

Since my remarks should not take longer than a few minutes, I have to confine myself to a rough and short outline of some main features, i.e. to major research institutions and their activities. It is impossible to go into details concerning single research projects, methodology or results, but I will mention some outstanding scholars and publications. I will also draw your attention to some synopses of the status of research which are suitable to introduce you to this field of research quickly. Let me now give you my short general survey.

You may know that Germany has been in the 19th century one of the leading countries in the foundation and development of the modern nutrition sciences. As in other countries, German research at first concentrated on the natural sciences, i.e. physiology, biochemistry, toxicology and microbiology, as well as on food sciences such as food chemistry and food technology and on several branches of medicine such as pathogenesis, pathophysiology, dietetic prophylaxis, epidemiology, medical therapy and human genetics. Psychological and social aspects of human nutrition, such as food choice or taste, and of eating manners were no longer dealt with after about 1850. It was only the small group of „naturopaths“ which tried to abide by the original idea of the eating and drinking human being, but they were banned by classical medicine and the nutrition science. On the other hand, the social and cultural sciences were no longer interested in the „low culture“ of eating and left such research to a few ethnologists, folklorists, anthropologists and cultural historians. As a result, natural sciences and the humanities were alienated in the field of nutrition research for more than hundred years.

First attempts at a reconciliation were made since the late 1960's in various disciplines. My more casual research into diet history in 1967 led to the acquaintance with Günter Wiegmann, the first leading German food ethnologist. Our common book „Der Wandel der Nahrungsgewohnheiten unter dem Einfluß der Industrialisierung“ [The Change of Food Habits under the Impact of Industrialization] was published in 1972 with the support of the German Fritz Thyssen foundation. As a consequence the „German Society of Nutrition (DGE)“ appointed me as chairman of the newly founded Department for „Nutrition and Social Sciences“ and commissioned me to conduct a first empirical sociological poll of 400 households.¹ The results of this investigation which I gained in co-operation with the sociologist Otto Neuloh from Saarbrücken were enclosed in the „Nutrition Report“ which the DGE gave to the government in 1978 and were later enlarged and published under the title „Ernährungsfehlverhalten im Wohlstand“ [Nutritional Misbehaviour in the State of Welfare]

(1979).² In this book, first modest attempts were made to give an interdisciplinary survey of the status of nutritional behaviour research in Germany and its methodology.

After I have been nearly one year in the United States doing research into food habits, I founded the „Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ernährungsverhalten (AGEV)“ [Working Group Nutritional Behaviour] together with some colleagues in 1978. This group has got round about 130 members from various disciplines and its annual conferences were so far devoted for example to following topics:³

- Possibilities and Limitations of Change in Food Habits (1980)
- Nutritional Behaviour as a Topic of Social Sciences (1981)
- Development of Food Markets and Consumers' Behaviour at the End of the 20th Century (1983)
- Evaluation and Measures taken to influence Food Habits (1986)
- Mass Media and Food Behaviour (1987)
- Traditional Regional Cooking Reconsidered (1988)
- Sociology of Nutrition - Development, Results, Future (1990)
- New Concepts and Models for the Improvement of Food Habits (1989)
- (In co-operation with WHO Europe and the Deutsches Institut für Ernährungsforschung Potsdam -DIFE) Current Research into Eating Practices/Contributions to Social Sciences (1st European Interdisciplinary Meeting 1993)
- Poverty and Food in Welfare Societies (2nd European Interdisciplinary Meeting 1995)

Another initiative for research into food habits was developed by ethnologists. In 1970 Günter Wiegmann and his Swedish colleague Nils-Arvid Bringéus invited scholars from Europe and the United States who were interested in food ethnology to Lund. This group of scholars, to which also cultural anthropologists and social historians belonged, has held biennial conferences at several places in Europe ever since and has published most of the results. Eventually they decided to devote each conference to one single topic, such as food preservation, milk and dairy products, resp. the potato.⁴ The very active International Commission for Food Ethnology, whose president at the moment is the Irish folklorist Patricia

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Lysaght from Dublin, will hold a next conference on Cyprus in 1996 which will deal with „The Impact of Migration, Immigration and Tourism in Ethnic Traditional Food“.

