

Fatphobia as Marginalization: The Impacts on Women in the Public Sphere

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore the impact that fatphobia has on Western society, specifically the female body. Using existing literature, this research aims to deepen the knowledge and experience around fatphobia and its pervasiveness in the public sphere. Key questions explored are centered around how fatphobia impacts women in Western society, how fatphobia is created and maintained, and the exploration of where fatphobia is most pervasive in a person's life. The study will analyze its research findings through a feminist and intersectional theoretical perspective. Some of the key findings in this study were that fatphobia is largely connected to patriarchy, Western culture, and colonization. As well as classism and neoliberalist ideologies and how these ideologies create and maintain fatphobic beliefs. The intersection between fatphobia and race was explored, however, there was a significant lack of perspective in the literature from fat women of colour.

Additionally, analysis on the biomedical discourse around obesity and weight discrimination was explored, eliciting extreme discrimination against fat bodies. Based on this information, it is apparent that awareness of fatphobia needs to be explored further in professional research and in day-to-day life. Specifically, recognizing fatphobia as a form of marginalization is recommended to be included in social work education and implemented into social work practice to ensure more inclusive knowledge and practice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The study uses a critical literature review to focus on plus size/fat women's experiences of fatphobia in public places. Fatphobia is defined informally as "irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against obesity or people with obesity" (Collins Dictionary, 2019). In my search, a formal definition of fatphobia does not exist, and it has been suggested to Collins Dictionary to be considered as a formal term, which demonstrates how insufficiently discussed fatphobia is. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the impact fatphobia has on people, specifically women. The goal is to create awareness of the marginalization fat women face as a result of fatphobia reinforced by society. The objective of completing this study is to highlight the discrimination that fat women face and to encourage further exploration of this topic in Social Work education and society in general.

Since the majority of scholarly research done about fat bodies stems from a biomedical framework, it excludes the personal, lived experiences of those living in fat bodies (Pause, 2020). The biomedical framework highlights the obesity endemic as the culprit of why people live in larger bodies and infers that being in a large body is due to poor personal choices (Pause, 2020). The research conducted through this biomedical lens projects knowledge onto fat bodies rather than including them in the research and honoring them as the true 'knowers' of their bodies and experiences (Pause, 2020).

Ideally, this report will provide insight for social work scholarship on how pervasive the experience of fatphobia is and how it can be dismantled, using fat activism, health policy change, and a Health at Every Size (HAES) approach, which will be discussed in detail further in the report. As a self-identified plus size woman, I feel that this topic is not discussed in social work education or research. As someone who has personally experienced fatphobia and has

experienced discrimination within casual conversations, the doctor's office, the fashion industry, etc., my goal for this report is to bring more attention to the reality of these experiences and lessen the discrimination faced by larger bodies. Currently, fatness is constructed as a poor personal choice, and various social factors are still not considered within the research (Welsh, 2011). By centering this study on the impact of fatphobia, it is my goal that providing this platform will contribute to activism and change around the oppression faced by larger bodies.

Context

Fatphobia appears to be constructed as a result of poor personal choice and an outcome of personal failure (Guthman & DuPuis, 2006). This belief stems from a neoliberalist ideology that creates divisions within society by creating constructions of knowledge around who is deserving of equitable treatment (thin bodies) versus those who are not (fat bodies) (Guthman & DuPuis, 2006). The belief that fatness is a personal failure and that these personal choices are equal between all people is problematic because it also rejects the impact that social class plays regarding large bodies. When people are lower income there can be a lack of access to nutritious, fresh foods and opportunities to be active in comparison to wealthy individuals, who inherently have greater access and opportunities (Welsh, 2011). Unfortunately, through neoliberal discourse, there is a significant lack of analysis done on any structural socioeconomic reasons for weight or negative health disparities (Welsh, 2011).

Another primary area found through the literature was the impact that anti-fat stigma has on fat bodies. Being stigmatized and discriminated against because of weight has severe consequences in almost every aspect of a fat person's day-to-day life and can be considered to cause severe exposure to psychosocial stress (Brewis et al., 2011). Unfortunately, anti-fat stigma can also stem from the fact that society places human value highly on physical appearance,

resulting in emotional suffering for fat bodies (Brewis et al., 2011). In this case, it seems the physical body trumps all other aspects of one's identity and that the focus on the physical body creates these opportunities to engage in anti-fat stigma.

While the implications of neoliberalism and discrimination are major contributors to the construction of fatphobia, the biomedical framework is perhaps the most pervasive and influential. Unfortunately, the literature states that being in a large body results from the obesity endemic, which is constructed as a major health issue contributing to mortality and chronic illness (Felkins, 2019). Western society amplifies this belief by normalizing the criticizing nature towards fat bodies by labeling them as lazy individuals in poor health (Saguy & Ward, 2011). A study on weight-based discrimination by Bombak & McPhail & Ward (2016) demonstrated that personal experiences of fat bodies with healthcare providers have been particularly stigmatizing. Participants stated their doctors would often shift the focus of the appointment on health risks due to being in a larger body, which they perceived as stigmatizing and humiliating (Bombak et al., 2016). Unfortunately, the research done on fat bodies is primarily biomedical-focused, reinforcing that fatness is a disease (Manokaran et al., 2020).

Women in particular experience fatphobia with more intensity than their male counterparts because the pressure placed on women's bodies is layered and complex. According to Chrisler (2012): "Gender-role socialization about health attitudes and behaviours can possibly position women into being held more responsible for their shape and size especially by those who harbor medical discourse and/or fatphobia." (p.611). Therefore, there is a need to analyze how women experienced fatphobia through a feminist perspective to understand how these experiences are unique to women.

Additional gaps in the research on fat bodies is within social work scholarship with scanty literature on the nature of the oppression experienced by fat bodies, which is extremely problematic for a field that thrives on social justice (Friedman, 2012). Thus far, I have never read or discussed anything about how fat bodies are marginalized within my social work academic career or how this is a group of people who experience oppression. When considering the multiple intersections of identity (race, class, gender) combined with living in a larger body, the experience of fatphobia cannot continue to be ignored.

Research Question

This research asks the question of

1. *How does fatphobia impact women in Western society?*

The following two sub-questions are also addressed:

a) *How is fatphobia created and maintained;* and

b) *Where is fatphobia most pervasive in a person's life?*

These questions are significant to the research because they will explore a fat woman's personal experience of fatphobia and formulate a sense of how pervasive fatphobia can be in an individual's day-to-day experience.

