

This article was downloaded by: [Swami, Viren]

On: 11 February 2009

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 908624375]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Journal of Sex Research

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t775653667>

### Big Beautiful Women: The Body Size Preferences of Male Fat Admirers

Viren Swami <sup>a</sup>; Martin J. Tovée <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Westminster, <sup>b</sup> Institute of Neuroscience, University of Newcastle,

First Published: January 2009

**To cite this Article** Swami, Viren and Tovée, Martin J. (2009) 'Big Beautiful Women: The Body Size Preferences of Male Fat Admirers', *Journal of Sex Research*, 46:1, 89 — 96

**To link to this Article:** DOI: 10.1080/00224490802645302

**URL:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00224490802645302>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## Big Beautiful Women: The Body Size Preferences of Male Fat Admirers

Viren Swami

*Department of Psychology, University of Westminster*

Martin J. Tovée

*Institute of Neuroscience, University of Newcastle*

*This study examined the body size ideals of a group of male fat admirers (FAs) in comparison with an age- and body mass index (BMI)-matched control sample. Forty-seven men, who were involved in the fat acceptance community, and 64 control individuals rated a series of 10 images of women that varied in BMI from emaciated to obese. As expected, the results showed that FAs rated a significantly higher BMI as the most physically attractive compared with the control sample. FAs also rated figures with higher BMIs, particularly those in overweight and obese categories, more positively than did the control group. In addition, FAs perceived a wider range of body sizes to be physically attractive than the control group. Participant demographics did not predict ratings over and above affiliation with either the FA or control groups. These results are discussed in relation to the growing body of work examining fat admiration.*

Over the past several decades, there has emerged a relatively large and varied body of work relating to anthropological, psychological, and sociological aspects of body fat (e.g., Bordo, 1993; Crandall, 1994; Hesse-Biber, 1996; Longhurst, 2005; Probyn, 2000; Stearns, 2002). One particular aspect of this literature relates to the idealization of various body sizes within particular socioeconomic (e.g., Swami, Knight, Tovée, Davies, & Furnham, 2007; Swami & Tovée, 2005a,b, 2007a,b) and historical contexts (Swami, Gray, & Furnham, 2007; for a review, see Swami & Furnham, 2008). Specifically, many authors have documented the stigmatization and denigration of body fat within contemporary (Western) societies (Swami, Chan, Wong, Furnham, & Tovée, 2008; Swami et al., 2008), partly as a means of serving hegemonic interests (Bordo, 1993; Campos, 2004; Lebesco, 2004; Lebesco & Braziel, 2001; Swami, 2007; Wolf, 1990). As Brown and Rothblum (1989) argued, this “fat oppression” represents the following:

[a] hatred and discrimination against fat people, primarily fat women, solely because of their body size. It is the stigmatization of being fat, the terror of fat, the rationale for a thousand diets and an equal number of compulsive exercise programs. It is the equation of fat with being out-of-control, with laziness, with deeply-rooted pathology, with ugliness. (p. 1)

Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of authors and groups began to challenge this fat oppression, and more recently there has developed a substantive body of work based loosely on “fat studies” (see Ellin, 2006). Although this literature is highly varied, a number of specific strands can be discerned, including antidiscrimination research (e.g., Crandall, 1994; Crandall & Martinez, 1996; Puhl & Brownell, 2003), public health and social issues surrounding fatness (Saguy & Riley, 2005), and fat acceptance (e.g., Howells, 1993; LeBesco, 2004; Oliver, 2006). In terms of the latter, for example, the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance in the United States has reclaimed the word “fat” to promote its use as a positive signifier (Howells, 1993), whereas others have discussed social aspects of “fat pride” (Probyn, 2000).

Related to the discussion of fat acceptance is the phenomenon of “fat admiration” (i.e., a sexual attraction to heavier partners; Blickenstorfer, 1996; Fabrey, 1972; Wachtel, 1976). Fat admiration is difficult to define precisely, but is usually used in relation to individuals (typically, heterosexual men) who find attractive someone considered clinically overweight (a body mass index [BMI] higher than 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) or obese (BMI above 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>). The issue is complicated by the fact that some fat acceptance authors reject terms such as “overweight” and “obese,” which are considered to stigmatize fat (e.g., Schroeder, 1992; Wann, 1999). Moreover, the preferences of fat admirers (FAs) themselves can be wide ranging, and the targets of those preferences can range from being slightly overweight to morbidly obese. Even

so, a consistent thread among FAs appears to be their rejection of the thin ideal as an unnecessarily prescriptive societal construct (Swami & Furnham, in press).

