

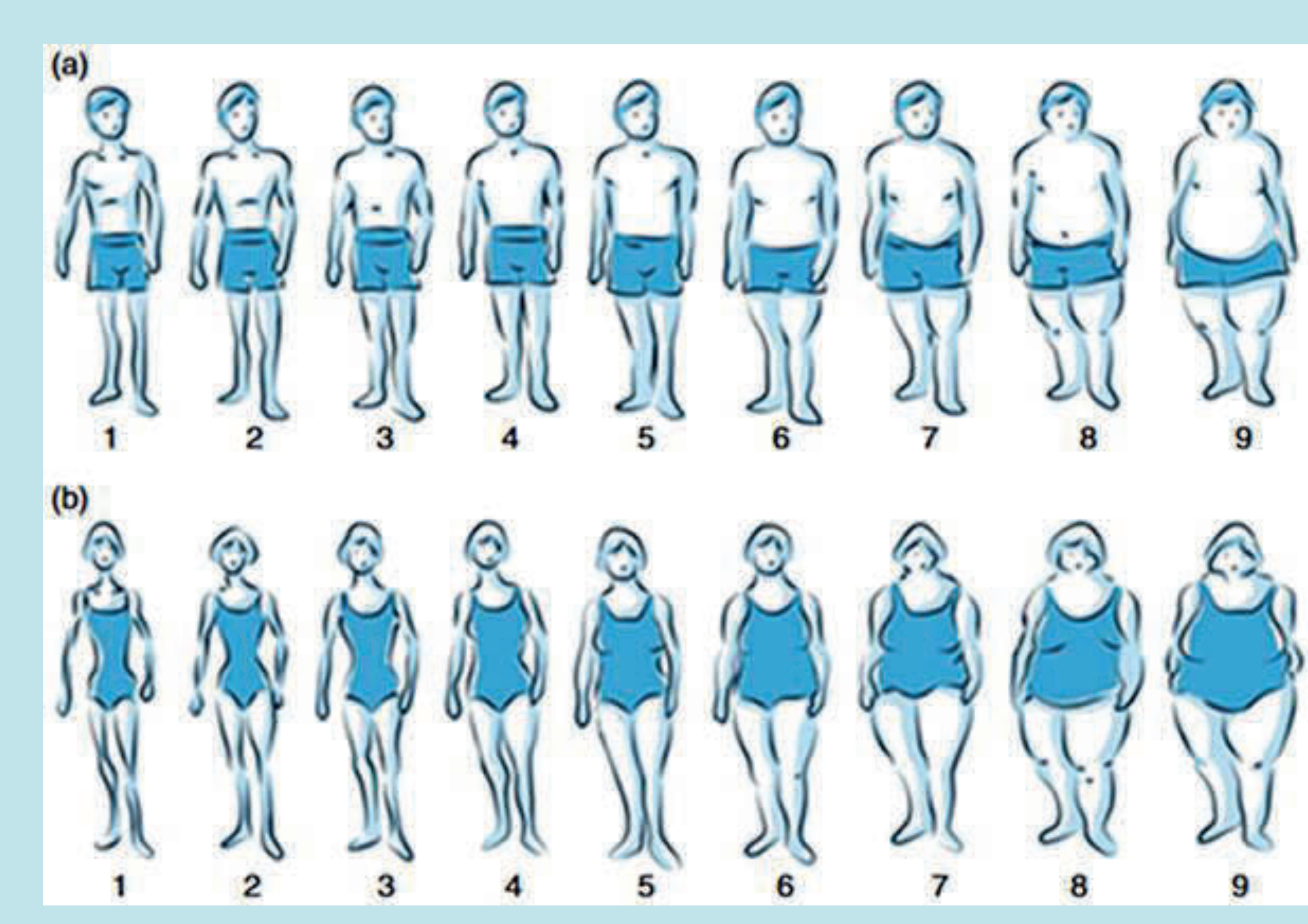


“ THE DOCTOR SAID I WAS... A LITTLE... OVERWEIGHT THAN NORMAL, SO I WANT TO BE ... HEALTHIER... NORMAL. ”

Children’s views and experiences on weight and body. A qualitative study in Santiago, Chile. (Prieto C., Bauld L., Boydell N., Harden J. *)

