

2015 Jerome Richfield Fellow

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4:00-6:00 PM

Oviatt Library Presentation Room

Welcome to Your Plate: How Individual Choices Can Create a Better World, One Bite at a Time

Food is essential for maintaining life and, yet, our food choices are literally killing us. Nearly 70% of American adults are either overweight or obese, and obesity is directly associated with a host of negative health consequences. In fact, four of the leading causes of death in the U.S. are diet-related. Alarming, obesity has more than doubled in our children and quadrupled in our adolescents in just the last 30 years. While many factors contribute to diet-related health problems, it clear that dramatic changes in the food landscape over the past few decades is the primary culprit. Ultra-processed *food-like products* are more readily available than ever before, are cheaper than healthy alternatives, and are scientifically proven to be as addictive as heroin and cocaine.

In addition to the health problems directly linked to our diets, agricultural chemicals pollute our drinking water and air, cause cancer in farm workers, and create global economic instability. Thus, how we choose to nourish ourselves has widespread impacts on all aspects of life.

For the past several years, my research has focused on understanding factors that contribute to our food choices and how those choices impact our health and the health of our planet. My work has broad applications to health, the environment, policy, and social justice. As a cognitive psychologist and cognitive scientist, I take a holistic approach to understanding how the mind works—from evolution and neuroscience to social movements and the psychology of change—in this talk I will review some of my own research findings on food choices and discuss how those choices can be shaped to create a healthier and more just world now and for our future generations. One bite at a time, we can be the change.