The paper begins with a discussion of the historical findings that are believed to heavily influence anti-fat stigma and prevailing beliefs and how they are reinforced in the present day. An analysis of how colonization influences and arguably was a major culprit in creating fatphobia and how it has been reinforced through capitalist and neoliberalist ideologies will form part of this discussion. The literature will also discuss how multiple intersections of identity and social positioning can contribute to the level of anti-fat stigma experienced by fat women. This study will explore how anti-fat stigma is a social justice and feminist issue with the belief that

women experience body shame and pressure differently than men and how the topic of anti-fat stigma is not explored nor discussed within social work scholarship. Following this, implications and recommendations for social work practice will be discussed.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspectives

Introduction

The analysis of this research is informed by two theoretical perspectives, specifically intersectionality theory and feminist theory. These theories will inform the research from a lens that considers the subordination of women in conjunction with the multiple intersections of an identity such as race, gender, and class. Since the study is based on gaining a broader understanding of how fatphobia impacts women, feminist theory is an applicable theory to use for analyzing the literature as it helps create awareness on how patriarchal systems impact and control the female body (Bell et al., 2019). The female body is not just a body alone, but is situated around race, social class positioning, and history. These identities have an added layer to one's social positioning and therefore must be considered when applying an inclusive lens (Kyrola & Harjunen, 2017).

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory has a long history dating back to the 19th and early 20th centuries with three sequential waves with the 'first wave', followed by a 'second wave' in the 1960s and 1970s, and then a third wave in the 1980s to present day is primarily recognized and centered in North America and European countries (Bell et al., 2019). Throughout these various waves of feminism, issues such as the suffragette movement and civil rights activism were recognized as societal inequalities, which is a large aspect of feminist theory (Bell et al., 2019). The main aspect of feminist theory is to analyze and understand how gendered discrimination exists and how this impacts and withholds women from being considered equal in multiple aspects of life, such as employment pay, voting rights, being in positions of power, etc. However, there are critiques to feminist theory with the belief that the narrative within this theory is highly coveted

by white women, as multiple voices within the feminist movement that were not white had a tendency to be ignored (Bell et al., 2019). According to hooks (1984):

“All throughout modern feminist thought, it has been claimed that, ‘all women are oppressed’. Allegedly, women all throughout the world share a common oppression by virtue of their inherited sex. On the other hand, the diversity of their classes and/or races ends the commonality. While the second wave, Bourgeois white women fight against sexist oppression--racist oppression and classism were generally ignored. Class, race, religion or sexual preference are not given that much importance in the study of women’s oppression” (p.5)

When specifically analyzing hooks’ (1984) feminist thinking, it is apparent that she wanted to develop a definition of feminism that was inclusive. Since hooks’ is a Black woman living in a society that she claimed is largely dominated by whiteness, her idea of feminism stems beyond just the inequalities between women and men. For hooks’ (1984) , she considered that “race, ethnicity, gender, and many other factors also play vital roles in the exploitation or discrimination of individuals” (p. 15). When reflecting on the more well-known idea of what feminist theory is, simply put as the fight for equality for women, hooks (1984) elaborated on how this definition is not all-encompassing stating that, “Implicit in this simplistic definition of women’s liberation is a dismissal of race and class as factors that, in conjunction with sexism, determine the extent to which an individual will be discriminated against, exploited or oppressed.” (p.18). hooks (1984) made it clear that there is a great disconnect within feminist theory that considers white women and men without inclusively considering the importance of understanding feminism through the lens of Black and people of colour. These are important critiques about feminist theory that must be considered when analyzing the literature and formulating how fatphobia impacts women so as not to exclusively consider the impact through a white lens, but to be critical and hold awareness of the limitations to feminist theory.

Incorporating feminist theory into the analysis of how fatphobia impacts women is necessary for this analysis as it holds a unique perspective, which allows for the unpacking of patriarchy and its influence on women's bodies, as well as how neoliberal capitalism exploits and oppresses them (Bell et al., 2019). Feminist theory is used to discover layers of womanhood through various areas, such as reproductive rights, work-related issues, socialist revolution, capitalism etc. (Moses, 2012). On a theoretical level, many feminists believe women are socialized differently than men in a way that disempowers and subordinates them (Moses, 2012). While this study will not analyze the different ways that men and women experience fatphobia, it will provide a platform for an analysis of how fatphobia impacts women through feminist theory and potentially reinforce the belief that there are major gaps in equality between the experiences of men and women. Providing a platform for women's experiences is necessary in order to contribute to women's empowerment, which would consist of body acceptance and non-discriminatory treatment in society.

Fat is overly represented as a problem, as the culprit to poor health or moral failure (Lupton, 2011). Looking at feminist theory through a fat studies perspective implies a rejection that fat should be the most critical 'problem' to be solved and instead, "it focuses on fat as a gendered, culturally produced and variable category and experience" (Kyrola & Harjunen, 2017, p. 100). However, there are criticisms to be aware of within feminist theory on how the theory itself can bypass the necessary interrogation of understanding how fatness is socially constructed. Kyrola & Harjunen (2017) stated that feminist theory:

May pay close attention to gendered, racialized and sexualized body management culture through the slender, grooming, dieting, eating disordered or surgically modified body, but include little or no attention to questions of fat, despite fat's status as a key site of anxieties over bodily excess and fluidity today (p.106).

In this case, while feminist theory will be used to understand the impacts of fatness on people, it is clear that it has room to expand and develop its consideration of how fatness impacts women. While it appears to break down barriers related to gender inequalities, it requires specific growth in understanding how fatness is socially constructed in order to address the multitude of additional areas that impact the body (i.e., dieting, eating disorders, etc.) as mentioned above.

Since feminist theory recognizes and incorporates a multitude of factors that contribute to oppression, with patriarchy being the most prominent, studies also commit to understanding how the intersections of gender, race, disability, social class, etc. impact a woman's experience (Kyrola & Harjunen, 2017). Without considering the multiple intersections of an identity, it remains difficult to begin to grasp an understanding of any individual's lived experiences as each individual has unique qualities, social positions and histories that should be further explored in order to attempt capturing the true experience of a person, which leads to considering the multiple intersections of one's identity.

Intersectionality

For this paper, intersectionality theory is used to analyze how aspects of discrimination, sexism, and patriarchy are experienced by women while considering how the impact of fatphobia is also intertwined. Intersectionality allows for the examination of the oppression caused by intersecting marginalized identities that were initially ignored by white feminists.