BACKGROUND

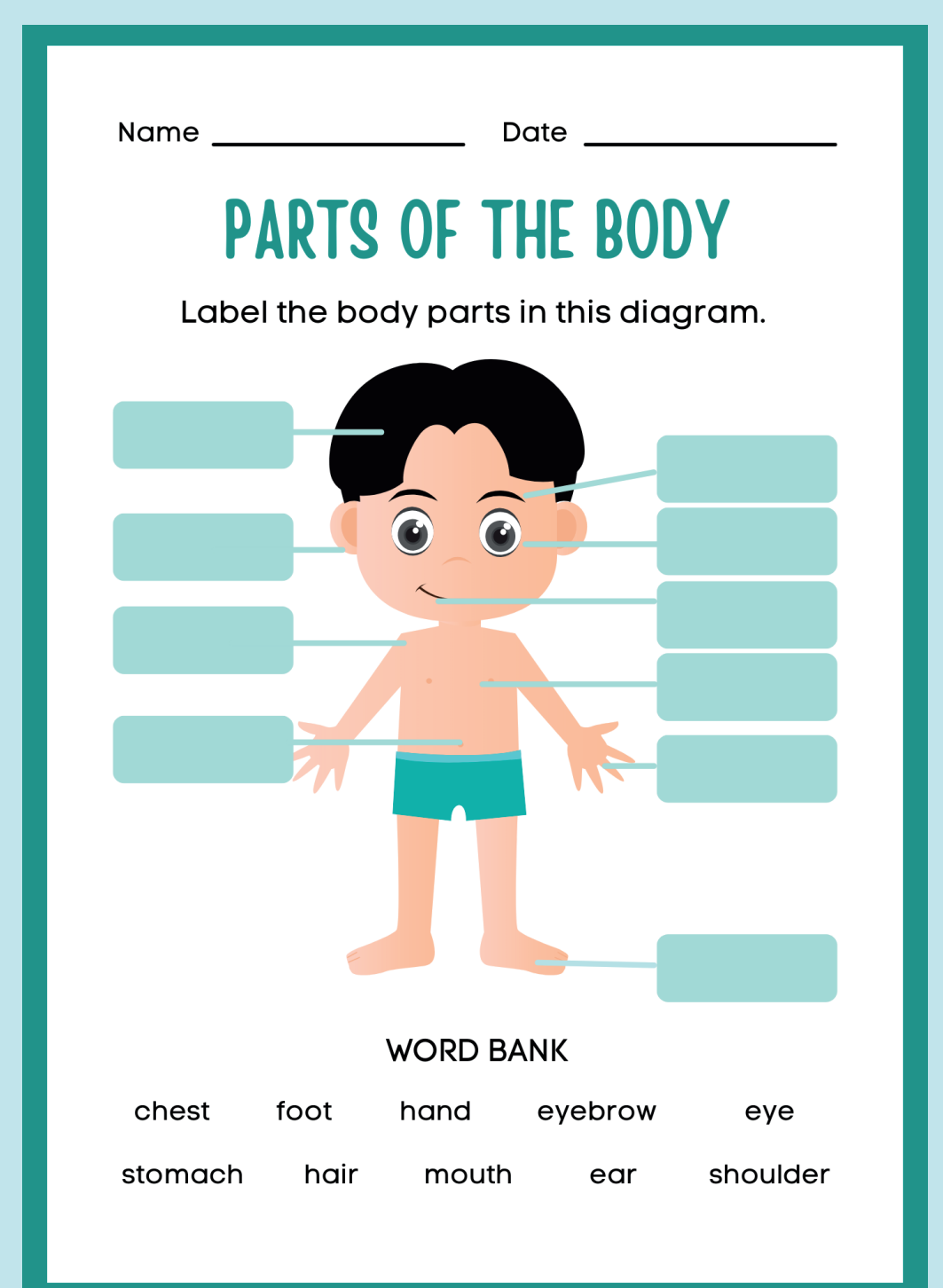
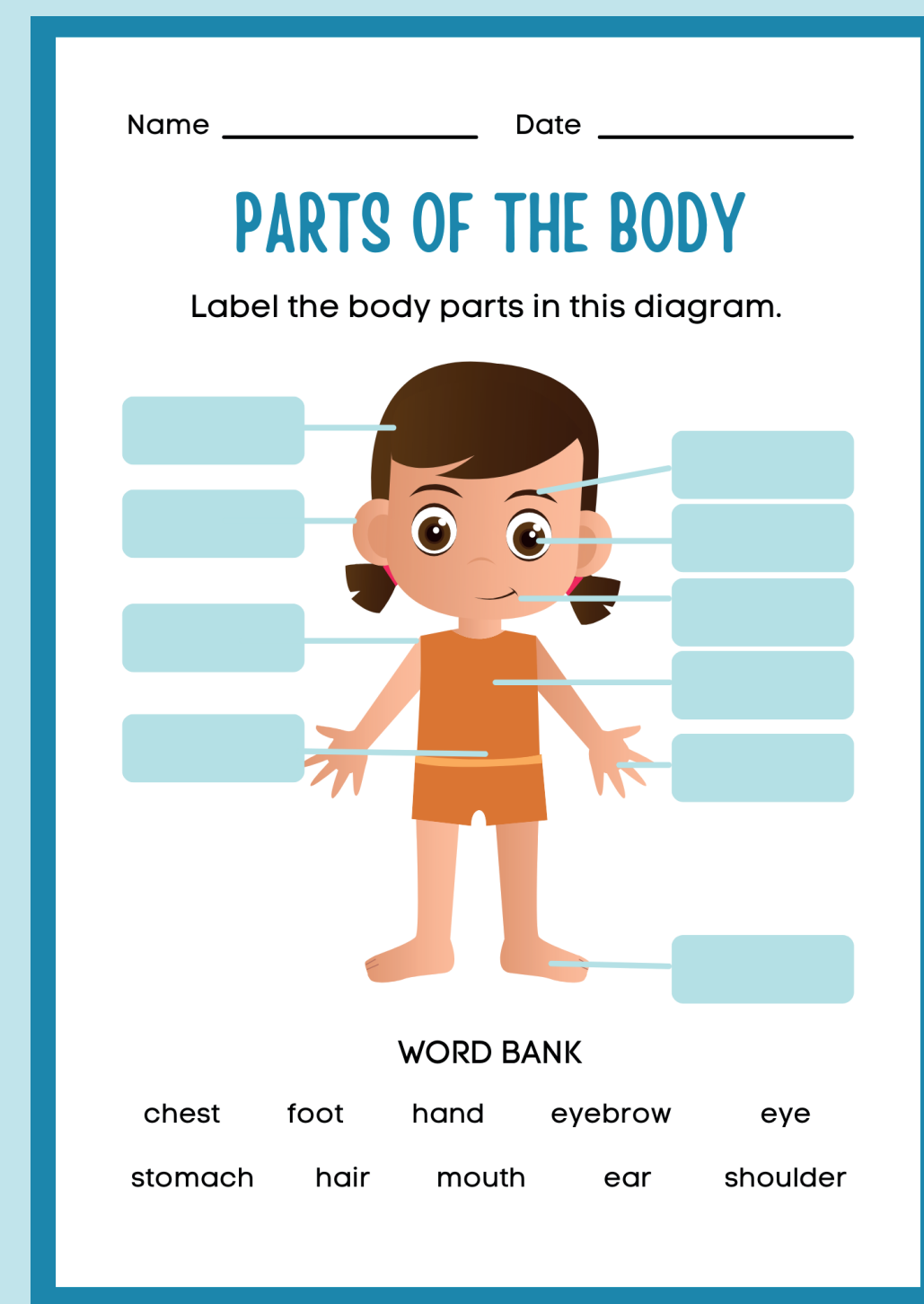
In Chile, 58.3% of children are classified as ‘overweight’ or ‘obese’ (1). However, there is a limited understanding of children's experiences with their bodies and weight and how these experiences might inform public health policy in Chile.



