

24<sup>th</sup> November 2016

# 'Too Busy to be Skinny': An Explorative Study of Preschool Mothers' Beliefs of Factors Influencing Obesity

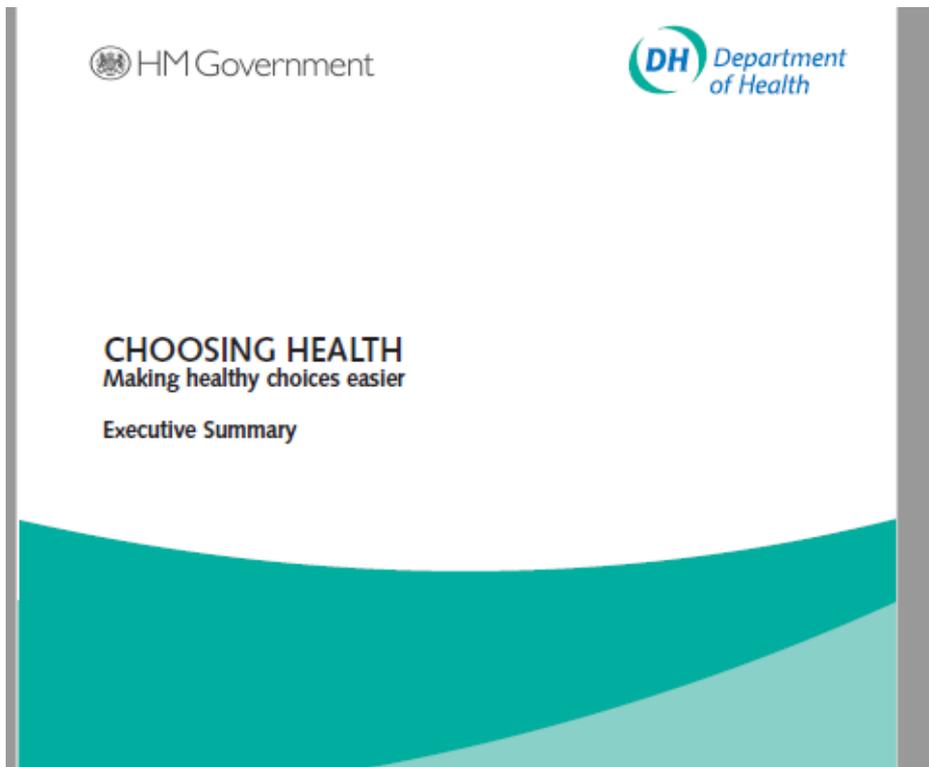
lifechanging



**University of  
Sunderland**

Faculty of Applied Sciences

# Where did my PhD study come from.....



The Health and  
Lifestyle Programme  
in South Tyneside 2004



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# Setting the Scene...

- The continued rise in national obesity rates has been identified as a particular concern for women
- Complex interactions between individual, environment, culture, society and biology can have a direct influence on food eaten and exercise routines and thus obesity rates.
- Therefore understanding the beliefs of the causes of obesity can help to understand obesity itself and potentially aid weight loss.



