

## The Stigma of Obesity: What About Men?

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An accumulation of research has shown that women (particularly White women) stigmatize obesity and are stigmatized for being obese (e.g., J. Crocker, B. Cornwell, & B. Major, 1993; M. Hebl & T. F. Heatherton, 1997). Little research, however, has focused on the perspective of men. This study adopts a cultural perspective and fills this void by addressing the relation between men and obesity, both in terms of how they stigmatize obesity in others and how they themselves are stigmatized for being heavy. The results show a clear picture that women are not alone: Black and White men also stigmatize obesity and are stigmatized for being overweight. However, race and gender do significantly influence the outcomes. Specifically, Black men have a larger acceptable standard for their views of women than do White men; in addition, large Black men are stigmatized less than large White men. Theoretical as well as practical implications of these results are discussed.

The number of overweight people in American society continues to increase at an alarming rate. At present, more than 50% of Americans are overweight, and more than 20% are obese (Flegal, Carroll, Kuczmarski, & Johnson, 1998; Mokdad et al., 1999). Obesity currently accounts for approximately 1% to 5% of total direct health care costs for various countries and has immeasurable personal costs, such as increased risk for a wide array of medical problems (Allison, Fontaine, Manson, Stevens, & VanItallie, 1999; Must & Strauss, 1999; Pi-Sunyer, 1991; Seidell, 1998). A wealth of medical research has been conducted on this public health issue and the negative health effects associated with it (Brownell & Wadden, 1992; Pi-Sunyer, 1991, 1993). However, much less research focuses on the psychological implications of being heavy.

Psychological research conducted on obesity can be categorized into two areas: (a) that examining the heavy individual's perspective and (b) that examining the reactions that perceivers have toward heavy individuals. From the heavy target's perspective, studies show that being heavy is not necessarily associated with general psychological dysfunction (e.g., anxiety, depression; Stunkard & Wadden, 1992), although it is moderately correlated with lowered self-esteem (Miller & Downey, 1999). Heavy targets tend to believe the

obesity stigmatization they receive is warranted, but they are sometimes able to compensate for the discrimination they face (Crocker, Major, & Cornwell, 1993; Miller, Rothblum, Felicio, & Brand, 1995; Quinn & Crocker, 1999). From the perceiver's perspective, research has shown that there are stereotypes and negative attitudes toward obese individuals that characterize them as lazy, undisciplined, and unhappy (see Allon, 1982; Crandall, 1994; Fallon, 1990; Hebl & Mannix, 2003). Heavy individuals are discriminated against in academic domains (Crandall, 1995), professional employment (Hebl & Kleck, 2002; Pingitore, Dugoni, Tindale, & Spring, 1994; Roehling, 1999), health care settings (Blumberg & Mellis, 1980; Hebl & Xu, 2001; Klein, Najman, Kohrman, & Monroe, 1982; Maroney & Golub, 1992), customer service exchanges (Hebl & Mannix, 2003), and interpersonal domains (Hebl & Heatherton, 1997; Hebl & Mannix, 2002).

One limitation of the majority of these psychological studies is that they only involve women (see also Crocker et al., 1993; Davison & Birch, 2002; French, Perry, Leon, & Fulkerson, 1995; Halper, Udry, Campbell, & Suchindran, 1999; Johnsen, Spring, Pingitore, Sommerfeld, & MacKirnan, 2002; Matz, Foster, Faith, & Wadden, 2002; Miller et al., 1995; Rucker & Cash, 1992; Sarwer, Wadden, & Foster, 1998; Teachman, Gapinski, Brownell, Rawlins, & Jeyaram, 2003). Although some studies suggest that overweight male targets may suffer interpersonally (e.g., Crandall, Schiffhauer, & Harvey, 1997; Richardson, Good-

man, Hastorf, & Dornbusch, 1961), the majority of evidence is not empirical but rather anecdotal depictions such as those found in recent movies and media (e.g., *The Full Monty*, *The Nutty Professor*). These depictions suggest that men are also extremely concerned with and stigmatized for being overweight.