Intersectionality as a term was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 when she discussed the issues of Black women's employment in the United States. Crenshaw believed intersectionality provided a lens to understand how power impacts and controls how and where identities intersect (Crenshaw, 2017). In their definition of intersectionality theory Crenshaw & Cho & McCall (2013) stated:

Intersectionality was introduced in the late 1980s as a heuristic term to focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics. It exposed how single-axis thinking undermines legal thinking, disciplinary knowledge production, and struggles for social justice. (p.787)

Crenshaw & Cho & McCall (2017) argued that intersectionality theory examines the dynamics of differences and similarities when considering race, gender, positions of power and equality. Intersectionality can be used to analyze institutional social problems, such as cultural barriers, as well as various layers within society in attempt to create a larger and more comprehensive understanding of the impact on an individual (Crenshaw & Cho & McCall, 2017). Additionally, Crenshaw & Cho & McCall (2017) stated that early histories of intersectionality reveal that, “its [knowledge] production was not located somewhere outside the field of race and gender power, but was an active and direct engagement with issues and dynamics that embodied such power.” (p.789). Analyzing the literature with this in mind will help to gain a greater understanding of the innerworkings of these issues and how power holds influence on fatness.

Examining intersectionality theory will help capture how the literature explains the way oppressions are experienced and how they are interwoven into multiple systems (Carastathis, 2014). This examination is important because fatness is treated or understood through multiple systems, which provides insight into how and where fatphobia is experienced. According to Samuels & Ross-Sheriff (2008), using intersectionality theory would:

Call on scholars to be more of a broader group of women in their analysis of gender and definitions of what is feminist thought. In fact, intersectionality goes further to recognize that for many women of color, their feminist efforts are simultaneously embedded and woven into their efforts against racism, classism, and other threats to their access to equal opportunities and social justice (p.5).

While the literature will not be specifically focused on how fatphobia impacts women of colour, it is clear that this needs to be taken into consideration in order to attempt to fully encompass this analysis through intersectionality theory.

Summary

Feminist theory and intersectionality theory work well together because they both create spaces and movements to resist sexist oppression but also other forms of oppression, such as racism and classism (hooks, 1984). Crenshaw (2017) believed that social problems do not stem from one problem versus the other, but that they are multiple intersections that contribute to these experiences. As noted earlier, not all aspects of feminist theory address feminism through the lens of a woman of colour. By incorporating intersectionality theory into the analysis, which very much incorporates race, I believe it allows for a more inclusive and comprehensive analysis as multiple factors of oppression are to be considered. More specifically, “Intersectionality proposes that gender cannot be used as a single analytic frame without also exploring how issues of race, migration status, history, and social class, in particular, come to bear on one’s experience as a woman” (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008, p.5). While the woman’s experience of fatphobia is especially important in relation to gender differences, it is necessary to consider the multiple aspects of identity through intersectionality and how these multiple roles also impact people’s experiences. Using intersectionality theory for this study allows the literature to be analyzed while considering how various systems of domination are interconnected and how this impacts one’s identity (Severs et al., 2016). Additionally, a study using feminist theory and intersectionality theory would be helpful specifically for social work scholarship because, “it is fundamental for social workers as we work with women to honor their unique multidimensional womanhood, personhood, and agency, even as their personhood and agency are honored and

devalued across the many contexts they must navigate” (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008, p.8).

While fatphobia is a form of discrimination alone based on my lived experience, I believe deconstructing the knowledge on fatphobia through intersectionality is highly appropriate because while there is likely to be commonality of women experiencing fatphobia as a whole, it cannot be assumed that the experience of a fat White woman is the same as a fat Black woman, a fat trans woman, or a fat woman with a disability, etc.

Feminist theory merges with intersectionality theory and vice versa because there is now a recognition of the interlocking oppressions of one’s identity such as race, social class, ethnicity, etc. (Crenshaw & Cho & McCall, 2017), but also highlights the role of gender inequality which recognizes that being a woman in the world is a vastly different and unequal experience than a man’s (Kyrola & Harjunen, 2017). Women’s lived experiences in combination with interlocking intersections of identity are likely to impact how fatphobia is experienced, which needs to be considered to expand our understandings of how fatphobia truly impacts people. While the two theories have their differences such as primarily focusing on women’s empowerment through feminist theory, in comparison to the focus of interlocking identities such as race, class, ethnicity, which is considered through intersectionality theory, the two theories remain as complimenting each other. Combined, they encompass the multiple aspects of an identity and allow an analysis to be conducted while considering how these aspects of identity are impacted by the reproduction of power and privilege.

Chapter 3: Research Plan

Introduction

This section will describe the search plan and method for finding relevant literature. It will discuss essential search keywords, synonyms and the various search databases used to obtain relevant articles. Furthermore, the inclusion and exclusion criteria are acknowledged to explain which information was relevant to the study. Personal reflexivity is included in this section to discuss some of my biases and exercise openness regarding my relationship to the research topic. Lastly, identified strengths and limitations are discussed to highlight the contributions of this study and to acknowledge areas that may be absent from the report.

Search Plan and Method

The research plan for this paper includes searching for peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles, published book chapters, and some grey literature online relating to the research topic. The intention of using these articles is to explore what the impact of fatphobia is on people, with a focus on women specifically. In order to understand the impact fatphobia has on people, specifically women, I will be conducting a critical analysis of literature to provide an overview of these experiences. While I acknowledge that interviewing people who experience fatphobia directly would provide an in-depth look at the lived experience of individuals, there were limitations to conducting interviews due to the Coronavirus pandemic. It is my intention that by using a detailed search strategy, it will allow me to obtain the richest of literature on the topic to provide a detailed look into my research question.

For obtaining both peer reviewed journals and published book chapters, the same scholarly databases were used in aiding the search. The scholarly databases used for this strategy are as follows:

List of databases:

- York Omni-Libraries: A fast, easy search tool that helps find high quality peer-reviewed journal articles in collaboration with 14 universities.
- Scholar's Portal: A search portal that provides access to academic journals in collaboration with 21 universities.
- York University Library Research Guides: This helped to access Sociological Abstracts and Psychological Abstracts.
- Academia.edu: This database holds a comprehensive list of peer-reviewed journal articles.
- JSTOR: A digital library of academic journals, books and primary sources.
- Google Scholar: This broadened the search findings and was a simple, user-friendly search tool to obtain academic journals.

