

## Religious Diversity in School Canteens. The Cases of Turin and Paris

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### Abstract

The aim of this article is to focus attention on the issues that emerge in school canteens in relation to different religious and traditional beliefs about nutrition. After a theoretical introduction, we will present the management systems of school canteens in Turin and Paris, which will be compared. The second part of the article will present the results of the A table with religions survey conducted in Turin (2013/2014) and Paris (2014/2015) in collaboration with families whose children attend schools Primary schools and benefit from school canteen services. Finally, attention will be given to the evolution of research following the experience of the first year.

**Keywords:** School Canteens; Religious Communities; Food education; Food and Religion

### Introduction

Among the areas of research that religious pluralism has revitalized, the relationship between religions and public spaces is perhaps of primary interest. Religions are becoming increasingly protagonists in all social contexts, and the need to take into account the particular demands associated with them in public spaces is becoming more and more complex [1]. The school is one of the public places where religions express themselves most forcefully; It is enough to recall the ever-open question of the teaching of religions, which calls into question the educational system and its capacity to grasp the contemporary challenges [2,3].

The aim of this article is to reflect on the current state of the policies promoted in school catering with regard to food in its relations with religions, and this through the experience of the Inquiry with the religions led in the cities of Turin and Paris.

In a public space such as school, observation of food-related aspects can contribute to the analysis of cultural and religious diversity and its management. Food is, in fact, a cultural element and, as such, is part of the amalgam of symbols that build each collective and identity system [4-6].

Globalized societies are increasingly confronted with cultural differences; The food assumes in this context a fundamental symbolic value, because it obviously allows the emergence of otherness [7]. Social organizations, educational institutions and systems must therefore interact with this otherness and question the possibility of new educational systems and means (with regard to intercultural education [8,9]).

In the first part of the article, the methodology of the At the Table with Religions survey, conducted in several European cities, will be presented briefly and the profile of the two cities to be compared: Turin and Paris. A second part will present and analyze data on the relationship between food, habits and religious norms, which result from the questionnaires distributed during the school years 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 in these two Cities. Despite the difficulties encountered in Paris in collecting the data, we found it interesting to compare

the results of Turin, where research began, with those of another European city, deeply marked, in all Religion and religious diversity, French secularism and the assimilationist model chosen by France to manage immigration [10-18].

Despite their differences, these cities can provide reading keys for historical and social theory as part of a comparative approach [19,20]. Indeed, cultural and religious changes are a crucial theme for understanding urban dynamics [21]. In the case of Turin and Paris, it may be interesting to see whether these two contexts have similarities despite their very different modes of management of cultural and religious diversity [22-25].

### Method of investigation

#### The Sitting with Religions Project

Research At the table with religions was built from the study cases of Turin, Paris, Bucharest, Rome, Milan, Tirana, Lausanne, Birmingham and Zaragoza. It is a project of analysis and proposals concerning the relationship between food in school canteens and religious diversity.

The survey thus sought to take into account the capacity of school canteens to manage the demands and food needs of different religious cultures, which are linked, inter alia, to migration and the social and cultural interactions that drive our society.

The project was carried out mainly on the basis of the following activities:

- A theoretical research on the relationship between food and identity, with particular attention to individual, community, historical and religious aspects;
- A mapping of food requirements related to religious traditions in schools;
- A survey of the nutritional, economic and environmental aspects of school food: the use of local products, the environmental impact of dietary patterns related to religions;
- A mapping of school feeding services in the main European countries;
- A semi-structured questionnaire on the religious food needs of children in 27 schools in Turin, Paris, Bucharest, Rome, Milan, Tirana, Lausanne, Birmingham and Zaragoza.

Until December 2015, the project involved 27 elementary schools (Italy, France, Spain, Switzerland, Romania, Albania, United Kingdom) and 23,000 pupils and families.

In this context, we will focus on the results of the questionnaires from the Turin and Paris schools.

#### The school canteen in Turin and Paris

The research was carried out in 2014 in Turin and in 2015 in Paris: a large city in northern Italy and the French capital; The city where the investigation began and the city that highlighted a particular way of interpreting secularism and speaking of religion. The differences between the two cities are also reflected in the conception of the public-secular school [3,26-28].

#### The school canteen service in Turin

After the decline in the population due to the industrial crisis, the city of Turin witnessed population growth over the last ten years, as the Statistical Office shows, reaching a peak of 901,556 inhabitants, 140,138 of whom are foreign nationals. Among the nationalities residing in Turin are mainly Romanians (55,333), Moroccans (19,892), Peruvians (9,390), Chinese (7,128), Albanians (6,093), Moldovans (4,860), Egyptians), Nigerians (4,277) and Filipinos (3,752). If you look at the metropolitan area, the total population can reach 1,700,000 units (3).

Although the issue of food sustainability cannot be seen as a key issue in Turin's strategic planning, it gained momentum during the revival of Turin during and after the crisis period, clearly represented by the Slow Food movement (4).

The school canteen is part of the educational services offered by the City Council of Turin. In Turin schools, it is possible to ask for special menus, which are available for both medical and ethical (religious or cultural) reasons. Among the 55,000 users, 8,000 [29] benefit from an alternative menu (without pork, without meat in general or without meat or fish). These data do not take into account Muslim students, whose menus do not have to be requested through a special form, since they are offered by the school without any complications. Therefore, students and families requesting a special menu for religious reasons are much more than 8,000.

In Italy, ethical-religious demands are implemented within the framework of the Ministry of Health's national guidelines for school meals (Ordinance of 29 April 2010). The latter lay down rules for the uniform definition of School feeding services offered, as well as the right of access to the service of users with special sanitary and ethical-religious requirements. One of the objectives of the service is to respect and take into account ethical and religious convictions or precepts in food matters [1].

