Eating Culture
An Anthropological Guide to Food
Gillian Crowther
use your up/down arrow keys and/or your space bar to advance the slides

Environments:
Biophysical
Sociocultural
Economic and Political

Gillian Crowther

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Environments:
Biophysical
Sociocultural
Economic and Political

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Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

- Nutritional Status
- Biological Makeup
- Human Nutrient Needs
- Diet
- Cuisine

• The Environment

*The Cultural Feast* discusses three main “environments”...
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

- Nutritional Status
- Biological Makeup
- Human Nutrient Needs
- Diet
- Cuisine

• The Environment
  • Physical Environment
  • Sociocultural Environment
  • Economic and Political Environment
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

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- Diet
- Cuisine

• The Environment

and you see these as major parts of the “Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition” . . .
Figure 1.1
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 4
each of these environments provides important opportunities and constraints for human food consumption
individuals and groups develop strategies that allow them to exploit the environments in which they live in order to meet their nutrient needs

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 10
“both individuals and groups develop systems of preferred foods and tastes that reflect the foods physically available and the methods of preparation to make those foods edible”

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 10
“it would be tempting to suggest that, in contemporary times, the social/cultural environment has taken on greater importance for human than the physical/biological environment, but that would miss two important points . . .”
1. Human beings, now and in the past, have always had an impact on their environments

   - both social and physical
   - humans (and all living creatures) change the environment just by existing in it
   - humans, with a greater capacity for impact, as a result of using tools (technology), have, throughout their history, had a proportionately greater impact on their environments than other animals

_The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 10_
2. the physical environment around us continues to provide opportunities and constraints for diet and nutrition

- droughts
- floods
- hurricanes
- rising ocean levels
- the rise and spread of “new” diseases
- earthquakes

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 10
2. the physical environment around us continues to provide opportunities and constraints for diet and nutrition

- global warming is resulting in major changes in food production patterns
  - including changes in water resources, and allocation of water resources

(Global Warming itself is a fact. What is in dispute are what are the causes of global warming.)

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 10*
“each of these environmental arenas is interconnected, one affecting the other”

- and the interplay among influences is important for understanding the biocultural model

- aspects of social and physical environments influence basic nutrient needs of humans and the consumption of the foods that satisfy them

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 11*
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

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Figure 1.1
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

Source: Authors
The Physical / Biological Environment

• climate
• soils
• water resources
• plant and animal life
• predators
  • including microbes and parasites

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 11
The Physical / Biological Environment

• “because people can eat only what is available, they develop systems of preferred foods and tastes that reflect both the foods available and the methods of preparation developed to make those foods edible”

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 11
The Physical / Biological Environment

• “humans respond to more subtle aspects of environments as well”

• e.g., agriculturalists who experience yearly fluctuations in rainfall often cultivate a number of different varieties of the same plant species

• including some that yield best in optimal conditions and others that yield better in suboptimal conditions

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 11
“As with other components of the biocultural model, the physical environment and human dietary practices influence each other.”
“All environments in which humans live can be truly understood only within the context of the technologies that humans use to exploit those environments.”

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, pp. 11-12
“Even human groups with relatively simple technologies alter the environment, especially the plants and animals in the environment, to meet their needs.”

_The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., pp. 11-12_
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Figure 1.1
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

Source: Authors

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 4
The Sociocultural Environment

• humans live and eat in a world filled with shared understandings
The Sociocultural Environment

- these conventional understandings are manifest in . . .
  - artifacts
    (tools, houses, clothing . . .)
  - social relationships
  - values and beliefs
  - behavioral patterns

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

• “culture” refers to the shared understandings that characterize groups of people and distinguish them from other groups

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

• culture is dynamic, changing in response to different circumstances and new information

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

• *Technology*
  
  • *Social Organization*
  
  • *Ideology*
Figure 1.1
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

Source: Authors

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 4
The Sociocultural Environment

- *Technology*
  - includes the knowledge, practices, and tools a group uses to cope with the physical environment and meet its needs for shelter and subsistence

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

• Technology

• includes the tools and techniques a society has for producing, processing, and preparing food
The Sociocultural Environment

- **Technology**
  - includes the tools and techniques a society has for producing, processing, and preparing food
  - e.g., Stone Age arrowheads, spear points, and choppers for butchering meat . . .

