



Research & Methods
ISSN 1234-9224 Vol. 24 (1, 2015): 3–18
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio, USA
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology
Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland
www.askresearchandmethods.org

Social Stratification and Eating

**Henryk Domański, Zbigniew Karpiński,
Dariusz Przybysz, and Justyna Straczuk**

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences

Patterns of eating, as an element of lifestyle and consumption, constitute a major research area in the social and health sciences. The study of eating patterns focus on what people eat, whether they eat alone or in company, where they eat, how often, and under what circumstances. For decades, research on eating within sociology had been somewhat neglected, but in recent years there has been an explosion of interest in this topic. In Poland, however, social scientific inquiry into practical, social, and cultural aspects of food has been minimal. Using data from a nation-wide survey carried out in 2013 and in-depth interviews with 60 respondents conducted in 2014, we attempted to answer two questions: (i) to what extent eating patterns reflect existing inequalities and stratification, and (ii) to what extent they have been affected by globalisation and Western lifestyle. This article discusses theoretical background of our research, its empirical basis, and summarises the basic results.¹

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As Georg Simmel (1997) observed, habits of eating are not simply about the choice of what one has for their meal, but also about the organisation of daily life. This observation offers a complex and nuanced account of everyday practice connected with eating. The classical sociology of Weber and Simmel considered consumption patterns a corollary of class position, social identity, domestic organization and rhythm of behavior. We reflect on these issues in the Polish context, regarding current patterns of eating as reflecting a general shift from “traditional” to “new” lifestyles, the latter being characteristic of Western societies.

Students of social history have long distinguished between “high-brow” and “low-brow” foods and corresponding “exclusive” and “popular” tastes and behaviours, respectively. These distinctions are found in most European and

non-European societies in different historical times (Goody 1982; Mennel 1985; Flandrin 1999). In Poland, nobility and peasants have developed different cuisines and these different traditions have survived to the present day, contributing to contemporary differentiation of life styles and eating habits (Chwalba 2008; Dumanowski 2009). Stratification in regard to eating patterns is also confirmed by recent sociological studies, even though there have not been too many of them. So far, such studies were conducted in the Nordic countries (Kjaernes et al. 2001), France (Aymard, Grignon, and Sabban 1996) and Great Britain (Warde 1997; Warde and Martens 2000). In Poland, this topic has not been systematically investigated and our study can be seen as contributing yet another piece to the body of knowledge on social stratification. Research in the latter area in Poland is well advanced, especially in regard to inequality in material position, differentiation of earnings, barriers to inter-generational mobility, marital homogamy, friendship choices, or occupational prestige hierarchy.

To be sure, filling in a gap in the study of social stratification is not the main reason for doing research on the stratification with respect to eating, even if its results were to contradict common sense and subjective experience. The most important objective of this study is to answer the question, to what extent does class hierarchy find its reflection in eating behaviours and patterns? Class means a group of individuals who occupy a similar position in the labour market in terms of ownership, and levels of social, cultural, and educational capitals that provide financial rewards, stability, and benefits like health care. Educational assets are a particularly strong predictor of tastes in consumption.

There are two reasons why our study of eating patterns is focused on how well, if at all, they reproduce class distinctions. On the one hand, the Polish society have been receptive to new life styles, especially the Western ones, that have spread rapidly after the collapse of communism, along with the emergence of market, leading to a clash between the traditional and the new life styles. This is a conjecture which, in principle, can be tested against relevant data. Changes in eating habits seem to follow globalisation, migration, and mass consumption. We search for evidence of diffusion of those patterns using data from the years 2013–2014, although it is important to keep in mind that data from just one time point do not allow for making causal inferences. We can only compare traditional eating habits with the new ones and compare findings coming from our study with those from research conducted in other countries, mostly in Scandinavian ones, given that we used a research instrument that is very similar to the one used in the Scandinavian surveys. A decline in significance of the traditional life style in those countries is attributed to the effects of individualisation, informalisation, commercialisation, stylisation, or gastro-anomy. One can assume that these processes have affected eating patterns in Poland, too.

