Department of Sociology: Maynooth University Special Topic Thesis

How do capital and habitus impact attitudes toward food and food practices?

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PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This case study focuses on a small sample group of seven participants to explore the relevance of habitus and capitals on their food practices and attitudes towards food. Both of these concepts will be explored along with relevant sociological research to give a well-rounded insight into the choices and experiences of my participants through a sociological lens. The goal of this research is to develop an understanding of the different foodscapes we construct in our daily lives, with influence from multiple factors, including but not limited to economic, cultural, symbolic and social capital, different tastes, upbringing, location and accessibility to food, and how these intertwine to shape our everyday lived experience with food.

To achieve this, I employed the use of food diaries to identify trends in my participants eating habits. From here I was able to tailor specific questions based on the data gathered from their food diaries and organised focus groups to work out the different factors which predominantly had an impact on their food practices and attitudes towards food.

While it becomes apparent that these two core concepts of habitus and capital play a huge part in shaping the way my participants experience food to varying degrees, we see evidence of other factors such as individual agency and nationality influencing people's perceptions and experiences with food in dramatic ways. We also see major themes connect all participants such as family, traditions, memories, gender, symbolic meaning and the social aspect of food.

INTRODUCTION

The consumption of food has always fascinated me. Every individual has particular tastes, notions and opinions when it comes to food and food practices. But what is it about our lived experiences that cause us to differ so much from person to person? As stated by Murcott (2019:18) food is "unavoidably social and cultural," making it a topic which is ripe for sociological investigation. I wish to anchor my research with Bourdieu's (1994a,1994b) concepts of habitus and capital and examine how these intertwine to shape the choices we make surrounding food and how this shapes the experiences we have with food.

Habitus is a complex social process which justifies an individual's values, perspectives and beliefs. This will be one of the key pillars for examination in my research project. As described by Costa and Murphy (2015:3) in regards to habitus, "Bourdieu tried to asses internalised behaviours, perceptions and beliefs that individuals carry with them." These beliefs can come from any number of influences, namely family and friends, as we socialise with them on a daily basis throughout our lives. The habitus will reflect the wider implications of an individual's social life. The habitus' "limits are set by historically and socially situated conditions of its production," (Bourdieu 1994b: 98). In essence, how and where a person grows up defines the habitus. I wish to draw upon this idea of socially constructed ways of thinking and apply it to people's food experiences, and understand how participant's backgrounds and social situation develop their foodscape.

Practices can be defined by Bourdieu as actions or activities which are regularly repeated by a group or individual (Bourdieu (1984) cited in Murcott 2019:24). Therefore, a person's food practice is seen as how they repeatedly interact with food, from what they purchase, what they cook, how they consume it and everything in between. Using Bourdieu's (2022) other theory on capital I plan to explore how notions of both symbolic and cultural capital are

socialised into us and establish meaning with regards to certain foods, meals and occasions. Furthermore, economic capital will come into play in how my participants food experiences are constructed either limiting or expanding their ability to consume food they desire, as "structures might limit agency even in light of the desire," to change (Wills, Backett-Milburn, Roberts and Lawton 2011:728). By rooting my research in the concepts put forward by Bourdieu it provides a sociological basis for my exploration of food practices and structures, and the factors influencing them.

It is fascinating to me how we gather many of our assumptions of food; our likes and dislikes, tastes and thoughts about certain food through socialisation. From the moment we begin our food journey as babies we are assigning meaning to specific foods according to family traditions (Jacobson 2004) or associating food with emotions (Locher, Maurer, Ells and Yoels 2005). This imbues certain foods and meals with symbolic capital specific to the individual or cultural capital which may be shared by communities. These meanings vary depending on the lived experience of the individual, but there remain some constants across the board, for example, nostalgia, comfort and meals at special occasions (ibid). These assigned meanings add to the capital we possess and shape our attitudes towards food and food practices.

In addition to discussing how both habitus and capital shape our food attitudes and practices, it is also necessary to discuss how Bourdieu stressed "that individuals or groups could alter their practices," (Bourdieu (1984) cited in Wills et al. 2011:727). Individuals are not bound to their circumstance and are constantly shaped by not only their history but also their new experiences. I will use this notion to explore how my participants deviate from the confines of their established food norms in an attempt to create their own food experiences and what factors help or hinder this change.

Combining the above concepts and sentiments from other authors throughout, this paper will explore the complex yet engaging topic of food, using Bourdieu as a focal point for discussion, and investigate how capitals and habitus impact attitudes toward food and food practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

I have divided my literature review into five sections in order to fully analyse core concepts and ideas relevant to my research question. The first two sections of my literature review will begin with discussing the backbone of this project which are the concepts of habitus and capital, and delve into existing works which apply these concepts to the topic of food. This will help me to explore how these may help us to understand our food experiences. Secondly, I will review literature which helps us understand how and why family helps us to establish meaning towards certain foods and how we reproduce these food practices from our memories. I will then discuss how food is a very gendered practice and how this changes people's food experiences depending on their gender. In the final section, I will discuss what motivates our food choices.

The purpose of combining the follow literature is to construct a general understanding of possible factors which impact food practices and attitudes and understand the previous works done in relation to food and society. Using the knowledge gathered from these works, my research will be both "better informed and better conceptualized [to] plunge more deeply into the same things," (Geertz 1973:25) and provide a new perspective. These previous studies will support my research so I can build upon this and provide rich insight into a topic which I believe is perfect for sociological investigation.

