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# **Children and Food in Warsaw: Negotiating Feeding and Eating**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2016

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## **ABSTRACT**

In my thesis I argue that feeding children in Warsaw involves multiple negotiations, which engage different people, various institutions and take place in varied spaces. Amid these negotiations, adults and children engage in power struggles, which are situated within wider public discourses, political debates and moral perspectives on food and modern personhood. Adults implement strategies in order to feed children in a particular way, whereas children re-negotiate that imposed order using different tactics. Children in many ways influence the process of feeding. At the same time, both adults and children are disciplined and normalized in relation to what is considered the “proper” way of feeding and eating. They are socialized into “proper” eaters and feeders by other social actors. I argue that feeding and eating are inextricably connected and cannot be studied separately as they continuously influence one another.

The thesis is based on 12 months of fieldwork conducted in Warsaw between September 2012 and August 2013. My fieldwork was based on multi-sited and relational ethnography and included research conducted with working and middle class families and in primary schools. During my fieldwork I treated children, aged 6 – 12 years old, as independent interlocutors and I used diversified methods when working with them. I also studied state institutions, food companies and food marketers, non-governmental organisations and media debates related to children and food.

Drawing from practice theory and building on structural and interactive approaches, I study the ways in which feeding and eating are negotiated between diverse social actors in Warsaw. The thesis discusses diverse moral perspectives on food, discourses and narratives about food and children, multiple experiences and practices related to feeding and eating embedded in the context of post-socialist transformation, shifting notions of parenthood and childhood, and the changing politics of food and food education in Poland.

“The Youngbloods are already at the table, the housemaid brings potato soup, the schoolgirl also sits there – she sits perfectly, with her slightly Bolshevik physique-kultur, in sneakers. She didn't eat much soup that day – instead she gulped a glass of water and followed it with a slice of bread, she stayed away from the soup – a watered-down mush, warm and too effortless, definitely bad for her type – and she probably wanted to go hungry as long as possible, at least until the meat dish, because a hungry modern girl is more classy than a satiated modern girl. (...) to affirm my misery and to underscore my indifference, and how unworthy I was of everything, I began to dabble in my fruit compote, tossing into it bread crumbs, bits of rubbish, bread pellets, and stirring it with my spoon. I still had my ugly mug, so what, this was good enough for me—‘shit, what do I care’, I thought sleepily, adding a little salt, pepper, and a couple of toothpicks, ‘oh, so what, I'll eat it all as long as it fills me, makes no difference..’ It was as if I were lying in a ditch, little birdies flying about... stirring with my spoon I felt warm and cozy. ‘Well, young man? . . . Well, young man? . . . Why is our young man dabbling in his compote?’ Mrs Youngblood asked this softly yet anxiously. I lifted my inept gaze from the compote. ‘I... just, it's all the same to me...’ I whispered, calm and slime in my voice. And I proceeded to eat the pap; and the pap didn't really make the slightest difference to my spirit. It's hard to describe the effect this had on the Youngbloods, I didn't expect such a powerful effect. (...) The girl bent over her plate and ate the compote in silence, with decorum and restraint, even with heroism. Mrs Engineer turned pale – she stared at me as if hypnotized, bug-eyed, she was obviously afraid of me. Afraid! ‘It's just a pose! A pose!’ she kept mumbling. ‘Don't eat that... I forbid you! Zuta! Victor – Zuta! Victor! Zuta! Zuta! Victor – stop him, tell him to stop! Oh...’. But I went on eating, because why shouldn't I? I'll eat it all.”

(Witold Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*: 138 – 140)

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## Prologue

When I was doing research for my Master thesis in Warsaw, many women I was interviewing expressed tension and stress related to feeding their children properly.<sup>1</sup> Especially one of them, 30-year-old Magda, felt that as a mother she is responsible for making sure that her children eat healthy and right. She talked about how hard it is, and that it will only become more difficult, which scares her:

*I don't know how it will be when my children will be ten and twelve... Why can't they stay at the age of two? I don't know how I'm going to do this! I think it comes from home. I prefer that she eats even a whole bar of chocolate than a pack of white and pink marshmallows. So hopefully she sees that I eat chocolate rather than other things. I'll let her go to school where I will previously remove all crisps from the school shop [laughing] and I will prepare a packed meal for her instead of giving her money (...) I don't know, it really scares me!*<sup>2</sup>

This anxiety that parents, especially mothers, experience when feeding their children seemed puzzling to me. Not being a mother myself, I became interested in uncovering the reasons for this anxiety. And during my fieldwork I have found out that the issue of children and food evokes a wide range of emotions besides anxiety, such as affection, tenderness, frustration, love, anger, tension, resentment, irritation, disappointment, care, and concern, not only for parents.

Whenever I tell someone what I study there is usually an emotional response.<sup>3</sup> I hear people's stories from their childhoods, their memories, or their positive or negative connotations with food. In particular, if I talk to parents, I hear countless stories about their children: what they like to eat, what they dislike, funny stories about their encounters with food, problems that emerge and solutions that are

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<sup>1</sup> Master thesis defended in the Sociology Department, University of Warsaw, entitled: *Transformation of food related practices in post-socialist Poland. Based on a study of four families living in Warsaw.*

<sup>2</sup> The research for both my Master and PhD theses were conducted in Polish, all the translations are mine.

<sup>3</sup> People also assume that I study babies and breastfeeding, while in my research I focus on older children aged between 6 and 12 years old, which constitutes the age of primary school children in Poland.

introduced to solve them. To some extent these stories became part of my research. However, since everyone has an opinion about feeding children or some kind of personal experience, being the recipient of all these opinions, questions and comments becomes tiring at times. It is almost as if there is a need to vent these emotions, and my research triggers it.

Studying food already means researching a kind of topic that everyone knows something about: everyone eats, shops, or prepares food. Everyone is an expert. But talking about food and children evokes other kinds of familiarity and sensibility. It is not only that everyone can relate to this matter, it is also an increasingly contested and problematic issue in Poland. Everyone has an opinion about the issue of children and food. This topic sometimes appears in the least expected moments and places. At some point during my fieldwork one of my Facebook friends posted this message: "In KFC a mother and a grandmother feed a 2-year-old child chicken wings and fries. What kind of emergency services should be called in such a situation?" which flared a long online debate among his friends concerning these shameful and irresponsible adults. Another time I was at my hairdresser and one of the topics we chatted about was his 2-year-old daughter. Out of the blue, not knowing what I study, he told me that she loves to eat, but luckily she is not obese, so her appetite does not become a problem. On another occasion, at the beginning of my fieldwork, I was in a taxi when the driver started laughing and pointed me to the direction of a huge poster ad depicting the drawing of two obese figures, a mother and a daughter, with a caption: *Jakie matki, takie dziatki* (a Polish expression, meaning that children will be the same as their mothers; see below). This poster promoted the social awareness campaign which was supposed to alert parents to their influence on their children's food habits. Among other things the fact that the poster was so gendered caused a lot of controversies and was intensely discussed in the media.



Figure 1. "Ja Ty Jemy" campaign poster. The main phrase means "I and you, we eat", but at the same time *tyjemy* means "we are getting fat".  
Source: <http://www.aktywniepozdrowie.pl>

These are just few examples of different ways in which the topic of children and food surfaces in personal conversations and public debates in Poland. Many social actors are increasingly interested in what and how children eat and how they are fed. Feeding children involves not only parents and children, the spheres of home and school, but also state officials and government representatives, food companies and marketers, non-governmental activists, nutrition experts, journalists etc. In fact, this topic is often used to discuss other matters: parental responsibilities, health issues, concepts of modern personhood, gender relations, and the broader politics of food.

The intention of this thesis is to discuss these issues. I will paint a picture of meanings and related tensions and contradictions attached to children and food in Warsaw. My aim is to engage with a puzzle: why has such an everyday banal and mundane experience as feeding children become such a contested and emotional topic in which various social actors are increasingly involved?

## Chapter I. Introduction

One afternoon in June 2013 I was walking around an already quite empty primary school in Warsaw. The summer was around the corner and the atmosphere in the school was more relaxed. Nearly all classes had finished for the day, so most of the Students were either already out of school or outside, in the school courtyard. I could hear them laughing and shouting. I sat in the corridor, close to the school shop. I was completing my field notes from that day when I heard somebody approaching. A grandmother collected her grandson, 9-year-old I would say, from school and they were climbing the stairs from the cloak-locker room placed in the basement. He started asking whether they can stop in the school shop to buy something sweet. She reluctantly replied that his mom has probably already prepared a meal for him at home, so they should get back. He insisted, and so they stopped in the school shop on their way out. He asked for ice-tea and a pack of crisps, for which his grandmother paid. When I was observing this scene a food supervisor, Mrs H., approached me and commented that it is outrageous, that she has observed that boy today in the canteen, he has barely eaten anything, and now he is buying this junk food which is so unhealthy. And his grandmother allows him that, while she should rather prepare a warm meal for him!

This is one of the mundane and yet intricately complex everyday situations I have encountered many times during the twelve months of my fieldwork in Warsaw. An example of the knotted interplay between the family, the school and the food market, between diverse needs, wants, expectations and judgements; between controlling and observing others while being controlled and observed oneself. This thesis is about these moments, about the tensions and contradictions related to feeding children; about children's eating experiences; about the discourses and narratives associated with children and food, and about everyday food practices in Warsaw.

The topic of children and food is currently most often framed, both within academic and non-academic debates, in the context of health problems, either malnutrition and undernourishment or obesity. Abigail Saguy (2013) distinguishes between different ways of framing “the fat problem” in the US, but the “master frame” as she calls it, the one encompassing many others, relates to health. The same holds true for the issue of children and food. There are two main public debates related to children and food in Poland. The one less often discussed relates to the problem of malnutrition and undernourishment, still alarmingly big. According to one study, 162 000 children, which makes 7.4% of children in primary schools are undernourished in Poland (Millward Brown, 2013). Simultaneously, according to WHO, obesity and overweight among children and youth in Poland is increasing with an alarming rate (Currie et al., 2012). 20% of children between the ages of 7 and 18 have problems with overweight or obesity; it concerns 22% of boys and 18% of girls in primary schools (Kuřaga et al., 2011).<sup>4</sup>

These are important concerns. However this thesis is not about them. Of course I cannot avoid these debates and the worries many people experience in relation to them, especially in relation to the latter, because my fieldwork was filled with them. But in this thesis I move away from the dominating perspective on children and food, one dictated by the health frame, and introduce different points of view.

I argue that the health/nutrition perspective provides only one way of looking at the issue of children and food, and when we are focused only on this one perspective we get a much distorted picture of the situation. People, both adults and children, relate in many different ways to food. In certain situations they value health, in others they consider fun and pleasure to be more important. Children, for example, more often relate to fun and pleasure than health in their engagements with food. In order to create a coherent and multidimensional picture of the issue of children and food, I study various perspectives on and various social actors engaged in the process of feeding children.

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<sup>4</sup> It is rarely recognised in Poland that the problems of undernourishment and overweight can be connected and in fact concern the same children.

The multiple practices, experiences, narratives and discourses concerning children and food in Warsaw, the varied feelings, attempts of control and the negotiations, the health concerns, which I study have at least one thing in common: they all relate to feeding and eating. The goal of this thesis is to understand the relationship between feeding and eating and study the related negotiations and through that solve the above mentioned puzzle: why are some parents so anxious about feeding their children? I also pose additional research questions: in what way do people in Warsaw negotiate their feeding and eating practices? How does it influence their intergenerational and gendered relationships? Why has the topic of children and food become such an emotional and contested issue in Poland? Why are so many social actors increasingly interested in it? What sort of relationships and negotiations does it entail?<sup>5</sup>

For decades children in Poland have been the focus of various social actors, including state institutions who, for example through education, wanted to influence and shape them into particular types of people. However, it has not been done on such a scale and so intensely with the means of food as today. Different groups of adults want to feed children in a particular way and make them into particular eaters. While they usually care a lot about children, they often want what is good for children because it is in fact in some way good for them. If children eat in the right way, their parents are good and proper parents; the teachers have fulfilled their responsibilities; the state has healthy citizens and the food companies have loyal customers. The conceptions of what is “right” often differ between these adults. Those who succeed in influencing children and in socialising them into particular eaters, those who “win” the power struggles and negotiations will seemingly have the most influence over the future generation. So the stakes are high. The thing is, however, that no one “wins”. There is no actual end to these negotiations and power struggles. Nobody will have full control over children, as they appropriate and respond to these multiple

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<sup>5</sup> A similar puzzle has been recently posed by Anna Lavis, Emma-Jayne Abbots and Luci Attala: “Why and how do individuals, groups, institutions and agencies care about what Others eat? And, secondly, what forms of sociality and social bodies are made and negotiated, ruptured and ignored, or rendered visible and invisible, in these encounters between individual eating bodies and the caring agendas of Others?” (2015: 2).

influences in their own ways; and then they grow up and possibly have their own ideas about feeding children.

Children and food are both fascinating, albeit neglected research topics. For a long time they were not considered interesting by the predominantly male researchers, as they were perceived as banal and mundane, not worthy of a scientific analysis, in the same way as studying women used to be seen (see Oakley, 1994; Hardman, 2001). While there has been anthropological research on food (e.g. Richards, 1932; Levi-Strauss, 1966; Goody, 1982; Mintz, 1986; Harris, 1987) and children (e.g. Mead, 1930; Fortes, 1938; Richards, 1956), both of these topics grew in importance and were appreciated on their own only since the 1980s. However, as for example Lawrence Hirschfeld (2002) has argued, anthropology as a discipline still neglects to research children. In an attempt to understand the feeding – eating relationships and the issue of children and food in Warsaw, this thesis builds on the scholarships of anthropology of food and anthropology of childhood, or – with the aim to exceed disciplinary divisions – on the findings of food studies and childhood studies.<sup>6</sup> I also draw a lot from the growing literature that intersects childhood and food studies (e.g. Jing, 2000a; James, Kjørholt and Tingstad, 2009a; Jackson, 2009; Punch, McIntosh and Emond, 2012a).

My research aims to fill out important gaps which exist in the literature. Firstly, although there exists a vast range of research on feeding (e.g. DeVault, 1991; Anving and Thorsted, 2010) and on eating (e.g. Mol, 2008; Abbots and Lavis, 2013a), the two are usually studied separately. I argue, however, that feeding and eating are inextricably connected and continuously influence each other. Therefore, in order to understand each of them, we have to look at the relationship between the two, especially when children are involved. It is surprising how often children are excluded when studying the process of feeding, my research remedies this situation.

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<sup>6</sup> For overviews in relation to food studies see e.g. Mennell, Murcott, and van Otterloo, 1992; Beardsworth, and Keil, 1997; Mintz, and Du Bois, 2002; Murcott, 2011; Murcott, Belasco, and Jackson, 2013; Hamada et al. 2015. In relation to childhood studies see e.g. Qvortrup et al., 1994; Mayall, 1994a; James and Prout, 1997; James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998; Christiansen and James, 2008; Lancy, 2008; Montgomery, 2009; James, 2010; Tisdall and Punch, 2012.

Secondly, even though certain ideas of food morality are often implicit in many studies of food (e.g. Saguy and Riley, 2005; Aronsson and Gottzen, 2011), there are only few studies which engage with it more explicitly (Coveney, 2006). I argue that in fact one of the main ways in which people relate to and engage with food is through their moral perspectives on food and moral food practices. The framework of food morality, which I create building on Jarrett Zigon's theory (2008, 2009), allows us to understand why people eat what they eat and why they are fed in a certain way, the multiplicity of perspectives on food and also the connections between food discourses and food practices.

Thirdly, many studies focus on one aspect or space of children's food practices, be it home (e.g. James, Curtis and Ellis, 2009); school (e.g. Pike, 2010a) or other institutions (e.g. Punch et al., 2009); commercial life (e.g. Cook, 2009a, 2009b) or food education (Pike and Colquhoun, 2009). I argue, however, that in order to better understand children's food practices and to thoroughly study the process of feeding children, we have to look at the multiple sites of children's engagements with food and multiple social actors engaged in the process of feeding. That is why my research includes not only families and primary schools, but also state institutions, market agencies, non-governmental organisations and media.

Fourthly, building on that literature which engages with the struggles between adults and children related to food (e.g. Grieshaber, 1997; Anving and Sellerberg, 2010), my research proposes a unique analytical approach to that issue. This thesis uses the framework of multi-layered negotiations and the theory of strategies and tactics (Certeau, 1984) in order to analyse the relationships and struggles between adults and children related to food.

Finally, fifthly, this thesis aims to fill out an important regional gap in the research on food, on children and on children and food. With my research, I bring the food studies and childhood studies to Eastern Europe and Poland more specifically, and also I offer the engagement with new cultural contexts to the existing literature.

This introductory chapter creates a background for the whole thesis. In the first part I discuss my understanding of the relationship between feeding and eating. I consider diverse dimensions of that relationship and introduce my theoretical approach to those issues. In the second part I take a historical view and discuss the changes of feeding and eating that have taken place in post-socialist Poland. These theoretical and diachronic perspectives create the context for the following chapters.

In chapter 2 I discuss my methodology and my field sites. I reflect on doing fieldwork “at home” and discuss the reality of doing multi-sited and relational ethnography. I present my field sites (families, schools, state agencies, NGOs, food and marketing companies, and media) and introduce the main characters of my thesis. I also comment on doing research with children and the theoretical and practical implications this entails.

Chapter 3 focuses on food categorizations. I engage with the ideas about “proper” and “not proper” food. I introduce the concept of food morality and explain how diverse moral discourses on food influence people’s moral dispositions and their practices. I focus on food itself: how is it categorized along diverse nutritional, bodily and phenomenological lines? I critically engage with the category of *children’s food* and study the balancing of “good” and “bad” food when feeding and eating.

Chapter 4 studies the organisation of feeding and eating, the general rules that guide food practices and the ways of implementing them at home and at school, and also the negotiations between these spheres. I look at the ways in which children intentionally and non-intentionally influence feeding and eating at home and at school; and how adults (mothers, fathers, grandparents, head teachers, food supervisors, cooks, teachers) negotiate and coordinate feeding and eating with each other and with children.

In chapter 5, which tightly builds on chapter 4, I discuss the daily interactions of feeding and eating, namely breakfast and the midday meal. I argue that adults implement diverse strategies regarding feeding children, while children employ

multiple tactics to fight with that imposed order. I analyse the verbal and non-verbal negotiations adults and children engage in and various influences on their everyday feeding and eating practices.

Chapter 6 focuses on the numerous attempts of normalizing adults' feeding and children's eating practices. I analyse the food education politics in Warsaw and the ways in which the state agencies, non-governmental organisations and food companies attempt to discipline both adults and children in their food practices, and how they negotiate this process between themselves.

Chapter 7 brings together the issues debated in other chapters as I focus on school shops. I examine the feeding – eating interactions taking place in school shops and the multiple influences on them. I also discuss the politics of responsibility and blame, which underlie the school shops debates in Poland.

In chapter 8 I summarize the main themes of my thesis and draw the concluding arguments regarding the feeding – eating negotiations concerning children in Warsaw.

The chapters are in multiple ways connected and complement each other. I move between the different levels of analysis, providing a more synchronic study of family practices, school life and the negotiations between family and school; and a more diachronic analysis of the post-socialist changes in Poland, which influenced for example the food industry. There are many themes which run between the chapters, which may give a reader a sense of repetition. However, the different moments where I discuss children's socialisation or control and power relations, in fact relate to and build on each other. Also, the different aspects of families' and schools' social lives are gradually unveiled in different chapters, in the end creating a certain whole picture. Still, there is a certain order to the division of chapters I implemented. Chapters 1 and 2 are meant to create the theoretical and historical background and introduce my research, my methods and the context of my research. Chapter 3 focuses on food categorizations, which guide people's practices and negotiations discussed in chapter 4 (the general rules) and chapter 5 (daily interactions). Chapter 6 zooms out from the everyday food negotiations at

home and at school and discusses the attempts of normalizing these everyday practices. Chapter 7 connects all the mentioned issues through a case study. And chapter 8 summarizes and concludes my arguments. While connecting the broader themes of the thesis, each of the chapters focuses on one aspect, layer or dimension of feeding – eating negotiations in Warsaw.

## 1.1 Understanding Feeding – Eating Relationships

*It is in the maternal instinct: this need to feed!*  
(Paulina, 42-year-old)

The activities of feeding the family are of course not really instinctual; they are socially organized and their logic is learned.  
(DeVault, 1991: 48)

When I started my fieldwork I set out to study the process of feeding children in Warsaw. I was interested in uncovering the ways in which diverse social actors, namely families, schools, other state institutions, food industry, non-governmental organisations and media, influence and negotiate the process of feeding children. As it turned out during the twelve months of my fieldwork, feeding cannot be studied without analysing eating at the same time. Children in many intentional and non-intentional ways influence the process of feeding. Feeding is not possible if eating does not occur, both conceptually and practically.

Because this connection seems obvious, it is often omitted. I have not thought about it before my fieldwork. Feeding and eating are often analysed separately, as if they were disconnected, or that connection is pointed out only implicitly. However, they are inherently related. This relationship is not an easy or straightforward one. In fact it is quite puzzling. It is one of the most fundamental and basic human relationships, a mundane physiological experience, and yet it can be very complicated.

I understand both feeding and eating as sets of related practices, as certain processes filled with symbolic meanings. As Goffman explains, during a situation – for example a meal – “many different things are happening simultaneously – things that are likely to have begun at different moments and may terminate dissynchronously” (1974: 9). Eating for example is not only about putting food in your mouth (often called feeding yourself); chewing, swallowing and digesting. As Marilyn Strathern points out, “in describing actions, eating also describes relations” (2012: 2; see also Fausto and Costa, 2013). Eating is also about what is eaten, and

how, where, when and with whom is it eaten. On the couch in front of the TV or in the restaurant – these are very different eating experiences. They also differ according to how and who is feeding a person who eats. Feeding entails the existence of food producers, food retailers and shopping practices; or food foraging and hunting. It means planning when, where and how the feeding will be organised and preparing food. Moreover, “it takes proper food from the right source to make feeding nourishing” (Strathern, 2012: 6). It also entails putting food on the plate or into somebody’s hand or mouth, to enable their eating.

The practices of feeding and eating cannot happen without each other, especially in the case of children. As one of the mothers I talked to told me, *I can have my ideas about feeding her but after all she will eat what she wants, the feeding comes down to her eating something*. Feeding and eating are in constant relation and they continuously interact with and influence each other. Though feeding and eating are biologically grounded and to a large extent are bodily experiences, they are also deeply cultural and social practices filled with symbolic meanings.

In this thesis I build on practice theory (see e.g. Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Certeau, 1984; Ortner, 1984, 2006; Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005), that is I am interested in *what people do with food* and with each other in relation to feeding and eating. Practices are the everyday, habitual, to large extent non-reflexive actions based on embodied knowledge which relate to both bodily and mental activities. As Bernard Lahire explains, “practices can only be understood as the intersection of embodied dispositions (...) and contextual constraints.” (2011: xi). The feeding – eating interactions are the result of multiple practices, which are based on people’s individual embodied dispositions and influenced by the contexts of those interactions. I am interested in individual practices regarding feeding and eating as an expression of personal dispositions (Lahire, 2011), rather than class affiliations (see Bourdieu, 1984; Warde, 1997; Domański, 2015).

In the thesis I also relate to discourses concerning children and food, which impact on the feeding – eating relationships as they influence both people’s practices and the contexts of their interactions. By the concept of *discourse* I mean the systems

of thoughts associated with certain ideas, beliefs and attitudes, which promote certain practices and construct the world in a certain way (Foucault, 1972; Lessa, 2006). Multiple discourses concerning children and food are not only present in public debates in Poland; they are also used in people's narratives and reflected in their practices. I also relate to Erving Goffman's concept of *frames* which are ways of organising experiences and guiding the actions of individuals, groups and societies (Goffman, 1974). As Hacking (2004) shows, Goffman and Foucault are not in opposition to each other, their theories rather complement each other. Although they are not exactly the same, I will use the concept of *discourse* interchangeably with the concept of *frame*.

I draw the direct connections between discourses and practices through my understanding of food morality. In chapter 3, building on Jarrett Zigon's theory (2008, 2011), I distinguish between moral discourses, which relate to shared ideas about proper and not proper food; and moral individual dispositions and practices which are shaped by these multiple food discourses.

Eating and feeding are multi-dimensional and entangle many actors in different ways (see Abbots and Lavis, 2013b: 3). They engage those directly involved, for example parents and children or customers of a restaurant and its chef; but also food producers, state authorities, media outlets, and in the case of a restaurant waiters and owners of that restaurant. Feeding and eating connects directly engaged actors in a very intimate way and involves very distant actors. Marilyn Strathern explains: "Agents know themselves as persons through the food they consume; eating decomposes their multiple relations into the specific axis relevant to the food source" (2012: 9). Being fed as a client of a restaurant or in the canteen is not the same as being fed at home. Strathern adds that being fed as a mother is not the same as being fed as a daughter. People become particular feeders and/or eaters through the practices they and others engage in.

## **Feeding**

Feeding a child is usually a gendered experience; "the nourishing art" – as Giard (1998) calls it – is predominantly a mother's duty (see Charles and Kerr, 1988; De

Vault, 1991; Murcott, 1983, 2000; Walczewska, 2008; Mroczkowska, 2014). This need to feed and nurture is often perceived as an innate biological necessity and a fundament of being a mother and a woman in Poland, though it is to a large extent socially constructed. As Magda, the conversation with whom inspired this PhD thesis, told me: *You hear around that it is your maternal duty to feed your child right, and I didn't cook before, but I started for her, I was indoctrinated into being a cooking mother.* Feeding means a constant maintenance of caring, planning what a child would eat, shopping for necessary foodstuffs, preparing meals and putting food on a child's plate or in her mouth, while taking into consideration also other members of the family and their preferences, guidelines concerning "proper eating" and various constraints related to time, space and money; and also many interventions and influences from various sources that "seek to define and regulate mothering" (Lupton, 1996: 41). Feeding is a deeply emotional and multi-dimensional (bodily, material, cultural, social and political) experience.

As Marjorie DeVault explains in her classic book *Feeding the Family* (1991), a great part of the feeding process is invisible, to a large extent it is a mental process. "Producing meals requires thoughtful coordination and interpersonal work as well as the concrete tasks of preparation (...) Feeding implies a relatedness, a sense of connection with others" (DeVault, 1991: 39). The caring work, as DeVault continues to explain, is based on putting oneself in another's place and anticipating and understanding their needs, "feeding is finding a balance between the sociability of group life and the concern for individuality" (1991: 78). Feeding is an ambiguous experience as it is both about providing necessary and "proper" food, about caring and nurturing, but also about disciplining children and teaching them how to eat.

However, mothers are not the only social actors engaged in the process of feeding children. Fathers, grandparents, media, nutrition experts, state programs and food producers influence the ways in which mothers feed their children and influence children's eating. Children are also fed by others, for example in diverse institutions, such as primary schools. There another group of adults plans and

organises their feeding. Feeding children in Warsaw is not an individual, it is a collective experience (see Hryciuk and Korolczuk, 2012b: 9). The multiplicity of feeders causes tension and results in negotiations, as their ideas and expectations about “proper” feeding may be different and their rights and responsibilities may collide.

To sum up, I understand feeding children as a practical process in which diverse social actors are directly and indirectly engaged: mothers, fathers and grandparents, schools and other state institutions, food producers and marketers, media and NGOs. In my research I focus on these different actors. Their caring practices entangle the bodily and the political (see Abbots, Lavis and Attala, 2015). They all influence each other in many ways, negotiate the process of feeding children and influence children's eating. As DeVault explains, “the work of feeding others is also shaped by, and in turn expresses, beliefs and customs of the society at a particular time.” (1991: 35). My research was conducted between September 2012 and August 2013 in Warsaw, and therefore it reflects a specific socio-historical moment or *configuration* as Elias would say (2000; see also Mennell, 1996) and presents specific feeding – eating relationships (see section 1.2).

What sort of relationship is established through feeding – eating interactions is indeed an intriguing question. Is it only about giving and receiving food? Is it an inherently asymmetrical relationship? Or is there a sense of reciprocity? A mother gives food and care to a child, and a child gives love and trust to a mother? Or maybe it extends over time, a mother gives food to a child now, so that a child will take care and feed the mother in her old age?<sup>7</sup> As I have already explained, it is necessary not only to look closer at those who feed, but also at those who eat as these practices and engaged actors are inextricably connected.

## **Eating**

Eating as a child in Poland is in many ways different from eating as an adult. A child is dependant of the feeding practices of others. Eating as a child usually means that your daily food encounters are structured by others, by adults who set

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<sup>7</sup> Food can be seen as an ultimate gift after all (see Mauss, 1954; Strathern, 1988).

up many rules related to eating. All the children I talked to during my fieldwork, treated it as obvious and understandable that they are fed by adults, usually women. Eating as a child is connected with particular expectations and experiences; it identifies a person as a child (see James, Kjørholt and Tingstad, 2009a, 2009b).

Being fed by adults means being cared for; however, children are not the passive recipients of care. They actively influence the entire process of feeding and eating. As 11-year-old Krzyś told me, *my mom feeds me, but really, I eat whatever I want*. Strathern (2012) explains that what one eats is at the same time the outcome of the agency of others. I would add that it is also the result of the agency of a person who eats, which in the case of children is often forgotten. Following Ortner, I treat agency in a twofold way (2006: 15). Agency can be about intentionality of action, about being empowered and “enacting the process of reflecting on the self and the world and of acting simultaneously within and upon what one finds there” (2006: 57); but is not necessarily always fully “conscious”, many social consequences are in fact unintended effects of certain actions. Agency is also about pursuing projects while acting within the relations of social inequality, asymmetry and force. For children exercising their agency, that is acting within the “multiplicity of social relations in which they are enmeshed” (Ortner, 2006: 130) often means engaging in resistance practices, even if unconsciously. As in the case of adults, children's agency is structured by many interactional and contextual constraints, it does have its limits (see Tisdall and Punch, 2012: 255 – 256).

As Strathern points out eating is an ambiguous experience: “readiness to eat is also a sign that the source of what is to be eaten can be trusted. (...) Food itself is the result of others' feeding; hence eating in general exposes the eater to all the pleasures and hazards of relationships.” (2012: 8 – 9). Eating as a child means being fed by others, but also deciding whether one can trust them, intentionally and non-intentionally choosing or indicating what will be eaten, navigating between diverse rules, balancing between the obedience and resistance practices, negotiating the relationships with diverse feeders; and also putting food on a fork and in a mouth, chewing, swallowing, and digesting it. Eating is both a conceptual

and a physical practice (Abbots and Lavis, 2013b: 4). As I show in this thesis, children's eating is not only a private, but is increasingly becoming a public matter in Poland.

During the twelve months of my fieldwork I have repeatedly realised that children often do not want to eat in the exact way in which adults want to feed them. As one of the cooks from school canteen pointed out to me, *they have their own tastes and food preferences, like us [adults]. We cannot force feed them, they will eat what they like to eat and not necessarily what we feed them, and it should be like that.* The ideas about feeding might differ from those about eating, and *vice versa*; and as they are inextricably linked, these differences cause a lot of tension and result in negotiations. It is often more about non-feeding: avoiding, restricting and controlling eating, than actually feeding. Similarly, it is often more about non-eating: refusing to be fed, than eating. Also, adults not only feed children, but they also feed themselves. Children also sometimes feed others or themselves. Moreover the way in which a person is fed influences their eating in the future. The way in which parents feed their children today is influenced by how they themselves were fed and how they ate when they were children. So feeding and eating are entangled in multiple ways. As Annemarie Mol would say, *feeding and eating are multiple* (Mol, 2002, 2008). What is more, the individual actors engaged in feeding and eating are in fact plural, that is they are “not completely ‘the same’ in different contexts of social life” (Lahire, 2011: xiii). Children for example eat differently at home and at school. Parents feed their children differently at home and in public spaces. Also, feeding and eating mean slightly different things in Polish.

### ***Karmienie, Żywienie and Jedzenie***

I should explain that there are two words in Polish that can translate as *feeding* into English. *Karmienie*, for many people implies feeding a baby or breastfeeding. When doing my research I often used this term, and many of my interlocutors assumed I was researching breastfeeding. This term implies certain care embedded in the practice, for example people will say that a grandmother *karmi*

her family. Another term, *żywienie*, derives from nutrition science. *Żywienie* means the provision of essential nutrients necessary to support the life and health of a person. When I was conducting interviews with nutritionists, and asked about *karmienie*, they always corrected me and explained that I am not using the right term, that *karmienie* refers to babies, while when talking about older children I should use the term *żywienie*. At the same time, none of the parents I talked to referred to *żywienie* when they talked about feeding their children. While this distinction proved to be quite problematic when doing my research, it is a very interesting one. It somehow assumes that the care and love are reserved for the more emotional feeding (*karmienie*) of babies, while older children are fed (*żywione*) in the nutritional sense; it is not about care, love and emotions anymore, but rather about providing the right nutrients so that they can develop properly.

*Jedzenie*, on the other hand, relates both to the verb (in a passive form) and the noun, and means both *food* and *eating*. Eating seems very passive, because at the same time it means food, as if there is no activity on a part of a person who eats, as if they had no agency. A person who eats *is* the food she eats or is fed (see Mol 2008). This strengthens the perception of children as passive recipients of the feeding process, which I challenge in this thesis.

In the thesis I keep using the word *feeding*, as it is more inclusive, and only in some cases indicate which of the Polish words I relate to. In the same way I use the English word *eating*. Because I do not use the local terms, which as it happens are my mother tongue terms, there is a certain disconnection between my research and my analysis of it; but exactly because of that I am able to distance myself from my research and look at it from a different angle.

Bringing the multiple issues related to children and food in Warsaw and all the data I have gathered during my fieldwork to one social relationship, the one of feeding and eating, is of course a certain simplification and has many limits. But all of the issues I have encountered and the situations I have witnessed during my fieldwork are connected to feeding and/or to eating. This is where my research brought me. Moreover, it is a certain analytical tool, an attempt to grasp the

complexities of daily food interactions between and among children and adults, which are embedded in the context of post-socialist transformations, shifting notions of parenthood and childhood, and the changing politics of food and food education in Poland. There is a certain practical component to this as well. Constantly connecting feeding and eating allows me to bring children's perspectives more to the foreground. The thesis is still dominated by adult perspectives, but focusing attention on eating as well as on feeding, allows pulling out children's views and experiences.

### **Negotiations**

The main focus in this thesis is on negotiations regarding feeding and eating. Negotiations are an inherent element of this relationship and through negotiations diverse social actors are pulled into these interactions. In my understanding of *negotiations* I relate to Anselm Strauss's theory (1978). The term has a very broad and inclusive meaning for him, it is defined by bargaining, compromising, making arrangements, getting tacit understandings, exchanging, engaging in collusion and so on (1978: 1). Negotiations appear in many forms and all areas of life and they are patterned, there are certain rules defining who negotiates with whom, when and about what which create a certain negotiated order.

In my analysis, however, I relate to negotiations in a slightly different way than Strauss. According to him, how an actor thinks about negotiations bears directly on such issues as when, how, about what, with whom, and how much he would negotiate (Mather, 1979), which implies that participating in negotiations is a conscious and intentional involvement. I argue that negotiations are not necessarily or always intentional or reflexive.

In an attempt to understand the process of negotiating feeding and eating I distinguish four layers of negotiations which are connected with each other: (1) the internal/inner negotiations; (2) the interactional negotiations, (3) the (interactional) order negotiations and (4) the external influences on those negotiations. This last layer circles back to the first one, but also influences all the

other layers. All of them are in fact so closely connected that distinguishing between them is a somewhat artificial process, implemented for the sake of analysis.

### **Inner Negotiations**

First of all, people participating in each feeding – eating interaction, for example parents and children who sit at the dinner table or a mother doing shopping, or teachers trying to make children finish their meal in the school canteen, act on the basis of their embodied dispositions and views on what is right and wrong, proper and not proper, desirable or not in each situation – I discuss these moral categorizations mainly in chapter 3. In that way people engage in not necessarily reflexive, often emotional, embodied “inner” negotiations. I understand emotions as something that people both *have* and *do* (see Solomon, 2007; Scheer, 2012). Emotions are an inherent element of the feeding – eating interactions; they – as Solomon explains – “are not either black or white but display all sorts of complex colour patterns (...) Our emotional lives are rich, complex and colourful” (2007: 2). The same interaction can evoke multiple, contradictory emotions for/in a person, in the same way as it can provoke different moral dispositions. This corresponds to Bernard Lahire's idea of not coherent dispositions and *habitus*, to his concept of the plural actor. Lahire (2003, 2011) is interested in looking at how external reality which is more or less heterogeneous in nature becomes embodied, and how the various individual dispositions, not necessarily coherent as Bourdieu would have it, are constructed.<sup>8</sup> Monique Scheer explains that “attending to ‘inner’ experience is a practice” (2012: 200); a practice which is an ingrained component of feeding – eating interactions.

People have dispositions to be particular eaters and particular feeders. These dispositions and the practices of feeding and eating are developed through the process of *socialisation*.<sup>9</sup> Children are in many ways socialised and disciplined

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<sup>8</sup> Because I did not manage to observe the same people in different social contexts, I was not able to conduct the sort of research and analysis Lahire proposes (1995, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Socialisation is such an important topic in anthropology and social sciences in general (see e.g. Mead, 1928; Fortes, 1938; Berger and Luckman, 1966; Mayer, 1970a; Denzin, 1977; Ochs, 1988; Briggs, 1999) that it would not be possible to cover all the related debates in this thesis.

through food: when they learn what to eat and what not to eat, what kind of food is eaten when, how to behave when eating etc.

Following contemporary socialisation theories (e.g. Corsaro, 2005; Lahire, 2011; James, 2013), I do not perceive socialisation as a unilinear developmental process and I treat children as active agents of their socialisations. Children not only embody diverse rules and knowledges they are taught, they also appropriate them in their own, individual ways. As Allison James explains, “children do have some degree of agency and choice in the matter of the person they turn out to be.” (2013: 15).

This thesis, however, is not only about socialising children. It is also about disciplining adults in regards to their feeding practices: mothers and fathers (who are often socialised to different parental feeding roles), cooks in school canteens, teachers and other caregivers. To some extent they are, as children, the active agents of their socialisation processes, they employ multiple *technologies of the self* (Foucault, 1988) to become certain feeders. As Coveney explains, when feeding their children parents have to “discipline themselves in their parental responsibilities” (2006: 125). These processes are connected: through the feeding – eating interactions children are socialised into certain kinds of eaters, while their parents are socialised into certain kinds of feeders, characteristic of their social group, their culture, and of a certain socio-historical moment (see sections 1.2, 2.1).

Socialising messages, as Philip Mayer explains “are often conveyed non-deliberately as well as deliberately – conveyed by a variety of agents in the variety of contexts” (1970b: xviii). This is what happens to children through food. They are socialised through the engagement with their parents or grandparents, adults at school, their peers and advertising and media messages. They might receive different, sometimes contradictory, communications from these diverse sources and they react to those messages and appropriate them in their own ways. The socialisation process, as Lahire (2011) so convincingly argues, is heterogeneous.

Mayer distinguishes between socialising practices, which aim to instil in someone a particular behaviour and attitude; and socialising processes, that is all the experiences that advance people in their role-playing skills (1970b: xvi-xix). The socialisation into certain kinds of eaters and feeders occurs in this twofold way. Sometimes the disciplining comments (verbal or non-verbal) guide people to “proper” food practices, instil in them proper attitudes. Examples would be to “sit up straight at the table”, to “eat with your fork and knife” that children so often hear; or “you have to feed them fruits”, “they need to eat breakfast” directed at parents. However, as Mayer explains, food socialisation happens through multiple social experiences, more or less deliberate in their socialising goals, it is a certain process. Moreover, in this thesis I look at the processes of socialisation in a somewhat circular way: through feeding – eating interactions people are socialised into particular kinds of feeders and eaters, but these interactions take a certain turn and look in a certain way because the actors already have particular dispositions and are particular kinds of feeders and eaters.

Mayer asks: “How, without guidance from the actors, can [an anthropological observer] claim to identify agents and occasions of 'unconscious', non-deliberate, diffuse socialisation?” (1970b: xviii). How, I may add, is the observer supposed to integrate the circular aspect of socialisation into the analysis? “The observer simply sees connections which he cannot prove” (Mayer, 1970b: xviii). That is very much my case. The food socialisation of both adults and children is often very subtle, and since it is to a large extent a process, the actual socialising moments are often difficult to identify. In the same way the inner feeding/eating negotiations take place within a person and cannot be easily spotted by an observer. Still, both are embedded in feeding – eating interactions, and I try to unveil them throughout this thesis. They connect the first and the second layers of negotiations.

### **Interactional Negotiations**

Secondly, people engage in these inner negotiations and balancing of the “good” and “bad” food and food practices in relation to each other. People are socialised into certain kinds of feeders and eaters through interactions and shared

experiences. Participants of a particular feeding – eating interaction employ bodily, cognitive and emotional practices; that is they *do* particular things, they *do* reflect on and think about the interaction and/or they *do* emotions related to that interaction (see Scheer, 2012). People engage in power relations and verbally and non-verbally, reflexively and non-reflexively negotiate with each other. In result of these negotiations, the actual practices and decisions may differ from people’s initial standpoints.

In my understanding of *power* I relate to Michel Foucault (1980, 1991) in that it is something which cannot be possessed, but rather is used to influence the actions of others; it cannot be exchanged only exercised, as it is something that exists in action. The relationship between feeding and eating is always one of power. Foucault notes that the relationship between parents and children is one shaped by power struggles. “Rather than analysing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, [we should be] analysing power relations through the antagonism of strategies” (Foucault, 1982: 780). In this thesis I am interested in the disciplining power adults exercise over children and other adults in their attempts to mould and re-shape others’ feeding and/or eating practices. Since “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1998: 95), I am equally interested in people’s empowered responses and appropriation of these disciplining strategies. As Ian McIntosh et al. point out, food is a very interesting “power tool” used both by adults and children (2010: 298).

Negotiations regarding feeding and eating happen among adults and children and between adults and children. To analyse the latter I refer to Michel de Certeau’s theory and his distinction between *strategies* and *tactics* (1984: 29 – 44). *Strategies* are implemented by institutions and structures of power – in this case adults; they have the status of the dominant order and attempt to set certain behaviours and courses of action. *Tactics* are much more flexible and are employed by people – in this case children – acting in the environment defined by strategies. Tactics are developed to evade or negotiate strategies towards their own purposes and desires. Both are embedded in the everyday life and are not

necessarily conscious, they do not necessarily follow the intentional, goal-oriented logic, but can be habitual, following the logic of everyday practice.

I do not however adopt Certeau's theory in its entirety. His concept of interrelated strategies and tactics corresponds to very conflicting social interactions and a divided social world. He also assumes that tactics are determined by the absence of power (1984: 36 – 37). When it comes to feeding and eating, however, the relationship between engaged actors is not necessarily always based on struggle and conflict, it is simultaneously based on love, care and the desire to please on both sides. As Ahearne explains:

‘Strategies’ and ‘tactics’ cannot necessarily be set against each other as opposing forces in a clearly defined zone of combat. Rather, as Certeau presents them, they enable us as concepts to discern a number of heterogeneous movements across different distributions of power. (1995: 163)

Even though it might seem that in this relationship children are the ones with no power, they in fact have a lot of influence and control – often non-intentional – over adults. These strategies and tactics, the verbal and non-verbal daily negotiations regarding feeding and eating are discussed mainly in chapter 5.

The feeding – eating interaction is not necessarily negotiated at the specific moment when it is happening. The negotiations can extend over time, when for example dinner plans are discussed in the morning. They can also extend over space. Despite what Goffman argues (1983: 2 – 4), participants of a certain encounter do not have to be in each other's physical presence, as the feeding – eating interactions can be mediated by food, prepared earlier and eaten later; or for example by mobile phones, when parents call their children to check whether they have eaten (Anving and Thorsted, 2010: 40). This connects the second layer of negotiations with the third one.

### **Order Negotiations**

Thirdly, the everyday negotiations and interactions are guided by a certain interaction order, by particular rules established beforehand (Goffman, 1967, 1983). The feeding – eating negotiations are patterned in a certain way (Strauss,

1978). This relates for example to how the family's foodwork is organised, when, where and how food is eaten at home or how, when and where food is served in schools – to the general rules guiding food interactions. The feeding and eating practices are embedded in a certain order, which is negotiated in itself, and they have to be coordinated, both at home, at school and between home and school. I discuss this in chapter 4.

Negotiating the order of the feeding – eating interactions, as in fact all the other layers of negotiations, is intertwined with the intergenerational order. In Poland this entails not only *generationing*, that is generational structuring of adults and children (see Alanen, 2001b: 129), but there are rather three generations/categories to consider: grandparents, parents (or other adults from that generation) and children (e.g. Alanen and Mayall, 2001; Siibak and Vittadini, 2012). Leena Alanen argues that the concept of generation is vital to consider when studying childhood and children's relationships, as *generation* is a "socially constructed system of relationships among social positions in which children and adults are the holders of specific social positions defined in relation to each other and constituting, in turn, specific social (and in this case generational) structures" (2001a: 12, see also Punch, 2005).

While I consider my interlocutors to be from certain generations, which influences the relations between them and their social/negotiating positions, I do not conduct a generational analysis (see Mannheim, 1952). It is important to point out that in Poland children in fact are *generationated* in two ways. On the one hand, they are seen as children now, as different from adults and in a need of adults' care, through multiple practices they become and are made into children; on the other hand, they are also perceived as the future generation, as future adults. Especially the latter is often evoked in the debates about children's "bad" food habits (see chapter 6).

### **The External Influences on Negotiations**

Fourthly, the moment of feeding a child and eating as a child is not only a result of the negotiations between family members, or within the school; they not only

influence each other, but are moreover also influenced by diverse other social actors, such as media, state officials and regulations, food companies, by the diverse discourses related to feeding and eating. Multiple agencies and officials are trying to influence people's practices, both their individual dispositions and the contexts of their interactions. That happens for example when the state uses what Michel Foucault calls *biopolitics* – control technologies which do not focus on individuals, but on the population – to govern and control children and their parents and to normalize them according to certain standards regarding feeding and eating (Foucault, 1991). There is an interesting connection between a mother feeding her family, and a state feeding its nation. The state's role is not only to feed children, but also to do it in such a way to produce healthy citizens (see Téchoueyres, 2003; Gullberg, 2006). The state also relies on *governmentality*, as children (and parents in a different way) are encouraged, persuaded or overtly disciplined to behave in a particular way and become particular types of self-governing autonomous subjects (Foucault, 1980, 1991). I discuss this mainly in chapter 6.

This last layer of negotiations is embedded in other layers; it especially circles back to the first one. It becomes an element of people's embodied dispositions and contexts of their everyday life. When parents and children negotiate feeding and eating through their daily interactions, they at the same time have to negotiate the influences of other social actors on their feeding and eating practices. Therefore these influences are present throughout the whole thesis, but especially chapter 7 brings them together.

In the following chapters I build on the theoretical approach I have just explained. It may seem like a theoretical patchwork, but as Sherry Ortner argues the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau, and to some extent even Erving Goffman's interactionist approach, create one tradition of practice theory (2006: 2 – 7; see also Ortner, 1984; Certeau, 1984: 45 – 61). In this thesis I build on this tradition to analyse the negotiations regarding feeding and eating.

Through doing that, the thesis contributes to the debates currently taking place within anthropology of food and anthropology of childhood, or more broadly in childhood and food studies and also beyond them. I refer to the issues of *socialisation, power, agency, control and discipline*; to *dispositions and contexts*; to diverse *practices, discourses and negotiations* related to children and food. I discuss how feeding and eating, which engage diverse actors, have varied meanings and entail multiple experiences, are directly and indirectly, intentionally and non-intentionally negotiated in Warsaw. The fact that feeding and eating are increasingly a source of anxiety is of course not specific only to Poland or Warsaw (e.g. Pike and Kelly, 2014). Many of the issues I engage with can resonate with the experiences from other cultural contexts, as they are characteristic of a certain socio-cultural configuration and moment, which Poland is a part of. Nevertheless, even if some phenomenon might occur across different countries, responses to them are unique. Moreover, what makes the case of Poland especially interesting is that the everyday experiences of feeding and eating and the related discourses and narratives are situated within the context of post-socialist transformations. To bring this context to the foreground I now consider feeding – eating in Poland from a more diachronic perspective.

## 1.2 Feeding and Eating in Post-socialist Poland

The meanings attached to feeding and eating and related experiences, discourses and practices have changed in Poland. During the last thirty years not only family life, conceptions of childhood and parenthood, the food market and hence consumption patterns and practices, and media and public discourses have changed, influencing the ways in which parents feed their children and how children eat; also the way in which the state is feeding its nation has changed in post-socialist Poland.

Though this thesis is mostly based on synchronic analysis, I do believe that the feeding and eating today are influenced by what they were – or were not – before. The contemporary situation in Poland cannot be analysed without looking at its historical context. Firstly, I briefly discuss feeding and eating during socialism, and then I focus on the changes which occurred in the 1990s in Poland. The situation of the 1990s was certainly different from the moment of my research (2012 – 2013), however many processes that occurred then, continued and further developed throughout the 2000s.<sup>10</sup>

Both socialism and post-socialism were periods of many changes and diversified experiences. Nevertheless, they both promoted a certain ideal vision of feeding and eating, which corresponded to the ideal vision of a person (see Dunn, 2004). While people's practices might not necessarily fulfil these ideal models, many of them strive to do so. Everyday feeding and eating are not only influenced by the promoted norms and conventions regarding food, but also by the relations between engaged actors and the entire socio-political-economic context.

Treating the period of the Polish People's Republic as a homogenous time is a huge simplification – it lasted more than forty years and in itself was the arena of many changes, concerning for example the modernization of preparation and

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<sup>10</sup> I do not engage in this thesis with more theoretical discussions about what post-socialism is and what is its time frame; how that concept has been constructed and by whom; is Poland still a post-socialist society; would the “post-socialist condition” ever cease to exist? (e.g. Verdery, 1996; Fraser, 1997; Hann, 2002; Buchowski, 2004; Kürti and Skalník, 2009; Chari and Verdery, 2009; Gille, 2010).

storage of food or the development of nutrition science. Nevertheless, it is often connected, in individual and shared memories and popular representations, to the experience of queuing (Mazurek, 2010), food rationing (Kurczewski, 2004), and adapting various strategies based on informal exchange networks (Wedel, 1986). Shortage was an everyday experience. Shopping required various skills because the availability and access to goods was unpredictable and uncertain. Therefore people implemented diverse strategies to reach, procure and accumulate necessary goods, which were often embedded in the black market economy and facilitated by informal networks or family ties with the countryside.

People were also – because they had to be – very inventive in their shopping and cooking practices. Poland was a country of *ersatz*: the unavailable products were substituted with creative replacements, both by producers and consumers (Brzostek, 2010: 75 – 80). Coffee for example was made from chicory, chocolate was substituted with the *produkt czekoladopodobny* (chocolate-like product), and *Polo-Cockta*, which was the cheaper substitute of *Coca-Cola* sold in Poland since the 1970s, was invented. As one of my interlocutors has put it, *the choice was limited then. It was really difficult to procure different products, the diet wasn't diversified – we ate the same all the time. But also it was easier, you didn't have to choose, worry or restrict yourself, there was less temptation* (Tomek, 40-year-old). Food was procured (*zdobywane*) in diverse ways and not simply bought. Especially food which was outside of the control of the state was perceived as “pure, real and ‘ours’ (...) Food produced on a family’s own plot or smallholding, or obtained from village kin (...) was viewed as essentially good” (Haukanes and Pine, 2003: 108, see also Smith and Jehlicka, 2007). During my interviews I have often heard how difficult it used to be to organise feeding and eating, it was always a struggle. At the same time many of my interlocutors claimed that food was better: it was not filled with artificial additives and it was more natural (see Caldwell, 2007, 2010). Moreover, because some products were so rare, food and eating were celebrated and appreciated more than they are today. 36-year-old Asia told me: *There were fewer chemicals in food, you knew from where these products were! And they were appreciated more, both the food products and the food celebrations. Now*

*everything is available all year round, there is no difference between a Monday, a Sunday and a Christmas Eve. And there used to be a difference!*

Błażej Brzostek (2010) discusses how the state authorities promoted a unified model of consumption of a classless society – the universal diet was a part of a normative, rationalized system. This however was the ideal propaganda vision. In reality people who were affiliated with the government or the party had an easier access to a greater range of goods. Also people working in trade (*handel*) were perceived as lucky due to their easier access to diverse goods in the prevalent economy of shortage. Food – as everything else – was in many ways politicized. In fact many protests and riots against the government, which happened at the beginning of the 1970s for example, were directly caused by food scarcity or exorbitant prices. Food was in many ways the medium through which the socialist ideology was implemented; and through controlling food the state held the regulatory power over its citizens (Caldwell, 2009a). It was mostly manifested in production<sup>11</sup> (feeding) – as this was the main focus of the socialist state – but also consequently in consumption (eating).

The “modern” rational attitude to feeding and eating was exemplified in nutrition science developing since the 1950s. Separate nutritional guidelines were created for different groups: women in general, pregnant and lactating women, blue and white collar male workers, and children. The modern and rational socialist state, via administrative officials and regulations, claimed that it knew better how to properly feed its citizens than people knew. In general in the state discourses, family and domestic domain were “equated with corruption, dissidence and a kind of anti-social individualism or ‘amoral familism’” (Pine, 2007: 186). Many efforts were made to move eating and cooking practices from the domestic to the public sphere, which was easier to control. This was manifested for example in the way housing was constructed; the space of kitchen was significantly reduced, and it was often built without windows (Malicka, 1975: 190). Many workers’ families did

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<sup>11</sup> Although in Poland, contrary to the situation in other socialist countries, agriculture was not entirely collectivized; over 85% of farm land was privately owned (Pine, 1994: 24). Food was only partly produced by the state owned farms; however food distribution was organised by the state.

not have their own kitchens at all – as Ries shows it was supposed to constrain the “kitchen talk” which facilitates a sense of privacy and encourages free expression (1997: 10 – 12). This socio-architectural trend was also influenced by the new branch of science: collective feeding (Brzostek, 2010: 196 – 205; see also Caldwell, 2009b: 6). The newly created nutritional guidelines were carefully implemented in the canteens: adults were fed in the work canteens and children in the school canteens. Not only was it supposed to provide them with nutritional elements they needed; the goal was also to bind workers to their workplace and raise young socialist citizens in schools. The state not only supplied people with food – or when it failed at that, it distributed carefully prepared food rations; it also literally fed its nation.

In reality collective feeding did not become popular in Poland, the offer was in fact quite limited and often perceived as bad; and most importantly eating was strongly associated with the domestic sphere, where women were supposed to prepare meals for their families (Szpakowska, 2008: 327; Brzostek, 2010: 214– 218; see also Haukanes, 2007). Although the model of the egalitarian family – in which women share housework with men, and boys and girls are in the same way socialised to help with domestic tasks – was promoted, and though men did cook occasionally as women were often at work (see Czekalski, 2004: 362); nevertheless feeding the family was woman’s responsibility. After coming back from work, she was expected to take care of and feed her family (see e.g. Szpakowska, 2004).

Titkov (1995) uses the concept of *managerial matriarchy* to refer to many responsibilities that women in Poland have taken on themselves, which relates to their feelings of “being needed” and fulfilling their duties. In Poland the notion of womanhood, inextricably connected with motherhood, is – as Budrowska (2000) shows – influenced by Catholicism and the idea of *Matka-Polka* (Polish-Mother) who devotes herself and sacrifices everything for the family and the country.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The cultural concept of *Matka-Polka* has been very influential for the representations of femininity in Poland (Hryciuk and Korolczuk, 2012a). It is connected to Catholicism, especially Virgin Mary, and the symbolic link between the family and the nation, which was supposed to be sustained by women, who sacrifice themselves for the country, family and the nation. Polish

Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk explain that during socialism women were defined in two ways: as workers – who were supposed to supplement family income and support the development of the country; and as mothers – whose job was to “produce respectable citizens for the state” (2000: 156; see also Einhorn, 1993). The state was supporting women in combining those two roles, for example by introducing maternity leaves, developing pro-natal policies and opening nurseries and kindergartens.

The state has also taken on itself a large part of the responsibility to raise the future citizens. However, as for example Sikorska points out, school was mostly focused on the curricula and the educational goals, rather than on children themselves (2009: 247). In fact the state was not focused on welfare as much as it claimed: “the state had mythologized its generosity” as Nash – who analysed the changing notions of kinship and care in Czech Republic – puts it (2003: 211). There was a lot of disparity between the symbolic ideals and the actual gender roles, as more generally there were varying differences between the official ideological discourse and the everyday practices.