### School canteen service in Paris

The population of Paris is 2.249.975 inhabitants, of which 333.283 foreigners (remember that a person is considered foreign when residing in France but does not possess French nationality). The latest INSEE census on the distribution of the population according to nationality in Paris shows the presence of the following nationalities: Moroccans (20,652); Algerians (30,105); Tunisians (14,564); Other foreigners from Africa (52,627); Other (96,203). These figures only take into account nationality because the "ethnic" origin of the people is not recorded. Indeed, ethnic statistics are prohibited in France by the Act of 6 January 1978 relating to data processing, files and freedoms (Chapter II, Article 8, paragraph 1).

As regards the school canteen service, it is the *Caisses des écoles* that deal with it. There are twenty, one per district, and they are in charge of developing the menus, the production of meals and their distribution in public schools. The *Caisses des écoles* are local public institutions and are chaired by the borough mayor. School catering in Paris concerns 662 public primary schools, including 302 elementary schools; 80% of the first grade students eat in the canteen.

The school canteen service is optional; Also, as the Rights Defender reminds us in a report dated March 2013, "is there no obligation for the communes to set up menus that are adapted to take account of religious food prescriptions or prohibitions"? Each borough decides whether and how to take into account ethical and religious requirements. In Paris, pork is served in canteens and a substitute dish is usually offered on the days when the pig is intended; A vegetarian meal is served once a week in the 2<sup>nd</sup> arrondissement.

Yet the question of school canteens is the subject of intense public controversy, in which the demands of those who want an alternative menu come up against the opinion of 53% of the French who - according to an Odoxa / CQFD- ITele published in March 2015 - oppose the possibility of having a substitute dish for pork, and where pigs are increasingly a symbol of political and identity claims [13].

Many controversies arise, according to the chronicle and the legal literature. The debate on food according to cultures and religions focuses on the supply of food in school canteens, with particular reference to halal meat (5).

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<sup>3</sup>Centro Studi e Ricerche Immigrazione, *Dossier statistico sull'Immigrazione*, IDOS, Roma (2014).

<sup>4</sup>Slow Food, <http://www.slowfood.com/international/7/history> (2016).

<sup>5</sup>Voir, par exemple, la bataille culturelle contre la viande halal dans les cantines scolaires menée par Nicolas Sarkozy lors de la campagne électorale de 2012 ; voir également les déclarations de Marine le Pen rapportées par *Le Monde* : [http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/03/10/le-halal-a-la-cantine-un-fantasma-loin-de-la-realite\\_1655942\\_3224.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/03/10/le-halal-a-la-cantine-un-fantasma-loin-de-la-realite_1655942_3224.html)

While Kosher shechita seems to be a minor problem, with a smaller Jewish community and a greater presence of Jewish schools, a cultural conflict is developing around the Muslim halal theme, especially in the political and media arena.

The debate on school canteens was revitalized in March 2015, following the decision of the UMP mayor of Chalon-sur-Saône, Gilles Platret, to apply the unique menu in the canteens of his city from September 2015. In one A letter addressed to the families of the pupils, he announced that he wanted to eliminate substitution meals for pork in the name of secularism: "Under no circumstances can it be possible, in the light of the republican principle of Laïcité, to propose differentiated meals According to religious considerations (6).

This decision is in line with previous declarations by Marine le Pen concerning its intention to eliminate the possibility of an alternative menu to pork and has provoked strong public reaction: from, for example, Support given by Nicolas Sarkozy to the decision of Platret, until his condemnation on behalf of the Minister of National Education. The case of Chalon-sur-Saône gave birth to a "secular quarrel which agitates the political circles". In August 2015, Mayor Richard Trinquier (LR) of Wissous decided to remove the alternative menus in the school canteens. In September of the same year it was the turn of Chilly-Mazarin, which thus becomes the third city of France to remove the alternative to the pig meat in the school canteens.

### The data collected and the choice of samples

In order to better define the relationship between school canteens, religious cultures and eating habits - whether motivated or not by religious rules - a semi-structured questionnaire was developed and then distributed to a sample of three primary schools First degree of Turin and a primary school in Paris. It was decided to create a panel as broad as possible, able to represent the socio-cultural complexity that characterizes the school (although it does not represent it statistically). Because children's diet also derives from the income level and schooling of the family, their culture of origin and religion, habits, and interaction with classmate cultures.

While the factors mentioned are all important, some were easier to identify in the Turin context: families could be asked for their religious affiliation and the place of birth of the child and parents, for example. On the other hand, it was preferable not to include in the questionnaires questions concerning family income, a subject considered to be very delicate - even more so than belonging to a religious denomination.

The sample was created on the basis of available data on the constituencies. Districts 1, 3 and 6 were selected, that is, territories with the lowest number of foreign children, the number closest to the average, Foreign children. The schools were then identified according to the ease of access of the research team; The three schools contacted all agreed to participate in the survey without any problem: the Tom-maseo school (Circ.1), which is inside the historic center of Turin; Santorre di Santarosa (Circuit 3) is in the historically popular Borgo San Paolo; Finally, in the Barriera di Milano district, where we worked at the Gabelli school (Circuit 6).

Let us now go to Paris. Given the hostility of the Parisian context described in the preceding paragraph, the realization of the At the Table with Religions project proved to be particularly complicated and for the moment all the objectives have not been achieved. The goal was to find three elementary schools available to participate in our survey; Of the 21 public schools and 22 private schools - Jewish and Catholic - contacted (via email, telephone, through meetings in schools, via intermediaries and by mail), only one school decided to distribute the anonymous questionnaires Parents.

Our desire to talk about religious and cultural habits related to food came up against an enormous taboo that manifested itself at the beginning of the survey, since most directors changed their attitude and interrupted the conversation with the word "religion". Some school principals showed a real interest in our research, but ultimately did not want to participate in the survey because they were afraid of touching an overly sensitive subject that could become a source of problems. This is why we will keep the anonymity of the school that participated.

