The Healthy Stores Projects: Environmental Interventions in Practice

Joel Gittelsohn, PhD, MSc
Johns Hopkins University
Joel Gittelsohn, PhD, MSc

- Medical Anthropologist, Department of International Health and Center for Human Nutrition

- Expertise in application of formative research methods and interventions for the prevention of obesity and chronic disease

- Healthy Stores projects
  - Marshall Islands
  - Apache Indian reservations
  - Baltimore City
Three Healthy Stores Projects
Section A

Changing the Food Environment
Topics

- Changing the food environment
- Marshall Islands Healthy Stores: dealing with dietary transition
- Apache Healthy Stores: sustaining a successful program
- Baltimore Healthy Stores: working in an urban setting
- Future directions
Model of Community Nutrition Environments

Why Change the Food Environment?

- To modify the context within which illness-producing behaviors are made
- Enhanced sustainability
- To complement individual behavior change programs
- To reach a large number of people
- The only practical way of addressing the obesity epidemic on a large scale (Economos and Irish-Hauser, 2007)
How to Change the Food Environment

- Change *access* to food
  - Increase availability of healthy food options over less healthy food options
  - Change prices on healthier or less healthy foods (or provide coupons)
  - Increase/reduce production of certain foods
  - Change distribution of foods (e.g., to local retailers)
  - Overcome other physical barriers
    - Modify physical location of foods
    - “Behind-Plexiglas” corner stores
How to Change the Food Environment

- Change setting for education/information
  - Point of purchase
  - Goal: to create demand for healthy foods
Food Store Intervention Trials: Limitations

- Little or no formative research
- Little emphasis on participatory approaches
- Limited use of theoretical frameworks

Sources: Seymour et al. (2004); Glanz et al. (1995); Wechsler et al. (2000); French and Stables. (2005).
Food Store Intervention Trials: Limitations

- Little process evaluation
- Few have worked in small stores
- Few intervention strategies, with limited reinforcement/integration of activities

Sources: Seymour et al. (2004); Glanz et al. (1995); Wechsler et al. (2000); French and Stables. (2005).
Food Store Intervention Trials: Limitations

- Limited evaluation (e.g., lack of dietary assessments)
- Tend to be short duration
- No work on sustainability

Sources: Seymour et al. (2004); Glanz et al. (1995); Wechsler et al. (2000); French and Stables. (2005).