

Longwood University

Digital Commons @ Longwood University

Spring Showcase for Research and Creative Inquiry

Office of Student Research

Spring 4-14-2021

Food Deserts and Their Contributions to Health Inequities

Ieuan Phillips

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.longwood.edu/rci_spring



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Phillips, Ieuan, "Food Deserts and Their Contributions to Health Inequities" (2021). *Spring Showcase for Research and Creative Inquiry*. 142.

https://digitalcommons.longwood.edu/rci_spring/142

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Student Research at Digital Commons @ Longwood University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring Showcase for Research and Creative Inquiry by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Longwood University. For more information, please contact hamiltonma@longwood.edu, alwinehd@longwood.edu.

Food Deserts and Their Contribution to Health Inequities

Ieuan R. Phillips
ENGL 400 - Longwood University
Scott McDarmont



ABSTRACT

My goal for this Research Paper is to learn more about the connection between food deserts and health inequities, meaning why are there such inequities and what are the barriers to food companies for not building stores in certain neighborhoods.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My main research question is if it is a known fact that Food Deserts contribute to health inequities, why is there not more being done to mitigate Food Deserts in America.

FOOD DESERTS CONTRIBUTION TO HEALTH INEQUITIES

The lack of access to healthful foods and easy access to fast foods has been linked to poor diets that are high in sugar, sodium, and unhealthy fats.

Poor food choices has contributed to diet-related conditions such as high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease.

Some of the health effects of living in a food desert include:

- a higher incidence of obesity
- increased prevalence of diabetes
- other weight-related conditions, especially in children

In addition, many food deserts also provide limited or unaffordable healthcare services. This contributes to health inequities and negative health outcomes for people living in these areas.

WHAT IS A FOOD DESERT?

“**Food deserts**” are geographic areas where access to affordable, healthy **food** options (aka fresh fruits and veggies) is limited or nonexistent because grocery stores are too far away.

In the U.S., a **food desert** consists of a low-income census tract residing at least 0.5 miles (0.80 km) in urban areas (10 miles (16 km) in rural areas) or 1 mile (1.6 km) away in urban areas (20 miles in rural areas) from a large grocery store.

STATISTICS

THE HIGH COST OF UNHEALTHY EATING

700,000+
Obesity-related deaths annually¹

\$14 Billion Spent on healthcare for childhood obesity¹
\$190 Billion Spent on healthcare related to obesity¹
\$200 Billion Spent on healthcare for cardiovascular disease²

¹ Retrieved on June 13, 2016, from healthycommunities.letsmove.gov from the facts/economic costs of obesity

² Retrieved on June 13, 2016, from theconversation.com from the american health care fact book on food 8/2012

IS THE LAND OF PLENTY STARVING?



Of the nearly 323 million individuals who live in the United States, almost **7% make their home in a food desert.**



