Healthy Eating and Active Living - Mapping Attributes Using Participatory Photographic Surveys: Building Leadership Capacity in the Latino Population

Yanet Nunez* and Tina D. Vera MPH*

1School of Biological and Population Health Sciences, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR
2Family and Community Health, Oregon State University Extension Service Linn & Benton County

INTRODUCTION

Linn County is one of the least healthy counties in Oregon, and ranks low in health outcomes (24th of 33 counties) and health factors (29th of 33 counties). With 36.1% of its population overweight and a 30% obesity rate, Linn County weighs in heavier than Oregon averages – only 56% of residents meet daily physical activity recommendations. These statistics reveal the need for a comprehensive plan to address obesity-promoting conditions in Linn County.

Latinos are disproportionately impacted by obesity and related diseases. The burdens of these diseases are compounded by the socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental factors common in Latino communities. In Oregon, Latinos are five times more likely to die prematurely than Caucasians, non-Hispanic Oregonians. In Linn County, 83% of Latinos have incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level, compared to 12% in the general population. For low-income Linn County Latinos, financial constraints and neighborhood conditions increase food insecurity and limit access to healthy foods and safe places to exercise.

Latinos constitute approximately 11.7% of Albany’s population – this number is expected to grow an additional 18.4% by 2025. Healthy Eating, Active Living - Mapping Attributes using Participatory Photographic Surveys (HEAL MAPPS) was used to engage Albany’s Latino community to explore the environmental conditions that support or hinder healthy eating and physical activity behaviors among youth and families.

HEAL MAPPS is a community-based participatory research tool developed by OSU obesity prevention researchers. Latinos were mobilized to assess Albany’s HEAL-related issues, prioritize concerns, and further develop advocacy skills and action groups. This project engaged emerging Latino leaders and residents with the wider community and increased capacity for improving the local HEAL environment and health inequities that exist in Albany.

The specific aims of research: (a) provide culturally and linguistically appropriate leadership training (b) increase leadership skills and confidence in civic engagement (c) increase participants’ civic engagement, (i.e. Make policy and program recommendations, develop a policy action plan, and disseminate project findings to the community and local policy makers.)

RESULTS

- 18 Participants generated maps representing routes traveled on foot or by motor vehicle as they interacted with Albany, Oregon food and physical activity environments.
- Participants photographed over 222 features of the community related to healthy eating and physical activity for children, youth, and adults in Albany. Preliminary analysis of the acculturation survey revealed most participants are not acculturated to the prevailing culture.

STUDY DESIGN

- **Step 1: Create outreach plan**
  - Network analysis and payor mapping to identify key institutions and organizations individuals who support the health of Latino families.

- **Step 2: Stakeholders are trained in HEAL MAPPS**
  - Familiarize Activas leadership group to map and analyze their direct environment and build capacity for engaging the community related to healthy eating and physical activity environment.

- **Step 3: Focus group**
  - Activas discuss their mapping route on foot and by car.

- **Step 4: Community Conversation**
  - Community residents and stakeholders gather to look at photographs and share their stories of what makes it easy or difficult to eat healthy food and be physically active.

- **Step 5: Developing Strategies**
  - Familias Activas leadership group proposes strategies to develop a plan to address community food and physical activity environment.

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SUMMARY

- **Steps 1, 2, 3 (completed)**
  - A focus on relationship building leads to the accomplishment of program goals.
  - Cultural understanding and approachability and/or bilingual language skills are a must.
  - Leadership development is a long process. For long-term participant support, program needs to develop sustainable infrastructure.
  - Leadership training should be centered in a popular education methodology. Allow participants to come to their own realizations and conclusions.
  - Community and state events can be used as a civic engagement activities.

- Steps 4 and 5 (in progress)
  - Community report will be completed and available in Spanish and English.
  - Familias Activas leadership group will develop advocacy campaign around one identified priority.

REFERENCES


U.S. Census Bureau. [http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/41/41043.html]


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