



LUND UNIVERSITY

*From food scarcity to obese children
- the rapid transformation of health and food consumption
in Spain*

Department of Social Anthropology, Lund University

SANM03 Master Thesis in Social Anthropology

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Fall 2012

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Social Anthropology,
Lund university**

Social Anthropology: Master Thesis (Two Years)

Title and sub-title: From food scarcity to obese children - the rapid
transformation of health and food consumption in Spain

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Date of Seminar: 18th January 2013

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Abstract

Keywords: Social anthropology, Spain, parents, food, lifestyle, child obesity, modernization, body symbol, psych-somatic, interpretation

Spain has one of the highest rates of childhood obesity in the world. This study asks, why, through studying which food environment some Spanish parents create for their children. It studies the historical perspective of resources of food and the image of body and health this interpretatively has generated. Moreover, it studies the social circumstances of the studied parents, how they describe the transformation to democracy; a higher educational level, a disintegration of the previous family structure and a adaptation to new food trends. Through life story interviews, ethnographic interviews, participant observation, group interviews with parents and elderly women, interview with specialists and an open questioned questionnaire, this study seeks to understand the multi-faceted issue of child obesity and the children's food environment. Through using the inductive collection method, grounded theory, the empirical discoveries reflected which theories were studied.

Through a fieldwork in Barcelona it was interpreted that the grandparents of nowadays children are carrying marks from a long period with food scarcity, which interpretatively influenced nowadays grandparents' perception of a healthy body and often results in them overfeeding their grandchildren. Another discovery was that the transformation to modernization has happened in almost only one generation in Spain hence Franco's dictatorship, which ended in 1975. Modernization rushed into Spain and into the family through new gender roles in the home and a new distribution of the meals. Due to the welfare structure, low education level and inequality in Spain it is interpreted that Spain was not ready for this changes. The consequences were less time for cooking and creating a healthy food environment, but in exchange getting sweet biscuits and potato chips in to the everyday food environment.

Sider: 85

Signs: 27.479

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1 Introduction

1.1 Point of departure

After moving to Spain, experiencing the open and social population, tasting the rich food culture and enjoying the life on the street under the sun, a few things started to awake my awareness; The amount of obese children in the streets, everywhere in Barcelona. I was surprised about how many I saw every day. Not just what you would call chubby or even an overweight child, but obese. I started looking at what the little ones got to chew on from their parents, nannies or grandparents and I was not surprised anymore!

Children down to the age of 6 month are getting cookies, biscuits, juice and yogurt added with sugar, potato chips and popcorn. My Danish culture has it's sweet habits like in Spain more or less, depending on different areas of the country, education and interest, but you don't see it in the pressure put on the stroller wheels as often, yet.^{1 2}

I then started reading the Spanish labels on food manufactured for babies and toddlers. I found cookies all over. "The first porridge" with milk and cookies. Baby food and toddler food filled with sugar branded as a benefit for the child in the pharmacies! From my own observation I even had the impression that some, not a few, Spanish parents interpret that small crisp bags as being meant for children because the bags are small. When I spoke with some mothers about the breakfast ritual they would say that their child had the popular Marie biscuit³ for breakfast with chocolate milk and a sugar-bomb of Danone yoghurt⁴, but then not surprisingly, fresh squeezed orange juice.

I did see many differences and distinctions between parents in Spain, but my impression was social and cultural factors are influencing many parents to do the same, i.e. feed biscuits for breakfast etc.

Had Spain not been through the same sugar shock, which has shaken Denmark during the last 20 years⁵ or did the majority of this society meet the modern food recommendation with a different point of departure than other culture. I was surprised and I wanted to know more about the psychosomatic values, thoughts and priorities behind these parents individual- and what seemed as a common behavior in Barcelona. With a bachelor in Health and nutrition and working experience as nutrition/ food cultural adviser in Denmark and Japan I had a preconceived interest in this topic. Moreover, I am a parent myself. My son was born in Spain and has been following the Catalan standard of visiting a pediatrician.

¹ Lobstein T. and Frelst, M.-L. (2003)

² Lobstein, T (2010)

³ Peek Freans Maria Biscuit

⁴ Group Danone S.A

⁵ Holm, L, et.al. (2002)

Child obesity in Spain - How big is the problem?

According to World Health Organization (WHO) Spain has had, some of the highest number of overweight children (2-6) within the European Union countries since 2005.⁶ The incidence of childhood obesity rose 60% globally between 1990 until 2010. 65% in developing countries and 48% in developed countries.⁷ According to Thao Foundation, Spain is presenting a picture of obesity in 1 in 3 children between 3-12 years.⁸ Child overweight and obesity have exploded in Spain like in other countries. Only fifteen years ago the country had only 5 percent of obese children. The number of obese, Spanish < 5 year olds is not as documented as the group between 5-12 year. This is probably because, the weight of babies and toddlers is more unstable than when the child becomes a bit older. These numbers of obesity from are measured using different age groups, which makes it difficult to compare. However, the most important is the awareness that there is a huge group of obese in the children age, not the exact age and who shores *the* top position. However, it's relevant that the number in Spain is relatively larger than in the average number in the OECD and European countries. The number of obese adults is also high in Spain, but not among the 5 highest in Europe.⁹

The consequences of obesity among children

Overweight is scientifically proven to cause poor body image causing mental and emotional problems like anxiety, depression and eating disorders. Moreover, it can cause emotional turmoil and contribute to low self-esteem and fear of intimacy, hampering your interpersonal relationships. Besides this it increases the child's risk of hearts deceases, diabetes and other lifestyle disease.¹⁰ Overweight and obesity have in the western world become stigmatized as a sign of loosing control¹¹ and greediness.¹² Spain is not an exception.¹³

However, some people may still ask, why worry so much? It is up to the individual to decide whether to be obese or not? To this question, this study has one loaded question to ask back; when can children take responsibility for their own health?

The negative side of obesity in small children is that the ones responsible cause this problem, not the child itself.¹⁴ This study has a consistently apply to the child obese condition; That children are what their parents make them eat. Therefor the approach of this study is pointing at nowadays parents in Spain.

⁶ World Health Organization (2005) pp.5

⁷ de Onis M, Blossner M, Borghi E. (2010)

⁸ The Thao Foundation

⁹ OECD (2012a), p.6

¹⁰ Fletcher, Kim M. et.al. (2004)

¹¹ Goffman (1963)

¹² Stunkard, AJ et.al. (1998)

¹³ Magallares, A. Rubio, M.Á., Morales, J.F. (2011)

¹⁴ Steinberg, L. (2012)

1.2 Research question

“Why are there so many obese children in Spain”?

Sub-question and approach: *“How does a group of Spanish parents create a food environment for their children”?* With this sub-question this study seeks to answer the research question.

Definitions:

The term “food environment” as used in this study, refers to patterns in food and eating habits. Moreover, it includes psychosomatic elements; values, feelings, thoughts and awareness of health challenges.

The term “family culture” as used in this study, refers to the habits, beliefs and patterns in behavior of a family; how a family organizes their everyday.

1.2.1 Goals

This research aims to understand the increasing amount of obese children in Spain the last 20 years. The goal of this research is (1) to describe behavior and conception of health of the studied group of Spanish parents, (2) to present the parents’ historical background according to food and family, which causes their behavior and (3) to improve understanding of how these parents are creating a food environment; possibly causing their children’s obesity, in some case.

1.2.2 Limitations

Since the parents are the ones creating the habits of their children, a focus on only the parents is chosen. The age of the parents’ children is limited to approximately 1-3 years old, but only as a guideline. This study focuses on how the parents create the first food habits and this study wanted the parents memories to be as fresh as possible. Therefore parents with small children were chosen. Moreover, there is a clear perception of the difference of a 3 and 4 year olds in Spain, since they start school when they are around 3 years old, so this approximate limit seems natural.¹⁵ This study considers a person as a child until the age of puberty. This considerations vary from the perspective of the law in most western countries where the age is 0-18. However, it is chosen due to studies about when children start being responsible their life.¹⁶ Nowadays mothers of small children are usually between 32-40 depending if they have more than one child measured from the average maternal age of firstborn child in Spain, which is 31,3 years according to the Instituto

¹⁵ Gobierno de España Educación Infantil

¹⁶ Boniotti, F. (2002) p.6

Nacional de Estadística (INE).¹⁷ This research hasn't segregate families with only children and the ones with more than 1.

This study does not focus on only obese parents or parents with obese toddlers. It seeks to create a broad picture of how nowadays opinion and values among parents in Spain can be. One exception of this age limit is the case of one group interview with elderly women presenting a historical perspective of the food consumption and family patterns.

The approach is taken from a small group of native Spanish parents living in the region, Catalonia. These parents are born either in Catalonia or in other Spanish regions. Moreover, a few foreign parents who have lived in Spain for at least 10 years have supplied this study with their knowledge and astonishment of the Spanish culture.

This research seeks to illustrate the problem in Spain since it is bigger than most other countries in Europe. The target group is Spanish parents, but this study only shows the opinions from a small group of Spanish parents. The geographically limits are 3-4 areas in Barcelona, the second largest city in Spain. Chosen only the region of Catalonia may apply bias to my choice of group of Spanish parents since; it is difficult to generalize across this specific country and its 17 autonomous regions (Comunidades Autónomas). Especially Catalan people have their own national feeling of identity trying to differ from the Spanish culture.¹⁸ Further reading of this study will show that child obesity rates in this region are not the highest in the whole country of Spain, but this place was still chosen due to the similarities with in patterns of families and since other studies suggests that the increase of child obesity is also taking place in Barcelona, Catalonian of the same reasons like in the rest of Spain.¹⁹

This study does not include a comparison between the different 17 regions' health recommendations or include an analysis of whom these parents trust. Neither, does it discuss decreasing physical activity level, school meal or genetic factors will not be described in this research. However, all these elements in child obesity could have been a possible ways to look at child obesity in Spain.

1.2.3 Previous scientific work

A brief summery of previous studies within the issue of child obesity include many fields from medical studies to social anthropological studies.

The Greeks were the first to recognize obesity as a medical disorder. Moreover, Sushruta, an Indian surgeon in the 6th century BCE, related obesity to heart disorders and diabetes. His suggested cure was, physical work.²⁰ Due to the increase and awareness of the obesity issue in the last two decades, studies on this problem, it's determinants and treatments have gained importance and

¹⁷ Instituto de nacional Stadística

¹⁸ Hargreaves, J. (2000)

¹⁹ Ajutamento de Barcolona: Fighting child obesity, from school

²⁰ Haslam, D (2007)

popularity on an international level. Previous debates about child obesity have been highly dominated by statistics and quantitative data through World Health Organization (WHO)²¹ and the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD).²² These statistics supply the knowledge of child obesity with facts and numbers to compare, but no understanding of the problem from the viewpoints of the individual in the spotlight, the families of these children. The study of obesity started in the fields of medical, public health and human nutrition and with the increasing popularity of social studies, obesity became a topic in these fields too. While medics are often studying the physiological consequences of obesity, specialists in human nutrition often mix the field of physics, nutrition and sociology. The sociologists have often connected socioeconomic level and the risk of lifestyle deceases. Leading persons in this field are Richard G. Wilkinson²³ arguing about the relation between stress-related deceases and inequality, Nicholas A. Christakis²⁴ arguing how obesity is linked to ones network hence being exposed to eating standards of obese people and Sir Michael G. Marmot²⁵ arguing about the influence of nowadays status symbol and obesity, hence lack of social network and having a role or identity in a group. Stephen Mennel²⁶ has among many others studied new fast food trends and their relation to obesity, education, inequality, employment, income and demography but another area suggested by sociologist is, stigmatization of obese people²⁷

According to anthropologists, obesity, health and food have been studied according to eating habits, body symbols, food preparations, food comprehensions and much more. Often from a medical anthropological or bio-cultural approach, but not necessarily. Acknowledged anthropologists studying comprehension of food are among others Mary Douglas, Marvin Harris and Claude Lévi-Strauss with their respectably linguistic, cultural materialistic and structural approach.

Douglas discuss how the body and how a persons life circumstanced is expressed through the body; health, shape, care and conception of the body. Her discussion is used in this study through studying the difference between the nowadays grandparents and parents conception of a healthy child and what it takes to 'create' are healthy child.²⁸

Harris' discussion about the use of pork in Islamic regions is built on a rational understanding of the cost and benefits of having pigs in these warm, dessert areas. He rationally explains the skin of the pig, its digestion and way of cooling down in mud holes and dirt. Harris' rational approach creates his interpretation, that the warm, desert territory of the Islamic Middle east did not create benefits

²¹ World Health Organisation (2005)

²² 'OECD (2012a)

²³ Wilkinson, R.G. (2005)

²⁴ Christakis, N.A. And Fowler, J.H (2009)

²⁵ Marmot, M. (2004)

²⁶ Mennel, S. (1993)

²⁷ Goffman, E. (1963)

²⁸ Douglas, M. (1970):5

of having these creature, which later is interpreted to have alienated the pig and it's behavior.²⁹ Moreover, Harris rationally, interprets that the reason for the sanctification of the cows in India. Again his argument is more rational than arguments about religion belief. He argues that the cow has been useful in it's alive state, that eating of meat in India have been restricted to the nobility and that beef-eating Islamic invaders, may have provoked a taboo about eating this comprehended sacred cow.³⁰ These theories are used in this study not according to taboo, but to highlight how the historically circumstances of life and territory can influenced what a group of people conceive as 'good' food and consequently or as a result adjusts to new food habits with this conception. With his Culinary Triangle of the raw the cooked and the rotten,³¹ Levi-Strauss argues what different groups conceive as the right preparation of food and the symbolic relevance of the preparation and interpreted the taste it creates. He among other associates roasted with men and boiling with women hence, that women traditionally were taking care of the home and the men were hunting.³² However he discuss different accusations to these preparation techniques from different perspectives. His theory is used in this study to discussion what the parents associate with home-cooked and that microwaving interpreted is associated with less effort in cooking.

Pierre Bourdieu supplied this area with his model, *the food space*,³³ which, roughly generalize the consumer of different food products. Therefore this theory is only discussed but not imposed on this group of parents.

The issue of child obesity is complexes and multifaceted covering health behaviors, social determinants, evolution,³⁴ change in diet, global economy and global flow of food trends.³⁵³⁶ It has been studied by anthropologist focusing on specific groups, periods and in global contexts. Alexandre A. Brewis³⁷ presents a list of her own and other anthropological case studies focusing on obesity from different perspectives. Other anthropologists have done the same.³⁸ The increasing anthropological interest on child obesity is probably due to the increase of child obesity. Some areas study how the children's eating patterns are affected globally from the same modern food trends,³⁹ others how the child obesity epidemic is named as a social construction.⁴⁰

²⁹Harris, M. "The abominable Pig", in *Food and Culture* red. Counihan, C. and Esterik, P.V. (2008), pp..54

³⁰ Harris, M. (1989)

³¹ Levi-Strauss, C. (1970)

³²Levi-Strauss, C. (1970)

³³ Bourdieu, P (1984) p.190

³⁴ Lev Ran, A. (2001)

³⁵ Hannerz, U. (1992)

³⁶ Friedman, J. (1994)

³⁷ Brewis, A. (2011)

³⁸ Brown, P.J., and M. Konner (1987)

³⁹ Adair, L.S., and B.M. Popkin (2005)

⁴⁰ Moffat, T. (2010)

According to anthropologist in Spain, food habits and health comprehensions have been discussed by among others Jesús H. Contreras⁴¹ from Observación de la Alimentación (ODELA observatory)⁴² research team.

The interest of this study is closely related to the topic of medical anthropology, which studies human health and attitudes towards health over an evolutionary time in a social, gender and cultural context. It contains studying how different groups define health and illnesses, how food plays different roles in the everyday life and how a society organize it self with food supply.⁴³

Medical anthropologist studies different influences of health; genetics, environmental issues (lifestyle, nutrition and pollution), psychosomatic issues (feelings, thoughts) and psycho-spiritual (what a person values). A branch of Medical Anthropology is the Critical medical anthropology, which applies a critical theory through history and political economy to the study of the understanding of health. It emphasis on the different groups and their histories rather than biomedical and social explanations analyzing health.

The mentioned scientific works will to a greater of lesser extent serve to describe the background of this study and to analyze the discoveries from the empirical data.

1.2.4 Outline and key topics

This study is build on the methodological approach of grounded theory were the point of departure of the study is the empirical observation. Questions and hypotheses are asked in an ongoing process of discussing previous theories and founding within the area. The outcome of this study is a suggestion of how to study child obesity looking at the parents influence. It discuss known relations to obesity from different perspectives to gain new understanding of this group of Spanish parents.

The reader have by now been provided with the motivation of this study and previous scientific work. The rest of this chapter serve to supply the reader with background information about Spain and obesity outcomes in Spain and a description of the methods used and procedure of the data collection. The following four chapters are build on the four main observations, deduced from the empirical data. They serve as pillars in this study, carrying the analyses of new empirical discoveries and previous theories.⁴⁴ The structure of this study,

- **1st Chapter. Introduction:** Introduction, previous theories, background and methodology
- **2nd Chapter. From Hunger to Obesity:** This chapter is a discussion about how poor times in Spain have influenced nowadays obesity in children and the parents behavior due to the grandparents experience of hunger. It supplies this study with a historically perspective and is chosen as the first chapter to create a chronological outline in the analyses of this study.

⁴¹ Contreras, J.H (2005)

⁴² ODELA observatory

⁴³ Helman, C. (2007).pp 52

⁴⁴ Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1990)

- **3rd Chapter. Social Inequalities:** This chapter analysis the educational and inequality level according to obesity in children. It discuss nowadays status syndrome according to the high number of unemployment and according to obesity. Moreover it highlights educations influence on how parents create a food environment. This chapter is placed before chapter 4 and 5, since it serves as supplying some background knowledge to the analysis in chapter 4 and 5.
- **4th Chapter. Adaptation to modernization:** Adaptation to modernization: This chapter contains theories about globalization and modernization, lifestyle change of the mother and a distribution of meals.
- **5th Chapter. Adaptation to the new food trends:** This chapter include an analyses of the products observed to be used by the observed parents and makes an analysis on the traditional culture. Chapter 4 and 5 are discussing the last topics in this analysis. However they must not be interpreted as the least relevant. They are the last chapters due to a chronological structure.
- **6th Chapter. Conclusions:** Last a recapitulation is shown in the chapter, 6. Concluding interpretations.

Chapters 2-5 discuss and interpret how the group of parents creates a food environment. The analysis is multiply factorial, so this study seeks to hold a close connection to the key points and guide the reader through each step by maintaining a chronological sequence.

