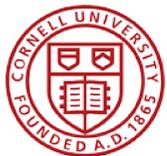


# Factors that Influence Snacking Behaviors of Adolescents from Low Socioeconomic Status (SES)

## Communities in New York City: A Qualitative Study



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### BACKGROUND

Snacking contributes a significant portion of adolescents' daily energy intake, and those from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds have poorer snacking behaviors than their counterparts. However, little is known about factors that influence these snacking behaviors.

**Overall Aim:** To qualitatively explore factors that influence snacking behaviors of adolescents from low SES backgrounds in New York City (NYC).

### METHODS

#### Study Design:

**Participants:** Adolescents (n=30; 12-18 years) who were members of a Boys and Girls Club in NYC.

**Measures:** 1) an online demographic and snacking behavior survey (e.g., How often do you buy a snack for yourself?) and 2) a semi-structured, phone interview with questions informed by Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) factors (e.g., personal, socioenvironmental, behavioral).

#### Sample of Interview Guide Questions

**When you want a snack, how do you decide what to snack on?**

**How does where you are influence what you snack on?**

Probe: What about when you're home/school/after school/at the grocery store/at the corner store?

**How does who you are with influence what you snack on?**

Probe: What about family/friends?

**What are some of the reasons you choose healthy snacks to snack on?**

#### Data Analysis:

**Demographic & snacking behavior survey:** descriptive statistics were calculated.

**Interviews:** a thematic analysis approach (following 6-phase coding approach) was implemented, and themes were categorized by SCT factors.

### RESULTS

**Participants:** mean age = 15.17 years; 43.33% male, 56.67% female, 83.33% of adolescents identified as Black/African American

#### SNACKING BEHAVIOR SURVEY FINDINGS

Most popular time to snack	# of participants (%)
Before breakfast	0 (%)
Between breakfast and lunch	12 (40.0)
Between lunch and dinner	13 (43.33)
After dinner	5 (16.67)
Frequency of independent snack purchasing	# of participants (%)
More than once a day	1 (3.33)
Once a day	2 (6.67)
5-6 times/week	0 (0.00)
3-4 times/week	5 (16.67)
1-2 times/week	13 (43.33)
2-3 times/month	4 (13.33)
Once a month	4 (13.33)
Less than once a month	1 (3.33)
Never	0 (0.00)
<b>Average daily snack frequency, mean (SE)</b>	<b>2.9 (1.45)</b>

#### QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW FINDINGS

##### Personal Factors

**PREFERENCE:** "Even if it's like very, really good for me, if I don't like the taste of it, I wouldn't eat it. So, the taste is what's making me eat it."

**HEALTH:** "On my mom and dad side there's like a few cases of people having diabetes and like just people getting obese, so I like to try and watch what I eat a lot so that I don't like end up in the same thing."

##### Environmental Factors

**PEER:** "Kids will come to school with certain chips, and they will let me try them, and I'd like them. I then to go to the store after school and buy my own bag."

#### Environmental Factors (cont.)

**FAMILY:** "[My mom] gets something, I'll probably just copy her. Sometimes she gets stuff that's healthy. Like, she will get like a water and like a peanut, or something like that, I will just get it with her."

**OTHER INDIVIDUALS:** "[Boys & Girls Club staff] are mad healthy, so they be telling you like, 'Don't eat a lot of junk food,' to eat like food that you know that's good for you, like eating fruits."

**HOME ENVIRONMENT:** "When you're at home, it's based on what your parents get for you, and parents are most likely to get like healthy stuff to you."

**SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT:** "They offer snacks, but it won't be snacks that you like. It'll just be healthy snacks."

**AFTER SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT:** "Sometimes there's an apple, cheese stick, oranges, and stuff like that. But sometimes they're like junk, like pizza, chicken nuggets, fries."

**FOOD STORE ENVIRONMENT:** "To get healthy foods, healthy snacks, we would have to go a little bit farther, like drive, a 10, 15-minute drive.... There are supermarkets and stuff, but they don't really have... they have fruits and stuff like that, but healthy chips and all of that, they don't really have that."

#### Behavioral Factors

**SELF-EFFICACY:** "Meals have to be prepared and cooked, so it would take time to get the stuff you need, and it will take time to make it, whereas snacks, I can just purchase it, eat it as soon as I purchase it."

**AUTONOMY:** "I kind of just look for what I have in my house. And if I don't have it, sometimes I'll actually leave my house and go to the store and get it."

### CONCLUSIONS

- Adolescents from low SES communities are influenced by a variety of personal, environmental, and behavioral factors when choosing snacks.
- Findings will inform an afterschool youth food advocacy study that aims to improve snacking behaviors by training youth to be change agents in their local food environment.

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