

## **ABSTRACT**

**DISSERTATION:** Applying the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Attitude Change to Reduce Anti-fat Person Attitudes in Adolescents

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This study investigated the degree to which two types of interventions stimulated changes in adolescents' attitudes and beliefs about people who are obese. The main research questions focused on whether an intervention based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model of attitude change would produce a greater reduction in anti-fat person attitudes and beliefs about obesity than an intervention that did not utilize this framework. The effectiveness of the two types of interventions was assessed with middle school students at a K-12 laboratory school. Students completed pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up surveys about their anti-fat person attitudes and beliefs about the controllability of obesity. The amount of change in attitudes and beliefs was assessed within and across the two intervention groups. The hypotheses of the study predicted that the intervention which integrated the elaboration likelihood model would produce a greater reduction in anti-fat person beliefs than the intervention which did not integrate elaboration-enhancing activities. The hypotheses also predicted that a reduction in beliefs about the controllability of obesity would occur across both interventions but that this reduction would be maintained only in the elaboration-enhancing condition. A

multivariate analysis of covariance was used to analyze the data. After controlling for the variable of the teacher present during the time of the intervention, the results showed an equal and significant reduction in the endorsement of anti-fat person attitudes and controllability beliefs across both the information-centered and the elaboration-enhancing interventions. The reduction in anti-fat person beliefs was maintained at the two and one-half month follow-up. Similarly, beliefs about the controllability of obesity remained significantly lower at the two and one-half month follow-up survey.