



IV Congreso Internacional  
del Observatorio de la Alimentación  
y la Fundación Alícia  
Barcelona, del 9 al 12 de junio de 2015

*The diet of young eaters:  
a specific requirement requiring  
a reorganisation of family  
eating habits*

+



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# + Plan

## Contexts and issues of child feeding

1. Feeding a child, a task unequally shared
2. Methodology & survey population
3. Socialisation through food & transient rituals
4. Inequality in physical and mental loads and variation in educational tensions

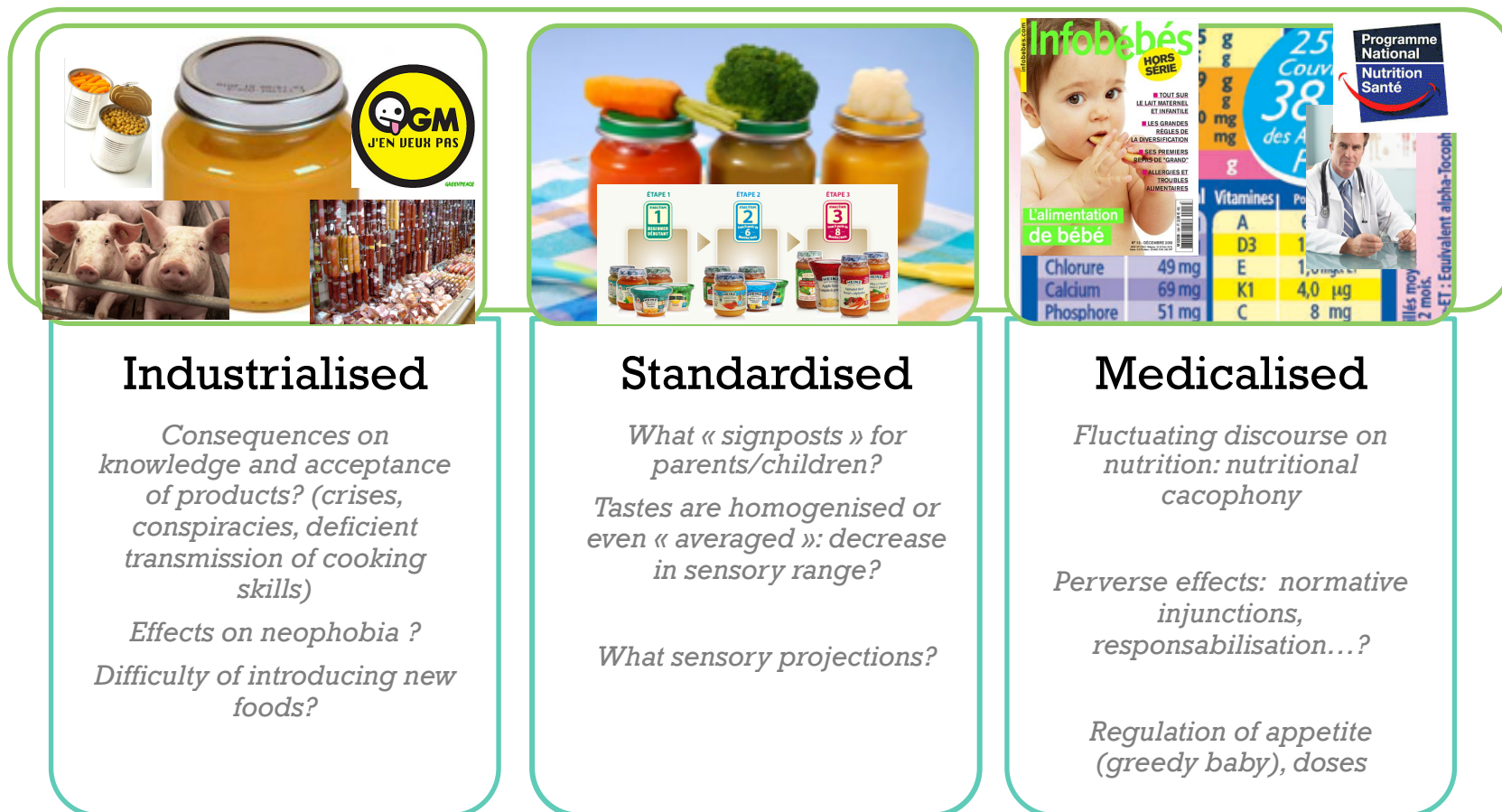
## Conclusion



# Contexts and issues of child feeding

Contemporary transmission of eating habits: abnormal or a social change?

