

## Research Article

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# Food and cultural omnivorism: a reflexive discussion on otherness, interculturality and cosmopolitanism

DOI 10.1515/irsr-2017-0003

Received: February 1, 2016; Accepted: December 20, 2016

**Abstract:** This paper is part of the research project “Cosmopolitismos juvenis no Brasil” (Youth Cosmopolitanisms in Brazil), partner of the international research project “Cultures Juveniles à l’ère de la globalization”. Our aim for this paper is to understand the connection between food and cosmopolitan experiences, discussing two main perspectives of omnivorism studies – (1) that cultural omnivorism cause long-term indifference for cultural diversity; and (2) that this omnivorism indicates only intercultural curiosity translated into specific distinctive capital in fields of power – and the possibility of these visions of cultural omnivorism turn into a reflexive view of the Other. We applied empirical and bibliographic research, including qualitative research with Brazilians aged between 18 and 24 years who are living in the city of São Paulo, and theoretical reflections related to the fields of food and cultural studies, covering omnivorism, otherness and cosmopolitanism. In the case of the first perspective, there is no possibility of connection to otherness, hence, to cosmopolitanism. The analysis of the second perspective shows that it is possible to find threats of distinction connected to cultural and food omnivorism. Therefore, it is still necessary to develop further studies to understand the reflexive dimension of cosmopolitanism within cultural and food consumption.

**Keywords:** food omnivorism, cultural omnivorism, otherness, interculturality, cosmopolitanism

## Introduction

The way we eat is a fertile ground for engaging in multiple everyday cosmopolitanisms. Cappeliez & Johnston (2013: 435) state that “food is an ideal vehicle for studying the meanings of cosmopolitanism in everyday life because it stands at the crossroads of daily sustenance and cultural identity”.

Biologically, humans are omnivores, meaning they can absorb nutrients from multiple vegetable, mineral and animal food sources. The human being is, therefore, one of the most adaptable mammals, and the lack of a particular foodstuff does not affect us as it does to animals whose nutritional needs are met by a more select group of foods (Rozin 1976), so we can avail of fauna and flora to get the nutrients needed to maintain health. We have autonomy, freedom and adaptability (Fischler, 1995).

This advantage is counterbalanced by a biological requirement: not only we can eat everything, but we must do it. Variety is needed to ensure the intake of all nutrients required by our anatomy. The complex relationship between humans and our food is printed biologically in the species (Rozin, 1976): when we eat, we deal with the anguish inherent to our omnivorous condition, inserted into the duality between neophobia and neophilia, or fear and fascination of food diversity. We need variety, therefore we are interested in new food possibilities, but those are viewed with suspicion, as they are potentially dangerous physically and symbolically.

Other animals avoid trying new things, what they knowingly cannot digest because their instincts usually keep them away from harmful foods. However, it is not easy for humans to identify what is edible and what is not only through sight, smell, hearing and touch. According to Rozin (1976), because we are generalists, we human beings base our identification rules of what can be eaten based on previous intake consequences. Over time, people reduce the wide range of food possibilities to which they have access to reduced, known and safe options that will be printed in culture.

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In this way, we reduce the possibilities we have access to according to a system of beliefs, practices and representations about food that are shared with our social group, and these are so immersed in the routine that become almost automatic and instinctive. Only the contact with the Other allows us to break with the naturalization of the social (Laplantine, 1991), the impression that our behaviors were inscribed in us from birth, instead of being acquired in contact with the culture in which we live our experiences since we are born. Otherness shows that each way of eating is just one of many options found to solve the problem of nutrition. In the ways we relate to food are also present the culinary cosmopolitanism, the process of identifying cultural and cosmopolitan identities through daily practices with multicultural forms of eating.

