

Explicit and Implicit Measures of Weight-related Attitudes in Young Children: Associations
with Perspective Taking and Executive Function

by

Sarah Michelle Hutchison
MSc, University of Victoria, 2010
BA, Athabasca University, 2008

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Psychology

© Sarah Hutchison, 2015
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Ulrich Müller (Department of Psychology)

Supervisor

Dr. Erica Woodin (Department of Psychology)

Departmental Member

Dr. Vivienne Temple (School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education)

Outside Member

Weight-based stigmatization refers to negative beliefs and weight-related attitudes that are demonstrated through rejection, bias, stereotypes, and prejudice towards individuals because they are overweight or obese. With weight stigma prevalent and on the rise, assessment of factors associated with weight stigma is important in developing effective interventions for children. The goal of this study was to investigate weight stigma in relation to perspective taking skills and executive function (EF). Sixty-two 4- to 7-year-olds were administered measures of weight stigma (explicit and a Weight Implicit Association Test; Weight IAT), perspective taking skills, and EF. As expected, most children demonstrated the stereotype that fat was bad on explicit and implicit measures. Results showed that explicit weight stigma increases with age, and perspective taking skills and EF were not associated with weight stigma. The findings suggest that weight stigma increases with age and that early intervention is needed to reduce weight stigma.