

Community Engagement & Youth-Led Action for Obesity Prevention: Working Towards Sustainable Solutions

NICHD Health Equity Seminar Series

Lessons Learned Engaging Diverse Communities in Obesity Research

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Overview

- Obesity Prevention & Control: What's at Stake?
- AACORN: Working Together with Communities
- R13 & Supplement Project Overview
 - Expanding & Developing Partnerships
 - Youth Engagement & Empowerment
 - Outcomes & Lessons Learned
- Next Steps



The Challenge

PA Regional Landscape¹:

- 28.6% of adults are obese & 64.5% of adults are overweight or obese
- 29.7% of children ages 10-17 are overweight or obese



The severity of racial, ethnic and regional disparities in obesity rates is striking, and we continue to see that **lower-income communities** and **communities of color** remain those hardest hit by the obesity epidemic.

¹ Levi J, Segal L,, et al. 2012. F as in fat: How obesity threatens America's future. Trust for America's Health

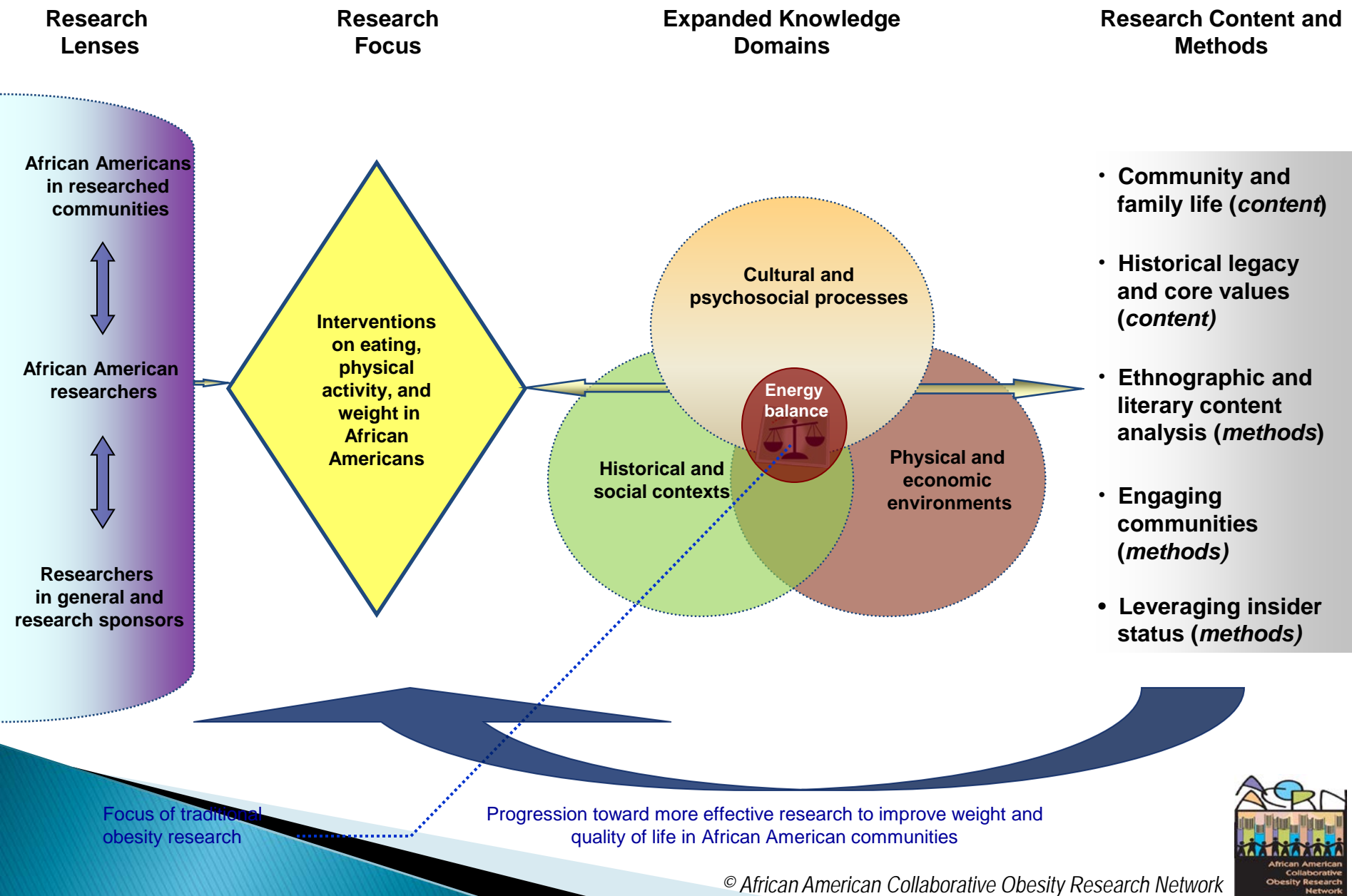


African American Collaborative Obesity Research Network (AACORN)

- **Shiriki Kumanyika, PhD, MPH**, Network Founder & Chair
Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania, Perelman School of Medicine, in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology and the Department of Pediatrics (Nutrition Section)
- Mission: to improve the quality, quantity and effective translation of research to address weight related issues in African American communities
- National Network
 - African American researchers and other scholars
 - Early career scholars, established scholars, and scholars-in-training
 - Community-based research partners



AACORN's Expanded Obesity Research Paradigm



A COMMUNITY-CENTERED VIEW OF INFLUENCES ON EATING, ACTIVITY, AND BODY WEIGHT

Influences of Culture and Mindset

What are our social values?
What do we believe in?
What gives us pleasure?
What gives comfort?
How do we cope with stresses?
What is fair treatment?
Who earns our trust and our loyalty?

Environments to Navigate

Do we have money to buy the things we need?
What are our neighborhoods like?
What type of food is available?
How much does it cost?
Where are opportunities for recreation and outdoor activities?
Who sponsors community events?
What messages do we get from TV, radio, outdoor ads, the web?

What is our history? How does it affect the way we live now?
What kinds of social institutions do we have?
How do our faith communities support us?
What are our families like?
What are our community strengths?
What is our collective strength for taking action?

EATING HABITS
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
BODY WEIGHT



Historical and Social Factors

Health and wellness

High quality of life

Long life

