Global Trends and Local Choices
A Comparison of Young Italian and American Food Practices

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**Abstract**

Food choice is most commonly discussed as a product of culture and market structures. These influences do exist, but they also disregard the individual decision-making process and discount the formulation of personal food lifestyles. Given the global spread of food trends—diets, dishes, and industry processes—are Italian and American food habits really that distinct? This project compares the food practices of young Italian and American individuals, and searches for the influencing factors behind these practices. Graduate students in Tuscany and the California Bay Area were surveyed and interviewed about their food habits and gastronomic preferences in order to comparatively analyze typical food practices and receptivity to global food trends. Students of both nationalities were observed to be highly aware of global food trends. Despite the high levels of awareness, however, neither population has made significant efforts to adjust individual habits to line up with movement goals surrounding sustainability, ethics, or aesthetics. In terms of the comparison, certain aspects of young adult food culture—namely grocery shopping practices and attitude towards food movement ideals—were found to be consistent across divisions of nationality. Pronounced differences still appear, however, in the amount of time spent on food, the prioritization of food as a social endeavor, and the origins of current food practices and attitudes.
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**Introduction**

Italy is traditionally seen as a culture dedicated to food. In theory dishes are rooted in local tradition and flavors, families spend multiple hours at the dinner table, local producers are well-known and respected, and ingredients are bought fresh and only when in season. In contrast, fast food is seen as staple in American diets. For most, cooking and eating is a chore rather than a pleasure, cash crops and large commercialized farms control the agricultural industry, and it is normal to stock up at the supermarket with very little knowledge of where food comes from or how it is produced. There are potentially no two western food cultures with more disparate ideals. In a globalizing world with internationally recognized food movements, however, food ideas and relationships can change.

Food movements, collective social efforts surrounding any number of food-related issues, have recently burst into popular culture with astonishing force. A simultaneous growth in food consciousness has occurred as both a cause and consequence of theses movements. In a June 2010 New York Review of Books, Michael Pollan wrote about “the new food movement,” saying that factions previously focused on different aspects of food reform are finally beginning to coalesce around a single movement (Pollan 2010). The factions he references still exist—involving debates on topics as diverse as genetically modified foods, healthy school lunches, animal rights, and reforming the farm bill—but their leaders are beginning to see how these issues group around an overarching need to reform the *entire* farm-to-fork process.
Of these original factious movements, Slow Food is one of the few that has always approached food reform holistically. Pollen calls Slow Food the “purest expression of food movement politics” and seems to indicate that this is the *food movement* that activists are adopting as the centerpiece of their efforts. A grassroots nonprofit and growing international social movement, Slow Food is largely credited with galvanizing international concern for our current food situation and re-introducing gastronomy into academia (Andrews 2008). The movement began as a regional effort in 1986 in Northern Italy and has served as a major motivator for my research project. Founder Carlo Petrini saw Slow Food as a counterattack on the globalization of fast food culture, as a desire to preserve local food traditions, and as a call for people to reengage with their meals and understand the repercussions of their gastronomic habits. 150 member nations, 1,300 local chapters (“convivia”) and 100,000 individuals around the world now recognize the nonprofit and have pledged to uphold the ideal of “good, clean, and fair” food for everyone (SlowFood.com).

While the Slow Food movement grew out of pride for what Petrini and his colleagues saw as the best parts of the Italian field, market, and kitchen, American food movements formed with goals to disrupt existing food culture. Food leaders like Pollen, Francis Moore Lappé, and Mark Bittman will tell you that until the 1970’s food was essentially invisible as a political, economic, or cultural topic in the United States. For much of the last century our focus has been to standardize food production and reduce prices—today, Americans spend a smaller percentage of their income on food than any people in history (Pollen, 2010). Cheaper food is a
benefit in some respects, but there are health, environmental, and equity tradeoffs that accompany the choices we have made. In the early years, some activist’s goals were as simple as getting consumers to think about their purchasing and eating habits. As conversations around food production and consumption have entered the mainstream, however, movement efforts have begun trying to change laws, markets, and individual practices.

Although Slow Food aims to maintain traditional food practices, and the American food movement seeks to introduce new practices, the end goal of a sustainable food system is common to both. A sustainable food system is one in which food production policies and food consumption practices are healthy for your body, beneficial to the earth, and socially equitable in the long-term. Under neither the current Italian nor American systems are these ideals realized to their full potential. Where in the farm-to-fork chain are these movements having an impact? To what extent are individual habits a product of cultural precedent versus market structure? How do these factors affect younger generations, in particular, which are developing habits at the intersection of standardized global conglomerates and sustainably minded international food movements?

This project, a mixed methods study, focuses on Italian and American graduate students. Surveys were used to create a general picture of current habits with as many data points as possible and interviews provide a more nuanced understanding of food practices as well as an inside look at the individual’s decision-making process. This research seeks to understand which personal or societal factors are shaping the food practices and attitudes of young adults in Italy and the
Unites States. In the end, my results should highlight the effects of globalization on individual food choice as well as hint at the reach of global food movements and the ideals they promote.
**Background**

In 1996, Vogue declared food “the new sex” (Wright and Middendorf 2008). After years of neglect, food is moving back into our consciousness and being discussed on a global stage. Some of the excitement manifests itself as short-lived trends. Other discussions entrench themselves in popular culture, and an even smaller subset work their way into daily decision-making to become habit.

Many movements are well established in everyday language—vegetarian, vegan, and organic among others. For most food movement activists, however, agency is not about diet trends and popular culture, but about basic human rights and responsibility.

**Ethical Production vs. Aesthetic Consumption**

Food movements are generally concerned with one of two debates: the ethical debate surrounding the social and environmental consequences of food production and the aesthetic debate surrounding the pleasure of food consumption. Existing academic research on global food movements either isolates the discussion to only one of these debates (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010, Singer and Mason 2006, Wilk 2006, Miele and Murdoch 2002, Kaufmann 2010) or approaches the issue so broadly that it is hard to identify concrete local or regional implications (Wright and Middendorf 2008, Lang and Heasman 2004).

Gottlieb and Joshi try to frame the food movement as a social justice movement that mirrors the rhetoric of the more established environmental justice movement. Singer and Mason take a similar approach and focus on supply-side
politics rather than consumer preferences. In contrast, Wilk focuses on cuisine and taste, Miele and Murdoch explore gastronomic aesthetics, and Kaufmann conducts in-depth interviews that inquire about the “meaning of cooking.” Common among all of these sources is a lack of information about what role the consumer should play. The authors who focus on production issues are quite obviously restricting their comments to the farm-to-shelf process, but even those researching the pleasure in consumption largely ignored the consumers and instead focused on the aesthetics of food in restaurants and other dining establishments.

**Rhetorical Strategies**

Much of the literature surrounding food movements in the United States frames the efforts as “alternative” and uses reform language such as “change”, “reshape”, and “restructure” (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). Wright and Middendorf (2008) claim that the agrifood movement requires a “cultural overhaul” (3) to move food back into our consciousness. They argue that agency is central to any social movement, defining agency as, “the ability of [individuals or collectives] to act... independently of the constraining aspects of structure, including the *predominant customs and norms of culture*” (emphasis added). This framing is not as applicable, however, in Italy where the predominant customs and norms of culture already hold food at the forefront of consciousness. In fact, Slow Food, which started in Italy, opts for language like “protect”, “embrace”, and “defend” (SlowFood.com) to describe their efforts, which are largely the same as those championed by “alternative” food movements elsewhere.
Individual Agency and Collective Action

Food awareness is well documented in academic literature, but there is no research exploring the cultural, economic, or demographic factors that lead individuals to pursue one movement paradigm over the other in practice. In a country such as Italy or France, where the aesthetic and quality of food has always been paramount (Miele and Murdoch 2002), Slow Food is a powerful force. The Ark of Taste efforts, which promote local flavors and protect endangered products, are popular in both countries, but so are the Presidia projects, which provide direct support to small farmers (SlowFood.com). The fact that the collective movement highlights both ethics and aesthetics in Italy, however, does not necessarily signify a concern for both arguments at the individual level. Similarly, the United States has a history of championing social justice issues (i.e. strong labor unions, women’s rights in the workplace, etc.) but there is little evidence showing whether individual Americans are more focused on issues of fair production or the gratifying consumption of food. In general, there is little research exploring individual food habits or individual agency in the context of the larger movements.

To be fair, food movements are particularly hard to study at the individual level—first, food practices are ingrained, personal habits that often prove difficult to extract as data, and second, food movements are frustratingly indirect about what they require from consumers. What do food movements want consumers to do exactly? “Buy organic” is too broad, even without the added confusion of how to accurately define organic.
From 1965-70, the “ethical production” half of the burgeoning food movement gave specific directions and saw specific results. Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers (UFW) lead a nationwide labor strike and boycott on grape growers in California. The grape strikers travelled across the country and implored consumers to boycott California table grapes until the working conditions and wages were improved. Armed with the specific task to leave grapes on the shelf and inspired by the workers’ first-hand accounts, individuals responded in dramatic fashion. In 1970, California grape growers agreed to sign union contracts. Today, consumer receptivity is hard to measure because organizations and leaders have failed to communicate goals like Chavez and the UFW.

Largely because of these failures, existing food movement research focuses almost exclusively on collective action (Wright and Middendorf 2008). Until recently, social movement research, generally, was more concerned with mobilization than outcomes (McAdam and Boudet 2012). Early social movement scholarship assumed social/political effectiveness a priori. Many of these assumptions stemmed from the fact that theorists were studying only the most prominent social movements: the women’s movement, Civil Right’s, etc. It is unclear whether the food movement will be counted among prominent movements in the future, but for the time being we understand very little about the effects at the individual level. Large-scale impacts—state action, electoral change, social/cultural change, and impact on other movements—form the core of social movement outcome research (McAdam and Snow 2010). McAdam and Boudet (2012) point out, however, that smaller scale studies are actually best for assessing impacts.
because spurious factors are nearly impossible to isolate at the macro level. By surveying individual food habits, before macro-level impacts have been assigned, I attempt to fill these gaps in the existing scholarship.

The Social Science of Food Choice

Much of my investigation on food practices revolves around the concept of consumer choice, or more specifically, food choice. In the 1990’s the Economic and Social Research Council sponsored a multidisciplinary research effort, The Nation’s Diet, to “improve understanding of the processes of food choice” (Murcott 1998). As a starting assumption, the researchers agreed, “food is not just something to be eaten.” Food is of course, something to be eaten, it provides fuel for living organisms, but it is also very much a “social process” (Nützenadel, 2008). The second assumption held constant across disciplines is that “all that is nutritious and non-toxic is not food” (Murcott, 1998). Human beings make deliberate choices about their food, which are neither a product of “idiosyncratic individual variation” or “uniform across the human species or history” (Murcott, 1998).

These two assumptions aside, consumer choice theories are fundamentally different depending on one’s academic discipline. In the past two decades food has penetrated the academic world to such a degree that most disciplines have even identified specific food choice theories within the field of consumer theory. I will briefly outline the viewpoints I considered while conducting my research and highlight the capacity for social movement change that each approach concedes.
Psychologists use the *social cognitive approach* and think of individual choice as a product of people’s perceptions of a situation, rather than as a product of the actual situation. The theory of planned behavior—a choice theory specifically tailored to food—says that an “individual’s intention to perform a behavior” (e.g. buy organic) is shaped by a) her attitude toward the behavior (e.g. it will make me healthier), b) perceived social pressure (e.g. I will be seen as elitist), and c) the “amount of control that the individual perceives herself to have over the behavior in question” (e.g. my small budget prevents me from buying organic) (Murcott, 1998).

Despite social pressure and structural restraints, such as the cost of food, the psychology perspective still largely places the right to choose with the individual. Through this lens, food movement teachings are only effective if they are perceived by the individual to be personally beneficial, socially acceptable and within one’s control.

Sociologists agree that perceptions shape actions, but they attribute those perceptions to what is know as the *normative order*—“a set of institutionalized guidelines about appropriate conduct which are generally held to be binding within particular social contexts or circles” (Murcott, 1998). As Murcott explains it, “‘Choices’ are pre-programmed; people have dispositions that they have learned from others in their social network, whether that be a peer group, an ethnic group, a social class, a local community, or a nation” (Murcott, 1998). Choice is also constrained by institutional structures such as the presence of food retailers and the cost of food as set by the global market. If “food choice” is understood in this way, as a shared rather than individual expression of preference, than social movements
and the collective choices they inspire are equivalent to individual choices. Sociology believes that the concept of food choice, even in the individualistic western world, is deceptive in terms of the impact an individual can have on her environment.

