



INTERNATIONAL FOOD PROTECTION TRAINING INSTITUTE

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IFPTI Fellowship Cohort IV: Research Presentation Thao Nguyen 2014-2015



Barriers to Inspections of Ethnic, Women-Operated Food Establishments in Dallas, Marshall, and Polk Counties, Iowa

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Funding for this program was made possible, in part, by the Food and Drug Administration through grant 5U54FD004324-04; views expressed in written materials or publications and by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does any mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organization imply endorsement by the United States Government.

Background

- The role of ethnicity has become more important in recent years in the food industry due to three factors: immigration, tourism, and international trade (Rossiter & Chan, 2004).



Image Source: Nguyen, T. (2015). Guacamole and Chips, Rosa Mexicano, Washington, DC.



Image Source: Nguyen, T. (2015). Bibimbop, Canton Korean & Chinese Food Express, Des Moines, IA..

Background (continued)

- Characteristics unique to ethnic operators may create barriers to inspector-operator interactions that are not present when dealing with the mainstream population.
- Failure to identify and address these barriers is likely to result in operator misrepresentation, reduced willingness to participate in trainings, and communication of distrust/mistrust to employees.

Problem Statement

- The prevalence and nature of barriers to regulator-operator interaction involving ethnic, women-operated food establishments in the target counties of Dallas, Marshall, and Polk, Iowa, is known only anecdotally.



Image Source: Nguyen, T. (2015). La Hacienda Mexican Restaurant in Des Moines, IA.



Image Source: Nguyen, T. (2015). Asian Pagoda, Robert D. Ray Asian Gardens, The Chinese Culture Center of America, Des Moines, IA.

Research Questions

1. What is the opinion of female ethnic establishment operators in the target counties about the historical relationship between food safety regulators and ethnic establishments?
2. What problems do these operators believe currently exist regarding language and culture in their interaction with food safety regulators?
3. What do ethnic, female operators view as the greatest barriers during inspections?

Methodology

- Interviews with a purposive sample of five Asian and three Hispanic ethnic operators from October 2014 – January 2015.
- Mailed survey covering the same topics sent to eighteen food inspectors of the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (IDIA).

Results

Positive Experiences Identified by Operators:

- Adequate time taken to explain violations when cited.
- Operator did not feel rushed by inspector.
- The inspector was personable.
- Positive feedback provided throughout the inspection.
- Inspector-operator rapport established.
- Food safety education provided to help the operator improve her business.

Results (continued)

Positive Experiences Identified by Operators (continued):

- Use of resources to overcome language barriers such as translated handouts, smart phones, computers, and/or interpreters.
- Clear and detailed notes, conducive to translation, provided on the inspection report.
- The inspector showed or drew pictures to help explain something to the operator.

Results (continued)

Negative Experiences Identified by Operators:

- Inspectors lacked cultural familiarity with the cuisine offered.
- Difference in native languages spoken.
- Insufficient education provided to operators.
- Operators felt that inspection pace is too quick.
- Inspections were conducted at inconvenient times.

Results (continued)

Current Problems Identified by Inspectors Included:

- Food Code and educational materials and handouts not being translated into different languages.
- Lack of video training materials.
- Absence of available interpreters.

Results (continued)

Barriers to a Successful Inspection Identified by Inspectors:

- Gender
- Financial restraints
- Resistance to change
- Operators' lack of food safety knowledge

Conclusions

- Asian and Hispanic women operators generally reported having positive experiences working with food regulators.
- Current problems appeared to be related to language:
 - Lack of bilingual inspectors and a lack of interpreters.
 - Lack of translated food safety resources/materials.
 - Amount of time allotted by inspector to effectively communicate with the operator.
- Other problems were behaviors and actions of the inspector toward the operator during the inspection.

Recommendations

1. The major limitation of this study is its exploratory nature involving a very small and purposive sample.
2. In order to further explore these potential problems, this study should be replicated on a much larger scale, i.e., a larger population over a larger area. Such a project could involve collaboration by multiple agencies either within one state or across multiple states.

Acknowledgements

- International Food Protection Training Institute (IFPTI)
- Paul Dezendorf, Ph.D., CHES, Subject Matter Expert
- Joanne M. Brown, DVM, MS, DACVPM, IFPTI Mentor
- Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (IDIA)
- Steven Mandernach, IDIA Bureau Chief
- Mark Speltz, IDIA Chief Inspector
- 2014-2015 Cohort IV Fellows

Questions?

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