

# Creating Crucial Connections: Lessons Learned from Engaging Diverse Communities in Research

Recruitment of  
Young Adult African American Women  
in Health Research:  
*Best Practices and Lessons Learned*



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Presented by: Laura L. Hayman PhD, MSN

# Outline

- ▶ Project Health
- ▶ Marketing & Recruitment Strategies
- ▶ Incentives
- ▶ Data Collection
- ▶ Surprises!

# PROJECT HEALTH



# PROJECT HEALTH

- ▶ Background:
  - ▶ **Obesity is a heterogeneous condition**
    - ▶ Some obese individuals also have abnormal cardiovascular risk factor clustering
    - ▶ Others are “healthy” with no abnormal cardiovascular risk factors
      - ▶ More likely to be healthy if:
        - 1) **Women**
        - 2) **African American/Black** <sup>1, 2</sup>
- ▶ **Purpose:** Examine and compare physical activity, sedentary behavior and dietary intake in young obese African American women who have healthy versus unhealthy cardiometabolic risk profiles
- ▶ <sup>1</sup> Wildman, RP et al., *Arch Intern Med.*, 2008; <sup>2</sup> Camhi, SM & Katzmarzyk, PT . *J Pediatr*, 2011

# PROJECT HEALTH

- ▶ Participant Eligibility:
  - ▶ **Black/African American Women**
  - ▶ **19-35 years**
  - ▶ **Obese: BMI 30-34.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>**
  - ▶ **Born in the US**
- ▶ Location: UMass Boston Campus
  - ▶ **Original Focus was on recruiting STUDENTS**

# PROJECT HEALTH Methods

- ▶ **Visit 1:** (approximately 1 hour)
  - ▶ Demographics: Questionnaire
  - ▶ Diet: 30-45 minute Block FFQ Questionnaire
  - ▶ Body Composition: DEXA scan, height, weight, waist/hip circumference
- ▶ **Visit 2:** (approximately 1 hour)
  - ▶ Blood Pressure
  - ▶ Blood Draw
  - ▶ Sedentary Behavior: Questionnaire

# Marketing & Recruitment Strategies

# “Passive” Marketing & Recruitment Strategies

- ▶ UMass Boston Students
  - ▶ **Flyers**
  - ▶ **Campus wide Email**
- ▶ Community
  - ▶ **Craiglist**
  - ▶ **Flyers**
    - ▶ Targeted beauty businesses and health services locations



# “Active” Marketing Strategies

- ▶ UMB
  - ▶ **Tabling**
    - ▶ Offered blood pressure screenings in Campus Center
  - ▶ **Class Announcements**
    - ▶ Exercise and Health Science classes
- ▶ Community
  - ▶ **Targeted beauty businesses and health services locations**
    - ▶ One- on- one discussions with patrons, owners, health professionals
  - ▶ **Healthworks Community Fitness**
    - ▶ Non-profit organization that focuses on minority health in Black women
      - ▶ Fitness class announcements
      - ▶ Tabling (blood pressure screenings)

# Total screened = 190 participants

Method of Recruitment	N (%) Participants Screened
<b>PASSIVE STRATEGIES</b>	
UMB: Email	111 (38%)
Community: Craigslist	96 (33%)
UMB: Flyer	34 (12%)
<b>ACTIVE STRATEGIES</b>	
Community: Healthworks Gym	5 (2%)
UMB: Tabling	5 (2%)
Community: One-on-One Talks	5 (2%)
<b>OTHER STRATEGIES</b>	
N/A	24 (8%)
Referred	8 (3%)
Other	2 (<1%)



# Lesson Learned

- ▶ Passive marketing strategies were more successful
- ▶ Active marketing strategies were time consuming and resource rich and had little return
  - ▶ **Note: Research Staff and Assistants were all undergraduate students supervised/trained by the PI**
    - ▶ However, RA's focused on the community efforts were Black women, and lived and/or worked in the same communities they were targeting.



# Participants Wanted!



Are you a self-identified Black Woman who:

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6'0"	221	228	235	242	250	258	265	272	279	287	293.5



You may be eligible to participate in a study at UMass Boston on lifestyle behaviors, body composition, and cardiovascular health in Black Women.

*A \$35 Target gift card, personalized health report, and travel reimbursement will be given to those who complete the study!*

If you are interested in participating or want more information please contact:

Sarah Camhi, PhD, Principal Investigator  
Exercise and Health Sciences, University of Massachusetts Boston  
E-mail: [sarah.camhi@umb.edu](mailto:sarah.camhi@umb.edu) | Phone: 617-287-5942



# After 2 months of unsuccessful recruitment...

- ▶ We conducted a focus group of women fitting our demographic give us feedback on flyers and incentives.
- ▶ Here is the feedback they provided, as well as feedback we received from our Research Assistants who were out in the community...

# Reaction to Images...

- ▶ **Original Plan:** Images chosen as they represent women who are different shapes and sizes and engaging in health-related behaviors associated with tasks in the study – body composition and nutrition
- ▶ **Response:** From my research assistant (who self-identifies as being Black and also helped choose the photos in the flyer)...

*“a lot of African American women had issues with the type of women we put on the flyers/poster... They felt it did not give a true picture of what an obese African American woman truly looked like and they stated that the women presented did not look truly black”*







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**Original Plan:**  
Include name of PI

**Reaction:** From Research Assistant:  
*"most stated that they didn't feel comfortable seeing a white person as the face of the research"*

**Response:** Used generic project email for contact





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**Original Plan:** We were only recruiting obese women - so we only marketed for this demographic- Didn't use "obese" but defined using BMI

**Reaction:** Focus group saw this as insulting that we would only be looking for "Fat Black Women" to study. Suggested that we market to all sizes to get better response

**Response:** Removed BMI criteria from flyer

**Consequence:**  
>50% of screened participants not eligible







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## Original Plan:

Personalized health report included was not emphasized and just mentioned

## Reaction:

Focus group was not clear on what this was and why this would be valuable... Once we explained what this was, they thought this should be highlighted more...

