

Relationship between Acculturation and Diet Quality among Hispanic Adolescents

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BACKGROUND

Acculturation is a dynamic and complex process that adopts elements of the dominant culture, which include food, attitudes, beliefs, languages, art, music, rituals and faith/religion. This melting pot vs. salad bowl framework may impact health. The melting pot advocates for assimilation into one dominant culture whereas the salad bowl encourages distinctions that contribute to unique aspects of every group. The salad bowl approach to health suggests that health promotion and disease prevention are broad goals that coincide with identity and heritage.



OBJECTIVE

To determine relationships between levels of acculturation and diet quality among first and second-generations of Hispanic adolescents in the United States.

STUDY DESIGN, SETTING, PARTICIPANTS

We utilized the 2015-2016 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) sample, consisting of 447 Hispanic adolescents ages 12 to 19 (46.5% male, 53.5% female) in the US. Diet quality from the Healthy Eating Index (HEI) was measured using two-day food records.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES, ANALYSIS

Data was cleaned and analyzed using SAS version 9.4. Level of acculturation was scored via NHANES content of generational items for parental citizenship status and language items for frequency of native language spoken at home. HEI was scored as poor (0 to 49), moderate (50 to 79) and good (80 to 100). Multiple logistic regression measured acculturation vs. diet quality and controlled for gender, age and income. The Tukey test confirmed findings.

RESULTS

Gender and income had no influence on HEI whereas older age groups were associated with higher HEI scores ($p < 0.008$). Level of acculturation was associated with HEI ($p < 0.05$). Among adolescents with poor diet quality, 38% with high acculturation had poor diet quality compared to 20.4% with medium acculturation and 6.8% with low acculturation ($p < 0.009$).



N=208

N=239

	Acculturation						P value
	Less Acculturated		Medium Acculturated		More Acculturated		
HEI Range	N	%	N	%	N	%	0.009
Poor	27	6.80	81	20.40	150	37.8	
Moderate	15	3.78	61	15.3	61	15.3	
Good	1	0.25	1	0.25	0	0	

CONCLUSION

Findings suggest that Americanized Hispanic adolescents consume more standard American foods and fewer meals prepared at home. Future investigations should explore the impact of acculturation on diet quality among other ethnicities and evaluate culturally appropriate interventions in the US.

REFERENCE

Berray, M. (2019). A critical review of the melting pot and salad bowl assimilation and integration theories. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 6(1), 142-151.

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