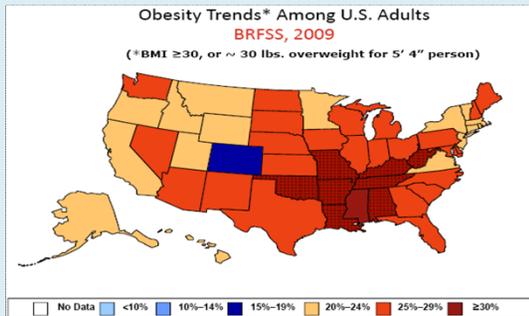
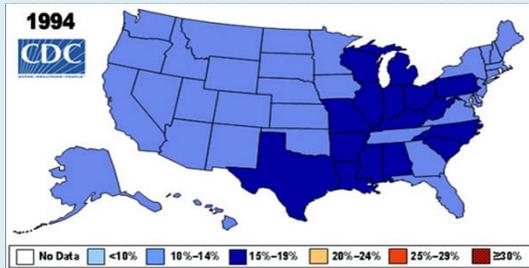


The skinny on weight loss reality television: do viewers adopt lifestyle changes?

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Research Questions:

- Do viewers adopt lifestyle changes conducive to weight loss while the show is being aired?
- Do viewers maintain these lifestyle changes after the show's completion?

Hypothesis:

We predict that viewers will adopt lifestyle changes leading to weight loss while they follow the show, but will fail to maintain these changes after the show's season has ended.



Introduction

More than 100 million Americans over the age of 20 are overweight, obese or morbidly obese. This alarming statistic coupled with the rising prevalence of weight loss reality television shows prompts the question: how do these shows affect the viewers?

Support:

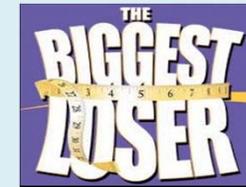
- **Social Cognitive Theory and Observational Learning/Modeling:** Behavioral change is contingent on several factors, an important one being self-efficacy beliefs. When people observe others performing a certain behavior successfully and reaching a desired outcomes, the observers feel a higher sense of self-efficacy regarding the behavior. Furthermore, the more similar the models are perceived to be to the observers, the greater the increase in self-efficacy beliefs among observers. Since reality TV uses participants who are not celebrities, but people perceived to be viewers' peers, participant weight loss should create higher self-efficacy beliefs in viewers, which is crucial to changing viewer behavior.
- **Effect of treatment programs on initial weight loss and weight maintenance:** People tend to lose weight while they are part of a treatment program, but tend to gradually gain the weight back after treatment ends. As we are investigating the role of weight loss reality TV shows as a form of treatment, we would expect that if it does function as a treatment program, viewers will gradually gain back the weight they lost after the show (treatment) ends.

Expected Outcomes:

- Many viewers will watch the show because they are personally interested in losing weight.
- These viewers will adopt lifestyle changes that promote weight loss while the show is being aired.
- These viewers will have stopped maintaining these lifestyle changes three months after the show ends.

References:

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Methods:

- Recruit participants from the communities surrounding the university by posting fliers in public venues around the greater Buffalo area.
- Participants must currently watch and follow one or more weight loss reality television show. Participants will be compensated.
- Three semi-structured, individual interviews with participants will investigate participants' reasons for watching these shows, and whether or not they engage in weight loss behaviors for the duration of the show's season at three intervals during the season.
- We will use a fourth interview three months after the completion of the show to determine if they have ceased, maintained, or initiated weight loss behaviors.

