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Culinary Omnivorousness: The Relationship between Social Class and Food Consumption Patterns

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CULINARY OMNIVOROUSNESS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
SOCIAL CLASS AND FOOD CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Applied Sociology

by
Cassidy Conner
May 2008

Accepted by:
Dr. James Witte, Committee Chair
Dr. William Wentworth
Dr. William Norman

ABSTRACT

Utilizing National Geographic's Survey2000 data set, this thesis investigates the intersection of social class and food consumption habits of Americans. Previous research identified the *cultural omnivore* as a new type of consumer who samples a wide variety of culture to show his membership in a higher social class (Peterson & Kern, 1996). This study focuses on one form of omnivorousness, *culinary omnivorousness*, to determine whether omnivorous food consumption patterns vary by social class. Three social classes are operationalized (highbrow omnivores, highbrow snobs, and lowbrows), and each class's consumption of three food types (universal foods, in-region foods, outside-region foods) is measured. Ultimately, this research finds a relationship between social class and culinary omnivorousness.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Cultural consumption patterns have consistently attracted the attention of social scientists, and a healthy amount of research has emerged to explain how and why people consume different cultural commodities. Although cultural consumption can take many forms, it is the objective of this research to focus on one type of cultural consumption—food consumption. More specifically, this study investigates the occurrence of a particular pattern of food consumption, *culinary omnivorousness*, which is marked by a willingness to consume all different types of foods (exotic/ethnic foods, regional foods, traditional foods, specialty foods, etc.). Previous research has suggested that the *cultural omnivore* is a new type of consumer who enjoys sampling a broad range of cultural commodities (Peterson & Kern, 1996). This omnivorousness, however, is not completely random or indiscriminate (Bryson, 1996). Much of the research on omnivorousness to date has focused on music consumption patterns (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Bryson, 1996; Van Eijck, 2001; Rossman & Peterson, 2005), but music only represents a small portion of all cultural commodities. Because omnivorousness has received a substantial amount of attention, it is important to study the ways in which omnivorousness manifests itself in a variety of types of cultural consumption, including culinary consumption.

The overarching goal of this thesis is to determine the relationship between culinary omnivorousness and social class. Peterson and Kern (1996) argue that cultural omnivorousness is not merely a new pattern of consumption; instead, omnivorousness is the new form of *highbrow* distinction. In other words, by developing an omnivorous palate,

consumers attempt to show their membership in a higher social class. Through omnivorousness, highbrows identify themselves as having a variety of tastes as opposed to having a snobbish appetite for culture that distinguished previous generations of highbrows (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson, 1997).

Using data from National Geographic's Survey2000, this research measures whether highbrows who have an omnivorous taste for music (one form of culture) also have an omnivorous taste for food (another form of culture). In other words, is the highbrow omnivore that Peterson and Kern identified *only* a musical omnivore, or is the highbrow omnivore a *true* omnivore who has developed a taste for a wide variety of cultural commodities? The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether the highbrow musical omnivore is also a culinary omnivore.

Not only is taste measured to establish levels of omnivorousness in this research, but social class is operationalized based on taste as well. Beginning with Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction*, taste was not merely seen as a byproduct of membership in a particular social class, but a person's tastes also placed them *in* a social class (Bourdieu, 1984). Working under a similar conceptual framework, Peterson and Kern (1996) used musical tastes to identify three social classes: *highbrow omnivores*, *highbrow snobs*, and *lowbrows*. Highbrow snobs and omnivores were categorized as those who liked both opera and classical music, and omnivores were those who also liked a variety of other music. Those who were not categorized as either snobs or omnivores made up the lowbrow category. Although this thesis uses a similar operationalization to Peterson and Kern's, in which social class is based on taste, the relationship between social class and taste can run both ways, so that taste

influences class and class influences taste. Formulating a notion of class based on taste is merely one way to approach social class.

While class is determined by musical taste in this research, levels of culinary omnivorousness will be measured based on the frequency of consumption of three different types of foods—*universal foods* (foods that most Americans are familiar with, such as pizza, hotdogs, hamburgers, etc.), *in-region foods* (foods commonly found in the area where each respondent currently lives or previously lived) and *outside-region foods* (foods commonly found outside areas where each respondent has lived). Because each food type (universal, in-region, outside-region) is fundamentally different, consumption patterns can be more accurately classified by measuring omnivorousness within each category as opposed to simply measuring omnivorousness on the whole. Bryson (1996) found that even the most ravenous musical omnivores did tend to reject one certain genre of music (heavy metal). By identifying three distinct food types, it will be possible to determine whether highbrow omnivores also exclude a certain food category from their diet or if they do in fact consume all foods more frequently than snobs or lowbrows. Ultimately, this research will undertake the task of determining how social class intersects with culinary omnivorousness and how this type of cultural consumption classifies consumers.

Note:

The terms highbrow, lowbrow, and snob are used in this thesis because of their significance in previous research on omnivorousness. These terms are not perfect, nor do they attempt to categorize social classes in any way other than their taste for culture.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although cultural consumption patterns have always differed by social class, traditional sociological explanations of class focus less on consumption patterns to illuminate class distinctions and more on individuals' relationships to the economy. Karl Marx, who emphasized the importance of economic conditions in all aspects of social life, envisioned social class divisions as solely a function of property ownership within capitalist societies. To Marx, there were two classes of people—capitalists, who owned the means of production, and the proletariat, who owned nothing beyond their own labor potential (Wallace & Wolf, 1999). Class, Marx argued, was the key source of struggle in capitalist societies because capitalists profited from ownership of the means of production and exploited their workers.

Max Weber also viewed class as tied to economic conditions. Unlike Marx, however, Weber believed that property ownership was only one factor within economic situations that determined social class (Wallace & Wolf, 1999; Waters, 1991). Aside from property ownership, people who shared similar skills and opportunities for rewards within the economy belonged to the same social class. Although Weber believed that class was important in power relationships, he also emphasized status and party affiliation. In contrast, Marx relied on property rights alone to distinguish members of society (Vaughan, 2001).

In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen sought to understand social class by looking at the lifestyles of those at the top. Veblen argued that members of higher social classes could be identified by the amount of leisure time they had at their disposal. To the leisure class, productive work involving manual labor and menial tasks was considered

quite offensive and best left to the lower classes. By pursuing frivolous, unproductive leisure activities, the wealthy were able to show how privileged they were by the amount of time they spent not working. Along with conspicuous leisure activities, the wealthy engaged in conspicuous consumption of wasteful and unnecessary goods, which also helped to identify them as high class. The similarity between conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption “lies in the element of waste that is common to both. In the one case it is a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods” (Veblen, 1899, p. 85).

Veblen’s critique of the upper classes was quite revolutionary at the time. In his discussion of conspicuous consumption, he identifies the importance of developing high class tastes in matters of consumption—a concept that would not be thoroughly explored until the publication of Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1984). According to Veblen (1899), a gentleman of leisure must “cultivate his tastes, for it now becomes incumbent on him to discriminate with some nicety between the noble and the ignoble in consumable goods” (p. 74).

More recently, certain sociological traditions have attempted to determine social class membership by measuring all different kinds of social and economic indicators. The American sociologist Lloyd Warner devised complex methodological formulas to distinguish social class, utilizing factors like income and occupation, as well as family status and how others in a community perceive an individual (Warner, 1960; Wallace & Wolf, 1999). This way of measuring class represents a shift toward a more complex appraisal.

The union of class conceptualizations and cultural consumption patterns gained significant theoretical support within the last few decades, spurred on by the work of Pierre Bourdieu. To Bourdieu, one of the most important roles of cultural consumption lies in the

distinctions that it creates between members of society. In *Distinction* (1984), he posits that “[t]aste classifies, and it classifies the classifier” (p. 6). Through developing a taste for certain cultural commodities, we construct an identity for ourselves, and Bourdieu recognized that this identity is an indicator of class. Class and cultural consumption are inextricably linked. Although anyone can consume different forms of culture, acquiring “cultural competence” is necessary to unlock the codes of cultural meaning associated with different cultural commodities. Access to cultural competence is guarded by social class, and it is through the relations to others in our social class that we learn the codes of cultural taste.