Perhaps surprisingly, there has been little discussion about fat admiration within academic spheres, particularly within the psychological literature on interpersonal attraction. This is noteworthy given that supportive fat acceptance communities now exist in the United States, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand and have developed to combat weight discrimination and stigmatisation. Less frequently, these communities act as avenues for the development of relationships between FAs and overweight individuals. Much of this development has taken place online and there now exist many dating and matchmaking Web sites for “big beautiful women” (BBWs) and “big handsome men” (BHM), and it is also possible to find specialist erotica dedicated to overweight and obese women and men (cf. Blank, 2000; Kulick, 2005).

Nevertheless, a small number of studies have begun the task of examining fat admiration in detail (e.g., for a discussion of BHMs, see Monaghan, 2005). In a recent study, for example, Swami and Furnham (in press) discussed various explanations for the preferences of FAs, including the possibility that FAs are heavier than the general population and so are attracted to others who most resemble themselves in terms of body size, and that fat admiration stems from an idealisation of individuals who challenge social norms about sexual identity and appearance (cf. Mayer, 1993). Similarly, Saguy (2002) discussed “fat heterosexuality” in terms of fetishistic behavior: She suggested that the attraction of male heterosexual FAs to BBWs is a form of fetishism that serves to reinforce gender inequality. In this sense, fat admiration may not be very different from “thin heterosexuality” in that both objectify women and, in doing so, reinforce the ubiquity of a woman’s body weight for her appearance. Indeed, Saguy discussed the relationship between “feeders” and “feedees”—relationships where one individual is provided with abundant food supplies to encourage weight gain—in precisely such terms. Feeders, who tend to be men, are likely to have the upper hand in such relationships, as feedees become dependent on them for sexual gratification, as well as nutritional intake.

To date, however, only one study has explicitly documented the body size preferences of FAs. Using line drawings of the female figure, Swami and Furnham (in press) reported that a sample of British male FAs showed a preference for heavy-weight over normal- and light-weight figures when making judgments of physical attractiveness. The same sample also rated normal-weight figures as the healthiest, suggesting that FAs are making informed judgments about attractiveness ideals, independent of health perceptions. An important limitation of the study, however, was its use of line drawings that lacked ecological validity—that

is, the stimuli used were deficient in depicting a range of body weights, and really only depicted body weights within a relatively narrow (normal-weight) range.

To overcome this limitation, this study examined the body size preferences of a community of FAs using photographic stimuli depicting women ranging in BMI from emaciated to obese, which allowed for a more precise evaluation of the preferences of FAs. Moreover, by comparing the preferences of FAs with an age- and BMI-matched control group, it was possible to examine whether there are differences in the range of figures considered attractive by FAs and non-FAs. Although this is in a sense tautological (i.e., FAs would be expected to idealize heavier individuals than non-FAs because the former are, by definition, more accepting of overweight), there are several reasons why this is important. Primarily, documenting the body size preferences of FAs will serve to highlight the variability of such preferences within contemporary societies, given that the bulk of psychological research has focused on cross-cultural differences (see Swami, 2007; Swami & Furnham, 2008).

Certainly, there is evidence to suggest that some groups within contemporary, Western society have ideals of body size that diverge from mainstream norms. For instance, Swami and Tovée (2006b, 2008) previously showed that lesbians and gay men idealize heavier and thinner bodies, respectively, compared with heterosexual women and men. Similarly, there is a raft of studies showing that ethnic minority groups define a range of body sizes as attractive, in stark contrast to the emphasis on thinness among (typically, Caucasian) majority groups (e.g., Allan, Mayo, & Michel, 1993; Flynn & Fitzgibbon, 1998; Kumanyika, Wilson, & Guilford-Davenport, 1993; Rubin, Fitts, & Becker, 2003). FAs, however, appear to idealize a significantly heavier body weight than any previously-studied group, although the range of body sizes that they consider attractive has not been examined before.

In short, then, we report the first systematic examination of the body size preferences of male FAs based on their ratings of ecologically valid photographic stimuli. Based on the previous review of the literature, we predicted that, in comparison with the control sample, FAs in this study would show a preference for a significantly higher ideal BMI, and that they would consider a wider range of body sizes to be physically attractive.

## Method

### Participants

The initial sample of FAs were approached and invited to take part in a study on their attitudes toward body size during two fat acceptance events held in London. Over a period of 18 months, Viren Swami developed links with individuals in the fat acceptance community, which has helped to break down the skepticism that some FAs

direct toward scientists. The events in question were generally forums of the discussion of fat acceptance activism, although they also served as support networks for esteem enhancement and the development of relationships among FAs. In this study, only data from male FAs were examined, due to the difficulty sampling female FAs (for a discussion of the relative scarcity of female FAs compared with male FAs, see Swami and Furnham, in press). Following Swami and Furnham (in press), this sample was further restricted to individuals who were not exclusively gay, who were of consenting age and who identified as being part of the fat acceptance community. The latter was defined flexibly, but generally involved the holding or promotion of positive attitudes toward overweight and obese individuals.

