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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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Mexico Travel of Gretel H. Balto

TIME: JULY 2 TO AUGUST 6, 1982

ITINERARY: Mexico City and Solis, Mexico, with numerous shuttles back and forth between the research site and the Instituto Nacional de Nutricion in Mexico City.

DISCUSSIONS

My main activities during this one month visit in the Solis research site consisted of detailed discussions with the field nutritionist-researchers concerning observations of the quality and contents of dietary intakes in the research region. Discussions were held with local informants, local community researchers, and nutritionists of the Instituto Nacional de Nutricion, concerning inter-household and intra-household variations in food intakes, as well as discussions of measurement of dietary complexity as an important nutrition quality variable.

I participated in the regular weekly meetings of the Primary field research team, during which details of field logistics, problems of identifying interviewers in the local region, and other issues were discussed and resolved.

Also, I participated in many hours of planning sessions concerning over-all pilot-testing strategies, which are to be carried out in the community of San Francisco, in the valley area, but at some distance from the four primary research communities.

PEOPLE CONTACTED

A large part of my contacts were with the individuals particularly involved in developing the dietary data-gathering strategies in the field situation. These persons include Sra. Catarina Garcia, Luz Maria Meneses, Peter Guarnaccia, as well as several of the personnel in the Solis Hospital. All of these persons are either natives of the area, or had participated directly in gathering dietary data in the preliminary phases of the project.

General meetings with the entire research (field) team, usually included Dr. Adolfo Chavez, Dr. A. Mata, Dr. H. Martinez, Dr. Raoul Castillo, Dra. Pilar Alves, Dr. Alberto Sciavon, Sra. Luz Maria Meneses, Catarina Garcia, and several other field workers. My colleagues from the University of Connecticut were also participants in these discussions and research meetings.

Dr. Gordon Finlay, psychologist from Florida International University and Dr. R. Chandra, immunologist from the Memorial University of Newfoundland, visited in the field site during July, and intensive research meetings were held with them. I worked with Dr. Finley in planning the initial pre-testing of the cognitive/psychological methodology.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. During the month of field work an important accomplishment was the assessment of a number of alternative ways to organize and conceptualize household dietary patterns, as well as the dietary intakes of individuals.
2. A dietary diversity scale was constructed and tested, using the dietary interviews that had been collected during the first part of the summer. Based on the work on dietary quality, dietary complexity, and related materials, I wrote a working draft which was later revised and incorporated in the project manuscript which was developed for the Scientific Coordinating Board.
3. The dietary complexity scale, and related food intake schedules were revised and re-organized for the full Pilot

testing in San Francisco.

SUGGESTIONS

1. There is a need for more detailed Pre-testing of alternative methods for gathering food intake data in the households. Methods should be developed for aiding the recall of individuals, for example in the "number of tortillas eaten" and other items that are so commonplace and repetitious that people don't keep track of them.
2. Several alternative measures of dietary intake, including energy intakes, dietary diversity, and perhaps other secondary indicators of quality, should be developed and used concurrently, in getting as full a picture as possible of the primary independent variable.
3. The central importance of the food intake observations should be made quite clear to all the different disciplines in the research team, and closer collaboration among the subdisciplines in the field team should be enhanced through seminars and other means.

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