I found that using these search databases allowed me to access a large number of articles while also allowing the search to be narrowed down by skimming through abstracts for information relating to fatphobia. As well, I discovered additional alternative synonyms to further narrow down my search, which came up whilst reading the literature. This was necessary as certain search terms such as “lived as” to obtain lived experience did not illicit as many search results. Aveyard (2010) stated that new keywords can exist within the scholarly articles, allowing the search for quality literature to become more specific to the topic and therefore providing more direct information. Within the search, synonyms related to a ‘women’s experience’ and fatphobia directly limited the number of articles that came up, making it difficult to find content on the women’s lived experience of fatphobia. Additionally, Google.ca was used for more generic information and to enhance the search by giving informal opinion, non-peer reviewed

pieces on fatphobia to inspire my research process. Terms used in the Google.ca search engine were as follows: “women’s experience of fatphobia”, “anti-fat stigma and women”, “personal experience of fat discrimination”, “fat shame impact on women”.

The search strategy was used by first naming the research topic, which is primarily looking at how fatphobia impacts women in society as well as considering the type of literature I will use in my search, which is a crucial starting point for developing a systematic search strategy (Aveyard, 2010). Identifying the research topic and type of literature I wanted to use helped to create the key concepts in my search strategy, beginning with the following terms: “fatphobia”, “women” and “lived experience”. Using York-Omni Libraries, Scholar’s Portal, JSTOR and the additional aforementioned databases, the three key concepts were entered into the database using the Boolean operator ‘AND’ as well as ‘OR’ to include all key concepts within the search. This technique was adapted from Aveyard (2010), who explains that using the Boolean operator ‘AND’ can combine key terms in the search process, albeit limiting the search results in comparison to the Boolean operator ‘OR,’ which will include one term or the other, therefore broadening the search results further.

Subsequently, a list of synonyms stemming from the three key concepts were conducted and separated by the Boolean operator ‘OR’ in the search databases in an attempt to broaden the search results. Please see **Appendix 1** for the search strategy chart that was used. When searching through the articles that appeared in the search results, I chose appropriate articles by skimming the abstract, search findings and discussion to assess whether or not these included the experience and impact of fatphobia on women and people, or if the article explained the pervasiveness of fatphobia. The articles that did not discuss these concepts were dismissed.

In an attempt to narrow this search further, entering words such as “Canadian AND women”, “Fatphobia AND North America”, “Obesity discrimination AND Canada” were used to find as much Canadian content as possible. However, during the search, I discovered the majority of the content went well beyond Canada and that finding Canadian-only sources on fatphobia was limited. This prompted me to remove “Canada” and “North America” in some of my searches to broaden the number of articles on fatphobia. As well, when reading through the articles, I found synonyms relating to my search, such as: “anti-fat stigma”, “fatness”, “fat phobic”, “anti-obesity”, “fat shame”, “fat experience”. These keywords were included in the search strategy in attempt to gain more specific, tailored literature to the research question. Without using a thorough search strategy “your searching will be random and disorganized, and the reader of the review will not be confident that you have identified all the relevant research papers relating to your topic” (Aveyard, 2010, p.69). The scholarly literature was then preliminarily skimmed by reading the abstracts of each article to assess whether or not the article would help understand the impact fatphobia has on individuals. Skimming the abstract of each article provided a summarized overview of the research conducted in the article, as well as a broad overview of the research study and findings.

When organizing the literature, I looked for emerging themes by skimming each article’s abstract to find key words related to my topic such as, “anti-fat stigma”, “fat discrimination”, “obesity”, “fat women” and “impact of”. As well, I carefully read through the research findings to obtain what the articles found in their studies based on the experience of fatphobia and what contributes to its pervasiveness, as well as the discussion area of the article to find the summary of the research article. I looked for information that described fatphobia’s impacts on individuals which were: the history and culture of fatness, neoliberalism and class, fat discrimination and

race, reinforcing anti-fat stigma and size discrimination, and biomedical and health perspectives on obesity. Aveyard (2010) mentioned the importance of keeping track of articles found as well as storing them in places that cannot be lost, therefore as I reviewed literature, each article was organized in an electronic document on Google Drive under each of the themes found. While I acknowledge Aveyard's (2010) argument that there are limitations in obtaining all relevant literature through electronic sources alone, there were significant limitations in using other methods for this study as the research is being conducted during a global pandemic.

For sources that were not scholarly peer-reviewed articles because they were on body positivity Facebook pages, I used Google as the primary search engine using the terms "women's experience of fatphobia", "anti-fat stigma and women", "personal experience of fat discrimination", "fat shame impact on women". Within this search, it would lead to scholarly article recommendations through databases like JSTOR and Science Direct. At other times, it would be personal opinion pieces or informal articles on women's experiences with fatphobia, however, these were not considered as viable sources in the literature review due to their informalities.

Search Parameters

Identifying inclusion and exclusion criteria is a critical process for a literature review because according to Aveyard (2010), it "allows you to demonstrate the scope and detail of your review that you would not be able to demonstrate in the review question itself" (p.71). The inclusion criteria for this search were primarily centred around peer-reviewed research conducted in Canada, United States, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. However, I was flexible to obtaining additional relative or interesting information on the topic of fat discrimination because I found that during my search process, there was not an abundance of articles on the impact of

fatphobia specifically. Articles searched were in the English language only. In an attempt to gather as much relevant information as possible to the research topic, I broadened my inclusion criteria to include flexibility around where the articles were written geographically, rather than specifically searching Canadian research, as well as the timeframe they were written in. Articles that are included in the research primarily range from 2005 to 2020 to provide flexibility in obtaining the most relevant literature on fatphobia because there was a lack of information on this topic. Due to an overall lack of peer reviewed literature on the experience of fatphobia, I had to be flexible with obtaining articles that were not written in the last 10 years as a solution for broadening my search and obtaining higher quality articles pertaining to the research topic. In terms of scaling down the search results, I had to decide which articles captured the pervasiveness of fatphobia and/or the lived experiences of people living in fat bodies and I was able to narrow this down to sixty relevant sources by making sure the articles met the inclusion criteria as stated above while also explaining in the abstract, research findings and discussion section, the ways in which fatphobia is experienced as well as its impact.