R13 & Supplement

Project Goal & Objectives

Goal: Engage youth and adult allies in planning and implementing conferences focused on youth-led action for obesity prevention & control.

- Implement creative new methods of enabling youth partners to share their perspectives, become more informed, and identify priorities about issues related to eating, physical activity, and body weight;
- Create Advisory Boards that will stimulate dialogue among youth, adult community members and academic researchers; and
- Identify and engage, through a MOU, at least one youth-focused organization as a CBPR partner.

Community Engagement

Concepts of Community

- Systems Perspective
- Individual Perspective: Community Listening Tour/Focus Group Objectives:
 - Explore Philadelphia & Chester County, PA residents' (youth and adult) perspectives on community engagement and social action strategies for addressing disparities related to obesity, with a particular focus on engaging youth
 - Utilize findings to inform partnership activities and to develop three conferences reflecting community priorities for improving food and physical activity options in their community



Setting the Stage for Youth Engagement

Youth attend AACORN's 2010 Invited Workshop:
Addressing Social Inequities: CBPR to Improve African American Environmental Contexts for Obesity Prevention

- Video journaling
- Reflection and debriefing meeting with youth workshop participants

Listening Tours

- Teen males and females

Participation in Teen Events & Programs



Approaches to Youth Engagement

| Levels of control | Example | Level of decision-making | Meaningful roles and Responsibilities | Level of leadership development and skill-building |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Youth-Led | Youth plan, implement, and evaluate the initiative | Youth make all decisions; they may or may not consult adults | All roles and responsibilities are developed and carried out by youth | High |
| Youth-Adult Partnerships | Working together at every stage, a team of youth and adults plan, run, and facilitate a youth leadership conference | Decision-making is shared. Planning and designing activities is shared by youth and adults equally | All roles and responsibilities are shared by youth and adults based on skills and interests | High |
| Adult-led, with Youth Consulted | Adults ask youth what kind of activities/program they want to participate in. Youth give input, help plan a small activity, or help run a small portion of the program | Youth input is sought, but adults make the final decisions. | Youth have medium to high levels of responsibility. Youth help define and create choices with approval from adults | Medium to high |

*Adapted from M. Delgado and L. Staples. *Youth-led Community Organizing*. Oxford Press, 2008.