Bourdieu thought that elitism in cultural consumption practices was necessarily the way that highbrows distinguished themselves. However, in tracking cultural consumption over time, Peterson (1997) argues that, although an elitist taste for cultural commodities previously corresponded with highbrow distinction, it does not have to.

Highbrows have attempted to distinguish themselves in many different ways beyond an elitist taste in culture (Peterson, 1997). In the Victorian era, knowledge of proper etiquette was the characteristic that allowed highbrows to distinguish themselves from others. Later, highbrows distinguished themselves by joining certain clubs or organizations, but as global mobility increased in the nineteenth century, membership in local highbrow organizations was too geographically constricting to be able to provide highbrows with universally recognizable class distinctions. It is at this time that an appreciation of fine arts became the new form of highbrow distinction. Wherever highbrows traveled throughout the world, they could identify one another by their similar tastes in “high art.” It was during this time period that an elite taste in cultural commodities (high art) served to differentiate highbrows from lowbrows. Now, Peterson believes, highbrows are moving away from the consumption of

elite cultural commodities to distinguish themselves in favor of an omnivorousness of many cultural commodities. In other words, highbrows no longer show their class membership by consuming strictly elite cultural forms, but instead, they consume all different types of cultural forms, indicating that omnivorousness has become the new highbrow status marker.

Several recent studies of cultural consumption have attempted to quantify the highbrow shift from elitism to omnivorousness that Peterson identified. Peterson and Kern's (1996) landmark study, "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore," utilized General Social Survey (GSS) data collected in 1982 and 1992 to test the omnivore hypothesis. They theorized that highbrows would be more likely to dabble in different forms of cultural consumption than in the past, including traditionally lowbrow culture. Using 1982 and 1992 data on musical preferences, they measured how omnivorously people consume different styles of music. Respondents who said that they liked classical and opera music were classified as highbrows, and the researchers justified this operationalization as an appropriate proxy for social class (because of the traditional relationship between a taste for high art and the upper classes).

Within the highbrow category, snobs were those respondents who liked classical and opera music but not many other forms of music, whereas omnivores were highbrows who liked all kinds of music. The data showed that highbrows had indeed become more omnivorous consumers of lowbrow music genres from 1982 to 1992. This finding confirmed the notion that highbrows were becoming more culturally omnivorous over the course of the study period and less snobbish in their taste in music. This highbrow shift from snob to omnivore was found to be "due in part to cohort displacement, but has occurred mostly because highbrows of all ages are becoming more omnivorous" (Peterson

& Kern, 1996, p. 904). Although highbrows are becoming more omnivorous, they are not simply consuming everything in reach. Instead, they are becoming open to the idea of experiencing different forms of culture. Still, some forms of culture are excluded by more educated consumers, including music that is traditionally liked by uneducated consumers (Bryson, 1996). Like educated consumers, highbrows may exclude certain forms of culture, while still retaining an overall sense of omnivorousness.

Peterson and Kern speculated that the changing climate of highbrow cultural consumption toward omnivorousness was a result of a variety of social, structural, and political changes over the course of the twentieth century. The common thread among these changes was a decline in exclusionary cultural practices in favor of an acceptance of other cultures and groups of people. Peterson (2005) argues, however, that “just like the criterion of high-status snobbery before it, [omnivorousness] will eventually pass” (p. 263). Omnivorousness, Peterson believes, is just the most recent mark of highbrow distinction, and it certainly will not be the last.

Peterson’s theory that omnivorousness would soon be replaced by another form of highbrow distinction did not remain purely speculative for long. Rossman and Peterson (2005) analyzed the same GSS musical data as Peterson and Kern (1996), but with a third measure taken in 2002. They found that omnivorousness had reached its height in 1992 and had begun to decline by 2002. The researchers offered some potential explanations for this decline in musical omnivorousness, including slight methodological differences in the data sets, political changes, and a specialization of music genres played on radio stations. However, this drop in omnivorousness may represent the shift from omnivorousness to some new type of highbrow distinction that Peterson (2005) predicted.

Peterson and Kern only tested omnivorousness in America, but researchers in European countries have found similar trends toward omnivorousness (Peterson 2005). Musical omnivorousness of the Dutch population was measured by Van Eijck (2001), and he found that omnivorousness differed by social class in a very particular way. Highbrows and lowbrows did not differ in the number of “favorite” musical genres that they had; however, “if we add the genres that respondents listen to ‘every now and then’ to assess the scope of their musical tastes, we do find a significant status difference” (Van Eijck, 2001, p. 1173). This supports the notion that highbrows dabble in a number of diverse forms of cultural consumption but do not adopt everything they consume as new, “favorite” types of culture.

Although the majority of research focusing specifically on omnivorousness has targeted musical consumption patterns, some food research has created a basic foundation to begin understanding culinary omnivorousness and its relation to social class. In a study of the diversity of restaurant types found in each large U.S. city, Neal (2006) found that certain cities were “culinary deserts,” while others were “gastronomic oases.” Gastronomic oases were cities that had an abundance of restaurants with “stylish haute cuisine, hip coffee houses and exotic ethnic fare” (2006, p. 12), but also a variety of traditional and fast-food restaurants. Gastronomic oases, in other words, are an omnivore’s ideal environment. Not surprisingly, the citizens living in gastronomic oases were more educated and had higher incomes than people living in culinary deserts (cities with a less diverse restaurant selection). Education and income are both highly correlated with social class, indicating that cities with a more diverse restaurant selection have a larger highbrow population. Highbrows, then, may have an easier time developing an omnivorous palate because they live in cities conducive to doing so.

Rao, Monin, and Durand (2005) found that, from 1970 to 1997, elite restaurants in France changed the highbrow culinary landscape by borrowing from other traditions and cuisines, and this borrowing seems to suggest a trend toward omnivorousness. The researchers discovered that high-status restaurants in France successfully diversified their menus without heavy sanctions, while other lower-status restaurants that tried to diversify were given lower ratings by critics. Although the unit of analysis was restaurants and not people, these findings imply that those with higher status may be allowed to set the trend of omnivorousness, while those with a lower status can only follow their lead.

Johnston and Baumann (2004) argue that highbrows do consume all different types of foods, including lowbrow cuisine; however, highbrows tend to transform lowbrow foods into acceptable dishes by infusing “authenticity, rusticity, and exoticism/obscurity” in these dishes (p. 2). In this way, highbrows do not just consume lowbrow cuisine; rather, they modify it, turning it into their own. These modifications instill a unique quality in otherwise generic dishes.

Omnivorousness may flourish due to the ease with which generic dishes can be endlessly modified into special culinary creations. It is somewhat unclear, however, whether highbrow omnivores will eat foods that are strictly mass-produced and generic in quality. Stillman (2003) suggests that “[c]onsumer critics of mass culture are far more likely to turn to natural products produced by traditional methods” (p. 110), including local, craft-produced, natural, or traditional (authentic) foods, in an attempt to reject the ubiquity of mass-produced foods. It would be interesting to see if highbrow omnivores are also more likely to reject mass-produced, universal foods as well (i.e., that highbrow omnivores do not consume indiscriminately; that they reject certain foods types). A rejection of any food type by a true

omnivore would seem strange; however, mass-produced foods may represent a homogenization of food culture that the omnivore must reject on principle.

The Slow Food movement, which began in Europe, is a response to the increasing popularity of mass-produced foods and chain restaurants that, Slow Food members believe, threaten to destroy local “authentic” restaurants, recipes and traditions. “The philosophy of the movement is that typical products and regional cuisines are important features of cultural distinctiveness” (Miele & Murdoch, 2002, p. 318). A diverse selection of regional foods is important to Slow Foods’ supporters and the culinary omnivore as well.

Shenoy (2006) identified the “culinary tourist” as a variety-seeking omnivore who takes pleasure in sampling local cuisines while on vacation. In contrast to the general tourist, the culinary tourist had a higher income and education, again suggesting that culinary omnivorousness marks members of a higher social class. The culinary tourist chooses local foods and restaurants over chain restaurants, but is this an overt rejection of the mass culture that chain restaurants represent, or simply a preference for local culture without any distaste for mass-culture cuisine?

