



**COMPARING THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF PARENTS AND THEIR
ADOLESCENTS**

**Taylor Silkey (Dr. Rebecca Utz, PhD, Samin Panahi)
Department of Sociology**

Introduction

With advances in preventative medicine, a large goal among doctors, researchers, and other professionals is to figure out how to promote in within the general public and minimize young people becoming chronically ill in their adult years. A focal point has been promoting individuals to get the correct amount of physical activity. Our research project studies the physical activity of parents and their adolescents, with the goal to identify family dynamics that affect physical activity levels.

Methods

Both parent and child participants were given a baseline survey. The survey asks questions that allow us to collect information about their general health, lifestyle, locus of control, relationship between each other, and demographic characteristics. In addition to this, both participants wore a FitBit bracelet for 28 days. These bracelets collected real-time data on physical activity without continuous researcher supervision. Self-recorded data of their physical activity was collected in a 28-day log book that they were required to fill out each evening.

Results

On the initial intake form, both parent and child were asked to rate their own physical activity and health as well as their participating family member's. Both child and parent ranked the child as having healthier habits within every category. The FitBit data complements this self-reported data. Combined, adolescents spend more time as moderately to vigorously active than their parent, on average. Additionally, the physical activity of the parent is positively correlated with the physical activity of the child.

Conclusions

While the children in this study are, on average, more active than their parents, they are significantly below the CDC recommendations for physical activity, while the parents are only slightly below. This indicates that this sample's assumption on what is a decent amount of activity for an adolescent is off. To reverse this, educational initiatives should be implemented among adolescents. In the future and to best put this education into place, researchers should continue to study these health habits and family dynamics, keeping in mind that this sample's main limitation was in diversity and size.