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<sup>6</sup><http://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/bourgogne/saone-et-loire/chalon-sur-saone-le-maire-decide-de-revenir-au-menu-unique-dans-les-cantines-scolaires-676197.html>

It should be noted that a second school initially agreed to participate in the survey, provided that questions on the religious affiliation of families and the birthplace of pupils and parents were not included in the survey (despite Anonymity). Finally, this school decided not to participate in the survey, but this episode is important because it led us to change the questionnaire for the case of France: we created a final optional section to be able to insert the questions considered “ Sensitive “. Thus, we presented to all the elementary schools contacted a questionnaire which had been thought to hit as little as possible the French sensitivity and which took account of the specificities of the context.

Given the refusal of most branches to participate in the research, the data analysis proposed in this article will be based on the results of the questionnaires distributed in a single school. Unfortunately, this has affected our research objectives, forcing us to build a comparison between two unbalanced samples. However, we felt that the Paris experience is, in itself, a very interesting research result, which has highlighted difficulties and the impossibility of speaking about religion in a public space such as school, as well as the particularity of the Parisian context compared to the other countries where the survey was carried out (Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Romania, Albania, United Kingdom). Moreover, the Parisian school concerned by the survey is extremely interesting for our research: it is situated in a neighborhood characterized by the coexistence of different cultures and origins, and within it there is a fairly high cultural mix. The school principal said that about 37% of the students who ate in the canteen were given an alternative menu, and that the recipients of these menus were Muslim students.

Of a total of 170 pupils who ate at the canteen (the questionnaire was distributed according to the director’s instructions) and their families, 74 responses were obtained. The high percentage of families of foreign origin and families who declare their belonging to a religion make the sample interesting for describing the relationship between beliefs, religious dietary rules and school meals.

### **Presentation of results**

Distributed to all families, the questionnaire received varying response rates: in Turin, an average of 38% of families responded (out of a total of 1,374 families contacted); While in Paris, about 43% of families participated in the survey.

The questionnaire was created with the aim of collecting data on: cultural and religious differences in schools (personal data of pupils and their families); Food habits and restrictions; The perception of cultural and religious diversity in relation to the school canteen.

The questionnaires distributed in Paris and Turin are identical to 90% and have been constructed with the aim of obtaining the same information. However, following the experience of the first year of research (2013/2014), it was decided to add some questions to the questionnaires distributed the following year in Paris. For example, questions have been included about household income, weekly consumption of meat, and the amount of monthly household food expenditure. These factors were important to us in defining the child’s eating habits. Similarly, it should be recalled that in the case of Paris it was necessary to create a final optional section in order to be able to insert questions concerning the place of birth of pupils and parents and the religious affiliation of families.

### **A Diverse School Population**

The first interesting data appearing in the analysis of the Turin sample relate to the nationality of pupils and the place of birth of pupils and parents.

With regard to nationality, the selected schools represent three distinct cases. The percentage of Italian pupils is 88.0% in the Tom-maseo school, 54.4% in the Santorre di Santarosa school and 32.4% in the Gabelli school. Of all pupils enrolled, 59% have Italian nationality, while 41% are foreign nationals.

The following graph shows data on nationality in the three Turin schools involved: besides 59% of children of Italian nationality, the first foreign nationality represented is Moroccan nationality, followed by Romanian nationality; There are a total of 38 nationalities.

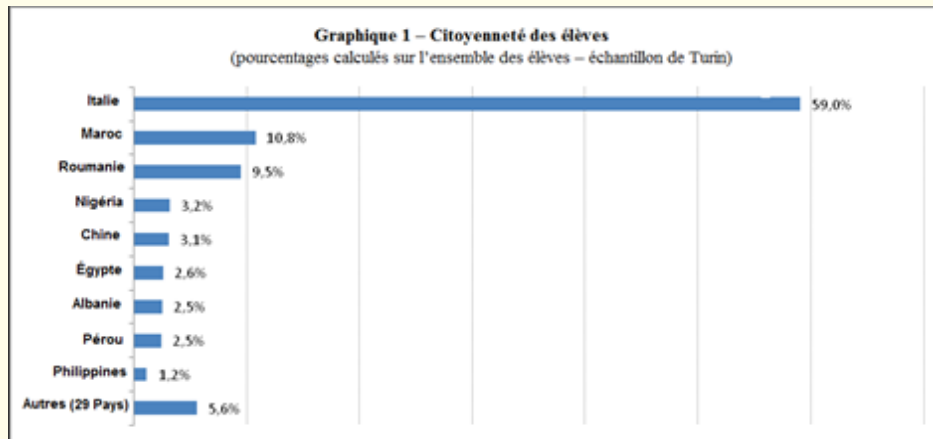


Figure 1: Citizenship of Pupils (Percentages Calculated on Turin Pupil Sets).

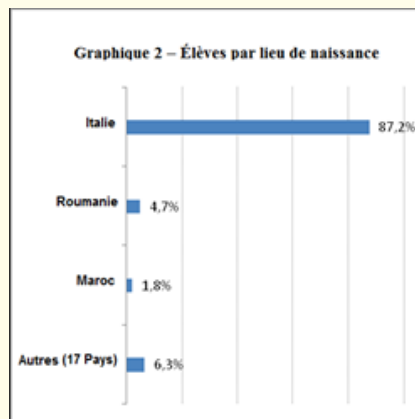


Figure 2: Pupils by place of birth.