Under the influence of American research (for example by A.J. Stunkard, St. Schachter, B. Silverstone, P. Rozin), the German psychologists Günter Gutezeit (Kiel), Joerg M. Diehl (Gießen) and Volker Pudel (Göttingen) and his research group began in the seventies to deal with the psychological determinants of human eating habits and with the consequences of certain ways of nutrition for the psyche and efficiency of the individual.⁵ Like the AGEV, this group based their research on the observation that large parts of the German population keep neglecting the recommendations for an optimum diet. The psychologists dealt with the following topics:

- Adipositas and restricted diet
- Anorexia nervosa and Bulimia nervosa
- Development of Food Habits among Children and Teenagers
- Food Preferences among Adults
- The Impact of Advertizing on Eating and Drinking Habits.
- The Influence of the Diet on Psyche and Food Habits

The current state of nutrition psychology, which is reflected by an enormous increase of publications since the 1980's, has only recently been summed up by J.M. Diehl.⁶ One of his main results is that food choice and eating habits differ greatly in the regions and that in contrast to results of nutrition sciences those of nutritional psychology cannot be applied to all countries. In spite of the increase in the number of publications no reasons could be found so far why certain groups in Germany do choose their food. In such chifferent manner.

Apart from that marketing, the new branch of economics, has dealt with the motives for purchases by means of psychological questions and methods. However, no co-operation took place between marketing experts and the nutrition psychologists in the universities as far I can see. A reason for this may be that the later group feels to belong to clinical psychology and

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therefore to medicine, while the determinants of food purchases are mainly dealt with by commercial market research and polling institutes.⁷

Since the 1980's, food habits have also more and more attracted German sociologists. Andreas A. Bodenstedt from Gießen was the first to make decisive outlines in his treatises, and he also presented a special bibliography.⁸ Thomas Kutsch, who comes from the school of consumption sociology in Cologne, was the director of the National Institute of Nutrition in Stuttgart and is now chairman of the AGEV, presented a larger survey of the launching nutrition sociology in 1993.⁹ He characterized the social determinants and the cultural, socio-structural and special individual resp. group patterns and emphasized the importance of the following aspects for research in this new branch:

- The process of purchasing motives in the food sector
- The ways in which kitchen and technology are used in the household
- The eating situation in its social context

Eva Barlösius who belongs to the staff of Professor Kutsch till recently, has greatly contributed to this research. She has tried to describe eating and drinking as research objects of all the cultural sciences. She focussed the contrast between the natural-physical sphere and the psychic and social sphere with their respective features in order to define this field precisely in contrast to the traditional nutrition sciences. Her treatises on taste, smell, the art of cooking and vegetarianism have helped to establish nutrition sociology and the whole field of cultural research into eating habits in Germany.¹⁰

In 1989 an International Commission for Research into European Food History (ICREFH) was founded. These conferences, which were held at Münster, Uxbridge near London, Wageningen and (just a month ago) Vevey on Lake Lemman, were devoted to the following problems:

- European Food History: A Research Review (1989)
- The Origins and Development of Food Policies in Europe (1991)

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- Food Technology, Science and Marketing: Its Contributions to the Making of the Diet in the 20th Century (1993)
- Material Food Culture (1995)

The conference volume of our first meeting gives a good survey of how the history of diet became an object of research, what are their main sources and results and what kind of research is being done at the moment. The book is at the same time a comprehensive bibliographie raisonnée in various countries ~~and which publications do exist.~~

Last but not least I will have to mention the „Internationalen Arbeitskreis für Kulturforschung des Essens“ [International Working Group for Research into Eating Culture] which was also founded in 1989 as a branch of the „Institut für Interkulturelle Kommunikation und auswärtige Kulturarbeit“ (IIK) at Bayreuth University. This group holds biennial meetings at Thurnau Castle near Kulmbach (Bavaria) where lectures are given by representatives of the several cultural sciences from more than a dozen European countries. The results of these debates are published in a new series „Kulturthema Essen“ with the support of public and private foundations. This new type of conference is so successful because for the first time the general theoretical foundations for a really interdisciplinary cultural science of eating with an internationally comparative perspective have been laid. The hard cover edition of the first conference volume has been sold out during six months although the price of this book was rather high, so a second pocket book edition is following. The topics of the meetings have been:

- Topic Eating Culture: Approaches and Problems (1989)
- Food and Cultural Identity - European Perspectives (1994).

