

Introduction

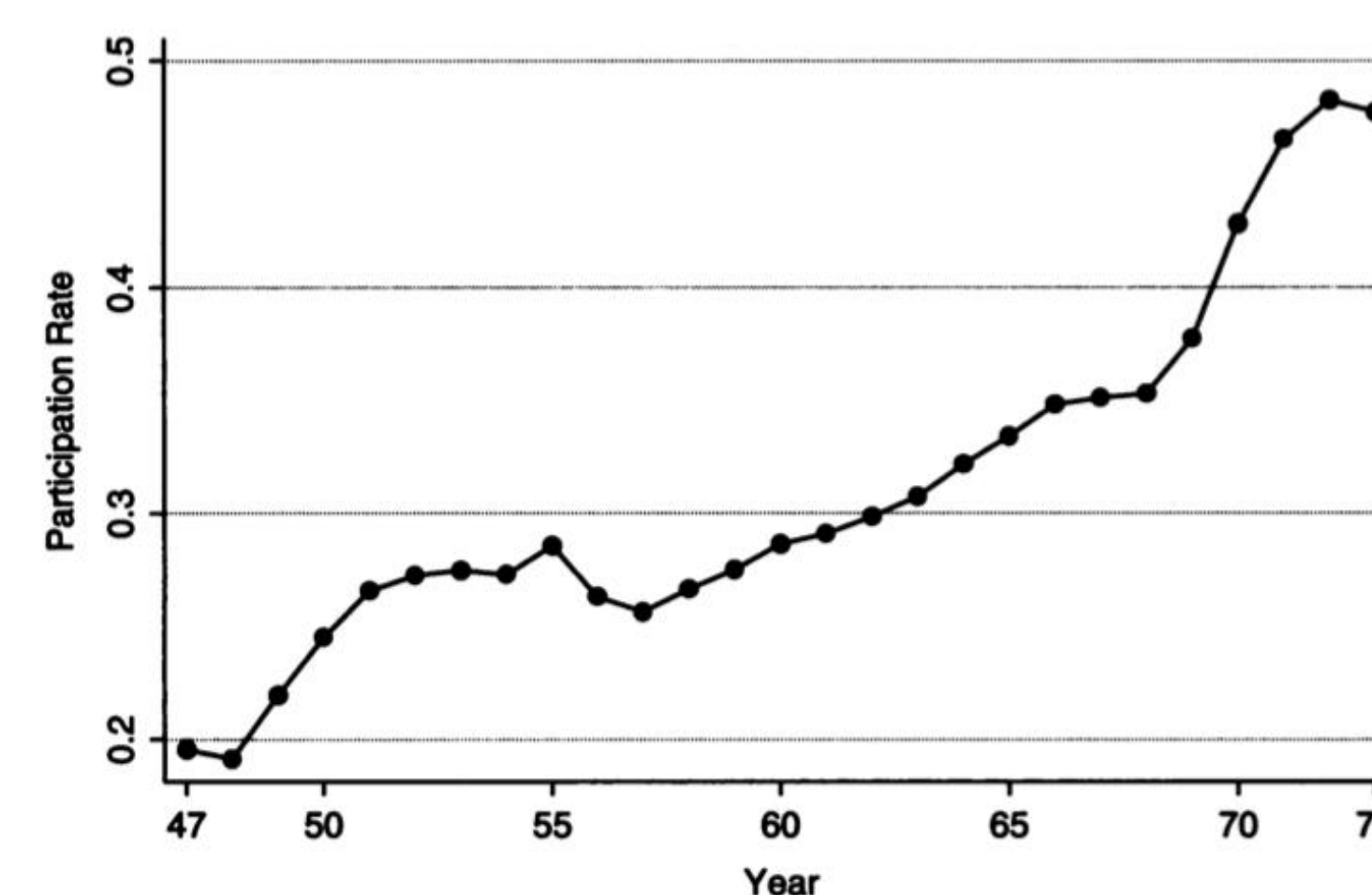
- The US National School Lunch Program (NSLP) exists to provide lunches to students in private and public schools throughout the country. However, the budget for the NSLP is tight and leaves schools struggling to provide students with tasty and nutrient-dense meals.
- The solution to this problem is to increase funding for the NSLP. The benefits that students would receive from this action include more energy throughout the day; a higher academic performance; and a longer, healthier lifespan.