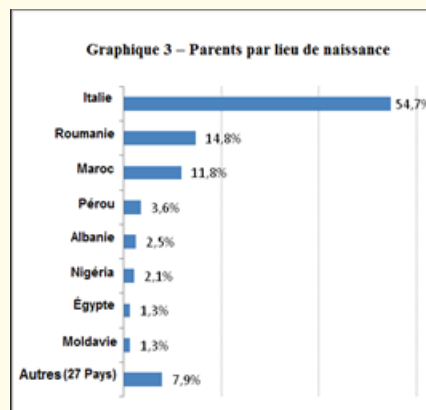
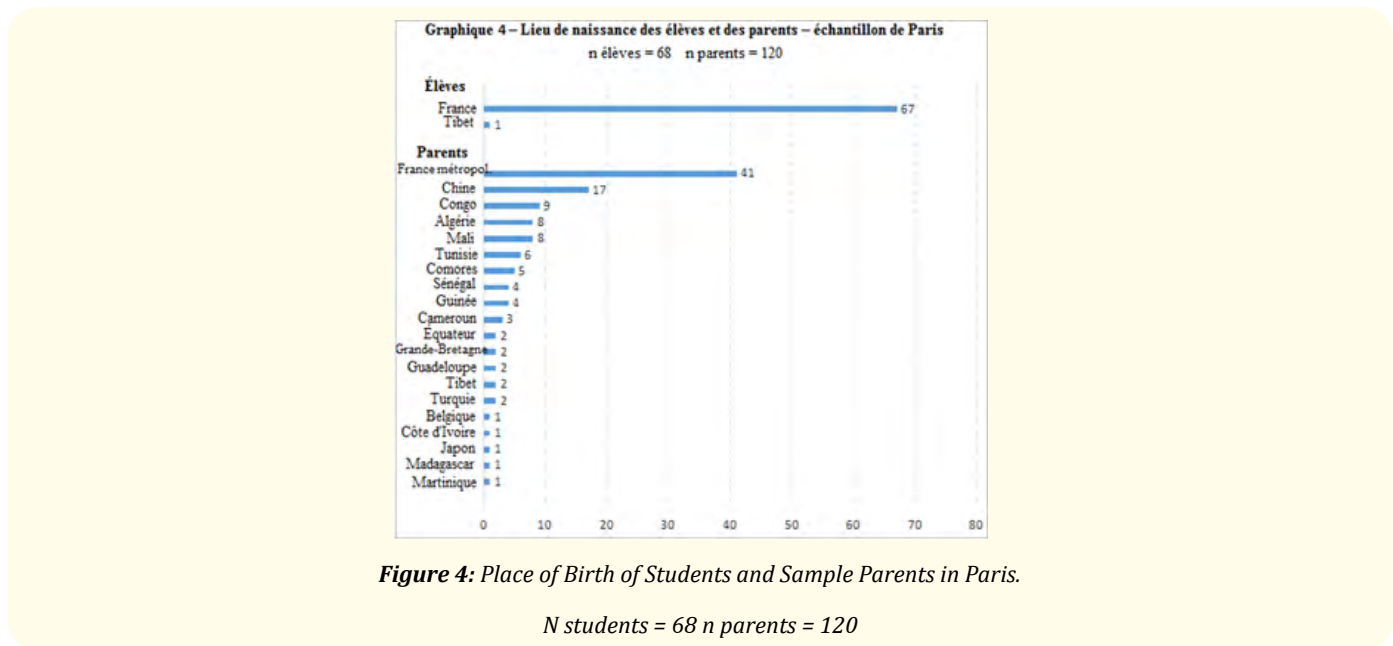


Figure 3: Parents by place of birth.

By moving from nationality to place of birth, most of the students were born in Italy, with low percentages of subjects born in Romania and Morocco and a non-significant proportion of subjects born in other countries. Figure 3 shows that the situation of the parents is more complex: a little more than the majority was born in Italy and the percentage of subjects born in Romania and Morocco increases significantly.

Regarding the Paris sample, 41% of the parents were born abroad (59 out of 143), whereas only one student (out of 74) was born outside the national context. This phenomenon has often been observed in the other European cities surveyed, also in the presence of more representative samples of the local school population: thus, the second generation changes the face of European schools.

The following graph shows the responses obtained by country of birth of students and parents. It is very interesting to note that the pupils were all born in France, except one of them, born in Tibet, whereas in the case of parents there are several geographical origins: 19 countries are represented. Despite a large number of parents who said they were born in Europe and Asia, African origin is generally the most common.



By studying the composition of parental couples and using data on their place of birth, it can be seen that out of a total of 58 families who responded, 29 are formed by couples of foreign-born parents, 15 by of parents born in France and 14 by mixed couples.

**Supplementary questions on income: Paris**

Leaving aside the questions more closely related to the religious factor of food, 58 families out of 74 answered the question on the average monthly income of the family nucleus: among the latter, the largest proportion (18 out of 58) Between € 1,501 and € 2,500 per month, 8 and 13 families reported an income of less than 1,500 or 1,000 euros respectively, while 14 and 5 families reported income of more than 2,500 or 4,000 euros respectively.

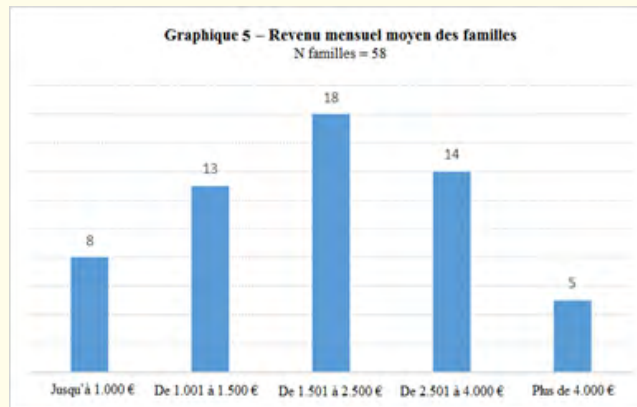


Figure 5: Average monthly income of families.

