

Ideologies & Narratives in Relation to 'Fat' Children as Bullies, 'Easy Targets' and Victims

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Abstract

In this paper we explore narratives in relation to 'fatness', drawing on focus group interviews with parents, early years practitioners, teachers and young people. The study is located in a larger study on bullying and resilience, with no specific focus on obesity or 'fatness'. Analysis of the interview data highlighted a recurrent focus on 'fatness' within the participants' narratives, by labelling and stigmatising the 'fat kid' and 'bigger children'. We conclude that obesity and fatness, as abnormalities, are now included in common sense talk in relation to 'easy targets', victims and bullies.

Introduction

In this paper, we focus on the tendency in Western society to stigmatise children and young people who are perceived as "fat", "overweight" or "obese". We explore the ways in which prejudiced attitudes on the part of parents, teachers and the peer group are expressed and affirmed in everyday discourse. A number of authors have highlighted the damaging effects on children and young people of health policy and obesity discourse, with its underlying 'perfection' and 'performance' principles (e.g. Evans et al, 2013; Rich, 2010). Obesity in childhood is usually defined as excessive weight in relation to age or height. The most common measure of weight status is the Body Mass Index (BMI), which is calculated as weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in metres. Generally, children whose BMI is between the 91st and 97th centiles are classified as overweight; those at or above the 98th centile are classified as obese (National Obesity Observatory, 2012).

Childhood obesity, and the epidemic proportions it has reached, is a recurrent theme in the scientific literature as well as in the (British) media; leading to calls for strategies to reverse this unhealthy trend, which according to research is due to a complex interplay of demographic, maternal and child variables (Demir et al, 2012; Parletta et al, 2012; Wilke et

al, 2013). Recent research (Black et al., 2015) found that many parents do not perceive that their child is overweight, even when their child has been classified as clinically obese. There are cultural differences too, with a particular emphasis in Western countries on the value of being slim. Concern for the trend in childhood obesity is reflected in public policy and pedagogy in the UK, with a specific focus on improving healthy eating practices (DfE, 2012). For example, the All-party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood (2014) has made suggestions on reducing childhood obesity through creating better playgrounds to get youngsters to exercise, fitness checks in schools and a cabinet minister responsible for preventing obesity. This poses the question of whether and how the ideas that are the product of political health ideologies enter the ordinary life of the lived ideology.

Childhood Obesity as a Moral Issue

Ideologies of health which circulate in schools and society can impact negatively on children's embodied consciousness (Rich, 2010). Leahy (2009) found that 'disgust' is an affect commonly mobilised by both teachers and students in health classes and by other health strategies designed to address childhood obesity.

At the same time, suggestions have been made that 'obesity talk' has more to do with preconceived moralities and ideologies regarding 'fatness' than a comprehensive assessment of the existing evidence. For example, Gard and Wright (2005) contend that people have latched on to this because it conforms to the familiar story of Western decadence and decline. Lupton (2014) argues that 'fat bodies' are culturally represented as inferior, deficient, and ugly, with 'fat' children subjected to greater prejudice, teasing and bullying than other children (see also Thornberg, 2015). As such, there appears to be a link between the social and personal worth of a person and their weight (Murray, 2009).

Thus, the increased focus on childhood obesity and 'fatness' is framed within moral and health ideologies that function to monitor and 'correct' children who do not fit into the thinness ideal (Evans et al, 2013). Yet, more research is needed to understand the complexities of narratives around 'fatness' and how they circulate relationally and affectively in home and school contexts.

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Method

The current study in South-East England is located in a larger study on bullying and resilience, with no specific focus on childhood obesity or 'fatness'. Yet, analysis of the interview data highlighted a recurrent focus on 'fatness'; 56 participants were in twelve focus groups; four were with young people (mean age = 14 years old), two were with secondary school teachers, two with early years practitioners, and four with parents. The young people and two of the parent focus groups were approached through local youth centres; early years practitioners and the other two focus groups with parents were recruited through our partnerships with local nurseries; the teacher focus groups were recruited through our partnerships with local schools. There were between 4-6 participants in each focus group. The focus groups were mixed gender, with the exception of two of the parent focus groups, which were with mothers only; participants in all groups were ethnically and economically diverse.

