

No Money, No Options: How Location Demographics Determines Healthy Living

by

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Abstract

This study will focus on the parallel between low-income communities' residents and their access to healthy and holistic foods within proximity, commonly known as food deserts. When opening businesses in the food industry, a group of them overlook low-income communities. The action of these companies leaves a significant group of Americans to settle for scraps when it comes to nutrition. This study seeks to answer the research question, why is profit more important in a country that is desperate to be healthy? If America is one of the leading obese countries in the world, why doesn't the government develop an effective way to give people of low-income communities better access to holistic foods? The goal is to examine the ramifications on people's health when they are not exposed to holistic foods on a regular basis.

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Introduction

Over the last few years, obesity in America has increased as of 2016, 39% of adults aged 18 years and over (39% of men and 40% of women) were overweight, due to eating a high caloric diet and not eating healthy foods. Food is a source that keeps humans alive secondary to water, however, people are not getting the most benefits out of the foods they are consuming. Instead, they are consuming foods that cause damage to their bodies. Accessibility to healthier food sources such as supermarkets is a privilege when Americans are low social class citizens. According to Bitler (2011), the basic demand for healthy foods is determined by income. For there to be healthy foods sources in certain areas the overall income must increase.

Therefore, low-income people who are obese are more likely to develop high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. In order to resolve this issue, residents of low-income communities need to have better access to healthy foods. Food establishments such as restaurants and supermarkets should offer healthier food options for consumers in these communities. The supply and demand mindset of the American economy is silently harming a marginalized group due to profit. When profit is prioritized over the health and well-being of impoverished communities, companies prosper while the people suffer.

Thesis Statement

Food establishments such as restaurants and supermarkets should offer healthier food options for consumers in communities like West Huntsville. The supply and demand mindset of the American economy is silently harming a marginalized group due to profit. When profit is prioritized over the health and well-being of impoverished communities, companies prosper while the people suffer.

Research Questions

The issue surrounding nutrition in the United States due to food deserts has a negative impact effect on the people of low-income communities, this paper will address the following research questions:

Why is profit more important in a country that is desperate to be healthy?

Why doesn't the government develop an effective way to give people of low-come communities better access to holistic foods?

Methods

Thesis: Food is a source that keeps humans alive secondary to water, however people are not getting the most benefits out of the foods they are consuming. Instead, they are consuming foods that cause damage to their bodies. Accessibility to healthier food sources such as supermarkets is a privilege when Americans are low social class citizens.

The study conducted consisted of intense research concerning People of Color in low-income communities throughout the United States. The study was trying to prove the long-term health effects of not having access to healthy food. This study was meant to prove that food deserts happening all over the United States are happening due to profit.

The research was conducted by looking through many business databases that provide information about social economic communities. Searching with the use of keywords, one would find many results which lead to information about low-income residents who weren't able to travel to the nearest supermarket. Searching by location and keywords was important to the research because it would give one a small window to work from. Words like low class, low-income, food deserts, unhealthy people of color really help facilitate the findings.

Additional research was conducted by in a psychology database, with a different approach. For this particular search, one would focus on the culture of the people living in these

communities. Which lead to the effect's food deserts had on the health and pockets of the members of these communities. Certain articles were difficult to interrupt because of the overwhelming amount of information. Other articles were easy and straight to the point but were not available for my use. This database produced results of multi-disciplinary articles that gave well-rounded information. The most important approach to my findings was trial and error. After three weeks of looking for articles, one would come across a group of articles that had a sufficient amount of information to prove the thesis statement and answer the research question.

Literature Review

A food desert is an area that is predominantly inhabited by low-income residents, which has finite access to affordable and nutritional foods Rogers., (2012). In a variation, a location with supermarkets and healthy food restaurants. In this study, neighborhoods with and without access to supermarkets will be compared to one another and analysis will be conducted between its similarities and differences. The question of why corporations decide not to open supermarkets in low-income communities will be answered, in addition to the adverse effects on these communities.