In terms of exclusion criteria, the critical literature review is primarily centered to Canada, United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, which does not encapsulate how countries outside of a Western/European ideology interpret or experience fatphobia. Since the countries listed seem primarily white-dominated, the majority of the literature excludes the experience of fatphobia on people of colour. Another area of exclusion criteria is that I have not included research earlier than 2005 in an attempt to include the most relevant and up to date information on the topic. As well, an area of exclusion criteria within my search is that I am not focusing on the male experience of fatphobia. The reason for this is because I feel there are different pressures placed upon women's bodies in comparison to men's bodies. Additionally, I

am a woman who has experienced fatphobia directly and I can empathize with the pressure placed upon women's bodies to appease to certain body ideals. While I am certain that men also experience pressure for body image, to me it feels easier for a man to be 'husky' or 'large' than it does for a woman. Whereas, from my personal experience, women are told to be smaller and to not take up space. I also recognize that this personal association with my reasoning for not including men may instil bias when analyzing the research and I will be conscious of this throughout my literature review

Personal Reflexivity

Growing up as a plus size woman who has experienced anti-fat stigma directly, and still faces it without much change or dialogue in terms of recognizing it as a form of oppression is what draws me to this study. My bias is based within my own personal experiences that fat women experience fatphobia in their day-to-day lives in the doctor's office, public transit, personal relationships, and beyond. My biases exist in the belief that fatphobia impacts women's emotional well-being in a more severe way because of the societal pressures and exclusions placed on women's bodies. Truthfully, I am tired of the experience of fatphobia being silenced and dismissed, and it is my goal that through this study I will be able to provide insight into the impact of fatphobia on women, and offer solutions for dismantling fatphobia.

Since I identify as a plus size adult woman, there is a bias within me that I need to be aware of when analyzing the literature. A part of me wants to find literature that aligns with my viewpoint and personal experience on fatphobia, however, my goal in the research is to analyze the literature with a neutral lens to exclude my personal biases. Additionally, I recognize that the multiple intersections within an identity, specifically considering race, is not something I can identify with and therefore I must be cognizant that the literature may not discuss how people of

colour experience fatphobia. While I can assume that being a fat person of colour adds an additional layer to the possible oppression faced, I cannot speak to this directly. Therefore, I must acknowledge that in this paper, the social positionings and intersecting identities (i.e., race) that contribute to the experience fatphobia may not be analyzed as comprehensively and are subject to misinterpretation. As well, the literature will be reviewed through the lens of a fat, white woman who cannot speak to the experience of a person of colour.

Strengths and Limitations

This research's strengths are that the topic of the lived experience of fatphobia and anti-fat stigma appears to be lacking in academic literature overall, but namely within social work research. My goal is to provide formal research on this topic to contribute to additional dialogue on the experience of fatphobia so that social workers can gain more awareness on fatphobia's pervasiveness and impact on the people they serve. While there are limitations to the number of peer-reviewed articles on the experience of fatphobia, I was able to find enough data to discuss the implications of fatphobia and anti-fat stigma on people in a detailed, informative way using the aforementioned search synonyms. However, this paper is a critical literature review which may impose limitations on describing lived experiences directly, which would have been captured in interviews. Another limitation of the research was that the experiences discussed in the literature were primarily focused on the voices of white women, leaving people of colour's experience of fatphobia out of the bulk of the research. One article depicted how a woman of colour experiences fatphobia in conjunction with other intersections of identity, but this was merely one article out of many. The research was also centred within Canada, United States, United Kingdom and the Netherlands, limiting the understanding of fatphobia's impact on women to only these cultures, dismissing how the impact may vary through different cultures.

Chapter 4: Review of the Literature

Introduction

After completing a thorough review of the literature that pertained to the research question and sub-questions, it was apparent that multiple contributing factors influence how women experienced fatphobia. Common themes emerged throughout the literature, such as history, culture and fatness, neoliberalism and classism, race, anti-fat stigma and size discrimination, biomedical perspectives, and fat as a social justice and feminist issue. These themes will be discussed critically using literature review to address the following research question How does fatphobia impact women in Western societies? and sub-questions, How is fatphobia created and maintained? and Where is fatphobia most pervasive in a person's (preferably women) life?. A brief overview of background information on fatphobia will be discussed before analyzing the aforementioned themes that surfaced in the literature to answer the research question and sub-questions.

History, Culture and Fatness

The analysis within this paper will begin from a historical perspective. It is argued that fatphobia is deeply rooted in patriarchy and colonization and that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were a pivotal period for anti-fat dialogue against women (Forth, 2012). Forth (2012) argued that during this time period, men with fat bodies were seen as bourgeois. Specifically, one study that has been done within various cultures to examine perspectives on the fat woman's body explored seventeenth-century Africa, explorers on the land described the Moors as having an opposing viewpoint on the fat woman's body in that there was an appreciation for fatness (Forth, 2012). However, there was also domination over a woman's body, regardless of being an ideal size, in that a woman's weight was highly controlled in most

cultures with a focus on being ‘the right size’ no matter the preference between fat or thin, which is an example of a woman’s subordination through patriarchy (Forth, 2012).

Building on these historical ideas, Brewis, Wutich, Falletta-Cowden, and Rodriguez-Soto, (2011) argued that ethnographic studies done in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrate “social contexts where fat bodies express beauty, marriageability, attractiveness, and an array of positive moral attributes such as control of selfish desires, closeness to God, generosity, fertility, familial responsibility, and social belonging” [in places like Azawagh Arabs in Niger, Jamaica, Belize, Puerto Ricans, Fijian village] (p.269). However, it is acknowledged that considerable preference for the thin body has enhanced dramatically since the 1980s where fat bodies were faced with increasing demands for slimmer figures (Brewis et al., 2011).

The discourse around anti-fat discrimination is clearly ingrained within Western society and the world, created by dominant groups in power (Schoppelrei, 2019). In this particular study, the dominant groups discussed will be Western colonizers. This dominant group created and maintained core beliefs that have become deeply ingrained, making it challenging to conceptualize ideologies beyond them. In Schoppelrei’s article (2019), they stated, “The hegemonic domain of power draws its ability to ‘shape consciousness’ through the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies” (p.285). Through this process, it appears that these dominant ideologies become common-sense beliefs, and without questioning how they are formed, it becomes nearly impossible to dismantle (Schoppelrei, 2019).

When analyzing how Western cultures, such as the British and French, viewed fatness, it often consisted of comparisons between people, places, and time periods around how non-Western cultures who preferred fat women did so because they were ‘perverse’ (Forth, 2012). The idea of finding a fat woman more desirable was due to fetish, not simply preference of

beauty (Forth, 2012). The reason behind this is because being fat has historically been identified as a health problem, therefore to desire an ‘unhealthy’ body was to defy the classical heritage and core values of Western civilization (Forth, 2012). The belief within Western culture that fatness results from personal qualities such as laziness, poor health, and unattractiveness is profoundly unconscious and prevalent in society’s present thought around the fat woman’s body (Van Amsterdam, 2012). Within Western patriarchal societies, body size has a much larger impact on women's bodies than it does men as women are met with more scrutiny of their body size and social pressures on their appearances compared to men (Van Amsterdam, 2012).

