

Eating Together: Food Friendship And Inequality

368 *Reviews*

Hudsons are on much firmer ground when they conflate the project to professionalize a trade or occupation with the growth, development, and even splintering of affiliated MBOs. Perhaps because Mark Warren already wrote *Democracy and Association*—which is amply cited here—the Hudsons had to throw their net wider as a differentiating strategy.

A major strength of this book is the tale that the authors tell about the societal legacy of like-minded individuals aggregating in the face of threat or challenge to promote and protect their endangered domain. Case studies illustrating the social change agency of MBOs are categorized to highlight some of the technological, behavioral, and attitudinal influences of these associations. While generally making the case for the positive social change engendered by MBOs, the authors also provide balancing counter-examples of MBO intransigence leading to discrimination (if the American Accounting Association had been more accommodating, would we still have seen the emergence of the American Society of Women Accountants?) or obstruction (think: AMA and universal access to affordable healthcare).

I do have my own instructions on how to read this book to maximize enjoyment. As noted above, ignore the title and stick to the subtitle. While you're at it, skip the preface. While the preface does contain the so-called methodology, knowing too much about it is likely to induce cries of "foul!" As the authors suggest, the histories of about 400 organizations (non-randomly selected from a universe of at least 150,000), together, offer a picture of the emergence, growth, and function of these associations. The authors make no pretense of systematic analysis and, instead, we get rich, evocative case studies of the development and contributions of a set of tenacious organizations. Finally, use the dictionary definition of "tenet" as "opinion" and substitute the latter word wherever you see the former in the book. The authors have not made solid cases that MBOs are either necessary or ubiquitous, nor have they convincingly demonstrated their function as micro-democracies. They have, however, provided enough provocative illustrations for us to appreciate the value of a research endeavor that attempts to

more systematically quantify the assertion that MBOs are agents of social change. Scientific research on that proposition would be a most welcome companion to the Hudsons' engaging ode to trade, professional, and personal avocation associations.

Eating Together: Food, Friendship, and Inequality, by Alice P. Julier. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013. 237 pp. \$25.00 paper. ISBN: 9780252079184.

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Eating Together explores the many ways commensality—eating in company—sets up and sorts out social relationships, connects us to power structures and to each other, and not only allows but even promotes a collective understanding. Although she reviews much of the relevant work (see especially Chapter One), only tangentially does Alice Julier look to the broad, heterogeneous, not to say motley, discussions that tend to be lumped together under the rubric of "food studies." There is little on the sources or meanings of food or its production, diffusion or consumption. Still less is this book concerned with the intimate bond between foods and the body. Health issues come up pretty much in passing.

What counts for Julier is sociability, the distinctive social relations which, as the title indicates, emerge from the multiple, subtle (as well as flagrant) negotiations of commensality. Her extensive interviews show that this work of hospitality takes a great deal of energy and emotion in our everyday lives, more than most of us realize. "Food events" (her term) offer a prime, and relatively unexplored, site for social (re)production.

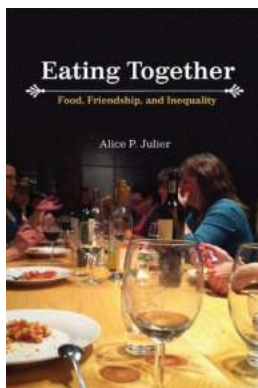
As the subtitle makes clear, Julier focuses on the inequality in contemporary American society that commensality obscures by bringing acquaintances together and fostering friendship. Making good use of Simmel and Mary Douglas, Julier looks to the culturally validated forms of dining within which we all create our own mode of eating in company. The models for domestic, non-kin dining range from the formal dinner party (Chapter

Eating Together: Food, Friendship, and Inequality - Why Sharing Meals Matters

Food has always played a central role in our lives. It sustains us physically, provides comfort and nourishment, and can even bring people together. In a world plagued by inequality, sharing meals with others has the potential to bridge social gaps and foster meaningful connections. Let's explore why eating together holds immense significance in combating food inequality and promoting true friendship.

The Evolution of Eating Habits

Our eating habits have drastically changed over the centuries. From gathering around a fire and sharing a communal meal, to the rise of convenience foods and solitary eating, our relationship with food has become fragmented. We eat on-the-go, in front of screens, and often alone. This shift in dining culture has contributed to a sense of isolation and disconnection among individuals.



Eating Together: Food, Friendship and Inequality

by Alice P. Julier (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 1175 KB

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Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

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Food and Social Inequality

Food inequality refers to the unequal distribution of food resources, resulting in disparities in access to nutritious meals. Unfortunately, this issue is prevalent in many parts of the world. Food insecurity affects individuals and communities, hindering their chances of leading healthy and fulfilling lives. To combat this, we must address the root causes of food inequality and not just focus on providing short-term solutions.

