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# Evaluating the Association between Acculturation and Unhealthy Food and Beverage Consumption Among Latinos

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## INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES:

Latinos are the largest growing minority group in the United States and currently comprise nearly 17.8% of the population<sup>1</sup>. Studies have shown that Latino children and adults are more obese and overweight than their non-Hispanic counterparts<sup>1</sup>. Obesity poses a threat to overall health and well-being<sup>2</sup>. Increased acculturation among Hispanics has been associated with a decrease in the quality of dietary habits and an increase in the prevalence of obesity<sup>3</sup>. This project sought to evaluate the prevalence of unhealthy food and beverage consumption among Latinos in Southern California based on their country of birth.

**METHODS:** In this cross-sectional study, a closed ended survey to evaluate the behavior and lifestyle habits of a Latino community in Southern California was developed and utilized. Survey questions included questions on country of origin, language preference for communication and frequency in consumptions of packaged/fast foods and sugar sweetened beverages. Participants recruited were of Latino heritage and were aged 18 and older. Descriptive analyses included frequency counts and statistical

comparison of country of birth, language and dietary habits. Questions pertaining to acculturation, eating habits were analyzed for frequency and statistical correlational significance via SPSS v. 24.

**RESULTS:** Consumption of fast food/packaged food was statistically significant between those born in the US vs. foreign-born participants and those who spoke predominantly Spanish vs. those who spoke predominantly English (both  $p < .000$ ). The consumption of sugary drinks was marginally significant between the same groups ( $p = .055$ ).

**CONCLUSIONS:** As Latinos acculturate, they are more likely to consume fast/processed foods, and sugary drinks to a lesser degree. Further studies should seek to evaluate the efficacy of culinary intervention in decreasing the consumption of processed foods in acculturated Latino Americans.

## REFERENCES:

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“Country of birth and language are uniquely associated with intakes of fat, fiber, and fruits and vegetables among Mexican American women in the United States.” J Am Diet Assoc **108**(3): 473-480.