
CHANGING THE CONVERSATION AROUND REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA AND BODY IMAGE

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ROUNDTABLE ON OBESITY SOLUTIONS WORKSHOP
APRIL 19, 2022

WEIGHT ATTITUDES TODAY

- **Obesity is blamed on individuals**
 - Belief that obesity is simply caused by poor diet and no exercise
 - Attributed to a failure of self-control, laziness
- **Thinness is valued**
- **"Diet culture" persists**



IMPLICIT WEIGHT BIAS HAS INCREASED

Patterns of Implicit and Explicit Attitudes: I. Long-Term Change and Stability From 2007 to 2016



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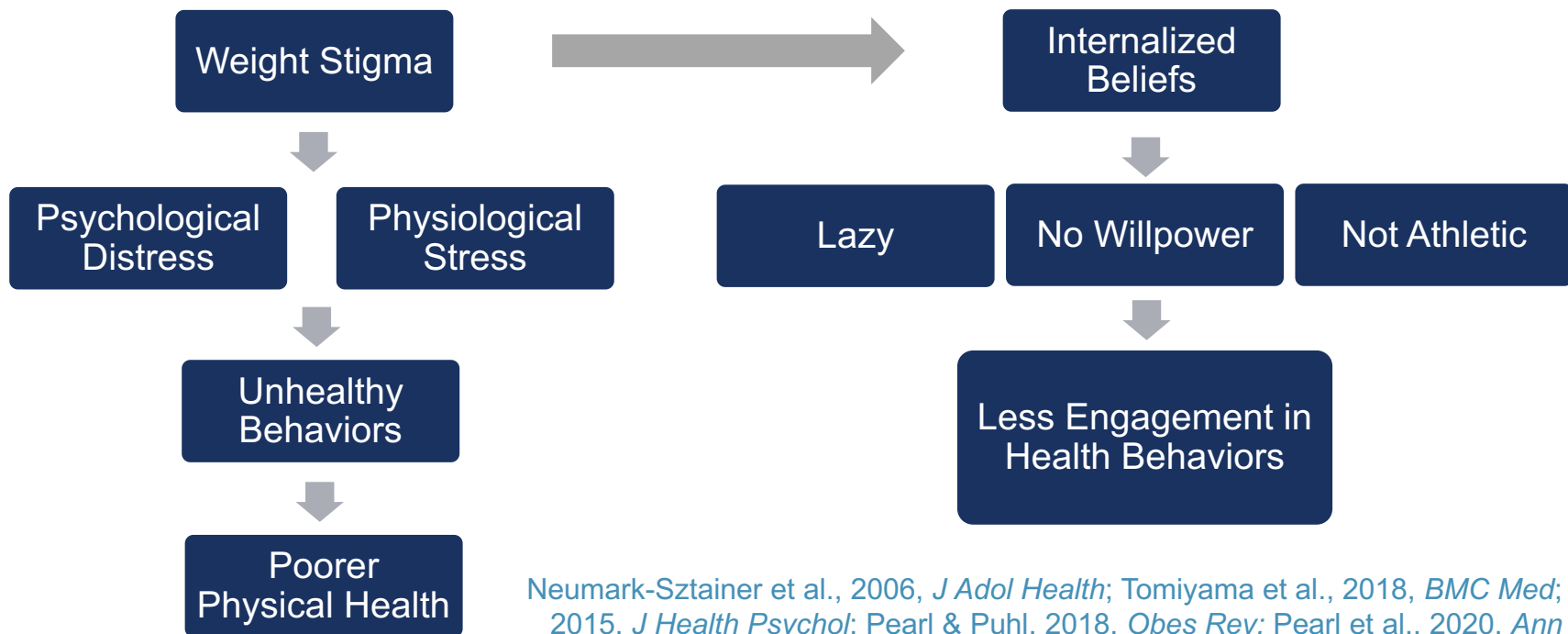


Abstract

Using 4.4 million tests of implicit and explicit attitudes measured continuously from an Internet population of U.S. respondents over 13 years, we conducted the first comparative analysis using time-series models to examine patterns of long-term change in six social-group attitudes: sexual orientation, race, skin tone, age, disability, and body weight. Even within just a decade, all explicit responses showed change toward attitude neutrality. Parallel implicit responses also showed change toward neutrality for sexual orientation, race, and skin tone attitudes but revealed stability over time for age and disability attitudes and change away from neutrality for body-weight attitudes. These data provide previously unavailable evidence for long-term implicit attitude change and stability across multiple social groups; the data can be used to generate and test theoretical predictions as well as construct forecasts of future attitudes.

BODY IMAGE, STIGMA, AND HEALTH

- Negative body image is a risk factor for unhealthy weight control practices and eating disorders
- Weight stigma undermines mental and physical health



Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2006, *J Adol Health*; Tomiyama et al., 2018, *BMC Med*; Pearl et al., 2015, *J Health Psychol*; Pearl & Puhl, 2018, *Obes Rev*; Pearl et al., 2020, *Ann Behav Med*

OBESITY AND BODY IMAGE IN MEDIA

- News
- Popular media
 - Movies
 - TV
 - Cartoons
- Social media
- Public health campaigns
- Fashion
- Advertising

NEWS IMAGES





Canadian MDs consider denying fertility treatments to obese women

CAROLYN ABRAHAM

From Wednesday's Globe and Mail
Published Tuesday, Sep. 20, 2011 10:13PM EDT
Last updated Wednesday, Sep. 21, 2011 8:11AM EDT

591 comments



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Canadian doctors are considering a policy that would bar obese women from trying to have babies through fertility treatments – provoking debate over whether the fat have the same reproductive rights as the thin.

Some studies find obese women face higher risks of medical complications while trying to become pregnant through in-vitro



Canadian MDs consider denying fertility treatments to obese women

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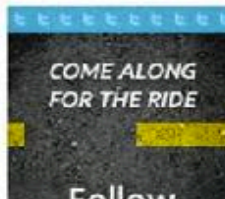


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Guidelines for Media Portrayals of Individuals Affected by Obesity



UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Health

OAC Resources

OAC Bias-free Image Gallery

<https://www.obesityaction.org/education-support/resources/oac-image-gallery/>

Media Gallery

<https://uconnruddcenter.org/media-gallery/#>

AD CAMPAIGNS



#AerieREAL Power. Positivity. No retouching.

AD CAMPAIGNS



ADIDAS
“Watch us Move”

“I’M POSSIBLE”
“Who’s going to tell me I’m
not an athlete?”



SOCIAL MEDIA

- Positive body image content
 - #BoPo, #Curvy, body acceptance messages
 - Positive short-term effects on mood, body image
- Use social media to elevate activism and correct misinformation

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Considerations:
 - Increasing diversity does not = representativeness
 - Inadvertent harms of BoPo
- Crucial to include people with lived experience
- Appreciate intersections of weight with gender, race, other identities

**Potential to harness media's power to shape social norms for
positive change**