At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s a lot changed in Poland. The post-socialist transformation involved changes in the economy, the political system, governance, freedom of speech and gathering, media, social policies, and memberships in international alliances. Consumption patterns and everyday practices changed when the socialist system with a centrally planned economy was transformed into a capitalist system with deregulated markets. As 37-year-old Aneta told me when we were talking about sweets: *Once you had to stand in line for these products. I mean there were candies and biscuits, but it wasn't as available as it is today! Today children can buy one out of a thousand different chocolate bars on their way to school, and you cannot control it!* The symbolic empty shelves were filled with thousands of goods and surrounded by fierce marketing, in the place of socialist

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women were supposed to devote their lives to patriotic acts: raising children, sustaining Polish culture when Poland did not exist as a country, and supporting soldiers. This concept was strengthened during the 19th century, and persistent during both World Wars. During the Polish People's Republic the idea of *Matka-Polka* was further reinforced, but directed towards building the strong socialist country.

propaganda campaigns. State owned companies were privatized and many Western companies entered Poland. People have experienced a “shift from the officially promoted ethics of self-sacrifice and collectivism to one of individualism and self-realisation through consumption” (Klein, Jung and Caldwell, 2014: 10).

Many of my interlocutors working in the food market told me that in the 1990s Poles bought absolutely everything that was sold as a product from the West. The good and proper has been often affiliated with Western. Gille (2010) explains that in the early 1990s people were looking forward to “normal” lives, meaning not as over-politicized as during socialist period; however “normal” referred as well to living standards (see Fehervary, 2002) and consumer culture: consumption of Western goods symbolized the fulfilment of aspirations and the return to “normality” (Rausing, 2002; Drazin, 2002).<sup>13</sup> As Haldis Haukanes and Francis Pine argue, “for Eastern Europeans to reject these representations [as backward, ignorant, brutal and dirty], and claim their place in capitalist or global ‘modernity’, they have to reject various ‘bad’ old practices, linked as much to communist ‘modernity’ as to peasant ‘backward’ traditions, as well as to build or elaborate ‘good’ *traditional* ones” (2003: 127). The importance of becoming “normal”, “Western” and “modern” can be symbolized by the fact that during an opening of the first McDonald’s restaurant in Warsaw in June 1992, not only the priest was present, but also the representatives from politics (minister of labour and social policies Jacek Kuroń), culture (famous writer Agnieszka Osiecka) and sport (coach Kazimierz Górski) (see Czeglédy, 2002; Caldwell, 2004; Pine, 2007).

Since the early 1990s the difficulty did not concern figuring out how to procure food or how to prepare “something from nothing”, but rather how to manage to feed the family with limited financial resources or how to appropriate the Western standards. With time, after the initial enthusiasm and fervour of free market and consumer culture, it was more problematic to make the “right” choices concerning

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<sup>13</sup> This attitude is still present today. During an interview I have found out that one food company is considering purchasing one of their ingredients abroad, just so that the product can be advertised as “from the West”, which would increase the company’s sales and revenues.

“proper” food and restrain and control oneself and one's family when so many products are available.

Changes in the food market were only one of the factors which influenced family lives. Frances Pine (2002) shows that many women in Poland were forced to retreat from the workforce and focus only on the family and domestic sphere of life, which was one of the government's ways of dealing with the growing unemployment. During socialism, the Western capitalism promised not only “normal” life in terms of consumer cultures, but also in regards to family life and gender roles. However, as Frances Pine explains:

It was rarely evident to eastern Europeans that women under capitalism also experienced lives in which for some different and for some very similar reasons they were excluded from political and economic power and had to deal with a plethora of small daily oppressions. It is, I think, this idealised view of women's position in the west, and the failure of the new system even to approximate it, which has been in part responsible for many Polish women's great disappointment in the new capitalist economy. (1994: 22)

Many pro-natal policies were withdrawn and the system of welfare distributions was limited (e.g. Gal and Kligman, 2000). Haney (1999) shows, with the example of Hungary, that the collapse of the “maternalist welfare apparatus” changed the situation of women: raising (and feeding) children became the sole responsibility of the mother. However as Nash notes – and the situation was similar in Poland – the fact that families had to look out for themselves, and that mothers had to take care of their children, was something that they were doing anyway throughout the socialist era (2003: 220). Nevertheless the context has changed. Nash explains that there was a shift in responsibilities from “our state” to “your family”, from the emphasis on communal to individual/family units (2003: 219). A process of “privatisation of care and parenthood” has occurred in Poland (Hryciuk and Korolczuk, 2015b: 13). The state withdrew from feeding its nation. The feeding and eating became the individual responsibility of the family, which in theory had an

unlimited access to and free choice of food, but in reality often had many, especially financial, constraints.

For some families (with lower socio-economic status) this shift from “our state” to “your family” was difficult and problematic; while others (emerging middle class) accepted and embodied the discourse on individuality and the increasing emphasis on personal growth and career, which especially influenced the changing notions of womanhood (Łaciak, 1995; Dunn, 2004). The ideal vision of a self-sacrificing woman was transformed into a model of self-investing woman (Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk, 2000). In fact many processes related to the changes of the family lives and gender roles, which have begun in Western countries in the 1970s, emerged in Poland in the 1990s (Lewis, 2001; Sikorska, 2009).<sup>14</sup> This influenced the emergence of new gender roles and new family models (see Szlendak, 2010); but at the same time put new constraints and expectations on women, and increasingly since the 2000s also on men. Though the concept of *Matka-Polka* became less pervading (Hryciuk and Korolczuk, 2012a) and there is a growing acceptance for women who do not become mothers and for fathers who take care of their children; the Polish society is still patriarchal and women experience a *double burden* and a *second shift* (Hochschild and Machung, 1990; Pine, 1994; Titkov and Domański, 1995; Titkov, 2007).

Although the hetero-normative nuclear family is the universal model and though it is a largely a Catholic society; gender and kinship relations continue to change in Poland. Foodwork remains a deeply gendered experience; however, though feeding children is typically a mother's work, fathers are increasingly engaged in the process of raising children (e.g. Kubicki, 2009). As Frances Pine (1996) demonstrates on the case of Polish *Górale*, with the changing relations between the state and the house/family and the ambiguous connection between tradition and modernity, the intergenerational relations have changed substantially in Poland. There is an increasing “generational knowledge gap” (Haukanes and Pine,

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<sup>14</sup> Not all of these processes were necessarily “a move forward”, for example the fact that the position of many women in the workforce declined, and that the abortion rights were limited is often perceived as a move backwards (see e.g. Pine, 1994, 2002; Zielińska, 2000).

2003: 110), as the younger generation is no longer interested in the knowledge possessed and traditionally passed by the older generation and rather wants to implement the new and “modern” practices, also in relation to food. Simultaneously, however, grandparents are often involved in the family life, as they substitute the paid care of children. My research reveals that the practices of grandparenting are increasingly seen by grandparents as “self-sacrifice” rather than, as it used to be, a “natural donation” (see Thelen and Leutloff-Grandits, 2010). The generational knowledge gap and the changing kinship and gender relations influence the feeding – eating interactions and the food practices in many families (see chapters 4 and 5).

The notions of motherhood and fatherhood change as well. Małgorzata Sikorska (2009) discusses the idea of the New Family, in which all members are partners, the emphasis is put on emotions and personal growth and freedom; in which a New Mother and a New Father are equally invested and engaged in raising their New Child – this is the middle class ideal, not reachable for all (see Thelen and Haukanes, 2010). And this conception is related to the emergence of “intensive” parenting style (Hays, 1996) and new notions of “proper parenting” in Poland, again especially among middle class families.

The notions of parenting have altered as the entire model of modern personhood has changed in Poland. Dunn (2004) explains how new conceptions of workers and conceptions of new people were created in post-socialist Poland, in the same way the ideas about raising children have changed. As Sylwia Urbańska (2012) points out, a parent from the 1970s would be very much surprised when reading current magazines devoted to raising children. Increasing emphasis has been placed on children’s psychological well-being in contrast to an earlier focus on their physical and material needs. During socialism, politeness and diligence were the desired qualities of children, whereas since the 1990s developing children's creativity and individuality becomes important (Sikorska, 2009). In the socialist period children were mostly perceived as future citizens, the discourse was focused on ethical upbringing of a social child, promoted egalitarian vision of a person; and since the 1990s children are perceived as people in their own rights, the medico-therapeutic

discourse promoting functionalist and individualistic models of raising children dominates. Raising children becomes a professional project that needs to be managed by a mother – she should be blamed for all the failures of a child (Urbańska, 2012: 65). Simultaneously, a mother's knowledge about her children has been undermined by the expert advice. Elisabeth Dunn shows how Gerber – which in the process of privatization acquired Polish company Alima producing fruit and vegetable preserves – promoted new ways of feeding children, by explaining that mothers should replace the homemade food they made for their children with products prepared by Gerber:

Part of Gerber's strategy for appropriating the qualities of knowledge and safety is to assert explicitly that mothers who rely on their own judgement, production methods, and labour may engender their children's lives. This approach reverses the whole meaning of feeding in Polish culture. Rather than the mother's work of selecting, cooking, grinding, and feeding baby food to her infant being an expression of maternal love and nurture, it is presented as a form of ignorance that may poison the child. (Dunn, 2004: 103).

The entry of Gerber and other Western products in Poland influenced the definitions of motherhood and food good for babies, and also changed mother's views on themselves and feeding their children (see Bentley, 2014). Women were advised how to feed their children not only by food producers and marketers, but also by the increasing number of expert books, TV programs and magazines. It does not mean that mothers were not advised by nutritionists during socialism. However, the emerging medicalized discourse of the 1970s was inferior to the traditional knowledge about raising and feeding children, which was passed between generations; whereas in the 1990s the number of those recommendations and their influences have changed significantly (Urbańska, 2012: 53).

During the Polish People's Republic many children – me included – had to sit at the table until everything from their plates was eaten, sometimes it lasted for a couple of hours. Food was often so difficult to procure – especially in the urban context to

which I mostly refer; and the memory of even worse food shortages was so strong, that children were expected to eat everything they were given. They were expected to listen unconditionally to their parents. Some of them were hit for not eating properly. One of my interlocutors, a historian, claimed that children were overfed during socialism. She has found out that in the 1980s children were expected to eat around 5 kg of meat every month. Additionally the diet was not diversified, and as a result many children were labelled as picky eaters.

For a long time in Poland a prove that a child eats well was the way she looked, that is only rather chubby children were considered well fed. People from older generations often still share this view. There is a tendency in Poland to overfeed children (Podgórska, 2013). One dietician, when we discussed food education, told me:

*Parents and grandparents are the problem, families are the problem. It is still a common believe that a healthy child is a chubby and pink child, who has a great appetite and always takes a second serving; while a child who does not want to eat, who eats as much as she feels she needs, she would be perceived as an unhealthy child, a neglected child... This is a problem, because children feel how much they want to and need to eat, not everyone has to eat as much as a grandma wants him to!*

There is an emerging discourse encouraging parents to allow children to choose what they want to eat and discouraging them from force or over feeding their children. The often repeated advice for parents is to give children the choice of two different foodstuffs or meals, because in that way not only will they eat it eagerly; it will also be a good lesson for them in making choices – a skill they need for the rest of their life. “When you are an adult” – we can read in one of the handbooks – “it is difficult to make decisions about career and lifestyle without the experience of expressing oneself [which choosing food provides]” (Faber and Mazlisch, 2001: 154, in: Sikorska, 2009: 89). During the Polish People's Republic parents, with the help from the state, were supposed to raise good and strong future citizens of the socialist country; since the 1990s parents have to teach their

children how to make good individual choices and develop in them a proper *neoliberal personality* (Urbańska, 2012: 61).

The New Child, increasingly treated as an independent subject with her own rights and opinions, has been formed in Poland in the 1990s (Sikorska, 2009). Simultaneously children's lives got busier, more structured and organised. They often (and I refer mainly to the urban middle class here) have to juggle homework with more and more extra-curricular activities and have less time for free and unstructured leisure activities (see Elkind, 1981; Maciejewska-Mroczek, 2012). The kinship relations and the practices of *generationing*, that is becoming/being parents, children and grandparents, have changed in Poland (see Alanen, 2001b). The development of new notions and understandings of childhood – and in relation of parenthood – was influenced not only by changes in raising children; it was also influenced by the transformation of legal conceptions of childhood and the growing role of children as consumers (see Thelen and Haukanes, 2010; Buckingham, 2011).

In the Constitution from 1952, children are mentioned three times: in relation to providing care for a mother and her baby; financial support for children in need; and that being born outside of marriage would not impair the rights of a child. Additionally, there is a separate article declaring that the state *shall devote special attention to the education of young people [teenagers] and provide the widest possible opportunities for their development* (1952: art.68). Children were mainly seen as future citizens. In 1991 Poland ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child from 1990. The position of a child's ombudsman was established in 2000. Children have been increasingly treated as independent people with their own rights and privileges. This is well reflected in the changing attitudes towards violence to children.

Smacking was for a long time considered a common way of punishing misbehaving children in Poland. Since the 1990s that attitude has been changing, and finally in 2010 violence against children became illegal. Nevertheless, according to public opinion research, 70% of Poles do not realise that such an injunction exists and 60%

perceive slaps as an acceptable method of scolding children (Jarosz, 2013). The same research shows that around 35% of respondents claim that raising children is the sole responsibility of parents and that nobody else should have a say or influence on it. In fact according to the current Polish Constitution, *parents have the right to raise their children according to their own convictions* (1997: art. 48).<sup>15</sup> They also have certain obligations, concerning for example compulsory schooling that their children have to go through. The state provides the protection of children *against violence, cruelty, exploitation and demoralization* (ibid.). The education system, through schools, is supposed to provide *assistance to parents in educating and raising their children* (Act on the Education System, 1991: art.1). The post-socialist state, in contrast to the socialist period, is supposed to only provide assistance to parents, whose responsibility is to raise proper (neoliberal) citizens. Crossing the boundaries of this assistance often becomes a matter of invading personal freedoms and rights, as the issue of who is responsible for children becomes problematic (see chapter 7).

Children's position in Poland has been transformed not only because of the legal changes; they have also been increasingly treated as consumers. Children, as McNeal (1999) shows, constitute three types of markets: (1) primary market (they have purchase power); (2) influence market (they have a power to influence their parents) (3) and future market. Since the 1990s all of these markets have been growing in Poland and children have been increasingly participating in commercial life as consumers (see Zelizer, 2002). In fact, at the beginning of the 1990s, children's food markets emerged and developed rapidly when many Western companies entered Poland. Food products intended especially for children did not exist before, certainly not on such a scale.<sup>16</sup> Dunn (2004) uses the example of the Frugo drink to show how the idea of niche marketing – not known in Poland before – was implemented. A new group of consumers was created/discovered, as the manager explained: "Frugo is aimed especially at youth. Frugo will be a part of

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<sup>15</sup> This article is often referred to by various parental social movements in Poland (Hryciuk and Korolczuk, 2015a).

<sup>16</sup> There were different food products for babies, though this market has also developed since the 1990s.

young world like no other brand. It will be a fragment of their culture” (Dunn, 2004: 58). In the 1990s adolescents became new consumers, a growing niche at whom marketing strategies were directed. Advertisements and marketing to younger children followed in the 2000s. However, products intended for younger children – even if not advertised directly to them, but to their mothers – emerged in Poland in the early 1990s. Kinder Surprise was introduced in Poland in 1992, Nutella followed in 1995. Nestle started selling its cereals in 1993, and the first yogurts intended for children, so called *Danonki*, have been sold by Danone since 1992. Children started exerting pressure on their parents to buy these products and relate to *pester power* not known before. Their purchase power increased as well.<sup>17</sup> In that way, the food market “discovered” children’s independence and influence before other social actors did (see Jing, 2000b).

The place of children in families, and in society, has changed in Poland with the demographic decline and the growing number of only children (GUS, 2014a; Kotowska, 2014). It has also changed together with new notions of parenthood and ideas about raising children. Moreover, it was influenced by legal and market changes. 40-year-old Magda told me: *When I was a child nobody cared about us, not like today, now it is all about children!* Poland is becoming a *neontocracy*, a society focused on children, which accords to children a great deal of social capital and adjusts to them in many ways (Lancy, 2008: 12, 26; see also Zelizer, 1994). Daniel Cook (2004a) shows using the case of the clothing industry in the US that historically we can witness not merely a democratization of children’s desires, but a privileging of them. The same seems to be the case in relation to food practices in Poland.

The changes which have been happening in post-socialist Poland and which have given children more freedom and greater choice and influence on their eating practices, at the same time have made feeding them more difficult. Parents have become more anxious about feeding properly, not only because their knowledge has been undermined by expert advice and there have been a growing number of

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<sup>17</sup> In 1987 only 25% of parents declared that they give their children pocket money, whereas in 2008 that number increased to 67% (see Sikorska, 2009: 240).

advices they have to sort through. There has also been an increasing pressure on doing it right and a growing number of influences, coming from the food market for example, which they have to control when feeding their children. Many parents, when asked about the changes in Poland, told me that it is amazing how many things one can buy today, how colourful and playful childhood can be compared to their memories. They told me that there is more knowledge about raising and feeding children today and that they will not repeat their parents' mistakes, for example of overfeeding children. At the same time they told me how difficult it is, because they have to constantly control what their children do and eat. As 40-year-old Natalia put it: *There's definitely more choice and this is great, but at the same time it makes all of it more difficult. It means you have to constantly control what your child eats!*

Poles experienced the post-socialist transformation in many different ways. The current generation of parents of older children was themselves brought up during the Polish People's Republic and when raising their children today, they relate in many different ways to their memories from their childhood. Socialism is in a way embodied in their individual dispositions. Younger parents, from my generation, were children in the 1990s and remember the sudden change that occurred in Poland. This also influences their parenting practices and their individual dispositions. The shared memory of socialism still influences the contexts of feeding and eating in Poland.

Despite the prevalence of the changes I have just discussed, I agree with the critique of post-socialist transitology which perceives transformation as a situation between two fixed positions (Pine and Bridger, 1998: 3) or as a more or less simple passage from socialism to capitalism (West and Raman, 2010: 3). There was no "one" socialism in Poland: people had different experiences depending on their status, age, job, place of residence; and in the same way there is no "one" capitalism. The changes I described did not happen overnight. And for many people they were quite ambivalent. In Poland there is a discourse about "winners" and "losers" of the transformation (e.g. Jarosz, 2005), which not only emphasizes

this ambivalence, but also strengthens the social divisions existing in post-socialist Poland.

During the socialist period feeding and eating were difficult to manage because of food shortages and problems with procuring food. Simultaneously, the idea of rational feeding was implemented in the canteens and promoted among mothers. With the post-socialist transition feeding and eating became difficult in a different way. The model of raising children has changed completely, and parents are expected to have different skills regarding feeding their children and to teach their children new eating skills. The knowledge about how to procure food, and the ability to do this, has been replaced with the skill of choosing how to feed and eat in a proper, healthy way.<sup>18</sup> Feeding and eating used to be about creating strong socialist citizens who would build a socialist country, and now it is about creating *proper dietary habits and neoliberal personalities*.

The 1990s not only brought the changes from the socialist state planned markets to the capitalist market economy and neoliberal policies; Poland was also a part of the broader fluctuations taking place all over the world, which are often reduced to the concepts of “globalisation” and “post-modernity” (e.g. Miller, 1995; Bauman, 1998). Also, the increasing interest and focus on food (see Lien and Nerlich, 2004; Watson and Caldwell, 2004) has had its echoes in Poland. New kinds of pressures and responsibilities have been placed on people, who at the same time started to gradually recognise their new rights. For example the notion of consumer rights was new in Poland, so was the increasing emphasis on parental rights to raise their children in whatever way they want to, and the concept of children’s rights. I have conducted my research more than twenty years later, when it seems that the tensions between people’s rights and responsibilities as citizens and consumers, the emphasis on “proper” parenting and healthy diet and the increasing politicisation of issues related to children and food have almost reached its peak in Poland, and especially in Warsaw. The desires to become

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<sup>18</sup> Another skill that some parents had to learn in post-socialist Poland – but that is less valued and not promoted in media or in parental handbooks for example – concerns feeding children with limited financial resources (e.g. Pine, 2002).

Western and “normal” are increasingly replaced with the fears of becoming like “the West”, which often means American: replacing traditional food cultures and home cooked meals with ready-made processed food and becoming an obese society. The longed for freedom of choice becomes problematic when the choices are unlimited and the pressure on making the “right” choices is growing.

In order to understand the feeding – eating negotiations in Warsaw, I try to unpack these relationships, break them down, split them up, take a close look at their different dimensions, and simultaneously put them together and try to look at them as a whole. I weave together the different positions and views, discuss and challenge the multiple perspectives regarding the issue of children and food in Warsaw. This chapter painted theoretical and historical context for the more synchronic and ethnographic analysis which comes next.

## Chapter II. Methods and Context: Situating Myself and My Field Sites

Before I move on to further analyse the feeding – eating negotiations in Warsaw, I would like to discuss my research. From the outset I planned to conduct extensive, multi-sited (Marcus, 1995), relational (Desmond, 2014) ethnographic research in Warsaw. My fieldwork took place between September 2012 and August 2013. It was conducted with respect to the ethical guidelines provided by the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth (2011) and according to the ethical code of the Polish Academy of Sciences (2001).

I start this chapter by discussing my experiences of doing fieldwork in Warsaw and engaging in “anthropology at home”. Though Warsaw is not the object of my research, it is an important context, so I briefly present it here. In the following part I consider researching different field sites and, in the final part, I discuss in more detail the ethical and practical implications of doing research with children.

### 2.1 Fieldwork in Warsaw

Warsaw is the city in which I was born and lived almost my entire life. It is where I went to school, grew up, met and lost friends. My family is in Warsaw. A lot has been written about doing “anthropology at home” (e.g. Messerschmidt, 1981a; Jackson, 1987; Cerroni-Long, 1995; Peirano, 1998) or rather doing research in one’s own society, however not necessarily about the experience of *doing research at home*. Warsaw is my home. Different parts of the city evoke diverse sentiments and certain memories. While I agree with Narayan (1993) that we should go beyond the category of “native anthropologist”, that such factors as education, gender, class and race might have greater influence on our positions in the field than being an outsider or insider; I acknowledge that being an insider anthropologist is a unique experience. There are of course different levels of being an insider. I am neither a child, nor a parent, a teacher, a school cook or a food

producer, so in some way I am not an insider at all. On the other hand I am Polish and from Warsaw. I went through the educational system in Warsaw as a child. I am a woman who wants to have children one day. So in some way, or rather in many different ways, I am an insider, a “multiple native” (Mascarenhas-Keyes, 1987). As many other researchers (see Gupta and Ferguson, 1997; Hume and Mulcock, 2004), I have to be reflexive about my positionality in the field.

My fieldwork was supposed to start on Monday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September – literally the first day of school. I woke up and wondered how am I supposed to start doing research? How does one start to study children and food in Warsaw? Uncertain about what I was supposed to do, I left my apartment. I went for a walk around my neighbourhood and realised the symbolic connection between my first day of fieldwork and the first day of school. A celebratory atmosphere was in the air. A Pizza Hut restaurant in my neighbourhood was filled with parents and children, as were other places, especially ice-cream parlours and cake shops. The grocery shops and supermarkets used the celebratory atmosphere: sweets favoured by children were on sale next to the check out. Today – it seemed – there were no rules and parents bought their children whatever kind of foods they wanted. I went to the playground, which is surrounded by various cafes and restaurants, a popular place for families, not only on the first day of school. It was particularly full. I sat on the bench, with my notebook and felt for a moment like a proper anthropologist. However, it soon became clear that I was on my own; that I had not come with a child, as everyone else, and it was then that the suspicious looks started. So I bought myself a kebab in a place nearby, came back to my bench and ate it slowly – this way I felt I had a good reason to be there.<sup>19</sup> I kept observing what was happening around me. How parents stayed in the restaurants and continued eating their meals, while children came out to the playground. How children ran up to the seller – who was not usually there – to buy balloons, cotton candy and popcorn. After a while I went back home. That was it. My fieldwork had started.

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<sup>19</sup> Food, as many more times during my fieldwork, proved to be a great research tool.

When a young researcher arrives in an unknown place that she wants to study, she is constantly engaged in her research, she gets to know and understand the culture through doing shopping, meeting people, reading a local newspaper, just by “being there” (Geertz, 1988). At least that is how I imagine the “non-native” researchers’ fieldwork. While my experience of living in Warsaw definitely changed because of my fieldwork, my sense of self and place became different; quite often I had to actively and reflexively remind myself to do research. I felt that I should write something in my field notes every day, and there were long periods when I simply had nothing to write. I struggled with this quite a lot, never entirely sure if I was a proper anthropologist and if my fieldwork – this fetishized rite of passage – was anthropological enough (see Abu-Lughod, 1986: 1 – 35).

In fact, I already knew many things that the outsider has to learn to understand: the language, the cultural norms, the traditions. This of course is a well-known trap for insider anthropologists: the knowledge of social and cultural context makes it easier to understand many issues, which can result in the lack of necessary distance and can hinder the perception of certain things, because they may seem obvious or usual (e.g. Goldschmidt, 1995). I tried to adopt *artificial naiveté* (Burgess, 1984: 24) and therefore ask about everything and record as much detail as possible while doing research. In order to familiarise the reader with the context of my research, below I briefly present the history, the social life and the food cultures of Warsaw.

There are many differences between urban and rural Poland, but Warsaw can be considered as a kind of different urban category, like most capital cities. In 1596 Warsaw became the capital of Poland and since then remained one of the most important cities in the country and in the whole Eastern European region. It was destroyed during World War II and substantially depopulated, the effects of which can still be seen today. Not only was the infrastructure of the city devastated, but also its social life and structures, which were further damaged by the socialist system, were destroyed. For example the Jewish population almost ceased to exist.

Nowadays Warsaw is a popular place of work and study, with more than 2 million inhabitants. Even though Polish society is ethnically very homogenous, many immigrants come to Warsaw, and there is a relatively big Vietnamese minority and a currently growing Ukrainian minority. Also many people from all over Poland move to the capital, which makes Warsaw – compared to the rest of Poland – relatively diverse and multicultural, although still very ethnically homogenous in comparison with other European capitals. Warsaw is wealthier than the rest of the country, with an average monthly income of 5,226zł (around £903) in 2013 (GUS, 2014b).<sup>20</sup> At the same time there are various social and economic inequalities within the city. Social structures in Poland have changed considerably within last 20 – 30 years and are still in the process of transformation. The post-socialist period led to growing divisions between diverse social groups and deeper social stratification in Poland. Though in general the class consciousness in Poland is quite limited (Gdula, 2011), to simplify the analysis, Polish society can be divided into three groups/classes: working, middle and upper, which I understand more in a Weberian (1978) and Bourdieusian (1984), than Marxist (1990) way.<sup>21</sup>

The working class includes blue collar workers and most of the farm owners, whereas the upper class consists mainly of wealthy businessmen. The middle class is hugely diversified which makes it hard to define, so it is often characterized as a social category which is still in the process of formation and is relatively small in Poland, but relatively large in Warsaw. From the occupational perspective it consists of doctors, lawyers, marketing experts, journalists, artists, teachers, and people working in administrative roles etc. Also the ruling, political group can be considered upper-middle class, as they are not perceived as prestigious enough to be considered upper class (Domański et al., 2007). An interesting characteristic of the Polish social structure is that the social and cultural capital is not always

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<sup>20</sup> The average monthly salary in Poland in 2013 was around 3,650zł, (~£631) (GUS, 2014c).

<sup>21</sup> In my research I have worked with fifteen families, and while they can be characterized as belonging either to the working or middle class (Appendix 1), I am hesitant to treat them as representatives of these groups. Therefore I rarely draw conclusions from my research that could be generalized as class practices. Instead, I rather focus on age and generational differences.

related to the economic capital and financial resources (Bourdieu, 1984). For example academics have high cultural and social capitals; however their salary puts them among the middle income group.

Because of Polish history – the resettlements, the migration and the influence of the socialist system – the locality and regionalism of many foods is complicated to establish and is still debated. Especially in the context of Warsaw, it is very difficult to establish any kind of regional cuisine. Although eating out is more and more popular in Warsaw, home cooked meals are still prevalent and convenience foods, though increasingly accepted, are still relatively rare. The idea of Polish food is in general connected with homemade, good quality meals (e.g. Rabikowska, 2010). Traditionally in Poland there are three meals eaten daily: breakfast, *obiad* (the main meal of the day, resembling the British dinner, but eaten around 2 pm) and supper. In Warsaw, this pattern is changing, with lunch being eaten more often and people having *obiad* or *obiadokolacja* (dinner-supper) later in the afternoon. The typically Polish *obiad* consists of a soup and a second dish composed of meat, potatoes, and vegetables (Falkowska, 1998, 2000). However, because of its cosmopolitan status Warsaw is much more open to international culinary trends than the rest of the country, with many families preparing dishes inspired by Mediterranean and Asian cuisines. There is a relatively easy access to various luxurious goods and foods from all over the world.

When I arrived in Warsaw to do my research it seemed that there was yet another food boom: a couple of new foodie magazines entered the market, breakfast markets and local foods had become very popular and food cooperatives were established. The interest in conscious consumption, fair trade products, and local foodstuffs, and also in healthy and ecological products has been flourishing in Warsaw for some time.

This growing middle class interest in food is related to the increasing concern for children's space and children's food in Warsaw. There are more and more places designed with children and their parents in mind. In many restaurants special high chairs for children and other facilities are available. Some places arrange indoor or

outdoor playgrounds. There are a couple of special cafes intended primarily for children and their parents in Warsaw. Despite an on-going debate about the various limitations and difficulties for mothers with children – concerning for example moving around the city with a pram (see Kubisa, 2012) – there is an increasing opening up of public spaces for mothers with children. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that in the public discourse it is much more about the mother's space, than about the children's space.

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, motherhood is a source of many anxieties and is increasingly problematized in Poland. Despite the emerging discourse which challenges the idea that women need to be perfect mothers (e.g. Woźniczko-Czczot, 2012; Graff, 2014); they are still usually expected to perfectly “juggle it all” (Thompson, 1996). When my fieldwork started, one highly critical article about mothers with prams taking over the space of the city (Mikołajko, 2012) had caused a huge debate concerning mothers' space and their rights, which brought numerous articles and radio programs, but also a play focused on that issue. Entitled “Polish-Mother Terrorist” (2012), the play presents the struggles of being a mother in Poland. It is a monodrama, and the only actress explains for example that “one soup can change the fate of the world”. She asks dramatically: “If I don't prepare organic soup for my child, and he will become a murderer instead of a genius, whose fault would it be?”, thus in a hiperbolic way reflecting the pressures put on mothers in Warsaw in regards to feeding their children.

## **2.2 Relational and Multi-sited Ethnography**

My fieldwork was based on researching different field sites: families, primary schools, state institutions, food industry, NGOs and media, so it was a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) or relational ethnography (Desmond, 2014; see also Marcus, 1998). As Matthew Desmond explains, relational ethnography “gives ontological primacy, not to groups or places, but to configurations of relations. The point of fieldwork becomes to describe a system of relations.” (2014: 554). I

have tried to look at the feeding – eating relationships, and not only at the involved in them actors, groups or places.

In practice this still meant researching six different field sites in a period of twelve months, which was a certain organisational challenge. Families and schools were the most important parts of my fieldwork, so I structured my research according to the school year. However, throughout the twelve months of my fieldwork I essentially studied the different field sites and the relations between them at the same time, which meant that they all influenced each other and my positioning within each of them. Frequently I spent the first part of the day in school, and in the evening conducted interviews with family members or state representatives. Sometimes I had two or three interviews in one day and I had to quickly move not only from one part of the city to another, but also from one role to another. In what follows I discuss accessing and researching these different field sites.

### **Families**

Family was from the beginning the most important focus of my research. I understand family as a dynamic rather than a static concept, based on constantly changing kinship relations and negotiated gender and generational positionings, rather than as a fixed structure (e.g. Alanen, 2001a, 2001b). I share DeVault's emphasis on the everyday practical work involved in *doing family* and, similarly, I was interested in the private, nurturing kind of family (1991: 15). However, I also treat family as a highly political concept, intersecting between private and public spheres of life (e.g. Hochschild and Machung, 1990; Chodorow, 1999).

I started my fieldwork by looking for families with children aged from 6 to 12 years old. Through my social networks I found families to start with and then I mainly related to the snowball technique to find others. Interestingly, I was almost always, with one exception, put into contact with a mother. I was always very clear that I want to do research on/with families, but still everyone assumed that they should put me in touch with mothers – the assumption was that they know the most about feeding children. Indeed, that was usually the case. Nevertheless it is

fascinating that throughout my fieldwork I gained access to more than twenty families, and almost always it happened through a woman.

So, with one exception, I contacted the mothers first. The meetings happened either at home or somewhere in the city. I came prepared with a set of open questions related to everyday food habits and feeding children. After gaining my interlocutors' consent, I recorded the interviews. After interviewing mothers I asked if I could talk to their husbands and their children as well, unless it was already planned beforehand. There was no other way for me to contact children: for ethical and practical reasons I had to access them through their parents (see Hood, Kelley and Mayall, 1996: 122 – 126). Out of the fifteen families participating in my research, I talked to children in fourteen of them. I often talked to and engaged both with a child who was between 6 and 12-year-old – my designated research group – and also with their siblings, especially if they were younger. I managed to talk to only four fathers.

After these initial interviews, I had planned to come back to my interlocutors' homes and participate in their daily food routines, but unfortunately this part of my fieldwork did not work out as planned. Working parents of primary school children – and that was usually the case – have very busy lives, and their children are often busy as well. Therefore my ethnographic research with families was not as extended as I wished it would be.

The families I did research with were diversified; there were married couples, divorced parents, and single parent households. Most of the mothers despite doing the feeding work were also in paid employment. Most of the children had extra curricula activities after school, such as dancing, scouts, painting etc. Families were diversified in terms of age and class; they had diverse financial situations (though none of the families were living in poverty), levels of education and social, cultural and symbolic capitals (Bourdieu, 1984). Placing them within the class system was not based on any structured analysis; it was rather based on my knowledge of the Polish society and its social structures, and of each of the families. The aim of distinguishing between middle and working class affiliation

was to gather a group of diversified and heterogeneous families, and not to focus on class differences *per se* (Appendix 1).

In the end, I worked closer with three families. I was put in touch with Paweł Marciniak<sup>22</sup> by Magda who participated in my Master thesis research and with whom I stayed in touch. Paweł (43-year-old) is a musician, separated from his wife Paulina (42-year-old), also a musician. They have two children: 11-year-old Krzyś and 5-year-old Basia. Both of the parents travel a lot for work and they share childcare. I first met with Paweł in an ice-cream cafe. And then I met, on separate occasions, with Paulina and Krzyś. I also participated in preparing and eating *obiad* at Paweł and his girlfriends' home. For many months I tried to join Paulina and the kids for dinner as well, but in the end we did not manage to meet.

I was introduced to Natalia Szymańska (40-year-old) through a colleague of mine. We met for the first time in the cafe next to her work – she works in public administration. Later on I joined her, her husband Tomek (40-year-old), and their two daughters: 9-year-old Julia and 5-year-old Kasia for *obiad* (the main meal). After that first *obiad* I spent the evening talking and drawing together with Julia and Kasia. Later, I also conducted an interview with Tomek, a photographer passionate about food and cooking. I returned several times to their home for various food occasions. Additionally, I talked to the grandparents on both sides and to the nanny who took care of Julia and Kasia, and was considered by the family to be the third grandmother. The Szymańscy family opened their home to me, and for that I am extremely grateful. Especially Natalia was extremely helpful; she put me in contact with several other families and also arranged for me to do research in Julia's primary school, acting as a sort of fieldwork broker (Aamodt, 1981: 137).

I met Małgosia Podolska (37-year-old) through a friend. We met to talk near her work – she works in an NGO. After that I arranged a meeting with her husband Mikołaj (38-year-old), a photographer. Later, I came to their home for *obiad*, and

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<sup>22</sup> The names of all of my interlocutors, besides state officials and public figures, were changed.

also talked and drew with their 7-year-old son Bartek. They also have a 4-year-old daughter Zuzia.

When we had *obiad*, Krzyś asked laughingly: *how weird is that?* And truly, it is a weird experience to come to strangers' home and join them for a meal. But usually after the initial intimidation and embarrassment, the atmosphere relaxed. Young children are especially helpful in such a situation. Not long after I arrived at the Podolscy home, Zuzia was climbing on my knees, and Julia and Kasia were fighting about who would sit next to me at the dinner table in the Szymańscy home. I always stressed that they should not prepare anything special and out of the ordinary to eat when I joined them, and I think all of the families accepted that. This relatively relaxed atmosphere during our initial meetings and their acceptance of inviting the researcher to their home was facilitated by the fact that we were more or less from the same social group: not only was I introduced by their friends or colleagues, but also all three families could be defined as middle class. If there would be a larger social difference between us, they might have felt more judged and behaved more out of the ordinary, which was my impression when I visited families which could be considered to belong to the working class.

In most of the families, talking to parents was often interrupted: somebody constantly wanted something. Dogs ran around the apartment, wanted to play and needed to be scolded or walked. Children and their friends often wanted to join us and constantly interrupted with diverse questions or arguments. They climbed on their parents, or on me; played with my recorder, looked into my bag, and played with my phone. Their younger siblings needed to be breastfed. Unless the mother or the father was alone in the apartment, the interviews never went easily and were always interrupted. Both their attention and mine was always divided, and that was just a glimpse into their everyday lives.

That was the reality of doing research among families in Warsaw. I mostly conducted semi-structured interviews, and I am aware that they relate more to people's narratives and what they say they do, than to their practices and what they do. However, as Certeau explains: "narrativity has a fundamental theoretical

relevance to the study of the practices of everyday life” (1980: 29). It is one of the ways to learn about people’s practices. Moreover conducting separate interviews with different members of the family, mothers and children, and sometimes also fathers and grandparents, helps to create a more coherent picture of family food practices and family display (see McCarthy et al., 2002; James and Curtis, 2010). Additionally, many of the interviews I conducted – including all of the meetings with children, which I come back to shortly – happened in my interlocutors’ homes. I was usually received in a very friendly way. My role was situated somewhere between a guest and a family friend. Especially with families with whom I worked for a longer period of time, I established certain familiarity and closeness, but I have usually spent at least a couple of hours with each of the fifteen families. I was often served something to eat or drink, or witnessed food preparations, which allowed me if not entirely participate and observe, then at least to peek into their food lives.

All of my interlocutors were experts on the subject that was of interest to me, and they were usually very engaged in our discussions. It should be emphasized though that probably only people who were already in some way interested in food or reflexive about feeding their children agreed to talk to me. So this was a specific group of interlocutors. I should also point out that – as far as I can tell – none of the children participating in my research were overweight or obese, and none were undernourished.

### **Primary Schools**

Besides working with families, I carried out ethnographic research in three state primary schools in Warsaw, spending around two – two and a half months in each.<sup>23</sup> Primary schools in Warsaw have six grades attended by children between

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<sup>23</sup> There are three types of schools in Poland: state, which are free; private which are usually very expensive; and schools which are owned by an educational trust and in terms of tuition expenses can be placed in between. Usually children from one area would go to the nearest state school, but this system is often disturbed, especially by other types of schools. In 2014, there were 311 primary schools in Warsaw, from which 217 were state schools (Biuro Edukacji, 2014a, 2014b). I decided to focus only on state schools; however some of the children I interviewed attended private schools, so I did also study them indirectly.

the ages of 6 and 12.<sup>24</sup> They were all ethnically homogenous, with few children who were not white, Polish and Catholic attending the schools. To some extent the experiences of doing research in different schools merged into one, however each school was a different social world where I established diverse relationships and certain routines.

The first school I researched, which I call school A, was situated in a neighbourhood considered one of the most difficult in Warsaw. It is one of the poorest districts with a large number of socio-economic problems. The school occupied two buildings located close to each other. Overall, there were 690 Students. I gained access to that school through my interlocutors' mother who used to work there. I arranged a meeting with the head teacher during which I explained who I was; what I wanted to do and answered any questions she had. I was asked to supply an official document with SOAS logo, explaining my presence in the school, which the head teacher displayed in school and shared with parents (Appendix 2), and that was it. Compared to other places (e.g. Kennedy-Macfoy, 2013), once I was put in contact with a head teacher through someone they knew, gaining access to schools in Warsaw was a relatively easy process.

The first day of my research felt as if it was my first day of school. I was not sure how to prepare. In the end I decided to take with me not only a notebook and a pen – attributes of an anthropologist – but also a bottle of water, and I made myself a sandwich. I was not sure what to expect in terms of food. When I arrived on the appointed day I had to wait for a while for the head teacher who was supposed to show me around, whilst my tension and anxiety grew. A janitor had mistaken me for somebody's child, who already graduated, but still I could not decide if it was an advantage or a disadvantage that I looked so young. To put it simply: I was terrified. I felt that I had no idea what I was doing. It was loud. Children were running everywhere. There were all these routines and rules, movements around the school which I did not know about (and which I came to understand after a while). When the head teacher came, she led me to the small

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<sup>24</sup> In 2009 a new Law was introduced which changed the compulsory age of starting school from 7 to 6-year-old.

room where the food supervisor<sup>25</sup> was placed – and that is how I have met Mr S.<sup>26</sup> Mr S. was a very opinionated man in his sixties. He had been working in this school for two years when I arrived. He held different jobs before, but he had no previous experience with nutrition or cooking. He welcomed me in a very friendly way and was always extremely helpful: he invited me to participate in the official announcement of tender results for the food suppliers; he provided me with information about all the necessary laws and regulations related to organising work in the school canteen; he was always more than happy to chat with me. I became his protégé of sorts, which sometimes proved problematic when other people in school did not want to discuss him or the canteen freely with me.

I spent most of my time in the canteen, usually observing cooks and children, the line in front, sometimes talking to teachers, and chatting with Mr S. and the cooks. I also helped a couple of times in admitting children to the canteen. Moreover, I walked around the corridors during the breaks, mostly near the vending machine which was based on the ground floor. Since the school was based in two buildings, I also spent some time in the other building where children from grades 0 – 3 were taught. There was a separate canteen there, where I observed what was going on, talked to the teachers and children, and to the workers and the owner of the catering company which serviced that canteen, Mr P.

The second school, which I call school B, was based in the same neighbourhood, but it was considered one of the best schools there. There were 409 Students. Natalia, one of my main fieldwork brokers and interlocutors, facilitated my access

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<sup>25</sup> Another term used for this position is *intendentka*, used in the feminine form since mostly women hold these positions. The food supervisor is responsible for planning the meals in school, organising the tenders for suppliers, organising the deliveries, accepting payments for the meals and overseeing the cooks and the canteen. In the UK these positions are usually referred to as canteen managers. The term I use, food supervisor, is not a direct translation of the Polish term *kierownik żywienia*. The latter relates to the socialist terminology when these positions were first created. Elisabeth Dunn has discussed at length the fascinating differences and the juxtaposition between *kierownik* and manager introduced in Poland in the 1990s, in relation to constructing new persons and new sort of employees under capitalism (2004: 69 – 75). I have decided to use the term which avoids this symbolic juxtaposition.

<sup>26</sup> It is common in Poland to refer to people by Mr/Mrs followed with their first name, and thus this is how I refer to my interlocutors with whom I was not on the first name basis, but with whom I have established close relationships. To avoid overwhelming the reader with multiple names, when discussing schools I will relate to my interlocutors by Mr/Mrs, followed by the first letter of their name.

to that school. Similarly as with the first school above, I met with the head teacher to discuss my research and facilitate my entry to the school. I was again asked to supply a sort of official document explaining who I was and what I was doing (Appendix 2). When I arrived at that school to start research, the head teacher walked around the school with me and introduced me to all the teachers, who were already informed about my arrival – unlike in school A, where for quite a long time people were not sure who I was, looked at me with suspicion and kept asking me if I am evaluating the school or if I am an intern studying to be a teacher. She also showed me the canteen and introduced me to the main cook, Mrs K., who in this school also played the role of the food supervisor, and to Mrs B. who worked in the school shop. In this school I mostly divided my attention between the canteen and the school shop. Mrs B. proved to be an especially helpful and friendly interlocutor. We usually chatted whilst the lessons were going on, as during the break it was too busy. I think she was often bored, and found my presence an interesting distraction. Additionally, I helped her with her English assignments – she was taking night courses in order to be able to communicate with her son-in-law. Moreover, I walked around the corridors and also went into the classrooms: I visited two classes during the Easter celebrations. I also spent a bit of time in Julia’s classroom observing how children eat their *drugie śniadanie* brought from home. Furthermore, I spent some time in the teacher’s room talking informally to teachers.

The third school, school C, was situated in a central and relatively wealthy neighbourhood; it had 484 Students. I contacted the third school through my friend’s mother who used to be a lead school psychologist in that district of the city. So once again, I was introduced to the head teacher by someone familiar, which influenced the way in which I was received. On my first day of school the head teacher introduced me to Mrs H., the *intendentka* (the food supervisor) and she introduced me to the cooks. Mrs H. was a nutritionist who had recently changed the school canteen into the catering business which she led. She herself had attended that school as a child and her mother was still one of the cooks. Two of her sons also went to that school at the time of my research. Here I spend most

of my time in the canteen, often talking to Mrs H., other cooks or the teachers. I also participated in serving the meals to the pre-school children, which was organised in their classrooms. Additionally, I observed the life around the school shop and talked to Mrs T. working there. I also participated in the Health Food Picnic organised by the school one Saturday during the school year. I also conducted interviews with the owners of school shops in schools B and C.

I entered the lives of the schools with both a sense of familiarity and astonishment (see Burgess, 1984). I was a primary school child in Warsaw in the early 1990s, so I thought I knew what to expect. To some extent the life of the school has not changed that much: the basic rules were the same. Then again, a lot has changed: the schools looked different, and the children seemed different. My perspective has changed of course. I was no longer a primary school Student; however I was also not clearly situated in the teacher's role, which was sometimes problematic. People reacted differently to my presence. All three head teachers were very friendly and helpful, and they introduced me to the food supervisors. As I mentioned, some of the teachers looked at me with suspicion and were convinced that I was evaluating the school in some way – a common situation when doing research in schools (Messerschmidt, 1981b). Others were very friendly. After a while though, everyone got used to me and I became a part of the life of the school. When I was ill for a long time (one of the results of doing research in schools and being surrounded by children's germs), and returned after a long break to school A, people were happy to see me and said they were worried about where I was. I often heard comments expressing respect and shock on how I could spend so much time in the canteen – these were truly incredibly loud and tiring spaces. I was often asked how my research was going, though the research itself was understood in different ways and some people had problems grasping what I was doing. Children especially, though at first suspicious, very quickly got used to my presence, and some of them talked to me and played with me during breaks. Some of them offered me food. All of my interviews in schools, with head teachers, teachers, food supervisors, cooks and children, were casual conversations, I did not record them, only made notes.

Though my experience in schools was rewarding, it was also very challenging. Talking to children and positioning myself among them was only one of the difficulties. I did not anticipate many others, for example the incredible and constant noise one has to work with, being knocked out with balls flying along the corridors, the laughs and inappropriate comments and overeating in the school canteens because of the large portions I was served.

When spending time in the canteen, from the outset I was offered a meal. When I agreed, I did not expect that I would receive a full bowl of soup and an enormous second dish around noon, on each of the days I was in the canteen – despite my requests I have always received “an adult portion”, that is bigger than what children ate. The cooks sometimes joked that I had to give them back an empty plate, although this was not only a joke. Of course the generous portions were a gesture of fondness and acceptance on the part of cooks. I was invited to eat what they prepared and that was a very important social interaction. My role in that interaction was to eat everything and compliment their cooking. That is what a good guest does, and in this scenario I was a guest. So of course I complied with what was expected from me. However, there was a cost. I was not used to eating so much during lunchtime. My stomach bulged and I overate. I found myself assuming the role of a child: I picked at the food, I tried to hide the uneaten pieces of meat under the potatoes and I strategically chose the time to return my plate, so that nobody would see which one was mine and that I had left some of the meal uneaten, for that would be unacceptable. Of course I would not be sent back to my seat to finish eating, as children were. Nevertheless, it would be considered rude if I did not eat everything which was so politely offered to me. After eating so much for lunch, I was not able to eat anything substantial for the rest of the day. Since usually I ate a bigger dinner in the afternoon, my whole daily food pattern changed. On the days when I was not in school, I had to eat a much bigger lunch than I used to. On the days when I was in school, I had to coordinate our dinner plans with my partner, informing him whether he would be eating alone this day or with me, depending on if I managed to avoid an enormous two dish meal on that particular day. At times, when I was not particularly hungry, had special

dinner plans, or when something I did not like was served, I strategically avoided the canteen at certain hours, in the same way that some children did.

Another challenge was the noise at the canteen. Around sixty people talked and tried to shout each other, cutlery was banged on the plates, and then stacks of plates, large pots and bowls filled with forks and knives were moved around in the kitchen. The din often rose to almost unbearable level, and then the teachers imposed order by banging on the table, banging a spoon on a plate or – in the case of PE teachers – whistling. These methods were in themselves quite noisy. A secretary from one of the schools told me that she admires me, and has no idea how I can stand to sit through that noise, sometimes for a couple of hours. In response I just nodded my head and smiled. I am still not sure how I did it.

#### **Other Field Sites: State Institutions, NGOs, Food Industry, and Media**

The home and school settings were the most important and the most ethnographic parts of my fieldwork; however I also researched other spheres. When studying the state, I started with collecting and analysing documents, laws and regulations concerning children and food, some of which were supplied to me by Mr S. I also conducted interviews with officials from diverse state institutions, such as Warsaw City Council, the National Food and Nutrition Institute, the Sanitary Inspectorate, and the Ministry of Education. Talking to nutritionists and administrative officials was sometimes especially difficult, as I was often scolded for not approaching the issue of children and food in the established, “proper” and expected way. As a result some of these meetings were not pleasant. Nonetheless, many others were very interesting, helpful and enjoyable. I met a lot of people who were passionate about their work. My role in that context was clearly understood as one of a researcher, though some of my interlocutors had a very clear idea of what my research should be about, which did not necessarily map onto my own ideas about the project. The interviews were semi-structured and recorded.

I also conducted a series of expert interviews with nutritionists and people organising education programs about food for children or leading other food

related initiatives addressed to parents or children. This included interviewing people working in diverse non-governmental organisations. These interviews were structured and recorded. I worked more closely with one of the NGOs, *Szkoła na Widelcu* (School on the Fork). The founder of this foundation is a cook who proudly assumes the role of the Polish Jamie Oliver; he is a celebrity chef whose aim is to change the ways in which children eat in schools in Poland. I participated as a volunteer in a number of cooking workshops for children organised by that foundation. I also participated in the out of town conference for school head teachers and food supervisors, organised by them and another organisation. My role of a researcher was clearly understood, though my habit of writing down field notes became a topic of running jokes.

Another part of my fieldwork included studying the food industry. I gathered and analysed information about the main companies producing food for children. I also conducted interviews with food producers and marketers. These interviews were semi-structured and recorded. My interlocutors are kept anonymous – that is what they have asked for – and often the companies they work for were anonymised as well. At the time of my fieldwork I worked as a freelance researcher for a market research company, which often serviced clients producing food marketed to or intended for children. To a certain extent then, my paid work was a part of my fieldwork, though due to the confidentiality agreements I cannot explicitly relate to anything witnessed there. It certainly helped me when I started organising interviews, as it facilitated my access to that group.

During my fieldwork I also looked at media. However, I did not conduct media analysis *per se*; rather I followed the debates to see what sorts of issues were mentioned in relation to children and food. Following Couldry (2003), I mostly regard media as a “meta-field”, which circulates to wider audience different knowledges of other, more specialized fields. I was interested in the public debates and discourses about children and food. In general, during the twelve months of my fieldwork, I tried to participate in any activities organised in Warsaw which were in some way related to children and food, which included cooking

workshops, conferences and public meetings with nutritionists or authors of cookery books etc.

Overall I did more than sixty interviews, not counting many more informal conversations. Studying different field sites requires a certain split in personality and frequent role switching. I used different language and positioned myself in different ways in these diverse field sites. I was often a guest in people's homes, but I was also considered a friend. When in school I was perceived as a researcher, as an evaluator, as an intern, as a teacher, and sometimes as a spy (see Hume and Mulcock, 2004). When doing expert interviews I was usually given the role of the researcher, and sometimes clearly of a researcher from abroad. On one occasion I was considered an inexperienced researcher and a kind of competitor, when one of the nutritionists started the interview by saying that I should not study children and food because I do not know anything about nutrition. People had different ideas about my research and what I was doing, which not always reflected the reality of my fieldwork. I did assume different roles depending on the context. I was an insider when talking to marketers, as well as when talking to activists expressing their negative views on food producers. These differences, especially in language, might be visible in this thesis. When I quote my interlocutors or recount their stories I relate to diverse narratives and ways of framing the topic of children and food they used. When parents talked about it, it evoked care and love, but also struggle and anxiety; state officials related to the concept of care as well, but more often talked about health and regulations, while food producers and marketers talked more about target consumers, access points and benefits.

As I mentioned I have conducted what Desmond (2014) calls *relational ethnography*. While studying different field sites, I was mainly interested in the relations and connections between them; in how feeding and eating were negotiated between them and how they influenced each other.

### 2.3 Research with Children

Building on the approach of childhood studies (e.g. Mayall, 1994a; James and Prout, 1997; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; Christiansen and James, 2008a), during my research I treated children as independent people, knowledgeable about their own and others' lives. I decided to focus on children aged between 6 and 12 years old – a group which is considerably understudied (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998: 177). Children at that age form an interesting group as they are still under rather significant influence of their parents, but they already have a separate social world, away from home, in school, where they can make more independent choices, and are also exposed to the influence of others, including peers. Looking at such a vast age group was difficult at times and required me to adopt different research strategies. However, it allowed me to attempt to see the processes of socialisation at play, in schools for example, when I was observing children of different ages in the same setting.

One of the main challenges of my research was doing research *with* children (see Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Lewis et al. 2004, Greene and Hogan, 2005). The emphasis is necessary as I want to stress that my research was not *on* or *about* children, but done *with* them (see Mayall, 1994a; Christensen and James, 2008b). Samantha Punch points out that there have been two tendencies: to perceive children as just the same or entirely different from adults (2002: 322). As Thomas and O'Kane (1998) emphasize, whilst most methodological and ethical matters that arise in work with children are also present in work with adults, there are important differences related to gaining consent and access, reliable methods and power relations. Then again Christensen argues that children should not be treated “as in principle different from adults” (2004: 165) and therefore no particular methods are needed when doing research with children. However, there is a way to exceed those two tendencies and perceive children as similar to adults, but possessing different competencies (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998: 189). Therefore the most effective way to carry out research with children is to combine traditional, “adult” research methods, such as interview or participant observation, with the techniques more suitable for children, such as drawing, albeit this should

be critically reflected on (Punch, 2002a: 332). This is what I have done during my fieldwork.

The issue of consent – as for example Morrow and Richards (1996) and Alderson and Morrow (2011: 100 – 122) emphasize – is especially problematic during research with children. I was always put in contact with parents who made the decision on behalf of children, often without asking them, although I did witness some of them being asked. I always explained to children what I was doing and why we were meeting, and I asked them if I can record our conversations – only one of them denied, which was an interesting empowered expression of his agency. I also talked to children, rather informally, in schools. Initially I stayed in the role of a distant observer, however many children came up to me and talked to me. They often asked me who I was and what I was doing, and were more direct about it than many adults. I did establish a rapport with many of them.

Interviewing children required adopting a flexible approach (Mauthner, 1997: 20), so I took into consideration the fact that they might get bored faster and that they may not be able to concentrate for as long as I can. I tried to be creative and flexible in my approach to each interview. However, I had limited influence over the interview situation, as in the family setting it was usually decided by parents or was negotiated by parents and children before my visit. So, with some children I talked on my own, whilst during my conversations with others parents were present or nearby. In schools, I often talked to children in the hallways and rarely in the canteens, which was my initial plan. In the corridors I was always approached by children, while in the canteen I approached them and it felt as if I was invading their space and taking over the little free time they had, so I have usually retreated (see Punch, 2002a: 329).

