

How Diet Choices and Weight Change Person Perception.

Nicole Tibbits

Faculty Mentor: Rebekah Wanic, PhD

Department of Psychological Sciences



Background

Weight Related Prejudice and Discrimination

- Self-reported weight-based discrimination increased 66% in past ten years (McLeod, 2008).
- Overweight people are described using more negative and fewer positive attributes (Brochu & Morrison, 2007).
- Overweight people are seen as overindulgent, lazy and overall less successful than average-weight people (Teachman & Brownell, 2001).
- This discrimination causes overweight individuals to have lowered self-esteem and self-confidence, as well increased stress levels (Elison, 2017).

Idea of Weight as Controllable

- Belief that weight gain and obesity is due to laziness and overeating (easily changeable), (Carr, Jaffe, Friedman, 2008).
- Weight-control effort tended to elicit more positive characteristics for average-weight people, although not for overweight people (Mussup, Manger, & Gold, 2016).

Methods

Participants: 80 students (63 female, 17 males) from the University of San Diego were recruited. Their races includes Latino(a), Asian, Black or African American, and White.

Independent Measures:

- 4 situations, including a picture of either an overweight or average-weight woman, and a description of her diet habits, either healthy or unhealthy.

Dependent Measures:

- The participants took a 19-question survey regarding the target's lifestyle and personality traits.
- Some characteristics included: loneliness, motivation, health, intelligence, introversion, confidence and likability.

Procedure: On Qualtrics, each participant was randomly assigned one of the previous situations, then they answered questions about their personal demographics and the survey regarding the target's lifestyle and personality traits.

Results

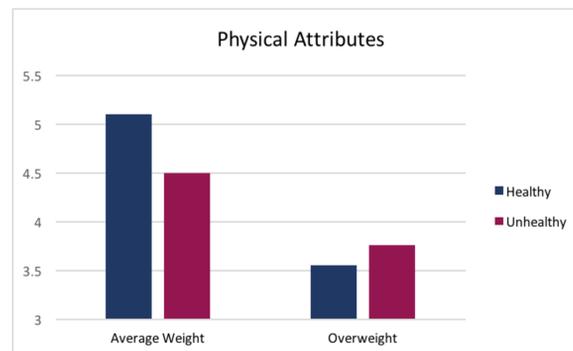
Manipulation Check:

- To ensure targets' weights were correctly perceived by participants
- Chi-Squared Test was significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 86) = 21.01, p < .000$

Dependent Variables: ANOVA

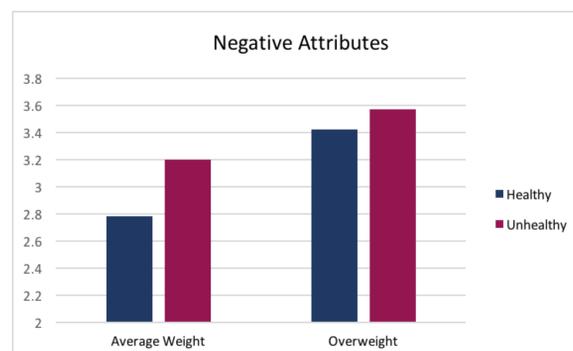
Physical:

- Overall health, perceived activity level and laziness
- Weight Main Effect: Significant, $F(1, 80) = 57.75, p < .000$
- Diet Main Effect: Not significant, $F(1, 80) = 1.69, p < .198$
- Diet and Weight Interaction: Significant, $F(1, 80) = 5.43, p < .022$



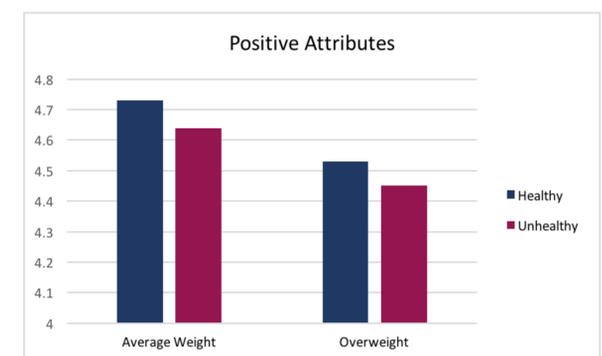
Negative Psychological:

- Perceived depression and loneliness
- Weight Main Effect: Significant, $F(1, 80) = 5.16, p < .026$
- Diet Main Effect: Not significant, $F(1, 80) = 1.39, p < .243$
- Diet and Weight Interaction: Not significant, $F(1, 80) = .51, p < .479$



Positive Psychological:

- Perceived intelligence, confidence, and motivation
- Weight Main Effect: Not significant, $F(1, 79) = .19, p < .170$
- Diet Main Effect: Not significant, $F(1, 79) = .26, p < .615$
- Diet and Weight Interaction: Not significant, $F(1, 79) = .01, p < .942$



Discussion

- Overall, the target's weight had the largest effect on the participants perceptions of them.
- More negative psychological and physical attributes were assigned to the overweight targets.
- Interestingly, overweight targets with unhealthy diets were rated more positively for physical attributes than overweight targets with healthy diets.

References

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