

Food as a serious topic of academic inquiry is only a few decades old. Nevertheless, within that time, it has exploded as a means to understand culture. Counihan and Van Esterik (2013) suggest three reasons for the proliferation of food research: a more recent focus on feminist research that privileges women's work (such as food preparation); an interest in how food is related to power, especially in terms of production and consumption; and the many ways that food connects to issues of identity, gender, the body, and the symbolism of cultural life. This surge in academic interest reflects, as well, a larger popular interest in where our food comes from—especially for those of us living in urban environments—and the largely invisible processes that take our food from farm to fork.

Cultural anthropologists interested in food may research the ties between food and nearly any other subject. Indeed, the study of **subsistence**, or food-getting strategies, is one of the

foundations of anthropological inquiry, because how people procure their food structures much of their social life. It is also linked to nutrition, health, land use, sustainability, and human cooperation and interaction. The study of food connects all aspects of anthropology—cultural, biological, linguistic, and archaeological—in a truly multidisciplinary way.

Anthropologists may choose a specialized subfield in which to anchor their research. There are many subfields, such as nutritional anthropology, which takes a biocultural approach; food studies, which focuses on issues of culture, history, and identity; ethnoecology, which examines traditional foodways; and gastronomy, which combines cooking, food science, and the cultural meanings of foods. Scholarly journals in which food research is published are also growing in number, such as *Food and Foodways*, *Gastronomica*, *Culture and Agriculture*, *Nutritional Anthropology*, and *The Anthropology of Food*.