

Example of essay on individual project unit 3

[Nutrition](#), [Fast Food](#)



Government Regulation of Fast Food

Obesity is becoming an epidemic in America - more than 30% of childhood diabetes cases are Type 2, a condition typically caused by poor diet (Zinczenko, 2002). A variety of factors has led to the increase in prevalence of obesity in America. Sociocultural factors and sedentary lifestyles have led to conditions where many have little choice but to eat fatty, processed foods. The American fast food culture contributes to this level of obesity, as the combination of affordability, taste and convenience makes it easier for a family of any income level to feed themselves on fast food - however, it then becomes the responsibility of the individual to regulate their diet.

In a study of US adults in the past decade, it was shown that nearly a third of the entire population of America (both men and women) were obese, with 32.3% of men and 35.5% of women in America having the condition (Flegal et al., 2010). Despite initiatives to lower the obesity prevalence in American states to 15%, to date no states have been able to make that goal through any number of initiatives and incentives (Obesity in America, n. d.). If this trend continues, by the year 2030 nearly 86.3% of American adults will be overweight or obese, with a combined billion-dollar increase in healthcare costs for obesity-related illnesses (Wang et al., 2009).

There are many reasons for this obesity epidemic in the United States. As it stands today, many people are fed on fast food multiple times a day (Zinczenko, 2002). These companies provide quickly made, good-tasting food that is affordable to eat, many popular establishments allowing you to feed yourself for a dollar. Due to corn subsidies making sweeteners such as

high fructose corn syrup cheap, more and more people are turning to fast food as the viable way to feed a low-income family. Portion control is nearly nonexistent, as Americans eat larger and larger meals. Combine that with a sedentary lifestyle, and there is no physical activity to burn off these high-caloric foods (Marks, 2004).

While health and fitness is something that most Americans are tangentially aware of, many of them are not implementing proper diet and exercise methods. This stems from a number of factors, not the least of which is the prevalence of fast food restaurants in an urban setting. The visibility of these restaurants makes it far easier to find a hamburger than fruits or vegetables (Zinczenko, 2002). In fact, it has now become somewhat more expensive to buy healthy, organic food. For a fiscally-minded American citizen, it is much cheaper to feed yourself and your family at the drive-thru than to make a salad from scratch (Zinczenko, 2002).

There are those who say that government regulation of fast food is unnecessary and a direct infringement of personal liberty, especially in regards to what is put in our bodies. Many claim that the food we eat is the one thing above all that must not be regulated or socialized (Balko, 2004). The very idea of controlling our food options and preventing private businesses from selling their products due to an absence of willpower and restraint on the part of the consumer.

However, according to government, and the obesity statistics found in this country, it is clear that, despite the current attempts at health and fitness awareness being performed in America, many citizens are not exercising

their personal liberty to eat healthier foods and exercise more. What's more, taxpayers on the whole are paying for the poor decisions of the obese few, as more medical treatment and health/fitness education is required in order to properly educate them on the dangers of high-calorie diets. As a result, government intervention must take place in order to facilitate the needed increase in health of American citizens.

One thing that must be considered is the fact that American citizens do not exactly know the nutrition information of the fast food they are eating. As a result, they are not properly educated on what their food provides in terms of calories or sodium. Government regulation of fast food companies could include steps such as the implementation of packaging complete with nutrition information. There is some nutrition information provided currently, but it is mostly inaccurate fudging, using deceptive language to omit ingredients and shrink serving sizes to make a meal seem more nutritious than it is (Zinczenko, 2002).

Some can argue that the intervention of government is unnecessary, as fast food companies are already starting to carry healthier options, such as apple slices and salads. Furthermore, many argue that obesity is merely the function of our bodies reacting to metabolic processes that lead to the health problems we see as a consequence of obesity. As such, the labeling of obesity as an 'epidemic' strains credulity, and involves targeting the symptoms of a disease, not the cure (Oliver, 2006). However, fast food items are still being prominently displayed, and there is a decided lack of advertisement regarding their healthier options, especially when compared

to the main items like cheeseburgers. Drastic steps must be taken if, despite these healthier options, American citizens are not taking them and continuing their path to obesity.

In conclusion, public health is a governmental concern - the needs of its people must be considered, and if industry and the individual are not willing to take the appropriate steps to stave off obesity and poor health habits, the government is the only entity left that can take these measures. In the event fast food companies were to take better responsibility of their customer base, or personal responsibility for one's own health were better cared for, then these steps would be unnecessary. Due to the prevalence of obesity in this country, however, and the social and economic factors that prevent viable alternatives from being as affordable and readily available, the intervention of government into the fast food industry must be allowed. Furthermore, initiatives to reduce portion control in American lifestyles and increase physical activity are needed - these choices must be made more palatable to the American public in order to prevent the gradual widening of America, and the substantial health hazards and costs that would come as a result.

References

Balko, R. (2004 June 16). The terror of fat. National Post.

Flegal, K. M., Carroll, M. D., Ogden, C. L., et al. (2010). Prevalence and trends in obesity among US adults, 1999-2008. JAMA 303(3): 235-241.

Marks, J. B. (2004). Obesity in America: it's getting worse. Clinical Diabetes

22(1): 1-2.

Obesity in America. (n. d.). Statistics. Obesityinamerica. org. Retrieved Jan 7, 2012 from

<http://www.obesityinamerica.org/statistics/index.cfm>.

Oliver, J. E. (2006). Fat politics: the real story behind America's obesity epidemic. Oxford

University Press.

Wang, Y., Beydoun, M. A., Liang, L., Caballero, B., & Kumanyika, S. K. (2009).

Will all

Americans become overweight or obese? Estimating the progression and cost of the US

obesity epidemic. Obesity 16: 2323-2330.

Zinczenko, D. (2002). Don't blame the eater. New York Times, Nov. 23.