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The Swedish School Meal as a Public Meal

Collective Thinking, Actions and Meal Patterns

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Abstract

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The aim of this thesis is to study what role the Swedish school meal has as a public meal in Swedish culture. An additional aim is to study the meal patterns of children, including the school meal.

An ethnological questionnaire with 192 informants was used to study people's perceptions and memories of the school meal. The school meal was seen as part of the Swedish welfare state, but also as a second-class meal, which did not live up to the ideal, which was a meal with the same values as a meal served at home.

Observations in school canteens (25 hours), interviews with the school meal staff (six informants) and focus group interviews with children in grade 4-5 (seven groups with a total of 52 children) were carried out at three schools in central Sweden. Firstly, the data was analysed as to how the teachers interacted with the children in relation to the pedagogic meal. The teachers took on three different roles: "the sociable teacher role", "the educating teacher role" and "the evasive teacher role". Secondly, the children's understanding of food and meals in the school meal context was analysed. The results showed that the children used ideas from the adult world among their peers in the school meal situation. This included the implementation of institutional commensality, the telling of stories about food and the classification of foods in dichotomies.

A questionnaire covering the meal patterns of the children and intake of some snack foods was also distributed to the children attending grade 4-5 at the three schools and their parents. Matched pairs (n=147) were analysed for agreement. Most children had a regular meal pattern, and there was general agreement between child and parent reports, except for sweets and chocolate.

The expectations on the school meal are high. At the same time, there appears to be a social construction depicting the school meal in a negative way. In order to come to terms with the negative public view of the school meal, the social construction of the school meal needs to be addressed.

Keywords: school meal, children, school, social constructionism, teachers, agreement, meal

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To my family

*We don't see things as they are,
we see them as we are*

Anaïs Nin

List of Papers

This thesis is based on the following papers, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.

- I Persson Osowski, C., Göranzon, H., Fjellström, C. (2010). Perceptions and memories of the free school meal in Sweden. *Food, Culture and Society*, 13(4), 555-572.
- II Persson Osowski, C., Göranzon, H., Fjellström, C. Teachers' interaction with children in the school meal situation. The example of pedagogic meals in Sweden. *Submitted*.
- III Persson Osowski, C., Göranzon, H., Fjellström, C. (2012). Children's understanding of food and meals in the foodscape at school. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 36(1), 54-60.
- IV Persson Osowski, C., Fjellström, C., Olsson, U., Göranzon, H. (2011). Agreement between child and parent reports of 10- to 12-year-old children's meal pattern and intake of snack foods. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, 25(1), 50-58.

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Introduction

The present thesis addresses the role of the school meal as a public meal in Swedish culture, here meaning how people collectively share patterns of thinking, feeling and acting (Hofstede, 1996). In Sweden, school meals that are free of charge and financed by taxes have been served to children for over 60 years (Gullberg, 2004). Besides Sweden, free school meals are only served in Finland (Tikkanen & Urho, 2009) and Estonia (Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia, 2007). Thus, the Swedish free school meal is nearly unique worldwide, and this raises a number of research questions that this thesis intends to answer, with the main one being: what role does the school meal have as a public meal in Swedish culture?

The Swedish school meal is a source of constant debate (Gullberg, 2004), often with negative associations regarding the food and the environment (Lundmark, 2002). In order to better understand and come to terms with the negative image of the school meal, the collective views of this public meal need to be studied. Therefore, one of the studies in the present thesis focuses on what perceptions and memories people have of the school meal, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the free school meal as a phenomenon in Swedish culture.

The rest of the thesis centres on children currently having school meals in Sweden. Children may be defined in different ways. The present thesis focuses on children attending the last year of preschool (usually aged 6 years) and children attending primary school (usually aged 7 years to 11 or 12 years). According to Palojoiki (2003), families have the primary responsibility of introducing children into the prevailing food culture, but schools should support this work. However, learning about food in institutional settings is different from learning in everyday settings, as in the latter, learning is not the primary goal (Palojoiki, 2003). In Sweden, school meals are seen as a teaching occasion by the authorities, something that is referred to as “pedagogic meals” (National Food Administration, 2007). There is a scarcity of studies regarding the pedagogic meal and how the school meal is used as a teaching occasion. The present thesis therefore looks at how teachers interact with children in the school meal situation in relation to the pedagogic meal. It also focuses on children’s understanding of food and meals in the school meal context. Furthermore, since children eat their meals both at home and at school, it is of interest to look at children’s whole meal pattern, including the school meal, an issue that will also be raised.

The Swedish school meal as a public meal

The history and ideology of the free school meal in Sweden

In 1946, the Swedish parliament decided to introduce school meals funded by state grants. Thus, this year marks the beginning of public school meals in Sweden, although it took almost 30 years before the parliamentary decision had been fully implemented in all municipalities (Halling, Nordlund, & Jacobson, 1990).

The rationale for introducing a free school meal was multifaceted. The advocates of school meals saw them as promoting social equality, with all children receiving the same food, and gender equality, by allowing women to work outside the home instead of staying at home taking care of domestic tasks such as preparing lunchboxes. School meals were also introduced as a way to curb bad eating habits and malnutrition by serving nutritious meals. Thus, school was not only supposed to teach children and provide them with knowledge, but also foster healthy citizens, making the upbringing of children a responsibility not just for parents, but for society as a whole (Gullberg, 2006).

After about twenty years of state grants, the municipalities were made responsible for the school meal in 1967 (Halling, et al., 1990), but it was not until 1997 that a law was passed stipulating that all pupils of compulsory school age are to be offered a free school meal (Swedish Parliament, 2008). In 2011, a new law was passed, specifying the pupils should be offered nutritious school meals (Swedish Parliament, 2010). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate scrutinizes whether the law is followed (Swedish Schools Inspectorate). There is also a web-based system called “School Food Sweden”, which allows schools and municipalities to evaluate their school food provision. The instrument covers six areas, namely food choice and provision, nutritional adequacy, safe and hygienic food, service and the pedagogic lunch, environmental impact as well as organization and policy (School Food Sweden).

The rationale for serving school meals has thus shifted over the years. Before the parliamentary decision, only poor children with special needs were served school meals (Gullberg, 2006). With the parliamentary decision, the goal of curbing malnutrition among children was expanded (Halling, et al., 1990). Today, school meals are often mentioned in terms of tackling obesity and improving the diets of children from a health perspective (National Food Administration, 2007; Prell, 2010).

School meals as part of the welfare state

In the 20th century, eating outside the home became more and more common. This is also the case with people attending public institutions, for instance children at school. As children spent more time at school, the responsibility for feeding children shifted from the family to the schools (Trubek, 2012). Children's eating is thus the responsibility of both home and school. A modern example of how this division is realized may be seen in the development of a school meal app for smartphones in Sweden, which was created in order to enable parents to make sure they serve a dinner in the evening that is different from the lunch their children had at school (Egerup Produktion AB). Thus, this functions as a complement to school meal menus, which have been published for years in local newspapers.

To what degree the feeding of children is a responsibility of educational institutions depends on the culture (Trubek, 2012). In Sweden, the welfare state has taken an uncommonly large responsibility for children's feeding, by the serving of a free public school meal. Thus, by looking at school meals, we can better our understanding of the division of responsibility for children's eating between the public and the private domain. A political scientist or sociologist would probably look at this issue from another perspective, whereas in the present thesis, the school meal's role in the Swedish welfare state is portrayed by a food researcher.

According to Esping-Andersen (1990, 2000), the welfare states of the world can be divided into ideal types based on their characteristics. Although his typology has received some criticism, it is still the one most commonly used (Arts & Gelissen, 2002). It is nevertheless important to note that Esping-Andersen's categorization was first made over two decades ago, and changes have occurred since then. For instance, Swedish policies have comprised clear liberal elements in the past few years.

Esping-Andersen (1990, 2000) described three welfare state models based on how social responsibilities are shared between the state, market and family. According to the liberal welfare regime, which is found in countries like United States, Canada and Australia, a minimal state is accentuated with social policies only directed toward the poor. Instead there is a focus on the market and the buying of private welfare. The conservative welfare regime is found in countries such as Austria, France, Germany and Italy. In this regime, welfare is based on a predominately male work force. This regime relies heavily on the family to take care of social services. The social democratic regime is found in the Scandinavian countries, including Sweden. Here welfare is universal, with a limited market, public services directed toward everyone, and benefits largely distributed equally. In this welfare regime, traditional family chores become a task of the welfare state (Arts & Gelissen, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Esping-Andersen, 2000). This is also the case with the school meal, where the school is seen as an institution that should

take over some of the responsibilities of the family and carry out social and health-related political activities (Gullberg, 2006; Haastrup, 2003). This can be contrasted to Norway, for instance, where food provision and the teaching of good habits by tradition are seen as a family matter (Andresen & Elvbakken, 2007). As a result, children bring their own lunch to school in Sweden's neighbouring Nordic countries, i.e. Denmark, Iceland and Norway (Haastrup, 2003).

Berggren & Trägårdh (2010) have offered an alternative way of describing the Swedish welfare state, which has been termed "statist individualism". This implies that there is a key alliance in between state and individual, rather than family and state. This way, the individual becomes autonomous and liberated from depending on civil society. Instead, there is an increased dependency on the state. This is also true for children, and children's rights are fairly strong in Sweden. If I apply this theory to the school meal, it is implied that children are not dependent on their parents in order to receive a meal during their school day, as this responsibility has been taken over by the state.

Perceptions of public meals

School meals are served within the public sector. Institutional meals are considered to be essential or desirable, but do not constitute the primary goal of the institution, for instance schools (Edwards & Hartwell, 2009). According to Edwards (2000), public meals are eaten by necessity and are characterized by a lack of personal choice. Traditionally, public meals have been regarded as "second-class meals" consisting of heavy food served by unprofessional and uninspired staff in poor surroundings. The aim of public meals is to nourish and refuel its consumers, which forms a contrast to the commercial sector, where the paying customer eats out for pleasure as a social event or eats out at work for business reasons. According to Lundmark's (2002) analysis of articles in newspapers and journals in Sweden, school meals are often associated with boring and disgusting food as well as with a noisy meal environment. Poppendieck (2010), who has looked at the American context, also posited that school meals suffer from a bad reputation as they remind people of a noisy and crowded environment, long lines, too little time to eat and a negative image of the food served.

Cardello, Bell and Cramer (1996), were able to show in a series of studies that people have a negative attitude toward institutional foods, which may be classified as stereotypes. Edwards, Meiselman, Edwards and Leshner (2003) moreover demonstrated that the acceptability of identically prepared foods varied depending on the eating location, with expensive restaurants receiving higher scores than institutional settings. These negative preconceived ideas towards institutional meals constitute a phenomenon that can be labelled "Institutional stereotyping" (Cardello, et al., 1996; Edwards & Hartwell,

2009). The factors causing negative attitudes towards institutional foods may be lack of variety, food presentation and physical dining setting, with the media being a source of origin for the negative attitudes (Cardello, et al., 1996). Cardello et al. (1996) concluded that institutional foodservices should address the causes and solutions to these attitudes rather than trying to improve the quality of foods, which might already be good.

In a study by Edwards and Hartwell (2009), students mentioned that the image of institutional foods is changing, partly due to celebrity chefs entering sectors such as schools. Probably the most famous one, Jamie Oliver, has striven to change the preparation of school food in England. This may be seen as a result of the trend emphasizing the expertise of the trained cook or chef (Trubek, 2012). This is also a gender issue, with a male cook, usually working in a prestigious restaurant, entering the public sector, which usually consists of a female work force (O'Doherty Jensen & Holm, 1997), often referred to as “dinner ladies” rather than cooks (Trubek, 2012). Edwards and Hartwell (2009) claim that, although people still have negative attitudes towards institutional meals, these perceptions are changing as a result of improved meals. The authors conclude that people are no longer satisfied with second-class food but expect more. However, these rising expectations regarding the quality of the meal constitute a challenge to institutions, which are also faced with limited finances.

According to Lundmark (2002, 2003), there are several aspects that need to be included when looking at the quality of a meal. Lundmark created a model of meal quality consisting of a pyramid divided into three parts: *base quality*, including energy/nutrients, hygiene and sensory aspects at the bottom, *added value*, including service and surroundings/settings in the middle and the *golden edge*, signifying general good characteristics of the meal, at the top of the pyramid. In order to create a positive meal experience, the whole pyramid has to be taken into account. Lundmark (2003) states that in Sweden, only the base of the pyramid has traditionally been considered in relation to the school meal, with the special focus being on nutrition. It seems as if this is a relic from the beginning of the 20th century and a time when the welfare state was being established, when the nutritional content of food was highly valued and the social and cultural aspects of food were ignored (Lupton, 1996; Mattsson Sydner & Fjellström, 2007). The present guidelines for school meals still have a major focus on nutrition, although other aspects are now also included (National Food Administration, 2007).

Guidelines for school meals

Over the years, the public school meal has been surrounded by various rules and guidelines. In 1981, the National Food Administration was made responsible for the nutritional recommendations regarding school meals (Halling, et al., 1990). The latest edition, “Good Food at School”, was published

in 2007 and is based on the 2005 Swedish Nutrition Recommendations (National Food Administration, 2007). However, the guidelines are not compulsory. According to the guidelines, the school meal should consist of a cooked main dish, raw or cooked vegetables, skimmed milk or water to drink and bread with margarine. The pupils should have two dishes to choose from plus a vegetarian alternative. It is advised that the food is nutritionally calculated, with one portion contributing 30% of the daily energy needs of the child. Another goal is that all pupils should have 100-125 grams of fruit and vegetables with their school lunch every day. Hygiene aspects are also raised. Other advice for the school meal include that the meals should be served in a pleasant and calm meal environment and that the pupils should be given sufficient time to eat. The school should not serve any sweets, ice cream, pastries, snacks or sugary soft drinks. Teachers are encouraged to eat with the children, which is referred to as pedagogic meals (National Food Administration, 2007).

Since the guidelines were published in 2007, they have been evaluated, among other ways through a web questionnaire directed towards administrative dietitians in all municipalities. The results from the evaluation indicate that most administrative dietitians were well aware of the guidelines. Although the guidelines were followed to varying degrees at different schools, the majority of the administrative dietitians stated that they have improved the quality of school lunches. They moreover claimed that the guidelines have improved the understanding of what importance the school meal has for children among the school meal staff, but less so among other groups like the teaching staff, school leaders, politicians, parents and pupils (Brugård Konde & Carlbom Hård, 2009).