Kitzinger (1994) argues that whilst focus groups can provide insight into the experiences of individual participants, the real value of group data is to be found from analyzing the interaction *among* participants. We used a two-level 'synthesized' discourse analysis (Sims-Schouten and Riley, 2014; Wetherell, 1998). Firstly, drawing on discursive psychology, we focused on the interactive accomplishments of talk, such as managing facts, blame and accountability (Potter, 1997). Discursive psychologists affiliate with conversation analytic traditions (Sacks, 2001), and are primarily concerned with what people do with their talk, e.g. disclaiming and making extreme statements (Pomerantz, 1986). The second level of discourse analysis focused on the wider discourses that participants drew on to make sense of themselves, including common sense discourses and ideologies (Billig, 1989, 2001). Data were transcribed in detail, drawing on Jefferson (1985); attention was given to aspects of talk in relation to intonation (↑↓ in the extracts for rising and lowering intonation), pauses, speeded up talk (> <), quiet speech (◦ ◦), to give a few examples. See appendix for transcription notions.

Narratives and Ideologies – Fat Child as Victim versus Fat Child as Bully

The talk was mostly located in educational settings (i.e., the early years sector and secondary schools), with a specific focus on children's bullying practices. What the extracts below all have in common, is that assumptions are being made about 'fat' children, which includes the notion that somehow their 'fatness' and embodiment influences their day-to-day practices, either as bully or victim.

Victim – Making ‘Fat’ an issue & Easy targets

The extract below comes from a focus group with mothers of children aged between 2 years and 16 years old. The extract is part of a discussion about how young children perceive other children who are a bit different (skin colour, disability and ‘impediment’) and starts about 20 minutes into the interview:

1. W3: >wh↓at I’m saying is< the girls, the girls .hh seem bl↓ind [to
2. W1: [°alright° [ok]
3. W3: [>a]ny sort
4. of< Erm (2.0) skin c↓olour, erm (1.0) imp↓ediment and >you know< the m↑ost
5. >they may say is< oh, I’ve been playing with s↑o and s↓o (1.0) °and you say°, who
6. is that (1.0) >I would str↑uggle< s↓ometimes to even get out of th↓em all (1.0),
7. you know, he’s got brown sk↑in. You kn↓ow, its (1.0)
8. W1: Yeah
9. W2: Yea[h
10. W3: [it something they dont even pick ↑up on< But I know, the, the ↑other
11. thing that >from what you said< made me rem↓ember the instance round the
12. pre-school, where I was t↑alking to one of the m↓ums and h::er little girl is a
13. b↓it bigger, a:nd, she’d erm (2.0) told, you know, came home and >told the mum
14. that she’d been called f↑at< or °somebody called her a fat some(1.0)° something
15. or (1.0) and °mum was saying° (1.0) mum went straight in th↑ere and said, you
16. know, we do not use that word in this h↓ouse and (1.0) I mean, if I said, if the
17. g↑irls (2.0) if someone called my girls ‘fat’ they’d just go ‘I am not fat’, and just
18. walk aw↑ay from ↓it (1.0). But I think because the mum th↓en (2.0) came in and
19. m↓ade it an ↑issue .hh it was something then that the little girl was more
20. s↑ensitive ↓of and .hh it: >became an issue and then was introduced< t::o the
21. perpetrator ‘you mustnt call people that word, it ↑all became s↓omething that
22. was (1.0) that could be used as a w↓eapon when they w↑anted to.
23. W1: Yeah, its like a lot of parents make a big ↑issue out err, like you said,
24. y↓eah (1.0) and b↓asically there’s a dis↑abled child over there >you know<
25. and a lot of parents actually make the child feel like >oh I shouldnt play with
26. that person< I shouldnt actually go near that person.

