

Listening Through Seeing: Using Design Methods to Learn About The Health Perceptions of *Garden on the Go*® Customers

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OVERVIEW

The goal of this project is to apply an innovative approach to gathering beliefs and attitudes of an inner city population in a more valid and reliable way than traditional data collection methods. This community based research study will focus on dietary risk factors for obesity, diabetes type 2, and cardiovascular disease in underserved communities. Our study assesses what **health** means to the underserved Garden on the Go® clients and how they define a healthy diet. Garden on the Go®, a signature obesity prevention effort, is Indiana University Health's year-round mobile produce delivery program providing fresh, affordable produce to Marion County neighborhoods in need. We build upon previous research conducted with Garden on the Go® to enhance the effectiveness of this intervention and provide valuable information that other groups may use to improve the impact of their efforts in meeting the health needs of similar communities.

RATIONALE

Traditional ways of gathering health related attitudes and beliefs of inner city residents, who are often economically and educationally disadvantaged, may yield invalid and unreliable information. Targeted individuals may be hesitant to talk about their true beliefs to professionals because they fear intimidation or disapproval. In addition, many do not want to participate in focus groups or interviews, and when they do, they often struggle to express their beliefs verbally. Consequently, public health professionals may not have an accurate understanding of the beliefs and attitudes about health among this population, and, thus, interventions based on this flawed understanding may not be as effective as desired. It is believed that a visual voice approach will not only be more acceptable to participants, but also provide multiple dimensions of their attitudes and beliefs, such as context. The participants are expected to be more willing to talk about the photographs, which will allow the public health professions to identify common themes and exemplars, as well as better understand their feelings about the topic. The information gathered in this format is expected to be more valid and reliable, leading to the development of more effective health promotion programming.

METHODOLOGY

Effective designs often start with a pre-design or **design research** phase that helps determine relevance to the user. Design research often relies on visual methods such as participant photography and journaling to gain insight into user experiences. The study team wanted to learn about health from the viewpoint of the individual, not the doctor, so we designed data collection tools that enabled study participants to communicate with the team about health and healthy behaviors in their daily lives. (see figure) In this study we couple visual communication with **photo elicitation**, using the pictures that the study participants took themselves as a basis for discussion.

Participants use cameras to take photographs to illustrate how they “see” health, healthy behaviors, and healthy diets. The cameras are distributed to 60 Garden on the Go® customers with a photo journals to jot down important information about the photos they take according to our prompts (see [In Journal](#), below). Once all photography is complete, participants engage in a group discussion using photo elicitation techniques. Participant responses and photos (used with permission) will be analyzed by the study team. Findings will contribute to a better understanding of health through the eyes of Garden on the Go® customers, and will be reported back to IU Health/Garden on the Go®.

RESEARCH PROMPTS

In Journal

A Day in the Life

For one day, take photos of everything you consume, ‘as is,’ from a snack to a full meal. In the journal note:

1. Date, time and place
2. Are you with someone? Who?
3. What activities were you also taking part in?
4. Where did you get your food from?

What Does Health Mean to You?

Think about everything that makes you feel healthy.

1. How does it make you feel healthy?

At Facilitated Photo Discussion

1. What are the top three things in your life that make you healthy?
2. What can we say about our choices?

CAMERA KIT WITH JOURNAL



PROCESS



PARTICIPANT PHOTOGRAPHY

Cameras and journals are given to customers at Garden on the Go® locations. Participants are asked to take photos related to health & describe them in their journal.



FACILITATED PHOTO DISCUSSION

Participants meet in groups with study team members to discuss photos.



GROUP ANALYSIS

Study team members work as a collaborative group to analyze data collected from research tools and from facilitated sessions.

DISCUSSION

1. Context based research. By participants using cameras to record their everyday life, we get a rich and detailed view of the context in which they live, which gives us valuable insights for future programs and activities.
2. Tools as enablers. The viewpoint of the participant is at the heart of this study. Cameras enable them to show their beliefs and attitudes to us directly, and talk about it later in discussion groups.
3. Design principles. By using the design principle of ‘people centeredness,’ we framed our research methods with consideration of the participant experience to make it user friendly and enjoyable.

PARTNERS

IU Health provided logistical support for study recruitment and access to Garden on the Go® customers. The Garden on the Go® program is at the heart of this study.

Herron School of Art and Design, Department of Visual Communication Design, was the primary research arm, taking the lead in study development, methodology and tool design and production. Herron took the lead in implementation, developing the assignments, recruiting and managing participation, processing photos and facilitating the discussions.

Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health assisted in the research design and data collection, interpreting the findings and making recommendations for others to better design and implement programs to improve the health of underserved populations.

STUDY TEAM

IU Health Lisa Cole, Kaliah Ligon. **Fairbanks School of Public Health** Terrell Zollinger, DrPH, Cindy Lewis, Anne Reynolds, Viacony Herzi. **Herron School of Art and Design** Helen Sanematsu, Youngbok Hong, Ashley Bailey, Brian Crain, Bridget Hawryluk, Andrea Haydon, Nick Walters. Special thanks to Niki Girls and Lynn Rogers at the Concord Community Center; Valerie Moore at the Lugar Towers and Indiana Avenue Apartments, and Tysha Sellers at the Edna Martin Christian Center.