

## **WHEN I JUMP, I FEEL THE EARTH MOVE UNDER MY FEET: EXPERIENCES OF AA CHILDREN WHO ARE OVERWEIGHT**

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**Purpose:** the purpose of this *research in progress* is to explore possible social and cultural factors in the etiology and consequences of childhood obesity among African-American children in Mississippi. Specific aims are to: (a) Explore the relationship between sociocultural factors and childhood obesity among African-American children and their primary caregivers, (b) develop a theoretical model of the relationship between sociocultural factors and childhood obesity, and (3) further develop an existing quantitative measure (CRRIC Survey) which attempts to detect the prevalence of cardiovascular disease risk factors among African-American children.

**Method:** Focus Group methodology was used to elicit information from three groups of African -American children ages 7 -11. A second data set was obtained from two focus groups of caregivers of the children. A total of 17 children and 17 parents comprised the final sample. Sessions lasted from one to one and one half hours .All researchers attended an 8-hour training session conducted by an expert qualitative researcher prior to commencing research.

**Findings:** Preliminary emergent findings reveal that children are being teased much more than had been anticipated by researchers. A second finding is that parents were unaware of the extent to which the children were being teased. **In** this sample, 95% of the children receive both breakfast and lunch at schools. Hence, only one meal is eaten in the homes. Children described the school meals as consisting of high fat (bacon, sausage, hot dogs, eggs, etc.) and sweet (sweetened cereals, sweet breads, etc). Home meals were described similarly. Most children were preparing some food items by themselves. These items were processed packaged noodles, frozen pizzas, cheese sandwiches, bologna sandwiches, etc. Without exception, parents reported an improvement in the childrens' eating behaviors after attending the focus groups sessions. Children were stated as taking the initiative in eating more fruits and drinking bottled water. When children were asked why they wanted to lose weight or become smaller, an 8 year old girl, who weighed 205 pounds, said, " I don't want the earth to move when I jump. When I jump, the children at school say that it feels like an earthquake." Of interest, all primary caregivers of the children were visibly overweight. **Discussion:** Results from this study are sure to inform the research and practice community about the contributors to childhood obesity, which are amenable to change (i.e. school lunches) Additionally, caregivers will be enlightened regarding the lived experiences of their children and contributory factors in the home and the environment. Once all data are analyzed, emergent themes will constitute the beginning conceptual model of socio cultural contributors to childhood obesity. Lastly, data will be used to further refine the CRRIC ( Cardiovascular Risk Reduction in Children) survey tool.