In a call for more research related to obesity, Friedman and Brownell (1995) suggested that it was clear that obese individuals differ from nonobese individuals, but it was not clear who was most likely to suffer, and in what ways. Friedman and Brownell particularly stressed that future obesity research should focus on and include gender as a potential area of difference. A great deal is known about obesity and women, but much less is known about obesity and men. Thus, one of the goals of this study was to examine whether men are stigmatized for being obese and whether men stigmatize obesity in others.

It is important to examine whether men are perceived differently on the basis of weight, or whether differential treatment based on weight is true only for women. For example, the finding that overweight women suffer lowered self-esteem, but that overweight men do not, may be interpreted very differently depending on whether overweight men are stigmatized in society. Some explanations for the stigma of obesity, such as adherence to Protestant values in American society, should affect men and women equally, whereas other explanations, such as the predominance of extremely thin women in the media, should have differential effects on the stigmatization of obesity in men and women. By examining the degree to which men as well as women are stigmatized for being heavy, we can further our knowledge as to probable causes and consequences for obesity stigmatization in American culture.

A second goal of this study was to examine the influence of subcultural differences in obesity stigmatization. As Friedman and Brownell (1995) also stated, ethnicity plays an important but currently underexamined role in the stigma of obesity. There is mounting evidence to suggest that Black and White subcultures may evaluate weight differently. For example, Hebl and Heatherton (1997) found that Black women do not stigmatize other Black women on the basis of their size (see also Hebl & King, 2003). What is not clear is how cultural influences might affect men. Although anecdotally, the Black culture (both Black men and women) is thought to embrace a larger female body size, the literature on Black men's preferences for and perceptions of women of varying sizes remains unclear. In line with the stereotypes, Cunningham, Roberts, Barbee, Druen, and Wu (1995) found that when asked to report their preferences regarding varied silhouettes of women's bodies, Black men were significantly more likely to choose silhouettes with larger buttocks than were White men. However, although Black men did prefer larger ideals, the female silhouettes with larger buttocks were not large enough to be considered heavy and were only

slightly larger than the thinner silhouettes (i.e., a 7% increase in the buttocks region). Even this slight preference for a more curvaceous figure does not dispel the possibility that Black men still subscribe to the "thin is in" mind set. Given this past evidence, it is possible that Black men will not stigmatize obesity in others but that White men will. Research concerning perceptions of obesity in Black men is much more limited than research concerning obesity in men as a whole. Crandall et al. (1997) did find that, in addition to both men and women preferring friends of similar body size, both Black and White individuals preferred friends of similar body size, although, again, the results were stronger for White participants than for Black participants.

Examining how the stigma of obesity differs in perceptions of Black and White men can further extend our knowledge about subcultural differences in the stigmatization of obesity and why they might occur. One explanation, used to explain differences in degree of stigmatization of obesity among Black and White women, suggests that obesity is simply more common among Black women than among White women. However, obesity rates are not significantly different between Black and White men. Hence, if obesity is stigmatized only when it is more uncommon, then only White women should be stigmatized for being overweight, because the proportion of White women who are overweight (49.2%) is lower than that of Black women (65.8%), White men (61.0%), or Black men (56.5%; National Institutes of Health and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 1998). Another explanation is that the stigma of obesity is driven by cultural norms for ideal body images. If Black and White Americans do not actually share the same cultural norms, then negative perceptions of obese individuals may differ along cultural lines, both in terms of perceptions of obesity among perceivers of different races and perceptions of obese targets of different races.

