; 2009) and de Certeau (1984) frameworks can help overcome some of the all-encompassing restrictions of biopedagogies, pinpointing to how the agency of the actors is always at play, to a lesser or greater extent, in any governmental intervention.

The top-down model illuminates how the process of rationalization and calculation eventually finds its 'own place' to master (de Certeau, 1984), namely the school canteen. In a sense, the process also resembles a regulatory bureaucracy, a form of hierarchical organization that employs rational knowledge as a form of domination. (Graeber, 2015). Yet, as soon as the 'holy' grams are materialized into a meal, frictions emerge. At the edge of the canteen, parents and nutritionists confront different values about children's nutrition. Familial habits and scientific principles might be in opposition, since experts' indications on dietary standards can

be challenged by the specific knowledge mothers have of their children's needs or preferences (Miller, 2005). Thus, parents can sneak food inside their children's bag, or even present false certificates of intolerance so as to force the school to prepare something the child likes to eat. Simultaneously, the participant observation during lunch unveils its tactical reconfiguration. Teachers, despite acknowledging it should be an educational moment, often surrender to the ambiguities of the practice and to their own preferences. Cooks, instead of being mere executors of the guidelines, bend the rules to please their guests. Children, who are often considered as passive targets of the school meal policies, actively aim to satisfy their 'excessive' hunger or to avoid teachers' reprimands by donating food to their peers. As many authors have argued, they are competent actors, able to construct an autonomous field of action which is independent from, and partially opposed to, the adults' field of action (James et al., 1998; Nukaga, 2008; Gram, 2015).

These findings shed light on the complementary nature of power and resistance. Subjects, regardless of their age, are not inhibited by biopedagogies, but rather find their own way through them, and creatively mould their implementation. This does not imply that children do not benefit at all from a healthy lunch: the school canteen can obviously be a friendly place where new meals are discovered and salubrious food is eaten. As Morgan and Sonnino (2008) rightly argue, the Italian school system should be taken as an example when it comes to children's school canteens. Over the last 15 years, many schools have improved the school meal rationale, by introducing organic and local products. Despite the science of nutrition is still very undeveloped, and often much closer to religion than to physics (Levinovitz, 2015), it is nonetheless the best way for governing children's nutrition, and most importantly for monitoring beneficial or counterproductive intervention. Whatever the critique may be to the medical approach on nutrition, its scientific truth cannot be ruled out. However, what is still open to question is precisely its epistemological root: 'What will we do with that nugget, be it small or large, of the truth?' (Veyne, 2013: 8). Studies on biopedagogies at school often respond to this question by showing its undesirable outcomes or side-effects. In this chapter, however, I take a different approach, and show how resistances to the top-down medical model on nutrition emerge from various sides, and are indeed an integral part of the model: in other words, resistance is always intrinsic to the exercise of power (Flohr, 2016).

Food regulation can be extremely coercive, as in the cases of prisons or workhouses diets (Coveney, 2006). However, though schools' biopedagogies can echo the panoptical metaphor, room for manoeuvre is still extremely present. Nonetheless, the ambivalence that surrounds

nutrition as a school subject might indicate that the meal policies are perceived as top-down impositions rather than a shared and agreed process involving all actors. Historically, in fact, this is not new: several authors showed how, throughout the 20th century, Italian immigrant families resisted and eventually influenced the efforts of the US social workers to Americanize their diets through home and school programs (Levenstein, 1985; Belasco, 1987; Levine, 2010).

This could also help explain the results of chapter 3, showing that the school canteen in Italy is more often used by children from higher social positions (Oncini and Guetto, 2017): school meal programs reflect middle class values of health and accountability (Rawlins, 2009; Harman and Cappellini, 2015), which, in turn, can paradoxically alienate the children who would most benefit from the intervention. Moreover, a recent ruling of the Court of Appeal of Turin upheld the right of 58 parents to take home-packed lunches to a school where it was not permitted (*Corte di Appello di Torino*, 2016). The Court's decision recognizes the right of families to feed their children following their own principles, which may not be in line with nutritional precepts. Future studies could further excavate what drives parents to make the case against school food intervention, and shed light over how different familial socioeconomic endowments are related to it. Crucially, in fact, more research is needed in southern Italian regions, where the same meal policies face a higher incidence of childhood obesity (Nardone et al., 2016), extreme poverty conditions of families (Istat, 2015), and lower confidence in institutions (Putnam et al., 1994). Chapter 6, based on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a Palermitan primary school, will provide an initial exploration.

The advantage of ethnography, a method that entails long-term listening to the ways subjects make sense of their world, has offered me insight into the perspectives of actors at the intersection with food education policy. This study can hence suggest that the scientific eye that guides the implementation of school meal policies might benefit from alternative approaches involving children, cooks, teachers, and parents in the construction of the menu. Despite the fact that the tension between the political imposition of a conduct and the complementary resistance of its subjects can never be completely resolved, it may prove useful to give the subjects involved more opportunities to voice their views and opinions. For instance, children and teachers could have additional participatory moments to discuss the relationship between food and health; concurrently, parents and cooks could jointly contribute to transforming grams into meals based on their own experience with children. In other words, the tactical character of the actors subjected to meal programs could be used for constructing a more participated

strategic action. This way, the authoritative knowledge of nutrition professionals may be perceived as less distant, and be of greater use at school as well as at home.

Appendix

Region	Average Children's PI Score
Trentino-Alto Adige	**9.6**
Piemonte	9.4
Toscana	9.3
Sardegna	9.3
Lazio	9.3
Umbria	9.0
Marche	**9.0**
Liguria	8.9
Emilia Romagna	8.9
Friuli Venezia	8.9
Lombardia	8.7
Veneto	8.7
Calabria	8.4
Abruzzo	8.2
Campania	8.2
Basilicata	8.1
Sicilia	**7.8**
Puglia	7.7
Molise	7.7
Italy	8.7

Note: Source: elaboration based on MDL Istat survey (2009-2012) data.
Differently from chapter 3, the analytical sample (N = 8,762) includes also single parents

Table 4.3 Average children's PI score by region.

Region	Overweight children	Obese children	Overweight + obese
Alto-Adige	13.4	4.0	17.4
Trentino	**17.4**	**5.5**	**22.9**
Lombardia	17.1	6.5	23.6
Friuli Venezia	18.2	5.7	23.9
Veneto	17.4	7.0	24.4
Piemonte	18.6	6.7	25.3
Sardegna	18.6	7.3	25.9
Toscana	19.5	7.3	26.8
Liguria	20.2	6.9	27.1
Emilia Romagna	20.9	7.7	28.6
Lazio	21.7	9.4	31.1
Marche	**23.1**	**8.1**	**31.2**
Umbria	22.8	10.0	32.8
Puglia	23.1	13.5	36.6
Sicilia	**23.2**	**13.9**	**37.1**
Basilicata	25.0	13.4	38.4
Abruzzo	27.2	11.4	38.6
Molise	24.9	15.8	40.7
Calabria	24.6	16.2	40.8
Campania	28.6	19.2	47.8
Italy	**20.9**	**9.8**	**30.7**

Source: Nardone et al., 2016.

Table 4.4. Percentage of overweight and obese children by region.

Chapter 5
Feeding Distinction:
The Stratification and Reproduction of Food Boundaries

1. Introduction

Despite being condensed into less than 20 pages, Bourdieu's (1984) study of French eating habits in the 60s and 70s has inspired more than 40 years of sociological accounts on the relationship between food and social position (for a review: Kamphuis et al., 2015; Sato et al., 2016). The opposition between the working class 'taste of necessity', revealed in the preference for abundant or functional filling meals, and the upper class 'taste of freedom' that prizes style and appearance, has been used, readapted and updated for studying the framing of social class distinction in eating practices. Cultural and economic capital have thus become cornerstones for studying meals and their social differentiation, and habitus the mechanism explaining how social class is enacted and embodied through dietary choices. In the sociology of food, overlapping yet distinct contributions have mainly come from consumption, health, and cultural sociologists, pointing out from different angles that hierarchical divides on food are nowadays still well recognizable, notwithstanding the claims of individualization theorists (Bauman, 2001; Beck, 1992). Within the sociology of consumption, the inquiry directed its attention to how food items are differently purchased, prepared, and discussed both in and around the home (Warde, 1997; Warde and Martens, 2000; Paddock, 2016); health sociologists zoomed in on the stratification and meanings of healthy and unhealthy nutrition (Williams, 1995; Oncini and Guetto, 2017a; 2017b); cultural sociologists focused on the omnivore-univore debate (Atkinson and Deeming, 2015; Flemmen et al., 2017) and on the ways taste is displayed among certain groups (Johnston and Baumann, 2010) or places (Cappellini et al., 2015).

What has been less fully explored by the sociology of food is the application of this framework to the analysis of child-feeding practices, and the extent to which symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Fournier, 1992; Lamont and Molnár, 2002) are transmitted to and reproduced by children. This is somewhat surprising, as Bourdieu's theorization is markedly concerned with the reproduction of inequality across generations (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) and he is famously quoted as observing that (Bourdieu, 1984: 79) 'it is probably in tastes in food that one would find the strongest and most indelible mark of infant learning'. The habitus indeed refers

primarily to the dispositions and ways of seeing acquired at an early age through family practices. Even so, Bourdieu himself did not spend time on children's consumption (Pugh, 2014). It is therefore crucial, as argued elsewhere, to 'bring parents and children back in' (Martens et al., 2004) and to study childhood and motherhood as a constitutive part of consumer culture, and more particularly of the social organization of eating (Cook, 2008).

In this vein, this chapter reveals how feeding and eating practices between home and school are adopted by parents and children of differing social background as a means to construct and display distinctive boundaries. First, I summarise the literature on 'mothers' foodwork' (Wright et al., 2015) and children's meals. Hence, using 40 in-depth interviews with Italian mothers, I outline how their feeding practices can be analysed along the lines of economic and cultural capital, distinguishing between two different forms of symbolic boundaries: the first concerning the places where groceries are bought and the food brands selected (economic boundaries), the second related to the nutritional principles guiding feeding choices and the perception of the quality of the school meal service (cultural boundaries). Later, I draw from the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in two Italian primary school canteens to highlight three ways used by their children to display knowledge and draw boundaries while eating the school meal. These 'immature' conduits for distinction indicate that food can be used to demarcate boundaries from the very early stages of life. I conclude by arguing that public policies aimed at improving children's dietary compliance must acknowledge how family endowments shape feeding and eating practices in order to develop truly effective food literacy programs.

2. The Stratification of Feeding Practices

When it comes to feeding the family, fathers tend to disappear from the picture. Despite the fact that in Western societies female participation in the labour market has constantly increased over the last 50 years, food management in the domestic environment remains a gendered task, one that indeed articulates, reveals and (re)constructs family social class ideologies, ethnic identities, and gender hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1984; Brenton, 2017; DeVault, 1994; Valentine, 1999; Wright et al., 2015). This is particularly the case in Italy, a country predominantly characterized by the breadwinner model and unbalanced household arrangements (Esping-Andersen, 2012). Certainly, feeding is a practice influenced by other actors or agencies: in one-earner families, fathers provide the economic resources to access food; media messages shape adults' and youngsters' food desires; national and international organizations aim to guide

nutritional conducts; kindergartens and primary schools supposedly educate tastes through meals and didactic modules. Yet these influences eventually clash with the mother-child dyad.

Motherhood and childhood are ultimately a matter of public scrutiny and private responsibility. Mothers' are invested with symbolic duties that may clash with time and material constraints. On the one hand, this disciplinary process surrounds them and their children through school meal policies and messages that 'seek to define and regulate mothering' (Lupton, 1998: 41; see also Coveney, 2006; Wright et al., 2015). Mothers are depicted as the gatekeepers of children's present and future health, responsible for feeding them with salubrious, safe and palatable food; these expectations consequently elicit intensive 'mental, emotional, and physical labour' (Brenton, 2017). On the other hand, practical responses to this unrealistic ideal of food and foodwork depend very much on the unequal distribution of resources. Higher endowments of cultural capital may well explain feeding choices in line with nutritional standards, especially in countries where healthy food is not very expensive (Oncini and Guetto, 2017a). Knowledge on nutrients, active information seeking and processes of social distinction can all lead to more compliant feeding choices (Abel, 2008; Harman and Cappellini, 2015). Vice versa, monetary resources can provide ease of access to high status gourmet food, organic or ethnic alternatives, and multi-food processors (Johnston and Baumann, 2010; Willis et al., 2011); whereas a lack of such resources could explain why poor mothers are risk-averse when it comes to preparing new food options for their children (Daniel, 2016). Clearly enough, cultural and economic endowments correlate, intersect and interact, although it is possible to disentangle their net effects (Oncini and Guetto, 2017a), and to analyse how their compositions lead to within class differentiations (Flemmen et al., 2017; Jarness, 2017). For instance, Yaish and Katz-Gerro (2012) offer evidence that while cultural participation is constrained by financial resources and preferences, tastes are related to cultural resources but not to income.

Studies focusing on the framing of distinction in feeding practices highlighted how different food ideologies are anchored to social class positions. Alan Warde (1997), among the first to analyse food and social class after Bourdieu, brought evidence of persistent social differentiations in UK food expenditure patterns. More recently, a comparison by Wills et al. (2011) between a working class and a middle-class family epitomises opposing eating and feeding styles. The former organises food management around the 'here and now' keeping in mind members' satiety while prizing teenagers' autonomy. The latter values the 'right' food as a means to reach good health while cultivating teenagers' tastes for future rewards. Similarly, Wright et al. (2015) find that many working-class mothers face up to their responsibilities more

pragmatically about daily satiation: their children eat what they put on the plate, often with a limited range of choices given monetary constraints. Conversely, middle-class mothers are attentive to the moral imperatives of healthy feeding, although this creates considerable anxiety and frustration when meeting the practical challenges of daily life; for instance, when preparing a school lunchbox (Harman and Cappellini, 2015). However, some scholars also underlined how within class variations exist, and should be analysed in more depth (Brenton, 2017). Mothers' feeding practices thus contribute to the acquisition of children's 'sense of their place', and thus to the reproduction of inequality. However, with some notable exceptions, studies on mothers' 'foodwork' neglected children's eating practices, in spite of the latter being the inevitable complement of the former.

2.1 Children and Food Boundaries

Childhood scholars rightly contend that the central tenets of studies on infancy and preadolescence have not been incorporated into mainstream sociology. As Pugh (2014) summarises, main contributions indicate that children are active economic agents (not passive), capable of strategic thinking (not innocent), and markedly influenced by the social contexts in which they grow up (not universal). Acknowledging children as a constitutive part of consumption practices and more generally of societal forces helps to provide a better frame for some long standing sociological themes, among which the intergenerational transmission of inequalities (Martens et al., 2004; Pugh, 2014). This focus on reproduction permits us to simultaneously frame mothers without neglecting children. As Cook (2008: 231) maintains, 'to "structure in" children to the field requires embracing women's, particularly mothers', perspectives and practices as constitutive of *how* consumption means, and not simply as additions to the presumption of *what* consumption means.'

The school context provided scholars with the opportunity to study how children reconstruct racial or class boundaries through food (Thorne, 2005). Nukaga (2008) finds that sharing, trading and gift-giving are food exchanges that play a crucial role in strengthening or modifying boundaries. Crossing ethnic or gender divides can accompany the creation of social class cleavages: White and Korean children label African-American children begging for food gifts as poor. Types of food, or their absence, can hence function as objectified markers of children's ethnic, socioeconomic and gender cleavages that hold children accountable for family choices. For instance, Karrebæk (2012) investigated how teachers in a Danish primary school transformed children's lunch-boxes into a domain of school evaluation that produces exclusion

among children from ethnic minorities. Rye bread, which represents a national symbol of healthiness, becomes a means for evaluating the level of ethnic integration and re-constructing compliance to new dietary guidelines. Interestingly, similar findings have been reported by researchers in several countries (in Japan: Allison, 1991; in Canada; Iacovetta, 2000; in England: Morrison, 1996; in Mexico: Salazar, 2007). Streib (2011) even shows that pre-schoolers aged 4 years old are already competent class-actors able to reproduce familial endowments. However, research accounting for the relationship between children's and mothers' food boundaries is still underdeveloped. The ways children either manifest distinctive symbolic boundaries or conversely bridge tastes regardless of race, class and gender (Pugh, 2014) are necessarily tied to the relation of dependency with the maternal world.

Differentiation in the ways children think about food can unravel how their nutritional habitus is simultaneously *structured* by familial endowments, and *structures* social relationships with peers. The overall aim of this chapter is indeed to make apparent, through the use of eating and feeding practices, how constrictions work in concert with the constructions. In this view, social class is not only an external constraint, but also something that children perform, as a role-play, in their everyday activities. Based on these considerations, this chapter provides an in-depth analysis on the ways boundaries are constructed by families and reproduced by children. How do families feed distinction when presenting their food choices? How these differ according to cultural and economic capital? And how do children reproduce this knowledge when discussing about food with their peers?

3. Data and Methods

This chapter draws on 40 in-depth interviews with primary caregivers and 85 notes gathered during the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in two Italian primary school canteens. All data were collected in Poversano and Goldazzo, two small towns in Trentino. In both school canteens, the project was ratified by the school principal, the school board, and the service provider of the lunch (see chapter 4 for further details). Parents were firstly informed about the nature of the study in a letter, and then recruited for interviews during parents' evenings. I approached the possible respondents personally, and asked for their phone number to set a date, specifying that I wanted to interview the person who takes care of food in the family. Unsurprisingly the great majority of interviewees (33) were mothers. In 4 cases I interviewed both parents, in 2 cases just fathers, and in one case a grandmother living alone with her grandchild. Interviews included questions about respondents' and their partners' profession,

which I used to construct a social class scheme that distinguished working class (13), middle class (12) and bourgeoisie families (15). Information on the categorisation is available in Table 5.5. For the class scheme I broadly relied on the Italian adaptation of the EGP class scheme (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Cobalti and Schizzerotto, 1993), which I then collapsed in three macro categories. The bourgeoisie contains entrepreneurs, managers, supervisors and professionals; the middle class pools together clerical workers without supervisory roles and self-employed workers; the working class includes skilled and semi-skilled manual workers. In the case of divergent class designations within the couples, I assigned the family to the higher category. The final sample is well balanced, with an almost equal proportion of families coming from the three social classes.

In line with the results of the regression models presented in chapter 3, I draw a distinction between economic and cultural boundaries, and I assume that they delineate interrelated yet analytically separable meanings on food consumption and feeding practices. As for the former, in the semi-structured interviews I focused on the favoured and unfavoured stores where food is bought, and consequently also on the main food brands and products purchased. As for the latter, I covered themes related to nutritional and feeding principles adopted when cooking for their children. The interview outline can be found in the appendix. Following Warde (2016), 'purchasing' and 'cooking' can be seen as cores of the many 'loosely interrelated activities' that altogether shape the practice of feeding. These feeding practices constitute the material and symbolic food environment that inform the nutritional habitus of a child, and that go on to give form to his eating practices.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed with QDA Miner, where I created codes distinguishing economic from cultural distinction processes as the two main broad categories of interest. The former mainly included details regarding grocery shopping. The latter included responses on the food eaten and avoided at home, nutritional principles, and the strategies adopted to transmit certain food practices to the child(ren). Hence, I analysed the recoded responses looking for similar discursive patterns among families within the same social class.