In a cultural perspective, omnivorism means that a single homology between social and cultural stratification cannot explain all individuals' behavior and choices (Peterson & Kern, 1996). For Katz-Gerro & Jaeger (2013), cultural omnivorism can be defined as a set of activities, consumer voracity and diversity of cultural preferences. Omnivorism could be related to a cosmopolitan attitude on the connection between cultural capital and social boundaries and between social stratification and foreign cultural consumption.

A series of articles regarding cultural consumption (Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson, 2002, 2005) argued that members of the upper class in the United States, who formerly had been defined as cultural snobs in terms of their preference for a limited range of highbrow cultural tastes (Levine, 1998), were turning into cultural omnivores; namely, an upper class that experiences and appreciates a variety of cultural tastes: highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow.

A different view on cultural consumption, beyond omnivorism, would be then of cosmopolitanism, of the possibility of reshaping the link between cultural capital and social boundaries, as well as the link between social stratification and cultural "foreign" consumption.

The cosmopolitan perspective on the study of the dynamics of globalization of contemporary societies is justified by the mixture of cultures and identities that are shaping the lives of people - how they are being confronted with cultural differences (Beck, 2006). Once the 'global other' is a reality (Beck and Grande, 2010: 417), there is therefore the need for a cosmopolitan approach that is based on how individuals, communities and institutions deal with otherness and plurality. Cosmopolitanism combines experiences with various forms of consumption practices. Some of them may start out as extremely global (in a global consumer culture) and end up as very

local, while others might have the obverse trajectory. As Skrbis and Woodward (2013) claim, there is a need to continue to look at the manifestations and possibilities of cosmopolitanism in common everyday lives' people encounters.

The aim of this study is to understand the relationship between food and cultural omnivorism and otherness, verifying some issues present in food consumption as a means of intercultural contact. Therefore, we propose to discuss two perspectives – (1) that this omnivorism cause long-term indifference for cultural diversity; and (2) that this omnivorism indicates only intercultural curiosity translated into specific distinctive capital in fields of power – and the possibility of these visions of cultural omnivorism turn into a reflexive view of the Other (cosmopolitan).

## Materials and methodology

This article has the purpose to present the connection between food and cosmopolitan experiences, through both theoretical and empirical research. The work is a constituent part of the research project "Cosmopolitismos juvenis no Brasil" (Youth Cosmopolitanisms in Brazil), partner of the international research project "Cultures Juveniles à l'ère de la globalisation" (with researchers from France, Israel and Canada). The aim of the project was to discuss how young people construct representations of themselves and of their relationships with the world. For this, we sought to understand the cultural and aesthetic cosmopolitanism, analyzing cultural consumption and experiences with global culture, through which young people build their criteria of judgment, knowledge and imagination of the Other.

In the methodological approach defined for the project "Cosmopolitismos juvenis no Brasil" there were two stages, the first qualitative, conducted through individual interviews, and a quantitative, through questionnaires. The selected individuals have between 18 and 24 years and live in different parts of São Paulo. During the months of February and March 2015, 40 interviews were conducted, and 500 questionnaires were completed between August and November 2015. For this discussion and analysis, we are presenting narratives from the interviews, translated from Portuguese to English.

The interviews explored issues on Cultural Consumption and Global Culture. In questions about Cultural Consumption there were options of cultural products related to food, such as TV shows, books, magazines, and content on the Internet. In questions

about Global Culture, food was connected to travel, knowledge of other countries, knowledge about celebrity chefs, the consumption of food brands, and experimenting of different cuisines. From the answers related to these issues, the discussions of the two perspectives and the connections to cosmopolitanism are added to this article.

As part of the analysis we also present theoretical reflections related to the fields of food studies (Contreras Hernández & Gracia-Arnaiz, 2005; Fischler, 1995; Rozin, 1976) and cultural studies, covering omnivorism, otherness and cosmopolitanism (such as Bourdieu, 2007; Calhoun, 2002; Campbell, 1987; Cicchelli, Ottobre & Riegel, 2016; Sullivan & Katz-Gerro, 2007; Swidler, 1986, 2001). For discussing the perspectives we present international studies developed at the intersection between food omnivorism and cultural omnivorism (Cappeliez & Johnston, 2013; Germann Molz, 2007; Jonas, 2013; Turgeon & Pastinelli, 2002; Warde, Martens & Olsen, 1999).