The pedagogic meal

Having a school meal does not constitute the core activity at school. Still, school is frequently mentioned as an arena for health promotion and health education in children, often in association with the serving of a school meal (Aranceta Bartrina & Pérez-Rodrigo, 2006; Evans & Harper, 2009; Pagliarini, Gabbiadini, & Ratti, 2005; Prell, Berg, Jonsson, & Lissner, 2005; Stewart, Treasure, Gill, & Chadwick, 2006; Tikkanen, 2009). According to Morrison (1996), although children's eating is essentially a private and family matter, children are to be taught what, when and how to eat and thus are subject to educational guidance at school. In Sweden, the school meal is seen as a teaching occasion, aiming to teach children healthy eating habits (Johansson et al., 2009). The idea of seeing meals as an occasion for learning in Sweden was illuminated in a government report on preschools, where it was stated that children need to see adults in the meal situation, since children learn by imitating adults (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1972). Inspired by this report, the staff started eating with the children, something that

is referred to as pedagogic meals in Sweden (Sepp, Abrahamsson, & Fjellström, 2006).

Pedagogic meals may be studied in different ways. Although the pedagogic meal is seen as a teachable moment and takes place in an educational setting, the present thesis does not focus on the teachers' education in the pedagogic sense. Instead, there is a focus on teachers' interaction with the children in relation to the pedagogic meal as defined by the National Food Administration. According to the National Food Administration (2007), the aim of pedagogic meals is to enable children and teachers to spend time together in the meal situation. At the same time, pedagogic meals are seen as a teachable moment, where children may learn about food and healthy eating. Teachers are seen as role models, and teachers are suggested to speak positively about the school meal and teach the children about the importance of eating lunch. The guidelines moreover state that older children also are in need of adult supervision as the presence of adults results in a calmer meal environment (National Food Administration, 2007). Thus, there is a dual function of pedagogic meals, i.e. to constitute an enjoyable time for the people who consume this meal together, and at the same time to function as a learning occasion for the children. The pedagogic meal thus has elements of both education and care, which may be labelled "edu-care" (Johansson & Pramling Samuelsson, 2001). Pedagogic meals only pertain to teachers eating with the children. However, a Finnish example shows that an alternative option called "an expanded educator approach", with the school catering staff participating in the education of children, e.g. by visiting classes to talk about healthy meals, may also be used (Lintukangas, 2009).

Not many studies have been carried out regarding the pedagogic meal. According to a national report on Swedish school meals performed by School Food Sweden (Patterson, Lilja, & Schäfer Elinder, 2012), about 78% of the schools had clear guidelines as to what constitutes a pedagogic meal. For most of these schools, these guidelines included that the staff should have lunch at the same table as the pupils when having a pedagogic meal. At most of the schools, there was at least one adult who had lunch per 25 pupils eating in the canteen.

Sepp, Abrahamsson and Fjellström (2006) studied the attitudes of Swedish preschool staff toward foods in relation to the pedagogic meal. None of the interviewed teachers remembered having had any instructions regarding preschool meals. Still, the teachers had a clear picture of what it meant to practice a pedagogic meal, namely helping and encouraging children to help themselves as well as acting as a role model in the meal situation. The preschool teachers also had a paternalistic view, meaning they did not put trust in the children's parents' ability to provide their children with a balanced and healthy diet and felt that children eat better and healthier at preschool (Sepp, et al., 2006). However, another study by Sepp, Lennernäs, Pettersson and Abrahamsson (2001) showed that the intake of nutrients and energy at

preschool did not meet the recommendations, but that this was compensated for at home.

In another Swedish study, Norman (2003) studied the teaching of children in the meal situation at various Swedish preschools by using videotaped observations. Three main educational patterns were found. The first educational pattern, “Conservative gender education”, was based on the understanding that children should act in a certain way during mealtimes. This pattern involved numerous rules, and children were told how they were supposed to behave. Depending on the child’s gender, they were educated in different ways. The staff often used power when talking to the children, meaning that there was a lack of dialogue and a use of reprimands. The second educational pattern, “Pragmatic education”, was predicated on the understanding that children have different abilities to handle a meal. Here dialogues were used, and there was a playful teaching of children in the meal situation. The children were active and helped with small tasks according to their ability. The third educational pattern, “Explorative context education”, was founded on the understanding that children should not be educated during mealtime since meals should be a pleasant time of fellowship. This pattern was characterized by a lack of rules. The staff seldom talked to the children, but the children also talked to each other. The context played a role here, including the fact that there were few adults in the meal situation.

Lintukangas (2009) has put forward that the adult must act in accordance with their teaching. Nevertheless, in an American study by Nahikian-Nelms (1997), it was found that caregivers held beliefs that should positively influence the children’s eating behaviours and food preferences, but that they did not act in accordance with these beliefs, but in a way that was inconsistent with expert recommendations. For instance, many of the caregivers did not consume the same foods as the children, some of the caregivers did not converse with the children, and only half of the caregivers made a comment about nutrition during the meals. The caregivers also had little knowledge of nutrition (Nahikian-Nelms, 1997).

Affecting children’s food acceptance in school settings

According to Martins (2006, p. 288), “good eating is not about learning to eat foods that are ‘healthy for you’ – it is about establishing a positive relationship with food”, and part of this is establishing an acceptance of many types of foods. Studies have looked at what teacher actions are most effective in affecting children’s food acceptance.

Exposure-based approaches may increase children’s liking of food items (Birch & Fisher, 1996; Cooke, 2007; Martins, 2006). On the other hand, the use of rewards increases the liking of the food item that is used as a reward and decreases the liking of the food item that they are paired with (Martins, 2006). In a study by Hendy (1999), choice-offering, meaning offering pre-

school children food by saying “do you want any of this?” was the preferred teacher action as compared to simple exposure, reward, teacher modelling and insisting on trying one bite of the food. Nevertheless, in a questionnaire directed towards pre-school teachers, the staff believed that teacher modelling is the most effective teacher action to encourage children’s food acceptance among the five actions mentioned above (Hendy & Raudenbush, 2000). In a series of studies by Hendy & Raudenbush (2000), silent teacher modelling was ineffective in encouraging preschool children to consume familiar or unfamiliar foods, whereas enthusiastic teacher modelling, with the teacher saying that they love the food item in question, could maintain new food acceptance across five meals. However, with the introduction of enthusiastic peer modelling for a new food item, e.g. with a peer model doing exactly the same thing as the teacher model but for a new food, the enthusiastic teacher modelling was no longer effective, with girls responding more to peer models than boys. Martins (2006) has also pointed to the effectiveness of peer modelling in childhood. Forced consumption, however, may lead to food rejection. Still, an American study showed that a majority of the participating college students had experienced a forced consumption episode, with a follow-up questionnaire showing that the most common type of forced consumption involved an authority figure, e.g. a teacher (Robert Battell, Brown, Ansfield, & Paschall, 2002).

A British study by Moore, Tapper & Murphy (2010) has looked at what feeding strategies are most commonly used by primary school meal staff. Methods used were observations and interviews with school meal staff. The techniques most commonly used were verbal encouragement, for instance that the child was told to try or eat one more bite, and praise. Meal norms were often imposed, e.g. that dessert was not to be eaten before the entrée was finished. Modelling of eating behaviours was rare. Most of the staff relied on their experiences as mothers and thus, it seems as if they had not been formally trained in how to encourage the children to eat. Moreover, maintaining behaviour was more highly prioritized by the staff than trying to influence feeding during school lunch.

In a Nordic study on adolescents aged 14-17 years, the response “teacher” scored the lowest when asking about what influences the participants’ healthy eating habits. Swedish and Norwegian adolescents valued the influence of teachers more highly than Danish and Finnish adolescents. The authors conclude that the development of school meal systems has to be accompanied by changes in health education (Kainulainen, Benn, Fjellström, & Palojoki, 2012). One approach could be combining home economics and the school meal in order to influence children’s eating. Prell, Berg, Jonsson and Lissner (2005) showed that focusing more on fish in the school canteen and in home economics increased the consumption of fish among Swedish adolescents.

Children's eating and meal situation

Children's perceptions of food and meals

Only a few studies have looked at the social meaning of food to children (Ludvigsen & Scott, 2009). Wesslén, Sepp and Fjellström (2002) studied preschool children's experience of food by using focus group interviews. The children associated food and eating with rules and norms and were well aware of what they were allowed and not allowed to do in the meal situation. An American study of how caregivers behaved at mealtime similarly found that "rule-setting" took up a large part of the interaction between children and adults (Nahikian-Nelms, 1997). A British study has moreover found that children perceive that adults have a high degree of control over their food intake, regarding both what is eaten and what amount is eaten (Robinson, 2000).

Foods are also often classified into binary categories in many cultures, and this is also the case with children (Roos, 2002). Wesslén et al. (2002) found that the preschool children preferred to discuss the foods that they liked than those they disliked. Moreover, the children categorized food as "food" and "non-food", for instance, sweets, cake and ice cream. This is similar to the classification of foods as healthy and unhealthy, which has been found in several studies on children and adolescents (Harrison & Jackson, 2009; Johansson, et al., 2009; McKinley et al., 2005; Noble, Corney, Eves, Kipps, & Lumbers, 2000; Roos, 2002; Stewart, et al., 2006). Both a British study (Ludvigsen & Scott, 2009) and an American study (Roos, 2002) have found that foods that are high in sugar, salt and fat, e.g. foods that may be classified as "unhealthy", are categorized as "children's food" and thus culturally distinct from "adult food". In other words, food is used to differentiate adults from children (Ludvigsen & Scott, 2009; Roos, 2002). Johansson et al. (2009) found that although children spoke well of their school meals, they preferred eating at home due to the different social context, better taste and having more influence over what is being served. The preference for home-cooked food has also been illuminated in two previous studies on Swedish teenagers (Ekström & Sandberg, 2010; Wesslén, 2000).

Based on pupils' self-reported school meal diet behaviour, Tikkanen (2009) performed a cluster analysis on Finnish 6th-9th graders (aged 12-15). Two clusters were found: "Pupils having a positive attitude towards school meals and learning", which among other things was defined by the pupils having more of the main course and the various components of the meal, the pupils eating similar foods at school as at home and the pupils trying to eat healthily, and "Impressionable pupils having negative attitude towards school meals", which among other things was characterized by the pupils disliking the school meal as it was dissimilar to foods eaten at home.

The foodscape at school and institutional commensality

Children of today come into contact with food in different environments. Food environments may be illustrated by the concept *foodscape*, which is a notion that I have found useful when applied on the school meal environment. The foodscape concept can be used in different ways (Mikkelsen, 2011; Sobal & Wansink, 2007). Here the definition of Johansson et al. (2009, p. 30) is used, which defines foodscapes in relation to children's eating as "the places and contexts where children eat and come into contact with food and the meanings and associations connected to them". According to Mikkelsen (2011), a foodscape framework enables scholars to analyse how food, places and people are interconnected and how they interact. He posits that the foodscape concept is especially suitable for understanding institutional eating-out occasions, for instance at school. Mikkelsen (2011, p. 215) defines the institutional foodscape as "the physical, organizational and socio-cultural space in which clients/guests encounter meals, food and food-related issues, including health messages".

Eating food at school means eating with both teachers and peers. Another concept that I have found useful when studying these relations when eating together is *commensality*. Commensality stands for sharing food together. Commensal relationships include whom one eats with and does not eat with, and eating food together brings with it a social map of roles, reference groups, status and social networks. *Commensal circles* distinguish whom we choose to eat with and whom we choose not to eat with, i.e. demarcating "us" versus "them", e.g. core, secondary and commensal partners. The concept *commensal unit* describes those people who eat together at a particular meal. The most common commensal unit is the family, with peer groups also being a routine commensal unit (Sobal, 2000).

There are various types of commensality. In the school meal context, *institutional commensality* is applicable (Grignon, 2001). Institutional commensality may be contrasted to domestic commensality, which occurs in the private sphere at home, typically within the family. According to Grignon (2001), institutional commensality is hierarchical and reflects the institution's classifications as regards to for example gender, age and status. Institutional commensality was exemplified in a study by Adolfsson, Mattsson Sydner and Fjellström (2010), who have looked at commensality in relation to people with intellectual disability. This type of commensality was found when the participants attended a daily activity group, where they had their lunch. Commensality in this location entailed having dinner at a fixed seat at a specific table. The staff constituted a commensal unit, as they were expected to have lunch with the participants and the staff also showed the participants how to behave at the table.

Children's food habits and meal patterns

An important topic regarding children's eating in the last decades is associated with excess weight. The prevalence of overweight and obese children has increased from the 1980s, and it has turned into a global epidemic (Janssen et al., 2005). A Swedish national food survey (Enghardt Barbieri, Pearson, & Becker, 2006) on 4-year-olds (mean age: 4.2 years) and children in grade 2 (mean age: 8.6 years) and 5 (mean age: 11.7 years) showed that, depending on age group, between 17-23% of the children were overweight, 1-4% of whom were obese. Dietary patterns are an important factor in the development of overweight and obesity (Janssen, et al., 2005). Studies have shown that children's food preferences are strongly associated with their eating patterns, and children often prefer fatty and sugary foods (Cooke, 2007). The children in the national food survey consumed about 25% of their daily energy intake from food items like soft drinks, sweets, crisps, ice cream, desserts, cakes and biscuits (Enghardt Barbieri, et al., 2006).

In Sweden, recommendations from the National Food Administration to the public not only include advice on nutrient intake but also meal patterns, recommending three main meals and 1-3 in-between meals daily for both children and adults (National Food Administration, 2005). In the national food survey, most of the children were reported to have a regular meal pattern with breakfast, school lunch and dinner daily. Frequency question items regarding lunch on weekends and in-between meals were not included in the latest national questionnaire (Becker & Enghardt Barbieri, 2004). However, international studies have both found a declining snacking pattern (Nicklas et al., 2004) as well as a frequent snacking pattern (Husby et al., 2009; Jahns et al., 2001) and these conflicting results may be due to how snacks were defined in the studies (Nicklas et al., 2004).

Besides school lunch, some schools also serve breakfast and in-between meals. According to School Food Sweden's report, about 63% of the participating schools served breakfast and about 78% served in-between meals to all or some of the pupils (Patterson, et al., 2012).

Children's food intake at school

How children eat in the foodscape at school has been the focus in some Swedish and Scandinavian studies. In the previously mentioned Swedish national food survey, it became more common to skip the school lunch in grade 5. 77% of the pupils in grade 5 ate school lunch every day, which can be compared to 91% of children in grade 2 (Becker & Enghardt Barbieri, 2004). The results from grade 5 are comparable to a study of 15- to 16-year-olds in Gothenburg, based on data collected in 1994-1995, where it was shown that 76% of the boys and 70% of the girls had school lunch every day. An irregular consumption of main meals was related to a poorer food

choice and nutrient intake (Sjöberg, Hallberg, Höglund, & Hulthén, 2003). A more recent study among Nordic adolescents (aged 14-17 years old), 76% of the girls and 86% of the boys from Sweden stated that they eat in the school canteen every day (Kainulainen, et al., 2012).