1.3 Background

In this study the background serves the purpose of providing guidance to which, group has been studied.⁴⁵

1.3.1 Spain - a short description

The kingdom of Spain contained approximately 47,190,493 people in 2011 across it's 17 regions each with different geographically, cultural and historical background.⁴⁶

The population density is 91/km² (235/sq. mi), lower than most Western European countries and the population distribution across the country is today, very unequal between countryside and urban areas. Nowadays parents approximately in their 30ties or 40ties live in a culture, which has been rated as one of the world's healthiest due to the average life expectancy (male 75 and female 83), which often is explained to be due to the Mediterranean lifestyle. A life containing the diet of

⁴⁵ French, D. et.al. (2004)

⁴⁶ Instituto Nacional de Estadística: Spain

olive oil, fresh fruit and vegetables, red wine and a related attitude towards life in general.⁴⁷ Those who are contributing the social security system can moreover harvest free public healthcare. A healthcare, which also is rates as one of the best in Europe.⁴⁸

However, it is also a country in a recession with a huge number of unemployed people. With a growing number of people with non-contamination diseases, including obesity and overweight in adults, which doubled between 1987 and 2010.⁴⁹ It will be discussed in this study if living next to the Mediterranean Sea really means living the so to speak Mediterranean Life style.

Inequality is said to threaten the Spanish welfare⁵⁰ moreover, Spanish families are experiencing increasingly separation from the big social network of the family.⁵¹

In 2010 14% of the population in Spain were immigrants from mostly poor countries. Red Cross' showed in 2006 the biggest groups were respectably, Romanian, Moroccan, Ecuadorian, British and Colombian. Historically, Spain has had huge groups of immigrants and long periods of foreign settlement. In 700 years, until 1492, the Arabic Moors (Muslims) dominated much of Spain, being gradually pushed back by the Reconquest; The Christian crusades. They were early pushed back in the North and last pushed back in Andalusia where they are considered to have left the big influence of culture still obvious today. Afterwards followed the Spanish colonial expansion in among many others Morocco and countries in South America. In 1936 a civil war started followed by Francisco Franco's (1892-1975) dictatorship, which lasted until the death of the dictator in 1975. Years which have influenced Spain's place in international comparison. Through the last 100 years Spain has experience experienced a civil war, famine⁵² political instability and corruption, dictatorship, economic ups and downs.

However, 2012's generation of Spanish parents grew up in a country, which experienced an increasing economy and level of welfare due to among other the transformation to the death of Franco, democratization, Spanish Miracle⁵³ entering European union and the Euro. They experienced a rapid transformation to modernization; modernization understood as the evolution from traditional (pre-modern) society in processes of increasing education, industrialism, urbanization⁵⁴ and demographic change.⁵⁵ However, a noteworthy factor is the delay of all these modernization elements due to Franco's policies. Still in 2012 the country is still lacking behind compared with many other western countries. According to economist the average years of schooling per adult is 7,3 years, lower than most other European countries.⁵⁶ According to the

⁴⁷ Enotes: Mediterranean diet

⁴⁸ OECD (2011a), pp. 5-8

⁴⁹ García-Armesto, S et.al. (2010)

⁵⁰ López, A. (2012)

⁵¹ Radio Sol y Mar: Spansk børnefamilier

⁵² Casey, J. (1999), pp.36

⁵³ Jensen, G.(2005) pp. 110-111.

⁵⁴ Diana Kendall, Sociology in Our Times (2007) p. 11

⁵⁵ Contreras, J.H and Arnáiz, M.G.(2005) p. 418

⁵⁶ Barro, R. and J.-W. Lee, (2010)

unemployment rate Spain has one of the highest in Europe. Moreover, the economy shaking making the government cut away much of the social services.⁵⁷⁵⁸⁵⁹ Spain can be characterized by having a close 'familistic culture' regarding the inter-generational contact and support. Compared to other European countries Spanish children live with their parents for more years with interpretably very little pressure of becoming independent and grandparents' are supporting their children taking care of their babies. However the traditional family pattern is changing, the family size is getting smaller and the number childless families are increasing.⁶⁰ The total fertility rate per woman (TFR) in Spain has fallen from 1979 when it was 2.8 to 1.2 in 1994.⁶¹ It has been reasonable stable with a small rise due to foreign women living- and giving birth in Spain. In 2008, more than 20% of newborns in Spain, had a foreign mother⁶² But it's still one of the lowest fertility rates in the world.⁶³⁶⁴ In all the western European countries, Spain is the country, which spends the least on family support (0.5% of GDP).⁶⁵ Concerning labor force participation, the first year following childbirth is a critical period for mothers and fathers in Spain.⁶⁶ Many employed women have a high risk of losing their job if they are on maternally leave for more than 4-6 months.⁶⁷ To put it short, Spain is a country with both low fertility rates and low female labor market participation.⁶⁸ That forced the mothers to choose between a family and a career. This is just a broad picture of the circumstances of culture this research is studying. This will hopefully create a picture of the circumstances of nowadays lifestyle for the Spanish children family.

1.3.2 Previous theories about child obesity and the issue in Spain

The approach towards why the obesity is increasing is taken from previous studies and theories. A description of obesity will lead the reader into this field and problems. Following a short description of the problem in Spain will inform the reader of the background and relevance of this study.

The cultural and medical considerations of obesity?

The word *Obesity* is derived from the Latin *obesitas*, which means "stout, fat, or plump." The past participle of *edere*, which means 'to eat,' is *Esus* and *ob* is the Latin of 'over.'⁶⁹

⁵⁷ Gilles, C. (2012)

⁵⁸ 'Split personality - How vulnerable is Spain? The answer depends on which Spain you mean'(2011)

⁵⁹ López, A. (2012)

⁶⁰ Breton, D and Prior, F (2009)

⁶¹ Ibáñez, M. (2010)

⁶² Ibáñez, M. (2010) p.6

⁶³ OECD (2012)c

⁶⁴ Ibáñez, M. (2010)

⁶⁵ Kalwij A (2010) pp. 503-519.

⁶⁶ OECD (2012b)

⁶⁷ Lapuerta, I., et.al. (2010)

⁶⁸ Esping-Andersen, G. (2007).

⁶⁹ Online Etymology Dictionary: Obesity

In most of the human history, humans struggled with food scarcity⁷⁰ and it is therefore not surprising that obesity historically, has been viewed as a sign of well-being prosperity and still today, obesity is seen as a sign of prosperity and wealth in many parts of the developing world. The western concern of obesity is even in some cultures considered as irrelevant due to other problems these cultures are facing.⁷¹

However the image of obesity was complex even in prehistoric times. Throughout history different cultures have viewed obesity as a result of a lazy, thick character. In Greek comedy the *obesus* was often a victim of insult.⁷² In ruling times of the Christian, food was considered as a gateway to sins.⁷³ In nowadays western cultures, obesity is often stigmatized.⁷⁴ Discriminating attitudes and behaviors against obese individuals are considered normal in most areas of living: health care, employment and education.⁷⁵ However, an increasing acceptance of obesity is also seen in some cultures today. The weight at which people considered themselves to be overweight was significantly higher in 2007 than in 1999 in Britain. It could be due to increasing rates of obesity.⁷⁶ In Spain a study of overweight and nonetheless the perceived overweight in adults and children, was carried out from 1987-2007. It showed an increased misperception of overweight in women and children of both sexes⁷⁷. This study will discuss if there is a tendency of acceptance of overweight between the studied parents.

Nowadays doctors define obesity as a non-communicable disease (NCD), which by definition is non-infectious and non-transmissible between persons. Obesity however, is considered as a chronic disease of long duration and slow progression. Medics and nutritionist have linked child obesity with parents' lack of awareness of the issue,^{78,79} with a worry of not having enough food⁸⁰ with a mistaken comprehension of hunger and fullness,⁸¹ with sleep duration⁸² and a long list of other detriments often related to the lifestyle behavior.

Though obesity isn't a transmissible disease, social research indicate that obesity and the behavior of obese people is spreading in people's network.⁸³ A study, which can be criticized for its insufficient claims about the spread of obesity, not expounding the facts that people sharing a network are likely to share the same environment, socioeconomic level and interests too. Moreover

⁷⁰ Mazzone, T and Fantuzzi, G. (2006). p. 222

⁷¹ Brevis, A (2011) pp.125

⁷² Woodhouse R (2008).

⁷³ Woodhouse R (2008).

⁷⁴ Goffman, E. (1963)

⁷⁵ Puhl R and Brownell KD (2001)

⁷⁶ Johnson F, et.al. (2008).

⁷⁷ Salcedo, V.et.al.(2010)

⁷⁸ Deakin's Research Communication, (2007)

⁷⁹ Zonana-Nacach A, Conde-Gaxiola ME.(2010)

⁸⁰ Gross et. Al. (2012)

⁸¹ Castellanos, E. H. Et.al.(2009)

⁸² O'Dea, J. A. et.al. (2012)

⁸³ Christaksi, N. and Fowler, J. (2007)

it's suggested that children's weight can be directly related to their mother's weight⁸⁴⁸⁵ the parental status,⁸⁶ size of the family⁸⁷ and the parents food habits and meals.⁸⁸

The child's body mass index (BMI) is studied in relation to (1) the child it self (physical activity, gender, genetics, age and nutrition), (2) to the family (knowledge about nutrition, the parents physical activity level, the food products in the home of the family, the nutrition of the family, the parents inducement to make the children do more physical activity, breastfeeding, parent's hours in front of TV) (3) the environment of the child (physical activity in school, physical activity and sport, in general, the way to school, fruit at school, food options at school, nutrition at school) (4) and the society (health campaigns, health politics and agriculture, TV-commercials, the supermarkets priorities of food products).⁸⁹

Figure 1. Determinants of a the child's BMI

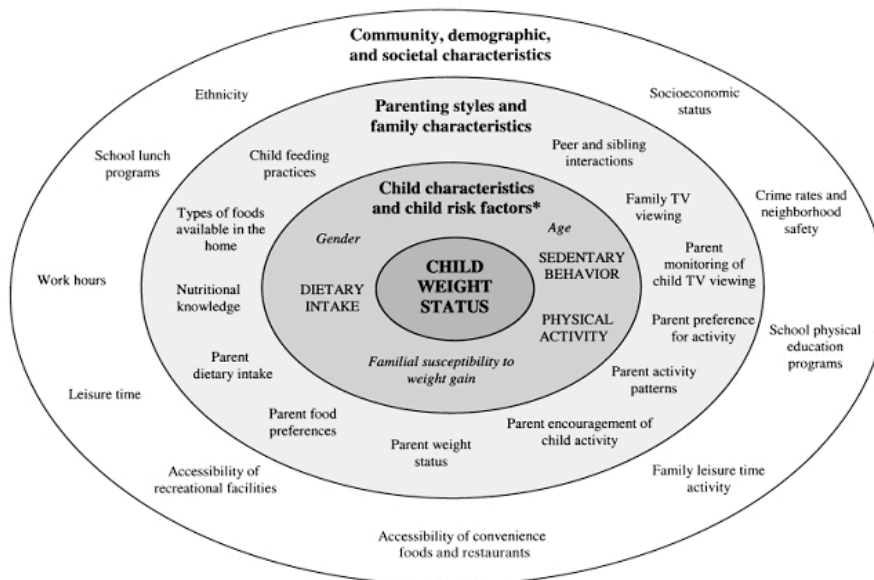


Figure 1 shows the different elements being studied.⁹⁰ This figure underlines the different influences of a child to become obese. According to this figure the focus of this study is the third from the center; Parenting style and family character. More specifically, this study focuses on feeding practices, type of food, nutrition and health knowledge and comprehension.

⁸⁴ Berge, E. et al.(2010) Parenting Style and Family Meals

⁸⁵ Mildred A. H. et al. (2010)

⁸⁶ Byrne, LK. et.al (2011) pp. 415-418

⁸⁷ Simonsen, G. (2012)

⁸⁸ Holm, L & (2003)

⁸⁹ Fletcher, K. M.et.al (2004) pp. 22

⁹⁰ Davison KK, Birch LL. (2001).

When does child obesity start?

Previous research shows: that an unhealthy food environment is created from the first year of birth.⁹¹ The foundation of a persons food habits is considered to start from the baby is born and again the time the parents choose to introduce solid food to their child. Approximately from the child is 6 months old. The weight of a child is followed by pediatricians and nurses in all over the world⁹² and the ideal weight of a child between 2 and 5 years of age is calculated by, multiply the age in years by two and add eight. Example: On average, a child of five years, multiply the age (5) by 2 and add 8. That is, $5 \times 2 + 8 = 18$ kg. In Spain a pediatrician and a nurse, who are following the child from 0-18 year of age, do it. A child is considered responsible for it's own food intake around the age of 12.⁹³ The interventions of the doctors start if the weight of the child are higher that 120% of the normal weight. If the weight is higher that 130-140% a treatment is discussed and started.⁹⁴ However, then the family has already created a food environment, opinions and habits.

Spain and child obesity

Spain has the second highest percentage of obese and overweight children in Europe. This number has exploded in the last 15-20 years. The quantitative data is used to show the size of the obesity problem and this study accommodates the relevance of statistics and hard numbers to discuss the seriousness of this issue. You can find an endless number of indexes from internationally and nationally organizations with obesity related issues, but when it comes to the previous theories and statistics one must bare in mind that Spain is a huge country divided in 17 different regions with as many similarities as variations according to food habits and lifestyle elements. There is a huge discrepancy in the number of obese children in the different regions across Spain.⁹⁵ The first statistics shown in this study from WHO⁹⁶ does not show the difference in the different areas of Spain or the exploration of obesity in the different areas. The prevalence of child obesity is highest in the Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla, Valencia and Andalusia in contrast with the Basque Country, Galicia and Madrid, which have the lowest prevalence. 2nd figure shows a different distribution according to the North and south of Spain.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Rüdiger von Kries et. al. (1999)

⁹² World Health Organization (2006)

⁹³ Woolley, H.et.al. (1998)

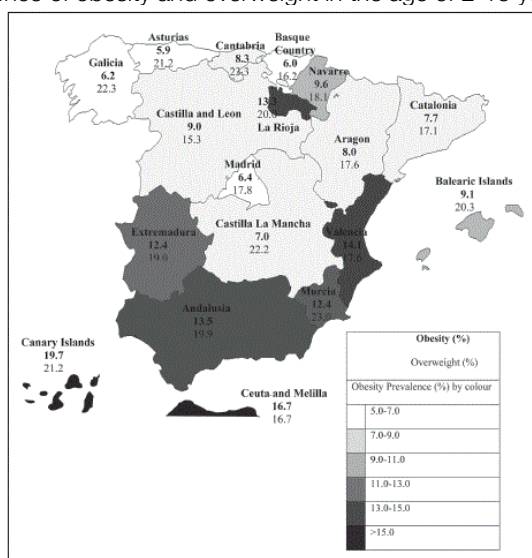
⁹⁴ Fletcher,K. M.et.al (2004) pp. 22

⁹⁵ Valdés Pizarro and Royo-Bordonada (2012)

⁹⁶ World Health Organization (2005) pp.5

⁹⁷ Valdés Pizarro and Royo-Bordonada (2012)

Figure 2: Prevalence of obesity and overweight in the age of 2-15 years across Spain.



The lifestyle in the different areas is therefore relevant to this study. It is obviously that, Barcelona is not the place in Spain with the largest number of obese children. However, families in Barcelona share many of the eating habits and values of southern Spain related to obesity and they have also experienced a significant increase of child obesity since 1985.⁹⁸ This study will discuss the reason of this distribution.

The Government has recommendations for the specialists working with obesity among children and has started different intervention programs. The message in these recommendations is however, "La familia - Como máximo responsable del niño, debe,"⁹⁹ the family is the one with the main responsibility. Studies show, that an only child is in higher risk of becoming obese than children with siblings¹⁰⁰ and a noteworthy comment must therefore be, that Spain has one of the lowest fertility rates in Europe and many only children.¹⁰¹

The previous studies on child obesity lead to new hypothesis. Obesity is a complex problem and must be understood according to the sociocultural context. If you had an only child, with separated parents, mother working full time, grandparents looking after the child, the child had a bad sleeping pattern, etc. The child would be very exposed to obesity right? No quite necessarily. Obesity is complex. It is in all socioeconomic levels, it has its tendencies and in some countries and cultures it has exploded or slowly spread more than in others.

⁹⁸ Moreno, L. A., et.al. (2000)

⁹⁹ Polanco, I. And Paven, Pilar (2008)

¹⁰⁰ Simonsen, G. (2012)

¹⁰¹ Breton, D and Prior, F (2009)

These previous studies create a demand for more studies, which are questioning elements influencing how parents are creating a food environment for their child. For instance through a medical anthropological approach, looking at the psychosomatic behavior in Spain's historical perspective?

1.4 Methodological Approach

The approach to the research question is through studying how a group of Spanish parents create a food environment for their children; including, studying their opinions of food and health and what the parents are practically feeding their children. This approach is chosen since the parents often are named as being primarily responsible of the weight of their children.¹⁰²

The description of philosophy of science and methods serve the purpose of providing a framework of the way the data is collected, in which field, for which agenda and by whom.

1.4.1 Philosophy of science

The philosophy of science of this study is taken from a hermeneutic angle, studying behaviors in a complex world rather than finding ways to generalize life like in the positivistic philosophy of science.¹⁰³ Studying parents habits around their child from a positivistic angle, the definition of the role of a parent must be very clear and objective not to show any subjective attitude, interpretation or signs of the researcher.¹⁰⁴ For scientists using the positivistic angle, life is objective and can be measured and directly compared. From the hermeneutic philosophy of science the reality is less measurable and a study is viewed through interpretation and perception. That makes the ontology of these two studies quite different from each other; the study of what it reality or existence.

In this study, the hermeneutic philosophy is preferred to gain more insight in attitudes, opinions of the parents. This means that this study cannot appeal 100% objective. The researcher become part of the study to understand the reality, which is studied. What then become important is a clear research question and a definition of it a clear description of the process of data collection. The research must seek to keep distance from the study not to influence the result too much.¹⁰⁵ The researcher must be aware of the concept of intersubjective and the importance that the findings should be able to be found by other researcher too.¹⁰⁶ For instance, some of the mothers interviewed met this me as a mother on the playground with me child and not obviously as a researcher, which may have created different responses then if the researcher been a dad, grandparent or a researcher with magnifier, pen and paper. For instance, according to discussion about breastfeeding and the following feeding practices, but this is just an assumption. It does of

¹⁰² Fleischer, K.M. (2004)

¹⁰³ Bryman, A. (2001)

¹⁰⁴ May, T. (2001), p.13

¹⁰⁵ Bryman, A. (2001), pp.16

¹⁰⁶ Gilje, N. & Grimen, H. (1996)

course, also depend on the personality of the researcher and the mothers' attitude to breast-feeding. The nationality of the researcher is conceived as having an influence too. Since the researcher is from Denmark and Europe, the parents' attitude had possibly been different, at least in the beginning; due to stigmatized expectations to different nationalities, immigrants and foreigners in Barcelona.^{107 108}

Even-though, I have lived in Barcelona and is a parent in this city, I cannot be described as having an emic knowledge or viewpoints similar to the ones of for example anthropologist, Nels Andersen in his study of the homeless man.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, had it not been for my status as a parent, my natural daily appearance on the playground and at the pediatrician's clinic, had most likely been gaining another ascendance from the people studied.¹¹⁰

According to epistemology,¹¹¹ this study aims to meet important criteria in establishing quality the study. To aim for trustworthiness this study has created certain reliability in the sense that other researchers should be able to get the same empirical material following the same methods and the same persons.¹¹² Qualitative studies may prefer using the ideas behind credibility since this word, include and acceptance that there can be several possible aspects of the social reality. It demands a very descriptive research practice. To do so, this study presents a clear description of how the empirical data is collected so that the reader knows how the fieldwork is done. Clifford Geertz calls it "thick descriptions";¹¹³ when the researcher makes a detailed description of the data collection and the studied culture and individuals.

