

Developing a Theory of Food Access

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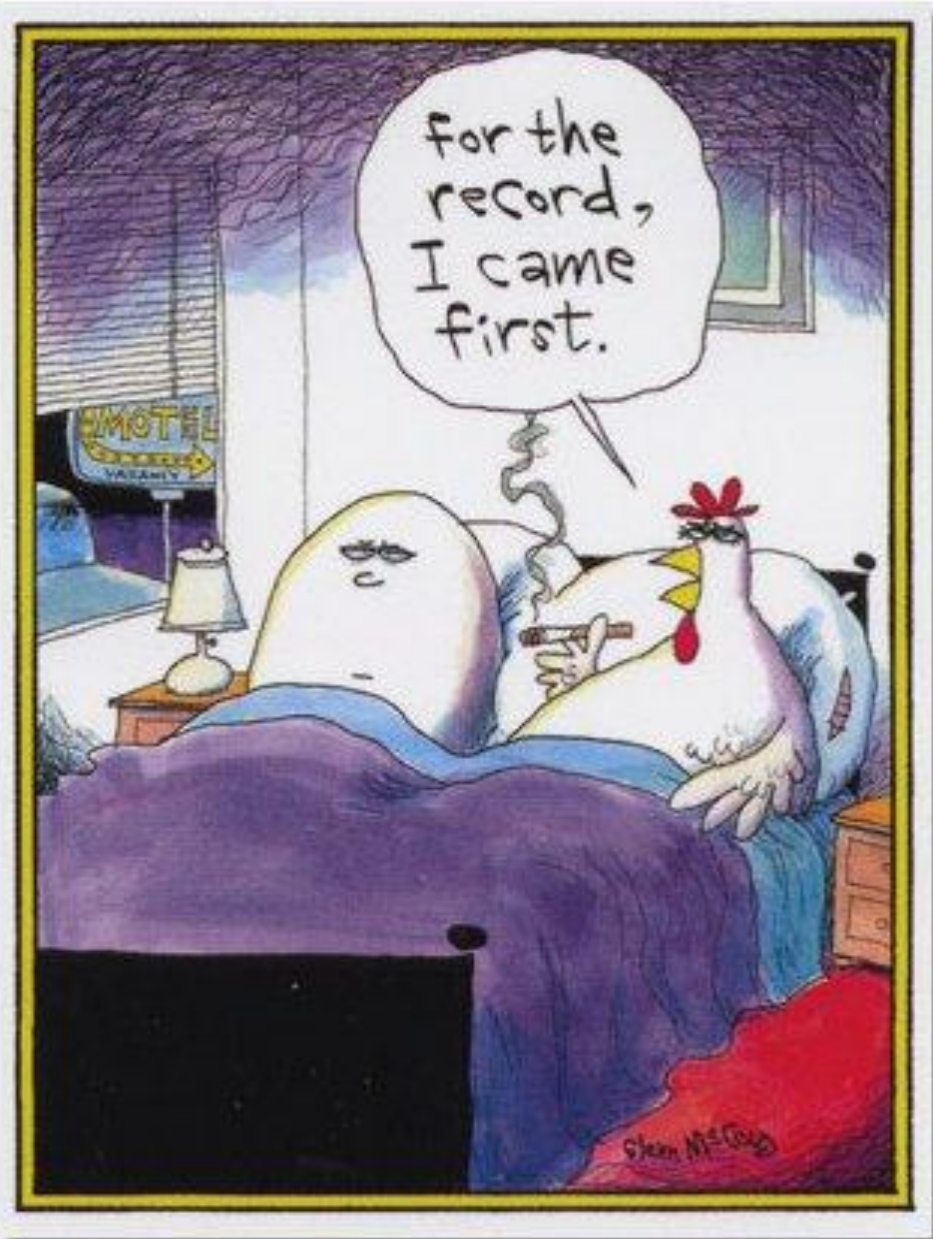
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What is theory?

