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Book Review: The Nation's Diet: The Social Science of Food Choice

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The Nation's Diet: The Social Science of Food Choice.

A. Murcott (Ed.). Essex: Addison Wesley Longman. pp.384 £19.99
(paperback).ISBN 0 582 30285 4.

This book is a collation of studies funded through the U.K. Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) via a program aimed at exploring the social science of food choice in the 1990s. It begins with an excellent introduction by Anne Murcott, who outlines the background to the program and provides a very helpful commentary on the range of methodologies displayed in the various studies. The division of chapters into three sections represents a gallant effort at creating order in such a diverse set of perspectives, and they read very well. *Axioms, Operational Definitions and Measurements*, covers the areas of social and behavioural psychology, blended with some dealings from economics, whilst introducing the question, what is food choice? There is good exposition of theory, method and findings, demonstrating different empirical approaches to constructing knowledge on this aspect of food related behaviour. The second section, *Sociopolitical Processes and Cultural Constructions*, broadens the debate with offerings from more qualitatively derived analyses, setting the scene in families, schools, the media and cosmopolitan domains. Here, we are reminded of the complexities of food choice and the challenges which the research topic presents. The final section, *Additional Perspectives*, begs for a name, but serves the purpose of providing some historical accounting and appropriate critique on what has proven to be a very challenging (and interesting) area of academic pursuit.

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