Conversely, to gain information about children's understanding of food, I sat and ate with them every day for around 4 consecutive months in each school. During lunch, I asked them about their likes and dislikes, favourite cuisines, healthy and unhealthy foods, while taking notes of their opinions and behaviours. To obtain data about their social origins, I also asked about the profession of their parents, which I double-checked with the teachers when I was not sure about

the reliability of the answer. All names and locations are fictitious to maintain the anonymity of the research participants.

Fieldnotes from the school canteens were digitally transcribed immediately after the lunch, so as to guarantee a more accurate information report. Importantly, in order to examine how food boundaries are reproduced by children, both in the observation phase and in the subsequent redraft I dedicated special attention to the dialogues, responses and behaviours of children from opposing social origins, aiming at differences in their conduits for distinction and exclusionary strategies, whilst consciously overlooking the boundaries drawn to 'bridge and keep children in' (Pugh, 2011).

Both in the interviews and in the fieldnotes, the analysis looked for ideal types that could serve the purpose of comparison by containing 'one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct' (Weber, 1949: 90).

Figure 5.1 represents the chapter outline. The one-way arrow indicates a direct effect, while the two-way arrow represents interdependencies between two boxes. Economic and cultural boundaries are dotted to underline that they are continuously formed and modified by several other practices besides those analysed here.

On the one hand, economic capital produces economic boundaries, which in this chapter I analyse in terms of stores where families more frequently purchase groceries, and preferred brands or food products are acquired: I therefore distinguish between three different strategies adopted by families: affordability, unification, and variation. On the other hand, cultural capital produces cultural boundaries, which here I identify as two opposed strategies: concerted cultivation and concerted leniency. Together, these two practices form two of the many blocks constituting the practice of feeding. This is made up, as much as eating practices, of sets of loosely interrelated activities (Warde, 2016), also dependent on the developmental age of the child: for instance, spoon-feeding versus baby-led weaning are two opposed strategies for feeding toddlers. Parent-child food negotiations in the supermarkets, however, are typical of older children (Gram, 2015). Feeding practices, along with their symbolic boundaries, form a child's nutritional habitus, and therefore his/her future eating practices. In this case, the two-way arrows imply the active, although weaker, role of children in modifying their parents' feeding practices.

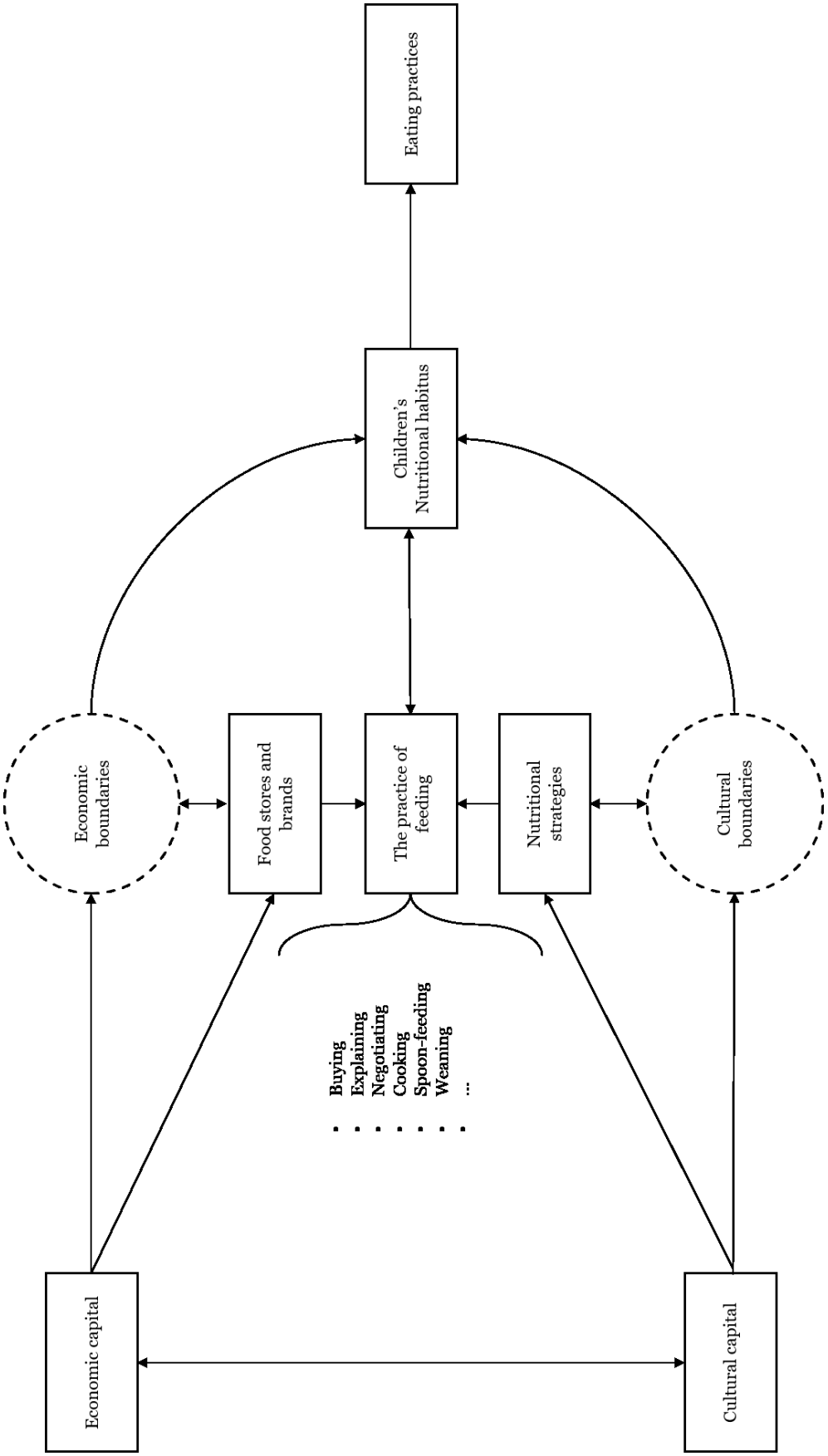

Figure 5.1 Outline of the chapter.

4. Feeding Distinction: Economic and Cultural Boundaries

The thematic analysis reveals different types of boundaries constructed along the dimensions of economic and cultural capital. Economic boundaries, built upon the scarcity, the availability, or the abundance of monetary resources, mark differences related to the type of supermarkets and the products acquired for feeding the family: I distinguish between boundaries created according to *affordability*, *unification*, and *variation* strategies.

Conversely, cultural boundaries are related to the nutritional principles and the feeding strategies that mothers employ with their children, which can be arrayed in a continuum from *concerted cultivation* (Lareau, 2003) to what I call *concerted leniency*. As Lamont et al. (1996: 34) also state, cultural boundaries 'are based on self-actualization (including intellectual curiosity), manners, tastes, education, and appreciation of high culture. Those who feel superior toward people who are less culturally sophisticated than themselves are said to draw cultural boundaries'. In this case, as I will show, parental self-actualization coincides with their investments on their children's taste.

4.1 Economic Boundaries: Affordability, Unification, Variation

At the risk of oversimplifying the individual choices beneath the food purchasing process, as well as the nuances that characterize the vast array of food products, one may argue that food stores and brands are, by constitution, a spatialised and objectified social relation. At their extremes, they materialize the opposed purchasing power of families, and they concur to the transmission and formation of a sense of one's position in the social structure. A hard discount is in direct opposition to a food boutique, as much as a subbrand is the reverse of a premium brand. They define each other diametrically and gain meaning relationally, resembling the symbolic and returning the social dimension of boundaries (Lamont and Fournier, 1992; Lamont and Molnár, 2002). Symbolic, because different types of stores and brands provide a system of classification which social actors can use to categorise objects, people and practices. Social, because the empirical regularities in our possession reveal the unequal access to and distribution of resources and social opportunities. Of course, everyone could in principle access any type of store or buy any kind of goods. Yet the models presented in chapter 3 show that social stratification is revealed in food purchasing practices. As shown before, the likelihood of buying at least one food item in a hard discount store is higher for working class families and more generally for those with less economic means. The type of food acquired by a family

eventually shapes children's knowledge of food types, and concur to set their ideas about the limits and capabilities of the household.

The analysis on food purchasing practices thus unravels how families with different economic resources adopt purchasing strategies that mark symbolic boundaries between them (Table 5.1). In fact, depending on the social class of the family, three main strategies can be outlined: affordability, unification, and variation. As Table 5.2 below indicates, the three strategies lie on different types of stores where families are used to buy food products: hard discounts, main supermarkets, and niche food shops respectively, are the basis of contrasting and competing rhetorics that justify food choices (see the appendix at the end of the chapter for further details).

Unsurprisingly, the first strategy (i.e. affordability) is mostly adopted by families with limited economic means. As a matter of fact, most families falling within this ideal type are characterized by working class families with a status of unemployment or inactivity for one or both partners. Monetary constraints force the family to look for cheaper options, and hard discounts become a reasonable place for acquiring some or most food, even if they are not close at hand. Lower prices are worth a longer journey. Moreover, unlike affluent families, groceries are often bought in bulk every month or two, so as to reduce food expenditure (see also Inglis et al., 2009). As these mothers testify, budget limits have to be kept in mind when buying groceries:

> Maria: 'Sometimes I buy what I want…but often I can't afford what I want because it's too expensive. Then my mind finds alternatives […]. I take what I didn't think of before because there's a promotion, always keeping in mind what the family likes. […] In the end, I buy groceries where it's cheaper.' [*Maria, two children, working class family – part time cleaner + unemployed partner*]

> Me: 'Where do you buy food usually?'
> Roberta: 'Eurospin…do you know that? It's sub-brand'
> Me: 'Sure, there is one in my hometown as well. Do you like it?'
> Roberta: 'Products are good. We always take what's in promotion, or what's close to the expiry date, they give you a 30% discount. Some products are good…well you don't find real mozzarella,[1] but it's something you can put in your stomach. […] However, there is quality there, but they also rely on quantity. Make a comparison with Pam: you spend 200/300 euros, while at Eurospin you only spend

[1] Some background information is needed to understand this comparison between 'fake' mozzarella from Eurospin and true mozzarella. The respondent comes from Naples, and she is referring to the (Buffalo) mozzarella she used to buy when she lived there. Buffalo mozzarella is a famous traditional product (PDO) from the Neapolitan area, and can be purchased at a cheap price only there. In another part of the interviews, both parents were complaining about the price differentials between Poversano and Naples, where 'with little money you can get two sacks of food'.

100 euros.' [*Roberta, two children, working class family – unemployed + seasonal street cleaner*]

Giovanna: 'If I had to buy everything at the Coop I would spend three times what I spend at Eurospin…I just can't afford that, we don't live in luxury. For a litre of milk, if I go to Eurospin, I spend 0.75 cents while at Coop I would spend 1.10 euro…and would be just the Coop milk […] I always explain that to my daughter, doing the job I do, earning the money I earn…we can't go to the restaurant or eat fillet every night. We can do that maybe for three days with my payroll, but then we start wondering: "what are we going to eat tomorrow?"' *[Giovanna, one child, lone working-class mother – part time cleaner]*

Most interestingly however, this model is rationally and emotionally defended. Although mothers recognise the constrained nature of the choice, this does not consequently imply, at least not for all the respondents, that quality must be sacrificed. Contrarily, food products purchased in hard discounts are deemed better than, or not dissimilar from, the ones you can buy in main stores. During an interview with a low-income family, for instance, someone suggested that I tried the pasta from Eurospin, because it is 'incredibly good' and I would have not noticed the difference [from commonly known brands]. Symbolic boundaries are therefore created for defending the intrinsic taste of sub-brand food against the more expensive alternatives bought by other families. In the following excerpts, Giovanna and Mara, although in different guises, mark boundaries between their choices and the more expensive alternatives:

Giovanna: 'I have problems with the Mulino Bianco snacks, I think they are more processed, I don't know…it's really that they create a problem in my stomach…whereas Eurospin's snacks are sensational. Mulino Bianco's are very gummy, very spongy, and when you put them in the milk it takes a while to absorb…but Eurospin's ones are less buttery and less greasy. Mulino Bianco biscuits leave oil on your fingertips, Eurospin's ones less. […] From time to time I talk to other mothers…but that sucks, and I'd like to become a child again. I'll tell you this story: there is a mum I met, and she is like "if it's not Mulino Bianco I don't buy it" and I invited her children to have a snack with my daughter. When she realised they were eating Eurospin snacks she turned white, [*ha cambiato colore*] but now she buys groceries at Eurospin too. I think it's a mentality, I don't know why we are so influenced.' [*Giovanna, one child, single working-class mother – part time cleaner*]

Me: 'I know that many mums go to the Conad store, the small one close to the primary school…'
Mara: 'It's too expensive. I go there just when I really don't have time. Try to go there, look at prices and then tell me. Once I went there to buy a bag of potatoes, I still remember, 5 years ago: almost 5 euros. I told the cashier: "look, that's the

> wrong price" and she says "no, that's right". "Well…congratulations then!" [ironic]. […] Look, one of my best friends, she buys everything at Natura Sì…she must be crazy, that costs an arm and leg [*l'ira di Dio*]! I don't meddle in people's affairs…but still, that's totally insane. […] I buy most things at Poli, but also Lidl isn't bad: I usually buy dairy products there, they have good quality.' [*Mara, one child, working class family – bartender + artisan*].

First, Giovanna makes a clear demarcation line between Eurospin's and Mulino Bianco's snacks, by giving a detailed justification based on the intrinsic qualities of her choice: food texture (less greasy), functionality (dunkability), and digestibility. In another passage, she recalls a personal episode in which the opposition between sub-brand and main brand, and perhaps between economic possibilities, comes to life and is eventually resolved with a moral victory: the other mother eventually 'crosses' the invisible boundary. All in all, as she advocates in the last sentence, that differences are in our minds. In a similar vein, Mara uses two real life examples to criticize two stores (Conad and Natura Sì) which are popular among affluent families, implicitly suggesting that prices do not correspond to real values: in the first case, she aptly protests with the cashier, whereas in the second she pigeonholes her friend as mentally ill for spending money at Natura Sì.

The second strategy, which I call *unification*, brings together those mid-income families with enough economic resources to buy food without thinking about saving on food. As Table 5.1 shows, this strategy is mostly adopted by middle class families (8), but also by some working class (4) and bourgeoisie families (3). This heterogeneity suggests that the discriminating factor is the availability of economic resources: as a matter of fact, here a dual earner household model is prevalent (see Table 5.5). The guiding principle recurrently provided by respondents is the taken-for-granted relation between expenditure and quality:

> Sara: 'You need to spend money if you want to eat well. You need to spend money if you want quality, there's nothing you can do about it' [*Sara, two children, bourgeoisie family – white collar + white collar*].

> Rosetta: 'I can save on everything, but I've never saved on edibles. I tell you, I often go to the Coop. […] Compared to a discount like Lidl or Eurospin it's more expensive, but I see more quality control there' [*Rosetta, two children, middle class family – primary school teacher + factory worker?*].

> Marco: 'I found out that to save [time] you, you just have to look to the price per kilo and you immediately see the quality of the offer' [*Marco, two children, middle class family – primary school teacher + white collar*].

In this case, I use the term unification because most of the interviewees buy groceries mainly in one of the well-known stores of the large-scale retail channel: as a matter of fact, Coop, Poli, Orvea and Pam are the most frequently mentioned. Although organic food can be an option, the distinctive trait of this strategy is the simultaneous preference for commonly known familiar brands (e.g. Nutella, Mulino Bianco, Barilla etc.) and the repudiation of discounts and sub-brands. Therefore, the display of economic boundaries is not based on what is purchased, but rather on what is avoided; not on the normative orthodoxy of what 'everyone'' buys, but rather on the scepticism toward what costs less. Food products sold in discount stores cannot be entirely trustworthy, because *sub*-brands stand by definition beneath the surface of what is commonly known: they are nameless and unidentifiable. Respondents thus use this contraposition to demarcate a boundary between clean and dirty, healthy and he harmful, indeed purity and danger (Douglas, 2010).

> Me: 'Do you go to Lidl or Eurospin to buy groceries?'
> Mara: 'No. I sometimes went to the Prix, but that's just if I need to buy toilet paper. If I have to buy food products I don't trust them [the hard discounts]. I might once have taken some yogurt that come from the same factory? as Vipiteno, or from Mila and maybe they don't write that down…but even so, no, I don't trust them.' [*Mara, one child, middle class family – white collar + white collar*]

> Clara: 'I rarely go to discounts, I can go to buy cat litter but nothing to do with food' […]. [*Clara, one child, working class family – housewife and truck driver*]

> Giovanna: 'I don't go to discounts, because I trust my supermarkets, it's also a matter of brands…you don't know what you're buying in discounts. My parents-in-law often go there, because it's cheap…but then you know that they are selling you pepper that's as big as this [hand gesture] that look like they are made out of plastic, that maybe come from the Netherlands.' [*Giovanna, three children, bourgeoisie family – white collar + white collar*].

> Sara: 'I am rather attached to main brands, sometimes I might get organic food, but I am not a fanatic…sometimes I might get organic fruit, that is maybe less beautiful but it has more taste. […] With sub-brands I am kind of stuck…I have tried, and maybe I have just convinced myself, but they are not as good as….' [*Sara, one child, middle class family – beauty salon owner + surveyor*]

These responses shed light on how principles of vision are inextricably principles of division: (Bourdieu, 1984; 1985): the four mothers attach negative meanings to the groceries sold by hard discount stores and position themselves on the other side of the boundary. Mara and Clara bluntly associate hard discounts with the realm of dirt: toilet paper and cat litter are evoked when setting the limits of what can be purchased there. At best, discount stores are relegated to

secondary sources of non-edible goods which would not contaminate the household's eating and feeding practices. Similarly, Giovanna describes the artificial size ('as big as this'), consistency ('made out of plastic'), and place of origin ('the Netherlands') of peppers for exemplifying how unnatural discount store vegetables can be. Finally, Sara describes herself as 'stuck' by her own convictions on the taste of sub-brands, which are 'not as good as' the main products she normally buys.

