

# [Food habits of the elderly essay sample](https://assignbuster.com/food-habits-of-the-elderly-essay-sample/)

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Definition of foodways : it “…generally refers to ways in which a distinct group selects, prepares, consumes and otherwise reacts to and uses portions of the available food supply” (Wahlqvist et al., 1991: 164) Objectives:

\* Analysis of the meaning of foodways for social actors in general \* Significance of food for the elderly (migrants )focusing on their marginalized social location \* Implication of foodways of the elderly

\* Meaning of the dominant medical system and dietary guideline : State hegemony over individual social actors Principal arguments:   
\* For the elderly, food plays an especially important role for their autonomy and independence and inclusion in society in general

Control over food purchasing and consumption “ can become a major concern for older people as symbolic of independent living” (McKie, Linda p. 529, 1999).

“ The purchasing, preparation and serving of food all require a certain degree of physical strength and mental vitality on the part of the person responsible. Not surprisingly, elderly people are all more likely to lack such abilities as a result of illness” (Van Eeuwijk, Peter 2007)

Joint daily meals serve as “ important arenas of social interaction and information sources” for the elderly (Van Eeuwijk, Peter 2007).

“ Involvement in social networks through shopping and food activities was of positive benefit to their well-being” (McKie, Linda p. 533, 1999)

\* Different levels of access to food resources can shed light on the existing power structure in a larger context in the society : Depending on the age, gender, race or ethnicity, class, etc, individuals will have different level of access to food.

Hunger is the absolute sign of powerlessness (Counihan, qtd in Van Eeuwijk, 2007)

\* Food can serve as an instrument for exerting power and control \* Majority of the elderly might prefer more traditional food instead of ready-made products or western style food \* Does being elderly mean that they have special dietary needs? It is necessary to re-consider the dominant medical system and dietary guideline as a mechanism of exercising state hegemony over individual social actors.

Structure:   
\* Introduction about the dynamic relationship between food and identity \* Food as an instrument for exerting power and control   
\* Food insecurity of the elderly   
\* Implication of food habits of migrant elderly ?

Literature:   
Summary 1.   
Peter van Eeuwijk, « The power of food: mediating social relationships in the care of chronically ill elderly people in urban Indonesia », Anthropology of food [Online], S3 | December 2007, Online since 21 March 2008, connection on 08 January 2013. URL : http://aof. revues. org/2052 \* Meaning of food : Source for coherence and identity

\* Access to food is unequal for each individual and food can work as an instrument for   
manifesting and exerting power.   
. Power relation between caregiver and the sick elderly   
Those who receives more support and care exert less power \* Severe problem of malnutrition of the elderly   
“ Many older people do not have access even to the most basic need of all – food”   
(HelpAge International, 2002: 24, qtd. in Van Eeuwijk)   
. Causes of the malnutrition are poverty, social exclusion, ill health, disability, unequal   
gender relations and the elderly’s marginalized position as net consumer in household according to Van Eeuwijk

. Even expression of complain about the food reflects gender-specific aspect of power   
Male elderly complains more often than female elderly   
\* Household Production of Health : Emphasizing the Role of the household in providing nutrition required for the care of the elderly sick \* Information on study design (chapter 15)   
\* Importance of the preparation of food in Elder care activities \* Dependence on others for the need of food is a source of feeling of shame for some elderly

In Indonesia   
\* Sharing food is the most important occasion for socializing for the elderly. Meal time is regarded as “ an essential safeguard against exclusion, isolation and neglect” (Van Eeuwijk, 2007) and works as a source of obtaining information of outer world and a platform for communication. Also fixed meal time brings an order to the monotonous daily life of ill elderly people. \* But some elderly are not allowed to join the family meal time due to their physical constraints or due to the active prohibition of other family members because of their bad table manners. \* Who provides food for the elderly?

