Paper presentation

Abstract title: Food, cultural taste and politics: The interweaving of culinary taste patterns, highbrow musical taste and conservative attitudes in Finland

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This paper explores the social differentiation of culinary taste patterns in contemporary Finland. Besides analyzing culinary taste according to basic socio-demographic cleavages (such as age, gender, education and occupational class), special emphasis in the paper is given to the relationship between culinary taste patterns and "highbrow" musical taste as well as conservative political attitudes. Thus, the paper contributes to the field by studying food and culinary tastes not in isolation from other cultural fields and hierarchies but as one component of a broader process of lifestyle differentiation across many cultural fields in which also political attitudes play a role. Both nationally representative survey data (N = 1388) and qualitative follow-up interviews (N = 28) are utilized in the analysis. Based on survey questions of favourite foods, three culinary taste patterns are identified: preferences for "heavy/meat", "light/ethnic" and "fast food". The most salient distinction is organized between "modern" light/ethnic side (indicating a trend towards educated, urban, middle-class, female and global) and "traditional" heavy/meat side (inclined towards uneducated, rural, working class, male and national). This finding is supported both by survey and qualitative interviews. Results also show that culinary taste patterns are closely related to highbrow musical taste as well as conservativeness. Especially the light/ethnic culinary pattern is strongly associated with highbrow musical taste and liberal attitudes, even after controlling for the effects of socio-demographic factors. These results give support to the idea of structural homology between cultural fields and...
the existence of meaningful, more general level lifestyle patterning. Analysis of the follow-up interviews, however, shows that the "homology" is often far from perfect at the individual level.