

CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR 2012 PROJECT SUMMARY

Name(s)

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Project Number

S0428

Project Title

The Skinny on Stereotyping: Collaborative Study Designed to Examine Preconceived Stereotypes in 3-5 Year Olds

Abstract

Objectives/Goals

Hypothesis: If 3-5 year old boys & girls participate in the 3 stereotype exercises, then it will be found that the majority have preconceived ideas of thin, average, and overweight body types- thin being the most favored, with overweight being the least favored.

Methods/Materials

- 1 Candy Land board game, 4 plastic sheet protectors, 3 copies of the approved girl body images paper, 3 copies of the approved boy body images paper, 12 tongue depressors, 1 white board marker All 3-5 year old subjects participated in three different body size stereotyping exercises:
- 1) The #Friend Selection Test# presented subjects with 9 different figures (3 thin, 3 average-sized & 3 overweight). Each subject was asked to choose 3 boys/girls to be their friend & then choose from the 3 which would be their #best friend.#
- 2) The #Adjective Test# provided 6 positive and 6 negative adjectives for the subjects to match with 1 of 3 different provided figures (thin, average & overweight).
- 3) The #Game Piece Selection# test began with each subject selecting 1 of the 3 homemade game pieces (thin, average or overweight). Subjects were asked to either accept or decline (#Willingness to Switch#) an offer to trade for the overweight figure (if not already chosen).

Reculto

Analysis of 114 subject#s data indicated that the thin figure was favored (42%) when compared to the average (35%) and overweight (23%) in an overwhelming majority of the cases; the overweight figure was least favored (23%) when compared to the average (35%) and thin (42%).

Overall results from tests 1, 2 & 3:

- 1) #Friend Selection Test#: 44% thin, 34% average & 22% overweight
- 2) #Adjective Test#: Positive- 40% thin, 37% average & 23% overweight Negative- 28% thin, 30% average & 42% overweight
- 3) #Game Piece Selection#: 55% thin, 38% average & 7% overweight #Willingness to Switch#: 59% yes, 34% no and 7% N/A

Conclusions/Discussion

Children do develop preconceived body size stereotypes, beginning as young as three to five years old! This project documents that even preschool children have developed preconceived body size stereotypes that could lead to negative prejudices. Society (public media, movies, televisions, magazines, etc.) has a responsibility to take note and try to remedy this emerging problem.

Summary Statement

This project examines the preconceived body size stereotypes in 3-5 year old children, additionally creating awareness of the emerging problem of body size stereotyping that can lead to future prejudices.

Help Received

Dr. Jennifer Harriger, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Psychology at Pepperdine University