In total, 58 men were invited to take part in the study, of whom 47 agreed and completed the study anonymously during the two events. The main reasons for declining participation were concerns that fat admiration would be negatively portrayed within the scientific community or mainstream media and concerns about privacy. All participant demographics are presented in Table 1. Once data collection among FAs was complete, an age- and BMI-matched control sample was opportunistically recruited through personal contacts. Data collection in this group continued until

it was deemed to be of a sufficiently large size and when there were few differences between the control and FA groups in terms of age and BMI. It is, of course, possible that not all FAs belong to an FA community and that, therefore, our control group may have contained FAs. To minimize this possibility, we excluded control participants who reported a preference for clinically overweight or obese women ( $n = 2$ ). The final sample consisted of 62 men, none of whom declined to take part (see Table 1 for their demographic details).

**Materials**

*Photographic Figure Rating Scale (PFRS; Swami, Salem, Furnham, & Tovée, 2008).* This scale consists of 10 photographic figures of real women in front-view, selected to ensure the widest possible range of BMIs available to the researchers (2 images from each of the 5 established BMI categories; see the Appendix). The images were presented in greyscale, and all women were captured in a set pose at a standard distance, wearing tight grey leotards and leggings, and with their faces obscured. Following Fisak, Tantleff-Dunn, and Peterson (2007), participants were asked to identify the largest and smallest female figures that they considered “physically attractive,” as well as the figure that they considered “most physically attractive” (values ranged from 1 to 10). In addition, participants also rated each image for physical attractiveness on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*), 3 (*a little*), 5 (*somewhat*), 7 (*very*), to 9 (*extremely*). Previous work has shown that the scale has good construct validity and test-retest reliability (Swami et al., 2008).

*Demographics.* Participants were asked to provide their demographic details, which consisted of their age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, marital status, highest educational qualification, annual income, height, and weight (the latter 2 items were coded as BMI).

**Procedure**

All participants completed paper-and-pencil versions of the two-page questionnaire. Participants provided informed consent prior to taking part in the experiment and completed the questionnaire anonymously. Finally, participants were debriefed following their return of completed questionnaires.

**Results**

**Between-Group Differences**

There were no significant differences between the FA and control sample in terms of age,  $F(1, 108) = 0.84, p > .05$ ; and BMI,  $F(1, 110) = 0.10, p > .05$ . Mann-Whitney  $U$  tests showed no significant between-group

**Table 1.** Participant Demographics for the Fat Admirer and Control Samples

Variable		Fat Admirer ( $n = 47$ )	Control ( $n = 62$ )
Age (in years)	<i>M</i>	37.09	37.63
	<i>SD</i>	9.89	9.51
	Range	20–61	18–67
Body mass index ( $\text{kg}/\text{m}^2$ )	<i>M</i>	24.89	24.68
	<i>SD</i>	3.36	3.70
	Range	17.67–32.28	15.59–33.69
Sexual orientation (%)	Heterosexual	91.5	90.3
	Bisexual	8.5	9.7
	Other	4.3	6.5
Ethnicity (%)	Caucasian	95.7	93.5
	Other	4.3	6.5
	Other	4.3	6.5
Religion (%)	None	76.6	67.7
	Christian	17.0	29.0
	Other	6.4	3.3
Marital status (%)	Married	40.4	46.8
	Single	29.8	19.4
	Dating	23.4	27.4
	Other	6.4	4.8
Education (%)	GCSEs*	25.5	21.0
	A-levels	34.0	40.3
	Undergraduate	34.0	33.9
	Postgraduate	6.4	4.8
Income (%)	<\$15,000	12.8	16.1
	\$15,000–\$22,000	2.1	24.2
	\$22,000–\$30,000	46.8	35.5
	\$30,000–\$40,000	27.7	17.7
	\$40,000–\$50,000	8.5	3.2
	>\$50,000	0.0	1.6
Not sure	2.1	1.6	

