Eating Culture
An Anthropological Guide to Food

Gillian Crowther

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Nutritional Status

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www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anthfood/aftexts.html#title
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Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

includes

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

• The Environment
  • Physical Environment
  • Sociocultural Environment
  • Economic and Political Environment
“Individual Nutritional Status” forms the core of the Biocultural model.

NOTE: the unit of analysis is the individual (see “Units of Analysis” slides for details)
Figure 1.1
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

Source: Authors

The Cultural Feast, 2nd Ed., p. 4
Nutritional status refers to “the health of an individual as it is influenced by the intake and utilization of nutrients”
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*The Cultural Feast, 2nd Ed., p. 4*
Nutritional status refers to the health of an individual as it is influenced by the intake and utilization of nutrients.”

The Cultural Feast, 2nd Ed., p. 4

the key term again is . . .

utilization of nutrients”
nutrients

“chemicals that provide the energy, structure, and regulation of body processes and that are not completely synthesized in the body”

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd Ed.*, p. 5
nutrients

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*The Cultural Feast, 2nd Ed.*, p. 5
nutrients

“chemicals that provide the energy, structure, and regulation of body processes and that are not completely synthesized in the body”
essential nutrients are “nutrients that are indispensable for health and cannot be synthesized by the human body, but must be ingested” therefore you MUST get them from the food you eat (if you want to remain alive / healthy)

_The Cultural Feast, 2nd Ed., p. 5_
we’ll have a closer look at *the nature of* nutrients and “essential nutrients” in “Biological Makeup”

and we’ll have a closer look at *what nutrients you need* in “Human Nutrient Needs”
for right now

1. note how nutritional status is measured . . .

2. when trying to keep track of your nutritional intake for a day

(remembering, of course, that most experts nowadays usually focus on a time period much longer than a day, or even a few days, in assessing nutritional status)
the best recent short treatment on contemporary nutrition research is Marion Nestle’s “Issues in Nutrition and Nutrition Research” in the Appendix of *Food Politics* pp. 395-405
Marion Nestle talks about . . .
Main Characteristics

1. *culture* as a primary concept

... how nutritional status is measured using ...
1. culture as a primary concept
2. comparative method as major approach to the study of human behavior
3. holism or the study of "humankind" as a whole, as a primary theoretical goal
4. fieldwork as a primary research technique, involving "participant observation" = how you get information

Main Characteristics

- "24-hour diet surveys"
- diet records (self-reported, diary)
- "food frequency questionnaires" (recorded retrospectively)

Technique = tool

after Marion Nestle, Food Politics, Rev. Ed., 2007, pp. 401-405
• **studies of laboratory animals**

• **biochemical research**
  (“test tube”)

• **epidemiological research**
  (populations)

• **clinical studies of humans**
  (medical)

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*after Marion Nestle, *Food Politics,* Rev. Ed., 2007, pp. 401-405*
“unobtrusive measures”

• analysis of data on availability of commodities in the food supply

• food supply data analysis
  • (U.S.A. production + imported)
  • (foods available for consumption)
  • (unknown: home garden production, hunting/fishing/foraging, amount of food wasted . . .)

• food composition analysis . . .

after Marion Nestle, Food Politics, Rev. Ed., 2007, pp. 401-405
some terms to keep in mind . . .

(we’ll have a closer look at these in “Diet” and other slide sets)
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

individual nutritional needs
diet

“refers to the actual foods that individuals or groups consume to meet their nutrient needs”

The Cultural Feast, 2nd Ed., p. 9
“diet”

... at times the authors of *The Cultural Feast* use “diet” in the collective sense

... and at other times they are concerned with how the foods and dishes in a particular cultural and physical context affect the specific food intake of individuals living in that setting

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd Ed.*, p. 9
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*The Cultural Feast, 2nd Ed.*, p. 9
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

- Nutritional Status
- Biological Makeup
- Human Nutrient Needs

Note that in the Biocultural Framework model, “Individual Nutritional Status” is set within “Diet”
Figure 1.1
Biocultural Framework for the Study of Diet and Nutrition

Source: Authors

*The Cultural Feast, 2nd Ed.*, p. 4
REM:

“units of analysis”
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“units of analysis”

in the case of your Forum Discussion activity, "How 'ya doin' with the nutrients?“ the unit of analysis is one person,
REM:

“units of analysis”

in the case of your Forum Discussion activity, "How 'ya doin' with the nutrients?"
the unit of analysis is one person, and that individual is YOU . . .
“units of analysis” may include:

- one person
- the family
- the community
- a region
- a “culture area”
- a nation
- an item or action itself
- a “cultural metaphor”
Main Characteristics

• “24-hour diet survey”

doing a 24-hour diet survey, your task for the Forum Discussion:

"How 'ya doin' with the nutrients?“

while you are doing this survey note how difficult the task is, and what the quality of the final “data” might be
As Marion Nestle points out,

One of the “. . . most frequently used methods for directly determining dietary intake [is to] ask people to report what they ate or drank in the previous day (24-hour diet survey, reported retrospectively). . . .”

-- Food Politics, p. 403
so have a look at the Forum Discussion, and carry on with your “24-hour diet survey”
and be sure to also have a look at the slide set on “Human Nutrient Needs”