



Fading Away:  
Weight Loss & Shifts in Identity

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**Presented at the Munroe Regional Medical Center Bariatric Support Group, Ocala, Florida, April 21<sup>st</sup> 2010**

# What do we mean by identity?



- **Personality:**
  - The complex of all the attributes--behavioral, temperamental, emotional and mental--that characterize a unique individual
- **Identity: How I think about and define myself**
  - Descriptive (internal, physical attributes)
  - Social roles
  - Complex schemas
- **What are some different types of identities we might hold?**

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# Effects from Reactions of Others



- **Physical characteristics influence the way others treat us and thereby mold our views of the world—our “personalities” and “identities”**
- **We hold stereotypes about personalities associated with physical characteristics**

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# Do Looks Reveal Personality?



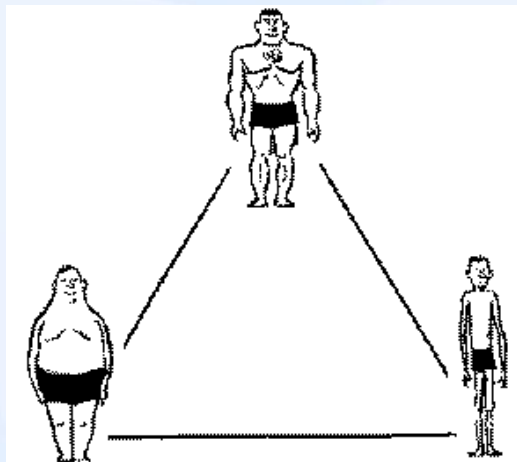
Looks Revealing Personality is Not Supported by Most Research

i.e.: Three body types:

**Mesomorphs** muscular, large-boned athletes

■ **Endomorphs**

roly-poly,  
good-natured,  
types



■ **Ectomorphs**

slender,  
bookworm types

# Research on weight loss & identity



- **Majority of research has focused on physical health outcomes**
- **Mental health issues have been mostly ignored**
- **Attention to identity**
  - **Clinically based (e.g., case studies)**
  - **Dissertation research**

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# “I don’t feel like myself anymore!”



- **Erosion of identity**
  - **Relational disturbance**
  - **Unfamiliar territory**
  - **Incongruity**

**“Sometimes I felt like I was going through a period of mourning. There was this feeling that I had lost something, but I couldn’t put my finger on what it was that I had lost.”**



# Obstacles to integrating new identities



- **Social pressure**
- **Lack of belongingness**
- **Need for stability**
- **Coat rack effect**
- **Unrealized expectations**

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# Final thoughts.....



**QUESTIONS?**

**COMMENTS?**

**DISCUSSION?**

Reference: Marta Meana Obesity Surgery: Stories of Altered (2008) Lives

- **Bariatric Surgery Evaluations or Psychological**
- **Support for Post-surgical Adjustment Issues**
  - **Eating Disorders or Body Image Issues**

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