Of the pupils who actually do eat the school meal, it can be assumed that not all of them eat all components of the meal. This was confirmed in a study on pupils in grade 7-9 (aged 13-15) in Finland, where free school meals are also served (Tikkanen & Urho, 2009). Most pupils had the main course (95%), whereas 50% had milk, 47% salad and 58% bread with their meal. Boys ate more of the main course and of the various components of the meal, except for salads, which was consumed more by the girls.

In the Pro Children study, fruit and vegetable intake of 11-year-old children was assessed in nine European countries. The Swedish researcher in this study, Yngve (2005), relates the results to the provision of school meals in Sweden. Sweden was one of the countries with the highest vegetable intake, with a substantial mean intake at lunch. As a result of this, Yngve stresses the importance of serving school meals.

Studies about children's actual consumption and nutritional intake at school are scarce. Nevertheless, there is some information on the nutritional quality of food that children are served at school. Before the law about nutritious school meals was implemented, School Food Sweden performed a national baseline study (Patterson, et al., 2012) on school food quality in Swedish elementary schools. The response rate was 27% for the first questionnaire, covering food choice and provision, nutritional adequacy as well as safe and hygienic food. As regards nutrition, food-based questionnaire items were developed focusing on vitamin D, iron, quality of fat and fibre content in the food, since these nutrients constituted problems in children's diets in the Swedish national study on children (Enghardt Barbieri, et al., 2006). 34% of the schools fulfilled the criteria for vitamin D, 71% for iron, 27% for quality of fat and 66% for fibre. Only 6% of the schools fulfilled all of these criteria and about 49% of the schools used nutritionally calculated menus. As these were baseline data before the school law was passed, it is possible that the situation looks different now. When Swedish adolescents themselves are asked how to make healthy choices at school easier, the most frequently mentioned answers concerned more vegetables and salads and suggestions for how these should be prepared as well as wishes for less fat in the foods served (Kainulainen, et al., 2012).

Dietary assessment in children as reported by children and parents respectively

Dietary assessment is important to study if nutrition guidelines are followed (Domel, 1997) and may serve as a basis for the development of health pro-

motion directed towards children (Enghardt Barbieri, et al., 2006). When it comes to dietary assessment in children, both the foodscapes at home and at school need to be assessed. There are also special issues that have to be taken into consideration, e.g. the cognitive skills of children to report their food intake and the risk of reporting error (Livingstone, Robson, & Wallace, 2004). For instance, studies have shown that younger children often overestimate their intake in food frequency questionnaires (Field et al., 1999; Tak, te Velde, de Vries, & Brug, 2006). Parents may be considered reliable reporters of children's diet at home, but are less likely to know what their children consume outside the home (Domel, 1997; Livingstone, et al., 2004). This becomes especially apparent in Sweden, as children are served a public meal away from home while at school. Neither parents nor children can thus be considered to be objective and reliable reporters of children's food intake (Livingstone, et al., 2004; Reinaerts, de Nooijer, & de Vries, 2007). Still, studies using comparisons between child and parent reports regarding eating behaviour are rare (Tak, et al., 2006).

Tak, te Velde, de Vries and Brug (2006), studied agreement between child and parent reports on Dutch 8–10-year-old children's consumption of fruit and vegetables and found the agreement to be weak to moderate, but somewhat better at follow-up when the children were one year older. In a similar study by Reinaerts, de Nooijer and de Vries (2007), the authors found a low level of agreement between child and parent reports for 9–13-year-old children. In two German studies by Mata, Scheibehenne and Todd (2008), parents' ability to predict children's lunch choices from school menus was assessed. Parallel meal plans and/or questionnaires were given for the children and their parents to fill out in the two studies. The authors conclude that the parents had high prediction accuracy. In an American study by Paxton-Aiken et al. (2012), parental response accuracy of fourth-grade children's (aged 10 years) participation in school breakfast and school lunch was assessed. Parental responses as to whether their children usually participate in these school meals or not, were compared to meal observations performed by the researchers. 74% of parents provided accurate responses for breakfast participation and 92% of parents for lunch participation, which the authors label as "moderately high".

Theoretical framework

Social constructionism

Ever since Berger and Luckmann (1966) published their classic work *The Social Construction of Reality*, constructionism has turned into a mosaic of approaches across many different fields of research (Gubrium & Holstein,

2008). Still, there are certain key assumptions that form the foundation of social constructionism. Burr (2003, pp. 2-5), referring to Gergen, lists four key assumptions of social constructionism: “A critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge”, “historical and cultural specificity”, “knowledge is sustained by social processes” and “knowledge and social action go together”. The first of these assumptions, “a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge”, entails the questioning of the ways we understand the world. How humans categorize the world does not essentially correspond to real divisions. On the contrary, many of these taken-for-granted divisions are social constructions created by humans. The second assumption, “historical and cultural specificity”, means that the ways we understand the world are products of a particular culture and period of history. The third assumption, “knowledge is sustained by social processes”, is built on the supposition that our shared knowledge about the world arises and is maintained through social interaction between humans. The fourth and last assumption, “knowledge and social action go together”, suggests that human beings act in accordance with our common ways of understanding the world (Burr, 2003, pp. 2-5).

Although these are things that social constructionists have in common (Burr, 2003), there are also theoretical, methodological and empirical differences (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008). Therefore it becomes important to state where this thesis places itself within this mosaic of ideas and approaches. One of the distinctions that can be made involves seeing social constructionism in an either ontological or epistemic sense. In an epistemic sense, social constructionism means that as soon as we begin to think or talk about the world, what we think or say is representations of the world. Thus, talk involves the construction of what the world is like. When making an ontological claim, however, we are making claims of what the world is really like (Edley, 2001). This is in close relation to the ongoing debate within social constructionism regarding relativism and realism concerning the status of reality. These two should not be seen as two different camps as there are overlaps in arguments (Burr, 2003). However, if the terms are to be defined, critical realism states that our perceptions may give us some kind of knowledge about the world, whereas relativism states that there is no ultimate truth and therefore all perspectives are equally valid. Edley (2001) believes that the debate has been surrounded by several misunderstandings. For once, most relativists do not deny the existence of a real world outside our talk about it (Burr, 2003). When Berger and Luckmann (1966) made the claim that reality is created in social interaction, they were talking about the beliefs we have about reality (Liebrucks, 2001). In my thesis, I argue for an epistemological relativism, meaning that the knowledge and ideas we have about the world are constructed (Burr, 2003). Ontologically, I do not deny the existence of a real world, but, depending on our cultural background and conceptual framework, we can have different representations of it. However, I do

not consider myself to be a radical relativist in the sense that all perspectives are equally valid (Liebrucks, 2001). Moreover, just like sociologists, I focus on the construction about beliefs about our social reality and thereby material objects are left behind (Liebrucks, 2001). To quote Best (2008, p. 43): “In short, Berger and Luckmann viewed social construction as a concept that might inform sociological analysis, not as an idea that somehow challenged the existence of a physical universe”.

Having that said, Wenneberg (2001) has raised the issue that many social constructionists are unclear as to whether they represent an ontological idealism or not, although they often touch upon such a standpoint. An ontological idealism entails that social reality is created from our perceptions and knowledge about it. In other words, we believe in social facts and social institutions, e.g. they are ontologically subjective. In order to exist, something has to be experienced. This forms a contrast to ontological objectivism, where something exists no matter whether someone perceives it or not. Wenneberg exemplifies this reasoning with money. Money works as a means of payment because we believe they do, e.g. a social fact that is ontologically subjective. According to Wenneberg, ontological idealism is reasonable when applied to social reality. I also acknowledge ontological idealism when applied to social reality. Nevertheless, I distinctly dismiss ontological idealism when applied to the natural, physical reality.

The present thesis deals with people’s constructed knowledge, i.e. “common-sense knowledge” and what people know as reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and thus not people’s theoretical knowledge or knowledge in the empirical sense. Social constructionist work deals with both *what* is being constructed and *how* it is being constructed (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008). According to Wortham and Jackson (2008), who have looked at how social constructionism has been used within the field of education, the question of *what*, e.g. the object being constructed, may be represented by accounts of individual social identity, individual learning and social stratification. The question of *how*, e.g. the mechanism of construction, may imply interaction, local meaning systems or practices and enduring social organization (Wortham & Jackson, 2008). Since the school meal may be seen as a learning occasion (Gullberg, 2006; Lintukangas, 2009; Nahikian-Nelms, 1997; National Food Administration, 2007), the present thesis has been inspired by educational constructionisms (Wortham & Jackson, 2008), looking at both *how* and *what* is constructed in the school meal context, incorporating several objects and mechanisms.

The new social studies of childhood

Childhood can be studied in various ways, and researchers can have a different outlook on children. In research, it therefore becomes important to state what approach is being used. The present thesis has been inspired by the so-

called *new social studies of childhood*. This interdisciplinary paradigm arose in the 1980s out of growing critique towards how childhood studies were being carried out (Prout, 2005). The critics pointed out that children had been marginalized and neglected in research for a long time and that the rather limited research that had been carried out regarding childhood was unsatisfactory, as children were not treated as social beings or agents (Corsaro, 2005; Prout, 2005). With the new paradigm, children were seen as “human beings” instead of “human becomings” (Qvortrup, 1994, p. 4). This, among other things, implies that children have their own activities, time and space (Qvortrup, 1994). Children are interesting to study in their own right and they have a course of action, rights, needs and are seen as a person (Halldén, 2003). This can be contrasted to socialization theory, which focus on the socially developing child who is learning to conform to social norms, and traditional developmental psychology, with its focus on children’s cognitive maturation, theorizing is transitional, meaning that children are seen as on a journey to adulthood, e.g. becoming (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). According to Prout & James (1997, p. 60), the new paradigm in the sociology of childhood can be summarized in the following points:

1. Childhood is seen as a social construction.
2. Childhood is a variable of social analysis just like class, gender or ethnicity.
3. Children’s social relationships are worthy of studying in their own right without the perspective of adults.
4. Children are not passive of social structures and processes but are active in the construction of their social lives.
5. Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology as it allows children a direct voice and participation in the research process.
6. To proclaim a new paradigm of childhood sociology is also to engage in the process of reconstructing childhood in society.

A theory that I have found useful to apply in my discussion as regards children’s knowledge construction about food and meals in the foodscape at school is the thinking of Corsaro. Corsaro (2005) is critical of theories that see children’s social development as an individual activity. Instead, Corsaro argues that individual development is embedded in the collective activity of negotiation, sharing and creation of culture with adults and with other children. As an alternative to socialization, Corsaro has launched the concept *interpretive reproduction*. *Interpretive* represents the creativeness in children’s participation in society, as they appropriate information from the adult world and use it in their own peer cultures. *Reproduction* entails that children contribute to cultural production and change. At the same time, children are constrained by society. Moreover, interpretive reproduction focuses on language and children’s participation in cultural routine, where routines,

which are habitual and taken-for-granted, give children the security and shared understanding that makes them feel like a part of a social group.

According to Corsaro, childhood is the socially constructed period in which children live their lives and for the children themselves, it is a limited period in their lives. At the same time, childhood is a permanent structural form and part of society, i.e. a category just like social class, gender and age groups. In sum, a new sociology of childhood according to Corsaro entails children being active agents, who construct their own cultures and contribute to the production of the adult world and that childhood is seen as a structural form (Corsaro, 2005).

Research question

The Swedish school meal is nearly unique worldwide, which makes this public meal of special interest to study. Previous studies on the Swedish school meal have focused on for instance the history and politics of the school meal (Gullberg, 2004), meal quality (Lundmark, 2002) and school-based dietary interventions (Prell, 2010). A nutritional view, i.e. with a focus on bodily functioning and state of health (Lupton, 1996), is often in focus in relation to the school meal. However, the school meal is far more complex than that. Over the years, the school meal has become a phenomenon embedded in Swedish culture. Yet, little is known about the socio-cultural aspects surrounding this meal. The overall research question of this thesis is therefore: what role does the school meal have as a public meal in Swedish culture? Culture is here defined as collectively shared patterns of thinking, feeling and acting (Hofstede, 1996).

The four studies on which the thesis is based all have different research interests. Over the years, the school meal has become a phenomenon embedded in Swedish culture, and the school meal is often debated in a negative way. In order to better understand and come to terms with the negative image of the school meal, the collective views of this public meal need to be elaborated. The present thesis therefore aims to study the school meal as a phenomenon in Swedish culture (Study I).

The school meal is seen as a teachable moment in Sweden. Nevertheless, studies about the school lunch as a teaching occasion and especially the pedagogic meal are scarce. The present thesis focuses on how the pedagogic meal is practised, focusing on how teachers behaved when interacting with the children (Study II).

School also constitutes an important foodscape for children. It is therefore of interest to study how children reason about food in the school meal context and how these ideas have come about. The present thesis illuminates children's understanding of food and meals in general and the school meal in particular in the foodscape at school (Study III).

The thesis also focuses on the school meal's place in children's overall meal patterns in the Swedish culture. In Sweden, we have recommendations regarding meal patterns from the National Food Administration (2005). From a Swedish perspective it therefore becomes important to study children's meal patterns. It has been suggested that neither parents nor children are objective and reliable reporters of children's food intake (Livingstone, et al., 2004; Reinaerts, et al., 2007) and therefore both child and parent reports were collected and compared (Study IV).

Aims

The aim of this thesis was to study what role the Swedish school meal has as a public meal in Swedish culture. An additional aim was to study the meal patterns of children, including the school meal. The specific aims of the four studies were:

- I To gain a deeper understanding of the free school meal as an embedded phenomenon in Swedish culture.
- II To study how the pedagogic meal is practised, with focus on how teachers behaved when interacting with the children.
- III To study what knowledge children construct regarding food and meals in the foodscape at school and how they do so, focusing on the school meal context.
- IV To study the meal patterns, including the school meal, and intake of certain snack foods of 10- to 12-year-old children as reported by the children and their parents, respectively. Additional aims were to determine whether there was agreement between the child and parent reports as well as to study what factors might influence rater agreement.

Methods

The present thesis was initiated in 2006 and mainly addressed what significance the free public school meal has in Swedish culture. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. An overview of the studies is displayed in Table 1.

The first study was explorative, focusing on perceptions and memories of the Swedish school meal. Several generations who have eaten the school meal shared their experiences by answering an ethnological questionnaire.

In Study II, observations, interviews and focus groups were used to depict how teachers practised the pedagogic meal.

Study III used the same material as Study II. The focus was on the children and their constructed knowledge in the school meal context.

Study IV focused on children's whole meal pattern during the day, including the school meal. The study also had methodological aims, looking at how children and parents report children's meal patterns respectively. Parallel questionnaires to children and their parents were used.

Table 1. Summary of study design, data collection methods and participants in Studies I-IV. Studies II-IV were carried out at the same three schools. The observed hours have been rounded off to the nearest half an hour.