## Omnivorism as naturalization and indifference

According to Contreras & Hernández Gracia-Arnaiz (2005), food culture is the specific set of beliefs, practices, and representations learned, shared and internalized by all the components of a social group about what to eat. These beliefs, practices and representations are organized into what is called food system: the set of technological and social structures constituents of the process that includes from production to consumption of the foods accepted by the consumer (Contreras & Hernández Gracia-Arnaiz, 2005). The food system transforms nourishment – nutritious and digestible matter – into food – what will actually be accepted as edible (Da Matta, 1987), a process of rating and ranking that sometimes turn a blind eye to physiological needs and favors a cultural code. Thus, the preferences are built according to what culture establishes as admissible.

To better understand the relationship with multicultural forms of eating, Jonas (2013: 119) uses the term vernacular food ways, “a set of social, economic and cultural practices around the production and consumption of food that are normatively distinctive to an ethnocultural group”. The author states that also in eating, as in other fields, there are distinct patterns of production and consumption, and this set of rules and cultural choices regarding food guides what you eat, but also with whom, where, when, how and why you eat.

These food system guidelines are so immersed in routine that they become almost automatic, giving the

false impression that they are instinctive. The way each person learned to deal with food stands, then, as the seemingly “right” way (Contreras & Hernández Gracia-Arnaiz, 2005). It is contact with the Other that allows breaking with the naturalization of social (Laplantine, 1991), and otherness thus shows that each way of eating is just one of the options to solve the problem of nutrition.

Besides satisfying a biological need, food can also be a relevant category in the symbolic construction of social identity, which gives it great importance within the framework in which it operates. Its power as such is due, according to Appadurai (1981), to the difference between the food code and other manifestations of material culture: food’s perishability and therefore the constant effort to grow it or get it, conserve it, prepare it and consume it. For the author, food is “a highly condensed social fact [...] [that] in its varied guises, contexts, and functions, can signal rank and rivalry, solidarity and community, identity or exclusion, and intimacy or distance” (Appadurai, 1981: 494).

Eating and the practices related to it enable us to identify historical periods, religious beliefs, feelings of belonging and infinitude of information about socio-economic, cultural and technological context of social groups. A society’s cuisine is a set of ingredients, cooking techniques and cultural values, and gives strong signs of belonging and otherness. Fischler (1995) exemplifies this relationship with nicknames given by one people to another, like the French, who call the Italian *macaroni*, while they are known as frogs by the British. Different forms of materialization of culture, including ways to eat and to relate to food, then create a differentiation that makes the individual recognizable by his group and by others as part of a given society.

Within this perspective, Bourdieu (2007) believes that the internal rules for the material and symbolic appropriation of objects and practices determine taste, which here does not mean a set of personal choices, but the expression of a hierarchical system with its own strategies to determine and maintain each individual’s position in the social order. For the author, the specific consumption of material or symbolic goods is the greatest expression of the lifestyle shared by the group. These aesthetic choices and practices can appear subjective, but are incorporated by the individual through *habitus*, which functions as a sense that guide behavior in a given situation and, although apparently innate, is learned with family, school and social group. The food system’s rules that dictate what should or should not be consumed and in what proportion, condition and company are precisely this practical sense that guides behavior in a specific situation: the meal.

The naturalization of food *habitus* is only questioned when exposed to other ways to resolve the issue of nutrition, especially when materialized in the meal. And these forms are plural due to 'omnivorous' adaptable condition: it is sufficient to note human's diverse diets, which can vary between extremes like Eskimos and their almost exclusive animal protein based diet (meat and fish), and farmers in Southeast Asia who have basically a vegan diet. The same way as variety is essential for human food consumption, Laplantine (1991) states that the "natural" for humans is their ability to cultural variation.

