

Reflection journal for the course Food Culture and Customs (RSO22306)

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Week 1 Food taboos

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During this first week the main theme was about Food taboos, I read the article Meat is good to taboo from Fessler and Navarrete and the reading From field to fork from Van den Belt. Next to these readings I watched the video After Horse Meat Scandal, Why Is Some Food Taboo? and the videos from Duncan and Veen.

After reading the paper from Van den Belt (2015) I developed an ethical view on how to solve and discuss problems arising during life. The story of Dory about she selling products on the farmers' market raise the question; Is this way of selling fair to other farmers on the market? Or should she work on her own or tell every customer by a sign that she does her job together with a partner and that they are not using chemicals? This story helped me to think more about ethics because I would never think if this tactic would be fair to other farmers, if it wasn't so explicitly written in this story. I would think why not? You could just sell what you want on the market with or without help, etc. Walker's story was about food for a local bank. Many times, people buy things for the local food bank to be kind but buy things they wouldn't eat themselves. Why are we than donating? Never thought of this ethical question before, only thought when I saw the food laying on the table, 'good job'. But to ensure it is food people like, maybe there could be a sign with 'only giving food that you would eat yourself'. I had to read the story of Camille a few times before I understood it better. Should you make recordings without permission a crime? Or should you than consider freedom of speech and dismiss privacy? I think it is a difficult story, but as the kid was on property of the farmer, the farmer should have the right to decide to publish or not. The story made me think a lot of ethical problems never really thought of. The discussions in class helped me more to understand how to think about these ethical issues and how to maybe solve them. I learned that there are three ethical reasoning theories: virtue ethics, utilitarian ethics and duties & rights ethics.

The reading of Fessler and Navarrete (2003) together with the videos from Duncan and Veen (2017) and the lectures thought me what taboos are, what the difference is with disgust, what disgust is and how to use these theories. The main point from the text of Fessler and Navarrete: "We identify three psychosocial processes, socially-mediated ingestive conditioning, egocentric empathy, and normative moralization, each of which likely plays a role in transforming individual disgust responses and conditioned food aversions into institutionalized food taboos." (Fessler et al., 2003). I can now explain that taboos are things you do not eat. Whereas disgust is food you rather not eat. Food taboos exist out of three theories: functional, symbolic and evolutionary psychology.

Both readings showed that they are about food and the theories around it. Making this clear by giving examples on the topics they address.

The tutorial session gave a deeper idea of what food taboos are and what reasoning fits with the taboo. Discussing topics like, 'Are insects a taboo?'. Yes, most of the time here in the Netherlands, but no if you ask it to someone from China. This showed that cultures have different perspectives on the topic food and that you should keep this in mind when you are writing or testing something during a project related to food.

To conclude I learned how to use social and ethical reasoning, what disgust is and what food taboos are. With this new knowledge I can better understand ethical issues, other cultures and their taboos and using this knowledge for the exam as well as using this in projects for other studies related to food and their theories around it.

References

Duncan, J. and Veen, E. (2017) FoodTaboos
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXZq5xNSvGBxEbo0FdU8GD8dhfflpT9G>

Fessler, D. and Navarrete, C. 2003. Meat is a good taboo: Dietary proscriptions as a product of the interaction of psychological mechanisms and social processes. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*. 3:1(1-40). Available: <http://www.danielmtfessler.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Fessler-Navarrete-2003-Meat-Is-Good-To-Taboo.pdf>

Thompson -2015 - From Field to Fork - Introduction.pdf. Highly recommended reading for this week & required for exam: Henk van den Belt, Three varieties of moral reasoning

Week 2 Food & Identity

04-11-2021

This week was about food and identity. Rising the question; What are your comfort foods? and are you a foodie? This week gave also more insights in the principles from Bourdieu. We read a paper from Wilk, Bourdieu and Johnston, read stories on a foodie website, watched a story about field theory and listened to a podcast.

A question to be answered about national food identity is; How can food be used to construct national identity? With the reading of Wilk (2007), we can say that this national identity is constructed by the national cuisine of the country. This cuisine exists out of products that people can afford. They only use foods that are locally available or that they can afford to get from foreign countries. Wilk showed us that branding is a key element of cultural capital. Wilk references back to Bourdieu, saying that capital is something stored up, acquired and kept. Bourdieu and Wilk both imply that economic capital is in the form of ownership of business, next is ownership of land. This gives a source of power.

