

## Розділ 3

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# СОЦІАЛЬНІ РЕАЛЬНОСТІ В ЕМПІРИЧНИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯХ

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### Culture and Food Habits of Kharkiv Schoolchildren in the Context of a Full-Scale War (Based on the Online Survey Results)

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**Борисов Роман, Голіков Олександр, Сокурянська Людмила. Культура та практики харчування харківських школярів в умовах повномасштабної війни (за результатами онлайн-опитування).** У статті здійснено аналіз результатів соціологічного дослідження харчових практик харківських школярів, проведеного методом онлайн-опитування співробітниками соціологічного факультету Харківського національного університету імені В. Н. Каразіна в рамках реалізації проєкту FUSILLI протягом березня – квітня 2024 року. У дослідженні взяли участь близько 300 старшокласників Харківської метрошколи, які навчаються в офлайн-режимі. Охарактеризовано методологію дослідження, представлено нормативні документи органів державної влади та місцевого самоврядування щодо харчування школярів. Особливу увагу в статті приділено тому, як відтворюються та змінюються харчові практики дітей в умовах повномасштабної російсько-української війни. Наведено дані щодо ставлення школярів Харкова до питань власного здоров'я, здорового харчування (зокрема обізнаності про нього), впливу на це сім'ї та школи; споживання старшокласниками шкідливої їжі й алкоголю; ставлення до колективних практик харчування з друзями, однокласниками тощо; вміння та навички учнів щодо приготування їжі, додержання правил гігієни під час її споживання; сприйняття школярами змін у харчуванні (його раціоні, регулярності, вартості тощо) під час повномасштабної війни в них удома й на місці навчання. Проаналізовано життєві, зокрема освітні, плани школярів на найближче майбутнє. Визначено перспективи подальших досліджень з обраної проблематики.

**Ключові слова:** харчові практики, школярі, Харків, онлайн-опитування, їжа, здоров'я, біополітики.

## INTRODUCTION

The health, healthy lifestyle, and nutrition of the younger generation should be the focus of interest of any civilized society. After all, the physical and psychological health of children, adolescents, and young people is not only a guarantee of the successful functioning of society in the future but also an indicator of its current state and a factor of progressive development. The whole process of civilization if understood according to N. Elias or M. Foucault, can be interpreted as a process of gradual crystallization and refinement of biopolitics (see (Golikov, 2020a; Stegnyy, 2021)). If the pandemic of 2020-2021 was only a kind of «pilot test» of the opportunities and problems in the Ukrainian education, healthcare, and state biopolitics systems, then with the outbreak of a full-scale war, these systems were forced to work at full capacity, and in extreme circumstances.

These problems and challenges affect both Ukrainian society as a whole and its individual institutions, such as the family, healthcare, education, media, and state and local governments. The traditional and spontaneously reproduced food culture in Ukrainian schools has been gradually codified over a considerable number of years, transformed by legal instruments, and regulated by biopolitical means<sup>1</sup>. Legal regulations faced numerous humanitarian problems with the onset of the full-scale war, particularly in the area of food supply. War in general is a serious test for state biopolitics as such, both at the structural level and at the micro-political and micro-cultural levels. The issues of population mobilization, problems of redistribution of food flows, management of humanitarian aid, directing the flows of refugees and IDPs, ensuring healthcare in the new conditions, finding ways to ensure strategic food security in the new conditions, modifications in the system of registration and calculation of the population, its categories and groups – all these become difficult tests for state systems.

At the macro level, these problems are manifested in food shortages and a dysfunctional peacetime distribution system (for example, in the first weeks of the war, especially in areas close to the war zone (such as Kharkiv and Kharkiv region), most shops were closed and the available food was not enough for everyone).

In such circumstances, schools are becoming one of the foci of transformation of state biopolitics, as well as the crystallization and structuring of non-state biopolitics – including the emergence of new subjects

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<sup>1</sup> The issues of catering in educational institutions are covered in such national regulatory documents as the Laws of Ukraine «On Education» (No. 2145-VIII, Sept. 5, 2017) and «On Complete General Secondary Education», the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine «On Approval of the Norms and Procedure for Catering in Educational Institutions and Children's Health and Recreation Facilities» (No. 305, Aug. 11, 2021) (as amended), the Order of the Ministry of Health «On Approval of Sanitary Regulations for General Secondary Education Institutions» (No. 900, Oct. 27, 2023), etc. Among the local documents are the following: the Decision of the Kharkiv City Council of the Kharkiv Region «On Approval of the Comprehensive Programme for the Development of Education in Kharkiv» (No. 826/17, Nov. 8, 2017) (as amended under martial law), and the Decision of the Kharkiv City Council of the Kharkiv Region «On Establishment of the Commercial Enterprise «Baby Food Plant» (No. 249/09, Oct. 21, 2009). The first of these documents, among other issues related to the organization of catering in educational institutions, including schools, refers to free meals for schoolchildren in Kharkiv under martial law.

of biopolitical action and biopower. Volunteer communities, local communities of citizens, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations – all of them have become involved in biopolitical regulation and modification of the existing biopolitical order. In particular, it was Kharkiv schools that became volunteer hubs where clothes and food were accumulated for those in need; it was Kharkiv schools (including their premises and shelters) that became spatial security nodes for not only schoolchildren and their parents but also residents of neighborhoods adjacent to the school.