- A coherent group of general propositions used as principles of explanation for a class of phenomena.
- A proposed explanation whose status is still conjectural, can be tested and disproved.
- “T” v. “t” theories.

Examples of Theory

Macro

- Structuration Theory
- Feminist Theory
- Critical Race Theory
- Theories of Power and Capital

Meso

- Diffusion of Innovation
- Community Readiness
- Organizational Change
- Community organizing and mobilization
- Social marketing

Individual
Behaviors

Micro

- **Theory of Planned Behavior**
- **Theory of Reasoned Action**
- **Health Belief Model**
- **Social Cognitive Theory**
- **Transtheoretical Model**

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- Structuration Theory
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Neighborhoods
and
Communities

Meso

- **Diffusion of Innovation**
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Micro

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Examples of Theory

Systems,
Structures,
Society

Macro

- **Structuration Theory**
- **Feminist Theory**
- **Critical Race Theory**
- **Theories of Power and Capital**
- **Political Theory**

Meso

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Need for Specific Theory of Food Access

- Empirical Evidence Suggests:
 - Food environments vary by race/class
 - Food environments influence health outcomes
- Empirics are not enough to inform intervention to increase access and improve health outcomes

Need for Specific Theory of Food Access

- From “Work Group III: Methodologic Issues in Research on the Food and Physical Activity Environments Addressing Data Complexity” (Oakes et al., 2009)
- **Challenge #1: Conceptual Models and Theories**
 - “Progress in trans-disciplinary research addressing the health effects of the food and physical activity environments appears hampered by several methodologic obstacles, including: (1) the absence of clear, testable conceptual models...” (S177)
 - “The first barrier is surely the lack of precise conceptual models and elaborate theories of exactly which factors are presumed to affect which behaviors under which circumstances and by how much.” (p. S178)

Methods

Qualitative Data Sources

- In-depth interviews (n=20)
- Focus groups (n=5)