These conference volumes and the other publications I have mentioned give a good impression of the current status of research into food habits, food preferences and patterns of consumption in Germany.

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Contributions of Social Sciences

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Introduction

Hans J. Teuteberg (Münster)

Food Supply, Food Choice, Food Preparation and Eating Practices in Interdisciplinary Perspective

Keywords: modernisation, food research, science history, natural science, cultural science, social science, interdisciplinarity

In the international research we find a growing consent that the food habits in the highly industrialized societies of Europe, Japan and North America have never changed as fundamentally and rapidly as during the last hundred years and that in this period of time some oppressive nutritional problems of the present might be rooted¹⁾. The simultaneously culminating processes of a quick population increase, urbanisation and a technical-scientific rationalisation in the last third of the 19th century have contributed decisively to this total change of the nutrition. What can be noticed first is that in the modern affluent societies developing since then the surmounting of the periodically returning famines was first and foremost achieved through changes of three historical paradigms:

First of all through the "agrarian revolution", i.e. through slowly growing productivity increases of agriculture caused by the transition to new tillage and crops, artificial fertilizing and irrigation, innovations of farming tools and cattle-breeding, and last but not least through reforms of the agrarian social systems.

Secondly, through the "transport revolution", i.e. through the introduction of steam ships and railways, followed by motor vehicles to secure the supply with foodstuffs from surplus areas to the markets with high demand corresponding with a simultaneous improvement of communication and distribution.

Thirdly, through a "preservation revolution", i.e. by offering storable foodstuffs with the help of totally new preservation and packaging techniques which helped to become independent from the rhythm of the seasons and harmful environmental influences for the very first time.

Since then the industrial nations have become independent from the catastrophic crop failures and all food crises resulted from self-inflicted military-political events which did not have anything to do with the old famines caused by nature²⁾. The fact that food actually could run out soon faded in the general consciousness. The old plea "Oh Lord, give us our daily bread" was soon degraded to a breakdown that could easily be repaired in a food economy where labour was divided and a welfare state which grew more and more perfect and where principally nobody had to starve. Instead, "epidemic overweight" has become the key issue. A growing percentage of the national income has to be spent on cures for diseases caused by this problem. The public discussion logically focuses on the topics of dietetic food, vegetarianism, fasting cures and sports. On the other hand gourmet restaurants, cookery books and groceries offer more and more refined palatal pleasures, thus leaving the consumer caught between the paradoxes of fear of suffering and the real treat³⁾.

It is very strange that in contrast to other modernisation thrusts the causes and consequences of this enormous "nutritional revolution" have hardly been examined during the last hundred years. The discrepancy between the world-shaking process of change and our knowledge about it can be explained as follows:

Until the end of the 18th century nutrition and health formed an intellectual and practical unit under the roof of an all-embracing philosophy of life, because in both cases the question was asked how one could best prolong human life⁴⁾. They formed two sides of the same coin. This uniform macrobiotic viewpoint was lost

when modern nutritional science established itself in the 19th century, because it confined itself to a purely scientific viewpoint. Since then nutritionists have considered their task to be the examination of facts and regularities concerning the nature of foodstuffs consumed by people as well as their utilization inside the organism. The worked-out knowledge was to be assigned for keeping the people healthy⁵⁾. Nutritional science aims at an examination of the processes of utilization of foodstuffs in the human body and at an elaboration of the basis for the supply of an optimal nutrition. This implies an elaboration out of safe fundamentals for a dietetic treatment of malfunctions of the metabolism, the digestive and secretion organs, to find therapeutic measures in clinical experiments and to create ways for a realisation of optimally diagnosed nutritional conditions. This task of the nutritional science is also influenced by questions about the agrarian-industrial production of foodstuffs. In this field the knowledge about their chemical composition is also very important.