The Western lens on fatphobia was examined by a research study of a cross-cultural analysis of fat women's experience between the United States and Finland (Gailey & Harjunen, 2019). The research was a combination of in-depth interviews, autobiographical writings, and semi-structured interviews, which demonstrated that in both cultures, women experience tremendous stigma in their daily lives (Gailey & Harjunen, 2019). Women from both cultures shared similar experiences of being stared at in grocery stores, frequently feeling dismissed and ignored when trying to have their needs accommodated in various settings, often eliciting feelings of inferiority and internalized fat shame. In addition to this information, the study found that most of the women from both groups believed that the biomedical model reinforced fatness as a problem, something that can be cured through health, without considering women who have been fat their entire lives (Gailey & Harjunen, 2019).

Fat bodies and the intersections of neoliberalism and classism ideologies

Within this section, the research sub-question ‘how is fatphobia created and maintained’ is answered through an analysis of neoliberal ideologies and how they produce and maintain fatphobic beliefs. From there, this research question is further addressed through social class,

which discusses the impact and limitations to living in a lower social class within society, and how these limitations reinforce fatphobia. There is an ideology that fat bodies are fat because of poor individual choice, a lack of self-control, and overconsumption (Lupton, 2011). This blame tends to stem from neoliberalist ideologies, which assume that all individuals should be and have access to make informed, educated decisions about their lifestyle choices. This is extremely problematic as it further reinforces the stigma that fat bodies result from laziness, a lack of self-control, and above all, a personal choice which further reinforces and maintains fatphobic beliefs. In their book *Fat*, Lupton (2011) stated:

Putting all the responsibility on individuals (persons, families, etc.) to make the right choices for themselves requires that we each exhibit the appropriate amount of discipline to make those same right choices in the face of temptation and abundance. Therefore, a state of being such as “obesity” can only be read as a failure on the part of individuals; they had all the opportunities to make the “right” choices for their bodies, and they, therefore, deserve any punishment or suffering for their lack of self-discipline, where such punishment comes in social, discursive, material, and violent forms.
(p.40-41)

Neoliberalism dismisses the multiple interlocking systems of oppression that contribute to a person’s ability to make choices, whether or not they have equal access and treatment in society (Otis, 2020). Through an intersectionality perspective, the multiple interlocking systems of oppression within one’s identity must not be forgotten, for these intersections impact how people experience the world (Crenshaw, 2017). Furthermore, the neoliberal ideology produces knowledge around these experiences and on who is deserving of exercising choice freely. It also produces knowledge about who is incapable of exercising choice. When considering the main research question, “how does fatphobia impact women in society”, an analysis of a fat woman’s experience of daily discrimination based on her size was discussed in Otis’ (2020) article, which focused on understanding the perspective of fat female model, Tess Holliday (n.d.), who described facing fat discrimination daily. This highlights the impact of her experience of

fatphobia as a woman. While the article's focus was on Holliday's tips for maintaining body positivity, Otis (2020) highlighted the immense impact that neoliberalism holds on fat bodies and the overarching fatphobic lens when they stated: "Neoliberalism governmentality creates divisions between active citizens, those who can manage their risks, and 'targeted populations', implying those who require intervention in management of risks" (Guthman & DuPuis, 2006, p. 167). This, therefore, creates a further divide between people who are deemed worthy (non-fat bodies, in this case) versus those who are not (fat women).

A society that reinforces the belief that fat is a personal failure tends to situate fat women who outwardly demonstrate confidence within a challenging neoliberalist agenda (Meeuf, 2016). Fat women who offer positive, self-accepting narratives of confidence living in a fat body is an example of the cultural citizenship imposed upon women's bodies through a neoliberal discourse because rather than focusing on the reasons why inequality exists for those with fat bodies, it focuses on the self-transformation of how the self-confidence developed so that others may participate in this cultural citizenship (Meeuf, 2016). Meeuf (2016) further argued that:

By shifting responsibility away from the economic structures of the U.S. capitalism that devalue women and women's labour, such discourses place the responsibility for gender inequality on the shoulders of individual women, who must now transform themselves – from their behaviour to their appearance – to be taken seriously within patriarchal culture. Self-confidence itself, it seems, is fast becoming another commodity that women are forced to pursue in neoliberal culture in the quest for cultural citizenship.
(p.150)

Within a neoliberalist agenda, overweight bodies, specifically women, are blamed for their size, assuming that they chose their body size through overconsumption and a lack of control. Feminist theory allows for a critical examination of how patriarchal social formations impact women's bodies specifically and how when intertwined with neoliberalism, fat bodies become oppressed and exploited (Bell, et al., 2019). The thin body is considered disciplined,

only indulging in certain foods or 'consumption' if followed by exercise and moderation to demonstrate self-discipline, further ignoring the exploration of why there are differences between these body sizes (Meeuf, 2016).

As mentioned, neoliberalist ideologies assume that being fat is an individual responsibility and fails to consider the multiple structural barriers which impact fat bodies from enjoying the benefits of participating in society with 'full citizenship'. However, intersectionality theory would interrogate that having the privilege of participating with 'full citizenship' varies amongst individuals based on the multiple intersections of identity that influence their experiences of marginalization (Cho & Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). Within a neoliberalist system, one's ability to participate in the public sphere is largely based on how successful one can engage in consumerist culture. Yet, many areas of consumerist culture exclude fat bodies (e.g., fashion industry, public seating, etc.) (Adwoa & Ricciardelli, 2015).

Classism is another ideology that branches off the neoliberalist ideology. In a study conducted by Van Amsterdam (2012b) on youth perception of fatness, the intersection of body size and class emerged when the youth were asked to construct an image of a fat working-class 'other' in opposition to a slender, attractive, White middle-class 'norm'. The images found to represent the fat body "as an abhorrent (and therefore asexual) being who is personally responsible for his/her deviant body size" (Van Amsterdam, 2012, p.6-7). Overall, the fat body was associated with lower-class positioning while the White, middle-class person was represented as admirable.

This raises the question of how fat women can make informed, individual choices about their bodies when their social class may be low. In the book *Fat Activism*, which described the social movement of working towards fat advocacy, Cooper (2016) described how social class

can impact a person's weight when she stated: "Many people struggle on low incomes, and something cheap, filling, and tasty is going to win over fruit every single time, especially if you need some energy" (p.312). Looking at the intersections between being a fat woman in a particular social class, there is the idea that maintaining good health requires women to continually conform to standards that hold alternative economic and social motivators (Welsh, 2011). This lack of attention on the structural socioeconomic reasons for weight or negative health disparities highlights individual failings and choice for their fatness (Welsh, 2011). The idea that fatness is a personal failure resulting from poor personal choice is incorrect, harmful, and it holds a top-down lens with the assumption that everyone holds the same social positioning.