Data Analysis

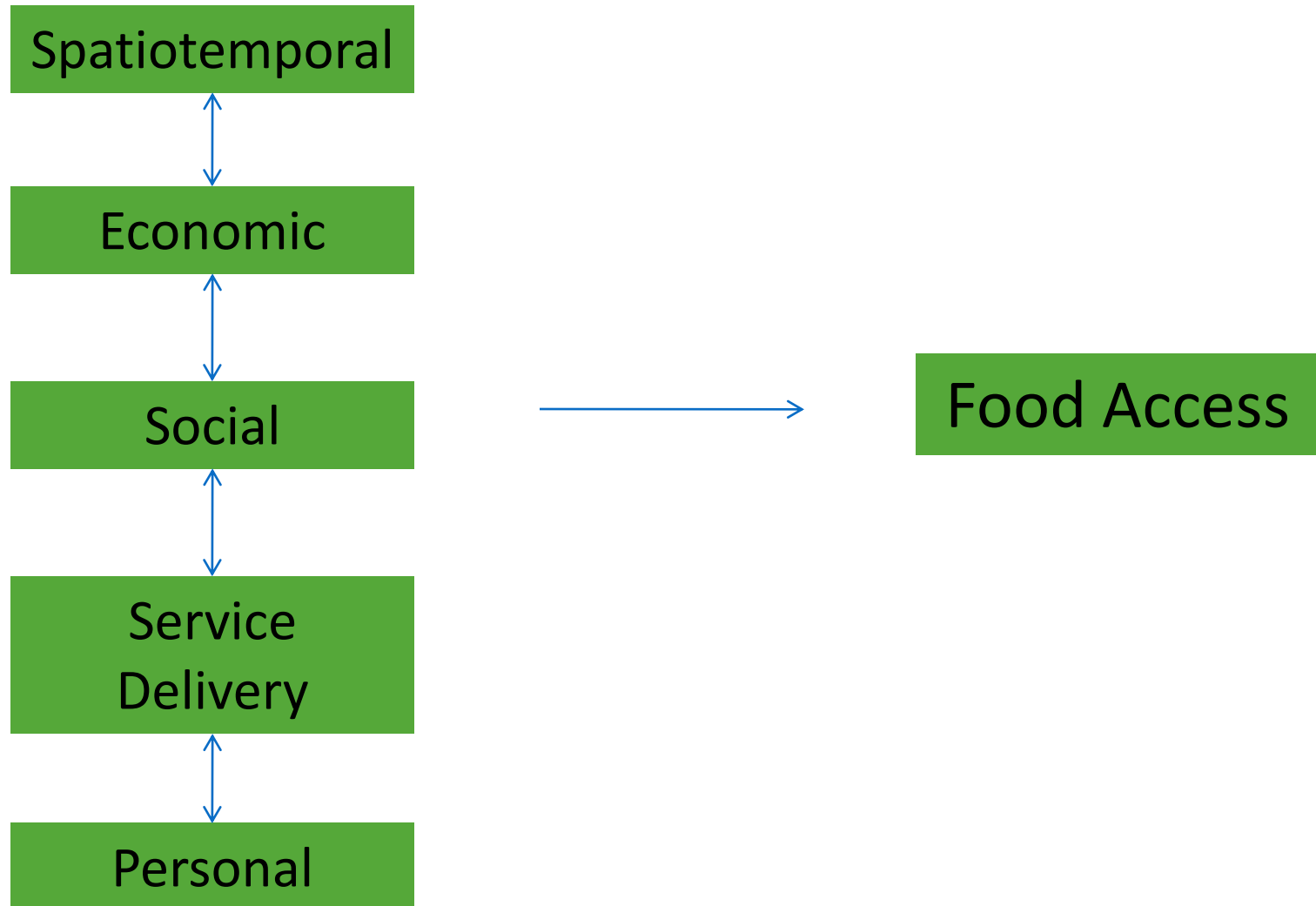
- Inductive analysis w/ research team
- Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2001)
- Atlasti 5.2

Erro



Grounded Theory of Food Access: Five Dimensions

draft





Dimension 1: Spatiotemporal

- Balanced access to a variety of food stores in local food environment.
- Variety and quality of healthy foods available (e.g., fruits/veg, low-fat milk, lean meats, whole grains).
- Positive perceptions of local food environment.
- Regular and reliable access to transport.
- Work schedule facilitates access, have time to shop.
- Short distance to travel to stores.



Dimension 2: Economic

- Price tags of healthy foodstuffs.
- Good value, food is worth the price.
- Financial resources of households.



Dimension 3: Social

E.g., Racial Segregation in Newark, NJ

- Neighborhood segregation by race and class.
- Racism and sexism (institutional, personally mediated, internalized).
- Relationships and connection to food system actors.
- Cultural preferences and heritage.



Red is White, Blue is Black, Green is Asian, and Orange is Hispanic, and each dot is 25 people.

Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com/segregation-map-america-new-york-2010-9#newark-blacks-live-in-the-poor-south-ward-14>

Dimension 4: Service Delivery



- Efficient service.
- Coupon and incentive programs.
- Presentation of food (e.g., neat, clean, adequately stocked).
- Staff (e.g., respectful, helpful, clean).
- Specialty products available (e.g., organics, health foods, meats).



