



Manager and Consumer Perspectives on Fruit and Vegetable Availability and Purchasing at Navajo Nation Small Stores

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*Dissertation completed in
collaboration with Community
Outreach and Patient Empowerment
Gallup, NM*

A Little About Me and My Previous Work in Navajo Nation

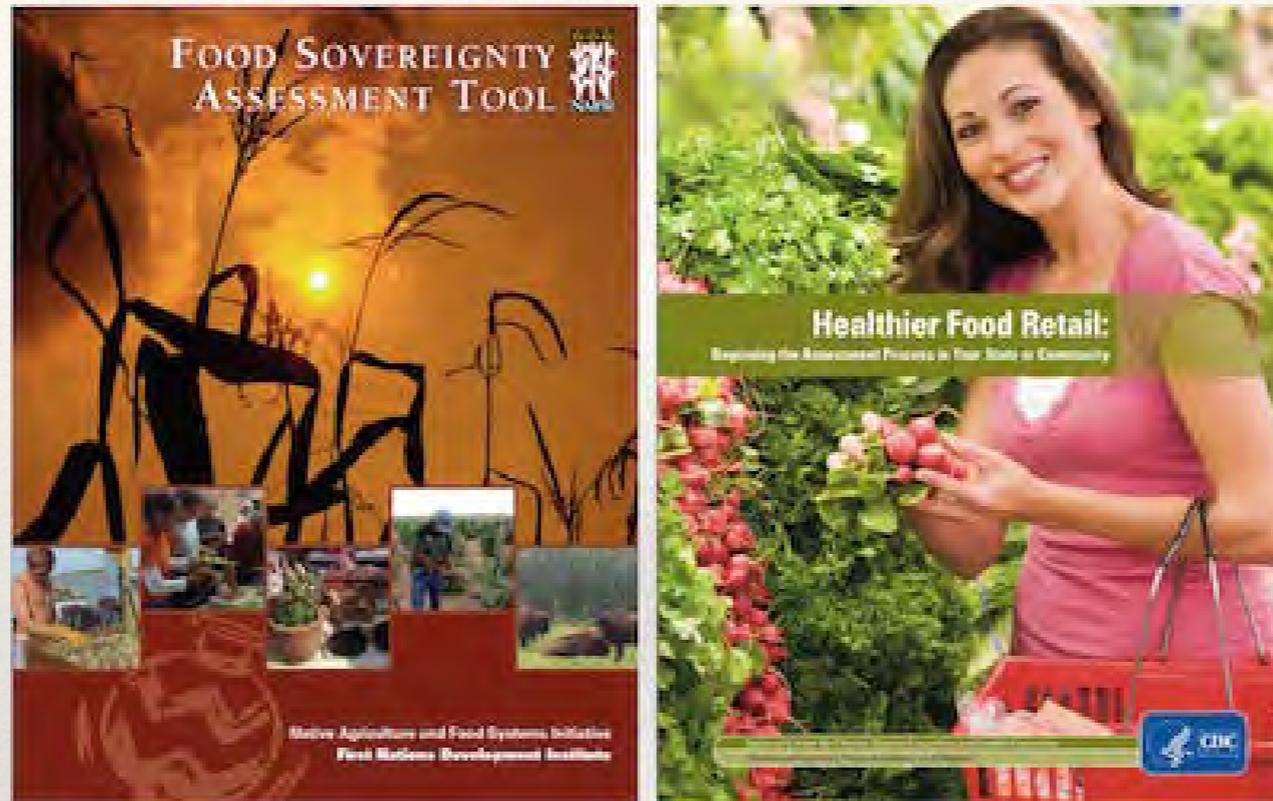


- 2010: Assisted with farmers-market development in border town, resulted in Navajo Nation mobile market
- 2012: Co-lead community food security assessment with community health workers
- 2013: Collected data for CDC/Navajo Division of Health study assessing healthy and unhealthy food availability across Navajo Nation and border towns
- 2015: Relocated to Gallup, NM – volunteering with Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment (COPE), preparing for dissertation

Now You Know a Little About Me

- I'd like to learn a bit about you. Do you primarily work in...
 - A clinic?
 - A community?
 - A little of both?
 - Or neither?

There Is No One-Size-Fits-All Solution



<https://firstnations.org/knowledge-center/foods-health/FSAT-2nd-Ed>

<https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/hfrassessment.pdf>

Project Overview

To contextualize the retail food environment in remote Navajo Nation

- Documented all fruits and vegetables in small stores
- Interviews with store owners, managers, and customers



Funding Agencies and Approvals

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- Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this presentation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.

The project was approved by:

- Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board
- Tufts University Institutional Review Board