Habitus and Food

Bourdieu has outlined that habitus is a subconscious guiding force embedded within every individual. It manifests within us from the earliest days of our lives and in essence can be described as "principles which generate and organise practices and representations,"

(Bourdieu 1994b:96) which we carry out in everyday life. The habitus makes us behave in a way which we are familiar with, which we have learned through our past experiences. Most notably it is our families and community which we find ourselves growing up in that condition the habitus. The habitus "ensures the active presence of past experiences," (ibid:98). If we are to apply this to the study of food and society, a lot of our consumption practices are unconsciously driven: "we don't directly feel the influence of these past selves," (Durkheim (1977) cited in Bourdieu 1994b:100). These practices are embedded in us. Other studies can attest to the habitus impacting peoples eating patterns. As adults, many people's food practices directly correlate to familial practices which can be seen as learned dispositions of the habitus (Woodhall-Melnik and Matheson 2017:807). Further confirming the role of family in habitus forming and affecting food practices is observations from Domaneschi (2019:127), who observed that many practices and attitudes surrounding food are "derived from family experience."

Another interesting perspective on the role of habitus within food studies is "how different habituses could be able to interact differently with the same material entities of the practice," (ibid:129). In essence, how different people may interact with the same ingredients depending on a number of factors: skills, knowledge, tools available.

Bourdieu's theory is not without critique though. The concept of habitus is "a little vague or lacking clarity," (Sweetman 2009:495). Assuming that habitus is a largely unconscious set of standards and practices we follow limits how we can operationalise the concept. If we are conscious in our every day lives about the choices we make, then it is safe to assume we possess a sort of reflexive consciousness to break away from the confides of our habitus. Paradoxically, it is the same "vagueness and ambiguity" of Bourdieu's notions which "allows the concepts of habitus, [and] capital," (ibid:498) to be applied to many types of research topics. The habitus is not set-in-stone, and these authors don't account for deviance from the

habitus. I will tease out this idea and look at how common or likely someone is to change their practices. As Bourdieu (1994b:105) states, the habitus creates a "*relatively* consistent," set of practices. Individual agency and outside influence must also be considered.

These studies on food and habitus however focus very heavily on the family aspect of habitus forming. What about people who had no family to condition these notions into them? Nor do these papers account for either friends or the wider community which may have an impact on the habitus, and in turn, on food practices and attitudes.

The Concept of Capital

To outline Bourdieu's theory, capitals (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) act as signifiers in society and are some of the main dimensions for social differentiation among groups and individuals (Prieur, Rosenlund and Skjott-Larsen 2008:45). They are both economic and non-economic assets which work together so people "can acquire status and indulge in practices," (ibid:46). The different volume of each capital held by an individual distinguishes them from another, and reflects the social world of which they are a part of. They shape an individual's attitudes, behaviours and preferences according to what they have available due to their various levels of capital. It is proven in the study done by Prieur et al. (2008) that there is a big correlation between capital indicators and lifestyle variables, which is what I aim to look at with regards to food in this research project. This gives me a useful foundation to work with as I explore how capital can shape our food practices and attitudes. Bourdieu (2022) explains that capital of various forms is acquired differently depending on "the period, society and social class," meaning there should be some differentiation between my participants based on these factors when it comes to their food practices and attitudes.

Bourdieu also understood that food choices are also associated with capital, along with other practices and tastes surrounding food (Kahma, Niva, Helakorpi and Jallinoja 2015:444).

Social capital is gained through your social network (Bourdieu 2022) and is reproduced and maintained by actors within this network. When applied to the concept of food this could be linked to enjoying restaurants your friends do, assimilating similar food practices to your significant other and so forth. Economic capital can define where you shop in turn affecting your food choices. Symbolic and cultural capital can imbue certain foods and practices with meaning to a community or individual shaping their attitudes and practices. Food is noted by Bourdieu to be an identifier of cultural capital (Prieur et al. 2008:48) which further situates this topic within a sociological framework for investigation.

This has been a growing area of research in recent years, as authors have explored the many factors which have been diversifying food globally, from the growing availability of food, the ways meals are prepared and different cultures food practices. This has led to a new type of capital which has been termed "culinary capital" (Johnston and Baumann (2010) cited in Kahma et al. 2015:444). Culinary capital can be seen as an amalgamation of cultural, symbolic and economic capital as these all shape the culinary experience of the individual.

Much like habitus, the concept of capital is interpretive as Bourdieu wanted the focus to remain on the analysis these concepts helped formulate of the social world rather than the concepts themselves (Prieur et al. 2008:45). Using this concept allows me to analyse the social world in a unique way where I can interpret peoples lived experience through their food practices.

Family Food Practices: Meaning and Memory

The importance of family in establishing meaning and building our food practices cannot be underestimated. From the earliest time of development for us as humans we begin forming "aggregate patterns of family traditions," (Jacobsen 2004:70). How we are raised defines our taste and how we experience food, with different people exhibiting different ways of

preparing and serving the same type of meals (Sutton 2012:314). Upholding these traditions and remaining true to what we have learned through socialisation is a way of preserving something from our past and could be seen as the habitus manifesting our past experiences in the present.

The meaning and importance of meals are regulated by the social and cultural contexts in which they are set, and this can change the dynamic of the entire food practices around the meal from "the number of different dishes, the crockery to be used for serving, the style of eating," (Murcott 2019:18). It is from our families we gain the knowledge about how to conduct ourselves when it comes to food. These notions about what is right and wrong about food consumption and production come from socialisation at a family level first, as research shows that young adults put their mother at the top of the hierarchy in the family when it came to who shaped their food practices (Lin 2015:440), which is further backed up by Srinivas (2012:370) who has observed that we trace much of our emotional association with food to both our mothers and grand-mothers.