Coverage

- The database that was used to collect the literature was the Tennessee Tech Library.
- The keywords used in searching for literature were:
 - NSLP funding
 - NSLP benefits
 - Food insecurity
 - NSLP nutritional standards
- An article was selected if it met the following standards:
 - Relevant information
 - Published in a scholarly journal
 - Author conducted independent study
- In total, three articles were chosen as the primary literature, and two articles were chosen as secondary or supporting literature, as the authors did not conduct their own study.

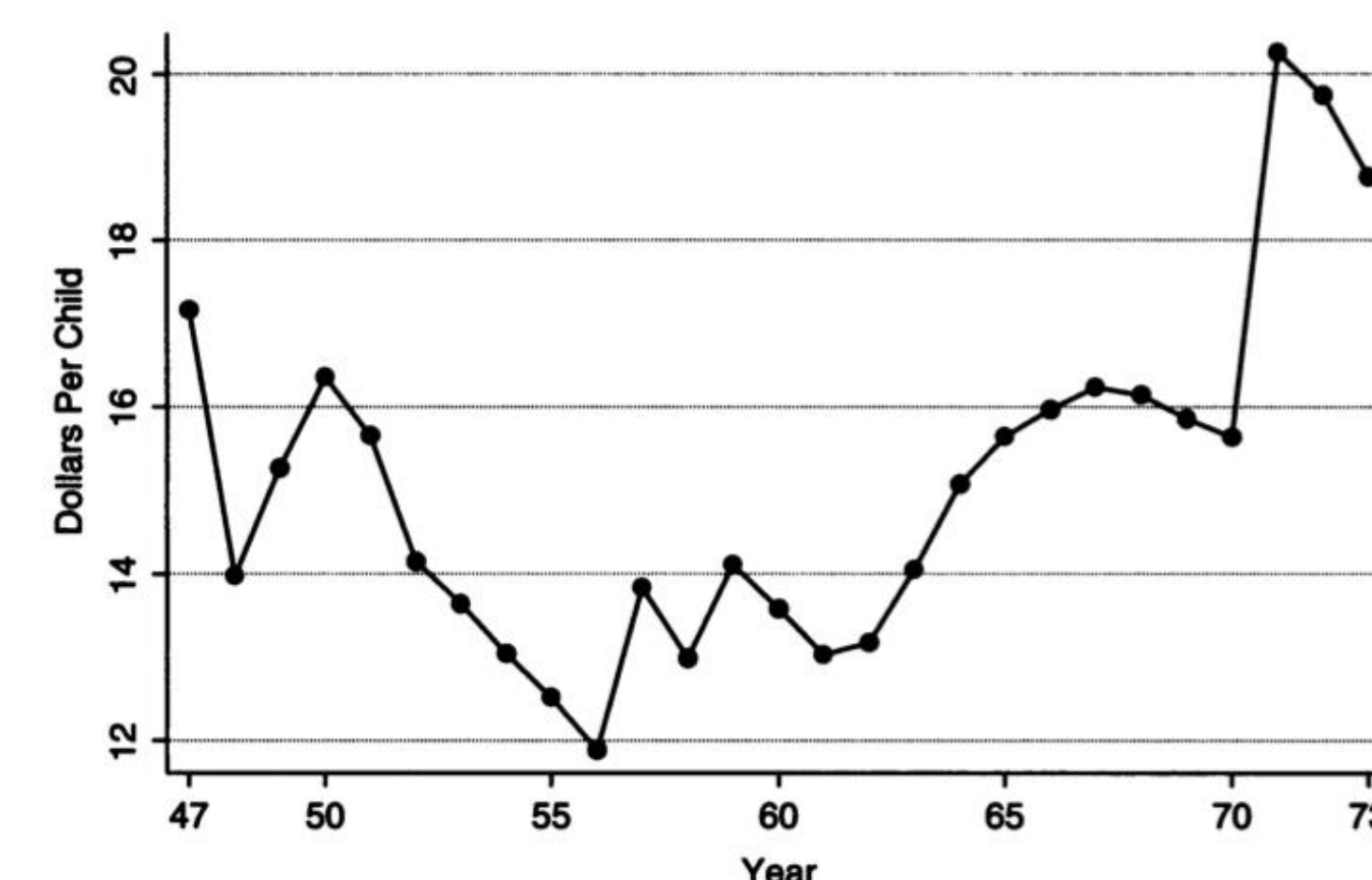
Methodology

- In order to come to conclusions on the benefits the National School Lunch Program gives to participating students, the research methods were examined in the three primary literature sources. The data from the independent studies were gathered using a variety of techniques, which are listed below:
 - Examine the factors associated with food insecurity and NSLP participation and the effects they have on students' health, behavior, and test scores¹
 - Assemble data from sources with information about NSLP funding and participation, the Nation Health Interview Surveys, and the 1980 Census³
 - Measuring plate waste using a validated digital photography method⁵
 - A list of results from the primary literature studies as well as the secondary literature data was created in an attempt to synthesize and come to conclusions about the educational and health benefits that elementary students would gain from increasing the funding for the US NSLP.



Note: Figure shows average national participation in peak month divided by size of population aged 5-17.

Figure 1. Annual Participation Rate in NSLP.



Note: Funding is measured in 2005 dollars.

Figure 2. Section 4 NSLP Funding Per Child.

Image Source: *The Effects of the National School Lunch Program on Education and Health*