To aim for trustworthiness this study furthermore aims to create validity to the study; in the sense that the empirical data should match the reality.¹¹⁴ Using qualitative studies, this researcher prefer using the terms, dependability or transferability. It strived to be dependable by keeping all the raw data from empirical data collection; the records and field notes.¹¹⁵ It seeks to have authenticity by fairly representing different viewpoints from the empirical material, also by briefly reflection on the data not being used in this analysis. Translators have been used in situations like the group interview and other interviews where misunderstandings could appear. Doing research includes different steps, each with their risk of getting bias. An obvious risk of causing bias to this research is the fact that neither Spanish nor Catalan is my native language. Therefore, I often double-checked if I had understood something correctly, which instead may have caused minor irritation among the interviewed. According to transferability, which is the degree to, which the results can be transferred or generalize to other contexts or settings, this study does not generalize the studied

¹⁰⁷ Semyonov, M.et.al. (2006)

¹⁰⁸ Hume, L. & Mulcock, J.(2004)

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, N. (1923):1

¹¹⁰ Hume, L. & Mulcock, J. (2004)

¹¹¹ Meeuwisse, A. m.fl. (2008), p. 23

¹¹² Bryman, Al (2004), p.272

¹¹³ Geertz, C.(1973)

¹¹⁴ Bryman, A. (2004). p. 273

¹¹⁵ Bryman, A. (2004), p.275

group as having behaviors as all other Spanish parents. It sees these persons as individuals. However, I judged that their attitudes and background are more common in Spain than in other countries and I presume that the study did cover some family similarities, which can be transferred to other settings, groups and regions in Spain. The chosen group is reliant on the time, the location, their individual background, interests and socioeconomic level. To be able to transfer the interpretations to other settings in Spain the definition of the parents way to create a food environment for their child must be clearly defined so that other researcher or settings use the same approach.¹¹⁶ For instance one researcher may focus more on shopping possibilities while another focus on the parents towards junk food if definitions are not clearly described. In this study the food environments include what the parents give their children, their individual reasons for this, their comprehension of their child's health, preferences of home-cooking, convenience, taste, money, education according to feeding their children. Furthermore to understand if their image of health is common image among parents in Spain and how it is different or similar to other parents image. This has been studied through asking the parents about their attitudes and about their perception of a general child food environment in Spain.

1.4.2 Grounded Theory

This study is using the methodology, Grounded Theory to discover the many viewpoints in the empirical data, to transfer these into a few main topics and generate new ideas about this multi-faceted area. Grounded theory is an inductive, interpretive and qualitative method, which helps the researcher to keep a sense of perspectives.¹¹⁷ To begin with, this study was build as a traditional model of research, where a theoretical framework was chosen from beforehand hypothesis. However, through the data collection and analysis of data, new discoveries of theory became relevant. Therefor this research uses the composition bases on the grounded theory,¹¹⁸ operating almost in a reverse from the traditional social science research model. The traditional model used in the beginning of the process is seen as the first inspiration of this topic, the data collection is seen as the intuitive process of discovering new perspectives of obesity, when the empirical data was collected "key topics" were identified and grouped into 'main topics' or ideas to be able to relate them to theories. Thereby, This study admits that it had a general idea of the area when the data collection data began, but highlights that the discoveries from the data emerged new relevant theories through using neutral open questions and a few structured questions. This allowed the parents to explain their story in there own way. The general idea of Grounded Theory is to discover or generate new theory or comprehensions.¹¹⁹ The new discoveries were the huge influence of Spanish history in nowadays grandparents, the implicit explanation of a very fast adaptation to

¹¹⁶ Thurén, T. (2005), pp. 9, 15

¹¹⁷ Glaser, B.G and Strauss, A.L (1967)

¹¹⁸ Glaser, B.G and Strauss, A.L(1967)

¹¹⁹ Glaser, B.G and Strauss, A.L (1967)

modernization, the parents perception of an overall low level of education in Spain, connection between the Spanish food traditions and the adaptation to international food trends.

A critique of grounded theory is the fact that it studies the elements, which have been discovered in the empirical data from a limited group of people. This creates a risk of not covering other more important areas, which the studied group has not mentioned.

1.4.3 Qualitative methods

According to the philosophy of science and the specific research questions, researchers use qualitative or quantitative or both methods. The quantitative methods are used to measure amount, numbers or other calculations. Therefore, this method is often used in positivistic philosophy of science.¹²⁰ This approach must supply a study with representing the objective and material conditions and according to social science it can be found in for example structured questionnaire. The qualitative approach on the other hand, is often used when subjective attitudes is studied. Studies which seek to understand philosophy of everyday life.¹²¹ Qualitative methods reflect opinions, attitudes and behavior are often used in the hermeneutic philosophy of science. However you cannot expect that hermeneutic studies don't use quantitative methods and the other way around.¹²²

The choice of methods supplies certain type of empirical material and influences which, discussion and analysis it's possible to make. The choice of methods of this study was made due to the wish to collect own empirical data and due to the study of Social Anthropology, the study of how people behave in social groups. The data of this research has been collected using interviews, life stories, participant observation and focus groups. Moreover, it has used a semistructured questionnaire as inspiration to create the questions for the interviews. Through both previously quantitative and own collected qualitative data this study seeks to show more depth in the analysis of the everyday life and the values of a group of parents in Spain. Spain has high amounts of obese children, but the distribution is huge across the different regions. This is an obvious reason to write about the criticism about statistics. They often compare fruits but not the different kinds of apples in between. They are good if you want to know about the broad difference, but rarely show the reasons or details between the chosen individuals. While a qualitative method approach may seem as showing soft data compared with statistics of a whole population, the qualitative methods are prioritized for this study to improve understanding of opinions, attitudes, thoughts, cultural and individual values from interviews and fieldwork. Moreover, to understand the distribution across Spain. As with a typical anthropological angle, this study does not see the used statistics as more than numbers. They are neither magical nor are the only representation of the truth. They distill some chosen numbers into simple and hard data or facts and describe social problems so that

¹²⁰ Bryman, A. (2004), s. 61

¹²¹ Spatscheck & Wolf-Ostermann (2009)

¹²² Bryman, A. (2004), s. 265

they are more easily understood by estimating percentages, amounts, rates and numbers.¹²³ Some statistics are good, but they are never perfect. The persons own words are used in the analysis combined with previous theories about this topic and this researcher gets in dialog with the parents to understand the common and individual context of their behavior.¹²⁴

1.4.4 Methods and Ethics

Studying other peoples behaviors creates demands for some ethics considerations and preparations. Nonetheless, to obtain a responsive approach to the questions asked, so that the researcher is allowed in to the core of the behaviors and group studied. Furthermore, to make sure that no one is put in a bad situation, feels offended or outrages. Considering, regarding, respecting, being aware and observant are main tools studying other people. This study aims to follow ethical principles in their different aspects. All persons have been informed about the research and it's purpose with exceptions to some parents in the participant observation. The other all knew why different debates were brought up and which institutions this master study is connected to. In some situations the persons were informed about which theories and inspiration this study was build on to inform them of the specific interest and to find there reacting; figuratively speaking. None of the persons studied, except the Nutritionist and pediatrician were informed about my education in Health and Nutrition. This information was kept covered due to a possible risk of the persons impression of being critical to their responds and behavior. The only method carried out covered was some of the participant observations, since it was made in public parks and near daycares around the time of the afternoon snack. Regarding self-determination, the persons were told that they at any time could say that they did not want to participate any more. After all interviews, the persons were asked to confirm their respond to and that it could be used in this study. This was done to make sure that their responds were understood correctly and to make them aware that these responds would be used in the study. Moreover, making them confirm their respond, gave them a possibility to adjust their respond. All the persons in this study were kept anonymous through coding of their names. Moreover they were informed that the collected data only would be used in purpose of this master thesis.¹²⁵

1.4.5 Methods used in this study

Through a description of how each method has been done, this study seeks to make the reader able to judge how the empirical data has been collected and what it contains.¹²⁶ Discussions of the succession of the methods are made through the analysis in chapters, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th.

¹²³ Best, J. (2001) pp. 160

¹²⁴ Sachs, L. (2002)

¹²⁵ Vetenskapsrådet (2002), pp. 7-14

¹²⁶ Geertz, C. (1973)

Regarding the continuously developing history it must be highlighted that the time of collection and analysis was in the autumn of 2012. Noteworthy, since opinions and behavior can change throughout history. The highest season of tourists had passed and the weather was moderate. Not too hot or cold. It was indeed a time to be outdoors and most people showed a positive and open attitude being questioned about their life, opinions, etc.

This city of Barcelona¹²⁷ and the region Catalonia is among the richest areas in Spain. It contains around 5 million people in its urban and metropolitan area.¹²⁸ The empirical collection is done in the city areas Poble Sec, Ciutat Vella, Sant Martin and Poble Nou¹²⁹ where the interviewed were randomly chosen.

Life story Interview

An informant in Barcelona randomly chose the families for the life stories.¹³⁰ The life story interviews were done in their homes to have as much cozy domesticity as possible; to make the persons feel relaxed and familiar to the situation of speaking about one's life. They were informed about the study to be aware of the reason of my questions, moreover to be able to inform about unknown elements.

These interviews were done to improve understanding of the culture as a dynamic process with the individual differences in views of norms and values. The study seeks to improve knowledge about own and others' preconceptions, beliefs and prejudices and to allow doubting on things which were taken for granted.

- The second life story is with Family Barco, mainly represented by Father Barco, father of two sons and husband to a Spanish spouse. The interview was mainly about his experience of Spain during his lifetime and his own life and values. The family was chosen due to the age of the father and his knowledge about the changes in Spain during his lifetime.
- The first family, Vila contains a mother age 36 a father age 42; parent of a son age 2 years old. They were chosen due to the age of the son.

The life stories were built on the same introduction of this study and therefore contain approximately the same topics, but they are not connected to a tight structure of questions.

Participant observation and ethnographic interviews

The participant observation was done in 2 different playgrounds and in front of a day care during the day (15 p.m. - 19 p.m.)

- Parc de La Ciutadella
- Ludoteca Sandaru.

¹²⁷ Falzon, M.-A. (2009)

¹²⁸ OECD (2006)

¹²⁹ Map of Barcelona

¹³⁰ Armelius, B. and Armelius, K. (1999)

- In front of a day care

The goal of the observations was to see what different parents have brought for lunch or snack for their child in an everyday setting. Because of the extremely short time limit only playgrounds and pick up places in Barcelona were used. These places cannot tell how the feeding practice is in whole Spain or among all social groups, but it can give an idea of how to relate the cases of this research to the statistics.¹³¹ The majority of parents did not know about the purpose of my presence, but after a while more parents were informed about the presents of a researcher. The fact that I, the researcher, brought my own child, made my appearance naturally to the participant observation. The participant observation include observation notes and notes from conversations (ethnographic interviews)

- Mother Lucia, mother of three children
- Mother Rocabert, mother of one child
- Mother Castillo, mother of one child
- Mother Hereu, mother of one child
- Nanny Marie, doesn't have children

Group interviews

Two group interviews were collected. The method is chosen to motivate a discussion and interaction in between the people studied. The goal is to get insight in the different attitudes and opinions and a deeper discussion about the cultural than from a person with less knowledge about the cultural norm and moral.¹³² A recorder and translator were used to create a more relaxed and natural atmosphere then if I had to take notes and not only focus on the conversation.¹³³

- This first group was with a group of Spanish parents, where half of them did not show up but instead send a friend or their spouse. That left the study with 3 parents with mixed nationality of 5 parents. The group interview was carried out and in the end it did show some interesting perspectives of the Spanish parents since they were suddenly in a group with cultural hybrid people aware of the peculiarities about the Spanish culture. It is comprehended that it made the parents draw clear lines between what they related to Spanish culture than if the communication was 100% Spanish.¹³⁴ The extended headhunting of parents to this group interview was through a poster put up in different local associations.
- The second group interview was with a group of elderly Spanish women. They were all Spanish, but born in different places of Spain. Their description of their life as parents, life in

¹³¹ Spradley, J. P. (1979), p. 38

¹³² Bryan, A. (2004), p. 350

¹³³ Spradley, J. P. (1979)

¹³⁴ Annex 9: Group Interview with parents

Spain and their interpretation of their children's life as nowadays parents supplied this research with viewpoints about parent life and attitude before the amount of obese children started to increase.¹³⁵ This group was found in a cafe in a local association in Barcelona.

Open Interview with Spanish health specialists

Two open interviews were made with specialist in health, working daily with nowadays parents.

- One was with a pediatrician.¹³⁶ The access to the pediatrician was through regular health checks of my son. Through awareness of sharing the same interest a meeting was arranged.
- The second interview was with a nutritionist.¹³⁷ Through speaking with mothers in the neighborhood and searching the Internet for topics about health and children in Barcelona, I became aware of this nutritionist.

Questionnaire

To get insight in the problem of obesity and how parents are creating food habits for their child a questionnaire was created, using both structures questions and open questions. Open questions to get opinions written by the people studied and closed questions to be able to see a pattern through behavior and background questions. In the formulation and creation of effective questionnaires, specific elements of the problem, the research question hypotheses were reviewed to keep the questions focused to the goal.

The first challenge was the fact that many Spanish people may feel a closer identity to their region of nationality than to the illusion of Spain. This is especially the case in Catalonia where the data is collected.¹³⁸ To avoid too much problems with this, the word Spain was not mentioned without writing Catalan in brackets. Moreover, everyone was asked about their region of birth and the difference between the different regions of Spain.

The second challenge was choosing the age of children. As with the rest of the methods of this study, the first years of eating solid food was chosen to get as fresh memory of the parents as possible. This study wants to focus on the first food habits getting taught by the parents.

The questions were kept simple and all referred to the household, specific task and opinion of the parents. Some questions were more specified than others.¹³⁹ The questionnaires were collected in 3 different locations.

- At food seminars¹⁴⁰ with a nutritionist for parents who wanted to learn about food for children (C). The parents from the seminar represent parents who, presumably, are seeking to know

¹³⁵ Annex 10: Group interview elderly women

¹³⁶ Annex 11: Interview with Pediatrician

¹³⁷ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

¹³⁸ Hargreaves, J. (2000)

¹³⁹ Malhotra, N. (2006)

¹⁴⁰ La Lleteria del Poble Sec, C/Salvà Nº 42, 08004 Barcelona

more about health for children. This group supplied insight of how probably, 'informed parents' think about food for small children. The empirical data was collected on Saturday 6th of October from 11-13 a.m.

- In the shopping mall, Diagonal Mar¹⁴¹ (D). This study does not have any knowledge about these parents interest in health. The empirical data was collected on the Monday 8th of October from 2-5 p.m.
- At a playground in Parc de la Ciutadella in Barcelona¹⁴² (P). The parents from the playground were presumably all kinds of parents living in that neighborhood and even coming from other neighborhoods. The collection was at all times of the day, morning, afternoon and evening. This was to get as much different answers as possible, from both parents with a tight and less tight work schedule.

All people had the same question set besides from a few adjustments made after the first questionnaire was received. Questions about the weight of the parents were deleted after a while, because of the sense that this question made the study to statistically focused.

Most parents were willing to fill out a questionnaire sheet, with exceptions from a few in the shopping mall. Both were women visiting the mall with their presumably spouse. Both were obese. This sheds light on the fact that it may have offended these people, to ask about their food habits, given that many relate obesity with "wrong" food habits. It could also just be because of lack of time.

These places were chosen with a conception that different point of view would be found according to these specific three places; Not to compare the people from the different places but to get a broad number of answers. Parents with children younger than 1 year old were asked to imagine what they would give their child after 12 months. However, this may create bias to the study since the imagination of the parents may not be realistic. Nonetheless, it gives an idea of how the parents are thinking of the food habits of their small children.

The material data have been processed in the sense that the recording from the group interview with the elderly women has been translated with a native speaking Spanish and Catalan into English.

Some grammatical errors in the recorded interviews have also been changes. The parents were asked to speak English if they wanted and could, to avoid a later wrong translation of the researcher. This highlights the bias of my language not native Spanish language skills and common understanding of expressions. This may have caused bias to the study since the people studied hadn't English as their mother tongue and could not express themselves as freely and cultural as if they had used Spanish.

¹⁴¹ Avinguda Diagonal 3, 08019 Barcelona, Spain

¹⁴² Passeig de Pujades, 21, 08018 Barcelona, Spain

2 From Hunger to obesity

"The last 50 years feels like 500 hundreds."

(Almudena)¹⁴³

The first quote in this chapter search to introduce the reader to this analysis. Spain has gone from scarcity to abundance of food in a very short time and this is interpreted to how influenced the people living in that period and their relatives. This chapter discusses some of the collected data according to approximately the last 80 year of Spain's history. Moreover, it discusses how previous history and nowadays welfare system influences the lifestyle of the studied parents. It contains,

2.1 The previous food scarcity

2.2 The tendency that grandparents overfeed their grandchildren

2.3 The role of the grandparents in Spain

2.4 Sub-conclusion: Grandparents and obese grandchildren

2.1 The previous food scarcity

"The old people in our society grew up with hunger and they now fill the table with lots of food as a status symbol [...] Today my generation is not in need of food, but I think that my grandparents and my boyfriends grandparents generation have the image of food

(Mother Castillo)¹⁴⁴

This quote by this 34 year old mother, Castillo, sheds light on Spain's history in the 20th century referring to a history of war, dictatorship and few food resources. This is something, which makes the history of Spanish grandparents different from many other European populations. Underneath, the 52 year old father Barco gives a brief description of the life of his family.

"My grandparents ate very humble. Vegetables, potatoes, almost no meat, almost no fish. They were of cause very impressed by the war. They lived in very bad times. During the war they could not eat what they wanted and they could not find the quantities they wanted. They had to go with a small booklet in order to get their amount of rice, potatoes, bread and so on; and they could not get more than a quantity a week, so they kept this standard until the end of their lives."