## Response:

Needed to clearly define the value and how it could be used



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## Reaction:

Focus group complained time commitment and participation was not clear

## Response:

Needed to clearly define time commitment





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## Original Plan:

Due to budget constraints, the incentive was \$35 for 2 hours of time

**Reaction:** Focus group said that for 2 hours of time this was not enough money – seen as \$17.50/hour which was not worthwhile – suggested making a round number like \$25/hr

## Response:

Increase incentive to \$50





# Participants Wanted!



You may be eligible to participate in a 2-hour research study on lifestyle behaviors, body composition, and cardiovascular health in Black Women.

## Are you:

- ☑ **A self-identified Black Woman?**
- ☑ **19-35 years of age?**
- ☑ **Born in the U.S.?**



**PROJECT HEALTH** Participants  
will receive:

- **Personalized Health Report**  
detailing your nutritional intake, physical activity levels and cardiovascular risk factors to provide feedback and guidance about your own health that you can also share with your health provider!
- **\$50 TARGET Gift Card**
- **Travel Reimbursement**



If you are interested in participating or want more information please contact:

**PROJECT HEALTH: Exercise and Health Sciences Department**

**E-mail: [Project.Health@umb.edu](mailto:Project.Health@umb.edu) | Phone: 617-287-7367**

## Major Changes:

- 1) New images of “strong” Black woman that was found to be acceptable to a group of Black women
- 2) Contact info is generic
- 3) No mention of BMI
- 4) Focus on defining personalized health report
- 5) Inclusion of total time commitment



# Lesson learned

- ▶ It is important to create a visual branding presence with flyers/posters
  - ▶ **Just be sure it is the right image(s) and message!**

- ▶ From a Research Assistant...

*“I know there were some complaints about the posters, but just about everybody I talked to on campus knew about the posters...Some people even recalled the participant demographic it was asking for--either that, or, they would remember the image.”*

# Incentives

# Incentives

- ▶ What was offered:
  - ▶ **Travel reimbursement**
    - ▶ Charlie card for round trip OR Parking pass
  - ▶ **\$50 TARGET gift card**
  - ▶ **Personalized Health Report**
    - ▶ Physical activity levels, body composition, cardiovascular risk factors, sedentary behavior, nutrition/diet

- ▶ From a Research Assistant...

*“It seemed to me as if the personalized health reports were more attractive to the women than the gift card incentives. They always wanted to know where their health stood... This study used a participant's own data as an incentive, and I think that's key when doing research on a budget....both the researcher and participant want the same thing. I was overly surprised, throughout my time...at how much more participants seemed to care about their own health over receiving the cash.”*



# Lesson Learned...

- ▶ Black women seem to appreciate having information about their health and wellness
- ▶ Monetary incentive was not the main motivation for participation



# Data Collection

# From my Research Assistant (who self-identifies as Black)...

- ▶ *“...I had a few African American women who came up to me and asked where all the black people in the research study were- **they wanted to have more black women involved.** I even had someone ask if I was the only black person that was involved.”*

# Lesson Learned

- ▶ Including staff that is identical to the recruited and targeted race/ethnic group is important to potential participants
- ▶ A diverse research staff by gender and race/ethnicity did not encourage participation.

# Some Additional Surprises Worth Mentioning

- ▶ UMB Students were not interested (or busy)
  - ▶ **We got larger response from the local community**
- ▶ Timing of appointments
  - ▶ **Many participants were available during the day**
    - ▶ We expected mostly evening and early morning appointments from community members
- ▶ Childcare
  - ▶ **Many women brought their children to their visits**
  - ▶ **We needed to find last minute supervision**
    - ▶ Some tasks were not appropriate exposure for children (ie., DEXA)

# Some Additional Surprises Worth Mentioning

- ▶ Tardiness/No Show
  - ▶ **The majority of participants were 15-30 minutes late for their scheduled appointment time**
  - ▶ **17% who were scheduled did not show**
    - ▶ This is despite our protocol to phone and email reminders 2 days prior and calls 2-3 hours before
  - ▶ **Allow flexibility with research staff availability and scheduling**
    - ▶ Many RA's were students, so this became difficult with class and work schedules

# Lessons Learned Summary

- ▶ Marketing & Recruitment Strategies
  - ▶ **Passive Strategies more successful**
  - ▶ **Students not interested; Community members are!**
  - ▶ **Use a focus group for flyers!**
- ▶ Incentives
  - ▶ **Personalized health report more meaningful**
- ▶ Data Collection
  - ▶ **Staff should mirror demographics of study participants**
  - ▶ **Have a childcare option**
  - ▶ **Schedule should not be rigid for start/stop**

# Thank you to the PROJECT HEALTH COLLABORATORS & STAFF

## Research Assistants

- ▶ Justin Wheeler
- ▶ John Hathaway
- ▶ Ryan Kohl
- ▶ Jessica Sullivan
- ▶ Hali Kovich
- ▶ Lauren Lob
- ▶ Vivian Onyechi
- ▶ Keiani Gomes
- ▶ Tania Godbout

## Collaborators

- ▶ Dr. Aviva Must (Tufts)
- ▶ Dr. Alice Lichtenstein (Tufts)
- ▶ Dr. Laura Hayman (UMB)
- ▶ Dr. Scott Crouter  
(University of Tennessee, Knoxville)

# Thank you!