The Power of Shared Meals

Eating together has the potential to address both social and food inequality. When we gather around a table with others, we create a space for dialogue and empathy. Sharing a meal encourages conversation and the exchange of ideas, leading to a deeper understanding of different perspectives and experiences. Eating together breaks down social barriers, enabling individuals from diverse backgrounds to connect on a human level.

Fostering Empathy and Understanding

Breaking bread together allows us to understand the struggles and challenges that others face. It helps us realize that, despite our differences, we all share the same basic need for sustenance. When we eat together, we become attuned to the inequalities that exist within our society. This shared experience can motivate individuals to take action and advocate for change, ultimately working towards a more equitable food system.

Nurturing True Friendship

Sharing meals can also cultivate meaningful friendships. There is something profoundly intimate about breaking bread with someone. It creates a sense of belonging and builds trust. When we eat together, we let our guard down, share stories, and bond over a common experience – nourishment. Through the act of

sharing meals, we can forge connections that transcend social, economic, and cultural boundaries.

Breaking Down Barriers to Eating Together

While eating together holds immense potential in combating food inequality and fostering friendship, there are several barriers that need to be addressed:

Access and Affordability

Ensuring equal access to nutritious food is crucial. It's essential to address food deserts – areas where access to fresh, healthy food is limited. Initiatives like community gardens, farmers' markets, and urban farming can play a significant role in combating these disparities and making healthy food more accessible to all.

Education and Awareness

Raising awareness about the importance of shared meals and their ability to bridge social gaps is essential. By educating individuals on the benefits of eating together and facilitating opportunities for communal dining, we can encourage people to prioritize this practice in their lives.

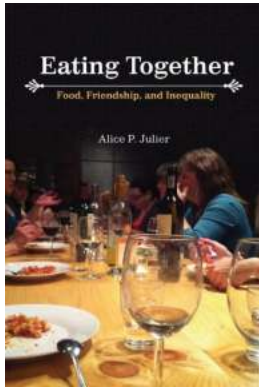
Breaking Social Stigmas

Breaking down the social stigmas that surround eating together is crucial, particularly for marginalized communities. Creating inclusive spaces where everyone feels welcome and accepted is key in fostering friendship and creating a sense of belonging.

Eating Together for a Better Future

By embracing the power of shared meals, we can work towards building a more equal society. Eating together allows us to acknowledge and address food

inequality in a tangible way while fostering genuine connections with others. Sharing meals helps us rediscover the joy and meaning that food brings to our lives, beyond its nutritional value. So, let's gather around a table, break bread together, and create a world where food, friendship, and equality prevail.



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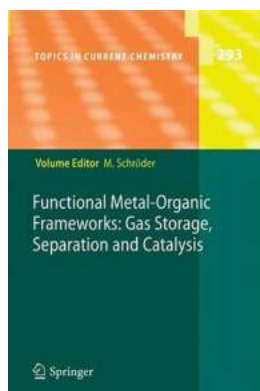


An insightful map of the landscape of social meals, *Eating Together: Food, Friendship, and Inequality* argues that the ways in which Americans eat together play a central role in social life in the United States. Delving into a wide range of research, Alice P. Julier analyzes etiquette and entertaining books from the past century and conducts interviews and observations of dozens of hosts and guests at dinner parties, potlucks, and buffets. She finds that when people invite friends, neighbors, or family members to share meals within their households, social inequalities involving race, economics, and gender reveal themselves in interesting ways: relationships are defined, boundaries of intimacy or distance are set, and people find themselves either excluded or included.



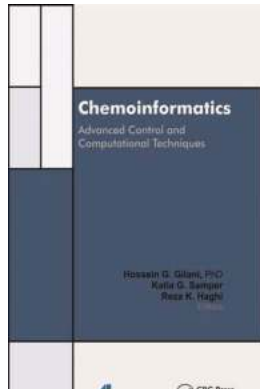
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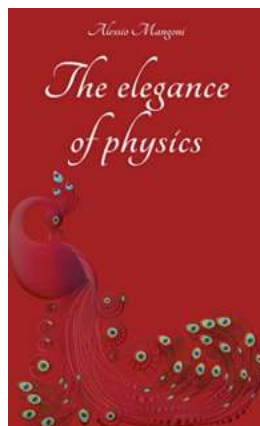
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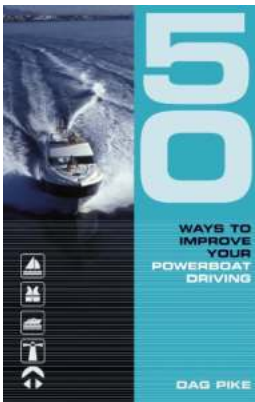
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