

Barriers and facilitators for physical activity in rural and urban middle school youth

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Presenter Disclosures

Justin B. Moore, PhD, MS

- The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:
 - "No relationships to disclose"



Rationale

- The prevalence of overweight and obesity in youth is emerging as a major global health concern
- Recent literature has suggested that rural residence might increase the risk of overweight and obesity in youth
- Low levels of physical activity (PA) have been observed in rural youth compared to their urban counterparts

Rationale

- Many previous studies have been driven by a socioecologic framework which identifies factors at the intrapersonal, inter-personal and community levels
- Recent studies have concluded that rural youth encounter unique barriers and facilitators for PA
- More research is needed to identify modifiable determinants of physical activity particularly in rural youth

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Purpose

- The present investigation employed a qualitative approach using focus group discussions to achieve four goals, which were to:
 - examine PA barriers reported by middle school youth and their parents
 - 2. examine PA facilitators reported by middle school youth and their parents
 - explore rural/urban differences in reported PA barriers/facilitators; and
 - 4. examine suggestions for increasing PA of youth in the future.



Participants

- · Forty-one parents/guardians
 - 20 rural, 21 urban, 10% male
 - mean age = 41.oyrs
 - 19.6% Hispanic/Latino
- · Fifty children
 - 22 rural, 28 urban, 44% male
 - mean age = 12.6yrs,
 - 21.6% Hispanic/Latino

Procedure

- Participants were recruited through letters sent home with students in one rural and two urban middle schools
- Participants attended evening meetings where they completed a survey and participated in a focus group
- Thirteen focus groups were conducted in total
 - Seven rural
 - · One held in Spanish
 - Sixurban

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Analyses

- Focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim.
- NVivo (Version 8) was used to organize and manage focus group transcripts.
- A master codebook was developed by two independent coders which consisted mainly of deductive codes, generated from research questions and the moderator guide.
- All 13 focus group transcripts were then coded independently using the codebook to assign codes to appropriate segments of text in each transcript.
- After independent coding, coders met to discuss coding decisions and resolve discrepancies.

Results: Parent Reported Barriers

- Most rural parents reported that recreation centers and other centers for PA were located in urban areas, at least a 20 minute drive from their homes
- Urban parents also mentioned that resources such as a local recreation club and newer parks were being built outside the city, in the 'suburbs', a long drive from their downtown residences
- Participants in one urban group noted that there were venues for ice-skating and skate boarding in the area, but these were not activities that "ethnic kids" would enjoy
- · Safety was indicated as a concern for urban parents

Results: Youth Reported Barriers

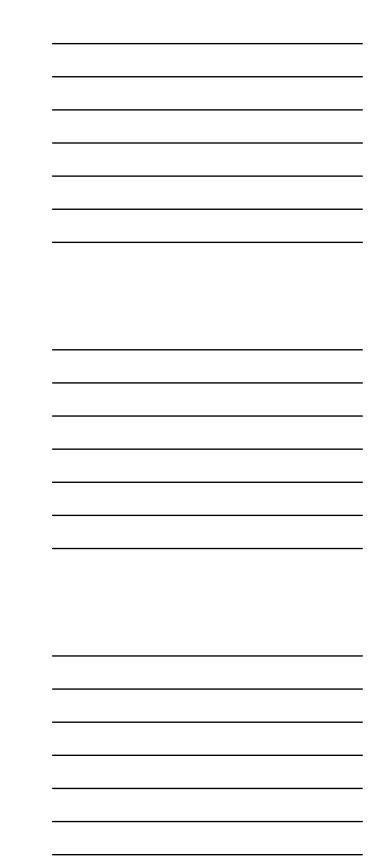
- Adolescents were cognizant of their parents' safety fears and cited this concern as a common constraint to their activity participation
- Both urban and rural youth reported their parents' supervision and vigilance to neighborhood threats reduced their opportunities to be outside and to be active
- Youth in public activity spaces and recreation programs "felt watched" which reduced their desire to visit these sites/programs and be physically active
- Students and parents both reported zoning policies that districted students to attend a school not within walking or biking distance to school

Results: Facilitators

- Parents perceived that children were in an important time in their lives for establishing peer relationships and noted that peers were the ones with the greatest influence over children
- Youth, like parents, frequently reported participating in active (e.g., basketball, walking around town) pursuits with peers
- Similar to their parents, youth mentioned facilities, such as fields, basketball courts, and community centers as facilitating PA

Results: Rural/Urban Differences

- Different safety concerns were salient to urban as compared to rural parents
 - Urban parents expressed fear of the social environment of PA areas, which might include drug dealers and gangs
 - Conversely, rural parents were less concerned about crime
- Urban youth did describe gangs and drugs as legitimate dangers while rural youth identified vandalism, hunters, and isolated stretches of land as environmental dangers
- Urban parents reported that there were facilities in their areas where youth could be active compared to rural parents
- Rural parents, compared to urban parents, reported greater importance of parental PA role-modeling as a facilitator



Suggestions for Future PA Venues

Group	Suggestions for future PA venues		
Urban Parent Groups (n = 3)	Skating rink, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club Use of abandoned buildings for PA venues Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, Parks Something for all ages No or low cost venues		
Rural Parent Groups (n = 4)	YMCA, Family Life Center, Boys and Girls Club, Bowling ar skating rink "all under one roof." Use of abandoned buildings for PA venues Public pool at low cost Public transportation system		
Urban Youth Groups (n = 3)	Indoor facilities/Sports and Recreation Centers, Teen Cente No or low cost venues Places to socialize Public transportation system Basketball courts open at all hours Public pool at low cost PE in school every day Something for all ages Less police interference with outdoor activities		
Rural Youth Groups (n = 3)	YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, indoor gym, skating rink Place to socialize Public pool at low cost		

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Discussion

- The results suggest that the socio-ecologic model is a relevant framework for understanding rural and urban youth physical activity
- The findings from this study suggest that interpersonal (safety, social/peer interactions, supervision) and policy factors (school) had the greatest impression on youth
- Further, we recommend an additional focus on geographic setting in physical activity research since rural and urban samples are likely perceive and relate to PA environments differently



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