This article focuses on the impact of race, ethnicity, and culture on obesity. Obesity has become a major issue for children and adolescents in America. Many believe that the epidemic began in the 1980's, when nutritional and exercise habits changed significantly. Eating habits are a major contributor to the obesity epidemic, but it is also important to determine the biological factors related to obesity. This article compares people from a multitude of races and a wide range of ethnicities to determine the connection to obesity. Both race and ethnicity are constantly changing, making it difficult to compare groups over a long period of time. Culture also plays a major role in the eating and exercising habits of America's youth.

Patterns of childhood obesity can easily be detected among different races and ethnicities. Non-white Americans tend to have a higher prevalence of obesity, although it is common for white Americans to be obese as well. Researchers have found that African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans have a higher incidence of obesity than other ethnic groups. Gender has also been found to have a role in obesity. The rate at which adolescents reach puberty impacts obesity. Females who reach puberty at an earlier age tend to have a greater chance of becoming obese. In particular, African American females often reach puberty before white females. This plays a role in the higher prevalence of obesity in African Americans.

Socioeconomic status also plays a major role in the obesity rate. The area in which families live has a major affect on the types of foods readily available. Families in a lower socioeconomic class find it much more difficult to purchase healthy foods. The price of healthy foods has increased immensely when compared to foods with much lower nutritional value. This makes it more difficult for families to provide their children with the nutrition needed to develop properly.

Culture likely plays the most significant role in obesity. Many parents do not consider their obese children to be unhealthy because certain cultures prefer a much different body image. Latin American mothers, for example, tend to desire plumper children than white Americans. Culture also dictates the body image that is deemed to be acceptable. In African American culture, the ideal figure for women is significantly larger than for white women. American culture is composed of a blend of cultures from all over the world. Acculturation in America affects obesity by encouraging the abandonment of traditional beliefs in exchange for American habits of eating and exercise. Acculturation in the American is linked with a significant decrease in physical activity and an increase in sedentary recreation. When families arrive in American, it is not uncommon for the amount of home cooked meals to decrease significantly. Americans frequently dine in restaurants, where they consume more calories. Americans also snack more often between meals.

It is important for Americans of every race, ethnicity, and culture to be aware of the risks associated with obesity. Obese children and adults often have much higher morbidity, with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. This article brings to attention the actions of Americans that place them at a higher risk of obesity. Americans need to take this article and use it to change their own eating and exercise habits.