Attractive neighborhoods vs ugly neighborhoods

The principal component when looking at food deserts is the type of residents that live in these communities. According to (Schuetz), 2012. residents that get paid a higher income live in neighborhoods that have the characteristics for a retail density neighborhood. Retail density

means businesses will look for neighborhoods that inhabit residents who are most likely to spend money. On the other hand, businesses will overlook communities with high crime rates and low spending patterns. Retailers are motivated by profit margins when companies speculate spending margins, they open in the neighborhoods that will bring in the most profit. Generally, this approach only benefits able to a particular percentage of the American population. Powell et al., (2007), Zink et al., (2005), Alwitt and Donley, (1997) banks and supermarkets opt not to open locations in low-income and low spending neighborhoods. Moreover, the nutrition of Americans is only important when they can contribute to the economy.

The economics of nutrition

According to Kato and McKinney., (2015) price is a huge factor when grocery shopping. If on average people spend \$60 a week on groceries, \$23 is spent on produce. In the study Kato and McKinney., (2015) conducted, some participants had issues keeping up with the cooking healthy foods, due scheduling conflicts, work, and childcare. Even when residents of low-income communities are given an alternative means of accessing food, it is still difficult for them to keep up with their work schedules and preparing meals throughout the day. Consequently, most participants were able to thrive from access to healthy foods. The thriving participants are framing the notion when people have access to better foods, they are able to flourish with such a privilege.

According to Bukendya., (2018) There are 22 food retailers located within or in close proximity to the West Huntsville neighborhood, which means residents have to travel long distances to have accessibility to food. Not just healthy foods but, food in general. Of these retailers within the proximity of West Huntsville, 55% were convenience stores, 23 % were ethnic food stores and 4% are supermarkets. The supermarkets are located well outside of the

neighborhood boundary. Convenience stores are small stores that contain specialty foods and alcoholic beverages. The residents of this community don't have much to choose from when purchasing their basic food needs from a convenience store. When a neighborhood is unable to produce a substantial profit income for companies, residents are forced to shop in stores located far away from their communities. If low-income residents choose to stay local, most of the places in the area have limited food and do not follow USDA dietary guidelines. As a result, most residents stay local because low-income communities lack access to around the clock transportation system.

The effects of food deserts on the residents of low-income communities

On the authority of Jang and Kim., (2018) On average, 17% of neighborhoods were below the federal poverty level. The average population per square mile was 4,234.74 Jang and Kim., (2018) equally important the residents below the poverty line lack access to vehicle ownership. When supermarkets and grocery stores are located in one concentrated area, the residents of these communities need a set means of transportation. In fact, that is not always the case because transportation in these areas stops after a certain time. Unfortunately, food is purchased from local bodegas and fast food restaurants, instead of going to the nearest supermarket.

Affirmed by Fan., (2012), residents located in food desert areas are spending more money on canned fruits and vegetables. Based on the income in urban areas, the prices of foods determine the quality of foods residents choose to purchase when shopping. When consumers can easily shop in their home and contiguous census tracts, unadjusted prices for common goods

are significantly different between food deserts and all types of non-food deserts, according to Fan., (2012). Accessibility to food sources and prices have major effects on the residents in food deserts communities. Another effect of food accessibility is health. Many residents are unfavorably affected by food deserts.

The health effect of food deserts

Food is how humans are able to maintain homeostasis, the types of foods humans consume are directly causing them to become ill. As stated by Thompson., (2016) the high prices of foods in urban communities' lead residents to choose foods and places to shop that have low prices. In the same way, residents of low-income communities choose foods with high calories and low nutrition value. When residents of low-income communities habitually choose to eat cheap foods due to the lack of income, it leads to obesity in the residents of such communities, in particular in the state of Arkansas. The BMI of public-school children has increased drastically because of poor food choices. Body Mass Index also is known as BMI is calculated by the ratio of the height and weight of the individual.

Similarly, food swaps which are categorized as neighborhoods inundated with fast-food chains that offer only high-fat and high-sugar foods. As stated by Quick., (2014) in their decade-long research there, Swanson and Schoenberg discover a great degree of awareness about the USDA food pyramid and healthy lifestyle habits to prevent conditions like obesity, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes based on the type of foods people of these communities are consuming. When people have the opportunity to access healthy foods, they have the opportunity to thrive and maintain their health.

Future Research

If I were to conduct a study similar to the studies discussed, I would choose to survey resident in both low- and higher-income communities. Asking what basic knowledge, they have on the accessibility of healthy foods in their communities. Then, I would gather all the similar results and conduct experiments in which both income groups would switch where they shop for foods. Soon after, collecting and observing the data affected by the changes in diet on the participants.