When working with younger children I used drawing, filling vignettes (a shop basket), and taking photographs (e.g. Christensen and James, 2000a; Punch, 2002b; O’Kane, 2008; O’Connell, 2013).<sup>27</sup> Drawings have long been used when working with children; especially by psychologists (e.g. Malchiodi, 1998). Drawing

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<sup>27</sup> The latter, however, was used only with one child and in the end I did not incorporate it into this thesis.

is considered a child-centred approach as it is assumed to be known to all children and suitable for their different linguistic capacities, however as Mitchell (2006) shows, not all children are familiar or comfortable with such a method. During my fieldwork one girl was clearly uncomfortable with it; she kept asking me to draw as well, and then repeated what I was drawing. Drawing is often treated as a way of empowering children and giving them voice in a research process; however as James (2007) notices this is in fact quite problematic, especially if the researchers impose their own interpretations and meanings on the drawings made by children.

I used drawings as a method of communicating with younger children and accessing their food worlds. I asked them to draw their favourite and least favourite foods, their best imagined and the worst possible lunchbox (Dryden et al., 2009), their typical meal, their associations with food and to fill out the shopping basket. I did not focus on drawings as objects in themselves; rather, I was interested in talking about what and why is drawn. I always brought papers and crayons with me.<sup>28</sup> All children were clearly familiar with the practice of drawing. They often brought more paper or other colours of crayons, needed for the specific elements of their drawings. We sat, sometimes for hours, drawing and talking at the same time.

There was a very important difference between doing research with younger and older children. The younger children, 6 – 9-year-olds, usually talked a lot, not necessarily about food, also about their everyday life in what seemed a completely random way. I found it interesting that during the interviews they often asked me many more questions than adults did and more personal ones too. They asked me where I lived, with whom I lived, how big my apartment was, my age, what I liked to eat, what I do not like to eat etc. However, the older children, 11 and 12-year-olds, were more distanced (see Harden et al., 2000). They answered all of my questions, but some of them did not create any kind of narrative, which most adults and the younger children did in different ways. The older children were much more conscious about the interview situation than the younger ones – probably exacerbated by the fact that I talked to them rather than

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<sup>28</sup> They were later left as a gift for children.

drew with them. I usually simply asked them what they preferred to do, and most of them preferred talking to drawing.<sup>29</sup>

Besides methodology, there are other problematic issues regarding research with children related to ethics, accessing their cultures and positioning oneself as a researcher (e.g. Lewis and Lindsay, 2000; Fraser et al., 2004; Alderson and Morrow, 2011). One issue is the lack of photos of children. Due to ethical reasons it was impossible to take photographs of children in schools: I would need consent from all the parents, and with hundreds of children that would be almost impossible to obtain. Because of this, I also decided to abandon the idea of photographing families, a decision which I now regret. As a result, my interlocutors may seem faceless and the school spaces seem unnaturally empty, I do hope, however, to fill them out with multiple voices and experiences I describe.

The inequality between me as a researcher and my young interlocutors, which derived from generational differences and power relations, is another issue (Mayall, 2008; O’Kane, 2008). This was especially difficult to deal with in schools, where the relations between children and adults were very strictly defined. There were however several ways to reduce those differences and facilitate research with children. For example the fact that I look very young could have worked to my advantage, in the same way as my short stature. Throughout my fieldwork, when working with children I tried to become a “non-official adult” (Mayall, 2008: 113) or take “the least adult role” (Mandell, 1991: 42). I tried not to exercise adult authority over children and not to take on disciplinary or caring attitudes, especially in schools. I tried to assume a “friend-like role”. I never broke their trust and did not tell their parents or teachers things told to me in confidence. Still, being like their friend was sometimes a difficult experience, when children laughed at me and teased me, for example about my speech defect or my height (see Mauthner, 1997; Connolly, 2008; Corsaro and Molinari, 2008). Moreover, it was sometimes challenging to deal with my own assumptions about childhood

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<sup>29</sup> That problem could have been solved by organising these interviews with pairs or groups of three to four children, so that they would be able to talk to each other, rather than to me (e.g. Lewis, 1992). Unfortunately I was not able to organise this in such a way.

and children's culture, especially since I was a child in Warsaw. Following Fine and Sandstrom (1988: 35), I reminded myself that my childhood memories do not correspond to children's experiences today; and that the fact that I was a child in Warsaw does not mean that I can take children's experiences and perspectives for granted.

Even though I included children in the research process, my research and my thesis are still dominated by adult perspectives, largely because of my own positioning as an adult and also because of the discrepancy between the number of adults and the number of children I talked to. I could have engaged more with children during my fieldwork and therefore create more space for them and their perspectives in my thesis – this is one of the limitations of my research. Moreover, I have initially planned to observe the same children in different contexts of their lives, at home and at school. This would have allowed me to make more precise arguments about children's socialisation and their tactics and relationships with different adults in different spaces (Lahire, 2011). However, I did not manage to realise this plan.

Even though this thesis is dominated by adult perspectives, working with children allowed me not only to find out more about their social lives and experiences with food, but also to learn a great deal about their families and adults' practices. I strongly believe that doing research with children makes it possible to learn more about their social worlds, but also to understand better the worlds of adults. Through engaging children in the research process it is possible to learn more about social life in general.

During the twelve months of my fieldwork, I not only had to navigate between different field sites and people, also the boundaries between my personal life and my fieldwork were often blurred. For example there were various expectations from my family and friends which disturbed my fieldwork. I had certain duties as a daughter and granddaughter, and sometimes I had to choose which obligations I would fulfil: these related to being an anthropologist or these ensuing from family ties. When I ate an enormous meal in the school canteen, I was not able to share a

meal with my partner later in the evening. When I was invited to eat with families participating in my research, I often missed meals with my own family, especially during weekends. Because of all the sweets I tried as part of my fieldwork, I had more dental problems than ever before. The relationship between my personal life and my fieldwork was not only reduced to food – indeed, I have mentioned that I was often ill as a result of doing research in schools. However, the food researchers' relationship with food when conducting their studies is an especially interesting issue (see Sutton, 1997; Hurn, 2013). Food was always present in my research, as a topic and as a tool. When entering people's homes, I was almost always offered something to drink and eat. This told me a lot about the relationship my interlocutors had with food, and even more so about their attitude towards me: what was offered and in what way clearly showed if I was treated as a distant guest, or rather as a friend. Food was also a research tool when I was volunteering at the cooking workshops or ate meals in school canteens. Moreover, food also mediated in my relationships with children.

Doing fieldwork and then analysing and presenting the gathered data, is always a selective process. Many elements and experiences from that year in Warsaw are excluded from this thesis. Moreover, most of my field notes and all of the interviews were done in Polish. I have transcribed and translated all of them, however the process of translation is always a creative one and thus the quotes and stories I present are always a bit distorted. Still, I try to give as much voice and space to my interlocutors as I can, and to represent their multiple experiences as accurately as possible.

### Chapter III. The Morality of Feeding and Eating and Food Categorizations

*It was early November, just after All Saints Day. I was eating dinner with the Szymański family. We were sitting at the table and eating fish and baked vegetables. At some point Kasia, the younger daughter stopped eating and got up from the table. She came back with pańska skórka.<sup>30</sup> Natalia told Kasia to leave it and sit back at the table with all of us. Kasia argued that they had told her before that she could eat it today after dinner, even though it was not a “sweet day”, and she was now done with her dinner so she wanted to eat it. Her mom started saying that she never agreed to that and that anyway she should come back to the table and eat like a proper person. “There’s this delicious fish, come and finish eating it” she added. Then Tomek said that he told Kasia that she could eat her pańska skórka today, and that Natalia should let her have it. “She will not finish the dinner anyway now”, he argued. Natalia looked at me and decided to let it go, probably because I was there and she didn’t want to argue. So Kasia started unwrapping her pańska skórka, when her sister took it from her hands saying that she wanted one as well! Tomek explained that she had eaten hers the day before and that this was her sister’s. Julia gave it back to Kasia. At this point Natalia told me that she could only imagine what I was thinking just then about their parental practices, implying that I disapproved. I replied that I remembered how much I loved eating pańska skórka as a child, and that I was not surprised Kasia wanted to eat it. We started chatting about our fond memories of eating pańska skórka when we were children.*

(Field notes, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2012)

Kasia is finished with her dinner and wants to eat pańska skórka. She has fulfilled her obligation of eating fish and vegetables, and now wants to eat a sweet treat, an act permitted by her father, so it would be a proper thing to do. However according to Natalia, Kasia has not yet finished her dinner; she should continue eating fish, which is good for her. Moreover she notices that it is not a “sweet day”, when Julia and Kasia are allowed to eat sweets, so Kasia should not eat her

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<sup>30</sup> Pańska skórka is a homemade sweet treat, made from egg whites, sugar, water and rose or raspberry juice, which is sold mainly in Warsaw, typically only on All Saints Day.

*pańska skórka* at that moment. The proper thing to do would be to continue eating fish and vegetables. Tomek joins their discussion, and explains that he allowed Kasia to eat her *pańska skórka* today, that she has already eaten enough of her dinner and will not eat anymore so she should be allowed to eat her sweet treat. Each of them has their own view on what would be proper in this situation. They might have continued to negotiate but because this time a guest anthropologist has joined them, Natalia decides to let it go. She acknowledges that her daughter has eaten a little bit of fish and vegetables, so even if now she will eat something sweet, her diet will still be balanced. But she also ironically comments that this is an example of “bad” parental feeding practices.

This is a fairly typical situation: parents have a certain vision of feeding their children, but it is tempered by their children's eating practices and adjusted to them. And these ideal visions and practices are based on certain categorizations of food. People, in general, classify, reclassify and categorize food in many ways, for example as healthy/unhealthy, hot/cold, pure/dirty, raw/cooked, permitted/forbidden, working class/higher class etc. (e.g. Levi-Strauss, 1966; Douglas, 1966; Furst et al., 2000). Food can also be classified according to the age of people who consume it, for example as children's food and adults' food. As Amsterdam and Bruner point out, “acquiring and negotiating our categories is part of the business of growing up, of becoming a member of a family or a group of friends or a culture (...) we need to get them *right* both to make sense of the world and to communicate with one another about it” (2002: 20, emphasis in original).

The categories of food are of special importance as they guide people's everyday practices and influence their sense of identity. Adults and children often categorize food differently, or relate in different ways to these categories, which causes various conflicts and tensions. Children's socialisation entails learning the “proper” food categories and related values. Consuming certain categories of food, and not consuming others, is connected with being or becoming a “proper” person. To understand the feeding – eating relationship, it is important to acknowledge that it is not just about the consumed food, it is about what it

represents and how it extends to a person who eats it. It is about the practice of feeding/eating particular food products and not feeding/eating others.

To analyse the food categorizations and related practices, I refer to the concept of food morality. Negotiations connected to feeding and eating are based on and fuelled by moral categorizations of food. At the dinner table for example diverse moral orientations and views on food are enacted and negotiated. Fish, a healthy part of a homemade dinner, is juxtaposed with *pańska skórka*, a sweet bought thing. The moral dispositions of Natalia (mother), Tomek (father) and Kasia (daughter) are all demonstrated and negotiated. Moreover, their moral dispositions and practices are influenced by the broader discourses on food in Poland.

I start this chapter by explaining how I understand the concept of food morality and what role it plays in children's feeding and eating. I discuss diverse moral discourses on food prevalent in Warsaw today and how these are embodied and enacted in people's everyday practices. I take a closer look at how food is categorized along different bodily, nutritional, phenomenological lines as good or bad; or better and worse. This process of categorization is to a large extent internal and relates to the first layer of "inner" negotiations (see chapter 1). It is also negotiated through interactions with others, as the above ethnographic vignette shows. To illustrate this, I critically engage with the concept of *children's food*. I conclude this chapter with a discussion about balancing "good" and "bad" food when feeding and eating.

### 3.1 Food Morality

During my fieldwork in Warsaw, on many occasions and in various contexts people asked me whether they fed their children in the right way, whether *their* children – be it at home, at school or even in Poland in general – ate in the proper way. Everyone has certain ideas about what would be proper and not proper in terms of feeding and eating in a particular situation. Every so often people's views and their practices are contradictory. Their *habitus*, as Lahire (2011) explains, is not coherent: they might relate to different individual dispositions depending on the context of the interaction. The concept of food morality allows to analyse the multiplicity of these embodied perspectives:

Every social context allows for a range of possible moralities. Therefore, within any particular context each person has several moralities available as a means to morally live-through that context. (Zigon, 2009: 263).

In my approach to morality I build on Jarrett Zigon's theory.<sup>31</sup> He argues that morality is not a set of principles and rules that must be learned and followed, but rather relates to the acquired attitudes, emotions and bodily dispositions of a person throughout their life (Zigon, 2007, 2008). Morality is negotiated and might change with the context; it is shaped and reshaped by social experiences. As Zigon puts it: "it is an everyday embodied way of being in the world" (Zigon, 2008: 17). Morality therefore is a set of individual dispositions.

Zigon distinguishes between moral discourse and moral practice. The former relates to the normative perspectives that define what is good and bad according to different values promoted by institutional and public discourses. He further distinguishes between institutional moralities – moral perspectives promoted and implemented by institutions, such as schools, government, church; and a public discourse of morality. The two are in constant dialogue with each other (Zigon, 2009: 259). Moral practice is a result of a person's decisions, not necessarily conscious, based on their embodied individual morality, which is influenced by

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<sup>31</sup> I do leave out a rich discussion on morality (e.g. Durkheim, 1961; Howell, 1997; Heintz, 2009; Fassin, 2012; Stafford, 2013).

these diverse moral discourses. Because of the multiplicity of these perspectives, morality as a set of embodied dispositions is plural and changeable. Zigon also points to what he calls *moral breakdowns*, moments when people's morality is challenged and they have to consciously and creatively find a way to be moral in a certain situation (2007). I argue that when feeding children, these sorts of moral breakdowns occur often, however they are not necessarily always solved through conscious and reflexive practices.

Zigon also differentiates *societal moral breakdowns*, which occur when the whole society is going through important changes concerning moral values and perspectives, which occurred for example in Russia, which he studied (2010, 2011). The same can be true for post-socialist Poland. As I mentioned in chapter 1, parents who feed their children now, were brought up in a completely different social and moral context than children today.

Building on Zigon's idea of morality, I introduce a concept of food morality whereby moral discourses on food relate to diverse perspectives on what (and how, when, where, with whom) is right and wrong, good and bad, or better and worse to feed/eat. Individual food morality relates to the embodied dispositions of a person and their views on what is "good" and "bad" to eat or feed. These views may change, as they are negotiated through interactions and based on assemblages of diverse ideas of "good" and "bad" food, which "provides a way for us to understand the fact that oftentimes seemingly incompatible moral discourses and dispositions exist rather comfortably in the same situation or location" (Zigon, 2014: 19). As Zigon continues to explain, morality "need not necessarily be conceived in terms of judging, evaluating, and enacting the good or right, but instead to be about the making, remaking, and maintenance of relationships" (2014: 21).

In their everyday life people constantly relate to their embodied food morality, which is relational, negotiated and shaped through social interactions. As Allison James explains, the moral perspectives and associations with food "have little to do with the actual taste preferences of individuals; they are encoded in sets of

cultural attitudes towards food which have been historically determined and are still daily applied” (1990: 680). Multiple moral perspectives on food contribute to the making, remaking and maintenance of the relationship between feeding and eating – as shown in the opening ethnographic vignette. When planning a meal and sitting at the dinner table parents want to feed their children in a certain way (e.g. feed them fish) which corresponds to their moral perspective(s) on food (e.g. fish is healthy; it is good and proper to eat fish; fish is a part of a homemade meal). Children, as well, want to eat in a certain way, which reflects their moral dispositions (e.g. eat *pańska skórka*, which is sweet and fun and challenges the typical pattern of meals).

John Coveney (2006) argues that people construct themselves as certain kinds of subjects, certain kinds of moral eaters. He traces the moral attitudes to food and eating, and the values attached to the proper diet, from ancient Greece and Rome, through to domination of the Christian Church and the Enlightenment, until the emergence and the development of nutritional science in the 19th and 20th centuries. According to him the importance of moderation, balance and self-control – which are the fundamental concepts within current health discourses on food – derive from the ancient Greek attitudes to food and eating (2006: 27). The same ideas of balance and self-control were strengthened by the Christian Church, with the emphasis on fasting and the concerns about the influence of food on the purity of the soul (ibid. 37). Eating particular foods and not eating others corresponds to being a moral person at a certain historical moment.<sup>32</sup>

In his book, Coveney (2006) shows that since the development of nutritional science in the 19th century, the ideas of what was good to eat echoed the health priorities. Today the conceptions of good and bad foods no longer correspond to the purity of the soul, but rather to the purity of the body (ibid. 64).

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<sup>32</sup> Being a moral person also corresponds to a particular behaviour regarding food (see chapter 5).

### **Health Frame: Dominating Moral Perspective on Food**

The nutrition/health discourse dominates perspectives on food in contemporary Poland. It is reflected in the institutional morality of the government (see chapter 6), and in the public moral discourse disseminated in the media. Almost every article, piece of information or news which I have encountered over the twelve months of my fieldwork that mentioned food, utilised a nutrition/health moral perspective. The books, TV programs and online blogs I looked at, which teach parents how to properly feed their children, almost always focused on health and nutrition. There appear to be a growing number of experts who tell mothers what is “good” (homemade granola bars and warm millet with fruits for breakfast) and what is “bad” (sugary drinks) (*Jedzenie dla dzieci*, 2013). As Coveney points out, “nutrition becomes popularized, it becomes a commodifiable media produce” (Coveney, 2006: 138; see also Scrinis, 2008).

During all of my interviews with adults and children, they referred to a certain idea of health and healthy feeding/eating. For example Paweł explained to me:

*There is this rule that they cannot eat too much white bread. We shouldn't feed them milk with chocolate cereals, if anything, rather normal or oatmeal cereals [why did you make up these rules?] That was for health reasons.*

11-year-old Kamila told me: *My mom sometimes makes French fries at home, but this is not very healthy, so we eat it once a month or once every two weeks, because you can become addicted.* 7-year-old Tosia admitted that she does not eat enough raw vegetables, and when I asked why she thinks she should eat them, she replied: *well, that's what my mom says, that I should eat them, because it's healthy.* Similarly, 6-year-old Ewa told me that she eats cheese, even though she does not like it, because her mom tells her to do this, because it is healthy and good for her. One of my interviewees working in market research pointed out the following:

*People have diverse ideas about where the chemical components and preservatives are. And we have noticed that children absorb this. They say “oh, this is chemical”, or “that has preservatives!” Five years ago nobody talked like that. People are paying more and more attention to these things. (...) Now [during the focus group] there will always be one boy who would say “oh, this is surely unhealthy, my mom would not buy this product!”, and it wasn't like that before!*

Before – that is in the 1990s when food marketing was developed in Poland and in the early 2000s – both adults and children were captivated by the diversity of food products and the consumer cultures, the notion of health did not play such an important part in moral perspectives on food. However, since 2000s Poles started to be more critical of marketing and increasingly immune to its influence compared to early 1990s. In the 2010s the nutrition/health discourse provides the most prevalent moral perspective on food in Warsaw. Nevertheless, the concept of health means different things to different people and healthy/unhealthy practices are negotiated through interactions. Milk is a good example.

It is a widespread belief in Poland that milk is best for children because it provides them with calcium and vitamin D, necessary for their proper growth and development. Throughout the Polish People's Republic during the periods when food rations were distributed, parents of younger children received additional milk rations. Milk is the ultimate children's drink and it has been recognised as such for a very long time in Poland (see Dembińska, 1980; Chwalba, 2004; see also DuPois, 2002). 30-year-old Marysia told me that she allows her children to drink milk whenever they want to, and that some people find this weird. Nobody forbade her from consuming milk when she was younger, so she does the same for her children. In this case milk is perceived as ultimately good. However, over the last couple of years, a growing number of parents in Warsaw, and in Poland more broadly, are starting to perceive milk as bad and unhealthy for children. They explain that milk contributes to having colds; it may influence the development of allergies. *It contributes to the mucus (phlegm) production, does not digest properly and in general it is not healthy* – Paulina explained to me.

Dairy consumption can be a highly contested issue, sometimes within one family. For example Natalia is against her children drinking milk, while Tomek believes milk is healthy and good for children. Once Natalia introduced a dairy-free diet for her children, which Tomek opposed.

*This is not good – he said – children should drink milk. There is much more research proving that milk is needed, than that it is not. Maybe in different cultural regions milk is less important, but here it is important. But well, it was only six weeks on that diet, so during six weeks they wouldn't lose their teeth, nothing would have happened to them, and after that time it was normal again.*

Natalia and Tomek quite often return to that discussion. On the other hand Piotr (35-year-old) assumes that his wife is more knowledgeable about these issues and follows her lead. It was Weronika (30-year-old) who opted to forgo milk in their children's diet. Piotr initially was sceptical, but once he witnessed that *drinking a half of glass of milk causes a cascade of snot*, he was convinced.

As Wiley (2011) shows the discourse about milk and children is highly normative. The slogan "milk is good for children" has been repeated in regards to children's diets in Poland for decades now. There is a programme called "Glass of Milk" implemented in primary schools, which promotes drinking milk as healthy and a good practice (see chapter 6). All of the children I talked to recognised milk as good and healthy, unless they had allergies and could not drink it. In those situations they still considered milk to be in general good for children, just not for them. Children internalize the wider public moral discourses on dairy, even if they contradict their parents' views, as was the case with Krzyś, Paulina's son, who told me that he disagrees with his mom and thinks that milk is good for children.

### **Other Moral Perspectives on Food**

Though dominated by the nutrition/health discourse, the ideas of what is good and bad to eat are also influenced by other factors and normative perspectives. Atkinson explains that "eating what is 'good for you' is always more than a matter of mere nutritional value" (1983: 17). The good is often aligned with what is tasty, what brings you pleasure and makes you happy. This is a perspective to which

children often relate in their moral practices. And what is good along the pleasure and taste lines is often perceived as bad along the nutritional lines. There is a saying in Poland that what is healthy for you, tastes bad. And what is tasty: creamy sauces, fatty meats, sweets, are considered not good according to nutritional guidelines. This more taste focused, “hedonistic” and more self-indulgent moral perspective on food has always accompanied the more health inclined discourse. They are always juxtaposed with each other and balance each other out. In Poland, due to post-socialist transformations which brought the *societal moral breakdowns* (Zigon, 2007), these juxtapositions have changed over time. They have become much sharper when on the one hand the health/nutrition moral discourse started to dominate people’s moral perspectives on food; and, on the other hand, the possibilities of enacting more self-indulgent moral practices have expanded with the transformation of the food market and the growing abundance of fun and pleasure foods.

Another moral discourse relates to the ethics of food production and consumption, which perceives unethically produced food as “bad”, for example meat or coffee produced under conditions unfair to either animals or workers. This is related to the growing interest in organic, local and Fair Trade products, enacted rather by the middle class parents, who as Cairns, Jonhston and MacKendrick (2013) show, often try to create and sustain an “organic child”, whose body is kept pure by means of the foods she consumes. But the concept of “natural products” (Caldwell, 2007), and good and local, Polish food – which is safe and from a known source, without chemicals and preservatives – is shared by people across the social structures in Poland (Mroczkowska, 2015). This moral discourse did not exist in Poland before the 1990s when socio-economic realities were such that the greater concern was to procure any food, even if the food consumed from today’s perspective was “organic” and “ethical” (Jehlicka and Smith, 2011; Klein, Jung and Caldwell, 2014).

Another moral perspective relates to traditional knowledge, which assumes that something is “good” or “bad” to eat because it was always considered as such. In Poland the traditional perspective on health has been supplanted, though not

entirely replaced, by the more modern, medico-nutritional perspective (Urbańska, 2012). These two perspectives can be contradictory. For example traditionally large portions of food and a diet based on meat were considered good, also for children. However the modern nutrition/health discourse dictates eating smaller portions more often, and a diet based rather on vegetables than meat. These different perspectives often cause intergenerational conflicts between parents and grandparents and lead to generational knowledge gaps (Haukanes and Pine, 2003); even if parents relate to what they ate as children and consider something to be “good” because it was given to them in their childhood.

The two above mentioned moral perspectives often intersect, when the “Polish food” and the traditional “Polish way of eating” are juxtaposed with Western influences. “Polish” or “ours” (Mroczkowska, 2015) equals local, familiar products, which are safe, without preservatives and chemicals, prepared at home and eaten together by the family; while “Western” implies processed, store bought food products, often consumed in a hurry or in front of the TV. After the 1990s' enthusiasm of becoming Western, currently many people are troubled that Poland is becoming too Western, that the society is letting go of its good, traditional food and food practices.

The moral discourse related to tradition is also connected with religion. One of many Catholic moral views on food dictates not eating meat on Fridays. This practice is still prevalent in schools. In the schools I have researched Friday was typically a meatless day. However, this practice is less and less enacted among families in Warsaw. Among the families I have worked with only one continued with this custom.

A different perspective on food relates to convenience. Time constraints influence the ideas of what is good and bad to feed/eat in certain situations. For example when the family is travelling or in hurry and hungry, it might be better and more convenient to eat in a fast food restaurant, even though it would not be “good” according to the health/nutrition moral perspective on food. When there is little

time to prepare food, parents buy a ready-made product even though if they had more time they would prepare a homemade meal.

Similarly, the price of certain food can influence the possibility of enacting certain moral dispositions. Parents might want to feed their children the best products, the freshest and organic fruits and vegetables for example, or the best, branded sweets; however they might not have the financial resources or time for that. As 30-year-old Marysia told me: *I would like to buy her these Kinder products, they are better, they have milk and chocolate inside, but it is just too expensive, so I buy it only occasionally.* The moral feeding and eating practices are influenced by economic circumstances and time pressures.

Some people may value food itself less, and focus more on the sociality of food encounters. For example for children in school, many food events are often more about eating and spending time with their friends, than about food they eat. The shared experience of eating something together as a family, having fun and pleasure, for example when everyone goes for ice-cream, might be, in certain situations, more important and better than eating healthy food.

Diverse foods are placed somewhere along the axis of “good” and “bad” according to different moral systems which intersect with each other. For many vegetarians consuming meat is morally wrong because it is based on cruelty, while for other people meat is considered good as it is tasty and provides many necessary nutrients. Many so called junk food products are perceived as not moral because they are unhealthy, and also advertised directly to children, an act that is often thought of as manipulative and exploitative, and therefore not moral. But the same products might be considered good by children as they provide pleasure and fun, and might influence their social positioning within the group. Coffee can be perceived as morally wrong if it is treated as an addictive stimulant that may cause high blood pressure. It can, however, become a morally good product if it is “fairly” traded.

There are different moral perspectives in play when thinking about what is “good” and “bad” to eat in Warsaw, what is “proper” and “not proper” in regards to

feeding and eating. Moreover these moral dispositions to food are changeable and situational – people embody multiple, often contradictory moral perspectives on food, and enact them according to their dispositions (or “inner” negotiations), the context of the situation and interactions with others.

### **Food Morality and Children**

The issue of children and morality has been extensively studied by developmental psychologists (e.g. Piaget, 1932; Kohlberg, 1958; Turiel, 1983; Kagan and Lamb, 1990; Killen and Smetana, 2014). Anthropologists, in response to the psychological focus on Western countries and studying children in those contexts, have researched children brought up under completely different cultural conditions to enable a discussion on cross-cultural differences and similarities (e.g. Mead, 1930; Richards, 1956; LeVine and New, 2008).

The concept of food morality becomes especially interesting when it relates to children. A proper diet is not only what makes a healthy and normal person – in a sense of not departing from the norm; but also a proper and a moral person. Parents have to not only feed their children in the right way so that they develop and grow, but they are also supposed to teach children what is proper and not proper to eat according to their food culture. Children's proper eating, their moral orientations, their food choices and practices are a reflection on their parents' proper feeding and their morality.

Nevertheless, it seems that there is a different kind of food morality for children. There are different rules regarding their eating, because children are considered to be in the process of socialisation, not yet knowing what is right and wrong. Parents' moral perspectives on food often differ when it relates to their diet and to their children's diet, there is a sort of double standard. Mothers often consider taste to be of greatest importance when choosing food for themselves, but when they choose food for their children health becomes the most important factor (Gibson, Wardle and Watts, 1998: 218; see chapter 4). There is a different sort of food morality when it comes to feeding children. Children's moral judgements and practices may differ from those of adults and are often perceived as not proper,

just because children might relate in a different way to what is “good” and “bad” to eat, for example they often value the taste aspect of food more than the health aspect (Ludvigsen and Scott, 2009: 425). With time, their moral dispositions are supposed to change and become more adult-like.

People relate to and embody diverse moral perspectives on food and, as Zigon (2014) shows, they relate to each other while making moral judgements and decisions. These interactions and negotiations often become especially sensitive when they concern children. Parents try to feed children according to their moral dispositions, according to what is “good” and “proper” in their view. Children eat in a way which is “good” for them, which may or may not correspond to their parents' views at that moment. Both engage in “inner” negotiations regarding what is “good” and “bad” to eat. Natalia initially decided that Kasia should eat more fish and vegetables, and not *pańska skórka*. But through her interactions with Tomek, Kasia and me, she changed her opinion.

The moral categorizations of food and the individual moral dispositions lie at the basis of the feeding – eating relationships. These ideas of good and bad, proper and not proper food are concentrated in the concept of *children's food*. The category of *children's food*, as Curtis, James and Ellis (2010) argue, is created through a certain moral, practical and material process. I would add that it is also a historical process. Focusing on this category and its elements allows me to discuss in more detail the ways in which multiple moral discourses on food are embodied, enacted and negotiated in people's everyday lives in Warsaw.

### **3.2 Children's Food**

*Children's food* is often perceived as a recent category and refers to products designed with children in mind and marketed to them (e.g. Roos, 2002; Elliott, 2009, 2010, 2011; Curtis, James and Ellis, 2010). Jing (2000b) for example explains that *children's food* is a relatively new category in China. She distinguishes between “children’s diet” and “children’s food”, and while the former refers to what children eat on an everyday basis, the latter relates to what is intended for them as a special category of edibles (Jing, 2000b: 7).

Similarly in Poland, the distinction between children's and adults' food became more explicit in the 1990s, when a new niche was discovered and exploited by food marketers, and products designed especially with children in mind were created (see section 1.2). Before, children ate the same food as adults did, but in smaller proportions and they consumed more milk (Demińska, 1980; Chwalba, 2004; Łoziński, 2012). Sweets and also fruits, which were often difficult to procure in cities during the Polish People's Republic, were often saved for children as a special treat; but children in general ate the same food that adults consumed (Brzostek, 2010). With the change from a socialist system and controlled markets to a capitalist system and deregulated markets, the separate category of products that are intended only for children has emerged, as in the example of a Frugo drink described by Dunn (2004: 58).

The market responds to and contributes to creating certain needs and expectations occurring in the society; in this case related to the increasing wealth and child-centred attitudes in families, which influence children's pester and purchase power. As Daniel Cook shows, the family life and the conceptions about parenthood and childhood are “enmeshed in economic and specifically commercial–consumer relations and arrangements from the outset – not separated by a wall or frontier boundary” (2009a: 320). As such, the commercially generated meanings of food play an important part in what Cook calls *semantic provisioning*, “the uses of language in the negotiation and creation of meaning of foodstuffs and meals.” (2009a: 323).

The main characteristic of products intended for children, is that they are supposed to be fun. One of the most common ways to achieve this is to add a toy to a food product, the best examples of which are McDonald's Happy Meal and Kinder Surprise. But there are also many other ways of providing fun with food. One of my interviewees working in market research told me:

*When they [a certain food company] were introducing new ice-cream they did their research and have found out such a simple thing that for children ice-cream is not only about taste, but also about fun and playing with it, and so they created an ice lolly which bends, and they named it Gibek [wobble].*

Food producers and marketers in many ways influence what both adults and children consider to be children's food, as they create products characterized as *eatertainment* (Elliott, 2009): they are distant from adults' food and promote food as fun and eating as entertainment. On the one hand, they are often perceived negatively because their actions are treated as exploitative of children, as immoral behaviour (Cook, 2004b). On the other hand, they create something that becomes an important part of children's food culture. Buckingham and Tingstad (2014b) argue that there are two main perspectives on positioning children as consumers. One perceives children as victims of powerful and manipulative consumer culture which robs them of their childhood, in that view children are manipulated by food producers and marketers to prefer certain foods – this is the view which dominates in Poland. The other perspective constructs children as having power and even the authority and the competence that many adults may be lacking – in that view certain foods, such as sweets, can in fact empower children. As Elliott shows this type of food “makes the child present in the domestic foodscape in a way not seen before.” (2009: 38). However, as Cook notes:

Corporate entities and individual persons are involved [in children's consumption] for profit and self-interest. They have agendas and perspectives that are often distinct from those of parents, educators and caretakers of children. Marketers and advertisers regularly invoke ‘children's best interests’ and their ‘empowerment’ as the altruistic motivations behind their actions. (2004b: 150)

One of my interlocutors working in market research told me about one of her clients, a company producing food intended for children: *let's face it, they think about how to earn money. Children are customers, so they try to sell to them as much as possible.* It can be argued that by treating children as independent customers, the food industry in fact empowers them.

Buckingham and Tingstad (2014b) explain that both perspectives on children's relationships with consumer culture are too narrow. Children go through a sort of consumer socialisation, or *commercial enculturation* as Daniel Cook (2014) names it: children come to know and participate in commercial life in many ways. They appropriate the messages from advertisements and the meanings proposed by food marketers in multiple, individual ways (Buckingham and Tingstad, 2014a). Children in contemporary Poland are much more proficient in this than their parents used to be at their age. Many people in Poland had to learn to participate in the new kind of consumer culture as adults, not as children. One of the food marketers told me:

*The Western food producers whose food is normally sold to children, in the 1990s in Poland they advertised to adults. People were hungry for new products, and it was possible to sell anything to them. So they started with adults, because it was so easy. And when they have saturated that sphere, they started looking for new niches (...) the focus on children came later.*

Many of my interlocutors working in or for the food industry pointed out that children quickly lose interest in products and brands. They quickly move on to something else. 10-year-olds do not want to consume something that the 7 and 8-year-olds are eating. The food market has to constantly change and adjust to children and diversify according to narrow age categories. One of the food marketers pointed to a *Kubuś* juice history:

*Kubuś used to be a chubby bear, and now he is sporty. It used to be a thick juice, sold in glass bottles. But children went to school, that was no longer good, so now there is *Kubuś Play* and *Kubuś Water* [in plastic bottles]. *Kubuś* grew up with these children.*

Children in Poland spend their own money mostly on ice-cream, chocolate bars and candies, chewing gum, crisps and soft drinks (UKOiK, 2006). These are *children's foods*, similar to “kets” described by Allison James (1979). They are in crazy colours and shapes, induce various sensations in a mouth, have humorous names, are usually very cheap and unwrapped and provide fun – they are the direct antithesis to “real”, *adults' food*. Children can eat those gummy spiders and worms, and also play with them (see chapter 7). One of my interlocutors working in a food company characterized this food as: *short-term joy, cheap price, bad quality*. They also – which I discuss in the following chapters – allow children to bend and break adults' rules. As Elliott explains:

Fun food offers the suspension of dining rules and rituals. Informality, in fact, is a necessary corollary of (fun food) play; one cannot be made to use a spoon for yogurt when it comes packaged in a tube designed for squirting straight into the mouth! Thus, adult rules, manners and canons of behaviour surrounding food are bent. (2009: 40)

*Children's food* are not only those advertised and marketed to children and bought by them, but also those advertised and marketed to mothers, and bought by them for their children. Food producers not only respond to (or create) children's needs, but also respond to (and use) parental expectations and desires to feed their children right and healthy. They have to sell their food not only to children, but to mothers as well (see Cook, 2013: 75). A food marketer told me:

*It used to be enough to say that something is healthy to convince mothers, and now we really have to search for what to say to mothers, to find out what they want. It is a nightmare, looking for consumer insights! But the producers, they follow children; everyone knows that if a child wants something, parents will buy it!*

This approach results in goods that can be characterized as *edutainment* or *nutritainment*:<sup>33</sup> combining the mother's need for nutritious food and education

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<sup>33</sup> For the latter see Wilk, 2012.

with a child's desire for fun and entertainment, hence making these products good from different moral perspectives.

*Children's food* is often understood as "children friendly food", and includes such food as pizza, chicken nuggets, spaghetti with tomato sauce; sweets and other forms of "junk food" (e.g. Curtis, James and Ellis, 2010). 40-year-old Magda told me: *I can always find something when we're going out, there is always a children's menu: a chicken and spaghetti.* Separate children's menus are a relatively new phenomenon in Warsaw, reflecting the separation of children's food from what adults eat. When my interlocutors in Warsaw talked about *jedzenie dla dzieci* (food for children) or *dzieciowe jedzenie* (children's food) they usually referred to diverse sweets and snacks, but also meals intended for children. 36-year-old Asia told me about her daughter: *like any child, she likes crisps and cola.* And Piotr, who is 35, explained to me that *it is known that children eat in the same way, they have similar tastes, and they will all eat pasta with some sauce.*

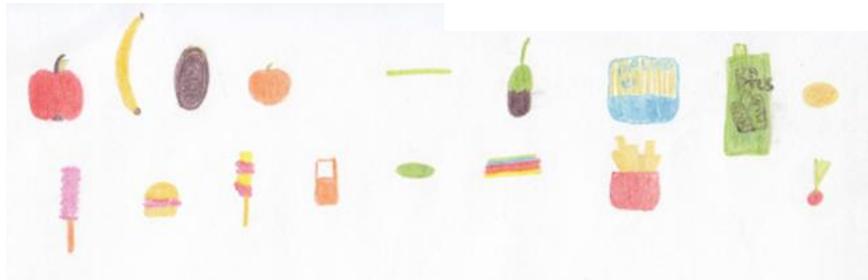
Children are often treated as if they were a homogenous group with exactly the same food preferences; no one says that all adults have the same food preferences. When doing my fieldwork I did in fact find out that the diets of children participating in my research were similar to each other: their meals were similar and their snacks were more or less similar as well. However, when I asked children to draw their favourite and least favourite foodstuffs they showed a great diversity in their likes and dislikes. Chocolate for example was both among their favourite and the least favourite foods, so were the different fruits and vegetables. Below you can see some drawings of children's favourite and least favourite food; the distinction between them might not be entirely clear at first glance.



Drawings 1 and 2, made by 6,5-year-old Kasia. On the left you can see her least favourite foods (an aubergine, a vanilla ice-cream, a strawberry, an orange, dill, chocolate, leeks, and a soup served at the school canteen), and on the right the foods she likes (a baked apple, cinnamon, gummy candies, a carrot, a pancake, dumplings and raisins).



Drawings 3 and 4, made by 11-year-old Kamila. On the top you can see her least favourite foods (a mushroom soup, chocolate, a vanilla yogurt and a chilli pepper) and on the bottom are her favourite foods (including an apple, a banana, an ice lolly, a shashlik, French fries, a nut, a cherry).



Drawings 5 and 6, made by 6-year-old Olek. On the left you can see his favourite foods (a candy, spaghetti, a hamburger, potatoes, ice-cream, French fries) and on the right are his least favourite foods (salad served at school canteen, Brussels sprouts, a hot dog).

Adults often assume that all children like and dislike certain things: they all like chocolate and do not like fruits and vegetables. Surely there are certain fashions, for example in my childhood spinach was the most unpopular food among children; but its place has been taken now by the Brussels sprouts, detested by many of my young interlocutors. Children – in the same way as adults – have their own taste preferences, as illustrated by the drawings above. Nevertheless, as Ludvigsen and Scott explain: “socially constructed distinction between children’s food and adults’ food created an expectation among children (and adults) that children are supposed to favour certain foods” (2009: 426; see also Ross, 1995). Elliott (2011) shows that according to children, children's food is related to fun, colours, being interactive, while adults' food entails seriousness, health, responsibility and is rather boring. However, she dismisses the connection between children's food and fruits and vegetables that some of her interlocutors made, because it was mentioned very rarely (2011: 136). While children recognise that certain foods are *theirs*, they might still differ in their likes and dislikes towards these foods.

Although “fun foods” (Elliott 2009) or “kets” (James 1979) are more clearly a part of what constitutes *children's food*, I argue that this is only a part of their food culture. Products such as fruits and vegetables or dairy, those which constitute proper snacks or meals, are also part of children's food in Warsaw, because this is what children are fed and what they eat. For example a typical polish meal: a soup and a pork or chicken breaded cutlet, with potatoes and *surówka* (a salad made from fresh vegetables) is considered a typical children friendly dish; similarly pancakes or *kotlety mielone* (resembling bigger meatballs or smaller meatloaf). During my research, when adults talked about *children's food*, they referred not only to products designed with children in mind, the fun and junk foods; but also to these typical Polish meals, the same food they have eaten in their childhoods. Children also recognised these types of food as an important part of their diets. *Children's food* is what children are fed and what they eat, and that includes both what is considered morally proper by many adults, which most often means healthy and nutritious food (though it is assumed children do not like that); and

what is considered morally improper and unhealthy by adults (which is perceived as often preferred by children). Adults, in fact, usually recognise that the “not proper” food can be in many ways good for children, because it brings them joy and pleasure. This juxtaposition and ambiguity are inherent in both adults’ and children's views on *children's food* and reflect their plural moral dispositions.

It is worth noting that food in this case is categorized according to who eats it and not for example when it is eaten (Douglas, 1975). Typically, as many anthropological studies show (e.g. Levi-Strauss, 1966; Douglas, 1966; Harris, 1987), food is categorized on the edible/not edible dimension. As Claude Fischler (1988) argues, eating certain foods, and not eating others, determines the identity of the group and the affiliation with that group. In this case children's and adults' food are juxtaposed with each other. Some foodstuffs that are only *children's food*, cannot be *adults' food*, which includes for example “kets” (James, 1979): sweets in crazy colours, shapes and tastes, usually quite cheap and designed especially for children. Adults are not supposed to like and eat them, while children are expected to like and consume them. Even more: some adults perceive these foods as inedible. One of my interviewees mentioned that she enjoys eating gummy bears, but that her adult daughter laughs at her and remarks that it is children's food and she should not eat it. On the other hand, there are certain foods, which constitute typical *adults' food*, which includes spicy meals or seafood. Children are not supposed to like and eat them, and often treat them as inedible. In fact, children enjoy challenging the boundaries of what is considered edible; some of them told me that they like eating dog's food for example.

*Children's food* is a changeable and dynamic category. Certain foods are categorized as “good” and “bad”, but also as belonging to children's food through multiple practices of feeding and eating. There are in fact many foods which are in between these categories of adults' and children's food; they are outside of this classification or cross over this classification, they are consumed by both groups. However, in the same way as Durkheim and Mauss explain that many justifications of totem classifications are made *post factum* and *ad hoc* (1963: 12); similarly various foods are often in one way or another perceived more as

*children's food* or as *adults' food*. For example it can be consumed by both groups, but be prepared because of children or served to them in a different way, which already makes it more of *children's food*. Also many meals when served to children are renamed. One of the parents from my research served a “Hogwarts' Stew” to his children.<sup>34</sup> Another example is a vegetable soup which is renamed “Shrek's Soup” or a “Spring Soup”, when it is served to children. This process of renaming certain dishes reclassifies them as belonging to the category of *children's food*. In order to appeal to children, they are given a different *semantic provisioning*, related to commercial and popular culture names and meanings (Cook, 2009a). As Elliott explains, “children’s foods must be conceptually different, to be palatable” (2010: 544).

To take the parallel with Durkheim and Mauss's *Primitive Classification* further; there is also a certain hierarchy in this categorization (1963: 15, 20). Even though more care is put in the preparation of *children's food*, in general *adults' food* is perceived as higher in that hierarchy. That is because at some point all children are supposed to change their food preferences and diets from those belonging to *children's food* category to those belonging to *adults' food* – that is one of the signs of proper food socialisation. Durkheim and Mauss explain that the totemic system is a certain way of grouping people in clans according to the natural elements, but at the same time it is a way of grouping the natural elements according to the social groups (1963: 4). Is food categorized according to the connection with either children or adults; or are the categories of children and adults divided according to the food they consume? It is possible to argue that we know that somebody is a child because of the food they consume: eating certain food makes you a child (see James, Kjørholt and Tingstad, 2009b). We know some food products are *children's food* because they are produced for them, liked by them and given to them. When adults eat them they are accused of being childish. Assuming that *adults' food* constitutes the norm and what is generally eaten, and that *children's food* needs to be somehow distinguished, it is interesting to

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<sup>34</sup> It is a reference to Harry Potter.

consider who decides what *children's food* is: adults or children; parents, food producers and marketers or nutritionists?

Curtis, James and Ellis (2010) present the construction of children's food in the UK as a practical, material and moral process. What children are fed and what they eat is negotiated on an everyday basis through diverse practices and through the materiality of the food fed and eaten. It is also a moral process as a certain diet reflects moral perspectives on food. I would also add that it is a historical process. What constitutes *children's food* in contemporary Poland has been influenced by the history of the dietary advice for children, by what the generations of parents have been feeding their children, by the changes in the conceptions of childhood and parenthood, and by the changes in the food market in post-socialist Poland.

So far I have been using the category of *children's food* rather theoretically. But as Douglas explains, it is important to show the context of social relations in which the used categories have meaning (1975: 37). I take a closer look now at three food categories which invoke strong moral judgements and constitute important elements of children's food and their everyday experiences: *śmieciowe jedzenie* (junk food), sweets, and fruits and vegetables.

### ***Śmieciowe Jedzenie* (Junk Food)**

"Junk food" is a category which crosses through diverse food groups. It signifies food high in calories, in sugar and fat, but low in nutritional value, with little minerals or vitamins, such as sodas, crisps etc. As such "junk food" is often contrasted with "healthy food". In fact, as Roos shows, children often juxtapose junk and healthy food, for example hamburgers and fries served in fast food restaurants are "bad" and unhealthy, while homemade hamburgers and fries are "good" and healthy (2002: 10).

The category of junk food relates not only to *children's food*, also to what adults might eat, however it is especially problematic in relation to what children eat (e.g. Elliott 2011). It is widely perceived as bad for children along different moral perspectives on food, but at the same time as often preferred by them.

One of the food education campaigns introduced in 2007 in Warsaw was called *Dzieci nie jedzą śmieci* (Children do not eat junk/trash), and it was probably one of the first moments when the English phrase “junk food” was translated into Polish and disseminated in media. Later in 2010, a non-governmental foundation promoted the phrase *To śmieci tuczą dzieci* (It is trash/junk that makes children fat) with a billboard campaign (see below). Both were meant to alert people, especially parents, to what their children eat. The phrasing was so strong – as was explained to me – to grasp people's attention and emphasize the importance of that issue.



Figure 2. A billboard which was part of the social awareness campaign about children's bad food habits. The caption reads:  
*It is trash that makes children fat. Change it.*  
Source: <http://www.aktywniepozdrowie.pl>

For years now the phrases *junk food* or *śmieciowe jedzenie* are used interchangeably in Poland. They are often recalled in media and usually used to highlight the “bad” eating habits of children in Poland and to frame this as an important social problem, especially in relation to the issue of school shops (see chapter 7). These categories were also used by parents I talked to. 45-year-old Dorota told me:

*My niece is obese, and I am sure it is caused by her lifestyle; she started to eat śmieciowe jedzenie very early. She was eating crisps when she was still in a pram! (...) So my daughter has this negative example, because my niece, she is.. well, she is fat! So Hania has this negative example and controls herself, she knows that if she will eat so much bad food, she will get fat.*

The term *śmieciowe jedzenie*, signifying a certain category of food and related practices, has entered into moral discourses on food in Poland few years ago. It is a symbol and epitome of “bad” feeding practices and bad parenting. Food in this case is reduced to its nutritional components, as if the role of food was only physiological, to provide people with necessary nutrients. Food which does not fulfil this role is basically trash, it is like eating junk. Therefore this type of food is perceived as bad from a nutrition/health moral perspective. However, it is also considered bad because it is promoted by food producers and advertisements, because it develops “bad” food habits in children.

The category of *śmieciowe jedzenie* relates to Mary Douglas' distinctions between pure and not pure, between clean and unclean food (1966). Junk food literally means something not pure, unclean, and dangerous if eaten. It is dirt, something out of place, something that does not fit into the existing system of food classifications, in this sense it is non-food and evokes a lot of anxiety.

Categorizing something children eat and put into their bodies as trash and junk is a very strong statement. It evokes very negative connotations, and at the same time seems extremely judgemental towards people who implement these sorts of practices: those who produce this junk food, those who feed it to their children, and those who eat it are “bad” people because they engage in “bad” practices. But at the same time *śmieciowe jedzenie* is often an element of *children's food*: created for them, advertised as theirs, given to them, and recognised by them as something pleasurable, tasty and fun. It often intersects with the category of sweets.

### **Sweets**

It is generally recognised that humans and especially children have an innate preference for sweetness (e.g. Beidler, 1982; Dobbing, 1987; Rozin, 1987). However, there is a moral ambivalence associated with sugar and sweets. They inhabit an interesting moral space because, as Allison James (1990) explains, they are nutritionally “bad for you”, but conceptually “good for you”, they are “naughty, but nice”. Sweets are perceived as nutritionally bad, because they contribute to

obesity, diabetes and cause dental caries, they do not provide any necessary nutrients, and as such they are treated not only as not healthy, but as unhealthy. At the same time sweets are conceptually good, because they bring pleasure, comfort and joy.

Most parents I talked to considered their children's consumption of sweets negatively, because it is not healthy and not moral. They worried about children's weight and their teeth and dental hygiene. But even 32-year-old Kasia whose son has no caries or cavities and is very thin, limits his consumption of sweets. When I asked why, she replied: *it's a habit! I've got it in me, that sweets have to be limited, that it's not healthy to eat so much of it, that it shouldn't be constantly consumed.* It is not morally right to consume large quantities of sweets; it is for many reasons bad. And restraining oneself from doing this is both virtuous and healthy – it is in many ways good. Claude Fischler (1986) showed with the example of French mothers that sweets are not only non-nutritious, but also represent a threat to parental authority (see also James, 1979).

Many rules regarding eating in fact relate to sweets, for example the norm of eating the sweet only after eating the “real” and “proper” food (see chapters 4 and 5). Another strategy is to hide sweets and restrict children's access to them. Many parents were sure that their children never sneak in to take these sweets, even though parents admitted to having done so when they were kids. When talking to children, I often found out that sneaking in and taking hidden sweets was a widespread tactic.

Some parents limit the sweets consumption to one or two days per week, others limit the consumption of sweets daily, and still others focus more on their quality. Paweł and Paulina for example limited their children's sweets consumption to weekends:

*We made that decision when Krzyś was small. It is easier to control his diet in that way. Because it is a nightmare when you enter a shop with a 3-year-old, and he constantly wants to eat this or that. And every day you have to decide what you will allow; so it is better to allow everything once a week, and then forbid it the rest of the week. (42-year-old Paulina)*

Krzyś was self-governing himself so well in respect to this rule that a teacher drew his parents attention to the fact that when there are birthday celebrations in the classroom, Krzyś does not eat his candy with the rest of the group, but with tears in his eyes puts it into his backpack. So his parents decided to allow him to eat sweets on such occasions. And Krzyś told me: *well, I don't mind it, I'm used to it by now (...) this is healthy, but I lack energy. If it was possible to eat sweets also on Wednesday, this would be well spread out throughout the week.*

Setting up these sorts of general rules, as Paulina indicates, allows parents to limit the amount of everyday decisions regarding feeding children that they have to make. It introduces a certain order to a process which is generally extremely chaotic and filled with negotiations, and allows a certain level of control over what children eat; it is also a way of disciplining children and teaching them the self-restrictive, moral, food practices.

Weronika and Piotr, like many other parents, avoided introducing sweets into their children's diet for as long as possible:

*When we started going out with them and they met other children, and also when we were eating meals at our parents' places, there was always a dessert there. The more conscious and aware they were, the more difficult it was to deny it to them, because it is cruel when everyone can eat it, and they cannot. The more sweets are around, the more difficult it gets. (Weronika, 30-year-old)*

Even if parents control their children's eating, for example delay as long as possible the introduction of sweets to their diet or carefully measure the portions children eat, children are also fed by other people and have food experiences separated from parental gaze. So despite their intensive trying and despite being

framed by other social actors as responsible for that, parents cannot fully control their children's eating.

Because parents try to restrain their children from eating too many sweets, or from eating them at all during certain days, they often want to give their children a good example. For some of them this becomes a problem. Weronika told me: *I really like sweets! (...) We hide from them [children] when we eat sweets, so we either eat it at night or at work. They can't see, so we can do whatever we want.* The same standard does not apply to children – they are not supposed to do whatever they want when their parents are not watching. 36-year-old Aleksandra also talked about eating sweets at work. She explained to me that she is disgusted by herself, but still that is what she does. Similarly with smoking: in the same way as she hides from her children that she smokes, she hides that she eats sweets.<sup>35</sup> As mentioned before, a different kind of food morality and different rules related to food apply in regards to children.

Adults and children often have contradicting views on the feeding and eating of sweets and thus related interactions involve a lot of negotiations. While other food encounters are much more problematic because children do not always want to eat what they are fed; in this case what is problematic is that the feeding needs to be restricted because children often want to eat more, which is considered not proper. So while for example *obiad* is about feeding and non-eating; sweets are more about eating and non-feeding. At the same time, parents realise that their children like certain sweets, they give them pleasure, they are tasty and fun, and in that sense good for them. They want to make their children happy and enjoy these little treats. Also, eating certain sweets is often socially important: if children do not at least try them, they might be ridiculed and laughed at by their peers, as illustrated by Chee in her examples of inclusion and exclusion of students in a school in Beijing (2000). 30-year-old Marysia told me, that her daughter sometimes asks for certain sweets, that she wants to bring them to school,

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<sup>35</sup> This is a very interesting connection, strengthening the perception of sweets as sinful and wrong. Moreover Moss (2013) in his analysis of the food industry in the US often compares their situation and their actions with the tobacco industry and their crisis of the 1960s.

because all of her friends are bringing them to school, and so Marysia gives her money for that. She does not want her daughter to feel bad among her friends.

The distinction between adults' and children's sweets has been strengthened in Poland since the 1990s (see section 1.2). Simultaneously, the general perception of sweets and consequently the related consumption practices have been changing. One of my interviewees working in a company producing sweets explained to me:

*Children used to eat Snickers and Mars bars and now it's considered too heavy and not good for them. They used to eat everything! In the 1990s nobody cared what they ate, everyone was excited that these things were available, and everyone ate everything. (...) Now, there is a growing awareness that sweets in large quantities are not healthy. Children used to mostly eat hard candies, and now that market is dying. (...) The same goes for the gummy candies. There were scandals that those gummy candies produced with gelatine are so unhealthy, so now everyone adds pectin, which is fruit gelatine. Parents really pay attention to these things.<sup>36</sup>*

Sweets' producers in response to these trends introduce sugar-less commodities. They also defend themselves and explain that their products are not unhealthy. One of them told me: *It is crazy, because sweet products, both chocolate and not chocolate, are in fact healthier than soft drinks or crisps, which are carcinogenic. Though of course, it all needs to be balanced.* In a similar way, another person explained to me: *we're trying to disenchant sweets. (...) My son gets a candy in his lunchbox every day. Sweets can be a part of a balanced diet.* This idea to make sweets a part of the balanced diet is what many parents strive for, as it allows the combining of plural and sometimes contradictory moral dispositions to food.

In each feeding – eating situation, through interactions, adults and children have to balance their moral views and the eating and non-eating of sweets, and also

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<sup>36</sup> At the same time the consumption of sweets in Poland in fact steadily increases since 2004, when Poland entered the European Union and the sweets industry was restructured, 91% of Poles buy sweets on an everyday basis and the industry's worth is estimated at 12.7 billion PLN (£2.19 billion) (KPMG, 2014).

balance the consumption of good and bad sweets, or rather better and worse sweets. Chocolate for example is considered a good sweet thing, but it is also often perceived as belonging to adults' sweets, while all types of kids-like confectionery and snacks are considered children's sweets (James, 1979). They have a very distinctive taste with which I became familiar during my fieldwork: extreme sugariness, many surprising flavours which do not resemble any known foods, the unexpected combinations of sweet and sour enriched by the sensations of dissolving in your mouth, the distinctive aftertaste of chemicals and sugar. Marshmallows, gummy candies, hard sweetmeats, chewing gums, lollipops – these are considered not good and children are often discouraged from eating them by their parents. As Magda in the opening quote of this thesis mentions: *I prefer that she eats even the whole bar of chocolate than a pack of white and pink marshmallows*. On the other hand, an interviewee working in food marketing told me:

*Children just want to have fun! They use these products in a different way, for example with these foams [marshmallows], they grill them, they build small people out of them and in general play with them before eating them.*

Sweets which are considered the worst by many adults may be considered the best by children. These contradictions in moral dispositions are often enacted through the feeding – eating negotiations.