(Father Barco)¹⁴⁵

As with the case of Father Barco's family, many people in Spain have experienced depression, hunger and misery during the years of the civil war and the time after in the Franco regime.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Annex 10: Group interview with elderly women

¹⁴⁴ Annex 6: Ethnographic interview with Mother Castillo

¹⁴⁵ Annex 1: Life story nierview with family Barco

¹⁴⁶ Sánchez, Antonio Cazorla (2009)

Hunger and difficult times have set the agenda for many years.^{147 148} Mother Castillo tells how her elderly relatives experienced poor times and how it influenced how took care of her,

“My boyfriend’s grandparents and parents always offer lots of food and it is for sure their way of showing love. They show that they want to protect us. They often say so. All of it is of cause homemade (laughing).”

(Mother Castillo)¹⁴⁹

The reasons causing the increasing child obesity are often interpreted as being the increasing consumption of junk food and ready-made food and decreasing active life, but the parents interviewed, shed light on how Spain’s historical can play a role in this problem. Mother Castillo doesn’t seem to be the only person spoiled with love in disguise of lots of food.

“...in not that many decades ago Spain got out of a dictatorship, a long civil war, and that Spain in general is a peasant society where the food resources have been tight in many years. Many people have experienced hunger, so when a child starts eating, the plate is booming and it is with a proud voice that the grandmother or mother says, oh look how good the child is at eating. They are very proud if the child looks healthy. Meaning if the child is overweight, not if the child is obese; but overweight is considered healthy for many grandparents. This is mostly the case in families where they don’t have a job or other resources.”

(Nanny Marie)¹⁵⁰

The quote of Nanny Marie highlights the reason for some grandparents’ attitude to the health of a grandchild. The Spanish pediatrician, Jesús García, President of the Madrid Association against Child Mistreatment, has the same assumption. He explains the interpretation of eating in some generations in Spain and how eating; the more the better is comprehended as health.¹⁵¹ From my interpretation this is also comprehended as the grandparents’ ways of caring for her wellbeing. This is of course not the reason for all the obese children in Spain, but Jesús Garcia expiration tells that there are still marks left in Spain from the years of hunger and spare times.

This argument seems like claiming that there is a whole generation in Spain with eating disorder caused by the war and dictatorship. This is a very precipitately, unsubstantiated and vague argument. Instead of presenting it as eating disturbance this study will mention this as a peculiarity of some individuals from this generation. The relevance of mentioning this is that eating disturbance in mothers is know as a risk of spreading on to the children.¹⁵² The other reason for looking into this is an assumption that Spanish families have more contact to family than for example northern European families, according to caring and supporting children and grandchild. If nowadays

¹⁴⁷ Blanco, D.A. and, Ánge, M.(2010)

¹⁴⁸ Baroso, M. B. (1903)

¹⁴⁹ Annex 6: Ethnographic interview Mother Castillo

¹⁵⁰ Annex 8: Ethnographic Interview Nanny Marie

¹⁵¹ ‘Cómo sanar a un hijo: ¿alejalo de sus padres?’(2009)

¹⁵² Woolley, H. et.al. (1998)

children are in risk of being overfed, this creates a relevant link. One might think that this is too long ago to have any influence on how nowadays parents create a food environment for their children even if some Spanish families are very close. However, the studied parents mentioned in so much of the empirical data, that it was found noteworthy to look into.

2.2 The tendency that grandparents overfeed their grandchildren

Father Barco explains how his son is served much food when the son is visiting his grandmother. He recounts his son's food description when he comes back from the grandmother.

"When he comes back, he says, Oh it was delicious. She made a stew with vegetables, with lamb, with duck, and afterwards I had a big streak and she made the potatoes, the fried potatoes herself, cutting it and everything and it was delicious, with the best oil and so on."

(Father Barco)¹⁵³

Mother Castillo enhances the fact that her old relatives had much different things to think of than which kind of dish to feed their children.

"I think that people make themselves through their parents and through evolution. Our parents were the parents of the dictatorship and civil war in Spain and World War II in Europe, individuals which were threatened on their survival."

(Mother Castillo)¹⁵⁴

The old relatives simply had to think about if there were enough food to feed the mouths. It can be interpreted from the interview of Mother Castillo that the grandparents way of loving their child and grandchild can be an out come of them thinking more about the child's physical health in sense, the more the better. Besides having few resources nowadays grandparents moreover lived in a time and country with a very high number of infant mortality.¹⁵⁵ The survival of the child had many challenges, like malnutrition.¹⁵⁶

"I think that we are different today as parents. We have time to think of other things than food. My boyfriend and me think about our son's emotions and development. It was not as important for our grandparents and parents. What was important was to offer some food. The important thing was to take care of the physical level."

(Mother Castillo)¹⁵⁷

The mother on 34 moreover makes a distinction to the way she thinks of giving love to her child.

¹⁵³ Annex 1: Life story interview with family Barco

¹⁵⁴ Annex 6: Ethnographic interview with Mother Castillo

¹⁵⁵ Shubert, A. (1990) pp. 212

¹⁵⁶ Fernandez, R.L.(1990): 3

¹⁵⁷ Annex 6: Ethnographic interview with Mother Castillo

*For my generation, we think more of becoming a respectful parent (...)
The most important is that my son feels that he is respected. I think that is a
result of where we are in history..."*

(Mother Castillo)¹⁵⁸

Mother Rocabert also describes what she preconceives as healthy or her child.

*"I try to give a lot of love and to make our time calm and stimulating, with
games, laughter, and love. I believe that health care should be taken to a
physically and emotionally level, with an active lifestyle, a good diet and lots
of love."*

(Mother Rocabert)¹⁵⁹

Anthropological studies about overfeeding, argue among others, that creating a bigger body can be seen as a reaction against the trend of thinness in western cultures, meaning to create plumpness as a reaction and resistant to external forces and their thinness.¹⁶⁰ External forces understood as global trends and modernization. However, this is not interpreted as the case for these grandparents. This study interprets that it is a reaction to previous poor times. Eileen Anderson- Fye's theory found that some societies associate more to the perception of body shape than to body size. Than womanliness is for some connected to the body shapes of an overweight woman.¹⁶¹ Since this discuss womanliness it cannot be transferred to the perception of children, but can be understood the perception of overweight as something healthy and not weak. Mary Douglas (1970)¹⁶² has discussed the idea as the body as a symbol from an anthropological angle. Through the body, individuals are showing the circumstances of their life and their meaning and values. Today the interpretation of an overweight body is mostly negative,¹⁶³ but this study interprets, that due to poor times, the mentioned grandparents have mixed interpretations about overweight in children. This study interprets that the conception of a healthy body or diet is different in the different generations. The intergenerational difference in the perception of healthy food will be discussed in chapter 4.

Spain is not the only country were grandparents are said to cause obesity in grandchildren. In England the grandparents are blamed to have an influence too.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, it cannot be interpreted, as a consequence of only the history of Spain, but one thing, which can be interpreted, is that the grandparents behave like these cases because of poorer times than today. Studies made by British pediatricians shows that children have a higher risk of becoming overweight or

¹⁵⁸ Annex 6: Ethnographic interview with Mother Castillo

¹⁵⁹ Annex 5: Ethnographic interview with Mother Rocabert

¹⁶⁰ Brewis, A. (2011) p.101

¹⁶¹ Anderson- Fye, E.(2009)

¹⁶² Douglas, M (1970)

¹⁶³ Goffman, E. (1963)

¹⁶⁴ Wilkinson, E. (2010)

obese if they have been taking care of by the grandparents.¹⁶⁵¹⁶⁶ There are not much theories on how grandparents overfeed their grandchildren in Spain, it's mostly debated through medias, but, a comprehension can moreover be, that the more the grandparents are responsible of the food of the grandchild, the more their possible health and food image influence the child's food environment. The intensity of the grandparents' care and support is more scientifically documented than the question if they overfed or not.

2.3 The role of the grandparents in Spain

In a discussion about the influence of the grandparents in Spain a relevant perspective is the formal and informal or family's care and support in Spain. Albertini, Kohli and Vogel's argue from a comparative study that economic and social support in ten western European countries is distributed very differently in North and South Europe's different welfare system. They argue that economic support from parent to child in the South is either very intense or non-existing, while it is distributed more evenly in North Europe.¹⁶⁷ The grandparents from Spain and Italy taking care of grandchildren are doing it more intense than in the ones in northern part of Europe and in France. Meaning, in more hours and with more economic support than the grandparents in the Northern parts.¹⁶⁸

One reason for the intense or non existing informal help from the grandparents could be that less women are working in Spain than in north of Europe, due to difficulties of finding a job in 2012 and probably, hence the norm of the Spanish intergenerational family care and the low public family support in Spain. A long list of welfare studies discuss how welfare must be understood through the studied country, culture, economy and in some countries gender equality.¹⁶⁹ Some countries have more family support than others. Yet, other studies show, that children are more dependent on their parents in Spain due to less formal support for education than in other European countries.¹⁷⁰ You can among other read about an example of the Spanish family culture, when Father Barco explains the previous norm of staying in the same village as your parents take care of them.

"Well, I used to live in the same building as my parents. You try to get as close as possible to your family, because modern life gives you plenty of reasons to abandon your family. And in order to prevent this to happen 200 % you still try to live as close as possible. So that you can never say I am not going to see my parents because they are many kilometers."

(Father Barco)¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ Pearce, A.et.al. (2010)

¹⁶⁶ Hope, J. (2010)

¹⁶⁷ Albertini, Kohli and Vogel (2007)

¹⁶⁸ Igle, C. and Szydlik, M. (2011)

¹⁶⁹ Esping-Andersen, G. (2007)

¹⁷⁰ SHARE-project

¹⁷¹ Esping-Andersen

The welfare differences and the norms of family culture in Spain can hopefully improve understanding of the circumstances of nowadays parents, whether the grandparents have a non-existing or very intense influence on the children and grandchildren. Again this study asks, how does a possibly intense influence effect the environment of the child? The interviewed pediatrician explains how some of the parents in her clinic talk about the grandparents of their children.

“The mothers are a bit annoyed because their mothers and their mother-in-law are stressing them if the child looks thin. They say that it’s unhealthy and that the mothers can do better. But I tell them that if they are just around the average, there are no problems. Babies are different. Some are thin some are choppy. We need both. They are not the same. Grandparents and old people on then street comment a lot on the size of the child. Saying, “Mufflettes” (big baby cheeks) and pulling the chicks.”

(Pediatrician)¹⁷²

The pediatrician moreover points:

“I hear, from the parents, that the grandparents know a lot about the healthy Mediterranean diet, but they give the child what it wants. If it wants spaghetti, it will get it. They are nursing the child and always want the child to be happy with them. I tell the parents that they have to tell the grandparents that they must serve healthy meals, but the parents don’t dare telling their parents, because they already feel sorry for the grandparents that they have to take care of their child. They fell bad about it.”

(Pediatrician)¹⁷³

Through speaking with the pediatrician it can be interpreted that some parents are having a dilemma with their parent feeding their child. According to the pediatrician these parents don’t tell the grandparents what to give their child because of guild for making them look after their child, while they work. A dilemma that probably have arisen hence the women’s participation in the work force. This will be discussed in chapter 3 and 4.

One can discuss the pros and cons by the Spanish family culture. The grandparents’ influence must be taken into account. The grandparents are a solution for the parents to have someone to look after their child, while they are working, and overfeeding is in some cases something which is part of the child’s food environment because of the grandparents need, comprehension of a healthy body. On the other side, another theory is that grandparents are the only ones teaching the grandchild about the traditional, Mediterranean diet and meal.¹⁷⁴

Before finishing this chapter, with the comprehension that the time spend with grandparents is a significant influence of child obesity, the parents must consider. The empirical data also discovered

¹⁷² Annex 11: Interview with Pediatrician

¹⁷³ Annex 11: Interview with Pediatrician

¹⁷⁴ RTVE.es (2012)

how nowadays parents, have experienced food resources and *their* parents relation to food. The 43 years old father Vila, describes coming from Andalusia to a suburb in Barcelona.¹⁷⁵

"I lived in a suburb of Barcelona in my elementary school years. My family did not have much money. I remember walking 1 hour to buy food in a cheap supermarket and then walk back 1 hour. The life in Barcelona has changed. Especially after 1992 with the Olympics. After the Olympics the city grew and it was not difficult for a workman to get a job."

(Father Vila)¹⁷⁶

A quote by the interviewed nutritionist is here used to understand the food resources in Spain of nowadays parents.

"Andalusia was very primitive when I moved there in 1989. It was like coming to Africa if you came from other countries in Europe. The only place we could get products from out of Spain was in one specific store in Malaga. Malaga was even in the late 80ties with a lot of tourists from England."

(Nutritionist)¹⁷⁷

The question whether nowadays parents also experience an extent of short food resources of cause also depends of each family. It was not something, which the other parents mentioned. Through the observation there is no evidence that the grandparents were overfeeding the grandchildren. I did mainly observe people, which according to age were more likely to be the parents. Not only were there no observation of grandparents overfeeding, the observation showed that the presuming parents were giving their children unhealthy snack. It can be discussed why the parent chose these food product, and if they have been influence of the grandparents; their own parents. However, no data or theory link grandparents with snacks. They are linked to big meals and overfeeding while it's the parents how are linked which snacks. This will be furthered discussed in chapter 4, discussion the distribution of the meal.

Had I made a comparison of the age groups and asked directly into what the grandparents give their grandchildren and what the parents give there children, and why, the interpretations would have been strengthened, this could have been done through participant observation in homes where the grandparents are babysitting.

2.4 Sub-conclusion: Grandparents and obese grandchildren

Through theories about body symbol, historically and welfare related theory the interpretation of the empirical data shape new arguments.

The grandparents are interpreted to have a different acceptance of overweight or acceptance of the seriousness of overweight. Moreover, it interpret that the mentioned grandparents conceptions

¹⁷⁵ Annex 2: Life story interview, family Vila

¹⁷⁶ Annex 2: Life story interview with family, Vila

¹⁷⁷ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

of what the grandchild need and what it, will appreciate are not consistent with a normal BMI; moreover it is not consistent with some parents conception their child's need. From previous theories, the family culture in Spain can be interpreted as more reliant on an intergenerational level than in many other western countries. This study interprets that it makes chances and risks of influencing grandchildren much bigger in Spain than in countries where the grandparents have less time with the grandchildren. It makes the grandchildren learn about previous Spanish traditions and lifestyle but they also become "victims" of the big meal of the grandparent and the grandparents who want to give the child what they couldn't get; food, lot of food, what the child prefer. This study argues that the social welfare and the history of Spain is something, which makes the culture of Spain different from European Cultures.

3 Social inequalities

What is the reason for child obesity in Spain?

"The reason I think is the lack of education."

(Mother Rocabert)¹⁷⁸

A topic which, is impossible to ignore studying health, is the inequality in a society. Obesity and interest in health is often related to a person's socioeconomic level. However, this study does not include any obvious knowledge about the background of the studied parents. It questions the parents' educational level, employment status and their perception of the relation between obesity, education and information level. Through questioning why so many are obese, the respond, which often came up were, lack of knowledge or lack of education.^{179 180 181}

This chapter serves to supply the findings with a discussion of socioeconomic inequality in education income and employment according to how these parents create a food environment for their children. Moreover, how these parents think it affects other parents' way of creating this environment.

3.1 Knowledge and education according to food choice

3.2 Inequality

3.3 Employment

3.4 Sub-conclusion - Inequality and obese children

3.1 Knowledge and education according to food choice

"In TV they talk about obesity in childhood every month. This morning they talked about health. Two doctors are in the program. A nutritionist is talking about vitamins. It's good for the population, with no education."

(Mother Vila)¹⁸²

Mother Vila mentions the benefits of informing the people without education about how to eat healthy and nutritional food. She is not alone with this conception. This fieldwork cannot cover how many parents she is speaking about, but it will discuss some parents behavior, possibly related to education level and social background and inequality.

¹⁷⁸ Annex 5: Ethnographic interview with Mother Rocabert

¹⁷⁹ Annex 2: Life story interview with family, Vila

¹⁸⁰ Annex 5: Ethnographic interview with Mother Rocabert

¹⁸¹ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

¹⁸² Annex 2: Life story interview with family, Vila

While collecting questionnaires something noteworthy was observed. It was observed that several of the mothers in the shopping mall (D) were obese and the questionnaire from all the three places of collection, showed clusters of attitudes. The descriptions of food habits from the parents from the mall were different from the ones collected in the park (P) and baby food seminar (C).¹⁸³ One possible answer to this could be that Barcelona is a city with different areas and a roughly separation of native Spanish inhabitant, foreigners from wealthy countries, immigrants from poor countries, students and business people from Europe working in the city.¹⁸⁴

According to the area of the shopping center, approximately 4 kilometers from downtown, it can be described as a cheaper place to live than in the center of Barcelona. Moreover, there is mixed groups of foreigners living in this area. All the parents responding to the questionnaire were from Spain. A possible reason for the observed number of obese people, could be hence, that there are more escalators in a mall than on the street, there are more toilets and food stands which accommodates prospective needs for bigger persons, it is possible to walk from store to store in a short time! These are just assumptions. Researchers in urban planning argue how body size can be one of the deterrents making people chooses where to live and that there are more obese people in the suburbs with shopping malls and possibly with good infrastructure for car owners.¹⁸⁵ The observation did according to body size observe mainly obese or very thin people. The people in the mall were moreover, not older than approximately 40 years. No elderly were observed in the mall.¹⁸⁶ A relevant discussion is where different groups and people with different socioeconomic level buy their food. However it have not been possible to find data on this from Spain.

To understanding the relationship between food behaviors and socioeconomic levels a classic theory about social group and taste can be used. The French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu argued that taste signifies class distinctions and consumption patterns.¹⁸⁷ He argued though his model of *The Food Space* how different *habitus*, meaning lifestyle, education, class and occupation has different consumption patterns.

“Tastes in food also depend on the idea each class has of the body and of the effects of food on the body, that is, on its strength, health, and beauty...” ¹⁸⁸

The extract, above is chosen since it describes how food choice presents values, background and what you chose to expose your body to; according to this study, the body of your child.

Bourdieu had different arguments. Among other that, ‘good taste’ can be achieved through education, but also that people have their own instinct of *habitus*, meaning something they are

¹⁸³ Annex 13: Questionnaire

¹⁸⁴ Los vecinos de barrios ricos de Barcelona viven ocho años más que los del Raval (2012)

¹⁸⁵ Plantonga AJ and Bernell S (2007)

¹⁸⁶ Annex 13: Questionnaire

¹⁸⁷ Bourdieu, P (1979) p. 186

¹⁸⁸ Bourdieu (1984) p.190

born into. Moreover, he argued that the role of the media has created new ways of gaining information and therefore a new class. Though his theory about the specific food and maybe also gender roles are out of date, his theory is considered as relevant discussing the food choice of these parents. From his theory, this study can look at the grandparents educational level to see what nowadays parents are born into and what they possibly have as instinct according to food. Moreover, we can look at the educational level of the parents to see if they according to Bourdieu have achieved 'good taste' through many years behind the school desk.

