

Socializing Taste

Elinor Ochs, Clotilde Pontecorvo & Alessandra Fasulo

University of California, Los Angeles, USA, and University of Rome, La Sapienza, Italy

Though eating and taste are central to social and moral order, we know little about the mundane practices that socialize children into the world of food. This study pioneers direct observation of the practices involved in socializing taste. Utilizing Bourdieu's distinction between 'the taste of necessity' and 'the taste of luxury/freedom', it examines the discourse of taste that prevails at the dinner tables of middle-class Caucasian American and Italian families. Across these families, food is depicted as nutrition, a material good, a reward, and pleasure. American families gave high priority to food as nutrition, a material good, and reward and low priority to food as pleasure; whereas Italian families gave priority to food as pleasure over all other qualities. American families devoted their dinner conversation to what children must eat for physiological and moral reasons, while the Italian families concentrated on what children and adults want to eat. Overwhelmingly, American children could obtain what they wanted to eat only after they finished what they must eat (dessert as reward). In addition, Italian adults encouraged children to express individual tastes as part of what it means to have a personality (child qua person); while at the American dinner table, adults typically treated the tastes of children as generically distinct (child qua child) from those of adults.

The centrality of food and eating to social and moral order has been widely noted at least since Erasmus's treatise *De civilitate morum puerilium* (1530). Indeed, medieval ecclesiastics and other scholars link the rise of civilized society to the emergence of certain standards for preparing, serving, handling, and consuming food (Elias 1994). In this perspective, culinary and gustatory manners are at the heart of the civilizing process. This theme is echoed in the American Indian myths analyzed by Lévi-Strauss (1969; 1978). Lévi-Strauss points to a central theme of these

myths – the transformation of food from raw to cooked – as emblematic of the transition from animal to human society. In addition, food is central to defining and maintaining social relations, including relations to spiritual as well as mundane personages. As noted by Goody (1982), anthropologists have dwelled primarily upon religious and economic functions and meanings of food, including food taboos, sacrifices, gifts, and commensalism (e.g. Douglas 1975; Frazier 1890; Fortes & Fortes 1936; Radcliffe-Brown 1922; Richards 1939; among others).

These and other studies make the point that conduct with regard to food defines persons and groups. What one eats, how one eats, when and with whom are guided by understandings of one's identity within society; or to put it another way, alimentary conduct helps to define one's identity within society. While Swift spoofed the idea in 'A Modest Proposal' (1729) and while Freud (1918) linked the idea primarily to the psychic life of 'primitive man', totemic identifications between edible objects and humans is endemic to numerous societies (see especially Fortes 1980; Goody 1982; Nemeroff & Rozin 1989; Rozin & Fallon 1981). Indeed Bourdieu elaborates this point in his detailed essay on taste in modern French society: 'Taste, a class culture turned into nature, that is, *embodied*, helps to shape the class body. It is an incorporated principle of classification which governs all forms of incorporation, choosing and modifying everything that the body ingests and digests and assimilates, physiologically and psychologically' (Bourdieu 1984:1990). For Bourdieu, class distinctions manifest themselves through two distinct principles that organize taste, namely the *taste of necessity* and the *taste of luxury/freedom* (1984:177). The tastes of necessity are preferences that arise as adaptations to deprivation of necessary goods, for example a preference for abundant, nourishing, substantial foods that give strength to the body. The tastes of freedom arise from possession of capital that allows distance from necessity and advocates freedom of choice. The tastes of freedom include a preference for formal aspects of food, e.g. an aesthetic of presentation and ordering of dishes, a concern for table manners, and for kinds of food that are refined and non-fattening.

Studies of taste see the socializing process as crucial to growth and maintenance of tastes for persons and groups across historical periods. For example, Elias's thesis concerning *The Civilizing Process* draws on instructional guides for table manners, poetry and manuals for teaching courtesy: 'if we examine the modes of behavior which in every age a particular society has expected of its members, attempting to condition individuals to them; if we

wish to observe changes in habits, social rules and taboos; then these instructions on correct behavior, though perhaps worthless as literature, take on a special significance... They show precisely what we are seeking – namely, the standard of habits and behavior to which society at a given time sought to accustom the individual' (1994:67). Bourdieu stresses that informal family habits as well as the formal educational system provide crucial opportunities for acquiring the cultural principles of taste. The school brings to conscious awareness through explicit discourse such principles: 'As grammar does for linguistic competence, it rationalizes the "sense of beauty", in those who already have it' (1984:67).

Thus far no study of taste draws upon direct observations of socializing practices involving children and adult members of communities. Our own work has drawn us to the dinner tables of families, where we have captured talk and conduct regarding a range of cultural domains including taste. The present effort brings together two comparable sets of video and audio taped observations. These observations cover ten middle-class Italian families in Rome and Naples and ten middle-class Euro-American, English-speaking families living in Los Angeles. All families have a three to six-year-old child and at least one older sibling. The Italian corpus includes 24 children (15 female, 9 male); the American corpus includes 27 children (14 female, 13 male). A total of 27 Italian dinners and 20 American dinners of these families were videotaped, transcribed, and analyzed.¹

In the discussion to follow, we present evidence for cultural similarities and differences in the discourse of taste among families of comparable social class but different nationality. On the basis of our data, we have discerned four general themes that organize discourse about food during the Italian and American middle-class family dinner interactions observed: 1) food as nutrition, 2) food as a material good, 3) food as reward, 4) food as pleasure. These themes can be categorized à la Bourdieu in terms of the opposition between taste of necessity (food as nutrition and food as a material good) and taste of freedom (food as reward and food as pleasure²). While all of the families addressed these four themes, the Italian and American families in this study differed in the extent to which they dwelled on particular ones. The American families gave priority to food as nutrition, food as a material good, and food as reward over food as pleasure. The Italian families gave priority to food as pleasure over any other theme. That is, the American families devoted most of the dinner discourse to what children must eat for physiological and moral reasons, whereas the Italian families devoted most of their dinner

discourse to what both children and adults *want* to eat. Overwhelmingly, American children could obtain what they *want* to eat only after they finished what they *must* eat (dessert as a reward).

These differential priorities are augmented by two further distinctions in the socialization of taste among the Italian and American families in this study. The first distinction concerns the relation of taste to the *child as an individual* and to the *child as a social status* (in Bourdieu's terms, the relation of taste to the position the child occupies within the social space of the family and society). In the Italian families, children were strongly encouraged to express their individual tastes in foods. At the Italian dinner, members of the family were expected *not* to share the same food preferences but rather to differ from each other. Individual food preferences are part of what it means to have a personality. The encouragement of individual tastes in this sense is linked to the flourishing of the child's personality. The emphasis in the American family dinner interactions was on linking taste to the child *qua* child. Adults formulated generalizations concerning differences between the tastes of children and the tastes of adults. These remarks focused on the opposition between dessert and the rest of the meal. Children were formulated as liking dessert but disliking the savory portion of the meal that precedes it. Adults, in contrast, presented themselves as liking both parts of the meal. This expectation is related to parental use of the dessert as a stick and a carrot to elicit compliance in eating meat, fish, vegetables, grains, cheeses and the like. Strikingly, the Italian meals did not evidence this affect-loaded opposition between dessert and the rest of the meal. Typically, the Italian meals ended with fresh fruit. In the Italian family dinner interactions, children frequently expressed their individual preferences for particular cheeses, particular sauces, particular vegetables and so on.