In fact there are also sweets that are produced purposely for children and perceived as good for them, for example all Kinder products produced by Ferrero. They contain milk and chocolate and thus are treated as good for children; they are both healthy and provide fun and pleasure. Even though they are considered very expensive, many parents would buy them because they are in many ways good for their children. However, one of the food marketers I talked to challenged this view:

*This is amazing what they have done with Mleczna Kanapka [Ferrero's Kinder Milk Slice]! There is milk, chocolate and nuts, [ironically] well great! Mothers are totally fooled by this message about milk and chocolate, it's crazy! If there is a little bit of milk in this chocolate product, it's nothing really! (...) Chocolate has a great PR, and they were building this for years!*

According to all my interlocutors, the best, that is the least harmful and the most proper category of sweets, are sweets prepared at home. Homemade cakes or cookies are treated as the most acceptable sweet treats. 37-year-old Marta for example told me:

*If there's no pie at home, they want these hard candies, chocolates, gummy candies. So I prefer to make a pie than buy these things, which is uneconomical and unhealthy! It is better to eat a homemade pie than some candies!*

Feeding children sweets prepared at home is valued for many reasons. Firstly, all the ingredients, and hence the final product, are familiar. Parents know what they put inside of these sweets, and consequently what they put inside of their children's bodies and they can keep these pure and clean. Secondly, as many researchers have shown (e.g. Murcott, 1983; DeVault, 1991; Moisio et al., 2004), there is an added value in the homemade food because of the additional work put into the act of caring and feeding. Preparing homemade sweets is not only healthier, but is also an act of love, so it is in many ways good for children.

What some parents consider a better, or even a good sweet product, others might perceive as bad, for example a chocolate and milk bar: for some it is good, as it provides important elements for children, such as magnesium, and moreover tastes good; for others it is not acceptable because it contains too much sugar. In general a homemade piece of pie is better than a bought piece of pie. However for some middle class parents there is a difference between a pie made from white flour and sugar and a pie made from wholegrain flour without sugar. Nevertheless, a bought piece of pie is better than a chocolate bar. A chocolate bar is better than gummy candies, marshmallows or lollipops. Moreover, moral perspectives on food and food categorizations change during holidays or when

visiting friends or family. Also birthdays and other celebratory occasions foster changes in attitudes towards what is “good” and “bad”. Children's consumption of sweets is often guided by rules established and negotiated by the family beforehand (see chapter 4); however despite the existence of the general rules and norms, parents have to consider each situation separately, and decide whether it is acceptable for their children to eat one more candy, ice-cream or a lollipop. They do it through engaging in “inner” negotiations of what is “right” and “wrong”, acceptable and not in each situation. What I considered bad one day might be perceived as acceptable another day. *Over the summer I allow them to eat much more ice-cream, also during the week. But now it is back to normal*, Paweł told me, which means that his children eat sweets only during weekends now. And Natalia explained to me: *When we go to a birthday party I allow them to eat sweets, everyone eats them so I wouldn't want them to feel excluded. But I try to control it. So when I think that they had enough, I would say “stop”*. One time when Natalia did not say “stop” at the right time, Kasia ended up vomiting at a birthday party.

Even though many adults expect all children to like all sweets – that is the general assumption – in fact children's attitudes to sweets vary. As with all other foods, they have their favourites and also those which they do not like. Some of them love chocolate or gummy candies, while others hate it. Among certain products, they have their favourite flavours. Their ideas about and meanings attached to sweets differ as well. As you can see on the drawings above (pp. 89 – 90), children included sweets when drawing both their favourite and their least favourite food.

Children to whom I talked to were all aware of the distinction between healthy and not healthy food. They all recognised sweets as not healthy for them and some of them were also able to clarify why. For example 12-year-old Kasia explained: *there's the restriction on sweets [consumption] so that my teeth do not get rotten and I don't become too fat*. 6-year-old Ewa told me:

*A school nurse, when she came to visit us, she said that we shouldn't eat sweets. And one friend, Nina, she always brings sweets to school, she eats them and other children are sad, because they don't have any, she doesn't share; and besides we shouldn't eat sweets, sweets are unhealthy!*

Ewa seems to be equally upset that Nina does not share the sweets with others, as by the fact that they are unhealthy. 12-year-old Hania told me a story about two girls she had met (who were in fact Julia and Kasia):

*They cannot eat sweets, only on Tuesdays, and when I was at their place they went crazy – they threw themselves on sweets, tore them from each other's hands. My friends were there as well, and we laughed a lot about that, well, this was really tragic! I don't have any restrictions of this kind, but I cannot eat sweets before obiad or breakfast.*

Children, similarly to adults, have different views and opinions about eating sweets. While they acknowledge that sweets are unhealthy, and that limiting their consumption is a proper thing to do, many of them still eat them. They like their taste. They like that they are *their* food. They are a part of their culture, as intended by their producers and marketers. Moreover, eating healthy foods can be viewed as a rejection of the inherent meaning of being a child (Ludvigsen and Scott, 2009: 426). As Chee (2000) shows, knowing and having tasted certain sweets can be important for the social positioning of a child.

9-year-old Julia told me: *I know they [sweets] are not good for me, but they are just soooo good! Chocolate is so yummy!* Sweets can be at the same time good and not good. Children like sweets and treat them as good (in terms of pleasure, fun and taste) and know that they are bad (nutritionally). This moral ambiguity is at the basis of people's engagements with food. In the same way as adults, children are able to relate to and embody various moral perspectives all at once. In each situation they engage in "inner" negotiations and relate to their varied moral dispositions. For example 12-year-old Hania mentioned: *I like to eat sweets, things like cookies. But then I try to eat only one or two, and not more, because it is not good for me, it is not healthy.*

Sweets are an extremely important, and at the same time contested element within the category of *children's food*. Sweets are recognised in many ways as good for children: they are a part of their culture, they can be shared, they are fun, and they provide pleasure and taste well. However, they are perceived as bad for them as well: they are unhealthy; especially contribute to teeth decay and weight gain, and in the long run to obesity. Consuming large quantities of sweets is perceived as bad, because it shows no self-control or restraint. And when that is the case with children, both they and especially their parents are perceived as not proper and immoral. When doing my research I have heard many stories about young children consuming either large quantities or “bad” kinds of sweets. These anecdotes were often recalled with disgust, and parents of these children were always blamed and framed as irresponsible and not proper people. For example Tomek told me:

*When I was at the food market the other day, I've seen a mother with her 2-year-old child in a buggy, and that child was holding in her hand a huge Snickers bar and eating it, a 2 year-old child! It's sometimes outrageous what people give their children to eat, how they feed them!*

Balancing the consumption of sweets, negotiating between better and worse sweets is one of the most problematic aspects of feeding children. Furthermore, eating sweets is often balanced by the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

### **Fruits and Vegetables**

Many families participating in my research implemented a rule that allows children to eat something sweet, only if fruits or vegetables were eaten first. 33-year-old Anna explained to me: *We have this rule, that in order to eat a sweet sandwich, with jam or Nutella, they first need to eat a salty sandwich, with ham or cheese, and some vegetables, like tomato, cucumber or paprika.* If children's diets on a certain day were not very good, then parents would give them fruits to tilt the balance of “good” and “bad” food eaten on that day. 40-year-old Magda told me about her daughter:

*Zuzia would rather reach for something sweet. I sometimes force her to eat a fruit, but she doesn't like it very much. But if I know that she didn't eat well that day, I will give her a fruit, to make it better. (...) You have to control her though, you have to place it under her nose, prepare it, give it to her and then make sure that she eats it. And often there is nobody to keep an eye on her, because I am on my own, and I am often at work.*

Sweets and fruits and vegetables are in constant juxtaposition. As Gibbson, Wardle and Watts (1998) argue, confectionery snacks are in direct competition with attempts to increase fruit and vegetable consumption between meals. At the same time those two food categories complete each other. Consuming them in relation to each other, making sure that they are consumed in balance fulfils diversified plural moral dispositions to food.

In Poland the most popular fruits for children include apples, bananas, pears, grapes and in the summer all sorts of berries, which can be gathered in the forest when on holidays, or bought from the street vendors when in the city. Fruits are often put in a bowl in an accessible place in the kitchen or the living room, so that children can easily take it and through that develop a habit of eating fruits. For younger children, fruits are often cut into small pieces and placed on the plate in a fun way to encourage a child to eat them. Fruits, because of their natural sweetness, can be and often are a substitute for sweets. For example for dessert children may receive cookies, apples baked with raisins or fresh fruits. In that way, despite the omnipresent perception among adults that fruits are good and sweets are bad, fruits can become a *good sweet* thing.

“Children's vegetables” include carrots, cucumbers (raw and pickled), peppers, and green beans. Mothers engage in various strategies to sneak in vegetables into children's diets, as they are considered good for children, but are not liked by them. Soups are a good example, especially if they are blended and creamy so that children cannot tell that vegetables are inside. As 30-year-old Marysia explained to me: *I sneak in vegetables in soups, for example she would not touch a cauliflower, but she would eat a cauliflower soup.* Also *pierogi* were mentioned as

the good way of sneaking in vegetables, as 30-year-old Weronika said: *they do not know what is inside, so they will eat it and enjoy it.*

I understand the category of children's food in a broad and inclusive way, so it incorporates both sweets and fruits and vegetables. The latter two often form a single category, precisely because they are juxtaposed with the former. The differences between fruits and vegetables are often neglected in public discourses, despite the fact that children often prefer fruits over vegetables, because they are sweeter. They are good because they contain vitamins and nutrients. They are good, because eating those means fulfilling nutritional guidelines (Five-a-Day), and feeding them to your children is what proper parents do (see chapter 6). They are good because eating them is virtuous and means that a person has good food habits. *Surówka* (salad made from raw vegetables) or vegetables in different forms are always considered a very important part of the proper meal (see chapters 4 and 5).

This widespread perception of fruits and vegetables as good for children is often used by food producers. Flavours of this kind are often added to certain products to enhance their acceptability. Certain gummy candies are perceived as better than others, because they contain pectin instead of gelatine, and added vitamins. Vegetable crisps, created for example from beetroot or carrots, are considered a healthy snack, even though crisps in general are perceived as unhealthy “junk food”. Often, this is just another example of health-washing, similar to reducing the sugar content in various products (Moss, 2013).

As with other food categories, there are better and worse fruits and vegetables. The fresh and seasonal ones are considered to be better than canned and frozen ones (Freidberg, 2009), though diverse pickled vegetables and fruit jams are very popular in Poland. Still, those that come from a known source, and preferably from the fields belonging to the family or organic stores, are perceived as better than those coming from an unknown source (see section 1.2). An apple straight from the tree is better than one bought in store. A *surówka* made at home from raw vegetables is better than a readymade *surówka* bought in store. Furthermore

for some people, vegetables and fruits bought at the farmers' market are better than those bought in the big chains, such as Tesco or Carrefour. 36-year-old Marta told me:

*I try to buy the best possible products. But there is only so much we can do in the city. Of course apples straight from the tree would be better than those bought in store, but still I try to buy the organic ones, so that's better than those sprayed, full of pesticides, right?*

In certain situations and settings, fruits and vegetables can become bad. Raw fruits can transfer bacteria (Freidberg, 2009: 127). As parents explained, eating too many cherries may cause stomach problems and eating too many grapes makes your child smell of alcohol. And if a child is allergic, fruits and vegetables can be bad for them. So in the same way as with sweets, the categorization of fruits and vegetables is relational and changeable.

In contrast to sweets, fruits and vegetables are often expected to be disliked by children. In fact for some parents this becomes highly problematic. They have to constantly remind their children to eat fruits and strategize to sneak in fruits and vegetables into their diets. Other parents are proud that they *do not know what it means to have children who don't like fruits and veggies* (Małgosia). 36-year-old Asia told me proudly of her daughter: *she knows the taste of all the fruits! And I stress that, because in my family there is one boy who at the age of 9 has no idea how a cucumber or a tomato tastes.*

However, despite what many adults assume children's attitudes to fruits and vegetables are diversified. They included the two categories in the drawings of both their favourite and least favourite foodstuffs (pp. 89 – 90). The only common element was an aversion towards Brussels sprouts. 11-year-old Kamila even confessed that she prefers fruits over sweets, but that might have been influenced by my presence and the interview situation.

In the same way as there are anecdotes about “bad” parents who give their children a lot of “bad” sweets, there are also anecdotes about children who do

not recognise and do not know the taste of fruits and vegetables. Both serve as cautionary tales for parents and as illustration of improper parental feeding practices and bad food habits. Restraint in relation to sweets and recognition of and certain openness to fruits and vegetables are what characterize “proper” and “good” food habits, and what children need to be taught.

The importance of eating fruits and vegetables is probably the most repeated nutritional advice in Poland (see chapter 6). All the children I spoke with recognised fruits and vegetables as something good for them, something that is healthy. Parents also share that opinion, though they often have different ideas about what is the proper way to consume fruits and vegetables. Some parents consider them to be always good, and would for example give these to their children late at night, when they are hungry. Others, however, say that fruits need to be digested for a long time, so should not be eaten too late; and also – as Marta told me – should not be eaten two hours before and after a meal, because they ferment other foods in the stomach. Parents and children alike, reinterpret the healthy advice in their own way, have varied moral dispositions to food and negotiate what is good and proper, and what is bad and not proper, also when it comes to fruits and vegetables.

The category of *children's food* in Poland is created at the intersection of food market influences and the changing family relations. It has been formed in an attempt to categorize and classify food, and with that introduce a certain social order, reflecting children's growing importance in Poland. It is, on the one hand, influenced by what parents have eaten in their childhoods, by the distinctively Polish meals; and, on the other hand, by the international trends in food production and marketing. *Children's food* inhabits children's and their parents' food worlds and intersects with multiple moral perspectives on food. This is the basis for multiple negotiations occurring in people's everyday lives.

### 3.3 Balancing “Good” and “Bad” Food

*It is one thing to take care that your children eat healthy, things they need, but it is something else to make sure that they do not eat unhealthy. (...) It is a different thing to make sure that a child eats grains and vegetables; I make sure that they do not eat things which in my opinion are harmful to their health, like these horrible sweets. I don't want them to create a habit of eating things like that.*

(Natalia)

Parents have to balance the “proper” and the “not proper” food they feed their children; they have to balance the consumption of healthy and unhealthy food, but also multiple moral perspectives on food. They have to balance their own moral perspectives on feeding with their children's moral perspectives on eating. Part of this process is teaching children how to balance their own eating, how to make the right food choices and restrain themselves from making the bad food choices – children need to learn and embody a “proper” food morality.

Richard Wilk (2012) pointed out that at some point in our lives we engage in “inner” moral negotiations almost unconsciously: on everyday basis we balance the bad foods we have eaten with the good ones. We allow ourselves to consume something considered bad (e.g. ice-cream), because we have been eating well the whole day/week/month. After eating badly, for example consuming a huge pack of salty and fatty crisps, we decide that throughout the next week we need to eat healthy and right in order to balance that out. Parents engage in similar “inner” negotiations and balancing of “good” and “bad” food when feeding their children. 40-year-old Magda told me:

*You need to make sure that your child does not eat in McDonald's on an everyday basis, and does not eat sweets all the time, but if from time to time they eat French fries or a hamburger, nothing will happen to them – you need to find a balance!*

Eating *fast foods*, such as from McDonald's or KFC, was often referred to in such a way. Many parents treat it as a source of pride if their child eat this food rarely, or do not like it, because this means that they are “proper” parents engaging in

“proper” feeding practices. Most parents agreed however, that if their children eat *fast food* occasionally – and definitions of “occasionally” differed from one family to another<sup>37</sup> – it is not too bad, because they eat well on other days, so their diet stays balanced: eating “good” foods balances the consumption of the “bad” ones.

Children learn to control themselves in that way. 11-year-old Kamila told me: *I love crisps! But I'm not eating the whole pack at once; I always leave something for later!* Kamila recognises that restraint and self-control are important values, and so even though she enjoys eating crisps, she claims to never eat the whole pack at once. Children’s lives are filled with moral tensions and ambiguities, when they too, as adults do, strive to balance “good” and “bad” food and their own eating with adults’ feeding practices. Many children told me that they know they should not eat particular foods, because they are not healthy (e.g. sweets), but they like to eat them anyway, because they taste so good; and that they eat other foods, even though they do not like them (e.g. cheese or broccoli), because they are healthy and are supposed to be good for them.

Balancing “good” and “bad” foods is particularly important, and especially difficult when shopping. The influence of marketing can be troubling for mothers when shopping, as commercialized and child-targeted foods are nowadays everywhere and they “pose something of a continuous threat to any kind of regimen mothers attempt to impose” (Cook, 2009b: 119). Parents therefore adopt various strategies regarding shopping. One of them is to avoid taking children shopping at all. Many of my interlocutors mentioned that it is better, faster and less stressful to shop without children. Children often exercise pester power over their parents and want them to buy certain foodstuffs for them, and consequently shopping changes into a difficult event filled with negotiations. 37-year-old Aneta mentioned about her 11-year-old son:

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<sup>37</sup> It is often recognised that working class families more frequently eat fast food, whereas more health conscious middle class families try to limit its consumption (e.g. Willis et al., 2011). This was confirmed in my research; however none of the working class families I worked with engaged in “excessive” fast food consumption, most of the meals they consumed were homemade.

*He has his favourite foods. It is not that he is in control when we are out in a shop together, but, well, I do what he wants. He likes ptasie mleczo<sup>38</sup> and this one kind of bars of chocolate, so these are always in the shopping basket. He exhorts things from us.*

Shopping is an element of the feeding process: parents want to buy the best products for their children and what “the best” entails might differ according to their embodied moral dispositions to food, to their financial constraints and time pressures; and to the particular situation. When children assist their parents in shopping activities, they are often more concerned with their own eating and interested in what is “best” for them in a given moment. Coordinating these different moral dispositions, as proven by Aneta's story, is very difficult.

Another strategy implemented when shopping is to discourage children from choosing “bad” snacks, and encourage them to choose “good” ones, or teach them to restrain themselves when they are allowed to choose only one “bad” snack. 11-year-old Kamila told me: *Recently I wanted a chocolate bar, but my mom said that I can't have it, because it's not healthy, so I took a fruit juice, and she agreed.* Parents also control what children eat through buying particular foods for them. As Anving and Thorsted explain, “through her purchasing activity, [a mother] tries to affect her children’s diet, and the children’s wants are met by her strategies as gatekeeper for what to buy” (2010: 38).

At the same time, as Cook shows, “a mother shops with her children’s tastes, desires and pleasures in mind” (2009a: 330). A mother is attempting to both meet children’s wants and desires and to control their eating through putting up barriers, and providing healthy food alongside the wanted, often considered unhealthy food. Mothers engage in “the everyday interplay between the provisioning of food, the policing of nutrition, the enactment of care and encounters with consumer culture in its various forms and venues” (Cook, 2009a: 318).

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<sup>38</sup> A typical polish sweet treat, a kind of marshmallow covered in chocolate.

Children also experience moral ambiguities, when for example parents tell them to choose a snack, but allowing only one. 12-year-old Hania mentioned that she often has this dilemma: *they tell me I can take only one thing, and sometimes suggest what would be better, the healthier option, but I can choose myself. And I have a dilemma.*

The feeding – eating negotiations, at all layers and in multiple contexts, are full of tensions and ambiguities. They are based on balancing “good” and “bad” foods and food practices and the multiple moral perspectives on food. There is no one coherent system of knowledge about good and bad foods for children in Poland. Different opinions and normative systems, different moral discourses constantly collide and overlap (see Jing, 2000c). Different social actors (practically and conceptually) feed children diverse foods and have their own perspectives on what is “good” and “proper”, and what is “bad” and “not proper” for children. For example food marketers focus more on giving children pleasure, fun and entertainment with their food, while nutritionists and doctors focus more on providing children with nutritious food; though within these groups there are various differences of opinions as well. And parents have to balance these influences, their own moral dispositions with their children's needs, wants and desires.

To come back to Jarrett Zigon's theory (2009, 2014), morality, or moral reasoning, is embodied and relational. The everyday morality is about the experiences, the relationships and the not necessarily conscious decisions resulting from various interactions. Moreover particular food products are categorized differently at different times. Something can be good in a particular situation, such as a birthday cake during a birthday celebration for example, and bad in another situation, such as eating a birthday cake for breakfast. It can be perceived as good and bad at the same time, depending on a person's perspective. The practices of feeding and eating, based on people's moral dispositions, involve both “inner” and interactional negotiations that are entangled with each other.

Both adults and children have their own food morality, their own set of norms and ideas about what is good and bad, even if these appear contradictory. The struggle between the different sources of knowledge and moral ambiguities related to food; parental striving to make children's eating balanced and feed them “properly” and their feeling of guilt when they do not manage to achieve that; and children's attempts to enact their ideas of what is good and bad to eat and to resist adults' strategies; multiple social actors trying to impose their own ideas of “proper” feeding and eating on children and parents, is what underlies the following chapters.

## Chapter IV. The Orders of Feeding and Eating: Home and School Negotiations

*Today, I am observing how the youngest children, the 6-year-olds, are fed. They eat in their classrooms. The cooks and cleaning ladies, who help with serving the meals, bring everything upstairs around 11.30 am (...) Children have finished eating, but Filip is still staring at his almost untouched meal. The teacher tells him "Filip, I talked to your dad yesterday and we agreed that I will write down for him how you have behaved during the meal". Filip doesn't reply. After a while she says: "Filip, your dad asked me to make sure that you eat your obiad", "But I don't like the fish fingers" replies Filip, "You should have asked your parents to write a note that you don't have to eat the fish fingers. They know the menu; they should have known what would be served". (...) The teacher again tells Filip "Eat at least one fish finger". Filip replies after a while "My mom doesn't make fish at home". A woman who is cleaning the plates tells him "I don't believe you. You should eat, it's just after noon, and the dessert won't be served until 3 pm, you will be hungry", "No, I won't be hungry". The teacher asks the cleaning lady to indicate on Filip's plate how much he should eat. Filip, with a wan face tries to again explain that he doesn't like it, but the woman replies: "How come you don't like it, all the children eat it, eat it!" I can see that Filip is really struggling, I feel sorry for him but at the same time I am fascinated by the whole situation. He tries to put the fish in his mouth, but can't, he is physically appalled and puts it back on the plate. He almost cries. He shyly tries to ask again "Ma'am, can I.." "Eat, eat, it will get cold if you don't eat soon". I am fairly certain it is already cold. (...) The teacher asks whether Filip has eaten one fish finger, in reply he asks whether he can finish surówka instead, and the teacher agrees. He eats it quickly, leaves the table and gets something to drink. He seems quite content that he is finally free, and without eating the fish fingers. He joins other children smiling. The teacher says "Filip, please give me your diary, I need to write this down for your parents."<sup>39</sup>*

(Field notes, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2014)

This is a compelling example of triangle relations between adults at school, adults at home and children who move and mediate between these spheres. The feeding – eating interactions in Warsaw are embedded mainly within and between the

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<sup>39</sup> In Poland school children have diaries (*dzienniczki*), which serve for the communication between parents and teachers.

home and the school settings. The situation of Filip was interesting in that respect. The teacher at one point threatened Filip that his father would be told about his improper behaviour at the table. Then she kept saying that he needed to finish his meal because that was his father's wish, taking herself out of that situation and becoming only a mediator between parental feeding and a child's eating. The school, however, provided the food. Mrs H, the food supervisor, arranged the supply of food products, planned the meal and the cooks prepared it. So the school also participates in feeding Filip. And yet, all those attempts and plans regarding feeding have to be adjusted to Filip's eating practices. Filip is disgusted by the fish fingers; his body is repulsed by them. In the end Filip eats, which he was dreading to do, but he eats *surówka* instead of fish fingers, the lesser evil from his perspective. Therefore both the parental and the school's feeding and Filip's eating are negotiated in relation to each other and a certain compromise is reached.

Home and school constitute the main spheres of children's everyday lives in Warsaw. They are the main sites of their socialisation, or rather as Allison James points out, the main sites where different people engage in interactions and share certain experiences, and through that process children are socialised and socialise themselves (2013: 125 – 127, see also Edwards et al., 2002). Children become particular eaters and adults particular feeders through the multiple practices they engage in. Since children in Warsaw eat mainly at home and at school, the feeding – eating interactions need to be organised and coordinated not only in each of those contexts, but also between them. This is the focus of this chapter. It is about negotiating the rules of a certain interaction order which guides the day-to-day feeding – eating interactions, discussed in chapter 5. This corresponds to the third layer of negotiations: negotiating the order of the interactions. Erving Goffman explains:

It appears to me that *as* an order of activity, the interaction one, more than any other perhaps, is in fact orderly, and that this orderliness is predicated on a large base of shared cognitive presuppositions, if not normative ones, and self-sustained restraints. How a given set of such understandings comes into

being historically, spreads and contracts in geographical distribution over time, and how at any one place and time particular individuals acquire these understandings are good questions (...) Individuals go along with current interaction arrangements for a wide variety of reasons, and one cannot read from their apparent tacit support of an arrangement that they would, for example, resent or resist its change. (1983: 5)

The interaction order I discuss here is specific to a particular socio-cultural moment and place in Poland (see sections 1.2 and 2). Moreover, it is in fact characteristic of merely over a dozen families and three primary schools in Warsaw, which were the focus of my research. However, many aspects of these interaction orders are shared among other families and schools in Poland, and in other societies. One of the shared assumptions for example is that it is adults who feed children and not the other way around. Another one is that children are supposed to eat what adults feed them, however it is increasingly acknowledged in Poland that adults should not force children to eat. Also the dominating moral health perspective on food is one of the shared presuppositions guiding feeding and eating interactions both at homes and at schools; as is a certain order of meals. As Goffman further explains, “what is desirable order from the perspective of some can be sensed as exclusion and repression from the point of view of others.” (1983: 5). Most of the feeding – eating interactions are organised, controlled and coordinated by adults; and in that way the feeding dictates the eating. However, as I will show, children influence and challenge this *status quo*.

The everyday feeding and eating practices enacted at home and at school, the interaction orders implemented in each of those spheres are entangled with each other, as shown in the above ethnographic vignette. Children in their everyday lives move between these two interaction orders, and that demands a lot of negotiations, which involve children, parents, often grandparents, teachers, head teachers, food supervisors, and cooks. I firstly discuss the interaction order established at homes, and secondly the feeding – eating order established at schools. In the final part of this chapter I focus on the negotiations between home and school.

#### **4.1 The Order of Feeding and Eating at Home**

In Poland feeding and eating are to a large extent confined to the family and the private sphere of home. Though the model of nuclear family, with parents and children living together, dominates in Warsaw, grandparents are often involved in family life. In my understanding of the concept of family, I share DeVault's emphasis on the everyday practical work involved in doing family: "family is not a naturally occurring collection of individuals; its reality is constructed from day to day, through activities like eating together" (1991: 39; see also Morgan, 1996, 2011; Finch, 2007). As Haukanes explains: "studying kinship 'in the making', the processes by which people build social relationships, means taking a detailed look at everyday practices" (2007: 1). Family identity is often created around food: important food-related practices, family routines and rituals, mediating between past and present generations, become a part of the narrative about what 'our' family is and what 'our' family does (Fischler, 1988; Fiese et al., 2006; Curtis, James and Ellis, 2009). Families negotiate on an everyday basis how they eat and feed and these negotiations become especially intense when they concern and involve children.

##### **The Gendered Division of Foodwork**

In Poland it is generally assumed that feeding is women's work. Although fathers get more involved than they used to (Kubicki, 2009), mostly mothers are responsible for the caring work of feeding the family (Mroczkowska, 2014; see also Murcott, 1983, 2000; Moio et al., 2004).

Mothers decide and plan what their children eat. They are expected to be knowledgeable about how to properly feed their children. 12-year-old Hania told me: *my dad always agrees with my mom when it comes to feeding me*. This puts a lot of pressure on mothers. In their decisions they draw on different sources of knowledge. They relate to their own ideas of what is healthy and what is not healthy; they learn from other mothers about their food practices, and also actively search for the information: they buy books and magazines, read online

blogs. They also relate to their childhood experiences and talk, though sometimes reluctantly, with their mothers and mothers-in-law (see below).

As a sort of exception from the rule, in the four families I studied fathers were also engaged in the feeding process. In fact in the Szymańscy family Tomek was responsible for foodwork at home. However, in general fathers tend to be “fun parents” allowing children more freedom, whereas mothers are more often “the strict ones”, who are responsible for feeding their children healthily and teaching them how to behave when eating, which often results in tensions and negotiations between parents (e.g. Curtis, James and Ellis, 2009). This is reflected in children’s statements. They often told me that their mothers insist on healthy feeding, whereas their fathers provide more fun with food. 12-year-old Zosia told me: *My mom takes care that we eat healthy and right, while my dad is much more relaxed about it, but I eat there every two weeks, so it can't be too bad for me.* And 11-year-old Kamila explained: *my mom makes the usual, normal meals, a soup and a second dish, while my dad makes more unusual things, like Chinese [dishes] on Sunday.* Julia and Kasia mentioned that they prefer their dad’s pies, because their mom does not add sugar to her pies, which according to them makes them tasteless.

The coordination of feeding and eating involves finding out what different members of the family like and dislike and how their tastes change, whilst also balancing their often contradictory desires; planning the meals, shopping for products and preparing food; anticipating the plans, wants and needs of the different members of the family and adjusting to them. As Thorsted Stine and Terese Anving explain on the case of Swedish families, “the work of feeding is situationally bound and involves constant insecurity in dealing with situations, demands, needs and wants” (2010: 44). This is how 30-year-old Marysia described her typical day to me:

*I wake up around 6 am and prepare breakfast for my husband. I also prepare a sandwich for him to take to work. Then my children get up, so I prepare breakfast for Sylwia, usually a milk soup. (...) She gets sandwiches or a sweet bun and something to drink to school. During winter I prepare tea with lemon or raspberry juice, and I give it to her cooled. She goes to*

*school at 8. [This is followed by a long description of what her 2-year-old son eats throughout the day and what kind of chores she does at home]. I collect her around 4 o'clock, and there is always a soup waiting, so she usually eats it. Then they eat a second dish. Sometimes she waits for my husband, and they eat it together as a supper. Or he eats a second dish, and she eats a normal supper, like sandwiches or toast. My husband doesn't like to eat the same food two days in a row, so I prepare something different on an everyday basis, and try to make sure that each of them eats something. If Sylwia doesn't want to eat what I've prepared, I would prepare something different just for her. [And when do you eat?] Haha, I eat breakfast on the run and obiad usually when she is back from school. We eat together, unless I do not manage, because I have to feed them and prepare something else, then I eat with my husband in the evening. Unless I am putting children to bed or something, then I will again eat on the move.*

This slightly long quote shows how much energy, time and knowledge have to be put into the largely invisible foodwork at home. Mothers have to coordinate their feeding practices not only with others' feeding and eating practices, but also with many other obligations, including paid employment; they are expected to juggle multiple roles and responsibilities at the same time (Titkov, 1995; Thompson, 1996). It seems that in Poland the pressure on the "proper" feeding of children is rising. There is a growing amount of experts, often giving contradictory advice, who undermine mothers' knowledge and tell them how to feed their children "right" (e.g. Sikorska, 2009; Radkowska-Walkowicz, 2014). That, combined with the moral ambiguities related to children's food, contributes to the increasing anxiety mothers experience as feeders.

The notion that feeding is a woman's job, that women are "natural" feeders is so strongly embodied that even women who are not responsible for foodwork at home and who do not like to cook, often take on the responsibility of feeding the family when their children are born. Mothers discipline themselves to become proper feeding figures (Foucault, 1988, 1991). Many of them told me that they did not care that much about food and eating before having children, but now they are constantly anxious about doing it right, about feeding their children properly. Many studies, mine included, show that even very egalitarian couples tend to fall into more "traditional" gender roles and share more typically gendered division of work at home when they have children (e.g. Ekström and Fürst, 2001; Boni, 2012).

Moreover fathers who are engaged in feeding their children often meet with surprise, disbelief and are even taunted. Both Tomek and Mikołaj mentioned that some of their friends were surprised to learn that they cook for their families; they were even laughed at. It is often especially difficult to accept for older generation. Natalia's father told me:

*Tomek dominates there, and his way of cooking is rather based on fat, and very strongly based on meat – and that is how he feeds his children. And I think Natalia cannot really influence that. We think that this is rather wrong. But she says that it is his domain, so he should decide – I think here lays the problem with this change in [gender] roles, I cannot fully accept it, I cannot fully understand it.*

Władysław explained that he simply thinks that Natalia, his daughter, would feed his granddaughters better than Tomek, his son-in-law. He cannot fully accept the “switched” gender roles in his daughter's household. When rationalizing feeding as women's responsibility, the issues of knowledge, skill, time schedules, concern for the family health are often referred to. As Beagan et al. (2008) show, such implicit gender assumptions are very difficult to challenge. Then again, this gives women a certain authority and power in their family relations, power they might not possess in other spheres of life (Walczevska, 2008). Even though more fathers are involved in the feeding process, the recognition that women feed is one of the most common presuppositions guiding the feeding – eating interaction order at homes in contemporary Warsaw.

### **The Changing Family Foodways**

The feeding – eating interaction order at home changes significantly with children around. The family foodways are often adjusted to children's needs and preferences.<sup>40</sup> When I asked my interlocutors how their ways of eating have changed with children around, all of them mentioned that their food habits became much more structured, organised and conservative, in comparison with

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<sup>40</sup> Based on few observations I would say that there is a tendency to consider father's preferences the most important in the working class families, while children's time schedules and preferences become more important in middle class families in Warsaw.

their chaotic food habits before having children. They all have a sort of routine family menu, repeated over and over again. Some parents seemed longing for the spontaneous and more laid back attitude to food, for various pleasures, for example Małgosia told me that she misses *enjoying a long, calm meal with a glass of wine with [her] husband*. They also eat out less, partly because of financial constraints, and partly because going out to the restaurant with children is considered to be rather problematic.

However, the situation of eating itself became more chaotic. This corresponds to what Goffman argued about an interaction order not necessarily being orderly (1983: 5). One mother, when asked about her dream and ideal meal, told me: *that would be a meal eaten not as a mother: calmly, slowly, at the table and not running around it after kids*. Mothers often do not have time to eat “properly” themselves. 33-year-old Anna told me: *I sometimes feel like a dumpster, I just eat what they have left; otherwise we would throw it away. It's not nice though, to eat such a half-eaten, tossed on the plate meal*.

Many parents mentioned that they had more time for cooking before; there was a place for culinary experiments, which according to them cannot take place with children around. For some the change was to have less time for cooking and also the cooking itself became rather plain and simple; for others having children was the reason to start cooking at all. 29-year-old Dominika told me:

*Certainly, we eat in a different way! I cook mainly for children, I think of them when I cook. I cook on an everyday basis. If I was on my own, I would probably sometimes eat only sandwiches, when I don't have time or when I'm not in the mood for preparing a proper meal, but children motivate me to do that.*

For many parents feeding their children often takes precedence over what they eat. As a result feeding children often comes at the expense of parental food habits. Many mothers told me about their favourite food which they do not prepare anymore, because their children would not eat it. This included for example seafood and spicy dishes.

Family meals are more and more often adjusted to children's tastes and preferences. With the emergence of intensive parenting practices children often become the main focus of the feeding process within families in Warsaw, the centre of women's attention; whereas in the past in Poland tastes and preferences of men took priority over those of women and children (e.g. Szpakowska, 2004; see also Murcott, 1982, 2000; Charles and Kerr, 1988).

Negotiating family foodways and foodwork at home involves special coordination when both parents are engaged in the process of feeding children. In the Szymański family for example, it is Tomek who is responsible for foodwork at home, for shopping, planning the meals, preparing and serving them. However Natalia has her own ideas about how her family should eat, which are often different from Tomek's views. Tomek is much more interested in taste and pleasure that comes from food, he wants to expand his daughters' food horizons, teach them to appreciate diverse flavours. Whereas Natalia would like her daughters to eat in a healthy way, she puts a lot of emphasis on including vegetables and grains into their diet, and limiting their sweets consumption. She often suggests to Tomek what can (or should) be prepared, even though he is the one who is doing the foodwork. Tomek told me: *My wife tells me what they should eat, and I remake it into what they would actually eat, and this is how it works.* Moreover, grandparents are involved in this process as they often pick up Julia and Kasia from kindergarten and school and take care of them until Tomek is home. Sometimes they take their granddaughters for a meal or for something sweet after school, despite their parents' opposing these practices as they may be for example preparing a meal at home at the same time. This causes various tensions.

In the Podolski family the foodwork at home is shared. Mikołaj does a large grocery shopping during the weekend, and then on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Małgosia leaves work early to pick up children from the kindergarten and school, and she cooks *obiad* and prepares supper for them. On those days Mikołaj prepares their breakfast. On Tuesdays and Thursdays Mikołaj goes to work very early while Małgosia prepares breakfast for their children, and he leaves work

early to pick up children, take care of them and prepare food for them on these days. Mikołaj and Małgosia implement this elaborate plan in order to coordinate feeding and eating at their home. Many parents I talked to enforced plans like that in order to coordinate their obligations and responsibilities, their own feeding practices and their children's eating practices.

In the Marciniak family feeding and eating is coordinated in a slightly different way. Because Paweł and Paulina are separated and they share the custody of their children, they constantly exchange information about Krzyś and Basia; information about their plans, school assignments, extra curricula activities, moods and health, but also about their food practices, about what they have eaten or not eaten on a particular day. They generally trust each other to sustain the rules (e.g. eating sweets only during the weekend) and the healthy diet when feeding their children. However, Paulina is less trustful when it comes to Paweł's girlfriend. She told me: *she tried to bribe my children at the beginning. She was making muffins or cookies all the time, until I have found out and said that it has to stop!* Food mediates in various relationships and can be a means of showing diverse feelings, such as affection, care and love, but also anger, jealousy and frustration.

Even though mothers, and in some of the families fathers, are the main gatekeepers (McIntosh and Zey, 1998), their decisions are to a large extent influenced by children. Parents do the shopping and plan the meals with their children in mind (see Cook, 2009a, 2009b). 11-year-old Kamila told me: *My mom buys only things, which I will eat. It's not that she'll buy whatever I want, no, but in general she chooses things I like.* Parents think about what their children have eaten last week or this week, and therefore what they would enjoy in the near future. They check what their children eat in school, to not repeat it at home. They try to predict when children will be hungry, and plan meals in such a way to adapt to children's needs. In many homes in Warsaw children non-intentionally affect the family foodways, and often dictate the family menus. Children are also often very intentional in their influences on family foodways (see Valentine, 1999). In fact they are often given a choice in what to eat. Paweł told me: *I usually ask them. I check what we have, and then let them decide what we eat from a couple*

*of options I give them.* Moreover, children often request particular dishes from the family menu. They also suggest new dishes, which they have tried elsewhere. Aneta's older son for example suggested a chicken baked with apples and plums which he had tried at his friend's home, and this meal has entered the family menu.

Children's tastes often change when they start school, which influences the feeding and eating at home. 35-year-old Piotr told me about his 6 and a half-year-old daughter:

*She eats surówki there, which she wouldn't eat at home. Sometimes at school she eats things she wouldn't eat at home because for example cauliflower is covered with breadcrumbs and butter there, which we don't do at home. Once or twice it happened that according to her something prepared at home was worse than the same thing at school.*

For some parents their children's tastes change for the worse when they enter school, they get used to additives and concentrates and a more fatty diet when eating in the school canteen. Moreover this is often a difficult experience for mothers, when their children say they prefer somebody else's cooking, indicating that they prefer somebody else feeding them. Paweł told me that Paulina laughed, but was also a bit bewildered, when their son when he was 6-year-old told her: "mom, your soup is almost as good as the one in the kindergarten!"

The feeding practices are often dictated by the eating practices, as parents regularly, albeit reluctantly, give in to their children's wants:

*We try to be liberal in the boundaries and limits we set up, to adjust to them, talk with them, and give them what they like, what they are in a mood for (...) I have already learned what they don't eat, and I try to avoid these things, because this was a suicide – preparing something for half a day so that they don't even touch it. (Weronika, 30-year-old)*

*He always eats something. When I am doing pasta, I put it aside and he eats just the plain pasta without the sauce. (...) I usually try to make something he likes, so that he eats with us. (Dominika, 29-year-old)*

Because mothers' and fathers' ideas about feeding might not be the same, and often differ from their children's ideas about eating, in order for their children to eat parents have to coordinate feeding with eating. They often have to compromise on their ideal visions of feeding because these clash with children's responses (see chapter 5). Feeding children what they would eat and adjusting the family foodways to them is another rule which guides many feeding – eating interactions in homes in Warsaw.

### **The Generational Order**

The age and generational differences create an important dimension of the order of feeding and eating at home (see Alanen, 2001b). Guo Yuhua (2000) uses the examples of Chinese families to discuss different dietetic knowledges that are shared by different generations and how they are entangled in kinship relations and continuously negotiated. The case is similar in Poland. Grandparents play an extremely important role in family life in Poland as they often substitute the paid care of children. However, they often have different ideas about raising children than parents do and it is repeatedly exemplified in the feeding process. Parents claim to be more knowledgeable than the older generation and demand to make their own decisions regarding their children; while many grandparents attempt to assert their expert position and sustain the traditional, inter-generational way of passing on knowledge about children (e.g. Radkowska-Walkowicz, 2014: 39 – 40; see also Haukanes and Pine, 2003). A large part of this tension focuses on sweets. As I have shown in the previous chapter, many parents are anxious about their children eating too many sweets and they establish various rules limiting their consumption – this is often one of the rules of the feeding – eating interaction order. Here is how Natalia has explained it to me:

*We negotiated Tuesday as a sweet day (...) I have read about it somewhere, that one day per week they eat the unlimited amount of sweets, and that's it. But it's impossible to realise! First of all, there would need to be consent in the family, and my husband does not really agree. Secondly, the grandparents would have to adapt, which is very unlikely; and thirdly the whole world would have to conform to this idea, and this means school, which is completely not possible!*

Natalia tackles an important issue: parents might try to control children's diet, and according to them it often seems that this is all they do; however there are other social actors involved in feeding children which cannot be completely controlled, including grandparents.

In the Szymańscy family there are many grandparents involved in taking care of Julia and Kasia on a weekly basis. Besides Natalia and Tomek's parents who take care of their grandchildren, there is also a third grandmother – a woman who used to babysit the children became so attached to the family that she is now treated as another grandmother. Natalia pointed out:

*I can let go with Mrs Krystyna [the third grandmother], but I cannot let go with other grandparents. My mom is not so bad, but it is worse with my dad, and the worst situation is with my in-laws. My parents often ask: "so these other grandparents do what they want, and we have to watch ourselves?!" (...) With Tomek's parents I was in conflict. We decided that our children eat these better sweets, and in small amounts, so when I saw that they give them gummy candies, I got mad. They [children] know I don't allow it at home, but they bring these foodstuffs from their grandparents' and then eat it anyway. Oh, it was difficult, we quarrelled a lot! They said that grandparents are there to spoil their grandchildren, and that grandparents also have some rights!*

Tomek confirmed this by saying: *they won't change, they are typical grandparents! I quarrelled with them about it, I might not entirely agree with Natalia, but since we made the decision together, I had to stand on her side.* Even though Tomek is less strict about sweets than Natalia, he also admitted that what his parents are doing is wrong.

This notion that grandparents' role is to spoil their grandchildren and that giving them sweets is the whole point of being a grandparent, have been often repeated to me by grandparents. Tomek's dad told me:

*Children need sweets; every child likes sweets. Of course one should balance their consumption, but they [Natalia and Tomek] are going to one extreme, which is in our favour [laughs] because the girls love to visit us for the reason that here they will get sweets. I think they love us much more because of that. I am not restraining myself, or them, for that matter. (Wojciech, 76-year-old)*

Natalia's father, on the other hand, spent a lot of time explaining to me that the whole point of being a grandparent is to break the rules which parents set up, which mostly means giving grandchildren sweets. He added:

*Natalia made a great choice about limiting sweets consumption! I respect it, but I do not adhere to it. Well, basically, I lie to her. I tried to explain it to her once.. I want my grandchildren to associate me with certain freedom and tolerance, with fun! I love this moment when they approach me and ask, "grandpa, what do you have?" with a mischievous smile, and then we look together into this box where the sweets are hidden. (Władysław, 73-year-old)*

His wife – the only grandparent who seems to adhere to the parental rules – complained that it is not fair, that she follows the rules and other grandparents do not, and as a result her granddaughters prefer staying with other grandparents. Both of Natalia's parents admitted that at least they try to give Julia and Kasia "better" sweets, such as chocolate for example.

Julia and Kasia like sweets. Still, Julia especially recognises that sweets are not healthy, but she enjoys eating them, she likes their taste and it brings her pleasure. She often disobeys her parents' rules and buys sweets in a school shop or brings stickers to school to exchange them for sweets. She also very knowingly manipulates her grandparents into giving her what she wants, and then lies about it to her parents, especially her mother. These negotiations are often non-verbal.

They are very subtle and mainly exercised through breaking or upholding, bending and appropriating in different ways the rules Natalia and Tomek create.

In other families the situation was not so tense, mostly because the grandparents live outside of Warsaw and they take care of their grandchildren only once or twice a year. All parents told me that they suggest to the grandparents what they should and should not do in terms of feeding their children, but that since it is just two – three weeks, they do not worry too much about it. All children, on the other hand, told me stories of how many sweets and what kind of sweets they can eat when being at their grandparents. For example, if they want to, they always eat sweet cereals in the morning. During summer they eat what seemed like an endless amount of ice-cream. 12-year-old Zosia explained to me:

*The grandparents allow me to eat Nutella from a jar with a spoon. If I want to eat candies, my grandma says “let’s go to the shop for candies”. My parents do not allow this, so only when they are away my grandparents would give me sweets. [So you don’t eat Nutella at home, at your mom’s?] Maybe once a year. I eat it very rarely at my mom’s, more often at my dad’s and constantly at my grandparents’ place.*

Zosia’s description of who allows her how much of Nutella spread very well summarizes adults’ attitudes toward children’s eating of sweets. Mothers are usually the ones who set up rules and are much firmer about keeping them; they want to instil in children the health related moral perspective on sweets, teach them to self-restrain. Fathers often allow children more, since they often happily take upon themselves the roles of “fun parents”, while mothers end up being “the strict parents”. Children often persuade fathers to give them more sweets than mothers would allow; or alternatively they lie about how many sweets they have eaten, to eat more in total than allowed. 8-year-old Sylwia agreed: *It is so much easier to convince my dad to eat sweets than my mom!*

Finally, grandparents usually seem not to adhere to any rules and allow their grandchildren almost complete freedom. Children are often aware of this and use these power relations to their advantage. They know mothers are often much

more difficult to persuade than fathers. They are also aware of the influence they have on their grandparents. And they use it. They know what kind of tactics they can try with whom. Mrs Krystyna, the 65-year-old third nanny-grandmother of Julia and Kasia, told me such a story about Julia:

*When I prepared the pancakes for her, she said she wants them not only with the sour cream, but also with sugar; that her other grandmother always gives her a lot of sugar on the pancakes! But I did not give it to her, and later I found out that the other grandmother does not give her any sugar with the pancakes. That little coercer!*

I have heard many stories about children promising a kiss or a hug in exchange for something sweet, or expressing their greater love to those who give them or allow them to eat sweets. Monique Scheer explains that “because people know that emotions do things in social contexts, they use them as means of exchange” (2012: 214). Children tactfully use various emotions during feeding and eating interactions. It might also happen, however, that children will discipline adults in relation to sweets consumption. Here is what Małgosia told me about 7-year-old Bartek:

*It sometimes becomes a conflict, because when my mom goes for a walk with them, she buys them lollipops. When they went there last summer, Bartek pointed out to me “Mommy, but granny should not exaggerate with sweets”, and when we arrived he told her: “Granny, you should not exaggerate with feeding me sweets!”*

Because of the moral ambiguity related to sweets, they cause a lot of tension in feeding – eating relationships and especially intense intergenerational negotiations in Warsaw.

### **Children’s Contribution to Foodwork at Home**

Going back to the topic of gender and food, I should add that when I started my fieldwork I was expecting to find gender differences in children's attitudes to eating and their food socialisation. However, I did not see these differences, partly because I did not encounter comparative cases of daughters and sons at a similar age raised in one family. I suspected that girls rather than boys are socialised into

feeders; they are taught how to organise and prepare meals, how to cook (e.g. Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989; Ochs and Shoheit, 2006). However, the only gender difference I have noticed was that older girls, rather than boys, embodied and enacted the health moral perspective on food through dieting practices.

To my great surprise, children no matter their gender were in general not involved in helping with foodwork in families I studied. Maybe it happens when they are older than 12-year-old or maybe I have missed it. I am far from claiming that gender differences in children's food socialisation do not exist, on the contrary, I think they exist and are quite meaningful; however I did not observe many of them during my fieldwork.

Nonetheless, I think it is striking that children up to the age of 12 are not principally involved in foodwork at homes in Warsaw; at least not in over a dozen homes. They might be asked to set or clean the table, to take out trash, to run for groceries, to help with meal preparation, though the latter is rather treated as a form of play than as a household chore. Many parents mentioned that they know they should ask more of their children, that when they were at their children's age they helped much more at home. 33-year-old Anna stated about her 7-year-old daughter:

*She is drawn to cooking, she wants to try it out in the kitchen, and I know I should let her, but she would make such a mess. It is always such a mess when they get involved with cooking. I mean from time to time we bake cookies together, or make pizza, and they love it, but I cannot allow myself to let them cook on an everyday basis, it would be such a mess!*

Even though parents say that it would be good to involve children in foodwork at home, because they need to learn how to do things and because they are keen to try, fitting the messiness and chaos this would entail into an already full and carefully planned day is often too much.

Children are keen to switch roles and to feed others. Some of them told me proudly that when their younger siblings are hungry, they would prepare something, usually a sandwich for them. Children might also often switch between

their generational positioning, from being a person disciplined by somebody older to becoming a person disciplining somebody who is younger (e.g. Aronsson and Gottzen, 2011). Many of them feed and sometimes discipline through food their toys or younger siblings. They perceive feeding someone as an ultimate gesture of care (Kaplan, 2000). 12-year-old Zosia told me:

*During weekends, when mom sleeps longer, I sometimes get up to do a breakfast for the whole family, to do something nice. I do scrambled eggs, though it usually ends up being an omelette.*

Krzyś does a similar thing for his family; however this is how Paweł, his father, described his breakfast:

*Lately he prepared a breakfast in bed for us. There were burned scrambled eggs with raw onion, burned toast and coffee, which was basically just milk. Oh, it was bad. Of course we said that it is wonderful etc., but it was really bad.*

Children's attempts to feed others are often met with ambivalence. For various reasons, including the need for control over what is eaten and over the space of the kitchen, parents are sceptical about sharing with their children the role of the feeder, even though at the same time they appreciate their willingness to feed others. The important rule of the feeding – eating interaction order at homes in Warsaw is that it is adults who feed.

### **The Order of Meals**

The main, widespread and completely internalized rule guiding feeding – eating interactions concerns the order and the structure of meals. As Mary Douglas explained in her well-known essay *Deciphering a Meal*, food, which encodes a message about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and connections across boundaries, comes in an ordered pattern (1975). Feeding, and hence eating, are organised in the form of meals.

The repeated daily food pattern in Poland consists of breakfast, *obiad* and supper. Currently this pattern is changing, especially in the urban context, when smaller lunch becomes the midday meal, and *obiad* is eaten later. However, the daily food

pattern often becomes more traditional again when feeding children. Additionally, it is also accompanied by *drugie śniadanie* (second breakfast), which children get to school. Also dessert is often introduced into their daily food pattern. Dessert is an interesting food occasion as it provides the possibility of eating something sweet, often considered not proper by adults, within the ordered pattern of meals, introduced by adults (James, 1979).

The organisation of meals at home is often adjusted to the food pattern at school. Parents not only check what their children eat at school, to not repeat it at home, they also adjust the times of serving meals at home to school. For example during weekends they try to repeat the food pattern of a school day. Małgosia told me: *during weekends, when we are at home, we keep the same meal times they have in school and in the kindergarten, they are used to that, so we try to keep that structure.*

Parents agree that feeding their children needs to be organised through meals, and that all meals are important – it is a shared rule of the interaction order guiding feeding and eating practices. They actively remind themselves that their children need to eat breakfast before going to school, or need to eat supper, so that they are not hungry before going to bed. They discipline both themselves and their children. Marc Lalonde (1992), who discusses *Deciphering a Meal*, explains that meals can be either seen in such a structural way as objects, or that they can be treated as events, the sites of children's rites of passage and socialisation. They are both. For both parents and children in my research meals were simultaneously stable and structured categories that order their days and weeks in a particular way, that structure the feeding – eating interactions; and incredibly dynamic social events, constantly negotiated by the family (see chapter 5).

From the meal occasions, *obiad* is an especially interesting one. It is an exemplification of the ideas about *proper meal*, which becomes especially important when feeding children (Murcott, 1983, 2000; Charles and Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991; Bugge and Almas, 2006; James, Curtis and Ellis, 2009). Nutritionally, the concept of a *proper meal* in Poland is similar to the English version (Douglas,

1975; Murcott, 1982; Charles and Kerr, 1988). It is a homemade meal. It entails two dishes: a soup and a second dish consisting of meat, a starch (usually potatoes) and vegetables.

In some cases the *obiad* at home during the week consists only of a soup. 33-year-old Anna told me: *I always have a soup, so that she can eat something quickly after coming back from school.* Mothers often prepare both a soup and a second dish, but because it is not eaten as one meal, one after another, they do not consider this being a proper, full Sunday-like dinner. There is a visible turn to the more typically Polish cuisine when cooking for children: soups, a breaded schnitzel or *kotlety mielone* [larger meatballs] with potatoes and *surówka*, pancakes, *pierogi* [dumplings], *kopytka* [a sort of gnocchi] – these are the widespread children friendly meals, also served in school canteens. Parents mentioned that they rarely prepared anything like that before having children, and switched to this more typical Polish cuisine when feeding children – these are the dishes they ate and liked in their childhoods.

The idea of a proper *obiad* relates not only to its nutritional, but also social components: eating a proper dinner makes the family (e.g. Murcott, 1982; Moisiso et al., 2004). This is especially activated in the presence of children. Eating a meal with the whole family is considered important not only for strengthening the family ties; it is also one of the main sites of children's socialisation. It provides one of the best occasions to discipline children in their eating practices, but at the same time allows parents to discipline themselves in their feeding practices (see chapter 5). Many parents perceive eating a meal together as extremely significant social event, even if they do not manage to organise it in such a way on an everyday basis (see Murcott, 1997; Cinotto, 2006; Jackson, Olive and Smith, 2009; cf. Haukanes, 2007). For example 40-year-old Magda, a mother of three, having three jobs, explained to me with sadness:

*I would like to convey to them this good tradition of eating together, to sit calmly together, without the TV, and without rushing eat the meal. It can be so nice, when you set the table etc. I really enjoy it. We try to organise it in that way from time to time, especially if there is an occasion for celebration, somebody's birthday for example. I would say we try to do this at least once a month.*

Other parents also expressed how important it is to eat meals together as a family, essentially because this is what families do and this is what children need. This is an important element of feeding children because it structures their days, and makes it easier for parents to coordinate and control their children's eating. Among families in my research, during the week many children ate *obiady* accompanied at least by one parent, and during weekends usually the whole nuclear family met together at the table.

Most of the decisions concerning feeding children, and hence children's eating, are made on an everyday basis and are ad hoc. When shopping with children and deciding which of the products they request should be allowed; during the meal situation when deciding how much would be enough for a child to eat, or what ingredients are more important to eat; when deciding whether to allow a child to eat one more candy or a piece of chocolate (see chapter 3). These decisions are however underlined by the general rules guiding the feeding – eating interactions. One of these rules relates to the order of meals. Children often hear for example “you cannot eat this now, *obiad* will be served soon”. 12-year-old Hania, and other children, explained to me: *In terms of rules.. I can't eat anything before meals.*

The rules of the interaction orders, which reflect what is considered important when feeding children, implemented in homes in Warsaw are culturally and geographically specific, and their understandings have been acquired in a particular socio-historical moment in Poland (see section 1.2). This has been reflected on by Tomek's mother:

*In my generation it was important that children were not hungry, that they had a soup or could eat something sweet. Now they are much more rational about feeding children. First of all, they can afford it; that is they can actually plan things. For us that was not possible, there was no time for planning, and no such option.*  
(Hanna, 75-year-old).

