



Understanding low-income parents' decisions to participate in a subsidized fruit and vegetable buying program in four urban childcare centers

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Saturday, April 20, 2013

Experimental Biology, Community and Public Health Nutrition Interventions

Co-authors

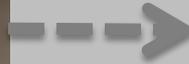
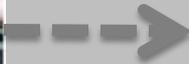
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Research context

- **Location** Boston, Massachusetts
- **Partnership** Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures
- **Program** Farm to Family (F2F)
 - subsidized fruit and vegetable buying program for families with children 3-5 years old, modeled similar to community-supported agriculture schemes
 - community-based institutions as recruitment and delivery vehicle





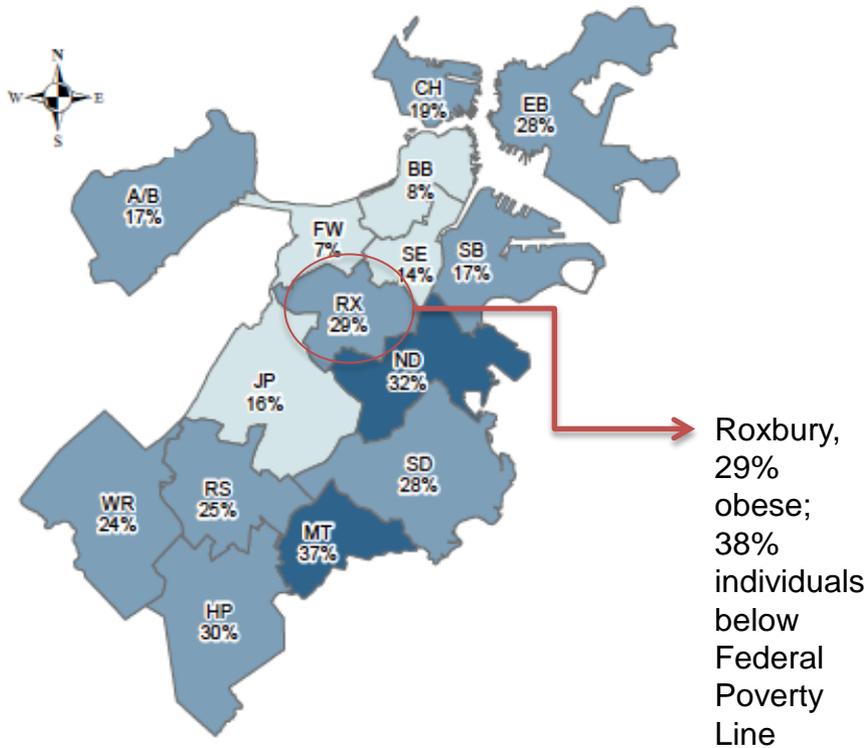
Research question

What factors do parents see as facilitating or inhibiting their participation in a subsidized food access program?



Methods

Obese adult residents, 2008 and 2010 combined



Source: Health of Boston, 2011

- Four Head Start programs
- Convenience sample of participants and non-participants
- On-site, semi-structured interviews in English
- Inquiry guided by social ecological theory
- Verbatim transcription analyzed using constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)



Findings Summary of sample characteristics

F2F participants, n=13
57% of total F2F participants

F2F non-participants, n=9

Similarities

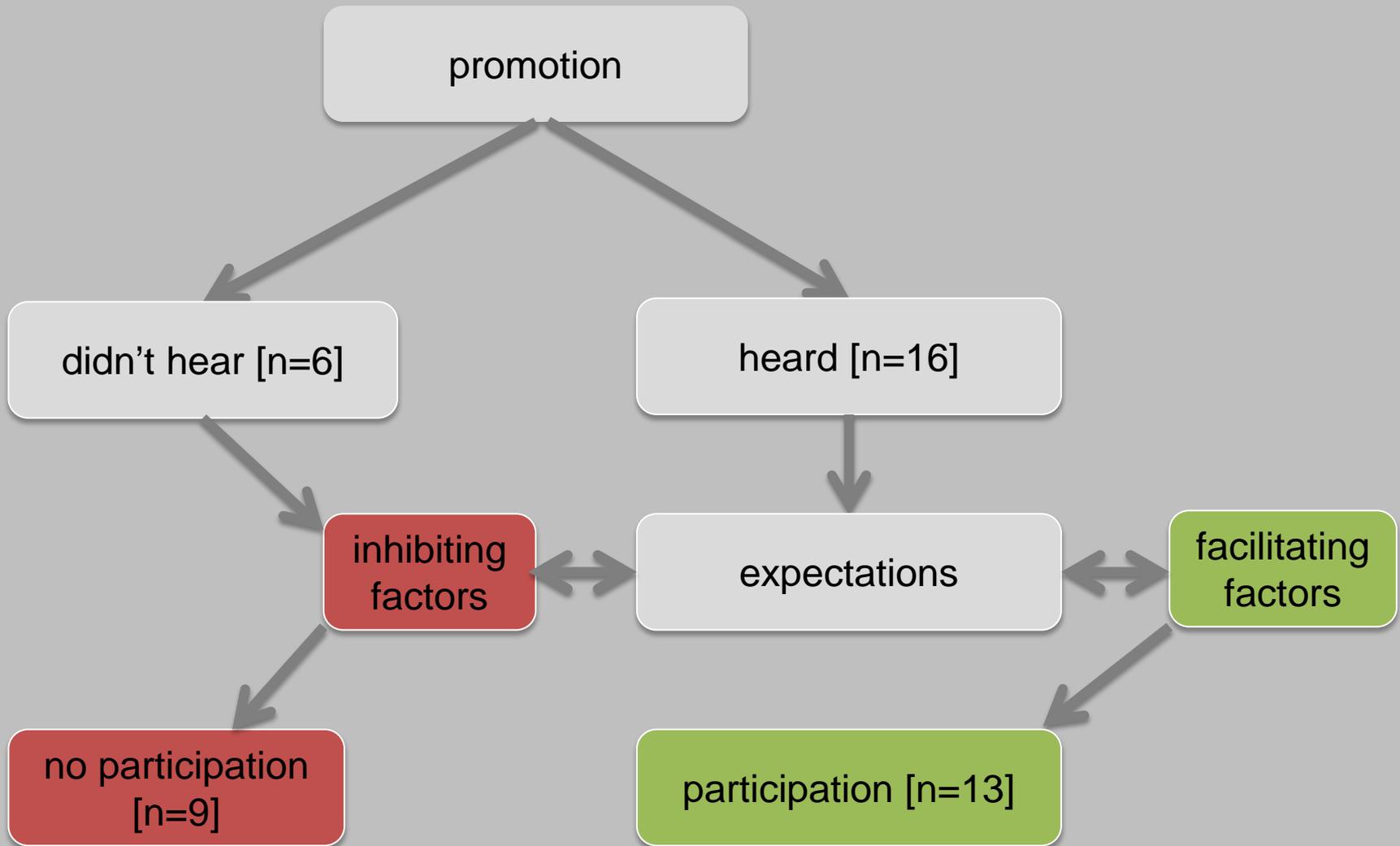
Female caregivers from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds

