

subtitle-invoked family, for instance, appear fleetingly. That kind of absence has particular consequences. First, it is symptomatic of the way Gopnik sometimes allows his wider theoretical pretensions to become distanced from his compelling on-the-ground narratives. Second, and perhaps most importantly, Gopnik as sole embodiment of everyday “eater” is far from a representative sample. His eating habits rely upon an abundant food budget, ready access to globe-spanning restaurants and ingredients, and the inheritance of a sophisticated understanding of gastronomical science. Offering a voice to other types of everyday eaters might have strengthened his overall message which, after all, is thick with salient insights into the field.

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SCHOOL FOOD POLITICS: THE COMPLEX ECOLOGY OF HUNGER AND FEEDING IN SCHOOLS AROUND THE WORLD

EDITED BY SARAH A. ROBERT AND MARCUS B. WEAVER-HIGHTOWER
(BERN: PETER LANG, 2011)

Reviewed by Annika Konrad, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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Who feeds whom, what, how and for what purposes? These are the questions that you might have pondered in November 2011 when headlines in US newspapers read, “Congress declares pizza a vegetable.” The US Congress did not actually declare pizza a vegetable—they blocked a bill that would end the crediting of one-eighth of a cup of tomato paste as nutritionally equivalent to a half-cup of fruits and vegetables for federal school lunch programs (Kliff 2011). Critics raised questions about the actors involved, like large food companies, parents, students, the USDA, individual school lunch programs, and school lunch staff. Many asked questions like, “Are only the interests of large food companies being served?” (Adams 2011), “Would students actually eat fresh vegetables and fruits over pizza?,” “Do individual schools actually

comply with these regulations?,” “What does the USDA count as a vegetable?” (Phelan 2011). These are examples of the complex “policy ecology” surrounding school food in the United States. Sarah A. Robert and Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower’s collection offers strategies for understanding and attempting to navigate the complex ecology of school food politics around the world.

Each contributor employs an ecology metaphor for school food politics. Weaver-Hightower’s concept of “policy ecology,” based on the idea of an ecosystem, includes analyzing both actual policies, texts and discourses that affect school food as well the policies that affect discourses and texts surrounding school food. To analyze policy ecology, Robert and Weaver-Hightower explain that an analyst examines the “*actors, relationships, environments, and structures, and processes of which an ecology is comprised*” (p. 7). The ecology metaphor for school food politics allows for deeper understandings of how we came to our current relationships with and attitudes about school food (p. 11).

The ten essays in *School Food Politics* are separated into two sections. The contributors in section one, “From Pap to Sloppy Joes to Nada: Inside International School Food Policy,” focus on understanding the historical and current contexts surrounding school food in the United States, England, Australia, Tanzania, Argentina and South Korea. The essays in section two, “Reforming School Food: Parents, Activists, Teachers, and Youth” are written from the perspectives of individuals who have tackled school food reform in a variety of capacities. Each essay in this collection is useful and thought provoking, but for the purpose of this review I will highlight the ones that make an especially strong impression.

Readers can find many broadly applicable strategies for navigating school food reform in section one. In “Fixing up Lunch Ladies, Dinner Ladies, and Canteen Managers: Cases of School Food Reform in England, the United States, and Australia,” Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower juxtaposes the history and current reform efforts of school food in the named countries. Through comparison, Weaver-Hightower finds interesting and useful commonalities and differences between the three cases. Despite completely different histories, policies, and contexts for school food, the three contexts show among other things that food needs to be appealing to students, that bans on specific food items are not effective, money is almost always at the heart of the conflict, media exposure and research are crucial, and that no single stakeholder is solely responsible for school food. Weaver-Hightower’s findings provide practical strategies for navigating school food politics across a variety of contexts.