I conducted my research 25 years after post-socialist transformations have begun, almost ten years after Poland joined the European Union, and four years after the financial crisis, which Poland managed to survive rather well. Some of the rules I described may resemble those guiding feeding – eating interactions in other societies. That is because many of the changes in the family life and the notions of parenthood and childhood which occur in Poland; the child and food-related trends, or “the moral geographies of young people and food” (Pike and Kelly, 2014) take similar shape in many neoliberal societies. In the European Union for example, particular issues related to children and food, such as obesity, are put on the agenda and then appropriated by the member states (see chapter 6). Nevertheless, each family creates its own feeding – eating interaction order. The specific family rules, rituals and practices are enacted and negotiated on a daily basis in a particular place and time.

Children acquire these rules of feeding and eating through observation, participation, repeated routine practices of parental feeding, and their own eating, as well as through comments on their behaviour from adults. It is a process which they contest in multiple ways (see chapter 5). These rules however are repeatedly instilled in children and by the time they start school, they are usually very familiar with the interaction order guiding feeding and eating practices at home, even if they challenge it. They are made and make themselves into particular eaters. When they start school they have to learn new rules guiding the feeding and eating practices and often become new kinds of eaters (see Mayall 1994).

## **4.2 The Order of Feeding and Eating at School**

In Poland, children between the ages of 6 or 7 and 12 spend at least a couple of hours a day in primary schools. They eat and they are fed there, and these practices are guided by a certain pre-established, though daily renegotiated, order.

Primary schools are state institutions which promote and implement government's ideas about raising future citizens; they do relate to a certain institutional morality (Zigon, 2009). According to Foucault schools are the perfect examples of biopolitics, as their disciplinary power is not directed at the individual child, but at the population of school children:

Power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behaviour. Hence the significance of methods like school discipline, which succeeded in making children's bodies the object of highly complex systems of manipulation and conditioning. (1980: 125)

Food is an important element of these biopolitics (see chapter 6). Through feeding children in school and disciplining their eating, adults focus both on the population of school children and on individual children. In school, children are encouraged, persuaded or overtly disciplined to behave in a particular way and become particular types of self-governing autonomous subjects-eaters (Foucault, 1980, 1991; see also Metcalfe et al., 2011; Gibson and Dempsey, 2013). Parents are disciplined and remade into particular feeders as well.

### **Institutionalized Care**

In Poland, the head teacher decides how feeding children is organised in her school. Caring for this is listed in the Act on the Education System as one of the responsibilities of the school: "to provide safe and healthy environment for learning, education and care of children (...) In order to ensure the proper implementation of the caring tasks, in particular to support the right development of students, the school can organise a canteen." (1991: art. 10 – 67).

Feeding children in schools is a bureaucratic and moral responsibility. However, it is often much more than just that. Even though schools represent the state and

are instrumental for the government, most of all they are the spaces in which children and adults interact on everyday basis. The head teachers, teachers, cooks and food supervisors are representatives of the state, but simultaneously they are people who work in a certain institution, who establish various personal relationships with children and their parents and who care both about them and for them (see Rummery and Fine, 2012: 322).

Teachers were often upset about the changes in food cultures and practices in Poland and, troubled, asked me what I think about the situation in their school. They often expressed anxiety regarding the generally “bad” way in which children eat these days, the diverse “bad” feeding habits of their parents. Teachers in school B told me (quotes noted in my field notes):

*One of the kids brought a bag full of gherkins, so I've asked him why he brought so many, and he replied that he likes it. What sort of [mentally] healthy person would give something like that to a child to bring to school? But it is the same boy who gets 10zł [£2] to school and spends it on crisps every day. And when one time I pointed this out, he told me that it is his money and he can do whatever he wants with it, so I told him that it is my classroom so he should follow my rules..*

*[To which another teacher added] Once I've taken a bag of crisps from a child and I have given it to his mother during parent – teacher conference. I told both of them that in my classroom these types of foods are not allowed. But the mother was trying to convince me that it is her right to give her child what he wants, and I shouldn't interfere.*

Teachers care for children, they care about how they eat and how they are fed and this nurturing tendency stretches beyond the school to the home setting. They try to both protect and control children (McIntosh et al., 2010: 291). So they not only discipline children, but also parents in their food practices. They are also disciplined by parents and sometimes by children, all of which causes a lot of tension.

Adults in school often have different ideas about what is good and bad for children which not only relate to the institutional food morality, but are based on their own individual moral dispositions to food. Some teachers for example are very anxious about what children can buy in the school shop and criticize the school shop owners for providing the inappropriate snacks in a school setting (see chapter 7). In school A, where there were two separate canteens, Mr S., running the bigger one, and Mr P., running the small one, perceived each other very negatively and often complained to me about the other's way of feeding children, indicating that he is not doing it right. The tensions and negotiations occur also between adults within one school.

In schools as well diverse ideas about "proper" feeding and eating are appropriated, different needs and wants have to be met and disciplining practices implemented; but there are many more administrative rules that need to be followed and the feeding of a couple of hundred children and their eating practices need to be planned and controlled – there is an important difference in scale. More actors are directly involved in influencing and negotiating the feeding and eating at school, something that Robert and Weaver-Hightower call "policy ecology" surrounding school food (2011: 7).

Children's eating in schools in Warsaw is organised into three events: eating *drugie śniadanie* brought from home, eating things bought in the vending machine or in the school shop, and eating in the canteen. To some extent schools repeat the food pattern existing at home. There is a (second) breakfast, an *obiad* often followed by dessert, and an opportunity to buy and eat snacks. However, even though each of them has its own rules – for example *drugie śniadanie* should be eaten during the breakfast break; when shopping in the vending machine or in the school shop children should form a queue – they are not necessarily coordinated with each other as they are at home. They often overlap when for example a child eats *drugie śniadanie* during the *obiad* break or eats snacks bought in the school shop in the school canteen. Children can eat or not eat during any of these feeding occasions.

The main rule of the interaction order guiding feeding and eating practices in schools is that adults feed children and they plan children's eating practices. Children understand that these are the rules, which they should obey, but simultaneously engage in many tactics to renegotiate these rules and challenge the established interaction order (see chapter 5). In fact food often mediates in power relations between children and adults in schools, and occasionally provides children with some independence within the generally very restrictive and disciplining school day.

In contrast to the home setting, in schools the feeding is not always so tightly connected with eating. For example when adults in school organise everything so that children can eat their *drugie śniadanie*, they are not at the same time feeding children this *drugie śniadanie*, they are just organising their eating practices. But when children eat in the school canteen, then the school feeds them. The issue of vending machines and school shops is even more complicated (see chapter 7).

### **School Canteens**

My impressions from school canteens were of chaos and noise, but also mobility and speed. Still, there was a certain order in this seemingly unordered space. Queuing for the meals, being controlled by the teachers and cooks, the attempts to restore silence – all of these rules create an interaction order that guides feeding and eating practices in school canteens.

The organisation of feeding in the school canteen is the duty of the head teacher, who usually delegates this responsibility to the food supervisor.<sup>41</sup> She organises and supervises the employment of the cooks, choosing the suppliers, planning and preparing meals, and also the process of paying for them etc. At each step the food supervisor has to negotiate the rules guiding feeding and eating with different actors, such as parents, cooks or food suppliers. Food supervisors have to coordinate various people and multiple aspects of feeding and eating in the canteen. It is the food supervisor's responsibility to plan the meals; often a set of dishes is served on rotation, creating a routine school menu (see Appendix 3). In

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<sup>41</sup> It is worth reminding here that the term often used in Polish is *kierownik żywienia*, which directly links this position with the concept of feeding (in a nutritional sense).

theory each portion should be calculated and balanced nutritionally to match children's needs. However, all of my interlocutors told me that they do not make the necessary calculations, that they know more or less what constitutes a proper meal for a child. This was especially striking in the case of Mr S. who had no dietetic or nutrition training.

In state schools there is no choice of dishes: everyone eats the same; contrary for example to the UK or US, where often children can choose and compose their own meals (e.g. Salazar, Feenstra and Ohmart, 2008; Pike, 2010a). The meals are most often paid for the whole month in advance. Even though there is a one-dish-for-all approach, children's allergies are accommodated; I have seen few children receiving dairy-free meals. In fact in many private schools in Warsaw children can choose from a variety of diets, such as meat, vegetarian or dairy-free, but they cannot compose their own meals. Also, in some schools they might be able to decide whether they eat or not on a daily basis. For example Krzys and Zosia decided each morning whether they wanted to pay for a meal in the school canteen or not.

The meal typically consists of a soup and a second dish, comprising meat, vegetables and starch (see pictures below). The only non-meat meal is served on Fridays, which derives from the Catholic fasting tradition, but now – as Mr S. told me – is maintained as a cultural rather than religious custom. Additionally to drink there is water, juice or compote. All of these meals resemble traditional home cooked dishes, which reaffirms the view that cooks and other caregivers in schools take on themselves the roles of maternal figures when feeding children. The canteens I researched served typically Polish meals; with additions like spaghetti with tomato sauce or chicken in Asian spices (Appendix 3).



Photos 1, 2 and 3 show the typical meals I was served in school canteens in Warsaw. On the left: potatoes, *mizeria* (cucumbers with sour cream and sugar) and *bitki* (“pounded” pork chops); in the middle: potatoes, cabbage and *schabowy* (breaded schnitzel); on the right: potatoes, *mielone* (larger meatballs), green beans and mashed beetroot.

Like the parents, the food supervisors and cooks take into consideration children’s tastes. They generally prepare what they know children would eat, for example *pierogi*, pancakes, bland meats, these of the *surówki* which are more popular such as *surówka* made from carrots, otherwise food would be wasted (see Bergström et al., 2012). They also prepare children’s favourite meals on special days, for example for a Children’s Day (1<sup>st</sup> of June in Poland) or before Christmas. Nevertheless, it is difficult to accommodate everyone’s tastes. If children do not like food served in the canteen, they can decide to stop eating there and the canteen will cease to exist. That point is often made in public debates in Poland, when cooks and food supervisors are criticised for preparing unhealthy dishes. They argue that they have to make something children would eat; otherwise they will lose their jobs.

Children I talked to in schools usually liked the food served in the canteen, even if they disliked specific dishes or other elements of eating in the canteen, such as noise and being rushed. They still engaged in multiple tactics to avoid eating particular foods (see chapter 5).

Younger children, 6 and 7-year-olds, can also eat breakfast in the canteen, and they receive the additional dessert later on. This is one of the ways of accommodating the youngest children and assisting them in the transition from the kindergarten, where they eat all three meals. Another way of accommodating them is to have small tables and chairs in the canteen. Legally, schools are supposed to organise the canteen space and the feeding in a way which accommodates the youngest children’s eating needs.

Canteens in the three schools I studied were organised in a similar way. There is usually a space for around 60 people (see the pictures below).<sup>42</sup> The walls of the canteens are decorated with pictures or cut-outs of flowers or foodstuffs. Also diverse slogans are hanged on the walls: “Eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day”; “Wash your hands before eating” etc. Reminding children about these rules is one of the ways of disciplining and governing them in their proper eating practices. Moreover the rules of using the canteen (e.g. “we do not run”, “everyone eats in turn”, “there should be silence in the canteen”) are sometimes displayed as well, and the menus for the whole week are usually placed near the entrance. These menus are often printed out on the paper with companies' logos provided by food producers (see Appendix 3). This is a kind of indirect way in which the food market enters schools and participates in feeding children and children's eating (Nestle, 2002: 173 – 197).



Photo 4. Canteen in the main building of school A (where Mr S. is the food supervisor).



Photos 5 and 6. Canteen in the branch building of school A (where Mr P.'s catering company operates).

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<sup>42</sup> There are no children in these pictures due to ethical reasons. Canteens were never so empty during their opening hours.



Photos 7 and 8. The canteen in school B (where Mrs K. is the food supervisor).



Photos 9 – 12. The canteen in school C (run by Mrs H.'s catering company).

As Jo Pike argues (2008, 2010b), the spatial practices of school canteens in multiple ways implement what Foucault referred to as governing and disciplining technologies. Children are moulded into certain kinds of eaters, into certain kind of self-governing subjects not only through verbal comments (“sit up straight”; “eat your meal”, “don’t talk when eating”), and bodily adjustments (teachers would not only verbally, but also physically adjust children’s posture or show them how to eat with fork and knife); but also through the spatiality of the school

canteen. Children sit at the tables, there is not a lot of space to walk in between them, which teach children to sit when eating, and not walk or engage in any other activities. There are two windows connecting the canteen with the kitchen, one for issuing meals, which allows controlling how much food children are given, and the “collection window” to which children return plates, which is placed in a visible place so that children cannot easily dispose of the unwanted food. The canteens are sufficiently small, so that all children fall under the adults’ controlling and disciplining gaze.

All of the canteens are open for *obiad* between 11 – 11.30 am and 2 – 2.30 pm. In all of the schools which I studied, there were two main “*obiad* breaks” which lasted 15 or 20 minutes. Children from grades 4 to 6 come during one of them to eat their *obiad*, and they usually come with their friends. I have witnessed several times how children negotiate, discuss and bargain with each other when to go to eat *obiad*.

The younger children, from grades 0 – 3, come as a group with their teacher. They usually come during the lesson. They wait until everyone has eaten and all leave the canteen. Their eating is closely observed by their teacher, whereas it is assumed that older children are already able to better self-govern their own eating practices. It might seem that children lack control and influence over their eating in the canteen. However, as I will show in chapter 5, they in many ways negotiate their eating with adults’ feeding.

Moreover, younger children are usually served the meals: they sit at the tables, and the teachers, cooks or other helpers serve the meals at each table. The head teacher from one of the schools explained to me that she would not want the young children to run around the canteen with full plates, they could easily drop something and it would certainly disturb the order of the canteen. The older children collect both the soup and the second dish from one window, and return the plates to another window. This is, on the one hand, a way of minimizing the work for the cooks and cleaners and, on the other, a way of teaching children good manners of cleaning after themselves.

These age-related differences are an important rite of passage. Younger children mentioned to me that they cannot wait until they are able to have more freedom and flexibility in the canteen (similarly to when accessing the school shop, see chapter 7). Older children can not only collect and return plates on their own; they can also not come to the canteen at all, if they do not want to. Some of them check what is on the menu each day, and if they do not want to eat it, they do not come. 12-year-old Hania explained to me that with age less and less children eat at the canteen, *because it is not that parents tell them to do this, everyone can decide on their own, so if they do not like the food, they will not eat at the canteen.* In that way their non-eating practices resist the related feeding practices of adults.

The canteens are not only governed by the rules established within each school, and by the rules established by different groups of adults for children. They are also governed by the rules and laws created by the national and local government authorities. Schools are not legally bound to have canteens, but it is recommended, and most of the state schools in Warsaw have the appropriate equipment (Czarniecka-Skubina, 2013). The canteens – and through that the cooks – are monitored by the National Health Inspectorate, which is the institution of the Ministry of Health. It used to be that they tested the quality of food, and checked the cleanliness and hygiene of the food preparation process, which they still do, but the Inspectorate was also responsible for monitoring the diets and making sure that they are nutritionally appropriate for children. One of the functionaries working in the regional office, Mrs Anna, explained to me anxiously that these rules changed when Poland entered the European Union in 2004. It is monitored if the canteens are run according to the HACCP system, so for example if the preparation of raw food is organised in a different part of the kitchen than its cooking; and if the food is safe and handled hygienically, but nobody checks if the meals are nutritionally appropriate. Mrs Anna told me:

*We have certainly developed from the sanitary angle, there are many more hygiene standards and people respect them, but we have moved backwards from the food quality angle. It is sad what has happened with the school canteens in Poland. Of course*

*people complained, but the canteens really used to cook for children, cooks knew what children like to eat. These smells, I recreated them at home, I started preparing the mushroom soup in the same way as in my child's kindergarten. And we've lost a lot of that food culture with all these Western standards.*

She saw this as very worrisome in light of the growing obesity among children in Poland, especially given that an increasing number of catering companies is operating in schools in Warsaw.

In 2012 the local government of Warsaw decided to implement further neoliberal policies and ceased to subsidize the school canteens (see Rawlins, 2009: 1091). This caused a huge critique and social debate, focused mostly on the related dismissals and many people losing their jobs; but also on the expected increase of prices and the decrease of the quality of meals. In many neighbourhoods in Warsaw schools had to contract out the provision of the meals.<sup>43</sup> In some schools outside catering companies won the tenders, and they either prepare the meals in the kitchen, or supply them from outside of the school. In other schools the cooks, often together with the food supervisor, started their own catering companies, and after winning the tenders rented the space of the canteen from the school and kept serving meals. This is what happened in school C. In contrast to the UK or US (e.g. Nestle, 2002; Pike and Kelly, 2014), catering companies operating in schools in Warsaw are relatively small enterprises.

Catering companies are often perceived as harmful, focused only on the business side of feeding children, and not on caring for them. Mrs Anna from the National Health Inspectorate told me:

*For them this is just a business. They care only about earning as much money as possible; they do not care about children's health, and as a result serve for example French fries and other unhealthy foods to children.*

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<sup>43</sup> The district councils decided this locally. In the school year 2012/2013 these changes were introduced in six districts in Warsaw and affected 88 primary schools.

This view was shared by many of my interlocutors and it resonates with the similar debates occurring in other countries (Truninger et al., 2013; Pike and Kelly, 2014). The meals served by catering companies are perceived as tasting worse and being reheated, which is considered bad; and it is assumed that nobody cares how children eat: the meals are served in plastic containers, children eat with plastic utensils and they are not under proper control when eating. A school librarian working in school B told me: *A school canteen is not only about food and feeding, though our canteen has great food, it provides something like a mother's care, and these catering companies don't do that.*

Catering companies operated in two canteens I studied.<sup>44</sup> Mrs H. in school C started one of them. She explained to me that she is young and has energy to do this, but if she did not, the cooks would have probably lost their jobs. Mrs H.'s catering company prepares all the meals in the school kitchen and caters only for this one canteen; while Mr P.'s catering company services a number of the canteens all over the city, including the branch building in school A. None of them however served meals in plastic containers or French fries. And from what I have observed, they and their employees surrounded children with the same sort of care as cooks in other canteens.<sup>45</sup>

Besides the local financial decisions and the controls from the National Health Inspectorate, the organisation of the canteen is also influenced by the Ministry of Education, which for example decides what the ratio between cooks and served meals is. Now the ratio is one cook per 100 served meals. Another way in which the state agencies influence the canteens is through meal subsidies.

There is a separate term in Polish, *dożywianie*, which relates to additionally feeding someone who has not been fed “enough”. When children are not fed

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<sup>44</sup> In those schools the only thing that have changed from the point of view of parents and children, were the prices of the meals. In school A, in the main canteen *obiad* cost 5.50 zł (£1.06); in the branch canteen it was 7 zł (£1.35). In school B the price was 4.30 zł (£0.83), and in school C 7 zł (£1.35). These are the prices for meals consisting of a soup and a second dish, usually followed by a dessert in schools A and B.

<sup>45</sup> This of course does not mean that all catering companies in Warsaw are like that. Krzyś and Zosia for example complained about the quality of food served by catering companies in their schools and about eating from plastic containers.

enough or in the right (nutritious) way by their parents, the state institutions or non-governmental organisations step in and help with feeding them. Supplementing children's diets in schools has been for a long time recognised as a way of equalizing their chances and intervening in the health inequalities (e.g. Gullberg, 2006; Pike and Colquhoun, 2009; Pike and Kelly, 2014). In Poland these types of policies were implemented in schools since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Chwalba, 2004). During the Polish People's Republic the state occasionally provided food for children in need. It was also provided for example by the local branches of the Children's Friends Society (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci*). In the 1990s children's malnutrition and undernourishment was recognised as an important social problem. Since 1996 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has been financing the municipalities, which provided meals for children in Poland through schools, day rooms and local culture centres. Between 2002 and 2004 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in coordination with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Sport launched a pilot project focused only on school children (Szymańczak, 2005). Since 2005 the government pays for feeding those children whose families otherwise cannot afford it, through the programme "Pomoc państwa w zakresie dożywiania" (The State's Aid in Feeding).<sup>46</sup> This is often related to receiving other welfare benefits. The state, through the local government, subsidizes these meals, but the school is responsible for their implementation. The problem of children's stigmatisation, because it is clearly made visible that they receive meals subsidized by the state, had been often discussed in media at the time of my fieldwork. In the schools I have researched however, this was not a problem.

Also since 1998, one of the biggest non-governmental organisations in Poland, the Polish Humanitarian Organisation, provides school meals for children in need, and according to their website between 1998 and 2014, they fed 62,496 children through providing 8,268 076 meals ([www.pajacyk.pl](http://www.pajacyk.pl)). The third biggest actor engaged in *dożywianie* children in Poland is the Danone Company, which since

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<sup>46</sup> In Warsaw, around 15 000 children benefit from this programme each year. In schools I studied this concerned 150 children in school A (out of 471 eating in the canteen); 45 in school B (out of 330) and 30 in school C (out of 350 using the canteen).

2003 provides meals for undernourished children ([www.podzielsieposilkiem.danone.pl](http://www.podzielsieposilkiem.danone.pl)). This is a good example showing that diverse state, private and non-governmental actors are engaged in feeding children in Poland (see chapter 6).

Feeding and eating in school are organised within the space of the school and negotiated between adults and children at school (see chapter 5). When children begin attending, they learn the rules guiding the feeding – eating interaction order. Their behaviour is adjusted by teachers and other adults, and also by other children. By observing older children they can learn what their obligations will be in the future and see what kind of self-governing subjects they are supposed to become.

However, feeding and eating in schools are influenced by multiple other actors. These interactions are negotiated through local and national norms and regulations, with officials from the National Health Inspectorate or Ministry of Education. They are also influenced by food producers as they provide food children eat in the canteen and buy in vending machines or school shops, but they are also present in schools in other ways, for example through logos placed on the canteen menus. Schools in Warsaw are influenced, on the one hand, by the international food companies and food trends and, on the other, by the changing policies regarding children and food, implemented on the national level, but influenced by the international guidelines, such as HACCP (see chapter 6). Also parents participate in the feeding – eating interactions in schools as they give children food to take to school, decide whether they will eat meals in the school canteen, and can influence school's activities and decisions. Coordinating feeding and eating in school and following the rules of the particular interaction order entails taking into account all those influences, needs, wants and expectations.

Metcalfe et al. (2011) argue that diverse discourses which relate to nutrition, choice, responsibility, proper food and manners – discourses that are pivotal in inculcating civility in children – are enacted in and through the School Meals System in the UK. As I have shown, many of these are also implemented in school

canteens in Warsaw. Though the discourse of choice and framing children as consumers in the school canteen (Morrison, 1996), is only now slowly finding its way to schools in Warsaw, when they become increasingly embedded in the pro-market, neoliberal context. Nevertheless, for cooks and food supervisors I talked to, the school canteen is more about caring for children, fulfilling their responsibilities by feeding children, than about children's or their parents' rights.

### 4.3 Home – School Relations

Children, uniquely, experience home and school every day as social settings under control and organisation of two sets of adults: parents and teachers. Children's experience and understanding of the two settings is constantly under construction, as they compare the two (...) parents and teachers negotiate the division of childcare labour and the status of their knowledge, and attempt to influence each other's childcare practices.

(Mayall, 1994b: 2 – 14)

So far I have described the orders guiding feeding – eating interactions at homes and schools in Warsaw. However, as Goffman explains, “exploring relations between orders is critical, a subject matter in its own right” (1983: 2). The relations between school and home have been increasingly intensified in Poland – parents are expected to be more and more involved in school life (see Edwards, 2002). As Vincent and Tomlinson (1997) explain, the promotion of home – school links is a part of a broader construction of what constitutes “good parenting”. Parents are perceived as responsible for the social behaviour and educational attainment of their children (see Thelen, 2010). Mothers especially are expected, as for example Mayall (1994b: 145) shows, to physically and psychologically prepare their children for school (see also Sikorska, 2009). In Poland, parents are increasingly expected to be involved in their children's school life, and middle class parents in particular attempt to realise these ideals. They influence the school and discipline teachers in their caring and feeding practices. Parents who are not behaving “properly” are judged and disciplined by teachers and other adults at school. Therefore adults often discipline not only children, but also other adults in their food practices.

The relationships between children and adults are often considered much more restrictive in schools than at homes. Berry Mayall (1994b) shows, with the case of one school in London, that home is perceived by children as a sphere of higher freedom and independence, as parents allow children to negotiate within the intergenerational contract, which is not usually allowed in schools. Children told me that it is easier to break the rules at home than at school. 6-year-old Ewa

explained: *At home I can leave everything [on the plate], at school that's not possible.* Then again, because children are not individually controlled at schools, as they are at homes, schools can in fact give children more control and freedom in making their own food choices (e.g. Warren et al., 2008), while they have less influence over the general order.

The two interaction orders of feeding and eating are entangled with each other because children eat both at home and at school. Adults in those spheres might have different views on what constitutes “good” and “bad” food and food practices. So in an attempt to feed children properly and to discipline them into particular eaters, adults negotiate with each other. Children are caught up between these orders and have to learn how to move between them. As mediators between these two social worlds, they often become the agents of change influencing, intentionally and non-intentionally, the orders of feeding – eating interactions.

The school influences the family food practices. Parents adjust their family meal patterns to the one occurring in school: the food timetable at home is usually in tune with the school schedules; during weekends children often eat meals at similar times as during the week at school and parents check what their children eat at school, to avoid repetition at home. The fact that their children eat *obiady* in the school canteen gives some parents a sense of security, that no matter what their children eat or do not eat at home, they have eaten a warm meal during the day. Natalia told me: *because she eats obiad at school, even if she doesn't eat well at home, there is no tragedy, because I know she has eaten at school.* However, because of eating *obiad* at school some children will later not eat an *obiad* at home, which troubles their parents. Moreover children's tastes change when they start eating in school, according to some parents for the worse. They are worried about what their children in fact are fed in school; for example sugary desserts or soups made from concentrate rather than natural ingredients or they eat more fatty dishes than they eat at home.

Parents are often judged by teachers and cooks, because they have not taught their children how to eat, which means that they do not feed their children properly. Punch, McIntosh and Emond (2012b) show, with the example of Scottish residential homes that one person's right may be in conflict with another person's responsibility. In the case of schools in Warsaw, parental right to feed their children might be in conflict with teacher's responsibility to take care of children in school. Or when parents do not fulfil their responsibilities regarding feeding children, the state has the right – and the responsibility – to step in and feed them. There is an important class dimension in this. Usually working class parents are perceived as not proper feeders; they are seen as not knowing what is right for their children, and therefore disciplined to embody the middle class ideas about proper parenting and feeding (Rawlins, 2009). Teachers I talked to complained for example that many parents do not want to get involved in various food education programmes implemented in schools; that they do not come to the meetings, are not interested in broadening their knowledge about what is good for their children (see chapter 6). According to many of my interlocutors at schools, parents do not know how to feed their children so they should be disciplined into proper feeders. Mrs K., food supervisor in school B, noticed:

*It's the worst if a child cannot distinguish between a tomato and a beetroot. Those children who went to the kindergarten know these tastes, they know that surówki should be eaten; but those who come to school straight from home, it's horrible, they don't know anything because they are not taught at home that vegetables should be eaten, they are not taught about food.*

In school, children can learn “proper” food practices and develop “proper” tastes. Only children who have already gone through institutional education have “proper” dispositions, and those who have not, need to be re-educated to be “proper” eaters. This is a way of governing and normalizing children in their eating practices and parents in their feeding practices.

On the other hand, the home setting in many ways influences the school food life. 36-year-old Aleksandra told me such a story regarding a vending machine placed in her daughter's school (school A):

*They placed a vending machine in our school, in that small building. I think it lasted for about a month. We [parents] have written a petition to the head teacher about that. I think that it was a trial run; they were just trying it out. I don't know why they have taken it away in the end, I'm just glad they did. All of us [parents] have signed that petition. My husband wrote a letter to the Education Office in Warsaw asking how it is with these vending machines; I suppose it is some sort of [financial] aid for school...*

Parents, as Aleksandra's story shows, can not only set up rules for their children regarding their eating at school (e.g. “you will eat *obiady* in the school canteen”; “you will not buy snacks in the school shop”), or prepare food in the form of *drugie śniadanie*; they can also influence the school. In fact, the proper parents, according to a certain middle class ideal, are expected to get involved in the school life, those who do not do this are not only judged and disciplined by adults at school, but also by other parents. Aleksandra continued her story about the vending machine by criticizing parents who agreed to place it in the bigger school building. She asked me: *which parent in their right mind would want this vending machine to stay in school?*

Parents can influence the head teacher in her decisions regarding feeding in school. They can participate in creating the rules of the tenders, through that controlling both the school canteens and the school shops. In Krzys’ school, parents used to have to buy a monthly subscription for meals in the canteen, but they have influenced the organisation of feeding – eating in such a way that now children can decide in the morning whether they will eat a meal on a particular day. In Hania’s school, parents (or maybe their children in fact?) were dissatisfied with the quality of the meals, and they pushed through the changes to make the meals tastier and healthier. The same happened with the school shop.

Home – school relationships are not always so antagonistic. In fact, they can be complementary in their negotiations, the subjects of which are usually children and their eating practices. One teacher from school C told me that parents of younger children often ask what their children have eaten each day. Some of them want them to eat even a little bit, just so that they are not hungry during the day. Others want their children to eat a whole meal since they have already paid for it. She continued:

*And then they resent me because I didn't make sure that they eat, and children tell me that their parents allow them to leave something, not to eat everything. And then the parents are not angry at their children because they lie, but at me because I haven't supervised them.*

As Ian McIntosh et al. point out, exercising power over children is often an ambiguous experience for adults, as it can be perceived at the same time as necessary and unwelcome (2010: 301).

Despite these tensions, there are many similarities between feeding at home and at school. Firstly, it is mostly women who feed: mothers, grandmothers, cooks, teachers, school shop sellers, and head teachers. Feeding is a deeply gendered experience. All of the women I talked to, care about it deeply. They perceive it as their responsibility not only to feed, but to feed children properly, to care about them, to teach them how to eat. Secondly, certain rules of the interaction orders, for example feeding being organised by adults according to a particular food pattern and children having to follow the rules, such as eating at the table, are similar at home and at school. Also, the emphasis on healthy feeding/eating is shared, even though it might be understood in different ways. Thirdly, both at home and at school control becomes the main aspect of feeding. Adults control what children eat, but also what they are fed by other adults. Moreover, feeding is not only about nutrition and nurture, but also about socialisation and discipline. There is a constant struggle between families and schools in relation to who knows better how to raise children. Parents complain that in schools children can buy sweet snacks, that they are forced to eat quickly in the canteen, and they

learn to eat in an improper way, for example drink sugary tea and eat salty and fatty foods; and that they receive sweets as a reward, for example for dessert. Adults in schools, on the other hand, complain that parents do not teach their children how to eat: to distinguish between a tomato and a beetroot and know their tastes; to behave at the table properly. They also complain in general about parental ways of feeding: giving children sweets or money to buy sweet snacks, or preparing not suitable snacks for their *drugie śniadanie*, such as pickles. Of course these complaints are not directed at all parents and at all school employees. Nevertheless, they antagonize home – school relationships which are the basis of children’s everyday lives and their food experiences.

The relations between teachers, parents and children are often based on power struggles. Adults in schools have their own opinions on how to feed children, but after all it is parental responsibility and even if they complain about parents, they can rarely challenge that. As Mayall notes, “teachers tread a difficult path between asking the home to be as they think it should be and accepting homes, parents and families as they are” (1994b: 28). Parents, on the other hand, have to balance between feeding their children in the way they think is right, and giving part of that responsibility and care to adults at school. They want their children to eat during the school day, but they do not want them to be force fed, which can put teachers in an awkward situation. Children are caught up in these negotiations and power struggles, sometimes using them to their advantage, when they for example tell adults in the canteen that they cannot eat something because they are allergic, or that their parents told them they do not have to finish the whole meal; or when they lie to their parents about what they have eaten at school. Going back to the opening ethnographic vignette, Filip was certainly struggling in his position of being caught between the rules set up by his parents and the rules implemented at school. But simultaneously he knowingly moved between these rules and influenced the feeding practices of adults by his own eating, shaping them into particular feeders. Children realise that they have to learn and adjust to the rules guiding feeding – eating interactions, but at the same time they

acknowledge that they have certain autonomy in expressing their own food needs, wants and wishes. This autonomy and influence seem to keep increasing in Poland.

In this chapter I have discussed the interaction orders guiding feeding and eating practices at homes and in schools in Warsaw today. This corresponds to the third layer of negotiations mentioned in the introduction: negotiating the general rules which guide the daily feeding – eating interactions. Home and school constitute the main spheres of children's everyday lives, because of that the rules and patterns related to feeding and eating in each of those spheres are entangled and influence each other.

## Chapter V. Negotiating Feeding and Eating: Daily Interactions

*I was eating obiad with the Marciniak family, when at some point I witnessed this conversation:*

- *I'm done; I'm ready to eat the dessert – said 11-year-old Krzyś.*
- *Eat a bit more – said Paweł, his dad – few bites of meat and vegetables.*
- *I don't want to.*
- *Eat, or you won't get the dessert.*
- *Ok, I'll eat a bit more vegetables, but I'll leave the meat, I don't like it.*
- *Ok.*

(Field notes, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013)

This is a typical example of the daily feeding – eating negotiations. In the previous chapter I discussed the interaction orders guiding feeding and eating practices at homes and primary schools in Warsaw. These rules however, and the individual and institutional food moralities are challenged through the daily feeding – eating interactions. In this chapter I focus on the second layer of negotiations, on the daily interactions regarding feeding and eating.

Building on Michel de Certeau's theory (1984), I analyse these interactions through the framework of strategies and tactics. Adults, both at home and at school, strategize to feed children in a certain way, which is recognised by them as a *proper* way. Children respond to these with multiple tactics, "the art of the weak" (Certeau, 1980: 6), which are not necessarily reflexive:

Even if the methods employed in this guerrilla warfare of everyday life can never be distinguished in quite so clear-cut a way, the fact remains that they are characterized by spatial and temporal wagers respectively. (ibid. 7)

In this chapter I uncover the strategies and tactics regarding feeding and eating implemented by adults and children in Warsaw; and how they are entangled with multiple power relations, not confined only to the family or school setting. I am interested in what has been described as "the daily cycle of struggle and

resistance in which parents and young children are inextricably entwined” in families in Australia (Grieshaber, 1997: 651); or the “means by which parents and children seek to exercise power over children’s food” in families in the UK (O’Connell and Brannen, 2014: 89). I am also concerned with the similar power struggle taking place in schools. To illustrate this I discuss two food encounters: the feeding and eating of breakfast and *obiad*.

These two food occasions, related rules and norms structure children's days, and consequently they also serve as the structure for this chapter. As Mary Douglas explained, “each meal carries something of the meaning of the other meals; each meal is a structured social event which structures others in its own image” (1975: 240). Simultaneously, each of those food encounters is a dynamic event which involves various negotiations. Meals, Ochs and Shohet explain, are:

Cultural sites where members of different generations and genders come to learn, reinforce, undermine, or transform each other’s ways of acting, thinking, and feeling in the world, sometimes through cajoling, begging, probing, praising, bargaining, directing, ignoring, or otherwise interacting with one another in the course of nourishing one’s body. (2006: 47)

Through these daily emotional interactions with food and people children are cared for, but are also constantly controlled and governed. As Jean Briggs has shown (1999), children’s socialisation happens through the mundane, repeated everyday interactions with adults and other children. In Warsaw, the repeatability of practices and comments, which aim to socialise children into proper eaters, was striking.

Children’s eating is carefully watched and they are disciplined and told how to change in order to behave “properly”, in order to develop certain technologies of the self, self-regulating practices (Foucault, 1988). This is how children are socialised into “proper” people. However, these disciplinary techniques do not create docile bodies described by Foucault (1991); while embodying these technologies of the self, children in many ways resist the disciplining process. They can accept or refuse to be cared for and fed in a certain way. They employ diverse

tactics to re-negotiate and transform the strategies implemented by adults (Certeau, 1984). In that way they are the agents of the socialisation process (James, 2013). Through their daily encounters with food, children actively participate in being socialised into certain eaters, and in socialising adults into certain feeders. As Michel Foucault explains:

Mastery and awareness of one's own body can be acquired only through an effect of an investment of power in the body (...) But once power produces this effect, there inevitably emerge the responding claims and affirmations, those of one's own body against power, of health against the economic system, of pleasure against the moral norms (...) Suddenly what has made power strong becomes used to attack it. (1980: 56)

Parents, grandparents, teachers, cooks, food supervisors, food producers and marketers, state officials, exercise power over children in order to feed them in a certain way. They want children to become particular eaters, to embody the "proper" dispositions consistent with dominating moral perspectives on food and their individual moralities, characteristic of this socio-historical moment in Warsaw. Children are able to respond in their own powerful, even if unintentional ways, to adults. Because of the changing family relations and the new position children have in Polish society, today these responses seem to be manifested more visibly and more powerfully than they used to be a generation ago.

## 5.1 Breakfast

### 7.20 am: Breakfast at Home

*During the week, in the morning the alarm rings, and I keep switching it off and on, my husband gets annoyed, he hates these naps.. So he gets up and wakes up the children, I need more time to wake up myself. And then, you know how it is, the discussion about what will be eaten for breakfast begins. They love sweet cereals, which I hate, I hate when they eat it, but we negotiated Tuesday as a sweet day (...) so they always eat these sweet cereals on Tuesdays. And on other days we negotiate, for example I would like them to eat something healthy and warm, but my husband does not share my vision, and my children do not necessarily like what I offer them as healthy and warm, for example oatmeal porridge with raisins.. And very often he prepares toasts: bread sautéed in the pan. It is usually a wholemeal bread, I promote it, but Tomek sometimes runs out for the white bread rolls, it annoys me, but ok.. (...) So children eat while I try to take a bite of a sandwich, and at the same time I am looking for my shoes and keys and Tomek is standing and serving these toast. I try to sit with them, but just when I sit I instantly remember that I should pack something else in their backpacks, or prepare winter hats, because it is getting cold, so it rarely works like that, that we all eat together; but they eat breakfast every day. (40-year-old Natalia)*

*I wake up angry, because Natalia sets an alarm for 6.25 am, and we get up at 7 am! She falls asleep, but I can't. So I get up and prepare breakfast for kids. Today was the best day – a sweet day, so they get up gladly, because I say that if they won't get up, they won't eat the sweet breakfast. But it is quite funny, they are so worked up about this sweet breakfast, and then they don't eat so much of it, I think Julia doesn't feel well after milk so early in the morning (...) On other days I make them sandwiches, or toast: butter on the pan and I throw old bread in and sauté it, they like it! It is usually a wholemeal bread, but I try to smuggle in white bread rolls, I know children like them (...) Sometimes I ask them what they want, other times not. I often give them a choice between two things and they choose [Do you eat with them?] No, I make everything ready for them. I might just drink coffee. (40-year-old Tomek)*

*[What is important in food?] Breakfast! It is the most important meal of the day! [Ok, so what do you eat for breakfast?] Toast, sandwiches or cereals with milk, but that only on Tuesdays, and dad recently bought the wrong cereals (...) [Would you want to eat these cereals more often?] No, I am often in a hurry in the morning, and then I feel sick after having milk. (9-year-old Julia)*

As these quotes show, the participants of the same encounter can view it differently. They enter the interaction with different objectives and expectations and attach different meanings to it. Natalia would like her daughters to eat a “proper” warm breakfast. But she is in a hurry and is dealing with other morning chores. Tomek wants to feed them something tasty, something they enjoy eating. He often gives them a choice to make sure that he serves something his daughters will in fact eat. Julia and Kasia, though they are in a hurry in the morning, recognise that this is an important meal and that they should eat something. Feeding and eating are multiple (see Mol, 2002).

There is a common expression in Poland that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. All of the children I talked to identified breakfast as an extremely important meal that should be eaten in the morning. Similarly – which is not surprising since children to some extent reproduce their parents’ opinions – all of the parents also recognised that breakfast is an important meal. One mother told me that breakfast is the only time when she makes compromises with her 12-year-old daughter, just to make sure that she eats something:

*This is the only thing we negotiate, that she eats breakfast, whatever really, even a piece of a yogurt pie – I prefer that she eats a piece of a yogurt pie with honey, than not eat at all. I don’t want her to start a day with an empty stomach, especially since it takes her twenty minutes to walk to school. Sometimes I buy her a croissant, she likes it, so we’re making concessions when it comes to breakfast. (Dorota, 45-year-old)*

Parents also negotiate among themselves. Natalia would like her daughters to eat warm porridge for breakfast, or at least sandwiches or toast from dark, wholemeal bread, but her husband often sneaks in white bread rolls. Their different moral dispositions to food, discussed in the previous chapters, are confronted here.

During the week, mornings are usually very chaotic and everything is done in a rush. Parents often do not eat themselves; they just make sure that their children eat something. One of the mothers prepares sandwiches for her children before

going very early to work and puts them in the fridge – she says that she does not trust her husband to prepare it properly. 30-year-old Weronika told me: *they rather eat on their own, although I know that it would be ideal if all of us were to eat together*. This ideal is very difficult to realise on weekdays. Not only because everyone is in a hurry and parents are often not hungry or do not have time to eat. Also children might not want to eat breakfast.

During my fieldwork one of the often repeated and debated media scares concerned the fact that children in Poland do not eat breakfast. Suddenly, people's private morning routines become of public interest, because they concern children and are considered "not proper". The alarming numbers were presented and later repeated: "60% of Polish students do not eat breakfast before going to school!"; "the culture of eating breakfast does not exist anymore!" Nutritionists have commented on these alarming messages explaining how important it is for children to eat breakfast before school, how it allows them to study better and enhances their concentration abilities. Food companies implement programmes promoting breakfast for children. It has been recognised in public debates that children are supposed to eat breakfast, and that it is their parents' responsibility to feed it to them. Parents are disciplined into preparing breakfast for their children and those who do not fulfil this obligation are considered to not be proper parents. When one of the politicians commented on this media debate, that she understands that children might not be hungry in the morning and might not want to eat breakfast, she has been forcefully criticized for not caring about children and disregarding this important social issue; she was even accused of mocking undernourished children (niezalezna.pl 2013; Wprost, 2013). Multiple social actors, including nutrition experts, state agencies, media, food companies, discipline families to feed and eat breakfast, despite their individual preferences.

In Warsaw the typical weekday breakfast consist of sandwiches or cereals with milk. Because parents consider it such an important meal, and it is usually eaten in a hurry, there is no time for elaborate discussions and negotiations, so their strategy is to let their children decide what to eat, just so that they eat something.

And most of the children I talked to choose cereals, which is a perfect example of *children's food* (see chapter 3).

Cereals constitute an interesting category, which incorporates different understandings and meanings of what is good and bad for children. In general sweet cereals are recognised as children's food both by children and their parents. They were among the first products designed for and advertised to children (Elliott, 2009: 35). As Robinson (2000) explains, choosing cereals is one of the most direct influences children have on family decisions. Some parents try to convince their children to eat muesli or cornflakes, considered healthier than the sugary cereals, however in the end they usually comply with children's choices on that matter. For many others this is a proper breakfast for their children. Children have their favourites: Nesquick, Cheeros, Cini Minis, Cookie Crisp etc. They know them so well that they can tell if their parents did not buy the branded ones. Julia told me:

*My dad bought the fake chocolate balls, the fake Nesquick cereals. It was horrible. Maybe it was not that horrible, but no, bleh, horrible. [How could you tell?] They taste and smell differently, but mostly because of the packaging, it was different, I recognised that it was forged.*

Children often drew cereals as their favourite food (see the drawing below).



Drawing 7. 6-year-old Ewa's favourite food.

Food companies advertise sweet cereals as children's perfect breakfast. They are a great example of *nutritainment*: sweet, colourful and playful, promoted by funny characters, which convinces children; and with added vitamins and minerals, reduced sugar content, eaten with milk, which convinces parents. They combine

both the health/nutrition and the fun/pleasure moral perspectives on food. One of my interlocutors working in a company producing children's cereals told me:

*Parents perceive these as products for children. They connect it with cacao, with milk and so all the associations are good, they like it. And children love these products, these characters – they buy them with their eyes, they wallow on the floor in front of the shelves with these products. So we know that whatever we produce as a part of that brand, people will buy it.*

The feeding and eating of breakfast is influenced by the food industry. And the decisions about breakfast are often made in a shop, when buying cereals. Cook asks, “when ends the market and begins the household?” (2004b: 150). The two are inextricably linked when it comes to feeding children and children's eating.

Parents often commented that their children's breakfast is usually not organised in a way they would like it to be, though they often said that about the whole feeding process. The properness in this case relates on the one hand to providing children with necessary nutrients and a good, wholemeal start of the day; and on the other hand to civilizing them into proper eaters who recognise the importance and develop a habit of eating breakfast. The first unreachable ideal relates to eating calmly together, as a family. The second concerns what is eaten. Health conscious middle class families consider for example warm millet or oatmeal porridge with dried fruits and nuts a perfect winter breakfast. Some parents serve it to their kids and they praise its protective properties and how important it is to eat a warm breakfast in the winter. They recommended it so much, that I tried preparing a similar breakfast for myself these winter months when doing my fieldwork. For few other parents this was an unattainable ideal.

Due to time pressure, parents usually feed their children what they want to eat for breakfast. They often say that the only strategy they employ is to persuade their children to eat something at all; that there is no time for negotiations. But the negotiations do still occur. The fact that children would say no to other foods is one of the tactics they employ. Often silent agreement, one of the rules of the negotiated order, is that if they can choose, they have to eat it – this is the result

of negotiations as well. Children implement diverse tactics to bend their parents' strategies and eat what they want to eat. They repeatedly refuse to eat, make a fuss or purposefully prolong eating something knowing that their parents are in a hurry, that there is time pressure and therefore in the end they will be allowed to eat what they want or not eat at all. They suggest what they would like to eat, knowing that in such a case they will probably get it, as it would mean that they will eat it. These negotiations not only take place every morning in the kitchen, but often begin in the bedroom or bathroom, or the evening before when parents start asking their children what they want for breakfast the next day. Moreover, they often extend outside the home setting, for example when shopping together and when children indicate which cereals they want to eat. Breakfast is negotiated not only among parents and between parents and children, but also between parents, children and food producers, with the influence from nutritionists, journalists and politicians.

On weekends, the experience of feeding and eating breakfast changes. On Saturdays and Sundays everyone can usually sleep longer and later have a calm, lazy breakfast as a whole family, which becomes a certain family ritual. This happens especially when there are younger children in the family. Almost everyone in my research pointed out how important that moment is for them. Weekend breakfast often becomes a special family time, and also in some families it is one of the rare moments when fathers prepare the meal (see Adler, 1981). Diverse foodstuffs are put on the table and everyone chooses what they want. Usually eggs are eaten and the decision about how to prepare them is often based on the democratic vote: the majority of the family members decide on a way of preparing eggs. Other times all the family members eat different things, but what is considered very important for them is that they sit around the table and calmly eat together.

*On the lazy Saturday morning I arrived around 10 am to the Szymański home. Girls were still in their pyjamas. Tomek laughed that they thought of dressing very formally especially for me, but in the end decided not to. Julia and Kasia were setting the table, but Natalia pointed out that they have to correct it because it was not proper (the plates were out of line). Tomek asked what kind of eggs everyone wants and Julia shouted out "hard-boiled". After a minute, she asked if there is that mayonnaise that her dad makes, and upon learning that not, she said that she prefers the soft-boiled eggs. Tomek asked me how many I wanted, but when I replied "one", his facial expression showed such surprise and disbelief, that I added: "maybe more". I sat at the table and chatted with Julia and Kasia, while their parents were preparing everything for us: drinks (coffee for me, tea for them), Tomek was preparing eggs, and Natalia cut and arranged all the rest: bread, cucumbers and radishes which I brought, peppers, tomatoes, wędliny (cold meat cuts) and hard cheese, all of which was later put on the table. There was also a small plate with a marinated herring, leftovers from the previous day. When Tomek added a pot filled with around eight or nine soft-boiled eggs, we started eating. We talked about their plans for this weekend, and they asked me how my research was going. We also talked about Kasia, they had to make a decision whether she would stay one more year in the pre-school or start school already. After eating two eggs, a piece of bread and a little bit of herring, Julia asked to be excused and left the table. Natalia asked her to take her plate with her, and later to put it into the dishwasher, and after doing this Julia went upstairs to her room.*

(Field notes, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

During weekends feeding and eating breakfast is less of a struggle. The time pressure and nervous negotiations give way to a more relaxed and ceremonial family practice. Parents' goal is no longer to shove some food into their children, just to make sure that they have eaten breakfast, have the energy to start a day and are not hungry right away; but rather to spend quality time together, have a nice and calm experience as a family. Another goal is to civilise children (Elias, 2000). It is a good occasion, as there is more time, to teach children proper food practices, related for example to setting the table, asking to be excused, cleaning after yourself etc. The notion that eating should not be rushed, which is impossible to put into practice on weekday mornings, is enacted by the whole family thus teaching children that this *is* the way to eat meals.

Similarly for children, the obligation of eating breakfast during the week changes into a pleasurable communal experience during the weekend. Many of them told me that they highly enjoy these family rituals. Even though during both of these occasions they exercise their power and in the end they usually eat what they want, during the week these negotiations are more antagonistic, parents and children become adversaries; while during the weekend the negotiations are more peaceful and are rather based on the mutual agreement than conflict and struggle. In this case the parental duties and strategies are more in synch with children's expectations and tactics.

#### **9.40 am: *Drugie śniadanie* at School**

*The bell rings and the breakfast break starts. It's 9.40 am. Children run out of their classrooms. The corridors quickly get crowded and noisy. Many children open their backpacks and pull out something to eat, most of them have sandwiches. At one end of the corridor a group of around seven girls sits by the wall, they talk and laugh while eating. They share their food. In the other part of the corridor boys are kicking ball. They run after it, while eating their sandwiches. I walk down to the lower floor, where the group of younger children goes to the bathroom with their main teacher to wash their hands before eating. Then they go back to their classroom and eat their *drugie śniadanie* there, sitting at their tables.*

(Field notes, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

As this ethnographic vignette shows, eating *drugie śniadanie* at school can entail multiple experiences. *Drugie śniadanie* is an interesting object which connects home and school in a very direct way: it is prepared at home, usually by a parent, and is supposed to be eaten at school by a child (Metcalf et al., 2008). When children open their lunchboxes – as Morrison notes – “home” is made visible (1996: 655). Similarly as with the first breakfast, parents usually feed their children what they would eat, so that the food is not wasted. One of them told me: *I don't prepare things she won't eat. I don't want the food to be wasted and I want her to eat something when she is at school.* But they also try to balance this meal in order to make it a healthy snack, so they strategize about what to prepare. For example many children receive two sandwiches: a “salty one”, considered healthy, and a “sweet one”, considered less healthy, but more pleasurable and fun.

Sandwiches are the most popular food prepared for *drugie śniadanie*. They differ however from what the previous generations of children ate. One of the head teachers I talked to mentioned that “*poor sandwiches*” are disappearing now.<sup>47</sup> Today they usually have salad, or tomatoes, or are based on wholemeal bread; it is something more than just a white bread roll with butter, ham or cheese, though these kinds of sandwiches do still appear. Some children receive more than just sandwiches: cut vegetables or fruits, sweets (often designed as a second breakfast treats), juices, yogurts, crisps, chocolate bars. Many of these can be eaten at any given moment, but as a whole they unmistakably create *drugie śniadanie* for children. And the packaging often strengthens this – colourful “lunchboxes”, often with popular culture characters are relatively new in Poland.

The special treats are particularly interesting, because they are invented by food producers and marketers with children’s *drugie śniadanie* in mind, and usually include chocolate and milk or are some kind of biscuits, which are supposed to convince mothers that this is a healthy treat. Children usually also receive something to drink, either water or juice – another thing that has changed in Warsaw. When I was at school it was not common to give children anything to drink or any additional snacks to school, people simply brought sandwiches. And then, when the first school shops opened, we started bringing money.

Not all children bring *drugie śniadanie* to school; however in some schools this is emphasized as parental duty. Parents, their engagement with the school and their care for their children, are often evaluated and judged based on these packed meals. These *drugie śniadania* can be viewed as a form of family display. Especially parents whose children go to private schools – often more focused on healthy feeding and eating – have to be careful about what foods they give their children to school. During one of my meetings with Paulina, she was preparing food decorations for the Christmas tree in her daughter’s preschool, which promotes

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<sup>47</sup> This is an interesting connection, giving the name of “poor” to those sandwiches which are simple, consisting just of bread, butter and ham or cheese. The “poor” here can be understood in multiple ways. It relates to the concept of health, they are poor in nutritional value, as they do not have vegetables for example; they are “poor” in a sense that they lack creativity and imagination, they do not inspire children who eat them (Allison, 2008); and finally they are “poor” because usually poor (working class) parents prepare these kinds of sandwiches for their children.

healthy and ecological foods. She prepared the decoration chains from dried apricots, and told me with a sense of guilt: *well, I know I should have bought the ecological ones, other parents would have done that, but that would have been so expensive! So I bought the dried apricots filled with sulphur, sorry! They will not see the difference.. I hope!*

In Warsaw the assessment of parental care based on food they give their children to school, and with that their disciplining, is still relatively limited compared to some other countries. For example in one of the schools in Copenhagen – as Tørslev (2014) showed – teachers decide whether the packed meals were proper or not, and put the red, yellow or green stickers on them. When children take the lunchboxes back home, parents receive the information about how well, or how badly, they have fulfilled their parental responsibilities. Allison (2008) demonstrates how in Japan a school lunchbox becomes a symbol of mother's attitude towards a child's wellbeing and education. The *obeñto* is a sign of a woman's commitment as a mother and her inspiring her child to become similarly committed as a student. In schools in Warsaw I have not seen these kinds of elaborate evaluations of parents' practices. However some teachers establish rules concerning what is proper to bring to school, for example crisps do not fall into this category and are confiscated (see chapter 4). This becomes problematic, as many parents do not accept any restrictions set by the teachers, because they feel they have the sole responsibility and privilege to make decisions concerning their children. The rights and responsibilities of parents and teachers may clash. It is often working class parents who are judged as not proper parents and disciplined, which strengthens the middle class, neoliberal vision of "proper" parenthood and modern personhood sustained in Poland (see section 1.2).

Some children look forward to preparing their own *drugie śniadanie*, as it is seen as a symbol of adulthood. When 7-year-old Basia was drawing her favourite, the best imagined *drugie śniadanie*, which consisted of a Nutella sandwich, a ham sandwich, marshmallows, a piece of an apple pie and an Actimel yogurt (see below), she told me that this is what she will prepare when she will be making *drugie śniadanie* for herself, in the 3rd or 4th grade.



Drawing 8. 7-year-old Basia's best imagined and the worst possible *drugie śniadanie*.  
The latter (on the right) includes a Brussels sprout, a potato and a fish with bones.

Parents prepare *drugie śniadanie* for their children, and through that feed them. However children usually eat it at school, this is what they are supposed to do. The feeding is spatially and temporally detached from eating. Parents' strategies and ideas of how they feed *drugie śniadanie* to their children often differ from how their children in fact eat it. First of all, children often do not eat everything that is given to them and what they are supposed to eat, or they eat it in the “wrong” order: sweets first. They forget about it, throw away things they do not like, and also share and exchange with each other what they brought from home. Secondly, children often do not eat in a “proper” way: that is they eat with their hands, they eat food that fell on the floor, they eat what is inside of the sandwich and leave the bread, they divide the foodstuffs that are not supposed to be divided into ten pieces and share it with their friends etc. The exchanging and sharing are very important social events, but often perceived as revolting by teachers. One of them told me: *Oh, this is disgusting! They share and try everything from each other. They would even divide a kabanos<sup>48</sup> in ten pieces to share it!* Children sometimes ask their parents to give them more of particular foods, because their school friends enjoy it. So it sometimes happen that parents end up making two sandwiches, or giving their child much more of fruit, dried fruit or candies, than they would normally do, just so that their children can share it

<sup>48</sup> *Kabanos* is a long, thin and dry sausage.

with their friends, or exchange it for something else; though parents are often not aware of the latter.