On the other hand, it's been argued that life style was becoming increasingly independent of stratification which, purportedly, makes life style a distinct dimension of social identity, behaviour, and attitudes, even though there is empirical evidence that these two concepts continue to be related. The argument goes on to claim that processes of individualization have recently reduced the area of the class conflict. According to Anthony Giddens (2001), it is precisely the individual decisions concerning life style that have become a principal way in which actors define their social positions and create a narrative about their individual identity. Given that traditional social roles resulting from group membership have lost their significance, people are forced, as it were, to choose a life style on their own from the wide variety offered by the modern age without any hint as to their hierarchy. The choices are only weakly tied to socio-economic position. Even those who are disadvantaged have many possibilities to choose from.

We believe the argument is debatable. Our objective is to pit it against a counter-argument according to which life style in Poland continues to be closely related with the class position. Research shows that considerable differences persist in Poland between intelligentsia and manual workers in terms of participation in culture, including going to theatre, reading, sports, and other leisure time activities (Domański 2000, 2008). Differences with respect to eating habits follow a similar, if less pronounced, pattern, as our analyses have demonstrated. For instance, individualisation of food preferences appears to be reflecting class divisions rather than mitigate them. Subjects with preference for healthy or ethical foods, for foods manufactured in accord with the idea of sustainable development, or subjects sensitive to food allergies come largely from urban middle-class backgrounds, but are somewhat under-represented among residents in small towns and rural areas, which can be said to maintain existing class differences rather than diminish their role. As Pierre Bourdieu (2005) claimed, life style, including eating habits, is not a matter of free individual choice, but is determined by habitus, a set of internal dispositions for action that are acquired during socialisation within a particular social environment. Habitus is about internalisation of the rules governing social world, along with its norms and values and types of acceptable behaviours. Life styles are derivative of placement in the social structure and contribute to its reproduction. Taste for certain foods is an element of the broader concept of habitus.

Our argument is as follows. Some aspects of traditional eating habits began to lose significance after 1989, when political, economic, and cultural changes were initiated in Poland. On the one hand, various ingredients that had been viewed as rare or exotic several years earlier, became widely available. On the other hand, popular culture (e.g. TV shows, colour magazines, and on the internet) often makes people realise that what they eat daily does not have to be limited

to foods typical of national cuisine and can be extended by other traditions. These developments somewhat blur class boundaries, but don't remove them completely. High- and low-status actors still differ from one another in terms of what they eat. But an even more important dimension of differentiation is the way they eat, e.g. where and in what company. Thus, there are people who literally eat alone at their desk in the workplace and there are people for whom meal is has an intrinsic value and eating time and working time are clearly separated from one another. Meal for the former is only a source of calories and nutrition and for the latter – more of a ritual that is not limited to nutritive functions, being also an aesthetic and social event.

With this conception of eating patterns, we try to determine: (1) How strongly do eating patterns affect our daily lives? (2) To what extent are eating habits a matter of choice? To what extent are they shaped by location in the social structure and institutional conditions? (3) To what extent are eating patterns in Poland rooted in a traditional model? To each question we provide detailed research hypotheses. To give an example, in the case of the second question we hypothesize that omnivorism is the greatest among those who are on top positions in terms of the amount of the economic, cultural, and social capital they possess. The analysis of data was based on a model called the eating system. The model has three dimensions: (i) the rhythm and the number of eating events, (ii) the composition of the main course and the social organisation of eating: where and with whom people eat, and (iii) what activities, if at all, accompany the meal.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our analyses are based on data from the two surveys. The first one was carried out by the Centre of Social Opinion Research in 2013 on a nationwide random sample population aged 15 and above using computer assisted personal interviews (CAPI). Given that what people eat is largely dependent upon the season of the year, we decided to divide the study into two waves to control for the seasonal variations in the eating habits. Intuitively, different types of food are eaten in winter than in summer, partly because changes in temperature affect the amount of energy that the organism needs and make different types of food available in different seasons. By running one round of the survey in Spring and the other in late Autumn, we are able to take any seasonal fluctuations into account. Thus, the sample was split into two sub-samples and separate surveys were run on each sub-sample in June and November. Overall, the two waves comprised 2,361 complete interviews.²

Interviews were distributed more or less equally across weekdays to control for variations in the eating patterns associated with the day of the week. For instance, some Catholics may still stick to the rule of not eating meat on Friday,

and some families may celebrate Sunday dinners by eating more “elaborate” foods to maintain family bond.