Families with high economic resources, however, have a common strategy based on *variation*. As it is possible to notice from Table 5.4, most of the families (12) adopting this strategy have a bourgeoisie background: usually, both partner have a job, and at least one of them is a manager or a freelance professional. Earning high incomes eradicate any form of preoccupation regarding the minimum (or the maximum) expenditure for groceries. As these respondents sincerely confessed to me when asked if they were concerned with prices:

> Maria: 'Luckily, we don't have to be careful. I can't tell if I spend a lot or not, I mean it can happen that I get food items on offer but I don't save money on food. Saving is definitely not the guiding principle.' [*Maria, one child, bourgeoisie family – secondary school teacher + freelance professional*]

> Listen, I'll tell you something unusual: only people who earn something more than normal can buy organic, because every time you go to Origine you spend at least 50 euros, and you go out with one bag in one hand, and with the other hand empty. It's not something that everyone can buy…but we have income, we can do that. [*Roberto, one child, bourgeoisie family – white collar + insurance broker*]

The reason I use the term variation is that these families, unlike the former families, acquire specific groceries through a variety of channels. This does not mean that main stores are avoided: also in this case, groceries are often purchased in large scale retail channels for time convenience[2] – the hectic pace of rich families' lives is indeed well documented (Lareau, 2003). Yet around these well-known supermarkets gravitate a whole series of complementary shops and products which ultimately constitute the hardcore identity of these families' feeding and eating practices; or at least their display. Throughout the interviews these respondents, in front

[2] Even so, many bourgeoisie [see comment] families in Goldazzo buy groceries at the Conad store, which is a very small and expensive supermarket close to the primary school (see the previous interview with Mara). Although Conad is to all intents and purposes a famous brand of the large-scale retail channel, several times respondents praised the excellent quality of the meat sold there, which respects the standards these families are used to.
Giada: 'I usually get meat at Conad, because I know it comes from local breeders, it's not meat that comes from 'who knows where' and also because it has to be lean, and because my husband hates when the meat has 'nerves'' [*Giada, 4 children, bourgeoisie family - white collar + white collar*]

of me, proudly listed, and sometimes materially exhibited refined premium brands, cherished fruit and vegetables, precious spices and dressings. These products can be obtained in several ways, which usually entail different types of costs: physical, because purchasing them may require a specific journey to an ad hoc boutique;[3] economic, because better quality, rare, or uncommon products necessarily imply a premium price; psychological, because information seeking (online and offline) is involved to look for them; social, because friends or relatives from other regions can be called upon for shipping or bringing gastronomic specialties from local delicatessens.[4]

Their economic boundaries are therefore two-sided: on the one hand, they share with mid-income families a repulsion towards hard discount stores. As we can notice, prejudices are expressed in a very similar fashion:

> Luana: 'Why should I go there? They have sub-brand products, they taste worse, I would go there to do what, exactly?' [*Luana, two children, bourgeoisie family – white collar + white collar*]

> Lucia: 'I never go into discount stores, because I am not sure about products' traceability. Maybe it's my idea, but even with normal products, I don't know where they come from, maybe they come from abroad […]. I know that can be a prejudice, but I really can't make it. I'm sorry, there's an aunt that goes there always, because she finds promotions on biscuits, and then she comes and donates that to my children, she gives them these super-big packs…but for me…it's something…that's gross, the taste I mean…therefore I never buy anything there.' [*Lucia, three children, bourgeoisie family – secondary school teacher + dentist*]

On the other hand, and most importantly, they care about showing the minutia that characterise their grocery shopping, which aims to be nontrivial, responsible, and sought after. This is akin to what Paddock (2016) shows: alternative and sustainable food consumption, despite being disguised as rustic, simple and democratic, upholds distinction practices. And similar to what Currid-Halkett (2017: 119) show for US consumers buying Whole Food groceries, it is not a matter of product, but rather its process and implications. This new aspirational class marks boundaries through 'consumer awareness, an animal right ethos, environmental consciousness,

[3] Paradoxically, searching the streets to get specific food is something that they share, for the opposite reason, with low income families. The former cover kilometres to save, the latter to spend.

[4] The latter is a sound example on the way in which social capital can also intervene in producing and reinforcing food boundaries. Upper class parents can count on a wide network, and food gifts can be used as a material resource for maintaining and reinforcing symbolic boundaries.

and more broadly and perhaps more significantly, being informed and conscientious members of society'.

Recurrently, main brands are accused of not being trustworthy, and are consequently taken over by more expensive alternatives which are perceived as healthier, tastier or more ethical: the organic Nocciolata Rigoni without palm oil replaces Nutella; the local, organic pasta Felicetti outplays the industrial Barilla; the online order of a wooden crate with organic fruit and vegetables (i.e. Biocesta) is preferred over the supermarket produce aisle; farm-to-table products supplants delicatessen and meat departments; stevia and agave substitute white sugar. In short, a 'natural' boundary is raised to confine the 'artificial'. Nonetheless, what these families have in common is precisely their attempts at being individually distinctive: in a sense, they are unvaryingly heterogeneous in their choices.

> Alessandra: 'Until few months ago, we were enrolled in the GAS, which requires a collective management of purchasing.[5] However, in this particular period of our family it's impossible to keep up, so we have stopped. However, there is a close friend of mine in the group, so that I still benefit a little. Then there is this shop of organic fruit and vegetables, which is called the Biocesta, I go there sometimes […]. For the extravirgin oil we have some relatives who live in Lazio, they have friends who are oil producers…olives without any industrial process, so they bring it to us when they come to visit.' [*Alessandra, 2 children, bourgeoisie family – pedagogic coordinator + researcher*]
>
> Arianna: 'For a few months, I have been buying groceries in this new shop, Convivia Food, there's a couple of very nice guys, and I also think they have a degree, and they go around Italy to meet producers that "know". It's really nice, they sell unpackaged pasta, unpackaged rice etc. and you can get as much as you want. […] We get pasta and rice, both whole wheat and organic, Italian oil, cheese…and now they have oranges, in fact I want to go to get them. […] And also, we rented a small plot of land, where we cultivate both organic and synergic vegetables.' [*Arianna, two children, middle class family – white collar + artisan*].
>
> Roberto: 'I am passionate about nutrition studies. I have studied the products: type 0 flour, the white one, we are trying to replace that with kamut or whole wheat, we'll throw the white one out of the window. Meat: we never buy meat in the supermarket. We are not vegetarian, but I buy meat from a friend of mine, who's a local breeder that doesn't use chemical products. Light cheese, those commercialised in television and scam advertising: abolished. […] The oil comes

[5] Ethical purchasing groups are organizations that permit their participants to buy goods collectively following specific solidarity criteria regarding environmental and social issues. Interestingly, Graziano and Forno (2012) studied the socioeconomic profile of these individuals and find that educational credentials, rather than economic resources, are associated with this political form of purchasing.

from Bari, from her relatives, people that make organic natural oil.' [*Roberto, one child, bourgeoisie family – white collar + insurance broker*]

In different manners, these three interviews exemplify the multifaceted nature of the variation strategy. Alessandra, who cannot keep going to the ethical purchasing group (GAS) due to time constraints, has already a comparable alternative with Biocesta. Arianna extols the virtues of Convivia Food, the organic shop where two 'graduated' guys carefully select products throughout Italy. At the same time, she proudly reveals to me that her family is renting a plot of land to grow 'organic and synergic vegetables'. Roberto, who is a self-taught nutrition expert, passionately lists and motivates his food choices from flour to oil, estranging himself from supermarkets and commercialised products (the abolition of light cheese). Therefore, variety is made up by the almost infinite opportunities that open up once families do not have to deal with expenditure limits. Their heterogeneous sensibilities do not reflect a single taste predisposition (such as 'the omnivore'), but rather confirm that omnivorousness conceals distinct types of omnivores, bonded by similar economic circumstances (Warde et al., 2007). And as I will show in the next section, this sensibility is the premise of a precise feeding strategy.

Social Class	Affordability	Unification	Variation
Bourgeoisie	0	3	12
Middle Class	0	9	3
Working Class	9	4	0

Table 5.1 Economic boundaries: purchasing strategies by family social class.

Strategy	Store examples
Affordability	Lidl, Eurospin, Prix, MD Discount
Unification	Coop, Poli, Orvea, Pam
Variation	Origine, Convivia, Natura sì, Siciliani, Biocesta, GAS

Table 5.2 Stores most often mentioned by interviewers.

Social Class	Concerted leniency	Concerted cultivation
Bourgeoisie	1	14
Middle Class	4	8
Working Class	10	3

Table 5.3 Cultural boundaries: feeding strategies by family social class.

Strategy	Concerted leniency	Concerted cultivation
Affordability	7	2
Unification	8	8
Variation	0	15

Table 5.4 Economic and cultural boundaries.

4.2 Cultural Boundaries: Concerted Cultivation and Concerted Leniency

Unlike the economic boundaries outlined above, constructing ideal types that can do justice to the nutritional choices made by mothers in feeding their children is a much more difficult task. For if brands and stores are ready-made for displaying distinction – many products cannot be materially purchased for lack of money – feeding strategies can be based on countless considerations which are less stringent than material conditions. Sure enough, studies show how feeding styles, children's dietary compliance and body mass index, differ depending on the social position of the family (Blissett, 2011; Brenton, 2017; Della Bella and Lucchini, 2015; Robinson et al., 2007; Wright et al., 2015). Nonetheless, mothers are all subject, to a lesser or greater extent, to paediatricians' and teachers' indications. In fact, when asked about their children's nutritional wellbeing in general terms, they all exhibit a sincere concern. Regardless of social class, they acknowledge that the future of their children's health is at stake; feeding responsibly means protecting them in the here-and-now and safeguarding their future. In this sense, all mothers are anxious about their children's body, especially when their children have weight disorders.

At the same time, nutritional wellbeing can be articulated in several manners, since its practical expression is controversial. As chapter 4 also highlights, there is a hiatus between the doxa and its material application. In this light, the thematic analysis of the interviews reveals two ideal typical strategies that mothers adopt. Drawing from Lareau (2003) I call the former *concerted cultivation;* this strategy is typically endorsed by bourgeoisie families (14) with high educational levels of both partners. Although also half of the respondents in the middle (8) and the working classes (3) fall into this category, this strategy works best jointly with the variation strategy illustrated above (see Table 5.3 and Table 5.4).

In her seminal work, Lareau (2003) names concerted cultivation the child-rearing logic of high income families: parents actively foster and asses their child's talents, opinions and skills thus developing a sense of entitlement. Their investments range from the orchestration of several sport and leisure activities to the extended verbal negotiation through which they engage with

their sons or daughters. The same framework helps to describe the feeding strategies adopted by the mothers in my sample: their children's taste, and consequently health, is in fact something that can be ameliorated and cultivated through culinary capital investments (Naccarato and LeBesco, 2012). As one mother explained to me with regard to the nutritional principles that inspire her: 'What we say with friends and colleagues, is to increase variety while minimising [health] risks'. Ironically, similar words might be pronounced by a business consultant. I will show in the next section that these investments yield returns that can be immediately appreciated. In this view, feeding is a composite practice that requires endless time and economic effort: variation, innovation, and restriction are the keywords here. These mothers often expose themselves to the nutritional cacophony regarding the relationship between health and food (Levinovitz, 2015), and are consequently more prone to appraise food proposals and innovate diets.

Increasing the variety of food items in the household thus means studying and trying new and inventive culinary proposals. This involves concocting tricks and ploys: mixing or whipping disliked vegetables with favourite ones, masking uncommon flavours – such as whole grain pasta – with commonly accepted ones – like tomato sauce –, using captivating kids' friendly foods (e.g. Piccolini Barilla) and engaging children in cuisine-related activities. One mother even forced herself to cook fish despite being disgusted: 'Even the smell bothers me, but sometimes I force myself to cook it'.

Moreover, many mothers purchase supplementary kitchen equipment for transforming food while maintaining its beneficial properties. Dehydrators, centrifuges, or yogurt makers can stimulate children's creativity, incentivize them to make experiments or combinations, and can even widen their knowledge about food products and food processing. Not surprisingly indeed, ethnic preparations and gastronomic traditional or Italian regional specialties can be served from time to time, and holidays can become occasions for trying the unusual.

> Mara: 'I can tell you what I believe is healthy, but it's difficult to apply, because my children do not eat everything I propose to them. I avoid pasta, and all white flour. I am peculiar, I like using barley or generally cereals. I avoid gluten…I take millet for instance. I don't do that just for myself, I would like everyone in the family to eat that but it doesn't always happen. However, yesterday I made millet croquette, slightly crunchy, instead of bread or pasta. They ate that with pleasure.' [*Mara, 3 children, bourgeoisie family – white collar + entrepreneur*]
>
> Angelica: 'I used to get yogurt in the half kilo tub, but now I've bought the machine to make yogurt. So, my son and I like yogurt, but he was very sceptical about the

machine at the beginning and then he tried and said "mum, it's supergood!" And now he wants the yogurt like that: low fat, and woe betide if you add sugar! I mean, I'd like to add sugar, but I restrain myself. For him…he wants it like that, so I don't put sugar in.' [*Angelica, 2 children, bourgeoisie family – white collar + surveyor*]

Maria: 'I like reading everything that concerns food consumption. I actually hate cooking, but I have to do it, and therefore I like to keep up-to-date all the information. […] So, now I have ordered a juice extractor, which is different from a centrifuge, and spins slowly thus maintaining all the nutrient properties. In this way, since my child is very fussy with fruit, with that I can give him the content of 5 oranges in half a glass. And therefore, when I am with them I can explain to my children: see, the banana is good because it contains potassium and magnesium, this and that vegetable for these reasons, the kiwi for this other.' [*Maria, 2 children, bourgeoisie family – owners of clothing shop*].

Rosa: 'When we eat, I explain to them what we are eating…so for instance they take the lard out of the dry cured ham. Then from time to time we go to Rome – we have relatives there, and they have this specialty butcher's shop [*norcineria*], and we tried this dry cured ham which is made from these pigs that are raised naturally. There was basically half meat and half lard in that ham, something that here you would throw away, but that one was a blend of flavours, and it was good to eat the lard, and they liked that. But I mean, that's just an experience.' [*Rosa, 3 children, bourgeoisie family – health specialist + oculist*]

In different ways, these interviews reveal how cuisine knowledge and health precepts intertwine and are passed to the next generation. In the first excerpt, Mara describes how she transmits her principles (avoiding white flour and gluten) to their children: millet, which is rarely used in Italian cuisine, is mixed with potatoes and moulded into croquettes, whose consistency is more easily appreciated. Angelica, however, outlines how her child starts eating low fat yogurt without sugar after the introduction of a machine for homemade production. Maria 'reads everything that concerns food consumption' even though she hates cooking, and she uses the centrifuge to feed the essential daily nutrients while explaining their beneficial character. Rosa depicts how her children learn to distinguish between the experience of traditional expertly-made ham, and the normal ham that needs to be 'purified' from its fat lard.

Sure enough, many times these efforts are frustrated by kids' tantrums or actual dislikes, and in several interviews mothers expressed their preoccupation with kids' fussiness and neophobia.[6]

[6] According to a recent article, food fussiness and food neophobia, despite being two relatively different phenomena, share a common aetiology which is partly explained by genetic factors (Smith et al., 2017). However, although the role of genes seems to increase over time (Faith et al., 2013), studies agree that environmental factors play a substantive role, since exposure to edibles can overplay food neophobia and food fussiness.

Nonetheless, barriers can become a way of engaging in verbal negotiations and scientific explanations regarding the harmful or beneficial effect of nutrients. These dialogues help children to link reasoning skills, food choices and sense of *boundaries*: what should always be eaten, what avoided, what permitted only on special occasions. Choices and prohibitions are linked to health discourses, and mothers provide explanations and examples that reinforce the notions that teachers try to instil at school. Buying groceries in the supermarket, which often leads to adult-child negotiations (Gram, 2015), can become a way of 'learning a lesson' by reading the ingredients label. In this way, the child can develop critical thinking about healthy and unhealthy food: not only the names of specific products that can be harmful, but also principles of conduct that can be generalised. In fact, despite exposure to a very eclectic food environment, concerted cultivation also means concerted restriction, since many products which are considered unhealthy cannot enter the house:

> Maria: 'Soft drinks: that's something that does not enter the house, it's really an exception, we don't like them. The paediatrician has been categorical with him, and my child really respects external authority. When we go out, maybe he gets a coke, but here we do not have soft drinks, or juices. Just water from the tap.' [*Maria, one child, bourgeoisie family – secondary school teacher + freelance professional*].
>
> Rossana: 'I have always been careful, my husband even more than me. Butter has no place in our home, margarine is not part of our planet […]. We give dry fruit to our children every day, to give them certain nutrients. We don't have a particular nutrition, just a careful one. Palm oils: I removed them just to be sure. They are in fact part of fats and I cook everything with extravirgin oil. I don't fry anything. Soft drinks, we don't have: maybe just for his birthday. Also, I try to buy everything organic, even if you cannot be sure about that.' [*Rossana, 2 children, bourgeoisie family – secondary school teacher + manager*].
>
> Giulia: 'We have never entered McDonald's, we have always called it "The yucky buns restaurant" [*Il ristorante dei panini schifosi*], so my children grew up with this thing: when we pass in front of the shop with the car they say, "look mum, the yucky buns restaurant!"' [*Giulia, 2 children, middle class family – white collar + artisan*].

Maria, Rossana and Giulia's words highlight how a concerted cultivation of taste requires strict rules defining what lies outside the food boundaries. Maria relies on experts' authority for prohibiting soft-drinks; Rossana lists the products that are not part of the family food 'planet'; Giulia describes her gimmick to distance her children from McDonald's 'yucky buns'. This child-rearing strategy based on the tension between variation and restriction is not only helpful health-wise, but also equips children with a very heterogeneous tool-kit of notions that bring

symbolic and material rewards. At the same time, it generates a very demanding task which mainly weighs on the shoulders of women that hectically navigate the befogged and fickle panorama of health food products.

The strategy named *concerted leniency*, however, includes 15 respondents, mostly from the working (10) and the middle classes (4). In this case, the name concerted leniency is used because mothers' feeding efforts are directed toward the satisfaction of the family palate: mothers indulge in preparations, dressings or foods that the family likes. When confronted with the former strategy, three main differences can be noticed: first, there is no ostentation of specific cooking methods, healthy products, or prohibitions that might be considered as investments in children's taste. Although specific attention toward kids is always present, the respondents do not aim to expand or deepen their knowledge: rather, they tend to accommodate their preferences, which not surprisingly are parent's preferences. Moreover, as reported by other studies (Wright et al., 2015), they firstly want them to be satiated. As I will show in the next paragraph, a father complained about the school canteen menu, exactly because it might need something 'more filling'. Similarly, one mother admitted that she always gives her daughter a snack backup, just to be sure she can eat if she gets hungry.

Secondly and connected to this, many mothers do not hide the fact that products or practices that could be considered as unhealthy are part of daily life. Admitting that soft drinks and snacks are in the house, and that sometimes children abuse them behind their backs, does not cause any embarrassment. Perhaps, from case to case, noncompliant behaviour can cause mild anxiety, yet this is not enough to question the presence of certain food products. For instance, in the following excerpt, Roberta does not consider the overweight status of her daughter to be problematic, nor her secret pilfering.

