

This work is directed at determining the stereotypes with which men, women of normal weight and obese women perceive other women on the basis of their figure. Specifically we looked at first impressions.

Materials and Methods

We surveyed 166 respondents from the Czech Republic. The first part of the survey included 10 questions about how men and women judge other women based on their body size and what attributes they give them.

This was followed by 21 statements (descriptors) to be matched with photos of women of different body size who were felt to possess that characteristic. The last part of the survey contained projective questions about perceived and ideal figure. In addition there were enclosed photographs of five women of different body sizes. The women had their faces blurred to obtain a true projective testimony.

Results

Attributes ascribed to women

Statistically significant differences in how women are perceived by men, women of normal weight and obese women include the following.

Men assume that when a woman lets her body weight go to either extreme, she is the least intelligent. Men perceive thin women as being pliable while fuller figured women are viewed as being more self-confident and assertive. In contrast women of normal body weight perceive thinner women as cold. Obese women view thin women as suspicious and distrustful. Obese women suspect other women of perceiving them as being unhealthy. The heavier the women the more likely they are to perceive another heavier women as being pliable, sensitive, warm, and therefore less cold, bitter and distrustful.