The acute phase of food problems for Kharkiv residents was resolved fairly quickly: by the end of March 2022, a large number of grocery stores and food markets were open, and this was a key factor in this matter. However, the regulation of food policies and practices is not limited to this layer: there are both specific food practices (in restaurants, pubs, cafes, etc.) and festive food practices, as well as «niche» practices (at work, at school, in teams, etc.) and «situational» practices (at stadiums, at public events, at private events). Feeding children in schools belongs to the «niche» practices that we have conditionally identified as «niche» practices (which are constantly and routinely carried out in relatively closed «niches» of society), and these practices, like many others of this kind, were eliminated by the very fact that the educational process in secondary education institutions (as well as in Kharkiv universities) was carried out exclusively in a distance format. This has completely changed not only the educational landscape in Kharkiv but also a large number of accompanying practices, including nutrition practices.

### **The Purpose of Research**

The problematic situation that has led to the relevance of our study, and hence this article, is, from an ontological point of view, the contradiction between the desired state of nutrition culture and eating practices of Kharkiv schoolchildren, which meets the requirements of healthy eating, and its real state in the context of a full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war. The epistemological aspect of the problematic situation is the contradiction between our knowledge of the individual and social significance of healthy eating for adolescents and our ignorance of how to achieve this in the realities of modern Ukrainian society.

It is in this light that we set out to analyse the shifts and transformations in the eating practices and the overall food culture of Kharkiv schoolchildren in the context of a full-scale war, in particular, to determine the impact of the food culture of Kharkiv schoolchildren on their food practices, and to identify possible ways to improve the level of the food culture of high school students.

## **1. FOOD CULTURE AND FOOD PRACTICES: THEORETICAL APPROACH**

### **1.1. Literature Review**

Over the past few years, Ukrainian society and the state have faced serious challenges to their biopolitics and identity policies in food culture, biological and epidemiological safety culture, demographic security, etc. The situation has not been improved by the absence of an all-Ukrainian population census for more than two decades, last conducted in 2001, which, incidentally, has significantly complicated sociological research, the development and verification of social policy, etc. The situation was worsened by the new realities of the war (Dembitskyi et al., 2023), which were reflected in all spheres of life, including in the labor market (Ivanenko, 2022; Golikov, 2020b), in school education (Borysov et al., 2023), and in everyday practices and lifestyles of Ukrainian (Shkoliar, 2023) too.

Ukrainian sociologists have paid considerable attention to the specifics of online education with its challenges, temptations, and risks (which, we note, also change related social practices of schoolchildren, such as the practice of «niche» eating) (Sokuryanskaya, & Golikov 2021), its consequences and the impact on it from the educational environment and digital skills (Ratushna, 2023) but the context of war, completely different issues have come to the fore: The issue of the transformation of childhood as a socio-cultural space and a set of practices (Skrypchenko, 2023), and the emergence of fundamentally new and previously unknown social practices and groups in the youth environment (Sycheva, & Levchenko 2022), etc. However, even in these studies, there is almost no reference to biopolitics or food culture.

That is why we are addressing this topic, which is very little actualized, despite its acuteness and painfulness. This is also given that this topic is important and very actively developed in the international research context. In particular, sociologists around the world are looking at the possibilities of creating holistic and sustainable food systems (Thakur, 2024), the historical and cultural aspects of food consumption (Wurgaft, & White, 2023; Giannetti 2022), the transformation of food practices and culture in the information age (Xaq, 2023). Researchers focus on a systemic view of the interaction of cultural institutions

with food and the food sector in general (Furstenau et al. 2023), on the media aspects of food consumption (Hollows, 2022), on the interaction of scientific, commercial, and everyday aspects in food practices and culture (Haushofer, 2022), and even on such a (post)Foucauldian idea as the constitution of the phenomenon of food politics (Nestle, 2022). Such seemingly peripheral topics as specific niche eating practices, i.e. veganism (Giraud, 2021), festive food (Elmes, & Bovaird-Abbo, 2021), globalizing food transformations (Jayasanker, 2020), identity dimensions of food (Burton et al., 2020), food safety (Nestle, 2020), and even the issue of predicting future food consumption, in particular, artificial food and artificial meat (Wurgaft, 2019). In general, food studies form a coherent and very extensive area of interdisciplinary knowledge in modern Western science, which once again emphasises the importance and relevance of these developments. In contrast, in Ukrainian sociology, this is rather a large «white spot», which can boast only sporadic research in this area. However, in Western sociology, as one can see, nutrition in extreme conditions (including war) is not among the main topics.

### 1.2. The Food Culture Conceptual Model

We conceptualise *food culture* as a set of ways of consuming food based on knowledge and ideas about what is acceptable and what is not, digestive physiology, diet and ration, drinking regime, quantity and quality of food, its caloric content, healthiness/harmfulness, etc., methods of preparation, consumption, storage conditions, possibilities, and sustainable routines for combining and peculiarities of the impact of different foods on the psychophysiological state of a person.

One of the food culture components is *food practices* as a set of specific operations of comprehending, choosing, combining, consuming, using, and distributing food in social space and time in quantitative, qualitative, formal, and substantive dimensions. Each of these dimensions is operationalized in its own way, measured, and empirically manifested in our study.

Important components of food culture are *food routines* as stable structures of selecting, combining, producing, storing, distributing, decorating food, and practicing it. Unlike food practices, routines are not specific operations, but properties and organizing of these operations, and far beyond immediate and situational actions to include stable and reproducible repetitions in.