Anthropology, the final discipline I considered, is somewhat of a combination of sociology and psychology. Anthropologists acknowledge individual decision-making authority, but stress that these personal tastes must be taken in a social and cultural context. Change in food choice over space and time is a consideration the anthropological lens stresses more than the others. International food movement rhetoric may penetrate cultural consciousness, but until movement goals become feasible for an individual that dietary change cannot be enacted. The anthropological perspective was particularly important for this project as a lens through which to observe cultural and national differences. Food is a marker of personal identity ("you are what you eat"), but it is also a marker of national identity and often times a source of regional pride.

**Tuscany and the California Bay Area**

Italy and the United States were selected as opposing forces, the former a historical model of slow food and the latter, the current antithesis. These nations have rich culinary histories, however, which extend far beyond the slow/fast duality.

Italian food is not as uniform as we are lead to believe in the United States. Venetian cuisine is different than Tuscan cuisine, which is different than Sicilian
cuisine. Pasta, tomatoes, basil, garlic, and olive oil are staples across the country, but preparation methods and specialties vary. In Florence for example, the two most famous dishes bistecca fiorentina—a rare, tender cut of premium beef—and ribollita—a hearty bread, vegetable, and bean soup—diverge from the classic conception of Italian food. Paolo Conti, an Italian investigative journalist will also tell you that Italian food is not as “good wholesome, and genuine” as foreigners, or Italians for that matter, are led to believe (Conti 2012). In his book The Myth of Good Italian Food, Conti shows that Italian agriculture used more pesticides per person in 2010 than the United States1, 85% of the products Italians consume are “technofoods” or foods that have been subjected to an industrial transformation process, and he asserts that Italy’s failure to capitalize on its natural, locally-focused food industry is the country’s biggest failure of the postwar period.

To break another stereotype, most Italians shop at supermarkets more often than at open-air markets. Local mercati are still a prominent fixture in Italian food culture and food infrastructure, but the biggest supermarkets in Florence (Coop, Conad, Il Centro, etc.) are set up much like any American supermarket, and attract every subset of the population. One key difference, however, is the sheer volume of point-of-purchase food establishments in the city. Every street in Florence is guaranteed to have multiple food locals, whether they are restaurants, grocery stores, alimentari (specialty stores), or gelato shops.

While a portion of my interviews discussed food history and gastronomic norms in the participants’ hometowns, daily practices are directly impacted by the

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1 Italian agriculture used 1.2 kilos of pesticides/person and the U.S. used 1.01 kilos/person.
local culture, market structure, and culinary standards. Florence is a dense urban center of about 370,000 residents covering only about 40 square miles. The City is a living museum of Renaissance history, and as such is constantly swarmed by tourists, many of who come to Tuscany specifically for the food. Florence is situated geographically and symbolically at the heart of Italian culinary pride and is ground zero for Slow Food activism. The University of Florence is located directly in the heart of the city and is very much an urban campus with classrooms and offices woven into the fabric of the surrounding streets. European University Institute (EUI) on the other hand, is located in Fiesole, a tiny hill city overlooking all of Florence. A bus ride from the center of Florence to the EUI campus, however, is only about 15 minutes, and nearly all of the students live in central Florence.

Stanford University is located in a much newer, suburban environment. Less than a century ago, the Silicon Valley was an agricultural valley dominated by orchards and large plots of farmland. Today, the Bay Area is populated by the most successful technology companies in the world (Facebook, Google, Apple, etc.), and the Peninsula in particular, is characterized by innovation and a staggering amount of wealth. Entrepreneurial tendencies and financial means also make Stanford and the surrounding area an epicenter for food movement trendsetting, culinary experiments and high-end restaurants, grocery stores, and delicacy shops.

Unlike Florence, the Peninsula is not associated with a particular dish or even cohesive cuisine. California, in fact, is often associated with fusion cooking—the combining of one type of cuisine with another. Asian, Mediterranean, and Latin American cuisines can be found in both their pure state and in a variety of
combinations with one another all over the Peninsula. Alongside these international influences, however, exist traditional American diners and fast food establishments serving foods such as burgers, milkshakes, and deli sandwiches.

As compared to the rest of America, the Peninsula is an outlier in terms of the plethora of food options available. Fresh ingredients typical of Northern California cooking are hard to find in many regions, especially urban centers, of the country. In the essay collection *Food in the USA* editor Carole Counihan defines American cuisine by “its profit making imperative, its multiethnicity, and its nutritional and gustatory deficiencies” (Counihan, 2002). After seeing such a depressing characterization (at least the first and last descriptors), a movement to revolutionize the food industry in the U.S. seems an apt development.

![Figure 1: Increase in Number of Farmers’ Markets since 1994](image-url)
As noted in the introduction, such a revolution is already underway, and changes can be observed in the type of food retail options available, the rhetoric used on food labels, and the increased media attention to anything and everything related to food. The USDA began counting farmers’ markets in 1994 and the number has steadily risen every year since; “organic” and “free-trade” are coveted packaging designations; and in 1993 an entire television network, Food Network, was devoted to food and the culinary arts. Food movements have clearly foraged cultural inroads. How, if at all, does this translate to an impact on the practices of individual consumers?
Methods

I used a combination of survey methods, in-depth interviews and fieldwork to compare the food practices of native-born Italian and American students and to explore their valuations and thoughts on the origins of those practices.

My participants were Italian graduate students at the University of Florence (Università degli Studi di Firenze or UNIFI), and European University Institute (EUI) in Fiesole, as well as American graduate students at Stanford University in California. I specifically chose to work with graduate students because unlike middle-aged adults, they are just now developing personal food habits, and unlike undergraduates, they are more likely to have access to cooking facilities along with a need to prepare meals for themselves (i.e. they do not have dining hall or parent-cooked meals). Additionally, young adults—especially highly educated graduate students—are more a product of global cultural trends than older generations who developed shopping, cooking, and eating habits before the current conflicts around food had fully developed.

In the fall of 2012 I was presented with the opportunity to study abroad in Florence for the spring quarter, at which point I selected UNIFI and EUI as practical settings for my survey and interview data collection. Although field notes were not an official component of my data, living in my research location for three full months had a profound impact on my understanding of day-to-day practices. Living abroad and interacting with the local food culture gave me a nuanced appreciation for regional dishes, language oddities, food establishments (stores, markets, cafes, restaurants, etc.), and most importantly, social food norms.
While in Florence, Professor Donatella della Porta, a sociology professor at EUI agreed to help me distribute surveys and connect with interview subjects at both Florentine schools. Administrators at my Stanford abroad program also assisted with survey translation and interviewee recruitment. Upon returning home to Stanford, I used email lists available to me and took advantage of graduate student contacts to distribute my survey as widely as possible and recruit interview participants who fit my sample criteria. Participants had to be native Italians or Americans, they had to be in at least their second year of graduate school, and they had to live outside of their parents’ house. Logistically, the US graduate students who participated in my study had to be on campus in the summer, when I conducted the Bay Area portion of my research.

Data Collection

Going into the collection phase, I intended to collect 40-50 survey responses in each of the countries in my study. I sent surveys to about 100 participants in Florence and about 1,000 participants at Stanford. 27 Italians and 99 Americans responded to my survey, for approximate response rates of 27% and 10%, respectively.

I used the online survey software, Qualtrics, to create both English and Italian versions of my survey. It took participants between five and 25 minutes to complete, and could be started, stopped, and resumed for up to a week. In Italy, I was able to
send a survey link to all of the Italian\textsuperscript{2} EUI students by combing through the university student directory, as well as a handful of UNIFI students who were advisees of one of my study-abroad professors. Because of this paring, the Italian survey process is best described as a combination of representative and convenience sampling. At Stanford, I was unable to find a comprehensive graduate student distribution list and instead selected a range of academic departments or schools (including the Political Science, Sociology and English departments, the School of Education, the Medical School, and the School of Engineering). In order to correct for the selective sampling that occurred with the Stanford and, to a lesser extent, the Italian population, I collected demographic data (gender, age, ethnicity, home region, etc.) and used t-tests/chi-squared analyses to test for any potential demographic biases that might skew my data. Below you will find a table with the demographic information for my survey participants.

\textbf{Table 1: Survey Participant Demographics}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age (percentage)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Economic Background (percentage)</th>
<th>Hometown Region (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>White—95.5, Pacific Islander—4.5</td>
<td>20-25yrs—0.0, 26-30yrs—72.7, 31+ yrs—27.3</td>
<td>Female—54.5, Male—45.5</td>
<td>White Collar—52.4, Gray Collar—42.9, Blue Collar—4.8</td>
<td>Northwest—7.4, Northeast—29.6, Central—40.7, Southern—3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{2} EUI is a European, rather than Italian institution and students come from all over Europe to attend. Well over half of the student population is born outside of Italy.
The survey allowed me to collect more data than an interview-only method, and the results helped answer both of my research questions (See Appendix A, pg. 86 for the full survey). To gather data on food habits, I asked questions such as:

- How often do you go to the grocery store?
- Do you use a grocery list when you go shopping?
- On average, how long do you spend eating dinner?
- During an average week, how much money do you spend on food?

Multiple-choice answers or scales enabled me to standardize responses and transform them into a set of generalizable habits.

To explore the motivational factors behind food practices I asked questions such as:

- What sources do you most often use to guide your eating practices?
- Do you know where most of your food is produced/grown?
- On a scale of 0-6, how similar are your current food practices to those you were raised with?

With the exception of a few short answer questions, the majority of the survey utilized a multiple-choice or scale format to reduce the time demand on respondents and help boost the response rate.

To help contextualize and add qualitative richness to my survey results I also kept a log of field notes, conducted interviews and collected participant food journals from my interview subjects. In each of my locations of interest I recorded (using a hand-held audio recorder), transcribed and coded 45 to 70 minute interviews with five graduate student subjects. Individuals were selected based on field of study and home region. I was looking for diversity in field of study so that personal attitudes were given preference over academic knowledge, and in home region so that the findings might be more representative of national, rather than
purely local trends and attitudes. Although I set up the Italian interviews to be conducted in English, I did switch to speaking Italian when communication issues arose.

Table 2: Italian Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alessio</th>
<th>Chiara</th>
<th>Lorenzo</th>
<th>Massimo</th>
<th>Michele</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of Study</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Region</td>
<td>Tuscany</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>Emiglia-Romagna</td>
<td>Marche</td>
<td>Calabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Profession</td>
<td>High School Teacher</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>High School Teacher</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Elementary Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s Profession</td>
<td>Bullet Train Employee</td>
<td>Bank Employee</td>
<td>University Professor</td>
<td>Financial Consultant</td>
<td>Postal Worker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: American Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adrian</th>
<th>Jaime</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
<th>Therese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of Study</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hometown</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>Toledo, OH</td>
<td>New Orleans, LA</td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Profession</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>Art Therapist</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>University Professor</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s Profession</td>
<td>Chauffeur</td>
<td>Real Estate Owner</td>
<td>Physical Therapist</td>
<td>University Professor</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I asked each of my interviewees to keep a journal of his or her food habits during the five days leading up to the interview. To make the journal process less taxing on the participant, I created a template (See Appendix B, pg. 92) that they either filled out by hand or on the computer.
Each interview was divided into three sections: first, a debriefing of the information recorded in the subject’s food journal, second, an examination of daily food practices, and third, an introspective exploration of the subject’s beliefs about the origins of those practices as well as his or her big picture food attitudes. If the interviewees did not bring food movements into the conversation of their own accord (which most did not), I prompted a brief discussion on the topic at the very end of the interview. Sample prompts from each of the three sections are as follows (See Appendix C, pg. 93 for the full interview schedule):

- **Section 1:**
  - Pick one of the five days in your journal and walk me through what you recorded.
  - Did you notice anything surprising about your food habits by completing this journal?
- **Section 2:**
  - When you go out to eat, how do you usually select a restaurant?
  - Do you enjoy cooking?
- **Section 3:**
  - Have you ever followed a diet or made rules (formal or informal) about what you can and cannot eat?
  - How similar do you think your habits are to those of your age peers in Italy (America)?

**Data Analysis**

To analyze my survey data I downloaded an excel spreadsheet directly from Qualtrics and imported it into SPSS to begin the clean-up process. The clean-up process entailed renaming each variable, replacing missing values with a standard value, and removing invalid data (such as American responses filled out by international students). In addition, I grouped and recoded short answer responses,
where appropriate, into quantifiable categories, and I added a nationality variable so that I could combine my Italian and American survey results into a single dataset.

My analysis of the interview data proceeded in similar fashion. During the first stage, I ran crosstabs and created descriptive statistics for nearly all of my variables. After making initial observations, I slowly added t-tests and regressions and designed my queries around assumptions and questions that emerged from my first phase of analysis.

I followed a similar analysis schedule for my interview data. Before the analysis phase, however, I transcribed each interview by downloading the audio files onto my computer and transferring the audio to written dialogue in Microsoft Word. I did not transcribe every single word, but did include every sentence, pause, and emotion I found necessary to communicate my participants’ responses. In total, I would estimate that I transcribed 95 percent of the information I caught on tape.