Study	Design	Method	Participants				
I	Qualitative	Ethnological questionnaire	192 informants				
II and III	Qualitative	Observations in school canteens	<i>Total</i>	<i>School 1</i>	<i>School 2</i>	<i>School 3</i>	
			<i>Pupils</i>	650	205	285	160
			<i>Grade*</i>		P-5	P-5	P-6
		Interviews with kitchen staff	<i>Observed hours</i>	25.0	6.5	11.0	7.5
			<i>Interviews</i>	3	1	1	1
			<i>Informants</i>	6	2	2	2
Focus group interviews	<i>Focus groups</i>	7	2	3	2		
	<i>Informants</i>	52	17	20	15		
IV	Quantitative	Questionnaire	147 children and their parents				

*Children in preschool (P) are normally aged 6 years, in grade 5 11 years and in grade 6 12 years.

Study I

In 2006, which is the same year that this project was initiated, it had been 60 years since it was decided that a free school meal was to be introduced in Sweden (Gullberg, 2004, pp. 2-5). Since the beginning of free school meals, several generations have eaten this public meal at school. In this study, perceptions and memories of the Swedish school meal were documented by having the participants answer an ethnological questionnaire. Questionnaires have been used by ethnologists and folklorists for about a hundred years. In questionnaires, people tell about their memories, experiences and values about a topic in writing (Hagström & Marander-Eklund, 2005). The questions asked in the questionnaire were open-ended, rendering the informants to write freely about their own experiences of the school meal. In January 2007, a pilot study was carried out among students at the Department of Food, Nutrition and Dietetics (at the time called the Department of Domestic Sciences) at Uppsala University. As a result of the pilot study, some of the questions were rephrased. One question was also added. The revised questionnaire that was used in the actual data collection consisted of five questions, asking the informants to present their thoughts, memories, description and meaning of the Swedish school meal. They were also asked to describe what the school meal would look like if they were in charge.

In order to recruit participants for the study, the Internet was used (Hagström & Marander-Eklund, 2005). Several organizations were contacted by letter and telephone and asked about willingness to advertise about the study on their homepage. Eight of them accepted and these were the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, the National Union of Teachers in Sweden, Food in Sweden (a website about food), the Swedish National Pensioners' Organization, Ladies' Circle Sweden, Home and School (a national organization for parents with children in preschool or school), the Federation of Swedish Farmers and NCCF (a national centre instituted by the government and working for the well-being of children). The participating organizations put up an ad with some information about the study, which included a link to the questionnaire. All data was collected online using *QuestBack* (2007). One-hundred and ninety-two persons born 1926–1997 from all over Sweden took part in the study. 74% were women and 26% men. Most informants were born in Sweden. Five were born in Finland, six in some other country in Europe and two in a country outside Europe. About 25% of the participants were currently working in the schools or with childcare, as a teacher, principal, youth worker, preschool teacher or similar professions, and about 14% as a school nurse, dietician, administrative dietician, cook or similar professions, which means that they might have had experiences from the school meal or a public meal other than their own while attending school themselves. About 39% of the participants had children who were presently at-

tending comprehensive school at the time of the study. The data collection was carried out in June 14–October 1, 2007.

Studies II-IV

Studies II, III and IV were all performed at the same three schools in April–June 2008.

Participating schools

In order to recruit schools for the study, an administrative dietician in charge of the school meal and the chief school dietician in a city in central Sweden were contacted. Due to structural changes in the organization concerning the school meal, they declined participation. Therefore the school superintendent in another municipality was contacted. This municipality has approximately 40 000 inhabitants and is situated in the same area. The school superintendent gave permission to perform the study and contacted the principals of the comprehensive schools with an offer to participate. Then all of the schools that had received an invitation were contacted by the author by telephone. In order to be eligible, the school had to be a municipal school teaching children in grades 1-5 (usually aged 7-11 years). Another criterion was that the participating schools should be heterogeneous in their characteristics, for example regarding size and location. The three first schools that agreed to participate fulfilled all of the criteria and were therefore included. The principals at the three schools gave their permission to perform the studies and informed their staff. The chief school dietician in the municipality was also contacted and informed about the study.

The schools, here referred to as school one, two and three, taught children in the last year of preschool (usually aged 6) as well as children in grade 1 (usually aged 7) to either grade 5 or 6 (usually aged 11 or 12). School one was situated in a smaller town in the municipality, school two was situated in the largest town in the municipality and school three was situated in the countryside. School one and school three served school lunches that were cooked at the school, whereas school two served meals that were mostly cooked at another school. School three was the only school that offered breakfast, and this was financed with a small fee from the children who chose to have this meal. For more information on the schools and the study material, please refer to Table 1.

Observations

At each school, observations were carried out in the school canteen for a whole school week, that is, five consecutive days. The observations were

overt (Patton, 2002, pp. 269-273) in nature, meaning that the children and staff had been informed that researchers were present in the school canteen. An observation scheme based on Patton (2002) was developed and used when observing and taking field notes, including the time and location of the event, the persons involved, how something occurred, and what happened during the event, as well as verbal and nonverbal interactions. General observations and the canteen environment were also noted. The observations took place from the opening of the school canteen until it closed, which resulted in a total of approximately 25 observation hours at the three schools. It is common that observations last longer than this. However, Patton states that the duration of the observations must depend on the purpose of the study and that observations only must last “long enough to get the job done” (Patton, 2002, p. 275). After a week at each school, clear patterns were seen but in order to confirm the findings, interviews with the kitchen staff and focus group interviews with the children were also performed.

Before the actual observations took place, two pilot observations were carried out at two different schools in another town in Sweden. The pilot studies were done by either two or three researchers at a time, and the results were discussed afterwards. The results from the pilot observations then guided the focus of the observations at the three participating schools. However, at the beginning of the actual data collection, the observations at the three schools were open in character in order to decide what was especially important to observe at that particular school. This approach, staying open and using an emergent design, is advised by Patton (2002, p. 331). Still, not everything can be observed and the fieldworker must therefore constantly judge what should be noted (Patton, 2002, p. 302). This choosing of what is to be observed naturally is the choice of the researcher. Nevertheless, it is the only way to narrow down the research topic, and according to Silverman (2006, p. 80) this does not create a problem. In general, the observations focused on what and how the children were eating and social interactions between children and adults as well as social interactions among the pupils themselves, both spoken and nonverbal activities. Since the pilot observations showed that the design with several researchers observing at the same time was a fruitful strategy, a design with two observers was used for as many days as possible, which was two days at each school. Eisenhardt (1989) also speaks in favour of using several investigators, as this builds confidence in the findings. During the observations, methods described by Patton (2002) were used.

During the fieldwork short field notes were taken. A digital dictaphone was also used to record what was being observed. Later on the same day the field notes and recordings were written down as more dense and detailed field notes. The field notes were descriptive. Nevertheless, when writing field notes one is also analysing them (Silverman, 2006, p. 92). Patton (2002, pp. 304-305) stresses the importance of separating descriptions from

interpretations, and therefore these were noted separately in the field notes. Eisenhardt (1989) also speaks in favour of overlapping data collection and analysis, using observations as an example. She refers to the views of Van Maanen, who also proposes an overlap of observation and analysis, although he claims, just like Patton, that these should be kept separate from each other. Informal questions were asked to the children or staff when the researchers came across something they did not understand or wondered about.

Description of the foodscape

The three school canteens were all self-service, offering one or two dishes to choose from daily plus a vegetarian alternative. Except for the warm dishes, the children were also offered milk or water to drink, salads and cooked vegetables as well as crisp bread with margarine. Lunch hours were 10:40-12:00 at school one, 10:45-13:00 at school two and 11:00-12:30 at school three. Due to varying lunch hours, the duration of the observations differed at the three schools. The schools had allotted the children a special time period when they could eat. The duration of the lunch period varied, but 20 minutes was common. The children had assigned tables and the younger children also had assigned seats. The pupils ate class-wise, together with their peers. Pedagogic meals were practised at all of the schools, hence there were always some adults present in the canteens, having lunch together with the pupils. At school one, the canteen had just been renovated and as a result of this, the environment was modern and measures had been taken in order to reduce the sound level. The canteens at school two and three were quite small considering the number of pupils having their lunch there. The inventory was more traditional at these schools compared to school one.

Interviews

Based on the pilot observations, it was decided that short, formal interviews were to be performed with key informants in the school canteen, namely the kitchen staff. The people working in the school kitchen were judged to hold valuable knowledge about the school canteen and were able to explain and contribute to the understanding of what the researchers had observed (Patton, 2002, p. 321), for instance more information about school food operations in general, information about the food and the environment as well as how the pedagogic meal functions at the respective schools. Thus, these interviews should mainly be seen as complementary to the observations, and therefore only limited reference to these data is made in the results sections in the respective papers.

At school one, the two persons working in the kitchen preferred to be interviewed together, and since this turned out to be a fruitful design, the staff was interviewed together at all three schools. This resulted in six individuals

being interviewed in pairs at the three schools. For participating in the interviews, the informants received two movie tickets each. The interviewer had been trained in interview techniques as described by Kvale (1996). A semi-structured interview guide was created and used at all three schools. The interview questions varied to some degree at each school depending on what had been noted during the observations. Still most questions were the same and open-ended, allowing the informants to speak freely about their experiences from the school canteen. The more specific questions concerning what the researchers had observed in the canteen were saved until the last part of the interview in order not to steer the informant in any direction at an early phase of the interview. That way the informants were allowed to give their spontaneous answers before the more direct questions were asked (Kvale, 1996). Eisenhardt (1989) supports the idea of adding questions to an already prepared interview guide as it allows the researcher to follow up on emergent themes. In order not to alter the informants' behaviour during the observations and to be able to observe as much as possible before the interview, the interviews took place when the fieldwork was coming to an end at each school. The interviews were performed at the school canteen after closing time and each interview lasted approximately half an hour. The interviews were recorded using a digital dictaphone and were transcribed verbatim.

Focus group interviews

Focus groups are group discussions that investigate the experiences and beliefs of the participants (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). Focus group interviews were carried out with pupils in grade 4-5 (usually aged 10-11 years) at the three schools. In focus groups it is customary to use purposive samples, meaning the participants are chosen depending on the purpose of the study (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). In order to enable good discussions, teachers at each school were therefore asked to choose the children who were to participate in the focus groups, choosing the pupils who could be expected to contribute to the discussions. Fifty-two children took part in the focus groups, twenty-nine girls and twenty-three boys. It is advised that focus groups are homogeneous (Morgan & Krueger, 1998) and it would have been desirable to have either all boy or girl groups. However, due to scheduling reasons, the teachers wanted the focus groups to be divided class-wise, resulting in all mixed boy and girl groups. All groups consisted of 5–10 participants.

The moderator, namely the author, was trained in focus group techniques according to Morgan & Krueger (1998). Also present at all the focus group sessions was an assistant who observed the discussions. Peer influence is an issue when interviewing children in focus groups (Horner, 2000). On arrival at the focus groups, the children therefore filled out a short questionnaire asking what they think about the food and the canteen at their respective

school. This questionnaire was then compared with the group discussions to see if conformity had been an issue during the focus groups. The theme for the interviews was school meals at the participants' own school. An interview guide was created covering general topics concerning the school meal, namely dishes, the canteen, taste, friends, rules and adults. All of the topics were displayed on a "mind map", e.g. as key words arranged around the main topic, which was the school meal. The mind map was used as a visual aid during the focus groups. Because of the mind map, the children knew from the beginning what topics would be covered. However, the children were to a large extent free to discuss the issues they felt most important to talk about. The children were also shown pictures of various foods and dishes (pancakes, tacos, a meat patty with potatoes, fish with potatoes, as well as fruits and vegetables) in order to stimulate them to talk. The focus groups were held at the schools during normal school time, and each focus group lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. The children received a ticket to the movies as a reward for their participation. They were also treated to a snack during the focus groups.

Questionnaire

Study IV mainly took interest in measuring the meal pattern of school children as it was reported by the parents and the children respectively. Therefore parallel questionnaires were constructed, targeting children and their parents, respectively (Appendix 1 and 2). These were then paired and compared. The questionnaire was partly based on the questionnaire used by the National Food Administration in the latest national food survey on children (Becker & Enghardt Barbieri, 2004). Both the children and their parents were asked to answer questions regarding the children's meal pattern and eating habits. Both the child and parental survey included background information and a frequency questionnaire regarding how often the children eat breakfast, school lunch, lunch at home on the weekends, dinner and in-between meals as well as certain food items, namely sweets and chocolate as well as soda and fruit drinks (concentrates of fruit juice and sugar, to which water is added to make a fruit drink). Soda and fruit drinks will hereafter be referred to as soft drinks. Meals were generally not defined for the participants, except for lunch on weekends, which was defined as a mid-day meal, and dinner, which was defined as an evening meal. The response categories were on an ordinal data level (e.g. never, 1-3 days/week, 4-6 days/week or every day). The questionnaire also included questions regarding where breakfast and in-between meals are normally eaten as well as whether the children consume a cooked meal for dinner or not. Some additional questionnaire items included what the children think of the taste of the school lunch as well as three items found only in the parental questionnaire (whether parents are satisfied with the food served at their child's school, the

school meal's importance for children's health and parents' and school's responsibility regarding children's eating habits). However, these additional items were excluded in the analysis, since it was judged that they did not fit the aim of Study IV. The language, font size and layout were adjusted to fit the age group of the children. The questionnaire was pilot tested among twenty-two pupils in grade 5 attending a school in a large town in Sweden. The original format of the questionnaire was used in the data collection, which took place in April-June of 2008.

The study was conducted in grades 4-5 at the participating schools. The teachers were responsible for the data collection, and for this they received two movie tickets each. The original study population consisted of 216 children and their parents. Grade 5 with 41 pupils at school one was excluded as the teachers responsible for grade 5 declined participation. The final population consisted of 175 children and their parents. The children filled out the questionnaire at school. The children then brought home a corresponding parental questionnaire for their parents to fill out. Parents were instructed not to ask their children when filling out the questionnaire. Parents chose themselves whether the mother or father was to fill out the questionnaire. All questionnaires were returned in sealed envelopes, so no one at the schools could see the answers of the children or the parents. Non-responding children and parents received one reminder.

Analyses

Qualitative analyses

In **Study I**, a thematic approach was used when analysing the answers to the ethnological questionnaire (Bryman, 2008, pp. 554-556). Based on the preliminary themes that evolved from the initial analysis, a coding frame was created in Excel (Bryman, 2008, pp. 554-555). The intent of using the coding frame was to sort the answers for further analysis. The coding frame was revised several times during the process of coding, as themes and subthemes were added and some themes were changed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The final coding frame consisted of five main themes, namely "food", "environment", "state involvement", "social meaning" and "fostering", along with several supplementary subthemes (please refer to Paper I, pp. 560-561). Based on their content, each individual's answers were sorted into the coding frame. When this had been completed, the results were assembled at the group level. When the initial coding had been completed, the material was reread several times looking for more abstract themes. During this process, social constructionist theory was applied, which implied that there was a special focus on culture, language and constructed phenomena in the analy-

sis (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2003). The final analysis resulted in three more abstract themes: “The school meal as a second-class meal”, “the ideal meal” (both based on the initial themes “food”, “environment” and “social meaning”) and “the school meal as part of the Swedish welfare state” (based on the initial themes “state involvement” and fostering”).