OECD can give us a hint of the educational level of this generation of parents, since the parents were not asked about their parents educational level or occupation. According to OECD, Spain has improved the educational attainments after becoming a democracy. However, in 2009, Spain still had, in an international comparison, a large number of unskilled workers and people with the last educational degree obtained as the upper secondary graduation;¹⁸⁹ in Spanish *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (E.S.O)*, which is corresponding to a college or high school degree. The case of several of the parents from the mall while several parents from the park and the food seminar had a university degree; in Spanish, *Licenciatura* or *Grado*. In Spain, participation in all kinds of upper secondary education is related to one's parental educational background, interpreted hence, the parents understanding and support for the participation or lack thereof. Moreover, it is linked to the household income. According to education of nowadays grandparents, statistics show that they did not have as high education level as in other European countries.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, that time seemed to cease according to education in the years of the dictatorship in Spain. Furthermore, the governmental support for education in Spain is also lower than most other European countries.¹⁹¹ According to Bourdieu's theory and the education statistics, nowadays grandparents cannot be presumed to have given their children any instinct of 'good taste' from their educational level, the same goes with the parents if they have only obtained a low educational degree, they haven't achieved 'good taste.' However, Bourdieu does add other elements like literacy, books, entertainment and of course economy to some extent to influence on 'good taste' too. Therefore, this study cannot interpret much from this theory; only use it as patterns in distinction of socioeconomic level. Yet, Bourdieu's new class, indicate that information and trends are distributed across classes through television today. Bourdieu is not alone with his theory about the relation between consumerism and modern lifestyle. Sociologist, Colin Campbell, inspired by Max Weber's stereotypes of consumers, argues how modern individualism influence people's

¹⁸⁹ OECD (2012b)

¹⁹⁰ OECD (2012b)

¹⁹¹ OECD (2012b),p.248

imagination of what they consume.¹⁹² Bourdieu's theory was chosen since it discusses education and food habit.

The influence of the shopping mall mothers' education on their comprehension of prestigious products for children can be strengthening through Bourdieu's comprehension. However, the empirical data does not show how the parents' choice is linked to taste. This researcher of this study can only make own comprehension that the lowest quality of baby food can be compared to Bourdieu's lowest quality of food. A 24 years old obese and unemployed mother, who finished secondary education, writes in the questionnaire that she finds Nestlé and Hero as high status baby products.¹⁹³

A 28 year old, obese and employed mother with the secondary graduation writes that she finds Danone, Hero and Nestlé as prestigious products.¹⁹⁴ They are not the only parents having this comprehension from the responds from the shopping mall. The mentioned brands are all brands, which are the cheapest on the Spanish market of baby food, contain the most amount of sugar and are far from the best quality of baby food from a nutritional perspective.

How can this be interpreted? One interpretation could be that these mothers do not read on the declaration, do not know how to read the declaration or simply don't see the importance in caring about it. As one women wrote in a questionnaire, if she gives her child potato chips, biscuits with sugar, ice cream and so on, it is because the products is marked towards children.¹⁹⁵ Interpreted that the mother then accepts this for her child.

Brands like Nestlé are a perfect example of the food industry developing baby food with for instance high amounts of sugar, market as baby food. The consumer is unprotected and has to know about nutrition recommendations to make decisions because otherwise he/she can be dragged to make the wrong decisions by clever marketing. The mothers from the mall are presumably, not as engaged in seeking information about children's health as the parents from the food seminar. Their educational level can be interpreted to first affect their type of job, but second, their resources to think of health and choice of food. This will be discussed later in this chapter. Though the questionnaires¹⁹⁶ were not collected to compare the people from the different places of conduction, there were huge eye-catching differences in the answers according to where they were collected. Several mothers from the mall had chosen not to breastfeed their babies or did it in less months than rest of mothers answering the questionnaire. A choice, which is proven to be related to child obesity later in the child's life.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Campbell, C. (1987)

¹⁹³ Annex 13: Questionnaire, D11

¹⁹⁴ Annex 13: Questionnaire, D10

¹⁹⁵ Annex 13: Questionnaire, D7

¹⁹⁶ Annex 13: Questionnaire

¹⁹⁷ Fletcher, K.M., et.al.(2004)

A 31 year old, obese mother from the shopping mall writes,

"I did not, I don't like it" ¹⁹⁸

Another 29 year old, obese mother from the mall writes:

*"2 weeks (...) Breastfeeding is the best option, but it is hard work
and it depend totally on the mother only."*

¹⁹⁹

Other mothers from the mall described that they breastfed for 15 days, 2-4 months or not at all. The mothers choosing not to breastfeed often say that they think it is the best for their child. So it can be interpreted that it is not a question of a conception that breastfeeding is not good for the baby. Like an obese mother points out,

"If you don't work I think that it is very beneficial." ²⁰⁰

On the contrary responds from the park was 8 months, 26 months, 3 years, 1 1/2 years.²⁰¹

Responds from the food seminar was 4 months, 5 months, one plan to do it for 1 year, another did it in 3 years and a third 28 months. The responds from the seminar showed a common comprehension as, the longer the better.²⁰²

This is relevant since previous scientific studies have showed that the food environment is created from the first year of birth; both healthy and unhealthy cases.²⁰³ The foundation of a child's food habits is considered to start from the mothers choice of breastfeeding and again when the parents choose to introduce solid food to their child. Approximately from the child is 6 months old. Previous research indicates that babies who are not breastfed are more exposed to becoming overweight in the years of childhood.²⁰⁴ Though the choice of breastfeeding is not a direct cause of child obesity, this study interprets it as significantly relevant. From the responses in the questionnaire it can be interpreted that the choice of breastfeeding is related to these mothers reported educational status and an observation of their BMI. The last interpretation is only build on observation of their body shape. An observation made and noted on their questionnaire sheet after they delivered it.

Moreover it is supported by previous studies showing how a group of children's weight is directly connected to their mothers BMI and her eating habits.^{205 206}

¹⁹⁸ Annex 13: Questionnaire, D1

¹⁹⁹ Annex 13: Questionnaire, D2

²⁰⁰ Annex 13: Questionnaire, D9,

²⁰¹ Annex 13: Questionnaire, P1, P3, P5 and P6

²⁰² Annex 13: Questionnaire, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5

²⁰³ Rüdiger von Kries et. al. (1999)

²⁰⁴ OECD (2009) p. 1

²⁰⁵ Murashima, M. et.al.(2012)

²⁰⁶ Scaglioni, S. et.al. (2011)

A relevant proclamation from the OECD studies is that in Spain, the proportion of children who were ever breastfed around 2006 is in the lowest end of all the countries in the OECD countries.²⁰⁷ Yet another relevant information is that the number of mother breastfeeding in Andalusia when the child is 6 month is only 6%. Noteworthy, since Andalusia also is the region with the second highest number of child obesity.²⁰⁸ I could only ask, what is the reason for this choice? No theory refers to a specific Spanish comprehension of breastfeeding. According to a historical perspective of this the elderly women from the group interview, only gives us the idea that like today, it has always been very different from woman to woman if she breastfed. One did not breastfeed, another 6 months, a third 1 1/2 year and a fourth one year.²⁰⁹ According to the historical tendency a smaller research about whether mothers were breastfeeding shows an U-shaped tendency. In the 60tis 61.3% were breastfeeding for longer than six months, in the 70's and 1980s respectively 14.4% and 19.2%, whereas 29% did it in the 1990s.²¹⁰ From this small study, time of breastfeeding cannot be related to educational level, since the educational level has increased since the 80'ties, but it can be questioned if this study is actually having a realistic outcome. To improve understanding of the working mothers, Julie E. Artis from the Sociology Department at De Paul University, have made a research on motherhood, inequality and the choice of breastfeeding. Her findings were that the working class mothers embraced the "ideal of intensive mothering" and that they "understood the health benefits of breastfeeding" but that they often did not breastfeed. The reason for this was lack of social support, limited access to medical advice, restrictions with jobs, inadequate nutrition. Moreover, these mothers did most likely not have access to neither unpaid nor paid maternity leave.²¹¹

The analysis of, whom chose to breastfeed would have been strengthened looking at the background and environment of the mothers, but one thing, which can help understand the circumstances of nowadays mother in Spain, is the governments support of maternally leave. Spain has the one of the lowest formal support and recommendation for maternal leave in Europe.²¹²²¹³ That of cause creates unequal circumstances for nowadays mothers in Spain. The breastfeeding out come is interpreted to be linked with educational level, employment of women and the short maternally leave in Spain compared to other European countries. The link between public support and breastfeeding sheds light on inequality and employment in Spain. It can be interpreted that there is a link between the facts that, Spain has a low level of people with

²⁰⁷ OECD (2009) p. 2

²⁰⁸ 'Cheer Up, America - Spanish Kids Are Fat Too Babies food has an influence on obesity later in childhood'. (2008)

²⁰⁹ Annex 10: Group Interview with elderly women

²¹⁰ Colodro-Conde, L. et. Al (2011)

²¹¹ Artis, J.E (n.d.)

²¹² Lapuerta, I. et.al. (2011)

²¹³ Théven, O. (2011) pp. 61

secondary education than other European countries. It has less support for maternal leave after 4-6²¹⁴ months and less women breastfeeding after 6 months than other European countries.

3.2 Inequality

Richard Wilkinson shows findings that within our societies, income has huge effect on life expectancy, illness and stress.²¹⁵ According to the income gap in 2011 the 20% riches in Spain are in average 5,6% richer than the 20% poorest in the country. Other places with even higher inequality and higher rates of obesity in children are United Kingdom and in The United States. Here we could expect that, Wilkinson argue that poor people in these societies are in high risk of obesity, illness , etc., in these developed countries. However, Wilkinson and Kate Pickett's argue that living in a society with huge gap between the different levels also create risks for the highest level of the society. As a doctor who also studied economy, Wilkinson and Pickett argue that the psycho-social factors are involved in this, since stress has a negative influence on the immune system. Their argument is therefore that humans are sensitive to inequality.²¹⁶ In this argument they uses research, which shows, which elements in the society that make us stressed. Threats to our social status and our social worth are claimed to be the worst.²¹⁷ Meaning that according to this theory, Spain should have a higher percentage of obesity than countries whit low inequality. This is backed up by OECD referring to other inequality related tendencies and inequality.²¹⁸ However, using Pickett and Wilkinson's scattergraphs, one must be aware of the sources they have used and don't trust these numbers fully. Take for example the case of inequality and life expectancy in Denmark. Denmark has one of the lowest inequality levels in the world, but also a low average age of life expectancy compared to other countries with even less inequality.²¹⁹ Inequality is mostly studied through large studies using comparative numbers where the different uniqueness of the countries is not illustrated. However, this study will take their findings into considerations. Most of all because of their link to risk or stress-related behaviors among the whole population, meaning that it is considered to have huge affect.

3.3 Employment

Other elements must be implicated to understand why some cultures have better health than others. There is more than one scientific suggestive evidence of significant inequalities in the

²¹⁴ Lapuerta, I. et.al. (2011)

²¹⁵ 'Richard Wilkinson: How Economic Inequality Harms Societies' (2011)

²¹⁶ Wilkinson, Richard G. and Pickett, Kate (2009). p.33

²¹⁷ Wilkinson, Richard G. and Pickett, Kate (2009)

²¹⁸ OECD (2011a): 6.6

²¹⁹ 'Richard Wilkinson: How Economic Inequality Harms Societies ' (2011)

probability of being obese in Spain. Education attainment, employment status, family status, demographic covariants and income effect. Education, family and demographic have already been discussed but the influence of employment status has been left quiet until now.

“Since the emancipation of women in Spain, The quality of life in the family has gone down. Not just the quality of the life; the food, the quality of the relationship and they quality of the education and knowledge of the children.”

(Father Barco)²¹⁵

While some parents from this study argue that the mother's employment has ruined the health of the family, some theories argues that having a job in nowadays circumstances, increase standard of health. Michael Marmot moreover argues how stress influence one's health, but he argues how unemployment and lack of social network can lead to low social status and hereby cause risk for the well-being.²²⁰ This can be interpreted to be the reality in some countries more than in others. His work is made on studies from presumably societies with high inequality, which have influenced his theory. However, this is just an assumption. Speaking about wellbeing and unemployment one must keep in mind that Spain have had another acceptance and use of homemakers than other Western countries until recently. One must discuss unemployment without the same pre-consumptions of its influence of well-being. In Spain, there have been a whole occupations connected to being a homemaker or to be taking care of the family. It was highly supported during the Franco regime.²²¹ Though Spain is known for its high rates of unemployment it also consist of a strong social family structures. According to the image of motherhood, Franco was pro the traditional picture of women as the faithful homemaker and a pillar for the family unit. He supported official propaganda about the woman's role in the house and as a mother. In the Franco regime women could not void or testify in a trial. All their affairs had to be managed by or co-signed by their husband or father. According to law they had to be faithful to their husband even if he was abusive. If not they would be arrested for *abandono del hogar* (abandoning the household). This circumstance continued until Franco's death in 1975.²²²

According to employment status, Spain was different from other European countries in the later half of the 20th century with a low participation of women in the work force. After Spain became a democracy female employment increased but in the economically active population today, women still make up less than 44%.²²³²²⁴ Father Barco describes the situation in his family.

²²⁰ Marmot M.(2004)

²²¹ Clark, R. P. (1990).

²²² Tremlett, G. (2006) pp. 211.

²²³ Hooper, J. (2006) Pp.130.

²²⁴ Solsten, E. and Mediate, S.W. (eds.) (1990)

“In my case I was working 90% of the income and my wife was working as well but less and she dismissed from work for some years in order to raise our children properly; but this is not normal nowadays.”

(Father Barco)²²⁵

However, Marmot argues how the social status related to your job position influence your self-acceptance, interpreted as in the modern western world, influenced by industrialization, education and urbanization. Since Spain has moved on to a modern lifestyle, nowadays parents is interpreted to have adapted to the comprehension of status symbol, which Marmot is mentioning.

The pediatrician has one possible answer to this,

“Well, almost all the parents, both mother and father, are working, nowadays. That’s what I am experience in my practice. That means that the children go to day care or maybe to their grandparents.”

(Pediatrician)²²⁶

One may ask, how many mothers are working in Spain with the high number of unemployed women? This study does not have numbers about if the employed women are mothers or not. It can only draw interpretations through the empirical knowledge were employment and unemployment were approximately equally distributed. However, it can be interpreted that the status symbol is changing in Spain due to adaptation of modern lifestyle, in general. In this case the new status symbol and living standard, may cause a dilemma, due to the structure of the Spanish welfare system according to the possibilities of day cares or grandparents for your child. Something, which, is expressed in nowadays media.²²⁷ Using Marmot’s theory this study interprets that if you don’t have a job today in Spain it can influence your comprehension of your resources to your child.

If so, this study interprets that this group of parents are living in a country with inequality and having challenges with a new dilemma between status symbol and family organization.

What the new status symbol contains will be discussed in chapter 4. According to the comprehension of resources for one’s child, some new discoveries from the empirical material which is not going to be discussed since it is a study in it self. Mother Vila pointed that she did not comprehend the government in Spain as trustworthy, due to many years of politically corruption.²²⁸ A study covering whom nowadays parents trust would probably strengthen the understanding of how they create the food environment for their child, the relevance of inequality and lack of trust in the politicians. It can be interpreted that Wilkinson’s theory about the health risk factors of

²²⁵ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

²²⁶ Annex 11: Interview with Pediatrician

²²⁷ Radio Sol y Mar: Spansk børnefamilier

²²⁸ Annex 2: Life story interview with family Vila

inequality should moreover discuss the health risk factors related to mistrust in a countries government often combined with inequality.

Different anthropologists have suggested how lack of trust influences the core of the family. Spain and other Mediterranean countries are considered to have had and still have internationally compared a close family organization, hence politically corruption and war.²²⁹

“He made my sister eat some dough in the morning. Dough made of flour and water. It is really dry. No taste. Not like a pancake. Food for an extermination camp. He wanted them to eat it because he ate it when he was a child.”

(Mother Vila)²³⁰

Mother Vila explains how her father made her sisters eat the same food, which he had been given. It can be interpreted that if the family the parents trust are lacking in education like education statistics have shown,²³¹ the guidance of how to create a food environment may not fit into the modern way of living. They are listening to the family and not many others, but the family doesn't have any education. This discussion would have been strengthened with more empirical research on who nowadays parents trust. Moreover it could possibly cover whom the parents are listening to. This could have been done in other life story interviews which, often create time to think about the reasons for once behavior and supply the researcher with the relation between behavior and the historical context.²³² Moreover a group interview could probably have covered different perspectives through a communication about the reason for their explanation.²³³ This chapter about inequality highlights how nowadays parents are possibly equipped in creating a food environment and which, challenges they are meeting. This could moreover have been studied through long participant observation in the home of the parents, which would have strengthened the argument about the link between food choice and education and inequality and a mistrust in government and maybe their recommendations It could improve understanding of everyday behavior through the participation in unscheduled settings.²³⁴ The disadvantages with both lifestyle interviews and participant observation are that they often take much time and are only describing the behavior of a small group of people. They are also dependent of the personality, gender and background of the researcher since these factors influence which, information the researcher will get.²³⁵ However it will create more anthropological data material. Since, Spain also has the highest unemployment rate in Europe, this is relevant for the analysis of the well being of nowadays parents

²²⁹ Fukuyama, F.(1996) p.56

²³⁰ Annex 2: Life story interview with family Vila

²³¹ Fuentes, A. (2009),pp. 5-7

²³² Atkinson, R. (1998) p.6

²³³ Bryman, A. (2012) p. 500

²³⁴ Kawulich, B.B.(2005): 5

²³⁵ Kawulich, B.B.(2005): 5

and what they pass on to their children. It will nonetheless create some understanding of next chapter about modern priorities and why the parents two incomes.

3.4 Sub-conclusion: Inequality and obese children

This chapter has discussed the importance of the educational level of the grandparents and parents in Spain. Parents lack of education and knowledge have been interpreted to influence how they create a food environment for their child through their choice of food and interest in health and body.

Moreover it interprets that the inequality hence welfare system in Spain, the new dilemma hence status symbol and the lack of trust hence previous history and nowadays inequality all influence on peoples health out come. This study interprets that the environment and background of the parents have a huge role to play and it supports the idea that in todays everyday life, a higher level of education gives a basis of creating a food environment for your child.

4 Adaptation to modernization

"The quality of life in the family has gone down."

(Father Barco)²³⁶

The quote by Father Barco will be the first in the analysis how modernization have influenced the focus of this study. The parents interviewed and theories from Jesús H. Contreras²³⁷ will supply this study with information about the Spanish transformation to modernization. The relevance and importance of this chapter is the rapid change from living in a closed Catholic practicing country to adapting to modern trends and family settings and it's interpreted influence of the amount of obese children. Moreover how the new lifestyle is seen in the distribution of meals and food choice.