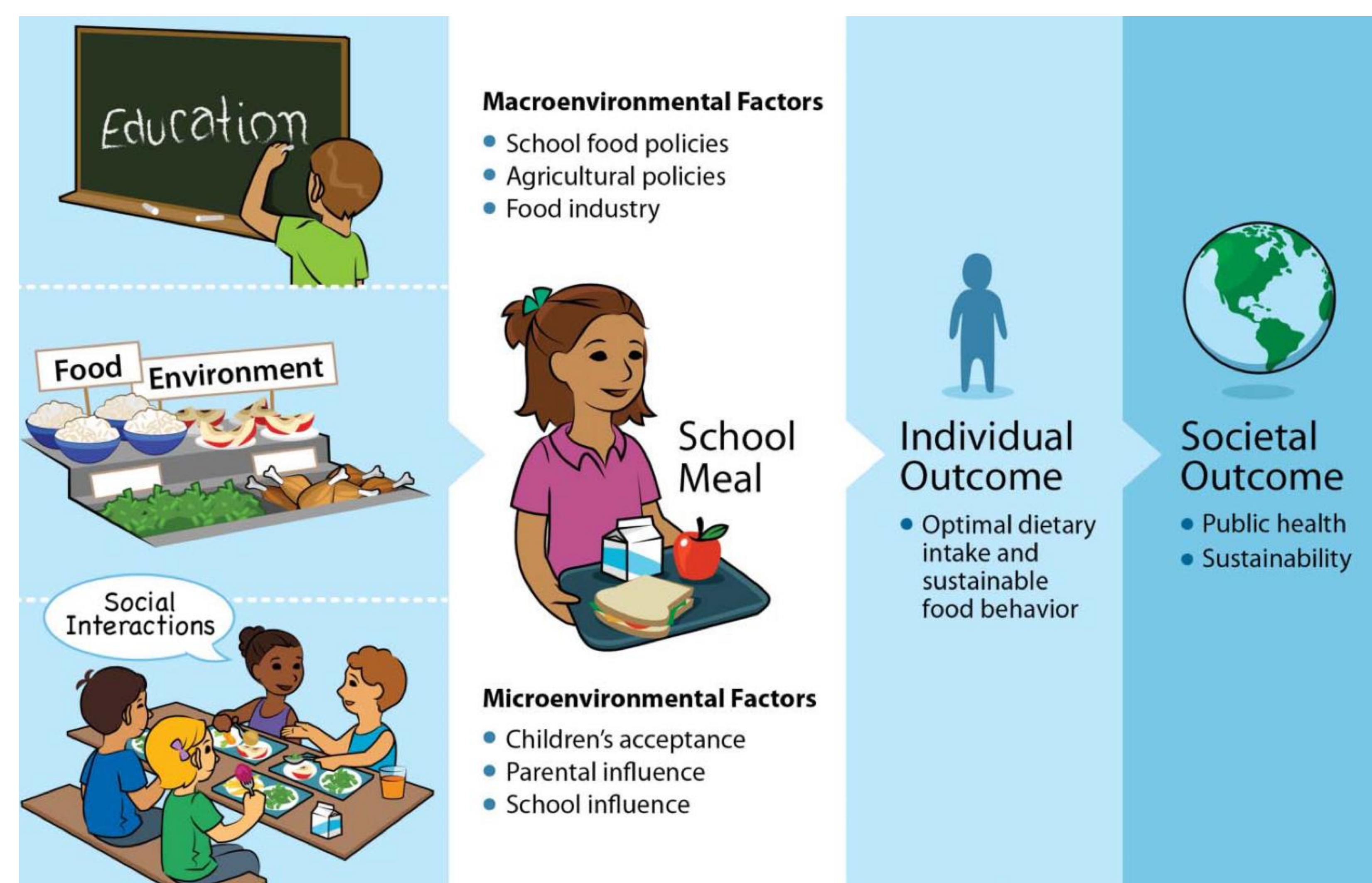


Image Source: *Are school meals a viable and sustainable tool to improve the healthiness and sustainability of children's diet and food consumption? A cross-national comparative perspective*

References

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5. Smith, S. L., & Cunningham-Sabo, L. (2013). Food choice, plate waste and nutrient intake of elementary- and middle-school students participating in the US National School Lunch Program. *Public Health Nutrition*, 17(6), 1255-1263. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s136898013001894>

Results

- The results from the literature indicate that increasing the funding for the NSLP would have a positive significant effect on students' educational performance. This is determined based off of the following results found in studies:
 - A positive relationship is shown between NSLP participation and educational attainment³
 - Increasing NSLP participation is shown to increase the average years of education in both men and women³
- The results from the literature regarding the health benefits that the NSLP provides indicate a slight increase in the probability of life-long health. This is determined based off of the following results found in studies and syntheses:
 - A positive relationship is shown between NSLP participation and increased height³
 - A negative relationship is shown between NSLP participation and the probability of poor health³
 - Schools would be able to provide more nutrient-dense and healthful meals for students²
 - Healthy meals at a young age lead to life-long healthy food choices, which promotes overall health⁴

Significance

- The findings are significant because they show how important the role The National School Lunch Program plays is in students' lives. The students at risk for or experiencing food insecurity will have access to proper nutrition.¹ Healthier food options at a younger age will increase the likelihood of life-long healthy food choices, which increases public health; students will be able to perform at a higher academic level, which will also help society as students age and become active members.⁴ The NSLP plays a crucial part in the lives and development of school age children, and proper funding should be put into the program in order to reap the benefits it offers.

Conclusions

- Based on the findings from previous research, it is evident that The National School Lunch Program has positive effects on school age children's health and academic performance, which lasts throughout their lifespan. This then leads to the hypothesis that increasing the funding for the NSLP would make it possible to improve the program and its results. Supplying more funding to the NSLP, and thus school lunch programs across America, would allow for more nutrient-dense meals to be served to students; this would increase the likelihood of a healthier lifespan and increase the level at which students perform academically.