Although omnivorousness may be an attempt to reject mass culture in favor of regional, exotic or authentic foods, omnivorousness is not outside the reach of mass culture. The cable television channel Food Network has successfully integrated an interest in diverse and exotic cuisine into popular culture (Adema, 2000). Food Network viewers are encouraged to develop an omnivorous palate, possibly threatening highbrows’ monopoly on omnivorousness. The incorporation of omnivorousness into popular culture may give rise to a shift away from omnivorousness in highbrow distinction as Peterson (2005) predicted.

Thus far, research on culinary omnivorousness has not been adequately developed, and many of the studies on omnivorousness have focused on musical tastes. Fortunately, several studies abroad have attempted to expand omnivorousness research to include other forms of cultural consumption.

Researchers in England found that an omnivorous consumption of theatre, dance, and cinema increased with higher levels of status, class, education, and income (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005). In a study of literary consumption in post-Soviet Russia, omnivorousness has also been observed as a new form of distinction for those with higher educations and economic capital (Zavisca, 2005). In the Netherlands, Van Eijck and Knulst (2005) identified a drop in snobbish highbrow cultural participation (attending ballet, museums, galleries, etc.) among younger generations of the population, but noted that, contrary to other research, omnivorousness was not taking its place. Instead, an increase in the consumption of popular culture (soccer matches, cinema, pop concerts, etc.) was on the rise. And finally, Sullivan and Katz-Gerro (2007) broaden the concept of omnivorousness to include voraciousness (frequency of consumption), finding that omnivorousness and voraciousness of cultural consumption in England likely occur together.

This thesis on the relationship between social class and culinary omnivorousness will add another dimension to the growing body of research that seeks to identify the range and scope of omnivorousness in all different cultural contexts.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA AND METHODS

DATA

The data utilized in this research is drawn from Survey2000. Conducted in 1998 on the National Geographic Society's website, Survey2000 was a groundbreaking Web survey, as it represented one of the first attempts to collect social scientific data over the Web on a large scale. Approximately fifty-five thousand respondents from around the world completed the survey, with nearly thirty-three thousand of these surveys completed by United States citizens above the age of sixteen (Witte et al., 1999). Because this survey was deployed over the Internet and participation was not restricted, the American sample is not nationally representative. But by acknowledging and accounting for the differences between the sample and the population, valuable information can be extracted. The four most important and relevant differences between the sample and the population are related to education, race, technological familiarity, and cultural exposure.

The sample is much more educated than the U.S. population, and because education and class tend to overlap, many of those in the sample that are classified as lowbrows are likely to have more highbrow tastes than the average lowbrow in the population. Therefore, the difference in culinary tastes between lowbrows and highbrows in the population is expected to be greater than observed in this sample.

Because the proportion of black and Hispanic respondents is so low, this study is limited in making conclusions about highbrows that are nonwhite. Omnivorousness as a

class distinguisher may play a different role for racial minorities in the United States, and further research is needed to draw accurate conclusions based on race.

In 1998, when Survey2000 was deployed over the Web, far fewer people than today had Internet or computer access. For this reason, those with lower incomes, from lower social classes, and with less education are underrepresented in this Internet survey because computer and Internet access in 1998 was much more related to these factors. Because social class, income, and education are all related, we can expect the sample to be composed of proportionately more highbrows due to the manner in which the survey data was collected. However, highbrows who were slow to adopt new technology are more likely to be omitted from this sample as well.

The final important difference between this sample and the population arises from where on the Web this survey was deployed. The National Geographic website is more likely to be visited by those with an interest in other cultures as many National Geographic articles focus on the distinctiveness of societies across the world. Highbrows and lowbrows in this sample are expected to be more familiar with distinct regional cultures than the population.

Keeping in mind all the factors that contribute to the nature of the sample, Survey2000 respondents are more homogenous along demographic lines, are expected to be more omnivorous, and occupy positions in higher social classes. Although results may not be generalizable to the population, this data set will allow for an in-depth look at the food consumption habits of certain groups of Americans.

Survey2000 queried respondents on a number of different aspects of their lives, but this research will focus on responses to the food section of the survey. Respondents were asked to evaluate twenty-eight food dishes on a five-point scale that assessed frequency of

consumption. Depending on where the respondents lived (currently and at other times in their lives), regionally specific foods were presented to them for evaluation. They were also asked about foods specific to regions outside of the area in which they lived. Finally, each respondent was given a number of “universal dishes” to evaluate that were not regionally specific, such as pizza, hotdogs, hamburgers, etc. The foods included in Survey2000 were drawn from the book *Roadfood* and reviewed by a team of researchers. For a complete list of the foods appearing in Survey2000, see Appendix A. The region definitions for each food adhere to census divisions of each region of the United States. For region definitions, see Appendix B, and for an example regional food coding, see Appendix C.

HYPOTHESES

Six hypotheses are presented in this research on culinary omnivorousness. These hypotheses attempt to measure whether social class (determined by musical taste) is related to the frequency of consumption of three different food types—universal foods, in-region foods, and outside-region foods. Class differences are measured for universal foods in Hypotheses 1 and 2, for in-region foods in Hypotheses 3 and 4, and for outside-region foods in Hypotheses 5 and 6.

Universal Foods (Hypotheses 1 and 2)

Hypothesis 1:

There is no difference between omnivore highbrows and snob highbrows in their consumption of universal foods.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no difference between omnivore highbrows and lowbrows in their consumption of universal foods.

In-region Foods (Hypotheses 3 and 4)

Hypothesis 3:

There is no difference between omnivore highbrows and snob highbrows in their consumption of in-region foods.

Hypothesis 4:

There is no difference between omnivore highbrows and lowbrows in their consumption of in-region foods.

Outside-region Foods (Hypotheses 5 and 6)

Hypothesis 5:

There is no difference between omnivore highbrows and snob highbrows in their consumption of outside-region foods.

Hypothesis 6:

There is no difference between omnivore highbrows and lowbrows in their consumption of outside-region foods.

METHODOLOGY

The success of this research depends, in part, upon a credible operationalization of the variables of interest. The operationalization of the key independent variable in this study, social class, is a challenging assignment. Social class has notoriously been difficult to measure

and often eludes simple classifications. Social class can be operationalized using an assortment of interconnected and possibly disparate variables, such as income, occupation, education, place of residence, demographic traits, etc. Regardless of the methodology, there are shortcomings inherent in any measure of class. The task, then, becomes to identify a method that best isolates a *particular kind* of operationalization of social class that serves the research agenda. In this case, social class is operationalized by measuring cultural consumption habits of individuals. The type of class this study attempts to measure is not the type that hinges on wealth or status, but on an identity formation based upon cultural taste.

Peterson and Kern (1996) operationalized class by measuring respondents' attitudes toward two types of music—classical and opera music. Highbrows were identified as those who liked both classical and opera music and liked one of the two more than any other type of music. This research employs a similar measure of class, using Survey2000's respondents' answers to the questions on musical preference. Respondents who answered that they like both classical and opera music, with one of the two being their favorite, are categorized as highbrows. Highbrows are then divided into two categories—snobs and omnivores. Snobs are categorized as those whose average music score for other types of music is above 2.5, whereas omnivores are those whose average music score is 2.5 or below. The average music score variable is calculated by summing the numeric music score values for each genre of music a respondent was asked about and dividing by the number of valid responses (see Table 3.1 below for music score values). Roughly half of highbrows scored above 2.5, meaning that, on average, they like fewer other types of music than those who scored below 2.5.

Table 3.1: Music Score

1= "Like it very much"

2= "Like it"

3= "Have mixed feelings"

4= "Dislike it"

5= "Dislike it very much"

6= "Don't know much about it."

Finally, all respondents who were not classified as either type of highbrow are identified as lowbrows. Because of this, a large majority of respondents with diverse musical tastes are classified as lowbrows. Although lowbrows could be divided into more homogenous sub-groups, the objective is to compare highbrow omnivores with everyone who is not a highbrow.

This operationalization of class is merely one way to construct class categories based on taste, and this research does not claim that this particular operationalization is the only way to do so. Many of those categorized as lowbrows in this thesis may in fact have traditionally highbrow tastes in other realms of cultural consumption, or perhaps they have certain highbrow musical tastes but failed to be classified as such because of the stringent methodology employed here. However, this operationalization of class is quite effective in isolating those with a high propensity for highbrow musical tastes. And within this highbrow category, there are those who are quite snobbish in musical consumption and those who venture outside the realm of traditionally highbrow musical snobbery. By measuring the food consumption patterns of these highbrows who venture outside traditional highbrow musical genres, this thesis determines whether the same pattern of omnivorousness is observable

with respect to culinary tastes. In other words, do highbrows who omnivorously consume one form of culture (music) also omnivorously consume other forms of culture (food)?