United States
Department of
Agriculture

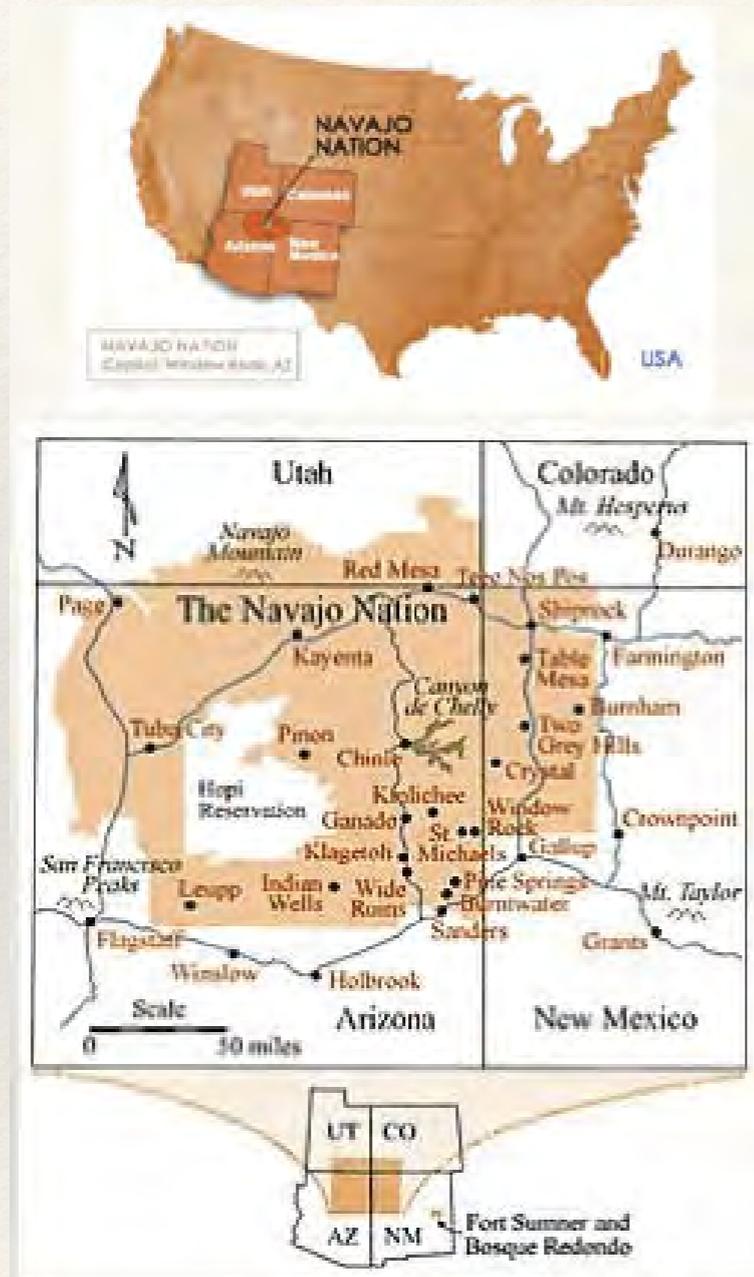
National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture



Outline

1. Project overview
2. Background and rationale
3. Model showing interconnection of the three objectives
4. Each objective
 - A. Focus/population
 - B. Methods
 - C. Results
 - D. Conclusion
5. Strengths and limitations
6. Conclusions

Navajo Nation: Rural and Geographically Isolated



- 110 Chapters
- 174,000 residents
- Poverty: 50%
- Unemployment: 40%
- Without utilities: 33%

<http://www.navajobusiness.com/fastFacts/LocationMap.htm>

Dispersed Population



Assets on the Navajo Nation

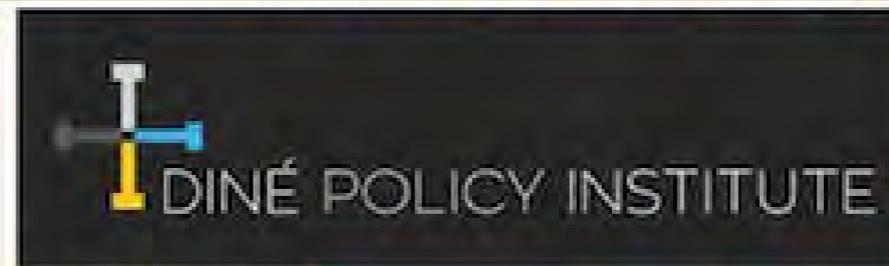


Photo credit: Shepherd Waldenberger

Health Disparities

- Very high rates of both food insecurity and obesity
- **Food insecurity** rates highest of any community in the US (Pardilla, 2013); entire Navajo Nation USDA designated food desert (USDA)
- **Obesity:** 19% of American Indian youth and 39% of AI adults in NM are obese (compared to 13% of all NM youth and 25% of adults) (NMDOH, 2013)
- **Youth type II diabetes:** American Indians over twice the US average (Pettitt, 2014)
- Highest death rate due to diabetes of all racial ethnic groups (NMDOH, 2013)

Pardilla, M. *et al.* (2013). High levels of household food insecurity on the Navajo Nation. *Public Health Nutrition*. 17, (1), 58–65

United States Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service. Food Environment Atlas <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/>

New Mexico Department of Health Office (NMDOH) of Policy and Accountability Office of Health Equity. (2013). *American Indian Health Equity: A Report on Health Disparities in New Mexico* <http://nmhealth.org/publication/view/report/44/>

Pettitt, D. J. *et al.* (2014). Prevalence of diabetes in U.S. youth in 2009: the SEARCH for diabetes in youth study. *Diabetes Care*. 37, 402–408

Social Ecological Model



- Many layers of influence on individual health
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32(7), 513–531

