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Nutrition Perspective: Research Paper

Give a Summary of the Documentary

Vegucated is a documentary that follows three meat and cheese loving New Yorkers who agree to adopt a vegan diet for six weeks, as well as, learn what veganism is all about. Before starting their journey they have no idea that there is a lot more than steak at stake and that the planet's fate may fall on their plates. They learn that veganism includes; "health benefits that associate with lifestyle, the living conditions of animals are extremely poor on production farms, the environment suffers from livestock farming, and that making lifestyle changes that go against the norms of culture and society" ("Vegucated.").

The individuals begin to uncover the hidden sides of animal agriculture that gets them thinking whether the solutions offered in films regarding food is going far enough. They start to risk their chances by exposing an industry they supported just weeks before their vegan challenge. This documentary showcases the rapid and at times comedic evolution of three individuals who are trying to change in a culture that appears dead set against it ("Vegucated.").

Which Documentary Did You Choose? Why?

For this Nutrition Perspective Research Paper, I decided to choose the documentary Vegucated. I personally thought it was interesting to see other individuals' thoughts and

experiences of trying the vegan lifestyle. It's something that I feel like I can relate to, considering I'm a vegetarian--borderline vegan.

Who is the Author? What is Their Nutrition Background?

The filmmaker of Vegucated is Marisa Miller Wolfson, who is a full time food activist and has been a vegan for over ten years. Wolfson has organized about seventy grassroots workshops and screenings of award winning documentaries about healthy, humane, eco-friendly eating all across North America ("About Your Vegucators."). Her first film was Vegucated, where it has gone on screen at six film festivals, won multiple awards, screened in over 100 cities around the world, and became a digital bestseller. Since then, Wolfson has enjoyed vegucating 2,500 plus members on her free online coaching program "Vegan at Heart" ("About Your Vegucators.").

When Was This Documentary Produced? Do You Think the Themes Are Still Applicable Today? Why or Why Not?

Vegucated was produced on September 10, 2011. It premiered at the Toronto Independent Film Festival, where Vegucated had received the best documentary award ("About Your Vegucators."). I do believe that the theme of veganism is heavily applicable today, there is a lot more attention on veganism and vegetarianism. Today, there are commercials and advertisements promoting vegan and vegetarian products, such as; Morningstar Farms TV commercial promoting black bean/veggie patties that are made from plants.

There are an abundance of food alternatives that individuals can convert from a meat diet to a vegan/vegetarian diet. Some alternatives includes; tofu, vegan meats, tempeh, plant based

milk, beans, lentils, etc. Many of these items are considered a healthier option, as well as, contribute to a smaller carbon footprint.

Compare and Contrast 3 Topics in the Documentary to Your Textbook.

The American diet is 40% of calories in mammal products, 50% of calories in processed foods (pasta, salad oil, sugar, pretzels, chips, soft drinks, etc.). That leaves 9% left, half of that is white potato, the other half is an unrefined plant (FRUFP, fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, etc.). From scientific studies around the world, the increased volume of unrefined plant food in the diet of a particular population, the extent of heart disease and cancer decreases and almost disappears (*Vegucated*).

Due to Americans consuming a diet that contains mainly animal products and processed foods, it has led to obesity. It is estimated that more than 35% of adults are currently obese, two-thirds of adults and one-third of children are overweight or obese. It is emphasized of how important the American diet needs major improvement. There needs to be an increase of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, while decreasing the consumption of refined grains and high fat meats (Smith).

A lecture given by T. Colin Campbell--a professor Emeritus at Cornell University--spoke about the China study. It is considered the most comprehensive study of nutrition ever conducted. A twenty year project examined the relationship between diet and disease in one of the few areas in the world where individuals still consume a mostly plant based diet. The study had shown that as soon as little bit of animal food is consumed in the diet, blood cholesterol levels start to go up, cancer starts to appear, heart disease eventually starts to appear as well. The

connection between meat and dairy consumption and disease has been confirmed over and over again in scientific studies (*Vegucated*).

According to the textbook, colorectal cancers are a leading cause of cancer deaths. A study had shown results of 380 cases of colon cancer and 110 cases of rectal cancer. As a group, vegetarians were 22% less likely to get colorectal cancer--19% for colon cancer and 29% for rectal cancer--than meat eaters. When the results were broken down, it showed that pescovegetarians had a 43% lower risk, vegans a 16% lower risk, lacto-ovo-vegetarians a 18% lower risk, and semi-vegetarians a 8% lower risk (Smith).

Vegans have a 26% lower chance of dying from America's number one killer--heart disease. This is due to that vegans avoid meat and dairy, which can clog arteries from fat and cholesterol. Nutrition professionals state that appropriately vegetarian diets, including total vegetarian or vegan diets are; healthful, nutritionally adequate, and provides health benefits (*Vegucated*).

In more recent events, there is an increase in Americans that are choosing plant based dietary patterns. In a 2012 study from the Vegetarian Resource Group had found 4% of U.S. adults, about nine million individuals to be vegetarian, while two million to be strictly vegans. Maintaining a vegetarian or vegan diet can reduce cholesterol, which is a waxy lipid found in all body cells, that is only found in food of animal origins (Smith).

What Did You Learn About Nutrition From Completing This Assignment?:

What New Idea/Point of View Did You Learn About?

Veganism and vegetarianism is something that I am familiar with, however, It's good to have my memory refreshed, as well as, learn newer components. Some newer points and views

that I learned from watching Vegucated, is a more in depth of how different kinds of animals are slaughtered. This concept is something I was aware of, but I have tried to avoid because it is hard to watch and to know what is happening to these animals.

Will You Incorporate the Themes/Ideas You Learned About In Your Own Life? Why or Why Not?

I do feel like I already incorporate many themes and ideas from concepts learned from this assignment. The themes and ideas mentioned in the film Vegucated is something I deal with in everyday life. I'm a vegetarian that is borderline a vegan. I incorporate a diet that involves fruits, vegetables, beans, etc. while excluding many animal products, such as; meat, milk, and eggs.

Works Cited

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