The frequency of consumption of three different types of foods will be measured in this research—universal foods, in-region foods, and outside-region foods. Respondents were given 28 food dishes to evaluate out of 173 dishes in the database, and each dish was classified as universal, in-region, or outside-region. Of the 28 dishes presented, at least 4 dishes were randomly selected universal foods (Witte et al., 1999). See the table below for the five-point scale measuring food score.

Table 3.2: Food Score
0= “Have never tried”
1= “Have tried; did not like”
2= “Like it but don’t eat often”
3= “Eat this dish regularly”
4= “One of my favorite dishes”

From the respondents’ evaluation of universal food dishes, a universal food score is calculated. The numeric values for each universal food dish is summed and divided by the number of valid responses to create the universal food score variable. Those with a high value on this variable represent frequent universal food consumers and those with a low value, infrequent universal food consumers.

Both in-region and outside-region food consumption incorporate a similar operationalization to universal food consumption. Respondents were asked to evaluate a number of regional foods in Survey2000, some foods specific to regions in which the respondent had lived/currently lives and some indigenous to regions in which they had

never lived. Any region in which a respondent has lived is considered in-region. The in-region and outside-region food scores are constructed in the same manner as the universal food score by summing the values of respondents' answers to each regional food and dividing by the number of valid responses.

Because dishes were randomly given to respondents based on where they had lived at different points in their lives, and because each region had a limited number of dishes associated with it, not all respondents received the same number of in-region and outside-region dishes (Witte et al., 1999). All respondents were given a total of twenty-eight dishes to evaluate, but the number of universal, in-region, and outside-region dishes may vary due to the way in which dishes were randomly selected for respondents. For a more detailed explanation of this process, see the Survey2000 Users' Guide and Codebook.

In order to measure the aggregate relationship between food consumption and class, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the three food scores (universal, in-region and outside-region) by social class is utilized along with a Tukey's post hoc test. Although this method will be useful in uncovering the general relationship between food and class, three OLS regression models are employed to test the six hypotheses of this thesis so that certain demographic and regional variations within the sample are controlled for.

In the first regression model, which tests Hypotheses 1 and 2, the universal food score is the dependent variable, while dummy variables for social class will serve as independent variables. Other independent variables will be added to this model to control for age, race, sex, education, and region. For Hypotheses 3 and 4 (regression model 2), the dependent variable is the in-region food score, while independent variables remain the same as in model 1. Finally, for Hypotheses 5 and 6 (regression model 3), the outside-region food

score will serve as the dependent variable, with the same independent variables as those in models 1 and 2.

Because the regression models utilize dummy variables, which measure significance against an omitted reference variable, it is important to eliminate any respondents from the data set who cannot be categorized in the dummy variables or corresponding reference categories. For this reason, only respondents who can be categorized by age, sex, race, education, region, and class, and have valid food scores, are included in this analysis. This study consists of all respondents who meet these requirements and who are adults that were born in the United States. Additionally, those who currently live outside the continental United States are omitted from analysis due to the limitations of including small regional dummy variables in the regression models.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

The sample of this study is composed of 16,472 respondents. The demographic makeup of these respondents is presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Demographics

		Total	Lowbrow	Highbrow	
				Snob	Omnivore
Sex					
	Male	49%	49%	51%	44%
	Female	51%	51%	49%	56%
Age					
	18-24	13%	13%	7%	12%
	25-34	27%	28%	20%	21%
	35-44	25%	26%	17%	18%
	45-55	21%	21%	25%	25%
	55+	13%	12%	31%	24%
Education					
	HS or Less	9%	9%	4%	5%
	Some College/Associate's	33%	33%	22%	25%
	Bachelor's Degree	35%	35%	31%	36%
	Graduate/Professional Degree	24%	23%	43%	35%
Race					
	White	96%	96%	98%	97%
	Black	1%	1%	0%	1%
	Asian	1%	1%	1%	1%
	Other	1%	1%	1%	1%
Region					
	New England Division	6%	6%	7%	7%
	Middle Atlantic Division	10%	10%	11%	10%
	East North Central Division	15%	15%	16%	14%
	West North Central Division	6%	6%	6%	6%
	South Atlantic Division	20%	20%	18%	21%
	East South Central Division	4%	4%	5%	5%
	West South Central Division	10%	10%	7%	9%
	Mountain Division	9%	9%	10%	10%
	Pacific Division	19%	19%	21%	19%
Total		16,472	15,185	651	636

Sex is one variable that is nearly identical to the population makeup, with 51 percent female and 49 percent male. Interestingly, female respondents were slightly more likely to be omnivores than males (56 percent female, 44 percent male).

The average age of respondents was thirty-nine with a standard deviation of thirteen years. Highbrows in this sample tend to be older than lowbrows. Only 33 percent of lowbrows are forty-five or above, but 56 percent of highbrow snobs and 49 percent of highbrow omnivores are forty-five or above. Approximately 13 percent of lowbrows and 12 percent of highbrow omnivores are twenty-four or younger, but only 7 percent of highbrow snobs are in the youngest category of adult respondents.

Survey2000 respondents are very highly educated compared with the US population. A total of 59 percent of respondents have a bachelor's, professional, or graduate degree. Highbrows are even more educated, with 71 percent of omnivores and 74 percent of snobs having a bachelor's degree or higher.

Respondents to this survey were overwhelmingly white (96 percent). With so few nonwhite respondents, finding a significant difference in omnivorousness by race will require a large difference in the sample.

The region with the most respondents in the sample is the South Atlantic Division, with 20 percent residing in this region (see Appendix B for a list of region definitions). Approximately 19 percent of respondent live in the Pacific Division, and out of the nine U.S. regions, the two most heavily sampled regions account for approximately 40 percent of the sample.

SOCIAL CLASS

The majority of Survey2000 respondents have been categorized as lowbrows (92 percent), and only 8 percent of the sample is composed of highbrows (4 percent omnivores, 4 percent snobs). See Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Social Class

	Count	Percentage
Lowbrow	15,185	92%
Highbrow	1,287	8%
Snobs	651	4%
Omnivores	636	4%
Total	16,472	100%

Remembering that Survey2000 respondents are much more educated than the population and likely have significantly higher incomes (both of which are positively correlated with social class), we can expect that there are even less people in the adult U.S. population who meet the criterion for highbrow omnivore or snob, operationalized in the same way as in this research.

With such a small percentage of respondents falling into the highbrow category, it is especially helpful that Survey2000 attracted so many respondents. Even though snobs and omnivores make up just 8 percent of the sample, 1,287 respondents are categorized as highbrows (651 snobs and 636 omnivores). With so many respondents, statistically significant differences are more probable.

FOOD CONSUMPTION

Three different types of food consumption were measured: the consumption of universal foods, in-region foods, and outside-region foods. Overall, respondents consumed universal foods with the highest frequency. The mean food score for universal foods was 2.372. In-region foods are the second most consumed foods (mean=1.755), and outside-region foods are the least consumed (mean=1.164). For each social class, too, universal foods are most heavily consumed, followed by in-region foods, and then outside-region foods. This trend is not surprising given that universal foods should be most familiar to respondents, and foods outside the region in which they live, least familiar. See Table 4.3 below for a complete picture of food score by class.