Lines 1-6 lay the ground for what is to come, i.e. the construction of the ‘fat’ child in lines 10-26. In line 1 the participant does an appeal to the innocence of her girls, when it comes to judging other people. This is indicated by the metaphor ‘seem bl↓ind to’. By using ‘seem’ here, as opposed to ‘are’ she avoids claiming ownership of this viewpoint (see Speer and Potter, 2000); as a mother she may not want to be seen to be bragging about her children. Instead, she lets the ‘facts’ speak for themselves, which is evident from the three-way-list completer (Antaki and Wetherell, 1999) that follows: ‘skin c↓olour’ (line 4), ‘imp↓ediment’ (line 4) and brown sk↑in (line 7). All of this functions to show that, although these notions and ‘abnormalities’ are out there, her children do not judge others (see also the rising intonation in ‘the m↑ost >they may say is<’, lines 4,5). Interestingly, although she uses all sorts of strategies to portray her children as non-judgemental by nature, the same cannot be said about her. Billig (1989) argues that in their arguing and thinking people are contradictory, shifting from one way of thinking to another. After having constructed her girls as ‘blind’ and

innocent, when it comes to other children's abnormalities, she goes on to show that she herself is not. Her focus is very much grounded in 'otherness' (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1996) and the fact that it is important to her to know (get out of them all (1.0), line 6) who her children interact with.

This sets the tone for the next part of extract (lines 10-26). After quickly repeating (indicated by >< in line 10) that this is not something they (i.e. her children) even pick up on, she uses a disclaimer (But, line 10) as a way of introducing the incident about a child being called 'fat' (see line 14). Not only that, the 'But' signifies that whilst her daughters may be blind to other people's impediments, this cannot be said about everyone. Here, rather than taking her girls as a starting point, she bases the discussion around her interaction with 'one of the m↓ums' (line 12), in which she locates herself at a slight distance ('one of the mums', rather than 'one of my friends'). The notion of weight is introduced through the appeal to the fact that 'h::er little girl is a b↓it bigger' (line 12, 13); note the stress on bigger. This direct orientation towards the child's size as being 'a bit bigger' is a direct appeal to factual accuracy (see Speer and Potter, 2000), which serves to show that she is aware of the child and her appearance.

In what follows, the issue of the child being called 'fat' (repeated twice in line 14) is treated as something that isn't really an issue, i.e. the participant dismisses the notion of teasing and bullying here. Lupton (2014) argues that 'fat' children are subjected to greater harassment and prejudice than other children, and experience bullying to a greater extent. Yet, the participants in the extract above, do not construct this as a bullying issue (regardless of the size of the child), instead they treat this as an issue created by the mother of the child. This is evident from the extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) 'mum went straight in there' (line 15) and the stress on the language used by the mum in question 'we do not use that word in this h↓ouse' (line 16). All of this positions the mother, and not the 'perpetrator' (line 22), as being at fault. Moreover, this mum could be in denial of her daughter's weight issue, in line with many parents of overweight children (see Black et al, 2015). It is at this point that the participant returns to her girls as being resilient, as having a retort to being called fat, by saying 'I am not fat', and 'just walk aw↑ay from ↓it (lines 17/18). As such, the 'abnormalities' discussed by the participants in this extract, are constructed as appearing outside their and their children's sphere and experience; either as 'something their children don't notice or are blind to' (in the case of impediments, skin colour, lines 1-10), or something that 'doesn't affect them' (in the case of fatness, lines 17/18).

