

**Project Title:** Acculturation in the Fast Food Nation: Latinos (as) and the Texas Obesity Epidemic

**Investigator:** Natalie Ceballos

**Department:** Psychology

**Project Summary:**

Obesity is an issue of major concern in our society. Texas consistently ranks highly in reports of obesity prevalence, and young Latinos (as) comprise one of the most heavily affected groups within our state. Although much is known about the consequences of obesity, few studies have examined factors that may influence unhealthy eating among Latinos (as). Thus, this project was designed to investigate eating behaviors and acculturation changes relevant to food consumption in this population. To examine acculturation effects, data were collected from college students in central Texas, the Texas-Mexico border region, and in Mexico. Data consisted of both self-reported measures of food preferences and eating habits, as well as computerized tasks designed to assess automatic responses to food-related images and ability to control impulsive reactions. Preliminary results suggest that ethnic differences may exist among college-aged students with regard to food cravings and reasons for engaging in unhealthy eating. However, our analyses failed to find any significant differences in the accuracy of body weight/height reporting or body image satisfaction between Latino vs. Caucasian participants. The results of this project not only provide much needed information about factors related to the development of obesity in the Latino (a) population, but may also pave the way for the establishment of an externally funded program of research for the prevention and treatment of obesity within the Latino(a) community.

**Publication:**

1. Ceballos, N.A., Czyzewska, M., Cabezas, A., Hernandez, V., Perez, C., Ramon, E. (2009). Automatic processes in addiction. In Psychosocial analysis of the use of addictive substances. Mexico: Plaza y Valdes. (accepted, in press)
2. Ceballos, N.A., Czyzewska, M. (in press). Body image in Hispanic/Latino vs. European-American adolescents: implications for the treatment and prevention of obesity in underserved populations. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 21(3).

**Presentations:**

1. Ceballos, N.A., Czyzewska, M., Cabezas, A.M., Hernandez, V., Perez, C.A., Ramon, E. Procesos Automaticos de la Adiccion. Primer Congreso Internacional de Psicologial de la Region Noreste. Saltillo, Mexico. 10/2008
2. Ceballos, N.A., Czyzewska, M., Nichols, M., Rinehart, K. and Tedder, Z. Accuracy of self-reported body height and weight, and body image among Caucasian and Hispanic undergraduates with different BMI statuses. Southwestern Psychological Association, San Antonio, Texas. 4/2009

3. Czyzewska, M., Ceballos, N.A., Martinez, J. and Sample, Z. Food craving among Caucasian and Hispanic undergraduates of different BMI statuses. Southwestern Psychological Association, San Antonio, Texas. 4/2009

**External Grants:**

Using these pilot data we intend to prepare and submit a proposal in response to NIH program announcement PA-07-409, Health Research with Diverse Populations. However, as our data analyses are still underway, we have not completed such a proposal at this time.

**Student Number: 9**