Here too, I took a grounded theory approach to coding, before generating a final list of codes and categories. My final codes included:

- culture (national/local),
- friends/social life
- living situation
- family/background
- market availability (price, health, convenience, taste, and sustainability)
- food movement knowledge
- satisfaction (good/bad)
- change
- consistency
I made these codes by hand and essentially memorized the codes in order to recognize patterns and anomalies. Because I had only ten interviews I had no trouble keeping them distinct and whole in my memory.
Results

As described above, I used three methods—surveys, interviews with preparatory journals, and ethnographic observation—to collect data on the daily food practices and attitudes of Italian and American young people attending school in Florence and Palo Alto, respectively. Rather than report my results separately for each method, I have decided to present my findings more holistically using a narrative approach. Drawing on all of my data, I have created a typical, fictionalized American and Italian research subject. My composite Italian subject is named Giovanni and his American counterpart is Jacob.

I will use these characters to sketch a detailed, empirically informed narrative of typical daily food activities for a young American in Palo Alto, California and a young Italian in Florence, Italy. The characters and their actions are a composite of my interviewees’ descriptions of their typical day as well as my own experiences in each region. As their days unfold, I will periodically interject qualitative and quantitative findings, which highlight differences and similarities in Giovanni’s and Jacob’s days.

Morning

Giovanni wakes up on Monday morning ready for the final week of the term. He is a PhD student at European University Institute in Fiesole, which lies just 15 minutes outside Florence’s historic city-center. He kisses Linda, his girlfriend of five years, good morning and walks out to the kitchen to make two quick espressos on the stove. It takes no more than 5 minutes and Linda and he share a couple biscotti with their coffee before heading to the University.

After a meeting with his advisor and a couple hours in his office, it is time for lunch. Occasionally he goes into town with friends, but today Giovanni decides to stick with his normal routine and eat lunch in the cafeteria. He stops by Marco and Giulia’s
office on the way so he can eat with his closest friends. The cafeteria offers a number of options all made fresh by the University chefs. Giovanni tries to choose healthier options, but sometimes he just can't resist the orecchiette alla Norcia, a rich regional pasta dish he grew up with in central Italy. Today, however, that is not on the menu, and he selects a sandwich with spicy salami and mozzarella cheese, as well as a side of grilled vegetables and a small pastry to finish.

Giovanni, Marco, and Giulia eat their food and talk on the terrace for almost 40 minutes before Linda sits down to join the group with a couple of her friends. Giovanni has nearly finished his pastry and third espresso of the day, but elects to stay another 20 minutes so he can spend time with Linda. Around 2 o'clock he clears his dishes, and before returning to his office, grabs a Sicilian orange that he will eat later as an afternoon snack.

***

Mondays are busy for Jacob so he wakes up earlier than normal to get coffee started. While the coffee is brewing, Jacob hops in the shower and gets ready before returning to the kitchen to pop some bread in the toaster. He fills his thermos with coffee and a little creamer. His housemates are not awake yet, but there is extra coffee so he leaves the pot on low for their mid-morning enjoyment. Stanford campus is a 20-minute bike ride on a good day, 15-minute car ride on a bad day. Jacob decides that today is a good day so he puts his thermos in his bag, along with a yogurt and granola bar for later. He devours the peanut butter and banana toast half he just prepared in five large bites and rides off.

Jacob works in the lab for a couple hours before taking a break where he eats his granola bar and yogurt. He is working as a teaching assistant this quarter, for which he manages lecture and leads a section of undergraduates through practice problems. In between lecture and his section today he stops at a campus café and grabs a soda in hopes that it will raise his energy level to that of the enthusiastic new freshmen. Section goes reasonably well, and Jacob meets a friend at Campus Market for a late lunch. The Market is a cafeteria-style eatery that prides itself on being sustainable, healthy, and quick. Jacob likes all of these ideas and orders a California grilled chicken sandwich with a spinach side salad. Jacob has another appointment at 2:30 so the two friends spend less than 20 minutes eating their lunches together. They promise to spend more time next week before Jacob rushes off to his meeting.

What are your priorities?

These first two passages emphasize a couple of interesting differences between the eating patterns of young Italians and Americans. An initial observation drawn from my data is the clear impression that Italians shape their schedules
around food, while Americans organize their food routines around their schedules. In other words, spending time on food—shopping, cooking and eating—is a higher priority in young Italian culture than it is in young American culture, relative to other parts of life.

The survey data shows no significant difference between nationalities in the amount of time spent preparing or eating breakfast. All five American interviewees said they regularly ate breakfast, albeit more modest portions—cereal, protein bar, and oatmeal—than the hearty eggs and bacon breakfast we traditionally think of Americans eating. The Italian interviewees all drank coffee (a lot of coffee) and ate only a small cookie or piece of toast. Both groups chose to eat their breakfast while getting ready or even while commuting to school.

Table 4: Comparison of Meal Lengths (in minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meal</th>
<th>Italian Mean</th>
<th>American Mean</th>
<th>Significance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>17.70</td>
<td>17.28</td>
<td>NOT Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>34.50</td>
<td>27.28</td>
<td>P-value = .015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>38.44</td>
<td>36.61</td>
<td>NOT Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After this mutual morning rush, however, the American and Italian routines diverge. The remainder of the Italian day is built around lunch and dinner, while most Americans build their days around work or school, fitting food into the open time slots. For many Americans, this meant adding snacks into the mix in order to combat hunger when their eating schedules became irregular. The American practice of rushing food prep and consumption starts with breakfast, but unlike Italians it continues throughout the entire day. “Fast food nation” is not a term
confined to drive-through establishments, but one that applies to the pace of our daily gastronomic practices more generally.

In a pretest I carried out, participants were asked about the factors that influenced their food decisions. I compiled a list of the top five factors:

- price
- taste
- convenience
- healthfulness
- sustainability

Both survey and interview participants were asked to rank the factors in terms of their importance in food decisions. Over half of the Italian participants ranked convenience as the least important factor. Americans were more divided, with the mean “convenience” rank being 3.11 out of 5 (See Table 5 below). The correlation between nationality and convenience rank was statistically significant with a p-value of 0.002, with Americans clearly assigning more importance to the ease and convenience of their food routines, relative to Italians.

Table 5: Rank of Decision-Making Factors—1 Being the Most Important, 5 Being the Least Important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Italian Mean Rank</th>
<th>American Mean Rank</th>
<th>Significance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>NOT Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taste</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>P-value = .040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthfulness</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>NOT significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>P-value = .002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>NOT Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of my American interviewees, Jaime, was a business school student who kept a packed schedule from 8AM to 12PM. When asked if she was surprised by
anything in the process of recording her food journal she said, “I was writing it and just thinking ‘this is so busy!’...There just isn’t a lot of thought put into the food part of my day. It’s more about what’s convenient”. When I pressed her on it later she said, “There are so many things that I have to plan in advance because I’m not going to be home all day. The idea of packing food is too much for me. There is a mental block there, and I just can’t do it”.

According to Jaime, her typical daily food schedule would look something like this:

8:00: a breakfast bar in the car while driving to work  
10:00: a light snack at a café on campus  
12:00: lunch meeting at the business school cafeteria  
2:30: another snack bar or piece of fruit eaten in class  
7:00: quick dinner downtown in Palo Alto with her boyfriend or friends

Several points are worth making here. First, consistent with an observation offered above, Jaime’s work routines effectively structure her eating habits. Second, food is slotted into her schedule wherever it is most convenient. Third, and similar to Jacob, Jaime eats installments of food throughout the day so that she doesn’t get hungry.

Lisa, another American interviewee, occasionally brings food to work, but ends up going out for donuts a couple times a week because, again, it is convenient. “The only things close to my building”, Lisa regretted, “are a Happy Donuts and a sit down restaurant. I don’t really have time to go to the restaurant so I end up getting donuts way more than I should”. She also buys quick dinners at the 7/11 around the corner from her house if she is feeling “lazy.” She knows these practices aren’t healthy; she said so herself a couple of times. Both Jaime and Lisa resort to quick convenient food options because work, friends, school, and other obligations dictate
their schedules. Convenience does not necessitate poor quality food, but it does mean that their food intake is irregular. When they eat, what they eat, and how much they eat is anyone's guess at the beginning of the week. "Some days it looks pretty bad, but then there are other days where I eat balanced meals...Really I go through Jekyll and Hyde periods with how healthy I’m eating," Lisa said, which echoed a number of similar statements made by the other Americans.

Eating around one's other commitments may seem normal, but that is only because it is what we are accustomed to in America. The eating patterns of young Italians are remarkably regular—in large part because time at the table is given priority among the day’s events. Michele (pronounced mee-kelay), a second year masters student at the University of Florence, commented that “the American diet is not regular.” Only in contrast to the predictable habits of his peers and his childhood, could Michele pick up on the chaos inherent in young American diets.

Regular versus irregular food schedules is a difference in philosophy towards food, but it might also be about a different philosophy towards work. We must consider the possibility that Americans take work more seriously and therefore feel the discipline of work schedules more fully than Italians.

In general, the Italian interview responses seemed to indicate that gastronomic irregularity is viewed as a serious concern in Italian culture. At the beginning of the interview, each participant was asked to walk through one of the days from his or her food journal in a step-by-step process. Without exception, the Italian interviewees prefaced their descriptions with comments such as “every day is the same” or “there is no difference between the days.” Even the details of their
habits were consistent. Michele began with, “breakfast for me is always the same: coffee and biscotti. So basic.” Another interviewee, Massimo, recited his routine without hesitation: “I go to the company canteen around 12:30/1. I usually have a complete lunch with a first and second course, a small piece of bread and water.”

For many in the United States, this level of consistency is associated with antiquated diners and a group of “regulars.” Regularity is often pushed aside for convenience in America’s fast-paced lifestyle. Life as a graduate student is no less demanding in Florence, but even young Italians are deliberate about slowing down for meals. “I love to sit calmly at my table without thinking about anything. My twenty minutes with my meal make me very happy,” Michele said expressing the importance of this practice.

While time spent eating breakfast is no different for Italians and Americans, there is a statistically significant correlation (p-value = 0.01) between nationality and time spent eating lunch (See Table 4, pg. 31). Among the Americans surveyed, 75% regularly spend less than 30 minutes eating lunch. Among Italians surveyed, 65% regularly spend more than 30 minutes eating lunch. The cross tabulation below is associated with a chi squared value of 13.412 at a significance level of p = 0.020 (See Table 6 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>5-10 min</th>
<th>10-20 min</th>
<th>20-30 min</th>
<th>30-45 min</th>
<th>45-60 min</th>
<th>60+ min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both University of Florence and EUI have central dining areas that facilitate communal meals. It could be argued that this is also the case on Stanford campus (examples being dining halls, Tresidder Student Union, and Arbuckle Cafe at the business school) and yet my American interviewees discussed lunch as a way station between one meeting and the next or as Jaime cited above, as the setting for a working meeting over lunch. In contrast, Lorenzo, a postdoctoral student at EUI, savored the time with his food. “I like the idea of going to a restaurant with friends, like we did last Sunday, and spending three, four hours. Lose our time there,” he explained.

**Meals made easy**

A second difference I gleaned from my data was the greater frequency with which Americans bought pre-made foods rather than preparing a homemade meal. All of the Italian interviewees, save for Alessio, a younger student at EUI, said that cooking was a daily routine for them. Not only was the act of cooking consistent, so were the ingredients going into the pot. Italian dishes, or on rare occasion Greek and Spanish dishes, were the only cuisines attempted by Italian participants. Many discussed adding variety, but it quickly became clear that variety meant meat sauce on pasta one day and a cream sauce the next. “I do eat pasta almost every day, but I don’t want to eat pasta twice in one day. I like to mix it up,” Michele told me with a completely straight face. This loyalty to Italian dishes will be discussed in more detail later on in the results section.
In any case, fewer combinations and food options seemed to make cooking more enjoyable and less burdensome a task than that described by the American interviewees. According to Italians, mastering cooking is about the quality of the food rather than its complexity or innovative preparation. I included the following question in the survey in order to assess what role nationality plays in influencing cooking enjoyment:

![Image of a scale with labels for necessity and pleasure, marked for cooking]

A comparison of means shows that being Italian is very strongly correlated with a higher level of cooking enjoyment (See Table 7). Because nationality, or at least birth country, is a given trait and cannot be changed, it is safe to assume that being Italian leads to a greater enjoyment of cooking, rather than the other way around.

