**UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

**Internalised weight stigma and quality of life in overweight and obese individuals**

# SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline- specific phrases.

* 1. *PURPOSE*

The purpose of the current study is to test a contextual model of individual response to stigma in a population of overweight and obese individuals.

* 1. *BACKGROUND*

Obese individuals face prejudice and discrimination across many spheres of daily life, including in employment, education and healthcare settings. The study of weight stigma and its impact on individual health and wellbeing is a relatively new area of research; however, much research has been conducted in other stigmatised populations, including those with mental health conditions and racial minorities. Early predictions that stigmatised individuals would internalise negative stereotypes about their group and would experience reduced global self-­‐esteem were not always borne out in practice, with members of some stigmatised groups possessing elevated self-­‐esteem compared with non-­‐stigmatised individuals (Crocker & Major 1989; Deegan 1990; Hayward & Bright 1997; Crocker & Lawrence 1999).

It has been suggested that a continuum exists between self-­‐stigmatisation at one end and empowerment at the other, with some individuals responding to experienced stigma and discrimination with righteous anger and motivation to engage in collective action, i.e. activism (Rogers et al 1997; Wright 1997; Corrigan et al 1999). Corrigan & Watson (2002) proposed a model of individual response to stigma whereby impact on self-­‐esteem and behavioural responses was determined largely by two factors, namely, whether or not the individual believed the stigmatization of their group/themselves was legitimate, and how strongly the individual self-­‐ identified with other members of that group. Support for this model has been found in studies in, for example, individuals with mental illness (Rusch et al 2006; 2009), women in academia and smokers prior to introduction of a smoking ban (Jetten et al 2011).

As response to stigma has implications for health and wellbeing, in particular, in terms of psychological distress, a more thorough understanding of the factors predicting stigma response may be beneficial in interventions aimed at harm reduction in stigmatised individuals. The purpose of the current study is to test the Corrigan & Watson model in a population of overweight and obese individuals.

* 1. HYPOTHESES/RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In-­‐group identification and perceived legitimacy of societal weight stigma will predict psychological and behavioural responses to such stigma in overweight individuals. Self-­‐esteem will mediate the relationship between discrimination and empowerment. Legitimacy will moderate the relationship between discrimination and self-­‐esteem, and discrimination and empowerment. Group identification will moderate the relationship between discrimination and self-­‐esteem, discrimination and empowerment, and self-­‐esteem and empowerment.

* 1. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

(1) Discrimination will have a deleterious effect on self-­‐esteem, self-­‐efficacy, and psychological wellbeing in individuals with high in-­‐group identification who believe that such discrimination is deserved (legitimate). Behavioural responses will involve attempts to dis-­‐identify with the group via weight loss. (2) In contrast, individuals who identify strongly with the high-­‐weight in-­‐group but do not believe in the legitimacy of weight stigma will have undamaged or improved self-­‐esteem, self-­‐efficacy and psychological wellbeing, and are more likely to engage in collective action aimed at reducing the stigma itself. (3) The relationship between discrimination and behavioural response will be partly mediated by impact on self-­‐esteem and self-­‐efficacy.