> Roberta: 'My daughter is slightly overweight, like 3-4 kilos, and the doctor told me to put her on a diet, but with her it's difficult. She's not fat, it's like my husband's family build. […] It's difficult because she wants to eat certain things: I have a small pantry, and they take food from there, and sometimes I find food beneath her pillow, she hides it, like she's making war provisions [laughs]…so I don't tell her not to eat it.' [*Roberta, two children, working class family – unemployed + seasonal street cleaner*]

Third, although they seem aware that they may not closely follow health guidelines, they question the consistency and aptness of dietary advice. Consequently, scientific explanations are rarely used for motivating culinary choices. In this sense, one could even surmise that the

experience of eating and feeding is enjoyed more, since practical concerns are seldom called into question.

> Me: 'Do you buy snacks?'
> Giovanna: 'Yes, I'll be sincere. We prefer biscuits, like the Gocciole and Pan di Stelle from Eurospin. She usually eats biscuits for breakfast, and I give her cereals for the afternoon. I have to be strict, because she would only eat that, like all children. I have to say that I don't dislike chocolate either. It's good, we have to be sincere, brioches are good…you know, sometimes after school we go to the patisserie to eat a pastry. […] As for cereals, we get the normal one, the white one, and then I separately cut pieces of chocolate and mix them. […]. We get the cereals that nutritionally are more harmful than beneficial. I watched this TV-show, and basically, they explained that they take out the most important part. That's why they suggested eating puffed rice cake, that give you a sense of satiety…but they've got no flavour.' [*Giovanna, one child, single working class mother – part time cleaner*]
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> Carla: 'His dad is a carnivore, we are all carnivores, and that's ok. I know it's unhealthy but…I spent my infancy in a country where we used to eat grilled meat from morning till night, and I'm ok with that. Yes, they say it causes cancer: well, rather than dying of hunger I'll die of cancer [laughing]. […] My son really likes eating, he eats like a truck-driver […]. Well, he eats snacks, maybe more than he should. And also bread, he tends to eat everything with bread, so sometimes I try to stop him. […] With table manners…he is a bit coarse, sometimes I say: when he's18 he'll learn to use a knife and fork, but we are not like that, we are not careful with good manners. He'll learn from life.' [*Carla, 2 children, middle class family – caregiver + artisan*].
>
> Mara: 'My son…he tends to put on weight, but also, we should say that his mom and dad are two hearty eaters, we never back down when it's time to eat. What do you want me to say? I'll never die of anorexia […]. But then, what's harmful? Everyday there's something new, now seems like a vegan diet also is not as healthy as they thought. I'm the last person who's going to count calories.' [*Mara, one child, working class family – bartender + artisan*].

I selected these three excerpts because they illustrate the main characteristics of concerted leniency. In the first, Giovanna 'sincerely' admits that she and her daughter eat food on a regular basis that could be considered noncompliant. Biscuits are enjoyed by both; pastries offer an opportunity for a mother-daughter detour; cereals, which she combines with chocolate for her afternoon break, are by her own admission 'more harmful than beneficial'. Lastly, she remarks that the healthy alternative ('puffed rice cake') it is not well-regarded because it lacks flavour. Nutritional concerns hence give way to gluttony, which is evidently deemed as a more pleasant and rewarding experience for the dyad. In the second, Carla defends a family habit 'we are all

carnivores' and uses sarcasm to discredit the relationship between meat intake and cancer; similarly, when talking about her son, overall, she prefers to make fun of his appetite ('eats like a truck driver') and rough table manners; eventually, 'he'll learn from life' since the family is 'not careful with table manners'. Finally, Mara does not hide the fact that her son's weight problem could be connected to both parents' eating style ('we never back down when it's time to eat'), but at the same time she proudly defends her food ideals against the vegan diet, risks of anorexia and calorie calculation. This does not mean that she is not distressed by her son's weight, and as a matter of fact her concern is expressed in several passages of the interview. Nonetheless, she seems torn: on the one hand, the pleasure felt from her son's mighty appetite ('he's a child to be proud of at the table' [*che dà soddisfazione a tavola]*), which reflects a prized family trait; on the other hand, the possible negative consequences in terms of health and peer stigmatization (he's very emotional, and when his peers make fun of him he gets back home crying and saying that he's ugly'). Hence, as she frankly confesses: 'he has a problem with food quantity, so I try to pull the dish away...but it looks like punishment, and I know that it's not…but sometimes he looks at me with puppy eyes [*occhioni*], and I have to turn away'.

In contrast with concerted cultivation, health reasoning and culinary investments are therefore subordinated to the gratification of what parents and children want. To paraphrase Lévi-Strauss, one might say that concerted cultivation is based on food which is good for thinking, whilst concerted leniency on food which is good for eating.

4.3 Perceptions of School Meals

Differences can also be noticed in parents' views of school meals. As we have seen in the previous chapter, most of them consider what the school offers as just a mouth filler, and are generally satisfied by the quality of the meal. This is barely surprising, since school meals in Poversano and Goldazzo have been rated very positively by the National network of Local Canteen Committee (RCM, 2016). Nevertheless, when complaints are made, they reveal how social position structures the perception of the school when feeding children. In line with the findings shown in chapter 3, two mothers from lower social positions admitted that they would have preferred their children back home for lunch, because they enjoyed cooking and eating with their children. Conversely, mothers from higher social positions frequently framed the canteen as a relief from the additional burden that lunch would have represented in terms of organisation and work-life balance.

Most striking however, are these contrasting examples in which two families from very opposite social positions complain about the school meal offer.

> Me: 'What do you think of the school meal?'
> Maria: 'I know that this year we are having a lot of problems. Therefore, I joined the canteen committee, although I still have to eat with children, to see how this works, because they told me that they have changed the personnel. Last year it was better, they were more humane, and they knew children, they used to look at children in the eyes, smiling and telling them to try the meal. This year I have been told that cooks are like robots, there is no dialogue, no contact. This is negative, because children have sensors, they are very sensitive, and a simple smile can facilitate the taste. If the server [*inserviente*] looks the other way when serving the food, the conveyed message is very different. […] Children are exactly what they look like: they are pure, sensitive…they absorb every vibe…even the vibe of the smile they receive, they absorb that. And with a smile they can eat more blissfully. [*Maria, 2 children, bourgeoisie family – owners of clothing shop*].

> Me: 'Do you like how the school meal is managed? Be sincere…'
> Roberta: 'Well…'
> Luigi: 'Well…all this organic-organic-organic [*biobiobio*]. My daughter told me they made the stew and it was full of gristle…
> Roberta: 'It costs more, but children don't eat that because it's full of gristle, they left it there…I mean, the menu is not wicked…
> Luigi: 'But they use barley soups, slops [*sciqcquabudella*]'
> Roberta: 'Leek soup'
> Luigi: 'Maybe for children a good dish of pasta is better, with some Gorgonzola cheese'
> Roberta: 'Especially on Friday, they come back home hungrier than when they left… it's clear: they had slops [*sciacquabudella*] for lunch.'
> Luigi: 'Sometimes my son comes back home and says he had some pizza: well, that's something.'
> Roberta: '…and he likes that. They could give them something more filling than all these soups.
> Luigi: 'They would do better to eat Lasagne
> Roberta: 'Yes, Lasagne, or Pasticcio' [*Roberta and Luigi, two children, working class family – unemployed + seasonal street cleaner*]

These two interview excerpts mirror the cultural boundaries shown in the previous paragraph. On the one hand, Maria, the mother of a fussy eater named Marco, would like the current service to be improved through an emotional effort. She does not complain about the food itself, but more about the social environment of the canteen: in her narration, the waitresses are under scrutiny. The service could constitute a trigger for pushing children to taste all courses. Children

are thus the object of an emotional investment that could return a positive relationship with healthy food.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, Luigi and Roberta complain about the actual food that children receive. The stew with gristle provides a chance to underplay the organic offer and its higher cost.[7] Moreover, both parents agree that school meals are not sufficiently nourishing for their children: the *sciacquabudella*, which could be literally translated as 'washguts', do not fill children's stomach as a proper meal could do: 'They would do better to eat Lasagne, as they conclude.[8] Therefore, the evaluation criterion of the canteen is how hungry their children come back home, and not the ancillary services that could accompany the meal. As, later in the interview, Luigi states: 'you know, when they come back home and they chew up the fridge, I know that they haven't eaten, or just not enough'.

5. The Reproduction of Food Boundaries: Children in the School Canteen

Having established how grocery shopping and feeding strategies partake in the construction of the household's cultural and economic food environment, it is possible to analyse how primary school children are affected by these symbolic boundaries. Social origins influence the meanings attached to food consumption from the very early stages of life, and prevalently shape the nutritional repertoire of the child. As we saw before (chapters 3 and 4), schools intervene in the second case, but they are still far from functioning as a true equaliser.

[7] This passage reminded me of my first meeting with the canteen committee of Fedrata' school, during the initial pilot study (see chapter 4). The head of the committee, a lawyer, was trying to raise the cost of the menu in order to make all the school meals entirely organic. During the meeting, he said that this plan was meeting resistance from some parents who did not want to spend 'an additional euro' per meal.

[8] As Bugge and Almås (2006) argue, the concept of proper meal is historically contingent, and results from complex social and cultural processes that mothers need to face in the process of establishing a family's eating pattern.

ID	Mother's and father's profession	Social class	Economic	Cultural
1.	Beauty salon (owner) – Surveyor	Middle class	Unification	Cultivation
2.	Housewife – Workman	Working class	Affordability	Cultivation
3.	Caregiver – Cook	Working class	Unification	Cultivation
4.	Housewife – Unemployed workman	Working class	Affordability	Cultivation
5.	Housewife – Workman	Working class	Unification	Leniency
6.	Part time cleaner (lone mother)	Working class	Affordability	Leniency
7.	Primary school teacher – Workman	Working class	Unification	Leniency
8.	Housewife – Truck driver	Working class	Unification	Leniency
9.	Teacher – White collar	Middle class	Unification	Leniency
10.	Housewife – Carpenter	Working class	Affordability	Leniency
11.	Housewife – Unemployed Workman	Working class	Affordability	Leniency
12.	Nurse – Entrepreneur	Bourgeoisie	Unification	Cultivation
13.	Housewife – Construction worker	Working class	Affordability	Leniency
14.	Unemployed – Unemployed street cleaner	Working class	Affordability	Leniency
15.	White collar (supervisor) – White collar	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
16.	White collar – Entrepreneur	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
17.	Primary school teacher – White collar	Middle class	Variation	Cultivation
18.	Secondary school teacher – Dentist	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
19.	White collar – Artisan	Middle class	Variation	Cultivation
20.	Health specialist – Oculist	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
21.	White collar (supervisor) – Surveyor	Middle class	Unification	Cultivation
22.	White collar (lone grandmother)	Middle class	Unification	Cultivation
23.	Bartender – Artisan	Middle class	Affordability	Leniency
24.	Part time cleaner – Unemployed	Working class	Affordability	Leniency
25.	Caregiver – Artisan	Middle class	Unification	Leniency
26.	Owners of clothing store	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
27.	Secondary school teacher – Professional	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
28.	Secondary school teacher – Manager	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
29.	White collar – White collar	Middle class	Variation	Cultivation
30.	White collar – Entrepreneur	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
31.	Nurse (single mother)	Middle class	Unification	Leniency
32.	Primary school teacher – Business consultant	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
33.	Engineer – Engineer	Bourgeoisie	Unification	Leniency
34.	White collar – Salesman	Middle class	Unification	Cultivation
35.	Nurse – Policeman	Middle class	Unification	Leniency
36.	White collar – White collar (supervisor)	Bourgeoisie	Unification	Cultivation
37.	White collar – Insurance broker	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
38.	Public administrator – Insurance broker	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
39.	Teaching coordinator – Researcher	Bourgeoisie	Variation	Cultivation
40.	White collar – White collar	Middle class	Unification	Cultivation

Table 5.5 Profession, social class and types of boundaries of the families.

The setting of the school canteen thus gave me the opportunity to observe their nutritional habitus *in fieri*, and to compare how children with opposite family endowments display and even impose their immature conduits of distinction when eating with their peers. Most of the fieldnotes come from the Goldazzo school canteen for two main reasons. First, in Goldazzo I

could sit with just two or three children at the same time: this allowed me to take notes and ask questions in a much more detailed way compared to Poversano, where the pupils sit in groups of 20 (see Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3). Second, while in Poversano most of the children come from the lower classes (mainly working class and petty bourgeoisie), in Goldazzo I shared several school meals with kids from contrasting socioeconomic backgrounds. This is due to the position of the school in the urban context. While Goldazzo is prevalently inhabited by very rich families, the school is convenient for some children from a nearby, less affluent neighbourhood with public housing. This comparison generated a 'contrasting strategy' (Gobo, 2008; Yin, 2014) that enhanced the identification of commonalities among children from similar social positions.

Before moving on to present the three main conduits of distinction, two important clarifications are called for. First, since my interest lies in the social reproduction of certain behavioural patterns, I wish to continue by concentrating on children's oppositions, rather than their bridges: this means that I am voluntarily excluding all those verbal and material exchanges through which children blur or overcome boundaries (Nukaga, 2008; Pugh, 2011). I am doing this at the risk of presenting an incomplete and highly polarised image of social differences, which, however, can more clearly account for some processes through which inequalities in food consumption patterns are reproduced. Second, it is important to remember that what I describe are children's reactions and dialogues in the presence of an adult (me or their teachers): although I did my best to avoid introducing myself into the setting as a peer (how could I) or as a teacher, kids' desire to display a wide knowledge and good manners, especially when coming from more affluent families, is highly accentuated. Nonetheless, this can be taken at face value, since children's social world is predominantly constituted by adults and their feedback (Cook, 2008; Martens et al., 2004; Pugh, 2014).

Figure 5.2 Tables at the school canteen in Poversano.

Figure 5.3 Tables at the school canteen in Goldazzo.

5.1 Three Immature Conduits of Distinction: Cuisine, Health and Table Manners

Dissimilarities in the way children from privileged or disadvantaged positions reproduce food boundaries can be summarised in three main conduits of distinction: i) *wide* vs *narrow* knowledge on cuisines and preparations; ii) *specific* vs *general* awareness of the relationship between food and health; iii) an *etiquette* vs *ludic* approach to table manners and conventions. These conduits are all linked to the different culinary investments and environments that surround these children, and can be associated with the cultural and economic boundaries listed above.

The first conduit stands out for its relative simplicity to frame and comprehend. Children from the upper classes enjoy more opportunities which broaden their gastronomic horizon. Both inside and outside their homes they are exposed to a wide variety of products and cuisines. Their pantries and fridges have plenty of diversified and less habitual dressings, vegetables, fruit and food articles which their families consciously use to cook them innovative and salubrious meals, maybe with the help of expensive food processors.[9] They are brought more often to restaurants, where they can become familiar with ethnic and regional cuisines, or simply with rare or unusual meals. Indeed, they often travel and spend holidays where they can visit different cities, countries and continents, thus gaining knowledge on global and national cuisines. In short, they are instilled with cosmopolitan capital (Johnston and Baumann, 2010; Prieur and Savage, 2011). Not surprisingly, in the school canteen this information is proudly displayed: for instance, more affluent children are more able to list exotic fruit or fish names when asked, and often narrate curious food experiences that they or their parents have had.

This twin of objective and embodied (Bourdieu, 2011) culinary capitals eventually shape their dispositions toward omnivourism. This does not imply that they immediately appreciate all the newness they are exposed to. One may even argue that kids' unconditioned preferences – salt, sugar and fat (Moss, 2013) – are the only true equalisers.[10] Nonetheless, this motley food environment lays the foundation for their future stock of knowledge and tastes.

> Mara: 'I've been to Kenya with my family, but I ate plain pasta the whole week, because I don't like many things. But there, you could eat a lot of different fishes, crocodiles and even insects!' [*Mara, 5th grader, upper class – entrepreneur + white collar*]
>
> Elisa: 'I tried the avocado at Expo…then also the *escargots* in Paris, I mean, my father asked for them and I tasted from his plate. It's not my favourite meal, but they're edible. Then I've been to Barcelona, where I tried the paella, and in Berlin, where I had the baked potatoes, do you say baked, right?' [*Elisa, 5th grader, upper class – manager + white collar*]

[9] As in the case of Francesco, the 7-year-old son of an upper-class family [university and secondary school professors], whose father bought 'the machine for making dry fruit [dehydrator]. We can make all types of dry fruit. We also tried to make dry persimmons, but they weren't so good. We like doing experiments from time to time.'. He also explained to me that they have a pomegranate plant, and that his mum makes home-made jam with different fruit, but that also in this case the persimmon jam was not so good. 'We also have a juicer, and once I tried to squeeze a tangerine: it's just as good, but there's less quantity'.

[10] I frequently asked children to draw a food pyramid based on their preferences, as if prohibitions did not exist. Not surprisingly, responses do not vary much: the bottom is usually filled with (some) fruit, candies, sweets, pizza, pasta, chips, and French fries; the top with (some) vegetables (e.g. artichoke, eggplant, broccoli), legumes, fish.

In Goldazzo: 'Roberto's family has a second home in Cattolica, a seaside town in the Romagnola Riviera. His mum is a supervisor at a bank, his father a surveyor. They have a nice,big residential house in Goldazzo. He's a very intelligent and very talkative second grader, and during the break I ask him if he knows where I can eat in Cattolica, since it is very close to where I come from.
Roberto: 'Well, well, good restaurants: you can go to Uomini di Mare, Piccadilly, Il Faro, which is close to the Pirate, do you know where that is, right? You have to go to the right…but I can't explain that. The Piccadilly, they make fantastic pizza, they never get that wrong. Sometimes we order pizza from the Pirate…when they work hard the pizza is good, but sometimes is too oily. Then we also went to Uomini di mare, but do not order the Seabass there, because my father said the fish there is not good …as a matter of fact we didn't go a second time.'
Me: 'Do you eat fish?'
Roberto: 'No, just fish fingers…for now! However, there is the Faro, they do everything there, and it's very good. My parents have fish there, while I have pizza.'
[*Roberto, 2nd grader, upper class – supervisor + surveyor*]

These three children, apart from showing their linguistic capabilities, are a sound example of the spontaneity through which their food boundaries start to contour differences with their less advantaged peers. Elisa and Mara have already engaged with exotic and very unusual cuisines thanks to their travels. At 11 years old, the first saw edible crocodile meat and insects, the second French escargot, Spanish paella and German baked potatoes. Whereas Roberto is extraordinarily cultivated for a 7-year-old child: he correctly lists three high-quality restaurants in a city far from his hometown, and he can suggest what to eat, what to expect, and what to avoid in each restaurant. Crucially, he is learning that eating fish in an expensive waterfront restaurant is a normal experience, and more importantly, that quality food is the result of exclusionary judgments.[11]

Conversely, children from lower social origins interiorize the limitations of their families, because parents explain to them that there is a substantial lack of resources to buy certain products, or to go to certain places (e.g. Giovanna's interview on page 9). As one child in Poversano used to repeat when I asked him questions about eating out: 'we can't go, my dad says that *these* are lacking'. When saying *these*, the child reproduced the Italian gesture that indicates money.[12] Similarly, one child repeated his father's words when explaining to me that

[11] Since I could not believe his account, I have checked the veracity of his indications. Not only do the restaurants exist and are rated 4 and 5 out of 5 on TripAdvisor, but it also seems true that the Piccadilly pizza is excellently cooked.