This study was designed to further our knowledge of the differences in stigmatization of obesity between genders and among races, by examining perceptions of thin, medium, and large-sized Black and White men and women by both Black and White male perceivers. We hypothesized that, in general, men would stigmatize obesity and would be stigmatized for being overweight and that White men would stigmatize obesity more than Black men. However, even if our hypothesis is generally confirmed, it is possible that our results could reveal more complicated patterns in evaluations that are due to differences in race of the perceiver, race of the target, gender of the target, or some combination of all three. As just two examples, it is possible that Black men do not stigmatize obesity in Black women, but do stigmatize obesity in Black men, or that the pattern of evaluations of our thin, medium, and large targets are not identical. Because of the numerous possible patterns that could emerge, we made no a priori predictions about possible interactions. However, it is our hope that an exploratory analysis of the stigmatization of obese indi-

viduals may shed light on possible reasons for differences in the stigmatization of obesity between gender and among cultures.

## METHOD

### Participants

Sixty-eight (22 Black and 46 White) undergraduate male students at Northeastern University in Boston volunteered to participate in this study.

### Development of the Stimulus Materials

To develop stimuli, we collected a large initial set of pictures from magazines and casual photographs of Black and White men and women who had thin, medium, or heavy physiques. To standardize the stimuli, all pictures had to depict professionally dressed individuals wearing business suits and little jewelry. The majority of individuals' bodies had to be depicted in the photographs, and the context needed to be such that the photographs could be edited without the individuals appearing unnatural on a page by themselves. For example, photographs with individuals leaning on equipment or furniture, holding items, or touching other individuals were excluded. When these photographs were collected, they were grouped into three categories ("thin," "average," and "overweight") separately by seven raters. The only photos eventually selected for experimental stimuli were those in which there was 100% agreement between the raters in the categorizations. Consistent with Hebl and Heatherton (1997), we did not use pictures of extremely thin or extremely heavy targets. To standardize the photographs across race, we used the same body across race but used Adobe PhotoShop® to attach Black and White heads.

When we selected the particular faces to apply to the bodies, we again had seven individuals put faces into piles based on race ("Black", "White"), levels of attractiveness ("unattractive," "moderately unattractive," "moderately attractive," "attractive"), and perceived weight based on the face ("thin," "average," "overweight"). Consistent with Hebl and Heatherton (1997), we selected only faces that had positive expressions on their faces and were rated with total agreement by our seven raters to be "moderately attractive." In addition, we selected only faces judged to fit convincingly on bodies that differed in size. These standardization measures were taken so that perceptions across race could not be attributable to differing objective appearances. To ensure that a cropped photo was not judged more favorably than an uncropped photo, all photos were cropped such that any given face was never depicted with its original body. If needed, the skin tones of the hands and neck were color-matched with the skin tone on the face. Finally, pretest-

ing ensured that the cropped photos appeared realistic: None of the 30 participants who were pretested indicated any suspicion with the authenticity of the stimulus persons depicted. In sum, the stimuli both looked believable and were standardized as much as possible across race, sex, and body size.

Our final set of experimental stimuli included 96 pictures. The 48 photographs of women were composed of four White female faces and four Black female faces pasted onto six different bodies: two each for thin, medium, and large physiques. The same was true for the 48 photographs of men. This enabled us to create experimental packets in which participants viewed 12 target photographs, in which no 2 photographs featured the same face or body. Multiple packets were created, so that participants viewed a selection of photographs that was randomized as much as possible, within the constraints described above (namely, that the same body or face could not appear twice in the same packet). Thus, it was a fully crossed, within-subject design, in that each participant observed one stimulus of each condition.

**Questionnaire.** The first part of the questionnaire assessed participants' impressions of targets. Six items were adapted from Gledhill (1990) and asked participants to assess each target on six dimensions: (a) "How intelligent is this person?"; (b) "How good is this person at his/her job?"; (c) "How successful is this person in relationships?"; (d) "In general, how happy is this person with his/her life?"; (e) "How popular is this person?"; and (f) "How likely is this person to hold a job of a professional nature?" Participants then rated the targets on how attractive they thought they were. Participants rated targets on each dimension using a Likert-scale with anchors of 1 (*very negative*) and 9 (*very positive*). As a manipulation check, participants were also asked to rate the weight of each of the 12 individuals in the photographs on a scale anchored by 1 (*very thin*) and 9 (*very obese*).