Dimension 5: Personal

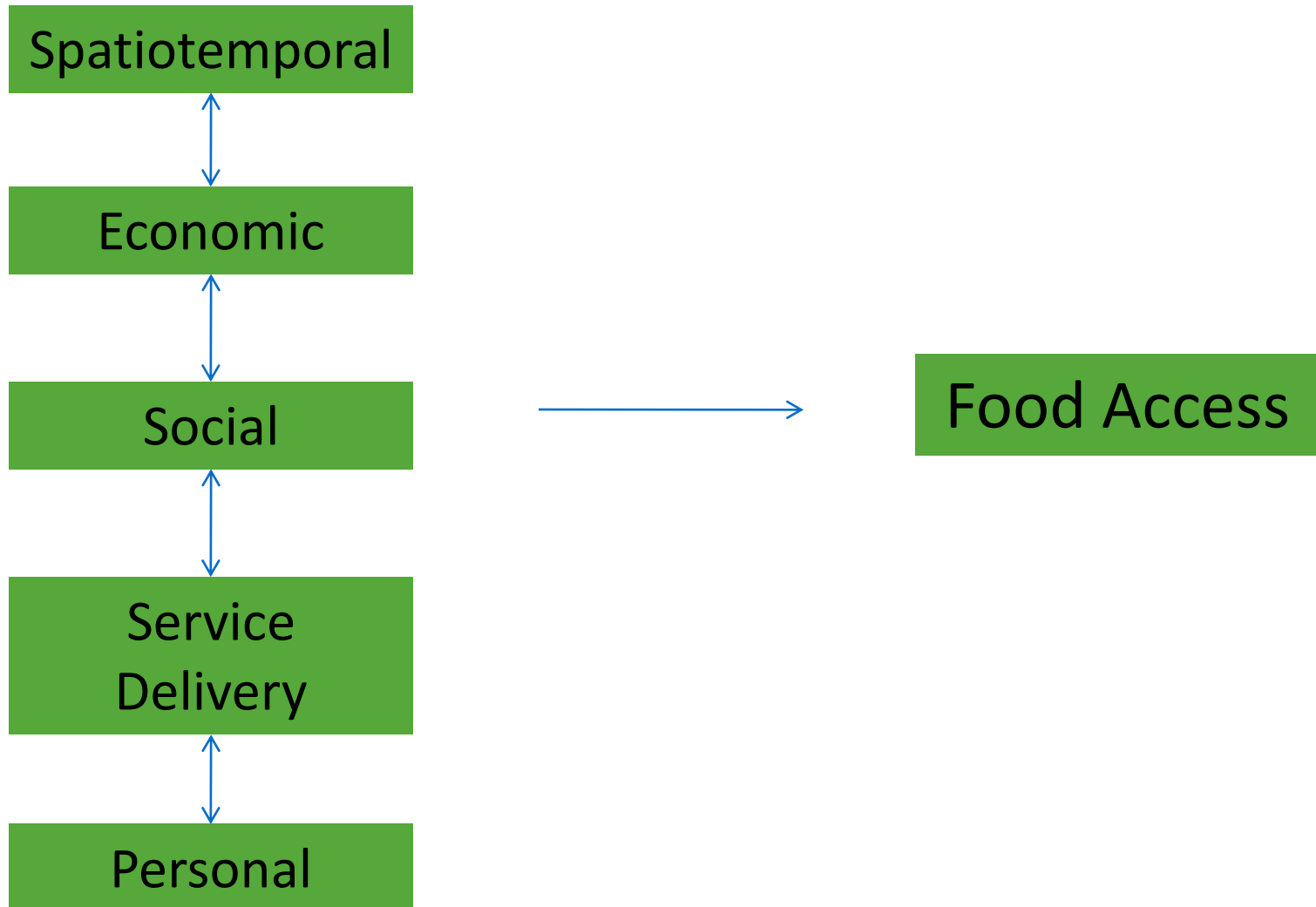
- Eating identity (e.g., healthy, meat, picky)
- Health status
- Knowledge about health eating



Policies Focused on Food Access

- Obama Administration (2010) details \$400 million Healthy Food Financing Initiative, which will bring grocery stores and other healthy food retailers to underserved urban and rural communities across America.
- CDC (2009) calls for policy and environmental strategies to increase the availability of healthier food retail in communities.
- Let's Move Campaign (2010) - Ensure that residents can access healthy and affordable food through public transportation—by realigning bus routes, providing free shuttles, or other means.

Research and Policy Implications



Thank you!

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