# Introduction...Do we have an obesity problem!!

- Globally
- Nationally

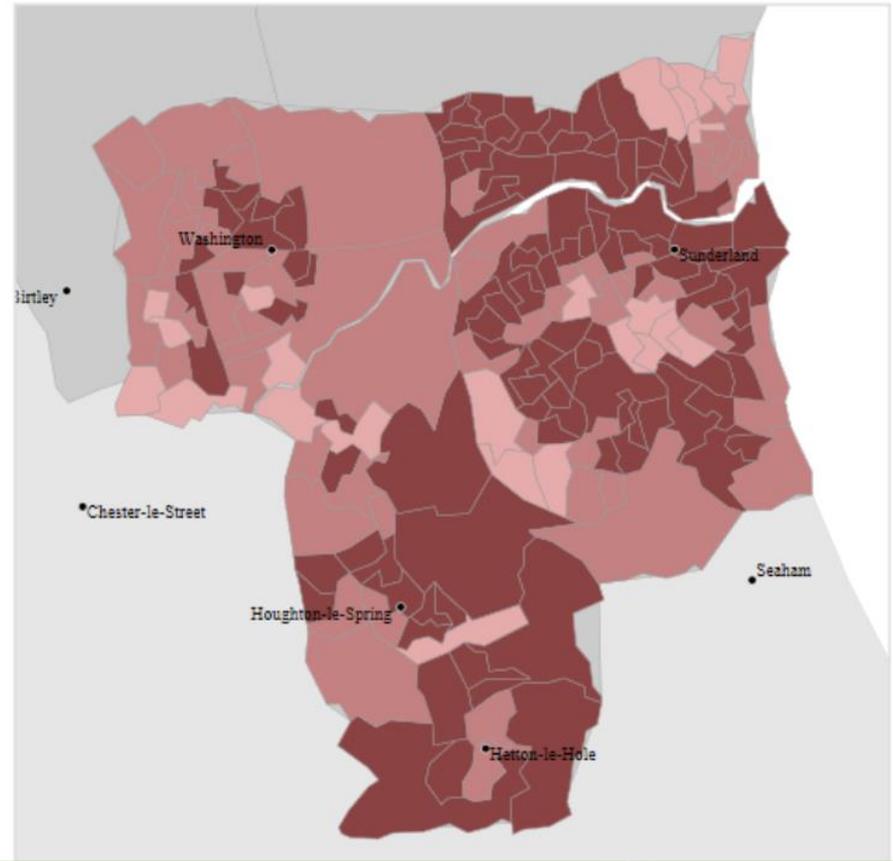
# A Local Problem...

- North East - obesity rate of 25.9% in adult males and 26.8% in adult females
- In the last 16 years since the year 2000 male adult obesity has risen from 7.8% to 18.1% and female adult obesity has risen from 7% to 19.8%
- Children – NCMP data has shown that children aged 5...14% overweight and 10.4% obese with the national average at 13% and 9% respectively.
- Children aged between 10-12 14.8% overweight and 21.1% obese compared with the national average of 13.5% and 19% respectively

# Levels of Deprivation

- 32.7% of NE falls within the top 20% most deprived areas

**Atlas of the Indices of Deprivation 2010 for England**  
Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) by Local Authority  
Sunderland: Index of Multiple Deprivation



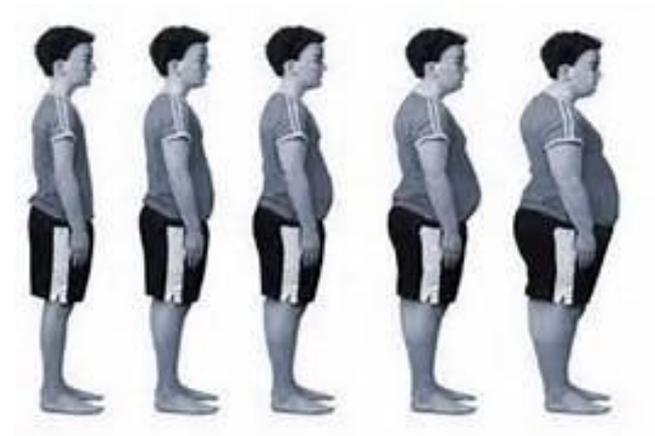
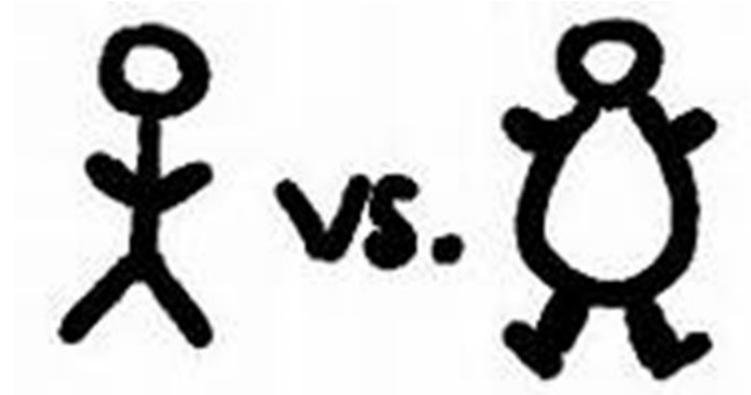
# Perceptions...