The distinction we are making is rather ad hoc, but we think it is heuristically important to distinguish between the:

- *basic nutrition* practices, which are usually carried out in a typical routine case «at home», in the most trivial and unproblematic situation for an everyday agent;
- «*locus*» *food* practices (in restaurants, pubs, cafes, etc.), which are characterized by the fact that people stay in the «loci» of this eating is quick, specifically for eating, and the «loci» themselves are specialized for these practices;
- «*niche*» *practices* (at work, at school, in collectives, etc.) are the opposite of «locus»: they are carried out in «niches» that are not originally intended for nutrition, but nevertheless are steadily reproduced because people stay in these «niches» for a sufficiently long time;
- «*festive*» *food practices*, which are distinguished by a different criterion and can be carried out in places of any of the three previous types of eating, but are rather the opposite of basic (or routine) eating practices, and the opposite in content rather than form;
- «*situational*» *practices* (in stadiums, at public events, at indoor events, in group outdoor recreation, etc.) that are carried out in specific situations and depend on them; most often these «situations» are created by a group or a large number of people and codified by a specific set of rules for these situations;
- «*background*» *practices*, which are an antonym to situational practices, namely, they are carried out in the absence of specific conditions for eating (for example, «taking chips on the go to eat with friends», «drinking water from the nearest kiosk», etc.).

It is clear that our subject of study belongs to «niche» practices, but one of the hypotheses of the study may be that they «drift» to «situational» (due to changes in the everyday situation of consumption, for example, in the Kharkiv metro school), «locational» or «background». But this is exactly what required empirical verification.

Finally, another important category for us is *food consumption*. Generally speaking, consumption in the broadest sense is the use in the process of satisfying a need, but the fact is that food, as historically one of

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the oldest objects that have accompanied humanity since ancient times, is associated with a large number of needs, so it is worth clarifying that food consumption (or food consumption, which we will use as synonyms) is the use of food and food-related objects to satisfy physiological, material, symbolic, social, cultural, psychological, etc. needs or desires.

## **2. FOOD CULTURE OF KHARKIV SCHOOLCHILDREN: EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK**

The experience of online learning gained during the COVID-19 pandemic and the first year of the full-scale war convinced many Kharkiv residents (primarily parents of students and educators) that the quality of distance education is significantly inferior to that of offline learning. In search of a partial solution to the problem of a safe educational space, the Kharkiv city authorities resorted to a unique experiment – equipping school classrooms in some subway offices. On 1 September 2023, the so-called metro school was launched in Kharkiv. Today, according to official data, 2,198 students study here in an offline format. Only one other school in Kharkiv (HTL No. 173) currently operates in the same format, as it has a good shelter where students and their teachers can stay during air raids.

The staff of the Department of Sociology of the School of Sociology of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (V. N. Karazin KhNU) conducted a study in April- May 2024 among teachers and students of these schools, as well as parents of schoolchildren. Some of the results of this study are presented in this paper. The focus of this study was on the issue of healthy food practices among schoolchildren under martial law. This issue is extremely relevant at any time (at least as a part, and a very important part, of the state biopolitics already mentioned above), but it is during the war that it becomes especially important, given, on the one hand, the opportunities that Kharkiv teenagers currently have to consume both healthy and unhealthy food, and, on the other hand, the restrictions on health food practices that may be caused by the deterioration of the financial situation of their families due to the war, lack of awareness of both students and their parents about healthy eating, lack of parental control over what food their children consume, lack of disciplines in the school curriculum that focus on healthy eating, etc.

This study was conducted within the framework of the international project Horizon 2020 «Fostering the Urbanfood System transformation through Innovative Living Labs Implementation» (FUSILLI), which was implemented by the School of Sociology of V.N. Karazin KhNU during 2021-2024 (project manager – PhD in Sociology, Associate Professor Olena Muradyan). The project brings together 12 cities from 11 partner countries in the European region, and Kharkiv was among them, with the aim to overcome barriers to the development and implementation of comprehensive, systematic, and innovative food policies.

The research on which we rely in this article was conducted using a range of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods were used in an online survey of high school students from the Kharkiv schools in question (a total of 296 students out of 366 high school students in the population, i.e. 80,8 %, answered our questionnaire). We used qualitative methods when interviewing teachers and parents of students from these schools. We conducted 3 focused group interviews (FGI) with parents of students and 1 FGI with teachers. In addition, 12 teachers and 18 parents of students were interviewed using semi-structured individual interviews. In this publication, we analysed and interpret the information obtained through the online survey of high school students of Kharkiv Metro School and Lyceum No. 173 in the city.

## **3. FOOD CULTURE AND FOOD PRACTICES OF KHARKIV SCHOOLCHILDREN: SKETCH OF LANDSCAPE**

We will begin the analysis of the information obtained in the above-mentioned study by presenting some objective data from its respondents, i.e. by sketching a portrait of Kharkiv high school students in the interior of the war.

### **3.1. Kharkiv Schoolchildren: Sketch of Portrait**

Of our respondents, 54,9 % were girls and 45,1 % were boys. A total of 296 out of 366 high schoolchildren from the metro school and secondary school No. 173 in Kharkiv, including 79,4 % of students from the metro school and 20,6 % of high school students from the secondary school No. 173; 34,2 % of respondents were in the 9th grade, 30,5 % in the 10th grade, and 35,3 % in the 11th grade.