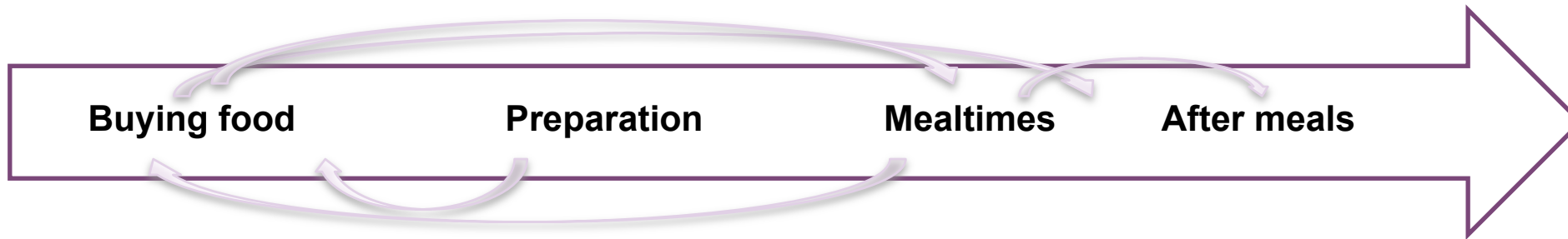
- Assumptions on crises in behaviour and feeding habits & assumptions regarding an educational crisis
- « *Social uncertainty* » with regard to the child (Javeau, 2006)



# + 1. Feeding a child, a task unequally shared

## Feeding small children: a complex task

- Mental load and physical load: shopping, buying, preparing, cooking, reheating: ... looking ahead, thinking, organising...



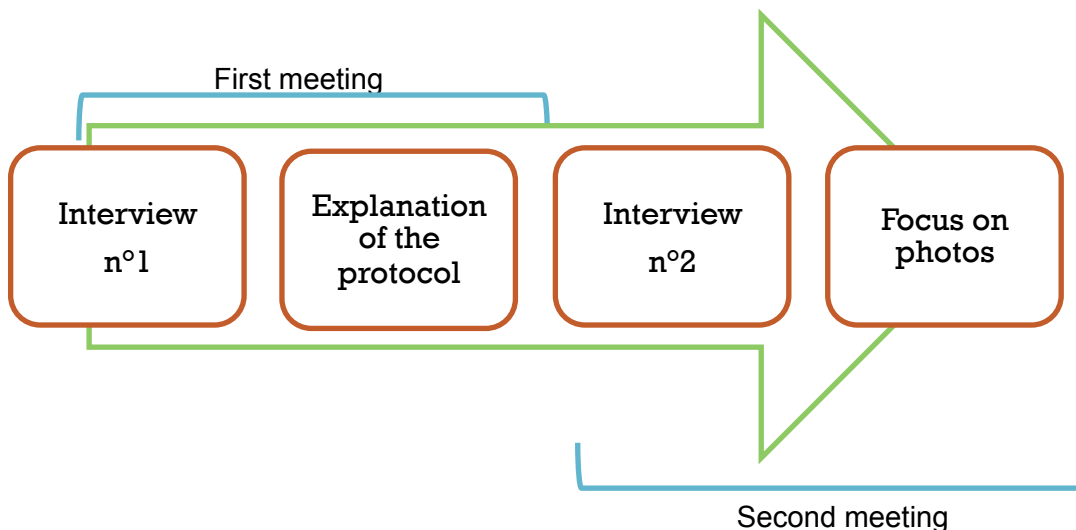
- A « *triple task of acquisition-transformation, relation and love* » (Vandelac, 1985) :
  - The task is both material and immaterial, and poorly defined
  - It generates disparities and inequalities between mothers & fathers (Chadeau and Fouquet, 1982; Pynson, 1993; Brousse, 1999; Garner, Méda, Senik, 2004; Cresson, 2004 ; Pailhé, Solaz, 2006; Bauer, 2007; Régnier-Loilier, 2009 ; Dorlin, 2010 ; Gojard, 2010)
- Even more true when feeding small children: « the first 1000 days »:  
assumption = maternal diet and family diet as a defence against food-related health risks
  - Domestication / de-commodification of food products
  - Regulation of food intake by portioning
  - Sensory awakening (eg: mothers' role in the progressive development of preferences (Schaal et al., 2004))

