

An Introduction to Eating and Eating Disorders

Alexandra W. Logue
The Psychology of Eating and Drinking
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Review by
Bennett G. Galef, Jr.

Alexandra W. Logue, associate professor of psychology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, contributed the chapter "Conditioned Food Aversion Learning in Humans" to N. S. Braveman and P. Bronstein (Eds.) *Experimental Assessments and Clinical Applications of Conditioned Food Aversions*. ■ Bennett G. Galef, Jr., professor of psychology at McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario, Canada), is coeditor, with T. R. Zentall, of *Social Learning: Psychological and Biological Perspectives*.

Writing a simple book about a difficult subject is not an easy task. To express complex ideas succinctly in everyday language, rather than at great length in the academic prose style of journals and scholarly texts, requires considerable sophistication both as a scientist and as a writer.

Logue did not write *The Psychology of Eating and Drinking* for experts in ingestive behavior; it is intended for lay readers or for undergraduates with limited background in both behavioral science and the scientific method and with an interest in understanding eating disorders. It's a book for those who would really like to know why it's so hard to lose those extra few pounds or enjoy brussels sprouts. It could, perhaps, be used as a supplementary text in a general psychology course or as a required text in a specialized course for nonmajors.

In the first 122 pages of text, Logue touches the necessary intellectual bases with chapters on the physiology of eating and drinking, sensory control of ingestion, and genetic and environmental determinants of both food preference and diet choice. The second half of the volume treats "relevant" issues. These include the effects of diet and food additives on behavior, anorexia nervosa and bulimia, overweight and dieting, and alcohol abuse. Logue thus provides both an in-

roduction to a number of ingestion-related psychological problems of general interest and the background necessary for intelligent discussion of their causes and possible cures.

Throughout the book, the author addresses two issues she considers fundamental to understanding each topic she covers: (a) To what extent is a particular aspect of ingestive behavior influenced by the environment, to what extent by heredity? and (b) How can information from various levels of analysis, microbiological to psychodynamic, be integrated in the study of ingestive behavior, its control, and its abnormalities?

Logue's eclecticism serves her well, and, though one might disagree with her emphasis in discussing some issues, she successfully conveys the richness and complexity of the variables controlling human eating. I had a serious problem, however, with Logue's treatment of the nature-nurture issue. While acknowledging that no behavior is completely a result of either genetic endowment or environment, Logue clearly feels that "it is possible to uncover the predominant determinant of a behavior—genes or environment" (p. 219), and this she does throughout the book. For example, "many food preferences appear to be determined in large part by the genes" (p. 79). In Logue's view, one consequence of predominantly genetic determination is relative immutability. For me, this approach to the relation of genes and environment in the development of behavior was a constant irritant.

In discussion of some areas, Logue achieves the apparently effortless, straightforward exposition that characterizes first-rate science writing for the abecedarian. Sections on taste-aversion learning, overeating and dieting, and anorexia and bulimia are readable, interesting, and useful. Other portions of the book, particularly those dealing with physiological and biological matters, seem less under control; the treatment is sometimes cursory and idiosyncratic rather than concise and integrative.

Logue has identified a very promising approach to the introduction of neophytes to the psychology of ingestive behavior. Her execution sometimes fails to live up to that promise. ■