### Procedure

Twelve (3 male and 9 female; 3 Black and 9 White) undergraduate students served as experimenters, and each approached both Black and White undergraduate students on campus and asked them if they would be willing to participate in a study concerning impressions. If participants agreed to take part in the study, they were handed a writing utensil and an experimental booklet containing the instructions, the photograph stimuli, and the response sheet. The instructions indicated that participants would be viewing and giving their impressions of individuals on rating scales provided on the response sheet. They then viewed 12 stimulus targets presented in random order and rated them on the seven dimensions after viewing each one. After this, participants were debriefed, thanked, offered candy, and dismissed.

## RESULTS

### Manipulation Check

To ensure that participants perceived targets to be variant in size, we conducted a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare participants' ratings of target weight for thin, medium, and large targets, and it revealed a significant main effect of target size,  $F(2, 60) = 214.17, p < .001$ . Paired  $t$  tests confirmed that participants thought the large targets ( $M = 6.98$ ) weighed more than the medium targets, ( $M = 5.53$ ),  $t(63) = 14.64, p < .001$ , and that the medium targets weighed more than the thin targets ( $M = 4.34$ ),  $t(63) = 13.94, p < .001$ .

We averaged the seven items on which each target was rated into one total positivity composite score. To examine whether men stigmatize overweight targets, we conducted a  $2$  (participant race)  $\times$   $2$  (target race)  $\times$   $2$  (target sex)  $\times$   $3$  (target size) repeated measures ANOVA with target size, target race, and target sex as within-subject factors and participant race as a between-subjects factor. The results revealed a significant four-way interaction,  $F(2, 64) = 8.44, p = .001$ . To better understand the results, we decided to examine men's perceptions of men and women separately.

### Do Men Stigmatize Heavy Men?

We conducted a  $2$  (participant race)  $\times$   $2$  (target race)  $\times$   $3$  (target size) repeated measures ANOVA with target size and target race as within-subject factors and participant race as a between-subjects factor. Both Black and White participants viewed the targets similarly; that is, there were no significant three-way or two-way interactions involving participant race with any of the other variables, and no participant race main effect (all  $ps > .14$ ). As shown in Figure 1, we did find a significant two-way interaction between target race and target size,  $F(2, 64) = 3.84, p = .03$ . The pattern in Figure 1 reveals that White male targets were stigmatized in much the same way as are White women (i.e., Hebl & Heatherton, 1997). The larger the male target, the less positively the target was rated. This pattern was confirmed by subsequent  $t$  tests indicating that thin White men were viewed more positively ( $M = 6.25$ ) than were medium White men ( $M = 5.90$ ),  $t(67) = 3.31, p = .002$ .<sup>1</sup> In turn, medium White men were viewed more positively than were large White men ( $M = 5.45$ ),  $t(67) = 3.41, p = .001$ .

Figure 1 also reveals that the pattern found for White male targets also obtained for Black male targets, but the differences were much less extreme. Thin Black men ( $M = 6.22$ ) were not rated significantly different from medium Black men ( $M = 6.18$ ) but were rated higher than large Black men

( $M = 5.88$ ),  $t(67) = 2.14, p = .04$ . In addition, medium Black men were rated only marginally higher than large Black men,  $t(66) = 1.81, p = .08$ .

Although the patterns for Black and White male targets were somewhat similar, the Target Race  $\times$  Target Size interaction was driven by the fact that large White men were significantly denigrated relative to large Black men,  $t(67) = 2.99, p = .004$ . There was no difference in the way that thin White and Black men were viewed,  $t(67) = .24, p = .81$ , and only a marginal difference in the way that medium White and Black men were viewed,  $t(66) = 1.74, p = .09$ . It is not surprising that, given the low ratings that the large White male target received, a main effect of target race emerged,  $F(1, 65) = 4.47, p = .04$ , indicating that Black male targets were viewed more favorably than White male targets. The main effect of target size was also significant,  $F(2, 64) = 10.19, p < .001$ .