A further, related, distinction in the socialization of taste in the Italian and American families concerns the *alignment of adults and children* on the matter of taste. By alignment we do not mean necessarily agreement on taste but rather support for the expression of one's taste (including agreement). In the Italian family interactions, *adults and children generally displayed support* for one another's food preferences and dispreferences. The Italians adhered to the Latin dictum *De gustibus non est disputandum* or its Italian version *I gusti non si discutono*, 'Tastes are not to be disputed.' If a child expressed a dislike of a particular aspect of the meal, the parent usually (but by no means always) accepted this dislike and sought to determine and procure an alternative more pleasing to the child. Further, adults and children at the Italian table

often displayed common appreciation for the same spice or cheese or pasta sauce. At these moments, food becomes a resource for socializing a relationship of identity among family members. At the American mealtimes observed, a somewhat different dynamic prevailed. Here *parents and children as well as children with one another often were at loggerheads*. Often an adult expressed strong appreciation for a food item and a child took the opposite affective stance. Or one sibling aligned with a parent's expressed taste and another took a contrasting position. Sometimes a child flipflopped his or her position, first assuming alignment, then switching to strong opposition, depending on a sibling's or parent's expression of taste. In this atmosphere, when a child expressed a dislike for some food, that expression was usually rebuked rather than supported.

We turn now to the interactions themselves to further articulate the patterns of taste outlined above and to explore how taste is realized through discourse and grammar. The four themes we present are intimately tied to one another. The theme of nutrition, for example, is related to the value of food as a material good, and the use of food as a reward is related to the theme of food as pleasure. Further, each interaction we display to illustrate one or another of these themes could be used to illustrate other themes, as interlocutors typically address more than one topical focus in their discourse.

Food as Nutrition

Probably all over the world caregivers socialize children into valuing and consuming foods that are seen as fortifying the child's body, mind, and emotions (see for example, Bourdieu 1984; Capaldi & Powley 1990; Delamont 1995; Food and Nutrition Board 1986; Goody 1982; Herzfeld 1985; Levenstein 1993; Mintz 1993; Schieffelin 1990; Visser 1986). Italian and American families are no exception, and parents frequently tell children, 'Eat this because it is good for you.' In this manner, they convey to children a world view of the taste of necessity, articulating foods that count as nutritious and appropriate for children to eat at this stage of their development.

In both Italian and American dinner interactions observed, three linguistic practices actualize a nutritional view of food: (i) justifications for eating certain foods that foreground the nutritional value of these foods, that is, that specify essential proteins, vitamins, and other nutritive elements; (ii) justifications for eating certain foods that foreground the good, strength, and growth children will obtain through such foods, and (iii) requests to finish eating such foods, which sometimes become persecutory.

Justifications foregrounding the scientific contents and fortifying benefits of foods are displayed in two Italian and American dinners. The first involves the Mamma, Papà, Nonna (Grandma), Nonno (Grandpa), four-year-old Gianluca, and eight-year-old Stefano Soldano at Sunday lunch on the terrace. While recounting a bike trip the boys had just taken that day, Papà tries to persuade Gianluca to eat more meat; he describes the protein content and reminds Gianluca that he needs strong muscles for his bicycle trips:³

- GIANLUCA 'io non ne voglio piu'
I don't want any more of it
- PAPÀ tu? ((*getting his ear closer to his son*))
You?
- GIANLUCA non ne voglio più.
I don't want any more of it.
- PAPÀ [e:mbe ma: sai perché devi mangiarla?
[Well but do you know why you must eat it?
[perché la carne ha le proteine,
[because the meat has the proteins,
[(((*driving the fork toward Lorenzo's mouth*))
...
- PAPÀ che:: costruiscono dei] muscoli fortissimi=
that build very very strong muscles
allora uno- però siccome tu hau- f-
so one- but since you hau- f-
oggi guarda con questi muscoli qui delle gambe,
Today look with these leg muscles here
hai pedalato tanto.
you have pedalled so: much
(.)
allora se adesso che tu hai pedalato tanto
so if now that you have pedalled so much
con questi muscoli mangi pure la carne,
with these muscles you also eat the meat
qui vengono dei bei muscoli duri=duri
here you'll get beautiful muscles hard hard
forti=forti,
strong strong,
(0.4)
capito?
understood?

Similarly, in the Popper family, Mom, Dad, five-year-old Jodie and seven-year-old Oren are sitting around the table as dinner is being served. Oren first asks for corn, which is not on the table, to which Dad responds with a disapproving query:⁴

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- OREN I just want corn
DAD You just want what?=
(.)

Without commenting on Oren's desire for corn, Mom simply notes the absence of corn on the table and the availability of two other prepared food items:

- MOM =We don't have corn
(.)
We have rice (.) and broccoli
- DAD ((*excited*)) oo (.) [great

Oren then asks for only rice, but Dad insists he also take broccoli. Dad justifies this imposition through a reformulation of broccoli as 'leafy greens.' This reformulation not only categorizes broccoli, it also gives weight to the justification through use of an authoritative scientific register:

- OREN [I'll have the rice
[(((*pointing*))
JODIE [I'll have the rice
DAD [and the broccoli=
OREN =no=
DAD =You always hafta have leafy greens
(.)
sorry

In these interactions, parents press children into eating foods that parents deem nutritious. As an extension of these practices, parents also press children to finish such food that remains on their plate. In the Gravina family, composed of Mamma, Papà, six-year-old Riki, and two older sisters (nine-year-old Tiziana and twenty-two-year-old Silvana), Mamma and Riki's sisters encourage rather than order him to finish:

- RIKI mamma non mi va più.
Mommy I don't feel like (eating it) any more.
- MAMMA eh ti manca un pezzetto solo.
eh you need (to finish) only a nice small piece.
dai
Come on
- SILVANA no Riki dai
No Riki come on

- DAD (some/the) broccoli
(.)
and [you eat all that
[((points to plate))
(and take) [three vitamins
[((points to vitamin jar in hand))
[yes-
[((makes 'ok' sign with fingers
mkay?
that's all=
...
DAD =you have to do is eat one carrot and (.) and two=
...
EVAN [(Daddy) I want thwee:: vitamins
[((touching Dad on arm))
[((Dad turns to look at Evan))
DAD =br- two pieces of broccoli any two you want
((continues)) ...

The discourse of taste in this sequence foregrounds food as a scientific object, which is dissected into its chemical elements ('I'm specially concerned about eatin your vegetables okay? They have minerals in em?'). The equation of food and nutrition is carried to an extreme when Janie and Dad include vitamins as a component of the meal, comparable to a food item ('you eat all that (and take) three vitamins'). This exchange illustrates the panoptical role of the parent, in this case Dad, in calculating and inspecting ('Time for a plate inspection') the nutritional intake of each child. (Bentham 1791; Foucault 1979, 1980; Ochs & Taylor 1992b, 1992c). In this exchange, eating is reduced to an obligation ('(f) you don't eat a good dinner you won't to- get any'), what the child *must* eat ('that's all you have to do is eat one carrot and (.) and two br- two pieces of broccoli'). The taste of necessity overwhelms the taste of freedom, with the child given only the pathetic choice of deciding *which* two pieces of broccoli she would like to eat ('two pieces of broccoli any two you want').

Food as a Material Good

Closely related to the concept of food as nutrition is the notion that food is a valued object. Across both Italian and American families in this study, food was often treated as a material good that should not be wasted. This ethic finds expression in the English idiom *Waste not, want not*. The Italian idiom *È un peccato sprecarlo* literally translates as 'It is a sin to waste it,' residual

of the medieval branding of this action. Although overtones of this meaning linger, the expression is currently taken more lightly to mean, 'It is a pity to waste it.'

As seen in earlier interactions, the value of food as a good is often based on its nutritional import; but other reasons also prevail for not wasting food.⁵ For example, families bring in moral considerations such as one is obligated to consume food that is on one's plate. In such interactions, adults emphasize a contractual relationship the child enters into upon receiving food imposed or requested. In the excerpted interactions above we have seen two examples of parents imposing food on children – in the Popper family Dad insists that Oren eat broccoli and in the Hope family, Dad insists children eat specified amounts of specified vegetables. In these cases the child is expected to finish food items even if unwanted and unsolicited. Such impositions and their contractual consequences are common at the American family dinner table but rare at Italian mealtimes.

