

Fatphobia, Weight Stigma & Healthcare

Systemic discrimination and Health Narratives in Media

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What is weight stigma?

Fat people are, like many other oppressed groups, affected by other people's judgement and opinions (fatphobia), but also systemic discrimination (weight stigma). Systemic weight stigma can not only be seen in our physical space but also in places like our healthcare system. One example is the BMI cut-off for fertility treatment, and healthcare professionals' focus on weight loss in the face of all health struggles (Parker & Le Grice, 2022).



Photo by Marie

No ones deserves to be treated poorly

[W]hen fat people experience discrimination the common response is often "well they chose this for themselves". The assumption behind this statement is, that body size is purely the result of personal choices and therefore does not require social accommodations or protection. In contrast, Aubrey Gordon suggests in *Your Fat Friend*, that most fat people have likely spent significant amounts of time trying not to be fat. Many fat people pursue these options precisely because society makes it very difficult to live as a fat person. Stigma, discrimination and social pressure constantly reinforce the idea, that fat bodies are a problem to be fixed. Gordons argument challenges the common narrative that fatness simply reflects a lack of willpower and responsibility. The fact remains, that nothing is neutral. Everyday environments as designed with assumptions about the bodies that will use them. The size of an airplane seat, the length of a seatbelt in public transport, and the ratio between tables and benches at a lecture hall are all examples of design choices that always assume certain types of body as their standard occupants. (Text by Emma)



Photo by Malin

Health in the media

"The Pitt" season 2 episode 8 brings us to an urgent care unit where a fat patient comes in with severe abdominal pain. His weight exceeds the weight limit of the hospital CT scanner. They end up having to transport him to a nearby hospital that has a CT scanner with a higher weight limit. In the end, the scan shows a medical emergency, in which he needs an operation as soon as possible to survive. Because of them having to send him to another hospital, as well as transport him back after the scan, the doctors lose valuable time, it creates complications that was also dangerous for the patient. If they had been able to accommodate for him, the risks would be lower, and his chance of survival higher. (Text by Malin)

My bike's narrow seat is a small scale example of this broader pattern: It is a material artefact that reflects and reproduces the exclusion of fat bodies from spaces, designed without them in mind. (Text by Chuqing)

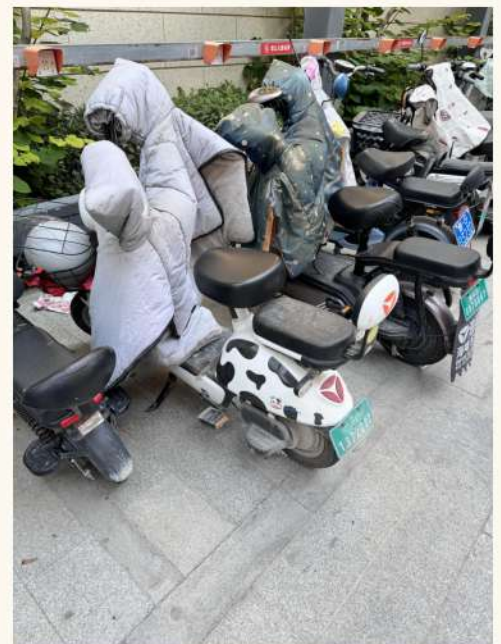


Photo by Chuqing

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