Inspiring pedagogical frameworks for school gardening/farming are offered in the chapter “Cultivating Schools for Rural Development: Labor, Learning, and the Challenge of Food Sovereignty in Tanzania” by Kristin D. Phillips and Daniel Roberts. The authors outline the history and current social and political context of what they call “school cultivation” in Tanzania. Phillips and Robert look at school farming or gardening in the context of rural development to argue that school cultivation curriculum should not only aim to fill the knowledge deficits of rural populations, but it should also aim to teach rural populations what they call “food sovereignty” (p. 72). By juxtaposing international visions of school farming with the history and



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current contexts of school farming in Tanzania, Phillips and Robert show that focusing school cultivation curriculum on “food sovereignty” would connect gardening/farming to learning about the economies and politics of hunger, ultimately centering school cultivation on issues of poverty and democracy (p. 77). This piece provides a useful framework for imagining school farming and gardening as a way of empowering underserved populations.

Sarah A. Robert and Irina Kovalskys emphasize the importance of collaborative efforts surrounding school food in “Defining the ‘Problem’ with School Food Policy in Argentina.” Robert and Kovalskys place two competing discourses in conversation with one another: (1) school professionals in Argentina who identify the lack of food as the cause of malnutrition and (2) public health professionals in Argentina who see the wrong kinds of foods as the cause of malnutrition. By putting these two perspectives into conversations with each other, Robert and Kovalskys show that collaboration is integral to school food reform. The competing discourses that Robert and Kovalskys highlight mirror many of the discourses surrounding school food in the United States, and the collaborative model that the authors propose is useful for thinking about new strategies for school food reform in any context.

Contributors provide detailed synopses of their efforts to reform school food in various contexts throughout the second section of the book with essays that provide hopeful accounts, success stories and food for thought, as well as examples of concrete strategies used to navigate school food reform. For example, in “Food Prep 101: Low-income Teens of Color Cooking Food and Analyzing Media,” Catherine Lalonde shares an account of her experiences running an after-school program in which she taught low-income teens how to cook and analyze media messages about food. Lalonde’s analysis of her experiences highlights the interesting gender dynamics that arose, practical concerns about food allergies and religious traditions, how to integrate analysis of food media into a cooking curriculum, and thoughts on the possibilities of teaching about food in spaces outside the traditional school contexts. Lalonde’s accounts of her after-school program provide useful insight into the dynamics that might arise in similar situations in which students are learning how to cook.

In “Going Local: Burlington, Vermont’s Farm-to-School Program,” Doug Davis, Dana Hudson and other members of the Burlington School Food Project share stories about their experiences attempting to change school food in Burlington, VT. Each of the contributors provides detailed information about what they specifically did to change the types of food offered for school lunch. For example, Davis shares a story about finding a way to bring local artisan breads into the schools and by describing how he worked with a local bakery to start a program similar to Community Supported Agriculture programs in which district employees can sign up for ten-week bread shares from the local bakery. Then he and the local bakery arranged to use the profit from the bread share program to make local, artisan breads for school lunches. This essay includes many other accounts of unique, creative approaches to school food reform that could be applied to other contexts.

The book ends with a chapter by the editors in which they share what they

learned from the huge variety of school food contexts presented in this collection. Robert and Weaver-Hightower explain that the range of contexts presented in this collection demonstrates that “any school feeding is an *ideological* project” (p. 204). The collection as a whole, Robert and Weaver-Hightower posit, also highlights the connection of school food to human rights-based discourses. The editors emphasize that instead of focusing on economic rationales for school food, arguments about school food should focus on school feeding as a human right (p. 205).

While it can feel jarring to move from one side of the world to another in this collection, it is also exciting and motivating to discover stories and strategies about school food politics in such different contexts. However, Weaver-Hightower’s concept of “policy ecology” maintains a strong presence in each of the essays and does a good job holding them all together. This collection is full of many exciting, practical, theoretical, and ideological frameworks for approaching school food reform. Anyone looking for insight, strategies, advice, or inspiration will find it in this collection.

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COME & GET IT! MCDONALDIZATION AND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LOCAL FOOD FROM A CENTRAL ILLINOIS COMMUNITY

BY ROBERT DIRKS (BLOOMINGTON, IL: MCLEAN COUNTY MUSEUM OF HISTORY).

Reviewed by Airín D. Martínez, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

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In *Come & Get It! McDonaldization and the Disappearance of Local Food from a Central Illinois Community*, Robert Dirks provides a historical description of food production and consumption in McLean County, Illinois, from the early settlers of the nineteenth century to the present. This book is based on a museum exhibit



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