Bringing popular foods to school is an important practice for gaining social prestige (Chee, 2000). Different foods are considered popular at different moments. When Tomek started preparing garlic bread for Julia, all of her friends enjoyed it so much that she continuously asked for more and more. Also, other parents approached Tomek when he was at school to ask him how he prepares this garlic bread because their children cannot stop talking about it and want to eat something like that as well. Children share and exchange diverse foods with each other, and as a result, their parents share their food knowledge with each other as well. This also happens when children eat at each other's homes. They often ask their parents later to prepare something they have tried when eating with another family. However, for children the sharing and exchanging involves not only food, it happens across different categories of objects. Julia for example often brings colourful stickers to school to exchange them for sweets, which are limited in her home. And 6-year-old Olek told me: *We exchange for example a sandwich for sweets. And lately my buddy had a chocolate candy, and I gave him a piece of a lollipop for it.*

Parents prepare *drugie śniadanie* and teachers organise the situation of eating it. But children employ many tactics to fight with adults' strategies and rules. They make their own powerful choices about eating. For example they often do not eat in the places or at times where and when they are supposed to. They do not necessarily eat in a way in which the feeding at school is organised. The proper place is usually a classroom, and a proper time is a breakfast break, around 9.40 am. Many children do eat their *drugie śniadanie* during that break; however they often continue to eat it throughout the whole day. Sometimes they eat it on their way back home. Sometimes they do not eat it at all. 9-year-old Julia for example often saves the sandwiches and gives them later to her younger sister when she is hungry. 6 and a half-year-old Kasia often eats them in the car, on her way back home.

The most popular place to eat is a corridor, children sit on the floor with their friends or eat while playing, often while kicking ball. Another popular place during summer is the yard in front of the school. But there are also others, for example in one of the schools a bathroom became the popular place for *drugie śniadanie* – children could hide from teachers there. This practice however was perceived as disgusting by teachers and quickly eradicated.

When doing my fieldwork I have heard countless discussions concerning the proper place and time to eat what children have brought from home. As Certeau explained, the focus of strategies and tactics is often on space and time (1980: 7). Teachers persuaded children to eat in a particular way, at a particular time and place through the use of diverse strategies, mainly verbal reminders and suggestions. Children through diverse tactics, such as choosing other places and times to eat, resisted these strategies and introduced the new understanding of what is “proper” according to their own social rules. This also differs with age. Children between the ages of 6 and 9 were under much more control of their main teacher, and they often ate their *drugie śniadanie* in their classroom. Certeau explains in relation to strategies:

It is also a mastery of places by vision. The partition of space permits a panoptic practice in which the look transforms strange forces in to objects which one can observe and measure, therefore controlling and “including” them in one's vision. (1980: 5)

In Julia's class the whole group went to the bathroom to wash their hands and then they came back to their classroom and everyone ate their *drugie śniadanie*, while the teacher observed their eating. Older children much more often moved from one classroom to another during the break, and they were not under such a careful surveillance, so they had more independence regarding what, where and when they eat.

One of the teachers, disgusted by how students eat their *drugie śniadanie*, told me: *They should eat calmly in the classroom, like normal people!* Adults in schools often referred to the notion of normality. Simply put, doing something in a normal

way means doing it in the adult way. Children should learn that. From their perspectives what children did, for example eating in a bathroom, eating while kicking ball or sharing and dividing food, was not normal. Not only feeding – so for example what parents prepare for their children as *drugie śniadanie* – but also eating is perceived in a very normative way and judged as proper or not proper. This process of judging, commenting and normalizing is part of disciplining and socialising parents and children into particular feeders and eaters. On other occasions however, as I have shown in the previous chapter, it is teachers who are disciplined by parents and children.

With respect to *drugie śniadanie*, the relationship between parents and their children, between feeding and eating, is mediated through schools: through the spaces of the classrooms and the corridors, through teachers, and through peers. What parents prepare can be in the end eaten by somebody else's child or not eaten at all. Feeding and eating is spatially and temporally detached in this case. It is often separated from the single interaction between parents and children and embedded within the broader social context and the interaction order of feeding children and children's eating in schools. Even with many rules it is one of the less structured food interactions. Despite various disciplining attempts from adults, children often eat their *drugie śniadanie* in whatever way they want to. Nevertheless, even if they do not adhere to them, they learn the rules of the proper behaviour regarding the eating of breakfast. Probably they will implement some aspects of these rules at a later point in life.

## **5.2 *Obiad***

With *obiad* adults' aims change. It is no longer, as it is with breakfast, about just feeding, making sure that children eat something. It is much more about feeding a *proper meal* (see chapter 4) and making sure that children eat it in a proper way. There are more expectations put on adults (by themselves and others) to do it right. The dinner table is one of the most important sites of children's socialisation (se.g. Ochs, Pontecorvo and Fasulo, 1996; Blum-Kulka, 1997; Geer, 2004). As Ochs and Shohet (2006) explain the socio-cultural messages can be conveyed more or

less explicitly, sometimes with direct comments and error corrections, other times with irony, inference, more veiled communicative strategies. These can happen during the same meal.

### **11.30 am – 2 pm: *Obiad* at School**

*“Ola, am I supposed to feed you? Eat a bit more.” (...) “Bartek, do I have to call your father, so that he comes to feed you himself? What do you eat at home, what kind of vegetables?” (...) “Why these carrots are not eaten? Did somebody allow it?” “-Yes, she has eaten half already”. (...) “Put your feet on the ground” (...) “Put your hand at the table” (...) “You don’t know how to use fork and knife? I will show you” and having said that the teacher has taken a girl’s hands into her own and showed her how to cut the cutlet using fork and knife. But most of other children eat it just with a fork, or take it in their hands and take bites of it. Two boys clink their glasses of compote as if they toast; two others fight with their spoons as if they are swords. Five girls sit at the table for four, but they are asked to change seats, one of them ends up sitting alone and complains a lot about that. (...) A teacher bangs a spoon on the plate to order silence in the canteen.*

(Field notes, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2013)

School canteens in Warsaw are spaces of many power struggles between children and adults, including teachers, cooks, food supervisors, head teachers, parents and state officials (see chapter 4). In the midst of these struggles and negotiations, the goal of school canteens is twofold: to feed children in order to provide them with the necessary nutrients and energy, to make sure they are not hungry during their school day or to substitute their food intake if they are not fed properly at home; and to feed children in order to teach them what proper eating entails, to socialise them into proper eaters (Metcalf et al., 2011).

Many children I talked to complained about eating in the school canteen, that they have to stay in a queue in order to eat, sometimes for the whole break. They also complained about the quality and taste of food served, or about the portions. Many children complained that they are forced to eat everything which is on their plates, even if they do not like it or are not hungry at that moment. They are constantly rushed. When in the canteen, children are constantly reprimanded, disciplined and silenced. As Daniel and Gustafsson point out, from adults’

perspective feeding children in school is a matter of servicing them, while from children's point of view there is an important social component in this: "there is a conflict between the children's social value of their lunchtime and the more instrumental value placed on this by the organisation" (2010: 272).

The interactions between children and adults in school canteens resemble playing a certain game. Adults control children's plates and what they eat to make sure that they eat enough. Children use many tactics, related for example to manipulating adults or arranging food on a plate in a certain way, to avoid eating exactly what they are fed. In some ways this is similar to the negotiations occurring at home. However because children are usually not individually watched, they have more opportunities, or rather different opportunities, to influence what and how they eat. They do not use as much emotional pressure on adults in schools as they do at home, but rather engage in other resistance practices.

One of the rules of the interaction order of the canteen is that children have to show their plates to adults – teachers controlling the canteen – to get their consent to return their plate to the kitchen and leave the canteen. Several times a child approached me and showed me their plate awaiting my assessment on whether they can return it to the kitchen. I always said that this is not my role and that they have to ask somebody else, bewildered by the idea of telling someone how much they should eat.<sup>49</sup>

Teachers often asked children to eat a bit more, usually a bit more of meat or fish and vegetables. Their answers were dependant on the situation. They differed according to what time it was (whether it was the beginning or the end of the break), what kind of food was served this day (there are some dishes which are clearly among the least favourite), and finally who asked. Children who in general

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<sup>49</sup> I was also used to threaten children, and when they asked other adults in the canteen who I am and what am I doing, they often answered that I am writing down who eats how much and so they better eat well. As a result some children came to me to tell me how much they have eaten. When they asked me directly, I just replied that I am writing down what is happening in the canteen. I tried to calm them down and say that I am not interested in what they eat; I am not there to control them. Still, my presence often caused some reserve initially, and then interest and speculations; I know that some children thought I was a spy of sort.

“eat well”, that is eat everything that is put on their plate without complaining and do not cause problems, are allowed to leave some food from time to time. Children who are labelled as problematic eaters are also asked to eat less than others. Children who often cause problems, the fussy eaters and naughty children who do not want to eat in a proper way are put under a closer surveillance. Girls who perform sweet and innocent expressions on their faces are much more likely to pass the inspection than mischief-maker boys. 11-year-old Kamila told me:

*At the canteen I can choose, if I don't like a particular thing, the cook will give me less or none [so they do not tell children to eat everything?] Yes, they control what children eat, but I usually eat everything so she doesn't yell at me and I can leave something.*

Children negotiate how much they eat. They often ask the cooks for smaller or bigger portions. They also use different tactics to evade adults' rules. First of all, they wait for the moment when nobody is looking, and return their plates then. I have seen many children repeatedly attempting to return their plates and being sent back to their seats. They usually succeeded at some point. The older children often have to just outwait the adults – when the break ends they usually are allowed to leave the canteen anyway since the classes are starting. Children often help each other with this. 12-year-old Zosia told me: *we have this agreement, that one of us goes and talks to Mr Tomek, or whoever else is there, and the rest returns their plates.* Children also say that another teacher allowed them to return the plate; that they have already complied with somebody else's orders, which might not necessarily be true.

Secondly, there are different ways of arranging food on the plate so that it looks as if more have been eaten. If one pours oneself soup, a common tactic is to pour just a little, to make it look as if the whole bowl of soup was eaten. Meat can be hidden under the potatoes. And food in general can be spread out on the plate so that it looks as if more has been eaten. I sometimes used this tactic when served meals in the canteens and could not eat the whole portion, but did not want to offend the cooks. Also, children occasionally share with each other, though it is not allowed.

Children also attempt to eat the dessert before the main meal, though they are supposed to receive their desserts only after finishing the meal. Chocolate bars, yogurts, flavoured milks, sweet buns, juices, cookies – whatever is served as a dessert is stored in one place in the canteen. The dessert is often used as an incentive. Teachers tell children that if they do not eat everything they are supposed to, they will not receive the dessert. Other threats to which adults refer include telling children that if they do not stop misbehaving they will have to change seats, the worst of which is when children have to sit with teachers. Adults also threaten that they will come and cut children's food and feed them as if they were small babies and that they will call their parents to complain that they misbehave.

The main negotiations in the school canteen concern what is eaten. The plates are under a close control. However, teachers also regulate other aspects of children's behaviour. First of all, they often tell children, especially the younger ones, where they should sit. This is to separate friends who talk a lot with each other, and also to make sure that they use several tables instead of spreading over the whole canteen. For children sitting with their friends in the canteen is very important. Eating a meal is a social event. It is important where you sit, because some places and some people are more popular than others. This is well illustrated by one event I described in my field notes:

*A group of girls from the 6th grade enter the canteen. After careful consideration they choose where to sit. A moment after they sat down another friend joins them. She looks at that table and without a word sits at the other one nearby. All of the girls get up and join "the leader" at her table.*

(Field notes, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013)

Children negotiate with each other when to go to the canteen and where to sit. Boys usually sit separately from girls, especially the older ones, but they do tease and engage with each other. Children do not like sitting with strangers, which they are forced to do if the canteen is full. Though for some children the *obiad* break is considered wasted, because they cannot play, for many others this is an important social occasion. Younger children do in fact play different games when

in the canteen. The older ones simply talk. Mrs H. told me that they treat it as a restaurant; they would love to just sit in her canteen for hours and talk.

Teachers constantly interrupt all of these engagements, negotiations and important social interactions. Adults repetitively reprimand children to sit up at the table and eat in a proper way, for example not to stick a cutlet on the fork and bite pieces off it. Many adults complained that children do not know how to use knives, that they eat only with their forks, however when I looked for them myself, it turned out that knives were often not provided. Children are also asked not to talk, but to eat. They are reminded that: *canteen is not for talking, it is for eating!* Or that *this is not time for playing, but for eating!* PE teachers use their whistles to order silence. Others bang on the table, if verbal reprimands are not enough. Teachers make sure that children eat quickly and do not engage in other practices.

On the one hand, children are socialised and are supposed to be taught how to eat like *normal people* in schools. Their behaviour is constantly verbally and physically adjusted. On the other hand, they are often not treated as *normal people* and their eating is governed by different set of rules than when adults eat. It is assumed that children have to be told how much they have to eat; and also where to sit and how to behave. They are not allowed to talk. All of these rules are of course enforced in different ways by different teachers. There are some who are especially restrictive and controlling, and others who allow children a greater freedom. It also differs from one canteen to another. Still the *normalisation* of children happens in all the canteens as these are the main sites of biopolitics of children's bodies (Gibson and Dempsey, 2015).

Eating *obiad* in the school canteen is not only controlled by adults at school, also parents either ask children about what they have eaten each day at the canteen, or directly ask teachers what their children have eaten. Teachers are influenced by parents who often emphasize that they do not want their children to be force fed at school. Generations of parents in Poland have horrible memories of being force fed in schools, and they want to protect their children from similar experiences. Parents today are especially sensitive about this aspect of feeding children. Mr S.,

food supervisor in school A, told me that this is the most frequent comment parents make when paying for their children's meals. At the same time, as mentioned in the previous chapter, parents want their children to eat something in the canteen. Teachers have to balance between making sure that children eat, while at the same time not forcing them to eat. The New Child in Poland is supposed to be independent and rather gently directed towards the proper behaviour than harshly disciplined and forced to behave in a particular way. This relatively new attitude to children was difficult to incorporate by some of the older teachers I talked to. They said that nowadays parents are too soft on children and that more discipline would do them good.

It is difficult to say who in fact is feeding children when they eat in the school canteen. Is it parents who pay for their meals? Or is it the government, if the meals are subsidized? Is it cooks who prepare these meals? Or maybe it is food supervisors who plan them; or food producers and suppliers? And what role do teachers play when they control how children eat and establish and enforce rules related to feeding? All of these groups of adults, all of these social actors participate in the feeding process. For some, it is their job. For others, it is a way of taking care of children, or fulfilling their responsibilities. Moreover, children influence how they are fed in the school canteen. They often influence the decision about eating these meals as parents usually ask them if they want to eat in the school canteen or not, especially once they are older. One young girl who did not eat meals in the canteen, told me that she is thinking about doing it, that she would ask her mother to buy her meals in the school canteen, because there is always something sweet given after *obiad*, and she likes sweets. After a while, I saw her eating *obiads* in the canteen. Older children decide on everyday basis if they want to be fed/eat a particular dish or rather avoid the canteen on a certain day. Children also sometimes suggest to cooks or food supervisors what they should prepare. And when they eat in the canteen, through diverse verbal, but mostly non-verbal tactics, they influence the process of feeding with their own eating and non-eating practices.

### 5.30 pm: *Obiad* at Home

*The table was set for five people. Małgosia and Mikołaj put the portions of fish on our plates in the kitchen, and brought it to the table in the living room. I was invited to serve myself, while Małgosia put surówka and potatoes on her children's plates.*

- *No, I don't want surówka, I'm not going to eat it – said 7-year-old Bartek.*
  - *Try at least a little bit. I will give you some. How many potatoes do you want? – responded Małgosia.*
  - *Fifty spoons, a lot, a lot!*
  - *You won't eat so much, I will give you three, and if you want more, I'll add more.*
- We started eating. One more fish was still in the pan, and Małgosia from time to time went to the kitchen to turn it over. Bartek's younger sister, Zuzia, wanted to change seats, so Małgosia, and later again Mikołaj, switched seats with her. She also complained that she wants more fish, and more surówka, though she still hasn't eaten what was on her plate. She played with the surówka ingredients pretending that they are worms. She put a piece of cabbage under my nose, while asking if I would like to eat a worm. Everyone talked at the same time. Bartek was telling me about his school. At some point he stood up from the table and went to his room to get a book he wanted to show me. His father asked him to get back to the table and sit up straight. After a while Zuzia said that she cannot eat anything more:*
- *Can I go now? I don't want to eat anymore!*
  - *Eat a little bit more – answered Małgosia.*
  - *But I don't want to.*
  - *You have barely eaten anything.*
  - *I can't eat more.*
  - *Eat a piece of fish and a bit more of surówka, and then you can go. You can leave the potatoes – said Małgosia while indicating with a fork on Zuzia's plate what she should eat.*

*Zuzia put all of it in her mouth at once and left the table.*

(Field notes, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012)

This is a fairly typical situation. Parents attempt to feed their children in a particular way while children have their own ideas about eating, which results in diverse verbal and non-verbal negotiations and power struggles. Małgosia wants her children to eat a balanced meal, a little bit of everything – this is how she planned her feeding. But Bartek prefers eating potatoes to eating other vegetables. His attempts to eat a lot of the former, and not eat the latter are

restricted by his mother when she puts potatoes and vegetables on his plate. Putting food on children's plates is one of the ways of controlling what they eat. That is why children's requests to do it on their own are often denied or if agreed, their actions are carefully watched. Children not only voice their opinions about how much food and what ingredients they prefer to eat, they also demonstrate their other wishes, for example regarding the seat they take. Zuzia has several times changed seats with her parents, and they always complied with her demands. However when her older brother got up from the table before finishing the meal and before being excused to leave, he was instructed to come back. The expectations regarding children's behaviour at the family table do differ with their age.

In order to feed their children in a way they want to, or to make sure that at least certain elements of their desired feeding are met, parents implement several strategies at the dinner table. To these strategies children respond with their own tactics.

### **Strategy nr 1: *Eat at the table***

One of the important rules of eating *obiad* relates to where it is eaten. It is often difficult to keep younger children sitting at the table. Children, intentionally or not, often disturb the organisation of feeding – eating situation. They do not want to eat, they get bored and they are distracted, they want to change seats, as Zuzia did. Alternatively, they simply want to break the rules. One time when I was eating *obiad* with Szymańscy family, Kasia got up and went for a candy. She was instructed by her parents to come back to her seat, and eat that candy later. Children are not supposed to leave the table if adults do not excuse them. This ability or willingness to sit at the table changes with age. I have rarely seen or heard about older children having these kinds of “problems”, they were already successfully socialised into that rule.

This strategy of sitting children at the table, and keeping them there, is implemented for couple of reasons as I was told. There is a practical component: children often make a mess when eating, so it is easier to clean it all up. Terese

Anving and Sitine Thorsted explain with the example of Swedish families that eating at the table is a way to organise the meal situation in such a way which allows parents to control their children's food intake (2010: 39). The same happens in Warsaw. It is also what children should be taught, in a bit tautological way: meals are eaten at the table because it is a proper way to eat meals. Some parents told me how they love to eat *obiad* sitting on the couch in front of TV, but they rarely do this with their children as they need to show them examples of good behaviour to socialise them into proper eaters.

This rule not only means eating at the table, but also entails table manners (Elias, 2000: 79 – 102). A child needs to sit up straight, properly at the chair, and not for example laying at the table. She is supposed to eat with the cutlery, sometimes it is just a fork or a spoon. He should eat what is on the plate, and not eat from others' plates. The food should not be thrown. Mikołaj explained to me:

*If I were to say that we constantly remind them to sit up straight, I would be lying; but if I said that we allow the complete chaos and running around the table, that would also not be true. Sadly, we are often tired and loose common sense, and they, because of their childish curiosity, they move around, something falls on the floor, sometimes it's funny and we joke about it, sometimes we use it as a starting point for a constructive remark, and sometimes we would just say "stop it!".*

These rules are disciplining techniques through which children are controlled and regulated, moulded into certain types of self-governing eaters (Foucault, 1988). Children learn these social rules through constant repetition of disciplinary comments – both at home and at school. When they are younger they resist it, and relate to diverse tactics, such as standing up, demanding to change seats, dancing around the table, eating with their hands, and taking food from other people's plates. They push the boundaries of the appropriate social behaviour to check how far they can take it and they exercise their powerful resistance to re-negotiate these rules. With time, they acknowledge that these are the social rules that need to be followed. They might even start reprimanding younger children or their own toys if they do not behave properly at the table.

## **Strategy nr 2: Eat five more bites of meat and vegetables**

Another rule relates to what is eaten. I have already mentioned what children's *obiady* in Warsaw usually consist of: soups, different types of meats, potatoes, pastas, vegetables. In some of the families also chicken nuggets and French fries were served. These dishes are considered *children's food* (see chapter 3).

Many parents referred to horrible childhood memories, when they had to sit at the table until everything from their plate was eaten. Everyone – me included – remembers meat that was not possible to chew and was kept in a mouth sometimes for what seemed like hours. Meat was considered such a rare thing in Poland, that it could not be wasted. Moreover it is the basis of a typical Polish diet. It is quite interesting that the generations of children brought up during the Polish People's Republic have so similar memories of being forced to eat. 32-year-old Kasia told me for example:

*There was a moment when he didn't eat meat at all. I did not worry about that. If he doesn't want it, he doesn't want it, I am not panicking. Sometimes it is annoying that I spend so much time preparing this, and he doesn't eat it, but I did not replace it with anything else. I remember how my parents yelled at me that I didn't eat; I do not want to repeat that. He eats as much as he wants. There is no such rule that he has to eat everything that is on the plate. He may finish it later.*

Many parents told me that due to their memories, they do not want to force their children to eat. But they recognise how important it is that their children eat what they (nutritionally) need and what they spent time preparing. Parents I talked to emphasize the importance of eating meals rather because of its nutritional value and a part of the social contract, than because of the pleasure food provides (Ochs, Pontecorvo and Fasulo, 1996). Preparing what children like usually solves this challenging issue. Family diets – as shown in the previous chapter – are planned with children in mind:

*I am not preparing things, which none of them likes; this is just not worth it! There are some things to which she would say that it is disgusting and she wouldn't eat it (...) I manage sometimes to do something more, so for example both the mielone and the chicken breast cutlets, if I have more time, but that happens rarely. (Magda, 40-year-old)*

Magda, having three children, rarely can prepare something separate for each of them, so she rather has a food routine, a set menu for each week; so that each of her children can eat something they like every couple of days. Many parents talked about that kind of menu, an offer or repertoire of foods – from their point of view very limited – which is prepared for their children. Mothers sometimes prepare something completely different for their children:

*We like to eat together, but it is often that we eat together at the table, but she eats something different than us. (Dorota, 45-year-old)*

*I frequently indulge her. I allow her to eat whatever she wants. If she doesn't want to eat obiad, because there are vegetables, I am able to stand up from the table and cook something just for her. Because she is so stubborn, when she doesn't want to eat something she won't eat it. If I tell her that she has to eat it, she will not eat for the rest of the day, and I feel sorry for her. (Marysia, 30-year-old)*

Based on their study in Sweden, Anving and Sellerberg explain that parallel meals are often treated as something wrong, making them is a form of resignation or necessary submission, but they are prepared because children would not eat otherwise (2010: 206). This is an example of their powerful influences over the process of feeding.

By not forcing children to eat parents put themselves in a difficult position, as at the same time they want their children to eat what they need and to eat properly. This causes a lot of anxiety, as expressed by Paulina:

*I know that people have diverse strategies, and some force their children to eat, sadly I sometimes do this as well. It is in the maternal instinct: this need to feed! And there is a scene sometimes because he has not finished his meal. Sometimes I'm mad at myself, how could I have led to such a situation that I force him to eat! But it is difficult when I think that he prefers to eat just bread rolls and apples, and that can be all of his diet. Not to mention the fact that I have cooked that soup or a delicious cutlet, and he sees one vein and does not want to eat it (...) then I enforce the strategy of ten – fifteen spoons, and he eats it. But this is not how I would like it to be!*

At the table, there often is a need for flexibility and encouragement strategies. Parents usually do not force feed their children, but they use diverse strategies to persuade them to eat. The most common negotiations include such phrases as: *eat just five more spoons of soup and you will be done; eat just a small part of your meat and vegetables* (see Paugh and Izquierdo, 2009; O'Connell and Brannen, 2014). The meat and vegetables are considered the most important part of the meal. Children are often “tricked” into eating vegetables; when they are grated finely, put into *pierogi* (dumplings) or whizzed in a soup, they cannot recognise them or pick them out. Parents also indicate on children's plates what should be eaten:

*It is not about her eating absolutely everything, we set the border: either on the plate, or in the amount of spoons or bites she needs to eat, it all depends on the likelihood of success (Piotr, 35-year-old).*

A child dictates this “likelihood of success” at a particular time and situation. Parents have to balance between what would satisfy them: how much food and what food ingredients are enough to count as a proper meal; their feeling that their child has eaten enough, with the probability that she will in fact eat it. They often engage in this kind of “inner” negotiations. Children do the same when deciding on eating more or refusing to eat. They learn to recognise how far they can push their parents on a certain occasion and to know how to negotiate, proposing to eat something that would satisfy their parents (e.g. vegetables), while avoiding eating something they do not want to eat (e.g. meat). These

“inner” negotiations are connected to and influenced by the verbal and non-verbal negotiations among parents and children.

Dessert is often promised as a reward for complying with parents’ decision. Similarly, the refusal of dessert is treated as a way of persuading children to eat. As Piotr told me: *Usually we would not move to the next stage: the dessert.* Conditional promises and negotiations are the one way of persuading children, parents also use emotional pressure:

*If she doesn’t want to eat I will coax her, and tell her how it was when my parents worked in the field, and if my grandmother was not around, there was no obiad at all! I tell them they would understand and see how it is, if I stop cooking for a week! (Asia, 36-year-old)*

Parents’ obligation is to feed their children, and as Goffman explains “what is one man’s obligation will often be another’s expectation” (1967: 49). In this case children expect that they will be cared for and fed by their parents, and taking that expectation away, threatening to deliberately fail in fulfilling that obligation becomes one of the ways to persuade children to appreciate that they are fed and cared for, and encourage them to eat.

While parents in Warsaw restrain from force feeding their children and telling them that they have to sit at the table until everything from their plate is eaten, which was something they often experienced in their childhoods; when encouraging their children to eat they often relate to other strategies their parents used in their childhoods. I, and many of my adult interlocutors, have heard in our childhoods stories about children in Africa who are starving and about our parents’ horrible memories from their childhoods of food scarcity. Children today hear a bit different, and yet so incredibly similar stories appealing to their sense of morality and guilt. The cycle will close, when in the future they will tell analogous stories to their children when persuading them to eat.

The tactics children employ in order to not eat exactly what they are fed have been presented implicitly here. The fact that parents prepare food that children

would eat is already their way of influencing adults, even if this is not always intentional. Children also use diverse verbal and non-verbal tactics to avoid eating what they do not want to eat or not in the way they are supposed to eat. Children's tactics include bluntly refusing to eat, pursing their lips, whining, tossing food to somebody's else's plate or throwing it on the floor, crying. They also play one parent against each other, complain to one parent that they do not want to eat and the other parent is forcing them. They stall in hopes that adults will give up before they do. They are more or less successful in their tactics, as expressed by 11-year-old Krzyś: *If I like it, I will eat everything [and if not?] then I will not. My mom complains, but I always manage to leave something.* Also, children are often asked by mothers what they prefer and want and can actively voice their opinions. During the meal children have to know how far they can push their parents, whether they can refuse to eat or should they eat just a little bit more. They resist parental feeding practices with their own non-eating practices.

### **Strategy nr 3: At least try it!**

Socialising children through food does not only mean teaching them the proper posture and a manner of eating, it also means widening their food horizons and encouraging them to try new things. Many parents attempt to persuade their children to at least try new foodstuffs, before dismissing them. James, Curtis and Ellis discuss how children's refusal of trying certain foods constitutes a symbolic refusal of participating in the family (2009: 45). They are encouraged to at least try because this makes them a part of the family. Anving and Sellerberg explain that next to *demarcation* (teaching children the family's own food culture), through family meals parents also attempt to "teach their children broad food tastes in the context of society at large (*diversity*) and to prepare the children for continuous change (*experimentation*)" (2010: 203). As parents explained:

*I attempt to persuade her to try. Sometimes we try saying "open your mouth, you will get a chocolate bar", but then she puts it in her mouth, and even before it is possible to taste anything, she spits it out (Marysia, 30-year-old)*

*He has his one repertoire [of foods he eats], and it is really difficult to convince him to try anything else. Lately we made a deal, he wanted this game board which is quite expensive, so I said that I would buy it for him, if he was to try different things, at least try them! (Dominika, 29-year-old)*

Trying new, especially more *adult foods* is always perceived positively. Parents implement diverse strategies, such as promising a reward for complying with that rule, in order to persuade children to try new things. Parents are proud of children who are open to new tastes, and who develop a preference for more adult foods, such as herring, liver, spicier dishes. One of them told me: *it means that children are open to new experiences in life.*

Children often complained that parents force them to try new things. 12-year-old Agnieszka clarified: *I don't like trying new things; I prefer to stick with what I know. And my parents torment me!* Children's tactics in avoiding to try new things mainly include refusing, trying to outwait their parents hoping that they will give up, taking food into a mouth and spitting it right away, pretending that they tried, even if they did not, crying.

Psychologists explain that *neophobia*, fear of novel foods, often occurs in childhood (Birch and Marlin, 1982) and it is one of the often repeated "problems" related to feeding children. Still, some children adapt to this parental strategy, for example it works very well in the Szymańscy family. Julia and Kasia try new things without complaining; they recognise that this is the rule they have to follow. This is a part of the negotiated order of feeding and eating at their home. Moreover, they are quite proud of it; it makes them feel brave and adult-like. In the similar way, when I have met with 7-year-old Bartek for the first time, he welcomed me by saying that he likes liver and this is very unusual for children, so he was very proud of himself.

The proper meal, *obiad*, is often considered the most important part of children's diets. It has various cultural and social meanings and is governed by diverse rules that define how *obiad* with children should look like in Warsaw. If it is not done in such a way, if children for example eat in front of TV, on the couch, or if they eat a

poached egg or sandwiches, then it is a *cheated obiad*, as Magda called it. Eating in such a way is not perceived as problematic if parents do it, but the proper *obiad* is considered a foundation of feeding children.

The focus of this chapter was on daily feeding – eating interactions taking place in Warsaw. Building on Michel de Certeau's (1984) theory I described the strategies adults use to feed children in a particular, considered proper way, and children's tactics employed in response to adults' rules. This cycle of power, of adults' feeding strategies and children's tactics regarding eating, repeats itself every generation. To some extent parents today reproduce what their parents have done, they sometimes unconsciously repeat particular strategies and very reflexively refrain from others; and children's behaviour resembles their parents' in their childhoods. However, new meanings and aspirations are attached to food and feeding children in Poland today and the role of children has changed, giving them space for more powerful claims on their own eating. Because of diverse socio-cultural changes, related to family life, the notions of parenthood and childhood, and the food industry; the negotiations related to feeding and eating – especially to sweets consumption – take significantly different forms today than they used to a generation ago. The food choices were rather limited by external realities, while now they need to be limited by self-governing individuals, which puts great pressure on parents.

Parents have to make thousands of decisions regarding feeding their children each day. They try to control what they eat and what they are fed by others, teach them how to eat properly, show the examples of good behaviour. In each particular situation they have to decide whether to allow their children to have what they want for breakfast; whether to allow them to leave the table during *obiad* or ask them to eat more meat and vegetables; whether to allow them to eat another candy or a piece of cake, or not etc. Their feeding strategies are based on their moral dispositions and ideal visions of feeding; and they adjust them to what their children would eat, how much time they have, what else their children have eaten on that day and what are their food plans for the rest of the day/week. Parents decide how to feed their children and they do it in relation to and under

the influence of their children. In each particular interaction feeding and eating are negotiated in relation to each other.

The same happens in schools. Adults try to feed children what they have decided they should eat or they try to implement parents' feeding guidelines, and they employ multiple strategies to do so. However, children have their own embodied moral dispositions towards eating. They use diverse tactics to evade adults' rules and strategies and make their own empowered decisions about their own eating. Both adults and children I talked to explained to me that they usually win the negotiations which occur during the feeding – eating interactions. This means that a sort of negotiated compromise is usually reached.

As I have shown, the negotiations regarding feeding and eating involve not only parents or teachers and children, but also grandparents, the food industry, nutrition experts, state agencies and media. In the following chapter, I zoom out from the everyday negotiations to discuss the politics of food education in Warsaw and the multiple attempts to normalize adults' feeding and children's eating practices.

## Chapter VI. Normalizing Feeding and Eating: The Politics of Food Education

*There will be a Health Picnic on Saturday! The head teacher told me that it is supposed to be a health awareness year in schools, hence the focus of the picnic. Mrs H. [food supervisor] mentioned that she used to prepare white borscht and roasted chicken for the picnics in the previous years, but this year it is supposed to be more about health and healthy eating, so she will prepare something else. (...) [On the day of the picnic] it is raining, so everything was moved inside of the school and less people came. Cooks served baked potatoes, penne with vegetables and rice with tomatoes. Additionally, there is food brought by parents: fruits and raw vegetables, salads, dips, there are also oatmeal cookies and various cakes, dried fruits and nuts, shrimp crisps. There are also dark bread and butter. To drink there is water, juices and strawberry compote. The whole school is covered with posters depicting food, some from food education programmes, others clearly prepared by children. Also the school shop is covered with posters presenting healthy food. I talked to Mrs T. working there, she told me: "It is about healthy food today, so I have hidden all those not healthy products, that's what the boss wanted and asked me for". So only the nuts, crisp breads, carrot crisps and drinks are displayed. (...) There are various stands where children can get their faces painted or make bouquets from paper flowers. There is also one stand where four dieticians in white coats sit – the head teacher told me that she wanted very much for someone from the Warsaw University of Life Sciences to come, and it was very difficult to organise, but as it seems, she managed to do this. Though the dieticians look rather bored, their stand is empty most of the time. I have only seen one mother asking whether her child has a proper BMI. The most popular place is on the opposite side of the corridor. There is a huge fridge with ice-cream, and there is constant movement around it.*

(Field notes, 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2013)

This ethnographic vignette shows one of the ways of appropriating the healthy eating advice and food education in schools in Warsaw. The picnic is made "healthy" by putting the posters about "proper" food on the walls, by inviting the dieticians, by serving food considered healthy and by adding the adjective

“healthy” when advertising the picnic among parents and children. The picnic is made healthy because the Ministry of Education expects schools to promote health awareness among students and parents, to teach them about “proper” feeding and eating. However, almost nobody is interested in the healthy feeding/eating advice if there is ice-cream to eat.

This chapter tells a different part of the story about feeding and eating in Warsaw, and relates to the fourth layer of negotiations (see chapter 1). It looks at the attempts to normalize people in their feeding and eating practices. *Normalization*, according to Michel Foucault, “refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiations and principal of a rule to be followed.” (1991: 182). Multiple disciplinary techniques are implemented to normalize people's feeding and eating practices in Warsaw. In this chapter I focus more on the negotiations involving state agencies, food producers and non-governmental organisations, who are trying to change how people feed and eat; and less on how people who are the subjects of these normalization processes, appropriate them. I do this through disentangling the politics of food education in Warsaw.

Multiple social actors in Poland engage in biopolitics and in order to govern and normalize the society they attempt to teach people to make rational food choices. In these attempts, the structural differences (middle and upper class people are more likely to make healthy food choices), financial constraints, cultural practices and traditions, limitations of access to both health advice and proper food are often disregarded (Rawlins, 2009). It is assumed that people do not know how to feed and eat “properly”. They are perceived by the government and other actors as not knowledgeable about food, or rather their knowledges are subjugated as “naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity.” (Foucault, 1980: 82). However, if they gain the appropriate knowledge, if they understand what constitutes “good” food choices and why they should be made, they will make them and change their everyday feeding and eating practices accordingly. Aya Kimura names it a “food literacy” approach, “based upon a deficiency framework which posits individual knowledge

and skills as sole reasons for inappropriate food choices, dietary behaviours, and culinary practices” (Kimura, 2010: 465). “Good” citizens make healthy and rational choices, while “bad” citizens do not adhere to these norms. The issues of class are written into the health education advice, as “government discourses clearly reinforce the notion that the 'right choice' and the 'healthy choice' is a middle class trait” (Rawlins, 2009: 1085; see also Guthman and DuPois, 2006; Wright, Fraser and Maher, 2010).

Children's food practices especially are perceived as in a need of change. The basic context and the most direct cause for the implementation of various food education programmes and initiatives are the increasing rates of overweight and obesity among children and youth in Poland (Currie et al., 2012).<sup>50</sup> Just when I started my fieldwork, the results of the research calculating the influence of the current “bad” food habits on the future costs incurred by the state due to the society's health problems were published, presenting the alarming numbers (KPMG, 2012). It was predicted that the current generation of children can die at a younger age than the generation of their parents. This was followed by a conference in the parliament, entitled dramatically: “Can we afford to feed children badly?” where experts and politicians discussed children's bad food habits in Poland. Educating children about good eating habits, and adults about proper feeding practices, is not only a way to create good and healthy citizens, it is also a way to lower the health costs borne by the state (Téchoueyres, 2003: 377).

I start this chapter by analysing the nutritional norms which lie at the basis of food education in Warsaw and the dominating moral perspective on food (see chapter 3). Then I disentangle the politics of food education and discuss the normalization processes implemented in Warsaw. In the same way as this thesis does not provide an answer to a question “How to feed children?” this chapter does not explain how to educate people about food, it rather aims to add another dimension to the story about negotiating feeding and eating in Warsaw.

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<sup>50</sup> A related question, with which I engage implicitly, is why obesity became such a big social problem at this moment in time? (Guthman and DuPois, 2006; Guthman, 2009; see also Campos, 2004; Saguy and Riley, 2005; Oliver, 2006; Herrick, 2007).

## 6.1 The Nutritionist Perspective

*Because we have these norms, we can educate the society!*  
(a nutritionist)

As I have shown in chapter 3, the dominating moral perspective on food in Poland is based on health and nutrition. The “good” choices are the healthy choices, and therefore nutritional norms lay at the basis of food education. To a large extent, they define what “proper” feeding and eating are in Warsaw. Gyorgy Scrinis (2008) explains that *nutritionism* is a certain ideology, which reduces people’s relationships with food to the measurement of calories and nutrients. The knowledge and norms created by mainstream nutritionists, the hegemonic nutrition is reproduced and promoted in media and by food industry, celebrity chefs, schools, families etc. (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2013b).

The nutritional science was developed in Poland at the end of the 19th and in the 20th century; however, it was not institutionalized till 1918. Since 1936, when the Health Committee of the League of Nations published the first dietary guidelines, they were popularized in Poland and referred to until 1950, when the National Institute of Hygiene created Polish dietary guidelines (Jarosz, 2012: 11). In 1963, the National Food and Nutrition Institute was created, and published the updated versions of dietary guidelines in 1965, 1970, 1980, 1994, 2008 and 2012.<sup>51</sup>

The nutritional norms determine the amounts of energy and nutrients that are sufficient to meet the nutritional needs of healthy persons in the population. They are developed not for individuals, but for different groups in the population, depending on their age, sex, BMI, physical activity, though they define the food intake for an individual person.

The group I am interested in – children between the ages of 6 and 12 – are divided in four separate cohorts. There are separate nutritional norms for children aged

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<sup>51</sup> The nutritional norms are in fact not created in Poland, *because we cannot afford it* – told me a nutritionist working in the National Food and Nutrition Institute – *the norms are set in the US or Canada, and we use and benefit from them. We either use the American standards or the WHO standards, depending on what fits better with our [Polish] diets.* This can be seen as a form of dietary colonialism (Caldwell, 2014; Kimura et al., 2014).

between 4 – 6 and 7 – 9, and then separate standards are created for boys aged 10 – 12 and girls aged 10 – 12. Until the age of 9 children are perceived as one group, and it is only at the age of 10 that their sex differences start to play a role in their food intake. Children's relationships with food are reduced to biology in this case. The society is divided in cohorts and different norms are created for each specific group with different needs. Still, each group relates to thousands of people, whose behaviour should be normalized and changed according to these norms, in a sort of one-size-fits-all manner.

Currently four types of norms are established in Poland: (1) the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) which establishes the average daily dietary intake sufficient to meet the nutrient requirement of nearly all (97%) of the healthy population; (2) the Estimated Average Requirements (EAR), which is a nutrient intake value that is estimated to meet the requirements of half of the healthy individuals in a population; (3) the Adequate Intake (AI), which is set for those components for which the demand cannot be determined, such as dietary fibres and vitamin D; and (4) the Upper Level (UL) which should not be exceeded. As one nutritionist told me, this *is created now mostly because of those supplements eaten today, for example those vitamin candies for children. A child can cover 100% of what they need with these candies, and then they also eat normal food.*

The National Food and Nutrition Institute is an institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, so the nutritional norms created there are official state recommendations. This strengthens the government's institutional health/nutrition food morality (see chapter 3). The nutritional norms serve as the basis for the dietary advice, monitoring the health of the population, calculating the proper intake and planning menus for a certain population, for example in schools, and for the development of food education programmes (Jarosz, 2012). They are the perfect example of biopolitical interventions as they do not focus on individuals, but on the population and they aim to govern children and their parents and to discipline them according to particular norms regarding proper feeding and eating.

The most popular way of presenting the dietary advice is through a food pyramid (Nestle, 1993). Food pyramid was created in the US in 1992, and in 1995 it was implemented in Poland (Całyniuk et al., 2011). Before, the most popular way of indicating what people should eat was through the model food rations. They were especially useful in the canteens because they proposed the exact compositions of meals. As one of the nutritionists explained to me: *this was very limiting because the needed intake can be achieved through different products and diverse combinations of products. Food pyramid promotes greater diversity in diets.* It also keeps changing. With time for example the physical activity and the jar of water were added to this pictorial depiction of healthy eating advice.



Figure 3. Food pyramid for children.  
Source: <http://www.izz.waw.pl>

In 2009 a separate food pyramid for children was created in Poland (see above). It differs from the adult version as it *is adjusted to its young recipients; it's more colourful* – as stated to me by one of its creators from the National Food and Nutrition Institute. The amount of recommended dairy consumption is increased, salt intake is limited (which is illustrated by the crossed salt shaker) and the rules of healthy eating are framed in a different way:

1. Every day eat diverse products from each group included in the pyramid.
2. Be physically active every day – exercising has a positive effect on physical fitness and proper figure.
3. Products that are at the base of the pyramid (at the bottom) should be the main source of energy in your diet.
4. Eat at least 3 – 4 servings of milk or dairy products, such as yogurt, kefir, buttermilk, cheese, a day.
5. Every day eat 2 servings from the group of meat, fish and eggs. Also remember about legumes.
6. Each meal should include vegetables or fruits.
7. Limit your intake of fats, particularly animal fats.
8. Limit your intake of sugar, sweets and sugary drinks.
9. Limit your intake of salty products, put away the salt shaker.
10. Drink the proper amount of water every day.

Children's balanced diet has several components: fruits, vegetables, dairy products and water should be consumed in great amounts; meat, fish and eggs should be consumed in sufficient amounts (2 servings per day); and salt, sugar and fats should be limited. This way of eating should be also accompanied by physical activity. Adhering to these rules, by both children and adults feeding them, would lead to a child achieving a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle. However, as Jessica Mudry notices “reducing a concept like 'healthy diet' to a series of achievable steps through food choices turns health into an oversimplified checklist.” (Kimura et al., 2014: 37).

The food pyramid is probably the most common tool and disciplinary technique used in food education programmes in Warsaw. There is usually a competition for “the best” representation of the food pyramid. The intention is that through the careful copying of the food pyramid children would learn and internalize the rules it conveys, and through understanding that this is the “proper” way of eating they will govern not only themselves, but also their parents, to make sure that they follow these rules. As Górnicka et al. (2014) show, children in Poland to a large extent understand the food pyramid and are familiar with the guidelines it conveys.



Photos 13 – 16. Food pyramids created by children in school B.

The pictures above illustrate food pyramids created by students in one of the schools I have studied. Usually, also some version of the official food pyramid for the school-aged children is hanged on the walls of the school canteen, together with the slogans encouraging “proper” eating. Jessica Mudry explains that this kind of food guide is an attempt to turn eaters into metric subjects, who view food through the measurements of different nutrients (Kimura et al., 2014: 38). It is a way to normalize them. People are supposed to engage in self-surveillance to keep their behaviour and their bodies in line with the quantified ideal (the “proper” BMI). In the case of children, this relates both to children's self-control and a close surveillance from adults. However, people incorporate the healthy eating advice – which is based on the nutritional norms – in different ways, they relate to different conceptions of health (see chapter 3). I doubt they in fact check the changes to the nutritional norms and modify their practices accordingly (e.g. Mudry et al., 2014). Certainly children do not.

The nutritional norms are subjected to diverse kinds of negotiations. Their implementation is negotiated by people in their everyday life, but the norms themselves are also negotiated among nutritionists and can be influenced by other social actors. A *Wege Maluch* (Vege Kid) initiative is a good example.

Magda, a vegan for ten years with a 2-year-old vegetarian daughter started the website *Wege Maluch* in 2011. She gathered recipes, advice from dieticians, paediatricians and psychologists to create a forum for parents who are interested in their children's wellbeing. Magda mentioned how difficult it is to be a vegan or a vegetarian in Poland, because it is perceived as deviating from the *norm*. It becomes an especially difficult issue when it concerns children. She often meets with criticism:

*Everyone asks why I take away healthy food from my child? Why I take away proteins, iron and vitamin B from my child? Why do I take away the possibility of choice from my child – as if giving her meat would provide that choice?! (...) When you are feeding your child according to the vegetarian diet you try so hard to make sure that they receive all the nutrients they need, your knowledge becomes much broader than people's who feed their children according to the traditional diet. And this thoughtfulness and carefulness is reflected in children's results: those on a vegetarian diet are not obese, they are not anaemic, they have loads of energy, and that's because their parents take special care when feeding them.*

Meat is considered a very important part of a Polish diet, especially of children's diet, and therefore deviating from that norm is often met with harsh judgements, also from the family. Magda mentioned that she cannot leave her daughter with her grandparents because they would surely feed her meat, as they are critical of her approach. She talked a lot about being stigmatized.

*Usually people react that it is crazy, that it is some sect. This is often quite primitive, people show no respect, even though I do not impose anything on them. When I was at the doctor, he called me a cow! I've tried to answer all his questions and calmly explain that I take good care of myself, but when I left his consulting room I was trembling! (...) When*

*we are at the paediatrician, I do not say anymore that she is a vegetarian, because they explain everything: a running nose, a cold, painful teething with not eating meat! (...) It is easier to say that your child is allergic, they accept it. And if you say that your child doesn't eat meat, you are asked to supply a note from the doctor that your child is ill, as if not eating meat was an illness! (...) People are against vegetarianism without knowing anything about it. You cannot change anything in these [educational] institutions! Our constitution guarantees that parents can raise their child according to their worldviews, but they do not respect it in schools!*

Magda spent months on writing petitions, networking and lobbying for the acceptance of the vegetarian diet for children. One of her goals was to obtain a document created by the state administration, which would say that a vegetarian diet for children is acceptable. This would be a tangible tool to use in kindergarten and school canteens to persuade food supervisors and cooks to prepare such a diet for children.

Magda called, wrote to and met with the representatives from the National Food and Nutrition Institute, the Ministry of Health, the Child's Ombudsman, the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate. She was often ignored or treated in a condescending way. But in the end, after months of struggle she did find allies and the official statement was published. It explains that if children are under a proper nutritional surveillance, their feeding and eating can be based on a vegetarian diet (IŻŻ, 2012).

Nutritional norms define a balanced diet and how people should eat in Poland. They ought to be recognised by the state's agencies in order to be implemented in state institutions, such as schools. The norms set the ideal to which people should endeavour and on the basis of which they are judged. Moreover they influence and shape the food education in Poland – people should be normalized according to these rules. In fact the term used in Poland, *edukacja żywieniowa*, literally translated means “nutrition education”.<sup>52</sup> Professor Woynarowska – a paediatrician for years engaged in children's food education – told me:

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<sup>52</sup> I refer to the broader term “food education”, because some of the initiatives I discuss are focused not only on nutrition.

*The main priority in food education is on biology, the technological aspect is emphasized: proteins, fats etc. There is no place for the psychological, psycho-nutritional aspect (...) The National Food and Nutrition Institute looks only at the components of the meal, while eating is not only about the nutrient components of what you eat!*

Food education in Poland increasingly focuses on consumer education: teaching people how to make the right consumer choices and buy the proper, nutritious products. As Scrinis (2008, 2013) shows, the nutritionists, dieticians and public health authorities have encouraged us to think about food in terms of their nutrient composition. Nutritionism dominates the public discourse on food in Poland and influences individual feeding and eating practices.

## 6.2 The Maze of Food Education in Warsaw

Many food education programmes in Poland focus mainly on children and on changing their eating practices. It is assumed that due to their young age, children are impressionable and their food habits can still be shaped. Children then will change the feeding practices of adults in their lives. A dietician working in one of the NGOs focused on food education told me:

*Children [in primary school] are at such an age that if [healthy diet] is presented in an interesting way, if we show them that it is good, they can do a revolution at home! They can say: “mom, prepare broccoli for me, because I had make plans with Kasia that I'll bring broccoli and she brings something else”; or “mom, maybe we can eat fish every Friday?”*

Children are made responsible for their food practices and related feeding practices of adults. However, it is mothers who are blamed for children's “bad” food practices (see Wright, Fraser and Maher, 2010, also chapter 7). People in general are *responsibilized* (Ross, 1996) for their feeding and eating practices by state agencies and other actors.

There are multiple stakeholders and institutions interested in what and how children in Poland eat, and equally interested in changing their food habits. I start disentangling these politics of food education in Warsaw by discussing the timeline of these kinds of initiatives, which reflects an increasing interest of various social actors in children's relationships with food. The diagram below illustrates diverse food education projects organised in Warsaw since the 1990s.

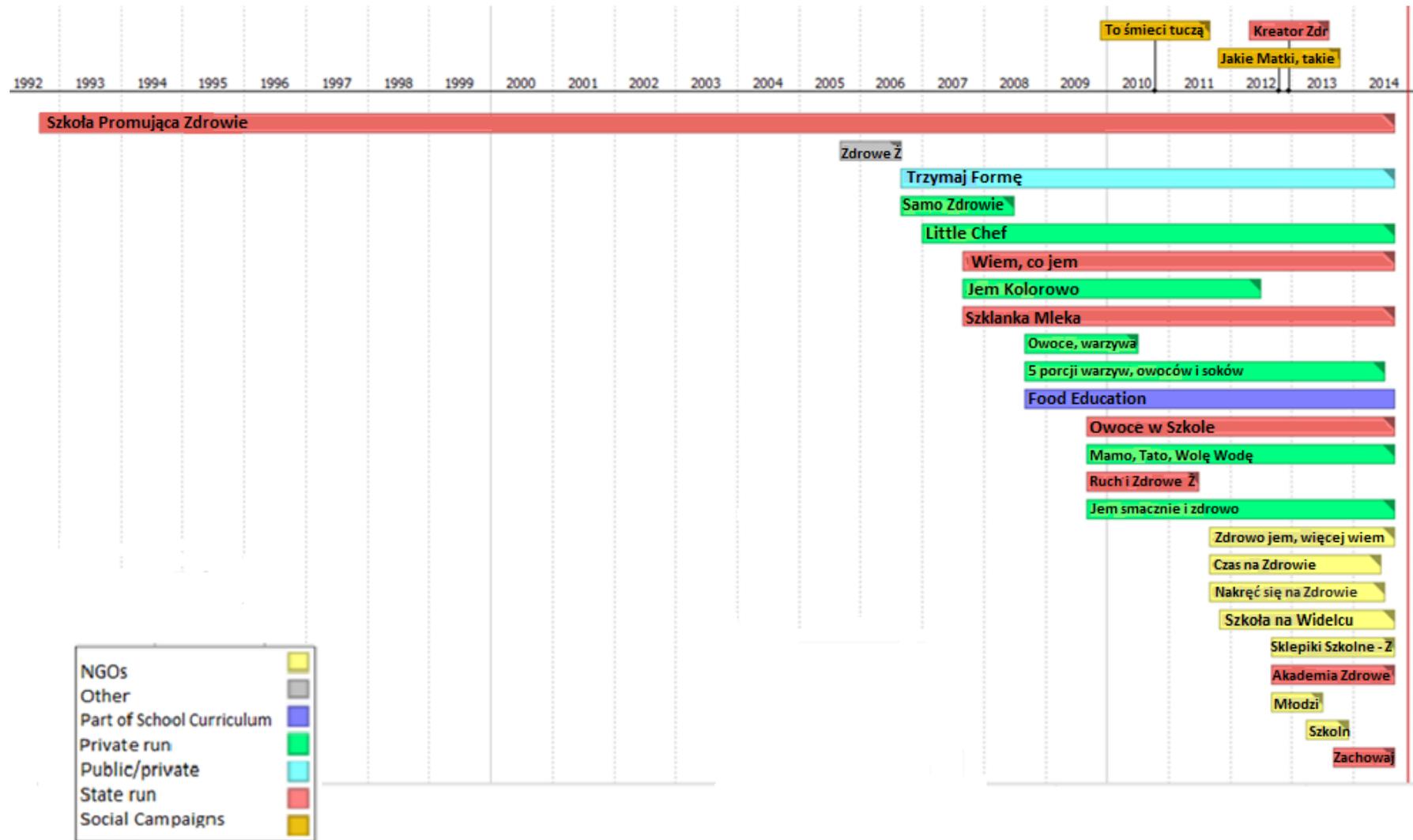


Figure 4. The timeline of food education initiatives in Warsaw.

## **The Beginning**

The first programme introduced in Warsaw was *Szkoła Promująca Zdrowie*, which is a part of the larger WHO programme and network of Health Promoting Schools and the research network conducting international comparative studies on Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC). *This was truly amazing. Everyone wanted to do something, and our enthusiasm coincided with the European help –* told me professor Woynarowska, who was the main initiator and for many years the leader of Health Promoting Schools programme in Poland. In the 1980s, she translated the first booklet published by the Health Promoting Schools programme into Polish, and then at the turn of 1980s and 1990s she was invited by the WHO to create the Polish-specific conception of the Health Promoting Schools. *The agreement between the ministries was signed in a week then – she told me – and for the last one [signed in 2009] we have waited 8 years! It was different at that time. People wanted to do something, there was this energy and the will to do things, and now it all crushes down on bureaucracy.*

The pilot programme was organised in 1992 – 1995. Since 1995 the network has been promoted and developed in Poland, with more than 2,600 schools being certified at the end of 2013. The conception of Health Promoting Schools is based on the holistic approach to the issue of health. The idea is to discipline the whole community in order to change individual habits, which is a perfect way to implement normalization processes. The goal is for people to self-govern and discipline themselves and each other in endeavouring to create a healthy community.

Then for more than ten years the issue of children and food was not of much interest in Poland. However, in 2004 two women, Anna Kłosińska and Marta Widz, were introduced to each other by their friends and started a new food education programme. Anna Kłosińska was at the time an unemployed nutritionist, taking care of her four children and trying to make sure that they eat well. Marta Widz was a dietician, who became interested in the issue of children and food when her children started school. *They were coming back home with untouched sandwiches, because there was no time to eat them, and at the same time they broke their*

*piggy banks and bought probably everything that was available in the school shop* – she told me. When they met, they decided that something should be done about what children eat in schools in Warsaw. So they created the project *Zdrowe Żywienie w Szkołach* (Healthy Feeding/Eating in Schools), which was funded by the Health Policy Office of the Warsaw City Hall. They have implemented the programme in 14 primary schools in Warsaw. Among other things, it consisted of meetings and lectures for the teachers and parents; the competitions for the best school canteen, the best school shop, the nicest food pyramid. The assumption in such an approach to food education is that people will normalize their own behaviour once they gain the knowledge about “proper” and “not proper” food practices. Anna told me laughing: *We brought all those food pyramids to the garage. Some of them were really impressive, up to two metres high, from styrofoam. We had no idea what we were doing and how to do that!* She concluded that *it was extremely difficult to break through some parents' prejudices, but there was so much enthusiasm in schools* that overall they had very good experiences.

Since this first guerrilla-like project, they both continued to work on food education for children. Anna wrote several projects and books about feeding children. Marta works in the Warsaw City Hall and runs the food education programme for children. Those first food education programmes, as many more that followed, were initiated by women concerned about children's food habits and passionate about that subject. Their concerns about children in Poland were often influenced by their own maternal anxieties and worries related to their children.