4.1 How did this group of parents grow up?

4.2 How does this group of parents live today?

4.3 Distribution of meals

4.4 What the children eat today and when did it change?

4.5 Sub-conclusion - Modernization and obese children

4.1 How did nowadays parents grow up?

Above is a quote by Father Barco giving his account of how the family has changed the last 30 years. He is referring to nowadays parents, in Spain and, in general.

"They do what they want and what they want is to have a bigger car."

(Father Barco)²³⁸

Nowadays parents born between approximately 1960-1985 have either experienced an everyday in a country with closed borders followed by a shift in leader shift to the socialist party, Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) in 1982-96 and the modernization streaming into the country. For the youngest group of parents they did not experience a Spain with closed borders themselves. Supposedly, the elderly group of parents has experienced a Spain ready for a change and has properly embraced different trends than the younger group of parents.

"Ready or not, many did jump happily into new ways of living."

(Mother Hereu)

²³⁶ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

²³⁷ Contreras J.H. (2005)

²³⁸ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

²³⁹After the transition to democracy the political framework and its hierarchical institutions changed. Social values and attitude can be interpreted as starting to change too, with a dramatically speed.²⁴⁰ The elderly women from one of the group interview discuss how they conceive the television as related with the new values, democracy and interpreted freedom.

Clara: *"It has been like a renaissance. For example my parents were living in the war. War changes people a lot and when there is a war everything goes backwards."*

Almodena: *"Nothing goes forward. Everything stays in the same place. As years go by after the wars, everything slowly finds its place and develops."*

Dorta: *"We did not have TV until the 60-70-80ties and it was only news on the TV. I loved the TV".*

Clara: *I always loved the TV. It was like a path to freedom".*

(Clara, Almudena, Dorta)²⁴¹

It can be interpreted that Internet and international media have giving today's parents more information about other cultures than what was possible earlier; both because Spain was a closed country under Franco but also since the development of the television and internet relatively new. Barcelona and Madrid were, in 1948, the first cities in Spain to access the television experience, and in 1956 a regular emissions were established. Yet, not until the second half of the sixties the TV consolidate its leading position for the Spanish citizen's leisure time and not before the 1990ties, regional channels appeared and expanded with private television. A bit later than in other European countries. However, approximately 99,5% of all households in Spain had a television by 2008.²⁴² ²⁴³ Modernization was moving into Spain, figuratively. Literally speaking the flow of tourists traveling to the *sunny* Spain increased after the democratization. Moreover, many people with Spanish origin returned to Spain in this period, and they possibly brought with them new ideas of social values and cultural habits from other parts of Europe. Looking back in history, Spain has influenced other regions in Europe, America, Africa Oceanic and Asia through the Age of Exploration but also experienced much external influence in prehistoric times. Nowadays, Spain contains a huge amount of immigrants and foreigners. Especially from Latin America, Morocco and Romania: the two first are previous Spanish colonies.²⁴⁴ Though the interviewed claimed, that those immigrants have no influence on how the Spanish families live today, and that Spain only influenced itself,²⁴⁵ the word, immigrate, used as noun and adjective is relevant for the insight of child obesity.

²³⁹ Annex 7: Ethnographic interview with Mother Hereu

²⁴⁰ Alberdi, I. (1999).

²⁴¹ Annex 10: Group interview with elderly women

²⁴² 'España en cifras 2012 (2012) p.28

²⁴³ Trading Economics (2012)

²⁴⁴ Gobierno de España (2012), p. 1

²⁴⁵ Annex 10: Group interview with elderly women

These will lead us slightly away from the key issue, but not without a purpose. Speaking about Spanish culture today one must keep in mind the existence of many other cultures through immigrants. Showing that the percentage of obesity was higher in the immigrant population than in the Spanish population in Madrid, Spain in 2010. Exception from the group of immigrants from some northern European countries. The most obese were male immigrants from Latin America and Eastern Europe and women from Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia.²⁴⁶ A high prevalence of obesity among immigrants in other countries has also been observed. The reason can be interpreted to be a low socioeconomic level or/and a more intense exposure to obese factors before arrival and during their residence in a new culture. Presuming that they are not in contact with the traditional culture of the new country and don't have the family network maintaining traditional food habits.²⁴⁷

Mother Vila tells her clear comprehension of this,

"All the people coming from South America, They are for me the main problem, because the mothers like we talked about who got their children under a war. They don't think that they come from another culture, which eats differently and then they change the country and lifestyle and they start giving their children fast food and American food. So their body is not prepared for that. It is only prepared to what they were used to and the food their parents were eating. Their body is not prepared. When you changed the way of eating, you either get fat or thin!"

(Mother Vila)²⁴⁸

The purpose of this quote was not to speak about her own culture. Mother Vila argues about how the obesity problem of the immigrants has something to do with a shift of culture, food options and lifestyle. She is speaking about how immigrants move to another countries. However, she is mentioning something relevant; not being prepared to the adaptation of new food products, a new lifestyle and not being able to choose between traditional and modern food options. This study gets the comprehension that the Spanish transition to modernization as a new lifestyle can be interpreted like mother Vila interprets the lifestyle change of the immigrants. Father Barco has similar comprehensions,

"Like the Indians in America were not prepared to the people and changes from Europe, Spain was not prepared for the Western lifestyle when Spain became a democracy in the beginning of the 80'ties."

(Father Barco)²⁴⁹

This brings us back to the focus of this part, how this group of parents grew up. They have interpretably experiencing *immigration*, literally spoken, since they had another point of departure

²⁴⁶ Marín-Guerrero, A.C. et.al. (2010)

²⁴⁷ Marín-Guerrero, A.C. et.al. (2010)

²⁴⁸ Annex 2: Lifestory interview with family Vila

²⁴⁹ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

or not the same tools as other western cultures adaptation to the new lifestyle. They did not change continent, but they adapted to modernization very fast and with a different starting point than most other countries. This chapter is going to discuss the interviewed description of modernization against the Spanish welfare system, modernization against the traditional role of the mother and modernization against the distribution of the meal and psychosomatic understanding of healthy food. The interpretation of a rapid adaptation will continue in chapter 5 discussing the change in food consumption.

4.2 How does this group of parent live today?

The elderly women all told that they had been homemakers.²⁵⁰ Nowadays only a few mothers can say this. Mother Vila describes a nowadays, Spanish family,

“Now getting children is a matter of money, even though we had less money before. Now the mothers are not home. They prioritize having a job, having money, having many lives. I think it is bad that the mother is not home to make the nest. To take care of the home. It doesn't really matter if its the mother or father, as long that its one of the two. Today the modern family needs a pillar in the home.”

(Mother Vila)²⁵¹

Mother Rocabert has similar opinions,

“Mothers are very overwhelmed because working hours are long and they have to take care of the children and the house (...) I think there are many spoiled children of parents with long working hours that hardly see their children.”

(Mother Rocabert)²⁵²

Both mothers describe challenges in a modern family with modern priorities like both parents having a job. Women have been the ones to fulfill the caretaker role, domestic needs and taking care of other family members, circumstances that have prevented them from the conformation to the full-time worker.²⁵³ However nowadays prioritize and circumstances in Spain leave the families with not many other solutions than let the mother give up the care taking role in the home if she will achieve a complete work life with a payment, which maintain the family's prioritized standard. The pediatrician gives her comprehension of how nowadays' parents' employment influence the diet of their children,

The working mothers have no time for cooking. They just cook something very fast or something, which goes to the micro-ware”.

²⁵⁰ Annex 10: Group interview with elderly women

²⁵¹ Annex 2: Life story interview with Family Vila

²⁵² Annex 5: Ethnographic interview with Mother Rocabert

²⁵³ Williams, J. (2009) pp.79-177

(Pediatrician)²⁵⁴

Moreover, she explains,

"I hear, from the parents, that the grandparents know a lot about the healthy Mediterranean diet, but they give the child what it wants. If it wants spaghetti, it will get it. They are nursing the child and always want the child to be happy with them. I tell the parents that they have to tell the grandparents that they must serve healthy meals, but the parents don't dare because they already feel sorry for the grandparents that they have to take care of their child. They feel bad about it.

(Pediatrician)²⁵⁵

Like the pediatrician indicates, some studies also show that lifestyle of nowadays parents, has a great influence on child obesity.²⁵⁶ Child obesity has often been related to modernization²⁵⁷ and modernization is interpreted, to have happening very fast in Spain; hence, an explosion of obesity doesn't seem unrealistic. Long hours work life outside the home, obviously decrease a previous homemakers time for cooking and planning a healthy food environment. However, other studies show no relation between maternal working hours and child obesity,²⁵⁸ which sheds light on different circumstances of the family culture in different countries. This study does again, interprets that the Spanish family culture, were not ready or suited for the changes, even though they wanted them.

Father Barco points, that things has gone more expensive which gives nowadays parents no choice,

"I can tell you that things has gone much more expensive. Young people don't have the same opportunities in life. Their only opportunity is to get their property of their parents when they die and to be independed from one or two jobs. Things have gone creasy or mad expensive in Spain. The introduction of the EURO has brought price inflation about 60 % and the wages has increased, let say 2-4 % yearly. We are speaking about since the year 2002. Some ten years ago. People are poorer now than 10 years ago, also in relation to how women care about how their children eat."

(Father Barco)²⁵⁹

This will lead us on to discussing modern priorities and status symbol.

²⁵⁴ Annex 11: Interview with Pediatrician

²⁵⁵ Annex 11: Interview with Pediatrician

²⁵⁶ Hawkins, S.S, Cole, T.J. and Law, C. (2007)

²⁵⁷ 'Too Many Kids Are Too Heavy, Too Young' (n.d.)

²⁵⁸ Taylor, A. et.al.(2012)

²⁵⁹ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

“How family changes in this period depends on every single woman, like man. But there are women who are capable of doing a lot; and others not. The tendency is to not. My mother (...) could make so many different dishes (...) Nowadays people they have more money, but they don't have any quality at all, compared to those days (...) there are a lot of people who says we have grown in quality of life, but that is wrong. We won, lets say comfort but that is not quality...”

(Father Barco)²⁶⁰

It is interpreted that, Father Barco describes, how he sees the change in mother role as a result of modern priorities. Nowadays in Spain, there are more women than men with a college degree, due to the educational institution's focused on equal opportunities for both genders since 1980'ties. Yet, female labor force rates continue to grow in a steady way. Since the 1980'ties Spain has experienced a greater life expectancy and more gender equality. According to studies on the modern family, also found that Spanish families have developed, embracing global trends.²⁶¹²⁶² A consequence is interpreted to be a busy lifestyle reflected in the children's BMI. Concurrent, anthropologist Contreras and Mabel Gracia Arnáiz argue that new priorities are a result of new sociocultural circumstances.²⁶³ The families have changed in different ways compared with the family 50 years ago. That goes with all the OECD countries.²⁶⁴ Family structure has changed geographically due to prioritizes and the developing economy. However, the support for families in Spain comes from almost only the family and the family doesn't always move with their children interpreted to an urban area with education and job possibilities.

“Well I used to live in the same building as my parents. (...) That is still the case in villages and people who stay there. I don't know if its good or bad(...) Everyone knows you, you can only marry someone who lives near you. Its another era.”

(Father Barco)²⁶⁵

Nowadays people move to get a better job or because of education or spouse.²⁶⁶ Not surprisingly, sociologists have linked modernization to a process where the individual becomes more central as an unit of society, than the community or the family.²⁶⁷ This is interpreted to create a demand for support from other sources than the family, a support like day cares, and formal economical support, which isn't implemented in the Spanish welfare system. Father Barco is not alone in the comprehension of bad habits due to the modern priorities. Mother Vila have described

²⁶⁰ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

²⁶¹ Alberdi, I. (1999).

²⁶² Berge, E. et al. (2010)

²⁶³ Contreras H.J. and Arnáiz, M.G. (2005)

²⁶⁴ OECD (2011b)

²⁶⁵ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

²⁶⁶ Contreras, J.H. (2005)

²⁶⁷ Encyclopadia Britannica : Modernization

"I think one of the problems for bad food habits is the family. Now both parents are working, so they let go of what they learned when they were raised. They have no time so they do the easiest way. And these parents who don't see their children, they don't want to argue with their children so they give them what they want.

(Mother Vila)²⁶⁸

Mother Vila is pointing out the mixed dilemma of the tight time schedule and the dissolution of the family. Father Barco points,

"In order to get a bigger house, a bigger car, proper temperature in the house, possibility to go to the cinema and so on and to go on winter and summer holidays, to go to a hotel, they are giving up a lot of real quality. So nowadays how is it. Since the emancipation of women in Spain, The quality of life in the family has gone down."

(Father Barco)²⁶⁹

This quote of Father Barco helps us understand what nowadays parents prioritize instead of time for home cooking. Earlier it was a question of spousal choice, project of marriage and religion²⁷⁰ and today it is high social status shown in employment status more than in ones marriage. Due the quotes, one can assume that the role of a family is not prioritized as much today. It can be interpreted that comfortably and employment enhances people's social images. Anthropologist Carrie B. Douglas argued how the change in birth rate is changing the family culture in Spain. In 1970 Spain had the birth rate of 2.8 while it has dropped to 1.07 in 2000.²⁷¹ She argues that one had his identity very much through the family and that family was very importance as serving trust and pleasure.²⁷²

From a medical anthropological perspective, the traditional family unit was a fundamental function to help the human child to survive and mature. The survival of the child was an investment for the parents and it required male and female partnership. The family has through the human history, been a biological and social tool for survival.²⁷³ Mother Rocabert describes something, which she comprehends as special about the Spanish. She comprehends that nowadays Spanish people priorities social life over health and they have to choose between the two due to lack of time. From the quotes it can be interpreted that people display themselves through work, social events, choice of food, type of leisure , etc.

²⁶⁸ Annex 2: Life story interview with family Vila

²⁶⁹ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

²⁷⁰ Lightfoot, D. W. (2009) pp 333-353

²⁷¹ Douglas, B, C. (edt) (2005) p.183

²⁷² Douglas, B, C. (edt) (2005) p.183

²⁷³ Cliquet, R. and Avramov, (1998)

“In general, Spanish life is devoted to long hours work, and leisure with family and friends as very important for people. We have a lot of outdoor life due to the good weather. To eat tapas and drink beers is an important leisure element to our culture. The working hours makes no time to think about healthy food and to prepare it, (...) therefore other solutions are made.”

(Mother Rocarbert)²⁷⁴

Several interviewed mothers did speak about home cooking as a priority, therefore next part of this discussion is about the changes in the meal.

4.3 Distribution of meals

“Today I just have a bocadillo for dinner, my spouse had a salad and my son got something different. We all have different dinner and only if we are hungry.”

(Father Vila)²⁷⁵

This part shows how parents who cook most meals for their children probably have changes other habits than the home cooking of the main meals. Interpreted they have changed the distribution of the meal and the values of eating and eating together. One of the elderly women from the group interview says the same

“There is a saying in Spain. You have to eat breakfast as a king, lunch as a prince, dinner as a poor. In real life nowadays people eat a breakfast like as a poor, lunch as a king and dinner as a prince.”

(Almudena)²⁷⁶

Father Barco pointed that his wife had been very strict giving her sons all meals, which seems to have become uncommon in his comprehension of families in Spain. The nutritionist has similar opinion about other meals.

“They are very lazy with breakfast, afternoon snack and desserts”!

(Nutritionist)²⁷⁷

Contreras and Arnáiz argue that the social settings and ingredients of a meal have changed its importance; something they call, *La desconcentraci3n*.²⁷⁸ The dinner has changes to be an evening snack of something, which can be made quickly, family members all eat different dishes, at different time of the evening and in different places in the home; in the sofa, in the kitchen , etc. The way the parents create a food environment can be interpreted to be a mix of traditional and new

²⁷⁴ Annex 5: Ethnographic interview with Mother Rocarbert

²⁷⁵ Annex 2: Life story interview with family Vila

²⁷⁶ Annex 10: Group Interview with elderly women.

²⁷⁷ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

²⁷⁸ Contreras, J. H. and Arnáiz, M. G. (2005), p.419

habits, both according to food and the distribution of the meals. Some of the parents stick to the diet and the food preparation, others don't prioritize home-cooking. Unfortunately the parents were not asked how the dinner has changes. It can be interpreted to be different from the traditional Danish dinner starting at 6 p.m. A classic anthropological angle to this discussion is how food and its meaning is changes over time through previous generations and developments or if some strong elements is maintained through generations.²⁷⁹ This discussion includes theories about structuralism and developmentalism.²⁸⁰ It can be interpreted that the group of parents identified their Spanish diet as home-made but also manufactured according to the new distribution of meal in Spain. It respects the specific cultural relationship to some food and preparations technics, but moreover tries to understand why the choices of the parents have partly changed in other meals. Claude Lévi-Strauss also wrote about food preparations and its relevance in showing how a group practically behaves around cooking. His Culinary triangle explains the perception of raw, cooked and rotten, but also the tradition of grilling, smoking and boiling food²⁸¹ and the gender habits related to preparation. Many associations are linked to the different preparations techniques. However, his theory does not include microwaving and snacking pre-made food. This can be related to both parents, their working hours, a busy everyday life, comfortability and no such thing as home cooking. It can be discussed if raw is the new high status preparation, due to the maintenance of vitamins, etc. Previous study by among others, Debra Franko suggests that the feeding environment influence our perception of food as either something to enjoy or as having a functional effect. She argues that the standard of food has decreased. Meals and food had a higher status and quality before.²⁸² Her study focuses on children in there teens. However, if these teenagers are having impression of the "new meal" as something unimportant, this study interprets that nowadays Spanish parents are creating the same image to their children through microwaving and dissolution of the meals, probably less gender related then before. Next part discusses the food choice of the studied parents according to the afternoon meal.

4.4 What the children eat today and when did it change

The observation show adults giving sweetened yogurt, potato chips, chocolate biscuits, doughnuts , etc., in everyday settings. Meaning without signs of any celebration, but interpreted signs of what is assumed to be everyday afternoon snack.²⁸³ The questionnaire shows other

²⁷⁹ Wood, R (1995):1

²⁸⁰ Mennell, S, et.al.(1992):1

²⁸¹ Lévi-Strauss, C. and Peter B. (tr.) (1966).

²⁸² Franko, D. L. et.al. (2008)

²⁸³ Annex 3: Participant Observation

parents' choice patterns of everyday afternoon snack. From bread, cheese and yogurt, fruit, biscuits, dried fruit, bread with avocado, rice crackers, bocadillo (baguette) and juice.²⁸⁴ Not quite corresponding to the observation. Nanny Marie tells her conception,

"The Spanish people are sorely tempted to, what I call "bollería industrial". Doughnuts, pastry etc. instead of whole wheat bread and so on."

(Nanny Marie)²⁸⁵

According to the elderly women from the group interview, nowadays parents have other options and make different choices.

"There are pastry all over today and we never gave these pre-cooked meals to our children but now they do."

