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of America's Fight Against Fat



Susan Greenhalgh - Anthropology Department

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to Society-wide "War on Fat"

- All social institutions and individuals recruited to join the fight
- Fat-talk (all communications about weight) is ubiquitous
- America, a fat-talk nation
- Anthropological research
 - 250 3- to 12-pg. mostly autobiographical narratives of California youth
 - Ethnographic accounts allow us to connect the dots between the societal fight against fat and its effects in individual lives







How the War on Fat Works

- Fatness is about morality and inclusion/exclusion or citizenship
- ☐ Fat people deemed "bad," undeserving of inclusion in community of good Americans
- Thin, fit people are "good biocitizens" with two duties
 - Diet, exercise, and maintain normal weight themselves
 - Use pedagogical and abusive fattalk to get others to do the same

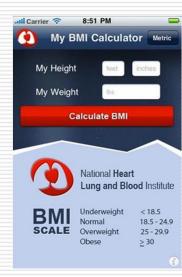




Human costs

- ☐ Identities based on BMI score, "spoiled identities"
- Bodily harm from excessive dieting and exercising
- Psychiatric risk
- □ Frayed social relationships
- And fat-talk did not even work to reduce obesity





Take-away points

- Fat-talk/biocitizen approach has the potential to harm everyone, not just heavy people
- ☐ Stigma and shaming are culturally legitimate, will be hard to stop
- Psychological damage to children and teens is often long-term
- Human costs should be weighed along with the economic costs
- Need a cultural revolution to rethink fat-talk and stop fat abuse