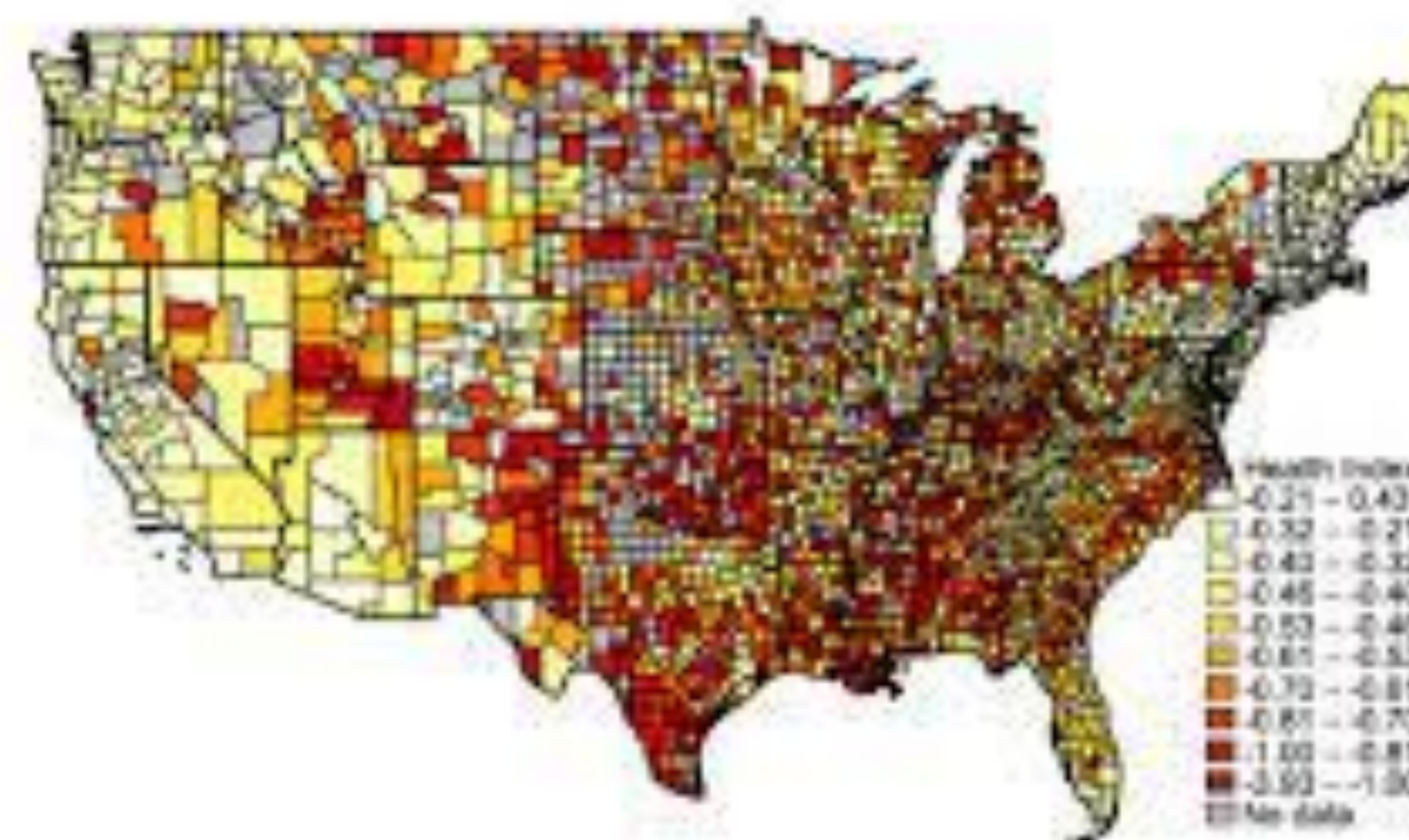
That means more than **23 million Americans**, including millions of children, are without consistent or easy access to fresh, nutrient-dense meals and groceries.¹



Some of the traumatic effects these food deserts have on public health include **growing rates of chronic disease and obesity.**

¹ Retrieved on June 13, 2016, from letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/healthy-communities

Average Health Index of Store Purchases by County



CONCLUSIONS

Why it takes more than a grocery store to eliminate a ‘food desert’

- Change in behavior is just as important as building a reasonably priced healthy choice grocery store
- Purchasing health foods and preparing healthy meals needs to become ‘routine or new normal’
- Nutritional education and a change in cultural food norms away from unhealthy foods needs to be part of the implementation

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1. Consider Food Co-ops, Nonprofits, and Government-run Supermarkets
2. Establish Bus Stop Farmers Markets
3. Support Community Gardens
4. Improve Public Transportation Options
5. Implement Dollar Store Restrictions
6. Ensure Availability of Adequate Healthcare Facilities Including Dental, Eye and Family Medicine
7. Provide Accessible Recreational Facilities

REFERENCES

- Diez Roux, A. V., & Mair, C. (2010). Neighborhoods and health. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1186(1), 125–145. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.2009.05333.x>
- Engler-Stringer, R., Fuller, D., Abeykoon, A. M. H., Olauson, C., & Muhajarine, N. (2019). An Examination of Failed Grocery Store Interventions in Former Food Deserts. *Health Education & Behavior*, 46(5), 749–754. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198119853009>
- Engler-Stringer, R., Muhajarine, N., Ridalls, T., Abonyi, S., Vatanparast, H., Whiting, S., & Walker, R. (2016). The good food junction: a community-based food store intervention to address nutritional health inequities. *Jmir Research Protocols*, 5(2), 52. <https://doi.org/10.2196/resp.rot.5303>
- Karpyn, A., Young, C., & Weiss, S. (2012). Reestablishing Healthy Food Retail: Changing the Landscape of Food Deserts. *Childhood Obesity*, 8(1), 28–30. <https://doi.org/10.1089/chi.2011.0113>
- Life In America's Food Deserts, How Poverty And Suburbanization Have Impacted Public Health. (2018, September 13). Kent. <https://onlinedegrees.kent.edu/college-of-public-health/community/causes-of-food-deserts>
- United States. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service. (2009). Access to affordable and nutritious food: measuring and understanding food deserts and their consequences: report to congress ([Rev. Sept. 3, 2009]). U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. <https://longwooduniversity.on.worldcat.org/oclc/680323030>