INTRODUCTION

Healthy Eating Behaviors

- According to the CDC, the daily recommended intake of fruits for the average adult is 1.5–2 cups. The daily recommended intake of vegetables for the average adult is 2–3 cups.1
- However, in the United States, about only 10 adults meet those daily recommendations.1
- Meeting the daily recommended intake of fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of illnesses such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers.1

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

- Research on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) indicates healthy eating behaviors can be predicted by intentions and other components of the theory.3
- Psychosocial interventions focused on self-identity and the TPB have had some success in promoting healthy eating behaviors.2,4

Self-as-Doer Identity

- The self-as-doer identity is a motivational identity which describes individuals in terms of doing a behavior (e.g., runner, fruit eater).5
- Self-as-doer identity predicts health behaviors such as diet and exercise,2,6 and healthy eating above and beyond TPB components.4
- However, whether approach and avoidant self-as-doer orientations are related to the TPB components and fruit and vegetable consumption is understudied.4
- Approach orientations direct effort toward obtaining favorable stimuli (e.g., healthy eater), whereas avoidant orientations direct effort away from negative stimuli (e.g., unhealthy food avoider).5

STUDY AIMS and HYPOTHESES

- How the orientation of the self-as-doer identity (approach vs avoidant) affects healthy eating and whether self-as-doer identity orientations predict specific healthy eating behavior beyond the TPB is not well understood.4
- Therefore, it was hypothesized that having an approach (not avoidant) doer identity predicts consumption of fruits and vegetables beyond the Theory of Planned Behavior.4

METHOD

Participants

- 312 participants
  - 18.74 years (SD = 12.53)
  - 30.4% (N=95) Men
  - 68.6% (N=214) Women
  - 68.6% (N=214) Women
  - 0.9% (N = 3) Non-binary/Transgender

On a Special Diet: 15.7% (N = 49)
- Gluten free, vegan, vegetarian, low carb, keto, paleo

Ethnicity:
- White: 76.6%
- Black: 8.3%
- Bi-racial: 1%
- Native American: 0.6%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 8.7%
- Hispanic/Latino: 3.8%

EDUCATION
- High School or Less: 17.6%
- Some College: 36.2%
- Associates Degree: 9.3%
- Bachelor’s Degree: 27.2%
- Post-Secondary Degree: 9.7%

Procedures

Participants completed survey questions related to demographics, TPB components, and self-as-doer identities.

Measures

- Demographics: Age, gender, education, and ethnicity
- Self-as-Doer Identity (Houser-Marks & Sheldon, 2006; Author modified for approach and avoidant healthy eating)
- Theory of Planned Behavior Components (Fischhein & Ajzen, 2010)
- Intention, Attitudes, Perceived Behavioral Control, Subjective Norms

Statistical Analysis

- Nutrition analysis were computed using USDA guidelines for serving sizes. Healthy eating behaviors were calculated as the daily average consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products.
- A hierarchical linear regression model was conducted to determine if self-as-doer identity orientations (block 2) predicted fruit and vegetable consumption above and beyond TPB components (block 1).

RESULTS

Self-as-Doer approach (but not avoidant) identity predicted fruit and vegetable consumption beyond Theory of Planned Behavior constructs.

Pearsons Correlations

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Hierarchical Regression

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DISCUSSION

- Self-as-doer identity significantly predicted fruit and vegetable consumption above and beyond the components of the TPB.
- Specifically, seeing oneself as the doer of a behavior with an approach orientation (e.g., healthy eater, fruit eater, veggie eater) rather than an avoidance orientation (e.g., unhealthy food avoider) predicts eating more fruits and vegetables.
- Findings suggest that it may be easier for individuals to add new behaviors (i.e. approach orientation to their diet instead of removing certain foods or behaviors (avoidant orientations)).
- Furthermore, the behaviors of eating fruits/vegetables better align with approach doer identities than avoidant doer identities.
- These findings also support previous research on the predictability of the self-as-doer identity on general healthy eating behaviors and build on past research supporting the role of adding identity to TPB.
- Future researchers should explore causal relationships between approach doer identities and fruit and vegetable consumption and explore techniques to implement self-as-doer identities in clinical work to determine whether the doer identity would affect healthy eating behaviors in a non-lab setting.
- One limitation to this study is that healthy eating was measured by adding fruits and vegetables, which supports an approach identity rather than an avoidant identity.
- Other limitations include its correlational design, and a relatively homogeneous sample regarding race, gender and age. An increased sample size and diversity of participants may strengthen research findings.