. Self-preparation means a certain degree of autonomy and independence   
. Only by close-relatives, while reliability of food relationship can be established only by  emotional and physical closeness.   
.” Feeding is perceived as both an intimate and a humiliating act” (Van Eeuwijk, 2007). \* Social dimension of food and elder care   
. Trust is a prerequisite in the relationship of food provider (caregiver) and food  receiver (care-receiver, elderly)

. Caregivers exercise social power over their elderly patient through the control of their diet  which requires special attention.   
“ Controlling while giving”   
. In providing care for the elderly, there is an increasing level of “ pressure from professional health authorities in term of complying with biomedically prescribed healthy food and food as medicine.” (Van eeuwijk, 2007)

Summary 2.   
Fischler, Claude. Food, self and identity, Social Science Information 1988 27: 275, DOI: 10. 1177/053901888027002005 \* “ Food is central to our sense of identity” (Fischler, p. 275) \* Objective of the article : Survey about how food is related to identity formation \* Diverse relationship of the human being to food

. Biological, cultural, nutritional, symbolic, individual, collective, psychological, social \* Problematization of separation in the study of food for the human being between hard science and soft science (natural vs. social) and claims necessity of applying “ integrative” approach instead . Human being is omnivore so the choice of food and integration of food into the self (according to Fischler’s term, incorporation) of human being is laden with meaning and identification of food plays an important role in the construction of our identity. “…if we do not know what we eat, how can we know what we are?” (p. 282) \* The omnivore’s paradox : “ lies in the tension, the oscillation between the two poles of neophobia and neophilia” (p. 278) => human being needs to be innovative and conservative at the same time in its food selection to survive, should possess “ innovative prudence” \* Human group’s cuisine as the solution of the omnivore’s paradox. \* “ We become what we eat. Incorporation is a basis of identity.

The German saying, “ Man ist, was man isst”, is literally, biologically true” (Fischler, p. 279) \* Incorporation of food in human body as the basis of collective identity and otherness. “ Food and cuisine are a quite central component of the sense of collective belonging.” (p. 280) “ Human beings mark their membership of a culture or a group by asserting the specificity of what they eat, or more precisely by defining the otherness, the difference of others.”(p. 280) \* Analysis of the processes of food identification and the construction of the eater’s identity. \* What factors should be considered in defining “ proper food”? . age, sex, rank, status, social role(circumstance), chronology (time of day, day of the week, season) \* Cooking, the world and the eather: the identificatory function of cuisine . Cooking enables the identification of food

\* Problematization of “ food without identity” of modern era due to the increasing industrialization of food production and growing consumption of ready-made foodstuffs.

Summary 3.   
Lynn, Lois L. Kang, Keum Jee & Elaine Kris Ludman, Korean Elderly: Diet, Food Beliefs, and Acculturation, Journal of Nutrition for the Elderly, v. 19(2), 2000, pp. 1-15.

\* Problem of the minority elderly immigrant population: nutritionally vulnerable \* The authors claim that Koreans hold a particularly strong ethnic identity and food habits are an important part of the Korean ethnic identity. \* Koreans hold strong belief in food’s medicinal function, e. g. Ginseng for the elderly to build strength and increase energy \* Comparative study of the Korean-American elderly in New York and Korean elderly in Seoul to understand similarities and differences between them and identify dietary acculturation trend.

\* Research method : questionnaire about health, eating out, breakfast foods, traditional medicine foods, and a 24-hour recall \* Korean-American elderly were more likely to consume “ Western style” breakfast foods, eat out in fast food restaurants, and use multivitamins. More subjects in the Republic of Korea recommended foods such as ginseng for health. All subjects consumed kimchee and rice at least once in the 24-hour recall. \* According to the authors, while some specific cultural traits remain in diet and food beliefs of elderly Korean immigrants, other dietary changes are not limited to place or age but they are the result of constant changes in our societies in general. \* Significance of the study: the study result should be applied for the background information for health practitioners in treating the health problems of clients. (understanding of the dietary intakes and food beliefs)

Questions for discussion   
\* Let me repeat the question made by Fischler in his article Food, Self and Identity. He claims that the difficulty in identifying food items in modern era makes us being insecure about ourselves, that is, we might lose certainty of one is oneself. Can we be in danger of losing control of ourselves, in other words, our identities through what we eat? Do you agree to Fischler’s argument that current increasing level of interest in food labelling of ingredients, in special diet and culinary art are signs of our aim to regain order in our everyday eating? \* What about those who are socially marginalized such as the (sick) elderly in case they lose control over what they eat? Will they feel like losing control over themselves? Let us think again about the argument raised by Scottish elderly that for them, preparation of meal by themselves means autonomy and sort of independence.

Most of studies about food habits of elderly have been done in nutritional science and have dealt with potential dietary problems due to the change on their food habits (Backgrounds: Acculturation, Modernisation, etc) to make suggestion for future health programs.