

New study uncovers attitudes of African-American children toward overweight peers

November 2 2015, by Dawn Fuller



The University of Cincinnati study led by Laura Nabors, an associate professor of health promotion and education, will be featured in a poster presentation on Nov. 2, at the 143rd American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting and Expo, in Chicago. Credit: Joseph Fuqua II

The childhood obesity epidemic in the United States has been growing for decades. A new study focusing on African-American children shows how the issue can also impact social development. The Cincinnati study led by Laura Nabors, an associate professor of health promotion and education, will be featured in a poster presentation on Nov. 2, at the 143rd American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting and Expo, in Chicago.

The study explored African-American boys' and girls' perceptions of drawings depicting an average weight and overweight child. The [children](#) were asked which child in the drawings would more likely be the target of name-calling. More than 67 percent of the children selected the drawing of the overweight child as the victim. The respondents also were more likely to say the sketch of the overweight child would be a target for teasing and have lower popularity than the drawing of the child of average weight.

Girls in the study reported more sympathy for the sketch of the overweight child than boys in the study, and females also were more likely to say they would be willing to go to a party (therefore socialize) with the overweight child in the drawing. The study focused on 107 African-American children—60 girls and 47 boys—aged 8-12 years old.

"There are very few studies of this kind that focus solely on African-American children's perceptions of weight and obesity, and there have been opinions that African-Americans aren't as obsessed about weight in their culture," says Nabors. "But these children showed a weight bias. This means that African-American children may face the same stigma revealed in research dating back to the '60s that [overweight children](#) are more likely to be perceived negatively. More recent research has shown that children as young as 3 years of age thought that overweight children were more likely to be stupid or lazy."

More information: www.apha.org/events-and-meetings/annual

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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