

Naturalization of smartphones in eating practices

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Eating Practices & Smartphone Use

- **Method: Interviews**

- Conducted by RA (same age as participants) and PI
- Open Ended Questions
- Drawing and demonstrating
- 45 min -1.5 hour
- Recorded & Transcribed

- **Sample**

- 25 participants
- Southern Ontario
- 15 females and 10 males
- Early career, college, university





Highly Valued Commensality

- “just eating with my friends is beauty”
- “me and my room mates try to cook and eat together whenever we can”
- “I laugh a lot; my friends are funny”
- “I tell my mom everything when we eat”
- “Food just tastes better, you know.”

Sharing meals strong predictor of wellbeing



World Happiness Report

ABOUT

WHR 2025 | CHAPTER 3

Sharing meals with others: How sharing meals supports happiness and social connections

41 MIN. READ

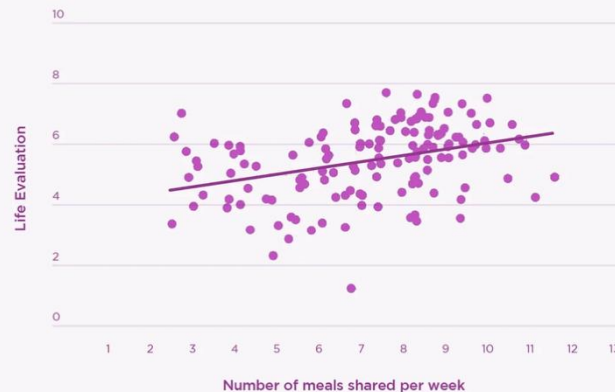
Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
University of Oxford

Andrew Dugan
Gallup

Micah Kaats
Harvard Kennedy School

Alberto Prati
University College London

Fig. 3.4: Meal sharing and life evaluations around the world
Gallup World Poll (2022-2023)



Source: World Happiness Report 2025

Not only do we find sharing meals and dining alone to be important predictors of wellbeing compared to income and employment, but in many cases, they seem to be even more so.



Complex phone
manners to protect
commensality

Significant rise in eating alone in cohort

- 1 in 4 US adults eat **all** their meals alone (America Time Use Survey, 2023)
- 53% increase since 2003
- 180% among young adults

- 86% of Canadian young adults eat at least one meal alone daily, compared to 67% of the general population (Charlebois & Kirk, 2017).





When eating alone: phone unquestioned norm

- "Are you kidding?"
- "Of course I use my phone"
- "Everyone does"
- "What am I going to do stare at the wall?!!"



Lack of time as key driver of solo dining

Yet, phone not accounted for in factors that use up or fragment time. Why?

Sources: Elard, O. B., Dennison, C., & Tuomainen, H. (2024). Eating alone or together: Exploring university students' eating patterns before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Food and Foodways*, 32(1), 1-23.

Skeer, M. R., et al. (2023). Family Mealtimes: A Systematic Umbrella Review of Characteristics, Correlates, Outcomes and Interventions. *Nutrients*, 15(13), 2841.

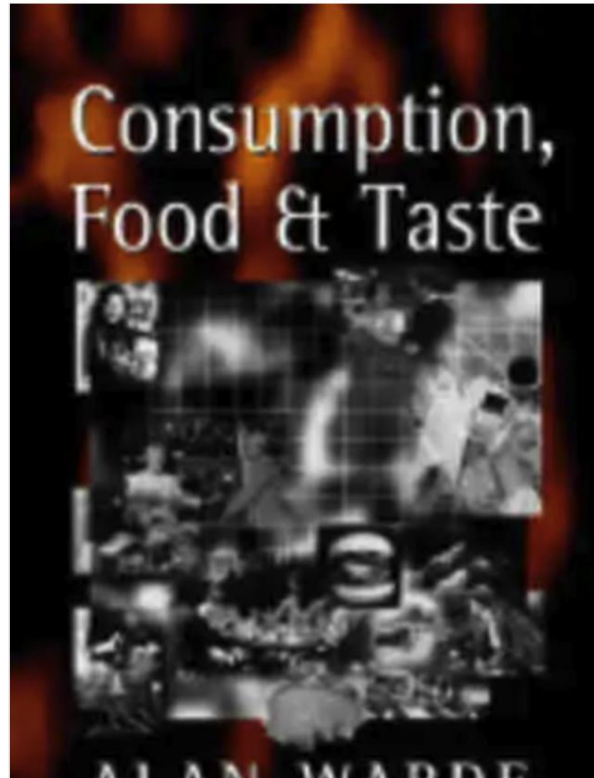
Chae, S., & Kim, K. (2020). A qualitative study on the reasons for solitary eating habits. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(12), 4323



How do you use your phone while eating?