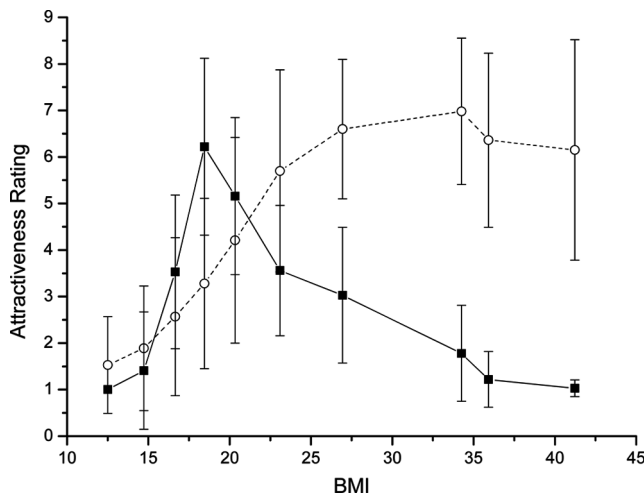
\*GCSE = General Certificate of Secondary Education.

differences on sexual orientation,  $z = 0.21, p > .05$ ; ethnicity,  $z = 0.43, p > .05$ ; religion,  $z = 1.69, p > .05$ ; marital status,  $z = 0.86, p > .05$ ; and education,  $z = 0.09, p > .05$ . There were, however, significant differences in annual income,  $z = 2.31, p < .05$  (non-FAs tended to have higher annual incomes), and so this variable was included as a covariate in all subsequent analyses.

**Figure Ratings**

We initially calculated an attractiveness range (AR) score from each participant’s ratings by taking the difference between the largest and smallest figure selected as attractive. This provided us with two variables of interest—namely, the figure considered most attractive and the AR. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) showed that there was a significant difference between the FA and control samples in terms of the figure considered most attractive (FA range = 4–10,  $M \pm SD = 7.70 \pm 1.50$ ; control range = 3–5,  $M \pm SD = 4.34 \pm 0.74$ ),  $F(1, 108) = 270.93, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .72$ . In this analysis, there was no significant effect of annual income,  $F(1, 108) = 0.04, p > .05$ . A second ANCOVA showed a significant between-group difference in the AR (FA range = 1–9,  $M \pm SD = 4.57 \pm 1.72$ ; control range = 2–7,  $M \pm SD = 3.81 \pm 1.02$ ),  $F(1, 108) = 8.18, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .07$ . There was no significant effect of covariate income,  $F(1, 108) = 0.22, p > .05$ .

We also conducted a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with ratings of each image as the variables of interest (see Figure 1), group affiliation as the classification factor, and annual income as a covariate. The overall MANCOVA returned a significant result,  $F(10, 97) = 64.82, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .87$ ; and results of the individual ANCOVAs are reported in Table 2.



**Figure 1.** Attractiveness ratings for the image set. *Note.* The filled squares with continuous lines represent the control group ratings, and the open circles and dashed lines represent the fat admirers group. BMI = body mass index.

**Table 2.** Results of the Analyses of Covariance for Ratings of Each Image in the Photographic Figure Rating Scale

Figure	Figure Body				Control		$F$	$df = 1,110$	$\eta_p^2$
	Mass Index	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$				
1	12.51	1.53	1.04	1.00	0.00	16.19**	.13		
2	14.72	1.89	1.34	1.39	1.27	4.08*	.03		
3	16.65	2.57	1.70	3.58	1.66	9.35*	.08		
4	18.45	3.28	1.83	6.16	1.90	62.85**	.37		
5	20.33	4.21	2.21	5.19	1.71	6.82*	.06		
6	23.09	5.70	2.17	3.61	1.40	36.82**	.26		
7	26.94	6.60	1.50	3.06	1.50	149.87**	.59		
8	34.26	6.98	1.57	1.80	1.04	423.30**	.80		
9	35.92	6.36	1.87	1.23	0.61	410.04**	.80		
10	41.23	6.15	2.37	1.03	0.18	287.13**	.73		

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

There was no significant effect of covariate income,  $F(10, 97) = 0.76, p > .05$ . As can be seen, there were significant differences between FAs and control participants on all but one figure (Figure A1 in the Appendix). Specifically, FAs provided higher ratings than did control participants on Figures A1 through A2 and A6 through A10, whereas control participants provided higher ratings on Figures A3 through A5.

**Regression Analysis**

A hierarchical regression was conducted with the total sample to examine which, if any, participant demographics were associated with ratings for the figure considered most attractive over and above group affiliation (FA or control). In the first step of the regression, group affiliation was added as a predictor variable, with ratings as the dependent variable. In the second step, continuous demographics (age and BMI) were entered in the regression equation to determine if these variables predict AR scores beyond the variance accounted for by group affiliation. Finally, in the third step, non-continuous demographics (sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, marital status, highest educational qualification, and annual income) were likewise entered into the model. The final regression model was significant,  $F(9, 108) = 30.14, p < .001, \text{adjusted } R^2 = 0.71$ ; but only group affiliation ( $\beta = -0.86, t = -16.23, p < .001$ ) was a significant predictor of ratings.

