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HEALTH SCIENCES

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT,
SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS, AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG
COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS (231 pp.)

Co-Directors of Dissertation: Cynthia W. Symons, D.Ed.
Amy Thompson, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the difference in physical activity participation, awareness of exercise facilities, institutional physical education requirements, number of physical education classes taken, perceptions of current exercise habits, perceived current physical fitness level, perceived body weight, and selected demographic variables between students at two types of community colleges. In addition, this study analyzed the extent to which the social support of family and friends exerted an influence on physical activity participation between subjects at the two subject institutions.

This study will make a valuable contribution to the body of literature because there is a lack of research published concerning the relationship of physical activity patterns among the community college population.

The Social Support Theory served as the foundation for this study (House, 1981; Israel, 1982; Sallis, 1986). For the purposes of this study a stratified random sample was generated to depict a proportional representation of students enrolled in each curriculum at each institution (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). Subjects in this study were from two Midwestern community colleges that provided responses about their physical activity participation.

The time frame for the data collection process was conducted during the Spring semester 2009. The data collection protocol followed the Dillman Tailored Method (DTM; 2000). The instrument contained 46 items with 5 subscales. The response rates from community college (city) were 325 and community college (rural) was 311.

Out of the nine hypotheses three statistically significant findings were revealed. First, hypotheses 1 revealed a statistically significant difference in physical activity participation between community college students at a city and rural campus. Second, hypotheses 2 revealed that the interaction (combined effect) of awareness of exercise facilities and the type of community college exerted a statistically significant influence on the physical activity participation among subjects. Third, hypotheses 9 revealed a statistically significant difference in physical activity participation and selected demographic variables (sex, parenting status, and employment status) between community college students at a city and rural campus. Future research is needed to determine what intervention and evidence-based practices are best to encourage college students to engage in physical activity participation.