- Do perceptions of obesity vary...researchers, practitioners or academics to lay people.
- Do personal beliefs of what obesity is vary depending on individual circumstances, weight status, gender or ethnicity?
- Could a personal definition of obesity underpin what an individual believes is a factor contributing to obesity?



# Perceptions

- For example one person might not define themselves as obese, regardless of what their BMI status might be because their belief of 'what obesity is'
- Beliefs are stressed as important in order to have an accurate perception of body weight as this could facilitate appropriate responses to this perception i.e. help with weight loss



# Research Question and Aims

- What are disadvantaged mothers' of young children beliefs regarding the factors influencing obesity?
- Aims:
  - 1- Explore beliefs about the causes of obesity for disadvantaged mums aged 18 or over with at least 1 child aged 5 or under
  - 2- To identify whether beliefs about the causes of obesity are related to any other influencing factor, such as environment or family



# Methodological Considerations

- Qualitative research methods
- Utilising a framework analysis methodology
- Constructionist ontology
- Interpretivist epistemological position
- Reinforced by social constructionism
- Underpinned by an inductive approach to research



# Methods

- Semi structured interviews with 15 mums in three cohorts
- Recruited from local Sunderland, South Tyneside and Durham within children centres and community groups
- In areas of high deprivation 1<sup>st</sup> most disadvantaged or 2<sup>nd</sup> most disadvantaged as defined by indices of deprivation 2010
- Framework analysis was used to analyse the data collected
- Saturation point established as defined by Morse (2015)
  - rich data through scope and replication
  - adequate replication noted
  - fully submerged within the data through data collection, transcription, coding, categorisation and analysis.

# Key Characteristics

Pseudonym	Weight Status	Indices of Multiple Deprivation Level	Working Status	Living Arrangement	Relationship Status	Family support
Anna	OW	2 <sup>nd</sup>	UE	NF	R	GP
Betty	OW	1 <sup>st</sup>	FT	NF	R	GP
Carol	OW	2 <sup>rd</sup>	FT	NF	R	GP
Donna	HW	2 <sup>nd</sup>	FT	NF	R	GP and P



# Results – Higher Order Themes

Number	Theme
First	Busy Lifestyle
Second	Generational Differences
Third	Childcare Provision
Fourth	Societal Pressure
Fifth	Partner Treating Children
Sixth	Female Role
Seventh	Economic Circumstances
Eighth	Observational Learning
Ninth	Old Families / Community Spirit
Tenth	Environment
Eleventh	Psychological / Emotional
Twelfth	Genetics and Illness
Thirteenth	Risky Lifestyle Behaviour



# Busy Lifestyle

- Majority of mums discussed busy lifestyle as major contributing factor
- - work, managing children and personal lives
- - restrictions on free time and responsibilities as a mum, often leading to compromising own health for the families health...becoming the 'traditional care giver'
  - *But I think because I spend the majority of time with my kids now I don't have the time to so that [exercise] and obviously everybody else has busy lifestyle (Olivia, overweight).*
  - *Because I think if you're not at home all the time, if you're working all the time then I think it's easier just to get takeaways or get a ready meal which I think has higher salt and fat in it (Harriett, healthy weight).*
  - *Time and work and that, had I not reduced my hours at work I don't think I would of been able to commit to the gym half as much (Donna, healthy weight).*



# Generational Differences

- Time, Technology and Industrial Past
- *The internet takes a big part in people's lives now like people don't bother going out shopping, everything is ordered online, you don't...you know like everything, we've orders on the internet nowadays and it's just crazy like (Olivia, overweight).*
- *In terms of this area, I think that in general we've had people who have had quite physical jobs and now you've got people who are maybe still eating the same amounts and kind of expecting to be able to do that and not having as a physical job (Margaret, healthy weight)*
- *It's not common to see people with allotments now, times have changed... like mam's parents with a vegetable patch and stuff like that and we didn't...growing up we never went to the shop (Nina, overweight)*



