P112 (continued)

Background (Background, Rationale, Prior Research, and/or Theory): Availability of healthier foods through full-service grocery stores contribute to dietary choice and risk of related chronic diseases. However, evidence is not strong that simply bringing new supermarkets to underserved neighborhoods improves food purchasing, consumption, and health outcomes of local consumers.

Objective: The purpose was to identify concerns facing existing grocery stores operating outside mainstream retail food locales in making food available to low-income households within a changing global food retail environment.

Study Design, Setting, Participants, Intervention: We conducted a qualitative study using research methods based on grounded theory at three research sites representing rural, village, and inner city communities in upstate New York. A naturalistic approach was used to understand the experience of running a grocery business from the perspective of grocers living and working in underserved locations. The social-ecological model framed the project. Three organizational models were examined: chain stores, franchises, and independently-owned operations. Fourteen retail owners and managers, with 28 of their customers, were recruited using purposive and theoretical sampling and then interviewed.

Outcome Measures and Analysis: The constant comparative method and periodic peer debriefings led to focusing on organizational structures and locations. Analysis included coding, diagramming and matrix construction.

Results: Grocers reported these concerns influencing ability to run their business: consumer demand, product management (access to wholesale distribution channels), employee and labor relations, local and global competition, access to capital, government relations at all levels. Meaningful differences were found between chain and non-chain stores in their ability to perform economic functions versus social functions important to underserved neighborhoods.

Conclusions and Implications: Two grocery store operator management typologies emerged, one more capable of meeting community economic needs, the other more attuned to social needs. These appear related to chain vs. non-chain store structure. By familiarizing themselves with what grocers need in order to stay in business, those advocating for retail food availability in underserved areas can better support existing stores.

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P113 Looking Through Asian Lenses: Perceptions Toward U.S. Food and the Food Environment

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Background (Background, Rationale, Prior Research, and/or Theory): Asian international students number about 449,714 in the U.S. Their poor eating habits and increased health risks have been described. However, their perceptions, how they navigate a new food environment, and how these are connected to their food consumption have not been explored.

Objective: To examine how Asian international students perceive U.S. food and the food environment.

Study Design, Setting, Participants, Intervention: A cross-sectional design using an online survey administered to East Asian international students ($n = 511$; female 67.1%; mean age 24.8 years;) at two public and two private universities in New York state.

Outcome Measures and Analysis: A 13-item perception questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale and a food frequency questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the perceptions toward U.S. food and the food environment. Multiple regression analysis was performed to analyze how perceptions were related to demographic factors and current food consumption. Content analysis with NVivo software was used to analyze the qualitative part of the survey.

Results: Students tended to agree that much food is being wasted, portions in restaurants and stores are large, and advertisements and marketing of fast food and processed food are ubiquitous. They disagreed that the price of food is cheap, and that meals in restaurants are well balanced. When they stayed longer in the U.S. ($B = .042$, $P = .05$) and became more acculturated ($B = .205$, $P = .000$), their perceptions toward the food environment became more positive regarding quality, variety, availability, safety, and price of food. When they had positive perceptions toward the food environment regarding these features of food, they increased their whole food consumption ($B = .197$; $P = .000$). Content analysis showed that students often mentioned that there were differences in food culture (29%) and U.S. food system factors (27.6%).

Conclusions and Implications: Nutrition education should involve helping students understand and successfully navigate the U.S. food environment so they can make healthier food choices while they stay here.

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P114 Perceptions of Childhood Obesity are Related to Food and Beverages Served in Head Start Programs: An Examination of Current Practices Across North Carolina

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