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Impact of food choices on behavior expectancy and judgments of morality

Several studies have found differentiated judgments of the traits, including moral uprightness, of others based on the type or amount of food consumed by targets (Basow & Kobryniewicz, 1993; Mori, Chaiken, & Pilner, 1987; Pilner & Chaiken, 1989). Unknown, however, is the degree to which food-based moral judgments will “spill-over” into judgments regarding a target’s likelihood of engaging in immoral behaviors unrelated to food, such as cheating, stealing, or infidelity. Also unknown are whether a picture of the target would yield results similar to those from studies in which all target information was given in written form, or whether a slightly overweight target would illicit exaggerated negative judgments. To address these questions, subjects will be shown a photograph and short description of a fictitious individual. Study conditions will differ in the size of the individual in the photograph and in their food preferences, listed in the description. After viewing the photograph and short profile description, subjects will answer questionnaires to try and determine the traits and likely behaviors of the profiled individual. Once data is analyzed, we will see if moral judgments based on food choices persist with the use of a profile photograph, if negative judgments are more severe for a heavier individual when compared to a thinner individual, and if negative moral judgments of those preferring traditionally unhealthy foods lead to judgments that the individual would also be more likely to engage in immoral behaviors.