When we examined the individual items comprising the total positivity composite, the same pattern shown in Figure 1 emerged consistently across the individual items. Whereas only one of the seven Target Race  $\times$  Target Size interactions reached significance, five of the remaining six were marginally significant, and an examination of the means indicated that the patterns were all similar to the pattern of means in the total composite. In addition, six of the seven items had significant main effects for target size (all  $ps < .05$ ), and the seventh had a marginal effect of target size.

### Do Men Stigmatize Heavy Women?

We again conducted a  $2$  (participant race)  $\times$   $2$  (target race)  $\times$   $3$  (target size) repeated measures ANOVA on the total positivity composite with target size and target race as within-subject factors and participant race as a between-subjects factor. As shown in Figure 2, a significant three-way interaction emerged,  $F(2, 65) = 5.10, p = .01$ . The means revealed that men did not differentiate among sizes when evaluating women of out-group membership; that is, White men viewing Black women did not view thin women more favorably than they viewed medium or large women; neither did they differentiate between medium and large women (all  $ps > .11$ ). Similarly, Black men viewing White women did not differentiate thin from medium or large women ( $ps > .26$ ), although Black men did rate large White women ( $M = 5.93$ ) somewhat lower than medium White women ( $M = 6.26$ ),  $t(21) = 1.80, p = .09$ .

The interaction was driven, then, by the ratings that men gave to same-race female targets. White men stigmatized obesity and denigrated both medium and large women relative to thin women. Specifically, White men rated thin White women ( $M = 6.66$ ) higher than both large ( $M = 5.64$ ),  $t(45) = 4.63, p < .001$ , and medium White women ( $M = 5.93$ ),  $t(45) = 3.83, p < .001$ . White men did not differ in their ratings of medium and large women. However, Black men showed a different pattern, stigmatizing large women but not medium

<sup>1</sup>Shifting degrees of freedom reflect the fact that a very small number of participants did not complete one or two more items.

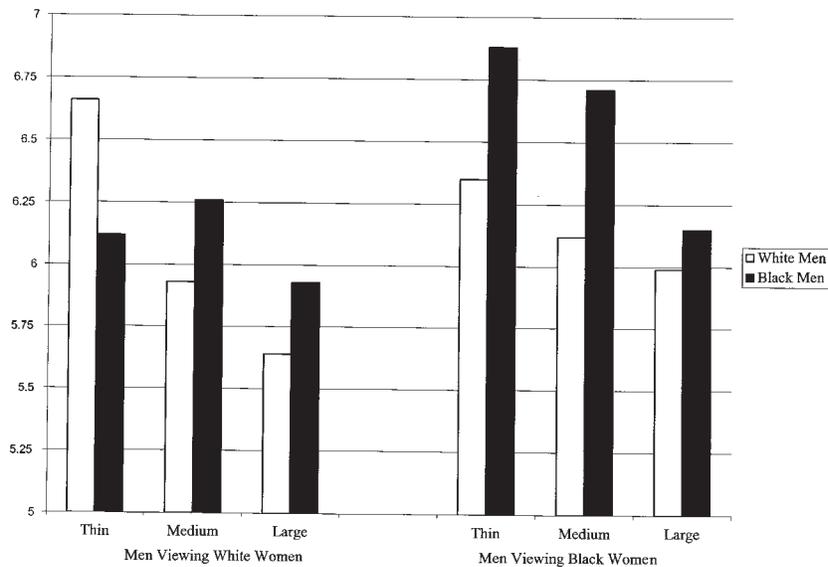


FIGURE 1 Positivity ratings of Black and White men.

