

Body Image, Physical Activity and Cultural Variables Underlying Race and Ethnicity among Latino Men

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What is the Purpose of this Study/Review?

- The Latino Men's Health Initiative was an National Institutes of Health–funded study designed to explore the role of cultural variables underlying race and ethnicity (acculturation, acculturative stress, ethnic identity, and cultural values) as it relates to correlates of overweight/obesity (diet, physical activity, and body image) among normal weight, overweight and obese Mexican and Puerto Rican men.
- The purpose of the study reported in this article was to examine whether or not there are differences in body image, physical activity and cultural variables between Mexican and Puerto Rican men.

What Is the Problem?

- The health of Latino men is a greatly understudied area and overweight and obesity is a significant public health concern among Latino men.
- Mexicans and Puerto Ricans are two of the largest Hispanic/Latino groups in the United States and they have high rates of overweight and obesity.
- Common correlates of obesity that have been examined in previous studies are diet, physical activity, and body image.
- Overall, there is a relative dearth of research examining body image, physical activity, and cultural variables between subgroups of Latino men.

What Are the Findings?

- Mexicans and Puerto Ricans did not differ in their current and ideal body image, body image discrepancy, body satisfaction, or how they described their weight.
- Puerto Ricans watched a greater number of hours of television per day than Mexicans.
- There were no significant differences between Mexican and Puerto Rican men in their participation in any regular activity designed to improve or maintain their physical fitness, the number of times or length they engaged in this activity, nor in their perceived exertion during this activity.
- Puerto Ricans reported a higher level of familism and *machismo* than Mexicans.
- Puerto Ricans and Mexicans did not differ in folk illness beliefs, fatalism or personalism, acculturation level, acculturative stress, or ethnic identity.

Who Should Care Most?

- Community-based agencies that conduct community-engaged programs focused on obesity in Latinos.

- Health care providers and health educators who focus on community participatory research and practice focused on obesity in Latino men.
- Researchers who conduct community-based participatory research focused on obesity in Latinos.

Recommendations for Action

- Programs focused on healthy eating, physical activity and body image interventions for Latino men should take into account similarities and differences between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in body image, physical activity and cultural values and ensure that interventions are addressing these issues in an appropriate manner.