“Me dicen que es mejor”: A Portland, Oregon study on Latina attitudes and perceptions of organic foods

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Research Questions

• How do Latina women perceive and understand organic foods?
  – How is the term “organic” understood?
  – What values, if any, do they associate with organic foods?
  – How can this inform research on Latina women and organic agriculture?
Why women?

LATINA PERCEIVED DECISION-MAKING BY GENDER

- **FOOD**
  - Primarily Latinas: 67%
  - Both genders: 33%
  - Primarily Latino males: 1%

- **BEVERAGES**
  - Primarily Latinas: 55%
  - Both genders: 44%
  - Primarily Latino males: 0%

- **CLOTHES**
  - Primarily Latinas: 66%
  - Both genders: 34%
  - Primarily Latino males: 0%

- **HOME ELECTRONICS**
  - Primarily Latinas: 33%
  - Both genders: 50%
  - Primarily Latino males: 17%

- **PERSONAL ELECTRONICS**
  - Primarily Latinas: 38%
  - Both genders: 50%
  - Primarily Latino males: 12%

- **AUTO/ TRANSPORT**
  - Primarily Latinas: 30%
  - Both genders: 48%
  - Primarily Latino males: 22%

- **PHARMACEUTICALS**
  - Primarily Latinas: 59%
  - Both genders: 38%
  - Primarily Latino males: 2%

- **FAMILY FINANCES**
  - Primarily Latinas: 41%
  - Both genders: 50%
  - Primarily Latino males: 9%

- **INSURANCE**
  - Primarily Latinas: 38%
  - Both genders: 50%
  - Primarily Latino males: 11%

- **SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**
  - Primarily Latinas: 45%
  - Both genders: 52%
  - Primarily Latino males: 3%

*Nielsen, April 2013.*
†UGA Selig Center Multicultural Economy Study 2012.
Glenfair Neighborhood

• Most densely Latino (26.6%)\(^1\)
• Experienced significant growth
• Most ethnically and racially diverse
• Highest poverty rate in the city (36%)\(^2\)

1. Based on 2010 US Census Data
Participants
• Self-identified Latina women
• Head of household or primary food shopper
• Ages 18+

Interviews
• Door-to-door qualitative interviews
• English/Spanish
• Single answer and open-ended questionnaire
• Interviews coded thematically
Associations with organic

- Natural: 22
- Chemical/pesticide-free: 18
- Healthier: 5
- Expensive: 5
- Less calories: 4
- Better quality: 2

Attitudes toward organic

- Skepticism of organic label: 16
- Skepticism of organic as "better": 11
- Organics are like "food back home": 8
- Improves health by:
  - a) weight loss: 3
  - b) physical appearance: 2

*Total of 32 participants
Attitudes & Associations

• Naturalness tied to traditional methods of home

“Organic food is natural like you grow food in Mexico. My mother always grew her food like that (organically). She used to compost using peels.”

• Health and beauty
• Skepticism

“Well, I see it... But I don’t know how they grew it. Maybe they just put the sticker on and they don’t do anything different.”
Table 1: Stores most frequented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winco</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walmart</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa Imports</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Meyer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safeway</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albertson’s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapatio</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costco</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ways forward

• WIC and SNAP as education points for organic produce

• *Tiendas* as a partner for local organic growers

• Smaller, locally-owned
• More flexible
Acknowledgements

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