<http://www.esourceresearch.org/Default.aspx?TabId=736>

Lack of Access to Healthy Food

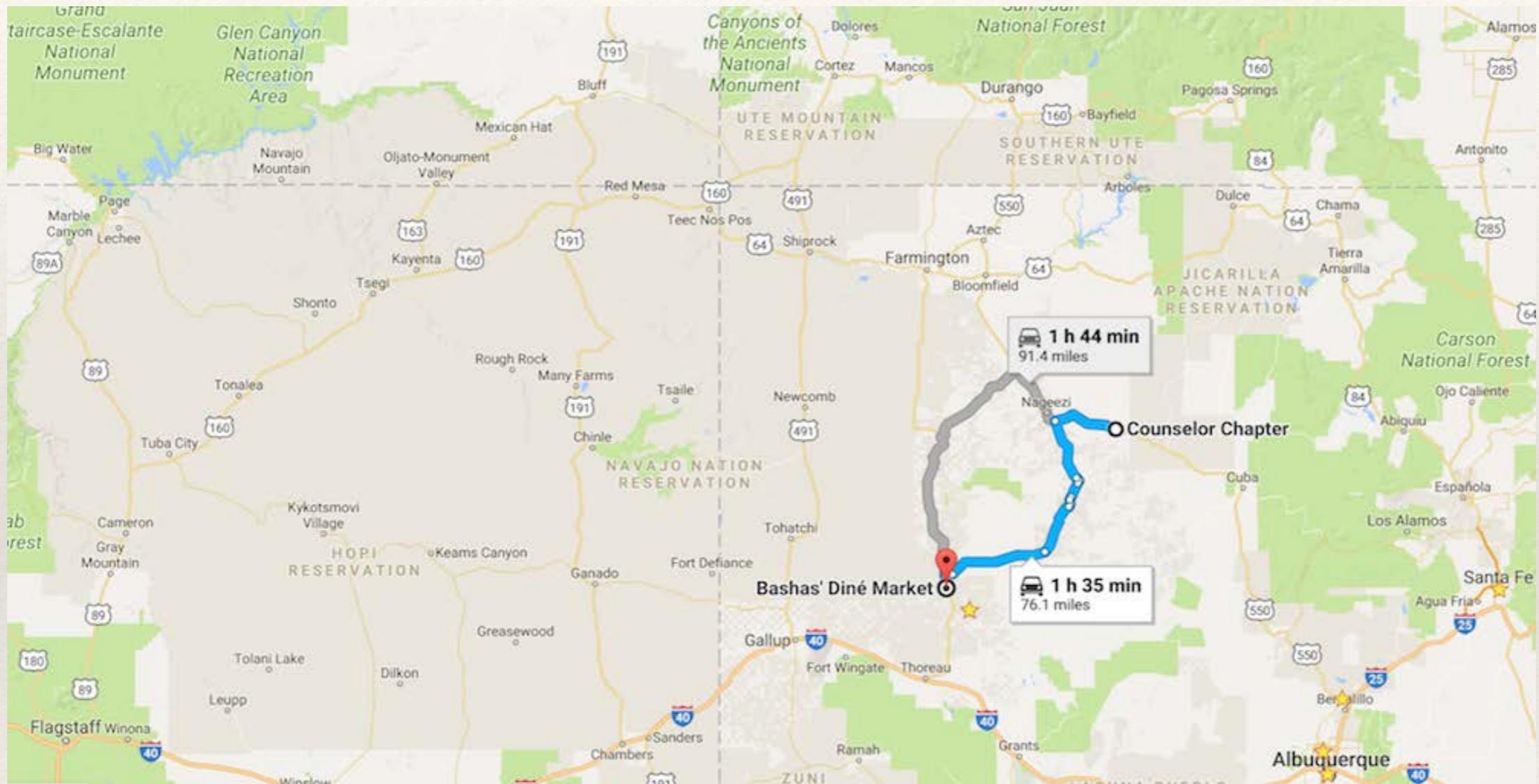
- 10 chapters have a total of 13 grocery stores
- 70% of population live in chapters without grocery stores
- Families may travel 60 miles for groceries and shop one to two times per month (Eldridge, 2014)
- Convenience store or trading post: closest food shopping opportunity & limited healthy food availability, more expensive and low quality (Kumar, 2016)

Eldridge, D. et al. (2014). DINÉ FOOD SOVEREIGNTY A Report on the Navajo Nation Food System and the Case to Rebuild a Self-Sufficient Food System for the Dine People.

<http://www.dinecollege.edu/institutes/DPIDocs/dpi-food-sovereignty-report.pdf>

Kumar, G. et al. (2016). Healthful Nutrition of Foods in Navajo Nation Stores. Am. J. Heal. Promot. 30, 501–510

Long Drive



Counselor Chapter: The closest grocery store on Navajo Nation is a 90-minute drive; 66 to Farmington, NM, off reservation

Have clients or residents in the communities where you work reported traveling far to buy healthy, affordable food?

Why Focus on Access?

- The community food environment influences both availability and likelihood of consuming a healthy diet (Larson, 2009)
- In the U.S., consumption of fruits and vegetables is dramatically lower than recommended, putting the population at risk for overweight, obesity and diet-related chronic diseases (CDC, 2013)
- Impacting the access piece in Navajo Nation is one step in addressing both food justice challenges and health disparities

Larson, N. I., et al. (2009). Neighborhood Environments. Disparities in Access to Healthy Foods in the U.S. *Am. J. Prev. Med* **36**, 74-81.e10.