**Table 7: Cooking and Eating Enjoyment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Italian Mean</th>
<th>American Mean</th>
<th>Significance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooking Enjoyment</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>P-value = .008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Enjoyment</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>P-value = .000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Was it possible, however, that I surveyed a higher percentage of Italian women than American women, and a gender imbalance in my samples gave me this result? Cooking is traditionally seen as a woman’s activity, after all, and it would seem logical for women to say they enjoyed cooking—purely on the basis of
exposure—more than their male counterparts. With this possibility in mind, I ran a regression that included all three variables: nationality and gender as predictors, and cooking enjoyment as the dependent variable. Interestingly, the F ratio of the relationship between nationality and cooking enjoyment was 6.433, and the statistical significance of the relationship increased to p = 0.002 (See Table 8).

Table 8: Regression Models Predicting Cooking Enjoyment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>Significance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationality and Gender</td>
<td>6.433</td>
<td>P-value = .002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality, Gender, and Who Cooks</td>
<td>5.139</td>
<td>P-value = .002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The regression illustrated that women do rate cooking as more enjoyable than men, but this had no impact on the larger results. I even added a third independent variable, “who does the shopping,” to make sure I was only including participants who are actively engaged in the food acquisition and preparation process. With this addition, the strength of the relationship did not drop appreciably and the p-value stayed at 0.002, solidifying the claim that young Italians—male no less than female—enjoy cooking more than young Americans.

Although I was surprised to see an equally strong relationship between nationality and cooking enjoyment, and gender and cooking enjoyment, interviewee responses were very much in accord with this conclusion. In general, my American interviewees placed cooking on the necessity end of the spectrum, rather than the pleasure end. Joe, a Masters student at the Stanford School of Engineering, had worked out a system in which he only had to cook a maximum of three days a week:
I...make something on Sunday with a lot of leftovers, and then I plan on making one or two meals for the rest of the week. I eat those three meals for the whole week. My thinking is that I don’t want to cook everyday…and if I’m making this much food [makes a small plate with his hands] or this much [makes a large plate with his hands], it’s going to take me just about the same amount of time. From a time saving, money saving, efficiency perspective, I figured it made a lot of sense.

I could joke, “Leave it to the engineer to calculate the most efficient food lifestyle,” but I would be ignoring the other three Americans who also devised strategies to cut down on meal preparation time. When I asked Jaime if she likes cooking, she said, “I do. The only problem is that it takes so long. If I can get vegetables pre-cut or chicken already pounded, that makes things much more bearable.” “Not ‘bearable,’” she corrected herself, “I just don’t have time for it.”

Lisa actually felt guilty about spending time in the kitchen. “Cooking is fine when removed from the rest of my life and responsibilities,” she said laughing, “but I often feel bad about spending so much time cooking when I could be doing something else like working or running errands.” Lisa felt this guilt despite the fact that she only prepared about 25% of the food she ate each week. She estimated, however, that this was more cooking than most of her American age peers did on a weekly basis.

Although other factors (such as the value placed on convenience) are surely involved, it seems safe to assume that one reason Americans cook less than Italians is because they enjoy it less than Italians. The Italian interviewees voiced frustration about the lack of time they had to devote to cooking, and yet, they all found time to do so. Chiara, a PhD student at EUI, used a leftover system similar to Joe; on

___________________________

3 This was her own estimate based on what she’d recorded in her food journal.
weekdays, she would cook herself two dinners at once, and eat the second as a leftover the next day. While Joe was proud of this format, however, Chiara seemed embarrassed. She nearly covered her face in shame when describing her leftovers.

Because of the value placed on fresh ingredients, leftovers are not customary in Italy. Waiters will look at you funny if you ask for a doggy bag, and even at home, Italian custom is to immediately eat everything one cooks. My host mother in Italy chided us if we didn't finish what she'd prepared, and as is typical of many Italian families, she did not own a microwave, which meant that there was not even a means by which to reheat a meal from the night before. Chiara's decision to incorporate leftovers into her food routine is a departure from traditional practices, and possibly an indication of changes being made by the younger generation.

One practice still firmly rooted in young Italian's consciousness, however, is the tendency to avoid pre-prepared foods. Eating take-out, for example, is positively correlated with being American at a significance level of p = 0.000 (See Table 9, pg. 41). Italian restaurants don't offer take-out or delivery for one thing, but even at lunch time, when small pizza, salad, and sandwich shops offer easily transportable options, Italians will choose to prepare their own lunch at home, eat at the cafeteria at their workplace (or school), or if they do eat out, most will elect to take their lunch seated at the counter. There is no “to-go” option as in the United States.
Table 9: Frequency of Eating Out and Eating Take-Out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Italian Mean</th>
<th>American Mean</th>
<th>Significance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Eating Out</td>
<td>2.07*</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>P-value = .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Eating Take-Out</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>NOT significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Values were as follows: 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=quite often.

One of the interview questions dealt with the consumption of fast food. When I prompted the Italian subjects, the term “fast food” was interpreted more as a concept than as the proper noun that Americans recognized to mean Jack-in-the-Box, Taco Bell, KFC, McDonald’s, etc. When asked if he eats fast food, Massimo responded: “Yes, very often. This is a bad fall back. I speak very fast and maybe I am generally fast in the things I do, and with eating too. I try to control myself and slow down because I definitely eat too fast.”

Listening to Massimo, I had to take a step back and remind myself that only in the U.S. does “fast food” refer to specific localities. Michele used the term fast food to describe any sandwich or snack that he bought and ate without sitting down at a table for an extended period. When it was explained that very few Americans would refer to the sandwich they packed for lunch as “fast food,” he simply replied, “Why? It is very fast.” For Italians, even constantly busy young Italians, any food that is not cooked or prepared with care, is fast food. And any food that is not slow is seen as less tasty, less healthy, and less authentic. Whether this is true or not, it is important to know that this is the mindset with which Italians create their daily routines.
The American participants, in contrast, alluded to consuming pre-made meals rather often. When Lisa doesn’t go out for donuts, she packs a lunch. The example she gave me was a “microwavable dinner—pasta with meatballs and marinara.” Later that night she cooked dinner—“pan roasted tuna, which only took 20 minutes, and rice, both of which were from Trader Joe’s ready-to-go stuff.” Joe also packs his lunch. He makes himself a sandwich and then inserts “a random fruit or other thing that is premade.”

It should be mentioned that Therese, a Stanford masters student studying sustainable agriculture, was not surprisingly an exception to this rule, and in fact, an exception to many of the practices followed by her American peers. She was aware of this and attributed many of the differences to her academic interests. She and her partner take turns preparing both lunch and dinner every day. They even cook lunch and pack it to go; a practice that represents a compromise between those of her American peers, who prefer processed foods, and her Italian counterparts, who prefer to prepare or buy food immediately before eating it.

Hopefully you now have a sense of the significant differences present in the daytime routines of younger American and Italian graduate students. The composite narratives of Giovanni and Jacob help illustrate the central role that food plays in shaping Italian schedules, the priority that Americans place on convenience, the importance of a lengthy, freshly-prepared lunch in Italian culture, and the American rejection of daily cooking in favor of pre-prepared options. In the next section,
Giovanni’s and Jacob’s afternoon forays into the marketplace will foreground discussion of other national differences as well as some intriguing similarities.

**Afternoon**

Giovanni’s eyes droop as he finishes reading a colleague’s notes on the latest version of his thesis. “Time to get another espresso,” he thinks as he shuts down his computer for the day. Giovanni always goes shopping at the beginning of the week so before returning to his flat he will stop by the supermarket. Giovanni buys nearly all of his groceries at Coop, which operates stores all over Italy. There is one on his way home, which is convenient, but of course there are a couple markets on his way home. He chooses Coop because his family shopped there when he was younger and all of his friends shop there now.

Today Giovanni only has his bicycle to carry groceries, but that will be plenty of room because he will go again before the weekend. In addition, he and Linda went to the IperCoop with their car yesterday to pick up bigger items that they only go out for every few weeks. Coop is having a sale today and Giovanni chuckles as he passes the banners promoting Coop’s Vivi Verdi, organic brand. His sister, who lives in Milan, began eating organic products last year and now swears by the positive effects it's had on her health. Giovanni buys organic products when the price is comparable to the regular, but that is usually not the case. With today’s sale, however, he buys orange juice, tomatoes, bagged spinach, and a couple cans of chicken broth within the Vivi Verdi brand. He also throws the brand’s new line of laundry detergent into the cart.

Giovanni is not typically a browser, however, so after the brief Vivi Verdi distraction he makes quick stops in the produce section, the dairy isle, and the refrigerated meats counter to get the remainder of the week’s items. Making one final stop before climbing the stairs to his flat, Giovanni pops into the downstairs bakery, which he does every day for a fresh loaf of bread. He shares a quick conversation with Vittorio the baker and finally heads upstairs around 7:00 pm to meet Linda.

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By the time Jacob finishes his day on campus it is almost 6 o’clock. He could bike to Trader Joe’s, but decides he’d rather bike home to get his car since the grocery store is in the opposite direction of his house. He is already pretty hungry, but he doesn’t have anything in the kitchen that will make a solid meal so he has to go shopping before he can prepare dinner. He grabs a pear and eats it on his way to the shopping center to hold himself over for a little longer.

Trader Joe’s is Jacob’s preferred grocery store because it is relatively close (10 minute drive), it is relatively inexpensive, and it has a number of ready-to-use dinner options. He is only cooking for himself tonight, but tomorrow he is hosting two friends from undergrad who come down from San Francisco every month to hang out. Cooking for one person is difficult so he almost always makes at least two servings. Maybe he’ll eat tonight’s second serving for lunch tomorrow. “Quick veggie stir-fry?”
he thinks as he feels his stomach rumble. He grabs some peppers and corn, a bag of shelled soybeans and pre-cleaned chicken from the freezer section. He makes stir-fry fairly often so he’s got everything else at home: the noodles, vegetable oil, soy sauce, and sesame oil.

He brought a shopping list for tomorrow’s menu—steak, roasted potatoes, and asparagus—so he is able to grab those items quickly as well. To start tomorrow’s dinner he wants an easy appetizer so he goes to the frozen section to assess his options. He chooses ready-to-bake egg rolls, which he has made a couple times before. Lastly he visits the beverage isle—Trader Joe’s is known for stocking local, artisan wines and beers. He picks out a six-pack of a new beer that one of the employees recommends. Done and it is only 7 o’clock.

**Standardized Shopping**

If Giovanni’s and Jacob’s shopping experiences sound similar, that was my intention. While meal times are a source of difference for younger Italians and Americans, shopping routines appear remarkably similar and on a couple issues indistinguishable when the two nationalities are compared. For one thing, the types of food retailers in Florence are not so distinct from those in the California Bay Area. Restaurants and cafés are different, but supermarkets, small specialty shops (e.g. bakeries, liquor stores, etc.), and even outdoor markets (thanks to the growth of farmers’ markets in the United States) are organized in similar fashion and feature nearly all of the same items (even many of the same brands). Walking into one of the Italian supermarkets for the first time, I noticed a couple of novelties, but for the most part, felt right at home. As food production, processing, and storage is becoming increasingly standardized across the globe, so too are food outlets becoming more and more homogeneous, reflecting a standard aesthetic. Many of the standard features of these food retailers originated in America, and the increasingly
global demand for products that are both consumer-friendly and convenient (e.g. pre-washed baby carrots) are already familiar to consumers in the United States.

*Coop* (pronounced “cop”) and *IperCoop* (“ee-pear-cop”), where Giovanni shops in the narrative, are real Italian supermarkets. They are national chains and

![Figure 2: Advertisement for Vivi Verde on Coop’s Website](image)

Coop, in particular was the universal market of choice among my Italian interviewees. To give a U.S. equivalent, Coop is a combination of Trader Joe’s and
Whole Foods—the prices and size are like that of Trader Joe’s while the emphasis on sustainable, healthy products, is like that of Whole Foods. Trader Joe’s was the most popular grocery store among my American interviewees. IperCoop is a wholesale food distributor, and in terms of size, similar to an American Safeway. Safeway was the second most popular store mentioned by my American interviewees.

Figure 3: Safeway sells multiple brands—Open Nature, Eating Right, Organics, etc.—that convey food movements concepts of sustainability and purity.
When young Italians shop at Coop, the products they encounter and the decisions they are faced with are very similar to those of American students at the grocery store. Coop, Whole Foods, and Trader Joe’s all carry national and international brands, but also invest a substantial amount of time and money into their own brands. As mentioned in the narrative, Coop and IperCoop carry an organic brand called *Vivi Verdi*, which translates to “Live Green” (See Figure 2, pg. 45). Whole Foods carries an organic brand called 365™, Safeway carries multiple brands (See Figure 3, pg. 46), and Trader Joe’s is dedicated to special dietary needs such as gluten free, vegan, low-sodium, and vegetarian.

Many participants, both Italian and American, discussed the importance of “freshness” when it came to evaluating food quality. The survey included two checkbox questions regarding freshness.