Here they make it clear that it is the parents who notice and make an issue out of it, which inevitably includes the participant herself (in lines 1-10) and the mother of the child who was

called fat ('But I think because the mum then (2.0) came in and made it an issue', line 18/19). This leads into the upshot, that it 'could be used as a weapon when they wanted to' (line 22); here 'they' refers to the perpetrator (line 21) and the fact that the mother in question could be blamed for providing potential bullies with ammunition and for turning 'fatness' into an issue. Nevertheless, the focus on 'otherness' on which the extract is built, and the fact that the participant constructs her daughters' response to someone calling them fat as 'they'd just go 'I am not fat' (line 17), suggests that 'fatness' is in fact an issue (i.e. why wouldn't her daughter's retort be 'I don't care if you call me fat?'). As such, there is a hint of a link between the social and personal worth of a person and their weight, in the common sense ideologies of the participants in the extract above (see Murray, 2009).

The next extract comes from a focus group interview with teachers. As with the interview above, the extract is part of a discussion around 'being different' (10 minutes into the interview):

1. W3: >Obviously kids with red hair< are often the target but the same amount .hh its
2. people that are quieter err or don't (1.0) don't fight back ° [°or°
3. M1: [SO its EASY targets, easy
4. target
5. W1: >Yeah, cause I mean< err there's a fat boy at school, >but he is one of the most
6. popular boys in the school< because he (2.0) in the lesson some of the kids do say
7. something to him, but he's quite good with it °you know° (1,0) his come back °erm°
8. and be able to sort of take that as banter and then it's err I [don't
9. W3: [You very rarely see:: a
10. really dominant character bully a really dominant character
11. {mumbles of agreement}

As with the previous extract, in the extract above, the scene is set at the start (lines 1-4). Here, the participant draws on a common sense ideology, indicated by the 'Obviously' at the start of line 1 (see Billig, 2001) to suggest that it is 'kids with red hair' (line 1) and 'people that are quieter' (line 2), who are 'often the target' (the latter is said very softly, indicated by the °). Interestingly, rather than saying that it is kids with red hair *and* quieter people who are easy targets, the participant uses a concession marker here 'but the same amount' (see Antaki and Wetherell, 1999). This does two things; firstly, it shows that physical aspects of a person (red hair) and characteristics (being quiet) both play a role in becoming a target, secondly, there is a hint that being quiet and not fighting back is not necessarily a characteristic of children with red hair. What it boils down to though is 'EASY targets' (said loudly and repeated twice, line 3,4). This leads very neatly into the next bit, the construction of the 'fat' child. By saying very quickly (indicated by ><) '>Yeah, cause I mean< err there's a fat boy at school' (line 5), this participant constructs the fact that 'fat children' are easy targets, as a given, which fits in with the research cited earlier on (Thornberg, 2013). As

such, there is an assumption that 'being fat' is a membership categorisation device (Silverman, 2001) of being bullied. This is followed by a disclaimer ('but' in line 5), after which the participant makes a reference to the child's popularity. Here, a three-way-list completer ('good with it °you know°, 'his c↓ome back' and 'take that as banter', lines 7/8) (Antaki and Wetherell, 1999) is used to strengthen the argument that the child is able to take this (i.e. 's↑ome of the kids do say something to him', lines 6/7) on the chin.

'Fat' and 'Bigger' children as Bullies

As well as focussing on the stigmatisation of 'fat' children as victims or potential victims, there was also talk of 'fat' and 'bigger' children as bullies. The next extract comes from a focus group with young people and is part of a discussion about sticking up for oneself; 15 minutes into the interview:

1. B1: C↓os ↓l::, >l'm a midget< y↓eah. And l'm, and l, so this kid tried b↓ullyng me,
2. and l >he's a fat shit<, sorry, l punched him, fuck off, °l'm sorry for fuck off°, l'm sorry
3. {someone giggles}
4. M: Right
5. B1: And like {interruption from others} l havent FINISHED. This kid called f↓at
6. p↑erson, and
7. M: Are you actually being serious?
8. B1: Yes, straight up.
9. M: Ok
10. B1: This fat person called XXXX, h↑e started me, .hh l said these elastic b↑ands. l
11. said these elastic b↑ands °so he like strangled me° so l punched him in the face, >l
12. broke his nose and l knocked him out and l got excluded for four days for it<,
13. but l was sticking up for mys↑elf