Douglas (1972:66) observes that, "Drinks are for strangers… Meals are for family, close friends, honoured guests." From this we can deduce that meals are intimate social gatherings which express a close bond with those we choose to dine with. I believe this comes from habitually eating with those nearest and dearest to us on a daily basis, and at special events throughout the year such as birthdays, Christmas or Easter. Furthermore, "each meal is a structured social event which structures others in its own image," (ibid:69). We attempt to recreate meals in the perfect image in our head time and time again. It becomes almost ritualistic after observing many food practices growing up, and we replicate these traditions, from changing the crockery we use at certain events, how our manners change depending on what food is served, as well as the types of food for different occasions and of course the seating arrangement (Bourdieu 2012:38, Murcott 2019:18).

It is our memories of food practices from when we are young which reproduces our attitudes and practices as we get older. Drawing on the Srinivas' (2012:356) notion of "gastro-nostalgia" it is easy to see how the want to recreate feelings and emotions experience in our youths of good times surrounded by family at events and such, can impact our food practices. It is our emotional association with food which feeds the habitus, reproducing our desires for home-cooking, even going so far as to try to replicate dishes as "mother made it," (ibid:369). Memories and meaning associated with food become rooted in "the symbolic value of consumption," (Giddens (1991) cited in Srinivas 2012:369). Recipes and meals can be a rich source about an individual's history of their locality, family and community and traditions (Sutton 2012). This symbolic capital unique to the individual or shared among members of the same 'community' who have been exposed to the same experience. We see two forces at work here in reproducing practices and attitudes; one is that nostalgia is a driving force behind the reproduction of family practices. The second force identified by Srinivas (2012:356) is the want to keep tradition alive in order to pass on this knowledge to the next generation of children in the family. This highlights the way in which Bourdieu exemplifies how habitus is reproduced and maintained by creating a "relatively consistent universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions," (Bourdieu 1994b:105).

Gender and Food Practices

As with most things in the social world, there is a gendered element when it comes to food practices. Bourdieu (2012) observes that all things related to food from division of labour, types of food and even portion size are regulated by gender. One observation by Bourdieu (2012) is echoed by Lin (2015), where it is seen that women often prioritise the needs of men in their family of their own. This is reflected by the way women often experience guilt if food is not ready for their husbands upon returning from work, and putting the tastes of children and men before their own (Charles and Kerr (1988) cited in Lin 2015:435), but experiencing

great pleasure in pleasing their families with a good meal. This exhibits how the division of labour in the house is unequally distributed with a lot more responsibility for providing meals and care to residents in the home falling on women, while men are often the ones being cared for.

In addition, consumption practices can usually be related to not only gender, but level of education. Women are more likely to consume fruit and vegetables than men (Prättälä (2003) cited in Kahma et al. 2015:445) and high level of education being associated with consumption of vegetables, vegetable oils and fish (Seiluri, Lahelma, Rahkonen and Lallukka (2011) cited in Kahma et al. 2015:445). Furthermore, men's transition into manhood is reflected by them consuming a 'second helping' or bigger portion size at dinner, whereas a woman's transition to womanhood is reflected by their willingness to eat less in order to facilitate the appetite of the men in the household (Bourdieu 2012).

These traditions, much like other attitudes and food related practices are thus reproduced, creating inequality and reinforcing gendered stereotypes. But what of families where the reverse is true and the primary cook or care provider is male? This is an avenue that needs to be explored within the research of food and society, as there can be some deviance from 'the norm'.

Food Choices: Trying Something New

Murcott (1982:203) explains that "peoples' food choice is neither random nor haphazard, but exhibits patterns and regularities." So how likely are we to change our eating habits, or try new things? Or are we bound by the social and cultural context we find ourselves in? It has been shown in research that there is often social pressure felt by people to replicate authentic meals true to their identity, affecting what we choose to cook or buy (Srinivas 2012:367). Many of us can become stuck in our ways often opting to follow tradition and

stick to what we know but this is not the case for everybody. A recent study by Bord Bia (2021:36-39) shows that food consumption is diversifying due to the growing range of foods available, with the Irish population specifying they "like to find new and interesting foods to try." This willingness to try new foods however is directly linked to the cultural capital an individual possesses as those who are "richer in cultural capital… pursue originality," (Bourdieu 2012:32). Those who wish to set themselves apart from others look for new and exciting ways to distinguish themselves from others.

There is also an element of "self-representation," (Herman 2019:25) social and symbolic capital which influences the choices we make when it comes to food. In choosing what restaurant to eat in for example we are influenced by preconceived notions we have gained through the social groups we belong to, and the symbolic meaning places might mean to us as well. If we take a picture in the latest 'cool' restaurant, we automatically gain a certain amount of social capital which we can then utilise to our advantage in the social world (ibid). Furthermore, studies show that consumers prefer to dine at places which they are familiar with (Kahma 2015:444). We can assume that this familiarity which they gained is from being accustomed to eating there before (habitus), or through hearing about it from someone in their social network (social capital), showing how these two concepts can shape our food experiences.

Photos which are taken of a particular setting can be immersive and help display the wider social context of the world. Images can be a "tool to uncover and convey aspects of the habitus," (Sweetman 2009:500) also. When I saw this application of using images to understand habitus, I thought it would be useful to apply to this research project as there is an abundance of information conveyed in the images I have received from my participants which may reflect their habitus and capital signifiers.

The growing access to new and diverse foods can be traced to the process of globalisation (Mead 2012:19). The expanding variety of foods accessibility allows people to conceptualise new meals and potentially broaden their current foodscape relative to the amount of culinary capital they possess. Given this ever expanding and changing landscape of food, food studies too is ever expanding with new avenues for sociological investigation opening up, where key concepts can be applied to examine the evolution of foodscapes.