**Table 10: Percentage of Participants Purchasing "Fresh" Products**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Category</th>
<th>Italians (%)</th>
<th>Americans (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seafood</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baked Goods</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyses revealed no significant relationship between the percentage of Italians and Americans reporting the purchase of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, or seafood. There was a difference in the purchasing of fresh baked goods. The above table shows the percentage of Italians and Americans, who currently purchase fresh products in the listed categories. With these results it is important to recognize that
freshness is a subjective measure. Although we often romanticize Italy as a place
where the farm-to-fork ideal is alive and well, the reality experienced by young
Italians in the marketplace is essentially equivalent to that of young Americans. This
is, in part, because Italian food is more processed and travels farther distances than
in the past (Conti 2012). On the flip side, American chains, such as Whole Foods, are
more attuned to local sourcing, pesticide-free production, and natural ingredients
than they have been in the past. Young Italians in Florence and Americans in the Bay
Area professedly have the same opportunities to buy fresh food. Additionally, it
appears that given the opportunity they will almost always do so.

My research reveals parity, not only in market offerings, however, but also in
the regular shopping practices exhibited by young adults. Aside from Jaime
(American) and Alessio (Italian) who almost never go shopping, the other interview
participants, both Italian and American, said they go grocery shopping one or two
times each week. As mentioned above, the Italians shop at Coop (5/5), and the
Americans mostly shopped at Trader Joes (4/5) and Safeway (2/5).

In addition to these weekly grocery outings, the Italian and American
students discussed two other types of purchasing trips. The Italians referred to the
first as a “big shop.” According to Massimo, this type of trip would be to an IperCoop
and is intended to pick up the basics “to last for about ten days.” Chiara
differentiated a “big shop” as the time to buy dry goods from weekly shopping,
which is the time to buy fresh goods.
Lisa did not use the term “big shop” but elaborated on the same type of outing in the Bay Area: “Every two weeks or so I take the shuttle to San Antonio shopping center and do a big Walmart, Target, Safeway run...for bulk items.”

The second type of special outing was a daily quick run for something small. One American, Therese, made frequent runs for milk, bread, or fruit, in addition to her regular supermarket shopping. As mentioned in the previous section, however, she is an outlier and single-item shopping was not found to be the norm for young Americans. The Italian practice of buying milk at one store, bread at another, and produce at another, is the one way in which Italian and American shopping practices differ. The specialty shop—the latteria (dairy shop), the paneteria (bakery), and the enoteca (wine shop), just to mention a few of those frequented by my interviewees—is an important vestige of the traditional Italian market structure. Despite the fact that young Italians now do most of their shopping at supermarkets, there are still a couple of items that draw them into local specialized outlets for the absolute freshest taste.

The open-air market, the iconic symbol of good Italian food, however, seems to have worked its way out of regular routines. Florence has three major open-air markets\(^4\) (what Americans would recognize as farmers’ markets) that are open all days but Sunday. In other words, Florentine consumers can shop at an open-air market almost anytime they want, and yet only two of my participants, Chiara and Lorenzo, shopped at the markets with any sort of regularity. To be fair, however, they were adamant about shopping at the markets (particularly Central Market),

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\(^4\) Sant’Ambrogio, Santo Spirito, and Central Market are the major food markets in Florence.
and the heightened quality and taste of market items was paramount in their
shopping decisions. Lorenzo said that if he goes to the Central Market, he will make
vegetables and meat for dinner, but if he cannot fit a trip to the Market into his
schedule, he will make pasta. The implication is clear: for Lorenzo only the market
has meat and produce that are up to his standards. Lorenzo even mentioned that the
proximity and quality of open-air markets were major factors during he and his
partner’s apartment hunting process.

Michele, Massimo, and Alessio expressed a desire to shop at open-air
markets, but told me that they were too expensive given their current financial
situations. When I asked Michele why he did not shop at markets he gave a big sigh
and replied, “Because the grocery store is cheaper. But when someone buys
something at the market it tastes good. It tastes better. I want to go, but ...taste will
come first later in life.” Massimo also mentioned tourists and crowds as a turn off to
shopping at the markets. This is certainly a valid concern and one unique to
Florence, given the flood of tourists that visit the markets each day.

There are at least five weekly farmers’ markets within five miles of the
Stanford campus5. Although this sounds like a lot, keep in mind that they are usually
only open one day a week and for a limited number of hours. Therese was the only
American subject who made regular trips to the farmers’ market. Like the Italians,
the Americans identified money as the biggest barrier to shopping at farmers’
markets. Lisa said that it is “fun to walk around” but that the food is too expensive.
Therese acknowledged the high prices as well saying, “We buy fruit from the

5 California Avenue, Menlo Park, Webb Ranch, Mountain View, and Milk Pail Market.
farmers’ market, and we used to get a lot of other things there, but...you could just walk away spending $20 on a squash!” A couple of Americans also mentioned the convenience issue in connection with farmers’ markets. Adrian said he would go if there were one closer to his house. When I mentioned the one less than seven blocks from his address, he said he would prefer not to wake up and shop on a Saturday morning.

When asked in the survey, 63.6% of American and 59.3% of Italian respondents said they shop at farmers’ markets. This does NOT mean regularly, and should therefore not be seen as representative of daily practices. It can be interpreted, however, as further evidence that American and Italian shoppers are similar in their habits.

All of this is to say that young Americans and young Italians are presented with comparable grocery shopping opportunities. What is more, their responses to these opportunities—the frequency with which they shop, where they shop, and how they shop—are, with a few exceptions (i.e. one-item shopping trips), fundamentally aligned.

**Sustainability Spectrum**

When consumers walk into a grocery store, they are faced with an endless stream of decisions. For younger shoppers, many of the decisions are novel and involve serious thought. Food movements today are trying to add “sustainability” and “ethics” into the mix of factors that are considered when consumers are making these decisions. Albeit an imprecise measure, at least half of all American and
Italian participants said that they had experienced “quite a bit of exposure” to the concept of sustainability in food, and only one American reported having “no” exposure to the concept of sustainability in food (See Table 11).

Table 11: Exposure to the Concept of Sustainability in Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Exposure</th>
<th>Percentage of Italians</th>
<th>Percentage of Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite a Bit</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the reported awareness, American participants overwhelmingly ranked sustainability as the least important factor\(^6\) (with a mean of 4.21 out of 5 possible) when making food decisions (See Table 5, pg. 32). Italians collectively ranked sustainability as more important than convenience, but still indicated that sustainability did not greatly influence their decisions (with a mean of 3.88 out of 5 possible).

Interview conversations revealed that despite some familiarity with and willingness to use food movement buzzwords like, “local,” “organic,” and “fair-trade,” neither Americans nor Italians were making a substantial effort to apply these concepts to their daily practices. For both nationalities, food movements and movement concepts were uncomfortable conversation topics, and provoked expressions of guilt and resentment towards a societal demand for them to make the “right” choice.

\(^6\) Out of price, convenience, healthfulness, taste, and sustainability as mentioned on page 23.
Among the participants, there were varying levels of food movement familiarity and individual responses ranged from complete apathy to lifestyle overhaul. To discuss the results, I’ve grouped my interviewees into one of four categories: happily resistant, unable to change, passively sustainable, and movement activist (see the grouping in Figure 4 below).

**Figure 4: Interview Participant Sustainability Classifications**

**Happily Resistant**

I will start with the least informed, least active, and also the largest group. Those characterized as “happily resistant” are participants who, despite their knowledge of food movement trends, expressed little to no interest in learning more or changing their habits. When Jaime was asked about the role that sustainability plays in her food decisions she said sustainability was the least important (among the five options) and then paused to admit, “I’m not really sure what that means when it comes to food.” Later, however, she discussed her roommate’s fair-trade coffee business and said she took notice when labels and restaurants advertized with phrases such as “sustainable, no additives, locally-sourced...happy cows come from California [laughs].” Jaime was more informed than she professed to be.
Whether she is intentionally or unconsciously ignoring her knowledge in favor of maintaining her current food practices cannot be answered.

Knowing where your food comes from is an important component of sustainability. I asked each of the participants if they knew the origins of their food to which almost everyone replied no or mostly not. Some participants expressed a desire to find out or a frustration with the food industry’s lack of transparency. Joe, someone I have categorized as “happily resistant,” said, “Someone could say this stuff is from God knows where and I’d be like ‘well, as long as it’s edible.’” He laughed as he said this, but it was clear his practices were in line with this train of thought. Alessio, made a similar joke that highlighted his apathy on the issue. “When I eat at a restaurant,” he said (which is every meal in his case), “I definitely have no idea [where my food comes from]. Hopefully the vegetables aren’t grown in Chernobyl!”

Because Jaime, Joe, Alessio, and Massimo do not pay attention to the origins of their food, they have no control over which farming practices, technofood modifications, or working conditions are used in the process. Each individual had an aspect of food that was most important to him or her—whether it be convenience, healthfulness, taste, or value—that far outweighed sustainability as a basis for food decisions.

Unable to Change

The next group, those characterized as “unable to change,” pay attention to what they are purchasing and where it comes from (to the best of their ability), but
they may not have the financial means or appropriate information to make informed decisions about individual products or personal routines. “I know local is better and organic is better, and all that stuff,” Lisa defended, “but in the end, buying sustainable stuff is not sustainable for me or my budget.” Two things become clear from Lisa’s statement. First, the options Lisa sees as “sustainable” are not financially attainable. These include certified organic products, which even according to Organic.org are substantially more expensive. Lisa also mentions Whole Foods Market, which is satirically known as “Whole Paycheck” in the United States because of its high prices.

The second point to recognize in Lisa’s statement, however, is that she is missing some critical facts about how to shop, cook, and eat more sustainably. Food movement publications, legislation, and protests have transmitted phrases, such as eat local, buy organic, and shop fair-trade, into public consciousness, but this has not been accompanied by a more holistic understanding of these concepts. Lisa associates the term “local” with best practices, but as with all potential solutions, there are also caveats about eating local. Therese, by chance, studies the locavore movement and warned that, “you could be eating hyper-local, but someone drove the food in a partially full truck and got a terrible carbon footprint.” Farming locally in Phoenix, for example, would be a disastrous experiment that would consume far more greenhouse gases than the option of shipping from the California Central Valley. Lisa’s assumption that local is better is generally right, but not always.
Lisa’s “unable to change” Italian counterpart, Michele, also named cost as an obstacle to buying organic products (sometimes referred to as biological in Italy) and spoke more generally about their presence in Italian culture:

Many young people eat organic—it is in fashion right now. It’s very good. It is popular in Northern Italy. In the South it is normal to eat something organic, but in the North it is like a fashion trend. It’s like being vegetarian.

**Do you eat organic? (me)**
No because it is very expensive. One day...

Michele expressed regret at not being able to buy organic products, but was very eager to tell me about agritourism in Italy, Coop’s commitment to better workers’ rights along the entire food production chain, and his displeasure with “unnatural” products. He made mention of all of these topics when I asked him about his knowledge of national and international food movements. He then seemed bewildered, however, when I asked how his feelings affected his food practices. He said that other than shopping at Coop, there was nothing more he could do to alter his practices.

Michele and Lisa expressed a stronger desire to change their habits than the first group. That said, this desire produced no more of an impact on their regular practices. Only four of my ten participants had actually taken steps to adjust their habits after learning about the environmental or ethical consequences of their decisions.
Passively Sustainable

Adrian and Lorenzo can be characterized as “passively sustainable.” This term is actually what Adrian used to describe himself. “Sustainability is important. I wouldn’t say it directs my purchasing decisions more than health, convenience, or taste, but I do make decisions,” he explained. He listed purchases such as free-range eggs, fruits and vegetables sourced in-state, and in-season foods as influenced by food movement concepts. He sighted books such as *Beyond Beef* (Jeremy Rifkin) and *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* (Michael Pollen) as very influential in the formation of his practices. When he was 18 he even attempted vegetarianism for a year after reading about the incredible energy and water waste associated with livestock production. I asked why he gave it up and his answer points to a “me versus the system” attitude shared by multiple participants:

The only reason I can give now that I have been forced back into being a carnivore on a limited budget is that life is cruel. I believe that the way we produce meat in this country is wrong...and I’ll eat the grass-fed beef while I can, but just because something is wrong doesn't mean I will totally stop. Given the shape of the system, there is some evil that one must bare... and I don’t think we have the incentive right now to change the system. Maybe in a generation and a half.

He describes his diet as *forced* on him, and puts the blame for eating meat on the system. It is easy to say that he is unfairly assigning blame, but Lisa and Therese also explained that after a period of eating vegetarian, they decided to reincorporate meat into their diets. “A lot of restaurants do this thing where they have two entrees that are essentially the same except one has meat and the other doesn’t, but they will be the same price. I felt like I was being ripped off,” Lisa justified. Therese's
reasons were more about the social pressures of eating meat—"I've been vegetarian before, but I also don't want to...I want to participate in whatever food culture is going on around me." In all three cases, eating vegetarian was the less comfortable, more demanding option.

