

Physical Educators' Perceptions of Obesity and Performance Expectations

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Obesity in America's Youth

- 18% of 6-9 year olds
- 17% of 12-19 year olds
- Only half of 12-21 year olds engage in adequate physical activity



USDHHS, 2004, 1996

Obesity Bias

- Bias and antifat attitudes are very prevalent
- Found in:
 - Healthcare settings
 - Employment Settings
 - Educational Settings



Puhl & Brownell, 2001

Physical Education

- Numerous opportunities for negative social comparison:
 - Changing in locker rooms
 - Wearing uniforms that may not fit or be flattering
 - Difficulty with physical activity tasks when compared with other children

Fox & Edmunds, 2000

Bias in School Leaders

- Survey of teachers and school health care providers
 - Obese not as healthy as non-obese youth
 - More emotional, less tidy, and had different personalities
 - Uncomfortable around obese youth
 - Becoming obese was the worst thing that could happen

Nuemark-Sztainer, Story, & Harris, 1999

Performance Expectations

- Different expectations for normal weight vs. overweight youth:
 - Strength
 - Flexibility
 - Endurance
 - Coordination
 - Sport Competence

Greenleaf & Weiller, 2005

Performance Expectations

- Also reported that overweight youth had lower levels of:
 - Physical ability
 - Reasoning ability
 - Cooperation ability
 - Social Interaction ability

Greenleaf & Weiller, 2005

Purpose

- Examine endorsement of obesity-based stereotypes among physical educators
- Explore differences in performance expectations for overweight and normal weight students

Participants

- $n = 50$ Physical Education teachers
 - 23 Males
 - 27 Females
- Ethnic Background
 - African American (12%)
 - Caucasian (88%)
- Mean Age: 42.2 ($SD=10.9$)
- 75% reported 6 or more years of experience



Methods

- Participants completed an online battery of tests:
 - Demographic questionnaire
 - Modified Fat Stereotypes Questionnaire (M-FSQ; modified from Davison & Birch 2004)
 - Expectations of Performance Questionnaire
(developed from Marsh's Physical Self-Description Questionnaire, PSDQ; Marsh, Richards, Johnson, Roche, & Tremayne, 1994)

Modified Fat Stereotypes Questionnaire

- 32 Items pertaining to 16 personal characteristics and attributes
 - EX: Happiness, Laziness, Attractiveness
- Difference score is calculated with positive scores reflecting endorsement of characteristic for thin people and negative scores reflecting endorsement of characteristic for fat people

Davison & Birch, 2004

Expectations Questionnaire

- 30 items total, with 6 items from each subscale:
 - Strength
 - Flexibility
 - Endurance/Fitness
 - Coordination
 - Sport Competence
- 15 Items are referenced toward normal weight youth and 15 are referenced toward overweight youth

Greenleaf & Weiller, 2005; Marsh, Richards, Johnson, Roche, & Tremayne, 1994

Data Analysis

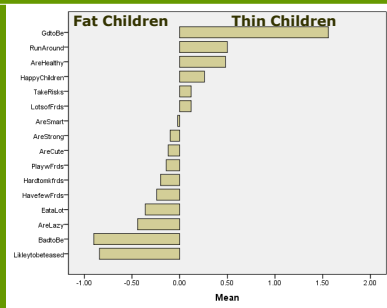
- Stereotype endorsement:
 - Positive score= endorsement of the stereotype for "thin" children
 - Negative score= endorsement of the stereotype for "fat" children
- Performance expectations
 - Paired-samples T-test
- Relationship between stereotype endorsement and expectations
 - Correlation

Results

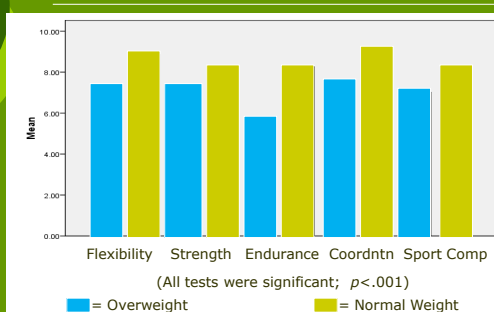
- Stereotypes were endorsed in the expected directions
- Significant differences between normal and overweight student performance expectations



Modified Fat Stereotypes Questionnaire



Expectations for Performance



Stereotype Endorsement and Expectations

- Strong relationship between MFSQ total scores and expectation subscale difference scores

	Flexibility	Strength	Endurance	Coordination	Spt Comp
Total MFSQ	.467	.425	.582	.579	.583

*All significant at $p < .001$

Discussion

- Endorsement of stereotypes is related to performance expectations
- Although most teachers believed that they did not make judgments based on size, the results indicate otherwise

In the future.....

- Education to raise awareness about obesity bias in education settings is needed
- Early-career training on obesity bias is important to help physical education teachers be more effective

Questions/Comments?