N familles = 58

It is interesting to compare income differences between families on the basis of parents' place of birth: 73.3% of French couples report an average monthly income of more than 2.501 euros, compared to 20.6% of foreign couples and 14, 3% of mixed couples. On the other hand, 6.7% of French couples report receiving an income equal to or less than 1,000 euros per month, compared with 44.8% of foreign couples and 48% of mixed couples.

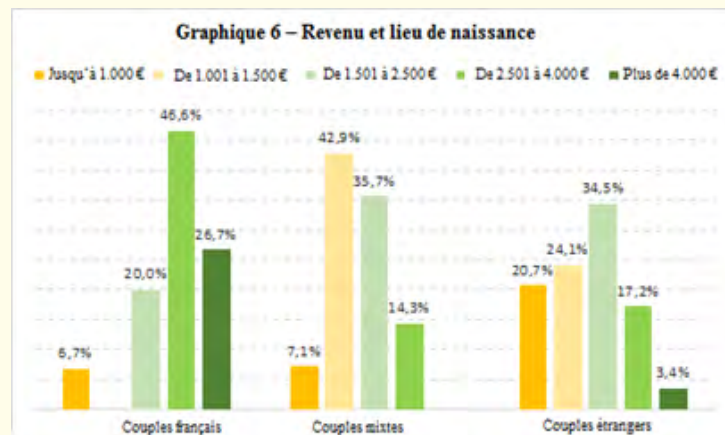


Figure 6: Income and place of birth.

**Religious affiliation**

To return to the Turin sample, 55.1% of families declared themselves Catholic Christians, followed by Muslims and Orthodox Christians. There are families who declare themselves unbelieving and Protestant and, according to insignificant percentages, Baha'i, Buddhists and Jehovah's Witnesses.



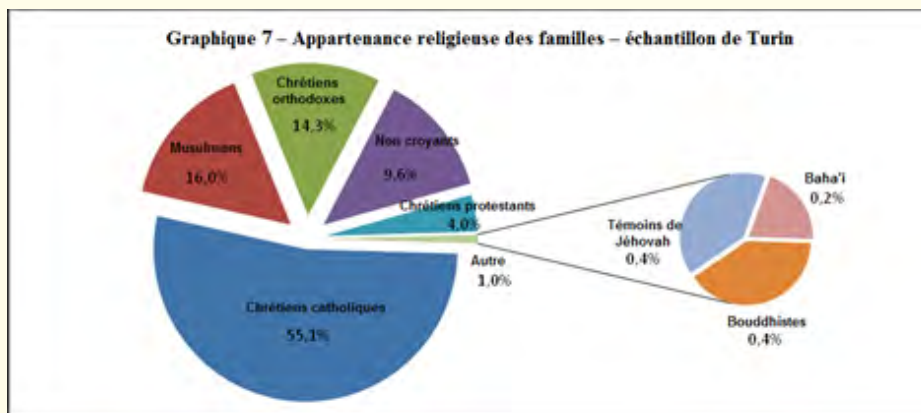


Figure 7: Religious belonging of the Turin sample families.

The optional section of the Paris questionnaire also allowed us to collect data on the religious affiliation of families, even though not all parents participating in the survey responded to the question of religious affiliation.

Thus, despite resistance, 56 families out of 74 wanted to provide data in this regard, and the remaining 18 did not respond (it is unfortunately not possible to know if they refused to answer the question or if non-response is to be understood as an absence of faith). According to the answers, most families (31 out of 56) declare themselves Muslim; Follow Catholics, Protestant / Evangelical, atheists, Buddhists.

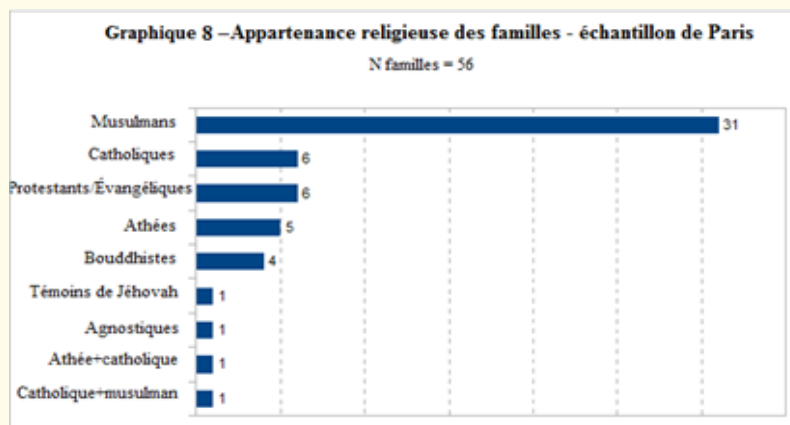


Figure 8: Religious belonging of sample families in Paris.

N families = 56

### Importance and respect of dietary rules

After a first part of the questions for collecting personal data, we asked the parents if their (possible) religion of belonging foresees specific dietary rules and, in this case, if they respect them at home. In Turin, about 28% of the families in the sample claim to belong to a confession imposing special rules on food (1.3% “do not know”). Faced with this, the percentage of families who declare that they respect religious norms in the preparation of meals at home decreases: one in four families declares to cook in accordance with the religious norm of reference (24.6% of the sample).

As for the Parisian context, among the 56 families who declared a religious affiliation, 19 of them deny the existence of dietary rules in their religious denominations, 3 declare that they do not have an opinion on the subject, and 4 do not give reply. The remaining 30 families replied that their religion foresees specific dietary rules and almost all of them (28 out of 30) said they respect the religious rules of food in their homes.

The preceding questions asked the sample about the rules and the eating habits of the family in the broad sense; In detail, it was asked to indicate the level of importance accorded to the observance of religious rules by the child, at home and at school. In the first case, although most families answered “it is not important”, the answers “it is important, but I can forgo it” and “it is very important” constitute about 37% of the cases. As regards compliance with school rules, the importance attributed decreases by a few points. The academic context thus seems to discourage certain practicing families from enforcing their children’s rules of food: from home to school, the importance attributed decreases both in the case of “it is important” and in that of “it is important, But I can give it up “. Here the hypothesis is developed that there may be a major difficulty in obtaining religiously correct meals, possibly combined with a form of cultural submission which acts in the direction of a renunciation of observance.