# Link Between how Fathers Treat Children and the way Grandparents Treat Children

- Majority of mums had a partner and all worked full time
  - *I think my husband kind of goes between spoiling them sometimes and me being quite strict with them and so I think he does like to give them treats because he obviously doesn't see them as much as I do. I think that he like again likes to see them happy, so he'd buy them sweets to sit and watch telly on a Saturday night with them, you know that sort of thing (Margaret, healthy weight).*
  - *Grandparents tend to give them more sweets and treats and I think if you object to that then they can sometimes think that you're being a bit mean...Because they want to spoil them, they want to give them things and because they don't see them so much as the parents do, when they do seem they want to make them happy don't they, so a part of being happy is to feed them nice things isn't it? (Margaret, healthy weight).*

# Female Role

- Mum highlighted as care giver and meal provider and dad provides exercise and firm role model
  - *“Mums are the main provider of healthy food for the family, whilst the dad’s role is to encourage exercise”* (Imogen, healthy weight).
  - *I think he should be the one that says, come on kids let’s go, let’s go out and like take them all to little football, well he goes to a football class actually, but just random go and have a kick about on the field. Or just being the one that’s a bit more firm so I can, here’s your dad, yes so I can use him as being the strict one. Being the fun one as well, he’s always like the one that’s rugby tackling or play[ing]* (Joline, overweight).

# Economic Circumstances

- Many mums discussed how a lack of money directly influenced food eaten and exercise routines
  - *“A lack of money is a barrier to losing weight, as you can’t afford gym membership”* (Carol, overweight).
- 
- Exercise can be free....and that can be related to your job
  - *I think any kind of physical activity really whether it’s walking or doing a fun activity or going to a class to do some swimming or whatever, em I think anything can really be construed as physical activity* (Betty, overweight).
  - *My job that I used to do was physical in a building that was....the stairs like million stairs I used to run up and down them 20 times a day like I was always busy, so I was never like enormously fat...* (Anna, overweight).



# Observational Learning

- Mums highlighted how obesity can be learned through copying behaviour
  - *That's how people have been brought up (Anna, overweight).*
  - *I think their background, I think what they are used to, what is just normal for them in a household (Carol, overweight).*

Mums expressed concern that as many grandparents provided childcare for grandchildren that the children were becoming obese and the parents could do relatively little to stop it

*I think it plays a big role as well because the grandparents think they're doing good and I think it's...[not]... it didn't give us any favours and I caught me dad dipping the dummy in the sugary tea and stuff (Nina, overweight).*



# Old Families and Community Spirit

- Mums discuss an old tradition of food sharing within families that have lived in the same area since the 1930 (when ship building was one of the main local employers).
  - *These are things that, and particularly down here, still to this day, everybody shares everything. The lass on the corner over there and the lass on that corner, she'll make a pan of broth and...all the time and she'll put on Facebook, I had a lovely pan of broth off (a neighbour) and all this. You just think it's like; it really harks back to the days when they all lived in the Garth's because they're still all neighbours (Kelly, healthy weight).*

# Typologies

- Creating typologies and finding associations allowed multidimensional analysis of two or more dimensions of the views of the causes of obesity.
- Some of the responses to questions seemed to relate to the responses of the mum interviewed

# Typologies

Number	Typology
First	Weight Status
Second	Employment Status
Third	Living Arrangement
Fourth	Economic Position
Fifth	Role of Partner Support
Sixth	Relationship Status
Seventh	Mums' Motivations

# Weight Status

- Self identified as healthy weight or overweight
- Overweight mums discussed a lack of motivation or a lack of caring
  - *Sometimes I come in from work and I can't be bothered [to cook] so I order a takeaway* (Florence, overweight).
  - *I just can't be bothered half the time. After I've made him [son] a meal then I'm just like, I'll just go and have a bath, or just chill* (Lily, overweight).
- Where are healthy weight mums discussed motivation is a very different way
  - *I used to hate exercise and be lazy but seeing my friends change habits made me change* (Donna, healthy weight).
  - *Some people just have motivation and willpower and determination to do it, they enjoy it they get something from it and other people think you don't* (Elaine, healthy weight).