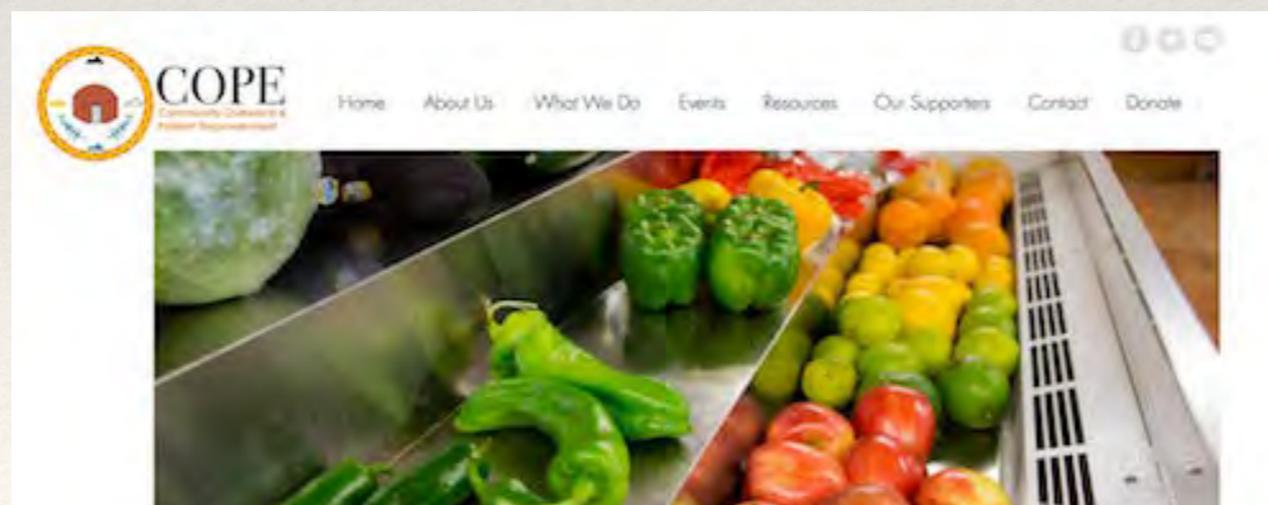
CDC. (2013). *State Indicator Report Fruits and Vegetables Median Daily Vegetable Intake*.

Project Framing and Rationale

- One previous food environment study done on Navajo Nation (Kumar, 2016)
 - a convenience sample
 - looked at a wide array of food options
 - did not document all fruit and vegetable offerings
- Here, we comprehensively assessed fruit and vegetable options at all small stores in chapters without grocery stores
 - Store management and customer perspectives are critical to improving access and availability
 - Components II & III took place in the New Mexico/Navajo Nation
 - Enable results to inform possible collaborative supply chain efforts for stores to offer more quality and affordable options.

Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment (COPE)

- Non-profit organization focused on eliminating health disparities in Navajo Nation
- Early work increasing capacity of Community Health Workers
- Expanded to food-access efforts
- Received CDC Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant
- Dissertation contributes to and builds upon REACH efforts



Have you or any of your team members worked on projects to increase access to healthy food?

Overview of Stores and Participants

- All convenience stores and trading posts in Navajo Nation identified through phone calls to each chapter house. Fresh, frozen, or canned fruit and vegetable inventories completed (n=85)
- Objective 1: Inventories of stores in chapters without grocery stores (n=71)
All owners and managers of chain stores in New Mexico region invited to participate in interview (n=26).
- Objective 2: Store owner/manager interviews completed (n=22)
- Objective 3: Customers interviewed at nine stores (n=72)

Objective 1: Store Inventories

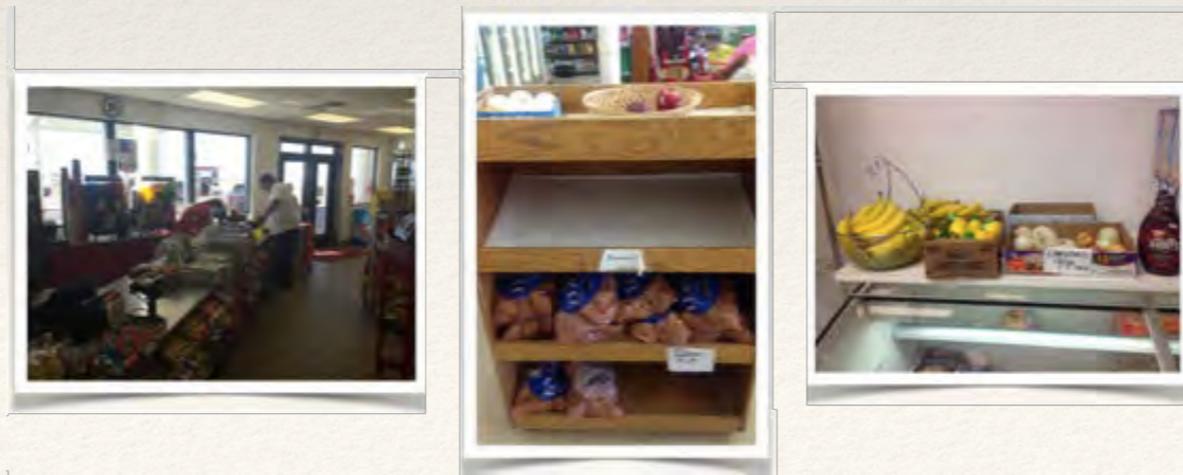
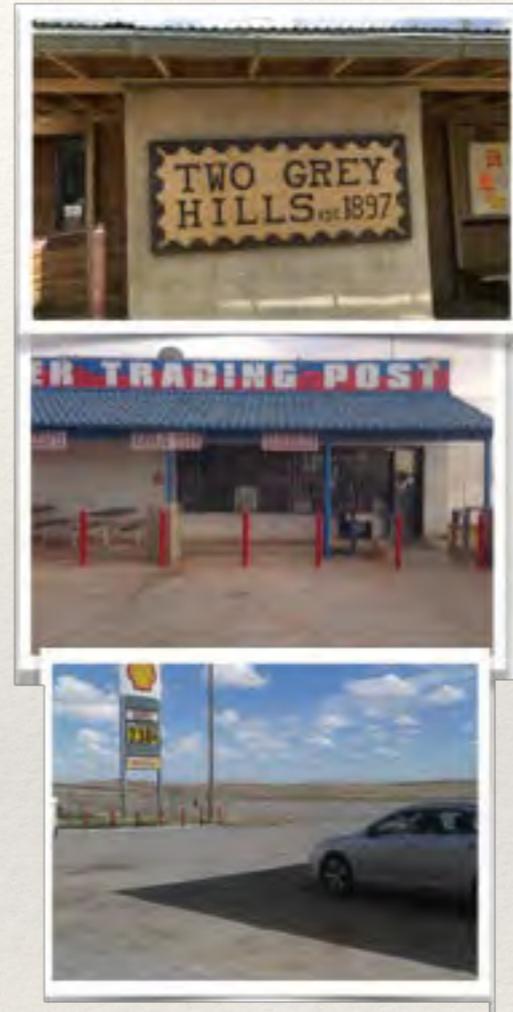
Availability and healthfulness of fruits and vegetables for sale at small, independently owned, regional and national chain stores in remote Navajo Nation

- Preliminary discussions: ownership structure strongly informs the types of foods made available to shoppers
- Understanding this relationship can inform future store projects

Hypothesis: There is a significant difference in fresh fruit and vegetable availability across the three types of stores.

