

The Role of Family on Current Lifestyle Choices: A Qualitative Secondary Data

Analysis of Interracial and Same-Race Couples

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Abstract

Qualitative data analysis and interpretations were based on 14 romantic couples (7 same-race couples (Non-Hispanic White partners) and 7 interracial couples (Non-Hispanic White partner and Hispanic partner). A grounded theory approach was taken to analyze 4 interview questions to fit the unique needs of the study (Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The data was analyzed within two coding cycles using five different coding methods. A total of 4 central themes emerged from the data: family of origin eating patterns; family of origin physical activity approach; family influence in the adult diet; and family influence in physical activity.

Background

- Loved ones, including family of origin have a large impact on our long-term eating behavior (Bandura, 1999; Savoca & Miller, 2001).
- A recursive link between romantic partners exist in health patterns (e.g., exercise); however, how family of origin and romantic partners interact together to impact current individual health related behaviors including eating and exercise has received less attention in the empirical literature.
- More importantly, how these influences play out between same vs. interracial couples may differ.
- It is important to focus on Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White individuals due to the higher prevalence of obesity found among Hispanics and general unhealthy patterns in ethnic minorities (Morales et al., 2007; Ogden & Elder, 1998).

Focus: To explore how the families of origin for both partners in romantic relationships (same-race versus interracial) impact current health related behaviors, with an emphasis on the viewpoints that were held in the families of origin about eating and exercise.

Methods

Procedures:

- Couples who agreed to participate engaged in a 30-minute to 2 hour semi-structured joint interview.

Participants:

- $N = 14$ romantic couples, 7 same-race couples (Non-Hispanic White partners) and 7 interracial couples (Non-Hispanic White partner and Hispanic partner) with an average of 26 years of age.

Research Questions:

- While you were growing up what was your family's attitude towards food?
- What was your family's view towards exercise?
- How does the family that you grew up with affect the way you eat now?
- How does the family that you grew up with affect your physical activity now?

Data Analysis:

- The data was analyzed within two coding cycles using five different coding methods.

Results

Table 1. Coding Methods for Two Coding Cycles with Identified Codes, Subcodes, and Sample Statements

Question	Code	Subcode	Sample Statement
Family Attitude on Food	• No healthy emphasis	• Parental diet	"My family didn't really make a conscious effort to eat in a particular healthy way it was just sort of family dinners my mom was always in some sort of diet."
	• No conscious effort	• No way of eating	
Family Attitude on Exercise	• No push	• No push/drive	"Neither of my parents were athletic. My mom used to be more active when she was younger but none of us did anything really."
		• No role model	
Family Influence of Food	• Making family recipes	• Family meals	"I would always make stuff that I would usually make or my parents would make for me. I know those recipes I guess so those are the kinds of things that I make."
	• Cooking	• Parental influence	
Family Influence of Exercise	• Taking action	• Self-driven	"I am a lot more physically active now than I ever was living my family. If anything... I'm doing the opposite of what I was before."
	• Individually active		

Table 2. Four Central Themes Identified by Romantic Couples in the Role of Family on Current Lifestyle Choices in Eating and Exercise (N = 28)

Question	Central Theme	Categories	Same Race Couples	Interracial Couples	Hispanic Response
Family Attitude on Food	Eating Patterns	Knowingly Unhealthy	6	7	3/7
		Knowingly Healthy	6	3	0/3
		Unknowingly Unhealthy	1	6	2/6
		Unknowingly Healthy	1	0	0
Family Attitude on Exercise	Family Physical Activity Approach	Individually Active	6	9	5/9
		Family Active Engagement	6	5	1/5
		Pressure to be Active	1	0	0
Family Influence of Food	Characteristics in the Adult Diet	Modeling Family Eating Patterns	4	8	3/8
		Cognizant in the Need for Change in Diet	9	4	1/4
		Cognizant of Influence with No Need for Change in Eating Habits	3	0	0
		No Influence	0	2	1/2
Family Influence on Exercise	Frequency of Physical Activity	Focused on Increasing Physical Activity	12	2	0/2
		Occasionally Active	2	6	2/6
		Neutral Approach	0	5	2/5

Table 3. Sample Statements from Romantic Couples

Questions	Sample Statements
Family Attitude on Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I wouldn't eat lunch. So I would say in general during high school years I was quite unhealthy." "And my mom always made really good food and once they got a divorce...my mom would still make the same thing but my dad would only eat steak for dinner... so it was just kind of some chunk of meat."
Family Attitude on Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "There was no push to get out and exercise generally it was sort of if you did it great. But no push." "My family does a lot of exercise like hiking and outdoor activities."
Family Influence on Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "...overall I feel like it' has positively affected me in any way just drove you to be a better person even if the flaws I did see I didn't adopt them as my own it just changed my philosophy and I know I didn't want to do it that way." "I think a lot of how I treat food how I think about food is from my family. I... I think... associating food with celebration is sort of key in terms of how I operate....and I want to celebrate all the time. That part of it has gotten drilled in."
Family Influence on Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Exercise was never really a family role. Growing up I never really associated with current exercises with growing up. It was never something that I did." "Sometimes it feels like physical activity in my part I introduce into my own life. Sometimes if I go for a certain length of time in my schedule it takes an effort to take to get back into it."

Conclusions

Findings:

- Individuals described families as being aware and unaware of family making healthy and unhealthy food choices during upbringing.
- Individuals described families as making high effort and no effort to be physical active while growing up.
- Different perspectives of family of origin in food and exercise were narratively related to sustained eating habits and physical activity behaviors in present lifestyle choices.
- Different perspectives from family of origin were found in food and exercise across same-race and interracial couples.

Implications:

- Our results point to the importance and need for a comprehensive policy approach that implements behavioral nutrition and financial circumstances at an early age.
- Greater policy efforts are fundamental in eliminating large minority health disparities and lowering death from chronic diseases.
- Our results advise that prevention and treatment programs should be targeting family systems rather than individuals to captivate permanent healthy lifestyle changes.

Limitations:

- Future research studies should focus on collecting a wider range of interracial romantic couples and socioeconomic status.
- Future experimental studies should further test both partner intentions and behaviors in relation to food and exercise through daily diary reports.
- Given that results are from a secondary qualitative data, future studies should consider making coding decisions during the process of collecting data (Maxwell, 2013).

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- A PDF version of this academic poster is available at: <http://mcclellandinstitute.arizona.edu/posters>