Conclusion

The above literature provides a clear overview of the many dimensions of food and society. Starting with habitus and capital we can see how these concepts are multi-faceted and can be applied to many topics to analyse the social world. Next, I looked at how family is instrumental in establishing meaning in us with regards to food and how our memories of food and family shape our foodscape throughout our lives. I then provided a brief overview of the role gender plays in reinforcing stereotypes and shaping our food practices. Lastly, I gave some insight into what motivates our food choices.

Altogether this literature highlights the many ways we can look at food and society, and the different societal factors which can impact our food practices and attitudes.

METHODOLOGY

Choosing a method

My research question is an investigation into how capital and habitus impact attitudes towards food and food practices. I aim to provide detailed accounts of people's current food practices and explore the factors which contribute to the construction of these practices. In order to do this, I plan to draw upon other research in this area, and support my findings with reference to the concepts of habitus and capital as put forward by Bourdieu. I will be using a constructivist paradigm of research where I aim to try understand "the world of human experience," (Cohen and Manion (1994) cited in Mackenzie and Knipe 2006:4) and how this is reflected through food practices, using qualitative research methods. There are two methods which I have chosen to gain the necessary information I need to explore this question fully which are; the use of food diaries and focus groups.

In order to obtain an overview of my participants current food practices I decided to employ the use of food diaries (see methodological appendix). I designed these food diaries in such a way that I could get a general overview of the types of meals my participants consume, the methods they use in preparing these meals, and to gather general comments about these meals. In doing this it challenged my participants to think about the food they consume, how they consume it and reflect on their food practices. I also gained permission from my participants to create a private group chat via WhatsApp. While this was simply to arrange a time and place to meet for the focus group, it soon snowballed into a 'discussion forum' of sorts where they could discuss meals and exchange pictures of food they prepared while completing the food diaries proving useful as I now obtained visual representations of their food to use in my research.

Having a breakdown of my participants food practices was not enough: I required more in-depth discussion. I chose to borrow the notion of 'thick description' from Clifford Geertz (1973). This is the idea that small facts can speak on larger issues, which I feel can be applied to my research. In order to work out the relevance capital and habitus has on people's food practices and attitudes; I need to extract information surrounding their lived experience. To do this, I figured a focus group would be the most beneficial research method to employ as group discussion can lead to more engaging discussion as people share their experiences.

Upon receiving the food diaries back, I could analyse the information contained in each one and looked for particular trends. I then formulated specific questions which I felt would encompass particular areas which I felt needed to be expanded on in the focus groups to give me the information I needed to learn of my participants habitus and capital.

Previously I had planned to conduct surveys on a large number of participants. However, it would be incredibly difficult to obtain information regarding habitus and capital through surveys without including a multitude of questions which I believed may get tiresome for the people who agreed to participate. It would also have limited the wealth of knowledge I could gain from conducting more qualitative- "data represented through words, pictures, or icons analysed using thematic exploration," (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006:8) - methods of research through the group chat, food diaries and the focus groups. I believe more in-depth discussion and analysis of opinions and attitudes is a more fruitful way to gain the information I need in order to answer the question I have set out for myself.

Choosing a sample

Deciding who I wished to conduct this research on was difficult as the possibilities were endless. However, I decided to root my research in something I am familiar with and which is easily accessible. And so, my research project is a small case study of seven young adults

living in Dublin. Although it is a relatively small sample I can still make "confident generalizations," (Firebaugh 2008:19) about to what degree habitus and capital impact peoples food practices and attitudes towards food. The group consists of four female participants and three male participants. Due to the nature of the current COVID-19 pandemic which still has a hold on the world, I chose to utilise convenience sampling, and ask my friends to participate, in order to eliminate any difficulty regarding restrictions in place for the pandemic, or if people felt uncomfortable with meeting face-to-face, which I believe is crucial to conducting a focus group, as a lot of nuances can be lost in meeting online. To make my sample more diverse I asked members of two separate friend groups with different backgrounds to one-another. This is to give me a more well-rounded view of the different habitus and capitals at play when it comes to people and their food practices and attitudes, and allows me to identify similarities or differences in the construction of these ideas. Having a more diverse sample also allows for the "possibility of surprise," (ibid:29) with different people coming together to share their lived experience.

NAME	GENDER	AGE	NATIONALITY	OCCUPATIONAL STATUS
Hannah	Female	22	Irish	Part-time retail + student
Jess	Female	23	Irish	Full-time student
Sarah	Female	25	Croatian	Full-time work
Debbie	Female	25	Czech	Full-time work
Aiden	Male	24	Irish	Part-time retail

Evan	Male	25	Moldovan/Italian	Full-time work
John	Male	22	Irish	Full-time work

NOTE: all participants have been anonymised for the purpose of this research.

The Focus Group

I set a date with my participants and arranged to meet. Unfortunately, due to two of my participants being infected with COVID-19, and the deadline fast approaching, I made the decision to split the group up and have two focus groups: four participants one day, three on another. I believe this was actually for the best, as I really wanted in depth discussion and I felt too many people together would make it difficult for everyone to have an opportunity to speak and be heard, and gave me more time to mine the memories of each individual participant.

The discussions and enthusiasm from both groups of participants at the focus group was astonishing. Every participant got involved in the conversations sharing anecdotes, recipes, cooking tips and opinions. The atmosphere was comfortable due to us being familiar with each other in both groups which I felt aided me in being able to ask tougher questions, as well as their openness to share their experiences with me. The questions which I had tailored from the previous data gathered stimulated the right conversations, and only required a small number of probing questions from myself to steer the conversation. All the information I gained from these focus groups will help me "to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts," (Geertz 1973:28).

