

Differential Relationships of Fear of Fat and Drive for Thinness with Physical Activity, Dietary Behavior, and Camouflaging Tactics

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ABSTRACT

Theoretically, self-perceived fear of fat (FF) and drive for thinness (DT) represent avoidance- and approach-related motivations, respectively, but have little research support. Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify differential correlations of FF and DT with self-views of body dissatisfaction, physical activity (PA), dietary behavior, and body/weight camouflaging (camo) tactics (i.e. avoidance behavior). Adult women ($N = 87$) currently trying to lose or maintain their body weight completed an anonymous online survey. The 10-item Goldfarb fear of fat scale and the 'drive for thinness' factor from the Eating Disorder Inventory I were used to determine FF and DT, respectively. Body dissatisfaction was measured on a five-point scale from extremely satisfied to extremely dissatisfied. PA levels were determined using the Godin Leisure Time physical activity questionnaire, and dietary intake was measured by the food frequency questionnaire by the U.S. National Cancer Institute. Likelihood of using various camouflaging behaviors, including the Camo factor from the WEIGHTCOPE, alongside 16 additional tactics were assessed on a 7-point scale from very unlikely to very likely. Results indicated a strong, positive correlation (.80) between FF and DT. Subsequently, the significant relationships ($p < .05$) of dissatisfaction with weight, shape, and fat were similar between FF and DT ($r_s = .44$ to $.58$). However, DT appeared to be more strongly related to body attractiveness ($r = -.53$) than was FF ($r = -.39$). The relationship between FF and DT and PA levels and dietary behavior were not significant ($r_s = .01$ to $.14$, $p > .05$). These findings suggest that participants might be motivated to control weight, but choose to take an approach that does not lead to regulation of PA and healthy eating. Even though the theory suggests that FF is based on avoidance and DT is more of an approach method, there are positive correlations between both motivation tactics and camouflaging behaviors. For FF, the strongest correlations were seen with general camouflaging behaviors, such as wearing loose clothing (.51), wearing SPANX (.46), using accessories to distract others from weight (.46), and taking pictures in good lighting (.46). For DT, the strongest correlations were seen with wearing SPANX (.56), using accessories to distract others from weight (.52), editing pictures before posting them online (.52), and using filters on pictures before posting online (.52). In conclusion, FF and DT might not represent theoretical motivations of avoidance and approach, respectively, as our results suggest that both perspectives relate similarly to self-views of body dissatisfaction and camouflaging (i.e. avoidance) behavior. In addition, it appears that women might cope with weight related distress in ways other than PA and healthy eating.