**Discussion**

The results of this study using photographic stimuli showed that, as predicted, the body size preferences of FAs were significantly different from those of an age- and BMI-matched control sample. Specifically, FAs

showed a preference for a significantly higher female BMI than did their control counterparts. More important, however, these results also showed that FAs perceived a wider range of figures to be physically attractive than did the control group. Finally, our findings also showed that participant demographics were not significant predictors of participants' ratings.

First, based on ratings of the images in the PFRS, it would appear that this FA sample idealizes female figures that are clinically overweight (BMIs between 25–30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>). Specifically, FAs in this study rated Figure A8 (BMI = 29.24 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) as the most physically attractive, and they also tended to positively rate figures that were in overweight and obese BMI categories more generally. These results can be distinguished from those of the control group, who rated Figure A4 (BMI = 18.45 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) as the most attractive. Moreover, the control sample also rated images that could be categorized as overweight and obese more negatively than their FA counterparts. Indeed, it was notable that there were significant between-group differences in the ratings of every figure, with partial eta-squared values being very high at higher BMI categories.

Second, these findings also showed that FAs considered a wider range of figures to be physically attractive than did the control sample. Moreover, FAs rated the two emaciated figures (BMIs lower than 15 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) more positively than did the control participants. Taken together, these findings suggest that an explanation for fat admiration may be that FAs are rejecting sociocultural norms of attractiveness. Similar arguments have previously been directed at other sub-communities that idealize heavier body sizes. For example, some authors have discussed how body size and physical attractiveness is decoupled among some ethnic minority groups, leading to wider definitions of “attractive” body sizes (e.g., Allan et al., 1993; Flynn & Fitzgibbon, 1998; Kumanyika et al., 1993; Rubin et al., 2003). A similar perspective may be applicable in relation to fat admiration. It may be the case that FAs challenge sociocultural norms of attractiveness, and this translates into an idealisation of overweight and obese others. Related suggestions, based on research in body image (see Calogero, Boroughs, & Thompson, 2007), include the possibility that FAs have low internalization of media ideals of thinness or feel lower pressure to incorporate media portrayals of thin bodies into their body size preferences. Instead, FAs may adopt more flexible norms of beauty or may even define beauty in ways that emphasize a transgression of “mainstream” norms. Relatedly, FAs may have higher self-esteem, which translates into a confidence to transgress social norms—a suggestion again derived from the body image literature (e.g., see Molloy & Herzberger, 1998).

Alternatively, FAs may be attracted to other individuals who are seen to transgress social norms (i.e., overweight and obese individuals). For example, in her

discussion of lesbianism, Brown (1987) highlighted the similarities between overweight women and lesbians, proposing that both groups are denigrated because they violate societal or patriarchal rules. To the extent that lesbians see the stigmatization of overweight individuals as political oppression, therefore, she argued that it would translate into pressure not to succumb to socio-cultural norms. Similarly, FA men may perceive the mere act of being overweight (or, more specifically, the relinquishing of norms associated with feminine beauty and appetite) as a transgression of mainstream norms, which they view as psychologically liberating or sexually arousing.

This is not to deny the importance of gendered aspects of corporeal relationality within fat admiration. As Saguy (2002) pointed out, male FAs may be sexually attracted to the vulnerability of overweight and obese women, which serves to promote and maintain masculinized conceptions of romantic relationships. Indeed, Saguy noted that in feeder–feedee relationships, it is often male FAs who have the upper hand, as overweight or obese women become dependent on them for nutritional intake and related aspects of the relationship. The phenomenon of “hogging”—the practice of groups of men targeting overweight or obese women for sexual encounters—also speaks to this effect (Gailey & Prochaska, 2006). Unlike fat admiration, however, men who participate in hogging are not necessarily attracted to overweight or obese women, but rather take advantage of such women's vulnerability in what is seen as part of a cultural misogyny. As noted by Swami and Furnham (in press), however, the gendered nature of fat admiration may be more complex, allowing for both dominance and submission on the part of men (e.g., “squashing” may give men a sense of being dominated by the women who squash them). Moreover, overweight women may use their size to challenge inequalities in gender, thus making men active partners in their defiance.