The participant in the extract above, positions both himself and the (perceived) bully as deficient, in the quickly uttered '>l'm a midget<' (line 1) and '>he's a fat shit<' (line 2); as such he is setting the scene by presenting this as a fact, something that is unquestionable (Edwards, 1997). This positioning of, and emphasis on himself as a midget serves a specific purpose, as regardless of being small, he is able to deal with the giant ('l punched him', line 2). Not only that, B1 indicates that he himself has all the characteristics of a bully, including his indifference to his target's suffering and a total lack of empathy for 'this fat person' when he 'punched him in the face' and 'broke his nose'. Disgust is mobilised by using derogatory language, 'fat' shit'. Here the use of the adjective 'fat' to describe the noun 'shit', also hints at a link between the personal and social worth of the person and their weight; something that is also evident from line 6/7 when the notion of fatness is repeated ('this kid called f↓at p↑erson'). As such, there is a sense that what is to come (see the three-way-list completer in lines 11, 12: 'l punched him in the face', 'broke his nose', 'l knocked him out') is somehow justified (as 'h↑e started me', line 10). Not only that, this creates the sense of the small witty

kid beating the giant, and regardless of the consequences ('excluded for four days for it' – a trophy), was sticking up for himself, which is introduced as a disclaimer (but, in line 13) (Speer and Potter, 2000). Something similar can be seen in the next extract.

The next extract comes from a focus group with early years practitioners. In the discussion below the participants make a link between 'size' and 'boisterous behaviour' (40 minutes in).

1. W1: I thi::nk .hh er, what I've noticed >usually, but not always< (1.0), usua::lly its the bigger
2. children, >like in size<, they tend to be more er aggressive, sometimes, >but it isnt always
3. the case< (1), .hh sometimes we've got like (1.0) very small children, >but they've got<,
4. Like very strong personalities, very strong character, they er °can be a bi[ft
5. W2: [BOISTEROUS,
a bit boi::ste[rous]
6. M1: ye[ah
7. W1: [cause, I've seen, been i↓n this quite a l↑ot.

The language used in the extract above is very different from the language used in the previous extract. In fact, the notion of 'fatness' is not addressed at all. Yet, as with the previous extract, the participants make a link between the child's size ('bigger children', line 1,2) and aggression ('to be more aggressive', line 2). At the same time, this is softened by the quickly uttered counter arguments '>usually, but not always<' (line 1), and '>but it isnt always the case<' (line 2,3), which serve to inoculate against doubt and disagreement (Pomerantz, 1986). In what follows an attempt is made to shed a light on the behaviour of 'very small children' (like 3), as possibly problematic at times as well (BOISTEROUS, line 5, 6), almost as to counteract the negative focus that was put upon 'bigger children' at the start of the extract. Yet, whilst the notion of 'aggression' appears to be specifically linked to 'bigger children', smaller children are constructed in terms of 'strength' ('very strong personalities, very strong character', line 4). As such, being aggressive appears to be specifically constructed as a category-bound activity (Silverman, 2001) of 'bigger children', whereas if small children display similar behaviour, this is perceived as a strength. Just like in the previous extract, there is a sense that 'small' children are entitled to act a certain way, whilst if a 'big' child acts the same way, due to their size, this could be perceived as aggressive and inappropriate.

'Fatness' and Morality

Fatness as a moral issue has been presented in the literature (Gard and Wright, 2005). In the next extract, 'morality' is also touched upon (see line 10), yet in a slightly different way. Here, rather than constructing the 'fat person' as deficient, the focus is on helping children to understand the importance of being nice to each other, thereby constructing the act of calling someone 'fat' as immoral. The extract below comes from a focus group with mothers. The extract is part of a discussion about being inclusive and teaching children not to be judgemental (30 minutes into the interview).