The vast majority of the schoolchildren we surveyed (93,2 %) lived in Kharkiv before the full-scale invasion of our country, 2,1 % in a city in Kharkiv region, 3,1 % – in a town/village in Kharkiv region,

1,0 % – in a city in another region of Ukraine, and 0,7 % – in a town/village in another region. After 24 February 2022, 68,9 % of our respondents left Kharkiv. Slightly more than a fifth of them (21,6 %) moved to a city/ town in Kharkiv region, 48,5 % – to another region of Ukraine, and 29,9 % abroad. They began returning home in 2022 (44,1 %), the majority of respondents (50,5 %) did so in 2023, and 5,4 % – in 2024. Moreover, 70,3 % of respondents returned to Kharkiv because, according to them, they missed their home, which once again demonstrates the patriotic feelings of Kharkiv residents, regardless of their age. It was extremely important for the respondents that «Kharkiv is safer than at the beginning of the war» (this answer was chosen by 65,8 % of the surveyed students). About a third of our respondents (32,2 %), answering the question about the reasons for returning home, said that their parents' work required it; 16,3 % said that they returned to Kharkiv to continue their studies.

More than a quarter of the respondents (26,2 %) indicated that they missed their father, mother, or other relatives as a reason for returning to their home. Obviously, a large number (if not the majority) of students were outside their hometown with some or all of their immediate family members. Our assumption is based, in particular, on the fact that among the terminal values offered to our respondents to assess their importance in their lives, the first place was taken by the family (chosen by 56,4% of the surveyed students), which is not surprising, since the results of numerous studies conducted in Ukraine, including those by sociologists at V.N. Karazin KhNU (Borysov et al., 2023) and IS NASU (2016), show that the family is one of the most important (or the most important) values of a person, regardless of their gender, age, level of education, religion, etc. However, the same studies show that with age, especially when starting a family of one's own, its importance for a person increases.

As for our study, whose respondents, naturally, do not yet have their own families, we believe that the war has become a factor that contributes to increased trust in the family (in this case, the parental family) and its importance in the lives of adolescents. Even before the full-scale war, it was the family that had the highest level of trust (90 %) among Ukrainians of all social and political institutions of society. According to the survey conducted by the Rating Group, during the Russian-Ukrainian war, the trust of our compatriots in the family reached 96 %. The war has actualized these feelings, that is why they are so eager to be close to their families.

Returning to the hierarchy of terminal values of the schoolchildren we surveyed, we note that the second rank in this hierarchy is occupied by such a value as health (52,6 % of our respondents believe so). This is also not unexpected, as traditionally in all studies of Ukrainian youth, health, like family, is among the most important values for respondents. In our study, we found a certain contradiction between high school students' assessment of health as a terminal value and their assessment of it as an instrumental value. The instrumental values in our survey instrument were the factors of life success in the respondents' estimates. It turned out that in this case, health ranks only 7th in the hierarchy of instrumental values of high school students. It is perceived as a factor of life success by only 30,7 % of them, giving way to such factors (instrumental values) as «high intelligence, abilities» (69,3 % of respondents gave this factor the 1st rank), «good education» (48,6 %, respectively, 2nd place), «diligence, conscientiousness» (48 %, 3rd place), «knowledge of foreign languages» (44,9 %, 4th place), «ability to manage money» (36,5 %, 5th place), «honesty, decency, integrity» (35,1 %, 6th place).

Only one-fifth (20,6 %) of our respondents said they had excellent health, while the majority (47,5 %) considered their health to be good, 24,7 % – satisfactory, 2,0 % – poor, and only one high school student rated their health as very poor. 4,7 % of respondents could not determine their health status. As you can see, the health of our respondents (according to their own self-assessments) is hardly brilliant, and, perhaps, it is precisely because of this that almost 90 % of them said they were trying to improve their health. At the same time, when asked what they do to improve their health, a relative majority of respondents (42,6 %) said they monitor their diet, while 40,7 % of respondents said they mostly eat healthy food, and 29,7 % said they follow a daily routine. For the same purpose, high school students go to gyms (35,4 %), do morning exercises (29,7 %), exercise on outdoor sports grounds (28,1 %), and run (18,3 %). At the same time, 23,6 % of schoolchildren regularly visit doctors for preventive health care. Thus, among the health practices, nutrition and food culture take the first two places with a noticeable «gap».

### **3.2. Food Practices of Kharkiv Schoolchildren: Common View**

In order to determine the impact of Kharkiv schoolchildren's food culture on their eating practices, we first tried to find out the level of food culture inherent in our respondents. Based on our definition of the

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concept of «food culture», we focused on our respondents' knowledge of healthy eating, healthy and unhealthy foods, the impact of certain foods on their physical and mental well-being, the sources they use to obtain this knowledge, the subjects, and channels of its transmission, etc.

The vast majority of schoolchildren surveyed (74,3 %) have sought information about healthy eating in one way or another, more than 80 % said they had talked to their parents about it, and 85,5 % said they had been taught about healthy eating in school. Social media and messengers are the most popular channels for students to receive relevant information (78,6 %). 40 % of high school students receive information about healthy eating from their sports coaches.

As for unhealthy foods, 84,8 % of respondents said they had been taught about them in school (only 9,5 % said they had not had such lessons). Our respondents not only have a general understanding of unhealthy foods but also know which ones are harmful to their health (81,4 % of respondents). But despite this, almost half of our respondents (48 %) eat these products. At the same time, 3 % of them do so every day, 15,5 % – several times a week, 28,8 % – 1–2 times a week, 27,3 % – 1–2 times a month, and 19,9 % of this group of respondents eat foods that are harmful to their health less than once a month.

Thus, despite their knowledge of healthy eating, the eating habits of the Kharkiv schoolchildren we surveyed do not always meet the standards of healthy eating. In view of this, we tried to find out whether the war is a possible reason for this situation, in particular, whether and how the diet at home and at school has changed under martial law.

