

Author's response to reviews

Title:Food store owners' and managers' perspectives on the food environment:
An exploratory mixed-methods study

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Author's response to reviews: see over

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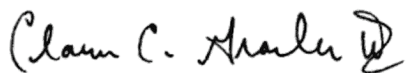
Dear Editors:

My colleagues and I are grateful for your efficient and thorough review of our manuscript, "Food store owners' and managers' perspectives on the food environment: An exploratory mixed-methods study." We appreciate the opportunity to revise and resubmit the manuscript and believe it is stronger because of the reviewers' constructive comments.

Below we provide a point-by-point response to the reviewers' concerns, as requested.

Thank you for considering the enclosed revision for publication in *BMC Public Health*.

Sincerely,



Clarence C. Gravlee

Reviewer Comment	Authors' Response	Page/line in marked copy
<i>Reviewer 1</i>		
<p>This is an interesting and well-written paper. Based on open-ended interviews, the authors examine how owners and managers of food stores in low-income neighbourhoods think about the healthiness of the assortment they offer and challenges they face in creating access to healthy foods.</p> <p>I believe the topic of this study is of interest and use to academic researchers and policy makers in public health. It is clear that the authors carefully conducted the interviews and thoroughly examined the responses of the participants. Besides these valuable and interesting contributions, I have a few concerns and remarks.</p>	<p>We thank the reviewer for these remarks.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Abstract: In the results section of the abstract, the results are described in an abstract way. It would be good to report key findings instead of describing the results in a too general way. To me, a key finding of the study seems to be that it is not necessarily access to healthy foods that is the problem, rather it is the lack of consumer demand. It would be helpful to select a few key findings and report them in the abstract.</p>	<p>We have revised the results section of the abstract slightly so that it now emphasizes the priority of making sales, which this Reviewer suggested was one of the major results (see next comment).</p> <p>The Results section of the abstract now lists two key findings from the free-list questions and eight key themes from the open-ended, semistructured interviews. Space constraints do not allow us to provide further detail in the abstract.</p>	<p>Abstract, lines 17–18</p>
<p>Abstract: the conclusions section of the abstract is vague. In the paper, results are discussed in light of some elements of ecological models of the food environment. I do not see how results are linked to multi-level, ecological models beyond that while reading the abstract. The second half of the final sentence of the abstract '....imply that reducing social inequalities in access to healthful foods will require interventions across the spectrum of interventions'. Which spectrum? It would be helpful if the authors could come up with some concrete implications or suggestions for interventions. For example, a very relevant implication of the findings relates to the critique</p>	<p>We agree with this criticism and have revised the abstract following the reviewers' suggestion. The abstract now gives specific examples of how our findings relate to multilevel, ecological models, including the reviewers' specific suggestion of highlighting the priority of making sales for store owners.</p>	<p>Abstract, lines 22–26</p>

Reviewer Comment	Authors' Response	Page/line in marked copy
that public health researchers have not adequately addressed the priority of making sales.		
The second paragraph of the background ('Research in this area is at a relatively early stage...') is too brief. As a reader, I am curious to know what exactly has been found in previous research and what hypothesized mechanisms are linking the store or food environment to health-related behaviours.	We appreciate this point and made major revisions to address it. The revised introduction includes three new paragraphs that expand the literature review. We introduce the conceptual distinction between community and consumer food environments and situate our work as a contribution to understanding how the consumer food environment comes to be. We also provide additional detail about previous store-based interventions (see response to Reviewer 2).	p. 1, lines 9–12 p. 1, line 15 – p. 2., line 10
In section 3.1, the implications of the second findings related to participants' free listing of health foods are discussed. I would prefer to separate discussion of results from the results itself.	We understand the motivation for this criticism but respectfully disagree with it. Because free-listing is not a common method in public health (our search found no articles in <i>BMC Public Health</i> that have used the technique), we feel it is necessary to provide readers with some basic information about how to interpret the results. We do reserve full discussion of the implications, however, until the third paragraph of the Discussion.	N/A
It would be good if the authors could reduce the length of the results section of 3.2 and use smaller or less quotes of participants.	We considered this point carefully but decided that it would detract from the paper to abbreviate the results. One of the reasons we selected <i>BMC Public Health</i> , in fact, was that the online format enables us to present more primary qualitative data than might be possible in a print journal (with accompanying page budgets). We feel it is important to present respondents' voices more fully to establish the evidentiary basis of our claims. This approach is also more consistent with the participatory approach that infuses our work.	N/A
The abbreviation 'FL' was not immediately clear to me. It would also be useful to include the country where the study took place.	Thank you for this point. We replaced "FL" with "Florida (USA)."	Abstract, line 8 p. 3, line 10

Reviewer Comments	Authors' Response	Page/line in marked copy
<i>Reviewer 2</i>		
This is a very relevant and timely article highlighting the challenges faced by store owners in supplying healthy food options. Overall the paper is well written and referenced.	Thank you for this assessment	N/A
Page 1: The literature review seems inconsistent with the focus of the paper. The authors indicate that the purpose of the current study is to expand our understanding of the mechanisms between the food environment and health-related behaviors. However, it seems more appropriate to frame the paper emphasizing the relevance of the study for developing food retail interventions.	We agree with this criticism. We have thoroughly revised the introduction with Reviewer 2's suggestion in mind. Specifically, the third through fifth paragraphs situate our work in the context of store-based interventions to reshape the consumer food environment. We introduce the distinction between community and consumer food environments, summarize observational research on the consumer environment, and cite key results from existing store-based interventions. In the final paragraph of the introduction, we say directly: "This paper extends the evidence base for future food-store interventions...."	p. 1, lines 9–12 p. 1, line 15 – p. 2, line 10 p. 2, line 21
Page 1, last paragraph: The authors indicated that out of 16 intervention studies identified by Gittelsohn et al, only three included retailer interviews. Please summarize the results of these interviews and cite them.	We made the requested changes.	p. 2, lines 14–20
Page 5, last paragraph: How many coders coded the data? Authors should provide more detail about how this process was done. Additionally, how did they resolve disagreements if there was more than one coder?	We now explain that the first author alone did the primary coding and that other team members contributed to the interpretation and synthesis of results.	p. 6, lines 18–21
The authors should indicate that the study was conducted as part of a CBPR project at the start of the methods vs. later in the paper.	We moved the description of CBPR to the first subsection of Methods, as suggested.	p. 4, lines 5–8
Should add a citation describing the accuracy of using expanded field notes compared to interview transcripts.	We clarified that all the excerpts presented in the results section are from verbatim transcripts of audio-recorded interviews. We think the accuracy of the field notes, therefore, is not vital to evaluating the evidence we present.	p. 6, lines 5–6