Table 4.3: Mean Food Score by Social Class

	Total	Lowbrow	Snob	Omnivore
Universal Food Score	2.372	2.383	2.201	2.280
In-region Food Score	1.755	1.752	1.741	1.836
Outside-region Food Score	1.164	1.157	1.218	1.280
N	16,472	15,185	651	636

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: FOOD TYPE BY SOCIAL CLASS

By running an analysis of variance of the food score for each type of food, a significant difference is observable between social classes. For universal, in-region, and outside-region foods, consumption levels vary significantly between the three social classes ($p < .01$ for each food type). This finding indicates that, on the whole, class and food consumption are related. See Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: One-way ANOVA by Social Class

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Universal Food Score	Between Groups	26.548	2	13.274	48.764	0.000
	Within Groups	4483.028	16469	0.272		
	Total	4509.576	16471			
In-region Food Score	Between Groups	4.442	2	2.221	6.246	0.002
	Within Groups	5856.043	16469	0.356		
	Total	5860.485	16471			
Outside-region Food Score	Between Groups	11.185	2	5.592	26.685	0.000
	Within Groups	3451.547	16469	0.210		
	Total	3462.732	16471			

Furthermore, by utilizing Tukey's post hoc test, it is possible to compare each of the social classes with one another (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Post Hoc Tests: Multiple Comparisons—Tukey HSD

Dependent Variable	(I) Class	(J) Class	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Universal Food Score	Omnivore	Snob	0.079	0.029	0.018*
	Omnivore	Lowbrow	-0.104	0.021	0.000**
	Lowbrow	Snob	0.183	0.021	0.000**
In-region Food Score	Omnivore	Snob	0.095	0.033	0.012*
	Omnivore	Lowbrow	0.084	0.024	0.001**
	Lowbrow	Snob	0.011	0.024	0.894
Outside-region Food Score	Omnivore	Snob	0.062	0.026	0.039*
	Omnivore	Lowbrow	0.123	0.019	0.000**
	Lowbrow	Snob	-0.061	0.018	0.003**

* Indicates significance at $p < .05$

**Indicates significance at $p < .01$

With three food types and three social classes, nine comparisons are possible. Eight out of the nine comparisons yield a significant difference. Omnivores consume significantly more than both snobs and lowbrows for in-region and outside-region foods. Omnivores also consume more universal foods than snobs, but lowbrows consume more universal foods than omnivores.

Therefore, with one exception, omnivores consume more of each food type than snobs or lowbrows. This finding is important, but in order to test the hypotheses of this thesis, demographic and regional differences in the sample must be controlled for (see Table 4.6 in the next section). Additionally, although lowbrows and snobs are not compared directly in the six hypotheses of this thesis, it is interesting to note that the post hoc test does illuminate differences between snobs and lowbrows. Lowbrows consume significantly more universal foods than snobs and less outside-region foods, while no significant difference is observable between the two concerning in-region foods.

OLS REGRESSION: FOOD TYPE BY CLASS AND CONTROL VARIABLES

Utilizing three OLS regression models, the relationship between social class and food consumption is calculated while controlling for demographic and regional differences of the sample. The six hypotheses of this thesis are tested with a regression model for each food type. See Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6: OLS Regression: Control Variables and Social Class,
 Universal Food Score, In-region Food Score, Outside-region Food Score

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Universal Food Score ¹	In-region Food Score ¹	Outside- region Food Score ¹
Sex (Reference = Male)			
Female	-0.115**	-0.069**	-0.059**
Age (Reference = 45 - 54)			
18 – 24	0.023	-0.306**	-0.260**
25 – 34	0.001	-0.193**	-0.144**
35 – 44	0.028*	-0.071**	-0.055**
55 +	-0.005	0.060**	0.081**
Education (Reference = Bachelor's)			
High School or Less	0.160**	-0.008	-0.046**
Some College/ Associate's	0.102**	0.020	0.011
Graduate/ Professional Degree	-0.053**	0.007	0.013
Race (Reference = White)			
Black	0.122**	0.099*	0.115**
Asian	-0.009	-0.158**	-0.033
Other	0.109**	0.060	0.125**
Region (Reference = New England)			
Middle Atlantic	0.048*	0.256**	-0.041*
East North Central	0.079**	0.049*	-0.032
West North Central	0.120**	0.244**	-0.058**
South Atlantic	0.074**	0.356**	0.018
East South Central	0.143**	0.246**	0.017
West South Central	0.135**	0.352**	0.011
Mountain	0.031	0.295**	0.004
Pacific	-0.059**	0.072**	0.017
Social Class (Reference = Omnivore)			
Snob	-0.074*	-0.107**	-0.081**
Lowbrow	0.070**	-0.057*	-0.094**
Constant	2.273**	1.736**	1.358**
Adjusted R²	0.053	0.093	0.065
N	16,472	16,472	16,472

¹ Unstandardized coefficients

* Indicates significance at $p < .05$

**Indicates significance at $p < .01$

Control Variables

Before examining the relationship between class and food in the three regression models, it is worth noting the effect of the control variables on food consumption patterns. See Appendix D for a regression analysis of each separate control variable with social class.

For all three types of foods, women consume significantly less frequently compared to men ($p < .01$). Although women were more likely to be highbrow omnivores than men, women in general consume less omnivorously.

Age plays a significant role in food consumption levels as well, but in a more complex way than gender. For the most part, universal food consumption does not differ by age. Compared with the 45–54 age category, only 35–45-year-olds consume universal foods in a significantly different manner ($p < .05$). All other age categories consume universal foods at roughly the same level. Regional food consumption, on the other hand, differs greatly by age. Compared to the reference category (45–54), younger respondents consume significantly less in-region and outside-region foods ($p < .01$ for all ages), and older respondents consume significantly more ($p < .01$).

Education plays a significant role in food consumption levels of universal food. Compared with those who have a bachelor's degree, respondents with a graduate or professional degree consume fewer universal foods ($p < .01$), and less educated respondents consume more ($p < .01$). In-region food consumption is not significantly affected by education level. Outside-region food consumption is significantly less for the high school or below category compared with the reference group, but no other difference by education exists for outside-region foods.

Although the Survey2000 data set is composed of 96 percent white respondents, a number of significant differences do exist among races regarding food consumption. Interestingly, black respondents are more omnivorous consumers of all three food types compared with whites. Asian respondents differ from whites in their consumption of in-region foods, consuming significantly less, but no difference is seen for universal food consumption or outside-region food consumption. Because there are so few minority respondents, larger differences are required to demonstrate significance.

Regarding regional variation in food consumption, respondents from most regions consume significantly more universal foods than those from the New England Division, with the exception of those from the Pacific Division who consume significantly less. For in-region foods, those who currently live in New England consume significantly less than those from any other region.

Social Class

A social class divergence in food consumption, which assumes the focal point of this research endeavor, is observable and significant between omnivores and snobs and omnivores and lowbrows for universal, in-region, and outside region foods.

Highbrow omnivores in the sample consume universal, in-region, and outside-region foods more frequently than highbrow snobs (see Table 4.6). This difference is significant at the $p < .05$ level for universal foods and $p < .01$ for in-region and outside-region foods. Hypotheses 1, 3, and 5 can be rejected with a reasonable degree of confidence. Highbrow omnivores consume more ubiquitous, universal foods that make up the American fast-food diet than highbrow snobs. They also consume more foods that are only ubiquitous within

regions they have lived in. And finally, they consume more food types than snobs that are indigenous to regions in which they have never resided.

Omnivores consume in-region ($p < .05$) and outside-region ($p < .01$) foods more frequently than lowbrows too, but universal food is the one food type that lowbrows consume more frequently ($p < .01$). Hypotheses 2, 4, and 6 can all be rejected; however, Hypothesis 2 is rejected because lowbrows consume significantly higher amounts of universal foods. Again, separating foods into three categories was especially helpful in this case, because if only one food score were constructed, lowbrows' higher consumption of universal foods may have counteracted omnivores' stronger appetite for regional foods. Instead we can see the complex and divergent relationship between food type and consumption level. On the whole, however, omnivores consume more frequently, compared with snobs and lowbrows, relative to five out of the six hypotheses. See Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Results of Hypotheses

	Snob Highbrow	Omnivore Highbrow	Lowbrows
Hypothesis 1 (Universal Food)	-	+	
Hypothesis 3 (In-region Food)	-	+	
Hypothesis 5 (Outside-region Food)	-	+	
Hypothesis 2 (Universal Food)		-	+
Hypothesis 4 (In-region Food)		+	-
Hypothesis 6 (Outside-region Food)		+	-

These results indicate that musical omnivore-highbrows are culinary omnivores as well. They consume more universal, in-region, and outside-region foods than snobs and more in-region and outside-region foods than lowbrows.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This research has shown that highbrow omnivores (operationalized by their musical tastes) consume foods more omnivorously compared with lowbrows and snobs in five out of the six hypotheses, and the focus will now be shifted to discussing the possible explanations for this. Because very little research exists on the intersection of culinary omnivorosity and class, much of this discussion will be exploratory in nature.

