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Project health: Helping encourage African-Americans to lean towards health

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Abstract

Project HEALTH (Helping Encourage African-Americans to Lean Towards Health) was a pilot intervention project driven by social and learning theories and informed by research on relationships between food consumption, early sexual maturation, body image perceptions, household shopping behaviors, and potential health-risks. Empirical research indicates that there are negative psychosocial and physiological consequences of early sexual maturation, a phenomenon typical in 50% of the African American (AA) girls 8 years of age. An empirical study investigated the food intake, household shopping behaviors, and body image satisfaction of AA girls at different stages of sexual maturation. AA girls ages 7–9 years, and one of their parent/guardians were recruited and interviewed from community centers around Atlanta, Georgia. Analyses of the data revealed the role of money spent on fast food on the stage of sexual maturation. Main effects of stage of breast development on body image satisfaction and BMI were found. These results set a foundation for intervention in the AA community. Project HEALTH was designed to increase awareness of the AA community about the relationships between nutrition and health related risks. Participants were caregivers of AA female children from the local communities. A experiential educational intervention was introduced and assessed in culturally relevant ways. Educational outcomes revealed a significant impact of the intervention on the knowledge and behaviors of the participants.

Biography

Dr. M. Talpade is an associate-professor of psychology at Clark Atlanta University. She has conducted work on health and nutrition since 2001 and has published her work in several journals on this topic. Her current research seeks to incorporate culturally relevant health information and activities to empower the high risk minority population in the U.S.