Additionally, it is essential to touch on race as an intersection of identity that can add to the discrimination felt by the fat racialized woman. In Western society, the ideal woman's body is thin; it is also fair-skinned, with blonde hair and blue eyes (Herndon, 2005). Most Black women in the United States in particular fall outside of this description, and therefore these 'ideal' views of traditional beauty further exclude them from the societal 'norm' (Herndon, 2005). The multiple intersections of identity from a sociopolitical platform tend to be highly influential on how anti-fat stigma is experienced by bodies who also hold intersecting identities shadowed by race and class, an area that must be further explored and discussed.

Fat Discrimination and Race

Throughout the research process, findings of the lived experience of fatphobia on women of colour was limited. However, a study conducted by Apryl A. Williams (2017) used critical technocultural discourse analysis (CTDA) to examine images and content of an online Tumblr page, called Fat People of Color. This study aimed to unpack the fat activist movement and the

white privilege within it (Williams, 2017). This study found that fat activism efforts and conversations do not often include women of colour. However, the study also acknowledged findings demonstrating that fat accepting spaces of colour are gaining momentum and are holding space for the discourse on the intersections of race, class, and body size (Williams, 2017). Williams (2017) spoke to her personal experience as a woman of colour, who has experienced fatphobia, through the study when she stated:

“As a fat woman of color, I find that my own life experiences do not mirror many of the accounts provided by white women in the studies I have reviewed. The gap between my lived experience and my scholarly understanding of fat acceptance is, in part, what prompted this study. I wanted to know why and how the experiences of fat women of color diverge from those of their white counterparts” (p.5) and “considering the impetus for this exploration, the research surrounding this topic is, unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, limited. However, the existing literature seems to confirm my own experiences as a fat woman of color. (p.14)

It is clear that while fat people of colour are gaining momentum in the fat activist movement, white dominance prevails within this movement and the research found throughout Williams’ study. Through hooks’ (1984) feminist perspective, working for women's equality was not enough, and instead, feminism should be a movement that works towards abolishing sexist oppression without excluding other forms of oppression such as social class, race, ethnicity, and colonialism (hooks, 1984). This belief coincides with intersectionality theory, which considers the roles race and sex play on experiences of discrimination, specifically on how women of colour often remain invisible, marginalized, and discriminated against simply for being women of colour (Biana, 2020). According to Crenshaw (2001, as cited in Yuval-Davis, 2006):

Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group . . . tries to navigate the main crossing in the city. . . . The main highway is ‘racism road’. One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street. . . . She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple,

multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression. (p.196)

Therefore, within intersectionality theory, it is impossible to truly consider the experience of fatphobia on women without specifically considering the additional intersections of oppression placed upon women of colour. By ignoring these intersections of identity, we cannot conceptualize this lived experience (Crenshaw, 2001).

Additionally, when considering the research question of how fatphobia impacts women specifically, there are perceived differences between white and Black women around fatness (Kwan, 2010). These perceived differences suggested that white women felt their partners preference was for them to lose weight and maintain a thin physique, whereas Black women stated their partners preferred they had more weight on their bodies (Kwan, 2010). While Black women are undeniably ‘othered’ in society, it was found that women of colour were less stigmatized regarding their weight in social settings. This was primarily a result of having strong peer community relationships, which helped fat Black women develop a positive body image (Kwan, 2010). It is apparent there are clear differences in how fatness is viewed through race, with Black women being less fatphobic overall. Using intersectionality theory, Samuels & Ross-Sheriff (2008) stated that in regards to race and culture, “Individually women experience their womanhood and various interlocking oppressions differently in different contexts. Likewise, what is oppression in one context may be a privilege in another” (p.6). This further demonstrates another intersection of how a woman’s experience with fatphobia can be varied depending on their race.

Producing anti-fat stigma and size discrimination

The existing literature on fatphobia states that it can be experienced in various settings such as public classroom’s, public places, and inside the therapy room with a helping

professional. The study focuses on contributing factors to the major research question of how women experience fatphobia. By reviewing literature on anti-fat stigma, my intent was to address the sub question of how fatphobia is pervasive in that it has potential to infiltrate into spaces that may not normally be considered. Lastly, this section will discuss contributing factors in order to address the sub-research question of how pervasive fatphobia can be in people's lives by exploring the impact of physical spaces, anti-fat stigma, attitudes and experiences of discrimination.

Many contributing factors to anti-fat stigma were found through a study of self-report measures to determine whether or not anti-fat prejudice, the universal measure of bias (UMB) and prejudicial attitudes and beliefs can predict obesity discrimination (O'Brien et al., 2013). The research by O'Brien et al., (2013) stated: "Anti-fat discrimination has been found to be associated with dominance orientation" and that "Anti-fat attitudes were strongly associated with right-wing authoritarianism or the importance of strong moral values and rule of law" (p.457) and the results produced high discriminatory beliefs around fat individuals (O'Brien et al., 2013). There is a discrepancy in how fat people, specifically the fat woman, experiences the world compared to non-fat individuals, especially when considering the unequal treatment and experience of discrimination. When considering gender, it is evident that women face intense scrutiny of their bodies when they are fat as opposed to men.

In Van Amsterdam's article (2012b), it was discovered that:

Gendered representations of male bodies as big and powerful, others used the metaphor of the homosexually attractive cuddly bear, while again others argued that gaining extra weight with increasing age was part of a natural progression through life. These constructions of positive fat identity tend not to be available to women since they are incongruent with (heterosexual White) femininity. (p.5)

This reinforces the lack of equality between fat women, fat men, and men in general. Bergman (2009) stated that “whether people think s/he is fat or not depends on how they interpret his/her gender. As a man, he is just a big dude; as a woman, she is revoltingly fat” (p.5). There are clear differentials between genders and their experiences of fatphobia which could be argued from a feminist belief that women have historically been subordinated (hooks, 1984).

As well, there is a significant lack of information on assessing the attitudes around having equal rights for fat individuals (O'Brien et al., 2013). The research thus far has shown that there are strong beliefs of superiority attached to thin female bodies. This belief stems from the perception that fat women deserve fewer privileges and fewer opportunities than non-fat women (O'Brien et al., 2013). The discrimination of fat women is so pervasive that O'Brien et al., (2013) noted that fat participants received negative responses on leadership potential in employment settings, assumed low success rate, and lowest rank when considering the fat bodies to the thin-bodied candidates for employment.

