Social Influences on Food Choice and Habits

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The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society.

(C. W. Mills, The Sociological Imagination, p.6)
AGRICULTURE

SOCIETY

SURPLUS

CAPITALISM
Goal is to produce profit, not healthy and sustainable food.
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Capitalist Society
We are price conscience, so consider price over other factors
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Subsidies

Foods that are subsidized become relatively cheaper compared to unsubsidized.
Politics

Tremendous wealth of food industries allow them to wield considerable political power, therefore, favourable rules/regulations
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Oversupply of Food
About twice as many calories are produced in North America than is recommended for a healthy diet – food industry needs you to eat more

M. Nestle. What to Eat. (p 11)
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Nutritionism

Ideology or paradigm whereby the healthfulness of food is predominantly understood in terms of its nutrient profile.

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The food system literally controls the information we have and the way we think about food, therefore, has tremendous influence on our decision-making.
An Orthorexic Society?
(Rangel, Dukeshire, & MacDonald, 2012)

Thus, consumers find themselves in a double-bind, socialized to take charge of their own (dietary) health and well-being but constrained in the ability to do so by a food system that is increasingly complex, contradictory, and opaque. (p. 131)

How do we try to resolve the double-bind?

- Front of package information
- Brand
- Diet programs
- Alternative production and distribution systems
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How can we effect change?

- Be political
- Political consumerism
- Reveal (without bias)