Further, the survey was designed so as to allow for comparisons with findings from an international project carried out in Scandinavian countries in 1997 and 2011 – this striving for comparability refers especially to some items in the questionnaire. The international module was only a part of the study design which aimed to capture the specificity of the Polish context. In order to achieve this goal, relevant research questions were formulated and then “translated” into appropriate questionnaire items. The survey questionnaire asked subjects to report in detail what they ate the day before the interview. More specifically, the subjects were asked to describe all the meals they had on the day preceding the interview, beginning with the very first coffee in the morning, and including all the regular meals and small snacks during the rest of the day. We believe that such a design has a number of advantages. The items in the questionnaire elicit descriptions of actual behaviours, that can be said to be still fresh in memory, rather than vague declarations concerning what people usually eat which may be distorted by social desirability bias. Apart from the contents of each meal, the subjects were also asked about circumstances in which the meal took place, such as whether they ate it at home or out, whether they ate alone or in company, who prepared the meal, what they were doing during the meal, how long did the meal take, and the like.

Included in the questionnaire were also items concerning more general eating habits, not limited to the previous day. Subjects were asked about beverages they drink, soft and alcoholic, how often they eat fish, meat and non-meat courses, fruit and vegetables, and other habits. Another part of the questionnaire dealt with types of food they prefer (e.g., traditional vs. exotic) or if the subjects were on some diet or other and avoided certain ingredients (such as sugar or milk). Other modules were concerned with inviting or being invited over for dinner, eating out, and their preferences for types of restaurants or cafes. One could also mention items asking subjects about budget limitations affecting food and eating products they can afford, food choices in relation to health, respondents’ attitudes towards environmental and ethical issues related to eating, and their experience in terms of having tried various dishes that can be thought of as exotic or elaborate as compared to more traditional. As regards the latter questions, subjects were asked if they tried the dishes and whether they had liked them.

The two waves of survey were followed by a qualitative study in 2014. In the course of the study, 64 in-depth interviews were completed. The interviews lasted between one and four hours each. The respondents varied on a number of social and demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, education, size of the town of residence, and material position, and the variation approximately matched the variation in the nation-wide random sample. However, given more

experience of women with the information elicited during the interviews, they were slightly over-represented, and the same is true for members of urban middle class. The respondents were drawn from various regions, although the regional variation in eating habits was not a major focus of the study. The script for interviewers emphasised the need to enquire deeper into some questions from the survey, especially the ones that dealt with attitudes towards eating habits and food preferences, by encouraging subjects to give more detailed accounts allowing them to freely present and justify their choices. Apart from elaborating on the questions that had been included in the questionnaire, subjects were also asked about their subjective perceptions of change in eating behaviours in Poland in comparison with earlier times, especially the years before the collapse of communism. The diachronic aspect enabled researchers to gain insight into the way the present and the past were evaluated and the emotions attached to them. Researchers asked about such issues as childhood memories related to food, home and family eating traditions and recipes, differences between everyday and ceremonial eating, eating in and out, social and solitary eating. Organisation of cooking at home was also discussed along with the division of labour in this regard, decision making processes, acquiring and developing one's cooking skills, sources of the family recipes, and openness to culinary innovations. Organisation of household food shopping turned out to be an important aspect of the way they are planned, carried out and justified. Careful analysis of the in-depth interviews combined with quantitative data from the survey will result in a better understanding of the studied area, especially from the point of view of meanings the subjects attach to certain eating habits and behaviours and the relationship between taste and various social and cultural contexts.

BASIC FINDINGS

Using data from our survey, we present now some empirical illustrations of how eating patterns affect our daily lives and how they relate to class position and some other variables. Polish speaking readers are encouraged to consult our book *Stratyfikacja społeczna a wzory jedzenia (Social Stratification and Patterns of Eating*, published in 2015) for more detailed and elaborate analyses. The following is just an overview of selected findings.

The first area of our interest is the rhythm and the number of eating events.