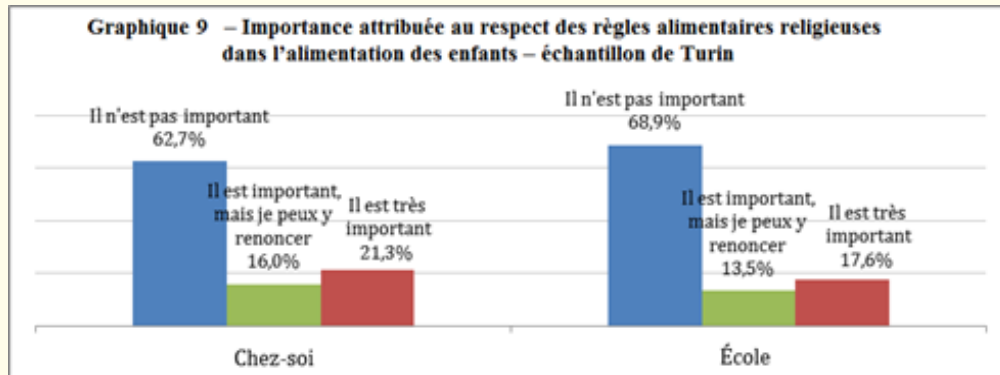


Figure 9: Importance attributed to compliance with the religious dietary rules in the diet of children in the Turin sample.

In the Parisian school, among the 30 families who declare the presence of religious dietary rules, the opinion that the respect of food standards in their child’s diet is very important prevails. This is at home and at school, since the results remain unchanged in both cases.

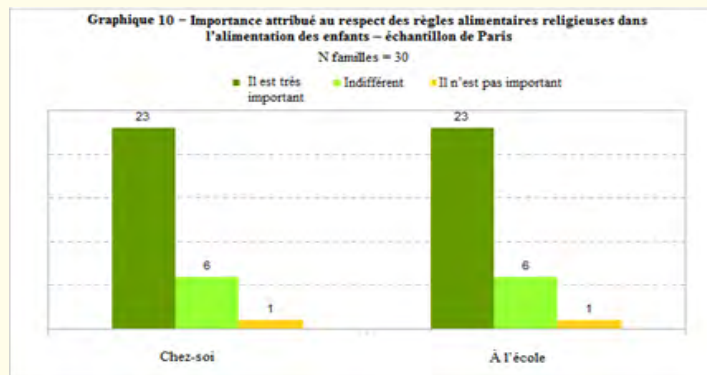


Figure 10: Importance attributed to the respect of religious dietary rules in the diet of children in the Paris sample.

N families = 30.

**Understanding the eating habits of families: the case of Paris**

Continuing on eating habits in the domestic context, families were asked to indicate the average monthly expenditure on domestic food: of the 56 families who answered the question, 23 (about 41%) Declare a monthly expenditure between 201 and 400 euros; 13 (approximately 23%) report spending between EUR 401 and EUR 600; 10 (approximately 18%) say they spend a maximum of € 200; 8 (14%) between 601 and 800 euros, while two families (less than 4%) say they spend between 801 and 1,000 euros per month.

As for meat consumption, of the 73 families responding (almost the total sample of 74 families), 32 (about 44%) said they ate three to five times a week, while 21 families (29%) eat it every day and 20 families (about 27%) prepare it at home once or twice a week; None of the families interviewed appeared to be on a vegetarian diet.

As for meat consumption, of the 73 families, taking into account the data on the frequency of consumption of meat and the monthly expenditure on food, it would appear that an increase in the level of expenditure corresponds to an increase in meat consumption (and vice versa). In a small sample of 56 households that reported their monthly food expenditure, families reporting a food expenditure of up to EUR 200 were also those consuming the least amount of meat. Families), 32 (about 44%) say they eat an average of three to five times a week, while 21 families (about 29%) eat every day and 20 families (about 27%) prepare home or twice a week; None of the families interviewed appeared to be on a vegetarian diet.

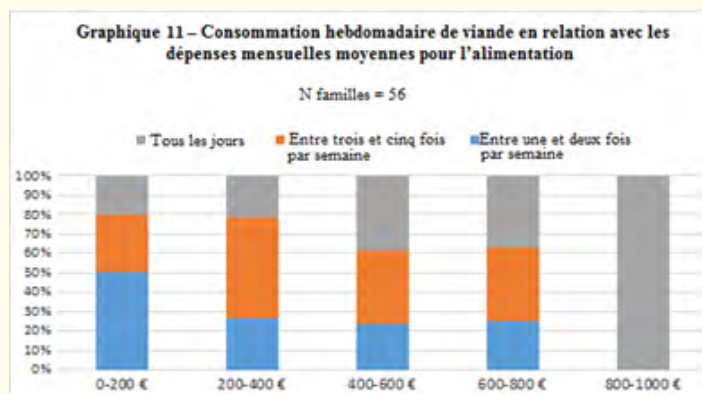


Figure 11: Weekly consumption of meat in relation to average monthly food expenditure.

**Eliminate meat at school? Okay, but do not touch the fish!**

Meat is undoubtedly one of the main foods subject to religious rules, which are often subject to restrictions and are therefore an obstacle to full sharing of the menu. As for fish, although religious regulations provide for substantial restrictions only in the case of crustaceans and molluscs - which are too expensive for the school context - to abstain from fish consumption may represent a significant opening to ethical restrictions and philosophical issues related to vegetarianism; On the other hand, fish is at the same time a very good substitute for other types of meat. Based on these considerations, we began to seek the advice of families, with rather unexpected results.