Lorenzo’s practices were the Italian version of passive sustainability. Lorenzo buys meat from local farmers, he shops at Coop, and he mostly patronizes “slow food restaurants called osterie or trattorie” that operate like home kitchens with slow, local, home-cooked meals. These are all very sustainable practices and he is aware they are in line with food movement teachings, but they also did not require much effort on his part. Only a handful of meats at the central market are NOT locally grown, he has shopped at Coop his entire life, and osterie are as common in Florence as coffee shops are in Manhattan. "I like reading about Slow Food because it justifies my way of being,” Lorenzo said clarifying just how little effort he had to devote to practicing sustainable decision-making.

Neither Adrian nor Lorenzo felt that their personal food habits were hugely consequential in the grand scheme of sustaining the planet or affecting change in the agricultural industry. Lorenzo said, “Food is not the biggest issue in comparison to the environment and environmental issues. There are more important things that should be done before constraining how much meat I eat.” Adrian had similar feelings on both the gravity of decisions surrounding food and the impact of individual habits: “We will be judged by some of our greater sins than simply putting chickens in boxes. If you don’t change the system, individual choice is almost irrelevant.” This skepticism surrounding individual impact was what linked Adrian
and Lorenzo and kept them from pursuing sustainable food movement ideas even more actively.

**Movement Activist**

Fittingly enough, Therese’s and Chiara’s *endorsement* of individual impact was the link to their active pursuit of more sustainable food practices. Therese studies sustainable agriculture and Chiara studies sustainable development. They are certainly outliers in the general population, but still important study participants as they represent the most direct link between food movement teachings and consumer demand. Therese was cognizant of her academic bias right from the start:

> I know a lot of information about the industry, but...so I think that shapes a lot of my choices. I am pretty aware of the tradeoffs that you make when choosing one item over another. The idea that one can eat very sustainably is present for me.

As a result of this awareness, Therese made choices to eat very little meat (since strict vegetarianism didn’t work out), shop at local farmers’ markets for all of her produce, only eat fruits and vegetables that are in-season, order boxes from local CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), and generally consider the whole farm-to-fork chain when making her decisions. She had a nuanced understanding of the food movement buzzwords mentioned earlier:

> I’m not a fanatic about local, because it all depends on the efficiency of your supply chain. I’m more looking at how fresh it is, or how good the flavors are. Or organic! That is a big point of reconciliation. We can eat meat, but it has to be organic and free-range.
Chiara made similar alterations, foregoing the Italian staple of tomatoes in the winter for in-season vegetables such as pumpkin and radicchio; buying Italian beers rather than imported beers; and buying fair-trade products whenever possible.

Therese’s commitment reached beyond everyday practices. On top of going to school, she consults for a program called Alba, which helps farmers in Mexico start their own organic farms and write business plans to “import sustainably produced tropical fruits” into the United States. When she was asked if she is aware of the origins of her food, she said, “yes, but I know that is weird. Like, I know that Santiago has no idea. I mean we talk about it, but...” Santiago is Therese’s boyfriend of two years. She studies sustainable food habits and lives them in practice relatively successfully, and yet her awareness has not rubbed off on him despite their constant collaboration around meals and food errands.

The consumer’s relationship to food is complex and being an informed shopper is more work than most consumers, let alone novice young adults, are expecting to put into the shelf-to-plate process. Are we at a point where sustainable food lifestyles are only attainable for well-informed students of sustainability? My interview responses would seem to indicate this to be true in both Italy and the United States. My sample is small, however, and even if it is representative of my sample population, the results still only apply to highly educated students in Florence and the California Bay Area.
Italian attitudes on food movement concepts of sustainability, as well as their general shopping routines were essentially on par with those of their American counterparts. The afternoon portion of Giovanni’s and Jacob’s vignettes helped illustrate these similarities. As I turn to dinnertime, there will be two final takeaways—the first, an observation about the consistency of habits over time, and the second, a difference in how food is or is not incorporated into social life.

**Evening**

Giovanni walks into the kitchen to find Linda chopping vegetables. He unpacks the groceries and even though tonight is Linda’s night to cook, he offers to help. She says she’s got it under control so he opts to pour a glass of wine and just keep her company. Pretty soon she’s got him preparing the pork, and by the end of the hour, Giovanni is the one stirring the sauces and Linda is the one sipping the wine. He pokes fun at this reversal, but in truth, has no problem cooking because it means he is in charge of the flavors. Cooking is also something he learned when he was very young and there are a handful of Italian dishes that he could practically prepare in his sleep.

Tonight Linda chose to make grilled eggplant and zucchini, ribollita (a hearty soup with beans and pasta), and pan-cooked pork chops stuffed with prosciutto and cheese. The ribollita is a Florentine dish and the particular pork chop preparation originates from her (and Giovanni’s) hometown of Perugia. The latter is one of their favorite dishes.

Once dinner is ready they move out to the tiny table, where the TV is on in the background. Every once in a while a news story comes on that sparks a change in the conversation, but before they know it, 45 minutes has passed. They stay at the table for a bit after their dishes are clear to digest and Linda breaks out some chocolate that she was given as a gift the previous week. Around 9 o’clock Linda clears the table and Giovanni starts the dishes. They smile at each other looking forward to another good day tomorrow.

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Joe steps into the kitchen with his arms loaded down. He wastes no time before getting some water boiling and the veggies cleaned, chopped, and sizzling in the wok. He and his undergraduate roommates had bought the wok to make stir-fry last year, and Jacob was lucky enough to inherit it during move-out. All of his cooking experience was acquired within those last two years of college when he opted out of the school meal-plan.
Tonight’s meal is a breeze and luckily enough, stir-fry is one of Jacob’s favorite preparations. And this despite the fact that he’d never tried it prior to coming to college. Once the noodles are soft, he throws them into the wok with the browning veggies, and adds soy sauce, sesame oil, and a drizzle of Sriracha hot sauce for spice. As he is giving the wok a final shake, his roommate, Andrew walks through the front door carrying Chipotle. “Oh, nice timing! Wanna eat together?” Jacob invites. Andrew answers by pulling a stool up to the island that doubles as their dining room table. Jacob’s schedule rarely overlaps with his housemates’ so this is quite a pleasant surprise.

Andrew and Jacob eat and catch up for almost an hour before Andrew has to run back to campus for a night class. Jacob fills the wok with soapy water and does his dishes in the wok so as to waste as little water as possible. With happy taste buds, he cleans up the remainder of the kitchen, and looks forward to the rest of the stir-fry in tomorrow’s lunch.

Giovanni’s and Jacob’s evenings close out the typical Italian and American food narratives, and illustrate the remaining findings unearthed from my survey, interview, and ethnographic data. Giovanni and Linda prepared dishes they were raised with because, almost without exception, Italians eat Italian dishes. Even more specifically, the participants mostly ate Italian dishes originating from their home regions. In contrast, Americans reported a departure from the eating practices they were raised on as children. Secondly, both Italians and Americans cited companionship as the number one reason they enjoy food. For Italians, eating with friends is a way of life. For Americans, it is not so much a cultural tradition, but it was absolutely expressed as the preferred way of taking one’s meals.

Flexibility of Habit

Two topics were unavoidable for Italian interview subjects: the “Italian way” and hometown cuisine. In each of the five interviews that were conducted, multiple definitions and clarifications of Italian food culture were slipped into the
conversation. Common to all of these “Italian way” comments was a sense of national pride. Not once did a participant express dissatisfaction with or in any way criticize Italian food practices. If anything, dissatisfaction stemmed from the fact that he or she was not living up to the Italian standard.

At the most basic level, interviewees frequently used “Italian” as an adjective to describe particular food items. Chiara’s comment: “For breakfast you see coffee, Italian coffee, with milk and orange juice” is representative of many of the comments made by her Italian peers. Although the products qualified this way were indeed Italian, this simple descriptor’s counterpart—“American”—was used only ONCE in the American interviews. Furthermore, the participants often used “Italian” as a signifier of quality assurance. This observation was not drawn out of the transcriptions, but could be noted through the respondent’s use of tone. With Chiara’s statement above, I was meant to understand that she was not just drinking coffee, but she was drinking pure, quality coffee.

A second purpose of the “Italian way” qualifier was to explain how food is traditionally handled:

**Alessio:** “Then I took a coffee and apple...after lunch in the typical Italian way.”

**Chiara:** “Well, my father didn’t want me to cook because he is a good Italian father.”

**Lorenzo:** “There is a huge difference in how much time [Italians] spend thinking about and eating food in comparison to [foreigners]. They say that it is an obsession, but we don’t feel that. For Italians it is normal; it is our life.”

Although the interviewees seemed especially concerned with pointing out national customs to a foreign interviewer, the statements above were not clarifications, but rather expressions of national pride. These insights into Italian
food culture were presented as endearing traits in much the same way that parents subtly brag about their children.

Finally the interviewees offered up “Italian way” comments to denote occasions where they felt they had deviated from best practices. Alessio, in particular, was very concerned with the negative turn his food practices had taken since breaking up with his American girlfriend about six months prior to the interview. He explained that she was a “good girl,” but that over the course of their relationship, adventurous eating (in the form of ethnic cuisines), irregular cooking schedules, and foreign ingredients (e.g. butter) had completely derailed his “gastronomic balance.” In the end the only solution was to “get back to good, regular, Italian food.”

The only topic more compelling for the interviewees than national food culture was local cuisine. As mentioned in the methodology section, each of the interviewees was from a different region of Italy (see Figure 5, pg. 65), and each was intent on discussing the local or regional foods unique to his or her birthplace. Again, as with national food identity, participants brought regional practices or specialties up independent of the interview schedule. Popular places to bring it up were in response to the questions “what is your favorite dish?” and “what dish are you best at cooking?” but these do not account for all cases.

The enthusiasm in Lorenzo’s description of a pasta dish was characteristic of participants’ descriptions of regional specialties:

My favorite is Agnoli, which are particular from Mantova, where my family comes from. They are original in their type, but they are like Cappelleti. There
is fresh pasta, and inside there is cheese and ham. We do these at home for Christmas time on the 26th. That has always been my favorite dish.

Others discussed dedication to their childhood fare and lamented how difficult it was to find equivalent tastes or quality in Florence. Chiara, for example, grew up in rural Veneto with a sizable vegetable garden and acquired a strong preference for freshly picked produce. “Here in Florence I am trying to find the same taste,” she said, “but it is quite impossible because my father is really passionate about the garden and our vegetables are really incredible.” Chiara was particularly passionate about a special red radicchio (a bitter lettuce) variety that can only be grown in Veneto. She explained that risotto with radicchio was her favorite, “but only with my own radicchio” she exclaimed. On occasion she would even bring radicchio all the way from her house back to Florence just to cook a “special radicchio dinner” for her Tuscan friends.

Michele had a similar dilemma, but had found a workable solution to the absence of Southern Italian flavors in Tuscany. Two to three times a year Michele drives to his family’s home in Calabria and packs his car to the brim with “typical foods from the south like salami and regional cheeses.” For Michele, this trip is not
only a taste of Calabria, but a taste of home since his family, like many other Southern Italian families, makes its own salami and cheese from scratch.

This attachment to familial traditions and patterns learned in childhood was dramatically different from the preferences of my American participants. Two quantitative queries revealed this distinction quite resolutely. With the first, participants were asked about the sources of their recipes.

**Table 12: Recipe Sources (as a percentage within nationality)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Cook Book</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Make it Up</th>
<th>Don’t Cook</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyses show that Italians are most likely to go to their family (36%) or make it up (32%), while Americans are most likely to search online (42.6%) or make it up (23.4%). Only 10.6% of American participants said they used family recipes. This percentage difference is statistically significant at the 0.005 level (p-value = 0.004). Some participants said they do not use recipes at all and so these figures do not capture the extent to which general practices were or were not imprinted on participants during childhood. They only address the specific use of family dishes.

To get a more holistic understanding of practice and consistency of attitudes over time, however, a second set of questions was posed, and participants answered on a scale of 0-6.
1. Compared to the food practices you were raised with, how similar are your current practices?
2. Compared to the food practices you were raised with, how satisfied are you with your current practices?

Despite the indication given in the interviews, the correlation between nationality and consistency of practices overtime was much stronger than anticipated.

**Table 13: Comparison of Current and Childhood Practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As Compared with Childhood Practices</th>
<th>Italian Mean</th>
<th>American Mean</th>
<th>Significance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td>3.82*</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>P-value = .006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.00**</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>NOT significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scale: 0 being extremely different; 6 being identical
**Scale: 0 being very unhappy; 6 being very happy.

Table 13 shows the significance when comparing the means. Even considering the limitations of my survey sampling methods and size, there is no doubt that most young Italians maintain the food practices they were raised with, while most young Americans deviate.