As Katz-Gerro & Jaeger (2013) present, omnivorousness can be defined as primarily based on the breadth of activities, voracity of consumption and diversity of cultural tastes. We may wonder if the desire and the voracity (Sullivan & Katz-Gerro, 2007) in the consumption of cultural and artistic events of the Other are themselves ways to create cosmopolitan openness. This voracity may lead either to forms of addiction or to long-term indifference to products that have become familiar, and equally may build relationships with alterity that engage reflexivity. In research on cultural consumption and specifically the omnivore thesis, the concept of openness was emphasized (Roose et al., 2012; Peterson & Kern, 1996), as a mechanical output of the increase of cultural goods at hand, but also in terms of tolerance to aesthetic experiences (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2009).

Faced with the perspective of food culture and multicultural forms of the food system, we verified the perspective of cultural omnivorism presenting indifference in the long-term. From the instinctive search for food diversity, consumers can move to the voracious consumption of cultural diversity, reaching a situation of naturalization of differences, or indifference to them. The naturalization or indifference found in the survey with young people in São Paulo refer to both the consumption during international travel experiences, when they are in tourists' status, as well as local consumption, in their daily activities and in leisure experiences.

The need for food is a factor that explains different experiences of young people when they are living touristic experiences. Within these moments, two main possibilities can explain different narratives of these individuals: (1) experimenting ingredients and different types of food, according to the access they have to them – which can be of a financial (they don't go to high value locations that offer more international options) or a logistics nature (according to the reality of the place where they are, there can be absence of determined products from other countries, or difficulty of access to them); (2) searching for internationally known and often standard food,

which may occur because of a security relation, or the pricing option, or even the lack of interest for exotic food. Therefore, during their traveling to other countries, young people seek more convenience (of price and security) than contact with the cultural diversity out of curiosity or a specific interest.

The youngster Rafael, 20 years old, presents in his travel experience the financial issue as decisive, as well as to choose local restaurants offering cheap food (snacks and simple meals), or to go to international networks of fast food that are more affordable and offer well-known products. Specifically, Cecilia, 23 years old, talks about her experience in China's countryside, where it was hard to find restaurants with food similar to what she is used to eat in Brazil. And regarding this kind of experience, Luciano, 24 years old, says that food with different seasonings, such as Asian, does not interest him, and that during his trip to Thailand he sought more Western food, usually in internationally known food networks, not wanting to try the local cuisine.

In everyday food consumption experiences, young people point to the naturalization of different food and cooking practices, i.e. the choice of different food and ways of cooking as if they were part of local habits. Naturalization is also found in leisure moments, in which the choice of a restaurant is made not according to the kitchen being foreign or exotic, but because it is a close option to local practices. This is the case both regarding global standardized food networks, as specific cuisine restaurants that have become part of the local culture (such as pizzerias, for example). Hence, considering local consumption, they would become culturally indifferent because of the diversity of food consumption in their daily and leisure practices.

For the youngster Sofia, 20 years old, going to the supermarket in São Paulo and buying Japanese ingredients for her meals at home is an element that is part of her daily life, also related to her eating habits, which include visits to eastern ethnic restaurants frequently. She has not a Japanese or Oriental descent and has no specific interest in the culture of the region, but thinks this kind of food is healthy and enjoyable.

In the case of Luiz Gustavo, 18 years old, eating hamburger and pizza is almost a daily habit, which he maintains both because they are easy to purchase and to prepare, as well as for their taste. He also seeks these options when he goes out with his friends for leisure activities, since they are fast, easy to find, and tasty. In his own words, "what matters is convenience and taste, I look for food that has good taste and is cheap (...) when we are between the guys what matters is this, if it's easy,

if everyone likes it, if everyone knows it (...) everything ends with pizza and hamburger". For him, these are the elements that are part of his food education, and he considers them basic in his daily diet.

