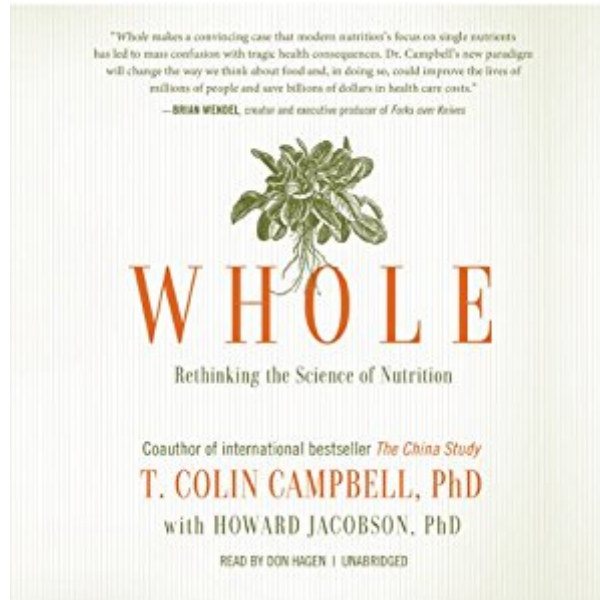


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# Whole: Rethinking The Science Of Nutrition



## Synopsis

What happens when you eat an apple? The answer is vastly more complex than you imagine. Every apple contains thousands of antioxidants whose names, beyond a few like vitamin C, are unfamiliar to us, and each of these powerful chemicals has the potential to play an important role in supporting our health. They impact thousands upon thousands of metabolic reactions inside the human body. But calculating the specific influence of each of these chemicals isn't nearly sufficient to explain the effect of the apple as a whole. Because almost every chemical can affect every other chemical, there is an almost infinite number of possible biological consequences - and that's just from an apple. Nutritional science, long stuck in a reductionist mindset, is at the cusp of a revolution. The traditional gold standard of nutrition research has been to study one chemical at a time in an attempt to determine its particular impact on the human body. These sorts of studies are helpful to food companies trying to prove there is a chemical in milk or prepackaged dinners that is "good" for us, but they provide little insight into the complexity of what actually happens in our bodies or how those chemicals contribute to our health. In *The China Study*, T. Colin Campbell revolutionized the way we think about our food with the evidence that a whole food, plant-based diet is the healthiest way to eat. Now, in *Whole*, he explains the science behind that evidence, the ways our current scientific paradigm ignores the fascinating complexity of the human body, and why, if we have such overwhelming evidence that everything we think we know about nutrition is wrong, our eating habits haven't changed. *Whole* is an eye-opening, paradigm-changing journey through cutting-edge thinking on nutrition, a scientific tour de force with powerful implications for our health and for our world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The gist of T. Colin Campbell's new book, *Whole*, is this. After publishing his radical landmark *The China Study: The Most Comprehensive Study of Nutrition Ever Conducted And the Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss, And Long-term Health* in 2005, let's suppose what he reported there is true. Eight years later, why hasn't that information and perspective broken through to more widespread awareness? Why hasn't your doctor or dietitian told you about it, or heard of it, or given it serious consideration? Why haven't school lunches changed across the board? *Whole* gives answers. Three p-words permeate Campbell's thesis here: profits, power, and paradigms. Power and profits drive the big businesses of livestock and processed food, Campbell argues. For elaboration on how the processed food industry influences people's eating habits against public health while in pursuit of sales and profits, I recommend *Salt Sugar Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us* (2013) or *The End of Overeating: Taking Control of the Insatiable American Appetite* (2009). More controversially perhaps, Campbell also argues that profit motives fuel the chase for pills, patents, and procedures in "health care" or as Campbell calls it, the "disease care" industries of pharmaceuticals, hospitals, and medical practitioners. Registered dietitians may be compromised too, as their influential trade association, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, receives major funding from the junk food business including Coca-Cola, Hershey, PepsiCo, Mars, and Unilever (that covers several major ice cream brands), as well as the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the National Dairy Council, among others. (p. 271) The food and health care industries also buy power and influence by funding, in part, the careers of politicians, food regulators, and media outlets (including both popular media and some scientific journals) (p. 181-262). That's a big argument, and Campbell states it earnestly. He looks at, "all the political maneuvering and financial pressure...a version of reality shaped more by the profit agendas of Big Pharma, supplement makers, hospitals, surgeons, and suppliers of processed food and industrial meat and dairy than the truth." (p. 261) But what about science? Don't the health sciences uphold an objective space where research like Campbell's can get a proper hearing among fair-minded truth seekers? Here Campbell covers a lot of ground. *Whole* unpacks Campbell's frustration with food sciences that drive for answers in small elements of biochemistry, often dismissing or putting up stiff resistance to studies at the level of major dietary patterns, lifestyles, and community-level differences in health outcomes (p. 45-164). Campbell knows from personal experience. He has contributed to food science both at the minute level of biochemistry, and also at the lifestyle and

