**To:Amy Carleton**

**From:YunqiZhu**

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**RE: Explainer Project: Influences of culture on nutritional practices in the US**

Nutrition is the most fundamental concept when discussing issues that affect any form of life. For this assignment, I intend to examine the relationship between culture and nutrition, especially in the United States. Every culture in the world has its distinct menu which indicates their food practices. There is too much information going around about what is healthy and what is not which raises so many questions about the morality of food. Each culture has its menu which still gets scrutinized by ‘nutritionalexperts; the truth of the matter is that many Americans are confused about what to eat (Alaunyte et al., 2015).Dietary practices within the US do depend on a person’s culture which is usually influenced by their values, beliefs, attitudes and economic background.

While researching this article I cameto the realization that cultureis something that can be formed or changed over time.The US is a fast-moving country; the food culture has also evolved to incorporate this during preparationto match up this speed. Fast food joints within the country are thriving by helping Americans to save on time. As a culture we have grown up to believe that time is of the essence which is no wonder that most Americans eat while on the run.The contents of the meals eaten are under the scrutiny of morality as to whether they should be part of the diet. Industries that make nutritional supplements are further fueling the confusion of what should be considered healthy. The US is home to very many different cultures all of which have different perceptions about nutrition.

Upon further analyzing the impact of culture and nutrition I discovered other concepts such as the economics of culture and morality behind dietary constituents.Historical injustices forced a new food culture upon African Americans.Most of individuals from this culture come from poor backgrounds. For them to be able to compete with other cultures economically, they have to take on multiple jobs; what this does is that it leaves them with very little room to prepare an actual meal. As a result, most of them resort to fast foods. This behavior has become ingrained even children who explain the high cases of obesity among people of this race.The cost of real food is way above what most African Americans can afford. They, therefore, opt for fast foods (Pike et al., 2014).

Looking further, I was able to see how much pressure culture places on individuals for them to be considered part and parcel.Culture plays a central role in the conflict between morality and nutrition. This is often seen in the eating behaviors of Americans with a Latino background. The Latino culture places a strong emphasis on the physical appearance of individuals, with women being the most affected. The Latino culture upholds a specific image of what beauty should look like,with women expected to flaunt distinct body curves. This pressure forces individuals from this culture to develop eating disorders. Some individuals result in binge eating then force themselves to vomit out the food to avoid adding on weight. It is clear that culture affects people’s beliefs about what to eat.

To understand the effects of culture on nutritional practices, it is important to look at the online community within the country. There is a constant battle between natural and processed foods.Some individuals believe that naturals are the way to go yet others believe that processed foods are equally as important.Famous figures are trying to sway the masses into adopting their kind of lifestyle. The American culture emphasizes on the duplication of eating regimen followed by celebrities. It is so unfortunate that the issue of nutrition has become a get rich quick scheme for the so-called nutritional professionals.

This paper is intended for government nutritional agencies who rely in biased points of view that define America’s eating culture. It is quite common to find government-approved nutritional supplements being recommended as part of a meal plan. There is no fault in that however it is disappointing how much effort is put in advertising these supplements including their ability to help one deal with weight issues. The government is clearly buying into the morality of nutritional practices by recommending good and bad diets rather than providing proper information to American citizens. It is important to promote healthy habits but is really necessary to moralize(Hayes-Conroy, 2016) food.

Research into the historical and scientific perspectives of nutrition reveals that the fundamental function of food is to facilitate the survival of living organisms.Culture has always provided an avenue through which people can express themselves while science continues to build on this perspective.American food practices seem to coincide with the pace of the economy coupled with preexisting beliefs. The Muslim culture, for example, prohibits the consumption of particular products, which may be considered to be of high nutritional value. Essentially culture places restrictions on what people put in their bodies. People have little to no control of their food choices as that is already predetermined by the time they are born.

American cultures not only prohibit what to put in the body but also how the food is handled and who handles it. As we are aware, food requires high levels of hygiene when handling. In some cultures within the US the person handling the food must be from within that particular culture. This applies to the Muslim community which holds that a member from their culture must at all times prepare red meat. Such a practice indicates that nutrition doesn’t start the moment it gets into the body but rather from the moment that food is being prepared. The socio-economic status too plays a role in influencing people. This determines the environment that one finds themselves in as well as the kind of image they need to uphold.

Nutrition is not only integral to the health of citizens but also the health of a nation. Food is a good reflection of the uniqueness of each culture. The US is home to diverse cultures, which means that there exist varied practices. Culture can be both beneficial and detrimental to the nutritional practices of an individual. It is close to impossible not to associate culture with the morality debate as culture either encourages or discourages particular practices. The government seems to fund the ideology of nutritional shortcomings portrayed by each culture by sending out messages which seem to favor businesses that are out to make profits (Hayes-Conroy, 2016). It is, however, difficult to standardize nutritional practices however the best message that Americans need to hear is that they have a choice do decide what is best for them.

References

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