

# Nutrition and food in popular culture assignment



**ASSIGN  
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The Nature of Food in Popular Culture Since the dawn of the television and movie era, the act and consequences of eating has been portrayed inaccurately. After reviewing nearly a hundred years of motion picture and television archives even the most thorough investigator would be hard-pressed to find a realistic depiction of food. These industries are known for responding to social change in other capacities such as the role of women in society and ever-changing social norms; but when it comes to food, the movie and television industries remains unchanged in its incorrect perception of eating habits.

The film industry has a history of responding to changes in society. Movies and television shows now present women and minorities as equal and they no longer condone spousal abuse or spanking children for wrongdoing. This was not always the case. In the 1950's sitcom, "I Love Lucy," the central character Lucy was seen putting makeup on her face to simulate a bruise. She did this so her husband wouldn't hit her after she made some kind of mistake with the dinner she was cooking.

In that era, a plot line such as this was viewed as acceptable; but a similar plot would be loudly protested in modern times. Today's television viewer sees a much different woman in entertainment programs. Women are depicted as strong and independent characters and spousal abuse is never condoned. In this instance, popular culture responded to a change in American culture. Another example of this would be the changing role of blacks in the film industry.

In movies made before the 1960s, black characters were rarely portrayed as anything more than porters, janitors, or factory workers. During the civil rights movement, however, we started to see a more representative depiction of African-Americans in culture. For example, Sidney Poitier in “To Sir with Love” was viewed as a major stride for racial equality in the film industry. And now, an African-American actor, Denzel Washington, is considered one of the most popular Hollywood stars.

In both of these cases, popular culture reacted to a transitioning society and created a different product. Yet, when dealing with food, popular culture has not responded to social change. As society now approaches the 21st century, food has become an increasingly volatile issue. In the United States, subjects like eating disorders, obesity, and unhealthy eating habits receive much attention from the media and the medical community. In fact, eating disorders and healthy eating habits are stressed in most high school health curriculums.

Despite the importance of these emerging dysfunctions, movies still portray food and eating unrealistically. Attractive characters eat what they want, when they want, and their bodies remain healthy and strong. Characters in the popular sitcom “Friends” have eating habits that most doctors would consider ghastly, but the six actors are all extremely attractive, seemingly unaffected by their diets. These same habits would be extremely harmful to the average person and would be loudly opposed if put into words and advertised in the public; yet popular culture ignores this fact.

Food is held to a double standard in popular culture. Filmmakers who make violent movies claim to do so because society is violent and they have a responsibility to show the audience reality. The same argument is repeated for the use of profane language, sex, and low social standards. Yet even though eating disorders and the proliferation of junk food into the human diet are rampant in our society, no screen writer or moviemaker seems willing to show this reality.

Perhaps it may seem like a trite detail that doesn't concern modern audiences or perhaps modern audiences want to see the attractive characters taking on the unattractive personal habits that the average American embraces. Either way, food and food alone is allowed special treatment in the eyes of the movie industry. The image and importance of food is greatly distorted in popular culture. Though, movies and television have adapted to cultural change in the past, they seem to ignore changes in eating habits.

Some argue that movies represent the society from which they emerge. If a society is crime-ridden, its movies will contain a great deal of violent content. If a society uses profane language, that same obscene vocabulary will be utilized on screen. These concepts, though disputed by many, are widely considered valid by numerous communication theorists. Yet, when it comes to simple a simple biological issue like eating, the movie industry blatantly ignores social