Differences

More F2F participants were college educated, married, working, had limited financial resources, had more children



Findings Participation process model





Findings Major themes and sub themes

Individual context

Head Start involvement (+)
Resonating with values (+)
Previous positive experience (+)
Concern for quality (+)

No time for involvement (-)
Less experience preparing fresh (-)
Skepticism about organic food (-)

Family context

Health concerns (+)
Cost & health benefits (+)
Getting vegetables into family diet (+)

Limited agency in feeding and food decisions (-)

Program context

Convenience (+)
Value (+)
Direct staff to parent interaction (+)

Hassle to prepare fresh (-)
No/limited staff interaction (-)

(+) = facilitating factors; (-) = inhibiting factors



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Major themes Individual context

Head Start involvement (+)

“...I’m **always involved** in everything that goes on here at the program... I look at it as a way to support the [Head Start] program...” [p14: female, black/African American, married, participated last year]

No Head Start involvement (-)

“...I just feel **like sometimes parents don’t take the time to like do things in the school** [Head Start]... They could be **busy like me...working** ...they’re generally busy and **don’t have time...**” [np7: female, black/African American, not married, did not participate last year]



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Direct staff to parent interaction (+)

Hassle to prepare fresh (-)
No/limited staff interaction (-)

(+) = facilitating factors; (-) = inhibiting factors



Major themes Family context

Health concerns (+)

“I got it more because of her [my daughter], so she can eat because she’s, can I say overweight? **She’s my fat girl.”** [p22: female, Hispanic, married, did not participate last year]

Limited agency in feeding and food decisions (-)

“...[my mother] has her for the summer so I have to give her \$100-150 [of my food stamps].” [p10: female, other, not married, did not participate last year]



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Major themes Program context

Value (+)

“It’s a lot for \$5.00. So it **saves us money and it saves us time** and it saves us running around.” [p20: female, white, married, participated last year]

Convenience (+)

“**I can pick up my child and I can pick up my vegetables...** I think it’s convenient, that’s why I did it...” [p18: female, black/African American, never married, did not participate last year]

Hassle to prepare fresh vegetables (-)

“A lot of people say, oh, **fresh?** No, I don’t want. Some people say **it’s a hassle.** Some people say let’s stick with the cans or frozen stuff.” [p21: female, black/African American, never married, did not participate last year]



Discussion

- Indicators of social proximity to Head Start suggest a social facilitation effect on participation (Zajonc, 1965)
- Value was conceptualized in terms of getting a lot for money balanced with time saved for food shopping
- Convenience related to being able to accomplish multiple caring tasks at the same time (i.e. picking up child and vegetables)
- Many participation factors were similar to surveys of higher income community-supported agriculture members (Perez et al., 2003)



Summary

- Low-income parents' participation was facilitated by factors that extended beyond monetary cost, were multidimensional, and related to individual, family, and program factors
- Participation was related to modifiable and non-modifiable aspects of the program design
- Similar subsidized food access programs should:
 1. consider the importance of staff to parent interactions during promotion
 2. consider design elements that can save time for participants



Questions, discussion...

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acknowledgements: Head Start staff and parents Johanna Carroll, Pamela Weisberg

funding: Gerber Pediatric Endowment Scholarship, Northeastern University Bouve College of Health Sciences



citations

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