### Exploratory phase

- Interviews:
  - Experts (n=3)
  - Professionals (n=4)
  - Parents (n=6)

### Probatory phase

- Interviews:
  - Professionals (n=5)
  - Parents (n=54), 32 included in phase 1
- Photo protocol (n=109)
- Netnography (n=100 publications on 17 websites)



### Two interviews and photos



Interview n° 14

## 2. Methodology & survey population

### Children (n=41)

- Various ages** (3 age groups) and sex
- Various types of childcare and medical follow-up
- Majority breastfed

### Parents (n=35 households)

- The majority**
  - Mothers living with partners
  - 3 fathers, 2 couples
  - Large cities (Toulouse, Paris, suburbs)
  - Tertiary sector
  - Graduates and high SES
  - Both parents working

### Professionals (n=9)

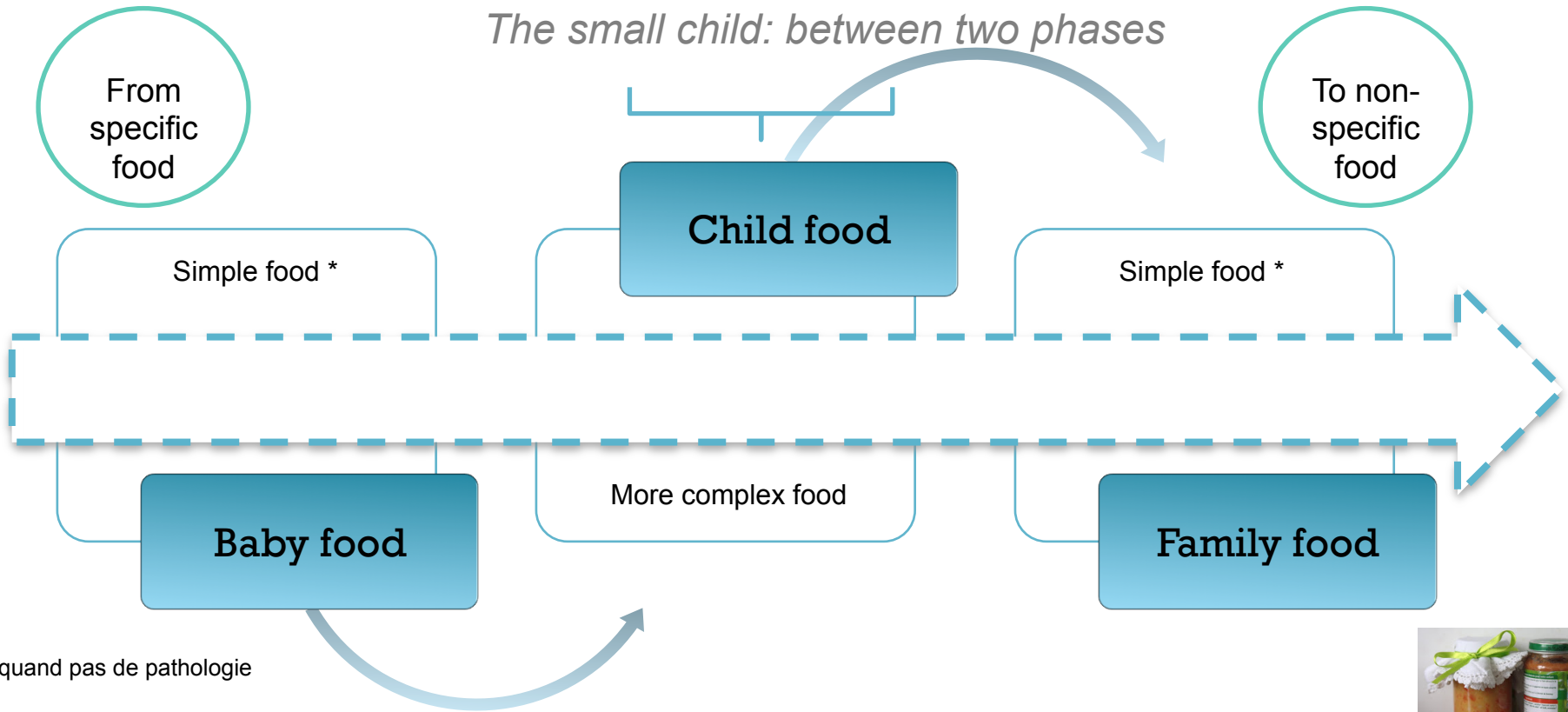
- Childcarers**
  - « Feminine » occupation
  - Rules or no rules regarding food (contract with the parents)
  - Mental and physical loads
  - Age groups of children: socialisation and organisation