Compiling the data

As I mentioned above, with the data compiled from the food diaries I could identify trends in eating practices in each individual diary, and also map similarities between my

participants. In order to analyse my findings from the focus group, it was crucial for me to listen back to my recordings and pick out key quotes which I felt related heavily to the key subject matter I wished to discuss in my findings. I then read back over my field notes and coded the relevant themes throughout using different coloured pens. This allowed me to quickly compile all the necessary information in a systematic way. I then re-wrote these themes on separate pages to keep all relevant information together and easily accessible, adding small notes and observations during subsequent listening to my recordings.

While coding my findings I immediately noticed there was some variation in eating habits, food consumed and attitudes between the Irish participants and non-Irish participants, which provides me with lots of ways to compare and contrast how different habitus and capitals influence people in different ways. On the other hand, I discovered that there were also many constants across the board with my participants attitudes and practices which I will explore in greater detail in my findings.

Ethics

In terms of ethics, all ethical guidelines of the Sociological Association of Ireland (2022) and the Department of Sociology (2015) were adhered to. Each participant was given a consent form (see methodological appendix) outlining the nature of my research, and stating that any participant could withdraw from the study at any time, and all data gathered on them would be disposed of. Each participant will be anonymised and will be referred to under pseudonyms. I recorded both focus groups on my personal laptop and stored them in a password protected folder to prevent anyone else from accessing it along with all the food diaries. The group chat is also encrypted. All data compiled on my participants including the group chat will be deleted upon completing this research.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep both my participants and myself safe, I requested each person conduct an antigen test to make sure we were all well enough to meet together 24 hours before meeting.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section I will provide a detailed account of my findings from the two focus groups with reference to the food diaries and images submitted by my participants. My analysis will attempt to ascertain the varying degrees of which both capital and habitus have impacted my participant's food practices and attitudes. Breaking my findings up into smaller sections will allow me to delve more deeply into each relevant piece of information. I will also be comparing my Irish and non-Irish participants, as I have found there are notable differences between the food practices and attitudes held by both groups, and the capitals and habitus each group holds. Family values and practices will explore how instrumental family is in socialising our food practices into us, and how we replicate these in our everyday lives. Second, I delve into the cultural phenomenon of the Sunday dinner and discuss its relevance in todays society, and the capitals the practice provides its participants. Finally, I look at how likely my participants are to deviate from their established food practices and attitudes depending on a number of factors.

Family Values and Practices

Within the literature review it was highlighted how important family was in establishing values and shaping the individual's food practices. It became evident almost immediately while conducting my research that these sentiments rang true for my participants. When asked "who is your biggest influence when it comes to food," all but two participants stated their mother or their grandmother. This indicates that the family is the most instrumental in constructing the food practices and attitudes of my participants. John and Hannah expressed that they were taught to cook by his father and "videos on Youtube," respectively. From what they cook, how they cook it and even where they shop is in some way dictated by the key people who have shaped their food practices. Even small practices such as not being wasteful

when it comes to food are replicated in their daily lives as a result of being socialised by their family.

Emotions seemed to be a huge factor when it came to describing food and family. The language used by everyone seemed to evoke feelings of comfort and joy. Words like "homey," "heart-warming," "comforting," and "out of this world," are just some examples how home cooking was described. To understand more I asked what they liked to make if they were feeling unwell (emotionally or physically):

Evan: "I always try to make things from childhood, especially when I'm feeling low just to make Ireland feel more like home."

Aiden: "Something like a stew or lasagne. I just remember coming home after a bad day in school and smelling stew the minute, I opened the door and feeling all warm. No better feeling."

It appears that the emotional significance of food and association with home and family plays a major role in establishing food practices. My participants display a want to recreate that same sense of comfort and nostalgia from growing up that they are willing to use the same practices as their family did.

Being around family for most of my participants really helped them to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for them to establish their own food practices:

Debbie: "I grew up watching my mam and grandmother spend whole mornings cooking so learned a lot just by observing."

Everybody shared a story about some recipe which their family made, and detailed all the steps that went into it. The level of remembrance and specific details each participant had was astounding. These recipes seem to give the participants symbolic capital which they value greatly and thus try to remember and recreate them when they can. Much of their aptitude at cooking can be traced back to the "methodical approach" some of their family had when it came to cooking. These family practices were described as "ritualistic" when it came to

following specific recipes, handed down from generation to generation, as is the case with Sarah who details, "I loved watching my granny make this crazy cake *Mađarica.* It's like a long beautiful tradition of making it in my family. I try but it never tastes as good." This idea that nothing tastes as good as when another family member (namely either the mother or grandmother) is a similarity all my participants shared and I believe is rooted in the idea of "gastro-nostalgia," (Srinivas 2012:359). This, to me, is one of the key indicators of the habitus exerting itself. It reinforces the idea that we are products of our upbringing, and we attempt to replicate these meals and practices in an attempt to create a familiar feeling for the purpose of comfort and contentment.

Conversation soon turned to snacks which were made as a treat when we were younger. Many which were described were met with a general fondness from the group when described such as a Nutella bagel, or something as simple as butter on crackers which is a "masterpiece." Until one participant mentioned "butter and sugar sambos," which was referred to by John as a "culinary delight," but was met with collective disgust from my non-Irish participants. What is considered to be a delicacy to some is absolutely abhorrent to others, which I figured was noteworthy. It showcases how our tastes and attitudes around food are socialised into us, and represents how you can differentiate people of various social and cultural backgrounds based on their taste preferences.