In **Studies II-III**, the observations, interviews and focus group interviews were analysed. The field notes and the interview transcripts were imported into the computer program NVivo 8.0 (QSR International), where the analysis was conducted. Based on the two different aims in Studies II and III, the material was read with a different focus for the two studies. In Study II, the focus was on how the teachers interacted with the children in relation to the pedagogic meal, whereas in Study III, children’s constructed knowledge in the school meal situation was in focus.

When analysing the material, some techniques conventionally used in grounded theory were applied (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The analysis started with the creation of codes. Categories were then created from codes that were similar in character. During the process of coding, memos containing thoughts and ideas of analytical character were written down (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Although some techniques described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) were used, the intent was not to create a grounded theory. Instead, Studies II and III both had a social constructionist approach (Wortham & Jackson, 2008). The analyses were also inspired by the new social studies of childhood (James, et al., 1998; Prout & James, 1997).

In **Study II**, the teachers’ behaviours were analysed as teacher roles. Inspired by Eriksson and Näsman (2009), these teacher roles were analysed as ranging from adult- to child-oriented. This entailed looking at the degree of focus on the child, the child’s will and perspective and whether the interaction with the child is done in a way that is adjusted to the child (Eriksson & Näsman, 2009). The analyses resulted in three teacher roles, ranging from adult- to child-oriented and which varied in their level of interaction with the children from high to low.

In **Study III**, what meaning children construct in the school meal situation and how they do so was especially noticed. This resulted in three categories. “Us and them” depicted the children’s meal situation in the canteens as regards to groups and sub-groups that could be found. “Foodlore” illuminated the children’s enjoyment of telling stories about the school meal. Based on various references (Ben-Amos, 1971; Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary, 1965; Oxford Dictionaries), “foodlore” is here defined as popular, often anecdotal knowledge about food, which is passed on from person to person by word of mouth. “Food as a dichotomy” described how the children discussed food in terms of food served at home versus at school as well as healthful versus unhealthful food. Corsaro’s (2005) notion of interpretive reproduction was used to further explain children’s construction of knowledge in the foodscape at school.

Quantitative analyses

In **Study IV**, SPSS version 16.0 (SPSS Inc., 2007) and SAS version 9.2 (SAS Institute Inc., 2008) were used to analyse the questionnaire. The significance level used was 0.05. Since the aim was to assess agreement between child and parent reports, only matched pairs were included. This resulted in 147 matched child and parent questionnaires although in some of the analyses, this number was slightly lower due to missing values. All assessments were made on an ordinal scale. The statistical methods used included descriptive statistics, polychoric correlations and ordinal regression models. Polychoric correlations is a suitable method for ordinal data with only a few scale steps (Olsson, 1979). The ordinal regression models (Agresti, 2007; Olsson, 2002) allowed for an assessment of agreement between child and parent reports, at the same time assessing whether agreement depends on the age and the sex of the child, the sex of the parent and household type, e.g. if the children lived in a household with one or two adults or if they lived in two households (shared custody). The models were generalized linear models with the ordinal ratings of different meals as response, and using a cumulative logistic link function. Age was included as a quantitative covariate, while all other factors were included as classification variables. Because the data were paired, estimation was carried out using generalized estimating equations, with family as a random factor (Olsson, 2002). The robust (“sandwich”) estimators were used for interpretation. The Freq and Genmod procedures in the SAS (SAS Institute Inc., 2008) package were used for the analyses.

Ethical considerations

The ethical rules of the Swedish Research Council (2002) were observed during all of the studies. Prior to participating in **Study I**, the informants were informed in writing about the aim of the study, that participation was voluntary, that all answers were anonymous and how the results would be used. In **Studies II-IV**, the school superintendent in the municipality and the principals gave their permission to perform the studies. Information was also given to the chief school dietician in the municipality. The staff working in the school kitchens at the three schools were also informed before the studies were initiated. The observations were overt (Patton, 2002, pp. 269-273) and thus, the children and the teachers were aware of that researchers were present in the school canteen. Before the interviews started, the informants gave their consent after having received oral and written information about the study. As regards the focus groups, the teachers asked the children about their willingness to participate. The children who chose to participate were also informed orally about the study by the moderator before the focus

groups started. Informed and written consent had been obtained from their parents prior to the focus groups. When it comes to the questionnaires, the children were informed in writing that participation was voluntary and that they could hand in the questionnaire without filling it in. The parents also received written information about the study and that participation was voluntary. Parents had the option to choose if they did not want their children to be included in the analyses.

Results

Study I

The first study focused on memories and perceptions of the school meal among Swedish people. The analyses resulted in three themes, namely “the school meal as a second-class meal”, “the ideal meal” and “the school meal as part of the Swedish welfare state”.

The first theme was named *the school meal as a second-class meal* as the school meal was associated with a poor environment, a negative view of the staff, and a lack of social significance. The picture of the food served was more nuanced, but the overall image of the school meal was still the one as a second-class meal. A special type of jargon was identified in the informants’ descriptions of the school meal, which enhanced the negative view of this meal.

The second theme, *the ideal meal*, depicted the informants’ visions for the school meal. A prominent feature of the informants’ descriptions was the wish for many vegetables to be served. The informants moreover asked for several dishes for the children to choose from and for the meals to be cooked at school. The environment should be nicer, calmer and quieter. From the informants’ statements, it seemed as if the ideal school meal should be more similar to meals served at home.

The third theme was called *the school meal as part of the Swedish welfare state*. This theme was based on statements from the informants that could be linked to the values of the Swedish welfare state, e.g. universal and equal social benefits for everyone. For instance, the school meal was described as a meal that is free of charge, which is served to all children and for some children is the only cooked meal they receive during the day. Moreover, the school meal was seen as a prerequisite for education as it gives energy and nutrients during the day.

All in all, the material consisted of conflicting and contradictory views. No differences between groups could be detected. The informants seemed to like the idea of having a free school meal that is provided for by the state, but that it does not live up to their expectations of an ideal meal, which takes on the same values of a meal served at home.

Study II

This study focused on teachers' interaction with children in school canteens in relation to the pedagogic meal. The analyses resulted in three teacher roles, which varied in their level of interaction with the children and which ranged from adult- to child-oriented. These teacher roles should be seen as analytic constructions and the endpoints were thus more or less evident in the material. The teachers could take on different roles and positions within these roles depending on the situation.

One of the teacher roles was called *the sociable teacher role*. This teacher role had a high level of interaction with the children and turned the school lunch into a social occasion by the use of conversation. Some of them also joked with or hugged the children. The difference between the adult- and the child-oriented educating teacher was whether the interaction with the children was related to the adult or to the child, e.g. if the teacher carried on conversations that were teacher- or pupil-related.

Another teacher role was called *the educating teacher role*. The educating teacher had a medium level of interaction with the children and strived to educate the children, both in general terms and about food and nutrition specifically. This teacher role also applied rules and procedures in the canteens, tried to influence what and how much the pupils ate as well as have the children help with chores in the meal situation. The adult-oriented educating teacher transferred knowledge and norms to the children, sometimes in an authoritarian and one-way manner. On the contrary, the child-oriented educating teacher was explanatory and used dialogues when conversing with the children.

An additional teacher role was *the evasive teacher role*. This teacher role acted in a way that could not be associated with pedagogic meals and had a low level of interaction with the children. The evasive teacher took a more passive approach, for instance by not interfering as regards what and how much the children were eating, by eating with the other teachers instead of with the children or by not following up on rules applied in the canteen. This behaviour can be classified as child-oriented when the teacher has in mind what they believe is the best for the child, e.g. by trying to create a better atmosphere for the pupils by not being involved in the meal situation and as adult-oriented when the teacher simply chooses to avoid their tasks which they are expected to perform during pedagogic meals.

The teacher roles were summarized in a theory named **ACTS** (the **A**dult- to **C**hild-oriented **T**eacher role theory for **S**chool meals (please refer to Paper II)).

Study III

The analysis resulted in three categories that describe what knowledge children construct in the school meal situation regarding food and meals and how they do so.

Us and them depicts the children's meal situation and the context in which knowledge was constructed. The children identified with other children in the canteens and thus differentiated themselves from adults. For instance, the children defied adults by breaking rules. At the same time, the children showed that they had appropriated norms from the adult world, as they also had acknowledged the rules. The children also differentiated themselves among their peers as sub-groups could be detected. This was especially apparent as regards to gender and age, where the oldest children had the highest social status.

Foodlore described the children's enjoyment of telling stories about the school meal. Some stories and statements were of a sensational character and some were clearly exaggerated. The children often spoke negatively about the school meal, even the ones who actually did not dislike the food. A special type of jargon and metaphors were used describing the school meal, and the word "disgusting" was especially common. The children also spoke of various items that they had found in the food and showed suspiciousness towards the school meal.

Food as a dichotomy described how the children discussed food in binary terms. The children made a division between food served at home and at school. Although there were exceptions, most of the children said that they enjoyed the food served at home and home meals better. The children also defined foods as healthful and unhealthful. Sometimes the children were able to provide an explanation to why they defined foods the way they did, sometimes not. The children had apprehended concepts related to nutrition and health, but were not always able to use them in the right context.

Study IV

The response rate was 99% (n=173) for the children and 87% (n=153) for the parents. Three children were excluded due to lack of parental consent and two parents were excluded due to improperly submitted questionnaires. 147 children and parents were matched for analysis and therefore included. The final study sample is described in Table 2.

Table 2. Basic characteristics of the final study population included in the analyses (n=147 children and their parents). Values are missing for some subjects.

Variable	Children	Parents
<i>Age</i>		
Mean (SD)	11.4 (0.5)	41.5 (5.5)
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	49% (n=72)	16% (n=23)
Female	51% (n=75)	84% (n=124)
<i>Household type</i>		
Household with two adults	88% (n=130)	
Household with one adult	2% (n=3)	
Two households (shared custody)	10% (n=14)	

Child reports are presented first and parent reports last in brackets below. The results showed that most of the children were reported to have a regular meal pattern with a consumption of breakfast (88% and 84%, respectively) and dinner (97% and 95%, respectively) every day and school lunch (91% and 89%, respectively) every weekday. Lunch on weekends and in-between meals were consumed less frequently. Lunch on weekends was reported to always be eaten by 56% of children and 50% of parents. In-between meals were reported to be eaten every day by 41% of the children and 39% of the parents. When it comes to soft drinks, 1-3 days per week was the most common answer (49% and 68%, respectively). There was general agreement between child and parent reports, except for consumption of sweets and chocolate, where the children reported a less frequent consumption than parents did ($p=0.0001$). 1-3 days per week was chosen by 78% of the parents and 50% of the children. 42% of the children claimed that they eat sweets and chocolate less than one day per week or never, which can be compared to 16% of the parents. In-between meals were also close to being significant in the ordinal regression models ($p=0.05$). Although not statistically significant, the children tended to report a less frequent consumption of in-between meals than parents. The sex of the child was a significant factor for in-between meals ($p=0.0001$) and soft drinks ($p=0.01$). Girls reported a more frequent intake of in-between meals as compared to boys and boys a more frequent intake of soft drinks as compared to girls. The other factors were not significant. Polychoric correlations were 0.65 for breakfast, 0.86 for school lunch, 0.40 for lunch on weekends, 0.30 for in-between meals and 0.25 for soft drinks. The correlation for sweets and chocolate was not significant, whereas a correlation for dinner could not be calculated.

Most children had breakfast (97% and 95%, respectively) and in-between meals (84% and 91%, respectively) at home on weekdays. However, one of the schools also served breakfast and one third of the children at this school were reported to have breakfast at school. About one third of the children consumed an in-between meal at a friend's home on weekdays, according to

both child and parent reports. A majority usually had a cooked dinner (85% and 91%, respectively).

Discussion

The socially constructed school meal

Since the introduction of a free school meal, this public meal has been a source of constant debate (Gullberg, 2004). This came across clearly in the first study of this thesis, where the material to a large degree consisted of conflicting views and messages. Nevertheless, two key parallel themes, the school meal as part of the Swedish welfare state and the school meal as a second-class meal, clearly appeared in the material.

Just as Gullberg (2004) has put forward, the present thesis showed that the school meal has become a symbol of universal national welfare. The informants in the ethnological questionnaire posited values associated with the welfare state, e.g. universality with regard to social benefits. The school meal was also seen as a prerequisite for education, illuminating one of the original ideas of school meals, i.e. that feeding the children is a precondition for learning. Nevertheless, although the informants apparently liked the idea of having a school meal provided for by the state, it did not appear to live up to their standards.

The fact that the school meal was also classified as being of second-class quality is not something exclusively found in Sweden, but may be attributed to the concept of “institutional stereotyping” towards institutional meals, which is found world-wide. Other studies (Cardello, et al., 1996; Edwards, et al., 2003) have also pointed to the fact that the negative image of the school meal and other public meals is not necessarily “true”. This is an important finding when addressing the negative image of institutional meals. Just as Cardello et al. (1996) have posited, the results of this thesis imply that institutional foodservices should address the causes of these negative attitudes rather than trying to improve the quality of foods. Other scholars have put forward too much focus on base qualities of the meal, for instance nutrition (Lundmark 2002, 2003), a negative view in the media as well as poor food presentation, food variety and physical setting (Cardello et al., 1996) as factors that contribute to the negative view towards institutional foods. However, to fully understand what place the free school meal has in the Swedish culture and the collective ideas of this meal, I have chosen to look at additional explanations. In line with the theories of Berger & Luckmann (1966), the ideas surrounding the school meal may be seen as a social construction, where the public view has become objectified and treated as “everyday

knowledge”, which is internalized by new generations. That this process had occurred was seen when interviewing the children in focus groups, as they used a type of jargon about the school meal similar to that of the adults who took part in the ethnological questionnaire. This process occurs in everyday life, but also on nation-state level. Hofstede (1996) has used the concept “mental programming” to explain how people collectively share patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. The media forms a part of the reinforcement of these common value systems, but so do other institutions like the political system and the education system. It is interesting to note that the professional staff who took part in the present study also shared the negative view of the school meal. In future studies it would be interesting to study in more detail whether they, as the official representatives of this meal, communicate their values, positive or negative, when pedagogic meals are being practised. What we can conclude from this study is nevertheless that the public view of the school meal is deeply embedded in our culture and consequently difficult to alienate us from.

