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THE INFLUENCE OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE AND HEALTH OF FOOD ITEMS ON AN EVALUATION OF A TARGET INDIVIDUAL

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Objective: This project seeks to investigate the different evaluations that are formed of a target individual as a function of government assistance status and type of food consumed.

Problem/Major Purpose: Studies have demonstrated that we differentially judge healthy and unhealthy food eaters in which healthy food eaters receive preferential treatment (e.g., Gao & Mattila, 2017) and we discriminate against unhealthy eaters (e.g., Sutin et al., 2016). Additionally, there tends to be a stigma associated with government assistance which has been shown to cause psychological distress to individuals who participate in assistance programs (Pak, 2020). To this end, this study will investigate whether those who participate in SNAP programs are evaluated more harshly as a function of food choice than those who are not part of a food assistance program.

Procedure: Through SONA, participants will receive a link to complete the Qualtrics survey. Participants will be presented with one of four vignettes that will differ by condition. Each of the four conditions will have a combination of SNAP participation or non participation and healthy or unhealthy eating. Participants will then be presented with a list of traits (e.g., *intelligent*; *hardworking*) from a modified version of the Immigrant Trait Stereotype Ratings Measure (Reyna et al., 2013) in which the participant must rate the target in the vignette on a 1 to 5 point scale. Finally, participants will be asked to provide demographic information (e.g., age, gender, snap participation status).

Proposed Analyses: This study will be analyzed using a 2 (snap participation: yes versus no) X 2 (food type: healthy versus unhealthy) between participants ANOVA. The dependent variable is the aggregate score on the modified Immigrant Trait Stereotype Ratings Measure. It is predicted that the targets in the snap participation and unhealthy food item conditions will receive the lowest ratings and the targets who are in the non-snap participation and healthy food item conditions will receive the highest ratings.

Conclusions and Implications: The hypothesized differential evaluations of a target as a function of government assistance participation and food choices has applied implications in terms of how society addresses stigma.