On the other hand, both American and Italian families frequently directed their children to finish food they have requested. The obligation to finish what one has requested is the topic of the following exchange between two members of the Saxe family – Mom and her five-year-old daughter Sally. This exchange takes place at the tail end of the dinner on the backyard terrace; Dad, Sally, and her older brother Adam have left the table and gone indoors:

- MOM [Adam?
" [((turns to left, calling into house from table))
(2.0)
[Sally?
[((turns to right, calling into house from table))
(1.0)
((more impatiently)) Sally
MOM C'mere,
you didn't finish your drink.
(.)
and neither did Adam.
(4.0)
((Mom gets up and picks up used napkins from table))
SALLY [then/no) I'll finish it in the house
[((coming from the house))
(1.2)
MOM Well, take it and finish it.
[you asked for it, (.2) you drink it.
[((Sarah arrives at table; Mom hands mug to Sally))
SALLY (We- we/Do I) hafta drink all that?

- MOM ((*impatient*)) That's what you asked for.
(.8)
- SALLY [I (didn't) say.(.4) 'fill it up?']
[((holding cup, walking towards house))
(.)
I [sa
MOM [((*fed-up tone*)) You said 'fill it half full'],
[((*following Sally towards house*))
[((*Sally pauses to drink from cup*))
and I didn't fill it quite half-full
cuz I knew you wouldn't drink all that.

In this exchange, Mom makes explicit the child's eating contract; she articulates both components: 'You asked for it? You drink it.' When Sally resists and contradicts Mom's premises ('I (didn't) say: fill it up?'), Mom elaborates the premises in the form of a narrative, detailing the scene and her own premonition that Sally would not meet her commitment ('I knew you wouldn't drink all that').

Sometimes the ethic of not wasting food one has asked for is conveyed through more implicit language practices, as illustrated in the American family interaction below. In this dinner scene, six-year-old Chuck asks for a refill of milk ('I wanna drink it some more'). Before pouring the milk, Dad asks how much Chuck wants then quickly suggests an amount. When Chuck asks for more than the suggested quantity, the following discussion ensues:

- DAD How much [would you like (here)
[((*pauses in pouring milk, looks up at Chuck*))
(.2) ((*Chuck climbing back on his chair*))
Half?
CHUCK Yeah
((*Dad nods head, hands milk to him*))
No. Full.
((*Dad angles his head to one side*))
DAD Fu- well:
(.)
You finish that and we'll-
CHUCK [(Half) full!
[((*looking into cup*))
DAD [Not full.
[((*Dad nods and closes up milk carton*))
(Okay)
...
DAD (If) you want more we'll get you more

Here Dad's response conveys the message that Chuck is requesting more milk than he is likely to drink. Rather than running the risk of wasting the milk, Dad offers the contingency of a further refill upon finishing the amount of milk Dad deems appropriate. Chuck concurs with this parental judgment.

In yet other cases, a parent may background the child's contractual relationship to food he or she has requested and foreground other reasons for not wasting food. For example, a parent may emphasize the cost of the food item. In the following interaction among members of the Fanaro family, Mamma uses such reason in scolding her seven-year-old son Sergio for wasting part of the cheese on his plate:

- MAMMA [ma che si lascia una cosa a metà?
But so one is leaving a thing half-finished?
[((*pointing to the cheese container he has on his plate*))

Mamma's irritation is marked through the negative affective phrase *ma che* 'but so' and by referring to Sergio with the impersonal pronoun *si* 'one'. At this point, Sergio imitates his mother's voice and message, saying *finiscilo* 'finish it!', whereupon Mamma repeats her directive:

- MAMMA e certo ma perché ne lasci un pò
Certainly but why are you leaving some of it
là (.) dentro?
there inside?

Sergio then begins to scrape the cheese container with a spoon and eats the cheese. But Mamma goes on to both check the cheese container and to justify her insistence with a complex moral argument. Despite Sergio's plea to notice how much he has eaten, Mamma argues that: (i) food should not be thrown away; (ii) food costs money; and (iii) it is a *peccato* to waste food.⁶

- MAMMA [senti Sergio.
Listen Sergio
[((*stretching the arm to take the cheese container*))
MAMMA non si buttano le cose così].
One should not throw away the things like that
MAMMA che costano soldi eh.
that cost money you know
SERGIO mamma ma te rendi conto,
Mommy but do you realize,

[quanto ho mangiato?]
 how much I have eaten?
 MAMMA [è pure un peccato] sprecarle.
 It is also a pity to waste them
 (((while scraping the cheese container with a spoon)))

The sequence ends with Mamma summoning Sergio to her side and feeding him some spoonfuls of cheese remaining in the container.

However there is more than meets the eye in this interaction, for earlier Papà revealed that he had bought that particular cheese for himself and Mamma. When Mamma lists as one of the cheese choices *Bel Gioioso con le olive* 'Bel Gioioso with olives,' Papà comments:

mbeh quello l'avemo preso per noi veramente
 hmm well that one we have got it for us really

Nonetheless, both Sergio and his younger sister Stefania choose the two containers of *Bel Gioioso con le olive* that Papà intended for the adults. After Stefania finishes her container of cheese, Mamma turns to Papà, showing him the empty container and saying:

tu pensavi di mangiarti il Bel Gioioso alle olive eh?
 You thought to eat for yourself the Bel Gioioso with olives huh

Following this comment, Papà and Mamma ask Sergio for a taste of his cheese and he gives them a bite. They exclaim with great positive affect about its wonderful savory taste. Taking all this into consideration, we might infer an element of parental resentment underlying Mamma's scolding Sergio for not finishing the cheese. It is not only that it costs money and that it is a *peccato* to waste it, but also that he had asked for this cheese even knowing its value to his parents.

The view of food as a material good gives rise to a moral code at the dinner tables of both Italian and American families. Allusions to the worth of food items in terms of their cost or in some cases in terms of the amount of labor involved in preparing them imbue food with an ethical meaning and render eating a moral activity. As the above examples illuminate, accepting food entails a moral obligation to consume it. This moral code is linked to Bourdieu's point that the taste of necessity involves an esthetic centered on substance. This esthetic can take the form of moral injunctions and proscriptions to the

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effect that one should finish what is on one's plate. In the United States, this esthetic has been transformed into an affect held not only by producers and consumers of food but also by the vessels that carry food. For example, American children have been introduced to the rhetorical figure of the 'happy plate,' meaning the plate is 'happy' when empty. It is the plate rather than the parents or the teachers or other caregivers who is made happy when the child finishes the food. In the Hope family it is little Evan who introduces this idiom to his parents and older siblings at the family dinner table:

EVAN I eated ALL of it.
 EVAN Mommy
 (.)
 and LAM gonna have a happy plate.
 (.)
 A HAPPY PLATE means .h
 (.)
 when we EAT
 (.)
ALL
 (.)
OUR
 (.)
 FOO::D!
 MOM OOH?:
 [Is that right?
 DAD [Hehehehehe Is that what they do at school?
 EVAN .
 MOM Yep=
 =The plate gets happy huh?
 (0.4) ((Dad serving fish to self))
 DAD [a happy plate.
 EVAN [Yep
 DICK cuz it doesn't have to carry all that stuff anymore.
 DAD It's sad when there's food left on the plate huh?

Here older brother Dick and Dad together deconstruct the rhetorical figure of the 'happy plate' in terms of a work ethic, namely that the plate has to carry the weight of the food, is sad when food is abandoned and left on it, and happy when empty.

In the dinners we recorded, Italian and American families shared this preoccupation with children finishing what it is on their plate. It is abundantly evident that the taste of necessity is liberally advocated for children of these middle-class parents.

Food as Reward

One of the most salient differences between the American and Italian family dinner interactions we have recorded is that American family dinners almost always included a *dessert*, whereas Italian dinners usually ended with fresh *fruit* rather than a sweetened item such as ice cream.⁷ Of particular import to the socialization of taste was the prevailing tendency of the American families in the study to frame dessert as a treat, a reward, an indulgence; while the Italian families referred to fresh fruit as a usual, albeit tasty, conclusion to a meal. The American parents tended to frame dessert as what their children *want* to eat and vegetables, meat etc., as what their children *have* to eat. This relation is exemplified in family discourse such as the following:

Excerpt from the Hope family:

DAD [Whoever does not finish their vegetables=
 (((heading toward Evan))
 .. =does not get any ice cream for dessert.