[12] The gesture is made by touching the forefinger and thumb, closing the other fingers and then rubbing the two fingers against each other forwards and backwards.

his family 'cannot buy the meat that costs a lot, the expensive cuts, because we don't have the money'.[13] On another occasion, a 7-year-old child explained to me that he often eats out with his family, but:

> Filippo: 'We eat out on the balcony. My mum says that's how we can afford to eat out, because my mum says we don't have the money to eat at the restaurant.' [*Filippo, 1st grader, lower class*]

Thus, their food boundaries are constituted by what the household cannot display. When they eat out, pizzerias and restaurants close to their dwellings are the most frequently named. Since their culinary knowledge is more limited, they have less things to say when they are asked about unusual food and cuisines; consequently, in Goldazzo they were often forced into silence by their more competent peers, giving rise to small forms of symbolic domination.[14]

The second conduit which can be identified concerns the relationship between food and health. For if all children interiorize general rules of thumb regarding nutritional knowledge, a marked difference exists depending on the 'depth' of these notions. As shown in the previous chapter, the school aims to shape the nutritional conduct of children, yet only partially succeeds. Although teachers explain to pupils the beneficial or harmful effect of certain food products, these efforts are not nearly comparable to maths or grammar lessons. Thus, the family provides the true backbone for the development of these notions. In similar ways in which upper class parents assist children with their homework (Lareau, 2000b), they also help them to understand why certain foods are good for the body and others not. Sure enough, these notions can change

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[13] This can be confronted with the meticulous description of a grilled fillet that Gianni, the fourth grader son of a manager and a teacher, can cook:

'You first cut the fillet into small cutlets. Then you put the big ones at the centre of the pan, where the flame is stronger, and the less thick ones at the edges, where it takes longer to cook. And then you dress it with oil and salt, also coarse salt'.

[14] The following fieldnote reveals how symbolic violence and domination can be imposed even by very young children. In a nutshell, it also demonstrates that children are not passive, not innocent and not universal (Pugh, 2014).

> I start talking about fish dishes with two 10-year-old girls. Matilde's parents are both engineers; Letizia is the daughter of a carpenter and a housewife. I ask which types of fish they know, though I am aware that Giulia has an advantage, since she spent the summer holidays in Croazia, where she likely ate fish. Nonetheless, Letizia pre-empts her:
>
> Letizia: 'Mussels, clams…'
>
> Matilde: 'That is not fish, it's seafood'
>
> Letizia: '…fillet?'
>
> Matilde: '[laughing] But fillet is not a fish! It's a part of the fish, when you "f-i-l-l-e-t" the fish'
>
> Letizia: 'Hammerhead?'
>
> Matilde: 'Letizia, but hammerhead is not good, it's not edible!'
>
> Letizia looks frustrated, and unconvincingly says 'octopus'. She is wrong again, but I interrupt the dialogue by explaining how my mum makes octopus salami by putting a plastic bottle in the freezer.

depending on different credos, but still have strong foundations in common. Linguistic capital, nutritional beliefs and explanations thus help upper class children to critically reflect on food, In the following excerpt, a child named Luigi complains about the menu of the school canteen, that it contains too much pasta and too little variety:

> Luigi: 'The canteen menu is not well adjusted, they give pasta 4/5 times per week. They should vary the first courses, maybe one day you make pasta, another day rice, then soup with carrots and zucchini which is very good. The meal needs to be more balanced, and the portions are too big.' [*Luigi, 5th grader, upper class – white collar + manager of a regional sports association*]

The distance between upper and lower social origins children emerges when they are asked about the foods which are good and bad for their health. Both can catalogue healthy and unhealthy items, but the calibre of their responses varies to great extent.

> I sit with Giacomo and Alessio, both first graders, but from very different families. Giacomo's father is an architect, Alessio's father is a part-time cleaner. When I ask if juices are good or bad for the health, Giacomo explains: 'juices should not be drunk very often, especially those in cartons, those are bad!' 'And why?' 'Because they have sugar, that causes cavities. My mom gives me dry fruit instead, because she tells me it's good.' 'What about coke? Do you like it?' 'Coke is bad. I like it, but you can't drink it always, and especially before sleeping, because it has caffeine'. Differently, Alessio just lists the food which are healthy and unhealthy, responding with 'good!' and 'bad!' after my questions.
>
> Francesco and Roberto are both third graders. The former tells me that his grandfather has a very big villa, his uncle a very long BMW, and that his father is a doctor and his mother a secondary school professor. Roberto's father passed away years ago, and his mother is a part-time caregiver. […] I ask them if they have ever visited McDonald's and they both nod. 'Is it good or bad for your health?', I ask. Roberto responds that French fries are really good, and then remains silent. Francesco gives me a much more complex answer 'well that depends on what you order at McDonald. If you take the salad, as my uncle does, that's very healthy'.
>
> Giovanni is the 10-year-old son of an accountant and a kindergarten teacher. I ask him if he ever goes to the McDonald's and he responds: 'Just a few times per year. I went yesterday, but I haven't been there for a long time' 'Is it good or bad for your health?' 'Of course, it's bad, basically what they offer in McDonald's is a reversed food pyramid.' 'What's that?' I wonder. He replies: 'That means that you have more fat than what you should, and less vegetables than what you need. It's all off kilter [*sballato*], there's much less salad in the sandwich than what there should be, while amount of 'junk' [*schifezze*] is too big. Yesterday I had the Crispy McBacon, that I really like, but it never fills you up, they do that on purpose.'

I chose these fieldnotes because they show how the *specific* versus *general* awareness of food and health is revealed despite the different age groups of the kids. In the first, whilst Alessio cannot give reasons for his categorizations, Giacomo correctly describes the causal relation between sugar and cavities, and caffeine and sleeplessness. On many other occasions indeed, the name of nutrients is used for explaining why certain foods are good to eat and other not. Similarly, in the second excerpt Francesco avoids my question, whereas Roberto gives a specification of a possible healthy meal that could be eaten in McDonald's.[15] In the third, Giovanni shows awareness regarding the negative health consequences of the fast food range, which offers the opposite (a 'reverse food pyramid') of what a compliant diet should be. In this way, he shows he has interiorized that eating hamburgers at McDonald's can be just a moment of transgression, and not the base for a healthy diet.

The last conduit concerns the embodiment of table manners. Even though all kids from 6 to 11 years old interiorize general norms of conduct for eating together, contrasts can be noticed in their approach depending on their social origin, especially for fourth and fifth graders. On the one hand, children from lower social origins, especially males, approach eating in a playful manner. They use their hands more often, play with water and glasses, and usually smudge the tablecloth. On the other, kids from more affluent families, regardless of gender, are more contained and naturally display appropriate table manners.

This diversity should not to be entirely attributed to the differences in posture and demeanour learned through the family. Although some upper-class parents might be more concerned with formal rules and vice versa (see Carla's interview at page 19), etiquette lessons are by and large outmoded.[16] Rather, the different codes adopted by kids reflect the different relationship they establish with adults. Most likely, my presence at their table 'forces out' different behavioural codes.

> Francesca, the 9-year-old daughter of a medical doctor and a housewife, surprises me by the way she is eating the piece of pizza. All pupils I see are eating with their hands, but she confidently uses a knife and fork. She holds the knife in her right

[15] Especially in Goldazzo, many kids' birthdays are organised in the closest McDonald's. The fast-food restaurant organises leisure-time activities for children and a birthday cake, for a fixed price (50 euros) plus the price of a happy meal menu for each invited kid. The event is highly regarded by all children, and I found it useful to ask them their ideas about the fast-food chain.

[16] In the interviews, I asked participants whether they did something to teach table manners to their kids. In general terms, the same basic rules apply regardless of socioeconomic background: sitting politely, avoid talking with your mouth full, no burping etc. However, mothers from the working class seemed more indulgent when recounting their kids' violations: 'Sometimes he licks the plate, and so I watch him and I say: "come on…" but then he says: "but mum, that's good" so I leave him'.

hand, and holds the fork in the left. The index fingers point down towards her plate, and she cuts small pieces that she slowly lifts to to her mouth. She slowly chews, and to my question 'why don't you eat with your hands?' responds: 'That's how I was taught. When I've round pizza, maybe I eat that with my hands. But not this one, it's better to cut this pizza'.

Giacomo and Giuseppe are 8 years old, and they both share a working-class background. They start eating bread before the cooks serve the pasta. Giacomo is the first to finish his portion, and he immediately goes to Thomas, a kid from the next table who hasn't touched his portion. He takes ¾ and then gives the other quarter to Giuseppe, who is complaining because of the unfair share received. 'Sorry, that was stuck', is Giacomo's argument. When the chicken leg is served, they hold the bone and bite the meat and the skin ('that's the best part!' he explains'). They are very hungry and funny, and I can't hold back laughing. They eat the cabbage by putting food on the fork with their hands, and when they drink they grease the glasses. Giacomo looks at me and asks: 'Why are you eating with the forks? Chicken should to be eaten with your hands, while smiling with your mouth full of food!'

During Halloween, children are invited to 'build' their own hamburger. They are given two pieces of bread, a medallion of meat, salad and some tomato sauce. I am making the hamburger using a fork and knife; Roberto [lower class] place the salad over the medallion and gets his lunch ready; Francesco [upper class] halts and comments: 'it's not proper to pick up salad with your hands, we should use forks'. Then, he starts preparing the sandwich moving leaf by leaf over the meat, while Roberto already bites his hamburger. He gives up after a while, and then he comments "we shouldn't lift food with our hands, but from time to time we can. We don't say this to anyone".

Francesco and Roberto, at two different times, distinguish themselves from their peers and display some traits of their table manners. The use of a knife and fork is unnecessary but done in both situations. Their table manners are both unconsciously embodied (their gestures are natural) and consciously displayed (they want me to notice). They behave *as if* they were adults sharing a meal. In contrast, Giacomo and Giuseppe maintain childish behaviour, and take pleasure from the moment of detachment which is guaranteed by my presence (by the time of the fieldnote, they had already understood that I was not interested in reprimanding them).

One important characteristic of concerted cultivation, is the involvement of children in adults' lives. Children are guided towards adulthood and parents teach them how to speak up and be respectful at the same time (Lareau, 2003). Parents, both tacitly and dialogically, transmit skills that will be rewarded in the future, as the ability to exhibit demeanour, or simply its knowledge. This is even clearer in these two last excerpts, where two children directly bring me into play.

> I'm sitting at the table with fifth graders. Riccardo is the son of an engineer and a civil servant. He already knows that he will go to the Scientific Lyceum, and tells me that from the next year he will no longer eat the 'junk' proposed by the service provider. He explains to me that the canteen is not bad because the food is inedible. As a matter of fact, he is the only one that finishes his meal. The problem is how the food is cooked. 'Take the chicken they give us. It's too dry on one side, and too wet on the other. That's probably because they cook them all together and don't turn them over. But that's not how you're supposed to cook that'. I try to insist 'Well, yesterday I ate that, and actually I liked it' He looks at me, and smiles slightly: "that's probably because you are have a healthy appetite"' [*buona forchetta*].
>
> I am eating with three 5th graders. Everyone has just finished the barley soup. However, Marco, the son of a small producer of grappa and a housewife, starts discussing with me about the canteen food : 'How can you like this shit? This meal sucks, we even pay money for this. We want our money back. It really sucks!' Roberto and Mattia start repeating what he's saying.

On both occasions, I am being challenged for appreciating the meals the school proposes. However, they express their dissatisfaction in diametrically opposite manners. Riccardo neatly describes what is wrong with the way the chicken is cooked, and when I contradict him, he responds with a certain degree of irony: I have a healthy appetite, which implies that I am not good at disentangling degrees of tastiness. His culinary repertoire, mediated by his linguistic capital, thus helps him to develop a sense of entitlement: he confronts me with very good reasons. Vice versa, Marco does not care about explaining why he does not like it, or why I appreciate it. Rather, he goes straight to the point and challenges my authority using swearwords:[17] 'How can you like this shit?'. Interestingly, he immediately associates the meal with its economic value, and in a protest-like manner expects a refund.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

Drawing from a consolidated tradition in the literature of symbolic and social boundaries (Lamont and Fournier, 1992; Lamont and Molnár, 2002), in this chapter I have sought to combine the processes describing the transmission and reproduction of food boundaries. Research on the way food is used as a means of distinction, and therefore of inclusion and exclusion, is probably the most developed area of 'food sociology'. However, research has mostly concentrated on families (O'Connell, 2010; Valentine, 1999; Wills et al., 2011) or more

[17] Children's linguistic codes depend very much on their social class of origin (Bernstein, 2003), and the use of pejorative language is usually a characteristic of working class boys (MacRuairc, 2011; Willis, 1977).

specifically on mothers (Harman and Cappellini, 2015; Wright et al., 2015), neglecting the pivotal role of children in receiving and reproducing the food boundaries constructed in the household. In line with authors who suggest the importance of children's daily lives (Lareau, 2000a; 2003) and the importance of adult-child relations in understanding the reproduction of inequality (Cook, 2008; Martens et al., 2004; Pugh, 2014) my contribution to the literature is twofold.

First, starting from the quantitative evidence gathered in the first part of the thesis, I outline and disentangle two different forms of boundaries concerning the way food is purchased (economic boundaries) and prepared (cultural boundaries). On the one hand, I distinguish between purchasing strategies based on *affordability*, *unification*, and *variation*: unsurprisingly, these strategies are based on the economic resources of the families, but eventually reveal the processes of symbolic categorisation behind the choices for certain brands or stores. On the other hand, I draw the distinction between *concerted cultivation* and *concerted leniency* as two opposite feeding strategies adopted by mothers: in the former, food is envisaged as one of the investments for the present and future health of the child; however, it amounts to much more than a simple health enhancer, since tools, experiments and verbal negotiations are used to widen the gastronomic repertoire of the child. Conversely, concerted leniency is a more indulgent strategy, where the satisfaction of the family palate, the enjoyment of eating *per se*, and doubts about nutritional messages are the norm. This does not mean that health is not considered by these mothers: nonetheless, it is just one side of the multifaceted identity that food represents for the family.

Importantly, since cultural and economic capitals are correlated, these two forms of boundaries tend to be connected: as Table 5.4 suggests, concerted cultivation works at its best with the economic strategy based on variation. Nonetheless, the two phenomena can be considered as analytically different: as a matter of fact, I met middle class (4) and bourgeoisie (1) parents that despite their economic resources, were closer to the concerted leniency 'pole'. Vice versa, other families mostly resembled a concerted cultivation approach, despite their modest financial situations.[18]

[18] Both qualitative and quantitative evidence indicates that social class is related to different feeding styles. However, within class variation, depending on profession, there are also people who work with food or health, at different levels, who may be more attentive with their children because of their higher levels of culinary capital, net of other kinds of resources. On two occasions (ID 3 and 22), I interviewed parents who work closely with food (a cook and a white collar working for a food safety organisation): in both cases their feeding strategy

Second, the fieldwork in the canteen allowed me to explore how children from different social classes can show signs of distinction and symbolic domination despite their age. In doing so, I tried to expand my research into children's experiences with food and boundary creations, which despite some notable exceptions (Karrebæk, 2012; Nukaga, 2008; Pugh, 2011), is still neglected. An analysis of my fieldnotes helped me to trace three main immature conduits of distinction depending on children's knowledge of cuisine, nutrition and table manners. Crucially, these differences reflect how different tacit and dialogical efforts made by parents contribute to the reproduction of inequality in these very small, and apparently insignificant aspect of kids' daily lives. Omnivorism thus appears as another means of distinction, rather than a sign of democratisation (Paddock, 2016; Warde et al., 2007). Upper class children come to school with a stock of 'omnivore' knowledge, which ranges from different and unusual food experiences, to a deeper knowledge about healthy nutrients. More importantly, they enjoy showing their various competences to adults. Conversely, children from lower social origins are aware of the limitations of the family resources, and care less about showing demeanour: in a way, they seem to fully enjoy eating and more generally the degrees of freedom that childhood grants them. As a matter of fact, it was common knowledge among cooks and teachers from both Poversano and Goldazzo, to state that children from more affluent families were fussier about the school meal proposal.[19]

Some limitations of the present study should be ackwnowledged. To begin with, in my analysis I consciously avoid looking at children's 'connection', *viz* their 'priorities' besides social stratification. My ethnographic observation may have therefore generated a black-and-white picture of social differences. Future developments of this study could include the analysis of the 'exceptional cases', namely the families adopting different eating and feeding practices compared to those in a similar social position.

Yet although 'childhood research demonstrates that children can evince similar tastes across race, class, gender, and other categories' (Pugh, 2014: 80) studies in social mobility tell us that 'barriers' eventually prevail over 'bridges': social origins weigh heavily on future life chances. This is the reason why I give research priority over the former. Second, I do not make

was closer to the concerted cultivation approach. This can be noticed also in children: for instance, one girl explained to me that her mother prohibited her from going to McDonald's after a period spent working there. Similarly, the daughter of a small restaurateur could display a much more detailed knowledge on cuisine compared to all her peers.

[19] These statements should be however taken with a pinch of salt, since they may just be rooted on stereotypical views. Other research methods are needed to disentangle the determinants of meal appreciation among kids.

connections between mothers (or fathers) and children: this methodological choice would have required additional permission that time constraints did not permit.[20] Future research would certainly benefit from an analysis of feeding and eating practices following children both at home *and* at school. This could also enable a deeper exploration of feeding practices, and a discovery of the contents of the black box of the transmission, especially in its tacit dimensions. Here I mainly investigate grocery shopping and nutritional strategies, which are two aspects of the 'compound of loosely interrelated activities' (Warde, 2013) that make up feeding. Moreover, I rely solely on respondents' words, and not on the actual feeding *in vivo*. Third, I do not concentrate on the role that social influences may play in eating and feeding choices, despite research showing that contextual forces and friends circles can promote healthy eating (Ball et al. 2009; 2010). For instance, it is possible that working class families who have children attending high-SES schools may be partly influenced by upper status families' styles of consumption, compared to those living in low-SES schools. Future research, using different techniques such as social network analysis or multilevel modelling may help exploring this issue further.