Contrary to some opinions, the vast majority of respondents answered almost all questions about food at home and at school during the war that it had not changed at all or rather not at all. For example, 68,5 % of respondents gave such answers regarding food at home. At the same time, 14,5 % of high school students said that the frequency of meals at home had increased or rather increased, 73,3 % said it had not changed, and 12,2 % said it had decreased or rather decreased. Only 7,8 % of respondents said that under martial law, they cooked at home less often or rather less often, while 24 % said that they cooked more often or rather more often. One in five (20,3 %) said that during the war they ate more or rather more food at home, 17,2 % – less or rather less, 62,5 % – nothing has changed in this regard. The indicative symmetry of the distribution continues: 20,3 % of respondents believe that during the war, the diet at home became more or rather more regimented, 17,9 % expressed the opposite opinion, and 61,8 % said that it had not changed. In other words, there were no clearly defined trends: for about three out of five respondents, nothing has changed either in volume or in mode, and one out of five respondents were at the «poles» of the distributions of these characteristics.

In terms of diversity, we see a very similar picture: 57,4 % of respondents said that it had not changed, 24,4 % said that the diet had become more or rather more diverse, and 18,2 % said that it had become less or rather less diverse. At the same time, 34,1 % of respondents said that during the war they ate more or rather more vegetables and fruits at home, and 23 % said they ate more or rather more meat. Answering the question about the calorie content of home meals, 13,5 % of respondents emphasised that home meals have become more or rather more calorie- dense. A decrease in the calorie content of home-cooked meals was reported by 10,9 % of respondents. According to 27,7 % of high school students, during the war, home cooking became more or rather more tasty, 66,9 % of respondents said that its taste had not changed, and only 5,4 % of respondents said that home cooking became less or rather less tasty.

Thus, the absence of significant changes in home nutrition during the war (at least according to the Kharkiv schoolchildren we interviewed) can be explained, firstly, by the fact that the *food supply in our city* (compared to the situation before 24 February 2022) has *not changed* both in terms of the range and quantity of these products (the exception, as noted above, was the first weeks of the full-scale Russian- Ukrainian war), which once again emphasises the dependence of urban residents on external sources of food. However, the deterioration of our country's economic situation in the context of Russian aggression could not but affect the financial security of many (if not most) Ukrainian families, including those in Kharkiv, and their ability to pay. The fact that the vast majority of schoolchildren we surveyed have hardly noticed any changes in their home meals, their diet, regime, etc., and, moreover, have seen positive changes in their quantity and quality, in our opinion, maybe, secondly, *evidence of the child-centred nature of Ukrainian families*. In particular, we were convinced of this during individual in-depth and focused group interviews

with parents of students of the metro school and the secondary school No. 173. Thus, child-centredness is another explanation for the assessments of the students we interviewed about their home meals.

Our study focused on the nutrition of high school students at school. According to our data, 79,2 % of respondents eat what their school offers them, while 20,8 % eat what their parents bring them. At the same time, two-thirds (66 %) of respondents prefer the food provided at school to what their parents have prepared. This may be due to the fact that most of our respondents study at a metro school, where they are fed such popular food among children and teenagers as burgers (prepared by the Kharkiv Baby Food Plant). The vast majority of respondents (73,1 %) like the taste of the food they are fed at school; 61 % of respondents believe that it meets the characteristics of a healthy diet. At the same time, they noted that school food was almost never half-cooked (74,9 %), overcooked (71,3 %), burnt (72,2 %), or fatty (70,9 %). Almost 84 % of respondents in the metro school said that they had never heard of poisoning from food supplied by KBFP.

As for the food of the pupils of the Lyceum No. 173, they are fed in the school canteen, which is run by the employees of the KBFP. The absolute majority of the senior pupils surveyed there stated that, compared to the pre-war period, the quality of food in the school canteen, its ration, calories, and taste has not changed; the portions remained the same or slightly decreased, there were even more vegetables and fruits, and slightly less meat. If our respondents do not like the food offered by the school canteen, most of them simply refuse to eat it, and only a few complain to the canteen staff, teachers or school administrators, or parents. Parents are more likely to respond to students' complaints about school canteen food; this is natural, as they are primarily concerned about their children's health. As for the response of canteen staff to complaints about food quality, our respondents say that sometimes they are taken into account in full, sometimes only partially. However, complaints about school meals were rarely mentioned at all.

The vast majority of respondents in the entire population (89,2 %) indicated that they always wash or disinfect their hands before eating, and this data is supported by qualitative information from focused group and in-depth individual interviews, in which parents repeatedly noted that they constantly talk to their children about this.

As for the drinking regime, it turned out that 39,9 % of senior pupils constantly take water to school, 30,7 % – sometimes, 29,4 % – never. The latter is probably due to the fact that in the schools where we conducted the study, there is access to drinking water, which is consumed either constantly or from time to time by 86,1 % of all respondents. Among the drinks most often consumed by the surveyed students, tea ranks first (77,8 %), followed by carbonated and non-carbonated water (67,6 %), juices, fruit drinks, nectars, and compotes (50,2 %), milk and milkshakes (41,0 %), coffee (37,2 %), sweet drinks (Coca-Cola, Sprite, etc.) (36,5 %), and energy drinks (7,2 %). Without additional research and monitoring data, it is difficult to say whether the drinking habits of the surveyed students are satisfactory from the point of view of their health, but the low acceptance of energy drink consumption makes us wonder whether there is a phenomenon of «socially acceptable response».