Food cultural diversity represents both the search for satiating needs and the naturalization of differences to local codes. This diversity results mainly in indifference to the Other, through standardization or specificity, occurring possibilities of erasing the Other for his difference, in a relation of universality of singularities. In this relation there is no reflexivity, so this omnivorism does not result in the possibility of development of cosmopolitan experiences and encounters.

## Omnivorism as cultural capital

Obtaining a kind of cultural instinct, which *habitus* represents, does not depend only on financial capital but also on cultural capital, according to Bourdieu's (2007) proposition, a perspective that allows the analysis of social classes with new dimensions. Cultural capital defines the location/ hierarchy of individuals or groups who have the access to knowledge, culture and art, among other distinctive fields. For the author, the higher cultural capital is, the greater legitimacy and distinction the subject has in the battle for constituting hegemonies.

The social position then depends on a specific capital, in order to keep it within a certain field of power, the space in which individuals or institutions have objective relationships and compete for positions defined in the social structure. When we talk about food, Pietroluongo (1997) sees gastronomy as one of these spaces of competition, and Naccarato & LeBesco (2012) present the concept of culinary capital, as knowledge regarding their own or others' culinary practices as a distinctive element. Therefore, in the relation to the Other, it would be possible for the consumer to consider his propensity to cultural omnivorism just as a way to satisfy his intercultural curiosity, which in turn is translated into specific distinctive capital.

Through omnivorism, cultural snobs (Bourdieu, 2007) turned into cultural omnivores (Peterson & Kern, 1996), and a single and one-dimensional homology between social and cultural stratification could no longer explain all individual behaviors or choices (Lahire, 2004), because hierarchies seem more and more complex and intricate. If identities are less determined by social status in post-modern societies, and cultural hierarchies are less likely to be monolithic (Glévairec, 2009), new questions arise, distinguishing and reconnecting information

and knowledge, education and culture, experience and representation.

Looking at cultural hierarchies, the frequency of participation in leisure activities becomes an important dimension of cultural consumption. The addition of the dimension of cultural participation to that of cultural tastes expands the study of omnivorousness as a phenomenon related not only to culture and consumption but also to work and time, since the money and time commitments involved in actual leisure participation (as opposed to reports of cultural tastes or preferences) entail considerations of money and time management. The tasting of many different out-of-home leisure activities with a fast turnover would imply a kind of "multi-cultural capital" (Bryson, 1997) of leisure, which also means that high-status groups increasingly work more but also consume more.

Campbell (1987) had earlier linked the idea of the insatiable consumer to the unique dynamic character of modern-day consumption. High levels of individual consumption in contemporary developed societies stem from the insatiability of consumers (the fact that their wants appear never to be exhaustible). Voracious cultural consumer also resonates with Swidler's tool kit (1986) or cultural repertoire (2001) metaphor. Swidler argues that a person's cultural repertoire works like a tool kit, playing a dominant role in structuring strategies for action. It is a repertoire of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct their understanding of the world and how to conduct themselves in it. Similarly, a voracious cultural consumer feels comfortable with switching and constantly making choices between activities, which he engages in for brief periods. According to Sullivan & Katz-Gerro (2007), there is a culturally active leisure-style, a tendency to seek diverse experiences, an insatiable consumer behaviour (Campbell, 1987), and a plentiful cultural tool kit (Swidler, 1986) among higher status groups.

In this context of intercultural curiosity and of search for variety in food, the development of cultural capital found in the research with young people in São Paulo refers both to the consumption during international traveling, because of cultural curiosity or food ethnicity, and in local consumption, because of the variety of possible food items or the distinction in special moments.

Cultural curiosity is a factor that explains different experiences of the young people with food in touristic situations. At these moments, the exotic element may be understood as quality of the food option, as well as ethnicity may be considered a desirable option as part of the intercultural experience in the country being visited.