Stores Fall Under Three Different Ownership Types

- Independently owned (n=27)
- Regional chains (n=28)
- National chains (n=16)



Fruit and Vegetable Assessment Methods

- COPE Healthy Stores Initiative baseline
 - Trained COPE staff and partners used electronic tablets to systematically document all fruit and vegetable types in the stores
 - April–October 2015
 - Modified Nutrition Environment Measurement Survey in stores (NEMS-S)
 - Availability and price of all fresh, frozen, canned fruit and vegetables
 - Red and green apples = one type; apples and oranges = two types
 - Quality of fresh, 1–3 scale
 - Percent of stores meeting Robert Wood Johnson Foundation minimum stocking levels for small retail food outlets (Laska, 2016)

Glanz K, et al (2007). Nutrition Environment Measures Survey in Stores (NEMS-S) Development and Evaluation. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*; 32(4): 282–9.

Laska, MN, et al. (2016). Minimum Stocking Levels and Marketing Strategies of Healthful Foods for Small Retail Food Stores. *Healthy Eating Research* http://healthyeatingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/her_minimum_stocking_final.pdf

Stores Offering Any Fresh, Frozen, or Canned Fruits and Vegetables

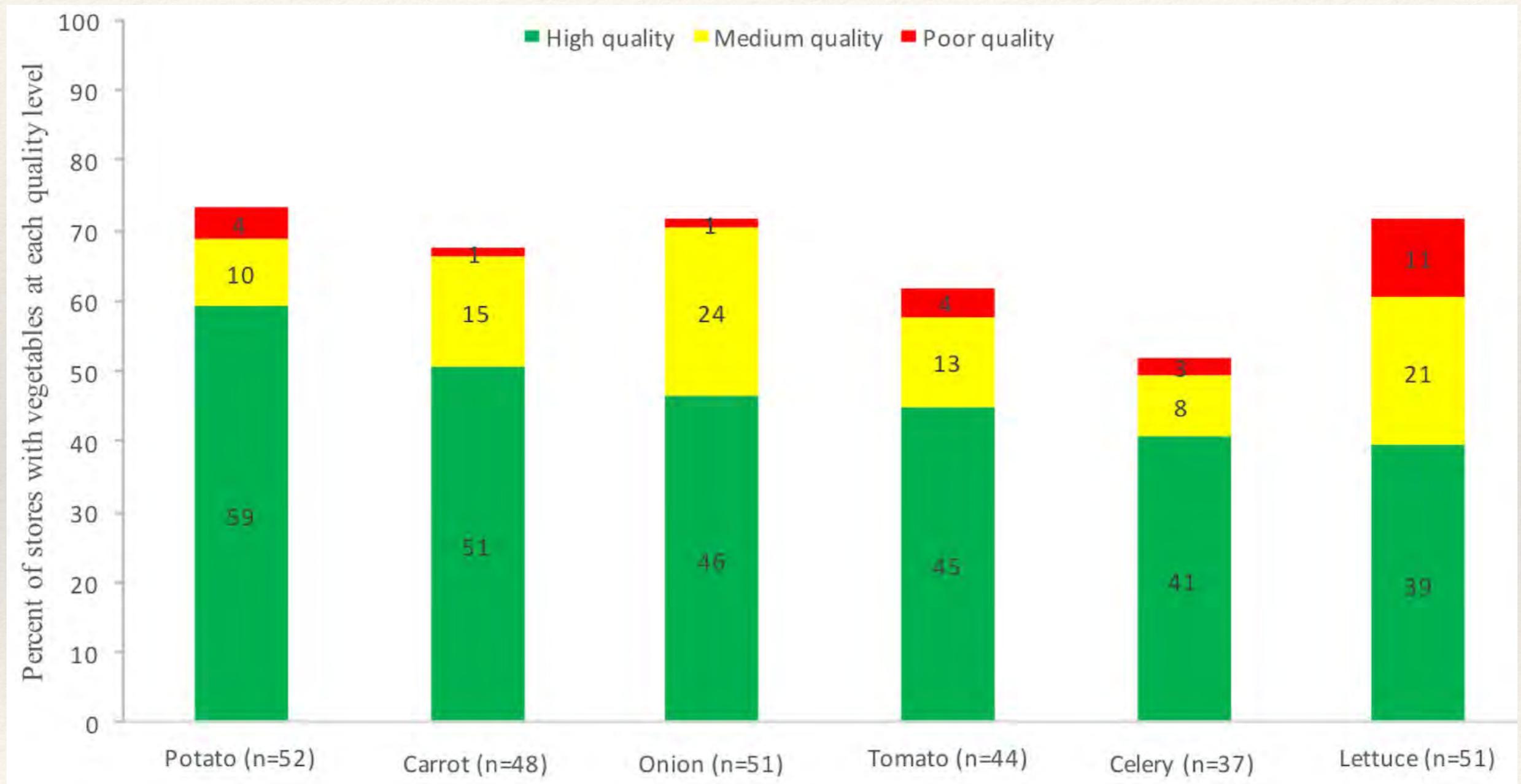
Fruit / Vegetable Type	All Stores Number (n=71)	Percent All Stores	Independently Owned Number (n=27)	Percent Independently Owned	Regional Chain Number (n=28)	Percent Regional Chain	National Chain Number (n=16)	Percent National Chain
Fresh Vegetables	59	83	25	93	22	79	12	75
Frozen Vegetables	54	76	23	85	19	68	12	75
Canned Vegetables	62	87	24	89	24	86	14	88
Fresh Fruit	62	87	25	93	24	86	13	81
Frozen Fruit	24	34	12	44	11	39	1	6
Canned Fruit	62	87	23	85	24	86	15	94