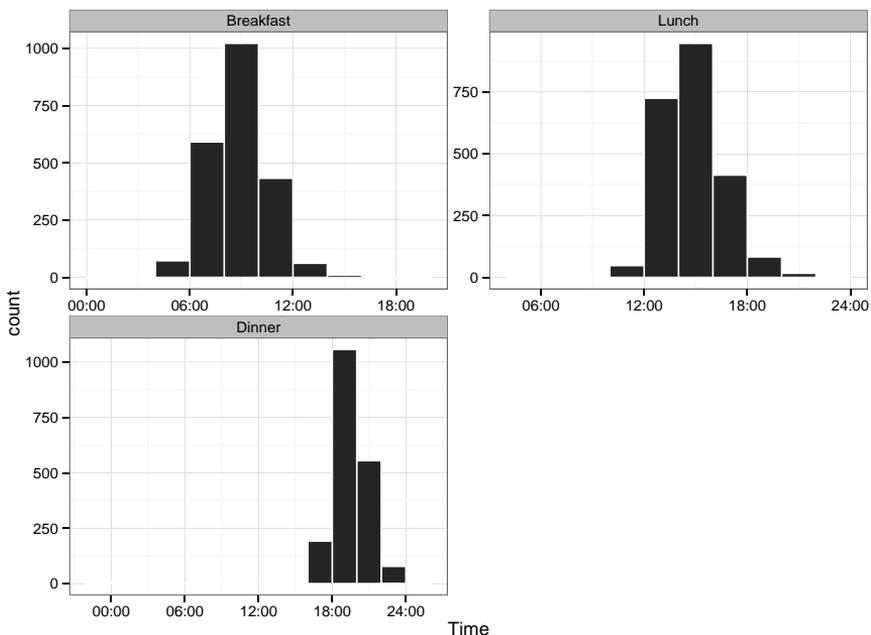
Rhythm

Socially shared norms concerning the rhythm of eating – the number of meals, time and place of their consumption, and their organisation – are a basis of each culinary culture. A casual character of one's meals that conform to satisfying one's

immediate and idiosyncratic needs (e.g. grazing) and are eaten at odd times of the day can be seen as evidence of erosion of those norms. We were interested in whether contemporary eating habits in Poland followed a traditional style, focused on eating at home with one’s family, or are driven by processes of individualisation and de-socialisation (“gastro-anomy”).

As our data suggest, eating is concentrated within specific times of the day. Since we do not have data on earlier time periods, we have no way of knowing if eating habits in this regard have been stable or have changed. Relying on the data, one can conclude that most subjects (70 per cent of the sample) stuck to a traditional habit of having three meals a day – breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Afternoon tea or “second breakfast” are far less common, with 17.4 per cent and 24.1 per cent, respectively, of the sample reporting to have had those meals on the day preceding the interview. All these meals were reported to have been eaten at hours that are commonly believed to be typical. For instance, most subjects had breakfast between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., lunch – between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m., and dinner between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. Departures from this pattern, which would indicate de-synchronisation, happen only rarely, as illustrated by the Figure 1.

Figure 1 Histograms of eating times by meal



According to Figure 1, subjects generally stick to the habit of having their meals at specific times, contributing to a social pattern of the rhythm of eating in Poland. These results are similar to those found in surveys carried out in Western European countries, e.g. in Scandinavia, where more than 40 per cent of the sample (50 per cent in Denmark) conform to the rule of having the main meal at a specified time, which occurs between 11 a.m. and noon in Finland and Norway, and between noon and 1 a.m. in Sweden and Denmark (Holm et. al. 2012; Lund and Gronow 2014). Similar results had been obtained in a survey conducted in the Nordic countries a decade earlier (see Kjaernes et al. 2001). In Spain, eating is also concentrated within specific and relatively narrow time windows, as reported by Southerton, Diaz-Mendez, and Warde (2011), although there are two main meals, lunch and supper, that are found to be eaten between 2 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. (by some 40 per cent of the sample), and 9 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. (by 30 per cent of the sample), respectively. This latter result indicates that Spanish respondents stick closely to the traditional daily eating rhythm that is also supported by institutional arrangements allowing employees to go home for lunch during working hours. In turn, no specific hours at which most subjects would have their meal could be discerned in Great Britain which can be said to be evidence of social norms governing eating to be gradually losing their effect. Great Britain can be this viewed as a society in which the much discussed in the literature processes of gastro-anomy and individualisation are indeed taking place (Southerton, Diaz-Mendez and Warde 2011).

In spite of the specific pattern of the rhythm of eating in Poland, some differences can be observed between members of various classes with respect to the number of meals and times at which they are eaten. The traditional habit of having breakfast, lunch and dinner is least common in the top category of professionals and most common among farmers and farm workers. It suggests that the habit correlates with occupational roles and tastes that are implied by them, the only exception being small proprietors who are above manual workers in the socio-economic position, but are quite similar to them in terms of having three majors meals during the day. Many of the small owners are family businesses which may resemble their consumption patterns to traditional lifestyle.