In Turin, 38.2% of the sample favors the elimination of meat and 26.4% is indifferent; The percentage of persons opposed increases substantially in the case where the exclusion of fish is also proposed. When the supply of fish is maintained, the majority of the interviewed families declare themselves indifferent or explicitly favorable. Adding the favorable and the indifferent to the exclusion of the meat, one realizes that about 65% of the families are ready to give it up.

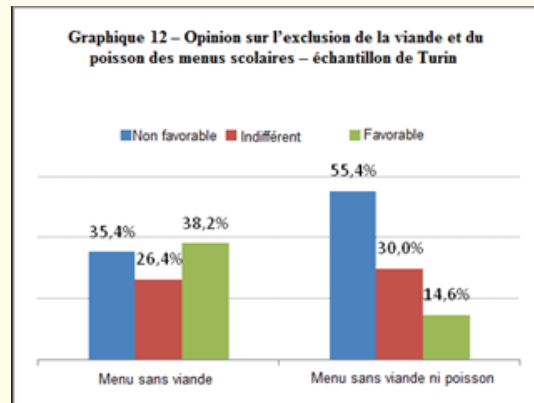


Figure 12: Opinion on the exclusion of meat and fish from school menus - Turin sample.

Let us now go to Paris. First of all, it seems interesting to present some information collected within the school. The meat served in the canteen is French; Out of 160 pupils who eat at the canteen, 80 do not eat pork and 30 do not eat meat from everything. When pig meat is served in the school (once every six weeks or so), images representing a pig are displayed in the canteen, and an operator is in charge of helping the pupils. Pork is replaced mainly by eggs or goose hams, depending on the budget available.

Let us now return to the proposal to remove the meat and fish from the menu. As has also been observed in all the European cities observed so far, most families are favorable or indifferent to the elimination of meat: in the case of Paris, this concerns about 71% of the parents. On the other hand, the elimination of meat and fish generates more perplexities: the percentages of favorable or indifferent move to about 67% (with a majority of indifferent), and the percentage of unfavorable increases.

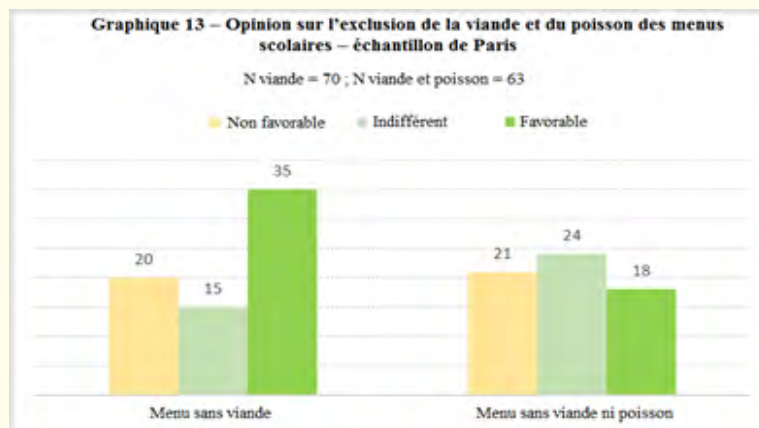


Figure 13: Opinion on the exclusion of meat and fish from school menus - a sample from Paris.

N meat = 70; N meat and fish = 63

Once the propensity to the exclusion of meat has been retained, it is necessary to confront the opinion of those who have declared themselves opposed; They were asked to explain their position. In Turin, 35.4% of people voiced their opposition to the exclusion of meat from menus. The main reason for opposition (about 56%, ie 20% of the sample) is the concern about the balanced nature of the menu: an understandable concern which, however, is supported by convincing arguments about the Meat by other, healthier foods. If we exclude

about 19% of respondents without motivating their answers, the most common reasons for this are taste issues (“everyone does not like fish”, “I like meat (“Religion has no right to impose restrictions on all pupils”, “children must experiment with all food”, “meat is part of the Italian and Mediterranean diet”), And concerns of economic and qualitative gender in relation to the service offered.

As for Parisian parents, the most prevalent concerns concern the maintenance of a healthy diet for the development of their child (ren); (“At home, we eat little meat because we cannot afford it”), doubts about the possibility of offering a varied diet and sufficiently rich in Proteins, and taste considerations (“My son does not eat fish”).

### Perception of cultural and religious diversity in relation to school canteens

The final dimension of the survey concerns the perception by families of religious diversity in the context of the class of their child (ren). In order to identify this dimension, a series of questions was set up to identify the share of “I do not know” answers as to the knowledge of “special cases” in the class (case of requesting special menus for Religious reasons); Knowledge of religions belonging to pupils who have requested a special menu; Knowledge of the canteen service and more specifically the type of offer for special diets; Opinion on special menus.

The questions include three modalities of response: “it is not important”, “it is important, but I can give it up”, “it is important”. The chosen method takes into account the answers “I do not know” as indicators of inattention or lack of information on the part of the families in relation to the religious diversity, which is nevertheless present in the observed school context and impregnates the Experience of children in school.

Faced with very high percentages of “I do not know” responses in Turin and, consequently, a lack of attention and a low perception of the diversity of food, culture and religion on the part of families, wanted to check potential factors. The level of involvement of subjects in issues related to religion-oriented diet appears to be a determining factor. This level of involvement has been inferred from the answers given to questions about the importance attributed to respecting religious rules in the diet of children in school: the assumption here is that to a greater importance attributed corresponds Also more involvement in the problem. The absence of an opinion on religious food prescriptions in schools (expressed in “I do not know” answers) is very high in cases of lesser involvement.

The same kind of questions were asked of Parisian families. As with the other European cities involved in the survey, the high percentage of “I do not know” or lack of responses from families seems to show a lack of perception of religious diversity in the classes of their Children.