Median Number of Fruit and Vegetable Types by Category

Fruit\Vegetable Type	Min, Max	Median (IQR)	Independently Owned Median (IQR)	Regionally Owned Chains Median (IQR)	Nationally owned chains Median (IQR)
Fresh Vegetables	0, 12	5 (5)	7 (3)	5 (4.5)	4 (5)
Frozen Vegetables	0, 8	2 (2)	3 (2)	2.5 (3)	1 (1.5)
Canned Vegetables	0, 12	5 (4)	5 (4)	5.5 (3)	3 (1.5)
Fresh Fruit	0, 9	3 (2)	4 (4)	3 (1)	3 (2)
Frozen Fruit	0, 5	0 (1)	0 (2)	0 (1.5)	0 (0)
Canned Fruit	0, 8	4 (3)	4 (2)	4.5 (3)	3.5 (2)
All fresh	0, 20	8 (6)	11 (7) _{ab}	8 (6) _a	6.5 (7) _b
All frozen	0, 9	3 (3)	3 (5)	3 (4.5)	1.0 (2)
All canned	0, 18	9 (5)	9 (6)	10 (5)	6 (3.5)

Medians for all fresh with common subscripts are significant at $p < 0.05$ after Bonferroni correction

Availability and Quality of Each Fresh Vegetable Type



Availability and Quality of Each Fresh Fruit Type



Median Price of Fresh Vegetables Based on Most Commonly Available Unit

Vegetable	Unit	Number of Stores with Unit	Total Number of Stores with Veg. Type	Percent of Stores with Unit	Median Price (\$) (IQR)	Min, Max Price (\$)
Potato	5 lb. bag	15	53	28	2.29 (0.25)	1.99, 3.23
Potato	10 lb. bag	33	53	62	3.99 (2.00)	2.39, 7.25
Carrot	1 lb. bag	33	48	69	1.29 (0.36)	0.69, 2.49
Onion	Individual	42	51	82	0.79 (0.30)	0.30, 2.09
Tomato	Individual	16	44	36	0.69 (0.51)	0.39, 1.99
Celery	Bundle	25	37	68	2.15 (0.60)	0.79, 2.99
Lettuce	Head	49	51	96	2.05 (0.70)	0.79, 2.99

Median Price of Fresh Fruit Based on Most Commonly Available Unit

Fruit	Unit	Number of Stores with Unit	Total Number of Stores with Fruit Type	Percent of Stores with Unit	Median Price (\$) (IQR)	Min, Max Price (\$)
Orange	Individual	37	47	79	0.89 (0.20)	0.35, 1.89
Apple	Individual	43	58	74	0.99 (0.38)	0.30, 1.49
Banana	Individual	34	51	67	0.69 (0.31)	0.30, 0.99

Percent of Stores Meeting Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Healthy Eating Research Minimum Stocking Levels

Stocking level	Stores meeting Requirement (Percent)	Number Qualifying Fruit*	Number Canned/Frozen Allowable	Number Qualifying Vegetables*	Number Canned/Frozen Allowable
Basic	35 (49%)	4	2	6	2
Preferred	15 (21%)	6	3	8	4

*To qualify, frozen and canned fruit had to be in water or 100% juice with no other added ingredients; frozen or canned vegetables had to be low or no sodium; garlic, lemons and limes could not be included.

Laska, MN, Pelletier, JE. Minimum Stocking Levels and Marketing Strategies of Healthful Foods for Small Retail Food Stores. (2016). Healthy Eating Research http://healthyeatingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/her_minimum_stocking_final.pdf

Objective 1: Store Inventory Conclusions

1. Large range in amount of fruit and vegetable types offered
 - What dimensions could explain the differences?
 - Recommendation: case studies of positive outliers, stores with greater options at lowest cost inform next steps?

2. There was a difference in the amounts offered across the three store types
 - Next, could look to see if the different amounts might impact amounts purchased

3. Availability should be viewed within the broader context of dimensions impacting healthy food access and purchasing in Navajo Nation
 - Recommendation to engage all relevant stakeholders when pursuing steps to increase options
 - Promote those fresh fruits and vegetables that are already available

Objective 2: Store Owners and Managers

The complexities of selling fruits, vegetables, and traditional Navajo foods in remote Navajo Nation retail outlets: perspectives from owners and managers of small stores

Store Owners and Managers in New Mexico Region

- Small stores in New Mexico:
 - owners of independently owned stores
 - managers of chain stores
- Phone calls to introduce project and invite for in-person interview to occur at store location



Topics Covered in Store Owner/Manager Interview

- Interview guide developed based on existing studies
- Topics addressed:
 - Background (residence, number of employees, type of store)
 - Store characteristics (SNAP/WIC, busiest time of month, use of POS, product offering decision making process)
 - Foods available (top three selling food categories, fruit and vegetable availability)
 - Perspectives on customers and the community
 - Supports and barriers to stocking healthy food
 - Produce supplier

Carty, K., Post, W. A, Ray, B. Stock Healthy Shop Healthy Toolkit. University of Missouri Extension.
<http://extension.missouri.edu/stockhealthy/home.aspx>

Setala A. et al. (2011). The Potential of Local Farming on the Navajo Nation to Improve Fruit and Vegetable Intake: Barriers and Opportunities. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, 50(5), 393–409.