Another noteworthy observation I made was in regards to the images which were submitted to me via the WhatsApp group chat. My non-Irish participants submitted many images of the meals which they prepared over the week, while my Irish participants didn't send any. When I asked why, Hannah responded "none of them looked good enough to take a pic." Further conversation revealed that my Irish participants did not see the point in presenting meals in an aesthetically pleasing way with Aiden chiming in "I wasn't taught to

eat with my eyes. Just slap it on a plate and eat it.” On the other hand, the images I received from Evan, Sarah and Debbie were all immaculately presented as seen below;

All three of them agreed that the aesthetic aspect of their meals played a big role in their consumption practices. Evan proceeded to show me a folder of images on his phone which consisted only of food that he made, which prompted Sarah and Debbie to do the same. Sarah noted that she grew up with an abundance of fresh food which was always presented in a stylised way, saying it "tastes better when it looks good," with Evan and Debbie agreeing with this statement:

> Evan: "My mom always wiped the outside of the plate so it didn't have a smudge or sauce when she served dinner. I'm not that careful but I try to be as neat and tidy as possible."
>
> Debbie: "Same, everything was always colourful and pretty I always hated ruining the plate."

These images are small vignettes into the habitus at play in my three participants lives (Sweetman 2009). While they were socialised into presenting food in an attractive manner they still hold this practice in a high regard, which is reflected in the above images.

To summarise, we can see how the family plays a crucial role in the production of habitus within the individual. This in turn demonstrates how the habitus guides our food choices and practices by exerting itself over the production of these practices through our emotions and memories. Even our attitudes are shaped by the habitus as seen with the example of different delicacies, where one might not be familiar with something, which is considered almost sacred to another person.

The Phenomenon of the Sunday Dinner

Upon analysing my participant's food diaries, I noticed that each one of my Irish participants had some variation of a 'Sunday dinner' typically consisting of roast chicken or beef, with assorted vegetables cooked in a variety of ways from boiling to roasting. When I posed the question "what is your favourite meal," unanimously my Irish participants responded that above all other meals they enjoyed a Sunday dinner. While the discussion on Sunday dinners continued there was some contention over the different methods of preparing

the meal; what is the best way to make roast potatoes, what vegetables belong on the plate, and the most important of all, what is the best gravy to use, echoing the sentiments of Murcott (2019:16) when she states that "it is not only styles of cooking… but the ingredients themselves that are varied." Disagreements aside, one thing they all agreed on- you must eat at the table. The entire family must be present or the whole meal is pointless. John stated:

> "It just brings the family together, doesn't it? After a week of not being at home because everyone's at work or college everyone comes together."

The Sunday dinner is a long-standing family tradition in Ireland. It is a cultural event that has stood the test of time, being a symbol of family, comfort and security in the Irish family. A meal of such scale and importance would rarely occur during the week when people are "not around," and so is saved for a time when everyone can attend. Douglas (1972:67) observed that "meals are ordered in scale of importance and grandeur through the week and the year," which is exactly what we see here. The consistent reproduction of this practice alludes to the habitus exerting itself. It is replicated week on week and requires the participation of all social actors in the family:

> Hannah: "I can't remember the last time we didn't have a Sunday dinner. Maybe when my mam was away ages ago. But we all help, well, mostly me and my sister. My dad might set the table and that's about it."

This is a tradition which they have become accustom to since they were small, and has manifested as a habitual task which is completed every week. They also displayed the want to pass this on to their children so they can "feel that same feeling of comfort and homeliness." I believe this shows the habitus of my participants in action. The desire to replicate this set of family food practices which they have become accustom to is a sign that there is an unconscious guiding force which they wish to pass on, further re-affirming the major role family has in the production and maintenance of the habitus (Woodall-Melnik and Matheson 2017).

One major thing I noticed from my four Irish participants was the pride they took in this practice. Each one of them felt a sense of belonging and shared meaning about what the significance and importance of the Sunday dinner was, and this was felt through the passion which they spoke about the subject. Having this Irish tradition set in their habitus gives them a certain amount of cultural capital. This allows them certain status among people who share the same capital and meaning with regards to the Sunday dinner. This capital is maintained and reproduced by the actors in the network. The shared meaning continues the tradition thus reproducing the practice. This then shapes their food practices as they recreate this practice on a weekly basis, each an almost mirror copy of the previous one. The Sunday dinner represents togetherness, security and family and replicating the practice produces that same feeling over and over again, and is a way of the habitus preserving these feelings.

On the other hand, my non-Irish participants did not share the same sentiments when it came to the typical Irish Sunday dinner; however, they still understood the cultural significance of the tradition:

Evan: “It’s such an Irish thing, isn’t it?”

Sarah: “Yeah, I feel it’s such a staple of Irishness. Everyone’s always talking about it (laughs). In work on Sunday everyone’s always excited to go home and eat it.”

As quoted by Geertz (1973:4) culture is “the social legacy the individual acquires from his group.” Though they do not share the same practice as the Irish participants, they still understand the meaning behind the practice, which to me indicates the importance of the Sunday dinner in Irish society. As my non-Irish participants have no family here in Dublin, family setting meals are often replicated with friends, though they are less formal and consist mainly of “maybe dinner in a restaurant, or beers and takeaway.” The day of the week of this get-together is also not significant, in contrast to the Irish context of the Sunday being sacred:

Sarah: “Sunday is usually a chill day to me. I might sleep in and then go out and do something or grab a drink.”