Hypothesis 1 was rejected, and the results of the regression indicated that highbrow omnivores were more likely to consume universal dishes than highbrow snobs. Traditionally, snobs have attempted to distinguish themselves from others by adopting elite tastes (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Bourdieu, 1984). For this reason, it is not surprising that highbrow snobs consume less universal foods than highbrow omnivores. The universal foods, by definition, are not elite—they are ubiquitous and consumed frequently by all types of people in every region of the United States. If snobs do tend to reject common culinary culture and gravitate toward foods that are expensive and rare, they can identify themselves as belonging to an exclusive class in which participation is restricted. Only certain people can afford the foods that snobs like, but more importantly, only certain people can *appreciate* these foods. This appreciation may be central to snobbery because it restricts access based on one's taste, playing a crucial role in forming social class distinctions.

It is also possible that the difference in universal food consumption between omnivores and snobs has less to do with snobs' snobbishness and more to do with omnivores' omnivorosity. Most likely, however, the difference observed results from

both a rejection on the part of snobs and a culinary openness on the part of omnivores. Additionally, the dishes presented to respondents of Survey2000 were purely generic. The results may have been different if, for example, respondents were asked if they liked not just the universal dish “hamburger,” but instead, “ground filet hamburger topped with smoked Gouda cheese and wild mushrooms.” As Johnston and Bauman (2004) noted, highbrows were more likely to consume lowbrow cuisine when it was infused with elite foods or preparation methods. This blurring between elite and universal food may have increased the universal food score for snobs, but it also may have done the same for omnivores. Highbrow omnivores, after all, borrow elite tastes from snobs (opera and classical music) as well as a wide variety of lowbrow tastes.

For both types of regional foods (in-region and outside-region), omnivores also consume significantly more than snobs (rejecting Hypotheses 3 and 5). Many of the regional foods, like the universal foods, are also traditionally lowbrow cuisine, and the same question that arose from the observed differential consumption levels of snobs and omnivores for universal foods applies for regional foods: Are snobs rejecting regional lowbrow foods, or are omnivores just consuming more of them, or both? On the other hand, some regional foods are quite expensive and have been incorporated into snobbish cuisine. For example, both shrimp and lobster are regional foods that at one time were inexpensive, lowbrow fare but now are more costly and often seen on the menu of highbrow restaurants. Even if snobs were to consume certain regional foods at the same frequency as omnivores, the omnivore’s breadth of consumption will assure higher average food consumption levels. And this point highlights the essence of omnivorosity: for any given food, individual taste may be the

largest contributing factor in consumption levels, but for a wide variety of foods, on the whole, omnivores are more likely to exhibit higher consumption levels.

What is missing from Survey2000 that would benefit the analysis of food consumption levels of snobs and omnivores is a measure of consumption of traditionally elite foods. Within this category, highbrow snobs may consume more than highbrow omnivores, though highbrow omnivores would be expected to consume elite foods as well because of their demonstrated taste for elite music.

Although almost any analysis can benefit from more data, it is clear that for all three types of food consumption measured in this study, highbrow omnivores consumed significantly more than highbrow snobs. Because a significant difference is found in all three models, in the same direction, we can be extremely confident that highbrow omnivores have a broader spectrum of culinary tastes than highbrow snobs. Although this combination effect between food types tells a unifying story of omnivorousness, looking at each type of consumption individually has been helpful as well.

On the surface, it appears that omnivores are different from snobs because they have a taste for a wider variety of foods (including many lowbrow foods) as opposed to only certain expensive foods, but they may be much more like snobs than lowbrows. Omnivores, like snobs, attempt to differentiate themselves through their tastes, and instead of restricting access to their social class identity by only legitimizing expensive tastes, they might restrict access by requiring the adoption of *expansive* tastes. Omnivores, then, would essentially be snobs whose snobbery is based on the adoption of a broad, extensive palate that glorifies a taste for authentic, regional, unique, or exotic culinary culture. The parallel between snobs and omnivores is also reinforced by our semantic understanding of highbrow taste: we think

of omnivore highbrows as “cultured” (meaning that they have a taste for many different distinct cultural commodities); however, synonyms for “cultured” include “sophisticated” and “refined,” and both words conjure images of snobbery. The intersection between omnivorousness and snobbery appears paradoxical and counterintuitive in a way, but it illustrates the fact that both omnivorousness and snobbery could ultimately achieve the same goal of identifying membership in a higher social class by limiting access to certain tastes (or consumption patterns) that are most often acquired through class relationships.

Since omnivores scored significantly higher than snobs on all three food scores, consumption comparisons between snobs and omnivores are relatively straightforward (at least quantitatively speaking), but the difference between omnivores and lowbrows is more nuanced. Lowbrows actually consume significantly more universal foods than omnivores (rejecting Hypothesis 2), representing the only instance in which omnivores are out-consumed. Though highbrow omnivores consumed more universal foods than highbrow snobs, there may be ambivalence toward universal foods on the part of highbrow omnivores. The consumption of universal foods may be at odds with the concept of omnivorousness. If omnivorousness symbolizes an acceptance of cultural variety, universal foods may represent the destruction of culinary variety in favor of universal “Mcfoods.” Conceptualized in this way, omnivores can shun certain foods, while still maintaining an identity as an omnivore. On the other hand, the difference between omnivores and lowbrows may be more a result of lowbrows’ voracious consumption of universal foods and less a result of omnivores’ rejection of them. Lowbrows may identify universal foods as their own, as a symbol of the all-American diet. A Sunday afternoon barbeque with hotdogs, hamburgers, and macaroni and cheese may represent for lowbrows what caviar and foie gras

does for some highbrows. If this were the case, omnivores may consume universal foods relatively frequently but still consume them less frequently than lowbrows. Universal food consumption may just be the acceptable culinary tradition for lowbrows, distinguishing their social class through the standard American diet.

It is important to remember, however, that the lowbrows in this sample are not representative of the “average” American lowbrow. Survey2000 respondents are more likely to be demographically homogenous, more educated, and likely come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Taking this into account, we can expect that the difference in universal food consumption between highbrow omnivores and the average American lowbrow may be even greater. If lowbrows do identify their class membership through universal food consumption, the average American lowbrow would be expected to consume more than the lowbrows in this sample who share many demographic similarities with highbrows.

Regarding in-region food consumption, it is somewhat surprising that lowbrows consume significantly less than omnivores (rejecting Hypothesis 4), because many in-region foods are traditionally lowbrow foods. However, omnivore curiosity with “authentic” regional cuisine may be responsible for this occurrence. Even if lowbrows consume a fair amount of in-region cuisine, omnivores may consume more because of the connection between regional authenticity and the concept of cultural omnivorousness. If omnivorousness is defined as a willingness to try all kinds of regionally specific forms of culture, a higher in-region food score for highbrow omnivores seems plausible.

In essence, the consumption of in-region foods may symbolize different things for the omnivore and the lowbrow. For many lowbrows, in-region foods might simply be seen

as familiar, traditional foods. The reason for consuming these types of foods may be rooted in the comfort of their own tradition, whereas for the omnivore, the pleasure comes from *sampling* many different regional traditions (both in-region and outside-region foods). This sampling is the key element of omnivorousness. Rather than identify with one culinary tradition, omnivores identify with the tradition of sampling the traditions of others.

It is not surprising that highbrow omnivores consumed more outside-region foods than lowbrows (rejecting Hypothesis 6). Regardless of where a regional food comes from, regional cuisine should pique the interest of omnivores because of the tradition of sampling. Highbrow omnivores are probably also more inclined to travel to other regions more frequently than lowbrows because of their interest in different cultures. The culinary tourist that Shenoy (2006) identified was essentially an omnivore who traveled in order to sample regionally specific cuisine and culture.

Although highbrow omnivores scored higher on the outside-region food score relative to lowbrows, they are not, by any means, ravenous consumers of these types of foods (highbrow omnivores' mean outside-region food score was 1.280 on a scale from 0 to 4). Omnivorousness, then, with respect to social class, is a relative term. By measuring one class against another, differential levels of consumption are observable, and highbrow omnivores consume more outside-region foods than lowbrows. But with an average score of only 1.280 for outside-region foods, there are very few highbrow omnivores who have tried, and liked, a majority of the outside-region foods with which they were presented in Survey2000. Instead, highbrow omnivores are simply more inclined to have tried and liked these foods than lowbrows.