Class position is also related with a tendency to have supper and second breakfast. The top category of professionals and managers are the least likely to have reported supper among the meals they had on the day preceding the interview, followed by routine non-manual workers, manual workers, farmers, and small proprietors. As regards the second breakfast, it was indicated most frequently by both categories of non-manual workers and least frequently by the farmers.

As for the class differences in the times at which meals were eaten, some clear differences were observed only in the case of lunch. Farmers have their lunch at

earlier hours than manual workers who in turn eat it earlier than small proprietors, and non-manual workers who eat at the latest. In sum, various classes tend to represent various rhythms related with market position that rather maintain class divisions.

What Do People Eat?

Results of our study provided us with a fine-grained picture of what people in Poland eat. Data concerning eating on the day preceding the interview suggest prevalence of traditional patterns. For example, Poles turn out to choose potatoes far more frequently (42.2 per cent) than rice (3.9 per cent) or pasta (7.3 per cent) although we should keep in mind that the percentage of potato eaters does not include those who had chips, which had been indicated by 1.5 per cent of the sample. Also, various types of groats were selected only rarely, even though they are characteristic of Polish cuisine.

Further, our study shows that the Polish respondents rarely have fish – only 4 per cent of the sample reported to have had fish for lunch the previous day and 48 per cent declared they had eaten meat – mainly pork or chicken, as other types of meat, including beef, were very rarely indicated. The proportion of those who had meat varies by the day of the week to some extent – taking all the meals reported by our subjects into account, the proportion is the highest on Sundays (92 per cent) and the lowest on Fridays (83 per cent), which may be attributed to religious beliefs. It seems likely that the difference between Sundays and Fridays is not large enough for the religious motivation to maintain tradition.

About 40 per cent of the sample had a soup on the day preceding the interview, usually some traditional one, including such as broth (9 per cent, 24 per cent on Sundays) or tomato soup (8 per cent). Other popular choices include vegetable soup, cucumber soup, and *krupnik* (barley soup).

Does what people eat depend on their class position? To some extent it does. For example, 29 per cent of small proprietors and 33 per cent of the higher managers and professionals named potatoes as the main item of their lunch, but among manual workers and farmers the percentage varied between 43 and 46 per cent. Middle class members eat soups less frequently, but have yoghurt, kefir, milk, cereal and cheese more frequently than manual workers and farmers. Even more examples of this kind can be given, although one has to emphasize that class position differentiates these choices rather weakly. It could be conjectured that other aspects of eating would be strongly related to class membership, especially those referring to the quality of food products, the way they are combined in individual dishes, or their quantity.

Nevertheless, it would be somewhat premature to conclude that there are no class distinctions in patterns of eating. They are more salient when we look

at the questions about culinary experiences not limited to the day before the interview. Middle classes eat healthier foods and avoid meals that dieticians and nutritionists believe to have an adverse effect on health. For example, higher managers and professionals declare to avoid lard or fatback more frequently (59 per cent) than manual workers and farmers (36 to 38 per cent) and a similar observation holds for avoiding sugar, margarine, or butter. These patterns reveal are even stronger in relationships with educational levels – constitutive link of the class position.

In order to establish summary measure of culinary experiences we constructed a quantitative index consisting of about 20 items including various dishes and food products eaten by respondents that ranged from traditional and local to more exotic or elaborate. Table 1 presents the distribution of some of them across social classes.³

Table 1 Declared eating of selected dishes/meals across class categories (%)

Has the respondent ever tried ...?	Higher managers and professionals	Routine non-manual	Small proprietors	Skilled manual	Unskilled manual	Farmers	Total
tripe	86,3	83,9	94,4	91,4	89,5	92,1	88,3
eisbein	80,7	80,6	90,4	89,1	82,8	89,5	84,4
blood sausage	91,2	92,6	96,1	95,5	94,7	98,1	94,3
traditional Polish vegetable salad with mayonnaise	98,0	97,8	98,4	98,2	95,5	97,3	97,4
pork jelly	84,1	77,1	81,6	83,5	80,1	86,6	81,0
shrimps	62,4	52,7	59,3	33,4	29,1	24,8	42,4
couscous	63,5	54,8	46,7	24,2	27,6	14,0	39,1
olives	89,0	83,1	79,7	63,8	58,7	49,0	71,0
tiramisu	77,3	77,7	70,3	41,3	45,0	30,9	58,2
tortilla	73,2	71,9	64,3	45,3	43,3	27,1	55,6
artichokes	50,4	39,3	39,8	20,7	22,0	13,1	30,4