As for the use of alcohol by high school students, our survey revealed that 1,7 % of them drink alcohol constantly, 2 % drink it from time to time, and 10,8 % rarely. The respondents who drink alcohol said that it was primarily their friends and parents who initiated them to drink alcohol. Among those who drink alcohol, the vast majority do so on holidays, every fifth – 1–2 times a month, every tenth – almost every day. The majority of respondents in this group (two-thirds) drink wine and low-alcohol drinks, about a third drink beer, and every fifth drink spirits (vodka, whiskey, cognac). Most often, they drink alcohol in the company of family and friends. Three-quarters of surveyed high school students who drink alcohol said that their parents were definitely aware of this; more than a third of them said that their parents had a positive or rather positive attitude towards this. As we can see, even in such an escapist or protest type of consumption as alcohol consumption, the formation of food culture is influenced by the environment and loved ones.

### **3.3. Food Culture of Kharkiv Schoolchildren: about Other Features**

Among the problems provoked by the war, the problem of deteriorating mental health, especially, in our opinion, young people, is extremely acute. As our research has shown, the vast majority of surveyed students are currently experiencing stress: 12,8 % – constantly, 40,5 % – from time to time, 33,1 % – rarely. Only 7,8 % of respondents have never experienced stress since the war. It turned out that the sounds of explosions, which are repeatedly heard in Kharkiv quite often (55,7 %), uncertainty about future prospects



(49,8 %), the threat of losing their own lives and the lives of loved ones (48,5 %), conflicts with friends, relatives, and family (44 %), news about the progress of the war (35,7 %), and deteriorating health (24,4 %) have the greatest impact on the psycho-emotional state of our respondents. Only 6,4 % of the surveyed students said that during the war they had more conflicts with classmates, while about 10 % said that conflicts with teachers had become more frequent, and as many as 17,5 % said that conflicts with parents had become more frequent. This distinction is revealing.

Regarding the impact of stress on the nutrition of the surveyed high school students, 39,9 % of them said that they felt this impact; almost the same number (38,2 %) said that they did not feel it, and such a radical differentiation in a sample that is generally homogeneous in terms of living conditions and daily practices indicates that the very understanding of stress is blurred in the context of war. Regarding the impact of stress on nutrition, 50,7 % of those experiencing it said they had started eating less, 41,1 % said they had started eating more sweets, 35,6 % said they had started eating more, and 3,4 % said they had started drinking alcohol.

As part of our research, we also tried to find out whether our respondents felt that they lacked «live» communication with their friends, including classmates. Of course, the lack of such communication is particularly acute for students studying online (see (Borysov et. all, 2023)). The opportunity to study offline, which is available to both metro school students and students of school No. 173, minimizes this shortage. However, we wanted to find out whether the students we surveyed communicate outside of the learning process and how often they do so. It turned out that 46,3 % of the surveyed students communicate with their friends and classmates offline almost every day, 50,7 % visit them, and 63,2 % would definitely or rather receive guests at home. Among the latter two-thirds, 67,9 % of respondents said they always treat their friends who come to visit them. In other words, about 43 % of all respondents treat their friends, and in this sense, a study of adolescent food culture should take into account this important factor. At the same time, 56,7 % of them treat their guests to food they have prepared themselves.

Our respondents also like to visit coffee shops, pizzerias, etc. 13,5 % of respondents do it all the time, 56,4 % from time to time, and 26,9 % rarely. We would like to emphasise that the vast majority of respondents (60,1 %) do so to socialise with their friends, 59,7 % also do so to try something tasty, and 41,4 % do so to eat a particular favourite food or drink a favourite drink.

Thus, the general structure of the food culture of Kharkiv adolescents indicates its stability and reproducibility, and that the child-centredness of the Ukrainian socio-cultural system is also reflected in food practices. In this sense, culture is more resilient than situational circumstances, and even such radical problems as war cannot significantly affect its transformation.

#### **4. PREFERENCES IN NUTRITION PRACTICES: PERCEPTION, LIMITS, FACTORS**

Having provided a general overview of the landscape of Kharkiv schoolchildren's food culture and practices, we paid special attention to the criteria by which adolescents prefer the food they consume. To do this, we turned to a comparative analysis and compared those adolescents who prefer food provided by their parents and those who prefer school meals (see table 1).

Despite the fact that the food adolescents eat at school is the same for everyone, there is a noticeable difference in its assessment: from the minimum in the case of specificity and closeness of the description to the «physical condition» of the dish (for example, the answer «the food was half-cooked» was chosen by 12,3 % of those who prefer food provided by parents and 9,3 % of those who prefer school food, a difference of 3 %, almost a third) to the maximum in the case of using more abstract categories.

##### **4.1. Food Practices: Perception Aspects**

The most important is the perception of food as meeting the characteristics of a **healthy diet** and its **taste**. Interestingly, the first criterion is more significant: in the case of perceiving food as «healthy», the difference between those who prefer food from parents and those who prefer school food is 26,2 %, and in the case of perceiving food as «tasty» – 21,1 %. Other criteria are somewhat less important, but the difference in preferences remains: most of all, due to the perception of food as too fatty (23,6 % and 9,3 %, respectively), burnt (22,6 % and 11,4 %, respectively), and overcooked (19,8 % and 11,4 %, respectively).

These results indicate the importance of, firstly, the categories of perception used by adolescents to describe food, and secondly, the perception of healthy eating characteristics by adolescents themselves as sufficiently important for the formation and/or correction of relevant preferences.