As the provided timeline (p. 192) shows, it was not until the years 2006 – 2008 that the issue of children and food and the topic of children's food education became of interest to many more social actors in Poland. Initially, the programmes realised by the state institutions (red) and food industry or other private agencies (green) dominated, but were later joined by the non-governmental initiatives (yellow). There are several reasons for the growing importance of food education at that moment. This was shaped partly by the changes happening in Poland: the

increasing overweight and obesity among children and youth, and the growing focus on children, and at the same time on healthy lifestyle, in general; and partly by the increasing global focus on children and food. As Charlotte Biltekoff explains: “eating habits moved to the centre of health discourse at the very moment that health itself became a social and cultural obsession associated with intense moral relevance” (Kimura et al., 2014: 36).

### **The Peak**

In 2004, the World Health Organization published the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. The strategy addressed two of the major risk factors responsible for the increase of non-communicable diseases: inadequate diets and the lack of physical activity. The WHO urged the member states to develop effective and integrated national strategies, for which they provided guidelines, to reduce the human and socioeconomic costs of non-communicable diseases (WHO, 2004). Then in December 2005 the European Commission published a Green Paper “Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases”, which was intended to trigger the debate about the increasing obesity problems in Europe (European Commission, 2005). In July 2007, European Commission signed the White Paper “A Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related Health Issues”. The document pointed to the multivariate nature of the phenomenon of overweight and obesity, with an emphasis on the causes related to the inadequate diet and the lack of physical activity. This strategy was supposed to strengthen the development of national policies to deal with these phenomena, taking into account the participation of all stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society representatives (European Commission, 2007). These strategies and documents do not focus only on children; however, children are identified as an especially vulnerable group and also a group in which the “good” food habits can still be successfully inculcated (Coveney, 2008: 202 – 203).

The Polish government's official position addressing the White Paper pointed out that schools have been identified “as places which play a particularly important role in shaping children's healthy preferences and acquiring the skills necessary to

maintain a proper health status, [so they] should be widely supported in conducting this type of educational programmes” (Ministry of Health, 2007a: 4). Moreover, in response to that EU's document, the Council for Diet, Physical Activity and Health was created in Poland in November 2007. It has 25 members, which include the representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Sport, the National Food and Nutrition Institute, and representatives from other academic institutions, non-governmental organisations and food industry. The main role of that Council is to support and advise the Minister of Health.

Also in 2007 the Ministry of Health initiated the Programme for Prevention of Overweight, Obesity and Chronic Non-communicable Diseases through Improved Nutrition and Physical Activity (POL-HEALTH) (Ministry of Health, 2007b). When in 2012 the National Programme for the Prevention of Lifestyle Diseases was created, the updated version of the former programme became its Module I. This Programme has been mainly focused on popularizing the nutritional norms for children and youth in educational institutions (Ministry of Health, 2012). This has been done for example through the distribution of publications about nutritional norms and sample menus for school canteens, which were prepared in the National Food and Nutrition Institute (Jarosz, 2008a, 2008b). There was also a competition *Kreator Zdrowia* (Health Creator), prepared by the Polish Association of Dietetics, commissioned by the Ministry of Health. It promoted the dietary guidelines and the importance of physical activity among children in primary schools, for example through the competitions for the best set of morning exercises or the best slogan and a T-shirt design that would promote health care through rational nutrition and physical activity. The normalization of feeding and eating practices in Poland is mainly based, on the one hand, on adults in schools: providing them with nutritional guidelines and sample menus to follow; and, on the other hand, on children: providing them with materials and tools to broaden their knowledge about nutrition and “good” food habits.

In Poland, food education is treated rather as part of health education than as an element of food policies (see Kimura, 2010). In 2008, the school curriculum was

changed, and the health education was given a more important place in comparison with the curriculum from 1999. It states that: “school's important task is health education, which aim is to develop in students the habits (and attitudes) of care for their own health and the health of others, and the skills to create a health friendly environment” (Ministry of Education, 2008) – in school students are supposed to be disciplined into “proper”, healthy, self-governing subjects. “Health education is the right of every child” explains another publication on implementing the new curriculum (Woynarowska, 2012: 11). Children have the *right* to food education, but then it is their and their parents' *responsibility* to implement healthy practices; they do not have the right to not do so.

Before, health education was just one of the inter-subject educational paths that schools could choose, next to the film education for example. Since September 2009, health education content encompasses all educational stages and is disseminated among diverse subjects, with PE having the leading role. Additionally, as Katarzyna Stępniaak working in the Centre for Education Development (an institution of the Ministry of Education), told me:

*Health education was developed to include also the psycho-social aspect, communication and coping with stress were added; so it's a broader and deeper understanding of health education, we don't work only on brushing teeth and eating carrots. But the problem is that this psycho-social aspect of health education was adjoined to physical education, and most of the PE teachers, they just don't know how to do this. (...) There were trainings and all of that, but the last monitoring showed that there is still so much to do!*

In schools, as I have shown in the previous chapters, children are controlled by adults, while adults are controlled by others adults through disciplinary tools such as monitoring or evaluation. In order for children to be educated about health and food in schools, firstly, their teachers have to be educated not only on that subject, but also on how to teach it.

Many children told me that their teachers mentioned something about healthy and unhealthy food, that they should not eat sweets, and should eat vegetables.

When I asked for specifics, they were usually very vague. 11-year-old Krzysz told me: *Yeah, there were some posters about healthy eating.* Meanwhile, 12-year-old Hania explained that her class participated in the How to Keep Fit programme and they have learned that five portions of fruits should be eaten daily, what constitutes such a portion and that it is important to eat healthy.

Charlotte Biltekoff notices that nutrition and nutrition education is a certain social reform project, “dietary reformers have provided dietary lessons that function at the same time as a pedagogy of citizenship” (Kimura et al., 2014: 34). In her book, Biltekoff (2013) shows how the definition of a good diet has developed in relation to the concept of good citizenship. Good citizens are those who govern themselves in order to make proper and rational choices and stay healthy. When it comes to children, good citizens are those who feed children in the “right” way, so that they can make rational food choices now and in the future.

In November 2009, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Sport have signed the Agreement on Cooperation on the Promotion of Health and the Prevention of Problems of Children and Adolescents. The Agreement states that the Ministries will cooperate and support the health education activities in Poland; they will plan and monitor the health education programmes, disseminate the knowledge about good practices, support the improvement of knowledge and skills of the employees from the education and health systems, and support the development of the Health Promoting Schools network in Poland. The Agreement also constitutes the Council for the Promotion of Health and the Prevention of Problems of Children and Adolescents, which consists of six members, two representatives from each Ministry (2009).

The field of food education in Warsaw is a sort of a maze with big words, long titles and multiple institutions involved. The diagram below shows the engagement of public institutions, and actors with which they cooperate, in children's food education. It shows that various ministries and stakeholders claim to have the right and appropriate knowledge or tools to educate children and adults about food, and at the same time they shift these responsibilities to other

stakeholders. On the one hand, they compete for the best results and having the most widespread programmes and, on the other hand, they shift the responsibilities for people's food habits on others. When Magda from *Wege Maluch* petitioned for the acceptance of a vegetarian diet for schoolchildren, the Ministry of Education replied that the parents' counsel in each school can decide about that; the Ministry of Health replied that it cannot regulate schools as it is the role of the Ministry of Education; and the National Health Inspectorate replied that this falls under the auspices of the National Food and Nutrition Institute and is not their area of expertise. The jurisdiction over food education in Warsaw is not clear. To put it frankly, diverse actors claim it is their right when things are going well and the numbers are promising, and that it is not their responsibility if they are looking rather gloomy.

The involved actors often have to negotiate with each other how to shape the normalization processes and what to focus on. State institutions cooperate with academics, food industry and non-governmental organisations in their attempts to normalize people. As Coveney explains, in the context of growing obesity problems, “new relationships between expertise and politics are formed; new partnerships with similar interests are brought together; and new horizons for individual perfection are demarcated” (2008: 201).

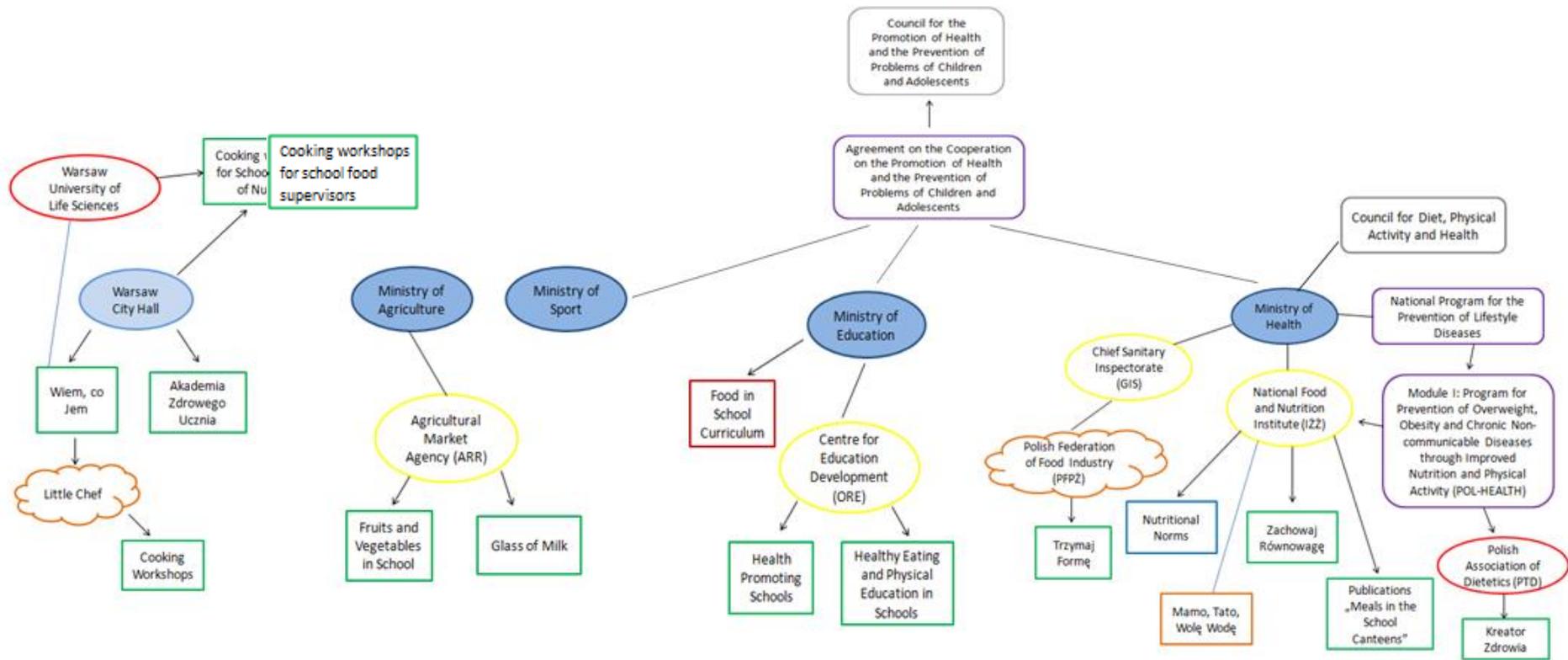


Figure 5. State food education initiatives in Warsaw.

The diagram shows institutions, however – as for example Latour has shown when analysing the case of Aramis (1996) – it is not institutions that make decisions, but people. The food education initiatives and programmes, and the broader health policies, are firstly designed and planned by people, and then implemented by other people in order to influence and change the food habits of another group of people. Moreover, as in the case with Aramis, the food education in Warsaw has many mothers and fathers who engage in the politics of rights, responsibility and blame, and at the same time it is an orphan.

### **Public-Private Cooperation: *Trzymaj Formę* Programme**

As you can see on the diagram, various social actors are engaged in multiple ways in educating children and adults about food. These are just programmes and initiatives run by the public institutions, there are many more – as shown in the previous diagram (p. 192) – organised by the private institutions and NGOs. One of the first programmes organised by the state, *Trzymaj Formę* (Keep Your Physical Form) running since 2006, is in fact based on the public – private cooperation between the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate, an institution of the Ministry of Health, and the Polish Federation of Food Industry (PFPŻ).

In 2005, the Polish Federation of Food Industry came up with the idea of organising an educational programme for children focused on teaching them about the importance of a balanced diet and physical activity. As Marta Tomaszewska, a representative of the PFPŻ, explained:

*This idea was inspired by the WHO strategy, which at that time issued a global resolution, and in this document it was advised that actions to prevent diet related diseases should be implemented. (...) At that time there was a gap in this area of healthy lifestyles in Poland, so there was a huge interest in what we started.*

The Federation contacted the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate and they signed an agreement on cooperation. *There were pressures from above that something in that area should happen* – a person working in the local office of the Sanitary

Inspectorate told me – in 2005<sup>53</sup> a council was created, a Council for the Diet, Physical Activity and Health, and under their patronage this programme started.

The goal of the programme is “the education for the development of healthy habits among school children through the promotion of an active lifestyle and a balanced diet, based on individual responsibility and a person's free choice” (trzymajforme.pl). The last part is a unique addition in comparison with other programmes. Other programmes often focus on showing children what is good food and what is bad, with the expectation that once they know, they will make proper food choices. However, the personal choice and responsibility are rarely so evidently emphasized. *Trzymaj Formę* highlights the importance of a free choice and individual responsibility for healthy choices, through that putting the responsibility for “bad” choices on individuals. Children, and their parents, receive knowledge about what is good and bad food – according to the government experts – and then they are supposed to govern themselves when making free, individual choices among all that is available. Such an *embodied neoliberalism* makes them into good and healthy citizens, but also into good consumers (Guthman and DuPuis, 2006).

The healthy advice is given with the use of the Health Plate, created by the Council for the Diet, Physical Activity and Health, and standing in sort of opposition to the food pyramid:

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<sup>53</sup> It was in fact officially established in 2007.



Figure 6. The food plate.  
Source: <http://www.trzymajforme.pl>

*In the 1970s the National Nutrition and Food Institute developed such a healthy food plate, but they departed from this. It is said more and more often that the food pyramid is not clear, that people don't know how to interpret it. They understand that what's on top should be limited, and what's on the bottom should be increased in the diet, but it's not like that (...) The Council for the Diet, Physical Activity and Health created that plate, but it took them 2 – 3 years. That's the nature of the academics; everyone has their own point of view and is not willing to change it. (Marta Tomaszewska, PFPŻ)*

Almost 8,000 schools participated in *Trzymaj Formę* programme during the school year 2012/2013 and around 800,000 students were, in varying degrees, affected (2013). On the one hand, I was told that this is the longest running and the most widespread food education programme in Poland. It is often promoted and presented as a success. The monitoring of the programme realised in 2009 showed that the participants are more satisfied with their appearances, more often eat five meals a day, rarely snack at night, more often eat vegetables and they more often engage in physical activity ([trzymajforme.pl](http://trzymajforme.pl)).

On the other hand, this programme has been criticized by many of my interlocutors engaged in food education. Anna Kłosińska for example, who organised the first food education programmes in Warsaw, told me: *Of course if a programme is financed by food producers, you cannot say that certain products are not good*. This opinion was shared by others. Someone said that the food plate promoted by *Trzymaj Formę* programme consists of sweets, because it is partly run by the food industry. Food producers and marketers are perceived as to a large extent responsible for the growing obesity in Poland, for example through

promoting the “bad” food habits through advertisements.<sup>54</sup> Their attempts to educate people about “good” food habits are questioned and challenged, because they are rather perceived as a way to promote certain brands and products than sincere concern for people's health. Organisers of *Trzymaj Formę* explain in reply that in accordance with the provisions of the programme, any names and trademarks of food products or food companies cannot be communicated and used in the programme, which demonstrates that the programme is not used for promotion purposes. They also argue that none of the food products are bad for you if you eat them in the proper, balanced amount.

When I asked Marta Widz, working in the Warsaw City Hall, about *Trzymaj Formę* and mentioned how it is one of the programmes organised on the largest scale in Poland, she explained:

*No, it doesn't work on any scale, because it doesn't work at all. Nothing happens. (...) It was organised in my daughters' secondary school, so I've seen it, I know nothing happens. The school is doing something, like a health day or one lesson based on these materials they send, and they put it in the report, describe it beautifully and send this report to the Sanitary Inspectorate. But these reports are real only on paper! And they [the organisers] don't want to deal with this; they are happy with how things are organised, they take these reports, but I am not sure if they still believe in them.*

Programme *Trzymaj Formę* is not only criticized because its sincerity is put in question as it is partly organised and run by the food industry. More so it is criticized for its approach to food education, often perceived as not systematic and long term, but superficial and focused on onetime events; rather focused on promoting the successful results than investing in achieving those results.

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<sup>54</sup> In fact in 2010 the food industry imposed restrictions on itself by pledging not to advertise to children younger than 12-year-old (PFPŻ, 2010), which does not mean that there are no other ways to promote brands and products among children.

## The EU Programmes

The attempts to normalize people in their feeding and eating practices in Warsaw are not only limited to Polish initiatives, but are in fact influenced by and reflect the international guidelines and disciplinary techniques. In 1977, the European Union have implemented the School Milk Scheme, which supported the distribution of milk among children in the member countries (European School Milk Scheme). In 2009, another programme, School Fruit Scheme, has been instigated. In 2014, the European Commission has proposed to combine and reinforce both programmes; “with the slogan *Eat well - feel good*, this enhanced scheme from farm to school will put greater focus on educational measures to improve children's awareness of healthy eating habits, the range of farm produce available, as well as sustainability, environmental and food waste issues” (European Commission press release, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2014).

In Poland, both programmes have been implemented by the Agricultural Market Agency since 2009 as “Fruits and Vegetables in School” and “Glass of Milk”. The products are distributed free of charge among children in grades 0 – 3 in primary schools. It should be supplemented by the teachers' involvement, the education about the importance of these products and the proper food habits in general.

When I asked the head teachers in Warsaw about implementing these programmes in their schools, they explained that they were contacted by food suppliers who proposed the participation in those schemes and supplied not only the products, but have also taken care of all the bureaucratic and administrative issues. For them, it is good business. Fruits and vegetables are distributed cut and washed, ready to eat, in small plastic bags. Milk is provided in small cartons. There is also an option of receiving flavoured milk (vanilla, strawberry or chocolate) for which parents have to pay additionally.

The evaluation of the “Fruits in School” programme shows that both parents' and children's knowledge about fruits and vegetables consumption has increased. Many of them are for example familiar with the importance of eating five portions of fruits and vegetables a day (ARR, 2012). However, I have heard countless

stories of food waste connected to this initiative, and I have often witnessed it myself. I have seen rotten fruits and vegetables in diverse corners and hideouts in schools and in bins in and around schools.

The EU Schemes differ from other food education programmes, as they do not only promote the knowledge about “proper” feeding and eating, but aim to change children’s (and their parents’) food practices through providing them with “proper” foods and through that instilling in them “good” food habits. This is a very direct and powerful way of disciplining children’s bodies and normalizing their eating practices. But even if the programmes bring results in that people’s knowledge about “good” food habits changes, in practice they are appropriated in multiple, sometimes contradictory to the initial idea, ways.

All of my interlocutors in families mentioned the distribution of milk and fruits and vegetables in schools. However, many parents mentioned that their children leave in the morning with one apple in the backpack, and they come back with two apples which adults end up eating. Parents find uneaten and rotten fruits and vegetables in their children's backpacks. Similarly with milk, children often bring it back home for their parents. Or they throw it away. 11-year-old Zuzia told me:

*If I were to receive flavoured milk I would have drunk it because it's tasty. But I don't like the normal milk, and they give us the full-fat milk, it's the worst! So I bring it back home, for my mom, she can drink it with her coffee.*

Children appropriate these disciplinary attempts in their own ways, often resisting, even if unintentionally, the process of normalization.

### **The Good Example: *Wiem, co jem* Programme**

There was one programme which many of my interlocutors mentioned as a good example of food education. It is *Wiem, co jem* (I know what I eat) organised by Marta Widz working in the Centre for Social Communication of the Warsaw City Hall. She is very passionate about the issue of children and food and can talk for hours about her ideas and plans, and about how children in Warsaw eat, and that the situation is bad so we should help them and their parents in changing it.

The programme *Wiem, co jem* started in 2007 and initially was called *Dzieci nie jedzą śmieci* (Children don't eat junk/trash), but was later turned into a positive campaign and the title was changed. *We do not stigmatize and do not show the examples of bad practices* – Marta Widz told me – *we show only good examples, we do not discourage, but we encourage, assist and support schools with our knowledge*. Since 2007, all 8-year-olds in Warsaw receive the booklets *Wiem, co jem*, and there are many other publications and activities which support the development of food education among children in Warsaw. The booklet contains, as Marta Widz called it, *10 commandments of good eating/feeding (żywienie)*, inspired by the nutritional guidelines presented in an engaging playful form.<sup>55</sup>

The booklets are sent to all schools in Warsaw, and then either given to children to take back home or discussed in the classroom with the teacher. In fact, two of the children participating in my research showed me these booklets when we met in their homes. They were proud to prove that they have certain knowledge about food. When I spoke with them they mentioned for example the importance of fruits and vegetables, and were happy to show me the source of that knowledge.

Marta Widz believes that the food education should not only happen in the classroom, but in the whole school, especially in the canteen and in the school shop. *Wiem, co jem* provides materials for children, to discuss in the classroom, but also circulates the publications on how to reorganise the feeding and eating in schools, what can be changed in the canteen and in the school shop (see chapter 7). Also, cooking workshops for children are organised during the winter and summer breaks.

Moreover, according to Marta Widz, food education should not only focus on children, but also on their parents – and she plans to create the information booklet for parents; and even more so on cooks and heads of nutrition. She told me:

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<sup>55</sup> The reference to Catholic 10 Commandments is a fascinating connection here, implying that nutrition and healthy lifestyle is a new religion people should follow.

*The way in which children eat in the educational institutions, is based on how and what the cooks are taught in the vocational schools. And they cannot cook! They have only two weeks of dietetics in school. They don't learn that the tomato soup can be made in four different versions: without flour, without dairy etc., so that it can fit diverse diets.*

She – as a representative of the City Hall – supports the cooking workshops for adults working in schools. Here is how she described one of the workshops:

*There was a doctor who in a very interesting way explained what kind of nutrients are in different food products and what are good, healthier substitutions for certain products etc. And Grzegorz [Łapanowski, a celebrity cook and a founder of the School on the Fork foundation] led the cooking workshop and showed them that for example Brussels sprouts can be prepared in such a way that it's delicious. Amazing things, and those women looked at him with their eyes out on stalks, and right away said that the cooks would not agree, would not incorporate these methods. To achieve any kind of change in schools, we have to change the curriculum in cooking vocational schools!*

Children's food education is a broad and multi-layered issue, which in fact relates to normalizing and disciplining various groups of adults as well as children.

### **Cooking Workshops**

So far I have discussed food education initiatives which use reading materials, playful games, competitions etc. A different approach to food education focuses less on teaching children the rules of proper eating and nutritional guidelines, and rather on teaching them how to cook, so that they can embody the good habits and see, touch and taste what is "good" to eat. These actions are based on a different kind of food morality, where "good" relates to a lesser extent to nutrition, and rather to the idea of fresh products and the focus is rather on the taste of food, than on the food pyramid; though the ideas about "healthy eating" still underlie these initiatives. Similarly to the UK (e.g. Warin, 2011), in Poland there is a discourse emphasizing the loss of cooking skills by the society. Though traditionally children were taught how to cook by their mothers, now this is less

common, and children do not even possess the appropriate manual skills, as I was often told. Therefore they need to be taught how to cook by others – again mothers are blamed for not fulfilling their roles properly.

Two key institutions which offer cooking workshops for children in Warsaw are the private cooking school Little Chef and the foundation *Szkoła na Widelcu* (School on the Fork). Little Chef started in 2007 in Katia Roman-Trzaska's kitchen.

Katia told me:

*It started when I had two small children. I cook a lot, and they always participated in that. (...) I've left a lawyer's career to open a restaurant, and when that didn't work out, together with my friend we thought of opening a cooking school for children, this was a niche at the time (...) through small steps we are changing the future of our children. And not only those children who come to our courses, whose parents pay for that, but also those children who attend the workshops through the Summer in the City, the City Hall project, and that's thanks to one woman's persistence – it's all because of Marta. (...) What Szkoła na Widelcu is doing now, Grzesiek and others, they went through Little Chef. They carry that torch further.*

Little Chef mainly organises cooking workshops on their premises, but also in schools. They also realise cooking workshops during the winter and summer breaks as part of *Wiem, co jem* programme run by the City Hall.

*Szkoła na Widelcu* [School on the Fork] started its activities in 2011. It was founded by Grzegorz Łapanowski, a celebrity cook and activist, often compared to Jamie Oliver<sup>56</sup>, because of his goal to change how and what children in Poland eat. His new TV programme, based on visiting schools in Poland and changing how the canteens work, starts in September 2015. When I asked what inspired him to create *Szkoła na Widelcu*, he replied:

*Ten years ago I was sitting at a couch in the US and talking to a 13-year-old boy. When we talked, he was snacking on toast bread. He liked it a*

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<sup>56</sup> Jamie Oliver can in fact be seen as ideally implementing Foucault's notions of normalization and governmentality (Hollows and Jones, 2010; Warin, 2011; Gibson and Dempsey, 2013).

*lot, and I couldn't understand how he could like and eat it. I started to ask him about the real bread, what for me was the real bread, and he looked at me as if I was crazy, he didn't understand what I was talking about. And that's when I understood that there might be a society where people don't know what is good and real food. Food can be synthetic and taste horribly, and they will accept it. (...) I realised that we may have the same problem in Poland. Ten years and three months have passed since I was sitting on that couch and talking to that boy, and basically we have a situation like that in Poland: children don't know what is real and proper food, their parents do not cultivate culinary traditions and culinary culture as an important element of building family ties. (...) The idea for Szkoła na Widelcu was simple. If the society does not know what is good food – and they don't know – both in a theoretical and practical sense, because they have nowhere to learn these things from, because the only educational programmes come from the food industry and are in fact tools for advertising products such as stock cubes or artificial pre-prepared sauces; then we need to teach them, we need to teach the society.*

This fear that Poland is becoming more like the United States in approach to food – that we are going in the wrong direction and that we are losing cooking skills and the good, natural products are substituted with chemical junk foods – was shared by many of my interlocutors and is quite prevalent in public discourses on food in Poland. The food habits of “the West” are framed as cautionary tales and used to warn people.

It clearly was not the first time when Grzegorz was explaining the reasons for creating *Szkoła na Widelcu*. His narrative seemed well prepared, thought through and practiced before, very ideological and powerful; a good frame for the culinary education the foundation is trying to develop. Though the disciplinary techniques are different and a different sort of food morality underlies these initiatives, they are still underlines by the idea that people do not have “proper” or sufficient knowledge about food and need to be taught how to cook, how to feed and eat.

During the twelve months of my fieldwork I often volunteered at the *Szkoła na Widelcu* cooking workshops. It is important that food is fresh, good and seasonal. It is supposed to be touched and smelled. Children should participate in preparing

the dishes, everyone doing what they can, that is how they learn. They are encouraged to mix different flavours, to use diverse ingredients. These events were always fun, filled with an energetic atmosphere and a sense that we are doing something good and important. However, as in other cases, within the *Szkoła na Widelcu* foundation there are many internal tensions and negotiations. One volunteer told me:

*This is all great, but it's so chaotic sometimes that it is difficult to work with them! And then you never know when Grzesiek will join us, he just comes for some time, talks to the children and parents, attracts the attention of everyone, creates chaos, and then he is gone. And especially if there are cameras or journalists, he's there! The communication is flawed.*

And somebody else pointed out: *This is supposed to be an independent, non-governmental foundation, but sometimes it feels that it is all to promote Grzesiek!*

At the time of my fieldwork, *Szkoła na Widelcu* has joined in cooperation with another foundation, *Aktywnie po Zdrowie* (Actively for Health). Together they have organised conferences *Szkolne Smaki* (School Flavours) for head teachers, food supervisors and cooks across the country. Each conference consisted of lectures by experts, nutritionists and policy makers; and two more practical parts: a demonstration of the cooking workshop for children and a cooking workshop for cooks and food supervisors. The goal of the conference was to show the head teachers that they can make many decisions concerning food and food education in schools, and showing them what kind of “good” decisions they can make.

*The workshop for food supervisors and cooks is starting. We all gathered in the kitchen of the cooking vocational school, rented out for this event. Grzesiek talks a bit about the project, and then each of the participants, mostly females, introduce themselves. They came from all over Poland. There are also representatives of a food company, potential sponsor for Szkoła na Widelcu. They came to observe what the foundation does, how they operate (...) Food supervisors and cooks complain about the food situation in schools. “Children get so much money to spend in a school shop that it boggles one's mind” said one of them. Many of them said that they have to prepare what children like, which is not necessarily the best option,*

*otherwise nobody would eat at the canteen and they can lose their jobs. "With hearts on our sleeves we approach this, we encourage them [children], but if they won't eat, the state will come and take our work! [It will cease to subsidize the canteens]. Somebody added "They haven't even tried, and they already spit it out!", "That's because they were not taught at home!" said another person. (...) After a heated discussion they start cooking. There are four groups, each led by one professional cook, each making a set of different dishes: (1) soups: chłodnik [a typical Polish summer soup from chard], lentil soup, corn soup and a carrot soup (a vegan option); (2) turkey in three ways with tabuleh and other salads, (3) fish cutlets with dill, garlic, lemon peel and oats with vegetables, (4) desserts.*

(Field notes, 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2013)

Cooking workshops for children and for adults are not that different. Everything is adjusted to the participants' abilities. However, the basic ideas are the same: fresh, seasonal foods are promoted; participants are encouraged to experiment with diverse flavours, to play with food, to have fun while cooking. The disciplinary techniques and normalizing judgments are very nicely packed. Though as I have mentioned, it is not without struggles, negotiations and tensions.

### **Reflecting on the Maze-ness of Food Education in Warsaw**

Coming back to figure 5 (p. 199) showing the engagement of state institutions in children's food education in Warsaw, it is visible that programmes are multiplied and often organised in a very similar way – and these are just state run programmes – without one coherent, long term plan and programme of food education. Warsaw of course creates a specific context and place for food education, because – as many of my interlocutors told me – there is an overinvestment, there are so many programmes and initiatives that schools do not want to participate in any more of them.

Children's food habits in Poland are increasingly framed as “bad” and unhealthy. However, during my fieldwork I was often told that children's knowledge about “proper” and “not proper” food practices have increased in Poland. It is not necessarily however reflected in their practices. Professor Charzewska, a nutritionist from the National Food and Nutrition Institute told me for example:

*They know much more now, but children are the same as adults: they know that smoking is bad for you, and they smoke anyway. Children don't see this deferred effect, that they will have high cholesterol. Still, they pay more and more attention to what they eat now.*

When I asked children about their associations with food, the older ones always in some way referred to nutrition. *So there are fats, and proteins. All of that* – 12-year-old Agnieszka told me. Many of them acknowledged and talked about the existence of the food pyramid, but they clearly found it a boring topic. Younger children's associations with food were usually more creative; they mentioned diverse tastes, flavours, foodstuffs which are considered inedible in Poland. For example they were playfully talking to me about eating hair or eyeballs. This difference might be perceived as proving the success of food education programmes implemented in schools: after spending some time in school, children are familiar with food pyramid, with the nutri-biological aspect of food; which does not however necessarily convert into their practices and attitudes to food, but it might. Gaining the “proper” knowledge is often the first step of the normalization process. Bartek, 7-year-old, was for example, fascinated by this nutritional approach to food, and when he drew his favourite foods, he divided them into diverse categories: meat, fish, fruits and vegetables and sweets. He was also very keen to learn about healthy eating advice, and then repeated it to his mom. Małgosia told me once:

*He likes the white bread rolls, but he is also very rational, and he has heard somewhere that the dark and grainy bread is healthy, so he tells me “mom, make me sandwiches with dark bread”, and I have absolutely no problem with that.*

Nonetheless, the process of food education has been criticized by many of my interlocutors. Many of them told me that the politicians only pay lip service to food education and health more broadly – they talk about it, but do not really act on it. An example of such behaviour is the Agreement on Cooperation on the Promotion of Health and the Prevention of Problems of Children and Adolescents. As professor Woynarowska mentioned, signing this agreement on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of

November 2009 was preceded by eight years of negotiations and planning. She explained to me:

*This was the first time that the government took a position on food in schools and on food education. So that's amazing! But it was put on their websites, and that's it. These are all just illusory actions! (...) The number of educational programmes with which schools are bombarded [is extreme], and they are all the same, this changes nothing! And why schools are doing that? They want to be active. So they make these ridiculous, long lists of programmes they are participating in, without any kind of evaluation and quality or effect control. All of this is just onetime activity, and I would really care for more coherent and long term solutions.*

Katarzyna Stępnia, working in the Centre for Education Development, an institution under the auspices Ministry of Education, a bit hesitantly told me:

*Well, it is a little bit like that, in this area of food education, that there is a very large offer, a lot of things are happening. I am against multiplying the programmes and duplicating the same things over and over again, teaching children for the tenth time how the food pyramid looks like. (...) But there is this kind of competitiveness.. We are committed to work together, there was this Agreement, but it doesn't change the fact that the Ministry of Health has their programme, and we have our programme. These are in many ways similar, and yet separate, parallel activities.*

Both Woynarowska and Stępnia are engaged in the Health Promoting Schools network. They told me that it is no longer what it used to be. Before, people were truly enthusiastic about this concept and believed in the ideas behind it; and now it is more about expanding the list of programmes in which the school participates, collecting the certificates, showing off. Also, the Ministry of Education, which is overseeing the programme run by the Centre for Education Development, pushes rather for the quantitative than qualitative results. As Stępnia told me:

*One of the goals I have received for the upcoming year is to increase the number of certified schools belonging to this network. But I don't want to focus on numbers! It is about the systemic, long term work with the community, it is a process, and it is not about the numbers!*

The criticism of food education activities is not only directed at the state institutions; however the expectations are often greater towards state run programmes. A nutritionist working in the Warsaw University of Life Sciences told me:

*There are some activities in the parliament, but these are just onetime and ad hoc actions – and this is the worst I think. Because there are loads of campaigns and actions in Poland, but most of them are onetime events, they are not repeated or evaluated. The Wiem, co jem campaign is one of the few which is continued every year. We should join forces and do something together, under one logo or something, but it doesn't work like that, working together doesn't work.*

Although it is increasingly recognised by the government and local administration that the “bad” food habits are becoming an important social problem in Poland; that the “proper”, healthy eating and feeding is an important issue and a vital part of keeping the society healthy, and food education is perceived as the best way to achieve these goals – people should be taught to eat and feed properly and to self-govern themselves – there is no coherent idea how to do this. Many engaged actors, state institutions, non-governmental organisations and food companies, compete with each other and, on the one hand, fight for the position of an expert in educating people about food, for the right to do it; and, on the other hand, shift the responsibility for that on others. There are many power struggles and tensions between the actors who are participating in the process of normalizing the society's food habits. Moreover, the dominating approach to food education disregards the structural differences. It is recognised that individuals, adults and children, are responsible for making “proper”, rational and healthy food choices, while there are not many initiatives aiming to change the food industry or the related policies. Also it is usually assumed that the society's feeding and eating

practices are bad altogether, so they need to be changed in general – hence the biopolitical attempts of changing how everyone eats and feeds.

Nevertheless, some groups are stigmatized and perceived as engaging in especially “bad” food practices. Some government and administration officials assume that people from working classes are much more in a need of food education than people from middle or upper classes who have greater awareness about nutrition and proper feeding and eating practices. I have often heard stories about children who do not recognise tomatoes or radishes because their parents have never showed them that vegetables are important. These groups of people are perceived as not responsible and not knowledgeable, as “bad” parents who allow their children to eat just junk food and get fat; while any kind of structural and financial constraints or the issues of access to knowledge or food are usually overlooked (Rawlins, 2009). However, other officials I spoke with applaud the practices enacted among parents from working classes in the countryside and criticize middle class parents living in the city. One person pointed out:

*Such a princess-mom in Warsaw, this doll will go with her child to the restaurant, because she is lazy; while a mother in the countryside will dig out the potatoes and prepare a potato soup for her child. And the latter is much better for a child!*

In both perspectives, certain groups of parents are criticized for not taking the “proper” care of their children and for not feeding them “properly”, either because they do not have the sufficient and right nutritional knowledge and food culture, or because they do not prepare homemade meals. They, and their children, have to be educated about food and the society’s feeding and eating practices in general have to be normalized.

### 6.3 The Process of Normalization

People's food practices in Poland used to be normalized according to a different set of norms, rules and judgements. During the Polish People's Republic, this related more to sustaining and embodying the ideas of socialism. In the 1990s, Poles were normalized according to the standards of Western consumer culture (e.g. Rausing, 2002; Drazin, 2002; Dunn, 2004). They had to be taught or teach themselves, how to be managers and neoliberal consumers. As Mitchell Dean (1999) shows, within the context of neoliberal politics people need to be shaped, guided and moulded into persons exercising freedom. Since the 1990s the emphasis in Poland has been largely placed on people's individual right to choose what they eat and how they feed their children. However, during last ten years the focus has shifted, people are expected to not only be proper consumers, but also to make the right and healthy choices regarding their lifestyles. Nowadays, the health discourse is the most prevalent moral perspective on food, and the freedom of food choice seems to be reduced to making either "good" or "bad" food choices.

When I asked Marta Widz what has changed during all these years when the programme *Wiem, co Jem* has been running, she told me:

*Firstly, then [around 2006 – 2007] the topic of feeding children did not exist in schools. They said they didn't need it; they all had programmes against violence, things like that, but were not focused on food. (...) So what has mostly changed is the awareness. Many products were withdrawn from the school shops, and even if they weren't, people know that they should not be there. And another important thing are the breakfast breaks, they are often longer now than they used to be. (...) I remember that we asked "What should be changed?" and they all answered that children should be encouraged to bring more fruits from home etc. [All the responsibility] was shifted on the family and home, as if the school didn't play a part in how children eat – "children eat badly because their parents teach them to eat badly, because parents give them bad breakfasts or don't give them the second breakfast". So we work on that as well. (...) This [change] will be a slow evolution, though in the context of what's happening this really should be a revolution!*

Partly because of the growing obesity and overweight rates in Poland, partly because food education programmes were implemented in other countries and promoted by the EU; partly because Poles became increasingly interested in healthy lifestyle, multiple food education programmes were implemented in Poland since 2006.

Although the state agencies play an important part in normalizing people's feeding and eating practices – they establish the nutritional guidelines and implement multiple food education programmes – there are other actors involved as well. Foucault explains:

Relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State. In two senses: first of all because the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations. (1980: 122; see also Rose and Miller, 1992)

A dietician working in Warsaw University of Life Sciences told me that they are beginning a nationwide research project to collect data about children in Poland. Across the country, children will be measured and weighted in order to find out and gather anthropometric information about children and analyse it in relation to the established *norms* and growing overweight and obesity rates. The project is funded by the Coca-Cola foundation. There is also an increasingly popular TV show entitled *Wiem, co jem* (I know what I eat; it has no connection to the Warsaw City Council programme with the same name). The hostess of this programme dresses up in funny costumes, visits shops, talks to experts and prepares “healthy” snacks in her own kitchen, all to show the viewers how they should and should not eat and feed their children. Academic and private institutions, non-governmental organisations, food industry agencies, media are engaging, alongside the state actors, in normalizing people's feeding and eating practices in Poland. The tensions related to who has the proper knowledge and the tools; who has the jurisdiction to teach people about food causes many negotiations. These attempts of normalizing people's food practices entangle varied actors in multiple power

struggles, and they are further entangled with people's everyday practices, the family and school power relations and negotiations, discussed in the previous chapters.

In this chapter I have focused on disentangling the politics of food education and discussing the attempts to discipline children and adults in their food practices, through multiple food education programmes implemented in Warsaw. However, the disciplining attempts and the process of normalization of people's food habits do not happen only through these programmes, through a sort of institutionalized teaching. The moral health frame and the nutritional guidelines dominate the discourses on food in Poland, and as such, they penetrate people's everyday lives and are reflected in their moral dispositions and feeding and eating practices (see chapter 3). The goal of the normalization process after all, as Foucault shows us (1991), is for people to self-govern themselves and each other. In Bentham's panopticon, the prisoners adjust their behaviours because they know that their actions are constantly observed by unseen guards. People are *responsibilized* as free, knowledgeable agents, who are supposed to make the "right" food choices (Rose, 1996). Parents are disciplined and responsabilized in regards to feeding their children, and they are expected to discipline and responsabilize children in their eating. 36-year-old Aleksandra told me:

*I explain to them for example that they have to eat cheese, because they are growing. Ewa asks for example "Is broccoli healthy?", well yes, it is healthy because it has vitamin K, P and some B vitamins; "what is that for?", so I tell her what I remember, I don't remember everything; and so then she eats it.*

Children and their parents are positioned and position themselves as "normal" according to certain perspectives on feeding and eating:

It is in the attainment of 'normality' that parents are judged by others and indeed by themselves in terms of doing the 'right thing'. And it is the quest for the 'normal', in this case in relation to 'proper' child-rearing, which requires parents to be aware of what are regarded to be rational parenting practices. (Coveney, 2008: 203; see also Grieshaber, 1997)

Likewise, as the opening ethnographic vignette shows, adults in school are attempting to discipline themselves, and also parents and children. Both adults and children of course respond to these disciplining and normalizing attempts in multiple ways, often with resistance. The process of normalization of feeding and eating in Warsaw connects all the layers of negotiations involving parents, children, teachers, cooks, state officials, nutrition experts, non-governmental workers, food producers and marketers and journalists; negotiations which I continue to discuss in the following chapter.

## Chapter VII. Contested Feeding and Eating: The Case of School Shops

*It's 9.30 am. The bell rings and the break starts. I am standing near the school shop and the whole area is immediately filled with children. A queue forms. There are laughs and scuffles. Two second grade girls have climbed the stairs to the top floor, and now breathless line up in a queue; they count how much money they have together and try to decide what to buy. One older boy is surrounded by others who suggest to him what he should buy – he has the money and the rest hope to benefit from this, to eat what he buys (...) Some of the children spend the whole ten minute break standing in that line, even if they don't buy anything, just to be with their friends. They will probably be back soon.*

(Field notes, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

*I am at the closing conference of the Młodzi Odwagi<sup>57</sup> programme, organised by one of the NGOs and the biggest Polish newspaper (...) Politicians, teachers, journalists and food activists came together to discuss what living healthy means for children and how this can be achieved. School shops keep appearing as one of the main problems and obstacles to children's proper eating habits, and consequently their health. This issue evokes a heated discussion among participants. They repeatedly ask: "Is the school shop a business or an educational institution?!" People are outraged at what school shops sell to children and insist that something should be done about it.*

(Field notes, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013)

These are two completely different experiences related to school shops I have had during my fieldwork in Warsaw. Children's food practices in school shops have lately become one of the most problematic matters concerning feeding and eating in Poland. At the time of my fieldwork, there was an extensive debate about school shops in media. Multiple social actors, including politicians, state officials, nutritionists, food producers, and activists, became involved in it. School shops became a contested symbol of "bad" feeding and eating practices.

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<sup>57</sup> The title means "young people, have courage", but it also relates to their weight.

In Poland, parents are recognised as responsible for their children's wellbeing, it is their legal and moral obligation to take care of their children and it is their right to do it according to their beliefs and opinions. In the 1990s the state gave a large part of its responsibilities back to families (see chapter 1), however, currently the government and diverse state agencies are again more interested in children's practices and practices regarding children, related for example to violence or consumption, including food. This is largely due to the increasing obesity rates recognised as a public health problem (see chapter 6). All of this raises important questions about parental liberty and autonomy in regards to their children, as well as about doing harm and the role of the state in preventing harm.

School shops have been increasingly recognised in Poland as doing harm to children, and therefore the issues of who is responsible for preventing this harm and who should be blamed for it, have become pertinent ones. These politics of responsibility and blame, besides parents and the state actors, also involve food producers and marketers, teachers, school shop owners and non-governmental activists. Children are in fact rarely recognised as the responsible ones, as the ones to be blamed for their “not proper” food habits (Tingstad, 2009).

This chapter brings together many issues discussed so far in the thesis, related to control, food morality, socialisation, disciplining efforts and the responsibility for children's “proper” food habits – they all come together in the case of school shops. In this chapter I discuss why and in what way school shops have become contested spaces, and how it influences children's everyday experiences. I focus on the feeding – eating interactions taking place in school shops, and multiple attempts to influence them. Through the case study of school shops I weave together multiple negotiations regarding feeding and eating in Warsaw.

## 7.1 Introducing the School Shops Controversy

The name “school shop” in Polish is the diminutive version of a noun shop (*sklep*): *sklepek*, meaning a tiny shop.<sup>58</sup> This term is immediately recognised in Poland and signifies a shop run on school premises. School shops often take the form of rather small cubicles, square or rectangular, between three and four square meters in size. Walls are built from wood or plywood construction, and there are glass windows where the items for sale are displayed. There is also a counter where transactions take place. Inside there are shelves filled with products: foods, beverages and stationery. Usually one person fits into this space.



Photos 17 and 18. School shop in school B, owned by Mr Kowalski and run by Mrs B.



Photos 19 and 20. School shop in school C, owned by Mrs Szostek and run by Mrs T.

School shops as an idea emerged during the Polish People’s Republic and it was usually implemented by students, with teachers’ help. A student body organised

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<sup>58</sup> In the UK they are often referred to as school tuck shops.

the sales of food products (sandwiches, buns, rolls) which they prepared themselves or bought in the nearest bakery. The small profits were usually used by the school towards student related expenses. This was one of the ways to keep children on school premises and prevent them from going outside during breaks. But the scale of these initiatives was very small. In the 1990s, with the change from a socialist centrally planned economy to capitalist neoliberal markets, the number of shops organised on school premises increased and they have been commercialized.

Today school shops exist in the majority of primary schools in Warsaw.<sup>59</sup> A school shop can be organised through the school, by teachers, students or parents; however, the most popular form since the 1990s is subletting the space to an outside entrepreneur, who opens a small shop. The contract between the school and the owner is signed yearly. The head teacher of the school can dictate the terms of the contract, which are sometimes discussed with parents. The owner pays a monthly fee for renting the space and, if either side is no longer satisfied, the contract can be terminated by giving notice. The next shop owner will be chosen on the basis of a tender, the rules of which are decided on by the head teacher, often in collaboration with parents.

Owners either work in the shop themselves or employ other people, who are usually women in retirement, hired on the basis of an interim contract: they are paid only for a certain amount of time, and they are not offered pension contributions, health insurance or any other benefits with their contract. Revenues from school shops vary significantly, depending on what kind of school they are in (primary, secondary or high school) and how many students are in it. I was told that, on average, the daily revenue from one shop run in a primary school with around 400 students varies between 150zł and 300zł (between £30 and £60). The temporal life of school shops is closely related to the school year and therefore impacts revenues. When school is closed so is the school shop, for example on weekends, during the summer and winter holidays, and during all

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<sup>59</sup> Research conducted in 2013 in 167 primary schools in Warsaw, demonstrates that school shops were in 102 of them (Czarniecka-Skubina, 2013).

public holidays. This – if we count that there are 180 days of school on average per year – makes an average of 40,500zł (~£6,879) per year from that one shop. With that amount the owner has to buy the supplies, invest in a school shop, take care of the rented space and hire employees. It might become a marginally profitable business – I have heard from the school shop owners – only if one opens more than one. Still, most of the school shop owners in Warsaw – I was told – own either only one or a couple of school shops. They are usually small entrepreneurs.

School shops became a problem in Poland largely due to what is sold in many of them: various beverages, chocolate bars, crisps, chips, buns, rolls, mini pizzas and a diverse range of confectionary. This is what James (1979) calls “kets”: cheap, unbranded and usually unwrapped, small products, in various shapes and colours, often inducing surprising sensations in a mouth, and with different textures and tastes, including lollipops, gummy candies, sweet drops, chewing gums etc. All of these can be considered *children’s food*: produced especially for children and for many reasons preferred by them, but at the same time considered especially harmful to them by many adults (see chapter 3).<sup>60</sup>



Photo 21. Sweets bought in one of the school shops.  
Photograph by Katarzyna Boni.

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<sup>60</sup> In other countries, vending machines are often problematized in a similar way as school shops in Poland (e.g. Nestle, 2002: 197 – 218). The first vending machines were introduced in Poland in the mid-1990s, however it is still a relatively small market (Gryn, 2015), and partly because of that I have decided to focus only on school shops, which are the main focus of the debates in Warsaw.

What is sold in school shops has not changed much during the last 10 – 20 years. I remember from my childhood how these products were an exciting novelty. What have changed are the approaches to food and children in Poland and the related discourses, now dominated by the health frame. These are largely influenced by the growing problem of obesity among children and young people in Poland. As Vebjørng Tingstad (2009) shows on the case of Norway, the blame for obesity problem, and subsequently the responsibility for it, is placed on diverse social actors, be it the state, the family, the school or the market and its advertisements. Everyone shifts the blame on to somebody else. Lately, it seems that in Poland the scapegoat has been found in school shops and their owners, who are presented in public debates as obstacles to children's health, and responsible for their weight problems.

At the time of my fieldwork a sort of moral panic about schools shops started to emerge in Poland. Many stories were presented in the media of what horrible things were sold in school shops, or how the head teachers, teachers and parents had to fight with school shop owners (e.g. Stępniewska, 2013). Occasionally also exaggerated stories of "success" were presented: how school shops were "reclaimed" by parents, by teachers and head teachers, or by children themselves, and how they consequently became the centres of health in schools (e.g. Warchala, 2010).

In the dominating discourses, school shops are treated as harmful to children and their owners are often perceived as focusing only on money and getting children hooked on sweets. Children themselves are usually depicted as victims who need to be rescued and who – when given a chance – happily participate in fighting the school shops together with adults. All of these representations not only depict school shop owners as a homogenous and equally harmful group; they also portray children as a very coherent group. The many differences of opinions and of practices are completely omitted.

Moreover, the highly visible discussion concerning what is sold in school shops is only part of the problem. Another issue which occurs somewhat implicitly in the

public debates concerns children as consumers. As I have mentioned, Buckingham and Tingstad (2014b) show that there are two main perspectives on positioning children as consumers: one perceives children as victims of a powerful and manipulative consumer culture which robs them of their childhood; the other constructs children as having power and even authority, competence that many adults may be lacking; and both are too limited to in fact reflect the reality of children's multiple engagements with consumer culture (see also Cook, 2004b). Nevertheless, in Poland children are mostly seen as innocent and naïve, and because of the manipulation by the market, or because of not being knowledgeable – which is not the case as I have shown in the previous chapters – they are perceived as poor decision makers. Diverse social actors want to influence children's choices because they perceive themselves as better decision makers on behalf of children; they know better what is “good” for them. In school shops children can make largely independent choices, and because children's food choices have been since recently framed as “bad”, these spaces have been highly problematized in Poland.

## **7.2 Feeding – Eating Interactions in School Shops**

Feeding – eating interactions in the case of school shops pose an interesting puzzle. Who in fact is feeding children when they purchase food in a school shop and eat it? The eating part of that interaction seems to be straight forward: children eat food, even if it was bought by other children in the school shop. In relation to feeding, is it school shop sellers who directly provide children with food they eat, or school shop owners who provide these foods in the school shops, or maybe the food industry which produces and distributes the food? Or maybe, it is a head teacher who creates the rules of the tenders and contracts which school shops have to follow? Or perhaps parents or grandparents feed children by giving them money to buy food in the school shop? Or maybe in fact it is children who feed themselves as they buy the food they consume? Multiple social actors are engaged in feeding children through school shops, and that is partly why this has become such a highly emotional and contested issue, one which involves various negotiations. I first focus on the interactions taking place in school shops and on

the directly involved agents, and then in the following part of this chapter I discuss other influences on the feeding – eating interactions taking place in school shops.

### **“Going to the School Shop” as a Rite of Passage: Children's Perspectives**

Besides eating food brought from home or eating a meal in the school canteen, the school shop provides one of the most important food occasions for children during their school day. It is also the site of important social and economic encounters children engage in. These small shops are centres of social life in schools.

For younger children – aged between 6 and 9 – going to the school shop is often forbidden or limited by either their main teachers or by parents. In one of the schools I studied they could go there only on Fridays. Those who want to buy something are lined up in a queue, and the rest sits on the bench. Mrs B. – a school shop seller – commented that those children who sit and watch their friends buying snacks look very sad. Additionally, school shops are often located on the highest floor where younger children are in general not allowed to go. Therefore going to the school shop is an important rite of passage; it signifies an important age-related transition and is awaited with impatience.

Many children cannot wait for that moment to come, they plan exactly what they will buy once they have their own money and can spend it in the school shop. 6-year-old Olek admitted: *I can't wait when I'll be able to go to the school shop! I've seen that my favourite crisps are there, so I'll buy them!* Others break or bend the rules set up for them.

Life around the school shop is very lively, as many children go through the decision-making process and engage in multiple purchase and consumption tactics. The beginning of the week is usually busier because many children receive money during weekends, and then spend it on Monday in school. Similarly, the first couple of breaks are the fullest ones, partly because some children buy their breakfast there or they buy their *drugie śniadanie*. Some children buy snacks for the whole day, others come on every break for something small. The basic rule of the interaction order in school shops is that there should be a queue, and

everyone should do their shopping in turn. However, there is a certain hierarchy in accessing the school shop. The older children sometimes crowd in front of the younger ones and adults can access the school shop without standing in line, they simply skip the queue and go straight to the counter.

Children usually come in pairs or small groups. 12-year-old Hania explained: *We always go together, as a group, I and my best friends, there are five of us. And we share everything we buy, or one person buys and treats others.* Children either share the expenses, they count how much money they have altogether and decide what to buy and then share it; or they reciprocate gifts: *so you will buy something for me today, and I will buy something for you tomorrow*, as one of the young girls explained to her friend. It is often more about “going to the school shop”, than about eating itself. For example, children who do not buy anything, because for various reasons they choose not to or they do not have money; often accompany their friends when they do their shopping. 12-year-old Agnieszka complained: *there is nothing I can buy there, only unhealthy things! But I still go there sometimes, with my friends, when they want to buy something.*

Children usually share with others what they have bought. Similarly to the situation among children in Beijing described by Chee (2000), what a person buys and with whom it is shared influences the social positioning of a child. Children who have more money are often accompanied by others, who suggest what they should buy and hope to participate in eating it. The economic division is very visible in that practice: there are children who often have larger sums of money, and others who can rarely afford to buy anything – even though very cheap products are supplied. It is also reflected in what they buy: the cheaper, unbranded, “worse” foodstuffs or the more expensive, branded ones (e.g. Chee, 2000; Buckingham and Tingstad, 2014a).

What children buy is not only influenced by their economic situation, but also differs with age and gender. The older ones usually know exactly what they want, they have their favourites. They also have larger sums of money. The younger children often come to the counter, put all the coins they have there, and ask the

woman working in the school shop what they can buy with these amounts of money. It is often just 20gr or 50gr, up to 1zł (£0.04, £0.10, £0.20), so they usually buy the smallest and the cheapest foodstuffs.

*“What would you like to buy?”, asks Mrs B. to two second-grade girls when it is their turn to approach the counter. They have climbed the stairs to the top floor of the school and have stood in the queue for most of the 10 minutes break. They’ve counted how much money they have together and tried to decide what to buy. When it is their turn, they put all the coins they have on the counter and ask Mrs B. what they can buy for that amount. Mrs B. counts how much money they have given her and says that they can buy either three bigger chewing gums, or one lollipop, two spiders, three worms [gummy candies], six lemons [chewing gums]. The girls discuss with each other what to buy – I cannot hear what they are saying – and then tell their decision to Mrs B. She gives them one worm wrapped in a napkin and four lemons in a small plastic bag. The girls grab it and move away with smiles on their faces. Right away they split the gummy candy and while one of them eats her half, the other one reaches for the chewing gum.*

(Field notes, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

When doing their shopping, children interact in diverse ways with the sellers and these relationships are never reduced only to their economic dimension. The sellers help younger children count the money, decide what to buy, ask what they want, and they also discourage some children from buying too much. Above all, they often simply chat with one another. Children also interact with each other: they compromise, fight, share foods, make deals and learn from each other. Children's interactions in school shops have multiple moral, social and economic dimensions. For some children this may be the first economic transaction they make on their own, without their parents watching, and it is one of the rare occasions when they can make relatively independent choices regarding food.