There may also be other explanations of fat admiration, which require further research. In recent work, for example, it was suggested that obesity triggers evolved pathogen-avoidance mechanisms that play a role in the stigmatization of obese individuals (Park, Schaller, & Crandall, 2007). On this basis, it might be suggested that FAs have ameliorated concerns about infectious disease, which translates into more positive perceptions of overweight and obese individuals. Another potential explanation is that fat admiration stems from differences in physiology or beliefs as a function of socioeconomic status (cf. Swami & Tovée, 2006a, who reported that hungry men idealized a heavier body weight than do satiated men; see also Tovée, Swami, Furnham, & Mangalparsad, 2006). This explanation, however, seems unlikely given this finding that FAs did not significantly differ from the control sample in terms of educational status (a useful proxy for socioeconomic status) and that annual income did not have an

effect on ratings (see Swami, Tovée, & Furnham, in press). More generally, these results suggest that participant demographics over and above simply being involved in the fat acceptance community do not predict preferences for a heavier body size.

Future work could extend this study in a number of ways. First, it is noteworthy that this range of stimulus BMIs may have still constrained the upper limit of body sizes considered attractive by FAs. One way to investigate this possibility would be to include a wider range of stimuli with larger BMIs than those presented here, a task that may prove challenging given the difficulties sampling women at extreme BMI categories (indeed, this study used the widest range of BMIs available in our library of images). Alternatively, future research could use stimulus sets that vary in body fat percentage, along with or in place of BMI, as this may provide a more accurate measure of fat admiration (e.g., as opposed to muscle mass preferences).

In addition, future work could begin the task of examining our previous speculative comments by examining individual difference predictors of fat admiration. For example, if it could be established that FAs score highly on the Big Five personality trait of openness to experience, then this might be taken as evidence that fat admiration stems from a rejection of social norms of attractiveness and an acceptance of unconventional beliefs or ideals. Just as important, future research should attempt to examine the body size preferences of female FAs for BHMs. This was not possible in this study due to the difficulty sampling large numbers of female FAs. Of course, it is possible that fat admiration is a predominantly male paraphilia, which would explain why there are so few female FAs. To establish the truth of this matter, however, will require more careful and systematic work, particularly research that attempts to document the prevalence of fat admiration within the general population.

In conclusion, this study extends earlier work documenting the body size ideals of FAs, which clearly do not conform to “mainstream” ideals of attractiveness. Future work should seek to build on the available literature to more fully account for, and explain, how and why fat admiration arises. Doing so will likely be of benefit to researchers seeking to uncover factors that promote positive body image among women and men (i.e., understanding the factors that influence fat admiration will likely help researchers challenge the contemporary societal fixation with extreme thinness, which has been linked with eating and body image disorders). In addition, this developing body of research may also be important for the promotion of sexual satisfaction, particularly as previous research has shown a positive correlation between fatness and sexual dysfunction (e.g., see Brody, 2003, 2004).