Debbie: “Yeah, I’m usually drained from the weekend so it’s a day to recharge. No socialising.”

This highlights the different values and capitals held by the two groups. On one hand we have the Irish who posses a specific cultural capital and shared meaning of the practice of the Sunday dinner and its significance within Irish society. Without this, their Sunday food practices and attitudes toward a specific family meal on a designated day would be completely different. This is directly shown if we look at the attitudes held by my non-Irish participants who don’t participate in the practice, as they lack the cultural capital specific to the Irish community, but display an awareness to the cultural significance of the practice.

Trying Something New: Diversity in Our Diets

Another key finding from my research is how willing my participants were to diversify their eating habits. It became apparent from the food diaries that my Irish participants food choices were less diverse than the non-Irish participants. They opted for more simple meals, often becoming creatures of habit and repeating the same meals daily, like John who consumed the same breakfast for the entire week (yogurt and some variation of a cheese and ham sandwich) and Jess who had the same breakfast and lunch from Monday to Sunday (“bagel, turkey, pudding, eggs”). On the other hand, Sarah’s food diary varied drastically every day, taking inspiration from many world cuisines for each meal, and only repeating the same meal once, while Debbie and Evan followed a similar trend. Upon quizzing my Irish participants on why they chose these meals there were three core reasons for the lack of diversity: time, money and force of habit:

John: “I’m always on the go, I haven’t time to make something mad. Just keep it simple. I try make nicer things on the weekend and that’s something to look forward to. Plus, I haven’t the money to make something new every day.”

Jess: “It’s just easier to get up and make something familiar in the morning that I know I’ll like. I’ve literally ate these bagels for so long. They’re great to eat when you’re on the go.”

In contrast, my non-Irish participants stated that they loved to take the time out of their day to make new and exciting meals, not wanting to be “boring,” or “repetitive.” Sarah even went so far as to describe the layout of most stores such as Tesco and Lidl to be “mundane” opting to shop at more “ethnic shops” to find inspiration, where my Irish participants preferred the convenience of such stores to be attractive, as well as agreeing that the prices were much more affordable.

To account for the differences, we must look at the factors which impact their practices. Economic and time reasons influence the Irish participants, limiting their agency when it comes to diversifying their habits, opting for more traditional and easy meals. My non-Irish participants have more time and money from working full-time. Having set hours, or working 9-5 allows them proper structure to plan meals effectively and provides them with a consistent wage. This allows them to broaden their horizons and diversify their foodscapes, by purchasing items from stores which may be more expensive, and having the luxury of taking their time to, as Evan states “construct flavours.” Comparing this to my Irish participants who work sporadic hours and also must juggle college work, it can be difficult for them to find the time and money to branch out and experiment with new food. Furthermore, Sarah and Evan spoke of being inspired from the multiple countries they have lived in, something my Irish participants have not experienced. This gave them a lot of inspiration both from their home countries and other countries they called home for a short while, attributing their high level of culinary capital to this:

Evan: “I’ve lived in so many places so I’m used to eating lots of different things. If my Croatian friend served me a meal, I’d try to make it myself another time. I think it’s fun.”

Sarah continued to express her delight in the new-found diversity of restaurants and shops in the Dublin area and is “excited” to try something “wild”. When I posed the question to my

Irish participants if they would be like to try some new eateries in Dublin there were some reservations. Aiden expressed his worry of the food not being affordable, while Hannah and John explained they would rather eat somewhere tried and tested:

> Hannah: "I like to stick with places I'm comfortable with and I know will be good or somewhere I've been with my family before"
>
> John: "Agreed, it's nice to have options if I ever want to try something, but I'd rather go somewhere I've been before or that my friends go to all the time."

It seems that social and symbolic capital factor into choosing somewhere to eat too with my Hannah, John and Aiden all expressing that they like places which have established meaning in their lives associated with memories of childhood or good times with friends. It also seems that people are willing to diversify their food practices, but only if the capital and resources an individual possesses are enough to break away from habitus. Economic capital also plays a part in all of their food choices, with each participant stating they consider their financial situation before deciding on where to eat.

This demonstrates "there are noteworthy differences in the capitals [of] people with a national orientation versus someone with an international orientation," (Prieur et al. 2008:67). High levels of culinary and economic capital in my non-Irish participants manifests in their want to try new, exotic foods, whereas the simplistic "grab-and-go" style habits exhibited by my Irish-participants shows a lack of both time and the necessary capitals to diversify. These choices also reflect the habitus of all the participants too, as they are all replicating behaviours they have been accustomed to over time, with their capitals simply affecting their agency in forming new food practices and attitudes.

CONCLUSION

This paper set out to examine our foodscapes by posing the question how do capitals and habitus impact attitudes toward food and food practices. What I believed would be a *fairly* straightforward investigation into the attitudes and practices of my participants quickly morphed into a multi-faceted comparative of people from different backgrounds with endless avenues to explore. It is clear from the evidence provided that "eating habits reveal the social relationships and cultural identities of which they are a product," (Murcott 1982:209). Various factors influence the development of our foodscapes, creating a complex field for sociological investigation, where we must pinpoint key indicators to understand what the biggest shaping forces are, in this case habitus and capitals. My research is unique as it applies both the concept of habitus and capital, rather than isolating them, as I believe the two are both crucial in constructing our lived experience with food. Many of my findings keep in line with the literature already existing on the topic of food and society, specifically when it comes to the significance of family in the formation of the habitus (Bourdieu 1994b, Domaneschi 2019) and the role capital plays in distinguishing people's different practices (Bourdieu 2022, Bourdieu 2012). It is these two notions which I believe impact peoples food practices and attitudes the most.