A vast majority of the sample had tried the traditional foods with the percentage ranging from 80 to 97 however it slightly differs across social class categories. Although, according to expectations, non-manual workers indicated eisbein or blood sausage less frequently than farmers and manual workers, the difference is not large. There are considerably larger class distinctions in eating the exotic

and elaborate category of dishes: they were indicated much more frequently by members of the middle classes, especially by higher managers and professionals. Manual workers and farmers indicated them substantially less often. For instance, 63 per cent of the top social classes and only 25 per cent of farmers declared they had had shrimps at least once in their lives.

These differences can be interpreted as suggesting that the middle classes like to “experiment” with what they eat, are not afraid of novelties, and are influenced to a greater extent by globalisation and new styles of consumption. They also have richer experience in tasting non-traditional dishes and have better knowledge of them as a result of frequent travels abroad, expertise, or social relationships with expert. The wider experience may also stem from the nature of their work that often requires them to participate in business or social meetings that take place in restaurants. Further, members of this category are better off financially than the rest of the population, which makes the more exotic and elaborate foods more accessible to them.

More detailed analyses demonstrate that class stratification of eating reflects intergenerational transmission, and effect of cultural and social capital. All in all, these factors account for 43 per cent of the variability in our summary measure of culinary experience, with social background alone accounting for 6.2 per cent, being almost as strong determinant of food choices as class membership. Important predictors of food choices include also class membership of spouses and individual social capital, as measured by: (a) the size of individual social network and (b) the diversity of contacts within it. This could imply that eating habits are shaped not only by socialization in childhood, but also by everyday social network. In other words, eating habits are influenced by market position as well as social and cultural assets.

Our research implies that culinary tastes of the Poles are quite stable and remained about the same in spite of changes associated with the transition from communist system to democracy and free market. Representatives of basic social classes share preference for traditional Polish dishes, however they are defined, although it mostly emerges among manual workers and farmers. At the same time, even though only a relatively small fraction of the population have an interest in culinary novelties, the interest provides some evidence of class-based distinction, because it is directly linked to higher levels of cultural capital, suggesting open-mindedness and receptiveness to new experiences – it is characteristic of well-educated subjects actively searching for knowledge about food (e.g. in cookbooks). But novelty doesn't have to mean sophistication and peculiarity. Both exotic cuisine, which has an unusual combination of flavours, and exquisite cuisine, are not highly valued, even by upper-middle class. Only business people express some taste for foods of this type, as their eating habits tend to reveal ostentatious

consumption. Also, they declared the greatest interest in luxury products and only rarely expressed concern with their level of food expenditure.

Budget constraints significantly affect food and eating choices, especially among low-status categories. More than half of our sample declared they'd had to economise on food expenditure so as to be able to cover other expenses. This applies especially to eating out which in Poland is not particularly common for a number of reasons, including weak cultural embeddedness tracing back to communist time during which it was commonly believed that food prepared at home is of far better quality, but (mainly) because not many families can afford to eat out (Brzostek 2010). More than half of our sample eat out at most once a year which limits their opportunity to expand their eating experience, although most of respondents state that when eating out they order dishes that are familiar to them.

Eating preferences of Poles are also shaped by how healthy the food is – at least according to our subjects' declarations. A majority of our sample claimed they pay attention to how the foods they eat affect their health and general physical condition. Despite healthy declarations, many respondents said that they value a tasty meal over a healthy meal and are not willing to sacrifice taste for health. Although the healthy life style is a generally desirable cultural value, also in this case it reflects patterns of stratification. Non-manual categories declare to live a healthy life more often than farmers and manual workers. Higher restrictions of the middle classes on what one eats may also be associated with paying closer attention to one's looks and fitness.

Drinking

What one drinks contribute to life style, like food choices. According to our study, tea is the most popular beverage among our respondents. Some two thirds of the sample had tea to go with their meal on the day preceding the interview, 45 per cent had coffee, and water was chosen by 31 per cent. The youth are more likely to drink water (and sweet beverages). Drinking green tea, herbal tea, sweet beverages and fruit juices is even less common (between 10 and 13 per cent), and milk or alcohol were chosen by a still smaller proportion. Because of the lack of comparable data, we cannot make any comparisons with earlier years to investigate if, for instance, choices of drink have become more health-oriented.