Interaction and knowledge construction in the foodscape at school

The school meal is seen as a teachable moment, which is referred to as pedagogic meals. The teachers eat with the pupils and thus form a commensal unit to the children. The present thesis has looked at how the pedagogic meal is practised, focusing on how the teachers interacted with the children. Three teacher roles, ranging from adult- to child- oriented, and which varied in their interaction with the children were found in the material and from these I constructed the ACTS theory. In line with Eriksson & Näsman’s (2009) theoretical discussion, it is important to stress that these teacher roles are analytic constructions and consequently they do not represent individual teachers. Teachers can take on different roles depending on the situation, i.e. the teacher roles should be seen as contextual. There are many factors that might frame the teachers’ behaviour, for instance official documents, teaching philosophy, local guidelines, the age of the children and various ideas of what constitutes a pedagogic meal. Nevertheless, in the present thesis there has only been a focus on how the teachers interacted with the children in relation to the pedagogic meal as defined by the National Food Administration.

It may be assumed that children have different experiences in the foodscape at school depending on which teacher role an actual teacher takes on when having a pedagogic meal. The sociable teacher role may be expected to turn the school meal into a social occasion. According to Norman (2003), teachers talking to the children during lunch may also contribute to the chil-

dren being trained in participating in dialogues. The educating teacher role may be anticipated to keep order in the canteens and to educate the children. When it comes to keeping order and applying rules in the canteens, the adult-oriented educating teacher role transferred norms and rules to the children in a one-way manner, whereas the child-oriented educating teacher role used dialogues and explained things to the children. According to Norman (2003), taking on the child's perspective and using dialogues may result in children with a good self-esteem. However, previous studies have shown that children associate food with conflict and discipline (Nahikian-Nelms, 1997) as well as rules and norms (Wesslén, et al., 2002). When educating the children in the meal situation, it is advised that teachers should act as role models (Hendy & Raudenbush, 2000; Lintukangas, 2009) and that children should help in the meal situation (Lintukangas, 2009; Nahikian-Nelms, 1997; Norman, 2003). Research moreover suggests that children should be exposed to and offered various food items (Birch & Fisher, 1996; Cooke, 2007; Hendy, 1999; Martins, 2006), as opposed to forced consumption, which may result in negative effects like food rejection (Birch & Fisher, 1996; Robert Batsell, et al., 2002). For it to be a pedagogic meal, I would nevertheless stress that it is fundamental that the teachers are present and active in the meal situation, i.e. that they do not take on the evasive teacher role.

Obviously, it is impossible to isolate what "everyday knowledge" the foodscape at school contributes. Nevertheless, it is interesting to look at how children reason about food and how "everyday knowledge" about food is being constructed in the foodscape at school and especially among their peers. In line with Corsaro's (2005) notion of interpretive reproduction, my analyses showed that the children participating in this study appropriated ideas from the adult world, but they also used these ideas creatively within their peer cultures and contributed to cultural production and change. This can be exemplified by the application of rules. The children had appropriated the rules applied in the canteens and used them among their peers, but at the same time they also spoke about breaking them. Thus, as Thornberg (2008) has discussed, they did not simply accept the rules, but judged them in a critical manner. The children moreover identified themselves with other children and differentiated themselves from adults. Thus, just like Corsaro (2005) has pointed out, there was a clear group identity among the children and social belonging to peers in the canteens seemed to be important. Nevertheless, the children had also appropriated the hierarchical nature of institutional commensality and there was a social stratification, for instance between different age groups.

The children also enjoyed telling stories about the school meal. The phenomenon of food legends is foremost found among adults, as the folklorist Klintberg (1990) has showed. In the same way, the children in the present study told their own creative food stories regarding the school meal. The

children had also internalized the idea of classifying foods in binary terms, for instance healthful and unhealthful foods, just as in other studies on children and adolescents (Harrison & Jackson, 2009; Johansson, et al., 2009; McKinley, et al., 2005; Noble, et al., 2000; Roos, 2002; Stewart, et al., 2006). The children moreover made a division between food served at home and at school, with most children preferring home food, just like other studies on children and teenagers have shown (Ekström & Sandberg, 2010; Johansson et al., 2006; Wesslén, 2000). This is in line with the results from the ethnological questionnaire, where the informants also expressed that the home meal is what is most highly valued.

The responsibility for children's eating in the borderland between home and school

Children's eating has become the responsibility of both the public and the private domain and as such, the school meal places itself in the borderland between home and school. To what degree the feeding of children is the responsibility of educational institutions depends on the culture. The responsibility for schools in Sweden is high in this regard, considering the serving of a free public school meal. Esping-Andersen (2000), quoting Assar Lindbeck, has claimed that the family has been "nationalized" in Sweden as the Swedish welfare state has taken over some traditional domestic tasks from the family (Esping-Andersen, 2000; Gullberg, 2006; Haastrup, 2003) or in other words, as Berggren & Trägårdh (2010) have put it, the individual is allied with the Swedish welfare state rather than the family. This forms a contrast to for instance Norway, where the parents are seen as responsible for feeding their children (Andresen & Elvbakken, 2007).

When looking at the sharing of responsibility of children's meals, it is imperative to look at children's whole meal pattern during the day. In the present thesis, 10- to 12-year-old children's meal pattern was studied. Although the results were to a large extent comparable to the results from the latest Swedish national food survey on children (Becker & Enghardt Barbieri, 2004), caution should still be taken when interpreting the results, as the sample used was limited and not random. The National Food Administration (2005) recommends three main meals and 1-3 in-between meals daily. Most of the children participating in the present study had a regular meal pattern, with three main meals daily as customary in Sweden (Kjærnes, 2001). However, the consumption of in-between meals was less frequent. The Nordic Nutrition Recommendations state that childhood is a period of rapid growth and therefore a regular meal pattern that includes in-between meals is of particular importance in meeting children's increased need for energy and nutrients (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2004). Some studies have found a

declining snacking pattern (Nicklas et al., 2004) while others have found a frequent snacking pattern (Husby, Heitmann, & O'Doherty Jensen, 2009; Jahns, Siega-Riz, & Popkin, 2001). These varying results may be due to different definitions of snacks in the studies (Nicklas, et al., 2004). When asked in focus groups, children at the participating schools stated that their in-between meals consisted of food items such as sandwiches, yoghurt, sour milk and fruit, whereas food items containing a great deal of sugar and fats were never mentioned when asking about in-between meals (unpublished results). When defining in-between meals themselves, it could thus be that the children in the present study did not define sugary and fatty foods as an in-between meal.

Some informants participating in the ethnological questionnaire asserted that the school meal is the only cooked meal that some children receive during the day. If so, the school meal could contribute to the original idea of social equality. It has been discussed whether the family dinner is on the decline or not (Fjellström, 2009). Nevertheless, according to Fjellström's (2009) review of European studies, a structured meal pattern is common all over Europe, and people who live together most likely also eat together, at least as regards to the evening meal or dinner and especially in families with younger children. This was also found in the questionnaire directed towards children and their parents, as most children and parents stated that dinner is served every day, and that this usually is a cooked meal. The results were not the same for lunch on weekends though, which was claimed always to be served by about half of the participants. School lunch, on the other hand, was eaten by a majority of the children every school day. It would be interesting to study whether these figures would emerge in a large, national sample also, having the issue of parents' and school's responsibility for children's meals in mind. Such a study could benefit from looking at if socio-economical factors have an effect on whether a family meal is served in the evening or not.

In the present study, breakfast and in-between meals were mostly consumed in the home environment. Nevertheless, one of the participating schools served breakfast and the possibility to have breakfast at school was utilized by one third of the pupils attending this school. An American study has shown that the number of children skipping breakfast declined with the introduction of a school breakfast program (Nicklas, et al., 2004). However, the introduction of more meals at school is also a political issue. The Scandinavian welfare state in Sweden has already taken on a large responsibility for children's food intake with the serving of a free public school meal. The introduction of more meals at school would entail the welfare state's responsibility for children's food intake becoming even larger. This is most likely an issue that will be further debated and calls for more studies.

One of the rationales for introducing a public meal was to foster healthy citizens and to curb malnutrition (Gullberg, 2006). Today there is also a fo-

cus on health promotion and health education in the school environment (Aranceta Bartrina & Pérez-Rodrigo, 2006; Evans & Harper, 2009; Pagliarini, et al., 2005; Prell, et al., 2005; Stewart, et al., 2006; Tikkanen, 2009). However, the focus is somewhat different today, as school meals are seen as a means to tackle obesity (Andresen & Elvbakken, 2007). Thus, I conclude that school meals have seemingly gone from attempting to curb undernutrition to curtailing overnutrition. This becomes clear when looking at the Swedish national guidelines for school meals (National Food Administration, 2007), which focus on health and elevate how to avoid overweight. Based on children's eating habits in the Swedish national food survey, with a high intake of sugary and fatty foods (Enghardt Barbieri, et al., 2006), the guidelines for school meals advise schools not to serve sweets, ice cream, cakes and sweet drinks. Instead, it is stated in the guidelines that the serving of sweet food items should be left to the parents (National Food Administration, 2007). Thus, I take this as implying that schools should take a larger responsibility for ensuring a healthy diet in the children as compared to what is expected from the parents. In the present study, most children were reported to have sweets and chocolate as well as soft drinks 1-3 days per week, but it is not known if these food items were consumed at school or at home, or a combination of the two. There was a general agreement between parent and child reports, with sweets and chocolate being the exception and without any significant correlation. Parent reports were closer to the results from the national food survey (Becker & Enghardt Barbieri, 2004). One explanation for the lack of agreement may be that the children have underestimated their intake. Snack foods and sweet foods are often under-reported as they are considered to be "bad" foods (Gibson, 1990) and the children participating in the focus groups did classify these types of foods as unhealthful.

The strongest polychoric correlation was found for school lunch and breakfast. Parents could be expected to know about their child's consumption of breakfast, since this is a meal that was usually eaten at home, which is the opposite for school lunch. Still, parents were seemingly aware of their child's school lunch habits. Polychoric correlations could not be calculated for dinner, but most parents and children gave the same answer here. The weakest correlation was found for soft drinks and in-between meals. It can be speculated that parents might be less aware of their children's consumption in this regard, at least for in-between meals, which was close to being significant in the ordinal regression models. However, the explanation for these results might as well be other reasons, e.g. difficulties to estimate frequency of consumption, under- and over-reporting or different definitions of a meal, and thus this calls for further studies.

The “ideal” school meal

Both the past and the present generations who took part in the studies had negative associations with the public school meal, especially when compared to the highly valued home meal. Instead, the informants in the ethnological questionnaire wished for school meals to be cooked at school, preferably just like at home, using healthy, natural and ecological food items. Free choice was emphasized, entailing that everyone's preferences should be taken into account. Thus, this meal should take on the criteria of a proper meal (Murcott, 1982) and it should also be served in an area that resembles the home environment. Home-cooked food symbolizes love and care, and the use of natural ingredients is highly valued in our culture (Lupton, 1996). Processed products, on the other hand, are seen as inauthentic and of lesser value (Lupton, 1996; Warde, 1997). The health discourse surrounding food, which is manifest in western culture (Lupton, 1996; Warde, 1997) as well as the lack of choice, which is often associated with institutional meals (Edwards, 2000), also came across in the informants' answers. At the same time, although the school meal should take on the same values of a meal served at home, it was implied that it is to be provided by the state and take on the values surrounding the welfare state. Judging from the results, it appears as if people are no longer satisfied with second-class food, but expect more from institutional meals, which is in line with Edwards & Hartwell's (2009) findings.

Although I do not deny that some people have had unpleasant experiences from the school meal, these single negative experiences do not justify the common negative picture of the school meal, especially considering the improvements that have been achieved over the years. A social constructionist view entails that what we perceive as natural is really not and that everything could be perceived in another way, for instance in another culture. Thus, to unmask the common view of the school meal in our culture we could ask ourselves how a person from another culture would perceive this meal. It might well be that such a person would picture us as well off, on the forefront and lucky to be served a free meal at school. Yet, we are not satisfied.

Over the years, the school meal has become circumscribed with certain expectations. Based on the present recommendations for school meals (National Food Administration, 2007) and the present studies, I have summarized the expectations of the school meal in Figure 1. The figure displays the construction of the “ideal” Swedish public school meal, divided into hierarchical dimensions, which all form a part of the school meal's role as a public meal. It is important to note that these expectations include values that may be attributed to both the home and the welfare state, i.e. the private and the public domain. Thus, the demands on the free school meal are apparently high. At the same time, the economic resources are limited (Gustafsson, 2003), which makes it difficult to reach these expectations.

The serving of school meals in Sweden costs about a total of SEK 5 billion a year. This entails that schools most commonly spend SEK 9:50 per portion on the actual food, according to the Food at School report (Patterson, et al., 2012). It is unlikely that a family meal can live up to all of the demands that we make on the ideal school meal. Still, we generally do not reflect on the fact that we might expect too much from the school meal, which constitutes a public meal on a strained budget. This is exemplified in an article on the Nordic council of minister's program "New Nordic Food" website. Taking Finnish school lunches as an example, it is stated that it almost takes a miracle to cook a varied and nutritious school meal with such a limited budget and that it has been estimated that an ordinary family might make a sandwich for the same amount of money. Still, the National Institute for Health and Welfare has acclaimed the Finnish school meal to be the nutritionally best meal of the day (Markus).

I acknowledge that the school meal as it looks today is not optimal at all schools in Sweden, for instance as regards nutrition, and that there is still room for improvement. Nevertheless, it appears to me that the bad reputation of the Swedish school meal is highly undeserved. That it is a meal that is served for free and taken for granted seemingly makes it even more difficult to appreciate. We are on the forefront with our free school meals, but looking at Figure 1, we still expect more. Nevertheless, considering the social construction regarding the school meal as being second class, it will probably be impossible to reach people's expectations, unless we address the reasons for institutional stereotyping. If we don't, the socially constructed "ideal" school meal will probably remain an unattainable utopia. However, if we continue to develop and improve the school meal, point to positive examples in the media instead of the negative ones, improve the status of the staff, stipulate clear and mandatory guidelines or laws and thoroughly follow up on these as well as allocate enough resources to the school meal, we might experience a more positive outlook on the school meal in the future.



Figure 1. Based on the guidelines for school meals and the results from the present studies, the figure displays the socially constructed “ideal” Swedish school meal. The figure have been divided into hierarchical dimensions, which all are expected to be provided by the welfare state.

Methodological considerations

Study I

In study I, an ethnological questionnaire was used. An advantage of using an ethnological questionnaire is that extensive autobiographical material is gathered in a rather short amount of time, without the influence of an interviewer. On the other hand, written answers may be less spontaneous than spoken ones as in an interview and in an interview; the interviewer may explain questions and thereby avoid misunderstandings (Hagström & Marander-Eklund, 2005). In order to avoid misunderstandings, the questionnaire was pilot tested. Since there is a risk that questions in an ethnological questionnaire may influence the informants too much (Hagström & Marander-Eklund, 2005), open-ended questions were used. Another disadvantage of the ethnological questionnaire is that people who experience difficulties with expressing themselves in writing may not participate or may write short answers (Hagström & Marander-Eklund, 2005). Short answers are also more common when using the Internet (Hagström & Marander-Eklund, 2005), which was the case in the present study. However, there are also advantages with using the Internet, as people who usually do not participate in ethnological questionnaires may be reached, for instance younger people (Hagström & Marander-Eklund, 2005).