Using these silhouettes (3), children picked the one that best represented themselves and another that represented the ‘ideal’ body for them.

METHODS

34 semi-structured interviews were conducted with children between 10-12 years classified as ‘overweight’ or ‘obese’ (N=18) and their mothers (N=16). Prompts and images were used during interviews to talk about weight and bodies (2,3). A Reflexive Thematic approach to analysis has been adopted (4).



RESULTS

The language used by children to describe their bodies differed from those given by the clinicians using medical terminology (‘overweight’ / ‘obese’). None of them described themselves as ‘obese’.

“
I’m a little chubby (male, aged 11)
Sometimes I’ve seen 10 years old who are very little (...) and next to them I’m bigger (male, aged 11)
”

The thinnest shape was explicitly associated with being healthy. Most children felt unhealthy only because of their large bodies.

“
I’m unhealthy because I’m a little fat (male, aged 10)
I don't feel healthy because I'm very fat (female, aged 12)
”

Within families and peer relations, children had learnt that ‘being overweight’ is a characteristic which is insulted and the cause of teasing and bullying.

“
My mom sometimes calls me fat because she’s angry’ (male, aged 10)
‘At school, he called me ‘cow’ (female, aged 12)
”

Children's meanings of body, growth and weight have been affected by medicalisation processes - surveillance, measuring, and monitoring at the clinics.

“
The doctor said I was... a little... overweight than normal, so I want to be ... healthier... normal’. (female, aged 12)
”

REFERENCES

(1) JUNAEB (2021) Mapa Nutricional, available at: <https://www.dinta.cl/documentos-de-interes/mapa-nutricional-junaeb-2020/>
(2) Canva, <https://www.canva.com/templates/?query=body-parts>
(3) Sørensen, T.I.A. and Stunkard, A.J. (1993), Does obesity run in families because of genes?. Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 87: 67-72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0447.1993.tb05363.x>
(4) Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide. London: Sage

CONCLUSION

Children did not describe themselves with medical labels (‘overweight’ and ‘obese’). The weight stigma associated with those labels made them feel ashamed. These findings are relevant because they highlight the unintended consequences of the current Chilean public policies and surveillance strategies on children based on BMI to classify ‘overweight’ and ‘obesity’ and to reduce overweight.