Drinking habits reflect in some respects stratification of eating. Our data show that drinking choices are associated with class membership. Representatives of the middle class tend to choose healthier beverages, such as green tea, and avoid carbonated beverages with high sugar content. Green tea is most popular among higher managers and professionals, somewhat less popular among routine non-manual workers, and is least used by small proprietors who are quite alike farmers

and manual workers in this regard. Similar observation apply to preference for drinking water with meal.

Looking at drinking alcohol we see that beer turns out to be a more common choice among farmers and manual workers than among middle classes. The reverse is true of alcoholic beverages that are imported and viewed as more luxurious, such bourbon, gin, or wine.

Activities Accompanying Eating

Eating habits are related to activities accompanying meals, such as watching TV, listening to music or radio, reading books or papers, etc. There are two major reasons for the interest in these activities. First, they are likely to divert subjects' attention from what and how much they eat which, in the long run, may contribute to overweight and related health issues (Wansink 2006). Second, if subjects focus on the activities that accompany eating more than on the meal, it could indicate they care little about the taste or the quality of the food, as long as it lets them satisfy their hunger.

For each meal, respondents were asked what they did during those meals. About half of the sample stated that they hadn't been doing anything apart from eating, although the percentage is somewhat lower in the case of the evening supper. Among those who reported to have done something along with their meals, a majority indicated watching TV. Again, there are some differences depending on the type of meal: the percentage watching TV is higher in the case of supper than breakfast or lunch.

Seeking for the effect of the class position on activities accompanying eating, we used logistic regression to separate the effect of social occupational category from the effects of other characteristics that potentially relates to the likelihood of doing something during the meal. No significant effect of class membership and educational level was found, but we did find some association between our dependent variable and gender, age, the size of the place of residence, and family situation. For instance, respondents who live alone are more likely to do something apart from eating during their meals.

All in all, our results are mixed and invite further research. More specifically, it seems that future studies of the topic could use some objective measures of physical health to investigate a relationship, if any, between activities accompanying eating and those measures.

Eating and Gender

Our research confirms that the fairly traditional eating patterns and preferences in Poland are supported by a gendered division of household labour. Gender turns

out to differentiate not only eating habits and behaviours, but also beliefs and opinions concerning eating. As our analyses indicate, household labour is divided along gender lines in the sense that such activities as planning, preparing, and cooking meals are believed to be women's domain and the unequal distribution of chores in this area is believed by both men and women to be obvious and reflecting gender inequality within families. Women also declare more interest in cooking and in developing their knowledge concerning nutritive and health-related effects of various ingredients.

Further, women are more open to changes in the household menu, in terms of introducing novel and refined dishes as well as healthier ones. Women eat more fruit, vegetables and dairy products, but less meat and fat, and they also drink less alcohol. Importantly, men who live in one household with women eat healthier foods than men who live on their own.

Women's eating choices seem to be more rational, driven more by health considerations than taste. Women are more willing to choose their food products in a conscious way as well as to impose restrictions on what they eat. Theoretically, this is because male identity is based on what they eat, while female identity – on what they avoid (Fursten 1994). As a matter of fact, there are a lot of similarities between typical female eating choices (low-fat meat, fish, vegetable, and fruit) and foods recommended by dieticians and nutritionists (Jensen and Holm 1999). A “healthy” diet is thus not only a means to live a healthy life, but also to conform to cultural norms specifying regimes for controlling female body which constitute an important element of female identity. In turn, unhealthy and hedonistic foods (lots of meat, fat, and alcohol) can be associated with males. But some tendency to eat more rationally can be observed among men as well which is closely associated with education: better educated men are more interested in developing their culinary expertise, searching for advice from nutritionists and dieticians and they are more likely to impose some restrictions on what they eat.

FINAL REMARKS

It is claimed that globalization, growing mass culture, communication, individualization and international migration, have produced new patterns of eating. In the project “Eating patterns, life styles and social stratification in comparative perspective” we analyse what eating habits of today tell us about everyday life. The emphasis is on social and cultural – not nutritional – aspects of eating. We focus on two questions: (i) whether Polish society transforms from the traditional to the new patterns, (ii) how far various processes related (according to many theories) food choices, such as commercialization, individualization, or informalization are obscuring class divisions in Poland. Our study on class stratification of eating was

based on the national sample using CAPI, the most applicable survey method. Stratification of eating was for the first time studied in Poland. Our study was also one of the few on this question researched in other societies, although, generally, food habits are eagerly debated these days.