Finally, what could this research imply policy-wise? First and foremost, although dietary compliance is related to health status, eating is a much more complex phenomenon, rooted in class and family preferences. It may appear counterintuitive, but this may imply that to enhance parents' and children's food habits, the focus should be on enjoyable alternatives, with 'health' entering by the back door. This indeed is what the nutritionists in the school canteen of Goldazzo and Poversano are trying to do, by shifting the focus of the weekly meal from a salubrious proposal to a palatable one. Moreover, through school food education, parents, children and teachers may be jointly involved in programs for widening their knowledge and competences on cuisine, in an effort to mitigate the influence of social origins. Food education, which is now in a didactical limbo, could indeed become more central to school activities, and could be used as a means for studying the main school subjects. Nonetheless, additional efforts should be made to debunk nutritional messages based on unscientific premises, moderating junk food advertising and labelling unhealthy contents.

[20] I have some data on mothers and children from the same family, but I do not disclose that because it was not part of the initial agreement stipulated with schools and parents.

Appendix

Interview Guideline

Cooking

- Who cooks in the family? Do you like it?
- Could you describe a typical family meal to me? How and what do you usually eat? What do you tend to avoid? How? Why? What about Sundays?
- Is there something you usually cook for your child? What do you want him to eat? Are you inspired by particular principles?
- Do you eat together? Are there rules or table manners to be respected at home when eating?
- Is it important to cook healthy food? What is healthy food? Does he/she ask you for particular food?
- Are there food items you think should not be eaten by your child?

Purchasing

- Where do you usually buy food? Why there?
- Which products do you usually buy? Do you care about branded products? Why? Which packaged products do you usually buy? Does your child come with you?
- Is it expensive to buy groceries? How much do you usually spend for groceries?

School meal

- What does your child eat during break? What do you think about snacks and sweets?
- Does your child eat in the school canteen? Why so? Do you like it? Are you happy with the school meal?
- Do you speak to teachers about your child's eating habits? And to the cooks? What do you think of the canteen? What do you think about school intervention in children's eating habits?

Chapter 6 'Do You Pay for Your Lunch?' Eating School Lunch at the Margins: An Extreme Case Study

1. Introduction

Preoccupations regarding childhood obesity have certainly reached their peak, as is demonstrated by the high-sounding Milan Charter (and the version tailored for children) produced during the last Universal Exposition (EXPO). The manifesto's main goal is to fight both obesity and malnutrition, especially among young people. As one of the points of the Charter states (Milan Charter, 2015)

> In signing this Milan Charter, we women and men, citizens of this planet, strongly urge governments, institutions and international organizations […] to commit to introducing or strengthening dietary, physical and environmental education programmes in schools and in school meal services as instruments of health and prevention.

Schools have thus become both targets and carriers of new policies of intervention for the enhancement of children's 'food literacy' all over Europe (Benn and Carlsson, 2014; Oncini, 2017).

On paper, the idea of intervening through schools to enhance children's health seems adequate. Schools should mitigate the effects of social origin on children's outcomes, and food preferences might be seen as one of these. Yet many authors, as we saw in chapter 4, have critically framed these interventions. They can create boundaries between children and school meals or home-packed lunches and stigmatize them for their ethnic or socioeconomic background (Iacovetta, 2000; Karrebæk, 2012; Leahy, 2009; Metcalfe et al., 2008; Salazar, 2007).

The school canteen in particular, as chapter 4 also shows, can become a contested field (even a battlefield) of nutritional knowledge, where food preferences and moral geographies meet and clash (Pike and Kelly, 2014). Nevertheless, ethnographic literature to date has not yet focused on an extreme case study to analyse food education programs. Despite a bulk of research conducted on children as 'objects and subjects' of ethnographic accounts (Levey, 2009), an

emic investigation is still lacking on how food policy programs enter schools in difficult neighbourhoods. This last chapter, despite its explorative nature, aims to go in that direction.

When the thesis project was approved by the Doctoral Committee at the beginning of my PhD journey in 2014, I justified the fieldwork in two Palermo school canteens with the need to compare case studies that could shed light on the differences in feeding practices and school interventions in Northern and Southern Italy. One of the rhetorical reasons that helped me to convince the board was the striking difference in childhood obesity levels between Trentino and Sicily (Nardone et al., 2016). Whilst governmental efforts to reduce obesity have been underway for many years in line with WHO indications – the *OKkio alla salute* monitoring program was established almost 10 years ago – there is still a difference of more than 14 percentage points between Trentino (22.9%) and Sicily (37.1%) childhood overweight/obesity rates. Similarly, children's PI score (7.8) in Sicily is well below the Italian mean (8.7) and 1.8 points lower than Trentino one.[21] Ideally, I would have preferred first to look at how the same school biopedagogies are interpreted by subjects in regions with opposite characteristics (chapters 4 and 5), and secondly how parents' and children's food boundaries are constructed using local notions of cuisine and taste depending on the economic and cultural capital of the family (chapter 5).

Yet, only a few weeks after the beginning of the fieldwork in a primary school in a poor Palermo neighbourhood, I realised that any comparison (within Sicily or between regions) would not do justice to the characteristics of the field site. Unlike Fedrata, Poversano and Goldazzo, teaching methods in the classroom are too influenced by children coming from multi-problematic households, to an extent that makes it impossible to compare the cases. I thus decided to define it as an extreme case study, which corresponds to a case that presents unusual values on the independent variable of interest (Gerring, 2009). Hence, the extremity refers to the social environment of the classroom, which is a direct result of its socioeconomic composition.

These exceptional circumstances can then shed light on a different set of questions: how are school food policies applied in a deprived context? What happens when food education takes place, *viz* recess and lunch? Through this ethnography, I aim to show that when the unquestioned assumptions regarding the role of pedagogy, teachers' relations with their pupils, and eventually childhood itself fall apart, food education is emptied of its original meaning: teachers' food rules, when applied, repeatedly target the same children. Recess and lunch, far

[21] All statistics are available in chapter 4 appendix.

from being didactic experiences or convivial breaks, are mainly moments of tension between teachers and the most problematic children.

First, I outline the methods and the context of the study, briefly describing the neighbourhood and the school. Second, I focus on the second graders' recess and the lunch, to show how food 'dos and don'ts' are seldom envisioned with a food literacy objective by teachers. During the recess, the arbitrary rules on food and table manners are used to highlight the transgression, but not to teach healthy eating. Similarly, teachers' efforts during lunchtime are solely devoted to keeping children fed and seated, while trying to get to the end of lunch as soon as possible. Importantly, teachers' reprimands during recess and lunch always target the most turbulent children, either to prevent or to stop them from violent fights. Most often, the food itself is not a matter of concern for anyone, since violent episodes between children monopolize the attention of all the adults nearby. I conclude by reflecting on the limits and capabilities of nutrition education programs applied in deprived contexts.

2. Data and Methods

This chapter is based on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a Palermo primary school and the surrounding neighbourhood between March-May 2016 and October-February 2017. The school provides a full-time education program; most children eat at school, and they can choose between home-packed lunches or school meals.

After the education department and the nutritionist of the Palermo city council had granted me the access to all the school canteens in Palermo, I started contacting the directors of the institutes that offered a canteen service. After three refusals, the decision to undertake the fieldwork in the Valmarina school resulted from two major contingencies: first, the position of the school in a neighbourhood under recent gentrification seemed at first to guarantee a level of heterogeneity in children's socioeconomic backgrounds. As I was subsequently to find out however, higher status families, after preschool, send their children to other institutes, thus creating a selection bias in the school socioeconomic composition. Most primary school children come from lower social class backgrounds, and some of them from severely deprived households. Second, the deputy head, Rosanna, a teacher with almost 30 years of career in Valmarina, seemed genuinely interested in the project and empathised with my condition as a PhD student looking for a field site in a short time-span. For this reason, she recommended my project to the director, who, despite some initial hesitation, eventually welcomed me into the institute.

After gaining formal access to the school through the school board, I presented my projects to the teachers during their weekly meeting. Parents were informed orally by the teachers during the days before my arrival, and I had occasion to meet many of them while spending the afternoons in the school neighbourhood. The canteen assistants were informed about my research by the nutritionist in charge of the menu in Palermo. Finally, I met the children during my first recess in each classroom, and I explained to them about my studies and the previous research conducted in another region in the North of Italy.

In the first part of the fieldwork I visited each classroom of the school for one week during recess and lunch. This allowed me to come into contact with all the teachers, the pupils, the janitors, the assistants and to explore the similarities and differences between classrooms. From October on, I decided to focus solely on the second graders because of the relationship of trust I had developed with Rosanna, who was teaching in one of the two sections. During recess, I mostly took notes about the snacks eaten by the pupils and the interaction amongst themselves and with the teacher. Often, however, I intervened to pacify children's violent rage directed at each other or at the teacher. As for lunchtime, although the initial plan was to repeat the positive research experience of Poversano, Goldazzo and Fedrata, I ended up sitting with children only during the initial minutes; the rest of the time I gave my assistance to the teachers and to the canteen assistant who asked me to supervise children and to help them plate the food and peel the fruit. In any case, the extreme turmoil of lunch did not allow any prolonged dialogue with children. However, as I will argue in the conclusion, what initially appears as a hindrance to the research, is its most compelling finding. During the fieldwork, I also conducted formal interviews with teachers, the nutritionist in charge of the menu, and with 12 second graders' mothers.

For that period, starting from October, I took an apartment in the neighbourhood, in order to obtain a clearer picture of life in the district. Even though the ethnography cannot be considered 'urban' in a strict sense (Scott and Storper, 2015), my presence in the district helped me to understand some other details regarding the lives of the most deprived children and their social environment. Moreover, I also volunteered two days a week to a free after-school programme organised by a nearby social centre sited in a squat which was well known by the residents and occasionally frequented by some children of the school. Thus, 'going public' eased the relationship with some of the relatives or locals, and especially the ones involved in illegal activities who had children in the school. Given the focus of the thesis however, this chapter will almost exclusively deal with the implementation of food pedagogies in the Valmarina

school. All names and locations are fictitious to maintain the anonymity of the research participants.

3. Contextual Forces

3.1 The neighbourhood

The Loggia is one of the neighbourhoods in the first administrative district of Palermo. The central area is inhabited by low income families, some of them living in squats purchased by acquisitive prescription or public housing. Although the area, like the whole of the centre of Palermo, is under a slow process of gentrification and attracts many tourists through its monumental churches and oratories, many school children come from 'multi-problematic households', as the school websites states. Extreme conditions of poverty, parental unemployment, illegality, violence, overcrowded and decrepit housing conditions constitute for many the physical and social environment of their infancy: as the literature in this regard has widely documented, these factors are associated with a wide array of children's development outcomes: lower cognitive and educational attainment, higher likelihood of mental and physical health problems, drug use, violence and delinquency (Bradley and Corwyn, 2002; Evans, 2004; Gershoff et al. 2014). Contrary to other Italian cities, the conservative restoration of Palermo city centre only started around the 90s and it is still taking place. Moreover, market forces combined with public intervention aimed at attenuating the replacement of lower social classes. In 1993, following the example of Bologna, the municipality acquired and converted many buildings in public housing for low income families, a project that was finally completed and made available ten years later (Barbagli and Pisati, 2012). This explains why the neighbourhood is a mixture of renovated council housing and decaying buildings: around 15 accommodation facilities for tourists (mainly Airbnb apartments) and many service activities near the boundaries alternate with crumbling architecture and council housing sited in its core.

It is not uncommon, while walking across the area, to see collapsed or locked down buildings, although in some cases families continue to live there illegally. Meeting children's parents or relatives that have been affected by recent building collapses is not rare: Maria, the grandmother of a second grader named Alice, told me that the collapse of an unstable inhabited flat in 2014 destroyed her food truck that was parked right below. Fortunately, she was not inside when the rubble fell. Giovanni, Alice's classmate, was sleeping at his uncle's place when his building fell apart killing an old couple who were not able to evacuate quickly enough.

The schoolchildren living in the Loggia play freely around the neighbourhood after school and in the evening. Most boys living in harsh conditions enjoy a great degree of freedom and usually gather in the squares where informal supervision is exerted by the locals, relatives, and even by unlicensed car-park attendants that patrol the parking areas. The lack of 'protected' spaces for children means that they soon come into contact with the commercial activities of the older guys of the area, who are often distant relatives of some sort. This happens especially for those whose fathers are incarcerated: cousins, uncles, or friends take care of them for the duration of their imprisonment.

In fact, half the neighbourhood, once an old thriving street market, has now become famous for its wild nightlife, admittedly the real economic force of the Loggia. The former market shops have been acquired by the young locals and redefined as unlicensed bars called '*Drinkerie*' that from Thursday to Sunday blare high volume commercial music, barbecue traditional meat and sell spirits and cocaine at low prices. Thousands of young Palermitans group together in a famous square and in the nearby streets to dance and enjoy the uncontrolled atmosphere until early morning. Buying drugs, which is a relatively easy task during daylight – the main dealers are well known to everyone – then becomes a seemingly legal activity during night. Police officers do not generally enter the neighbourhood overnight because, as happened a few times, they would be violently ejected by clients and barkeepers. These activities can be closed for tax evasion every now and then, but they eventually reopen once seasonal police checks are over. Ironically enough, a turned off surveillance camera watches the square from above.

The boys living the neighbourhood are thus exposed and introduced to the local code of the street (Anderson, 2000) thus developing a counter-school and counter-police culture which may soon result in early school drop-out. From time to time, they might be barbecuing some meat, or even help the older guys to prepare cocktails overnight. Both in and outside their houses, children witness situations and acquire premature knowledge of adult life (Burton, 2007).

3.2 The School

The Valmarina primary school, in the heart of the district, is part of a comprehensive school which comprises an infant school in the same building and a junior high school a few metres away. The school provides a full-time education program (from 8:00 to 16:00) and a school lunch; although the latter is not compulsory, few families opt for home-packed lunch. The institute is named after the daughter of a mafia family who became an important police informer (*collaboratrice di giustizia*) during Borsellino's investigations, and who committed suicide

after the assassination of the magistrate. Since 1990, these schools have been part of the state program that aims 'to fight the high dropout rate from school', as the school website states, and since 1999 have been defined as 'schools in a high drop-out rate area and with strong prevalence of immigrants'.[22] Middle class families living in wealthier areas near the district often avoid sending their children to the Valmarina, especially when compulsory education begins. Therefore, children generally come from families living on benefit, or at best from working class families where both parents work. Built during the fascist regime, the horseshoe-shaped school is old and badly-equipped. The building has never been upgraded to modern standards. The ground floor hosts preschool children on one side and rooms for eating school meals on the other.

The second floor, where the primary school children are taught, counts 10 rooms for lessons, one computer room, and four bathrooms equally divided at the end of each corridor. The toilet walls are covered with stylised pictures of phalluses and swearwords. Each grade, apart from the fifth, is divided into two sections. The classrooms are equipped with a laptop and a video projector which is usually employed to watch cartoons in the afternoon, since blackboards are still the main tool for teaching. The dark brown wooden doors do not close properly, due to frequent slamming by children or teachers. At the end of the day, the teachers lock the entrance to each classroom with an iron chain and a padlock. All the walls in the corridors are covered with children's drawings against the mafia or celebrating legality, policemen and anti-mafia martyrs.

The third floor, which several years ago was used to organise afternoon activities, was deemed unfit for use by the council in 2009 and cannot be used by children for security reasons. Most of the equipment the school received from a funding to improve the learning environment was left and got old there, untidily dumped in the rooms: more than 10, now obsolete, computers, a chemistry lab, hundreds of books, several pieces of gym equipment, around twenty teaching board games and maps, some musical instruments, closets, tables, chairs, blackboards and teacher's desks, are scattered and covered with dust all over the place. One entire room was even transformed into a fully furnished (and still functioning) kitchen to organise cooking lessons for children. From time to time, teachers climb the stairs to look for new books or games for their pupils, but this paradoxically creates further disorder in the rooms. Outside, within the horseshoe limits, a tiny paved square (around 100 square meters) with four cluster pines

[22] To date, however, there are not many children of immigrants in the school, since the number has decreased over time. Among the second graders, only 2 out of 21 come from immigrant families.

provides the only outdoor space for physical activity. Only fifth graders go there every once in a while: most teachers agree that as a gym is unsuitable and dangerous because of the many protrusions that could harm the children. Consequently, children do not generally engage in school sports activities, apart from the rare daytrip organised by teachers to the park nearby.

The school lacks both a heating and an air-conditioning system. Between December and February, teachers use an electric stove to heat up the rooms and children wear winter jackets. More problematic are the high temperatures during the hot months of September and June, when classrooms become furnaces. Since there are no curtains, the only shade that is offered is with some white A4 sheets of paper stuck on the windows. Often, basic school supplies are lacking, and the two teachers in each section chip in to buy what is strictly necessary, such as toilet paper. Unlike what happens in other schools, they do not ask parents to contribute as they know they will not or cannot.

4. Recess and Lunch with the Second Graders

Rosanna and Clara are the head-teachers of the 21 second graders at the Valmarina. From this year their classroom is considered one of the most troublesome in the institute, since two children with behavioural problems are repeating the second grade, thus joining an already lively classroom. All pupils come from low status families: parents are generally lower educated (upper secondary at most), the breadwinner model prevails, and most working fathers hold unskilled jobs. To a certain degree, all families have, or have had, financial difficulties at home. Joblessness, which is a common condition in Palermo (unemployment rate is at 25%), can hit single-earner households very hard. Two mothers even asked me if I knew about job opportunities during the interviews.

However, an additional dividing line in the socioeconomic composition of the classroom can be drawn between the 'magnificent five' and the rest that 'come from nice families'. The name of the latter grouping were Rosanna's words, who at the beginning of the fieldwork described the classroom as consisting of a few children from difficult families, 'but also some from '*famiglie graziose'*, namely those that provide 'proper care' to their children. Conversely, the magnificent, also called fantastic, five, owe their ironic nickname to their teacher, Clara. Giovanni, Piero, Giacomo, Matteo and Fabio all come from low income families with problematic dynamics: illegal activities, violence, alcoholism, and parental imprisonment are, to different degrees, the constitutive environments of their childhood.

Unsurprisingly, they are also the most turbulent children in the classroom, and they present some levels of cognitive and linguistic deficits. Only Piero has a part-time special needs assistant teacher: the other parents have not made the request yet. Since they often hang out together in the Loggia, they share different aspects of the adultification process together.[23] Nevertheless, their friendship is mainly based on masculine competition and violent subjugation, which are the main causes of classroom disruptive moments.

4.1 Arbitrary Compliance: Recess with the Second Graders

In the whole school, only a few teachers implemented food rules during the recess, and Rosanna was among the first to do so. Clara, who is in her first year at the Valmarina, agrees with this approach. Rosanna is aware of the food education guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education (MIUR, 2015), and when we first met she expressed her preoccupation for the unhealthy food eaten by children in the Valmarina.