Although the nutritional science always emphasizes its interdisciplinary character, it is merely a co-operation of natural-scientific and medicinal subjects. If you talk about nutritional science today, you mean physiology, biochemistry, toxicology and microbiology, on the other hand parts of the agrarian sciences, food technology, food chemistry and finally certain branches of human medicine (pathogenesis, pathophysiology, dietetic prophylaxis, epidemiology, human genetics and therapy). The nutritional scientists do of course know that on their way from production to consumption the foodstuffs are subject

to numerous human influences, but especially all the psychic, social and cultural aspects are nearly left out of consideration. To these scientific branches they assign only the functions of peripheral auxiliary sciences whose insights are not very important. You can notice the long-lasting predominance of the natural sciences in the naming of university institutes, publications or congress topics. In 1977 the Federal Research Centre for Nutrition asked more than 400 research institutions which were their main interests of nutritional research. The 95 positive replies showed that 56% were interested in food amounts and marketing of foodstuffs, 24% in social and psychological determinants of food behaviour, 12% in questions of health, labour and overweight diseases and 8% in consumer information⁶¹.

The nutritional science has almost forgotten that man being an eater is not only a physical object with metabolic processes, but at the same time a psychic subject with human relations. Man can basically choose his food without instincts, although in reality he is subject to numerous natural and behavioural restraints created by society. He does depend on a daily food supply, but does not consume indiscriminately. The consumption of food is determined on the one hand by the basic scarcity of all foodstuffs, on the other hand by individual psychic and action patterns conveyed by society. Between the need (hunger and thirst) and the satisfaction (meal) man has created manifold systems of purchase, preparation and presentation which underlie specific cultural norms and a network of esteems that cannot easily be found out. In national, but even more so in regional and local subcultures it is laid down what can be considered a foodstuff, how it should be prepared for consumption and where and when it should be consumed. These rules vary in terms of time and place. Social and psychic aspects of nutrition altogether have probably on the whole an even greater significance and continuity than biological body functions⁷¹. Although nutritional sciences have found out what happens chemically-biologically with the foodstuffs in the human body, they cannot give an answer to the central issue why the people eat what they eat.

This present conference aims at discussing the contributions of the social sciences to the nutritional research on a larger scale on an international as well as multi-disciplinary level. This seems to be a very high claim which can only be redeemed satisfactorily with greatest difficulty. What matters most is to see

not only different special disciplines and their terminology and methods together, but also totally different national scientific traditions. All these problems are joined by linguistic-notional barriers. The conference would surely achieve a certain progress, if the lectures made clear the present state of research in the various countries and disciplines. In the course of a short introductory speech it is also impossible to go in detail into the problems of a cultural or social science of eating as a counterpart to the traditional nutrition science and to summarize all the far-dispersed scientific contributions. At the end of the conference we can possibly define in a summary some general insights about which we have achieved an assent. To inspire the discussion I have to confine myself to formulating only a few selected theses.

As a starting point of all socio-cultural nutritional research, we can state first of all that the human being is born into a world which he henceforth experiences as a natural environment, but which he did not create himself. His body, which he could not choose genetically either, has to be adjusted to this surrounding world. He remains tied up in these preconditions of his naturalness. Nutrition for example is based upon a satiation instinct which like sleep and breathing belongs to physical-existential basic needs that do not brook delay. The human being cannot do without the reproduction of his vitality secured by a continuous supply with food. But the world as it is found by the human beings is even more determined by the process of human development. The daily meals are a historically grown, highly distinguished system of technical transformations of nature, but at the same time they are tied up in social rules and thereby corresponding actual behaviour patterns.