Excerpt from the Saxe family:

((Family has left table. Mom comes into living room and asks Sally if she wants a bath or shower. Sally says she wants a bath but asks if she can first have dessert. Mom tells Sally she needs to first take a bath. Sally then tries to hand Mom a piece of celery from dinner she had been told to eat.))

MOM [finish your celery.
 [((stands by Sally, who looks up at her))
 SALLY [I can't!
 [((a look of agony on her upturned face))
 (.4)
 MOM Whadda you mean you can't.
 (.4)
 SALLY [I can't.
 [((still looking agonized, putting hand across heart and
 stumbling a bit for dramatic effect))
 (.3)
 MOM [I think you can.
 [((walks towards bathroom, Sally follows))
 SALLY [I CAN'T!
 [((stomping angrily after Mom))
 MOM well then there's no dessert.
 ((Sally follows Mom to bathroom, eating celery.))

These language practices help to construct an affective schema of the meal for children in which dessert is laden with positive affect (but with strings attached) and the rest of the meal with negative affect. Dessert in this manner is used as an instrument of parental control over children's eating comportment; as such it can become a source of conflict between parents and children.

From a Bourdieuan perspective, dessert is an example of the taste of luxury and freedom in the sense that it is far from essential for strength and growth of the body. For the American families in this study and for millions of other families in the United States, dessert is regarded as a quintessential gratification. But this association of dessert and pleasure is undermined by the American parental practice observed here of tying dessert to the child's completion of other parts of the meal. Dessert is used by many American parents as if it were a proof of salvation, i.e. that one is worthy of the state of grace (delivered not by God but by authority figures in the family.)⁸ This dynamic construes dessert as a *conditional pleasure*: Children can receive what they *want* to eat only after they finish what they *have* to eat. Duty before pleasure.

In several of the American families, parents and children engaged in acts of control and resistance concerning parts of the meal that have to be eaten in order to obtain the desired part of the meal – dessert. The above excerpts display that parents situate references to dessert not only in promises (If you eat x, you will get dessert) but also in threats (If you don't eat x, you won't get dessert.) Sometimes parents and children disputed the promise of dessert, as seen below in a Hope family dinner. After the children eat what Dad imposed on them, Dad denies that he promised dessert. As they are finishing their dinner, three-year-old Evan reminds Dad and Mom of the promise Dad made before dinner. Evan tries several times to get their attention with remarks such as:

[AN' YOU 'MEMBER! I COULD HAVE A -,
 [((Evan stands by Dad who is scraping food off plates into bin
 and talking to Adam))

and

DADDY?, YOU 'MEMBER IF I EAT A GOOD DINNER I-

and

[Mommy.
 [((tapping Dad's arm))
 (.) ((Dad looks at Evan))
 you -you 'member.
 (.2)

If I eat a good dinner (.2) I could have a ice cream.

To all of this, Dad eventually responds with a series of denials, including,

[An ice cream?
[(((looking at Evan))
(.)

Who said that?,

and

I didn't say that.

This response provokes a torrent of protestations and counter-claims from the children. Older brother Dick tells Dad,

[I'll tell you the exact words you said.
[(((standing, looking at Dad))

And when Dad asks for details, Dick provides exact time and place:

You were sitting right in that chair
where you are now.
(1.0)

...

It was before dinner .h

(.2)

when we were all hungry,

'n Evan came up to you and said .h

(.2)

'Daddy? Could I have a ice cream'

And you said, 'Yeah if you eat a good dinner
you can have a ice cream.'

Eventually Mom sides with the kids, and Dad is coerced to taking everyone (including the research team) to have ice cream at the Häagen Dazs store.

Italian families occasionally used a desirable food item as a carrot to encourage a child to eat some part of the meal. Sometimes they engaged in exchanges in which items such as delicious cherries, peaches, or yogurt were proffered to motivate the child to finish; however these exchanges were seldom, lasted two or three turns at the maximum, and never took the form of threats.

Food as Pleasure

The last perspective on food we attend to is socialization into the view that food is a pleasurable object. This perspective might be understood as an

Epicurean *Weltanschauung* in which the experience of pleasure is fundamental to the health of body and soul. The Epicurean point of view on food was present at the mealtimes in both the American and Italian families; however, the Italian families stressed this perspective more often and far more elaborately. The Italian families we observed discussed a broader range of enjoyable facets of food, including the pleasures of planning, procuring, preparing, serving, and eating particular food items. Family members received credit from other members for their expertise in each of these areas – knowing, for example, what different family members enjoy, where to buy a particular food, how to prepare a food in the manner family members prefer, and so on. It is this perspective that is the heart of socialization of taste in the Italian households in this study. So important is this perspective that it pervaded the grammar and lexicon of the Italian dinner talk. The Italian discourse on food was brimming with positive affect markers such as diminutives, intensifiers, affirmative particles, refined adjectives, adverbs, lexical terms that finely distinguish sub-types of particular kinds of food (e.g. sub-types of a particular cheese) and dative clitic pronouns that refer sympathetically to a family member who especially likes a food item and elicit affiliation with that affect.

In the Italian families we have been studying, food as an object of pleasure can be a topic even before the food reaches the table. In some families, members are requested to sit at the table while Mamma finishes preparing the meal. During these moments, the rest of the family commonly ask what good things Mamma has prepared for dinner. During a Gravina family dinner, six-year-old Riki spends this interval pretending to pick up spaghetti, turning his fork around imaginary strands of pasta in his empty bowl. After a few minutes, his older sister Tiziana asks Mamma what she has prepared, and Mamma responds using the compressed term *pastasciutta* 'pasta (dry)', which indicates that it is a classic pasta with tomato sauce, and then specifies the second course. Riki repeats Mamma's term more slowly and immediately identifies himself as a pasta lover, which in turn is confirmed by Mamma:

RIKI	pasta asciutta dry pasta (0.4) io sono un pastasciuttaro. I am a pasta lover.
MAMMA	[ti piace la pastasciutta eh. You like pasta huh. [(((while attending to cooking))

Of interest is the affective tone that Mamma sets in motion with the term *pastasciutta*. This term is more affect-laden than the more unmarked term *pasta*; it refers to a prepared pasta dish that has a sauce as opposed to the broader term *pasta*, which can refer to uncooked as well as cooked forms of this food. Because it refers to a dish, the term *pastasciutta* can form the root of the affective identity of the child as a *pastasciuttaro*, a lover of this kind of pasta. Child and mother are in these ways linked by language (e.g. through repetition) and by the common affect they imbue this category of food. Riki supports Mamma's expertise both as food preparer and as someone who knows well what he likes to eat. In many ways, Riki's behavior matches that of his father. In another dinner of the same family, Riki's father, Papà, supports Mamma's expertise as food preparer through his assumption that whatever Mamma has prepared is good. Papà addresses his wife the following question:

Che c'è di buono signora?
What is there good for dinner, signora?

Here the assumption is that whatever has been prepared will be good. That Papà is addressing his wife as *signora* is not meaningless. *Signora* is the polite, euphemistic form used by men to indirectly refer to their wife (*la mia signora* 'my lady' or *la sua signora* 'his lady'). Calling Mamma *signora*, Papà displays deference for her good conduct as lady of the house, providing *good* food that he particularly wants to acknowledge.