Table 1

**Factors of Pupils' Preferences for School Meals, %**

If You Eat the Food You Are Given at School, then...?	They Prefer Food that is...	
	Given by Parents	Given at School
I like its taste	66,0	87,1
Meets the characteristics of a healthy diet	48,1	74,3
The food was half-cooked	12,3	9,3
The food was overcooked	19,8	11,4
The food was burnt	22,6	11,4
The food was too fatty	23,6	9,3

**Source:** author's data analysis.

In general, «school food lovers» are significantly more optimistic about school food (both in terms of taste and healthiness), while «home food lovers» were twice as likely to be critical (by some measures). The differences are so marked that they cannot be attributed to the state of affairs in the material world. Of course, here we are talking primarily about the specifics of perception and the categories used to describe food in certain communities.

We also hypothesised that the identified categories of perception are key to shaping adolescents' eating practices. To test it, we compared the perceptions of school food among those who eat at school all the time and those who do so occasionally (see Table 2).

Table 2

**Categories of Perception and Eating Practices of Schoolchildren, %**

If You Eat the Food You Are Given at School, then...?	Do you eat at school during a full-scale war?	
	Yes, all the time	Yes, sometimes
I like the taste	81,9	55,4
Meets the characteristics of a healthy diet	68,5	45,9
The food was half-cooked	10,7	12,2
The food was overcooked	10,1	25,7
The food was burnt	12,8	21,6
The food was too fatty	12,8	21,6

**Source:** author's data analysis.

Adolescents who eat at school all the time are more likely to say that they like the taste of the food (81,9 % vs. 55,4 %, respectively) and that the food meets the characteristics of a healthy diet (68,5 % vs. 45,9 %, respectively). Again, criticism is more frequent among those who sometimes eat at school: the assessment of food as burnt is generally 2,5 times more frequent (25,7 % and 10,1 %, respectively), and the difference in two other parameters (burnt and fatty food) is almost twofold. As we can see, the routinization of practices directly affects the assessments and categories of perception. In this sense, we can say that the phenomenon of habitus' hysteresis identified by P. Bourdieu is fully confirmed (Bourdieu et al., 1992).

When assessing school meals, we separately considered the assessments and preferences of adolescents whose practices are related to healthy eating, as these are the adolescents who monitor their own diet (37,8 %). Interestingly, this group considers school meals to be less healthy: 51,9 % of them believe that the food provided at school meets the characteristics of a healthy diet, compared to 66 % of their peers.

**4.2. Health Issues in Food Practices**

Separately, we investigated the relationship between self-assessment of health and techniques for rationalising and managing nutrition (see table 3).

Health perception is most strongly influenced by 2 indicators directly related to nutrition – dietary control (55,7 % of respondents who rate their health as excellent, and only 23,3 % of respondents who rate it as satisfactory) and consumption of mostly healthy food (45,9 % of respondents who rate their health as excellent, and 32,9 % – as satisfactory) (see table 3). Answers to this question demonstrate the determination of self-perception rather than objective health status: for example, monitoring involves more active involvement and reflexivity than consumption of a certain list of products, the decision to buy at least some of which is made by parents, not adolescents themselves. Some other health promotion practices related to self-assessment are also distinguished by the activity and reflexivity that precedes them, such as going to the gym or swimming pool and exercising on street sports grounds.

Table 3

**Relationship Between Self-Assessment of Health and Health Promotion Practices, %**

What do You Do to Improve/Maintain Your Health?	Self-assessment of health		
	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Watch your diet	23,3	41,1	55,7
Eat mostly healthy food	32,9	35,5	45,9
Going to the gym or swimming pool	30,1	29,1	42,6
Exercise on outdoor sports grounds	23,3	24,1	32,8
Follow the daily routine	24,7	26,2	29,5
Participate in sports clubs or sections	9,6	23,4	26,2
Running	15,1	14,9	21,3
Do morning exercises (exercises)	28,8	28,4	18
Visit doctors regularly for preventive care	27,4	18,4	16,4
Attend dance classes, gymnastics clubs, etc.	9,6	16,3	11,5
Practice yoga, qigong, reiki, etc.	5,5	4,3	1,6

**Source:** author's data analysis.

Thus, we have found patterns that are quite predictable, in particular: the higher the self-assessment of health, the more actively respondents monitor their diet, eat healthy food, go to the gym or swimming pool, play sports outdoors or in sections (the distinction is particularly clear here), follow a daily routine, and run. It is noteworthy that there is no such clear relation to morning exercises, and attending dance and gymnastics groups. There is an inverse correlation with regular visits to doctors, and the practice of yoga, gypsy, reiki, etc. As you can see, both nutrition rationalization techniques are strong predictors of respondents' health, with a pronounced linear relationship. This once again illustrates the importance of healthy eating and a sustainable diet in health.

One of the most important factors affecting health is knowledge of water consumption standards and practices. Among respondents with declared excellent health, more than two-thirds say they know exactly how much water they need (for comparison, only two-fifths of respondents with declared satisfactory health say this), as well as a third of those who have an approximate idea versus half of those who are «satisfactorily healthy». Homologous dependence is also observed in terms of applying this knowledge in practice (see Table 4): the number of those who do not use this knowledge increases almost threefold with deterioration of health, while the number of those who always use it decreases almost twice (from 38,3 % to 21,4 %).

Finally, when testing another hypothesized perceptual factor, a relationship was found between self-rated health and home nutrition practices (see table 5).