# 3. Socialisation through food & transient rituals

The processes of food socialisation



→ Children are confronted with widely differing situations, which compete or even contradict each other in the principles of socialisation that they develop

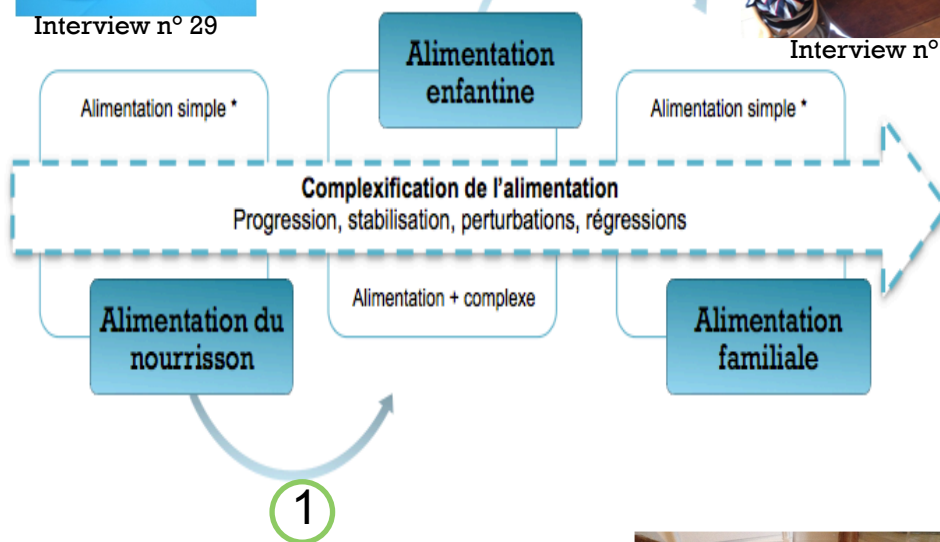


Interview n° 29



Interview n° 7

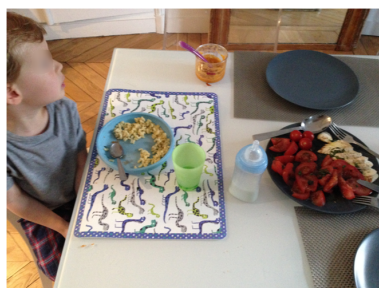
2



1



Interview n° 08



Interview n° 21

■ In terms of content

1. Tension between milk and first introduction of other foods
2. Tension between specific and non-specific foods
  - Tension between different textures, portion sizes, increasing number of ingredients, meal structure

■ In terms of presentation

1. From a bottle to varied foods in jars
2. From jars to children's cutlery to normal cutlery

■ In terms of place

1. From a person's arms to a high chair
2. From a low table or high chair to the family table
  - + in the home *versus* outside the home

■ In terms of timing

1. Several meals to + or - 4 meals
2. Meal eaten alone to meal eaten at the same time as the parents
  - + ordinary *versus* out-of-the-ordinary dimension

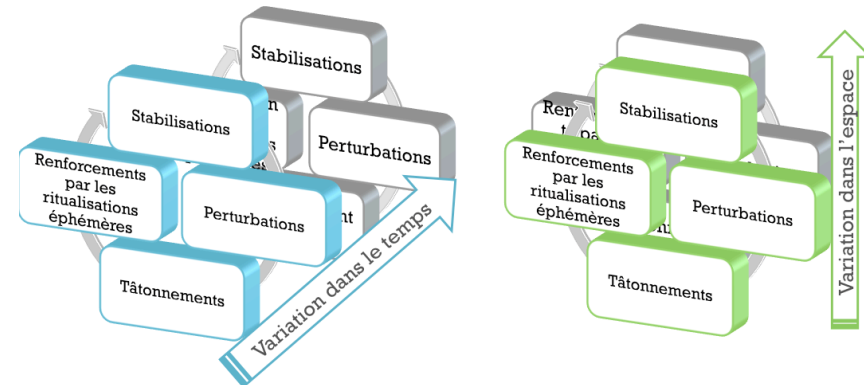
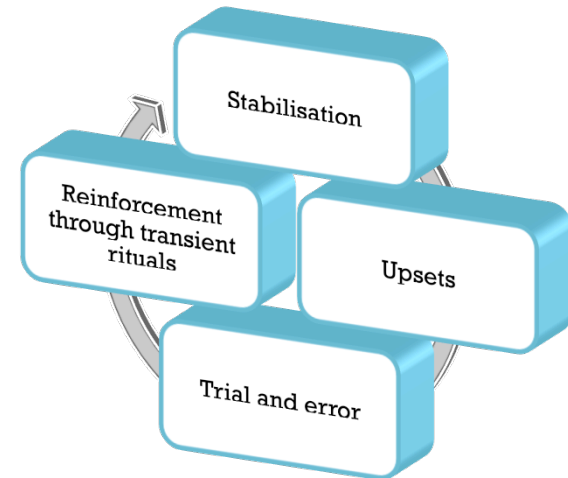