Given that Mamma typically dispenses food to the children, Papà plays a relevant role in mediating between Mamma and the children. Simplifying, we can dichotomize it: the father can be supportive and co-constructive or oppositional and critical toward Mamma's feeding role. The last example, together with the one below drawn from the Fanaro family, show the enactment of the supportive mode. These fathers explicitly acknowledge the expertise of *Signora* (in the word of the Gravina father) or of *Mamma* (in the word of Papà Fanaro) and publicly express positive evaluation and gratitude for it. Thus in the food prepared and 'indelible marked' by the mother, there is not only 'the maternal relation to the archetypal cultural good, in which pleasure-giving is an integral part of pleasure' (Bourdieu 1984:79). In these examples – as in others that we have found throughout our corpus – there is, as well, explicit presence of the father's seal, of his recognition of the value of this maternal tie in front of the children.

In the Fanaro family, we find this positive mediating stance towards food promoted by Papà as Mamma begins to serve *spaghetti alle vongole* 'spaghetti with clam sauce' to five-year-old Stefania. He at first exclaims to Stefania and her older brother Sergio,

Ehilà:=ragazzi!
Hey look at this guys!

The term *ehilà* is pre-announcement particle of positive affect, which in this case draws attention to a just noticed event. Before announcing the nature of this event, he further prefaces it with the following positive framing:

Stasera mamma ci delizia=
Tonight Mamma delights us.

Spaghetti alle vongole.
Spaghetti with clams.

Papà uses the positive affect verb *delizia* and emphatic stress (marked by underlining) and stretched sounds (marked by colons) to intensify this affect. Stefania then asks for a hundred clams. Mamma comments favorably on Stefania's evident pleasure in eating the clams:

C'avevi famina Stefania eh?
You were a little hungry Stefania hmm?

Ti piacciono le vongolette?
You like the nice appealing little clams?

Mamma conveys positive affect by 1) referring to Stefania's hunger with the highly unusual diminutive form *famina* 'little hunger' rather than the unmarked term *fame* 'hunger'; 2) acknowledging explicitly Stefania's liking of clams; and 3) referring to the pleasurable object of Stefania's taste, using the term *vongolette* 'nice, appealing little clams', which appends the positive affect suffix *-ette* to the root *vongol*. As noted earlier, this suffix has no English counterpart but roughly imparts the meaning of being appealing and nice, i.e. cute. Together, these forms construct a relationship of caring intimacy between Stefania and Mamma and the food Mamma has prepared.

Affect morphology pervaded Italian family discourse on food. We found children and parents talking about food items using forms such as

Form*Suffixes:**-etto/etta (appealing, nice):*

Un po' di sughetto eh?
A little bit of appealing, nice sauce

Ah: il pomodoretto.
Ah: the appealing, nice tomato

Ci metti pure un po' di quell'olietto.
Put on it also a little bit of that appealing, nice oil

Adesso da cosa iniziamo?
Now what shall we begin with?
Dall'ovetto che ti piace tanto?
With the appealing, nice egg you like so much?

Ma io dovevo comincià(re) con
But I should have started with
l'ovetto'
the appealing, nice egg

-ino/ina (little, refined, delicate):
Mamma questo pezzettino? lo voglio
Mamma this appealing, nice, little, delicate piece, I want it

Una zucchini
A little, refined, delicate squash

Dammene un assaggio più piccolo
Give me a smaller little, refined, delicate taste of it

Prendo una fetta di meloncino
I'll take a piece of little, refined, delicate cantaloupe

Poi poi con le cipolli(ne) con
Then then with the little, refined, delicate onions with

Context

Mamma instructing elder daughter to serve younger brother some sauce on the artichokes

Papà reformulating Mamma's description of the fresh tomato pasta sauce she has prepared

Child telling Mamma to add olive oil to the beans she is about to serve

Mamma suggesting to her young daughter what dish she might start the dinner with

Young daughter whiningly reminding Mamma that she forgot to serve an egg at the start of the dinner

Young daughter asking Mamma to give her another bite of meat Mamma is feeding her

Mamma offering to young son the type of squash he has indicated he wants

Mamma responding to young son, who has offered a piece of his breaded potato dish

Elder son announcing his choice of fruit

Young son recounting the ingredients to make a tasty tomato sauce he likes

Socializing Taste

l'ajo me pare.
the garlic it seems to me

reduplication:

Ci sono anche quel- quelle lesse
There are also tho- those boiled ones
allora eh (.) semplici semplici.
then eh. (.) simple simple.

fino= fino un pochino ...
Thin thin a very little bit ...

Una fettina fina=fina.
A little, refined, delicate slice thin thin

*Pronouns:**me, mi (for me):*

Così non mi mangiano il dolce però
Like this for me they won't eat the cake however

te, ti (for you):

No te lo mangiano.
No for you they will eat it

Io te le ho comprate apposta.
I bought them expressly for you

gli (for him, for her):

Non gliel'ha- hai assaggiati i fagiolini
You didn't for her try them, the green beans
eh Riki
right, Riki

ci (for us):

Adesso ci mangiamo un bel
Now for ourselves we'll eat a lovely Vitasnella
Vitasnella [type of yogurt]

Mamma offering another type of cooked squash to the child, which he prefers over another type of squash that has been prepared

At the end of the dinner, after eating fruit, Mamma agrees to give young son a piece of requested cheese that has already been put to one side

Papà concurring with Mamma

Elder daughter worrying that the researchers will not eat the cake she has made

Mamma reassuring elder daughter that researchers will eat the cake she has made

Mamma responding to elder son, who has just requested a peach

Papà cajoling Riki to eat green beans to please Mamma

Mamma announcing to young daughter that she will eat a Vitasnella yogurt, which she likes

In these examples, we find grammar recruited to embellish the pleasing quality of foods and the affective relevance of food for strengthening relationships between members of the family. All of the forms in one way or another render

food as desirable and worthy of appreciation. Affect suffixes such as *-etto/-etta* and *-ino/-ina* render food as a loving product. Reduplications such as *semplici semplici* and *fino fino* intensify the quality of food referred to. Clitic pronouns such as *me/mi*, *te/ti* and *gli* socialize children into the notion that eating establishes and affirms familial and other social relationships. In some cases, these pronouns stress the Epicurean pleasure that a food gives to the person who consumes it. This pleasurable quality is socialized in utterances such as *Adesso ci mangiamo un bel Vitasnella* 'Now for ourselves we'll eat a lovely Vitasnella [yogurt]', where Mamma takes a collective perspective with her daughter as beneficiaries of the experience of eating the delicious yogurt. Here, however, it is only the daughter who will eat this food.

In addition to the plethora of grammatical forms that signal positive affect towards food, Italian family members used a large and varied lexicon to describe foods, including highly specific adjectives and food names. Such fine grained distinctions were rare in the dinner discourse of the American families in this study.¹⁰ In a dinner of the Fanaro family, for example, Mamma calls five-year-old Stefania's attention to a cheese she has just brought to the table:

((with a singing voice)) Guarda un po'?
cosa c'è? Stefania:
Look a minute at what there is? Stefania

Displaying the cheeses, she then asks,

- MAMMA Cosa vuoi?
What do you want?
Bel Gioioso, formaggio fresco dane:se,
Bel Gioioso, fresh Danish cheese,
cosa vuoi? dimmi un po'.
What do you want? Tell me something.
vado [a pren-
I'll go and tak-
STEFANIA [°formaggio [fresco dane:se.°
Fresh Dani:sh cheese.

It is notable that the parent uses such a lengthy descriptive expression in speaking to Stefania about cheeses. In another part of the same meal, Mamma lists to Stefania's seven-year-old brother Sergio all the cheeses he used to eat but no longer likes:

- MAMMA ma io- io non capisco Sergio. una volta a te te
But I cannot understand Sergio once you you

piaceva la mozzare:lla, qualsiasi tipo de form-
liked mozzare:lla any type of ch

forma:ggio=adesso=
chee:se=Now=
((moves the mouth as for saying 'mmhm'))
(i.o)

=lo stracchino non ve pia:ce,
=stracchino you don't like,

[a robbiola non ve pia:ce,
robiola you don't like.

