*Schools, space and culinary capital*. By Gurpinder Singh Lalli. Pp 116. London: Routledge. 2023. £120.00 (hardback), £33.29 (eBook). ISBN 9780367464813 (hardback), ISBN 9780367464820 (eBook).

*Schools, space and culinary capital* addresses some of the key issues concerning social inequality and food insecurity and the relationship between the two in an empirical case of school meals in an English school. The author offers compelling narratives, produced ethnographically, from crucial education stakeholders. In the book, we hear the voices of children, teachers and staff. These voices unravel the complexity of schooling practices and inform us about the nuances of inclusion and exclusion in foodscapes. When discussing these narratives, the author uses the concept of culinary capital to show the relative privilege and disadvantages. This book also demonstrates the possibility of exchanging ideas, learning valuable skills, and producing knowledge *with* pupils in school spaces. Thus, the book weaves together the empirical insights from a school setting, the conceptual possibilities of *space* and the theoretical use of culinary capital in understanding everyday experiences in society.

The book is structured in an accessible manner, starting with an introduction to the topic and a review of the literature on school meals in England. Then, it discusses research findings across three key thematic chapters: school foodscapes, schooling food and children’s voice, and the school meal and culinary capital. Finally, the author brings together critical insights from the research findings in an afterword. I will now review these chapters in turn.

Chapter 1 sets the scene for the study and the more extensive discussion that follows. It introduces the conceptual context of the study, with the author discussing key terms such as culinary capital, socialisation, and social theory to provide a foundation on which various arguments made in the book are based. Alongside the description of culinary capital as an extension of Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of cultural capital, the author also draws readers’ attention to the intricate relationship food has with socially stratified categories, i.e., gender, class, and race. These relationships are articulated in Chapter 1 as they play out in school settings. Chapter 1 also alludes to the empirical context of the study, conducted in 2018-19, that explores how school meals promote various forms of capital and the extent to which the 2013 School Food Plan has successfully bridged inequalities. Chapter 2 offers a very useful empirical backdrop for the study, focusing particularly on the English School Meal, showcasing how this concept evolved from an idea into practice and how it remains a subject of socio-political scrutiny in the country. Various conceptual and empirical thoughts shared in these two chapters are brought into the discussion of the research findings, presented across the remainder of the chapters in the book.

School foodscapes is the focus of Chapter 3. It draws on ethnographic data to explore socialisation processes underpinning the school mealtime. It shows how everyday interactions and cultural practices shape and are shaped by eating spaces in school settings. Building on these deliberations, the author then focuses on Free School Meals and explains how these are related to the meal choices students make, childhood obesity, social class relations, and education about food more broadly. The author makes a point about expanding food from merely a political incentive provided at school to include it as part of the process of learning and knowledge production *with* students. Chapter 4 discusses food in school settings from children’s viewpoints. Here, we see many images of the food spaces in the school where this study was conducted, including the school’s dining hall, seating spaces for students to consume their meals together, the ‘top-up’ machine for meals, wall display and the overall ambience of the dining area. Some of the discussion on choice is extended here in relation to children’s bodies and pupils’ interactions; both these concepts are discussed in relation to the broader processes of socialisation and the inculcation of specific social practices. Food spaces in the school are argued in this chapter as sites for learning not only typical schooling norms and about food itself but also how to be a ‘good citizen’.

Chapter 5 brings the focus back to culinary capital and uses it as a lens to review the school meal. Here, we observe vital deliberations in understanding culinary capital – its relationship to understanding inequality in society more broadly and the schooling landscape more particularly. The author connects the term with foodways and foodscapes and later suggests the implications this does, and can, have on pedagogical approaches in school settings, thus addressing classed, gendered, and racial inequalities in school settings. The final chapter offers some implications of the study and the key discussions presented in this book for schools beyond the empirical context and in light of global education policies.

Overall, this book contributes to investigating schooling and schooling practices from an atypical lens – the lens of food – and thus surfacing some of the often-hidden aspects of socio-educational inequalities. It touches on various crucial aspects of everyday schooling experiences, showcasing the importance of space and capital in understanding and examining these experiences. The findings are obviously relevant to the empirical case, thus enhancing some of the debates on school meal patterns and processes in England. Simultaneously, the book is also pertinent to exploring similar processes occurring in other countries and examining alignments and misalignments of meal practices across schools globally.

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