Store Owner/Manager Study Logistics

- 23 interviews conducted
 - April-July, 2016
 - 20–90 minutes
- Verbal consent obtained prior to interview
- Questions read out loud and responses written into paper-based interview form
- Excel database developed

Study Participants and Store Characteristics

- 22 interviews completed
 - 27% store owners (n=6)
 - 73% store managers (n=16)
- Accept federal assistance programs?
 - SNAP: 100%
 - WIC: 17 of the stores (~75%)
- Carry fresh produce?
 - Fresh fruit: 96%
 - Fresh vegetables: 86%

Process for Decision-Making and Store-Product Offerings

- Interview participant is decision maker (55%)
- Someone else makes decisions (for example, the chain's corporate office or the owner of regional chain) (27%)
- Decisions made are based primarily on what customers want and will buy

Most Popular Items Sold at the Stores

Product Category	Number of Stores	Percent of Stores
Snacks	18	82
Drinks	15	68
Hot prepared foods	7	32

Fresh Fruit/Vegetable	Number of Stores	Percent of Stores
Bananas	19	86
Apples	17	77
Oranges	16	73
Tomatoes	13	59
Lettuce	12	55
Carrots	8	26

Perspectives on Offering Fruits and Vegetables

- Product demand (50%)
- WIC or Navajo Nation junk food tax requirement (41%)
- Increasing healthy habits in community (36%)
- Store provides a convenience to customers (23%)

Majority felt:

- Store plays an important role in increasing fruits and vegetables in the community (82%)
- Customers often suggest new items they would like stocked (77%)
- Customers look for fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables in the store (73%)

Perspectives on Stocking More Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Types

- Majority would like to offer more types of fresh fruit (82%) & fresh vegetable types (67%)
- Minimal perceived demand drives level of supply
- Additional challenges:
 - Perishability and loss in revenue
 - Managers: limited decision making power & options from suppliers
 - Owners: would offer more if they saw explicit need in community
 - “Whatever people would want to try”
 - Could try additional types that have longer shelf life: romaine lettuce or chili peppers

Perspectives on Partnering with Navajo Farmers

- 14 store owners and managers (64%) are interested in purchasing fruits and vegetables from Navajo farmers
- Store owners:
 - local growers should notify management
 - some are not familiar with any local farmers
 - would need to be high quality and reasonably priced;
 - short growing season and would need USDA approvals due to insurance
- Store managers:
 - Are not decision makers about product offerings
 - Still, some are interested in partnering with growers and need to think through logistics

Objective 2: Store Owners and Managers Conclusions

1. Perceived low demand does not align with customer demand
2. Despite complexities in supply and demand, it is important to highlight willingness of store owners and managers to respond to shoppers' requests
3. Engage all relevant stakeholders, constraints of power dynamics among chain owners and managers; investigate potential for sourcing fresh fruits and vegetables in creative ways.

Objective 3: Customer Perspectives

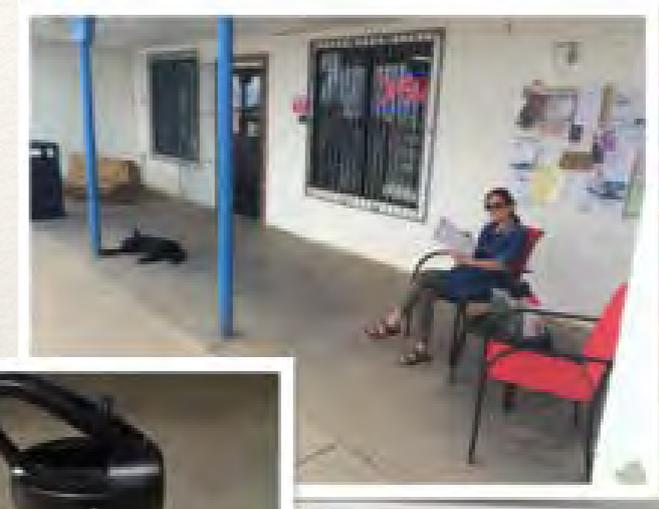
Purchasing fruit and vegetable
at small stores in remote
Navajo Nation

Customer Participation

- Convenience sample of 72 shoppers outside of 9 small stores in New Mexico region of Navajo Nation
 - Stores were considered for participation if owner/manager had participated in an interview (Objective 2) and gave permission for shopper interviews to be conducted.
- Participants were 18 years old and older, reside on Navajo Nation, and not pregnant or breastfeeding

Customer Survey Logistics

- July–September 2016
- 5–10 minute interviews
- In appreciation, provided fruit-infuser water bottles to participants



Customer Survey

Survey is based on existing studies with augmentations for local relevance

- Pitts SBJ et al (2013) Formative evaluation for a healthy corner store initiative in Pitt County, North Carolina: engaging stakeholders for a healthy corner store initiative, part 2. *Prev Chronic Dis.* 10:E120.
- Carty K, et al. Stock Healthy Shop Healthy Toolkit. University of Missouri Extension. <http://extension.missouri.edu/stockhealthy/>
- Bonanno A et al. (2014) Shopper Intercept Survey Instrument. Unpublished research instrument of the Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast (EFSNE) project.