[((shaking her head)

(.)

boh:

bah

Papà comes to the defense of Sergio by pointing out a particular kind of cheese that Sergio has recently learned to eat. Papà elicits the assistance of Mamma in searching for the word for the type of cheese Sergio now enjoys. In this manner, he involves Mamma in the production of a positive, highly specified account of Sergio's taste.¹¹

- PAPÀ pero lui adesso ha imparato a mangiare il co:so=
But now he learned to eat that thing
come se chiama?
What's its name?
((eats a piece of bread))
(i.o)

- MAMMA [°che?°
What?
[((serving herself))
((Sergio follows his parents talk by looking at them in turn))

- PAPÀ i:l gorgonzola.
the: gorgonzola

Mamma reformulates this account of Sergio's taste and indicates a consequent line of action to satisfy his taste:

- MAMMA ji piace il gorgonzola?=
Does he like the gorgonzola? ((Sergio nods))

=e allora compriamo que:llo.=se je pia:ce que:llo.
And then we'll buy that if he likes that

The Italian families in our study socialized children into the pleasures of food through discussions of different ways of eating foods, styles of preparing food,¹² and the best places to procure food. Parents articulated menus and recipes as dinnertime topics, lacing the dialogue with forecasts of the delicious product. Children were active contributors to these discussions, providing evaluations, detailing their own recipes for food items (e.g. a cake), and suggesting menus for upcoming dinner parties. In the following excerpt, young Stefania, for example, positively evaluates her father for knowing how to buy a delicious bread, and Papà gratefully receives Stefania's applause for his knowledge of which bread to buy and where to buy it ('da Margherita'):

- MAMMA hai visto abbiamo scoperto una nuova cosa allora
You have seen we have discovered something new then?
(1.0)
- SERGIO ((in a contemptuous tone))
ah: Stefania ce mette 'l pane
uh Stefania puts the bread in it
(1.0)((Stefania smiles and nods to Mommy))
- MAMMA mh:::., è buono?
mh::: is it good?
- STEFANIA chi l'ha fatto?
Who has done it?
- MAMMA papà.
Daddy
- STEFANIA l'ha compra:to?
Did he buy it?
- MAMMA mh mh
mh mh
(1.2)
- PAPÀ [l'ho comprato da Margherita
I bought it from Margherita
- STEFANIA [((she applauds Papà))
- PAPÀ gra:[zie:::
Thank you
- MAMMA [(che bravo) papà
How good papà is
hai visto?
Have you seen (it)?

Did the American families engage children in verbalizing the pleasures of food? The following exchange from the Schultz family dinner indicates that American parents and children do at times converse about the delights of food. In this interaction, Mom directs her older daughter Lucy to tell Dad about the salads she had at luncheon that day:

- MOM [you wanna tell Daddy about the salads you had for lunch?
[((standing, serving rice
(.2)((chair scrapes on floor as Dad sits down))
- LUCY um -
((takes a drink))
- MOM [(Lucy was playing and uh
[((Dad moves chair in))
(.2) ((Dad looks at Mom))
she missed the [tuna
[((sits down))
- (.)
- LUCY [()
[((Mom sits))
(.3)
((Dad looks at Lucy))
- DAD yes?
((Dad looks down at food, eating))
- LUCY There was um (.) a salad? -
It was really goo:d
(.)
all lettuce (.) tomatoes: (.) blue: cheese dre:ssing?
(.2)
- MOM [She put the dressing on (herself/her salad)=
[((looks at Dad))
- DAD =mhmm
(.)
[Did you make that here?
[((looks up at Lucy then down at plate))
- LUCY (no)
(.2)
at the luncheon
- DAD ahh:

As in Italian families, Lucy uses linguistic resources, including intensifying modifiers ('really', 'all'), stretched speech ('goo:d', 'blue:', 'dre:ssing'), and emphatic stress ('really', 'blue: cheese') to recount how good the salad was, and Mom and Lucy reveal that Lucy herself prepared the salad dressing. To all of this Dad is a supportive albeit temperate interlocutor.

Exchanges of this sort were infrequent, however, in the American family dinner corpus. With the exception of dessert, the American families tended not to devote much dinner conversation to discussing how good particular foods taste. American parents also rarely involved children in discussions of menu planning, alternative ways of preparing delicious dishes, or the best shop to purchase particular foods.

Most striking of all, American parents and children seldom displayed agreement with each other about the tastiness of particular foods. This cross-generation divergence in taste contrasts with the cross-generational solidarity that dominated Italian family meal interactions. Italian parents and children typically reinforced each other's sense of taste: e.g. upon hearing that Mamma has prepared *pasta asciutta*, seven-year-old Riki tells her he is a lover of *pasta asciutta* (i.e. a *pastaciuttaro*); similarly, little Stefania asks for a hundred clams following Papà's announcement that Mamma has prepared delicious spaghetti with clam sauce; and in another discussion, Mamma agrees to buy gorgonzola cheese upon hearing that her son Sergio prefers it.

When an American parent brought food to the table that she or he has bought and prepared, or when a parent praised the food or elicited a confirming praise from a child, the child generally said nothing, or child and parent took oppositional stances. Recall the exchange (excerpted earlier in the article) between Dad, Mom, and seven-year-old son Oren of the Saxe family. In this interaction, Oren asks for corn, but Mom tells him she has prepared rice and broccoli. In this move, the parent nixes the child's food desires. Then Dad offers the praise 'oo - great.' Oren does not verbally reinforce Dad's enthusiasm; he resignedly chooses the rice. In turn, rather than reinforcing Oren's choice, however, Dad insists that Oren have broccoli as well. Oren disagrees, but Dad repeats his directive, giving a nutritional rationale, 'You always hafta have leafy greens - sorry.' Here a child's dashed desires give way to resignation and opposition that persists throughout this and other family dinners.

In some cases, following a parent's positive comment about food, one child aligned but another disaligned, or vice versa. For example, in another dinner of the Saxe family, Dad wants the kids to taste some new food items that he and Mom enjoyed on their vacation. He introduces Brie cheese to them saying, '(Now kids) we have a delicious (Brie)' and then later 'better taste this - this is so good.' However, the kids take oppositional stances towards the cheese: Jodie first describes it as 'yucko:', but when Dad turns to Oren, Oren agrees with Dad, commenting 'I (love) it.' But Oren's stance

seems arbitrary, inspired by Jodie's negative feelings in that when Jodie offers him her cheese, he remarks, 'I don't want so much of that yucky cheese I mean that good cheese' and somewhat later he emphatically announces, 'but I don't - like - cheese.' A similar opposition exchange ensues when Dad introduces gazpacho soup, with one child (Jodie) agreeing and the other (Oren) disagreeing with Dad about its tastiness. Ultimately, as seen in the excerpt below, Dad explodes in frustration:

- DAD [these kids deserve dog food
 [((gazing towards Mom, emphasizing words with raised spoon))
 MOM ((half laugh)) nuh
 (.2)
 JODIE [(do::gs?)
 OREN [(look at how much of) the things I ate
 [((pointing at items on plate))
 (.)
 I ate all my ch[ips,
 [((Dad eye flashes to Oren))
 (.)
 I ate four of these,
 (.2) ((eye flash to Dad))
 DAD but you're not eating the gazpa[cho
 [(((Dad serves self
 (.1) ((Oren reaches for cantaloupe slice))
 OREN but I don't like gazpacho
 DAD you do like it
 (.)
 [I know you do
 OREN [but I already tasted it
 [((flicking seeds off cantaloupe))
 (.)
 and I hate it

Dad appears frustrated with Oren's opposition to gazpacho as well as Jodie's earlier voiced opposition to cheese. Ultimately Dad is unwilling to accept Oren's dispreference ('you do like it - I know you do'), despite Oren's persistent claims to the contrary. In these ways, taste becomes a source of tension between parents and children, as parents attempt to influence children's food preferences and children display resistance.

