

## *Texas Obesity Research Center*

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Engaging Latino Adolescent Girls in Physical Activity Intervention Planning in a Low-Income, Urban Environment

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Latino adolescent girls are less physically active than the general adolescent population, which puts them at increased risk for obesity and chronic disease. The Physical Activity Partnership for Girls (PG) uses a community-based participatory research approach to assess community needs and priorities related to physical activity (PA) behaviors of middle school girls living in low-income, urban sectors of San Antonio, Texas. Input was sought from girls, parents, and youth-serving agencies serving the community to inform the development of an innovative PA intervention utilizing low-cost, mobile technology (texting) and social media that will be delivered through Girl Scout troops. **Purpose:** We will describe the results of two strategies used to elicit the perspectives of girls about their PA and technology use: 1) participatory photomapping (PPM), and 2) self-administered survey. **Methods:** Girl Scouts facilitated the participation of 40 girls (11-14years) in PPM activities to guide girls in assessing their active living experience in the community. PPM integrates traditional photovoice strategy with geographic information systems technology, connecting qualitative data to specific locations on a map. In addition, girls (n=102) completed a self-administered survey to assess access to and use of technology, including mobile phones, computer, television, internet, social networking, and PA. **Results:** The PPM process took place over 12 weeks and involved multiple photo walks, guided group discussions, and the development of an advocacy presentation for a community retreat. Of the 40 participants enrolled, 10 completed the process. The resulting photomap, presented to community stakeholders, revealed key themes about environmental barriers to PA for girls, including animal control, built environment, and safety concerns. Survey results indicated cell phone ownership and use varied by age: 76% of 14-year-olds owned a cell phone compared to 43% of 11-year-olds; 14-year-olds reported using cell phone 49 hours/week compared to 9 hours/week for 11-year-olds. Cell phone ownership was significantly associated with higher levels of PA ( $P \leq 0.05$ ) and personal contentment ( $P = 0.006$ ). **Conclusions:** Use of cell phones and social networking

holds promise as an effective strategy for engaging girls in improving individual PA behaviors. However, interventions should also address environmental concerns girl identified through PPM in order to maximize potential benefit.

KEY WORDS: Physical Activity, Community-based Participatory Research, Photovoice, Adolescent