Along this same line of inquiry, it is worth noting that some lowbrows in the Survey2000 data set are quite omnivorous in their consumption of regional foods. These lowbrows may be omnivorous consumers of music as well. In other words, there is a subset of lowbrows who are cultural omnivores. However, they were not categorized as highbrow omnivores because they did not have an elite taste for music (liking classical and opera music, with one of the two being the favorite type of music). It is not the intention of this thesis to conclude that lowbrow omnivores do not exist or that omnivorousness is purely a form of highbrow distinction. Rather, omnivorousness is just one form of highbrow distinction. Omnivorousness is also a matter of personal taste or could represent an interest in other cultures without any claim of membership in a particular social class. This study does not attempt to address omnivorousness by itself, but instead focuses on the emergence of omnivorousness within the context of social class, and specifically, within a class based on the consumption of elite, as well as culturally diverse, cultural commodities.

With a relatively small number of highbrow omnivores in the data set ($n=636$), it is encouraging that so many statistically significant differences were observed, but the relative difference in each social class's food score was quite small. The regression models for each of the three food types explain less than 10 percent of the variance. The R^2 for the universal food model is 0.053, while it is 0.093 for the in-region food model, and 0.065 for the outside-region food model. No model explains a great deal of the variance, and all models account for age, race, sex, education, region, and social class. These results seem to indicate that either taste for food is largely an individual preference, or it is dependent on other variables not accounted for in the regression model.

Regardless of myriad influences on culinary taste, this thesis has shown that food consumption is related to class membership—in particular, class membership based on cultural tastes. Because so many factors influence taste, it would be misleading to suggest that social class plays the largest role in culinary tastes. In fact, many other control variables were more significant predictors of taste. What this research does demonstrate is that those with elite musical tastes and a taste for a wide variety of other music also tend to score higher on measures of culinary omnivorousness. In other words, highbrow omnivores are more likely to be culinary omnivores than highbrow snobs or lowbrows.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This study has effectively demonstrated a social class difference in food consumption patterns based on musical taste operationalizations of class. Because class conceptualizations have shifted from solely economic bases to include measures of taste, it was possible, and feasible, to identify musical taste–based class distinctions and how they related to culinary tastes. Highbrow musical omnivores were more likely to consume a wide variety of foods than snobs and lowbrows. Highbrow omnivores consumed more universal, in-region, and outside-region foods than snobs. They also consumed more in-region and outside-region foods than lowbrows, but lowbrows did consume more universal foods than highbrow omnivores. Five out of the six hypotheses of this thesis were rejected because highbrow omnivores consumed significantly more food types than lowbrows or snobs. It is important to note that the differences in consumption were significant but relatively small. Some control variables were more statistically significant than social class in the regression models, and even by including these variables, less than 10% of the variance was explained. Although individual taste may explain food consumption patterns more than any other variable, social class is certainly important in identifying one piece of the puzzle.

The reason why highbrow omnivores consume more types of foods than snobs and lowbrows is not altogether clear, but some possible reasons have been discussed. Through their extensive consumption of various cuisines, highbrow omnivores may attempt to identify themselves as “cultured” consumers, making statements about both their taste in

culture and membership in a class. Similarly, snobs may claim membership in an elite group by developing a taste for rare and expensive foods.

Omnivorousness as a class indicator is a relatively new marker of highbrow distinction, and future social scientific research should continue investigating this trend. A new analysis of the Survey2000 data set will prove helpful in this task. Because it is such a large and comprehensive data set, many findings about omnivorousness and social class await examination. Literary taste was measured in Survey2000 in much the same way as culinary taste, and it would be very interesting to measure literary omnivorousness for highbrow omnivores, snobs, and lowbrows. Researchers who would like to examine literary omnivorousness and class relationships in the Survey2000 data set should consult Griswold and Wright's (2004) article "Cowbirds, Locals, and the Dynamic Endurance of Regionalism," which examines regional literary consumption using Survey2000 data.

In addition to the literature questions included in Survey2000, respondents were asked about their participation in recreational activities (visiting the library, dining out, going to the movies, etc.). Measuring omnivorous recreational participation for each social class would add another dimension to research on omnivorousness. It would be interesting to determine whether participation in each activity was related to social class, and if overall participation was more likely among highbrow omnivores.

Future research on omnivorousness and social class may also benefit from a new method of operationalizing class based on taste. Taste in music determined social class groups in this thesis, but other measures of taste could effectively measure similar class distinctions. Furthermore, social class membership could be redefined in new ways. Although this study sheds light on the intersection between social class and culinary

omnivorousness, the highbrow omnivore could face extinction while some other form of highbrow distinction emerges.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

FOOD BY REGION

Table A.1: Food By Region

Region	Dish
Universal Foods	Hot dogs
	Pizza
	French fries
	Fish sticks
	White bread
	Jell-O
	Macaroni and cheese
	Hamburgers
	Grilled cheese
	Donuts
Fried chicken	
New England Division	New England clam chowder
	Lobster roll
	Indian pudding
	Clam fritters
	Cheddar-corn pancakes
	Apple brown Betty
	Corned-beef hash
Mince pie	
Middle Atlantic Division	Chicken pot pie
	Stuffed cabbage
	German potato salad
	Apple turnovers
	Bagels with cream cheese and lox
	Cheese blintzes
Chicken wings	
East North Central Division	Chicken noodles with mashed potatoes
	Potato pancakes
	Corned-beef sandwich
	Grilled steak (T-bone or porterhouse)
	Buttermilk pie
	Sauerbraten
	Chili and cheese hot dogs
Corn fritters	
West North Central Division	Chicken-fried steak
	Buttermilk pancakes
	Pepper steak
	Rhubarb cobbler

	Chicken and biscuits Pork sausage Chicken fricassee Wild rice
South Atlantic Division	Corn fritters/hush puppies Black-eyed peas with rice and onions Sweet potato pie Barbecued ribs Country ham Crab cakes Pecan pie Creamed corn
East South Central Division	Catfish and hush puppies Barbecued pulled-pork sandwich Spoon bread Watermelon rind pickles Fried okra Grits Whipped yams
West South Central Division	Catfish steaks Hush puppies with onions Fried okra Enchiladas Corn sticks Fish chowder Mesquite smoked beef Chicken-and-sausage gumbo
Mountain Division	Blue-cornmeal griddle cakes Ham-and-bean soup Chicken and biscuits Grilled steak Tostada Chili rellenos Biscuits with apple butter Hash browns
Pacific Division	Fish and chips Poached salmon Pan-fried oysters Fruit blintzes Apple fritters Baked polenta Fisherman
Other Region Outside Continental U.S.	Baked yams with pineapple Coconut pudding (haupia) Loco moco

Poi
Chicken luau (chicken and taro leaf stew)
Teriyaki steak
Lomilomi salmon
Fried butterfly shrimp
King crab
Sourdough bread
Salmon fillet
Salmonberry ice cream
Grilled halibut
Sourdough poppy seed potato bread
Caribou sausage
Rhubarb cake
Barbecued steaks
Chuck-wagon stew/beef-and-onion stew
Broiled venison steak
Beef and beans
Potato hash
Fruit-filled coffee cake
Smoked black cod (sablefish)
Black cod poached in milk
Potato waffles
Smoked salmon
Fruit cobbler
Succotash and wild rice
Chicken soup with dumplings
Corned beef and cabbage
Roast wild goose
Roast duck with wild rice stuffing
Rivvel soup
Cooked fiddleheads
Dried dulse
Fish/shellfish chowder
Hugger in buff (potatoes with salt pork)
Restigouche salmon
Tantramar mushrooms
Shellfish chowder
Oat bread
Fish and brewis
Fish baked in custard
Sautéed capelin
Fried cod tongues
Shellfish chowder
Lobster thermador
Boiled lobster
Rappie pie
Cape Breton scones