In some American families, the generational divide in food tastes can be unwittingly promoted through cautionary comments of parents that anticipate the possibility that a child may not enjoy a particular food. For example,

in the Saxe family, while Dad is singing the praises of gazpacho soup in front of the kids, Mom is pessimistic about the kids' liking the soup:

- MOM [It's gazpacho
(((arriving with soup she puts by Dad))
DAD (Great)
(Mom swaps plates, to give herself the little one, Dad the big one))
MOM I don't know if the kids'll really like it
(.)
(but I'll give them)

Similarly in the Popper Family, when nine-year-old Adam asks for some sauce on his hamburger, Mom replies, '(Just) taste it first and see if you like it.' Remarks such as these may counter and even sabotage socialization of children into a world view that consumption of food is a pleasurable experience.

A final point distinguishing observed Italian and American family dinner discourse on food as pleasure involves the *distribution of pleasure* among family members and the *limits of pleasure* for any one family member. In American families, adults and children tended to assert their equal rights to pleasurable food (usually sweet dishes), whereas Italian families tended to privilege children's access to pleasurable food. This means that when an American child took what others perceived to be more than an equal share of a tasty dish, other family members often negatively sanctioned the child. In the Italian family dinner interactions, however, children were routinely indulged and allowed to eat more of food items desired by others at the table. This difference manifests itself linguistically. Italian family members relied upon appeals to a child's sympathy to motivate sharing food; American family members tended to react to a child's having a larger portion than others through assertive demands to share as well as through cajoling appeals (see Schieffelin 1990 for appeal and assertion in Kaluli food exchanges.)

In American families, children could be reprimanded sharply and at length for taking more than their share and imperially instructed to leave an equal share for another member of the family, including a parent. In the following exchange among members of the Saxe family, Mom has just noticed that nine-year-old Adam has served himself (what she considers) an excessive number of peach halves:

- MOM (((quite annoyed)) Adam?
(((leans forward, looks at Adam)))

There are other people at this table.
now you put back two of those peaches!

- ADAM okay? [(okay)
(0.6) (((Adam stands and reaches for serving spatula))

At this point, Adam makes an ironic construal of the equality principle in which everyone gets an equal share except for him, who gets more:

- ADAM [each (.) people (.) get (.) two except for (me).
(((puts one peach half back))
(1.4)
that's fair,

As Adam tries to elaborate this principle, Mom insists on her version of the equality principle, requiring Adam to return two peaches back to the serving bowl:

- ADAM [two for [you ((to Dad)) t-
(((using spatula to point to Dad and then back to serving dish))
MOM (((firmly)) put two back.

But Adam contends that if *he* complies, then *Daddy* will get what he attempted to get. While Adam reluctantly puts back another peach half, Mom provides an irate reply that excludes the possibility of any further attempt to violate the equality principle:

- ADAM [then, Daddy gets three
(((Aaron scoops back another peach onto serving dish))
(0.6)
MOM (((sharply)) we'll see!
(((nods))
ADAM ((mutters under his breath)) (?)

We did not observe Italian children assertively directed to respect the equality principle. Part of this difference is related to different *styles of serving food*. In Italian families, one or both parents (more frequently, the mother) served food to everyone; in American families, either this style or self-serve style was common. In the American families, it was the self-serve style that seems to provoke assertive reprimands and reminders of others' rights to a food item. Even when the style of serving was generally controlled by a parent, children

had direct access to other items on the American dinner table, such as olives or nuts. These items could be the origin of considerable conflict, with accusations of being a 'hog' or being inconsiderate.

A different orientation was displayed through language and gesture in the Italian families in this study: The parent typically deferred to the child when both desired a food item. For example, in another dinner of the Fanaro family, Papà renounces his share of more clams in favor of his son Sergio, who requests to have an extra amount. While Mamma is serving Sergio, she asks Papà, *le vuoi Silvano?* 'Do you want them Silvano?' and Papà lifts his plate to get them. At this point, Sergio asks for even more clams, whereupon Papà withdraws his plate, explicitly deferring to the children his expected share:

- MAMMA ((Mamma is standing up and distributing pasta and sauce))
 ((to Sergio) 's:petta un po' di yongole=ti metto.
 Wait I'll give some clams to you.
 [le vuoi Silva(no)?
 Do you want them Silvano?
 (((to Papà, while putting the clams in Sergio's plate))
 ((lifts his plate for receiving the clams))
 PAPÀ a me mettimene tanti:ssime=a me=me=me=me
 SERGIO To me, give them to me, many many to me me me me
 MAMMA ((gives some more clams to Sergio))
 PAPÀ [°mettile a loro°.
 Give them to the children
 (((withdrawing his plate))
 MAMMA no no ce ne stanno altre=
 no no there are others of them=
 =dammi il piatto
 give me the plate
 ((serves the clams to Papà while Sergio stands up
 and looks into the pasta container))

Further support of 'Give priority to the child' in Italian families comes from recurrent exchanges in which a parent evidenced that he or she wanted a portion of delicious food that had been prepared expressly for a child. In such exchanges, the parent did not assert his or her right to a share but rather appealed, giving justification, to the child to concede. For example, six-year-old Riki Gravina emphasized to others that Nonna (Grandma) prepared *le fettine panate per me* 'breaded cutlets just for me.' His twenty-one-year-old sister commented *solo per te eh* 'only for you huh' in a benevolent but slightly envious tone. While handing Riki the plate of two cutlets, Mamma appeals to him to give one to her, using an affect-laden construction:

- MAMMA gliene dai una a mamma?
 To her, will you give one to Mamma?

Mamma formulates her appeal by referring to herself at the very onset of the turn in the third person, i.e. from the child's point of view. She uses the third person clitic pronoun *gli* 'to her', and reinforces this perspective subsequently by using the lexical term of affect *Mamma*. Mamma goes on to justify her appeal by saying that there are two big cutlets, implying that one is enough to satisfy the child:

- MAMMA so(no) due grandi
 They are two big ones

Riki then agrees to share, choosing first one of the two cutlets on the plate for himself. Mamma then follows up by asking permission to claim the second cutlet, using again the third person affect-laden kinship term *Mamma*:

- RIKI [io prendo questa
 I will take this one
 (((pointing to the cutlets))
 (2.0)
 MAMMA eh e (a) mamma questa eh eh, no?
 Huh and to mommy this one huh huh, right?

Her repeated use of the term *mamma* explicitly links the offering of food (to which Riki has a right because Nonna has prepared the cutlets expressly for him) to the relationship of *Mamma* to *bambino*. The phrase (a) *mamma questa* 'to Mamma this one' portrays the child as generously granting food to mamma rather than to her as an individual person. The repeated use of the emphatic particle *eh* 'huh' draws further attention to the reapportionment of the food. The turn-initial particle *eh* acknowledges and approves of Riki's taking a portion of food; the second and third particles acknowledge and display approval of Mamma's taking a portion of food subject to Riki's permission (conveyed by the final particle *no*.) In this way, Mamma uses lexicon and grammar to recruit and socialize Riki into ways of feeling, acting, and thinking about food and relationships.

Tasteful Constructions of Child and Family

These four thematic dimensions of taste characterize a considerable portion of dinnertime conversation among the Italian and American middle class family members who participated in our studies. In these communities,

mealtimes are particularly robust moments for examining socializing influences in that they bring adults and children together for at least the time it takes to serve and consume food. For the socialization of taste they constitute essential contexts. On the basis of our observations of these twenty families, we suggest that while each of the four themes – food as nutrition, food as a material good, food as reward, and food as pleasure – finds its way into all of the households, the themes do not receive the same weight across individual families and across the Italian and American family communities. The theme of food as reward was far more salient among the American family dinner interactions than among the Italian ones. The theme of food as pure pleasure was far more salient among Italian family dinner interactions than among American ones.¹³

While both the Italian and American families in this study constructed generic and individual portraits of the child through their verbal framings of children's relation to food, the Italian families used talk about food to construct the child as an individual personality far more than do American families in this study. We believe this difference stems largely from the massive attention to food as pleasure at the Italian family dinner tables and in particular to respect for the individual food preferences and dispreferences of both children and adults who are present. The Italian dinners were fundamentally organized around the individual tastes of family members. Part of what it means to be a member of these families is knowledge of these individual tastes. Part of what it means to show affection is to procure and/or prepare such foods for these family members. The Italian tables videotaped in this study were filled with different foods for different family members. There prevailed an expectation that particular family members, regardless of age, would select what they want from the range of dishes at hand. And, as we have seen in some of the excerpts, if a food preference was not at hand, a parent would try to procure that item for future mealtimes. These family dinner practices indicate that individual tastes are recognized as an important component of one's personality, to be respected and nurtured.