The paper from Johnston et al. (2010) gave more insights in what a foodie is. 'A foodie is a person who is very very very interested in food and who consider(s) food to be an art, on a level with painting or drama'. Foodies physically look "like anybody else".

Bourdieu (1979) shows four principles. Field, habitus, capital and practice. Where capital can be defined in social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital. The video about the field gave an example how to see this principle in real life.

After reading these important theories, the question in my mind was how I can apply these to real life to get a better grip on the understanding of the words, for stronger answers during my exam.

The lectures gave more concrete examples of how the theory in the papers are written and how to understand them. I learned from the lectures that the Field is a network of historic and current relations between objective positions that are anchored in capital. That habitus is how we are trained to think, feel and act in determinant ways – a mindset and a body set. Social capital are the resources based on group memberships, relationships and networks of influence and support. Symbolic capital are the resources available to the individual based on honor, prestige and recognition. Cultural capital is the experience, knowledge, connections you get through the life course. Economic capital is a command over economic resource.

For the tutorial we had to dumpster dive. By these findings we had during the tutorial discussion about the findings as well as how it is related to Bourdieu's concepts. This gave the principles of Bourdieu more in depth understanding to use during the group assignment and the exam.

To conclude I learned what a food identity is, how you can use it in a context for your exam. What the principles of Bourdieu are and how you can reflect on them in issues during real life. And what a foodie is and if I would define myself as a foodie.

References

Bourdieu (1979) Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.
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RSO22306_2021_2/Readings%20(by%20week)/Bourdieu%201984%20Intro%20%20Distinction.pdf

Johnston, J. and Baumann, S. 2010. "What is a foodie" Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape

Wilk, Richard R. 2007. 'Real Belizean Food': Building Local Identity in the Transnational Caribbean. *American Anthropologist*. 101(2):244–55. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/683199>

Week 3 Authenticity

12-11-2021

This week was about authenticity, with the question; what is authentic and what is authentic food? I learned new knowledge into this subject by the readings from Johnston and Baumann, Heldke and Ray, the lectures and the tutorial session. I developed my own view on what is authentic and learned which theories or principles belong to authenticity.

The reading from Heldke (2005) explained that there is no authentic food, but that the people make the food authentic, it's the relation between the people eating and cooking. According to Heldke there are three definitions of authenticity in food: 1) Different or novel "we're not in Kansas anymore", 2) replicable "exactly the way...", 3) Native "... an insider would do it".

Heldke pointed out that we leave the familiar in order to encounter unusual, unfamiliar, strange, exotic Other and to reflect on how this particular Other transforms our own identities. Tastes both remind us of who we are and point out to us who we are not. To conclude, one assesses authenticity, then, by determining whether or not the dish contains certain properties of taste appearance or preparation.

Ray (2017) explained that authenticity is both socially constructed and relational. Authenticity is not inherent but is constructed through the perceptions of food producers and consumers.

Main points from the Johnston and Baumann (2010) I learned were about the authenticity markers. They identified 5 different markers; 1) geographic specificity, 2) It is "simple", 3) Has a personal connection, 4) Can be linked to historical tradition, and 5) Has "ethnic" connections.

All papers summarizing what authenticity means and how you can define it. I think I agree with thinking that authentic food is something you have never tasted before and never experienced in that setting which makes it for you an authentic dish that belongs to that type of culture.

The lectures explained that authenticity is linked to Bourdieu's distinction theory. Authenticity is about status- strategy for accessing and reproducing cultural and economic capital. Authenticity helps to identify your identity in food and finding your people through food. Food can be authentic by the place it is served, the product/food that is served and by the people eating it. The lecture taught that authenticity is the property of the particular work of cuisine that is "happening".

