School of Psychology and Exercise Science
Research Seminar

Speaker: Trish Cain
Title: New options for quantification: Introducing the Fat Attitudes Assessment Toolkit
Where: Kim Beazley Lecture Theatre (351.1.001)
Host: Libby Brook (l.brook@murdoch.edu.au)

Abstract:
The majority of instruments designed to measure attitudes toward fatness and “obesity” were developed in the 1990s, a time when the “obesity epidemic” was gaining attention and the “war on obesity” began to be waged. Consequently, such instruments are focused on assessing negative appraisals of fat people. Recent times however, have seen mainstream fat discourse expand beyond anti-fat rhetoric and incorporate perspectives of activism, acceptance, and critical responses to the anti-“obesity” agenda. To reflect this maturation and align with more critical research agendas, an expanded approach to quantification is needed. Here I introduce the Fat Attitudes Assessment Toolkit. Development and validation of the toolkit incorporated: Comprehensive item pool, subject matter expert review, Pilot Study, Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis, test-retest reliability, and convergent, discriminant and predictive validity. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis identified an eight-factor structure. Five factors, Empathy, Injustice, Size Acceptance, Attractiveness, and Health correlated significantly and may be combined to create a composite score for the Fat Acceptance Scale; or used as discrete measures. Additional scales, Complexity and Responsibility allow for assessment of beliefs around the “condition” of fatness while the Self-reflection scale affords analysis in relation to participants’ reflection on their own body. The psychometric properties for all scales are robust and all scales correlated weakly with socially desirable responding. The Fat Attitudes Assessment Toolkit offers researchers a variety of options and an expanded scope for measurement. We now have the opportunity to answer more targeted and specific questions when surveying populations or assessing interventions designed to reduce weight-based stigmatization and oppression.

Biography:
Trish is in the final stages of her PhD at Murdoch University. Her research is informed by both qualitative and quantitative methodology with a focus on critical health psychology, specifically weight stigma and the quantification of discourses around “obesity” and fatness. Her research has been published in Fat Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Body Weight and Health and presented at the International Weight Stigma and Fat Studies conferences.

Reading for the keen:

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