In the American family dinners, individual tastes were sometimes acknowledged. Sometimes parents microwaved different packaged frozen food for different children. And families ordered different kinds of pizza to satisfy the tastes of different members.¹⁴ Generally, however, two practices prevailed: Either a parent prepared one set of dishes for the adults and one for the children, or a parent prepared one set of dishes expected to be consumed by all. For example, in one family, microwaved food was offered only to the chil-

dren, whereas Mom and Dad ate roast beef and potatoes. This practice, among others, makes a social distinction between the tastes of the child and the tastes of adults. Very often the American parents assumed that their children as a group would not like the foods that they themselves enjoyed.¹⁵ When the American parents in the study put a single set of savory dishes to be commonly consumed, children and parents often entered into conflictual discussions wherein parents articulated what the children must eat and the children resisted. Such discussions gave rise to children's negative expressions of taste, *what they do not like*, more than to positive expressions of *what they do like*. This orientation to displeasure contrasts with the Italian family dinner scenes captured in this study, wherein the children frequently expressed delight in seeing certain dishes they particularly like and displayed solidarity with their parents and siblings in their taste for particular foods.

The Italian predilection towards catering to individual tastes comes at a price, however. When Mamma or Papà buys ingredients and prepares them to satisfy particular tastes, a deep relationship of emotional dependence is created. The individual child comes to rely on that parent (and in some cases on a grandparent) to know how to make him/her happy by fulfilling his/her tastes. The Italian child is expected to express gratitude and strong positive feelings about these individualizing attentions and labor. And the parent (or grandparent) comes to depend on such praises to foster their self-esteem. In this way, there develops a reciprocity of emotional need fulfillment. Here the socialization of individuality is achieved through interdependence rather than through the fostering of autonomy.

The emotional interdependence centered around food can link generations beyond the living. Like Proust dipping his madeleine and reviving his memory of taste in his past, eating a particular food may evoke for Italian family members memories of lived pleasures created by those no longer alive who knew and loved them. Remembering these tastes while eating, Mamma or Papà may quote the idiom *Sapore della buon'anima* 'Taste of the good spirit.' The maintenance of a continuous culinary tradition across generations within the family is a crucial vehicle for maintaining an emotional relationship with one's roots. While American families have their food traditions, those in this study displayed as well an orientation, not shared by the Italian families, towards serving foods that were new to family members. Serving new rather than familiar foods, these parents cannot predict whether family members will like them and can not reach back through time to retrieve the taste of their own childhood.

Notes

* The American research group, directed by Elinor Ochs & Thomas Weisner, has examined the organization of family dinner story-telling, the relation of story-telling to problem-solving and to power asymmetries between parents and children and husbands and wives (see Ochs 1994; Ochs, Smith & Taylor 1989; Ochs & Taylor 1992a; Ochs & Taylor 1992b; Ochs, Taylor, Rudolph & Smith 1992). The Italian group (directed by Clotilde Pontecorvo) has carried out different studies (Fasulo & Pontecorvo 1994; Pontecorvo, Amendola, & Fasulo 1994; Pontecorvo & Fasulo (in press a); Pontecorvo & Fasulo (in press b); Pontecorvo & Sterponi (in press); Pontecorvo, Tonucci & Amendola 1993 on family dinner interactions within a research project on 'Interaction modalities in natural social settings' supported by a grant of the Università di Roma, 'La Sapienza' (1992-1994). The topic of socializing taste in Italian and American families grew out of data analysis sessions held June-July 1993 in the Department of Developmental Psychology and Socialization Processes at the Università di Roma. In addition to the co-authors, these sessions involved Silvia Amendola and Alessandro Duranti. This essay has benefitted from early insights generated at this time. In addition, the analysis builds on long-term collaborative research by Elinor Ochs and Carolyn Taylor on the American family dinner interactions. The research upon which this essay is based has been supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Development (1986-1990, Principal Investigators: Elinor Ochs & Thomas Weisner), the Spencer Foundation for Educational Research (1990-1993, Principal Investigator: Elinor Ochs) and the Università di Roma, 'La Sapienza' (1992-1994, Principal Investigator: Clotilde Pontecorvo.)

1. An additional 20 American dinners were audiotaped only.
2. As will be elaborated below, food as reward is not purely governed by the principle of freedom. A reward is a pleasure that is warranted when one has fulfilled some obligation or condition.
3. The transcription notation uses the following symbols:
Brackets denote the onset of simultaneous and/or overlapping utterances, for example:

DAD qq (.) [great
OREN [I'll have the rice

Equal signs indicate contiguous utterances, in which the second is latched onto the first:

PAPÀ qui vengono dei bei muscoli duri=duri

or an utterance that continues beyond a line on the page:

DAD you have to do is eat one carrot and (.) and two=
EVAN (Daddy) I want thwee:: vitamins
DAD =br- two pieces of broccoli any two you want

Intervals within the stream of talk are timed in tenths of second and inserted within parentheses:

DAD You want a vitamin?
 (o.4)
EVAN ((nods yes))

Short untimed pauses within utterances are indicated by a dash or a period within parentheses:

EVAN Mommy
 (.)
 and I AM gonna have a happy plate

One or more colons represent an extension of the sound or syllable it follows (hai pedalato ta:nto.); underlining indicates emphasis ('A:ll right!'); capital letters indicate loudness ('and I AM gonna have a happy plate'); a degree sign indicates an utterance that is quieter than surrounding talk ('io non ne voglio piu°'); audible aspirations (hhh) and inhalations (.hhh) are inserted where they occur; details of the conversational scene or various characterizations of the talk are italicized and inserted in double parentheses (((*driving the fork toward Lorenzo's mouth*))); items enclosed within single parentheses indicate transcriptionist doubt:

DAD (do you?)

Free translation of the Italian is represented in boldface.

4. Dad responds with a repair initiator (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977). In this sequential context, Dad may not have heard what Oren has asked for; however it is more likely that Dad is expressing astonishment and disbelief, given that 1) corn is not on the table, and 2) Mom has heard him (see her response).
5. Herzfeld (1985) notes that Cretan mountain village boys are expected to finish large quantities of meat stolen by local men in a continuous sitting to avoid the possibility that they might be seen by outsiders with pieces of the meat in their possession.
6. The use of the word *peccato* 'sin,' which mamma offers as the last and the most compelling warrant of her argumentation, is reminiscent of stories about the long scarcity of food experienced by former generations during the Second World War and before (for the generality of this experience in European countries, see Delamont 1995, who reports data from anthropological studies in European villages and countryside). There is a strong moral message about not wasting food as a deeply running stream in many cultures: the risk of *carestia* 'famine' being always behind the corner, children are socialized not to waste food as a moral and not only as a practical obligation. In Italy it is a largely shared imperative, even across social classes and across rural and urban dwellers, not to throw away bread (as the nutrition prototype) though it could be old and hard to be eat (Bourdieu 1984). Indeed many popular dishes of Italian regions - for example the Tuscan 'acquacotta' and 'ribollita' or the Roman 'panzanella' - use old bread as their basic component in order to recycle it and avoid throwing it away.
7. This is not to say that Italians never have a sweet following the meal. They may do so for parties, for Sunday extended family meals, or when guests are invited. Usually pastries and ice cream and the like are consumed outside the house and outside of the main meal at *caffè* or *gelateria*.

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