(Almodena)²⁸⁶

Farther Barco retell his sons description of the different between his grandmothers home-cooked meals and his mother's meal.

"My eldest son tells me sometimes. My mom never cooks these things for me, or when she cooks its always the same, rice with tomato sauce from a pot and so on but my grandmother still does everything you had, dad, when you was a child."

(Father Barco)²⁸⁷

Lily and Dorta from each group interview give their comprehension of nowadays parents feeding habits,

"The people who buy packed food now where the people who had home cooked food when they were kids. It is a matter of lack of time today. The contemporary life."

(Lily)²⁸⁸

"Parents nowadays, don't have as much time, so they buy different food than we did. Another thing is that we did not have the possibilities as they have now. We had to use the vegetable we had in the garden and what we could get in the village."

(Dorta)²⁸⁹

Dorta highlights the new food options. According to theory of Contreras and Arnáiz book *"Alimentation y Cultura"* ²⁹⁰ the structure of household expenditure between 1958 and 1997 has

²⁸⁴ Annex 14: Questionnaire

²⁸⁵ Annex 8: Ethnographic Interview with Nanny Marie

²⁸⁶ Annex 10: Group interview with elderly women

²⁸⁷ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

²⁸⁸ Annex 9: Group interview with parents

²⁸⁹ Annex 10: Group Interview with elderly women

²⁹⁰ Contreras, J.H. and Arnáiz, M. G. (2005), p.417

changes a lot in specific areas. The consumption of bread, egg and oil has decreased a lot while the consumption of meat, fish, dairy products and sugar have increased in this period. Even though the coast of Spain runs along the Mediterranean Sea, the people in Spain do not necessarily eat what is called, the Mediterranean diet any more. Father Barco is giving his interpretation of Spain's adaptation to international food trends.

"Like the Indians in America were not prepared to the people and changes from Europe, Spain was not prepared for the Western lifestyle when Spain became a democracy in the beginning of the 80'ties."

(Father Barco)²⁹¹

This will lead us to the question on if the change in food options happened faster in Spain than in many other European countries and how the priorities of food were different in the transformation to modernization in Spain than in other European countries, due to the history of hunger and poor times. According to Jesús H. Contraries and Arnáiz that major economic, demographic, social and cultural changes are directly related to the changes in eating behavior. They argue how urbanization, industrialization and a change in the work force have changed the general lifestyle in Spain.

Father Barco describes his memories from approximately 1969:

"When you went outside of Catalonia it was impossible to get yogurt. There was no yogurt, there was not fish. We are speaking about villages or towns which are only 30 kilometers away from the coast. All the fish they had were the one that came with salt. In the round packaging. They had no fresh fish at all. In stead they had a lot of vegetables. They were very good. They were very tasty. They had a lot of potatoes, they had a lot of wheat and other kinds of flour (...) and of cause they got much more meat than other parts. In the industrial areas. It was not so easy. People were poor all over. But for people with animals at home it was easier (...) You didn't have water (...) That was the kind of life."

(Father Barco)²⁹²

According to the observation in the park, playground and in front of day care one can interpret that it is not unusual that the parents nowadays bring small packages of Danone yogurt²⁹³, manufactured cookies and biscuits. From the phrase of father Barco above, one can interpret that Spain did not have obesity problems earlier since it was a hard work - or since they had problems with getting enough food on the table every day. According to both the life stories and ethnographic interviews and group interviews the impression is that nowadays parents have been used to mostly home cooked food. The internationally food trends gradually changes during their

²⁹¹ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

²⁹² Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

²⁹³ Groupe Danone

childhood and adulthood. The consumption of pre-made food, yogurts, and pastries is something new in Spain.

The demand of the in-between-meals has opened up to the habit of small manufactured snacks.²⁹⁴

Like the previously discussed this has come with the change of lifestyle and prioritize.

The people born in the 80ties may be the ones experiencing the first change in their parents' lifestyle after a long period with little change in the household due to the dictatorship. For instance because only 30,7% of the Spanish women were working 1993 35,8% in 1998 and 48,3% in 2004.²⁹⁵

The distribution of the meals may have changed according to the change of the work schedule in some families, but they have created new trends too.²⁹⁶

This study highlights the fact that when the role of the women changed, so did the food trends and when the food habits and preparation techniques changed, so did the role of the women.

The studied persons describe a general Spanish parent as less inclined in cooking and simple turning to easier and simpler meal solutions such as quickly prepared packaged foods and ready-made meals. This trend has of course been benefiting the fast food sector. For examples quickly pre-cooked packaged foods and ready-made meals were introduced into Spanish diets in the late 1990s and the consumption has experienced an exploded growth ever since. Moreover, preparation techniques like microwaving are increasingly popular the younger the generation.²⁹⁷

The features of the social changes for these parents have reached their eating habits. Options of food have become much bigger and the choice become more complex.²⁹⁸

Mother Lily tells her comprehension of pre-made food,

"I buy a lot pre-cooked, because I don't feel a difference in my body. I love the tortilla from Carrefour [...] I am happy that some people make their own food, but I don't. It cost a lot of gas and electricity."

(Mother Lily)²⁹⁹

Mother Lily doesn't see any difference between the home cooked and pre-made Spanish tortilla.

According to the changes in consumptions this is an increasing attitude for the Spanish consumers. The younger they are the more accepted are the new trends like precooked and microwaving food.

Interpreted partly because of the new family structure, increasing number of childless families and single person families.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁴ Contreras, J.H. and Arnáiz, M. G. (2005), p.420

²⁹⁵ Moreno, L. (2006)pp. 73 - 95

²⁹⁶ Contreras, J.H. and Arnáiz, M. G. (2005), p.420

²⁹⁷ Observatoria de la Alimentación (2006) p.55

²⁹⁸ Díez mendez, L. (n.d.)

²⁹⁹ Annex 9: Group interview with parents

³⁰⁰ OECD (2011b), p.23

4.7 Sub-conclusion - Modernization and obese children

Nowadays are interpreted to have been growing up in a fast moving society. One can only expect that it create new priorities for these and a different fundament to create a food environment for their children. Hence increasing busy lifestyle and less time spend on cooking; more and more parents are exchanging everyday traditional cooking with convenience food or convenient snacks. It can be interpreted that the parents prioritize time to spend on individual development, education, socializing , etc. Elements of todays everyday, which did not happen in a normal family 50 years ago in Spain.

The most relevant discussion of this chapter is interpreted to be if a culture can be less 'ready' to modernization and if it makes the parents less aware of elements in the adapted society they can be interpreted to be exposed to negative tendencies like obesity.

The part about the distributions of the meal shows the importance of the afternoon snack to these parents. However, their choice for this small meal it comprehend as often more unhealthy than healthy.

5 Adaptation to new food trends

This chapter includes a discussion of how the parents are using traditional and new food habits to create a food environment for their children. Moreover, what the parents consider a treat and why? By treat, this study refers to a present in the form of food. This will be analyzed through the empirical material from the observation and through a study of the history of some food products in Spain. The products analyzed are the products, which influenced the point of departure of this study, biscuits, potato chips, doughnuts and a few more discovered from the fieldwork.

5.1 Adaptation to some food trends, but not all

5.2 Nowadays perception of what is healthy food

5.3 The Spanish darlings

5.4 Sub-conclusion: The afternoon snack and obese children

5.1 Adaptation to some food trends, but not all

The relevance of writing about the food in a culture is hence the social value, symbolic value group identity that, are created through food and food preparation.³⁰¹ Last chapter winded up with a discussion of the rapid transformation to nowadays lifestyle and which food is observed as the parents' preferences. This chapter search to understand why these parents adapted to some trends, but not others. The quote of the nutritionist and Farther Barco are chosen to distinguish the Spanish situation, to back up support the analysis of the preferred products.

*"When I came here in 1989, you could only get small sizes of everything.
Now everything is super size like in the United States."*

(Nutritionist)³⁰²

Like most other places, Spain has experienced a change in the food habits when food became manufactured and sold in packaging which, made it long lasting and nonetheless.³⁰³ However, as interpreted earlier, this happened later in Spain. Father Barco gives a more distinct impression that the country did not import internationally food products or adjust to internationally food trends before the late 70ties.

"The dictator of Franco influenced everything. Everything (...) it was a very clear Dictatorship. We will not get German cars (...) we will not get food from abroad, we will not get whatever. So we had to do with what we had."

³⁰¹ Helman, C. (2007) pp. 58

³⁰² Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

³⁰³ Contreras, J. H. and Arnáiz, M.G. (2005), p.405

(Father Barco)³⁰⁴

Both the quotations above points against that Spain experienced globalization of food much later than the rest of Europe. When Spain's borders opened up for import the food demands must be seen from the point of view that, Spain was not like other countries in Europe in the 1970ties and 1980ties and the people in Spain have welcomed or met new trends from how matters stood.

The whole country was waiting for the change.

(Mother Vila)³⁰⁵

Mother Vila and several other parents have expressed that there was a common longing for freedom and change in Spain. Presumably, also an eager to know new internationally trends according to TV broadcast, fashion, food, technology, etc.³⁰⁶³⁰⁷ According to nowadays food habits and consumption it is obvious that we must understand the parents' attitude, motivation and reluctance to the different food products. Studying obesity from an anthropological angle it becomes important to analyze *what* they eat, *who* does, *when* they eat and *how* they eat, shop and conceive food to understand why these parents chose some products and not others. The questions *why* do you eat, consume, conceive this, become crucial to an anthropological angle of this. Why the Spanish flute sandwich; *bocadillo*? Why juice with sugar? Why fried? Why not sea wheat, green tea, Thai dishes, oatmeal and fresh milk? It has partly been discussed with inequality and education and what different classes consume from Bourdieu's model. However, while these theories are all generalizing, this will be discussed from the point of view of this empirical data. First, in part 5.2 with a discussion of what the parents conceive as a treat for their children and if these parents' perception of a healthy body has something to do with what they feed their children. Second, in part 5.3 through discussing the historical reason for their food choice.

5.2 Nowadays perception of what is healthy food

To show a historical relief of the almost, psych-somatic understanding of a healthy diet, Father Barco was asked about previous and nowadays perceptions of the well-being of child and it's body. Father Barco points out how, his mother was creating a food environment through the comprehension that her son needed meat to be healthy and strong.

³⁰⁴ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

³⁰⁵ Annex 2: Life story interview with family, Vila

³⁰⁶ Annex 10: Group interview with elderly women

³⁰⁷ Annex 7: Ethnographic interview with mother Hereu

"I say it is mainly something, which has been done by women. They have been the heart of the family. They have imposed certain ways of life and eating habits for the children. My mother wanted me to be very healthy and strong. She bought me meat from horses [...] I got also meat from bulls from a bullfight [...] Then I got plenty of fish [...] As I said, she and a lot, a full generation of women were much interested in their sons to get the best quality of food to overcome illness."

(Father Barco)³⁰⁸

Presumably, the mother did an effort in getting this special meat. From Father Barco's description, food is interpretable a source of strength to overcome illness. A conception, which, probably has, changes a bit hence new food products and due to a historical development of conceived cure of the body, food and medicine.³⁰⁹ The nutritionist tells her opinion about if nowadays parents think about creating a healthy food environment for their children.

"No, no, no. Very few. I don't see that they think about that at all. Many people were used to not having any food, so if the child eat, its good [...] if you are interested in child nutrition you have to go to a specialist like me, or you buy books for it. It is not in the normal pediatrician practice..."

(Nutritionist)³¹⁰

Several of the interview parents claimed that not all Spanish parents are aware of creating a healthy food environment for their children.

"There are [...] families with no idea at all, and no interest in such things."

(Mother Hereu)³¹¹

However, when the parents were asked about their own habits, the responds were likely to be,

"Yes, everyday"

(Mother Vila)³¹²

"Yes, about everything I do."

(Mother Lucia)³¹³

A methodological reflection on this may explain the reason for these different comprehensions. One reason could be, that this study is missing some important groups and their responds. Another reason could be, that when I asked the parents, the phrasing of the question created a loaded question; if the parents thought about creating some healthy food habits for their children. Since most parents presumably wish the best for their offspring, this phrasing gave them only one possible answer. To cover this relevant perspective, the parents were asked how they did create a

³⁰⁸ Annex 1: Lifestory interview with Father Barco

³⁰⁹ Sachs, L (2002) p. 32

³¹⁰ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

³¹¹ Annex 7: Ethnographic interview with Mother Hereu

³¹² Annex 2: Life story interview with family Vila

³¹³ Annex 4: Ethnographic interview with Mother Lucia

healthy food environment. This covered a more varied picture of how the parents were thinking of creating a healthy food environment. Some of the answers were,

"For me it's better if I cook the food myself. It's just better to do something fresh than to buy it."

(Mother Vila)³¹⁴

Another was giving her child specific products with specific nutritious,

"...sesame and flax seeds..."

(Mother Rocabert)³¹⁵

The argument of the nutritionist can be seen from the interpreted perspective that a public awareness of health is relatively new in Spain. According to the interpreted rapid transformation to modernization, a new lifestyle and new health problems, the parents underneath cover something noteworthy in the relation to awareness of health problems,

"We had our own market. We didn't bother about local because everything was local. Everything."

(Father Barco)³¹⁶

Furthermore, Mother Rocabert says,

"I think it's clear that not enough people watch their diet or that of their children, with an excess of meat, dairy products, ready made meals and junk food products. But there are slowly coming more and more information about how to change and improve nutrition, without having to avoid the Mediterranean diet, and information of how to shop more organic products."

(Mother Rocabert)³¹⁷

Mother Hereu argues that awareness of health is new in Spain,

"There are few in Spain. They are starting now. The debates about nutrition and food. Right now there is a debate about food for obese children. But they are not serious. They are built on very few theories."

(Mother Hereu)³¹⁸

The nutritionist gives us a time perspective of when this debate started

"Obesity is new in Spain so the debate is new too (...) I think, ever since it was obvious that Spain's children are fat, there have been some campaigns going on. I would say it might have started about 10 years ago with the "5 al dia" to try and get everyone to eat more fruit. That is probably the loudest health message heard."

³¹⁴ Annex 2: Life story interview with family, Vila

³¹⁵ Annex 5: Ethnographic interview with Mother Rocabert

³¹⁶ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

³¹⁷ Annex 5: Ethnographic interview with Mother Rocabert

³¹⁸ Annex 7: Ethnographic interview with Mother Hereu

(Nutritionist)³¹⁹

It can be interpreted from these different assertions of parents and a nutritionist that Spain is years behind the rest of the western world with obesity awareness and preventions. Presumably, due to lack of awareness of the seriousness of the obesity problem and due to historical influences of perception of food and acceptance of overweight. Yet, with the increase of the problems, health debates have become more popular. This study emphasizes that the studied parents think about the food environment through healthy initiatives or traditional habits which, some parents seem to maintain. However, it also highlights that nowadays parents to some extent adjust to new habits. Possibly, less in the main meal such as the lunch, and mostly in the case of the dinner and afternoon snack, since the afternoon snack has gained its importance recently. The nutritionist points,

“If they work they cook something simple. Spaghetti, pasta, etc. There are parents with traditional habits, but then they also buy doughnut, potato chips, juice, etc. They have adapted to the new food products too.”

(Nutritionist)³²⁰

According to the nutritionist it can be interpreted that it is not just a question if parents are serving home made food or not. Parents can have good intentions, and then overlook other elements influencing the food environment. Even-though structuralism and developmentalism can be viewed as contrasting ideas, this study highlights the combination of traditional and new food habits in understanding the complex background of the parents way to create a food environment. Structuralism can be understood as, what a group of people has done for decades and what is perceived at national dish. This historically relied on what have been available in geographic territory. Developmentalism refers to how habits have evolved due to previous generation's development. Some mothers from the ethnographic interviews and one from a life story interview explain how they describe what a treat (food) could be.

“Every Wednesday I give him a doughnut”

(Mother Vila)³²¹

“I think that is the point of me giving them a croissant. I eat a croissant to feel some kind of happiness, and I am giving that feeling to my children.”

(Mother Lucia)³²²

³¹⁹ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

³²⁰ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

³²¹ Annex 2: Life story interview with family, Vila

³²² Annex 4: Ethnographic interview with Mother Lucia

"I do give her some cake"

(Mother Hereu)³²³

Mother Vila, Lucia and Hereu tell us their comprehension of a treat. The choice about giving your two year old boy a doughnut every Wednesday was to make him enjoy going to the swimming pool to get the habit of doing physical activities.³²⁴ It is not possible to predict which habits a toddler will stick on to. The different habits must be seen from the specific situation, but it is interesting to read that especially mothers do have much concern about their child's nutrition and at the same time want to give what they themselves consider a treat. The importance difference is whether it's a doughnut, chips or an organic fruit bar or oranges from the family's garden on the countryside. The mother giving a doughnut every Wednesday explains,

"Now he is so much happier when he goes to the pool. Because he is waiting for the doughnut and for the juice. I also give him a juice. I don't like to give him juice, which is not natural. But this is the day of the doughnut and the juice".

(Mother Vila)³²⁵

Other parents gave dried nuts as a treat, probably because they imagined it as a treat themselves.

"This image of a treat separates parents in two different groups. The ones giving "presents" which are unhealthy and the ones giving "presents" which are healthy; berries, fruit, chestnuts. Here in Spain, they give what they consider a treat, of course - chips, cakes ..."

(Nutritionist)³²⁶

The idea as a treat in disguise of a doughnut or some chips may be, since it is sweet, fat, and salty. Something, which is often conceived as filling.³²⁷ The children learn that a treat is sweet. What the parent consider a treat is interpreted to be related to peoples background, economy, educational and family habits. Moreover, related to what is perceived as 'good' for your child either because it's healthy, because it's accepted sometimes or because the child appreciates it. The part named, the Spanish darlings, will discuss how a possible historical influence affects the parents' conception of a treat.

5.3 The Spanish darlings

Like in any other case there are food traditions and preferences within a country. Something, which can be interpreted to influence what a group adjusts to and what gets less attention to the majority

³²³ Annex 7: Ethnographic interview with Mother Hereu

³²⁴ Annex 2: Life story interview with family, Vila

³²⁵ Annex 2: Life story interview with family Vila

³²⁶ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

³²⁷ Contreras, J. (2005)

in a group or society.³²⁸ Both anthropologists Jonathan Friedman and Ulf Hannerz have studied how things spread, but with two different approaches. Friedman suggests that consumption include maintenance of identity³²⁹ and that consumption is done from different groups' different origin. For instance, while some groups like the western countries have been part of a common history and evolvement and, as he express it "*social transformation*,"³³⁰ they still evolve from the specific origin of each country. If a tendency is similar in two countries, it is because they share some similar setting. Contrary, if a one tendency is different in two groups, it is because the groups use this tendency from two different origins.³³¹

Hannerz argues that the interpretation of life which humans makes, are what create humans as part of a group. The collective group's meaning of life is what makes it a group.³³² Hannerz visualize how processes in life must be seen as rivers flowing and in constant, endless movement, just like perceptions and comprehensions made by humans. A comprehending is always build on something and will create a basis for a new comprehension. Education, media and interaction with new people are something, which creates many "flows" of interpretations, trends and concepts.

