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Vol. 6, No. 2
November 2003
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BOOK REVIEWS

Sociology of Food and Nutrition: The Social Appetite (2nd ed.), by John Germov and Lauren Williams (Eds.). Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004 (350 pages).

The basic necessity of food has tended to be overlooked as an area deserving of academic study. However, during the past 10 years, a number of books focusing on the sociology of food have been published in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. Increasingly, food and nutrition have become a focus for public health policy, for the potential to improve public health.

Sociology of Food and Nutrition: The Social Appetite, edited by John Germov, a sociologist, and Lauren Williams, a dietician, both working at the University of Newcastle, Australia, is designed to answer the question, "Why do individuals choose to eat the way they do?" The social context of food and nutrition is examined, along with exploration of the socio-cultural, political, economic, and philosophical factors that influence the production and consumption of food. Contributors are leading sociologists of food and nutrition from universities around the world, and provide a critical analysis of the social structures that underlie food choices. Sociologists have an interest in reflecting on

- Why are things the way they are?
- Who gains and who loses?
- How could aspects within a culture or society be different or improved. (p. 5)

These questions are applied regularly to issues discussed throughout the book, now in its second revised edition, and consisting of eighteen chapters organized into topics under a number of sociological themes:

Part 1 is aptly entitled, 'An Appetizer,' and introduces a theoretical framework for understanding how sociology can contribute to a study of food. Based on the work of Charles Wright Mills (1959), and Evan Willis (1995), a 'sociological imagination' template is developed for describing how a sociological analysis is carried out. This four-part model – historical, cultural, structural, and critical – is intended to establish a link between the personal experiences of individuals and

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social factors that influence them. For example, in relation to how people make food choices, a sociological analysis could examine

- historical factors: to understand the influence of tradition on food choice
- cultural factors: cultural values can determine food taboos and define what is edible
- structural factors: how government regulations and the nature of the economy 'structure' the production, distribution, and consumption of food
- critical factors: agricultural production methods that may create significant environmental damage—what are the alternatives to the status quo? (p. 4)

Part 2 examines the food system and impacts of globalization, McDonaldization, and agribusiness on the food supply, as well as supermarket power and commodity chain analysis.

Part 3 analyzes the influence of discourses, politics, and policies on food and public health nutrition.

Part 4 investigates the ways in which food consumption is linked to social differentiation and identity.

Part 5 deals with contemporary issues related to food and the body, including topics on body image and the thin ideal, the social construction of eating disorders, and the stigmatization of obesity.

Chapter 12 within Part 4, is dedicated to 'The Vegetarian Option,' where Deidre Wicks provides a brief historical overview to the rise of vegetarianism, defines forms of vegetarianism, as well as examines ideologies behind why people choose to be vegetarians. This is an informative chapter for those working in the field of public nutrition, and who advocate a vegetarian diet for promoting health.

Each chapter of the book includes an overview section with a series of questions, a short summary, along with key terms of concepts and theories that are highlighted in bold in the text, and defined further in a glossary at the end of the book. At the conclusion of the chapters are summaries of main points, discussion questions, essay-style questions, with recommended further reading references and web sites specific to the themes of the chapter. An appendix lists key web resources, books, journals, videos/DVDs/films, and associations related to an interest in food and society.

Through interdisciplinary collaboration between sociologists and dieticians, the editors have been successful in providing a useful text for students of dietetics, nutrition, food technology, sociology of health, and for a broader readership, with

an interest in studying the social context of food, particularly so in cross-cultural situations.

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The Awesome Challenge of AIDS, by Pushpa Khurana. Published by Diamond Pocket Books (P) Ltd., New Delhi, India, 1998 (117 pages).

The author, **Dr. Pushpa Khurana**, a retired Indian army officer, with the rank of Major, has been concentrating on the research of cell physiology, with special reference to cancer cells, in addition to running an obesity clinic where aging and age-related disorders like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, arthritis, insomnia, etc., are treated. Even though the book, entitled, “*The Awesome Challenge of AIDS*,” was written and published in 1998, the message shared by the author regarding AIDS is always evergreen and should be understood by many. She said that “the epidemic of AIDS has become truly endemic, encircling the whole globe nowadays” (p. 43).

This is because sexual activity is uncontrollable, and any authority cannot just ban it morally, socially, or legally. She further reaffirms that a person is generally capable of infecting others through sexual transmission, sharing of injection needles, child bearing, and/or donation of blood or body organs. As she quotes from the statement of a common belief in India –“if a common house ant bites an elephant, the elephant dies”–men, who are as vulnerable as the elephant, may be killed by this tiniest living creature known as the Human Immuno-deficiency Virus or HIV. This HIV virus has affected men’s immune systems, which is why the doctors have called the disease Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, or AIDS. There is a strong scientific evidence that the disease originated from green monkeys in Africa and has spread over the entire continent as people migrated, before it was first discovered in USA in 1981, from which the disease spread to the rest of the world.