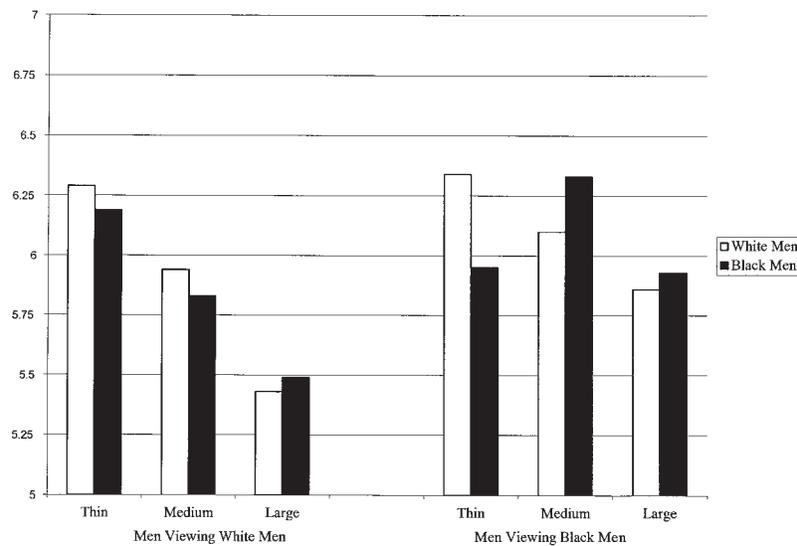


FIGURE 2 Positivity ratings of Black and White women.

and thin women. Specifically, Black men rated large Black women ( $M = 6.15$ ) lower than medium Black women ( $M = 6.71$ ),  $t(21) = 2.09$ ,  $p = .05$ ., and thin Black women ( $M = 6.88$ ),  $t(21) = 2.77$ ,  $p = .01$ . Black men did not differentiate between thin and medium women,  $t(21) = 0.98$ ,  $p = .34$ .

On the individual items, the same general patterns were obtained, revealing consistent support for the notion that size did not influence men's evaluations of women of a different race but size did influence men's ratings of women of the same race. More specifically, White men stigmatized Black women only on how attractive they were,  $F(2, 44) = 11.97$ ,  $p < .001$ , but did not stigmatize them on any other dimension. Black men differed in their evaluations of White women

based on target size only for how happy the women were with their lives,  $F(2, 20) = 4.87$ ,  $p = .02$ , and marginally for how popularly they were viewed,  $F(2, 20) = 3.14$ ,  $p = .07$ .

For same-race evaluations, the patterns on the individual items revealed a similar overall pattern to the total positivity composite. However, there were a few exceptions. Specifically, we found that White men stigmatized White women on the basis of size for how attractive they were,  $F(2, 44) = 32.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ; how happy they were in relationships,  $F(2, 44) = 10.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ; how popular they were,  $F(2, 44) = 9.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ; whether they likely held a professional job,  $F(2, 44) = 3.90$ ,  $p = .03$ ; and how successful they were in relationships,  $F(2, 44) = 8.83$ ,  $p = .001$ . They did not stigmatize

White women on the basis of size with respect to how good they were at their job or how intelligent they were. Black men stigmatized Black women on the basis of size for two of the seven individual items: (a) how attractive they were,  $F(2, 20) = 7.36, p = .004$ , and (b) how popular they were,  $F(2, 20) = 8.36, p = .002$ , with marginal effects for two others: (a) how happy with life they were,  $F(2, 20) = 2.48, p = .11$ , and how successful they were with relationships,  $F(2, 20) = 3.32, p = .06$ . There were no differences in ratings based on size for how good they were at their job or for how intelligent or how professional they appeared.

## DISCUSSION

This study was designed to examine the question of whether men stigmatize obesity. Our data revealed that men stigmatize obesity in women *and* in men. Our study also revealed that White men were not alone in their stigmatization of obesity; Black men also stigmatized obesity. Thus, our hypothesis that both Black and White men would stigmatize obesity in women and men was confirmed. However, the results show that the pattern of obesity stigmatization is not uniform across race and gender; instead, some complex patterns emerge. Three patterns are particularly novel additions to the past research conducted on obesity stigmatization: (a) differing latitudes for stigmatizing women on the basis of weight, (b) the difference in evaluations of Black and White male targets, and (c) the lack of stigmatization of the out-group for female targets.