The youngster Sarah, 19 years old, explains that in her travel experiences the main factor that defines where she is going to eat is exoticism, meaning different spices and flavors that can be part of a unique souvenir, something that would not be possible to try at home. The fact that she can tell her friends this memory would be equivalent to showing a picture of a place that few people have visited.

For Samy, 21 years old, connecting food as part of the local culture's experimentation during his visit is one of the most important aspects of his trips. The young man says that "if anyone who has a mouth goes to Rome, when one gets there, one has to eat pizza, pasta (...) I feel like I know the place better when I feel the flavors, smells, which I can only find there". Hence, for him, the world has to be experienced through his mouth, and touristic opportunities are those that allow him to have contact with really original food from that culture, not adaptations, as many that he finds in Brazil.

In food's local consumption experiences, young people seek both a variety of food as a factor to be culturally valued and the distinction of certain flavors and exotic food practices. In everyday practice of cooking and eating, the variety of origin of ingredients and food is desired as a way to satisfy different curiosities and to create contact with other cultures. As well as in leisure moments, knowledge and contact with international cuisines and their ingredients are valued for the cultural status conferred in front of their colleagues, as a way to show the repertoire they acquired in traveling or searching for information from certain cultures and their differences. In the case of local consumption, therefore, young people seek exoticism or variety in food consumption in their daily and leisure practices as a way to increase their cultural capital.

For Leonardo, 23 years old, cooking with different ingredients is one way to try different flavors and to learn new ways of cooking, as well as new food combinations. He considers that the mixture of cultural influences is a way of having a more diverse diet and of broadening his taste, constantly ready for something new. Similarly, Simon, 19 years old, emphasizes the possibility of food choices from different origins in his daily life as a way to expand his palate. For him, the opportunity of having contact with other cultures through food is one of the possible forms of knowledge of new elements that he has access to, since he does not travel frequently.

For leisure time, the youngster Ana Carolina, 19 years old, points out that the choice of international cuisine's restaurants is a differential factor, a chance to try new flavors and to be able to share with friends a different place in town. She narrated that she seeks new international

restaurants or ethnic cuisines in digital applications, and that she likes to comment about them on social networks and also read the comments of others. For her, this is a way of sharing with her contacts the places that she has already attended as well as of knowing new places to go out and have different experiences.

In his perspective, Thiago, 22 years old, explains that maintaining contact with ethnic cuisines is a way to extend his travel experiences, also sharing those moments with his friends. It is a way to teach some friends and to share with others those flavors he's discovered. For him, it becomes a challenge to know who has experienced one specific dish or ingredient, as well as to talk about different travel experiences.

If food variety represents both intercultural curiosity and the search for the formation of a distinct cultural capital, it also represents possibilities of contact with the Other, considering aesthetic experiences with this Other, during traveling or in everyday moments. In these experiences we find the search for expansion of the individual's repertoire, which take into consideration the possible distinction created in certain contexts in which these youngsters live, as well as a reflexive relationship with the Other that would be based primarily on curiosity.

## Food omnivorism as cosmopolitanism stance

In order to discuss this connection of intercultural curiosity and the formation of a distinct cultural capital regarding food consumption, we develop here a discussion on the possibility of food omnivorism becoming a cosmopolitan stance, mainly from an aesthetic perspective, on ordinary experiences.