1. W2: Like we were walking, err (1.0) a::nd >E, she is only three< she s↓aid
2. m↑ummy that is a fat p↑erson, and I was like, no E, you cant s↑ay th↓at (1.0). my
3. mum is ↑also big, >and she would be like< n↑anny you got a fat belly (1.0) >my mum
4. will laugh about it<, b↓ut when you go and say th↑at to someone ↑else, you c↑ant say
5. th↓at, °cause, its not very nice°
6. W1: So:: you s↓ay to her, that isnt nice, th↑is is gonna h↑urt people, they're gonna be
7. r↑eally upset
8. W2: Yeah
9. W1: What you are tr↑ying to err sort of g↑ive th↓em i::ts s↑ome form of understanding
10. err and this is (2.0) is in a m↑oral way (1.0). Actually they n↑eed to underst↑and that
11. we gotta be nice to each other (2.0) >which is what you are saying< (1.0) °really° .hh
12. about getting sort of certain rules to your children o::r disciplining them in a c↓ertain
13. way. H↑oping that they can cope with it
14. W3: >Its how children< (1.0) °I mean like° (2.0) y↑ou kn↓ow, they look at ↑other
15. people in the street, then they see someone in a wheelch[air
16. W1: [Ye[ah
17. W3: [They point out and say
18. something.
19. They'll stare. >You know, you kind of say to them dont do that its not very nice<, they
20. d↓ont understand.

Unlike extract1, in which the mother constructed her girls as 'being blind' to other people's impediments and abnormalities, the participants in the extract above indicate that (small) children are quite aware of people who are different, either by verbalising this (m↑ummy that is a fat p↑erson, line 2) and/or by pointing at the person (They point out, line 17). Yet, at the same time, in common with extract 1, the child in question is portrayed as innocent. This is evident from where and how the incident of the 'fat person' (line 2) is rhetorically positioned within the narrative. Firstly, there is the notion of the child being only three ('>E, she is only three<', line 1); this is said very quickly, as an aside, but also gives the impression that the child is not accountable (see Potter, 1997). Second, the participant makes a direct link between the 'fat person' incident, and her own mum ('mum is ↑also big, >and she would be like< n↑anny you got a fat belly', line 3). This is followed by a disclaimer (Speer and Potter, 2000), '>my mum will laugh about it<, b↓ut' (line 3,4), which serves to show that within this participant's family narrative and ideology, the issue of fatness is not problematic, whilst it is very different for other people (when you go and say th↑at to someone ↑else, line 4). As such, it could be argued that the increased focus on 'fat people' as deficient in intellectual

ideologies (such as politics, the media and academic literature), has resulted in common sense ideologies, where 'fatness' is positioned as inadequate and flawed, on a par with other 'abnormalities', such as being in a wheelchair (Line 15). It could be argued that the mother is inducting her child into the pragmatics of social interaction. A small child can 'get away with' commenting on a person's 'fatness' but as the child gets older he or she must learn the social conventions of tact and politeness. The granny 'will laugh about it' in a way that someone outside the family might well not. Again, there is an appeal to the role of the parent, as someone who is responsible for the fact that the child turns out right. This is evident from the three-way-list completer that follows in lines 9-12 ('g↑ive th↓em i::ts s↑ome form of understanding', 'getting sort of certain rules to your children' and 'o::r disciplining them'), all of which serves to show that parents are ultimately accountable for making their young child aware of how to deal sensitively with other people's impediments, as ultimately 'they d↓ont understand' (lines 19,20).

Discussion

Childhood obesity is a recurring topic in literature and research, as well as in the (British) media; leading to calls for strategies to reverse this unhealthy trend (e.g. Demir et al, 2012; Wilke et al, 2013). At the same time, there is evidence that the increased focus on childhood obesity and 'fatness' is framed within moral and health ideologies that function to monitor and 'correct' children who do not fit into the thinness ideal (DfE, 2012; Evans et al, 2013; Lupton,2014). This in and of itself marks 'fat' children as defective with related consequences. What all the extracts in this paper have in common, is that 'fatness' is being made an issue, by labelling the 'fat kid' and 'bigger children' and by hinting at 'fatness' as a deficiency and problematic in our current society. As such, there is a sense that the current increased focus on childhood obesity and 'fatness' has found its way into everyday narratives and discourses. Obesity and fatness, as abnormalities, are now included in common sense talk in relation to 'easy targets', victims and bullies.