### Race and Differing Latitudes of Desirable Weight in Women

One clarification to the general stigma of obesity pattern that our results provided is that differences emerge in men's ratings of women, in that Black and White men differ in how they categorize medium-sized women. White men view thin women most favorably and view medium and large targets similarly, and less favorably than thin targets. Black men, however, seem to use a different cutoff and view both thin and medium targets similarly and more desirably than heavy targets. Thus, the results suggest that Black men may be accepting of larger ideals, but only to some extent. Medium-sized women are just as favorable as thin women, but Black men do have limits and begin to stigmatize women when they are large.

One plausible explanation for the difference in latitude of desirable weight is that Black and White men may hold different norms for what they believe is an acceptable size. In White culture, extremely thin women are the ideal, and most women who are seen as prototypically beautiful (e.g., actresses, models) are extremely thin (see Fallon, 1990). Against this standard, even medium-sized women may appear large. When Black men consider Black women, however, there seems to be greater latitude and variation in what

body size is attractive. This finding is reinforced by previous research showing that Black women do not stigmatize obesity in other Black women (e.g., Hebl & Heatherton, 1997; Hebl & King, 2003). Perhaps Black women are also responding to a different norm for what is an acceptable size in Black culture but take it a step further and do not stigmatize women the basis of size at all. The difference in ratings between Black women and Black men could be due to Black men viewing women as potential romantic partners, or Black men having less exposure to societal standards. It may also be that Black women are reacting against standards of thinness and are consciously refusing to evaluate large women negatively. Black men, however, may not be consciously altering their perceptions, but they may simply hold different standards from White men for "acceptable" size.

### Race Differences in Evaluating Male Targets

Another clarification to the general stigma of obesity pattern was the differences in how men evaluated Black and White male targets. Participants exhibited a much more extreme stigma of obesity for White men than for Black men. More specifically, large Black men were rated more negatively than thin Black men, but large Black men were rated more positively than their large White counterparts. It is important to note that this difference cannot be due to any actual differences in the distribution of weight or other aspect of the appearance of our target stimuli. The photographs were all standardized, meaning the same bodies were used for both Black and White stimuli, and the faces were standardized in pretesting.

Why might heavy Black men be rated more positively than heavy White men? One possibility is that the results reflect a politically correct biased response; our participants may have been reluctant to rate Black targets, even large Black targets, negatively. This is certainly a possibility, but if this were true one might have expected different responses from our Black and White participants, with Black participants being willing to denigrate obese members of their in-group. It is also possible that the image of a large Black man evokes different stereotypes than does an image of a large White man. For instance, the large Black man may be viewed as more athletic (e.g., tackle football players), whereas the large White man may evoke comparisons to men with "beer guts" (e.g., Chris Farley or Homer Simpson), who are obese and unhealthy, rather than broad and muscular. There is some evidence for this conjecture from research conducted by Arboleda (2002), who found that Black men were viewed as more athletic than White men at all corresponding sizes.

### Lack of Stigmatizing Out-Group Women

Although in most cases our large targets were denigrated for their weight, we did not see evaluations based on size when men evaluated out-group women. White men did not stigmatize obesity in Black women, and Black men did not stigma-

tize obesity in White women. This effect may be driven by an out-group homogeneity effect, in which men are not able or are less motivated to differentiate between members of other races. If this explanation fully accounted for the results, it is surprising that we did not find the same effect for men viewing the male in-group and out-group targets. It is possible that the effect occurs only in ratings of female targets because there is no similar dimension on which male participants can compare them—they are members of the out-group in both race and sex. One way to test this possibility would be to see if the same effect emerged with women rating men of in-group and out-group races. Furthermore, different processes might concurrently influence Black and White men's responses (e.g., social desirability may affect responses for White men only, while at the same time differing stereotypes of large men may affect responses from Black and White participants). Finally, it is not clear whether the results reflect the fact that men are raising their evaluations of large out-group women, that they are lowering their evaluations of thin out-group women, or that both processes are occurring.