> Clara: 'You have to see what the schoolchildren eat every day, the situation is out of control; children come in the morning with the *Arancine*, sometimes they bring a sausage roll [*Rollò]* for the break, and drink Coke, tea, or juice. In my classroom I have established some rules, but sometimes parents come in the morning and ask if I can make an exception…and how can you forbid that? They are not precise rules'

As a matter of fact, food education guidelines can be interpreted, and as emerged in chapter 4, teachers perceive that they are in a didactic limbo as far as nutrition education is concerned. Thus, Rosanna's attempts to overwrite the pre-existing parental feeding practices eventually result in arbitrary codes of conduct. Children cannot bring four types of edibles for the break: first, the traditional Palermo rotisserie, and especially *Arancine* and *Rollò*;[24] second, chocolates and candies; third French fries and packed crisps; fourth, Coca-Cola and all fizzy drinks. In addition to these don'ts, two fundamental boundary conditions are added: children must eat on a placemat and wait for the Catholic meal prayer to be over before starting to eat.

[23] The day before the monthly visit to his father, Matteo usually asks his closest peers if they want to join him to go to the jail; Giovanni, who often accompanies his father to the slaughterhouse, shares with his friend the notions acquired while watching the killing of animals. Fabio might explain to them what cocaine looks like. During a chance encounter in the Loggia. I met him while he was carrying white crumbly bricks from one site to another: "Hi Fabio, are you playing bricklayer with your friends?" "Hi, teach! No, we're pushing cocaine [*Ciao mae'. No, stamu spacciando cocaina*]". He was of course teasing me, but it is rather revealing that a second grader can joke about cocaine when moving a dusty white stone.

[24] *Arancina* is a typical Sicilian breaded ball made of rice seasoned with meat sauce and subsequently deep fried. *Rollò* is a baked German wiener sausage in puff pastry.

Since the school does not have a suitable space for recess, children are forced to remain in the classroom during the 20-30 minutes of the break. When Rosanna or Clara decide that the lesson can be interrupted, they are generally divided by gender into small groups and sent to the bathroom with a piece of paper stuffed in the collar of their smock. Usually, the janitor checks that kids do not drench their clothes while washing their hands, and then returns them to the classroom: this is the only time they can let off steam and run down the corridors. Once everyone is back in the classroom, snacks are set up on the placemat, and the prayer can start: 'God bless the meal we are about to eat, and please make sure that food is given to all the children in the world. Enjoy your meal kids'. In the few rare moments the silence prevails, the noise produced by the simultaneous unwrapping and popping of pre-packaged snacks can be clearly heard, while the air is filled with creamy and chocolatey smells: 'teacher, it's the noise of the snacks!' as one girl once amusingly noticed; 'yes Maria, it's the *roar* [*scroscio*] of the snacks', Clara replied.

This may seem an exaggeration, so Table 6.1 below lists the foods that are typically brought by the pupils in four days that I have selected from my fieldnotes. Three considerations are in order: first, Rosanna's rules, despite being respected by most pupils, have a high level of arbitrariness: stuffed pizza, handmade croissants, or fried donuts are by no means very different in terms of nutritional value and components, but they are classified as acceptable edibles. Second, although the rules are made to improve children's dietary compliance – that is to say, to create a barrier against unhealthy feeding choices, they cannot be deemed successful. Most children bring more than one energy-dense sugar-based snack, along with tea or fruit juice in cartons, but neither Rosanna nor Clara can stop them from eating as much as they like (Figure 6.1). Indeed, the list ignores the provisions which are often hidden inside the school bags. Third and most importantly, transgressions to the rules are alternately yet frequently committed by the fantastic 5, usually around once or twice per week.

There is probably no more compelling evidence regarding the hiatus between theoretical knowledge on nutrition (nutritional doxa) and the practice of eating or feeding. Even in this classroom, a small food pyramid hangs on the door. Children as young as seven can dichotomize between healthy and unhealthy foods, since teachers have told them so. Nonetheless, when it comes to eating, rules of thumb give way to rules of taste. And some pupils, as school meal literature has widely documented (Karrebæk, 2012), become responsible for family choices. Thus, even though Rosanna's prohibitions might seem reasonable at first glance, they perversely end up targeting the very 5 children who most often flout the rules.

Forgetting one's placemat or bringing uncompliant items are violations that are then sanctioned with a reprimand that creates an arbitrary distinction between one of the fantastic five and the others. Having a *Rollò* or the chocolates becomes the means through which the same kids are taken as negative examples in the eyes of the classroom.

Figure 6.1 Fabio's break snacks.

'When I enter the classroom at 10.20, the atmosphere is a little tense. Giacomo, Piero and Fabio are shoved into the classroom by Rosanna's angry voice: "YOU SHOULDN'T HIT OR PUSH EACH OTHER! DO YOU THINK THAT'S RIGHT?". At this point, all the children sit down and prepare their placemat. Fabio has 2 mini-muffins, 2 pre-packaged sweet puff pockets, and 2 chocolates. Rosanna removes the chocolates from his desk as a punishment and states: "you know you can't have these". The result is Fabio's violent reaction: he starts dragging and lifting the desk, so as to make noise. Piero turns toward Fabio and prepares a paper napkin instead of the usual placemat. Rosanna intervenes again: "Where's your placemat? You know you have to come to school with a placemat!" […]. After the prayer, Fabio goes back to Rosanna asking for his chocolates, but she replies "No, I won't give you the chocolates until you behave". Fabio hurls his four snacks, one kid's bottle and then the tablemat. "Now I'll call your mother so she'll come to pick you up", threatens Rosanna. "Better!" "Better? Perfect, then you'll stay here the whole afternoon, I'll send you to a boarding school and you'll stay there for a veeery long time!". Fabio gathers the snacks from the floor, and throws them away a second time. Rosanna picks up her smartphone, and pretends she is recording a video: "So now I'll send this to your mother, on WhatsApp". Fabio covers his face with his hands, and then with the placemat. "Even if you cover your face, your mom can recognise you!". In the scared quietness, one kid remarks with a smart alec

voice: “Yes, you are the only one who’s wearing blue, and your mother knows that”.’ 06/10/2016

‘Giacomo unwraps the *Rollò* from the paper sack, but Clara immediately notices: “Giacomo? What are the rules?” Can you bring that snack?”. Giacomo defends himself: “My sister bought it for me!”. “And what do you have to tell your sister? These things cannot be brought to school, because they are very unhealthy, so you won’t bring this any longer”. “But what’s the harm! [*e che fa mae’!*]” he rebuts. “It’s unhealthy Giacomo, you know we don’t allow that”.’ 11/11/2016

‘Fabio has unwrapped the *Rollò* over his placemat, and he is waiting for the prayer to start. Clara looks at the rotisseries snack, and starts talking louder so that all children can listen. “Rosanna, have you seen what Fabio has brought?” “Yes, I have, and I’ve already scolded him. How many times do I need to tell you children: *Rollò* hurts your stomach, eating sausage in the morning is unhealthy!”. Giacomo, who two weeks ago was treated similarly and today has handmade braided chocolate pastry intervenes: “I don’t bring it to school anymore, later when I go out I buy it, because I ask my father for the *Rollò* and he buys it for me”.’ 24/11/2016

I have selected these fieldnotes, among many, because they testify how reprimands over food choices do not aim at teaching healthy eating; rather, the labelling of food masks the labelling of children. In the first excerpt, Rosanna uses the prohibition regarding chocolates punish Fabio’s previous exuberance. She does not explain the reasons for her choice, but simply cuts it short: ‘you know you can’t have these’. Unsurprisingly, Fabio reacts and the dialogue rapidly escalates into a public conflict that leaves aside any consideration for healthy and unhealthy eating. Crucially, one child contributes to isolate Fabio, remarking on the effectiveness of the teachers’ debatable intimidation. In the second excerpt, Clara engages in a conversation with Giacomo as soon as she finds out that he has brought a *Rollò*. Giacomo shrewdly defends himself: first he shifts responsibility to his sister; second, when is asked to apply the rule to his sister’s feeding choice, he questions the choice itself: ‘what’s the harm!’. His rebut forces Clara to a *petitio principii* fallacy, rather than a satisfactory explanation: the *Rollò* is unhealthy because teachers do not want it, and teachers do not want it because the *Rollò* is unhealthy. Finally, the third fieldnote can be considered as a follow up of the second. Fabio’s violation is made public to explain that *in the morning,* namely at school, the sausage is unhealthy and hurts kids’ stomachs. Giacomo, who feels called into account since he often comes to school with a *Rollò*, suggests to his friend the gimmick he used to avoid the reprimand. The noble intent of improving food literacy through food rules, unwittingly adds a label of deviation to the behaviour of the fantastic 5.

Name/Date	21/10	28/10	11/11	24/11
Shyla	/	Stuffed pizza + carton	2 chocolate-filled croissants + carton	/
Alice	/	/	/	Chocolate snack (Mix Max)
Giulia A.	6 Tuc tomato cracker + carton	2 snacks (Flauti) + carton	2 sweet snack (Flauti)	Chocolate snack (Kinder Brios)
Giulia B.	Handmade chocolate-filled croissant + 2 yogurts + carton	/	Handmade sweet braided chocolate pastry + fried donut + carton	/
Maria	/	Chocolate snack (Kinder Brios) + gummy bear pack	Chocolate snack (Pangoccioli) + water	2 chocolate snacks (Mikado + Kinder Brios)
Alessandra	Nutella Toast + carton	Handmade fried donut + carton	chocolate snack (Kinder Brios)	
Linda	Pavesini + carton	Pavesini + carton	Chocolate snack (Mix Max) + carton	Pavesini + carton
Clara	Chocolate snack (Mix Max) + 10 chocolate filled wafers	Chocolate bar (Kinder maxi) + chocolate snack (Mix Max) + carton	2 chocolate-filled croissants + mini-chocolate egg + carton	2 chocolate snacks (Kinder Brios)
Maria	Chocolate snack (Mix Max) + carton	Sweet chocolate snack (Mix Max) + carton	Chocolate snack (Mix Max) + carton	Chocolate snack (Mix Max) + carton
Nadia	2 yogurts (Fruttolo) + water	Handmade custard-filled croissant + 2 yogurts + carton	/	/
Nina	/	2 snack (Flauti) + carton	Chocolate-filled croissants + carton	Chocolate snack (Mix Max) + carton
Alex	/	Kinder Bueno (2 pieces) + carton	Cracker + water	3 chocolate bars (Kinder)
Lino	Chocolate snack (Kinder Brios) + carton	Chocolate snack (Kinder Brios) + carton	Chocolate snack (Pangoccioli)	Cracker + 6 stuffed mini-sweet croissants +
Alberto	/	/	2 snacks + water	Snack + carton
Giorgio	Chocolate snack (Mix Max) + carton	Chocolate snack (Mix Max) + carton	2 chocolate snacks (Mix Max) + carton	2 chocolate snacks (Mix Max) + carton
Assama	10 salty biscuits	Sweet snack (Kinder Brios) + carton	Tomato cracker + water	/
Fabio	2 chocolate snacks (Mix Max) + carton	3 packs of candies + chocolate-filled croissant + 2 chocolate snacks	2 chocolate snacks (Mix Max) + carton	Rollò
Giovanni	2 chocolate-filled croissants + carton	/	Chocolate snack (Buondì) + carton	2 snacks + cracker + carton
Piero	3 chocolate snacks (Kinder Brios) + water	Rollò + water	2 chocolate-filled croissants + carton	2 packets of crisps (Croccantelle)
Giacomo	/	2 packs of candies + 2 chocolate bars + 3 chocolate snacks	Rollò	Handmade sweet braided chocolate pastry + carton
Matteo	Crackers	/	Handmade sweet braided chocolate pastry + carton	carton

Table 6.1 Children's snacks.

4.2 Do You Pay for the Lunch?

Despite being produced at a centralised site and subsequently transported to all the schools of the city, the proposal of Palermo's school menu rated by National network of Local Canteen Committees ranked 16th out of 30 in Italy (RCM, 2016). The offer comprises many organic fruit and vegetables, local products (e.g. Swordfish or *Vastedda della Valle del Belice*) and traditional dishes (e.g. *Anellini al Forno*), and it is consistent with the protocol criteria illustrated in chapter 4. Several meetings with the nutritionist in charge of the menu composition also revealed a similar conception of the school meal as a biopolitical strategy (de Certeau, 1984) aiming to correct children's and families' eating and feeding styles. The words of Dr Gaetano closely resembled the positions of the nutritionists in the other canteens I had visited. For instance, in this excerpt he bluntly states that medical principle should ultimately prevail over family choices:

> Dr Gaetano: 'Parents…they all think they can have a say, but it's not like that. We need to intervene on nutrition because parents shouldn't support children's preferences. Especially here in Sicily, we need to dismantle children's nutrition and reconstruct family food culture.'

The school meal, in this light, is envisioned with the specific aim of reconstructing an appropriate diet for both children and parents. Yet when the meal policy is implemented in a problematic context, its premises are drastically overturned by the social forces at play. The strategy-tactic distinction I have referred to before no longer applies: more often, the canteen represents the moment of highest tension between pupils and teachers. In a way, tactics annihilate strategy.

At the edge of the canteen, I could not find anyone who truly considered the school meal as a didactic intervention. Although most children eat meals provided by the school, there is no canteen committee in charge of quality control: parents do not even know about this possibility. Of course, as chapter 3 shows, dietary compliance results improved for those children eating at school. Some mothers in the interviews aptly admitted this: certain healthy meals, such as spinach or legumes, are only prepared and tasted by their children at school. However, they stress that the true added value of the service lies in its cost: since most families fall in lowest income groups, they pay 7 euros for 20 meals. The economic relief outplays any consideration regarding the salubriousness and the appropriateness of the meal. Even so, some children in every classroom are often given teachers' meals (and mine), since their parents did not pay the monthly fee or forgot to bring their home-packed lunch to school.

It is very telling that on two different occasions (once in the canteen, another during an after-school session) I was criticised by some fifth graders for not paying for my lunch, which the education council of Palermo had kindly decided to offer me.

> 'Today I'm sitting with the fifth graders. After unwrapping my box with pasta, a girl that I haven't met so far asks me in a very formal manner: "Do you pay for your lunch?" [*Voi lo pagate il pranzo?*] I am embarrassed, and I mumble that I don't pay, like all the teachers. But she counters with firm voice "And why don't you pay for your lunch? We pay, and you don't pay for it. You do have money, right? And then why don't you pay for your lunch?"' 13/05/2016

The canteen where children eat is just made of five disused classrooms with four long tables and chairs, the windows half covered with a dusty protective grid (Figure 6.2). The out-of-date menu of the previous year hangs in the corridor, and no decorations try to embellish the rooms or suggest dietary recommendations.

For the teachers, lunch is a mission to be accomplished as fast as possible. Especially for Rosanna and Clara, who on alternate days must supervise the second graders, the shorter the lunch, the lower the likelihood to lose control over the fantastic five. On average, in 20 or 25 minutes all the children are queuing to go back to the classroom. Moreover, the presence of the other second grade section increases the turmoil, as well as the probability of violent upheavals.

The pedagogic intent fails as soon as the children enter the lunchroom: while leading the prayer, teachers often scold pupils that laugh and talk, often by reciting the words in an angry and loud voice, or roughly switching their seats: 'God bless the meal we are about to eat, and [in a outburst of rage, grabbing Alberto's collar, lifting him up] PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT ALL THE CHILDREN IN THE WORLD HAVE SOME! IT'S NOT POSSIBLE! ALWAYS YOU! SHAME ON YOU!'

When the lunch starts, children can choose if they want sauce on the pasta (Figure 6.3), thus losing part of the programmed nutrients, or just oil and parmesan; many of them avoid the second course, and wander around the room asking teachers to put some oil on the bread; only few children ask for vegetables, and very rarely are they encouraged to try them. Interestingly, it is usually the fantastic five that eat all the lunch and ask for a second or third helping, and according to the teachers this happens because it is their only full meal of the day. Thus, their peers' leftovers are often given to them, and they enjoy competing over the amount of sauce on their pasta or the number of helpings received. Teachers rarely eat the school lunch: Rosanna often brings her own home packed lunch, because she does not appreciate what the school

proposes. Clara tries the second course from time to time, since she usually skips lunch. The leftovers are eventually collected in a plastic bag for Rosanna's dog.

Figure 6.2. One of the lunchrooms in the Valmarina school.

Unlike the recess, the few kids with home-packed lunches are never encouraged to modify their meal; teachers did not establish any rule in this matter.[25] The packed lunch always consists of rotisserie pieces (often *Rollò* and *Arancine*), pizza, sandwiches with sausage and pink sauce, fried chicken and French fries; tea or Coke usually accompany the main meal.

Lunch, far from being a convivial event, tests the ability of the teachers to prevent children's upheavals. While in Poversano, Goldazzo and Fedrata teachers mainly aim at reducing the level of noise, in the Valmarina school their primary objective is to prevent the lunch from spinning out of control while trying to satisfy the children's incessant requests. Unremittingly throughout lunch, teachers respond and issue reprimands to children in a loud voice: Eat! Are you done? Come on! Quick! Turn your back! Sit down immediately! Sit properly! Don't even try! and such like, are the exclamations that mark the tempo of the canteen.

[25] Unlike many authors showing the spatial and social division produced by the simultaneous presence of the packed lunch and the school meal (Metcalfe et al., 2008; Salazar, 2007), in Valverde I could not noticed no sharp contrast between the two groups. In fact, children with a home-packed lunch eat side by side with the other pupils, because there is not enough room to divide them. Moreover, since teachers have other preoccupations than 'what's in their lunchbox today' (Karrebæk, 2012), home-packed lunches often go unnoticed, with the exception of some very special rare meal: only on two occasions have I seen children interested in someone's home-packed lunch: once for an entire round-shaped pizza, the other for a McDonald's happy meal.

Figure 6.3. Pasta *in bianco*. Children can decide whether to add sauce or not

At times, Rosanna even makes rude retorts to pupils:

> 'While I am eating the kiwi, Matteo asks me for some. I therefore ask Rosanna if he can have a kiwi. Unexpectedly, she gives a very rude answer: "Matteo, if you don't eat that kiwi I'll use it as a suppository! Do you understand? As a suppository!"' 04/05/2016

> 'There are portions of rice left over, so Lara asks for another helping with tomato sauce. After receiving the portion from Rosanna, she realises she's not hungry anymore, and leaves it on the table. Rosanna is walking along the tables, and when she notices Lara hasn't eaten the second serving she shouts at her "Lara, YOU asked me for another portion of rice, and now YOU're not eating it?" "But I don't waaaant it" "You know where you can put that rice!"' 10/11/2016

Rosanna's manners might seem excessive, and the canteen atmosphere certainly does not evoke the image of a successful pedagogical intervention. Yet this seemingly rigid, almost reactionary, strategy, is adopted to avoid children's rapid violent escalations, which would be much more frequent without this constant pace of tension. Successful teachers in the Valmarina are those that learn to reframe verbal codes, do not shirk from using muscular force, and constantly take preventive measures. This pedagogy of vigour aims to reaffirm status and age hierarchies in the classroom, thus gaining an aura of respect that facilitates control over the classroom. Faced with this, food education is not worth the time. As the following excerpts demonstrate, loss of control over the classroom can rapidly escalate.

