How Insights from Behavioral Economics Can Support Re-Design and Enhance Impact of Infant Targeted Interventions

Lerzan Coskun, Ph.D.
Yana Kuchirko, Ph.D.
Lisa Gennetian, Ph.D.
Michelle Spiegel, MPA

New York University
Institute of Human Development and Social Change
In collaboration with NYC’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Perspectives on Parents’ Program Engagement

• Conventional Models (conventional economics)
  – Compare costs and benefits
  – Have a clear understanding of the enrollment process
  – Seamlessly execute positive parenting practices

• Behavioral Economics (microeconomic theory, psychology, and neuroscience)
  – Busy lives and distractions
  – Economic instability
  – Attention, self-control, social norms and self-perception as influencing decision-making
Approach

• Applying an interdisciplinary framework of behavioral economics with child development theory.

• Helping parents focus their attention on, and supporting follow through with, available resources and services.

• Optimizing impact of existing interventions through low-cost BE informed design innovations.
The beELL-NYC study: Using Behavioral Economics to Support Positive Early Language and Literacy Habits Among Low Income Mothers of Infants

NYC Existing Programs and Services

- Newborn Home Visiting Program (DOHMH)
- Talk to Your Baby texting program (NYC Hall)
- New York Public Library

Parenting Behaviors

- Responsive interactions
- High quality and quantity of language input
- Singing, playing, reading

BE Enhancements

Use/Uptake
Random Assignment Design

NHVP First Home Visit
Enrollees ($n=411$)

Control ($n=194$)
Information via flyers and social marketing as usual

Experimental ($n=217$)
Plus BE Enhancements
Three key BE enhancements

1. Shifting default to opt-out
2. Positive Affirmation
3. Small Incentives
Default options and inertia

- Voluntary involvement (opt-in) is the default choice in most early childhood programs.

- Inertia, uncertainty and competing demands often lead to decisions that maintain status quo.

- In our randomized controlled study, we set the default to automatic enrollment (opt-out) for the experimental group.

- Parents can voluntarily decline participation by texting “STOP”.
Default options matter

- 94.9% of mothers automatically enrolled and remained in TTYB
- 5.1% automatically enrolled and opted out of TTYB
- 1.1% informed about TTYB through advertising and opted-in

Opt-in vs. opt-out patterns did not differ by:

- First time parenting
- Number of children
- Depression concern
- Receipt of Women, Infant, Children Benefits
Affirmations to positively invoke parenting identity

- Parenting advice information can be threatening, particularly for parents who feel stigmatized or judged.

- Parents who receive positive affirmations express higher levels of interest in parenting programs than parents who do not.
Positive affirmation during NHVP 2nd home visit

“Being a new mom can feel overwhelming sometimes, but you’re doing a great job.

What was one new thing (baby’s name) has done since I saw you last week? Something that made you smile?”

2/07 1:30PM
Alex might not be getting much sleep and neither are you! But keep up the good work.

2/14 1:30PM
Being a mom is important work. You're doing a great job with Alex!

2/21 1:30PM
You're doing so much to help Alex grow healthy and well. Give yourself a pat on the back!
Small Incentives to bring future benefits to the present

Wishing you
and Mylo too,
Happiness in everything you do.

Books are FUN at every age. Mylo can chew on them!
Point to the pictures. Make silly animal sounds.
And explore!
Small Incentives plus

The library is a fun place for you & your child!
The library has FREE books, music, movies, games, computers & WiFi

Come meet other families like yours & help your baby grow!

[Image of children at a library event]

[Map of New York Public Library branches with locations listed]

[Application for a Children's Library Card (Ages 0-11)]

- Last Name: Edwards
- Middle Name: 
- First Name: 
- Date of Birth: 02/12/1992
- Age: 0
- Gender: M
- Parent or Guardian's Name: 
- Parent or Guardian's Address: 
- Parent's Relationship to Child: 
- Parent's Email: 
- Parent's Phone: 

[Form options for contact information and library card details]

[Map of New York Public Library branches with locations listed]
# BE enhancements to support infant-targeted interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>BE Intervention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To counter inertia in uptake</td>
<td>• Automated enrollment in TTYB</td>
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<tr>
<td>• To redirect attention</td>
<td>• Parenting tips and reminders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To strengthen self-perception</td>
<td>• Positive affirmation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• To approximate interpersonal contact</td>
<td>• Personalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>• To bring future benefits to the present</td>
<td>• Small incentives</td>
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How can BE enhancements help shape parent-infant language interactions?
Thank you!

Website http://beELL.org
Twitter @beELLorg
Email beELL.nyu@gmail.com