Although a fairly large number of participants were reached by the ethnological questionnaire, it would have been advantageous to advertise about the study on an even broader range of websites. Initially, more organizations than the eight participating ones were contacted, but they declined. As a result of this, a large proportion of professionals took part in the study. The answers of teachers, for instance, are still interesting, as their opinions might influence pupils of today having school lunch, by their participation in pedagogic meals. Moreover, the reason for using ethnological questionnaires is to study the material qualitatively and not to study a representative population or to generalize the results (Hagström & Marander-Eklund, 2005).

When looking at what people remember when they recall their food memories, one has to look at various dimensions of the memory. According to Belasco (2008, p. 26), food is both “a medium for personal recollection and collective identity”. Traditionally, however, memory is seen as a purely psychological process. Nevertheless, memory also has a social dimension, as it can never be separated from its social context (Lupton, 1994; Misztal, 2003). Memory is constructed in social interaction (Fivush, 2008; Lupton, 1994), and therefore memories must also be seen as products of the culture (Lupton, 1994). Although it is the individual who remembers and shared memories of common events are never quite the same, memories are thus affected by the social and cultural surroundings (Fivush, 2008; Misztal,

2003). Emotions also affect our food memories (Lupton, 1994, 1996). Moreover, as most meals are forgotten, the ones we remember are the ones that stand out or are unusual in some way (Pliner & Rozin, 2000). Thus, all of these aspects have to be taken into consideration when interpreting the results.

Studies II-III

In Studies II and III, observations with complementary interviews and focus group interviews were used. The observations aimed to give first-hand experience of the setting and the routines (Patton, 2002), whereas the focus groups aimed to focus especially on the children and their experiences of the school meal. The focus groups also allowed the researcher to study how meaning was constructed among the participants (Bryman, 2008). It could be argued that interviews with the teachers should have been carried out as well. As time was limited, it was judged that observations were more important to perform than interviews. The intention of Study II was to mainly focus on how teachers actually behave during pedagogic meals. In interviews, the researcher only gains access to what the teachers say they do during pedagogic meals and previous studies have shown that teachers do not always act according to their beliefs in the meal situation (Nahikian-Nelms, 1997; Sepp, et al., 2006). In order to make up for the lack of teacher interviews, informal interviews were performed with some teachers during the observations. Nevertheless, in future studies it would be interesting to also interview the teachers in order to study the intentions behind their actions during pedagogic meals in more detail.

When performing observations, there is always a risk that the people being observed might alter their behaviour (Patton, 2002). The relative brevity of the observations must also be seen as a limitation. Nevertheless, according to Patton (2002), the duration of observations must be decided based on the time and resources available in relation to the information needs, the purpose of the study and the questions being asked. Due to a lack of resources, one week at each school was judged reasonable. Nevertheless, the observations also needed to be complemented with interviews with the kitchen staff and focus group interviews with the children. Moreover, the heterogeneous nature of the schools most likely contributed to a more dense and diversified result than studying a single school in more detail would have done. However, the intention with choosing different types of schools was not to make a comparison between the three, but only to contribute more varied material. The schools most likely represented middle-class regions in Sweden. In future studies, it would be desirable to also include schools in resource-poor areas, as the results could turn out different there.

Traditionally in social science, children have been excluded from the research process (Johansson, et al., 2009; Stewart, et al., 2006). In the present

study, it was judged crucial to involve the children as research participants, and the chosen method to do so was focus group interviews. Middle-school children (aged 11-14) have the cognitive, language and social skills needed to participate in focus groups (Horner, 2000) and the method does not discriminate against children with limited literacy skills (McKinley, et al., 2005). The power imbalance that exists between children and the adult interviewer is also lessened when children are interviewed in groups (Horner, 2000). A disadvantage may be peer pressure, with the children giving socially desirable answers, trying to be more like one another (Horner, 2000). Some children expressed a different opinion during the focus groups than in the pre-focus group questionnaire. Nevertheless, it is difficult to judge to what extent conformity was an issue as participants may change views during focus group discussions (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). What is more, in Study III, peer pressure was of interest to study in its own right. A problem that may arise in mixed groups is that boys may take over the discussions (Horner, 2000). In the present study, dominant individuals were present, but these individuals could be either boys or girls. In order to include everyone in the discussions, the moderator directed questions directly towards shy participants (Morgan & Krueger, 1998), but some participants were still less active than others. A more even participation rate was found in the smaller groups.

Study IV

In Study IV, parallel questionnaires to the children and their parents were used. These were later compared as regards to agreement. There was a general agreement between child and parent reports, which indicates that it is possible to ask 10–12-year-old children about their meal patterns and obtain similar results as when asking their parents, as long as the response alternatives are limited.

Study IV has some methodological shortcomings that need to be taken into consideration. Neither the questionnaire used in the study nor the questionnaire on which it was based (Becker & Enghardt Barbieri, 2004) has been validated. In future studies, it would be desirable to use validated questionnaires, especially considering that meals may be defined in different ways (Macdiarmid et al., 2009; Meiselman, 2000). Several definitions of meals and snacks have been used in previous studies and in order to allow for comparisons between studies, it would be advantageous to limit the number of classifications (Macdiarmid, et al., 2009). Polychoric correlation could not be calculated for dinner, which might be because of the limited number of answers in some response categories. As regards the sample, it is possible that the limited number of participants may have contributed to the creation of type II errors. For instance, the result for in-between meals was close to being significant in the ordinal regression models, and it is possible

that a lack of agreement could have been detected with a larger sample size. Due to the small variability in data, household type had to be excluded from the analysis for school lunch. This problem could also have been avoided with a bigger and more varied sample. The sex of the child was a significant factor in the ordinal regression models for in-between meals and soft drinks, but without any corresponding results in the national food survey (Becker & Enghardt Barbieri, 2004), no real conclusions can be drawn from this limited sample. Moreover, as the sample used was not randomized, the possibility of generalizing the results was precluded. However, the present study should rather be seen as a pilot study, comparing child and parent reports with new statistical methods in the field of food and nutrition, and the intention is thus for it to serve as a model for future large-scale studies.

Ordinal regression models and polychoric correlations were the chosen statistical methods. Kappa is often used to assess agreement. However, the usefulness of kappa is controversial (Agresti, 2007), and its values can vary greatly depending on the proportion of cases (Hoehler, 2000). Therefore ordinal regression models have been put forward as a better alternative to assess agreement (Agresti, 2007), at the same time allowing for an assessment of factors that may influence rater agreement. As mentioned, the present study may therefore constitute an example for how ordinal regression models and polychoric correlations may be used in future agreement studies in the field of food and nutrition.

Ethical considerations

None of the studies were judged to be in need of ethical approval. According to Swedish law, applying for ethical approval is needed if sensitive personal information is collected, for example regarding health, which can be linked to an individual (Central Ethical Review Board). It can be argued that the questionnaire regarding children's meal patterns might be linked to health. However, at the time when the study was initiated, it was considered sufficient if the participants gave their consent, i.e. if they handed in the questionnaire. This law was changed June 1, 2008, which was when the data collection for the questionnaire was being finished. Today, a similar study would therefore be judged by an ethical review board. Other reasons when application for ethical approval is needed did not apply to the study (physical and mental interventions or consequences when participating in research, biological material collected from living or non-living subjects and physical interference on a non-living subject) (Central Ethical Review Board).

The ethical rules of the Swedish Research Council (2002) were followed throughout the studies. However, although careful ethical considerations were made, more concern for the children could have been shown. For instance, the children could have been provided with written information directed towards them about the focus groups and written consent could have

been obtained from them also and not just from their parents. Moreover, although the aspiration was to perform the observations in a sensitive way, there is always a chance that observations may be experienced as obtrusive and could have made the teachers and other staff as well as the pupils being observed feel self-conscious and anxious (Patton, 2002, p. 291).

Future perspectives

The present thesis has answered some questions, but have also raised others that would be of interest to study in the future. The school meal is a source of constant debate, and the present thesis has identified a social construction of the school meal as being of second-class quality. In today's society, the Internet is an important information and communication channel, and many interactive social media are becoming increasingly popular, e.g. weblogs (Simunaniemi, 2011). Therefore it would be of interest to study how the school meal is being discussed in social media and how these may contribute to the common view of the school meal in Swedish culture.

The present thesis has exemplified how ordinal regression and polychoric correlations may be used in order to assess rater agreement within the field of food and nutrition. It would be beneficial to extend the use of these statistical methods to other areas in food and nutrition, but also to perform a large national study on children's meal patterns. Meal patterns are of special interest to study considering the division of responsibility between the school and parents regarding children's meals. Current discussions as regards to introducing more meals at school, i.e. breakfast and in-between meals, call for more studies on the subject. Children's nutritional intake from school lunch also needs to be scrutinized, as studies in this area are scarce. Figures are available on what percentage of schools serve nutritionally calculated portions (Patterson, et al., 2012), but little is known as regards what the children actually consume during school lunch.

Although some studies have been conducted on pedagogic meals, more studies are warranted. Teacher interviews could clarify the intentions behind taking on various teacher roles during pedagogic meals. It would also be beneficial to clearly define what constitutes a pedagogic meal, create guidelines to teachers based on research in the area and to instruct teachers about the best ways to carry out pedagogic meals.

Another aspect of school meals that has been sparingly studied is the politics that lies behind decision-making concerning this public meal. Gullberg (2004) has studied politics concerning the school meal from a historical point of view, but little is known about what informs political decision-making today. This is of interest to study, since how the school meal turns out is fundamentally a political decision.

Conclusions

From the present thesis, it can be concluded that:

- The free Swedish school meal was seen as a symbol of the welfare state, but also as being of second-class quality. A social construction portraying the school meal in a negative way was identified.
- The public school meal has gone from attempting to curb malnutrition to curtailing overnutrition in Sweden. The responsibility for providing children with a healthy diet has shifted towards a growing responsibility for the school as compared to the home in the Swedish culture.
- Teachers practising pedagogic meals were found to take on three teacher roles, namely “the sociable teacher role”, “the educating teacher role” and “the evasive teacher role”. These teacher roles ranged from adult- to child-oriented and varied in their level of interaction with the children. This resulted in a theory named ACTS (the Adult- to Child-oriented Teacher role theory for School meals), which may be a useful tool regarding teacher behaviour during pedagogic meals.
- The children appropriated ideas and understandings from the adult world and society as a whole and used it among their peers in the foodscape at school. The children separated themselves from adults and child sub-groups had been created in the canteens. The children also enjoyed telling stories about the school meal and classified foods in dichotomies. Nevertheless, the children did not simply internalize society and culture, as they produced their own knowledge and resisted adult rules and regulations.
- Overall, the children participating in Study IV were reported to have a regular meal pattern. There was general agreement between child and parent reports, with sweets and chocolate being the only exception. The sex of the child was a significant factor for consumption of in-between meals and soft drinks.
- The ideal school meal, as it has emerged in the Swedish culture, was anticipated to be provided for by the welfare state, but should nonetheless fulfil the expectations of a meal served at home, and even more so. Considering these high demands and the social construction of the school meal as being of second-class quality, it is likely that this ideal will remain an unattainable utopia, unless we address the causes of the negative image of the school meal.

Svensk sammanfattning

Bakgrund

1946 tog den svenska riksdagen beslutet att införa gratis skolmåltider (Halling, et al., 1990). I denna avhandling studeras den svenska skolmåltidens roll i den svenska kulturen. Med kultur menas här hur människor gemensamt delar tanke-, känslö- och handlingsmönster (Hofstede, 1996).

Den svenska skolmåltiden är föremål för ständig debatt (Gullberg, 2004) och det som framkommer är ofta negativa åsikter kring maten och miljön (Lundmark, 2002). Delstudie I har därför ägnats åt människors uppfattningar och minnen från att ha ätit skolmaten, med syfte att få en fördjupad förståelse för skolmåltidens roll i den svenska kulturen.

Resterande del av avhandlingen fokuserar på barn i förskoleklass samt låg- och mellanstadiet som nu äter skolmåltider. I Sverige ses skolmåltider som ett lärtillfälle, vilket benämns pedagogiska måltider (National Food Administration, 2007). Det finns dock endast ett fåtal studier på området. I delstudie II studeras hur lärare interagerar med barnen under skolmåltiden inom ramen för den pedagogiska måltiden. Delstudie III fokuserar på barns uppfattning av mat och måltider i skolmåltidskontexten. Eftersom barn äter sina måltider både hemma och i skolan så är det av intresse att studera barns totala måltidsmönster, inklusive skolmåltiden och detta är något som tas upp i delstudie IV.

Syfte

Det övergripande syftet med avhandlingen var att studera den svenska skolmåltidens roll som offentlig måltid i den svenska kulturen. Ett ytterligare syfte var att studera 10- till 12-åriga barns måltidsmönster, inklusive skolmåltiden.

Metod och material

I delstudie I användes en etnologisk frågelista för att sammanställa människors uppfattningar och minnen av skolmåltiden. Deltagare rekryterades genom att annonsera om studien på olika organisationers hemsidor. Ett

hundra nittiotvå personer födda mellan 1926-1997 besvarade frågelistan, varav 74% var kvinnor och 26% män. Datainsamlingen skedde juni-oktober 2007.

Datainsamlingen för studie II-IV utfördes april-juni 2008 på tre skolor i en kommun i centrala Sverige. Den kvalitativa metodinsamlingen bestod av observationer i skolmatsalarna (totalt 25 timmar), intervjuer med skolmåltidspersonalen (totalt sex informanter) samt fokusgruppintervjuer med barn i år 4-5 (sju grupper med totalt 52 barn). Socialkonstruktionism användes vid analysen. I delstudie II analyserades hur lärarna interagerade med eleverna inom ramen för den pedagogiska måltiden. I delstudie III studerades barns uppfattningar om mat, måltider och skolmåltiden.

Utöver de kvalitativa studierna så utfördes en enkätstudie på de tre skolorna som riktades till barn i år 4-5 och deras föräldrar. I denna delstudie studerades barnens måltidsmönster, inklusive skolmåltiden. Barnen och föräldrarna svarade på samma frågor rörande barnens måltidsmönster i varsina enkäter. I analysen parades barnens och föräldrarnas svar ihop (n=147) för att se om svaren överensstämde med varandra och om det var några faktorer (barnets ålder, barnets kön, förälders kön, med vem/vilka barnet bor) som påverkade överensstämmelsen.

