Karen Espinoza

CCM 260 SW

Professor De Onis

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Hispanic and Latino communities in Salem Oregon: Outdoor recreational programs and childhood obesity

Over the past decade, Oregonôs growth rate of the Hispanic and Latino[1] population has surpassed that of the national growth rate. Hispanic and Latino youth are the group most at risk for being overweight, and thus experience a higher susceptibility for childhood obesity. This research examines the Hispanic and Latino populationôs absence in dominant public health ‘ëó ñ Q P H –C ***discourses, and their childrenôs susceptibility to poor health conditions in Oregon. This study first explores local outdoor recreation programôs commitment and incorporation of family-based recreational activities in Salem, Oregon. This study further discusses how parental gatekeeping, and the dynamic status of the home environment influences Hispanic and Latino youthôs interaction with the outdoors. Issues of race, privilege, and environmental***

Oregon's population is composed of 12.8 percent of Hispanic and Latinos, while 76.4 percent are white, non-Hispanic or Latino (census.gov). White, non-Hispanic or Latino make up more than three fourths of Oregon's population, raising the following question: is the disproportion in population representation, also seen with health conditions, such as obesity? Approximately one third (32.4%) of the Hispanic and Latino population in Oregon are obese, while nearly one quarter (29%) among white, non-Hispanic and Latino are obese (stateofobesity.org). Oregon's Hispanic and Latino population has grown by 72 percent since the year of 2000, compared to only 50 percent nationwide (oregoncf.org). This disproportion between obese Hispanic and Latino vs. white, non-Hispanic or Latino adults is also reflected in children. Hispanic and Latino children from ages six to eleven are two times more likely to be overweight or obese at 25 percent, compared to 13.6 percent of white, non-Hispanic and Latino children (The Office of Minority Health). Given the disproportional health impacts between Hispanic and Latino children compared to white-non- Hispanic and Latino children, in this research project, I seek to explore how recreational outdoor programs, parental imprint, home environments, and the media, influence Hispanic and Latino youth's physical activity and thus, susceptibility for childhood obesity. Furthermore, I consider issues of race, privilege, and environmental, economic and intergenerational justice. Coming from an immigrant family, and being a Mexican immigrant myself, it is essential to raise awareness of how the Hispanic and Latino population are being represented and heard in predominant white spaces in Oregon.

In Salem Oregon, there exist a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities to engage youth, yet, very few are committed to engage one of the most vulnerable populations to

step further to connect Hispanic and Latino college students with environmental conservation mentors (latinooutdoors.org).

[2]Environmental Justice refers to the just treatment of all people regardless of their race, color, nationality, economic income etc. in respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws (pezullo, 2018).
[3]Intergenerational Justice is a principle of Principle of fairness, not only children and adults but also between the unborn generations to come (Pezullo, 2018).

Being aware of our culture, heritage and history, this program has y,

more active in a park or playground setting, in contrast to only 8 percent active in a childcare or school setting (

Oregon is home to the Hispanic and Latino population, and thus, this community needs to be represented in dominant public health discourses involving environmental justice, and recreational outdoor programs, to improve lifestyle habits, physical activity and reduce youth susceptibility to childhood obesity. Increasing outdoor recreational programs available to

[5]Agenda Setting refers to the media's capability to influence the public's perception and the relevance of an issue, by deciding what topics and stories will be covered and portrayed to be important (Pezullo, 2018).
[6]Symbolic Action is the usage of communication and behavior as a form of symbolic action. Where communication style can cause an action, and help people make sense of their own relationships with nature and values (Pezullo, 2018).

Hispanic and Latino youth and family members, can help increase both their local environmental awareness, science literacy and above all, the importance to stay physically active. Out of all recreational outdoor programs offered in Salem Oregon, few are family based, let alone, committed to serving the Hispanic and Latino youth community. Parental actions, feeding patterns, and the economic and environmental state of the home environment will reflect on the children's overall health. As the Hispanic and Latino community progressively expand in Oregon, and their children are the most susceptible to childhood obesity, further steps need to be taken to improve their representation in white spaces, such as outdoor recreational programs.

Bibliography

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