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 12*
The Sociocultural Environment

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*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 12*
The Sociocultural Environment

• Technology
  • includes the tools and techniques a society has for producing, processing, and preparing food
  • e.g., early agriculturalists’ digging sticks, seed drills, plows, and scythes . . .

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

• Technology

• In contemporary times, a wide range of tools and “adaptive strategies” are used to produce, preserve, and prepare foods . . .

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

• Technology

• In contemporary times, a wide range of tools and “adaptive strategies” are used to produce, preserve, and prepare foods . . .

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 12
Adaptive Strategies

• foraging (hunting/gathering/fishing)
• horticulture
• intensive agriculture
• pastoralism
• industrialized agriculture

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

• anthropologists have noted that societies with similar adaptive strategies and technologies share a number of social and cultural characteristics

• suggesting that a society’s technology interacts with other aspects of its culture

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

these technologies are described and discussed in . . .

Ch. 5 “Food Technologies: How People Get Their Food in Nonindustrial Societies”

and

Ch. 6 “Food Technologies: How People Get Their Food in Industrial Societies”

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

these chapters explore how each of these technological strategies influences the types, amounts, and quality of the foods available to the respective groups of peoples.

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

• Technology

• Social Organization

• Ideology

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 12
Figure 1.1
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

Source: Authors

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 4
The Sociocultural Environment

• Social Organization

• refers to the way a social group organizes its members into families, social strata, communities, and other groupings

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 12
The Sociocultural Environment

- **Social Organization**
  - also includes norms that . . .
    - regulate relationships
    - provide templates for the way work is organized within households
    - influence how the day is organized
The Sociocultural Environment

- *Social Organization* also includes . . .
  - local patterns of leadership
  - patterns of political organization
  - systems of social stratification
  - ethnic identity
  - relationships between men and women, adults and children
  - informal ways in which food and other goods are exchanged

_The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 12_
The Sociocultural Environment

- *Social Organization* also . . .

- influences people’s diets in many ways, including access to food and the resources needed to obtain and use food

  - e.g., access to land for cultivation and foraging
  - e.g., food as a marker of ethnic and class differences

_The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 12_
The Sociocultural Environment

• Technology

• Social Organization

• Ideology

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 12
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Source: Authors

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 4
The Sociocultural Environment

- Ideology
  - values
  - preferences
  - meanings
  - beliefs

...that groups of people share with respect to food

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., pp. 12-13*
The Sociocultural Environment

• Ideology

• some of these values and beliefs are connected to systems of religious belief

• some to local medical knowledge

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 13
The Sociocultural Environment

• *Ideology* . . .

• also refers to
  symbolic meanings and associated values
  placed on specific foods

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 13
The Sociocultural Environment

• *Ideology* includes . . .
  
  • accepted definitions of what constitutes food
  • accepted definitions of what constitutes meals
  • norms regarding the appropriate form and timing of meals

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 13
The Sociocultural Environment

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*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 13*
The Sociocultural Environment

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*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 13
The Sociocultural Environment

- **Ideology** includes . . .
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  - accepted definitions of what constitutes meals
  - norms regarding the appropriate form and timing of meals
The Sociocultural Environment

Ch. 8 “Worldview, Religion, and Health Beliefs: The Ideological Basis of Food Practices”

examines beliefs and values placed on foods by different cultural and ethnic groups

and

explores the impact of changing ideology and the conflicts over food ideology that are common “in our very interconnected world”

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 13*
The Sociocultural Environment

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*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 13
The Sociocultural Environment

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explores the impact of changing ideology and the conflicts over food ideology that are common “in our very interconnected world”

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 13
in the film *The Pig Commandments* we'll see how the conflicts over food ideology can literally tear a culture apart
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Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

Source: Authors

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 4
The Economic and Political Environment

• refers to the ways humans are organized and stratified . . .