Customer Survey: Interview Topics

Interview topics:

- Primary store for food shopping
- Frequency of shopping at small store
- Usual purchasing at small store
- Travel time from home to store
- Purchasing of fruits or vegetables that day and prior week
- Why shopper buys fruits or vegetables at small store, what would make it easier to do so
- Fruit and vegetable purchasing at farmers market or roadside stand
- If grows own food

Customer Survey: Demographics

Demographics

- Age, gender
- Household size, number shopping for
- Usual mode of transportation to store
- Employment status
- Household participation in federal assistance programs
- Food insecurity
- Formal education
- Home utilities

Produce at Stores Where Customer Surveys Occurred

Documented all fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables available just prior to conducting interviews

Fruit and Vegetable Availability at the 9 Store Locations of Customer Surveys

Produce type	Number of Stores with Any	Min.	Max.	Median
Canned Vegetable	9	3	12	5
Canned Fruit	9	2	7	5
<i>Canned Total</i>		6	19	9
Fresh Vegetable	8	0	12	5
Fresh Fruit	8	0	9	2
<i>Fresh Total</i>		0	21	8
Frozen Vegetable	9	3	8	6
Frozen Fruit	3	0	2	0
<i>Frozen Total</i>		3	8	6

All 9 stores accept SNAP; 8 accept WIC

Participant Characteristics

- Mean age: 58 years (23–88 years)
- 63% female
- 56% employed
- 17% retired
- Wide range of education
 - 24% no more than high school
 - 36% high school graduate or equivalent
 - 25% completed some college/technical school
 - 15% completed college or more
- Have home electricity: 85%
- Food insecure: 44%
- Household participation in a federal assistance program: 50%

Transportation to the Small Store

- Average travel time from home to small store: 17 minutes
 - Range: 1–60 minutes
- Usual transportation mode to store:
 - Drive self: 86%
 - Get a ride: 10%

Purchasing Behavior

- 64% do most of their shopping at supercenters
 - 47% shop at the small store two or more times per week
- Most common reasons for shopping at the small store:
 - Convenience to home or work
 - For gas
 - For a snack or drink
- Items most commonly purchased at small store:
 - Snacks, staples, and soda

Fruit and Vegetable Purchasing

- 4 participants purchased fruits or vegetables at the small store on the day of the interview
- 32% had purchased any in the previous week
- “What would encourage you to buy fruits and vegetables at the small store?”
 - Greater variety
 - More stocking of healthy food
 - More affordable pricing
 - Better placement
 - More advertising
- About 20% of participants did not know if the store sold fresh fruits or vegetables

Objective 3: Customer Perspectives

Conclusions

1. Almost half of participants in this study shop at the small store at least two or more times per week.
 - Small stores are important settings for exploring interventions.
2. There is value in promoting the fruit and vegetable options that are currently available.
 - Close to 20% of participants did not know that the store sells fresh fruits and vegetables.
3. Despite the need for healthy food options and specifically high quality fruits and vegetables in remote Navajo Nation, the small stores are not perceived by shoppers as places to purchase these foods.
 - Reorganize and rebrand: Have healthy foods section and promote.

Strengths and Limitations

- **Strengths**

- Objective 1 provides the first assessment of its kind: documenting all fruits and vegetables offered at all small stores in remote Navajo Nation
- Objectives 2 and 3 are geographically bounded: could aid in next steps, working to mitigate supply-chain challenges and increase affordable, high-quality fruit and vegetables options

- **Limitations**

- Inventories only at one time point and not necessarily reflective of offerings year-round
- Consumer surveys: convenience sample—cannot necessarily be generalized to whole Navajo Nation

Conclusions

- Offering high-quality, affordable fruits and vegetables in remote areas is both a supply-and-demand challenge.
- Resources and best practices exist to assist communities working to address these seemingly intractable challenges.
- Recommend thinking creatively about where food moves in remote regions (hospitals, schools) and seek out opportunities to partner.

Practical Implications of Project

- Dissemination of results
 - Navajo Nation (Community leader requested results to assist with wellness center proposal)
 - Eastern Agency Council Meeting (June 2017)
 - Northern Agency Council Meeting (June 2017)
 - Will mail summary to all store owner/manager participants
- National conference
 - Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (July 2017)
 - Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (October 2017)
- Preparing manuscripts for publication

Is there one idea or concept from this presentation that you might be able to bring back to your own work/context?

Acknowledgements

Dissertation committee:

Dr. Tim Griffin, advisor
Dr. Robert F. Houser, committee member
Dr. Sonya Shin (COPE Executive Director)

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COPE staff and volunteers

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Taylor Wilmot
Emilie Ellis
Onagh MacKenzie
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COPE volunteer data collectors: Casey Smith, Vikas Gampa, Caroline King

Gayathri Kumar (CDC)

And of course the store owners, managers, and customers willing to participate in the project

Questions?

Contact: Emily Piltch
epiltch@gmail.com

Additional Information on Robert Wood Johnson Food Minimum Stocking Requirements



Expert Panel Recommendations

The recommendations included in this report were developed by a panel of experts in food retail, nutrition, and obesity prevention. The panel was convened in 2015 by *Healthy Eating Research*, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

To develop minimum stocking levels, the panel reviewed and analyzed evidence from a wide range of sources, including: peer-reviewed, scientific research; recommendations and guidelines from the federal government, scientific bodies, national organizations, and public health organizations;¹⁴⁻²⁸ and existing requirements for retailers participating in nutrition- and/or health-related policies and programs at the local, state, and national levels.²⁹⁻³⁴ Recognizing that increasing customer demand is an important complement to increasing availability of healthy foods, the panel also developed recommendations for evidence- and practice-based strategies to increase healthy food and beverage sales through retailer marketing, particularly in-store marketing strategies.³⁵⁻³⁸

http://healthyeatingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/her_minimum_stocking_final.pdf