

Environmental Justice: Physical Activity, Healthy Eating, and Obesity

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Active Living Research

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Presentation Outline

- Environmental Justice Movement
- Environmental Influences on Behavior
- Physical Activity (target behavior) and Socio-demographic Characteristics
- Distribution and Impact of the Environment
- Environmental Correlates by Socio-demographic Characteristics
- Summary

Environmental Justice Movement

- 1983 empirical study, eight southeastern states – EPA region IV, United States General Accounting Office
- Three of the four communities with large commercial hazardous waste landfills were predominately African American

Environmental Justice Movement

- United Church of Christ (1987)
 - National study of race and hazardous landfills
 - Zip codes and demographic factors with and without waste treatment, storage, or disposal facilities
 - Zip codes without facility – 12.3% ethnic minority
 - Zip codes with one facility – 24% ethnic minority
 - Zip codes with one or more facilities or one of the nation's five largest landfills – 38% ethnic minority

Environmental Justice Movement

- Every 3 of 5 Black and Hispanic Americans lived in communities with uncontrollable toxic waste sites

Environment Justice Movement

- Environmental hazards not random, rather selective of socially and economically vulnerable populations



Environmental Justice Movement

- Environmental injustice – people of color and low-income communities suffer disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards
- Environmental Protection Agency (1998), Environmental Justice
 - Fair Treatment
 - Meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, ethnicity, income, national origin, or educational level

Environmental Justice Movement

- Institute of Medicine
- Toward Environmental Justice, 1999
- President Clinton's quote, 1994
- “Each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionate high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”
President William Clinton

Environmental Influences

- Physical Activity



- Healthy Eating



Environmental Influences on Behavior

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Special Issues of Journals
 - American Journal of Preventive Medicine
 - American Journal of Health Promotion
 - American Journal of Public Health
- Popular Media
 - Super Size Me

Physical Activity and Socio-demographic Characteristics

Physical activity patterns

- Lower rates of physical activity
 - People with lower incomes
 - People with lower levels of education
 - Some racial and ethnic minority groups
 - African Americans
 - Hispanics

Sources:

Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health
Healthy People 2010

Distribution of Activity Unfriendly Environments

Physical Activity and the Physical Environment

- Persons with more education and higher incomes were more likely to have access to walking trails and indoor places to exercise
- Higher income groups used trails more than lower income groups
- Brownson et al. (2000)



Physical Activity and the Physical Environment

- Absence of data
- Harris County study (in progress)
 -

Environmental Correlates by Socio-demographic Characteristics

Environmental Correlates by Socio-demographic Characteristics

- No significant, environmental physical activity correlates
 - African American women (Rohm-Young et al. 2003)
 - Hispanic/Latina women (Voorhees et al. 2003)

Environmental Correlates by Socio-demographic Characteristics

- Significant, environmental physical activity correlates
- Blacks – positive association with frequently seeing others exercising in neighborhood (King et al. 2003)

Environmental Correlates by Socio-demographic Characteristics

- Women and persons with high school education or less significantly increased the amount of walking since using walking trails (Brownson et al. 2000)
- Cross-sectional data

Environmental Correlates by Socio-demographic Characteristics

- Multi-use paths not being used
- Destination amenities and cultural influences (Lusk 2004)
- General destinations
 - Sitting areas, lakes, gazebo shelters
- Key destinations that serve everyday needs
 - Grocery stores, drug stores, post offices, banks

Summary

- Questions????
 - Are Environmental Justice principles appropriate and relevant?
 - Yes, appropriate and relevant. More data are needed.
 - A new topic for the physical environment, physical activity, and healthy eating.

Summary

- Should we be concerned with Environmental Justice principles?
- Yes
- Major initiatives to eliminate health disparities

Recommendations

- Inclusive public participation process (e.g., multi-use paths) (Assessment, Policy Development, Assurance)
- Distribution and impact of the environmental factors by socio-demographic characteristics for physical activity and healthy eating (location and density of supermarkets and fast food restaurants)
- Environmental correlates by socio-demographic characteristics for physical activity and healthy eating

Recommendations

- Social environment interactions with the physical environment by socio-demographic characteristics

White Oak Bayou in North Houston

Amenities and Upkeep: West vs. East Sides (Political Boundaries)



Environmental Justice

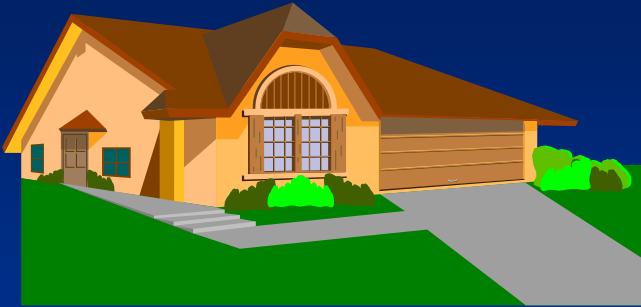
It's about people



- Where they work

Environmental Justice

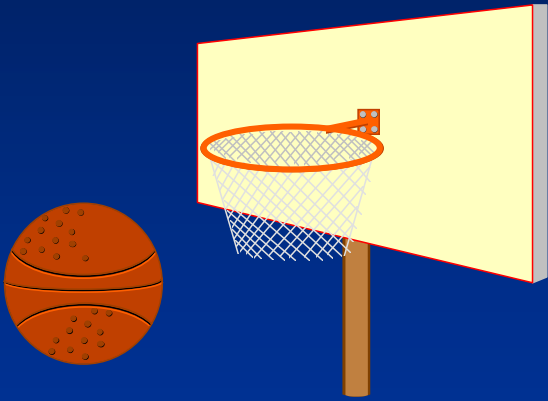
It's about people



- Where they Live

Environmental Justice

It's about people



- Where they play



Confronting Inequalities

- Understanding Environmental Influences
- Reducing Barriers (Transportation vans to food markets and outreach programs)
- Providing Opportunities for Healthy Living for all segments of the population