Self-assessment of health is most significantly associated with *increased meat consumption* (19,1 % of those who assess their own health as satisfactory, 42,6 % of those who assess it as excellent), *dietary diversity* (24,6 % of those who assess their own health as satisfactory, 41,6 % of those who assess it as excellent), who assess their own health as satisfactory, 24,6 %, and 41 % of those who assess it as

excellent), *intensification of home cooking practices* (23,3 % of those who assess their own health as satisfactory, and 36 % of those who assess it as excellent). Other, less influential practices include increased frequency of meals at home, increased amount of food consumed at home, increased consumption of vegetables and fruits at home, increased caloric intake, and overall assessment that eating at home has improved.

Table 4

**Relationship Between Self-Assessment of Health and Knowledge of How Much Water to Consume Per Day, %**

Do You Know How Much Water You Should Consume Per Day?	Self-Assessment of Health		
	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Yes, you do	43,8	53,9	67,2
Yes, you have a rough idea	52,1	43,3	31,1
No, you don't.	0,0	1,4	0,0
Never been interested in this	4,1	1,4	1,6
<b>Do you act on this knowledge?</b>			
Yes, always	21,4	23,4	38,3
Yes, but not always	57,1	68,6	55,0
Almost never	14,3	7,3	5,0
Hard to answer	7,1	0,7	1,7

Source: author's data analysis.

Table 5

**Relationship Between Health and Home Nutrition Practices, %**

During a Full-Scale War,...		Self-Assessment of Health		
		Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5
frequency of meals at home.	Decreased or rather decreased	16,5	11,3	4,9
	Has not changed	76,7	73,8	68,9
	Increased or rather increased	6,8	14,9	26,2
began to eat at home.	Less or rather less	19,2	17,7	9,8
	No change	67,1	66,0	54,1
	More or sooner more	13,7	16,3	36,1
the diet is now at home...	Less or rather less diverse	21,9	19,1	11,5
	Has not changed	53,4	61,0	47,5
	More or rather more diverse	24,6	19,9	41,0
You have started eating fruit and vegetables at home...	Less or rather less	16,4	14,9	4,9
	No change	59,0	50,3	52,4
	More or sooner more	24,6	34,8	42,7
The food at your home has become...	Less or rather less caloric	6,9	11,3	13,1
	No change	82,2	78,1	65,5
	More or rather more caloric	10,9	10,6	21,4
You started cooking at home...	Less often or somewhat less often	8,2	8,5	3,2
	has not changed	68,5	70,9	60,8
	More often or somewhat more often	23,3	20,6	36,0

*The End of the Table 5*

1	2	3	4	5
The amount of meat you eat at home.	Decreased or rather decreased	12,4	14,9	6,5
	Has not changed	68,5	66,6	50,9
	Increased or rather increased	19,1	18,5	42,6
meals at your home.	Worsened or rather worsened	13,7	5,0	1,6
	No change	65,8	74,5	52,5
	Improved or somewhat improved	20,5	20,6	35,9

**Source:** author's data analysis.

Thus, as we can see, self-assessment of health-supposedly a purely objective, measurable, medically determined indicator – depends not only on the stasis, here- and-now state of affairs in nutrition and related practices, but also on dynamics, on the extent to which, for example, meat consumption changes or the diversity of the diet. This once again shows that the war situation has brought to life new factors and dimensions of socio-cultural, practical, and structural inequalities in Ukrainian society.

### CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

We have at least briefly and schematically analysed the place of food (micro)politics in the biopolitics of the state and other subjects of biopower. In order to study the food culture of Kharkiv schoolchildren, we built an appropriate conceptual model, and also developed a situational and ad hoc, but still typology of practices (basic food practices, “loca””, “niche”, “festive”, “situational”, and “background” practices).

Using this conceptual framework, we have derived a number of results through empirical analysis, including an examination of the landscape of food culture and food practices. We found that the food culture of Kharkiv children and their parents has demonstrated resilience and reproducibility, supported by the child-centred nature of the Ukrainian socio-cultural system.

Analyzing the basic patterns in the area of food culture, we found that, for example, in general, «school food lovers» are significantly more optimistic about school food (both in terms of taste and healthiness), while «home food lovers» were more likely to be critical (twice as often by some indicators). Criticism is also more frequent among those who sometimes eat at school. This allowed us to more specifically demonstrate and conceptually substantiate the impact of food culture on the supposedly purely objective or, conversely, purely individual aspects of nutrition.

The relationship between self-assessed health and techniques of nutrition rationalization and management was also important: the higher the self-assessed health, the more actively respondents monitor their diet, eat healthy food, go to the gym or swimming pool, exercise outdoors or in sections, follow a daily routine, and run. Part of these techniques is the attitude to water consumption – and among respondents with excellent health, more than two-thirds say they know exactly how much water they need, and a homologous relationship is observed in terms of putting this knowledge into practice.

In addition, we found that not only sustainable food culture routines, but also dynamics and processes in this area affect health status, as self-assessed health is most significantly associated with increased meat consumption, dietary diversity, and intensified home cooking practices.

Of course, the topic cannot be considered to be covered in a single outline publication. Our outline study opens up a number of prospects for further research. In particular, it is worth analyzing the hidden determinants and factor determination of both current and sustainable eating practices, as well as dynamics and processes in this area; it is important to use the information obtained through qualitative methodology in further analysis; heuristically, the analysis of the data structure using multivariate methods seems to be a strong solution; conceptually, it is interesting to analyse the place of national cuisine and ethnically coloured food in the food culture of Kharkiv adolescents.

However, even a sketchy study is enough to confirm that this topic is relevant, acute, and important not only for individuals (students, parents, teachers) or institutions (schools), but also for the state and society, and to demonstrate the need for further research in this area.

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