Conference Activities

*Creating Healthy Communities:
Working Together to Ignite Change*

Philadelphia, PA – April 2, 2011



*Living Life with a Passion for
Healthy Lifestyles*

Philadelphia, PA – July 28, 2012



*Youth Empowerment Partnership:
Working Together to Ignite Change in
our Communities*

Chester, PA – April 6, 2013



Conference Content Areas

- **Empowering the Individual and Mobilizing the Collective**
 - Capacity/Power Analysis
 - Organizing Techniques and Tools
 - USDA Team Nutrition - Empowering Youth with Nutrition and Physical Activity
- **Technology Tools and Resources to Support Healthy Choices**
- **Legislative Approaches and Grassroots Organizing**
- **Achieving “Total Health” for Our Communities**
 - Holistic Approaches to Health & Weight Control
 - Hip Hop and the Healthy Eating Movement
 - Youth-Adult Partnership Models
 - Peer Models
- **Activating our Families to Improve Food and Physical Activity Options in our Communities**



Youth In Action

- MOU – HPC Youth Advocacy Institute
 - Youth-led Session: Food Marketing, Social Justice and Our Health
 - Youth Action Plans & Advocacy Activities
- Peer Mentors – West Chester University, MPH students
- Teen-led “Go Petition” – Revise & Improve the Health & Physical Education Curriculum in Pennsylvania



Lessons Learned

Youth Engagement Strategy

- Start young and nurture youth partners
- Don't underestimate the time and infrastructure needed to support youth engagement and organizing efforts (e.g., flexible budgets to respond to youth ideas as well as to off-set travel costs for youth participation, and staff support)
- Create a youth-friendly atmosphere where youth feel welcome
- Encourage peer feedback

Engaging Adult Allies & Youth Partners

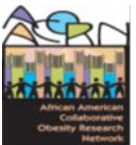
- Check that everyone involved shares a willingness to be transformed, and to have their assumptions challenged
- Identify partners from various sectors
- Seek out organizational partners that create opportunities for everyone and not just the same youth all the time
- Take time to learn about and discuss differences between youth and adults



Evaluation Methods, Components and Strategies

Evaluating Social Change & Community Action Efforts (Guiding Concepts)

- Importance of viewing outcomes longitudinally over a period of time
- A complex power construct, necessitating a broad perspective to capture both explicit and implicit changes in power relationships
- Determination of the success of a change initiative is made by those the change is intended to benefit
- Capacity development (reflection, analysis, learning, problem-solving) is emphasized
- Validity of the historical tenet in the field of community organizing that the process of achieving change is of equal to or greater importance than the ultimate outcome



Evaluation Methods, Components and Strategies (cont')

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

- Qualitative data collection

Documentation

- Ongoing project assessment

Measures for Youth-led Community Action Efforts

- Empowerment process
- Efficacy and agency
- Advocacy knowledge and skills
- Attitudes and behaviors

Next Steps

- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation
- Online and in-person engagement activities with youth and community partners
 - SHIFTDemand
 - Conference Facebook & Twitter pages
 - Yahoo Group (*not all teens participate in social media)
- Dissemination activities
- Sustainability activities
 - Determine what to continue and prioritize
 - Create options (e.g., funding, shared resources, etc.) for maintaining priority efforts

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 - The Enterprise Center – YES Program
 - Health Promotion Council of Southeastern PA – PUFFA
 - Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative, University of Pennsylvania
 - North Columbia YMCA
 - Coatesville on the Move
 - Activate Chester/ United Way of Chester County
 - West Chester University – Dept. of Health
 - Lincoln University – Upward Bound
 - Chester County Futures
 - Coatesville Center for Community Health
 - Coatesville Youth Initiative

YOUTHadelphia



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