A number of strategies were adopted by the participants, which appeared to specifically center around 'otherness', as a way of distancing themselves from 'fatness' and 'fat' people. This focus on 'otherness' in talk and narratives in relation to 'fat' people fits a purpose. As Lupton (2014) argues, 'fat' bodies' are culturally represented as inferior, deficient, ugly and disgusting. Not only that, associations are made between (bad) parenting styles and diet and weight in children, both in academic research and in the current government focus and associated policies and pedagogy (DfE, 2012). By constructing 'fatness' as located

elsewhere, i.e. somebody else's child or another person the stigmas and labels that are already there are maintained and reiterated.

Viewed through a neo-liberal lens, it could be argued that parents are encouraged to seek out social opportunities for their children in order to keep them fit and healthy, through a mixture of state and private institutions, engaging with the market as a means to do so (Rich, 2010). This raises the concern that healthy eating may only be an option to those who have the cultural desire and means to do so. Yet, it is not simply a matter of telling parents to improve their children's diet and to encourage them to exercise more. Healthcare professionals need to be sensitive to the needs of families in providing guidance on healthy nutrition (Fraser et al, 2010). In addition to this, schools need to create safe spaces in which overweight children can exercise without fear of ridicule from peers.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore, through the analysis of everyday discourse, the possibility that stereotypical perceptions of "fat" children are perpetuated under a variety of guises in which speakers justify attitudes that are not actually grounded in evidence. The extracts that we analysed indicated that stigmatising statements take a number of forms, including recourse to self-evident "reason" (e.g. through use of words, such as "obviously"), taking a moral stance and appealing to the listeners' unspoken agreement. One lesson to be learned from our analysis is that perceptions of "fatness" are not limited to one type of label. Rather, our data suggest that there are many faces to prejudice which not only are related to different factors (such as size), but may well have different consequences for targets (such as parental denial or child justification of aggressive behaviour). Recognising this complexity is particularly important for parents and teachers, as they try to understand the dynamics of prejudice against different groups of children and young people within a range of social and cultural contexts. Researchers into child obesity may also wish to consider this aspect of the issue as they develop and evaluate interventions to address the wider health issue of obesity in our society.

In conclusion, our point is that stigmatising the person with weight issues can drive that person and their family into denial, social withdrawal, self-loathing and low self-esteem. It should be noted however that on the continuum running from 'large' to 'overweight' and 'clinically obese', there will be points where it is in the child's best interests to intervene in order to prevent later acute health problems. Yet, any solution that we consider must take

account of the complex interacting social factors that contribute to one particular child's body size.

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Transcription Notions

◦ ◦	<i>Encloses speech that is quieter than the surrounding talk.</i>
(1.0)	<i>Pause length in seconds.</i>
- Hyphen	<i>Word broken off.</i>
↑	<i>Rising intonation.</i>
↓	<i>Lowering intonation.</i>
CAPITAL LETTERS	<i>Talk that is louder than the surrounding talk.</i>
<u>Underline</u>	<i>Stress/emphasis.</i>
> <	<i>Encloses speeded up talk.</i>

()	<i>Encloses words the transcriber is unsure about. Empty brackets enclose talk that is not hearable.</i>
.hhh	<i>In-breath.</i>
[]	<i>Overlapping speech.</i>
[<i>Onset of overlapping speech.</i>
{ }	<i>Clarification, referring to tone or gesture, e.g. {laughs}</i>
:::	<i>Extended sound.</i>
=	<i>Marks the immediate 'latching' of successive talk, whether of one or more speakers, with no interval.</i>

(Edwards, 1997; Jefferson, 1985)