# Weight Status

- Over weight mums discussed in details the negative effects of social media and mobile phone applications, highlighting problems such as trolling and the ease of using phone applications to order takeaways
  - *People are scared to see photos of them-selves running, if someone has took a photo of them running and they're hot and sweaty and they've wrote something nasty on it, it can easily turn up on the internet or stuff (Nina, overweight).*
- Whereas healthy weight mums highlighted the benefits of social media and the ease of communicating with weight loss groups
  - *For example, my best mate is probably categorised as obese, however since peer pressure...so I think social networking is having a massive impact on people...It's like it's because you're joining a group sense of...so, for example, my gym has a social networking site so they draw you in and you give consent to do it, but people are like, well done and it's motivation for you. (Donna, healthy weight)*



# Employment Status

- Major factor here is work lack of time
- Working mums discussed at length a lack of work life balance where as unemployed mums discussed this a problem for other people (employed mums)
  - *I just think it is a general lack of time for people as well like (Anna, overweight, non-working mum).*
  - *Being busy, working, grabbing whatever is near rather than making fresh meals. Not necessarily having time to exercise, things like that (Elaine, healthy weight, working part time).*
- Employment status of parents had a knock on effect to grandparents as they had a care giver role
  - *Busy lives, mums working full time as well as having kids and food is sometimes difficult to control because children can be with other people (Betty, overweight, working full time).*



# Living Arrangements

- Nuclear family verses extended family
- Extended family different views on cost of food, exercise, time
  - *Just because you've had a baby doesn't mean that you can't lose weight, it doesn't mean that you can't do exercise or healthy eat, you're never too busy to eat* (Florence, overweight, extended living arrangements).
- All mums interviewed identified themselves as main care giver except mum in extended home who identified her own mother and grandmother as providing this
  - *I would probably say yes because me mam might make the tea and have loads of veg and chicken and then I might make the tea that's chicken nuggets and chips. So I would say family roles do, because when I come in from work sometimes you just can't be bothered. So I would say, ah mam do you just fancy a curry, but then I come in and then me mam could have a healthy tea made* (Florence, overweight, extended living arrangements).



# Role of Partner Support

- Many of the mums discussed that the planning of healthy food and exercise was something that mums should do and not her partner
  - *I think a lot of families it would potentially be the mum who is doing all the cooking, doing all the shopping, making the choices about what other people are going to eat (Elaine, no partner support).*
- One of the only mums to discuss that her partner participated in planning of food and cooking gave her free time to exercise and eat healthy.
  - *[my] partner tends to cook quite a bit, he enjoys the cooking, but he cooks really healthy as well because he enjoys the gym so he tends to take the lead on that (Donna, healthy weight, partner support).*



# Mums' Motivations

- Outside motivation seemed to be important when losing weight and family support for any weight loss was important
  - *Being motivated and focused, if someone is obese having a goal, getting support, having help. If it is you may just be an average weight most of your life and you suddenly just find you're putting it on, that might be a focus of, or like for me the wedding, that's trying to get me focussed into losing it (Joline, overweight).*
  - *Well both the grandparents, my mam and partner mam, they're really supportive, they're always positive and they're always saying, you'll do it, you'll do it for me wedding. (Joline, overweight).*



# Conclusion

- Evidence produced shows that obesity is complex, multifaceted and individualistic and emphasises the importance of taking into account individuals varying circumstances, situations and beliefs
- Mothers of young children believe that they are unable to participate in physical activity because of lack of partner support, busy lifestyle, generational differences, economic circumstance and traditional female role
- New evidence suggests that additional factors maybe impacting obesity
- possible link between areas that have experienced heavy industrial decline and traditional food sharing
- possible link between fast food mobile phone applications and obesity



# Thank you

- Any Questions??
- [Jody.nichols@nhs.net](mailto:Jody.nichols@nhs.net)