Cosmopolitanism, in its aesthetic dimension, can offer a complex prospective on modernity. It could reflect the ideology of an elite perspective on the world (Calhoun, 2002). It could also be considered a phenomenon focused on the privileged mobile elite whose cultural curiosity reflects a lack of obligation to any community, with the figure of the mobile "voyeur", a "parasite" or a "cultural tourist" in the "restless pursuit of experience, aesthetic sensations and novelty, over duties, obligations and social bonds" (Featherstone, 2002: 1). Yet, it could offer a different view on cultural consumption after omnivorism too, reshaping the link between cultural capital and social boundaries, as well as the link between social stratification and cultural "foreign" consumption. According to Cicchelli, Octobre and Riegel (2016), aesthetic cosmopolitanism reformulates omnivorism in several

ways because: (1) it more clearly reintroduces the weight of social capital (which, for Bourdieu, is secondary and which sometimes tends to be confused with informational capital) in an age of social networks and global media; and (2) it clearly insists on the dimension of reflexivity (the sole consumption of foreign products is not sufficient to capture the building of imaginaries).

More than just an inclination to multicultural openness, cosmopolitanism can be seen as one component of a broader cultural repertoire formed by a multiplicity of cultural practices, including culinary practices (Cappeliez & Johnston, 2013). Either on extraordinary or in everyday consumption, there are different ways in which the diner can relate to the food culture of the Other and, as a result, to the Other itself, helping to reduce distance and difference.

For Germann Molz (2007), when tourists eat foreign (local) food, they constitute a symbolic performance and a cosmopolitan material. For literally eating strange food, they embody the cosmopolitan character of openness to other cultures and exhibit a kind of multicultural competence. At the same time, these culinary experiences symbolize the desire of tourists for diversity, adding this element to a collection of symbolic cultural differences that count as “global” and that categorize this practice as cosmopolitan consumption of the world as a whole.

Differently from the analysis of tourists from the global North, Tammy Jonas (2013) proposes to look at another group of people on the move: immigrants in peripheral countries (Australia, Vietnam and India). According to the author, cosmopolitan food consumption takes place when the diner shows interest for different vernacular food systems, may or may he not become fluent in this new language. Immigrants seek authenticity in order to maintain ethnic identities that allow them to settle their homely identities in new lands. It is a means to achieve social distinction and a way to engage with Otherness as a cosmopolitan principle (Jonas, 2013: 132).

In everyday situations in one’s own country, within leisure activity participation, there is the study of omnivorousness regarding the activity of dining out (Warde et al., 1999). Reviewing an argument that Western populations no longer recognize any fixed cultural hierarchy, Warde et al. (1999) affirm, instead, that individuals seek knowledge of an increasingly wide variety of aesthetically equivalent cultural genres. The frequency of use of different commercial sources of meals and the social characteristics of customers using different types of restaurant show that there is a group that keeps familiarity with diverse ethnic cuisines, as a way of improving personal assurance, communicative competence. The

pursuit of variety of consumer experience is a feature of particular social groups and that some specific component practices express social distinction.

Turgeon & Pastinelli (2002) understand that, just as the new restaurants of the nineteenth century and their menus that united regional cuisines dishes made possible to know and consume a new idea of national, the twenty-first century ethnic restaurants also help to consolidate a post-colonial world. Ethnic restaurants represent deterritorialized places where diners can get to know other cultures on familiar ground, a microcosm of intercultural exchange.

But people do not have equal access to cultural repertoires of cosmopolitanism, and multiple everyday cosmopolitanisms can also be seen in everyday cooking and eating, even in domestic kitchens. Cappeliez & Johnston (2013) propose to broaden our understanding of the lived experience of cosmopolitanism by pointing out three modes of cosmopolitan consumption that can be articulated by people with varying degrees of economic and cultural capital: a “connoisseur” mode that seeks new and expert food knowledge and uses that act as a source of cultural capital and distinction; a pragmatic mode based on food experiences obtained and shared with personal connections; and a tentative mode that is ambivalent or uninterested about new food influences, but not oblivious to them. Analyzing these three modes proposed by the authors, and connecting them to a cosmopolitan stance, in an aesthetic perspective, the tentative mode would be similar to the indifference discussed as one of the omnivorous possibilities, meaning that it wouldn’t mean openness of the individual to Otherness, thus, to a cosmopolitan encounter.