Using record of meals on the day preceding the interview rather than the more common for frequency method, allows us to grasp the entirety of eating events, and to record various aspects that appear as part of a concrete situation. A focus of one particular day makes this possible, while at the same time – allowing for the inclusion of various types of events throughout the day and throughout the week. Since our study relied only on the one cross-sectional research we have limited possibility of capturing changes in time. Our analysis indicates that although in the emerging market society Poles encountered a lot of food choices, it did not obliterate traditional patterns of eating. Especially, we did not find that people commonly tend to individualization, search for aesthetic aspects of eating, and stick to exotic consumption.

NOTES

- 1 Our project “Eating patterns, life styles and social stratification in comparative perspective” was realised in the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology Polish Academy of Sciences with funding from the National Science Centre, Poland (grant number UMO-2011/03/B/HS6/03983).
- 2 Using the guidelines of the European Social Survey for calculation of response rates, the overall response rate in both surveys was 48.1%. See europeansocialsurvey.org for details.
- 3 Responses to all the items, as well as more detailed analyses are discussed in Domański et al. (2015).

REFERENCES

- Aymard M., Grignon C., Sabban F. 1996. Food allocation of time and social rhythms. Introduction. *Food and Foodways*, 6 (3–4): 161–85.
- Bourdieu P. 1985. *Distinction. A social critique of the judgment of taste*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Brzostek B. 2010. *PRL na widelcu*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Baobab.
- Chwalba A. 2008. *Historia powszechna: wiek XIX*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Domański H. 2000. *Hierarchie i bariery społeczne w Polsce w latach 90-tych*. Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych.
- Domański H. 2008. Dystanse inteligencji w stosunku do innych kategorii społecznych ze względu na położenie materialne, pozycję rynkową, prestiż, samoocenę pozycji i stosunek do polityki, w: H. Domański (red.), *Inteligencja w Polsce. Specjaliści, klerkowie, klasa średnia?* (pp. 292–324). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN.
- Domański H., Karpiński Z., Przybysz D., Straczuk J. 2015. *Wzory jedzenia a struktura społeczna*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

- Fischler C. 1988. Food, self and identity. *Social Science Information*, 27(2): 275–92.
- Flandrin J.L. 1999. Wyróżnienie smaku, w: R. Chartier (red.), *Historia życia prywatnego*. t. 3: Od renesansu do oświecenia. Wrocław: Ossolineum.
- Goody J. 1982. *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: a Study in Comparative Sociology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Holm L., Ekstrom M.P., Gronow J., Kjaernes U., Lund T.B., Makela J., Niva M. 2012. The modernisation of Nordic eating. *Anthropology of food* (online), S7.
- Kjaernes U. 2001. *Eating Patterns. A Day in the Lives of Nordic Peoples*. Lysaker: National Institute For Consumer Research.
- Landrine H., Bardwell S., Dean T. 1988. Gender expectations for alcohol use: A study of the significance of the masculine role. *Sex Roles*, 19(11–12): 703–12.
- Lund T.B. and J. Gronow. 2014. Destructuration or continuity? The daily rhythm of eating in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden in 1997 and 2012. *Appetite* 82: 143–153.
- Maffesoli M. 1988. *Le temps des tribus. Le déclin de l'individualisme dans les sociétés postmodernes*. Paris: Librairie Méridien/Klincksieck).
- Mennel S. 1985. *All manners of food. Eating: and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Southerton D., Díaz-Méndez C., and A. Warde. 2012. Behavioural change and the temporal ordering of eating practices. A UK–Spain comparison. *International Journal of Agriculture & Food*, 19: 19–36.
- Simmel G. 1997. *Sociology of the Meal*, pp. 130–36 in: D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (eds), *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*. London: Sage.
- Wansink B. 2006. *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Warde A. 1997. *Consumption, Food and Taste: Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture*. Londyn: Sage.
- Warde A., Martens L. 2000. *Eating Out: Social Differentiation, Consumption and Pleasure*. Cambridge University Press.