

## **Pablo Monsivais, PhD, MPH**

Dr. Monsivais is an Associate Professor in the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology. His research on the social and behavioral epidemiology of food consumption and obesity is aimed at identifying population-level drivers of social inequalities in diet and health.

### **My Education**

BA University of Texas, Austin

PhD University of Washington, Seattle

MPH University of Washington, Seattle

### **My Professional Background**

After doctoral and post-doctoral training in neuroscience and physiology at the University of Washington and University College London, I returned to the UW to retrain in nutrition and public health in 2004. Between 2007 and 2011, I conducted behavioral and epidemiologic research on food choices, diet and health at the UW's Centre for Public Health Nutrition in the School of Public Health, first as a postdoctoral fellow in behavioral sciences and then as an acting assistant professor in the Department of Epidemiology. From 2011 to 2017 I was Senior University Lecturer (= associate professor) at the University of Cambridge Centre for Diet and Activity Research where I led a research group focused on social and behavioral epidemiology.

### **Research Interests**

In the USA and other higher-income countries, there are profound socioeconomic inequalities in eating habits, obesity and chronic disease. My research aims to identify the social and behavioral determinants of diet and obesity in order to inform policies to improve dietary public health and reduce inequalities. Below are some of the themes in my research program.

#### *Food prices and the economics of healthy eating*

There is no such thing as a free lunch, and although some foods are both cheap *and* nutritious, research indicates that eating a healthier diet tends to cost more for consumers. But food prices aren't the only economic issue. Being pinched for time can undermine healthy eating and other healthy habits. Also, financial security, and employment-related factors can have an impact on food choices and diet quality.

#### *Social and neighborhood environments*

Human health is shaped by social context, particularly, social relationships with family, friends and colleagues. Our research is starting to indicate how these social ties can support healthy eating habits and also provide an important buffer to economic adversity. Also important are the neighborhoods where we live and work. Neighborhoods differ in many ways, including the number and type of food outlets they contain. Our research has found that these neighborhood differences are associated with people's eating habits and obesity.

#### *Evaluation of local policies*

Another area of my research is in measuring the effects of nutrition and public health programs and interventions on food consumption and the nutritional quality of the diet. For example, we have studied how reimbursement rates to child care providers influences the type and nutritional quality of food served to preschool-aged children. We are also interested in studying the impacts of programs to improve food access and reduce food insecurity. Finally, using existing data, we are using modeling and other analytical approaches to identify cost-sensitive ways of improving nutrition at the population level.

#### **Research to policy and practice**

Public health research has little value if it isn't made accessible to the community and to professionals involved in practice and policy. I am interested in serving the local community and public health professionals with expert advice and also in partnering with community groups and public health professionals on research projects and other activities of mutual interest.

#### **Teaching and Training**

I am experienced in mentoring and supervising students at the masters and PhD level. Having started in February 2017, I am not yet teaching at WSU, but I am interested in teaching a range of topics including population nutrition and nutritional epidemiology, dietary public health, community nutrition and food and nutrition policy.