

## Whose Plate Is This, Really? Exploring Cultural Nuances Between Food and Eating Disorder Recovery

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:TW/CW

- ▶ This presentation may contain information that is sensitive to those who have experienced weight bias or eating disorders.
- ▶ I stand in solidarity with you today offering support and understanding
- ▶ This presentation may cause kneejerk reactions to argue or dismiss the lived experiences of others.
- ▶ DON'T: Rather, sit with the discomfort of being presented with information you may not agree with and ponder where those reactions are coming from.
- ▶ This presentation may elicit feelings of blame or shame for those administering care.
- ▶ This is NOT a personal indictment on individual treatment. It is an opportunity for us to reveal the institutional practices that inhibit the quality of care people receive.

**WE ALL WANT THE SAME THING!**

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## A Little About Me

- ▶ PhD in Communication from Rutgers University in 2018
- ▶ Currently at Rutgers NJMS and assist in the curriculum on weight bias
- ▶ Studying Fat Acceptance and its intersections since 2013
- ▶ Author of the book, *Fat Girls in Black Bodies: Creating Communities of our Own*




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### Outline for today's presentation

- ▶ The culture of food
- ▶ White supremacy and its never ending impact on all things
- ▶ Implications for eating disorder recovery
- ▶ What professionals in the field can do

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### The Culture of Food

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### When you think of food what also comes up?



FAMILY GATHERINGS



SMELLS & TASTES



FOND MEMORIES



ALL OF THE ABOVE

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## FOOD IS...

- ▶ Food is culture - It is how we persist in our heritage and uphold our legacies
- ▶ Food is connection - It is how we convey feelings. We show love. We converse over our issues. We mourn and grieve
- ▶ Food does not exist in a vacuum. It is interconnected to our identities, political and CANNOT be discussed without the context of these things

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## White Supremacy and the "Healthy" Food Myth

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## Nothing is as it seems

What is often praised as development in the US comes at a price to marginalized populations

- ▶ "Civilization"
  - ▶ Colonization of land (i.e., cash cropping and removal of meaning for food and ceremony)
  - ▶ Changes in group norms, behavior and practice
- ▶ "Modernization/Industrialization"
  - ▶ Displacement of people from land
  - ▶ Mass production and cheapening of indigenous foods while charging exorbitant prices




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Wait! There's more!

- "Normal" Eating
  - Forced assimilation
  - Different cultures practice different eating habits
  - "Normal" has been institutionalized to stigmatize and demonize different cultural practices and bodies
- "Traditional" Foods
  - White-washes cuisines that are indigenous to other lands
  - The white majority continually takes credit for foods and not the history that encompasses them
  - What is not traditional is seen as, for foods as discarded and of less value in all things




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Coconut water      Kale      Avocados

FOOD ISN'T "HEALTHY" UNTIL IT'S  
ACCEPTED BY THE MAJORITY

Quinoa      Kimchi      Tofu

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How All of this Spills Over Into Eating  
Disorders and Recovery

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Weight bias & food shaming is everywhere!

Trying to find a weight loss program that really works?

NOT MOTIVATED TO LOSE WEIGHT? JUST BE THE FRONT OF A NAKED SOUL FOOD

This is what this

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Certain bodies become reversed

U.S. GIRLS PHYSICAL FITNESS PROGRAM

Body Mass Index (BMI) scale diagram showing categories: Underweight, Normal, Overweight, and Obese.

Historical photograph of a woman.

Historical photograph of a man.

Historical photograph of a woman holding a scale.

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A historical review

Sabrina Stangl

Anti-racist attitudes originated not with medieval findings, but with Enlightenment-era belief that overbreeding and between were evidence of "savagery" and racial inferiority.

1689-1690

Thinness was prized and encouraged through the Anglo-Saxon Protestant faith to denote self-control and godliness.

Fatness denoted a new articulation of racial identity due to increasing during the slave trade.

1840s-1850s

Phobia becomes a direct consequence of the attempt to rule over Black bodies



**FEARING THE  
BLACK  
BODY**

The Racial Origins of the Phobia

DAVID R. JOHNSON

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### What does the data say?

- ▶ Media
  - ▶ 72% of fat people depicted in news are done so in demonizing ways
  - ▶ Fat is represented as a negative trait in 64% of children's videos
- ▶ Interpersonal relationships
  - ▶ Daughters have been found to find dissatisfaction with their bodies after witnessing their mother's relationship with their body
  - ▶ Some individuals' first memory of body shame traces back to interactions with family and close friends
- ▶ Consumerism
  - ▶ Weight loss is a 70 billion dollar industry
  - ▶ Thinner bodies align with European beauty ideals

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### What does the data say?

- ▶ Eating disorders have the highest mortality of any mental illness
- ▶ Marginalized patients are typically underdiagnosed for eating disorders and less likely to be referred for treatment
- ▶ Additional barriers to access and care are prevalent for marginalized populations, along with navigating multiple identities that face oppression
- ▶ Psychologists more frequently assigned negative attributes, more severe psychological symptoms, and more pathology to clients who were fat ("obese")

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### Time to unpack

#### THINK ON THESE THINGS...

- ▶ Do you find yourself being "put off" by other group's culinary practices?
- ▶ Do you have a stark idea of what healthy is and how health can be obtained?
- ▶ Are you less inclined to believe what your client is saying about the importance that food plays in their lives?
- ▶ How open are you with clients to become the student and learn more about them?

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## Understand Intersectionality

- Founded by **Kimberle Crenshaw**, intersectionality can be defined as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, that create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

*In other words, intersectionality is the way that oppression is compounded for various groups based on how they identify or are identified by others.*




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## If you are offering alternatives

- Are they what your client wants?
- Do they center your client's culture?
- Have you looked into the alternatives already being utilized by those connected to your client's community?

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THANK YOU!

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