Interestingly enough, the Italian propensity to stick to national and regional food lifestyles and the young American propensity to create new habits has no correlation with current satisfaction. Americans and Italians reported similar levels of satisfaction with their current habits as compared to satisfaction with their childhood habits. The Americans collectively ranked satisfaction with their current habits as 4.53/6 in comparison to their old habits. Italians collectively ranked satisfaction with their habits as 5/6 in comparison to their old habits. In other words, both populations are much more satisfied with their new habits.
American comments about moving away from home provide anecdotes to support these results:

**Joe:** “It was an interesting thing when I went to college because I realized that I was eating better at college than I did growing up as a kid. This is not something I would tell my mom [laughs], but it is probably the truth. Going to college there was a lot more stuff and things changed. I think probably for the better.”

**Lisa:** “Before I started cooking I ate in the dining hall for four years and that was a whole new world for me. It was a revelation that my meal didn’t have to center around a piece of meat. I mean I tried lentils, and I’d never had asparagus or brussel sprouts before college. There were a lot of firsts.”

College was discussed as a major catalyst for change during all of the American interviews and many participants expressed disillusionment when they reflected back on their habits prior to college. Both Lisa and Adrian commented on the unhealthiness of cuisines available in their hometowns of New Orleans and Chicago, respectively. Therese went so far as to call the food in her home state of Texas her “nemesis” because of the quantity of cheese and meat that is added to virtually every dish. Given that she is lactose intolerant, and as noted above, tried for a while to be vegetarian, her frustration with the options in Texas makes sense.

Lisa’s attempt at being vegetarian occurred just before coming to college, much to the dismay of her parents. “My mom got mad at me,” Lisa explained, “because she thought I was just trying to cause trouble. I mean where I’m from you eat meat. My mom thinks potatoes are vegetables. There are no vegetarians!”

All of the American participants went to school as undergrads outside of California, and most remarked that coming to the Bay Area was a second, but more intense, shock (the first being their move to college) to their food habits. When I
asked Lisa to compare her food practices to those of her age peers she answered flatly: “less healthy.” “Compared to the whole country?” I clarified.

“Yeah, maybe you’re right. Back home everyone is unhealthy and the Bay Area standard is really high. I guess about average then. I definitely don’t live up to the standards of my Stanford/Palo Alto peers,” Lisa said. Joe echoed this sentiment and felt the need to compare the dishes he ate growing up to what he called “California level healthy”—“people here are very, very, very conscious about that sort of stuff,” he said looking rather amused.

Italian participants mentioned college as well, but mostly just to say that moving away from home prompted them to cook on their own for the first time. Based on the comments of my American respondents, however, it seems clear that their college food experiences were far more significant—offering novel foods, teaching about health and sustainability, and encouraging students to be more adventurous in their food preferences. Are college food and nutrition programs really that advanced? Did the national inundation of food movement publicity perfectly coincide with college years for the age group I sampled? Both of these are logical possibilities that would be interesting to explore with further research.

Food Was Meant to be Shared

A dinner table surrounded by friends and family is an iconic image in Italian culture. Whether in support of cultural precedent or simply as a result of the human desire for companionship, this stereotype is absolutely true. Eating with friends, family, or significant others is a high priority for young Italians. Young Americans
eat far more meals alone than their Italian counterparts (See Table 14 below).

Nearly half of my American survey participants marked that they eat most of their lunches alone, while only 8% of my Italian participants said the same. Historically, Italians went home at lunchtime to eat with their families. My Italian language advisor told me that this is no longer the custom in Florence (although it still is in more rural areas of Italy), but because eating alone is simply not an option, younger Italians have shifted to eating lunch together with their co-workers and classmates.

**Table 14: Lunch and Dinner Companions (as a percentage within nationality)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
<th>Dinner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Participants clarified that significant others were considered “family.”

This disparity in the presence of mealtime companions is, by far, the strongest difference I found in my data. It is quite stunning to see the relative parity in shopping habits and purchasing attitudes in combination with the radical differences surrounding diet composition, time devoted to food, and the extent to which food is a social activity. I would like to note, however, that when discussing the social-life implications of food, American participants held similar beliefs to their Italians counterparts, even if their practices were different.

Although the American participants ate many of their meals alone, both the survey and interview data indicate that meals with companions are their most
enjoyed and they *wish* mealtime, and meal prep, was more of a social activity.

Among those Americans and Italians who marked that they greatly *disliked* cooking (marking a rank of 0 or 1 out of 6), 80% cooked alone and 20% cooked with their housemate. Of those who marked that they greatly *enjoyed* cooking (marking a rank of 5 or 6 out of 6), only 37.1% cooked alone and 60.85% cooked with their housemate (See Table 15 below). Cooking, as with most activities, is more enjoyable when there is someone to share it with. This is not surprising.

**Table 15: Cooking Enjoyment versus Whom is Cooking (as a percentage within cooking enjoyment)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who Cooks</th>
<th>Cooking Enjoyment Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housemate</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What *was* surprising was the multitude of ways in which the presence of others affected food practices. It was not purely about enjoyment, but also about time allotted for the meal, quality of the preparation, and the content of the meal.

Chiara described the discomfort of eating alone and the effect it has on the amount of time she spends eating:

> If I can eat with somebody, I can spend like one hour for lunch. I like to say this is an Italian habit—talking, chatting, and eating at the same time. If I am alone it is more depressing [laughs]. Maybe 10 minutes, 15 minutes at the table.
Alessio too said that “eating with friends is the best part of [his] day,” and that because he believes “food is about sharing, [he] feels like a pig when eating alone.” This is partly why Alessio always opts to eat out with friends as opposed to cook for himself at home.

Joe, on the other hand, almost always cooks dinner for himself at home. He eats dinner with a group of friends twice a week, but expressed that in “a perfect world” he would always eat with friends. Lisa actually realized how often she eats alone while making the food journal for this study. She looked sad to have come to this realization and explained that most of the joy in cooking and even eating comes from sharing the experience and exploration with others. She told me about one particular instance in which she realized the affect that eating alone had on the content of her meals: “Yesterday I thought my boyfriend was coming home for dinner, but then he had a last minute meeting so I ate alone. I probably wouldn’t have cooked so much, or worked so hard if I knew it was just going to be me.”

Therese had spent a considerable amount of time thinking about this phenomenon before I came to her with the food journal and interview request:

This summer I was at home for three weeks by myself, and my eating habits were totally different than any other time in my life. I was eating weird things for breakfast and weird things for dinner and not really deriving the same kind of pleasure from preparing meals. When I eat by myself it is like toast and something or salad with a whole bunch of spinach...or you’re just eating handfuls of nuts [laughs]. Versus when I eat with people, I think about how the food looks, and the setting in which we eat, and there is just this heightened awareness to taste and texture.

She also posed an interesting question at the end of the interview: “Would people eat better if they always had someone to eat with?” My research results seem to indicate that they would enjoy their meals more, maybe spend more time preparing
and eating their food, as well as pay closer attention to the appearance, taste, and quality. Whether these changes make for better practices is dependant on the values of the individual. For those, such as Therese and Chiara, whose values side with food movement teachings, these changes would unquestionably be seen as positive.
Limitations

I feel fortunate with this project, both to have found significant quantitative results given the size of my samples, and to have collected qualitative interviews and observations that are in support of the quantitative results. The project was exploratory in nature, and as I will discuss in the next section, the results can provide a valuable background from which to approach food movement education, as well as conduct further research in the field. Before I summarize my general findings and offer an overall interpretation of the results, however, I want to discuss the limitations of my results given a) the time and resource constraints of the honors thesis process and b) the constraints of my research design.

The 14-month timeline for this project limited the amount of time I could spend collecting, cleaning, and analyzing data, not to mention writing and revising the paper itself. Given academic and extracurricular demands during the regular school year, the data collection period was confined to a three-month, spring term that I spent in Italy and a two-month, summer term that I spent in the Bay Area. The period in Florence was also not exclusively devoted to research, but was equally divided between data collection and a standard university course load.

Given these constraints and the schedule constraints of interview candidates there were only so many days and times during which I could conduct interviews. The short time frame similarly impacted the time I had to prepare, pretest, re-write, and release the survey. Furthermore, I was forced to use convenience sampling in both locations in order to get the collection done in time. My interview participants, in particular, were found based on the qualifications mentioned in the methods
section (home region and field of study), but beyond that, their availability was the next most important factor. This resulted in an unbalanced comparison in term of gender—four Italian men, one Italian woman and two American men, three American women—not ideal for a comparative study.

The original research design—the study population and methodology selected in particular—also entail applicability and validity limitations. The study populations I chose are very specific and in no way representative of the general population in either Italy or the United States. My results speak to the practices and attitudes of highly educated, younger adults from mostly middle and upper class socioeconomic backgrounds (See demographic table, pg. 23). It is also only representative for young adults who have moved away from home. While most Americans over twenty live outside their parents’ home, the story is radically different for young Italians. In 2001, a project carried out by the European Commission for Education and Culture entitled *Study on the State of Young People and Youth Policy in Europe* reported that 59% of Italian men and 44% of Italian women age thirty still live in their parents’ home (Schizzerotto). Despite these statistics, I made the decision to focus my research on Italians who did NOT live with their parents. I made this decision in order to make living situation a controlled variable in the American/Italian comparison. The consequence of this decision, however, was to invalidate the results for nearly half of the young adult population in Italy.
A final caveat to consider with regards to the study population is the geographic scope of the project. Although I was successful in polling participants from all regions of the two countries (See demographic tables on pgs. 23, and 25), daily practices are still largely a product of the immediate environment. It is especially important to note the impact of choosing the Bay Area and Tuscany since these regions would be considered by many to be epicenters of food movement activity. My claim that most participants are doing little to incorporate food movement teachings into daily practices would likely be even more accurate in other regions of the country where food movement concepts have less visibility.

The last limitations of this project are the biases associated with self-reporting and participant reactivity. A central premise for this research is that food habits are highly individual. They are also highly personal, and to this end, data cannot be collected without self-reporting. For this study in particular, I never observed participants engaging with food, and was therefore forced to take their word. The food journal was an attempt to jog the interviewees’ memories and prevent them from crafting false memories. Most participants completed the journal after each meal and were thus able to relay fairly accurate records of their habits. I began each interview by asking participants to recall in full detail one of the days from his journal. This recall activity was designed with the intention of keeping the participants as true to their habits as possible during the entirety of the interview.

Memory failure is, of course, not the only weakness of self-reporting. There is also the tendency for participants to change their answers based on what they believe to be the researcher’s purpose, and the tendency for participants to exhibit a
social desirability bias (i.e. give answers they believe make them look good). Given the intentionality with which I asked non-leading questions in both the survey and interview (as determined by rounds of pretesting), and the neutrality I exhibited during the interviews, I do not expect that participants changed their responses based on my own research interests. It was not until the last couple questions on the survey and in the interview, in fact, that I brought the topic of food movements up at all.

Social desirability bias is, however, a genuine concern, precisely because food habits are so personal. Because of conceptions, such as, “you are what you eat” and the fact that food is tied to weight and appearance, people want to report having “good” food habits. This means reporting eating vegetables, eating in moderation, eating whole, fresh foods and anything else that society teaches us is healthy. In recent years and among younger, educated populations, in particular, being sustainable is also seen as “good.” For this reason, it is a significant possibility that participants exaggerated the extent to which they actively follow sustainable and ethical food practices. This bias must be considered as a limitation on the survey and interview results.
Discussion and Implications

At the most basic level, my interest in doing research stemmed from a desire to assess the extent to which a globalized food culture and international food movements, in particular, have impacted the food practices and attitudes of young Italians and Americans. In Italy, Slow Food and other movements were formed in defense of traditional food cultures and practices. In America, food movements grew in opposition to fast food culture and associated food trends and practices. The interesting, "big picture” question to me is have these movements helped to safeguard traditional food cultures in Italy, while inciting resistance to fast food culture in the United States? And if not food movements, what factors are shaping habits?

This comparative perspective, I contend, helps make sense of and contextualize my findings, which I explained above as they unfolded over the course of a typical day. The “morning” discussion largely revolved around food preparation, the “afternoon” around food acquisition or shopping, and the “evening” around food consumption or eating. Table 16 on page 80, summarizes the basic findings as organized within the categories of shopping, preparation, and eating.

When it comes to food preparation and eating, the differences between Italian and American young adults were numerous and striking. Italians were much more likely than their American counterparts to report that they enjoyed cooking. They also were much less likely to eat their meals alone and, at least at lunch, to spend more time lingering over their meal. Finally, while most of my American interview subjects had rejected the food practices and habits they had grown up
with, my Italian interviewees continued to embrace the traditional regional cuisines of their youth. To me all of these differences underscore the salience of traditional Italian food culture in the lives of its young adults as well as the clear imprint of America’s fast food culture on the food practices and preferences of their U.S. counterparts.