By reacting on the natural and cultural predispositions in a creative or reproductive acquisition process, man creates his own world. As this world is also always a world for other people this process happens in a communicative context. This and the variety of social groups and individuals cause that in these processes of acquisition of natural basic conditions and socio-cultural preconditions certain variation possibilities are given which allow to give various answers about the same situation. These behaviour-strategies do not only vary as far as time and region is concerned, but also in terms of social and psychic dispositions. Because of the typical variability in the interrelations of nature and culture, body and mind, individual and society during food

consumption it seems sensible to work with the comprising ordinal term "nutritional style". This abstracting category can best comprise notionally a relatively social homogeneity of nutritional behaviour in the context of various possibilities of acting. Starting from the scientific debates about the nature of the living standard and the consumption nutritional style signifies a special form of socio-cultural reproduction on the grounds of subjective experiences, esteems and need structures that go beyond the purely material aspect of food consumption⁸¹. With the help of the term "style" we cannot only make clear what and how much was consumed where or when, but also examine the motivations and why this complex nutritional behaviour changed. While the term "need" emphasizes the narrow, constantly repeating natural processes, the term "style" aims at the individual decisions as well as the socially and temporally-regionally changing behaviour patterns. I have to remind you that nature offers these possibilities of food supply, but that it is up to the people who actually use them situationally.

The close interlocking of necessary needs on the one and more or less free individual or collective shaping possibilities of life on the other hand has already been recognised by anthropology and social sciences as an essential characteristic of human existence and social acting⁹¹. In the early stages of mankind, the nutritional need was probably led by instincts and impulses. In the course of the development lasting millions of years the loss of instinct also caused the loss of a decisive possibility to direct the nutritional instinct. Since then man was able to "overeat", which is something an animal normally cannot do. Still, this process should not be seen in a negative light, because the loss of the "inner biological clock" created the possibility to differentiate the foodways in a cultural process, which led to a continued refinement of taste and a rationalisation of the production of foodstuffs. The innate primary nutritional needs were joined by secondary needs conveyed by society. Just like the basic needs of housing and dressing they also always mirror social relations. Thus, this network of needs contributes to the creation of a culture. The nutritional need is first and foremost an experience of lack and therefore a state of tension asking for surmounting, but it is also a sociological category to express social identity and social action. The originally brutish feelings of thirst and hunger are joined by appetite, a feeling which is caused by totally different motives. As you well know it

is responsible for the fact that man consumes more than he needs to cover the natural calorie household. The nutritional behaviour patterns originally adjusted by nature have been remodelled and normed socio-culturally in the course of history. In the course of thousands of years the bodily needs were tied up in social conventions, fashions and customs which consolidated to firm customs and laws and were often even raised excessively as magic-religious commands with a taboo-character. The sociologist Norbert ELIAS has proved that the refinement of the table manners was obviously connected with the advancing of social awkwardness thresholds that contributed to the construction of the European civilisation¹⁰⁾. The atrophy of the nutritional instincts thereby brought the danger of deficient nutrition, but at the same time the possibility to form a food culture and to differentiate the food range continually. This was a possibility animals do not have.

The strained relationship between the natural nutritional needs of the individual and the available possibilities for their satisfaction is also characteristic. As needs always exceeded the possibilities for satisfaction until the beginning of the affluent society, one had to find norms to regulate the demand. This constraint can explain the various systems of food distribution which helped confine the needs or even suppress them as illegitimate. Even today a large amount of barriers help to reduce the daily behaviour decisions to a tolerable extent, to ease the pressure of these needs and to operate economically with foodstuffs. The development as well as the removal of such behaviour patterns offers deep insights into the causes for such a change of nutritional habits.

The question about the relationship of biological and socio-cultural reality is surely the actual key problem of a sociology, psychology and cultural anthropology of food. These disciplines can hardly be separated in terms of problems and methods¹¹⁾. The question of priority also has to be taken into consideration. William F. OGBURN has maintained in his Cultural Lag-theory that the material culture, i.e. the total of all scientific-technical experiences, insights and methods, changes regularly more rapidly than the immaterial culture, i.e. the total of all institutions, values and norms. According to his model discrepancies always have to arise, because the immaterial area always runs behind the material area, which causes "cultural gaps". The prevailing research makes us assume indeed that the

material nutritional conditions are always way ahead of the culture-shaping "mentality" and that the nutritional behaviour patterns have to adjust to the already changed living conditions belatedly. This can explain, for instance, the fact why people in our highly industrialized society full of mechanization with small exercise and few bodily work the majority of the population still eats as if their body is stressed as in former times. In any case it seems to be wrong to draw conclusions automatically from external technical-economical structures about the resulting behavioural changes in the field of nutrition. In any case the naively supported thesis of a functional connection of technical-economical progress with a socio-cultural differentiation of nutritional systems should be put on the test bench.

