The Psychology of Eating and Drinking (Book Review)

Kima Cargill, University of Washington - Tacoma Campus
Search engines do not understand human language. Consequently, the results of our literature searches are always limited by our imaginations and vocabularies. This is surely why I was unaware of A.W. Logue’s textbook, *The Psychology of Eating and Drinking* at the time I developed my Psychology of Food class several years ago. Had I simply thought to use the term “eating” instead of “food” in my literature searches, I would’ve saved myself many hours of hard work. Yet, Logue’s title is appropriate, and deliberate, in that it conveys her emphasis on the behavioral, or psychophysiological processes of thirst and hunger, rather than focusing on food and its attendant psychosocial meanings.

*The Psychology of Eating and Drinking* is an extraordinarily thorough and well-presented review of the psychological literature on thirst, hunger, satiety, taste preferences, disordered eating, and obesity. Written primarily to serve as a classroom textbook, this volume is also an interesting and handy resource for the “intelligent lay person” (cover). Logue, both an educator and experimental psychologist, wrote *The Psychology of Eating and Drinking* for lack of a comprehensive textbook for undergraduate psychology of food courses. To her credit, one of the purposes of this book is to debunk common myths about food and eating and to present only valid, scientific research. With over a thousand references, this volume is an impressive review and synthesis of the extant literature on eating and drinking from experimental psychology.

The author begins the book with two chapters which explain teach the reader the psychophysiological mechanisms for hunger, thirst, and satiety. Largely regulated by the hypothalamus, hunger and thirst have been the subject of many decades of experimental research. One of the requirements, according to the author, of reading this book is to view psychology as a science (cite), meaning a discipline which uses the scientific method to conduct (usually) laboratory experiments on human behavior. Indeed, psychology is a science, and an important one, but it is also a social science and a human science which uses other methodologies and epistemologies besides those used by the quantitative natural sciences. Logue’s book, certainly an important synthesis of food research in psychology, fails to include non-empirical psychological works on the study of food, such as Anna Freud’s landmark article on breastfeeding or Frieda Fromm-Reichmann’s ethnographic work on Jewish food rituals, both rightfully part of the scholarship on the psychology of food. To be fair, such feminist, qualitative, and/or interpretive approaches do not lend themselves to empirical investigation and consequently have little relevance to experimental psychologists. Nonetheless, the reader should be aware that this text represents a specific subfield of psychology and its accompanying epistemology, that is to say a strictly positivist-empirical one.

Overall, *The Psychology of Food and Eating* proves to be an excellent classroom resource and a worthy companion to Counihan’s *Food and Culture: A Reader* (also on Routledge) as a scholarly sampler of many types of social sciences food research. It is an informative and thorough review, useful not only to psychologists or those studying psychology, but to a broad audience seeking a refreshingly grounded contrast to the many bogus self-psychology and pseudoscientific books on food and eating. Finally, the exhaustive bibliography serves as useful compendium of references for those conducting food-related research.