  • within groups and communities
  • and among groups, communities, nations, and regions

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 13
The Economic and Political Environment

• it also includes the way in which societies manage the . . .

• production
• exchange
• consumption of all goods, including food

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 13*
The Economic and Political Environment

• influences people’s access to food and other resources
  • and the capacity to exploit those resources

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 13
The Economic and Political Environment

• in rural, poor countries, for e.g., fewer food opportunities exist
  • diets depend greatly on access to land for food production or gathering
  • and on the equipment needed to exploit the environment

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 13*
The Economic and Political Environment

• national and international agricultural and economic policies are especially important
  • agricultural subsidies affect both producers and consumers

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 13
The Economic and Political Environment

- national and international agricultural and economic policies are especially important

- **agricultural subsidies** affect both producers and consumers

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 13*
agricultural subsidies

to grow crops and raise animals
agricultural subsidies
to grow crops and raise animals
direct payments to farmers
guaranteed prices for products
discounted prices for inputs

_The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 14_
agricultural subsidies to grow crops and raise animals

direct payments to farmers

guaranteed prices for products

discounted prices for inputs

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 14
discounted prices for inputs

such as

seeds

fertilizers

water

land

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 14
agricultural subsidies

there are also indirect subsidies

e.g., corn-based ethanol production

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 14*
agricultural subsidies

So what?

“How does that affect me?”

The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 14
agricultural subsidies

for e.g., Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty supported a 
ca. 52¢ / gal. subsidy for corn-based ethanol
to companies with profits as high as $150,000,000
- at the same time that he essentially raised the tuition for
  UMD students
agricultural subsidies

That’s more or less ca. $5.00 each time you to drive to Minneapolis and back (not including increased costs due to protective tariff)
agricultural subsidies

“. . . US corn ethanol subsidies are between $5.5 Billion and $7.3 Billion per year”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farm_subsidies#United_States
agricultural subsidies

. . . US ethanol producers are protected from imports of cheaper Brazilian ethanol by a 54-cent-per-gallon tariff

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farm_subsidies#United_States
“... demand resulting from biofuels increased the price of corn and other energy crops by an estimated 33 percent in early 2008 ...”

- The World is Fat, Barry Popkin
  (Penguin Avery, 2010, p. 91)
agricultural subsidies

A Side Question related to Food Ethics:

“How much of that 1/3 price increase did the family farmer get?”
A Side Question related to Food Ethics:

“How much of that 1/3 price increase did the family farmer get?”

The statistics suggest that the average small farmer’s income actually went down.
It used to be thought that subsidies were in part initiated to help the small family farmer.

When did that all change?
Ezra Taft Benson

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For the religious leader (1811–1869), see Ezra T. Benson.

Ezra Taft Benson (August 4, 1899 – May 30, 1994) was the thirteenth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) from 1985 until his death and was United States Secretary of Agriculture for both terms of the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Contents

1 Biography
   1.1 Apostle
   1.2 Political career
   1.3 Church presidency
   1.4 Scouting
2 Health problems and death
3 Published works
4 Notes
5 References
6 See also
7 External links

Biography

so U.S.A. government subsidies now largely go to non-small-family-farmers . . .

and, some argue, have for all practical purposes actually put many of the family farmers “out of business“ . . .
agricultural subsidies:
there are also
direct subsidies
Pre Assessment Question:
Is the following quote likely to be a factually correct statement?:

"In 2008, Minnesota farmers received more than $544 million in direct U.S. farm payments."

