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Gender Commentary April 5th:

Fikkan and Rothblum "Is Fat a Feminist Issue?"

Fikkan and Rothblum offer the first systematic review of studies that explore the intersection of gender and ethnicity related to weight stigma and argue that feminist scholars need to devote as much attention to the lived experiences of fate women as they have to the fear of fat experienced by thin women. The studies explore discrimination of fat women in multiple levels of employment, education, romantic relationships, health and mental health, exercise, media, and the significant differences within race and ethnicity. In the attached pages, I began to type out the more disturbing studies, but gave up around page 5 because they all say the same disturbing thing: in a country where obesity is increasingly becoming the leading health issue, the discrimination against fat women remains substantial. It is truly disturbing that America boasts the statistics: 68.5% of adults are overweight or obese.; 34.9% are obese 31.8% of children and adolecents are overweight or obese; 16.9% are obese. If these numbers hold true, it is fightening that persecution of a fat person is just as common.

On my facebook current news feed, a device that lists the most clicked on news stories of the current day, I read "Donald trump releases a statement about abortion"; "North Korea boasts missle capability"; "model Iskra Lawrence responds to fan critism calling her a fat cow"; "Gwenyth Paltrow tries beauty regimen involving being stung by bees"; Britney Spears posts ab selfie tweeting "happy Monday" in wake of last weeks photoshop critism of last weeks bikini picture. 3 of the top news events were related to women's beauty, two focused on celebrity responses to fat shaming. With over 1 billon

users, those news stories were the most followed and read. So yes, I think fat is a feminist issue. I think fat is an issue for every American, given that 1/3ʳᵈ of us fall into that category. If you look over the studies, I offer a crude summary: If you are a white woman and your weight is even average you will earn $389,000.00 less across a 25 year career compared to those who weigh 25lb below the average; if you are a white overwight woman: you'll probably never be a lawyer; for every point increase in your BMI, your liklihood of dating decreases 6-7%; over half possible physicians judged fat patients as non-compliant, ugly, and awkward; heavier women get less pelvic exams, which makes sense because 17% of doctors don't like examining the obese. Some fun ones to highlight: men rated photos of a woman missing a limb, with an STD, in a wheel chair as more attractive than an obese woman; Parents were less likely to give financial support to "Fat daughter"; you're won't be hired to be on a weight loss commercial because other fat women won't trust the products effectiveness if the sales pitch is given by a fat person. The only one I think should be excluded is "If fat women do get married, their partners tend to have lower education level, stature, and overall less attractiveness". I think this is more of an evolutionary behavior-like attracts like and according to this article fat women tend to have a lower education level and be judged as less attractive. However that one was disbuted statistic among a harrowing onslaught of 50 others. There was some hope when it came to the black females when it said they don't generalize/discriminate weight when applied to non-relevant domains like job and education…but then they take it back when they say that the other sources of discrimination suffered by black women probably overshadow those attributed to size- venues white women are most discriminated against (high status jobs, marriage, earners of incomes), may be venues women of color are excluded from. Also the lack of size

discrimination against black women in particular because of the racial stereotype of large, strong, independent and nurturing.

I know psychological studies are always to be taken with a grain of salt but this amount in succession is a bummer, albeit an unsurprising one. Ours is a society focused on body image, and even though overweight men drastically seem to fair better/ the media highlights male documented culture; the situation rings as more of a feedback loop: with everyone in America being the culprit. It wasn't just thin people clicking on the weight articles. It's not just thin people who campaign over the weight of celebrities and public figures. This is a symptom, not the core issue- we are obsessed with image, technology has made it more possible than ever, and the class system will be defined by weight over name. As much as I dislike being the cliché: an upper middle class white female attending an all girls private highschool, I alternated between vomiting my lunches and not eating till I was dizzy. What's worse is that I had no real excuse; No family issues, no real trauma. I was chubby, awkward, and pale in grade school. I knew I could fix the first one, if not the second two- I wanted to have friends; and honestly I didn't like the way fat people looked. Maybe this was practical; whether it was the confidence my illusion offered, or my actual weight- it did seem to work. In the photos below I am 5'7" 117lbs which makes my BMI officially underweight. According to this article, at that time, more guys would have wanted to date me, I'd be more likely to get married, doctor's would respect me more, I'd be percieved as more educated, more motivated, and overall more worthwhile compared to my current normal BMI of 22.4. Even though I'm already the exception to the slew of samples: I thought I was just as fat back then as I do today, my out of my league ex boyfriend and I dated after I had gained weight- I have to admit this article forced a temprorary regression:

Had I screwed myself out of 300k? Will I not get the jobs I want in the oncoming months because I am average? I sit here knowing that I am a part of the problem- when my reaction is to be a coward and try to avoid discrimination instead of working to fix the attitude problem of a country.

I'm not saying this to garner sympathy, I am trying to make a point: reading this article made me want to irrationally throw away my high calorie smoothie because I have 3 points until my BMI reaches "overweight" and all my dreams might be threatened. I should have felt outrage of the current state of fat discrimination. Why does watching Lena Dunham and Amy Shumer pioneer positive body image through their pride in their bodies not make near as much of an impression as this article does on further showing why white women should be thin?

Discussion Questions:

1. I know this seems like a copout but I realize my own irrational hangups made my possible over reaction too bias so before I ask the obvious, I'd appreciate your own reactions and takes on the article.

2. Is Fat a feminist issue? do you agree that this issue warrents as much attention as eating disorders from feminists?

3. This article was done in 2011. With Celebrity media/plus size modeling, do you think progress has been made?

4. What steps would you take first to solve this problem? Think it is hopeless?