Reviewer's report

Title: Mexican American mothers' made-from-scratch cooking, values and strategies help keep children well-fed in colonias along the Texas-Mexico border: results from a participant-driven photo elicitation study

Version: 1 Date: 9 June 2011

Reviewer: Lisa K Staten

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Overall
1. This paper is very lengthy and needs to be edited to be more concise. There is frequent repetition of several key points such as the discussion around the point of “donde come uno comen dos.” This is a good point but is discussed in four sections of the manuscript which is unnecessary. One mention in the results then discuss in the discussion. When highlighted in the strengths section there is not the need to restate the quote again but instead focus on the concept.

Background
1. On page 4, the authors state that while there are quantitative studies related to food and nutrition along the US-Mexico border, there are few qualitative studies. The authors should state what they believe is missing. The absence of qualitative studies is not enough reason to do a qualitative study. The introduction would be strengthened by highlighting the areas that the quantitative data lack.

2. The authors highlight PDPE as a key innovation in methodology. There needs to be a clearer delineation of the distinction between photo voice and PDPE.

Methods
1. Please provide a more detailed description of the assignment given to the participants. Were examples provided? How that assignment was worded guided the types of photos taken which should be discussed in the limitation section. A more detailed description of the assignment may clarify the linkage between asking participants to document their “food experience” and the two specific concepts the authors were exploring as indicated on page 7.

- Minor Essential Revisions

Background

Introduction
1. The meaning of the end of the sentence that states “Using their own photographs… in a meaningful way that was not separate from the daily lived experience” is not clear.

2. Typo on page 3 “including the lack immigration…”
Methods

1. Is there any potential bias from the participants having been part of the 2008 Colonia Household Food Inventory? All the participants were part of the SNAP program and WIC. Was there any potential bias in how they responded as a result of these programs? For example, have they received nutrition education about the importance of family meals or not eating fast food? Are any of the project promotoras affiliated with any of these programs which might influence the participants’ responses?

2. Did the lead promotora take part in the interviews? She was viewed as a key informant in interpreting the results, was she from one of the two colonias or similar SES? Also were the other four from those specific areas and if so for how long? Were their ages similar to the other women?

3. A statement is made that the “The balance of photographs was to be used for personal photographs.” Was that what was stated or was it just stated that they should use 15 to document the food experience and whatever they wanted for the rest? How that was phrased helps provide context for the interpretation of the non-food related photos.

4. Clarify if the promotoras had guidelines on what additional pictures to pick or was it up to their discretion.

5. Top of page 12, does the term reflection refer to photo quality or personal reflection?

Results

1. There was a great deal of overlap/redundancy between the mother’s orientation towards her children and the food values section.

2. Page 21 – top of page – For example, one mother explained her strategy… Seems like philosophy mighty be a better word than strategy in this context.

3. I found the Strategies section extremely interesting and applicable to health promotion activities.

Discussion

1. A lot of time was spent in the background section on the methodology. Given that this study seemed to reinforce a lot of previous studies, what exactly did the method of PDPE elicit that went beyond other qualitative approaches?

- Discretionary Revisions

Results

1. Perhaps the usage of additional subheads in the Results section would increase readability.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.