With a longer time, frame in the research, I would open a health grocery store in a food desert community and collect the health changes that occur in the low-income residents within the course of a year. Much like, ProMedica in Toledo, Ohio, which is a pop-up health food grocery store that is affordable to low-income residents. Ferenc., (2016) speaks about the success of opening such a store in a much-needed community. With cheap food prices and an institute that aids to stop the communities' hunger. Likewise, I would take it a step further and offer classes to educate the people in these communities to help them find places near their neighborhoods that offer healthier food options. Then, low-income residents can find an alternative to the nearest fast food options. Overall, I would remove the notion of profit from the research and focus on the people. The people living in these communities are in desperate need to have access to healthy foods in order to live a better life. My research would include screenings of a complete physical before and after a year of consuming nutritional foods.

Analysis

This study seeks to answer the research question, why is profit more important in a country that is desperate to be healthy? According to (Schuetz), 2012. the reason is that profit means residents aren't contributing to the capitalistic way America thrives. People in low-income communities don't vigilantly contribute to the wealth that is America, so the health of these people are overlooked. If America is one of the leading obese countries in the world, why doesn't the government develop an effective way to give people of low-come communities better access to holistic foods? According to Kato and McKinney., (2015) the overall cost of buying healthier food is about \$68 per person, it's just a matter of access. When access is denied to these communities' price is not the issue. On the other hand, some people in the Kato and McKinney., (2015) experiment didn't make time to cook the nutritional food provided by the researchers. While some residents made the best out having access to healthier foods, others weren't able to obtain the most benefits form the opportunity. Kato and McKinney., (2015) experiments explore the notion that some individuals need more than just access to better foods in order to have a healthier life. In some cases, it is possible to have access to nutritional foods and choose not to eat them.

Likewise, when profit molds the health of residents in certain communities no one is benefiting. The was goal is to examine the ramifications on people's health when they are not exposed to holistic foods on a regular basis. As stated by Quick., (2014) when people are contently exposed to specialty food stores they are not thriving. The supply and demand mindset of the American economy is silently harming a marginalized group due to profit. When profit is prioritized over the health and well-being of impoverished communities, companies prosper while the people suffer.

Personal Reflection

During the research process, I found it tedious to look up the articles needed to prove my thesis. The process was long and required a lot of reading. Luckily, I set up a plan that allowed me to eliminate the articles that touched on the topic I was researching but didn't offer enough information. Even though the process before the writing was long, I enjoyed coming to terms with the topic I choose to research. I am completely interested in the empowerment and betterment of the impoverished people of color in this country. While reading about the all the struggles that came with living in these communities, I discovered that I want to make it my mission in life to help people who are left behind due to their social status. I've learned so many negative things about minorities and their struggles in the United States. For every new fact, I learned to do the research about diseases caused by lack of nutrition, the more it motivated me to develop a voice that can make a difference, so people are able to get their basic necessities met.

The privilege that I have of knowing what others may not know has made me grateful for my education. I have realized that people are in the dark about things surrounding their everyday life because certain people aren't seen as valuable to this country. I want to counite my education

so I can share my knowledge and experiences with people who need it the most. Researching, writing and going through the motions of creating this paper has inspired me to become a nurse. When I become a Nurse Practitioner I will focus on nutrition and holistic medicine. Later on, I want to start a non-profit that helps minorities to gain access to higher quality foods. Overall, this was a great journey which means more to me than a grade. It allowed me to find myself and find new interests I didn't know I had.

Conclusion

The overall purpose of this study is to help the reader understand access to healthier foods has a major impact on American culture. This is significant because people who live in food-restricted communities due to their income negatively affects their long-term health. There has been plentiful research to prove profit more important than health in the United States. The health of low-income residents comes with a price they can't afford. As a result, the residents of these communities are allowed to live a healthy lifestyle only when experiments are conducted in their communities. Otherwise, most of the research found was clear, low-income communities will not bring supermarkets the profit they desire.

On the other hand, research and testing showed improvement in residents of urban communities have been exposed to slightly better access to healthier and holistic foods. The thriving residents show that with the promise of opportunity without profit people can live a healthier life.

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