#### Differences in Individual Items

The results indicate that men do in fact stigmatize obesity, although this occurs differently for men and women. When men view other men, they rate larger men more negatively on most of the dimensions we measured. In addition to thinking larger men were less attractive than thin men, they thought the larger men were less happy in relationships, less popular, less successful, less intelligent, and less professional than their thinner counterparts. Although men rated large men lower on most of the dimensions, they rated large women lower on only some of the dimensions we asked them to rate. In particular, they rated the larger women lower on the following interpersonal items: how attractive, how happy in relationships, how popular, and how successful the targets were. But men did not rate them lower on the other items, such as how intelligent or professional they were, or how good they were at their job. It is possible that this pattern of results is an artifact of the types of stimuli that we used. All of our targets were dressed in professional-looking clothing. Perhaps men, when they saw a woman in a business suit, compared her to their stereotypes of women (e.g., Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972) and hence judged the target to be surprisingly intelligent and successful. Such a comparison would negate any differences based on size we otherwise anticipated on these measures.

#### Implications and Directions for Future Research

In this study, we focused on men and asked them to rate standardized photographs depicting Black and White men and women of varying sizes. Theoretically, this study sheds light on the understanding of differing subcultures within a given society (see Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Graham, 1992). In

particular, it revealed the importance that subcultures play in judging standards of beauty. The pattern of results suggests that mere differences in the number of obese individuals across subcultures does not explain differences in stigmatization of obesity among these groups. At least two explanations still remain. As suggested previously, it is possible that media portrayals of Black Americans reveal more variability in acceptable sizes and evoke perceptions of large athletic frames more than do portrayals of White Americans. This could explain differing acceptable weight standards among the subcultures of Black and White Americans. Alternatively, it could be that Black Americans simply do not look to mainstream media portrayals to determine the subcultural standard for beauty to the same degree as do White Americans. An important next step is to conduct research that specifies the influence of different subcultural values on attitudes regarding weight standards. In addition to disentangling different perceptions among Blacks and Whites in mainstream American culture, future research might also disentangle the influence of other ethnic, regional, and socioeconomic status differences (see Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). For example, even in this article, we have been referring to and making claims about Black Americans. However, there are subcultural differences even within the category of Black Americans, specifically between African Americans and Black Americans of non-African origin. We therefore must be cautious in claiming our effects apply to all Black Americans, as we did not collect any data that would allow us to determine what subcultures comprised our sample. Indeed, it is likely that our sample was primarily African American, and our results therefore may not generalize to all Black Americans.

The results also have broad implications from an applied perspective. In particular, they suggest that men are deserving of some of the attention that is currently, predominantly focused on the psychological duress that women experience as a result of not meeting societal weight standards. Because Black men are often the most highly susceptible group of individuals for a variety of medical illnesses, it is surprising that we did not see much obesity stigmatization of or by Black men. The inference that can be drawn here, then, is that the obesity stigma is not exclusively derived from its link with health risks. Studying Black men may actually provide some benefits by unleashing important insights into why certain individuals maintain greater size acceptance. That is, given the high incidence of eating disorders among White women, it might be useful to understand what aspects of Black culture lead to a higher latitude of acceptable body sizes, demonstrated by Black men in our sample (see also Cunningham et al., 1995).

#### CONCLUSION

American media images of women tend to depict a static and unrealistic ideal of thinness (Fallon, 1990). Perhaps it is this obvious and extreme representation of American val-

ues that lead researchers so often to examine the stigma of obesity as it pertains to women (Jackson, 1992). It has generally been thought that the ideal man is tall, but less attention has been paid to whether the ideal man is thin or heavy. This research demonstrates that men, too, are stigmatized across a number of evaluative dimensions for being overweight. In addition, these findings add to the growing body of research indicating that standards and ideals of weight differ among White and Black Americans, likely reflecting subcultural differences in ascription to societal values. Men, too, show these differences. Although the effects of obesity stigmatization may not be as great for or toward men than women, this research shows that this stigmatization does exist and that there is utility in examining men as well.

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