The question, why this generation of Spanish parents has adapted to different international food ideas and not to others, can possibly be understood using Hannerz's³³³ theory. Hannerz argues that the adaptation must been illustrated as flows more than as cultural patterns, since some trends flows easier and faster into a cultural coherence while others have a bumpy flow and maybe becomes unimportant for the culture and dissolve again. There are many foreigners in Spain bringing their food habits with them. However, many internationally trends and popular food products are not adapted to Spanish food habits. One could ask why some yogurts but not other kinds? Why Mexican but not Thai food? Underneath is a discussion of the consumption of biscuit, potato chips, baby food, juice and meat in Spain.

The Maria biscuit - *galletas*

The fact that the afternoon snack has gained a stable importance in families with children probably, creates a demand for small snack. According the nutritionist, there is one answer to what nowadays parents give their children for afternoon snack,

"Biscuit, biscuit, biscuit, biscuit."

³²⁸ Contreras, J.H. and Arnáiz, M.G. (2005), p.406

³²⁹ Friedman, J. (1990)

³³⁰ Friedman, J. (1994): 11

³³¹ Friedman, J. (1994): 11

³³² Hannerz, U. (1992), p.3

³³³ Hannerz, U. (1992): 7

(Nutritionist)³³⁴

It can be discussed if biscuits are unhealthy, non-harmful or acceptable. While some groups accept cookies and biscuits as a healthy snack or even a meal for small toddlers, others place biscuits in different categories and insist on not having the product in institutions for small children, due to the sugar content. In the phrasing of some questions for the interviews this researcher was for instance advised by Spanish friend not to place biscuits, cookies and chocolate in same category, but instead to place it in a category with bread, cheese and milk. This clearly clarifies the nationality of the researcher. The data collection was motivated by my personal or Danish perception of a high consumption of high calorie-biscuits, potato chips, etc., for children. Had the researcher been for example American or British, the observation had probably been less surprising. However, this is an assumption without any theoretical argument. According to the observation and the questionnaire, biscuits are one of this group of parents' favorite snack for their child.

"I give him cookies when I take him from school. I bring some cereals and some cookies sometimes. Cookies that are normal. Not with chocolate."

(Mother Vila)³³⁵

Mother Vila explains how biscuit is an everyday element in her son's diet. However she does has preferences of biscuits and doesn't give him chocolate biscuits like other parents. Another mother describes that she accepts biscuits as breakfast for her daughter.

"Cookies she can eat any weekday, at breakfast..."

(Mother Rocabert)³³⁶

Biscuits have traditionally been an easy and cheap way to get calories. Biscuits are presuming closer to the relation of the Spanish illusion of bread than to the North European illusion, since rye bread and whole grain has and is consumed more in this part of Europe. Interpretably, this separates the conception of bread from biscuits and wheat flutes. In Spain parents are recommended to give their children Maria biscuit, also know as the Marie biscuit, for breakfast with fruit and milk³³⁷ and this biscuit seems to have a special relation to consumers in Spain. This study does not contain a discourse analysis but this researcher found it relevant, to point that the page Wikipedia³³⁸ did have a presentation of this biscuit in a few languages where 3 out of 6 were Catalan, Spanish and Portuguese. This does now show any significant relation to the Spanish relation to the Maria biscuit, but it can be conceived to be an important element in the culture.

³³⁴ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

³³⁵ Annex 2: Life story interview with family Vila

³³⁶ Annex 5: Ethnographic interview with Mother Rocabert

³³⁷ La Tienda: Marie cookies

³³⁸ Wikipedia: Marie biscuit

This Biscuit is also shown on the packing of different baby food in Spain.³³⁹³⁴⁰

The afternoon snack is the time of day where many of the studied parents give biscuits. Not that this is considered a treat, but presuming it is conceived a healthy snack. There is a high validity in the argument that biscuits are important for nowadays parents, since almost all parents and the nutritionist mentioned this. However, little theory is found about this. I have a comprehension that the plain, sweet and almost creamy biscuit is conceived as something acceptable after the mother milk. It is creamy, sweet and interpreted from the observation, given by parents without many moderations when the child gets its first solid food. The family therapist, Laura Gutman argues that some mothers have the idea that sweet food symbolizing love from mother to child because the mother's milk is sweet.³⁴¹ Gutman has theories about parents' conception of giving love through sweet food.³⁴² An interesting point of view since the Maria biscuit is both sweet, plain, creamy and white-golden in color and is recommended as the first porridge a baby should get in Spain.

Potato chips - *patatas fritas*

"In Andalusia everything is about fried. Fried fish, fried vegetables. It is not surprising to me that it's the place with the most obese children."

(Nutritionist)³⁴³

According to the observation, potato chips is given to small kids as a snack and can be interpreted if small bags of potato chips is conceived as products for children, since the bag is small.³⁴⁴ It is the impression that chips are a very common snack for everyday and weekends both during the day and evening for the observed and interviewed parents and it is not common to get potato chips on the same dish as meat or fish in Spain. Friedman argues that people uses new coming elements from their point of origin.³⁴⁵ Meaning that a product may originate from one country, but it can be used differently in others, having a different role with no relation to the country of its origin.³⁴⁶ Potatoes have been one of the main crops in Spain in the previous century with a production on 5 million tons up to the 1990's and it was common to eat potato chips in the period after the civil war.³⁴⁷ With the spread of the potato in Spain, the foundation of the adaptation to potato chip was interpreted made. Due to the tradition of olive oil and fried food this plays a role according to traditionally Spanish food preparation. The tradition of frying and roasting was also

³³⁹ Nestlé

³⁴⁰ Hero

³⁴¹ Gutman, L. (2008)

³⁴² Gutman, L. (2008)

³⁴³ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

³⁴⁴ Annex 3: Participant observation

³⁴⁵ Friedman, J. (1994): 11

³⁴⁶ Friedman, J. (1994): 11

³⁴⁷ Esteban, J.et.al. (2002)

part of the Mediterranean diet, which assuming made the adaptation to the potato chips easier than cultures not used to frying, both as a snack for adults and children, side-dish and part of a main menu. The use of potato chips can possibly also have something to do with the climate in Spain according to a need for salt. However, this is not scientifically documented.

Pastry and doughnut - *bollería*

According to some of the elderly women pastry is the one to be blamed for nowadays child obesity. Mother Vila had implemented the habit of giving her son a doughnut once a week. Doughnuts are not a new trend in Spain. Spain have had their own pastry named rosquilla, which is fried fermented dough baked in an oven. The Romans introduced them to Spain. Moreover, Spain have what may be known as the Spanish doughnut; The Churro. A thin, long stick, deep-fried and sugared pastry. They are sold on the street in paper cups. Hannerz argues about creolization and how cultural flows spread from the country of its origin (center) to other cultures (peripheries) with approximately same purpose to the new culture; In the case of doughnuts, this covers a demand or social setting for snacking and as a treat, which, already existed.³⁴⁸ According to Contreras ³⁴⁹ moreover, a study made by the supermarket chain Consumer Eroski,³⁵⁰ consumption of sweet has increased for both children and adults in Spain.

Pre-cooked baby food

These products can contain different dishes and their benefit is that they are small transportable and microwaveable meals. One thing, which divide the studied parents in two is, which brands they relate to high status. The answers were contrary, especially the ones about the food brand, Nestlé.³⁵¹ It seems like some of the parents adored everything made by Nestlé and others refused everything banded with Nestlé. Nestlé makes infant formula, pre-made baby food for microwaves and other fast solutions for parents. ³⁵² The brand can be interpreted related to decrease of home-cooking, people lacking qualifications or no interest in reading the declaration interpreted on the empirical data.^{353 354 355}

Parents eating habits have changed a lot during the last 20-30 years. From homemade cooking to buying more pre-made food, processed food and dining out.³⁵⁶ There are many statistics on what

³⁴⁸ Hannerz, U. 1992, p.219

³⁴⁹ Contreras H.J. (2005)

³⁵⁰ Eroski Consumer (2012)

³⁵¹ Nestlé

³⁵² Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

³⁵³ Annex 1: Life story interview with family, Barco

³⁵⁴ Annex 2: Life story interview with family, Vila

³⁵⁵ Annex 12: Interview with Nutritionist

³⁵⁶ Dirección General de Salud Pública y Alimentación (2003)

people eat, if they cook themselves and which preparations methods they like. These data show that precooked and microwave is preferred more the younger the person.³⁵⁷

Cartons of Juice - *Zumo*

Juice is also discussed since some parents explained that they thought that it cause problem like child obesity.

“What I don’t like from the small juices, is that they have to much sugar (...) Parents who give these juice to their children (...) its not that they don’t care. It’s just not that important for them. They just think, juice is good in general, so I am going to give him. Some care about sugar and others don’t...”

(Mother Vila)³⁵⁸

Cartons of juice are observed in almost all the observations. It can be interpreted that it’s an easy and convenient thing for the afternoon snack, which is cultural accepted by the parents due to the agricultural importance of fruit in Spain.³⁵⁹ Using Hannerz’s theory the juice is probably covering a previous habit of fresh juice, so the consumption of juice is not new, just the convenient carton with strew. From Friedman’s theory, orange juice may be associated with a Spanish taste and identity.

Meat - *Carne*

According to statistics, meat is consumed in large amount in Spain. However, this has not been observed in the empirical data but in statistics about the Spanish food consumption.³⁶⁰ Since it’s related to obesity, it will be discussed briefly. Anthropologist have discussed the comprehension of different type of meat across the world and while some animals are conceders a sin to kill, others are relates to good food and maybe even survival.³⁶¹ Growing up with habits of eating much meat can be interpreted as making the adaptation to fast food flow easy into the habits of this culture, since the majority of fast food contain meat and the preservation of frying, grilling, pre-cooked and microwaving. Preparation technique mostly accepted by people from the south of Spain³⁶² where the obesity epidemic is on it’s highest. According to Mother Vila and Father Barco meat is consumed especially in the central and southern parts of Spain. Not surprisingly, the number of obesity children is much higher in the South than in the North. Contreras and Arnáiz point out that the Spanish population is now getting more of their fat intake from meat and more sugar is added

³⁵⁷ Foro Internacional de la Alimentación (2006) pp54-55

³⁵⁸ Annex 2: Life story interview with family, Vila

³⁵⁹ Den store danske - Gyldendals åbne encyklopædi : appelsin

³⁶⁰ Contreras, J.H. and Arnáiz, M.G.(2005)

³⁶¹ Harris, M. (1985): 19-46

³⁶² Observation de la Alimentación (2006) p.58

to food products.³⁶³ Previous anthropologists have given examples of how traditional food habits are maintained due to the importance to a group of people and their understanding of health, 'good,' moral and wrong. Harris writes how the holy cow in India, a country with so many starving people and fat cows³⁶⁴ is not eaten but respected like Mother Mary is to the Catholic Church. However, what influenced this maintenance. Harris suggests that due to different historical events, the cow has become a symbol of the Indian identity. It can be interpreted that this has a huge influence on how these people perceive the meaning of life. Mary Douglas studied how other societies structured comprehension of purity and taboos related to another kind of meat. To this society the consumption of pork has a symbolic role as wrong, dirty.³⁶⁵ Even though this study did not find elements of taboos in food consumption it used these studies to understand what is accepted as proper food and that this can be something which is tangled into one's beliefs. These studies show situations, where something has a huge value to the identity of a culture. Therefore it is kept and maintained through the evolution. In this case, how a group adapts to new food trends, will presumably influence which trends nowadays parents have adapted moving into modernization. What affects one's perception of what is good for your child. It is interpreted that the parents value home-cooking for some of the meals, yet, chose modern food due to new perception of the meal. According to the theories of Douglas and Harris, nowadays Spanish parents cannot be conceived as having any structured taboos related to these kinds of meat. Quite the reverse, especially the elderly generation is interpreted to conceive meat a positive energy source, possibly due to the many years of scarcity.

A discourse analysis about the health debate in the Spanish media could have supplied this study with the understanding of what nowadays parents learn from the television and how much child obesity is discussed in media. Moreover, a discourse analysis of Spanish health experts on child obesity like Carlos Gonzales,³⁶⁶ Caseload Rodríguez Bustos³⁶⁷ could show attitudes towards what is expected from the parents. Many other food products could have been studied according to obesity. Some could be the conception of the Danone³⁶⁸ yogurt, which was originally founded in Barcelona, others could be the Spanish Bocado made of baguette.

³⁶³ Neira, M. and de Onis, M. (2006)

³⁶⁴ Harris, M. (1989) p.11

³⁶⁵ Douglas, M. (1966)

³⁶⁶ Gonzales, C.(2005)

³⁶⁷ Caseload Rodríguez

³⁶⁸ Group Danone

5.4 Sub-conclusion - The afternoon snack and obese children

How does a group of Spanish parents create a food environment for their child?

The food environment of these parents is interpreted to be influenced by their parents' food tradition and by their own comprehended exposed role to internationally food trends.

While previous parents build their comprehension of what was good for their children on their circumstances, these parents do the same. They both highlight home-cooking, but not the importance of keeping all meals. Some of the meals seem to be vaporizing due to new lifestyle.

This creates a demand for small meals and everyday snacking.

Due to lack of knowledge and to the traditional perception of the plain Maria biscuits this is interpreted as conceived as a "healthy" afternoon snack. This creates an understanding of what first the point of departure of this study. This study supply the area with awareness about a small group of parents, saying that these people's welfare and historically background is shown in their rapid addition to modernization and their outcomes in child obesity; modernization hasn't shown its consequences and new tools must be incorporated to have a healthy body in these circumstances. It can be interpreted that this study would have had even more food discoveries if it collected data from all parts of Barcelona and form other locations in Spain.

6 Conclusions

How does this group of Spanish parents create a food environment for their children?

The question has been answered from the social anthropological angle seeking to understand the psych-somatic and social circumstances influencing these parents' choices. Through this approach this study has discovered some new interpretations of why there are so many obese children in Spain. The goal of this study was to discover or generate new comprehensions. Through conversations with parents, elderly women, a nanny and health experts this study had several new discoveries. Some of them were, a huge influence of Spanish history in nowadays grandparents perception of a healthy body. Another was a perception of low educational level and inequality in Spain. A third was the quick adaptation to modernization and the lifestyle it brings. Moreover, how Spanish food traditions have influenced the adaptation to international food trends.

Since this study used the inductive grounded theory method, it is underlined that I emphasize that other parents could have focus on other elements, which then had created other discoveries related to child obesity. It is interpreted that there are many overweight and obese children in Spain hence, the country recently had much less food resources, which interpretably created a perception of an overweight body of a child as a healthy child. Moreover, hence the consequences of stress-related lifestyle due to inequality and low educational level for the adult generation and an interpretation of food choice of parents with no education in today's circumstances. The fast adaptation to modernization is interpreted to have been a consequence for child obesity since the social welfare and the family culture were not as prepared for this change as other countries, which had experienced this change, ongoing. It is seen in the BMI of the children, interpretably since the meal has changed its importance and some meals have been exchanged with convenient snack like biscuits, Danone yoghurt and factory-made juice. Last but not least, it is interpreted that traditional food, desserts and preparation techniques have made a gradual transition to the adaptation of unhealthy in-between-meals. The preparation of frying is common in Spain and meat, pastry and juice have been part of the Spanish diet for ages. Again it is underlined, that just because a country is next to the Mediterranean Sea the people living there don't necessarily eat the Mediterranean diet.

The truth of child obesity has many faces and this study acknowledged that it could have been focusing on other discoveries or gone more in detail with a couple of the mentioned factors.

The grandparents have been blamed, but if you look into the reasons for their behavior their overfeeding behavior is caused by the political history in Spain. Due to the welfare system in Spain these parents expose their children to the overfeeding behavior of the grandparents more than in countries with more formal family support.

The population's, if not lack of knowledge then a later received knowledge, has been blamed too. However, if you look into the reason for this, the welfare in Spain is supporting education less than other western countries and the elder relatives to nowadays parents, were not part of a society focusing on the importance of education.

The mothers have been blamed, because they choose not to sacrifice their life for their children. Today the mothers get a career, chose to get fewer children, travel, prioritize a bigger house instead of cooking for the family every day and for all meals. Looking at the circumstances of nowadays mothers, modernization (industrialization, urbanization and increase of education) has created new circumstances for these parents according to the economic inflation and to the new status symbol including having individual interests and a career. This has changed the norm of being a homemaker and the economic possibilities of only surviving on one income. Moreover, the parents are blamed, due to their quick solutions of convenient food with a high amount of saturated fat, sugar and salt.

However, if a parent doesn't have the knowledge, economy and resources to act before the pediatrician does, the resources to select a food environment with proper nutrition is far from the chosen reality. Due to a late awareness of the problem, obesity prevention has started later than in many other western countries. Due to the history of closed borders they are not used to read on the food label, because traditional Spanish food did not need preservation. Due to lack of knowledge and to the traditional food culture a plain biscuits is conceived a "healthy" afternoon snack. This study supply the area with awareness about a small group of parents, saying that these people's welfare and historically background is shown in their children's BMI.

Modernization has showed its consequences in Spain and new tools must be incorporated to maintain a healthy body in these new circumstances.

This small amount of Spanish individuals cannot explain how all Spanish people are thinking and behaving, but it can give us an idea and improve insight of sociocultural elements effecting how parent behave, feeding their children. Other relevant topics, which could have been in the focus of this study could be, who these parents trust and listen to. Due to their traditional family culture it is interpreted that the family influence it's members more than government or other organizations.

Moreover, it could have been focusing of their perception of health, in general; if they prefer medicine and the pediatricians and pharmacies recommendations to household remedy and how this reflects the outcome of health. Like the background documents, the focus could also be sleep duration and time and content of the meal. There are many ways to study how the parents create a healthy food environment. The children of today will be the parents of tomorrow.

I hope to have emerged new knowledge, which will help understand nowadays parents and children and future parents. While genetic factors can explain some part of the obesity problem, it probably cannot alone, explain the fact that during the last fifteen years the increase of obesity has exploded. However, factors like lifestyle changes and the condition of the society will help answer this phenomenon. That's why an anthropological study of lifestyle changes is relevant.

Specialists in this field know about the levels of interventions and the importance of the family as the main responsible. So, why are there not more tools for the parents to take the "right" decisions? Hopefully, this study will strengthen the focus on the parents and their circumstances according to child obesity. The outcomes of this study is considered relevant for organizations making obesity preventions programs; organizations like the World Health Organization, the Spanish Ministry of Health, the Thao foundation, the ODELA Observatory and other institutions spending many resources on the obesity issue. This study can fill out an empty, but important, space in the broad spectra of research on obesity determinants. Nonetheless, with anthropological understandings of aspects of food choice and health aspects.

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8 Annex