## References

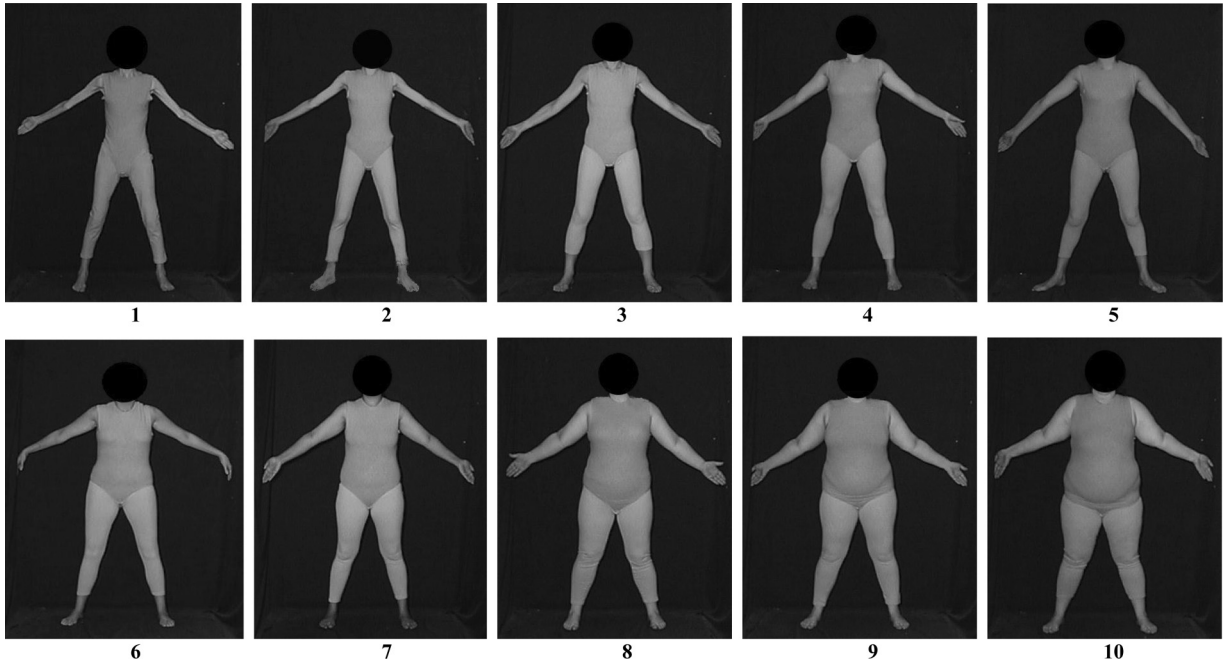
- Allan, J. D., Mayo, K., & Michel, Y. (1993). Body size values of White and Black women. *Research in Nursing and Health, 16*, 323–333.
- Blank, H. (2000). *Big big love*. San Francisco, CA: Greenery Press.
- Blickenstorfer, C. H. (Ed.). (1996, February). Dimensions: Where big is beautiful. *Dimensions, 12*.
- Bordo, S. (1993). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the body*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Brody, S. (2003). Alexithymia is inversely associated with women's frequency of vaginal intercourse. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 32*, 73–77.
- Brody, S. (2004). Slimness is associated with greater intercourse and lesser masturbation frequency. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 30*, 251–261.
- Brown, L. (1987). Lesbians, weight and eating: New analyses and perspectives. In Boston Lesbian Psychologies Collective (Ed.), *Lesbian psychologies: Explorations and challenges* (pp. 294–309). Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Brown, L. S. & Rothblum, E. D. (1989). *Overcoming fear of fat*. London: Routledge.
- Calogero, R. M., Boroughs, M., & Thompson, J. K. (2007). The impact of Western beauty ideals on the lives of women: A sociocultural perspective. In V. Swami & A. Furnham (Eds.), *Body beautiful: Evolutionary and sociocultural perspectives* (pp. 259–298). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Campos, P. (2004). *The obesity myth: Why our obsession with weight is hazardous to our health*. London: Penguin.
- Crandall, C. (1994). Prejudice against fat people: Ideology and self interest. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66*, 882–894.
- Crandall, C. & Martinez, R. (1996). Culture, ideology, and antifat attitudes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 22*, 1165–1176.
- Ellin, A. (2006, November 26). Big people on campus. *New York Times*, p. 1.
- Fabrey, W. (1972, August–September). NAAFA men: Who are they and why aren't there more of them? *NAAFA Newsletter, 2*, 2–3.
- Fisak, B., Jr., Tantleff-Dunn, S., & Peterson, R. D. (2007). Personality information: Does it influence attractiveness ratings of various body sizes? *Body Image, 4*, 213–217.
- Flynn, K. J. & Fitzgibbon, M. (1998). Body images and obesity risk among Black females: A review of the literature. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine, 20*, 13–24.
- Gailey, J. & Prohaska, A. (2006). “Knocking off a fat girl”: An exploration of hogging, male sexuality, and neutralizations. *Deviant Behavior, 27*, 31–49.
- Hesse-Biber, S. (1996). *Am I thin enough yet?* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Howells, S. (1993). A fat lot of good. *Listener, 138*, 18–21.
- Kulick, D. (2005). Porn. In D. Kulick & A. Meneley (Eds.), *Fat: The anthropology of an obsession* (pp. 77–92). New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin.
- Kumanyika, S., Wilson, J. F., & Guilford-Davenport, M. (1993). Weight-related attitudes and behaviors of Black women. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 93*, 416–422.
- LeBesco, K. (2004). *Revolting bodies? The struggle to redefine fat identity*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press.
- LeBesco, K. & Braziel, J. E. (2001). Editors' introduction. In J. E. Braziel & K. LeBesco (Eds.), *Bodies out of bounds: Fatness and transgression*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Longhurst, R. (2005). Fat bodies: Developing geographical research agendas. *Progress in Human Geography, 29*, 247–259.
- Mayer, K. (1993). *Real women don't diet!* Silver Spring, MD: Bartleby Press.
- Molloy, B. L. & Herzberger, S. D. (1998). Body image and self-esteem: A comparison of African-American and Caucasian women. *Sex Roles, 38*, 631–643.

