

Sources



The authors of papers in this special issue of *Public Health Nutrition* were asked to recommend 15 sources that have most influenced their own understanding of the nature and scope of nutrition science. These could be books, textbooks, reports, major articles or other sources, all of which have not only been influential but also are recommended now as a further way to discern the 'big picture' of nutrition science and food and nutrition policy.

The method of selection has been as follows. Authors were asked first to make a list of their 'top 5' sources, listed alphabetically; and then a list of their 'next 10' sources, also alphabetical. They were asked not to consult one another and not to choose their own work.

Authors generally assumed they were being asked for factual sources on the subject of nutrition as they understood it, although this was not specified. Tim Lang listed a novel, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, as did Colin Tudge in a whole additional list of fiction appended to his paper (in Part 2). The Holy Bible was listed twice, once in German, once in Afrikaans. Some ancient and modern philosophers were listed. Tracts (in the political sense) were occasionally mentioned: Mike Davis's *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* by Geoffrey Cannon, Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* by Barry Popkin, and William Cobbett's *Cottage Economy* by Colin Tudge. The great majority of the sources listed are books, although this was not specified. About half are technical, the rest are written in plain language, either for or accessible to the general reader. Almost half were first published in the last 15 years, and less than a quarter in the 1960s or earlier.

The writers whose work is mentioned most often in the 'top 5' lists are Alan Berg, whose best-known book is *The Nutrition Factor*, and Francis Moore Lappé, whose classic is *Diet for a Small Planet*. When the 'next 10' are included, writers also mentioned most often are Susan George, one of whose books is *How the Other Half Dies*; the economist Amartya Sen, author of *Development as Freedom*; and Hugh Trowell and Denis Burkitt (*Western Diseases: Their Emergence and Prevention*). 'Bubbling under' are Ivan Illich (*Limits to Medicine. Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health*), Marion Nestle (*Food Politics*) and John Boyd Orr (his memoirs *As I Recall* listed more than once).

Relatively few sources are mentioned more than once. Most of the writers mentioned most often have published a number of key books and papers. So at the Giessen workshop an informal poll was taken of all participants, asking another question: taking their work as a whole, who are the writers that have most influenced you, and that you would mostly highly recommend to students of the new nutrition science?

All the writers listed above were recommended again. Those mentioned three times or more were Denis Burkitt (twice alone); Susan George; Ivan Illich; Marion Nestle; and also Jared Diamond (*Guns, Germs and Steel* and *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*). (Geoffrey Cannon, Tony McMichael and Colin Tudge were mentioned, each three times, but were discounted.) Judged informally in this way, Denis Burkitt (with or without Hugh Trowell), Marion Nestle and Amartya Sen become as highly recommended as Alan Berg and Francis Moore Lappé. The author who recommends the most of these writers, five in all, is Hélène Delisle of the Department of Nutrition in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Montréal, Canada.

The top book

And the winner is... The outstanding source mentioned most often below is *Western Diseases: Their Emergence and Prevention*, masterminded and edited by Hugh Trowell and Denis Burkitt who, having worked between them for more than half a century in Uganda, East Africa, developed a world view of the causes, control and prevention of disease.

Earning reputations as indefatigable campaigners, they did more than any others to identify chronic diseases of most systems of the body as having environmental causes, and in particular broadly the same types of inappropriate nutrition. The book includes contributions from 34 authors from all round the world. As part of the lives' work of Denis Burkitt and Hugh Trowell, it is part of the foundation and structure of what is now established thinking on food, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases. Ahead of its time, some of its proposals remain ahead of our times.

The top author

And the winner is... The writer mentioned most often, in the lists below and in the informal poll of workshop participants taken together, with a clear lead, is, like Denis Burkitt and Hugh Trowell, also a campaigner driven by ethical principles: *Susan George*. She is a citizen of the USA living in France. For many years she has worked for the Transnational Institute, and also as a consultant to the United Nations and other international agencies, and non-governmental organisations. She has been described as demonstrating 'with characteristic commitment and conviction, that the rich and powerful who control the world food system control technology and ideology,

scholarship and culture as well'. In her own words: 'Hunger is not a scourge but a scandal'. Her books include:

- George S. *How The Other Half Dies. The Real Reasons for World Hunger*. London: Penguin, 1976.
 George S. *Feeding the Few. Corporate Control of Food*. Washington DC: Institute for Policy Studies, 1979.
 George S. *Ill Fares the Land. Essays on food, hunger and power*. London: Penguin, 1984.
 George S. *A Fate Worse than Debt*. London: Penguin, 1988.

Judged in these ways, the most influential new nutrition science book is *Western Diseases: Their Emergence and Prevention*, and the most influential writer is Susan George. The full list of sources, which together should be plenty to inspire generations of new nutrition scientists, follows.

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