During the tutorial I explained my authentic food experience. It was about my holiday in Egypt from a couple of years ago with the family. We visited in the desert an inhabitant of that region and were invited to drink some tea at their house. We got some home-made tea, poured from a typical tea pot and with special glasses. The tea made of their tea type with a lot of sugar. We sat on a carpet on the ground, that was very colorful. They were wearing typical clothes, kind of scarves forming a dress. For me this was a new experience and due to the atmosphere, it made it for me authentic. By discussing this during the tutorial I experienced why it made it authentic for me, because it was new, and what authenticity is for me.

To conclude, I learned this week more about food and its authenticity. I learned how I can define authentic food and how other righters look at the word authentic food. This information is very useful when I want to make a product or cook something which I want to be authentic, so it attracts the people that find the same thing authentic. I will use this knowledge during the exam and my further studies.

References

Heldke, L. 2005. "But is it authentic? Culinary Travel and the Search for the Genuine Article" in The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink. C. Korsmeyer (ed). Pp 385-394. New York: Berg.

Johnston, J. and Baumann, S. 2010." Eating Authenticity " Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape

Ray, K. (2017). Bringing the immigrant back into the sociology of taste. *Appetite*, 119, 41-47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2016.10.013>

Week 4 Race, gender & food

19-11-2021

This week was about race and food and gender and food. I learned more about the readings from Cairns, Bourdieu, the Guardian and Williams-Forson. All about different theories, the relation between gender and food according to foodies and the relation between food and race, but Cairns making some connections with Bourdieu's theories. The video's thought even more about the relation between food and race and about food in relation to gender. The tutorial session explained more how food/recipes books are used to show racism. By the Chinese protest recipes by Clarence Kwan.

The readings explained more about gender, race and food and the relation with Bourdieu's theories in this case. But the lectures gave especially more clarity on these topics and how the readings did show this.

The online lectures taught first some categories for understanding, like what is a gender identity. It is an individuals' internal sense of themselves as either male, female, both or neither. Or what gender expression is, how individuals express their gender through performance. As the article from Bourdieu (1979) made clear, gendered food practices and choices are influences by gender inequities AND class distinction. Socially constructed tastes and the body are related. Taste is a class culture turned into nature, that is, embodied and helps to shape the class body. Bourdieu also mentioned that classed bodies are also gendered bodies. As discussed more in the lecture are key terms like, doing gender, social reproduction and discourse (Cairns et al., 2010). And showed that it is important to remember that foodies can challenge dominant gender roles because of their economic and cultural capital. The lecture showed a picture which easily taught me how the body is controlled since you were born, see figure 1. Nowadays we have the thin ideal all girls especially want to have, which is a desired aesthetic look. It needs control, discipline and desirability to achieve.

The second lecture especially taught more about race; race is a socially constructed category. With the key words to remember, like constructivism, symbolism, discourse, structuralism and embodiment (Williams-Forson, 2008). To understand more about race the word intersectionality was introduced, how multiple categories of identity and difference depend on one another for meaning.

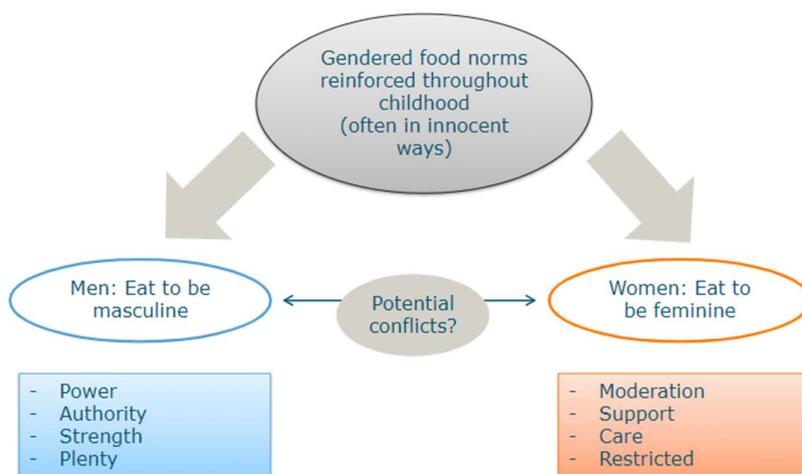


Figure 1, body controlled since birth

In the tutorial session we first had to talk two minutes to our group mates without interruptions of them of our experiences. I found telling the story easy, because you weren't interrupted but what I found difficult was understanding if they did understand what I was saying. When we had to do this in the other way around. I experienced that I found it difficult not to immediately ask a question or say yes, when they were talking. After this we analyzed the protest recipes from Kwan (2020). I found it quite difficult to understand the main points that were made about the protest in the recipes, the recipes did distract me too much. But by the class discussion I understood more about the different layers there were made about Black Lives Matter, black people and the police.