- Monaghan, L. F. (2005). Big handsome men, bears and others: Virtual constructions of "fat male embodiment." *Body and Society*, 11, 81–111.
- Oliver, J. E. (2006). *Fat politics: The real story behind America's obesity epidemic*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Park, J. H., Schaller, M., & Crandall, C. S. (2007). Pathogen-avoidance mechanisms and the stigmatization of obese people. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 28, 410–414.
- Probyn, E. (2000). *Carnal appetites: Foodsexidentities*. London: Routledge.
- Puhl, R. M. & Brownell, K. D. (2003). Psychosocial origins of obesity stigma: Toward changing a powerful and pervasive bias. *Obesity Reviews*, 4, 213–227.
- Rubin, L. R., Fitts, M. L., & Becker, A. E. (2003). "Whatever feels good in my soul": Body ethics and aesthetics among African American and Latina women. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, 27, 49–75.
- Saguy, A. C. (2002). Sex, inequality and ethnography: Response to Erich Goode. *Qualitative Sociology*, 25, 549–556.
- Saguy, A. C. & Riley, K. W. (2005). Weighing both sides: Morality, mortality, and framing contests over obesity. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, 30, 869–921.
- Schroeder, C. (1992). *Fat is not a four-letter word*. Minneapolis, MN: Chronimed Publishing.
- Stearns, P. N. (2002). *Fat history: Bodies and beauty in the modern West*. New York: New York University Press.
- Swami, V. (2007). *The missing arms of Venus de Milo: Reflections on the science of physical attractiveness*. Brighton, England: The Book Guild Publishing.
- Swami, V., Chan, F., Wong, V., Furnham, A., & Tovée, M. J. (2008). Weight-based discrimination in occupational hiring and helping behaviour. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 38, 968–981.
- Swami, V. & Furnham, A. (2008). *The psychology of physical attraction*. London: Routledge.
- Swami, V. & Furnham, A. (in press). Big and beautiful: The body weight and shape preferences of "fat admirers." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.
- Swami, V., Furnham, A., Amin, R., Chaudhri, J., Joshi, K., Jundi, S., et al. (in press). Lonelier, lazier and teased: The stigmatizing effect of body size. *The Journal of Social Psychology*.
- Swami, V., Gray, M., & Furnham, A. (2007). The female nude in Rubens: Disconfirmatory evidence of the waist-to-hip ratio hypothesis of female physical attractiveness. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 26, 139–147.
- Swami, V., Knight, D., Tovée, M. J., Davies, P., & Furnham, A. (2007). Perceptions of female body size in Britain and the South Pacific. *Body Image*, 4, 219–223.
- Swami, V., Salem, N., Furnham, A., & Tovée, M. J. (2008). The influence of feminist ascription on judgements of women's physical attractiveness. *Body Image: An International Journal of Research*, 5, 224–229.
- Swami, V. & Tovée, M. J. (2005a). Female physical attractiveness in Britain and Malaysia: A cross-cultural study. *Body Image*, 2, 115–128.
- Swami, V. & Tovée, M. J. (2005b). Male physical attractiveness in Britain and Malaysia: A cross-cultural study. *Body Image*, 2, 383–393.
- Swami, V. & Tovée, M. J. (2006a). Does hunger influence judgements of female physical attractiveness? *British Journal of Psychology*, 97, 353–363.
- Swami, V. & Tovée, M. J. (2006b). The influence of body weight on the physical attractiveness preferences of feminist and non-feminist heterosexual women and lesbians. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30, 252–257.
- Swami, V. & Tovée, M. J. (2007a). Differences in attractiveness preferences between observers in low and high resource environments in Thailand. *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, 5, 149–160.
- Swami, V. & Tovée, M. J. (2007b). Perceptions of female body weight and shape among indigenous and urban Europeans. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 48, 43–50.
- Swami, V. & Tovée, M. J. (2008). The muscular male: A comparison of the physical attractiveness preferences of gay and heterosexual men. *International Journal of Men's Health*, 7, 59–71.
- Swami, V., Tovée, M. J., & Furnham, A. (in press). Does financial security influence judgements of female physical attractiveness? *Journal of Socio-Economics*.
- Tovée, M. J., Swami, V., Furnham, A., & Mangalparsad, R. (2006). Changing perceptions of attractiveness as observers are exposed to a different culture. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 27, 443–456.
- Wachtel, K. (1976, March–April). Some social implications of ridicule. *NAFA Newsletter*, 5, 1–4.
- Wann, M. (1999). *FAT!SO?: Because you don't have to apologize for your size*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.
- Wolf, N. (1990). *The beauty myth: How images of beauty are used against women*. London: Vintage.



Appendix

The Photographic Figure Rating Scale (PFRS)



Please answer the following questions:

1. Which figure do you find the *most* physically attractive?—
2. Which is the largest figure that you consider physically attractive?—
3. Which is the thinnest figure that you consider physically attractive?—

Please use the following scale to answer the question below:

1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9

Not at all A little Somewhat Very Extremely

How physically attractive do you consider each woman above?

Fig1 — Fig2 — Fig3 — Fig4 — Fig5 — Fig6 — Fig7 — Fig8 — Fig9 — Fig10 —