African American and American Indian Parent Perspectives about Childhood Obesity

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AA & AI Cultures

What role does culture play?
This Presentation

• What does obesity mean to parents?
• How do parents view their children’s weight?
• What causes childhood obesity?
• What is the influential role of parents on childhood obesity?
What Does Obesity Mean to You?

• *Obese, fat, and even overweight* are distasteful and potentially insulting
  – Prefer *big* or *heavy*

• Obese = major health problems and lack of normal functioning
  – Large body size ≠ obese

• BMI percentiles are biased

Goodell 2008; Thompson 2003; Jain 2001
Is My Child Overweight?

• More likely to underestimate when:
  – Child and parent are overweight/obese
  – Child is younger

• Child will “grow out of” obesity or “grow into” their size

• *Chubby* toddler is cute; overweight adolescent is not

Dammann 2011; Goodell 2008; West 2008; Killion 2006; Skelton 2006
What Causes Childhood Obesity?

- Lack of physical activity, too much sedentary activity, unhealthy eating
- Genetics
- Environmental factors
- Parental behavior
- Stress

Barr-Anderson in review; Jain 2001; Thompson 2003
How Do I Influence My Child’s Behavior?

- **Physical Activity**
  - Tangible and emotional support
  - Role modeling

- **Eating**
  - Limits on intake
  - Tangible support
  - Role modeling

African American Parent Perspectives

Barr-Anderson in review; St. George 2012; Dammann 2011; Wright 2008; Thompson 2003
American Indian Parents

- More likely to underestimate child’s weight status when:
  - Child and parents are overweight
  - Child is male

- Recognize potential relationships between diet, weight, and disease risk

Arcan 2012; Dammann 2011; Adams 2005; Sherwood 2000
Future Directions

• More qualitative inquiry, especially with AI parents

• Frame future initiatives as improving health and not decreasing weight

• Early prevention

• Behaviorally-focused, family-based, culturally appropriate interventions with a focus on building practical skills

• Environmental changes so the healthy decision is the easiest decision
Thank you!

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References