According to the World Health Organization, as of April 1995, estimated HIV-infected cases were recorded at 18 million all over the world, from which Sub-Saharan Africa contributed some 11 million

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or 61%, with Asia and USA at around 2.2 million and 0.75 million, respectively. The report further confirmed that Africa, particularly Uganda, ironically called the AIDS capital of the world, spend some US\$1.60 per person per year on health, whereas in the USA, an AIDS patient spends some US\$45,000 per year, which is more than the yearly budget of a large hospital in Zaire, where 25% of adult and pediatric cases are AIDS patients. The author further presented how India, which contributes around 1.5 million of the 2.2 million in Asia, experienced how this sexually transmitted disease (STD) could spread all over the country. According to a statistic provided by the author, homosexual behavior accounts for some 1.2% of the spread of infection in India, followed by infected spouse at 2.8%, drug abuse at 8.8%, blood transfusion at 12.0%, and heterosexual spread at 75.2%. Incidence of other STDs like gonorrhea and syphilis, besides exploding population, a high degree of illiteracy, paucity of funds, and rapid industrialization in India, has aggravated the spread of this HIV virus, especially in the state of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. To remedy the situation, the Government of India established the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) and has conducted continuous surveillance and research projects, identification of high-risk groups, provision of condoms, implementation of blood safety programs, and the related preventive measures.

The essential concern of the book is mainly focused on how the World Health Organization, down to the health system of every country, addresses the problems of AIDS spreading even further, and curing AIDS patients. The reason for using the words “*awesome challenges*” for the title of the book is due to the fact that some of the measures the author recommend do need high medical expertise and adequate funds to implement them. The thrust of the mission is based on two main fronts, which are, *restoration* of the human body’s immune system, and *manufacturing* of effective drugs to cure the disease, including that of finding effective vaccines for the prevention of the disease. In the *first front*, “restoring the immune system,” the author recommends immuno-modulation and bone marrow transplant. Immuno-modulation attempts to regenerate and restore the immune system of the body as a defense against AIDS, while bone marrow transplant seeks to produce all components of normal blood cells. In the *second front*, “manufacturing effective drugs,” the author recommends several methods and prescriptions, ranging from

biological response modifiers in the form of a protein, IMREG-1 (interleukin and interferon), genetic engineering, gamma-globulins, and antibiotics like cyclosporine for infection, isoprinosine, lymphotoxins, and dietary supplements.

It is always good to be reminded about matters that are uncontrollable to us when we deal with our health. The author has shared some reminders, which I believe are to prevent us from contracting this disease. It is recommendable for anyone to read the book as information material to guard from getting infected by this disease. May God bless you.

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Evaluation Methods in Research, by Judith Bennett. Published by Continuum, London, 2003 (108 pages).

Judith Bennett is a senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of York.

This book, *Evaluation Methods in Research*, is divided into six main sections. Section 1 deals with various definitions of the word 'evaluation.' The definitions stem from different perspectives, purposes, and dimensions of evaluation. Section 2 proposes a variety of models and approaches in educational evaluation. These are categorized into two: classical and illuminative. The British and American approaches to evaluation are worth noting. This section includes information about key research strategies and techniques central to planning, design, and implementation of an evaluation. In Section 3 are given models of change in curriculum innovation, evolved as a result of evaluation. The two models discussed are "Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) developed in the USA, and the typology of continuing professional development (CPD) outcomes developed in the UK" (p. 42). Section 4 looks at the most common research practices and procedures employed in educational evaluation. It also advocates multi-method approach to educational evaluation. Section 5 moves on to the practical side, the planning and doing of evaluation. This involves key questions and evaluation needs

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to address, and a step-by-step process of answering those questions. In Section 6 the author presents three examples of educational evaluation. The glossary gives short explanations of the terms used in research and evaluation.

Bennett moves systematically and progressively through the evaluation process. First defining the terms, then providing the rationale, tools, their appropriate use, making sensible interpretation, and finally reporting of the findings to the stakeholders and/or audiences. The first four sections deal with the theoretical framework while the last two sections show how theory would look in practice.

In Section 4, the author strongly suggests multi-method approach to evaluation, containing both formative and summative dimensions by systematically collecting qualitative and quantitative data as “each of the research strategies and techniques has its associated advantages and disadvantages” (p. 57). Section 5 is the heart of the book. Bennett provides planning for evaluation in the form of questions, then takes each question and suggests a plan for answering it. This is aptly demonstrated by a practical example of “An evaluation of a support programme for underachieving students” (p. 63). The general key questions are given in Box 5.1, p. 61. They are

- What is being evaluated?
- What form will the evaluation take?
- What practical issues (time, money, staff skills, time scale) need to be taken into account?
- What questions will the evaluation address?
- What use will be made of the findings?
- What type of data will be collected to help answer the evaluation questions?
- What techniques will be used to gather the data?
- Who will gather the data?
- What ethical considerations need to be addressed?
- How will the evaluation be reported?

The templates in the form of boxes are concise and informative. They provide guidelines for the evaluation procedure.

Even though a guideline for report writing is suggested, an example of an executive summary and a detailed report would have

helped a prospective evaluator immensely, because in the final analyses it is the report that matters. The flip side of an evaluation report is that at times it is full of technical jargon and statistical tables which overwhelm the clients and as a result they, at best, skim over the report or tend to skip parts or, at worst, put it on a shelf to gather dust.

Bennett's book is precise and easy to read. It is a useful practical guide in educational evaluation.

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