



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 17, 2018

## Another Government Boondoggle: \$430,000 Study of Latino Food Shopping Habits

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is abusing taxpayer dollars once again, this time by issuing a \$430,000 grant for a study on the grocery store purchases of American Latino families. The study is yet another example of unconstitutional government overreach, and it raises the possibility for the government to intervene in the dietary habits of its citizens, despite its strongly negative record in this area.



The College Fix reports that the grant money was given to San Diego State University professor Iana Castro, who will follow Latino American families through the supermarket as they buy their food in order to understand their shopping habits.

Castro will specifically be analyzing conversations between parents and their children throughout their shopping trip, and determining the products on which the shoppers' eyes land first.

The grant proposal for the study explains the "public health relevance" of the study:

The proposed research will identify in-store and parent-child factors that influence grocery purchasing behavior, a behavior that occurs multiple times per week and has implications for dietary intake and diet quality through foods and beverages consumed. The modifiability of in-store and parent-child factors makes them excellent intervention targets, and examining their influence on grocery purchasing behavior is innovative and significant.

Of course, there is no constitutional relevance for the study, which ultimately represents yet another example of government overreach, but then again, there is also no constitutional basis for a Department of Health and Human Services.

Not only have such studies probably been done thousands of times by private companies looking to market their products better, making such a government study completely unnecessary, the larger and perhaps more frightening component is just what the government intends to do with the information derived from the study. Will it begin regulating how stores display their products based on where the study's shoppers' eyes land? Will the government use the information to regulate what people can buy, or what quantities?

It is not out of the realm of possibility that the federal government would study the habits of its citizens only to use that information to alter their behaviors. The Obama administration, for example, was a major proponent of the use of behavioral psychology on American citizens and even established the White House Social and Behavioral Science Team (SBST), which partnered with other government agencies to offer information on specific behaviors that could be used to their advantage. President Obama's regulatory czar, Cass Sunstein, even authored a book entitled *Nudge — Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*, which provided a variety of behavioral psychology measures that



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could be used to “nudge” Americans toward healthier lifestyles while giving them the impression that they reached those decisions by themselves.

Of course, the federal government cannot truthfully claim to protect individual liberties while also advocating the use of behavioral psychology. Sunstein stated that the presence of too many choices can be confusing to the American people because they are too ignorant and undisciplined to make proper decisions.

According to Sunstein, “Once we know that people are human and have some Homer Simpson in them, then there’s a lot that can be done to manipulate them. Sometimes we have self-control problems, sometimes we’re impulsive. In these circumstances, both public and private institutions, without coercing, can make our lives a lot better.”

That same premise was the basis for President Obama’s healthcare law, according to the law’s chief architect, Jonathan Gruber, who admitted that the legislation was written intentionally vague and without transparency because of “the stupidity of the American voter.”

Beyond all this, the federal government should play no role in the dietary habits of the American people, not simply because there is no constitutional provision for it, though that should be reason enough, but because the government has a history of proving its lack of understanding when it comes to health issues.

For example, the Food and Drug Administration continually approves vaccines and drugs that have long been proven to have horrific, and even fatal, side effects. Foods such as aspartame and genetically modified plants and organisms have been given the nod by the same agency, despite the mounting evidence against them that has caused them to be banned throughout Europe. The USDA approves of meat pumped full of antibiotics and hormones, which have been proven to pose long-term health risks to consumers.

The federal government has also long advocated low-fat, high-carbohydrate diets — especially through the food pyramid — despite scientific evidence that a high-fat, low-carbohydrate diet is [better](#) for one’s health and that the sugars found in breads and cereals lead to diabetes, which nearly 10 percent of Americans suffer from, a number that is growing.

Obesity has become a health epidemic in the United States, largely because of the “foods” approved by government agencies that are devoid of nutrition, thanks to significant processing and the use of chemicals.

But will the \$430,000 study conclude that the better solution is for the government to stay out of regulating foods? Not likely.

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