Given the very different food trends and traditions in the two countries, these findings are perhaps not terribly surprising. What was surprising is the extent to which these differences persist *in spite of access to sources and types of food that, for all intents and purposes, are identical.* That is, as I learned from three months in Italy and my interviewee accounts, the retail grocery stores in Florence are very similar to the ones I frequent in California. The variety and quality of foods available in these markets is much the same as well. Most importantly, as my survey and interview subjects confirmed, there are no real differences between Italian and American young adults in where they shop, how often they shop, and the extent to which an awareness of food movements shape their shopping behavior. This is a point worth highlighting. We often lament the power that market forces have over our lives, and I have no doubt that their influence is in many instances decisive. In my case, however, it is important to contrast the essential similarity in the structure of food markets in the two countries with the many differences I discovered in the food preparation and mealtime behavior between my American and Italian subjects. Market structures may account for the similarity in shopping practices, but that is the extent of their influence.
Table 16: Summary of Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Shopping</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Eating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Italian     | • Shop mainly at supermarkets 1-2/week.  
• Awareness of food movement concepts, but little action taken to implement them in practice | • Cook at least one meal each day.  
• Cooking is seen as a pleasure.  
• Convenience is relatively unimportant. | • Spend more than 30 minutes eating lunch  
• Spend 30-45 minutes eating dinner.  
• Eat dishes similar to those from their childhood.  
• Eat most of their meals with others. |
| American    | • Shop mainly at supermarkets 1-2/week.  
• Awareness of food movement concepts, but little action taken to implement them in practice | • Little preparation is involved because diet includes many pre-prepared foods.  
• Cooking is seen as a necessity.  
• Convenience is important. | • Spend less than 30 minutes eating lunch  
• Spend 30-45 minutes eating dinner.  
• Eat dishes much different from those of their childhood.  
• Eat many of their meals alone. |

What are we to make of this? Given the apparent persistence of these differences in food practices in the two countries, should we conclude that the food movements have had no impact and are simply powerless to change entrenched habits? Not quite. Based on my data and observations in the two countries, I come away with a more mixed, but ultimately, perhaps more hopeful take on the matter.

On the negative side

• the imprint of fast food culture remains strong in US

• and very little active effort to implement food movement concepts is happening in either country, even among highly educated, cosmopolitan young people
On the positive side

- there is at least some awareness and a generally positive view of food movements
- and partly as a result of exposure to more progressive food practices, there has been a wholesale rejection by American interviewees of the unhealthy food habits of their youth
- but perhaps, most importantly, the convergence of food markets in the two countries reflects the significant influence of food movement ideas in the structure of those markets.

**Possible Policy Implications**

Thus far food movements have largely focused their lobbying and awareness efforts on the production side of the food chain—the farm-to-shelf process. Any observant shopper in either the United States or Italy would agree that messages about sustainable, whole, and organic foods have inundated their shopping trips in recent years. Large grocery chains have become more receptive to carrying sustainable, healthy products, and in most cases, are very deliberate about advertising these qualities to their customers. This is true in Italy (i.e. Coop and IperCoop) and in the United States (i.e. Safeway and Costco). In the United States, there are chains entirely dedicated to food movement concepts (i.e. Whole Foods).

Advocates should be congratulated on the impact they have had on food retailers, but they should also be cognizant of the lack of information currently reaching individuals as they interact with food outside of the marketplace. Much of
the consciousness around sustainability ends with the purchase and has no bearing on food preparation or mealtime practice. The next step for food movement activists and organizations is to educate and assist individuals with making the shelf-to-table process more sustainable.

Based on my interviews, one especially promising site for education might be college campuses, which serve as the effective bridge between the student's food practices growing up and the ones around which they will begin to structure their adult lives. Dining programs should be set up, not only to feed students but also to teach them practices that have positive effects on their bodies, their communities, and the environment. This is also not to say that education could not and should not start at an even earlier stage with garden educations programs, cooking workshops, and nutrition classes, among other approaches. In the end, a full farm-to-fork understanding is the goal and individual education efforts, it seems, will need to join existing market interventions to make this vision a possibility for young adults in both Italy and the United States.


Appendix A

Food Practices Survey

Practices

1. At your home, who is responsible for:
   Grocery shopping
      o Me
      o Housemate
      o Shared responsibility
   Food preparation/cooking
      o Me
      o Housemate
      o Shared responsibility

2. Which best describes your dietary choices:
   o Omnivore
   o Vegetarian
   o Vegan
   o Other ____________

3. Where does your food come from (check all that apply)?
   o Grocery store
   o Large supermarket (i.e. Costco)
   o Farmers’ market
   o Own garden
   o Take-out (delivery or pre-prepared)

4. How often do you grocery shop?
   o Every day
   o Every few days
   o Weekly
   o Bi-monthly
   o Monthly

5. Do you use a grocery list when shopping, or buy what you find?
   o Stick to the list
   o Some combination
   o Buy what I find

6. Which of the following items do you buy fresh (as opposed to canned/boxed, frozen or cooked)?
   o Fruits
   o Vegetables
   o Meat
   o Seafood
   o Baked Goods
7. Which of the following, if any, do you wish you could buy fresh?
   - Fruits
   - Vegetables
   - Meat
   - Seafood
   - Baked Goods

8. What prevents you from buying fresh?
   - Fresh food is unavailable where I live
   - Fresh food makes shopping inconvenient
   - Fresh food is more expensive
   - I don’t cook often enough to buy fresh ingredients

9. Do you know where your food is grown and produced?
   Text box

10. Where do you find most of the recipes you use for cooking?
    - Family recipes
    - Cook books
    - Online
    - I make it up as I go
    - I don’t cook
    - Other

11. How often do you do the following:
    Eat out at a sit-down establishment
    - Every meal
    - Every day
    - Often
    - Rarely
    - Never
    Eat pre-prepared food/take-out
    - Every meal
    - Every day
    - Often
    - Rarely
    - Never
    Use a recipe to cook
    - Every meal
    - Every day
    - Often
    - Rarely
    - Never
12. Where would you place cooking on the following scale?  
   Necessity (1)----------------(2)----------------(3)----------------(4)----------------(5) Pleasure

13. Where would you place eating on the scale below?  
   Necessity (1)----------------(2)----------------(3)----------------(4)----------------(5) Pleasure

14. How many meals do you eat each day?  
   o One  
   o Two  
   o Three  
   o Other ________

15. How long do you spend preparing (0 minutes is an acceptable answer):  
   Breakfast  
   ________minutes  
   Lunch   
   ________minutes  
   Dinner  
   ________minutes

16. How long do you spend eating (0 minutes is an acceptable answer):  
   Breakfast  
   ________minutes  
   Lunch  
   ________minutes  
   Dinner  
   ________minutes

17. I usually eat breakfast:  
   o Alone  
   o With friends  
   o With family

18. Lunch:  
   o Alone  
   o With friends  
   o With family

19. Dinner:  
   o Alone  
   o With friends  
   o With family
20. Where do you usually eat breakfast?
   - Home
     - Kitchen counter
     - Dinner table
     - Couch or lounge chair
     - Outside
     - Other room
   - Work office
   - Café or restaurant
   - Dining hall
   - In transit
   - N/A

21. Lunch?
   - Home
     - Kitchen counter
     - Dinner table
     - Couch or lounge chair
     - Outside
     - Other room
   - Work office
   - Café or restaurant
   - Dining hall
   - In transit
   - N/A

22. Dinner?
   - Home
     - Kitchen counter
     - Dinner table
     - Couch or lounge chair
     - Outside
     - Other room
   - Work office
   - Café or restaurant
   - Dining hall
   - In transit
   - N/A

General Attitudes

23. What is the cost of all the food and drink that you personally consume during the average week?
   $_______
24. How much of an impact do the following have on your food and beverage purchases? (1-5 scale)
   - Taste
   - Price
   - Healthfulness
   - Convenience
   - Sustainability

25. What THREE sources do you use most often to guide the following food practices:
   (Grocery) Shopping
   - Internet/newspaper/magazine articles
   - Cook books
   - Blog or social networking sites
   - TV Shows (Cooking, talk show, etc.)
   - Food Labels
   - Family and Friends
   - Non-profit organization
   - Dietitian or medical professional

   Preparation/Cooking
   - Internet/newspaper/magazine articles
   - Cook books
   - Blog or social networking sites
   - TV Shows (Cooking, talk show, etc.)
   - Food Labels
   - Family and Friends
   - Non-profit organization
   - Dietitian or medical professional

   Eating
   - Internet/newspaper/magazine articles
   - Cook books
   - Blog or social networking sites
   - TV Shows (Cooking, talk show, etc.)
   - Food Labels
   - Family and Friends
   - Non-profit organization
   - Dietitian or medical professional

26. Rank the following food sustainability aspects in order of their importance to you:
   - A sufficient food supply for the growing global population
   - Fewer pesticides used to produce food
   - Maximum food output with minimal use of natural resources
   - Less food and packaging waste
   - Shortest distance from farm to point of purchase
   - Consumption of in-season foods
27. How much have you heard about the concept of sustainability in food and food production?
   - A lot
   - Some
   - A little
   - None

28. Are you familiar with any groups or organizations trying to promote specific food habits related to food production, preparation, or consumption? If yes, briefly describe these groups and their goals.
   Text box

29. Compared to the food practices you were raised with, how similar are your current food practices:
   (Scale 1-5)

30. Compared to the food practices you were raised with, how satisfied are you with your current food practices?
   (Scale 1-5)

31. What is the same and what is different?
   Text box

Demographic Info

32. Age
33. Gender
34. Where did you grow up?
35. Ethnicity
36. What profession do you aspire to?
37. What was/is your mother’s profession?
38. What was/is your father’s profession?
Appendix B

**Daily Food Journal**

Please record your food habits for 5 consecutive days (they can be weekend days), with as much or as little detail as you feel comfortable. The example provided has more detail than you are expected to provide, and is simply intended to offer ideas for the kinds of things you might record. Thank you!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Example Day</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All food/drink purchased:</td>
<td>-spicy salami sandwich $3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-baguette $1.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-organic eggs $4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast:</td>
<td>-toast with honey and apple</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-coffee w/ milk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-biscotti w/figs</td>
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<td>Lunch/ Snacks:</td>
<td>-food bought above</td>
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<td>-water</td>
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<td>-baby carrots</td>
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<td>-pesto turkey</td>
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<td>Dinner:</td>
<td>-soy noodles w/ apple and cashews</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-hamburger patty</td>
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<td>-eggplant mousaka</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-raisin, apple, and peach strudel</td>
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<td>-water</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you spend time preparing or cooking today?</td>
<td>5 minutes for turkey sandwich</td>
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<td>Company (friends, family, etc.)</td>
<td>B: alone</td>
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<td>L: w/ 2 friends</td>
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<td>D: w/ roommate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional comments:</td>
<td>Bought lunch at Safeway; tried a new sandwich place; roommate cooked dinner</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please bring a copy of your completed journal to the interview or email it to me and I will print it out beforehand: tamcadam@stanford.edu
Appendix C

Interview Schedule

0:00-10:00 Discuss food journal
- Were you able to complete the food journal?
- How often did you fill out the food journal?
  After each meal? Each day? At the end of the 5 days?
- Pick one of the five days and walk me through what you recorded.
- Did you notice anything new about your food habits?
- Do you think about food often?

10:00-30:00 Discuss general food practices and trends
- Living situation? Kitchen situation?
- How often do you eat out versus eat food prepared at home?
- How often do you grocery shop?
  Where do you shop?
  Why?
- Where do you eat out?
  Why?
- Which of the following factors in most important when you shop for food?
  Price, Health, Sustainability, Taste, or Convenience
- How often do you cook?
  Do you share these responsibilities with your roommates?
- When did you start cooking?
- Are you good at cooking?
  Do you enjoy it?
  How did you learn to cook?
  What is your best dish?
- What about eating? Do you like eating?
  Why?
  What is your favorite food?

30:00-50:00 Discuss specific food movements and the associated goals (e.g., Slow Food, locavore, vegetarianism, free-trade, etc.)
- How do you decide what and how to eat?
  Have you ever followed a diet or made rules about eating?
  For example, do you use recipes?
  If not, where do your habits come from?
- Are you happy with your eating habits?
  Is there anything you would change?
- How similar do you think your habits are to those of your age peers in other countries?
  Do you buy international products?
Do you know where your food is grown/produced?
Do you ever eat fast food?
-Have you ever heard of Slow Food (Movement)? Free-trade? Others?
-Would you/have you ever gotten involved?
-Have you ever thought about the regional or international impacts of your habits?

**Demographic Questions (completed in writing)**

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Where did you grow up?
4. Ethnicity
5. What profession do you aspire to?
6. What was/is your mother’s profession?
7. What was/is your father’s profession?