

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

- The sociology of food and nutrition challenges individualistic accounts of people's eating habits that assume that personal likes and dislikes primarily govern food choice.
- The 'social appetite' refers to the social context in which food is produced, distributed, consumed and disposed—the social context that shapes our food choices.
- Sociology examines how society works, how it influences our lives and how social change occurs. It adopts a critical stance by asking questions such as these: Why are things as they are? Who benefits? What are the alternatives to the status quo?
- As Evan Willis suggests, the sociological imagination—or thinking sociologically—is best put into practice by addressing four interrelated facets of any social phenomena: historical, cultural, structural and critical factors.
- The way we eat reflects an interplay between social structure and human agency.
- Food cosmopolitanism, globalisation, reflexivity and risk are central features of contemporary social life in developed societies.

Sociological reflection

Think of the influences that have shaped your own food habits and likes and dislikes by imagining a social occasion at which food is consumed, such as a birthday party or Christmas celebration. Apply the sociological imagination template to explore the significance of the occasion, noting for each factor the influences on your food consumption:

- Historical: When did you first eat that way? What past events have influenced the social occasion?
- Cultural: What customs or values are involved? Who prepares and serves the food, and with whom is it consumed? Why?
- Structural: In what setting does the food event occur? What role do wider social institutions or organisations play?
- Critical: Has the particular event changed over time or not? Why?

Discussion questions

- 1 How can food and taste be socially constructed? Give examples.
- 2 What is meant by the term 'social appetite'?
- 3 Consider the social meanings and symbolism in the examples of the social appetite in Box 1.2. What other examples can you think of?

Further investigation

- 1 'Food choice is not simply a matter of personal taste, but reflects regional, national and global influences.' Discuss.
- 2 Given that social patterns of food production, distribution and consumption exist, to what extent are individuals responsible for their food choices?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Books

- Belasco, W. 2006, *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Crotty, P. 1995, *Good Nutrition? Fact and Fashion in Dietary Advice*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Lang, T. & Heasman, M. 2015, *Food Wars: The Global Battle for Mouths, Minds and Markets*, 2nd edition, Earthscan Publications, London.
- Mennell, S. 1996, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Revised edition, University of Illinois Press, Chicago.
- Nestle, M. 2013, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*, Revised expanded edition, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Websites

- Agri-food Research Network: <http://afrn.co/>
- Anthropology of Food: <http://aof.revues.org/>
- Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS): www.food-culture.org/
- Australian Food, Society and Culture Network: <http://sydney.edu.au/business/food-society-culture>
- Canadian Association for Food Studies: <http://cafs.landfood.ubc.ca/en/>
- Critical Studies in Food and Culture: www.facebook.com/Critical-Studies-in-Food-and-Culture-105508892823849/
- Food Culture Studies Caucus (American Studies Association): www.facebook.com/FoodCaucus/

- Food Systems Academy: www.foodsystemsacademy.org.uk/
- Gastronomica: www.gastronomica.org/
- Health at Every Size: <http://haescommunity.com/>
- International Food Policy Research Institute: www.ifpri.org/
- International Rural Sociology Association (IRSA): www.irsas-world.org/
- The Secret Ingredient: <http://thesecretingredient.org/>

Films and documentaries

- Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret*, 2014, documentary by Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn, 85 minutes.
- Food, Inc.* 2009, documentary by Robert Kenner, 94 minutes.
- The End of the Line*, 2009, documentary by Rupert Murray, 85 minutes.
- Fast Food Nation*, 2006, film directed by Richard Linklater, inspired by Eric Schlosser's book, 114 minutes.
- Fed Up*, 2014, documentary by Stephanie Soechtig, 92 minutes.
- Ingredients*, 2011, documentary by Robert Bates, 67 minutes.
- Super Size Me*, 2004, documentary by Morgan Spurlock, 100 minutes.
- That Sugar Film*, 2015, documentary by Damon Gameau, 102 minutes.
- The Future of Food*, 2004, documentary by Deborah Koons, 81 minutes.

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- AIHW—see Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
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- SIGNAL—see Strategic Inter-Governmental Nutrition Alliance.
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- WHO—see World Health Organization.
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