Dietary Acculturation among Filipino Immigrants

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Goals

- Contextualize health trends among U.S. Filipino immigrants by focusing on dietary change

- Narrate and explore the meaning of dietary acculturation as voiced by members of the Filipino immigrant community
Philippines – U.S. migration is often described as a search for higher standard quality of life and economic opportunity.¹

In 2010, Filipino Americans numbered 3.4 million – 1.1% of the U.S. population.²
Filipinos in the United States

Percent Filipino, 2000

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 1 and 2000 County and County Equivalent Areas cartographic boundary file.

Percent of population claiming Filipino ethnicity by county.

- 19.1 - 24.3
- 9.3 - 19.1
- 2.4 - 9.3
- 0.4 - 2.4
- 0.0 - 0.4
Background

- The Filipino-American population is at increased risk for overweight or obese compared to other Asian American groups.\textsuperscript{3-5}

- Filipino Americans are at high risk for various chronic diseases, especially Type 2 diabetes\textsuperscript{6,7} and hypertension.\textsuperscript{8}
Health Status of Filipino Americans

- National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS)³
  - National population-based health study in the U.S., May 2002-December 2003
  - Filipino-American women had the highest rates of cancers
  - 47% of Filipino-American women reported having at least 2 or more chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, cancer, hypertension)
  - Filipino-American women had the highest proportion of overweight and obesity
Behavioral Risk Factor in Asian American Women by Ethnic Subgroup—Body Mass Index

- **Other**
  - Obese: 35.40%
  - Overweight: 23.10%
  - Underweight: 4.20%

- **Vietnamese**
  - Obese: 11.60%
  - Overweight: 15.70%
  - Underweight: 8.50%

- **Filipino**
  - Obese: 37.10%
  - Overweight: 25.70%
  - Underweight: 1.80%

- **Chinese**
  - Obese: 15.70%
  - Overweight: 15.80%
  - Underweight: 11.10%
Health Status of Filipino Americans

- **2005 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS)^4**
  - Statewide population-based study prevalence of BMI in California
  - Japanese and Filipino-American men had the highest proportion of increased/high risk individuals for being overweight or obese among all other Asian American groups
  - Filipino-American women had a higher proportion of increased/high risk individuals for being overweight or obese than all other Asian American groups
Health Status of Filipino Americans

- Healthy Asian Americans Project (HAAP)\(^5\)
  - Self-administered survey in Southeast Michigan during health fairs, screening data derived from blood tests by University of Michigan, clinical measurements (height and weight), 2004-2008
  - Filipino Americans reported higher rates of hypertension compared to other Asian groups
  - Chinese and Filipino Americans had higher rates of cholesterol problems
  - Filipinos had the highest proportion with abnormal blood pressure values
  - Filipinos were the most likely to be overweight
Healthy Asian Americans Project (HAAP)

Distribution of Cardiovascular Risk Factors by Ethnic Group

- **Vietnamese**
  - Overweight (BMI > 25): 20.00%
  - Total Cholesterol (>200): 19.50%
  - HBP Systolic (>140): 47.40%
  - HBP Diastolic (>90): 17.10%

- **Hmong**
  - Overweight (BMI > 25): 15.60%
  - Total Cholesterol (>200): 21.90%
  - HBP Systolic (>140): 39.30%
  - HBP Diastolic (>90): 42.10%

- **Filipino**
  - Overweight (BMI > 25): 16.40%
  - Total Cholesterol (>200): 27.30%
  - HBP Systolic (>140): 66.70%
  - HBP Diastolic (>90): 31.80%

- **Chinese**
  - Overweight (BMI > 25): 19.50%
  - Total Cholesterol (>200): 16.40%
  - HBP Systolic (>140): 64.40%
  - HBP Diastolic (>90): 22.20%
Background

- Diet is a contributing factor in weight and chronic disease.
- The Filipino-American population has received relatively less attention in the public health research literature evaluating relationships between immigration and dietary changes.
Dietary Acculturation

Definition:
- The process by which immigrants adopt the dietary practices of the host country.⁹
Proposed Model of Dietary Acculturation: The process by which racial/ethnic immigrant or rural-urban migrant groups adopt the dietary patterns of their new environment.
Methods

- Semi-structured interviews (n = 11)

- Interviews were transcribed and coded using MAXQDA to identify themes

- Emerging themes from the interviews were identified and analyzed
Sample

- 11 Filipino Americans
- Residence in the U.S.: Since 1990
- Ages: 18 (2), 21 (3), 22 (3), 25 (1), 28 (1), 39 (1)
Filipino food is prioritized

- Definitely Filipino.
- Filipino food. The only time I don’t eat Filipino food is when I go out.
- It’s mostly Filipino food.
- I eat a lot of Filipino food.
- A lot of Filipino dishes. Although we have no time to cook, we usually go get food from Filipino restaurants.
- A mixed American and Filipino. When we first came here, we eat a lot Filipino food. As time went on, we started to incorporate American food.

Rice is a staple

- Usually my three main meals consist of some type of meat and accompanied with rice.
- I have rice and then ‘ulam.’ That’s it.
- Rice all the time. We have to have rice. Every meal that we eat, we have to have rice. And with like one ‘ulam,’ or one viand.
- There’s rice, and there’s something else.
- Rice is there. Rice is a big deal. I eat rice with my dishes most of the time.
- Rice and some vegetable concoction. Usually, there is some mock meat. Like, umm, meat substitutes.
- Oh, a lot of white rice! Every day.

Vegetables are less common

- I’d say 3 times a week.
- Only sometimes. Only when it’s on like part of Filipino dishes.
- Whenever we have vegetables. Whenever my family cooks vegetables. Not very frequent. Probably like twice a week. My dad cooks very meaty.
- Not every day. Not too often. I eat salads. I like meat better.
- Not a lot. I eat a lot of meat.
- Not so much. Not my favorite.
- Just a few times a week.
- I pick them all out. Like in pancit, I’ll take out the vegetables.
Typical Filipino Meal

- rice
- ulam
Conclusions

- No strong evidence of dietary acculturation that supports complete dietary change.

- Many individuals claim to eat more Filipino food than American food or others.

- Rice remains an important part of the diet in the majority of participants.

- Preliminary data suggest that Filipino Americans are not eating a lot of vegetables.
Limitations and Future Directions

- Factors including eating portion sizes, intake levels of different food groups, and socioeconomic status are important determinants of healthy eating and nutrition, but were not assessed in this project.

- The findings point to the need for more nuanced research on the meaning of dietary change, in order to understand health trends among immigrants.


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