# 3. From organisational routines to transient rituals

- Similar to the micro-rituals of childhood (Haicault, 1993 ; Rivière, 1995)
- *Transient rituals: repetitive daily micro-acts essential to **socialisation** and to the need to **organise and relieve** mental, physical, emotional loads*  
⇒ *Place of vertical, horizontal and inverse socialisations*
- Cognitive economy:
  - Obvious short-cuts in modes of buying, preparing, consuming and using left-overs...
  - Mental relaxation needed to organise without systematically acting on reflex

1. Creating routines = mode of organisation  
⇒ time marker, time-saving, decrease in physical/mental load...
2. Creating rituals = mode of education  
⇒ gives the child a stable framework





Interview n° 2

**Nutritional norm, organisation and time marker**  
eg: the evening/morning bottle



Interview n° 7

**Deferring the introduction of solids:**  
eg: single ingredient puree in a Babycook



Interview n° 8

**Non-specific food chopped with scissors**  
eg: cooked ham or spaghetti



Interview n° 19

**Putting ingredients together to avoid spills when learning to grasp**  
eg: spinach with semolina



Interview n° 11

**Rituals of two spoons**

# + 4. Inequality in physical and mental loads and variation in educational tensions

## Real differences

### Mothers



Interview n° 02

- Major investment in managing daily life: « triple task of acquisition-transformation, relation and love » (Vandelac, 1985)
- Physical and mental loads +++
  - Organising the unexpected: transient rituals, gathering the family round the table
  - Making up: home-made food
- Importance of « giving a child good food » and « feeding a child well »
  - Increasing complexity of the task of nurturing
  - Responsibility and guilt
- Consequence = tendency to delay or exclude foods/experiences not exclusively for small children



Interview n° 08

### Fathers

- « Simple eating » = principle of convenience with food children like (pasta, hot dogs, pizza...)
- Widening the range of what is eatable with new experiences & innovations: fun activity and sensory awakening
  - Purchase or introduction of foods with strong flavours (eg. hot, bitter) or textures not specifically for children (crunchy)
  - « Sunday cooking » with the child
  - Strongly present at « first times »
- Consequence = they encourage transition to non-specific food

# Conclusion : increase in physical and mental loads

- The maternal roles of nurturing and of emotional support become merged with the increasing focus on well-being
  - Intricate connexion of food, nutritional and emotional needs
  - « Giving a child good food » and « feeding a child well »: giving « healthy » food and « way of giving the child healthy food » go hand in hand
  
- Setting up strategies
  - Pureed/mixed: combining/alternating (specific, non-specific, home-made, industrial jars of baby-food)
  - Cooking in bulk over one day (freezer)
  - Assembly cooking (frozen, fresh, industrial)
  - Monotony (babycook)
  
- Increasing complexity of the task of those who nurture the child
  
- ➔ **Postulate: health and, increasingly, well-being justify special attention to family diet in early childhood**
  - Coupling or uncoupling of food provision and emotional support?
  - Importance of taking into account variations in educational tensions according to emotional load





## Acknowledgments:

- Survey participants:  
mothers, fathers, children,  
childcarers, professionals,  
researchers

- Interviewers:  
Hoby Razafiarimanana,  
Justine Divine, Elisa Lomet

- Sponsor:  
Blédina / Danone  
Research



Interview n° 32

Interview n° 13



Interview n° 29



Interview n° 28



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