

7th Child and teen consumption 2016: Cultural contexts, relations and practices

Aalborg University, Denmark, 27-29th of April 2016

www.ctc2016.aau.dk

Special Session: Children's and teenagers' food practices in contexts of poverty and inequality

Convenors

Dr Rebecca O'Connell, Senior Research Officer, UCL Institute of Education

Dr Wendy Wills, Reader in Food and Public Health, University of Hertfordshire

Call for papers

Food is an intimate commodity, the symbolic medium *par excellence*. Food practices are embodied and embedded in everyday routines and social relations. Food is a source of pleasure and an expression of care. It is also moralised, imbued with status and shame. The consumption of particular foods is a marker of identity - who we are and where we belong.

For these reasons food and eating are particularly important for children and young people. Activities involving commensality play a role in establishing and cementing social networks and the consumption of food is a significant way in which children seek to connect to, and reject social relations with, others. Food is also an important medium for children's expression of identity and control and a means of enacting agency and increasing their autonomy as they grow older. Children's and young people's consumption of food is materialised and made manifest in their physical and mental health, and intersects with self-esteem and body image, both of which become more salient as they mature. Children and young people also make significant contributions to domestic food provisioning.

Yet children's and young people's access to food (and other resources) is limited by family capital and their own access to money. Whilst it is known that in food insecure households parents (usually mothers) often sacrifice their own food intake to protect their children, this is more prevalent when children are young. Food insecurity has implications for young people's current and future health and wellbeing and limits their social participation in ways that exclude them from active citizenship. Social policies and charitable initiatives aimed at children and families may alleviate suffering but can generate stigma. Especially in consumerised societies, lack of access to desired or acceptable foods may not only mean young people going 'hungry' but marks them out as 'other'.

Qualitative studies of children's perspectives of poverty show the damaging effects on children of material disadvantage and social exclusion, as well the ways that resourceful and resilient young people manage and moderate the effects of poverty. However not enough is known in the contemporary context of austerity nor at an international level about how children and young people negotiate food and eating in the context of disadvantage. Drawing on international studies by leading researchers in the fields of food and childhood, the session will address the following questions:

- Which conceptual approaches are helpful in seeking an understanding of young people's experiences of food insecurity?
- How do social contexts and social positionings mediate children's and young people's food practices in the context of poverty and food insecurity?
- How do poorer children and young people negotiate belonging, and in particular, commensality, in the different social settings in which they live?
- What is the relationship between eating and embodiment for children and young people, and how does this differ among social groups and in comparison to adults?
- What roles do children and young people play in procuring and preparing foods for their families and others?
- How do consumer markets influence children's and young people's experiences of food and eating?
- What methodological and ethical issues need to be considered in researching young people's food practices in the context of poverty?

Proposals are invited for papers that address the topic of children's and teenagers' food practices in contexts of poverty and inequality, including but not limited to the above questions. Please submit a title and abstract (maximum 1000 words) to the conference website: www.ctc2016.aau.dk, indicating in your abstract that it is for this special session. The convenors are approaching journal editors with a view to publishing a special issue or an edited book based on papers from this session.

Please note that submitted abstracts must also contain a brief abstract of 50-100 words. Submitted abstracts must present original work, and must explain use of methods and theory and the contribution of the work to the field/practice/public policy, as appropriate. The conference language will be English.

Important dates:

- Submit abstract: September 1st 2015
- Notification of acceptance: November 30th 2015
- Submission of final version of abstract: January 15th, 2016
- Early bird registration deadline: February 15th, 2016

Please address academic enquiries to Rebecca O'Connell r.oconnell@ioe.ac.uk and Wendy Wills w.j.wills@herts.ac.uk.

About the convenors

Dr Rebecca O'Connell is a Senior Research Officer at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education. She is a Social Anthropologist whose principal research interests lie at the intersection of care and work, especially foodwork and childcare, with a particular focus on the home, food practices and the ethics of care. Rebecca is currently Principal Investigator on a European Research Council funded study of Families and Food in Hard Times in the UK, Portugal and

Norway (www.foodinhardtimes.org). She is also co-convenor of the British Sociological Association Food Study group.

Dr Wendy Wills is Reader in Food and Public Health at the University of Hertfordshire where she works at the interface of social science and public health in relation to food, eating, weight/obesity and health; inequalities are a particular concern and a focus of her research. She has directed several major research grants, including for the ESRC and Food Standards Agency (FSA) in relation to young people's food and drink purchasing and consumption practices. She was formerly a member of the FSA's Social Science Research Committee and a past convenor of the British Sociological Association's Food Study Group.