



Social network effects on child self-reported physical activity at summer care programs

The Issue

- Summer is a time of reduced physical activity for children
- Summer care programs like those at Boys & Girls Clubs can provide opportunities for children to be active and foster friendships
- Child physical activity is influenced by their friendships in school; however, limited work has been done to understand this influence over summer



This study investigated how physical activity is related to friendship formation among children at summer care programs.

Results

- Friendship ties were significantly more likely between children who:
 - Shared a friend
 - Picked each other as friends
 - Were the same age
 - Were the same sex
 - Participated in team sports
- Children were more likely to be picked as a friend if they reported more physical activity
- Children were more likely to form friendships with those who had similar PA over the summer at the larger program; however, the opposite effect was seen in the smaller program



Implications

- Child friendships were influenced by physical activity at summer care programs.
- Summer care social networks may be a promising avenue for targeted physical activity promotion activities
- Sport participation may play a role in child friendship networks
- Cooperative or collaborative team and skill building physical activities may benefit children's social skills and physical health at these programs through reinforcing positive physical activity habits



Methodology

- Children (ages 8-12 years old) from two summer care programs were surveyed at the start and end of summer
- Children reported their physical activity and sport participation as well as up to five people they interacted with the most while at the program.
- Social network analysis methods such as exponential random graph modeling were used to analyze the data
- Full methods and data can be made available on request



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