47% of families do not express an opinion on the presence of students asking for special menus for religious reasons; 69% do not express themselves about the number of these students; 73% do not express themselves about the special diets for religious reasons offered by the school catering service; Finally, 49% of families do not express themselves on the religious affiliation of pupils who ask for special menus. Of the families who responded (ie, 51%, ie 38 out of 74 families), the vast majority of respondents indicated Islam only as a religion of belonging, ie 90% of respondents (34 out of 38).

This seems to coincide with the strong presence of the Muslim population in the district where the school is located and with what the school principal said in an interview: “In your school, who are the beneficiaries of alternative menus Muslims, Jews, vegetarians, etc.)? “ Muslims “.

### Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, it was proposed to compare the results of Turin and Paris, given the difference in representativeness of the two samples. However, the Parisian case, which brought to light the peculiarities of the French model of secularism in relation to other cities of inquiry, has deserved to be presented next to the “pilot city” of research, Turin, where our the survey received a very favorable reception.

The experience of Paris revealed a particularly complicated context. As the principal of the school who collaborated in our project said: “There is an enormous taboo on religion in France, and there is a lot of aggressiveness (...). The model of secularism as it is in the texts should not hamper integration, but as it is experienced, yes: it hinders integration. Because we often take a negative look at everything that expresses more or less a character of religious affiliation”; “I think there is such a fear of disturbing the reign of secularism, that many do not dare to talk about religion at school” (...) I think there is a Real reflection to have in this Country on the state of secularism today. I can give another example, it is the calendar: the calendar is not secular, it has holidays of the Catholic religion (...) It is not I who invented the expression, we are in a country Catholic-laity, that is to say, it is a secular country which completely denies its Catholic heritage, which is extremely present.”

The questions raised in Paris concerning family income, food expenditure and meat consumption provided an insight into the education and food habits of families. These issues have had the merit of focusing attention on other aspects that influence the child’s nutritional training. Indeed, these are all factors that directly affect the eating habits of the family home and, therefore, of the child. Moreover, these questions have brought to light a sociologically significant fact: a social inequality between foreign couples and others.

As for the similarities between the two contexts, it is firstly noted that when faced with the questions: “Does your religion prescribe religious food laws? “And” Do you prepare your meals according to the rules of your religion? In the case of Turin, Muslims were the most likely to answer in the affirmative. As far as Paris is concerned, as we have seen, among the 56 families who declared a religious affiliation, 31 were Muslims. Given the strong presence of food prescriptions in Islam, it can be assumed that in the 28 people who claim to respect the dietary rules of their religion on the 30 people who declare it, the percentage of Muslims is high.

One of the aspects on which the results coincide is the proposal to remove the meat from the menus. In the cases of Turin and Paris, the majority of families would seem ready to give up meat. On the other hand, the hypothesis of eliminating fish from the menu is more perplexing and - in Turin as in Paris - the percentage of unfavorable families increases sharply. This position is of particular interest, since it makes possible the possibility of having menus that are as little differentiated as possible by eliminating foods that are the source of a multiplicity of alternatives. These data are also interesting because they can be interpreted by comparing them with the nutritional and health success of the vegetarian diet and the demonization of beef.

Similarly, for those who did not support the exclusion of meat, in both cities the main concern was to maintain a balanced and healthy menu.

Finally, as we have seen in the case of Turin and Paris, the percentage of parents who do not answer or respond “I do not know” to diversity issues is very high; The same phenomenon had occurred in the other cities surveyed. This is due to widespread ignorance or indifference about the themes related to religion - conceived in the present context as a cultural component of individuals and groups - and to different cultures. This can give rise to false perceptions and false imaginings linked to diversity, which, coupled with a lack of education for children in cultural and religious diversity, can lead to the roots of these same imaginaries Within families.

This is a question well known to researchers: that of “religious illiteracy”, that is to say, of a disseminated ignorance of knowledge relating to the religious fact [3,30-33].

But what role, in particular, for food in education for cultural and religious diversity in schools? Given that it is one of the areas where cultural and religious diversity is expressed and evident, given that it invites enormous symbolic values - linked also to sociality and living together - school canteens Could be one of the favored spaces in which to make emerge the otherness and make it become a factor of knowledge.

Food identity could be one of the aspects from which, insofar as it is a strong identity factor, the identity is not fixed and can become a good ground of knowledge [34].

Concerning the concrete alternatives possible, specialists from different disciplines have drawn up trails: the association of traditional recipes and recipes from other countries, the creation of a unitary menu integrating religious and ideological needs (veganism and Vegetarianism), the possibility of bringing food to school, the formulation of a standard menu that is as different as possible.

Of course, there is one thing that emerges: conflicts or misunderstandings between educational institutions and the family are likely to arise. First, the influence of group dynamics and context on children's choices and freedom (as well as the role of family and school education) should not be forgotten or underestimated.

"If you have a student who has a Muslim name, for example, and decides to eat pork in the canteen, I can tell you that the other Muslim kids are going to be on his back to tell him "you're not allowed", Because they feel betrayed, because children need to be part of a group".

Another significant anecdote reported by the school cook is that of a Muslim girl who, tasting a hamburger, told the cook: "It's a secret between us!". In this case, there seems to be a latent conflict between the two educational authorities: the family and the school.

In this sense, the canteen could also include moments of exchange, presentation and comparison of different eating habits. Such initiatives should also include pathways with teachers, so that differences in food - cultural, religious and ideological - can become opportunities for educational opportunities.

Addressing the issue of food from the point of view of religious demands involves thinking about the transformations of religious belongings and manifestations in different contexts. Similarly, it means reflecting - in a given society - on the positioning of religious freedom rights in relation to the challenges posed by the two dimensions that characterize any form of religiosity: heritage inheritance and individual autonomous choices. The case of the school clearly shows the complexity of this topic and also the way in which it affects citizenship policies and practices [35-55].

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