Predicting Healthy Eating Behaviors: Does Self-identity Matter?
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**Introduction**

**Healthy Eating**
- Almost 70% of Americans are overweight or obese
- Only 32.5% of Americans are eating more than 2 servings of fruit daily
- Thus, eating a healthy diet is becoming increasingly important in the United States

**Self-Identity**
- Factors of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) including attitude, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms have been shown to influence fruit and vegetable consumption
- Recently, self-identity has become a prominent addition to the TPB and important in the promotion of health behaviors
- Psychologists have demonstrated the power of social influence on behavior, but research suggests that self-identity may have a stronger influence than social influences when determining behavioral intentions
- Researchers have yet to determine how self-identity and social influences are connected in healthy eating behaviors among young adults

**Participants**
- 79 College Women
- Ages 15-53
- M=22.92, SD=6.92
- 79.7% Caucasian, 7.6% African American, 5.1% Asian, 7.6% other
- Approx. 25% Freshman, 25% Sophomores, 25% Juniors, and 25% Seniors and beyond

**Procedure**
- Participants completed a survey about the TPB components and self-identity related to diet and behaviors
- Participants then recorded their diet for four days using a food diary and an online survey
- A hierarchical multiple regression was performed to determine if self-identity predicted healthy eating behaviors above and beyond subjective norms and other TPB components

**Analysis**
- A secondary analysis of a larger study exploring healthy eating behaviors was conducted
- For the larger study, participants completed surveys at three different time periods and then recorded their diets using food diaries
- For the present study, only for the first time period was analyzed

**Results**

<table>
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<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>sr²</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Intentions</td>
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<td>Attitudes</td>
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<td>.37</td>
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<td>.00</td>
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<td>Subjective Norms</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Block 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy Eater Identity</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.36*</td>
<td>.07</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**
- Self-identity predicted overall healthy eating behaviors to a greater degree than did subjective norms and added additional unique variance to healthy eating behaviors
- Results support previous research on the TPB and provide additional evidence for the role of self-identity in healthy eating behaviors
- More specifically, people may show more motivation to engage in healthy eating behaviors by confirming their sense of self related to healthy eating behaviors
- This sense of self may be a stronger motivational tool for healthy eating behaviors than social norms
- The present findings open a new gateway to the investigation of self-identity and its influence on intentions to perform other behaviors such as exercising, studying, and drug-use.
- Future research should focus on:
  - Self-Identity studies on exercising, smoking habits, studying, work ethic and more
  - Methods to influence self-identity for health related purposes such as the “Self-as-Doer” identity

**Hypotheses**
- Increased positive attitudes, stronger social norms, increased perceived behavioral control, a stronger identity related to healthy eating behaviors and increased intentions to eat a healthy diet would predict overall healthy eating behaviors
- Self-identity would predict overall healthy eating behaviors and above components of the TPB
- Self-identity would predict overall healthy eating behaviors to a greater degree than would subjective norms

**Measures**
- Demographics: Age, school year, relationship status, race
- Theory of Planned Behavior Components (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010) Intentions, Attitudes, Perceived Behavioral Control, Subjective Norm

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