community levels like a medical sociologist would do, as *The China Study* makes clear. Campbell's account in *Whole* may serve as vivid material for science studies. This is a field where sociologists and philosophers grapple with questions of how human foibles, careerism, and powerful interests sometimes distort and inhibit the advancement of science, and how new theories occasionally burst through to scientific acceptance despite formidable resistance. Campbell deploys the concept of scientific "paradigms" in food studies. Scientists cluster their investigations and share basic assumptions within a broad current of thought, or paradigm, the thinking goes, for as long as the prevailing paradigm seems productive, until one day the paradigm runs out of answers and gives way to challengers. In our time, Campbell suggests, the paradigm in nutrition is that animal foods are healthy sources of key nutrients that call for microbiological research; and the paradigm in medicine is that disease is to be cured through pills and procedures that call for biochemistry in pharmaceuticals, biotechnological engineering, and surgical protocols. The notion that medical and nutritional sciences, or any science, organizes into theoretical paradigms that hold sway during periods of "normal science" springs from Thomas Kuhn's launching pad for the field of science studies, first published in 1962, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: 50th Anniversary Edition*. T. Colin Campbell goes further, intimating that scientific grant makers should promote a more appropriate distribution of financial resources in health-related studies, in order to breed a research environment that would admit a variety of approaches, even if they contradict the main thrust (p. 214-217). His thinking comports well with some recent, socially minded philosophers of science, especially Miriam Solomon's excellent brief, *Social Empiricism* (Bradford Books) (2001). If you haven't read *The China Study*, I would recommend that first (and *The China Study* may be all you want or need). *The China Study* spells out the many health benefits of whole foods, plant-based eating in Campbell's view; and what is the research that brought him to believe that; and what's wrong with animal foods. Or, for a captivating show of it on your tv screen, you can see T. Colin Campbell speaking prominently in the outstanding documentary film, *Forks Over Knives*. If you want to know how exactly to go about eating a whole foods plant-based diet, then *Whole* is not the place to turn. But I can recommend some very good books for that: *The Starch Solution: Eat the Foods You Love, Regain Your Health, and Lose the Weight for Good!*, *Forks Over Knives - The Cookbook: Over 300 Recipes for Plant-Based Eating All Through the Year*, and *Everyday Happy Herbivore: Over 175 Quick-and-Easy Fat-Free and Low-Fat Vegan Recipes*. Isa Chandra Moskowitz also comes pretty close to Campbell's way of eating in the reduced-fat version of her super-tasty chef's recipes (though she adds very small quantities of oil that you can cut out if you want to stay true to Campbell's way) -- in *Appetite for Reduction: 125 Fast and Filling Low-Fat*

Vegan Recipes. If you're curious and you want to come to grips with the clash in food science between Campbell's minority viewpoint and mainstream theories, then you've come to the right book. Further, if you'd like to hold your own in discussions with people who may want to know how you can be so confident as you shrug off the mainstream opposition and lean into the radical health promise of whole-foods plant-based eating, read this. If you simply want to know why whole foods, plant-based eating has not become more widely accepted, then *Whole* is a very fine book for you. Thank you, T. Colin Campbell for turning it out.

"History is a race between education and catastrophe" -HG Wells, quoted in *Whole*. As T. Colin Campbell writes, *Whole: Rethinking the Science of Nutrition* is built on two basic insights: "First, nutrition is the master key to human health. Second, what most of us think of as proper nutrition--isn't." While for many (though, alas, still the minority) this isn't news, showing why this is the case with a carefully crafted, well-researched thoroughness is what makes this a signature T. Colin Campbell book. As anyone who has read *The China Study* knows, this MIT-trained, 50-plus year veteran of nutritional research and politics packs a crisp and well-trained punch. His power comes from his clarity of expression and the thoroughness of his research. Campbell builds his thesis with tight reasoning, backed by solid research that considers the big picture. That's why, even if you feel like you don't need convincing, it's great to have the data and clear rationale beyond what may feel intuitive to you; that is, that a whole foods, plant-based diet is the healthiest diet there is and our current nutritional-medical complex is harming millions and millions by disguising that nutritional fact (did you know that pharmaceutical companies spend considerably more on political lobbying than defense contractors?). If you've read *The China Study*, Campbell's important bestseller, you'll be familiar with themes in *Whole: Rethinking the Science of Nutrition*. But the focus is different. As Campbell writes, "The China Study focused on the evidence that tells us the whole foods, plant-based diet is the healthiest human diet. *Whole* focuses on why it's been so hard to bring that evidence to light -- and on what still needs to happen for real change to take place." Much of the book lies in the difference between reductionism and holism. "If you are a reductionist," writes Campbell (p. 49), "you believe that everything in the world can be understood if you understand all its component parts. A wholist, on the other hand, believes that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. That's it: the entire debate in a nutshell." Much of the confusion the public has about the basic healthy way to eat is based on small studies that highlight a little something, but miss the bigger picture. Campbell has the research experience and brain power to tie it all together. If there is one issue I have with the book, it is that Campbell doesn't really look at our

individual tendency to rationalize and how that dovetails with the confusion created by the food and medical industries. That is, while it's true that a plethora of confusing and overwhelming information makes it difficult to hear loud and clear the truth about a whole foods plant-based diet, even many who are convinced it is the best way to eat, don't end up eating that way. Why? Because sugar, fat, meat, and junk food taste yummy (at least they do until you break the habit/s, and then they usually taste too much). In fact, they taste so good that most people end up kinda, sorta downplaying the consequence of indulging and are only too happy (unconsciously) to be bolstered by noisy and confusing nutritional headlines. Or, to twist the classic expression a bit: "the spirit is weak because the flesh is willing." For that reason, this is an important book: it helps bolster the resolve of anyone who kind of knows a whole foods approach is the way to go. And for those that don't, this book is a clear and easy to read education. This is definitely an valuable book that I hope is widely read.

I loved the China Study. Now this just adds to it, explaining the reductionist thinking that passes for research nowadays. I have been plant-based for many years. unfortunately, it has been tough to convert my family to this way of eating. I feel so healthy and good on this diet. At my age, (59) my mother started on high blood pressure medication. When I gave blood recently, mine was 108/80. It is a tough sell for the people I know. This book highlights how hard it is to change age-old thinking. (Especially when there's money involved). The only person in my family who read the China Study, my daughter, eats healthily like I do. The rest of them won't read it. (Heads in the sand?) Thank you, Dr. Campbell, for another great book.

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