

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MEXICAN VS MEXICAN-AMERICAN DIET AND RATES OF OBESITY THROUGH TWO CASE STUDIES



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DATA COLLECTION

- ✘ Santa Elena, Yucatan (2014) and Laramie, Wyoming (2016)
 - + Rural populations 30-45 minutes from larger cities
 - + Conducted interviews with volunteer participants in both locations



OBESITY TRENDS/STATISTICS

- ✘ 69% of Mexicans are overweight and 33% are obese
- ✘ 40-45% of Mexican-Americans are obese
- ✘ Obesity leads to: cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, hypertension, hyperlipidemia



IMPACT ON HEALTHCARE

- ✘ Mexican-Americans account for 11% of the US population
- ✘ 27% of Mexican-Americans are without health insurance
- ✘ Only 27-42% of obese Mexican-Americans are advised by health care providers to manage their weight
- ✘ Mexican-Americans who are less likely to receive advice: speak Spanish at home, are male, are of advanced age, are of low economic standing, have no health insurance, have few/no morbid health conditions

TRADITIONAL FOODS ARE HEALTHY

- ✘ Beans, squash, corn (tortillas), onion, tomato, peppers, chicken, and pork
- ✘ These foods are rich in: complex carbs, vitamins/minerals, protein, fiber, antioxidants
- ✘ Homegrown or fresh



COMMON FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO OBESITY FOR BOTH POPULATIONS

- ✘ Overconsumption of calorically dense foods
- ✘ Increased frequency of consumption
- ✘ Lack of education concerning diet and obesity
- ✘ Poor dietary choices



FACTORS LEADING TO OBESITY THAT DIFFER BETWEEN THE TWO POPULATIONS

✘ Santa Elena:

- + Soft drinks, packaged foods, and highly processed foods are eaten in conjunction with the traditional Yucatecan diet, with no apparent reduction in meal size
- + Sheer amount of food consumed

✘ Laramie:

- + Unhealthy restaurant food and fast food are replacing traditional Mexican dishes
- + Increased acculturation leads to poorer dietary choices
- + High frequency of consumption
- + Disappearance of healthy foods, such as fruits

PACKAGED/PROCESSED FOODS

- ✘ Cookies, chips, crackers, pastries, French fries, sugary cereals, pasta, frozen foods, sugary beverages
- ✘ Heavy in simple carbs, lacking in micronutrients, added preservatives
- ✘ Flour or potato-based carbs (as opposed to complex, corn or other vegetable-based carbs)

FOOD PRICES, FOOD AVAILABILITY & FAST FOOD

- ✘ Eating out used to only occur on special occasions, now it's a common occurrence
- ✘ Home-cooked meals take time and effort
- ✘ Unhealthy foods are less expensive and more available than healthy foods



ACCULTURATION & (IN)ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH

- ✘ Increased fat and sugar intake
- ✘ Increased waist circumference/abdominal obesity
- ✘ Less tortillas (low fat, high fiber)
- ✘ Within one generation, the influence of the Mexican diet is almost lost
- ✘ Higher language acculturation is associated with poorer diet and greater body weight

OVEREATING

- ✘ “Everything is about eating”
- ✘ Food is family
- ✘ No defined eating schedule



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✘ Lay health educators
 - + Culturally sensitive and family oriented
- ✘ La vida buena's salsa aerobics
 - + Local "promotoras" recruited and enrolled Mexican-American women in an exercise class
- ✘ Portion size guidelines
 - + Thumb = fat, fist = fruits/grains, palm = meat