Exploring the Relationship Among Role Models, Physical Activity, and Dietary Behaviors Among Young Adults Enrolled in a Weight Management Trial

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BACKGROUND

• Role models can have a profound impact on an individual’s development and lifelong behaviors. ¹
• The transitional period to college and discovering independence leaves room for many risk behaviors, including physical inactivity and unhealthy diet practices. ²
• An individual’s role models can influence their engagement (or lack thereof) in physical activity and healthy eating. ²
• Previous research has primarily focused on youth, leaving a gap of knowledge surrounding the developmental life stage of young adulthood.
• Little research has been done examining health risk behaviors such as physical inactivity and unhealthy dietary practices amongst the young adult population.

AIM

• To investigate the relationship between self-identified role models with physical activity and diet among adults ages 18-35.

METHODS

• Young adult university students (n=443) were recruited from campuses in Washington DC and Boston, MA.
• Participants were part of a larger randomized controlled trial focusing on attaining or maintaining healthy body weight.
• Participants completed assessments at baseline which included:
  o Surveys assessing physical activity (PA) behavior and PA and healthy eating role models
  o Demographics (i.e., age, sex, race/ethnicity, school year)
  o Anthropometrics, including clinic-measured height and weight

DEMOGRAPHICS (n=443)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age, in years; M (SD)</th>
<th>23.27 (±4.36)</th>
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<tr>
<td>BMI, kg/m²; M (SD)</td>
<td>31.22 (±4.38)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female; N (%)</td>
<td>348 (78.6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-White; N (%)</td>
<td>193 (43.6%)</td>
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MEASURES

• Height & Weight: Self-reported; verified in-person
• Physical Activity (PA): objective PA monitoring via accelerometer; surveys assessing physical activity behavior
• Role models: Surveys assessing activity and healthy eating role models
• When it comes to eating healthy, whom do you consider to be your role model?
• When it comes to being physically active, whom do you consider to be your role model?
• Healthy Eating: online 24-hour food recalls from which a Healthy Eating Index (HEI) score was calculated

ANALYSES

• Frequency analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between role model variables for healthy eating and physical activity.
• Chi-square and multiple logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between role models and weight status, sex, age, race/ethnicity, school year, engagement in PA, and eating habits.

RESULTS: ROLE MODELS BY PA (n=440)

RESULTS: HEALTHY EATING ROLE MODELS BY SEX (Male=95, Female=345)

RESULTS: HEALTHY EATING ROLE MODELS BY RACE (n=440)

DISCUSSION

• Non-white participants reported more external role models (entertainer/celebrity, athlete/notable athletic figure, teacher/coach, and other) compared to white participants. White participants reported more family and friends compared to those of other races.
• Friends were the most reported role models for healthy eating and physical activity. For healthy eating, friends was followed by family and entertainer/celebrity. For PA, friends was followed by family and athlete/notable athletic figures.
• Males reported more athletes as role models for healthy eating compared to females (11.6% to 8.4%). Females also reported more celebrities compared to males (14.5% to 3.2%).
• Friends, family, and athlete/athletic figures were the top three reported role models in participants who met the PA guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week and those who did not.

REFERENCES


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