Resultat

Tre övergripande teman kunde ses i resultatet från frågelistan. *Skolmåltiden som en andra klassens måltid* sammanfattade den allmänna negativa bilden av skolmåltiden som framkom i resultatet med en bristfällig miljö, negativa åsikter om personalen samt en avsaknad av social samvaro under måltiden. *Den ideala måltiden* beskrev hur informanterna önskade att skolmåltiden skulle vara, d v s en måltid med mycket grönsaker, många rätter att välja på, måltider lagade på skolan samt en trevligare och lugnare miljö. De värden som beskrevs antyder att informanterna önskade att skolmåltiden skulle vara mer som en måltid som serveras hemma. *Skolmåltiden som en del av den svenska välfärdsstaten* fängade de socialpolitiska värden som skolmåltiden innebär, t ex att den är gratis, något som alla barn serveras och för somliga utgör den enda lagade måltiden under dagen samt att den ger energi och näring för att klara skolgången.

I delstudie II kunde tre lärarroller urskiljas i lärarnas interaktion med barnen. Dessa var kontextuella, d v s lärarna kunde anta olika roller utifrån den situation som de befann sig i. *Den sociala lärarrollen* innebar en hög grad av interaktion med eleverna, framför allt genom konversationer med barnen. *Den utbildande lärarrollen* hade en medelhög grad av interaktion med barnen. Denna lärarroll strävade efter att dels fostra barnen och dels att utbilda dem i måltidssituationen. *Den undvikande lärarrollen* hade den lägsta graden av interaktion med barnen och detta beteendemönster kunde inte för-

knippas med en pedagogisk måltid. T ex så valde några lärare att äta med kollegor istället för med barnen. I den andra artikeln har dessa lärarroller sammanställts i en teori som benämns ACTS (the Adult- to Child-oriented Teacher role theory for School Meals). Där beskrivs närmare hur de tre lärarrollerna kan ses som både vuxen- och barnrelaterade, där det senare innebär att det finns ett fokus på barnet, barnets vilja och perspektiv och att interaktionen med barnet sker på ett sätt som är anpassat efter barnet (Eriksson & Näsman, 2009).

I delstudie III kunde tre kategorier urskiljas kring barns uppfattning om mat, måltider och skolmåltiden. *Oss och dem* beskrev måltidssituationen i skolmatsalen, med en uppdelning mellan barn och vuxna samt de subgrupper som kunde ses bland barnen, t ex avseende ålder och kön. *"Foodlore"* beskrev hur barnen berättade historier kring skolmaten, ofta av en ganska sensationell karaktär. En viss typ av jargong användes och ordet "äckligt" var vanligt förekommande. *Mat som dikotomi* handlade om hur barnen diskuterade mat i binära termer. Barnen gjorde en uppdelning mellan mat som serverades hemma och mat som serverades i skolan samt hälsosam och ohälsosam mat.

Resultatet från enkätstudien visade att de flesta barn hade ett regelbundet måltidsmönster bestående av frukost, skollunch och middag, med ett mindre frekvent intag av mellanmål. Det var en generell överensstämmelse mellan barnens och föräldrarnas svar i enkäterna, förutom godis och choklad, där barnen rapporterade ett mindre frekvent intag än vad föräldrarna gjorde. Barnets kön var en signifikant faktor för konsumtion av mellanmål samt läsk och saft.

Slutsats och reflektion

I denna avhandling har det argumenterats för att den negativa bilden av skolmåltiden utgör en social konstruktion. På samma gång ställs det höga krav på skolmåltiden att den ska vara som en måltid som serveras hemma, samtidigt som den ska vara gratis och bidra med socialpolitiska insatser inom ramen för välfärdsstaten. Med den begränsade budget som finns samt den sociala konstruktion som råder kring skolmåltiden så är det onekligen svårt att leva upp till dessa krav. Det pågår dock ett ständigt utvecklingsarbete kring skolmåltiden och kan vi komma tillrätta med den negativa sociala konstruktionen så finns det en möjlighet att bilden av den svenska skolmåltiden blir positivare i framtiden.

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Appendix 1: Child questionnaire (in Swedish)



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Kod: _____

Hej!

På följande tre sidor finns ett frågeformulär om hur du brukar äta och vad du tycker om skolmaten på din skola. Flera barn på olika skolor deltar i undersökningen.

Frågorna besvaras med att du sätter ett kryss i en ruta. I några frågor får du kryssa i flera rutor, men i så fall så står det angivet i frågan. Läs frågorna noga och välj det alternativ som stämmer bäst in på dig. Det finns inga rätt eller fel svar på frågorna, utan försök svara så sant som möjligt på hur du brukar äta. Glöm inte att det är tre sidor med frågor och hoppa inte över några frågor.

Du ska inte skriva ditt namn på formuläret eller kuvertet. Ingen på skolan kommer att få se dina svar. Det är frivilligt att svara på frågorna. Skulle du inte vilja svara på frågorna lägger du formuläret i kuvertet utan att fylla i det.

Tack för hjälpen!

Hälsningar

Christine Persson Osowski
Uppsala universitet

Är du flicka eller pojke?

- ☐ Flicka
- ☐ Pojke

Vilket år är du född?

19__ __

Med vem bor du? (Flera svar får kryssas för)

- ☐ Bara med min mamma
- ☐ Bara med min pappa
- ☐ Med min mamma och hennes nya partner
- ☐ Med min pappa och hans nya partner
- ☐ Med både min pappa och min mamma
- ☐ Med annan vuxen/andra vuxna

Vart brukar du gå direkt när du slutar skolan om dagarna?

(Flera svar får kryssas för)

- ☐ Hem
- ☐ Fritids
- ☐ Dagmamma
- ☐ Kompis
- ☐ Släkting
- ☐ Någon annanstans, skriv var: _____

Hur många av veckans 7 dagar brukar du äta frukost?

(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Aldrig
- ☐ 1-3 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 4-6 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje dag

Var brukar du äta frukost under veckans 5 skoldagar?

(Flera svar får kryssas för)

- ☐ Hemma
- ☐ I skolan
- ☐ På fritids
- ☐ Hos dagmamma
- ☐ Hos en kompis
- ☐ Hos en släkting
- ☐ Någon annanstans, skriv var: _____
- ☐ Jag brukar inte äta frukost

Hur många av veckans 7 dagar brukar du äta mellanmål?

(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Aldrig
- ☐ 1-3 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 4-6 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje dag

Var brukar du äta mellanmål under veckans 5 skoldagar?

(Flera svar får kryssas för)

- ☐ Hemma
- ☐ I skolan
- ☐ På fritids
- ☐ Hos dagmamma
- ☐ Hos en kompis
- ☐ Hos en släkting
- ☐ Någon annanstans, skriv var: _____
- ☐ Jag brukar inte äta mellanmål

Hur många av veckans 7 dagar brukar du äta kvällsmat/middag?

(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Aldrig
- ☐ 1-3 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 4-6 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje dag

Vad brukar du äta till kvällsmat/middag? *(Kryssa bara för en ruta)*

- ☐ Oftast varm lagad mat
- ☐ Oftast kall mat, t ex smörgåsar eller fil
- ☐ Ungefär lika ofta varm lagad mat som kall mat
- ☐ Jag brukar inte äta kvällsmat/middag

Hur många av veckans 5 skoldagar brukar du äta skollunch?

(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Aldrig
- ☐ 1-2 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 3-4 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje skoldag

Vad tycker du om maten på din skola? (Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Oftast god
- ☐ Oftast ganska god
- ☐ Varken god eller inte god
- ☐ Oftast inte så god
- ☐ Oftast inte alls god

Hur ofta brukar du äta lunch/mat mitt på dagen på helgerna?

(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Aldrig
- ☐ Sällan
- ☐ Oftast
- ☐ Alltid

Hur ofta brukar du äta godis eller choklad? (Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Mindre än en dag i veckan eller aldrig
- ☐ 1-3 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 4-6 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje dag

Hur ofta brukar du dricka läsk eller saft? (Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Mindre än en dag i veckan eller aldrig
- ☐ 1-3 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 4-6 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje dag

Tack för hjälpen!

När du svarat på frågorna lägger du frågeformuläret i kuvertet, klistrar igen och ger det till din lärare.

Appendix 2: Parental questionnaire (in Swedish)



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Kod: _____

Hej!

Just nu pågår ett forskningsprojekt om den svenska skolmåltiden och barns matvanor vid Uppsala universitet. I detta projekt ingår en enkätundersökning till barn och deras föräldrar eller annan vuxen som barnet bor tillsammans med. Denna undersökning kommer att utföras på ditt barns skola och andra skolor i X kommun. Rektor på skolan har godkänt studien.

Enkäten består av tre sidor och beräknas ta 5-10 minuter att besvara. Ditt barn har fått fylla i en kortare, motsvarande enkät i skolan. När du svarar på frågorna ska du välja det alternativ som du anser stämmer bäst in på ditt barn. ***Vi är intresserade av dina spontana svar, så fråga inte ditt barn innan du svarar.*** Försök att svara så fullständigt som möjligt på alla frågorna.

När du svarat på frågorna lägger du enkäten i kuvertet, klistrar igen och låter ditt barn ta med det till klassläraren ***senast en vecka sedan du mottagit enkäten.*** Ingen på skolan kommer att kunna ta del av dina eller ditt barns svar. Kodnumret ovan är endast till för att kunna para ihop svaren från varje barn med respektive vuxens svar och för att kunna skicka påminnelser till dem som inte svarat. I det publicerade resultatet kommer det inte att framgå vilken skola som deltagit eller vem som svarat på frågorna. Eftersom det är klasslärarna som samlar in enkäten förblir elevernas identitet okänd för mig som utför undersökningen.

Deltagande är naturligtvis frivilligt, men för undersökningens kvalitet är det viktigt att så många som möjligt svarar. Om du inte vill att ditt barns svar ska användas i undersökningen har du möjlighet att meddela det genom att markera det längst ned på sista sidan i enkäten. I och med att ditt barns enkät har motsvarande kodnummer kan denna tas bort från undersökningen om du så önskar. Om du själv inte önskar delta i undersökningen lägger du enkäten i kuvertet utan att fylla i den.

Om du har några frågor är du välkommen att kontakta någon av oss som arbetar med projektet, se kontaktuppgifter i marginalen.

Med vänlig hälsning

Christine Persson Osowski

Är du man eller kvinna?

- ☐ Man
- ☐ Kvinna

Vilket år är du född?

19__ __

Med vem bor ditt barn? (Flera svar får kryssas för)

- ☐ Bara med sin mamma
- ☐ Bara med sin pappa
- ☐ Med sin mamma och hennes nya partner
- ☐ Med sin pappa och hans nya partner
- ☐ Med både sin pappa och sin mamma
- ☐ Annan vuxen/andra vuxna

Vart brukar ditt barn gå direkt när han/hon slutar skolan om dagarna?
(Flera svar får kryssas för)

- ☐ Hem
- ☐ Fritids
- ☐ Dagmamma
- ☐ Kompis
- ☐ Släkting
- ☐ Någon annanstans, skriv var: _____

Hur många av veckans 7 dagar skulle du uppskatta att ditt barn brukar äta frukost?
(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Aldrig
- ☐ 1-3 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 4-6 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje dag

Var brukar ditt barn äta frukost under veckans 5 skoldagar?
(Flera svar får kryssas för)

- ☐ Hemma
- ☐ I skolan
- ☐ På fritids
- ☐ Hos dagmamma
- ☐ Hos en kompis
- ☐ Hos en släkting
- ☐ Någon annanstans, skriv var: _____
- ☐ Han/hon brukar inte äta frukost

Hur många av veckans 7 dagar skulle du uppskatta att ditt barn brukar äta mellanmål?
(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Aldrig
- ☐ 1-3 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 4-6 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje dag

Var brukar ditt barn äta mellanmål under veckans 5 skoldagar?

(Flera svar får kryssas för)

- ☐ Hemma
- ☐ I skolan
- ☐ På fritids
- ☐ Hos dagmamma
- ☐ Hos en kompis
- ☐ Hos en släkting
- ☐ Någon annanstans, skriv var: _____
- ☐ Han/hon brukar inte äta mellanmål

Hur många av veckans 7 dagar skulle du uppskatta att ditt barn brukar äta kvällsmat/middag? (Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Aldrig
- ☐ 1-3 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 4-6 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje dag

Vad brukar ditt barn äta till kvällsmat/middag? (Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Oftast varm lagad mat
- ☐ Oftast kall mat, t ex smörgåsar eller fil
- ☐ Ungefär lika ofta varm lagad mat som kall mat
- ☐ Han/hon brukar inte äta kvällsmat/middag

Hur många av veckans 5 skoldagar tror du att ditt barn brukar äta skollunch? (Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Aldrig
- ☐ 1-2 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 3-4 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje skoldag

Vad tror du att ditt barn tycker om maten på sin skola? (Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Oftast god
- ☐ Oftast ganska god
- ☐ Varken god eller inte god
- ☐ Oftast inte så god
- ☐ Oftast inte alls god

Hur ofta brukar ditt barn äta lunch/mat mitt på dagen på helgerna? (Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Aldrig
- ☐ Sällan
- ☐ Oftast
- ☐ Alltid

Hur ofta skulle du uppskatta att ditt barn brukar äta godis eller choklad?

(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Mindre än en dag i veckan eller aldrig
- ☐ 1-3 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 4-6 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje dag

Hur ofta skulle du uppskatta att ditt barn brukar dricka läsk eller saft?

(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ Mindre än en dag i veckan eller aldrig
- ☐ 1-3 dagar per vecka
- ☐ 4-6 dagar per vecka
- ☐ Varje dag

Är du nöjd med den mat som ditt barn får i skolan? *(Kryssa bara för en ruta)*

- ☐ Mycket nöjd
- ☐ Ganska nöjd
- ☐ Varken nöjd eller missnöjd
- ☐ Ganska missnöjd
- ☐ Mycket missnöjd
- ☐ Vet ej/har ingen uppfattning

I vilken utsträckning anser du att skolmåltiden har betydelse för barns hälsa?

(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ I mycket hög utsträckning
- ☐ I hög utsträckning
- ☐ Varken hög eller låg utsträckning
- ☐ I låg utsträckning
- ☐ I mycket låg utsträckning

I vilken utsträckning anser du att föräldrar har ett ansvar för barns matvanor?

(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ I mycket hög utsträckning
- ☐ I hög utsträckning
- ☐ Varken hög eller låg utsträckning
- ☐ I låg utsträckning
- ☐ I mycket låg utsträckning

I vilken utsträckning anser du att skolan har ett ansvar för barns matvanor?

(Kryssa bara för en ruta)

- ☐ I mycket hög utsträckning
- ☐ I hög utsträckning
- ☐ Varken hög eller låg utsträckning
- ☐ I låg utsträckning
- ☐ I mycket låg utsträckning

☐ Jag vill inte att mitt barns svar ska användas i analysen

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