Considering the possibilities of omnivores becoming aesthetic cosmopolitans, we find similar considerations of this approach within these studies that relate food and cosmopolitanism. First, regarding the weight of social capital in this context of global flows and networks, Germann Molz (2007) shows the multicultural competence that tourists develop in their international experiences, and Jonas (2013) points out that ethnic identities can become social distinction for migrants. Analyzing everyday consumption in global cities, Warde et al. (1999) explain how the variety of ethnic restaurants and food are a way of improving personal assurance and communicative competence, as well as detailed in the “connoisseur” mode by Cappeliez and Johnston (2013), for those who seek expert and new food and that use it as a source of cultural capital and distinction.

Secondly, looking at the dimension of reflexivity, not only based on the consumption of foreign products, Jonas

(2013) observes how migrants form homely identities in new lands as a way to engage with Otherness. Locals can also engage to the possibility of connecting to Otherness, through the consumption of ethnic restaurants, as analyzed by Turgeon and Pastinelli (2002), with an intercultural exchange through ethnic food and its cultural codes. This is similar to the pragmatic mode proposed by Cappeliez and Johnston (2013), for those individuals that experience ethnic food because of personal connections, and close social networks.

Based on the studies that aim to connect the discussion of food consumption and cosmopolitanism, and based on our empirical study, our next step will be to verify the possibilities presented in different practices and experiences, with young people in Brazil.

## Final considerations

As an everyday practice, the way we eat and relate to food is a cultural trait so common that some people see it as innate. Nurturing yourself is a biological necessity, but different groups will find several ways to solve this need: you cannot eat everything in endless combinations, or in any circumstances or with any kind of company. This is why different stages of the food system – production, distribution, preparation and consumption – also belong to the field of culture and are full of symbolisms.

The dynamic nature of culture and the adaptation's breaches created by subjects imply changes reflected in the relationship between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces. The intrinsic symbolic dimension of eating habits follows this trend and tends to change over time. The food system is part of culture and also the result of a past constantly updated – through their residues and breaches for the emergence of new meanings and values – and a future daily built.

Therefore, the relationship between young people living in São Paulo, Brazil, towards food (and specially Other's food) is diverse and serve different cultural proposes, as we propose to show in this study. On one hand, these youngsters can acquire an indifferent perspective toward cultural diversity due to a massive and long term exposure to it, both at home and during trips. On the other hand, they can be curious about different cultures only because this knowledge can be used as distinctive capital in fields of power. But what we intend to explore further in the research project “Cosmopolitismos juvenis no Brasil” (Youth Cosmopolitanisms in Brazil) is how the possibilities of contact with otherness opens the visions of cultural omnivorism into a cosmopolitan reflexivity.

In the search for different cultural codes through food practices, omnivorism arises as a possibility of diversity and variety, but also results in different forms of contact with the Other. In relation to food cultural diversity in the long term, according to standardizations or specificities, indifference towards the Other can be created, and even differences of the Other may be erased from imaginaries. Therefore, in this kind of encounter, omnivorism does not represent the possibility of building a reflexive arc and of a cosmopolitan stance.

On the other hand, there is also, for those cases of dietary variety search in other cultural codes, the expansion of the individual's repertoire, as a way of enhancing cultural capital, as well as social capital, accordingly to his place in the global world in which he lives. Access to different cultures and constant curiosity for differences of the Other can be a distinctive marker, and also may start a reflexive relationship with the Other.

In order to better understand the construction of this cosmopolitan reflexive arc, based on omnivorous food/cultural consumption, our proposal is to deepen the elements found in studies that relate food and cosmopolitanism, in the reality of young Brazilians. Therefore, it is necessary to understand both the weight of social capital in the global context, through the use of international and local experiences, and the development of feelings and imaginary on reflexivity, which is not restricted to the consumption of food products from other countries, but which also approaches the experience of needing to look and to understand the Other, as seen in the experience of migrants.

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