- “you just do it”
- “I don’t think about it”
- “it’s easy for me...guess I learned it...just happens”
- “its **seamless**”

Materialist Media Theory: Alan Warde & Harold Innis



Article

After taste: Culture, consumption and theories of practice

Alan Warde
The University of Manchester, UK

Abstract

Multi-disciplinary studies of consumption have proliferated in the last two decades. Heavily influenced by notions of 'the consumer' and tenets of 'the cultural turn', explanations have relied preponderantly upon models of voluntary action contextualised by webs of cultural meanings which constitute symbolic resources for individual choice. Arguably, the cultural turn has run its course and is beginning to unwind, a consequence of internal inconsistencies, misplaced emphases and the cycle of generational succession in theory development in the social sciences. Theories of practice provide a competing alternative approach which contests the colonisation of consumption by models of individual choice and cultural expressivism. To that end, this article explores the use of theories of practice as a lens to magnify aspects of common social processes which generate observable patterns of consumption. It is suggested that theories of practice might provide a general analytic framework for understanding consumption, one whose particular emphases capture important and relevant aspects overlooked by previously dominant approaches to consumption as culture. This article reviews reasons for the emergence of theories of practice and isolates some of their distinctive emphases. Strengths and weaknesses of the theory of practice as an approach to consumption are discussed.

Keywords

Consumption, cultural turn, sociology, taste, theories of practice

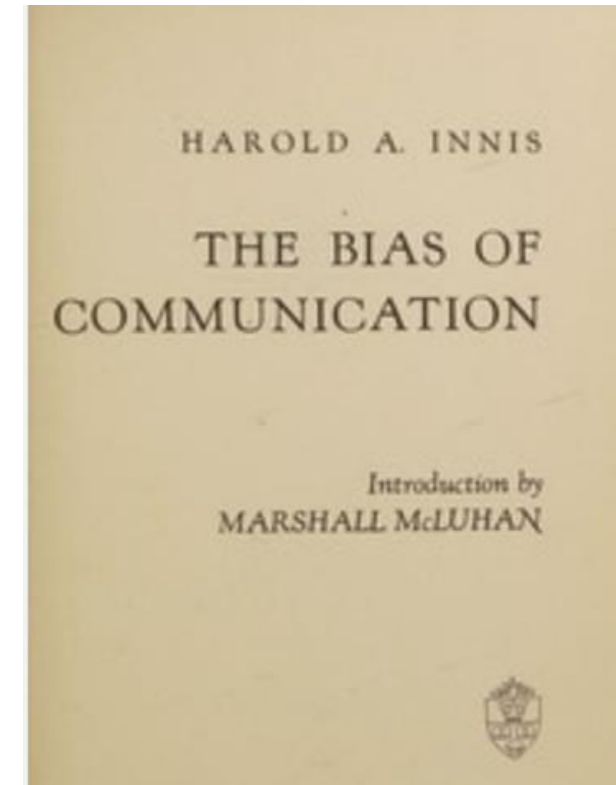
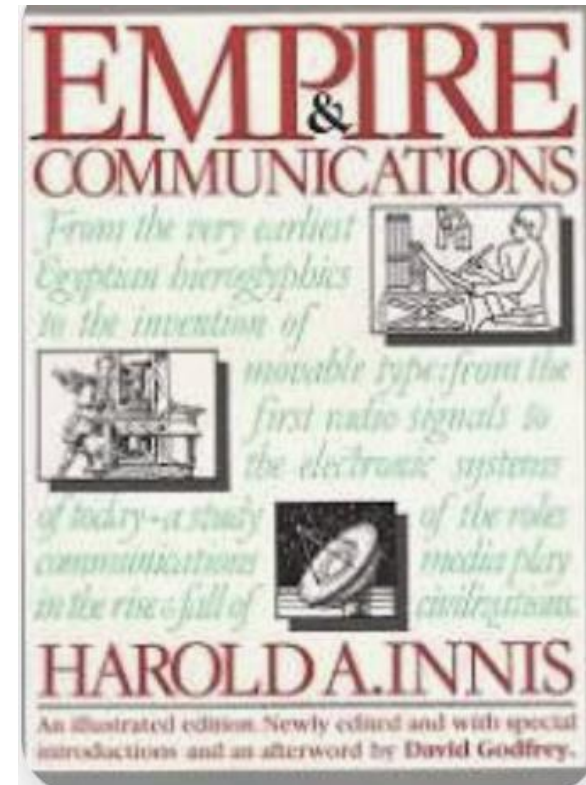
Introduction: Consumption and the role of theory

There is widespread agreement about the importance of consumption in the contemporary world. Some argue that it is a principal driving force behind social and economic development, others that it is the core preoccupation of populations across much of the world. The topic has come to be studied extensively by most

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Seamless by design



Under seamless
utopia,

Foodprint friction,
labour, anxiety



Unmediated **lunch break**, uninterrupted time experienced as unnatural and unbearable. Feels wrong

Conclusion

- Share meals matter, but structural forces, not personal failure, undermine them
- Food prints made visible—the unacknowledged labour of seamlessness
- This is not a generational problem; shared condition, naming it is where change begins