

IT'S ALL IN THE FACE: AN EXAMINATION OF ATTITUDES AND SELF PERCEPTIONS
OF VIEWERS AFTER BEING EXPOSED TO PICTURES OF FAT WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

Joy Cox

Dr. Brian Houston, Thesis Adviser

ABSTRACT

Weight stigma is found to be detrimental to both the physical and psychological well-being of those who are subjected to it (Puhl & Heuer, 2010). Despite these findings, weight stigma is continually tolerated and perpetuated through communication channels, one being the news media. The negative framing of overweight and obese individuals through this channel are often shown cropped without faces, and highlighting specific body parts where fat is most pronounced (McClure, Puhl, & Heuer, 2011). The following 2x2 experimental design sought to examine the attitudes and self-perceptions of females after they viewed cropped (emphasizing body parts) and uncropped images (showing full bodies with faces) of obese women. 307 participants (239 non-overweight/obese and 68 overweight/obese) were included in the study. ANOVA and ANCOVA analyses were conducted to reveal the outcome of seven hypotheses. Results confirmed that non-overweight/obese participants who viewed cropped images of obese women, had greater anti-fat attitudes than overweight/obese participants. Motivations to exercise also dropped significantly for both weight conditions after viewing images, reinforcing previous research in regards to social comparisons. Strengths, limitations, and future directions for research are also discussed.