> 'It is hard to put today's lunch climax into words. After a while, Giovanni starts throwing small pieces of bread from the other side of the table, thus triggering the reaction of his peers. In the meantime, a group of pupils start getting up despite teachers' reprimands: they just pretend the teachers do not exist. They walk around the room, ask for peeled kiwis, water, or plastic cutlery; some of them try to escape

from the lunchroom but are stopped by Ada. Towards the end, I sit near Giovanni to give him his peeled kiwi: he eats half, and throws the other half at Gianni. At the same time, Alessio starts kicking Andrea [they have some unfinished business from the recess]; teacher Ada asks me to hold Alessio while she explains to Andrea why it is always better not to fight back [Andrea tends to be a quitter, and easier to handle]. After a couple of minutes, the situation is totally out of control. The floor is full of bread, pieces of tomato, plastic cutlery and *pennette* pasta shapes. Every once in a while a loud crash resounds: plastic dishes are overturned and cracked with a punch. Giacomo runs all over the canteen and laughs at Maria, who is not able to tackle the situation any longer: she just looks at me with disconsolate eyes. Small pieces of bread and kiwi fly from one side of the canteen to the other, and I am still holding Andrea and Alessio back from kicking and slapping each other. Suddenly, Maria stands up, shouts loudly at the children [SILENCE!] and then faints on the ground senseless. Two hours before, during recess, she sourly confessed to me she is counting the days before the end of the school: from next year, she will no longer be here. Luckily, her nearby colleague holds her up and gently lays her down on the floor. I help other teachers to move Maria out of the canteen, while she tragicomically repeats that she "can't stand it anymore". Most children are scared, some of them make the sign of the cross, yet I can clearly see a few faces laughing at her. A few minutes later, Alessio exploits the absence of authority to kick Andrea, who reacts and tries to fight back, but I hold him again. Alessio takes a plastic knife and threatens Andrea: I seize the knife, while I am still holding Andrea, who is furiously moving his legs to harm his classmate. Alessio moves close to the table, where a real knife and a pair of scissors have been accidentally left by the canteen assistant. He seems set on taking the knife, but Ada pre-empts him, grabs his shirt and starts pushing him with vehemence, telling him to stop; Alessio looks frustrated, and he throws a plate full of sauce on the floor. Ada is furious at this point, and she starts yelling "NEVER AGAIN! NEVER AGAIN! NEVER AGAIN!" right in Alessio's ear, and then delivers a tenuous slap to his right cheek.' 11/05/2016

'During lunch, one unguarded moment is enough. Fabio and Giacomo are yelling at each other in Sicilian dialect: "I'll kill you!" "I'll throw you on the ground and mess you up with my finger" [*"T'ammazzu!" "Ti butto pi terra e ti affosso ccu 'n itu"*]. They are holding and pulling each other collars. In a split-second Clara intervenes and divides them. Their necks are irritated and coloured with marked irregular red stripes. Their cheeks scratched. I ask Fabio what is happening, but he is still nervous: "That guy is finished, I'll force him to the ground with a finger and I'll mess him up."' 03/10/2016

Teachers who are not used to the critical environment of the school often lose control of classrooms, as Maria's case demonstrates.[26] Recess and lunch are indeed children's maximum moments of detachment. Even Clara, who adapted very quickly to the Valmarina, from time to time forgets to give her full attention to potential upheavals and fights. Nevertheless, she is very quick to halt Fabio and Giacomo, thus avoiding rapid deterioration. In all this, where does the healthy meal fit in?

5. Overwhelming Fields and the (Ir)relevance of Healthy Eating

The fieldwork conducted in Fedrata, Poversano and Goldazzo did not pose any serious obstacle to the ethnographic journey. From access to the field, through the dialogues with children, and the formal and informal conversations with primary caregivers, teachers and cooks, the research object progressively manifested its different facets. The concept of strategy and tactics helped me to frame the ambivalence that surrounds nutrition in the school context, because the implementation and the reception of the intervention could be clearly identified, along with their contradictions.

On the other hand, Valmarina school seriously put my capacity to focus on the object of the research to the test. For if food education guidelines try to enter the school as a biopolitical strategy, the harshness of the context makes most considerations over feeding practices and their possible corrections irrelevant. Whilst previous case studies shed light on the ambivalence that surrounds nutrition education, the Valmarina faces me with its inconsistency. The concept of school food intervention, despite the endeavours or claims of Rosanna and Clara, clashes with the real goal of the everyday life in their classroom: containing the effervescence of the most troublesome kids, especially during recess and lunch. Sure enough, they know school should be a vector of intervention, yet they lack the viable opportunity to apply this. In the end, as many teachers acknowledged, 'there are bigger issues at stake' than teaching children to prefer healthy food. In many fieldnotes, the description of what happens *with* food *during* the food times is often interrupted by other incidents, which usually involve a certain degree of violence and therefore adult intervention. I frequently stepped in to stop fights myself, thus placing the 'participant' over the 'observer'.

[26] I followed Maria for one entire week during the first months of the fieldwork. Almost every day, she faced episodes of violent rage between pupils, and she seemed incapable of containing them. For instance, the day after the fainting spell, Giovanni suffered a serious nervous breakdown, and in the outburst, he kicked Maria on her foot after sliding between my legs. She started crying desperately, and called her husband begging him to pick her up. She eventually came back to the classroom after one hour.

In a way, the field resisted its investigation: a common difficulty that the ethnographic approach entails when adults face children (Nukaga, 2008), here became insurmountable. In Goldazzo I had to be careful not to influence children's responses; in Palermo, I simply could not obtain many of those responses. I was often distracted by more pregnant issues, as teachers counted on me as an additional supervisor. Ethically, I could not help but 'burst' into the field when witnessing children's fights, although this often compromised the ethnographic ecology of the study: what would have happened without my presence? Was my presence triggering and fostering their behaviours? And most importantly, how could I take accurate 'thick' notes on eating and feeding throughout the turmoil? When reading back my writings I realised that my attention often shifted 'from eating to beating', and that the material collected could probably be more fruitfully used for an examination of children's construction of masculinity and adultification.

Similarly, I encountered many difficulties when interviewing mothers: some of them did not feel comfortable when talking about family eating habits and evidently wanted to end the interview as soon as possible; others did not entirely trust my genuine and disinterested curiosity, and produced some glaringly made-up responses; many simply refused. For instance, Matteo's mother maintained that her husband, who I knew was in prison, helped her to cook lunch every day. Too late I realised that the interview guide, and maybe in-depth interviews as a method of investigation, were perceived as too invasive and inquisitive by many parents.

Yet these hurdles, conceptually distant from the school meal ethnography I was meant to carry, ultimately reveal the discrepancies between the high-sounding claims of childhood health prevention and the daily life of a difficult classroom, indeed of the surrounding neighbourhood. Feeding salubrious food, teaching people how to choose wholesome meals, inducing children to taste 'health' in practice, are rearing strategies doomed to failure if children's life is marked by food poverty and deprivation. Of course, the school food program might improve their diets in the *hic et nunc* of lunch, but it will not reduce the recess snacks from school desks, nor remove the Cola from their kitchen table.

The words of Dr Gaetano, who aims at reconstructing a new food culture to fight childhood obesity, clash with the daily life of families living at the margins. Mothers may be relieved from the chore of cooking lunch or buying a sandwich, but food guidelines, dietary recommendations, and healthy school meals remain meaningless words to most of them. The paradox is that, unlike the resistance that emerged in the other schools, the meal service is never

called into question by anyone, as the lack of volunteers for the canteen committee demonstrates. Yet the school meal itself could be a starting point to design original bottom-up intervention strategies.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter, I have given a preliminary account of what happens to school meal interventions when facing an extreme scenario. Focusing mostly on a difficult classroom of second graders, I tried to depict the futility of school food education when applied in a deprived context: on the one hand, the arbitrary nature of teachers' food rules during recess perversely target the most problematic children, while failing to improve their diets. On the other hand, lunch cannot be used as a didactic moment, since teachers constantly face other priorities and want to get back to their classrooms as soon as possible.

Despite its explorative and descriptive nature, this study raises some important points of criticism as far as food education and school meal programs are concerned. First and foremost, health policy interventions should not be framed as if they were applied in a social vacuum. So far, as chapter 4 also illustrates, school meal policies are applied top-down without in-depth considerations regarding the contextual forces surrounding the school. Children (and their families) are not universal, as Pugh (2014) sustains: the urban, socioeconomic and cultural milieu where schools are located must be taken into consideration in order to develop specific solutions to particular problems. It is not enough, however valuable it may be, to insert gastronomic specialties of the region or organic products into the menu.

For instance, in the case of Valmarina school, it is of extreme importance to back up food policies with sports policies. The school, as already described, still does not have a gym. Moreover, it is necessary to intervene in the urban structure of the neighbourhood, which for now completely lacks a playground or a sports field. It is telling that the only outdoor five-a-side field in the area is in fact employed as a private abusive parking lot. This indeed calls for further research by social scientists, geographers, and urban planners.

As for food literacy, this case can suggest opportunities so far unexplored, that could be promising for other schools sited in poor neighbourhoods. For instance, given the acknowledged positive effect of gardening on pupils' dietary intake (Cullen et., 2009; Langellotto and Gupta, 2012), the vast abandoned green areas in front of the school, could be requalified and converted into a community garden managed by the school for the organisation

of gardening workshops. As I also argued in the conclusions to chapter 4, additional participatory activities involving teachers, children and parents may prove useful to improve the outcomes of food education programs. In extreme contexts, however, this may not be enough, since families constantly face other priorities. Hence, apart from structural interventions on facilities and the necessity of reducing the number of children per classroom, low income families could be directly involved in the preparation and serving of school meals by decentralising the production site to smaller units at school or in the immediate surroundings. Especially unemployed mothers could benefit from the financial compensation in return for their service, which in turn might alleviate the poverty of their families. Meal preparation could be then accompanied by nutrition experts who could explain the benefit and harm of certain eating and feeding practices.

School meal policies should go a step further by considering how they intersect with larger social forces; they should bridge the gap between families and school canteens and become part of a greater plan for improving the quality of children's lives. In the concluding chapter that follows, I will suggest some operative recommendations for enhancing school meal policies.

Final Remarks: What Can Be Done?

This thesis set out to contribute to the field of food sociology by adopting a multimethod approach and by looking at different, yet interrelated, perspectives on eating and feeding. At the risk of writing a 'Frankenstein patchwork', namely a whole which is greater, albeit wobblier, than the sum of its parts, the manuscript offers a comprehensive analysis of eating and feeding practices in Italy, with a focus on primary school children and their relationship with the school canteen. In this light, food serves as a powerful lens to analyse social stratification: not only does its daily nature permit us to grasp how it mirrors different positions in the social hierarchy, but it also forces the researcher to look at the reproduction of those positions, and subsequently that of social and health inequalities.

Each chapter is devoted to examining a particular research question, and attempts to talk to different audiences, both within and outside sociology. At the same time, the results are discussed in the light of possible policy implications for improving health promotion programs, especially when implemented in schools. The theoretical and methodological scaffolding of the thesis, presented in chapter 1, is based on Bourdieu's theory of practice (1990) and on its distinction between forms of capital (2011). Nevertheless, the empirical contributions do not blindly follow 'Bourdieusian tracks', but critically engage with its most useful theoretical and methodological tools.

The first part of the research, which uses quantitative methods, mostly focuses on the social stratification of dietary compliance and might be of greater appeal to health sociologists and epidemiologists. Chapter 2 shows that cultural capital, more than economic capital, predicts health behaviours among Italian adults. More interestingly, I highlight how gender differences in health behaviours diminish with increasing levels of cultural resources, measured in terms of educational credentials, participation in cultural activities and books read. Chapter 3 focuses on the determinants of children's dietary compliance and shows how cultural capital in its threefold dimension is a better predictor than economic capital, proxied by the EGP social class scheme (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). Conversely, economic capital is a better predictor of the type of store where common food items are purchased by families. In this study, I also show that the school canteen does not mitigate social origin influences: participation in the school canteen depends on children's social origins, and although it improves children's dietary compliance it

is not effective for enhancing family eating habits. The second part of the research is based on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in four primary school canteens. Chapters 4 and 6 highlight the contradictions and the inconsistencies of school meal programs, and could be of major interest for Foucauldian scholars, social geographers and also urbanists: as for the former, I use the data gathered in Fedrata, Poversano and Goldazzo to make evident the hiatus that characterises the scientific construction of school meals and the individual reactions of its targets: parents, teachers, cooks and children, in different ways, elude from top-down biopedagies. In chapter 6, however, I use the data gathered in a school sited in a deprived neighbourhood to shed light on the irrelevance of food literacy programs when applied in contexts characterised by high levels of deviance and childhood poverty. Finally, chapter 5 might attract consumption and childhood sociologists: in the first part, using the notion of economic and cultural boundaries, I examine how family feeding practices are at the base of different distinction strategies based on the store where groceries are purchased and the principles inspiring family cuisine. In the second part, I make use of the fieldnotes made while eating with children to highlight how primary school kids, using knowledge on food and cuisine, can already display distinction depending on their family of origin.

The conceptual framework adopted in chapter 5 could be further applied within and beyond the sociology of food. The distinction between cultural and economic boundaries might prove useful to explore the purchase of specific food items whose symbolic values and prices can vary sharply: meat cuts, cheese, alcoholic drinks and even bottled water are just a few, particularly suitable, products. Which meanings are attached to these products depending on their perceived quality, price, or production process? How are they used to place the others at distance while reinforcing social class identities? Concurrently, the opposition between concerted leniency and concerted cultivation can be adopted to explore the transmission of other consumption practices besides food. For instance, the opposed strategies may be fruitful to explain how young children are socialised by their families to smoking and drinking (de Vries et al., 2003; Valentine et al., 2010), but also to sustainable practices such as recycling or energy saving (Matthies et al., 2012; Fell and Chiu, 2014).

Overall, I deem that the present work gives some food for thought as far as health promotion programs in schools are concerned. Three points are in order: first, the necessity to involve families, as much as possible, in the development and implementation of school food policies; in doing so, it is fundamental to keep in mind that eating and feeding practices depend very much on family cultural and economic endowments, and that any form of intervention should

first identify, comprehend and disentangle the reasons behind particular food choices, while using friction or bewilderment as tools for critical thinking. Here is where, I believe, the unique and fundamental contribution sociology can provide to public policy. Second, and connected to this, interventions must be developed and planned *ex-novo* considering the cultural, urban, and socioeconomic context surrounding children. The school in Palermo has certainly different needs than those in Poversano and Goldazzo: recognising idiosyncrasies should be the starting point of a food education program, not its end. More generally, this implies that additional research efforts are needed to examine geographical variability and change over time to compare how different Italian regions or provinces organise and delivery the school meal service. Third, food literacy should be a truly transversal discipline, which uses both the didactic curriculum and workshops to raise awareness in children and their families about opportunities and threats behind daily eating and feeding.

These three points pave the way to the formulation of specific recommendations at the micro- and at the macro- level. The former concerns the relation between schools and families when food education is concerned, and may consider the following solutions:

1. Creating space for discussion *before* the implementation of the school menu, so to explain the beneficial aspect of certain choices while being open to suggestions and modification. This could also change the perception of the school meal from a top-down imposition to a community-based agreement.
2. Organising occasional parent-child food workshops and school meals, followed by teachers and nutrition experts, to discuss and experiment alternative eating and feeding strategies.
3. Adopt school gardening as an established praxis, so to broaden children's perspective and knowledge on what foods are edible while encouraging them to explore new tastes.

At the macro-level, public intervention is needed to:

1. Include kitchens and dining rooms in all school buildings: this should be part of a national investment project to requalify existing school estate, which at the moment presents several problems and require structural intervention (Boarin, 2010).
2. Increase public funding to reduce as much as possible the cost of the lunch for families in need, while promoting lunch attendance with attractive payment schemes.
3. Invest on health programs to enhance food literacy outside school, while warning on the negative effects of energy-dense food products and soft-drinks using labels and campaigns.

Since the research is entirely based on the Italian case, one may wonder whether the results can be generalised beyond the investigated area. In a narrow sense, most findings are related to specific features of the country. Low levels of women's participation to the workforce and traditional attitudes toward gender roles help understanding why feeding is chiefly a female activity, as chapter 3 and chapter 5 suggest. Similarly, the rules surrounding the organisation of the school meal reflect the Italian politics of pleasure (Leitch, 2003) and the active role that the public sector has always had in shaping food consumption (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008). Nonetheless, this work resonates with many other studies that throw light on the social stratification of eating and feeding practices (Arganini and Saba, 2012; Darmon and Drewnowski, 2008; Wright et al., 2015), on the resistances to school food intervention (Pike and Kelly, 2014), on the ways food can be used as a means of distinction (Paddock, 2016), and on the surprising capacity of children to reproduce class cultures (Streib, 2011). I hope that the manuscript contributes to this literature by providing new theoretical and methodological insights for the analysis of food consumption.

Finally, I would like to outline some general lines of enquiry for future research on eating and feeding practices. On the quantitative side, the time is ripe for building a European dataset dedicated to food and drink consumption in a comparative perspective. This might also align existing household budget surveys to exploit economies of scale and scope, while focusing on food in much greater detail. Fine grained data could be gathered using grocery receipts, so as to have precise information on type and expenditure relating to each edible purchased; this method, besides being cost and time effective, would also allow data to be retrieved on kilocalories, nutritional composition of products, snacking, eating out and the like. At the same time, personal questionnaires could be used to obtain information on cooking methods, nutritional principles, children's participation in the school canteen and trust in food production. This type of data, especially if a longitudinal perspective is adopted, would indeed allow us to comprehend and analyse the effects of food poverty and family eating habits on children in much greater detail. At the same time, the study of feeding practices would benefit from an ethnographic immersion in the daily life of families with opposing socioeconomic backgrounds, from breakfast to dinner, passing through grocery shopping, in a way akin to the approach adopted by Lareau (2003) in her most famous work on childhood inequality. This might also contribute to define theoretically 'The practice of feeding', so as to complement Alan Warde's (2016) account on *The Practice of Eating*. So far, studies have used in-depth interviews of family members, which can only partially account for the tacit dimensions that constitute the

core of eating and feeding practices (for a critique, see Atkinson, 2014). Spending entire days with family members would help sociologists to open the black box of food taste transmission, to highlight how food inequalities shape health inequalities, and eventually inspire inventive responses.

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Preamble

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Final Remarks: What Can Be Done?

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