Motivating Adolescents to be Physically Active: After-school Providers' Perceptions of Gender and Class Constraints

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Background

o Important to promote PA in after-school environments
  - Program leaders are gate-keepers for implementing programs
  - Understanding program leaders' expectations of adolescent PA is a neglected link but critical for "fit" of PA promotion programs

The Good Fit Project

- Mixed-methods formative evaluation for promoting after-school PA in multiethnic urban adolescents
- Community-based after-school programs as venue
  - Interviewed Program Leaders in after-school programs with academic focus

Data Collection

- 51 participants interviewed
  - ***10 Key Informants***
    - Adult after-school program leaders
    - 9 females, 1 male, various racial/ethnic backgrounds
  - 41 Adolescents (ages 11-14)
    - 10 one-on-one interviews
    - 6 focus groups – 3 boys & 3 girls
    - Primarily Latino and African American
- All data were audiotaped, transcribed, reviewed & entered into ATLAS.ti for coding & analysis

Coding Process

- Team of 3 coders
- Codebook development through consensus
  - Guided by method of MacQueen et al (1998)
- 3 phases of coding for reliability & efficiency
  - Phase 1: Group coding
  - Phase 2: Consensus coding
  - Phase 3: "Funnel" approach
    - Multiple reviews of each coded transcript
    - Discussion directly entered into ATLAS
    - Disagreements addressed by full group

Question

- How do after-school program leaders perceive adolescent physical activity?
  - How do they understand adolescents' opportunities and motivations to engage in physical activity?

Analysis

- Open Coding/Memoing
- Examined Codes
  - Barriers - Motivation - Resistance
  - Gender & Social Standing
- Compare and contrast
  - Within and between transcripts
- Emerging themes checked for salience within transcripts
  - Checked for negative examples

Provider Responses

Gender Expectations

Girls	Boys
Like dance, cheerleading, jump rope	Like basketball - don't like dance
Want to watch and sit on the side	Should want to be active; don't relate well to sitting in a group
Body image and appearance concerns	Boys focused more on skill and competition
Are cliquish and mean; Good girls vs Bad girls	Boys fight, compete and can be bad at losing

Barriers

- Weight/Size
- Physical Appearance
- Body Image
- Attitude/Apathy
- Competition
- Parents

- Space
- Parks/City Blocks
- Safety/Violence
- Lack of gyms
- Finances

ENVIRONMENT

I think first and foremost finances. You know a lot of our kids are on free lunch programs so if they didn't get a free metro card from their school they wouldn't be able to come here. So even that dollar fifty or two dollars that the kids would have to pay would be too much for some kids

Most of our junior teens are coming from schools that have eliminated their phys ed programs…So in their environments there's nothing, no parks, they're living in very small apartments and with siblings…

There's a lot of violence…there's a lot of street activity that isn't necessarily conducive to a safe environment…I think that's definitely a concern because they don't have a place and their apartments are small.

…is this city living, in terms of the size of apartments…I would say very few of our children have their own bedroom, or their own space

Motivation

- Fun
- Challenge
- Competition
- Parents/Providers
- Social
- Buy-in with activities

- Internal vs External
  - Incentives
- Familiar vs New
  - Exposure

…if you gave them an incentive that had to do with like, a stipend or something where there was…See, in some ways it has to be not related, you have to kind of inhabit it with somewhat of a hidden agenda, which isn't comfortable with me

Unfortunately most kids today want some kind of incentive attached to it…we've gone along as a culture where we do that, nobody does anything unless there's something in it for them anymore, and kids have adopted that way of thinking too

Also our kids are very receptive to incentives, which is not good. Because if they're not getting that incentive out of it, they don't want no part of it.

INCENTIVES

Resistance

- Developmental stage
- Testing adults
- Boredom
- Cultural differences
- To look cool
- Lack of exposure

Social Standing

- Hectic, unstructured homes
- Living in unsafe neighborhoods
- Attending inferior schools
- Immersed within their culture
- Importance of exposure
  - "Basketball, rap, and sneakers"

EXPOSURE

"…I think they're.. in an area that's very limited in terms of exposure…I think they need positive experiences with other ethnic backgrounds and they certainly don't need any sports that encourage any violence…because that's the way, you know?"

"I definitely want to broaden their horizons. It's so important because…their neighborhood is just not a safe community, a lot of drug transaction that goes on throughout the day….and that's all they know…their outlet is like, this basketball. And I just want to show them that there's more sports."

"…they like the step [dancing] but I struggle with it because…I feel [it's] just another exposure to rap music…but it does get them in…I have many arguments with my counselors about…I'd like them to have a different exposure."

Distance

- Leaders express distance between their lives and the lives of the adolescents in their program
  - Culture
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Economics
  - Age
- Their expectations of adolescents don't fit their reality
- Distance may lead some leaders to perceive their role as including exposing adolescents to "middle-class culture"

Conclusions

- Program leaders critical to the adoption and implementation of PA-related activities in after-school environments
  - Gendered expectations can influence PA among adolescents
  - Program leaders' expectations may be at odds with increasing PA due to focus on exposure
  - Distance between leaders and adolescents may decrease adolescent motivation to engage in program activities, including PA