



Food production and eating habits from around the world: A multidisciplinary approach

A review by Karla Lorena Andrade Rubio

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The reader has before him/her a comprehensive interdisciplinary book of universal research that is being globally disseminated. The problems and mutations in eating habits discussed in this volume are contextualized by the editor within the current scenario of globalization. In this scenario, several food consumption patterns are affected by the globalization phenomenon, which indicates both the localization of the global and the globalization of the local (Robertson, 1995; Roudometof, 2016). This entails that at the same time that processes of homogenization of food behaviors occur on a planetary scale, numerous local foods and types of cuisine are globally adopted by many individuals (Bain, 2013; Hall & Gössling, 2013).

The five parts of this book were written by experts in different disciplines, such as Anthropology, Psychology, Economics, Nursing, Communication, Marketing, Medicine and Sociology. Thus, the chapters do not have one single theoretical-analytical framework, although it must be said that all of them are fine and clearly written, and well-grounded from a theoretical and methodological perspective.

The first part of the volume, titled "Food Production" begins with Chapter 1: "Deagrarianization, the Growth of the Food Industry, and the Construction of New Ruralities", in which Francisco Entrena-Duran shows that many present-day rural societies are undergoing trends to deagrarianization, which occurs hand in hand with the increasing industrialization of food production processes. Thus, the food process and food consumption become ever more away from agriculture and livestock.

Chapters 2 and 3: "Expansion of Greenhouse Farming in the El Ejido Area: A Case Study on the Environmental and So-

cial Consequences of Agroindustry in Southeast Spain" and "Effects of Pesticides on Cambodian Farming and Food Production: Alternatives to Regulatory Policies", written respectively by Entrena-Duran and Ramos-Sanchez, deal with the socioeconomic and environmental outcomes and the ecological effects brought about by the agro-industrialization of food production in Cambodia, respectively.

The second part examines "Eating Habits, Physical Activity, Body and Health". This section begins with a chapter called "The Impact of Physical Activity and Psychological Factors on Eating Habits," authored by Mawusi-Amos, Dzifa-Intiful, Antwi, and Asante. The chapter explores the main psychological impacts that shape eating habits. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of physical activity for individual health.

In Chapter 5: Strategies for the Care of the Obese: A Non-Prescriptive Nutritional Perspective, Dimitrov-Ulian *et al.* (2017) reveal that concerns over obesity are reflected in multiple actions aimed at controlling body weight, such as prescriptive interventions, that are diet-focused and consider weight loss as their primary indicator of success. However, despite these actions, the prevalence of obesity is considerably high and rising. As alternatives, the authors propose a series of strategies that are less focused on the prescription of strict diets and more on personal autonomy. Nutritional counseling and the reinforcement of positive eating habits constitute the keystones of the aforementioned strategies. Then, in Chapter 6: "Body Cult in Contemporary Societies: Sport, Self-Image and Health", Valdera-Gil and Valdera-Gil deal with, among other things, the diversification of sport practices and the tension between the commodification of the body aesthetic patterns and the real circumstance in



which habitually there are a large number of obese people. Subsequently, in Chapter 7: "Eating Habits: Falls and Stroke Risk", Kamberi, and Kamberi show us how, in the Republic of Macedonia, Christians often consume pork, while Muslims do not. Nonetheless, medical empirical research, on which these authors are based, does not demonstrate the existence of a clear link between this cultural eating habit and the first attack of ischemic stroke. Consequently, the authors assert that such stroke could be due to other numerous risk factors.

The third part, "Advertising and Discourses on Food", begins with Chapter 8: "Between Health and Beauty: Food Advertised as Medication". The author, Rey, states that the obsession with attaining that beautiful body image promoted by the media, which is so rooted in advanced societies, cannot be understood as an isolated phenomenon. Instead, it needs to be contextualized within a larger background to be explained as the consequence of a complex process shaped by the cult of the body and the medicalization of food.

Next, in Chapter 9: "Health as a Hook in Food Advertising", co-authors Gonzalez-Diaz and Iglesias-Garcia illustrate a connection between marketing and everyday health concerns on television advertisements about yogurts, perishable desserts, and diverse lactic products. They assert that in the present-day framework of increasing social concern for health, transnational food companies are marketing a series of commodities, namely functional foods, which are sold as being healthy for consumers.

Later, in Chapter 10: "Food, Marketing and Culture: Discourses of Food Advertising in Spain", Gracia-Arnaiz states that Spanish food advertising is articulated by the combination of six key discourses. These are the discourses of tradition-nature-identity, the medical-nutritional, the aesthetic, the hedonist, that of the progress-modernity and that of social differentiation.

The fourth part, "Children's Eating Habits," starts with Chapter 11 on "Identifying Eating Habits in Multicultural Schools through Focus Groups with Children". Throughout the text, Merino-Godoy and Palacios-Galvez present the results of a research carried out in multicultural schools located in the southern Spanish region of Andalusia. The research was focused on Early Education (three to five years) and the First Cycle Primary (six to eight years) of school children. Among other findings, the authors conclude that these students lack basic awareness of diet and nutrition, yet they can perfectly reproduce the jingles and slogans of food products advertised on television.

Anibaldi, Rundle-Thiele, Crespo-Casado, and Carins collaborate on Chapter 12 titled "Insights into Children's Lunch-

boxes: Understanding the Issues Impacting the Selection of Contents by Australian Parents". The research reveals that although parents are generally well-informed and well-intentioned with respect to their children's food consumption at school, the contents of many lunchboxes are not nutritionally balanced with the inclusion of 'extras' being particularly worrisome.

The latter part of the volume is devoted to "Changes in Eating Habits" and contains two chapters. In Chapter 13: "Changing Urban Food Consumption Patterns in the Context of Globalization: The Case of India", Vepa and David assert that Indian urban people have never produced and consumed a higher amount of vegetables, fruits, milk or eggs. The diet has diversified considerably, but the average consumption of proteins has diminished. At the same time, the intake of fats has grown, particularly for people with lower incomes.

Lastly, in Chapter 14, Entrena-Duran and Jimenez-Diaz write on "Social Changes and Transformations in Eating Habits". They view eating habits as social constructions of human beings. This means that similarly to what happens with any other human construction, eating habits are subject to social change. The transformations that eating habits are currently undergoing are a result of the social changes brought about by globalization processes in advanced countries. Given its multidisciplinary nature and the wide variety of issues it addresses, the book reviewed here can be worthwhile and appealing for a broader audience.

Information about the author:

Karla Lorena Andrade Rubio is a Professor of Sociology at the Department of Social Work at Tamaulipas University (Mexico), and is a member of the National System of Researchers of Mexico (SNI 2).

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