Strangely enough nutrition has so far been seen mainly as a material substratum, i.e. one examined single foodstuffs, preservation and cooking recipes, kitchen installations, the order of courses, metabolism processes etc. But for the people only the meal itself is the focus of interest and represents regularly a medium of communication. With the act of consumption an exchange of informations is almost always institutionalised. Therefore meals signal and substitute certain social behaviour patterns that might take place in totally different spheres of life. Social joint characteristics as well as social distances can be expressed through meals; food and drink therefore contains an arsenal of encoded symbols and social esteems which can be "decoded" by the social sciences. This sign character of food and drink has been discussed by the sciences of arts and literature for a long time, but only by few sociologists in last years¹²⁾.

Which desiderata can be noticed in the cultural and sociological food research? Some examples in short:

1. Not the single foodstuff, but the social action within the bounds of the "nutritional chain" of purchase, selection, preparation and consumption, but most of all the meals, have to be the focus of the analysis. One has to find out from what social functional connections internal signs systems, symbols and value judgements are derived.
2. The central key terms of culinary action require scientific reliable definitions that simultaneously make the historical change of notions more transparent. It is strange that food and nutrition are still used rather synonymously and terms like taste, pleasure,

hunger, appetite or thirst are still explained only scientifically in dictionaries. As far as the nutritional sciences are concerned the numerous linguistic variations and connotations have so far remained totally unconsidered.

3. To put nutrition simply into a perspective according to the nutritional value contents does not do justice to the complexity of the cultural phenomenon of eating, because the norms fixed by the natural sciences do not mirror unalterable natural laws. Instead, they represent culturally relevant dimensions which are, like the limits of a subsistence level, always fixed anew. Therefore the social context of the fixation of such nutritional norms has to be examined principally.
4. To substantiate a sociology of food the connecting lines between nature and culture have to be detected systematically. The Nobel prize winner Konrad LORENZ and his pupils worked out a scientific ethology whose results have to be adopted as long as they offer possibilities for analogies between bestial and human nutritional behaviour.
5. Finally the sexual and nutritional impulses have to be compared, because analogous development processes emerge here. Apart from Thomas KLEINSPEHN nobody has tried so far to use the psychoanalysis of FREUD as a bridge between the natural and social sciences.¹³⁾ Research about "eating disorders" (anorexia, bulimia, hyperphagia) point into the direction of turning the oral reception into an object of nutritional sociology and cultural anthropology.

A cultural and scientific food research surely has to examine yet a large amount of problems, because food and drink have to be seen as a social total phenomenon. This loose sketch of thoughts has already made clear how urgent an extension of the canon of scientific food research is.

- 1) Teuteberg (1992).
- 2) Newman (1990), Post (1985), Abel (1974), Burnett (1989), Scholliers (1993), Sandgruber (1982), Toussaint-Samat (1987), Teuteberg/Wiegelmann (1972), Levenstein (1988).
- 3) Levenstein (1993), Burnett (1989), van Otterloo (1992).
- 4) von Engelhardt (1993).
- 5) Mani (1976).
- 6) Bodenstedt (1983).
- 7) Neumann (1993), Teuteberg (1986).
- 8) Gumbrecht (1986), Turner (1979).
- 9) Gehlen (1978), Scheler (1983), Pleßner (1980, 1981), Parsons (1968), Thurn (1980).
- 10) Elias (1939/78), Wiegelmann (1986), Mennell (1985).

- 11) Ogburn (1969).
- 12) Neumann (1993), pp. 421-444.
- 13) Kleinspehn (1987)

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