The habitus and capitals each participant possess are different and so each of their food practices and attitudes are unique. But there still remains many similarities which reflect the cultural and social context of their lived experiences. Family is the most important factor when it comes to shaping our food practices and attitudes. The beliefs and values we gain from our families are replicated in our daily lives through the habitus and this is evident when we look at our choices and practices around food, as observed with the ritualistic nature of the weekly Sunday dinner in the Irish context, or something as simple as replicating the same aesthetics as we consumed when we were younger. The social and cultural context of these

practices must not be overlooked as they also contribute to the reproduction of these practices, by instilling in them certain capitals (be it symbolic, cultural or social) which each individual holds dear, for example the sentimental meaning of a restaurant, or a cultural or family practice of preparing a meal. Our memories and meanings associated with events or food lead us to chase these same feelings again and again. Furthermore, although there is a willingness or want to change and diversify our food practices from which we are accustom to through the habitus, this all depends on the level of capital we possess. Without these the habitus dominates and we will simply reproduce what we are most comfortable with.

Many of my findings focus on how family (particularly female centric families) impacts the formation of habitus and in turn impacts our food practices and attitudes, but a gap in literature still exists. It would be interesting to explore how people's practices are shaped if they have no family to help develop their foodscape or families which are composed of predominantly men. Another possible avenue to explore would simply be an entire case study on the tradition of the Sunday dinner as I feel I have only dabbled in the sociological significance of this long-established tradition. Further investigation may shine some light on even more social and cultural relations. It would also be interesting to revisit this same group of participants in the future to examine how their food practices and attitudes have evolved as their levels of capitals may change over time increasing their agency in deviating from their established habitus.

I feel as though I have only scratched the surface in what is an endless topic of investigation, which showcases how affluent this topic is with knowledge of the social world. There are seemingly endless avenues for further investigation on what impacts our food practices. This research is my contribution to the existing body of knowledge on what is a complex socio-cultural activity.

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METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX:

Consent Form

FOOD DIARY – SPECIAL RESEARCH TOPIC 2022

I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in my undergraduate research project. In agreeing to be a part of this research, you will help me develop an understanding of how we see and interact with food in our everyday lives. All data collected will be completely anonymous.

Prior to our meeting on 10th April, if any candidate is showing signs of Covid-19 please contact me via phone or email at the earliest convenience in order to arrange an online focus group. More information on the focus group will be communicated before the meeting.

By signing below, you are agreeing to have the information provided both in this food diary and in the focus group used in my research project. Should you wish to withdraw from the research at any time, I will dispose of any information gathered and it will not be used in the final project. All participants will be anonymised in the final project.

I look forward to working alongside you all and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Adam Lynch

Ph. 0857441403

Email: adam.lynch.2022@mumail.ie

Signed: _____.

Food Diary Example:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Attached you will find your food diary. Please read this information carefully and complete each day as you go. A sample day has been completed to give you a rough guideline on how to complete an entry.

- Each day has 3 boxes: breakfast, lunch, dinner. Please fill the box with a short description of what you ate/prepared in the corresponding box.
- If you miss a meal, please write why or simply leave the box empty.
- There is a 4th box on each day labelled comments. Here you may write how you felt about the food you ate that day, if you felt rushed preparing meals, where you ordered/purchased food from, were you low on cash, how the food made you feel etc. Any comment matters!
- At the end of the week please read over your diary and write 3 reflections about it.
- Please keep this diary safe and bring them to the focus group as we will be discussing them together.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to participate. Any issues please contact me.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Greek yogurt with cereals, fresh raspberries, coffee with oat milk.	Just coffee	Just coffee	Just coffee	Just coffee	Just coffee	Raspberry scone with butter and jam
Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
N/A	Soya braised potatoes with rice and egg	Vegan subway sandwich	Courgette pasta with pecorino cheese	Leftover pasta	Rice with sweet and spicy tofu	Terryiaki tofu and veg
Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
Meatballs, mash potatoes, courgettes, cheese and onion quiche, cooked at home with house mate.	Egg omelette with shredded carrot, cabbage and hot pepper paste dip	Tomato soup, miso butter garlic pasta	Oatmilk porridge with sesame seeds and maple syrup	No dinner but had a 2am difontaines pizza slice x2	Roya braised potatoes with egg and rice	N/A
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments
Usually, I skip breakfast on most days. I'd usually have an occasional Sunday waffles or pancakes.	Late night snack – black + green olives.	Had takeaway because I didn't have time to do the shopping	Wasn't very hungry so had a light porridge for dinner	Busy day so didn't cook	N/A	Was kind of hungover today and had breakfast because I was starving

Focus Group Questions:

How often would you eat together as a family?

What is your favourite meal?

- Do you cook it often?
- Was it something you had often growing up?

Do you have any fond memories of a particular meal/cooking with family?

Who is your biggest influence when it comes to food?

Who taught you to cook?

Who do you feel was most instrumental in shaping how you see food?

How likely are you to try something new while shopping/eating out?

What would you eat if you weren't feeling the best? Emotional/Physical

Did you consume meat on Good Friday?

- Why/why not?

Did you grow up with much fresh/frozen food?

- Is this reflected in the food diary?

What shops would you shop in currently?

- Why here?

What would you consider a 'special meal'?

- What is the significance of a Sunday dinner?

- What does a typical Sunday dinner consist of?

What inspires your taste the most?

How much do you factor sustainability/ethics into your meals?

Growing up did you experience food equality/inequality?

- Do you find yourself reproducing these notions today?

What would your ideal date night/restaurant be like?

Do you find yourself buying cheaper/meal prepping?