Let's Talk about Weight Bias Attitudes among Future Health Professionals

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Introduction

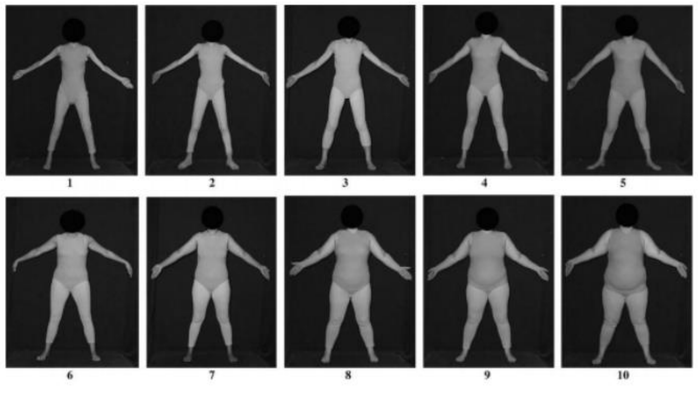
- Weight bias has been linked to the current obesity epidemic (Forhan & Salas, 2013)
- A study of 389 health professionals specializing in obesity found that significant implicit and explicit anti-fat attitudes were present throughout the population (Carels et al., 2014).
- Physicians tend to be more rushed, less thorough, and share few resources with their patients who are overweight and obese (Forhan & Salas, 2013).
- Weight bias attitudes among healthcare providers towards patients who are overweight or obese have impaired patient's desire to seek medical care (Tomiyama et al., 2013).
- Individual's body dissatisfaction has been associated with adverse health impacts (Pearl & Phul, 2016).

Methods

- Study Population: college students ages 18-59 who were attending classes full or part time.
- Study Design: A cross-sectional Design.
- Measurements:

1. Demographic questions including gender, age, BMI, college major and career plan, and dieting behaviors,
2. The Photographic Figure Rating Scale (Swami, Salem, Furnham, & Tovee, 2008), and
3. The Anti-fat Attitudes Questionnaire (Crandall, 1994).

- Study Procedures: college students were recruited for participation through emails from their instructors, the university canvas system, in-class announcements, and social media. $10 gift cards were sent to 20 selected participants.
- Data Analysis: Paired samples *t*-tests & independent *t*-tests.



Results & Conclusions

Demographic Information:

- Gender – 59 males, 133 females
- Race/Ethnicity – White (86.4%), Hispanic (5.2%)
- Marital Status – Single (60.4%), Married (37.5%)
- Career Path – Patient Care (39.6%), Teaching (31.8%), Community Health (6.8%), Social Work (4.2%)

Dieting & Body Image Perceptions:

- 46.9% had been trying to lose weight.
- 46.4% described they were healthy in general.
- 63.9% exercised to lose weight or prevent weight gain during the past 30 days.
- 54.7% ate less calories, or low-fat foods low to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight during the past 30 days.

Mean Comparison (paired samples t-tests) of the PFRS with & without the BMI chart:

	PFRS			
	W/O BMI : M (SD)	With BMI : M (SD)	*t*	*Df*
. Which figure best represents a healthy figure? lect one)	4.67 (1.01)	4.35 (.77)	4.87***	190
. Which figure would be preferred by the posite gender? (Select one)	3.55	3.61	-1.04	191
. Which figures associate with underweight?	1.66	1.67	-1.33	191
. Which figures associate with overweight?	8.47	7.92	7.71***	191
. Which figures associate with obesity?	9.48	9.27	5.70***	190

Note. * = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p< .001

Anti-fat Attitudes:

- Participants who were interested in patient care (*M* = 4.29*)*, teaching (*M* = 4.21*)*, and community health/public health (*M* = 4.35*)* career options had no differences on weight bias attitudes.

Conclusions:

- Body dissatisfaction and dieting behaviors need to be addressed among college students.
- Despite the BMI controversy, the BMI chart may help define the weight category.
- Weight bias may be a significant concern that needs to be addressed as part of college education.