Children’s perspectives on school shops vary, some of them enjoy shopping there, because for example they can buy and eat foods they are not allowed to eat and cannot buy elsewhere; others complain that there is no healthy food, so they do not buy anything in school shops. In fact the most evident gender dimension concerns older girls who often start watching their weight and relate more often

to the health/nutrition moral perspective on food. They buy water or “healthy food”; and except for some of the teachers, they are the only ones doing that.

For children, school shops mediate in important social relations and economic exchanges. “Going to the school shop” is a deeply social occasion, one of the main entertainment activities in which children can engage during the break, which provides the opportunity for diverse interactions: among themselves, with adults, but also with food and money. In different parts of the school, children negotiate with each other when and with who go to the school shop. They spend a lot of their time and attention on deciding what to buy. Later, once they have purchased certain food, they often share it. They eat it right away or take it back to class, sometimes they eat it throughout the whole day, and other times they take it back home, forgotten in their backpacks or pockets. From children’s perspective, school shops are very important places that allow them to have some independence, to bend adults’ rules and fight with imposed ideas of what is good, proper and healthy, and what is bad and unhealthy. Out of all food occasions in schools school shops make children the most active participants: they decide what they want and buy it (see Mauthner et al., 1993). These decisions and children’s interactions in school shops are influenced by their financial resources, by their personal tastes and preferences, by their age and gender, and by the existing snack fashions (Chee, 2000). Moreover, they are influenced by parental rules, by teachers’ opinions and of course by what is available in school shops.

***You think of children when you buy the products: Selling Food to Kids***

The aim of the school shop is to earn money. From the market perspective school shops are business ventures. Especially for the food producers, they are a significant point of accessing children as an increasingly important consumer group. There are even special lines of products designated only to be sold in school shops.

However, the interactions taking place in school shops are deeply embedded within moral economy, described by Sayer as “the ways in which economic activities are influenced by moral-political norms and sentiments, and how

conversely those norms are compromised by economic forces” (2000: 80). Every interaction in the school shop is embedded within the broader politics of “good” and “bad” food, making good or bad choices, proper parenting and healthy citizens. Moreover, the school shop owners and workers are often parents and grandparents themselves and reflect on that when selling food to children. They think and talk about what is good and bad for children, both in a sense of being healthy and not healthy for them, and what they prefer and want.

For the owners and people working there, school shops are often more than just businesses, and selling food to children has more than just an economic meaning; it is also about feeding them when they are hungry for example. They do feel a certain mission – or at least those whom I interviewed presented themselves in that way. For example I talked to Mr Kowalski, a man in his 60s, in this business for more than twenty years, who now owns a couple of shops and employs twelve people. During our meeting we sat in his office, in a small room for most of the time, but a part of the interview happened in the school’s cafeteria, where I was offered coffee and pancakes. We talked about his business, how he built many of the shops from scratch. He had eighteen school shops when he started, and they were very popular: the schools were bigger, so there were more customers. *The 1990s were crazy, he told me, and everyone was doing what they wanted. Everyone ate everything. Nobody heard about healthy food, nobody cared.* Healthy food was a recurring issue in my discussions with the school shop owners, brought up every time by my interlocutors. They felt they were under attack and before I had even asked about it, they defended themselves:

*School shops became the scapegoat – Mr Kowalski explained to me – they are perceived as evil and blamed for making children fat! But someone allowed these foods for consumption. And even if you control the school shops, the kids can always buy these products on their way to or from school. The school shops are needed, because small children have to eat and drink [during the school day]. I do not buy any of these “Chinese foods”.<sup>61</sup> These*

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<sup>61</sup> “Chinese foods” is a Polish expression, a term used by many of my interlocutors to describe foodstuffs with unknown origins and unknown content, generally not safe and not trustworthy.

*shops are much safer than the corner shops, because you think of children when you buy the products, you select what's good. (...) They are not looking in the right place for the guilty party. It is the parents' responsibility, a child should learn how and what to eat at home.*

He argues that he is taking care of children, because he makes sure that they have something to eat and drink during their school day, and he takes special care to buy good products. It is the responsibility of parents to teach children to make the right food choices, not his. In fact, he provides healthy food in his shops because of the pressure on healthy food which, according to him, comes both from the school and the government.

In a shop I have seen there was a special shelf with the sign "healthy food" on it, where the small packages of cereals, crisp breads, grain bars and flavoured milk were placed. However these products were not popular among children and often went to waste. The rest of his food assortment included chocolate bars, crisps, confectionary and beverages: water, flavoured drinks, and juices. *I would be happy selling only healthy food, Mr Kowalski told me, I can start tomorrow, if anyone would buy it!*

One of his associates participated in part of our interview, and she commented by asking: *What does "healthy food" really mean?* She explained that there is no clear definition of what healthy food means, and nobody wants to face it: *Maybe the chocolate bars that everyone gets so worked up about are actually not that bad?* In her opinion, if things are allowed for sale then they cannot be unhealthy; otherwise it is the fault and the responsibility of state agencies.

Similar points were raised by another school shop owner with whom I talked, 45-year-old Mrs Szostek. She opened her first school shop six years before and now owns a number of them.<sup>62</sup> She also emphasized that she does not sell "Chinese products"; and that she cares about children, that it is important for her that they

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<sup>62</sup> She was reluctant to tell me how many exactly. In general during our conversation she seemed wary of me, she did not trust me and was nervous that parts of our interview would be presented in the media, showing her in bad light.

eat healthy snacks, so she provides them in her shop: vegetable crisps, apples, crisp bread sandwiches, grain and dried fruit nibbles. The rest of her assortment included sandwiches, mini pizzas, various beverages, crisps, chocolate bars, and confectionary.

Mrs Szostek explained to me that it is a myth that children eat bad and unhealthy things bought in school shops: *it was like that once, that only Coca-Cola and fatty crisps were sold, but it was twenty years ago, come on, it's changed now!* She raised a similar issue concerning healthy food by asking:

*If it's unhealthy then why is it permitted to be sold? Why are parents exposed to the loss of their children's health? If cola is harmful, it should not be sold. There should be a ban on producing foods damaging to your health!*

This time not parents, but the food producers and the state, whose role is to control the food industry, are recognised as responsible for feeding children right and blamed for their “improper” food practices. A recurring answer to the question about damaging foods – which I asked to many representatives of various food companies – is that no food is harmful, if it is eaten in proper amounts, as recommended by food producers. For example – as it was explained to me – a regular pack of gummy candies contains on average six food portions and is not supposed to be eaten all at once. The food education programmes run by food companies are meant to teach people this, so that they can restrain themselves and their children and balance their diets (see chapter 6).

The perception of school shops and their owners as completely evil and harmful to children can be contradicted by their practices. Mrs Szostek, for example, thinks of economically deprived children when on an everyday basis she brings all the sandwiches that were not sold to the day room, where a teacher distributes them among children who are hungry, but do not have money to buy anything. Mr Kowalski takes special care to supply very cheap products so that all the children can buy something and do not feel excluded when their friends do their shopping. Moreover, women who work in school shops – at least those I was in contact with – care a lot about what children buy and eat. They often know children's names

and establish certain relationships with them, either based on friendship and familiarity, or sometimes on dislike and animosity. They take upon themselves a peculiar role of gatekeepers and often control what children buy, even if that means smaller profits. Mrs B., a 65-year-old school shop seller, told me this story for example:

*One boy wanted to buy so many Mr Snacks [crisps], that I asked him if he thinks that his mom would agree with that, and he reluctantly admitted that probably she would not and bought less.*

This was not the only time Mrs B. was worried about what children eat. Another time, when she asked a girl who wanted to buy 15 gummy candies whether she will not get a bellyache, the girl replied that she is accumulating the sweets for the coming holiday period. Mrs B. never denies children anything, but often asks or suggests that what they want is not such a good idea, and reflects on what their parents would say. Many of them comply with her suggestions. Mrs Szostek told me another story:

*There were these two boys, who bought a lot of sweets, crazy amounts. So I asked them to bring me the information from their parents, that they allow it, and their mother signed a paper in which she explained that she allows her children to eat as many sweets as they want. So I always had it in the school shop, just in case.*

It is not clear in case of what, but probably she refers to teachers who might worry that she sells too many sweets to children, and as long as parents agree this has to be accepted in school, even if teachers disagree, because parents are responsible for their children's eating practices and have the right to make decisions about that (see chapter 4).

Even though *the feeding* in the case of school shops is often reduced to the economic transaction, for the owners of the shops and the sellers, it is often more. They do care in a certain way about the children they feed, they do care about what they eat.<sup>63</sup> At the same time school shops are business ventures with the

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<sup>63</sup> Again, this concerns my interlocutors and not all the school shop owners and sellers in Warsaw.

goal of making money. This is often perceived by other social actors as a contradiction: if somebody wants to earn money by selling food to children, they will sell them what they want (unhealthy, not “good” food) rather than what they should eat (healthy and “proper” food). This is recognised as a problem. Because of that school shops and school shop owners are predicated in public debates as bad and harmful to children. Simultaneously, it has been argued that it is parents' responsibility to teach children to make “good” choices regarding their eating; and others would say that it is the responsibility of food producers and the state which controls the food industry to organise these feeding – eating interactions in a different way. Vebjørn Tingstad has argued that in Norway the problem of children's obesity has been generally recognised as a collective concern, to a large extent caused by the modern lifestyle, and thus “the blame is placed on the society rather than on the individual” (2009: 181). While in Poland, it seems, different social actors engage in the politics of responsibility and blame when it comes to the issue of children and food and point the blame on each other. School shops provide an excellent outlet for these power struggles and negotiations.

### 7.3 Influencing Feeding and Eating in School Shops

Children's decisions regarding buying and eating food from school shops, and school shop owners' and sellers' feeding practices are influenced by others. Multiple actors can and increasingly do influence the feeding – eating interactions taking place in school shops in Warsaw.

#### Teachers and Parents

Adults working in schools and parents have the most direct impact on school shops. Their whole existence is dependent on head teachers who can open or close them. Having a shop on school premises is one of the few ways that schools have to raise money – and through these shops the politics of markets enter the reality of schools, since they are one of very few places in schools where money is visibly exchanged. Moreover, school shops make it possible for children to buy foods and beverages needed throughout their stay at school, and keep them from leaving school premises during breaks.

Mr Kowalski told me that the head teachers are on their side and often defend the school shop owners from parents' accusations. Because – as he explained – it is mostly parents who have some problems with school shops, *especially the fat ones! One time there was this mother, quite obese, and she had a can of coke in her hand, and her child was eating a bag of crisps, and she was complaining that we sell such horrible things!* – he told me, implicitly arguing that not all parents should be allowed to criticize them. And indeed, some parents are concerned about their children buying food in the school shop. For example 32-year-old Kasia told me about her 6-year-old son who is in preschool:

*It worries me a lot! He doesn't go to the school shop yet, he is not allowed, but he already knows what's there and what he will buy. Crisps and these type of things, for example. I just hope that I can get in his head that this is not healthy... But I'm really worried about this!*

School shops are a source of anxiety for parents, as it is one of the few occasions when they cannot control their children's eating. Still, the rules concerning what

and how often can be bought in the school shop are established at home – for example 9-year-old Julia can buy sweet snacks in the school shop only on Tuesdays, because that is her “sweet day”; and 10-year-old Zuzia should rather buy sandwiches than crisps. However, children and parents often renegotiate these rules on an everyday basis. For example 30-year-old Marysia in general does not allow her 8-year-old daughter to buy snacks in the school shop, however sometimes when she asks for money for certain products she receives it. *Her friends are buying these things, and she wants to participate in that, so I give her money because I don't want her to feel excluded*, Marysia told me. As Allison Pugh (2009) shows, the more affluent parents are ambivalent about their children's involvement with consumer culture – they try to restrain their consumer desires, while at the same time wanting to give them what they want; whereas lower-income parents are highly sensitive to their children's feeling of exclusion from the peer group, however they cannot provide as constantly as much for their children.

One way of controlling children's eating is to not give them money and prepare a *drugie śniadanie* for them. But that strategy only works when children are very young, the older ones always get some sums of money, often from grandparents. Another way of controlling what they buy, besides setting up the rules, is to ask them every day what they did in school, what they ate, whether they went to the school shop, etc. Children break the rules parents set up for them, and they might slip up when discussing their school day. Also, parents often find the wrappers from various sweets in children's backpacks or in their pockets – a kind of accidental way of controlling them. I have heard a story about one mother who asked a person working in a school shop to observe what her daughter buys and whether she obeys the rules her parents set for her. The “harmful” shop seller was trusted more in this case than a child herself.

Influencing or attempting to control what kind of decisions children make is one of the ways to influence their eating. Another way is to monitor what is sold in school shops, control the feeding aspect of that interaction. Parents, in cooperation with schools, can influence the school shops to a great extent: they

can cease to sublet the space to the outside shop owner and close the shop, or run it themselves. However quite often parents' influence is limited to affecting the head teachers to prohibit the sales of certain products – and the boundary between what is and what is not acceptable is blurry. For example, in one school parents opposed the sales of ice-cream, but not of crisps. In another school gummy candies were generally accepted, but a kind of gummy candy which can be stuck to one's arm and eaten through licking was removed. What parents found especially disturbing, was that children were licking each other's hands. Of course, not all parents find school shops problematic. In general, they want their children to be able to buy something to eat or drink during their school day, and preferably in school, not outside – not all of the students come to school with *drugie śniadanie* or eat a meal in a school canteen. Parents also want their children to be able to share food bought in the school shop with their friends, to have little treats and pleasures during their school day, though they often prefer to supply it themselves and many of them want to control what exactly their children eat. School shops take that control away and thereby challenge parental rules and authority.

In many ways, teachers are also entangled in these interactions. Some of them are very critical of school shops and, for example, prohibit children from coming to their classrooms with products bought there (see chapter 4). In younger grades, some main teachers have taken upon themselves the roles of guardians and educators and confiscate certain snacks. They often perceive the school shop owners as evil and harmful: *he is impossible and doesn't want to change his ways and what he's selling!* – one of the teachers told me when we talked about Mr Kowalski. Teachers also often complain about parents. They comment that parents harm their children through giving them a lot of money and allowing them to buy unhealthy food in the school shop – which is not necessarily the case, children can be breaking parental rules when buying food in the school shop. Many teachers, however, do not have such strong opinions about school shops, and a lot of them shop there themselves during their working day in school. I

shopped there myself, in an attempt to taste *children's food* and to better understand the school shop experience.

The relations between parents and schools are furthermore deeply embedded in class politics: only certain (working class) parents are perceived by people in schools as engaging in bad parenting practices, while at the same time those parents who are interested in what is going on in school shops – and perceive them as obstacles for good parenting – are usually middle class (see Gillies, 2005; Rawlins, 2009). Parents, and to some extent also teachers, influence the interactions between customer-children and school shop sellers. But their authorities and ideas of how to educate and raise children are constantly confronted and undermined by children's practices in school shops. Therefore school shops are often seen as obstacles to proper parenting and good care of children, and school shop owners are blamed for their "bad" feeding practices which influence children's "bad" eating habits.

### **Non-governmental Organisations**

Many of the food education programmes implemented by non-governmental organisations in Warsaw focus on school shops (see chapter 6). This is a very tangible way of disciplining children in their eating practices and influencing their decisions: their choices are limited as the food they can buy is carefully controlled.

One of the biggest programmes, *Sklepiki Szkolne: Zdrowa Reaktywacja* ("School Shops: Healthy Reactivation"), is run by the *Aktywnie po Zdrowie* (Actively for Health) foundation and financed by the Ministry of Education. As the information on the programme's website indicates, participating in this programme can be a way of fulfilling the school curriculum related to teaching children about health, defined in the law from 2008, which is an incentive for schools to participate. We can also read:

A large group of children does not bring *drugie śniadania* to school and they satisfy their hunger during their stay at school with snacks bought in the school shop. Usually these are strongly preserved, sweetened/salted/ carbonated products, which are easy to store because of their long expiry date and easy to sell because of good

advertising and good taste. This way of eating influences negatively children's metabolism resulting in the both physical and mental impaired functioning, in the lack of concentration and balance. (...) Accepting the way in which school shops are run on the school premises means tacit approval of the inevitable deterioration of the health of children who use the school shops. The situation is worsened when children are older and more independent. They usually receive money from their parents to buy food at school, which they spend on products available in school shops: cheap, tasty and easily satisfying hunger. (...) School shop should be a place of food and consumer education for children. (www.aktywniepozdrawie.pl)

School shops are identified as harmful to children, and everyone who agrees on such a situation becomes partly responsible for children's deteriorating health and increasingly bad eating habits. This is quite a strong statement, which I think reflects well the debates and anxieties concerning school shops which emerged in Poland at the time of my fieldwork.

Schools which want to participate in the *Sklepiki Szkolne: Zdrowa Reaktywacja* programme, have to identify a problem in their application. It can be a vending machine placed in a school or the fact that children go out of school to buy snacks, both indicating that creating a school shop can solve this problem. Another proposal might be to change the school shop already existing in school, buy a fridge to store fresh food etc. Schools receive small sums of money to implement the changes they have proposed.

When I talked to Aleksandra and Marta, the coordinators of this programme, they told me that a lot of parents got involved in this programme; that they built and painted the spaces of school shops. Even though schools apply to participate in the programme, and even though school shops are run on school premises, parents are expected to get involved. If not, they *tacitly approve the inevitable deterioration of health of children*. In fact, Aleksandra and Marta during our conversation indicated that children learn and develop their tastes and habits from their parents, so the future of children's health is to a large extent parents', especially mothers' responsibility. This was for example reflected in the

controversial campaign *Aktywnie po Zdrowie* led, the aim of which was to alert parents to their influence on their children's food habits (see Prologue).

Non-governmental organisations usually try to influence both the feeding and the eating taking place in school shops. The food assortment of school shops is changed, at least for some time. I was often told that after a while everything goes back to normal and the unhealthy products are sold again. Simultaneously, children are taught what are “good” and “bad” products and what they should eat to stay healthy.

### **State Agencies**

Besides media influences, non-governmental activists and parental engagements, food producers and marketers’ attention, the state is also increasingly interested in children’s choices in school shops. The state is not however a unified entity, and in fact it engages with school shops through very fragmented and diversified practices. Schools are state institutions. In every school the head teacher decides if she wants to open a school shop and how to organise it. The only way in which the government controlled the school shops at the time of my fieldwork was through sanitary inspections.

For state officials a school shop has two main roles: educating children about proper food and supplementing their diets during the school day. In the publication issued by the Warsaw City Council, entitled “Everything You Need to Know About School Shops” (Widz, 2011), it is explained that decisions about opening a shop on school premises should not be dictated by commercial and financial motives. Every activity that is happening in schools has to be judged by the needs of students and by what is good for them, which is not necessarily what they want. The role of the school shop is to provide consumer and nutrition education for children. “A well run shop, which is used for food education” – we read – “may become a prime example of preventive care through preventive nutrition” (Widz, 2011: 20). As educational institutions, school shops should teach children about proper food and support parents and teachers in their attempts to

raise good and healthy citizens. When they fail to do that, they are perceived as highly problematic.

In October 2012, a suggested list of changes to the Act on Food and Nutrition Safety was submitted to the Polish parliament by the Polish People's Party (a centrist, agrarian, and Christian democratic party). It was aimed at school shops and the proposed changes concerned the prohibition of sales, advertising or presentation of certain foods in kindergartens and primary and secondary schools in Poland.<sup>64</sup> The proposed Act stated that the head teachers of these institutions can terminate the contract with the shop owner or vending machine distributor without giving notice, should they not adhere to these rules. The implementation of these rules would be monitored and controlled by the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate, an institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Health. In the justification following the list of the new rules, the authors of this bill explained that the reason for it was the increasing obesity of children and young people in Poland. They emphasized how important proper nutrition is for the present and future health of children. Furthermore, the future financial benefits for the state, resulting from the reduction of health problems, were highlighted.

This project was criticized by various nutrition experts – for example according to these rules a banana could not be sold, presented or advertised in schools because it contains more than 10g of sugar in the 100g of the product. The new version of a bill has been prepared.<sup>65</sup> Also the idea of solving obesity problems through national policies has been perceived by some as controversial. Many people, including school shop owners I talked to, argue that children can always buy other, “bad” products outside of school. So they can access it even if it is prohibited at school. Moreover, according to Marta Widz – an official from Warsaw City Council who created and coordinates the city programme *Wiem, co*

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<sup>64</sup> The prohibited foodstuffs were those which contain: more than 1.25g of salt in the 100 g of the product; more than 0.5g of sodium in the 100g of the product; flavour enhancers, such as E-621, E627, E631; artificial sweeteners and sweetening preparations containing fructose; more than 1 g of trans fat acids in 100g of the product; more than 10g of simple sugars in 100g of the product.

<sup>65</sup> The new version of the Law states that the prohibitions will be defined within different categories of food products, such as dairy, fruits, etc. by the Ministry of Health. This new version of the Law passed in the Polish parliament in October 2014, and it is implemented in schools in Poland from September 2015, when this thesis is being submitted.

*jem* – food producers will quickly learn how to bypass these rules. Also, it will be difficult to recognise which products are good and which are not for people who choose them, while all the responsibility will be placed on them. In her view, school shops should be transformed through showing good practices and examples, thereby encouraging change. Many people working in NGOs, which focus on children and food, share this opinion. One of them told me: *the education itself can be more valuable than prohibitions and laws. If the school really wants to change something, it can be much more effective than controls from the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate and sanctions.*

School shops have become the object of diverse debates, negotiations and controversies in Poland, and as I was often told, they are at the centre of a hidden war. One of the nutritionists from the National Food and Nutrition Institute working on the new version of the bill warned me that *everyone knows that the food industry is powerful, and they will lobby. They are already getting ready, they have excellent lawyers and they already say that this [law] is discriminatory.* These amendments have indeed been criticized by food producers who described the first version as inconsistent and factually wrong, and accused the authors of lack of consultations and cooperation with the market. They explained that the aim of food producers is not to make the society fat and that responsibility for the health of children should not be placed on them, as the greatest responsibility lies with parents (Koper, 2012). Others argued that it is a violation of consumer and trade rights. Mrs Szostek, a school shop owner, commented for example that the state cannot forbid something to which parents agree: *surely this must be a violation of parents and children's rights!*, she told me outraged.

High schools were omitted from the initially proposed amendments, because teenagers were perceived as able to make “proper” food choices. The decision on who knows and who does not know how to make proper choices concerning food has been made, albeit arbitrarily, and children below 16 years old had been defined as unable to decide on their own what is “good” for them. The new version of the law concerns all the schools, besides those for adults. As Gibson and Dempsey explain: “because children are subjects who are socially constructed as

both 'future citizens' and 'at risk', they are thereby seen as valid sites of biopolitical intervention in the name of the public good" (2015: 44). This bill is an example of such a biopolitical attempt to intervene in children's health: its disciplinary power is not directed at the individual child, but at the population of school children and it is dealing with a problem which is extremely political, at once scientific and biological, and at the same time an issue of power relations (Foucault, 1997: 245). Although this intervention is designed to discipline children's bodies and their eating practices, it strongly influences school shops mediating in the feeding process.

This bill, though considered by some to be very controversial, was perceived quite positively by the public opinion. Though it concerns food in school in general, that is it dictates what can be served in school canteens as well, in media and public debates it has been usually presented as the project fighting with the harmful influence of school shops. It has been named the "anti-junk food" law: by listing the unhealthy-junk foods and limiting their consumption it is supposed to promote "healthy food". The Chief Sanitary Inspectorate argues however, that we cannot talk about healthy and non-healthy food, because all products released for consumption are safe. It would be better to talk about "recommended" and "not recommended" food products (Koper, 2012).

In contemporary Poland there is a struggle between state officials, activists and food producers over what healthy food means, what should be recommended and what should be put on the "blacklist", how to define these, and what kind of proportions between them should exist. However, this discussion is not only about healthy and non-healthy food, but also about personal rights, the freedom to choose and the tensions between individual and collective responsibility. The interactions between sellers and customer-children taking place in school shops in Poland, have been intertwined with the politics of food and health, and biopolitical interventions. Through implementing this Law – which happens at the exact time when this thesis is submitted – the state agencies show that they are partly responsible for what children eat in schools. But simultaneously they

continue – as I have shown in chapter 6 – to *responsibilize* children and adults, particularly mothers, for the “proper” food habits of children.

#### **7.4 The Politics of Choice, Responsibility and Blame**

This chapter dealt with the contested feeding – eating interactions taking place in school shops in Warsaw. As Pierre Bourdieu puts it, “the truth of the interaction [between purchaser and vendor] is not to be found in the interaction itself.” (2005: 148). The two agents do not only engage with each other, they also engage with the social space within which they are located. Bourdieu shows this through his analysis of the relations between buyers and sellers in the house market in France. I have shown this through the case study of school shops in Warsaw. Multiple actors are engaged in the process of feeding children in school shops and because of that it is so difficult to identify who is responsible and who is to be blamed for the harm school shops are allegedly doing to children. Head teachers, teachers, parents, politicians, activists and journalists, food producers and marketers and state officials, all are interested in children’s food choices and entangled in school shop interactions.

*The 1990s were crazy* – as Mr Kowalski told me – it was *wolna amerykanka*, which could be translated as the Wild West, where no rules apply. However, with time, everything became more scrutinized and especially spheres involving children are carefully analysed and subjected to different laws. When school shops opened in many primary schools in Warsaw in the 1990s, they were an exciting novelty, not only for children, but for their parents as well. In general, they were not perceived as problematic, but rather as a good way of providing food for children in schools. Now school shops are a highly contested issue.

Although the name *sklepik* sounds fairly cute and childlike, its activity is grounded in a basic economic exchange: a customer buys certain things from a seller. It is not, of course, a simple economic interaction, however the business side of that institution cannot simply be erased. Every purchase in a school shop is an important social and economic experience for a customer-child. School shops can not only educate children about food, they also teach them about money, which is

problematic for many adults because children in general are not perceived as economic agents (Levison, 2000; Zelizer, 2002). School shops are constructed as problematic spaces because they are perceived as harmful to children, as damaging to their health through food sold there, but what is hidden behind it – what in fact is considered problematic – are children’s independent economic choices. Therefore despite the neoliberal rhetoric of the individual choice, children's choices are indeed limited by multiple social actors (Rawlins, 2009: 1104).

This happens because it is assumed that their choices will be bad for their health. Many children, in fact, know what is supposed to be healthy for them, and some of them choose it, while others prefer to choose something else. What is more, going to the school shop for children is not only about buying food, it is also about sharing it, about the social aspect of that occasion, about making choices and spending their own money – I cannot count how many times I have seen a child extremely happy and proud of herself because she takes money out of her own small wallet. These are *their* spaces.

As Daniel Cook explains, “the public battles over children’s consumption (violent video games, sexy clothes, fatty foods, and so on) are, at base, battles over which model of the child – which model of the person – will prevail.” (2004b: 149). Hence diverse groups of adults want to influence children’s decisions concerning food and shape them into particular eaters. Each of them has a certain idea of what is best for children and what is the best strategy to obtain it: by giving good examples, setting up rules or controlling policies and biopolitical interventions. Many of the strategies focus on school shops as these are often perceived as problematic when it comes to children and food, but also as obstacles to good parenthood, proper education and creating healthy citizens, as obstacles to moral food practices.

All of these debates focus on what is good for children; however, their perspectives are rarely taken into account. As Rawlins points out, “students have knowledge of healthy eating advice, yet their ability to practice making 'healthy'

choices is severely restricted by limiting their choices to those which are deemed 'healthy'“(2009: 1097). What is more, everyone wants to influence children’s food choices in school shops, but no one takes the responsibility for their decisions – that is always blamed on somebody else, be it the family, the school, the school shop owners, the food producers or the state. This “blame game” related to feeding children in Poland is reflected well in the discussion about school shops (see Tingstad, 2009). Since children are the sole responsibility of their parents, parents should have the right to decide what their children eat. However, when these practices are recognised as harmful to children by state or non-governmental agencies, these actors reserve the right to influence parental decisions or even take their right to decide about their children away.<sup>66</sup> Delineating this boundary, deciding what is harmful and what is not, is a very controversial and political issue.<sup>67</sup> The food industry is blamed as well; after all it provides the food that is considered harmful to children. Food producers reply that no food is harmful if it is eaten in the right amount, and it is parents who should teach their children to restrain their eating and balance their diets. The circle of blame and *responsibilization* closes.

As Wyness, Harrison and Buchanan (2004) point out, children are usually relegated to the “private sphere” of home, they are excluded from “public sphere”, from politics and cannot voice or fight for their own interests. At the same time children and their “needs” become the subject of many public debates. The case of school shops is a good example of evading children's actual interests, while claiming that they are equated with their needs; and fighting over which group of adults understands them better. Because school shops are highly contested spaces which involve multiple actors, they cause many negotiations regarding feeding and eating. The negotiations take place at school, among children, school shop sellers, teachers, head teachers, parents; they take place at

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<sup>66</sup> The extreme case is when social workers threaten to take the children away from their care givers, because children are considered obese and this is increasingly recognised in Poland as a form of child neglect. Few of such legal cases have been debated in media at the time of my fieldwork. In the end, the courts ruled on the side of the family.

<sup>67</sup> An example of such attempts, which has gone badly, is a Rawmarsh battle which took place in the UK when new food polices were introduced in schools, but were contested and resisted by children and their parents (e.g. Hollows and Jones, 2010; Warin, 2011).

home when parents establish rules for their children; they take place in the non-governmental organisations, which plan and implement programmes aimed at changing both the feeding and the eating practices in school shops. The negotiations also happen between diverse state agents, nutrition experts, food producers and moreover they are embedded in media discussions and representations, and intertwined with public and private debates. The feeding – eating interactions taking place in school shops in Warsaw, children's everyday food practices are entangled with the politics of the “right” choice, responsibility and blame in Poland.

## Conclusion

*Feeding my children, it's a source of anxiety for me! I think a lot about that, about what they eat, even though it is Tomek who cooks for them. Still, I try to make sure that they eat right. And it feels that I'm becoming this controlling monster, that my relationship with my daughters is sometimes reduced only to control! And that's a shame. But I don't know how to do it differently, and at the same time make sure that they eat well and develop good food habits.*

(Natalia, 40-year-old)

This quote from one of my conversations with Natalia reflects the anxieties and problems many mothers in Warsaw experience when feeding their children. What children eat and how they are fed is becoming an important social issue in Poland. This matter is also increasingly deliberated in other societies and international debates. This rising interest is reflected in the growing amount of academic and non-academic literatures covering this topic. My study adds to this field of research and fills out important gaps. I was not interested however, in writing a thesis which would reaffirm the perception of children's way of eating as a social problem. Rather I was interested in understanding why the way children eat is framed as a social problem, why does it cause so much anxiety and in what way the process of feeding children in Warsaw is negotiated between multiple social actors.

This thesis is not written solely from the perspective of mothers and children, though my main focus was on them, as they are directly involved in the feeding – eating interactions. Drawing on Matthew Desmond's (2014) concept of relational ethnography, my main research question was about the multiple feeding – eating relationships which involve various actors and settings in Warsaw. My aim was to present and discuss multiple actors, their perspectives and practices entangled in feeding – eating interactions.

Other research questions I have engaged with related to understanding how the process of feeding children in Warsaw is negotiated; in what ways does it influence the intergenerational relations; why are some parents so anxious about feeding their children; why has the topic of children and food become such an emotional and contested issue in Poland and why so many social actors are increasingly interested in it?

With my thesis I do not provide full answers to the posed questions. As Charles Tilly explains, the goal “is not to give a ‘complete’ account (whatever that might be) but to get the main connections right.” (1992: 36, in Desmond, 2014: 559). In this final chapter, I point again to these connections. I return to the research puzzle posed at the beginning, position my research within the discipline and discuss both the contribution and the limitations of my work.

My research builds on the practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Certeau, 1984; Ortner, 2006). This thesis has been mainly focused on adults' practices related to feeding children and on children's eating practices. During the twelve months of my fieldwork, I have studied fifteen families with children aged between 6 and 12, living in Warsaw. I have also conducted ethnographic research in three state primary schools in Warsaw. Moreover, I talked to state officials, to non-governmental activists, to nutritionists, dieticians and other experts, to food producers and marketers. I have also followed media debates related to the issue of children and food. Consequently, besides focusing on practices, I was also interested in the discourses and ways of framing the topic of children and food in Warsaw. The goal of this thesis was to paint a broad picture of practices, meanings, experiences and narratives related to food and children in Warsaw.

I started with a certain research puzzle: why such an everyday banal and mundane experience as feeding children has become such a contested and emotional topic in which various social actors are increasingly involved?

First of all, when engaging with and solving this puzzle, it is important to emphasize that the anxieties related to food and feeding children in contemporary Poland or Warsaw more specifically, are related to the more general anxieties and

concerns about children, and life in general, in the “post-modern”, neoliberal society. The worries related to health and body, “proper” behaviour, responsibilities and rights, the almost endless possibilities of choice and the pressure on making the “right” choices, underlie the everyday feeding and eating practices. In Poland, parents are framed as responsible for feeding their children properly, but despite their intense attempts they cannot fully control their children's eating. Moreover, their ideas about “proper” feeding might not only be in conflict with their children’s perspectives on eating, but also with the ideas of others who are engaged in the process of feeding children. Parents have the right to feed their children in whatever way they want to, however, teachers have the responsibility to take care of children – and these may prove to be contradictory. In the same way, other state agencies are responsible for caring about citizens and keeping the society healthy, but their attempts to do so might clash with parents’ rights to raise their children according to their beliefs and worldviews or the rights of the neoliberal, free markets.

Secondly, the increasing anxiety and the changing experiences of feeding children in Poland are related to various changes caused by the post-socialist transformations, discussed in the introductory chapter. Some of these changes concern families. In the 1990s, the state withdrew from the family life placing more responsibility on raising children on their parents, especially mothers. The position of children in the society is slowly changing as Poland is becoming a *neontocracy* that is a society focused on children (Lancy, 2008: 26). The responsibilities of parents to socialise children in the right way have increased, placing more pressure on them. As Renata Hryciuk and Elżbieta Korolczuk explain in their book on parenthood and politics in Poland, “in contemporary Poland issues related to parenthood became a battleground not only of family models, but also of social life and democracy” (2015b: 20).

The issue of food and “healthy” food has become especially important, particularly in regards to children. There is more and more expert advice on how to feed children properly, which in an attempt to discipline and socialise parents into proper feeders, often undermines their feeding practices and their knowledge

about what is good for their children, consequently causing anxiety and tension no matter their social class:

This anxiety can be understood as a response to the overbearing neoliberal discourse of individual choice and responsibility surrounding issues of perfect parenting. If the message to working class families is that they must aim to be like middle class parents then the message to middle class families is to maintain the facade, at least, of having model parenting skills. (Rawlins, 2009: 1096)

Moreover, with the post-socialist transformation the food market has changed in Poland. As I argued in chapter 3, the category of *children's food* emerged with more and more products intended only for children and advertised to them and their mothers. The commercial meanings attached to food intersect with the family life and influence people's moral dispositions to food and the negotiations regarding feeding and eating.

In Poland, children are seen as innocent and naïve in their relations with the market and often manipulated by it (see Buckingham and Tingstad, 2014a). This as well causes tension and anxiety and is one of the reasons for framing the issue of children and food as a social problem.

Thirdly, the increasing overweight and obesity rates in Poland, more than the problem of undernourishment, have been framed as a public health issue, as I have shown in chapter 6. It is one of the direct causes for multiple social actors to get involved in what children in Poland eat and how they are fed – everyone wants to solve the problem of growing obesity rates among children. The state agencies have become again interested in what and how parents feed their children, and engaged in their private lives in an attempt to normalize adults' feeding and children's eating practices (Foucault, 1991). Simultaneously, the responsibility for how children eat is shifted from one social actor to another, be it the state, the school, the family or the market, as they all engage in, what I call, the politics of responsibility and blame, discussed on the example of school shops in chapter 7.

Fourthly – which circles back to the first point I made about the anxieties related to children and food – all of those influences and changes are appropriated by people in some way. They embody these ideas of what is right and wrong and respond – sometimes with enthusiasm, other times with disregard and contempt – to the multiple moral discourses on children and food and ways of framing that issue; they employ various technologies of the self in order to become and behave like proper, post-modern, neoliberal feeders and eaters (Foucault, 1988). Parents, children and teachers are increasingly *responsibilized* for their feeding and eating practices. They are framed as responsible or irresponsible citizen-consumers. It seems that all of people’s food choices and decisions are carefully controlled, by others or by themselves, and framed as either bad or good and there is more and more pressure to make the right choices.

The process of feeding children has become such an emotional and problematic issue because it involves multiple negotiations that are influenced by the above mentioned changes. My thesis to a large extent is about these negotiations and I have laid the theoretical grounds for it in chapter 1. The negotiations occur because diverse social actors have different ideas about how to feed children properly and how to socialise them into proper eaters. These ideas further clash with children's ideas about feeding and eating. So adults and children engage in multiple negotiations and power relations. I have treated negotiations as a sort of tool which allowed me to better grasp and understand the multiple feeding – eating relationships in Warsaw.

I have distinguished and discussed four connected layers of negotiations: internal negotiations, interactional negotiations, negotiating the order of the interactions and the external influences on the negotiations. The 1<sup>st</sup> layer concerns “inner” individual negotiations: each person relates to their wants, needs and preferences regarding food and feeding/eating, as well as their obligations and appropriate practices at any given situation, and negotiates between them. Chapter 3 in particular delves into these embodied processes, which are not necessarily conscious and which build on certain food categorizations and individual moral dispositions.

Then, these individual moral dispositions to feeding and eating are often negotiated through interactions with others – this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> interactional layer of the negotiations. What one person wants as a result of their inner negotiations (for example to feed a child a vegetable soup), another person participating in that interaction may not want to do (a child might not want to eat that soup). This results in verbal and non-verbal negotiations which I have discussed in chapter 5. As a result, a mother might have to agree to bend her initial plans, and for example, feed a child less soup and promise her a dessert afterwards. In a similar way, a child might eat something she initially did not want to; she might decide that eating a bit of soup makes sense if she will receive a dessert afterwards. Building on Michel de Certeau's theory (1984), I have argued that adults employ diverse *strategies* of feeding children and through that establish a hegemonic order, assuming the right and proper place. They try to constantly control and discipline children's food practices (Foucault, 1991). However, children with the use of diverse *tactics* renegotiate this order and introduce their own ideas about eating. These negotiations are a part of the socialisation process, of socialising children into particular eaters and their parents into particular feeders.

As chapters 4 and 5 illustrate, this second layer of negotiations involves not only adults and children, but also mothers and fathers, parents and grandparents, or parents and teachers when they interact and their ideas about and practices of feeding children are confronted, and moreover challenged by children's ideas about eating.

These everyday interactions and negotiations follow certain established rules and patterns, they are embedded in a certain interaction order (Goffman, 1983), which, as chapter 4 demonstrates, is also negotiated and renegotiated (Strauss, 1978). This relates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> layer: negotiating the order of the interactions. Children in their lives not only have to learn, contest and engage with the rules established at home, but also with a certain order and rules regarding feeding and eating at school. The two spheres of children's lives, adults both at home and at school engage in multiple negotiations with children and each other, they

discipline not only children, but each other as well in regards to feeding and eating practices.

Negotiations regarding how children are fed and how they eat involve also state officials and government agencies, food producers and marketers, non-governmental activists, nutrition experts, journalists etc., which I mainly delve into in chapters 6 and 7. I frame this as the 4<sup>th</sup> layer of negotiations: the external influences. Each of these social actors relates to certain ideas of what is “good” and “bad” for children and attempts to change adults' and children's practices accordingly, attempts to normalize them in consonance with their perspectives on right and wrong food practices. As I have shown through chapters 3 to 7, these disciplining efforts are appropriated by people in their everyday feeding and eating practices. If we want to tackle the obesity problems in Poland or understand the changing social relations in contemporary Warsaw, especially the relationships people have with food, we have to recognise and explore these interconnections.

This thesis is focused on Poland, and specifically on the case of Warsaw, but it builds on and contributes to the broader scholarships of food studies and childhood studies. Anthropologists have been interested in food and in childhood since the beginning of the discipline (e.g. Mead, 1930; Richards, 1932, 1956; Fortes, 1938). However, both topics were usually in the background, an element of studying people's everyday lives or learning about their culture through understanding the socialisation processes. Both the topics of food and of childhood have not been studied more extensively until the 1980s, and in Poland have not been studied much at all. At that time the interdisciplinary fields of food studies (e.g. Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1992; Hamada et al., 2015) and childhood studies (e.g. Mayall, 1994a; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998) have developed. My thesis draws from and adds to these disciplines.

Combining these two areas of childhood and food studies, both loaded with symbolic, emotional and political meanings, creates an extremely interesting research topic. There has been an increasing academic interest in studying

children and food (see e.g. Jing, 2000a; James, Kjørholt and Tingstad, 2009a; Punch, McIntosh and Emond, 2012a; Pike and Kelly, 2014). While my research fits into and backs this trend, it is also unique in many respects.

Most of the research on children and food in Poland has been done by nutritionists.<sup>68</sup> This strengthens the perception of children and food through the lens of nutritional science, reducing children's varied relationships with food to nutrients intake and deficiencies – a perspective which I challenge in this thesis. My research moves away from the dominating perspective on children and food focused on health. Instead I critically engage with that perspective and show other multiple meanings and experiences attached to food, feeding and eating.

I argue at the beginning of this thesis that feeding and eating are usually studied separately (e.g. DeVault, 1991; Mol, 2008; Abbots and Lavis, 2013a), while because they are inextricably connected and continuously influence each other, they should be studied together, in relation to each other. As I show in the thesis, the ways in which parents and other adults, state agencies and food companies feed children are always influenced by children themselves: by their likes and dislikes, by their moods and preferences, by their choices – these influences do not have to be intentional. Therefore, I demonstrate that studying the process of feeding has to involve children and studying how they eat.

Moreover, in my thesis I combine the structural (Douglas, 1975) and more dynamic, interactional (Goffman, 1967, 1983) approaches to food. The two are often perceived as contradictory and mutually exclusive perspectives on people's relationships and engagements with food. However, I show that while food plays a part in structuring people's lives, especially children's lives are based on certain repeated patterns and people's approach to food is based on certain categorizations; these are simultaneously dynamic and negotiated. As chapter 4 illustrates, the food patterns and routines, though repeated daily, are a result of certain negotiated interaction order. Likewise, meals, despite being eminently

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<sup>68</sup> There is growing social sciences literature about feeding infants and babies (e.g. Zdrojewska-Żywiecka, 2012; Radkowska-Walkowicz, 2014; Maciejewska-Mroczek, 2014), however I focus on older children.

structured events, are at the same time highly dynamic sites of multiple negotiations, which I discuss in chapter 5. Also, as chapter 3 shows, the categorizations that organise people's attitudes to food and their feeding and eating practices are in fact changeable and dynamic. Food, and the related practices and experiences, bring both the structure and multiple dynamic interactions to adults' and children's lives.

My thesis also contributes the conception of food morality, developed in chapter 3, to the anthropology of food. Building on Jarrett Zigon's theory (2007, 2008), I develop John Coveney's ideas (2006) and introduce the concept of *food morality*, which explains the multiple perspectives on food, multiple ideas of what is "good" and "bad" food and people's food practices. These perspectives are reflected in and connect moral discourses on food and people's practices. People embody certain moral dispositions which guide their everyday practices. However, these dispositions are plural and might even be contradictory (see also Lahire, 2011). Both adults and children can embody multiple perspectives on food, multiple ideas of what is right and wrong, and they enact them according to the situation and negotiate them through their feeding – eating interactions.

Many studies focus on one aspect or space of children's food practices, be it home (e.g. James, Curtis and Ellis 2009; O'Connell and Brien, 2014); school (e.g. Burgess and Morrison, 1998; Bugge, 2010; Pike, 2010a) or other institutions (e.g. Punch et al., 2009); commercial life (e.g. Cook, 2009a, 2009b) or food education (e.g. Salazar, Feenstra and Ohmart, 2008; Pike and Colquhoun, 2009). My research demonstrates that in order to better understand the feeding – eating relationships, we have to study multiple sites of children's food practices and multiple social actors engaged in the process of feeding children. Various groups of adults not only engage in relationships with children mediated through food and attempt to socialise children in their food practices, they also influence and negotiate with each other. Therefore painting a comprehensive picture of the issue of children and food in Warsaw demanded a multi-sited and relational ethnography, which I discuss in more detail in chapter 2.

With my research I strengthen the position of childhood studies, by showing that doing research with children not only enriches our knowledge about their experiences and their social worlds, but in focusing on the social worlds of children we can further understand that of adults. In the same way as we ask parents about their children's practices, we should ask children about their parents' practices. Studying the family or the school life, as well as researching the issue of children and food, cannot and should not be done without including children into the research process (e.g. Christiansen and James, 2008).

Moreover, I analyse the relations and negotiations between adults and children, which have been broadly discussed before (e.g. Grieshaber, 1997; Anving and Sellerberg, 2010; O'Connell and Brannen, 2014). My research provides a unique framework of negotiations, discussed in more detail above, to analyse the struggles between adults and children in relation to food. In order to study the direct struggles between adults and children I relate to Michel de Certeau's (1984) concept of strategies and tactics (see chapter 5). Although it puts greater emphasis on the antagonistic adult – child relations, in a way concealing the often agreeable and friendly feeding – eating interactions they engage in; I believe that it sheds new light on these relations and frames the process of generationing in a new way (see Alanen, 2001a, 2001b).

Finally, my research contributes to the development of anthropology of food (or food studies) and anthropology of childhood (childhood studies) in Poland, where both of these fields are relatively new. With my research, I especially reinforce the position of food studies, demonstrating how essential they are for understanding current global problems related to health, food and children. My research also provides new regional and cultural context to the discussions and the literature on children and food.

My research and this thesis of course have some limitations. One limitation relates to what also made my study unique: studying multiple sites. Focusing on multi-sited research meant that my attention and time given to each site were limited, and hence each of them could have been studied more thoroughly. As

Matthew Desmond points out, “relational ethnography necessarily sacrifices some ethnographic depth in order to investigate connections, transactions, and processes shooting through multiple contexts” (2014: 570).

Another important omission relates to the issue of malnutrition and undernourishment in Poland. I have discussed the obesity debates, but largely disregarded the other issue related to children and food and framed as a social problem in Poland. This was mainly dictated by my interlocutors – I followed them, their experiences and anxieties.

In general, I have presented only a fragment of a whole picture of the issue of children and food in Warsaw. I have engaged only with a part of a puzzle. I did not focus for example on struggles and negotiations in poor families, living in deprived socio-economic conditions. Their feeding and eating experiences are surely different. It is important to emphasize that my research is not representative; my thesis tells only a part of a story about feeding and eating in Warsaw.

It would be interesting for example to focus more attention on class differences in regards to feeding and eating in Warsaw. However, as I have explained in chapters 1 and 2, I was more interested in people's relationships and experiences with food as a result of their individual dispositions rather than class affiliations. Moreover, I have worked with fifteen families, which can be characterized as middle and working class, however I do not think that I can make appropriate conclusions about class practices based on a study with such a limited number of people. In the thesis, I focus on the age rather than class or even gender differences.

Another issue relates to the place I have focused on. I have focused only on Warsaw, whereas it would certainly be interesting and insightful to study also smaller cities or countryside areas, where the feeding and eating practices and related experiences probably are different, which would allow me to create a more comprehensive picture of the issue of children and food in Poland.

These various limitations of my research can be further developed in other research projects. Those loose threads can be picked up either in my own future

research or by other researchers. The point is that my research, together with its limitations, provides a fruitful ground for further studies.

One of the threads that can be further explored relates to policies. This was not a policy oriented research thesis; however it can provide some insights for thinking about policies. The main argument, which I have developed for example in chapter 7, would be to include children in the process of creating any sort of interventions and policies related to them. A more child-centred approach to children's food and health education can be more effective (e.g. Wyness, Harrison and Buchanan, 2004). The decisions about children should not be made without them, their voices should not be omitted and this is how they are made in Poland. In the same way, parents should be involved in the process of creating policies regarding them. As chapter 6 illustrates, when framing the issue of the growing overweight and obesity in Poland as a public health crisis, it should be taken into consideration that this is only one way of perceiving people's relationships with food, and there are many more meanings and experiences related to feeding and eating. Moreover, many structural issues related to class differences, the accessibility to "good food" or healthy eating advice, financial constraints, rituals and traditions, are omitted when people are blamed for their "bad" food choices causing overweight and obesity. Realising these omissions and understanding these differences can lead to better shaped and more effective policies.

The goal of this thesis was to show that what may seem like a simple and mundane experience of feeding children in Warsaw is in fact extremely complex, political and involves multiple actors. The feeding of children is a biological, social and cultural experience, which has different practical and symbolic meanings. Different people and social actors, engaged more or less directly, have diverse views on how to properly feed children, they relate to multiple moral perspectives on food and attempt to socialise both children and adults into particular kinds of eaters and feeders. Therefore adults negotiate with children and with other adults how children are fed and how they eat. This diversity of perspectives, narratives and experiences and the multiplicity of negotiations; the tensions between rights, responsibilities and making the "right" choices, are important to realise if we want

to better understand the social worlds of children and parents, the relations between the family, the school, the market and the state or the conceptions of modern personhood embedded in the politics of food and health education in post-socialist Poland.

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## Appendix 1. List of the families participating in my research<sup>69</sup>

	Family	Family members I talked to	Age	Occupation	"Class affiliation"
1.	Marcinak	Paulina	42	Musician	Middle class
		Paweł	43	Musician	
		Krzyś	11	Student	
		Basia	5	Preschooler	
2.	Szymańscy	Natalia	40	Administration official	Middle class
		Tomek	40	Photographer	
		Julia	9	Student	
		Kasia	5	Preschooler	
		Władysław (maternal grandfather)	73	Administration official	
		Anna (maternal grandmother)	72	teacher	
		Hanna (paternal grandmother)	75	teacher	
		Wojciech (paternal grandfather)	76	In administration	
		Krystyna (Nanny/"grandma")	64	Cleaner	
3.	Podolscy	Małgosia	37	NGO worker	Middle class
		Mikołaj	38	In advertising	
		Bartek	7	Student	
		Zuzia	4	Preschooler	
4.	Kalinowscy	Anna	33	Office administrator	Middle class
		Basia	7	Student	
		Tosia	5	Preschooler	
5.	Całka	Marta	37	Businesswoman	Upper-Middle class
		Zosia	12	Student	
6.	Górniak	Dominika	29	Stay at home mom	Middle class
7.	Raszko	Weronika	30	Stay at home mom	Middle class
		Piotr	35	Photographer	
		Kasia	6,5	Student	
		Anna (maternal grandmother)	55	Doctor	
8.	Wilik	Dorota	45	Historian	Middle class
		Hania	12	Student	
9.	Galcer	Justyna	45	Teacher	Middle class
		Agnieszka	12	Student	
10.	Palik	Kasia	32	Florist	Working class
		Olek	6	Student	
11.	Szwalik	Marysia	30	Stay at home mom	Lower-Middle class
		Sylwia	8	Student	
12.	Woźniak	Aleksandra	36	Accountant	Lower-Middle class
		Ewa	6	Student	
13.	Ukleja	Magda	40	Nurse	Working class
		Zuzia	10	Student	
14.	Malinowscy	Aneta	37	Stay at home mom	Working class
		Przemek	11	Student	
15.	Kowalscy	Asia	36	Cleaner	Working class
		Kamila	11	Student	

<sup>69</sup> The names have been changed.

## Appendix 2. Information about my research provided to schools



Warszawa,  
12 marca 2013

### INFORMACJA O BADANIACH

Jestem studentką drugiego roku studiów doktoranckich z nauk społecznych w School of Oriental and African Studies w Londynie. Mój projekt badawczy poświęcony jest karmieniu dzieci w Warszawie. Za zgodą dyrektora pani XXXXX, będę przez kolejnych kilka tygodni realizować badania w szkole podstawowej nr XXXX, im. XXX. Moje badania opierają się na obserwacjach i rozmowach, żadnego rodzaju dane osobowe nie będą wykorzystywane. Projekt spełnia wszystkie wymogi komisji etycznych, a charakter moich badań jest czysto naukowy.

Z poważaniem,

Zofia Boni

### Translation:

Information about the research

I am in my second year of the doctoral studies in social sciences in School of Oriental and African Studies in London. My research project focuses on feeding children in Warsaw. With the consent from the head teacher (name provided), I will spend the next few weeks doing research in the school (number). My research is based on observations and conversations; I will not be gathering and using any sort of personal data. The research project meets the requirements of the ethics committee and its goal is strictly academic.

Best Regards,

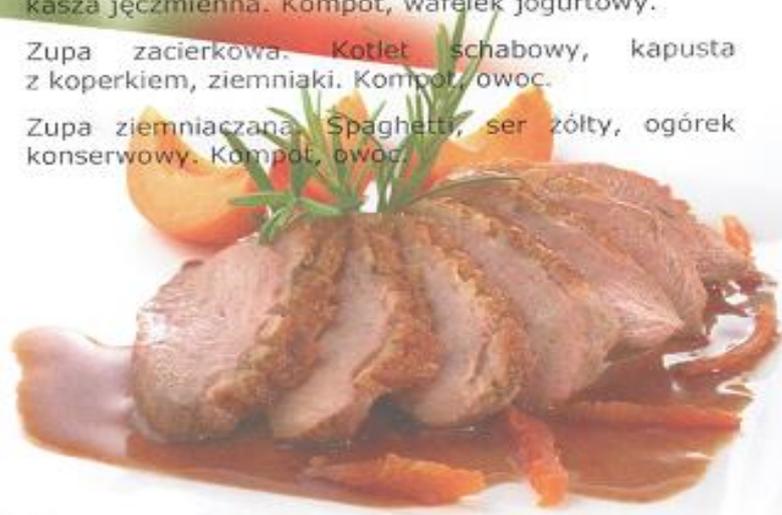
Zofia Boni

### Appendix 3. A weekly menu from the canteen in school B.

# Jadłospis

## OBIADY

18.04.13	Zupa krupnik ryżowy. Sznyceł z piersi kurczaka, surówka z kapusty pekińskiej, ziemniaki. Kompot, owoc.
19.04.13	Zupa ogórkowa. Naleśniki z serem i polewą z owoców leśnych. Kompot.
22.04.13	Zupa pieczarkowa z makaronem. Kotlet mielony, marchewka z groszkiem, ziemniaki. Kompot, wafelek jogurtowy.
23.04.13	Zupa barszcz biały. Kurczak w pięciu smakach, brokuł, ryż. Kompot, owoc.
24.04.13	Rosół drobiowy z makaronem. Udko kurczaka, surówka warzywna, brzoskwinia, ziemniaki. Kompot, jogurt.
25.04.13	Zupa pomidorowa. Polędwiczki wieprzowe, surówka z buraków, ziemniaki. Sok jabłkowy.
26.04.13	Zupa kalafiorowa. Ryba smażona, surówka z kwaszonej kapusty, ziemniaki. Kompot, cipsy „Plasterki jabłka”.
29.04.13	Zupa grochowa. Bitki wieprzowe, sałatka warzywna, kasza jęczmienna. Kompot, wafelek jogurtowy.
30.04.13	Zupa zacierkowa. Kotlet schabowy, kapusta z koperkiem, ziemniaki. Kompot, owoc.
06.05.13	Zupa ziemniaczana. Spaghetti, ser żółty, ogórek konserwowy. Kompot, owoc.



Translation:

<b><i>Obiad menu</i></b>	
18.04.13	Rice and barley soup, chicken breast schnitzel, coleslaw, potatoes. Compote and fruit.
19.04.13	Pickled cucumber soup. Pancakes with cheese and wild berries' sauce. Compote.
22.04.13	Mushroom soup with noodles. Meatloaf/meatballs, carrot and peas, potatoes. Compote and yogurt waffle.
23.04.13	White borsch. All spice chicken, broccoli, rice. Compote, fruit
24.04.13	Chicken broth with noodles. Chicken leg, vegetable salad, peach, potatoes. Compote, yogurt.
25.04.13	Tomato soup. Pork sirloin, beetroot salad, potatoes. Apple juice.
26.04.13	Cauliflower soup. Fried fish, sauerkraut salad, potatoes. Compote, crisps "apple slices".
29.04.13	Peas' soup. "Pounded" pork meat, vegetable salad, barley. Compote, yogurt waffle.
30.04.13	Vegetable soup. Breaded schnitzel, cabbage with dill, potatoes. Compote, fruit.
06.05.13	Potato soup. Spaghetti, cheese, pickled cucumber. Compote, fruit.