

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Art
Debbie Namugayi

Will defend her thesis

**Social and Cultural Drivers of Meat Consumption
among Mexican American Millennials
in Tempe, AZ**

Abstract

The rise of meat consumption has been dramatic over the past half century. Demographic changes have led the shift in food choice over the past 50 years. The increase in meat is visible in Mexico as well, where there is an expanding economic interest in cattle production. Rising demand for meat in Mexico can be attributed to increased population and economic growth. The worst consequences of our modern food system are most evident in factory farming animals for consumption. The current production methods for raising animals for their meat requires a greater amount of resources than for producing grains, fruits, and vegetables, yet meat production is on an upward trend. The specific effects of meat consumption highlight the importance of understanding humans as actors in the food system.

Through a qualitative interview process, I intend to explore the specific cultural and social drivers of meat consumption in greater depth. Mexican American respondents between age 20 and 29 were chosen as the population of interest because of their regional dominance in the study area of Tempe, AZ and because of the high prevalence of meat in their cultural diets. Looking at millennials in particular is crucial because as the first generation born with technology and Internet as constants, they have formed unique characteristics never before seen in previous generations like baby boomers or Generation X. This sample population communicated motivations and constraints to their overall consumption patterns and the frequency and types of meat consumed.

This study found that time and cost were the driving factors behind food choice, given the hectic schedules of the sample population, who were mostly students at Arizona State University. Acculturation did not play an extensive

role as the regional influence of the Southwest U.S. allowed respondents' families access to traditional Mexican food while living in the US. The lack of sustainability knowledge and its connection to food choice indicates the importance of marketing that contextualizes decreased meat consumption. Rather than focusing solely on environmental outcomes, marketing tools highlighting health, financial, and economic benefits of eating less meat would encourage more consumers to decrease consumption.

Monday, November 3, 2014

9:00 a.m.

Wrigley Hall, Room 481

Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Kelli Larson, Chair

Dr. Erin Redman, Member

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