

Building on a YMCA's health and physical activity promotion capacities
A case study of a researcher-organization partnership to optimize adolescent programming
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North American adolescents are not meeting physical activity guidelines for health, thus, understanding how to increase this population's physical activity is crucial. Building on organizations' capacities to develop and sustain popular health promoting programs is a viable approach, but one that has rarely been used in physical activity intervention research.

To build on the capacity of a YMCA to promote physical activity to the teenagers they serve, the YMCA and I formed a participatory research partnership, developing and implementing means to evaluate and inform the YMCA teen program. Our partnership and our work served as the object of my case study with which I sought to understand the processes contributing to sustainable organizational capacity changes.

The specific case understudy pertains to two and a half years of qualitative data. I collected all email between me and YMCA partners, conducted semi-structured interviews with partners at specific time points over and conversational interviews throughout the case study period. Internal YMCA documents as well as those produced through our partnership, and field notes also informed the case. I used inductive and deductive thematic analysis to analyze the data.

Findings illustrate that workforce and organizational development capacities at the YMCA were increased through our partnership, resource allocation, and leadership. Specifically, through a shared leadership process, whereby, I would respond to YMCA partners' perceived needs, yet also guide them beyond those needs, partners and I combined our complementary objectives, knowledge, and skills to generate an integrated program vision, rationale, and evaluation results. This integrated program perspective provided YMCA partners with validation, reminders, and awareness regarding their work processes and the teen program. In turn, these intermediary outcomes contributed to practice changes YMCA partners have maintained and built upon, regarding programming, health promotion, and evaluation. Notably, contextual aspects of the partnership, namely, partners' reciprocity and patience contributed to its success.

This case study illustrates how a university researcher and a YMCA can partner to develop and implement a program evaluation, results of which can help YMCA partners make research-informed decisions, which may in turn positively impact physical activity and other organizational programs. Moreover, the findings indicate the participatory process contributed to YMCA partners' use of program evaluation results and to their developing program evaluation competence. Lessons learned from this study may be applicable to other partnerships striving to increase adolescent PA participation as well as general organizational health promotion capacities.