(Mike Myers, StarTribune, 13 March 2010)
Pre Assessment Question:
Is the following quote likely to be a factually correct statement?:

"In 2008, Minnesota farmers received more than $544 million in direct U.S. farm payments."
(Mike Myers, StarTribune, 13 March 2010)

Answer:
Yes

the quote is as reported in The StarTribune
United States farm subsidies in 2005

Source: Congressional Budget Office (via the Associated Press)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farm_subsidies#United_States
Corn: $7.3 billion / year
(/ 310 million people)

your share = $23.55

Source: Congressional Budget Office (via the Associated Press)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farm_subsidies#United_States
and up until 15 February 2010, for example, states like Colorado also subsidized corn through tax breaks to their highest-sugar-content products . . .
Colorado to remove tax breaks on soda and candy

15-Feb-2010

The Colorado State Senate has passed a bill to remove a tax break on soda and candy, voting along party lines after days of debate.

Republican Senators said they considered the repeal to be illegal, because voters need to be consulted under Taxpayer's Bill of Rights rules before new taxes can be implemented, KRDO-TV reports. Democrats, meanwhile, argued that no new tax has been imposed – an exemption has been removed.

Proponents of removing the tax break say it could help boost the state’s economy by millions, but its opponents say that it could lead to job losses.

“We’re eliminating an exemption, we can’t raise taxes without the vote of the people but we can implement tax policy which means we can decide whether or not it’s fair,” Senate Majority Leader Mikehuge said.

Find this article at Food Navigator-USA.com
so **you** pay for . . .

(1) higher prices for corn-based products
    [included in about 1/5 of your grocery items]

(2) at the same time you pay MN companies *ca. 52¢ / gal.* to produce
    ethanol [now or eventually in taxes]

(3) you pay higher tuition to support the
    MN State ethanol subsidy

(4) and, of course, you paid the $5.5 - $7.3 billion
    Federal subsidy in the first place, basically
    to corporations like Cargill, ADM, ConAgra

(5) the 54 cent protective tariff probably
    also increased the price of your gas
so YOU pay for . . .

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and

(6) sometimes also through tax breaks on things like high sugar-content products . . .
New Mexico food tax passes state Senate

By Caroline Scott-Thomas, 16-Feb-2010

Related topics: Food prices, Legislation, Cereals and bakery preparations

The state Senate of New Mexico has voted to implement a food tax that applies to nearly 40 percent of foods sold in the state in order to help balance the state’s budget.

15 February 2010
so you pay for . . .

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and

(6) sometimes also through tax breaks on things like high sugar-content products . . .

(7) and then the state sometimes taxes (some) foods on which you have already paid a half-dozen subsidies . . .
so YOU pay for . . .

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[include in about 1/5 of your grocery items]

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Federal subsidy in the first place, basically

(5) the 54 cent protective tariff probably
increased the price of your gas

(6) and sometimes also through tax breaks on things
like high sugar-content products . . .

(7) and then the state sometimes taxes
(some)

this is the best book to explain how
the system currently works
(mostly all very legal, by the way)
The Economic and Political Environment

• international trade laws influence . . .
  • the kind of crops farmers grow
  • the prices they receive for their products in wholesale markets
  • consumer retail costs

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 14
The Economic and Political Environment

• multinational food companies’ marketing strategies and distribution networks influence . . .
  • what is available for purchase
  • the prices at which these products are offered

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed., p. 14*
The Economic and Political Environment

• the way national and international agricultural research organizations approach the development of . . .
  • new seeds
  • chemicals
  • tools
  • techniques of cultivation
may have an impact on who benefits from improved technology and who does not

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 14
The Economic and Political Environment

the ways in which
the social and economic environment
national and international policies
and agricultural research and development
affect the availability and quality of food are
reviewed in . . .

Ch. 7 “Food and Social Organization”
and
Ch. 9 “Hunger in Global Perspective”
and
Ch. 10 “Addressing Global Food Issues”

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd ed.*, p. 14
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

Finally, keep in mind that all three environmental units mutually interact with all of the other elements in the Biocultural Framework.

• The Environment
  • Physical Environment
  • Sociocultural Environment
  • Economic and Political Environment
Figure 1.1
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Source: Authors

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Eating Culture
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