To conclude I learned what the relationship is with Bourdieu's theory and food, gender and race. I learned how I can use these terms and knowledge on my exam and how this is used in the readings from nowadays and the past. For the next week I want to pay more attention during the lectures, as I experienced that I was faster distracted by following the lecture online.

References

Figure 1, lecture 7, Gender & Food, slide 40, November 16th, 2021

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Williams-Forson, P. (2008). More than just the “big piece of chicken”: The power of race, class, and food in American consciousness. *Food and culture: A reader*, 342-353.

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Week 5 Food identity

26-11-2021

In this week's journal I write what I have learned from the things I have done this week. This week had the main question; How can we use the body to research food, identity, and difference? I read the articles from Gombert et al. and Hayes-Conroy. The lectures explained more about the readings and what the main points are to learn for your exam. For this week's journal we had to do one challenge. I tried to eat a day vegan. The tutorial session on Thursday did us experience a restaurant moment, how the people where and how you did feel by eating the things from the menu. It explained more what visceral means and how you can explain it by something from your everyday live.

This week I tried to be one day vegan. Which means eating no animal-based products. For my breakfast this meant not eating my favorite yoghurt bowl with muesli and fruit but making oatmeal with soy milk, adding fruit and peanut butter. My lunch was something I normally eat, because that's already vegan. Bread (vegan) with hummus, muhammara and cucumber. For dinner I searched for a vegan dinner on the Allerhande, it was a curry. Curry with coconut milk, rice, vegetables, curry spices and lentils. My snacks normally are half vegan, because I eat a piece of fruit, a Nākd bar which is vegan and bread with peanut butter. But my late-night snack/dessert is always Greek yoghurt with fruit and nuts. This was kind of hard to swap, so instead of the Greek yoghurt I drank soy milk and eat the nuts and fruit separate. I experienced that eating vegan can be cheap as well as expensive. Replacement products can be cheaper than 'normal' ones, like soy yoghurt instead of normal Greek yoghurt, but using lentils instead of meat can save money. Because you are used to some foods its difficult to swap them, you are used to the taste, the moment you eat it and how it makes you feel. I would like to eat vegan but living at my parents' house makes this a bit more difficult as I want to eat just for dinner what they have made, but almost every time that includes meat. That's why I am trying if I am out for dinner or making my dinner by myself to eat something at least vegetarian, but preferably vegan.

From the readings and lectures that together formed one main material. I learned what slow food is. That the principle of slow food is; food meaning pleasure, culture and conviviality. Bourdieu is related to a lot of the key words of the lectures and readings. Like slow food has also to do with practices. This week explained that visceral means the bodily realm in/through which feelings, sensations, moods, and so on are experienced. Feelings are visceral judgements that are simultaneously biological and social (Hayes-Conroy, 2010). There are visceral associations between particular types of food and particular social identities, groups, cultural ideas, and discourses. It was nice to have some recap as well this week during the lecture about autonomy and justice. This made clear that I already forgot it a bit and that we must study it well before the exam. I learned conversion factors like personal, social and environmental. Lastly, the lecture and reading from Gombert et al, learned that income and education are linked to food.

For the tutorial session I had chosen the experience of eating in an Italian restaurant, where I eat this weekend. Through writing down the pre-tutorial questions and discussing it during the session itself, it made by this example clearer how visceral is involved. Showing that the food made me happy because of the feeling that it was home-made and that, that made it fuel more. And by the happy environment in the restaurant, you got a better feeling.

To conclude I learned this week how to incorporate Bourdieu's theories in the food area. What visceral means and how to use it in everyday life. How I can implement these theories in possible exam questions and that I must learn key words from the whole course very well for the exam.

References

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