Baked stuffed lobster
Fried apples with sausages
Chocolate bread pudding
Apple pudding
Pate aux bucardes
Stuffed baked apples
Sourdough pancakes
Houligan
Slumgullion
Moose stew
Smoked black whale meat
Arctic char fillet
Reindeer steaks
Hare/rabbit stew
Rhubarb pie
Stuffed goose
Roast Canada goose
Braised fowl
Cornish hens with rice
Chicken pie
Christmas pudding
Pumpkin pie
Apple strudel
Crusty potato logs
Shepherd's pie
Stuffed baked potatoes
Potato-and-sausage casserole
Johnnycake
Fish chowder
Porc tourtiere (Christmas dish)
Bleuet pie
Habitant pea soup
Caribou (homemade wine-and-spirit drink)
Cretons de Quebec
Sucre a la crème
Pinchberry tart jelly
Roast duck
Roast turkey
Roast goose
Pan-fried whitefish
Saskatoon pie
Pickerel

Appendix B

REGION DEFINITIONS

Table B.1: Region Definitions

Region	State
New England Division	Connecticut
	Maine
	Massachusetts
	New Hampshire
	Rhode Island
Middle Atlantic Division	Vermont
	New Jersey
	New York
	Pennsylvania
East North Central Division	Illinois
	Indiana
	Michigan
	Ohio
	Wisconsin
West North Central Division	Iowa
	Kansas
	Minnesota
	Missouri
	Nebraska
	North Dakota
South Atlantic Division	South Dakota
	Delaware
	District of Columbia
	Florida
	Georgia
	Maryland
	North Carolina
	South Carolina
East South Central Division	Virginia
	West Virginia
	Alabama
	Kentucky
West South Central Division	Mississippi
	Tennessee
	Arkansas
	Louisiana

	Oklahoma
	Texas
	<hr/>
	Arizona
	Colorado
	Idaho
Mountain Division	Montana
	Nevada
	New Mexico
	Utah
	Wyoming
	<hr/>
Pacific Division	California
	Oregon
	Washington
	<hr/> <hr/>

Appendix C

EXAMPLE OF CODING BY FOOD TYPE

The following table represents an example of the food type (universal, in-region, outside-region) coding for one respondent (serialno=48) in Survey 2000. At birth through age 21, the respondent live in California (Region=Pacific Division), and from age 28 on, the respondent lived in New Jersey (Region=Middle Atlantic Division). Therefore, any food that is from region 9 (Pacific Division) or region 2 (Middle Atlantic Division) is an In-region food. All others are outside region foods (except for universal foods).

Table C.1: Coding By Food Type

DISH	REGION OF DISH	FOOD TYPE
Succotash and wild rice	Outside Continental US	Outside-region
Blue-cornmeal griddle cakes	Mountain Division	Outside-region
Hamburgers	Universal	Universal
	West South Central	
Corn sticks	Division	Outside-region
Stuffed goose	Outside Continental US	Outside-region
Fish and chips	Pacific Division	In-region
Potato-and-sausage casserole	Outside Continental US	Outside-region
	East South Central	
Fried okra	Division	Outside-region
Fish sticks	Universal	Universal
Bagels with cream cheese and lox	Middle Atlantic Division	In-region
Hot dogs	Universal	Universal
	West North Central	
Chicken fricassee	Division	Outside-region
Stuffed cabbage	Middle Atlantic Division	In-region
Porc tourtiere (Christmas dish)	Outside Continental US	Outside-region
Cheese blintzes	Middle Atlantic Division	In-region
Braised fowl	Outside Continental US	Outside-region
Rhubarb cake	Outside Continental US	Outside-region
Fruit-filled coffee cake	Outside Continental US	Outside-region
Apple strudel	Outside Continental US	Outside-region
Cornish hens with rice	Outside Continental US	Outside-region
Pinchberry tart jelly	Outside Continental US	Outside-region

Pan-fried oysters	Pacific Division	In-region
	West South Central	
Hush puppies with onions	Division	Outside-region
Chicken pot pie	Middle Atlantic Division	In-region
Donuts	Universal	Universal
Dried dulse	Outside Continental US	Outside-region
Fisherman	Pacific Division	In-region
Poached salmon	Pacific Division	In-region

Appendix D

OLS REGRESSION BY CLASS AND EACH INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Table D.1: OLS Regression: Sex and Social Class
Universal Food Score, In-region Food Score, Outside-region Food Score

	Universal Food Score ¹	In-region Food Score ¹	Outside-region Food Score ¹
Sex (Reference = Male)			
Female	-0.110**	-0.089**	-0.073**
Social Class (Reference = Omnivore)			
Snob	-0.086**	-0.101**	-0.067**
Lowbrow	0.098**	-0.088**	-0.126**
Constant	2.341**	1.886**	1.321**
Adjusted R²	0.017	0.006	0.009
N	16,472	16,472	16,472

¹ Unstandardized coefficients

* Indicates significance at $p < .05$

** Indicates significance at $p < .01$

Table D.2: OLS Regression: Age and Social Class
Universal Food Score, In-region Food Score, Outside-region Food Score

	Universal Food Score ¹	In-region Food Score ¹	Outside-region Food Score ¹
Age (Reference = 45 - 54)			
18 - 24	0.081**	-0.307**	-0.273**
25 - 34	0.001	-0.192**	-0.146**
35 - 44	0.037**	-0.073**	-0.057**
55 +	0.009	0.070**	0.087**
Social Class (Reference = Omnivore)			
Snob	-0.076**	-0.116**	-0.082**
Lowbrow	0.101**	-0.051*	-0.093**
Constant	2.261**	1.909**	
Adjusted R²	0.008	0.040	0.056
N	16,472	16,472	16,472

¹ Unstandardized coefficients
 * Indicates significance at p < .05
 **Indicates significance at p < .01

Table D.3: OLS Regression: Education and Social Class
 Universal Food Score, In-region Food Score, Outside-region Food Score

	Universal Food Score ¹	In-region Food Score ¹	Outside-region Food Score ¹
Education (Reference = Bachelor's)			
High School or Less	0.166**	-0.020	-0.068**
Some College/ Associate's	0.105**	0.017	0.007
Graduate/ Professional Degree	-0.049**	0.067**	0.059**
Social Class (Reference = Omnivore)			
Snob	-0.072*	-0.100**	-0.067**
Lowbrow	0.081**	-0.077**	-0.113**
Constant	2.264**	1.809**	1.260**
Adjusted R²	0.025	0.003	0.008
N	16,472	16,472	16,472

¹ Unstandardized coefficients
 * Indicates significance at p < .05
 **Indicates significance at p < .01

Table D4: OLS Regression: Race and Social Class
 Universal Food Score, In-region Food Score, Outside-region Food Score

	Universal Food Score ¹	In-region Food Score ¹	Outside-region Food Score ¹
Race (Reference = White)			
Black	0.119**	0.077	0.083*
Asian	-0.056	-0.288**	-0.104**
Other	0.126**	0.067	0.128**
Social Class (Reference = Omnivore)			

Snob	-0.077**	-0.093**	-0.060*
Lowbrow	0.103**	-0.083**	-0.123**
Constant	2.277**	1.836**	1.278**
Adjusted R²	0.007	0.003	0.005
N	16,472	16,472	16,472

¹ Unstandardized coefficients

* Indicates significance at $p < .05$

**Indicates significance at $p < .01$

Table D.5: OLS Regression: Region and Social Class
 Universal Food Score, In-region Food Score, Outside-region Food Score

	Universal Food Score ¹	In-region Food Score ¹	Outside-region Food Score ¹
Region (Reference = New England)			
Middle Atlantic	0.059**	0.256**	-0.041*
East North Central	0.088**	0.055*	-0.027
West North Central	0.136**	0.256**	-0.048*
South Atlantic	0.078**	0.360**	0.023
East South Central	0.160**	0.264**	0.031
West South Central	0.153**	0.369**	0.026
Mountain	0.045*	0.315**	0.020
Pacific	-0.048*	0.089**	0.034
Social Class (Reference = Omnivore)			
Snob	-0.077**	-0.084**	-0.060*
Lowbrow	0.101**	-0.086**	-0.122**
Constant	2.222**	1.620**	1.273**
Adjusted R²	0.021	0.049	0.007
N	16,472	16,472	16,472

¹ Unstandardized coefficients

* Indicates significance at $p < .05$

**Indicates significance at $p < .01$

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