While the research is minimal on the lived experience of fat women thus far, there was a study completed in the United States in 2012 which researched how fat women navigate the social world (Owen, 2012). The research was conducted through interviews, personal journals, and ethnographic research. One of the research participants in the study expressed needing to request armless chairs at a restaurant or in an airplane to not get in the way of her seatmate, creating feelings of embarrassment and self-consciousness. When fat women feel they need to be smaller to accommodate the physical space around them, they experience internalized fat oppression (Owen, 2012). Living in a world that values thinness excludes large bodies. It makes the physical space of the world more difficult to navigate when a person must consider fitting through spaces that are designed for able-bodied, thin people.

Looking at academic settings is another example of how anti-fat stigma seeks to control and exploit fat women within the public sphere. Consider walking into a lecture hall at a University in a larger body with armrests and confined small seats that clearly demonstrate fat bodies do not belong here. Hetrick & Attig (2009) argued:

The hard materials and unforgiving shapes of these desks punish student bodies that exceed their boundaries with pain and social shame. Some fat students are unable or unwilling to subject their bodies to the disciplinary powers of desks and must sit elsewhere. In these cases, desks can threaten fat students' very identities as students; if their bodies cannot fit into structures that signify their intellectually receptive status, then they are, symbolically, at least, unable to learn. Homogenous thinness is rewarded with comfort and various privileges accorded to those granted identification as both students and normal. In these ways, classroom desks control body size and thereby produce the ideal thin student. (p.199)

This study reinforces the core beliefs around what is normal vs. what is not in terms of body size and is inherently fatphobic and exclusive.

An additional area within society that causes harm to fat bodies can be psychotherapy. In therapeutic settings, Kinavey & Cool (2019) claimed that anti-fat bias may be experienced explicitly, but also through microaggressions, which they described as "everyday verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership" (p.120). If a clinician's role is to guide a person through change effectively, it becomes very challenging without an awareness of the health disparities that create harm and further the marginalization of fat bodies. Clinicians need to consider that if their clients are striving for health, they are likely striving for a sense of worth in a culture that combines the two (Kinavey & Cool, 2019). Fat discrimination is pervasive, real and affects every fat body differently. Being stigmatized and discriminated against because of weight has serious

consequences in almost every aspect of a fat person's day to day life from the size of classroom seats, to microaggressions experienced in the therapy room.

Furthering the discussion on how pervasive fatphobia is, an article entitled '*Body Norms and Fat Stigma in Global Perspective*' focused on how prevalent anti-fat stigma is manifested in Paraguay, Bolivia, India, and the United States and researchers found that fat is viewed negatively across all countries (Brewis & Wutich, 2011). The authors stated, "fat stigma amplifies exposures to psychosocial stress" (Brewis & Wutich, p.270), and "by early childhood, weight-related teasing and bullying is common. As people move into adulthood, high body weight becomes a strong negative predictor of worse academic, romantic, and career opportunity success" (Brewis & Wutich, p.270). It is clear that from any age, with human value placed highly on physical appearance, emotional suffering for fat bodies is so deeply rooted because the physical body trumps all other aspects of one's identity (Brewis & Wutich, 2011).

The value placed on physical appearance is connected to fatphobia as highlighted by Przybylo & Rodrigues (2018), whose article expanded on how fat studies scholarship has found a strong correlation between fat bodies and ugliness. Although fat bodies were considered representations of wealth and prosperity at one point in time, the influence of advertisements and consumer culture over the past four decades has turned a fat body into an ugly body (Przybylo & Rodrigues, 2018). Although rare in research, fat studies scholarship states that the affiliation between fatness and ugliness is not natural and that it stems from 'historical and cultural positioning' of fat bodies in a society that benefits from their marginalization (Przybylo & Rodrigues, 2018). A common theme in this article is that the correlation between fatness and ugliness has immense impact on fat individuals' social and professional lives and how they access non-discriminatory health care (Przybylo & Rodrigues, 2018). This consumer culture has

a greater impact on fat women than men, as women are consistently scrutinized for their appearance. Feminist theory would recognize that the woman's body is subjected to scrutiny for merely existing in a larger frame because of societal pressures and longstanding inequalities historically placed upon women's bodies (hooks, 1984).

Within Brewis, Hruschka and Wutich's (2011) study, the aim was to understand how and why anti-fat stigma is distributed in social relationships and interactions and how some of these key concepts are mediated by women specifically impacting their perception of their self-worth. Through in-depth interviews of women in the United States, Brewis, Hruschka and Wutich (2011) determined:

The women's level of felt stigma (i.e., self-stigma) is sensitive to the opinions of subjectively close alters and frequent associates, but not non-close others and infrequent associates. Moreover, targets tend to think family members say they need to lose weight more than do nonfamily members. However, family members are actually no more judgmental than non-family members. (p.496)

It is evident that the perception and opinion of those with closer relations to fat women are a significant contributor to the severity of stigma felt by fat women specifically.

Biomedical and health perspectives on fatness and the oppression of 'obesity'

Blaming fatness as a health issue is very prominent in Western medical discourse and dismisses looking at fat women as human beings (Otis, 2020). The obesity endemic in particular is a frequent topic within the literature based on a health tool known as the Body Mass Index (BMI), which is one aspect of how a woman experiences fatphobia. The research question of how women experience fatphobia will be further be discussed in this section, beginning with critiquing the Body Mass Index (BMI). This tool tends to switch the discourse on health as being primarily about weight loss and self-control than about the overall lifestyle and physical fitness of a person (Otis, 2020). Using one uniform tool that has been designed to measure all bodies as

if they fit into specific categories is discriminatory and a grossly inaccurate representation of health. The Body Mass Index (BMI) tool often determines whether or not a person is obese.

Obesity is problematic because it is believed that the rate of obesity is increasing rapidly, and the health discourse around obesity is associated with chronic illness and mortality. This belief further demonizes fatness under the conditions of what is deemed healthy versus unhealthy. The fact that fatness can be deemed healthy versus unhealthy reinforces that the biomedical lens dominates these labels and the discourse around obesity. It is crucial to understand how these dominant systems are interconnected and how they impact a fat woman's identity from an intersectional lens since fatphobia remains pervasive (Severs, et al., 2016). Through intersectionality theory, the impact of discrimination as a result of obesity discrimination is likely to be complex for a woman of colour in comparison to a white woman's experience, because being a person of colour is yet another intersection of one's identity (Cho & Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). Felkins (2019) argued that fatness has been deemed a health problem and an aesthetic problem, making the act of criticizing and diminishing women who live in fat bodies as a socially acceptable act. Normalizing the criticizing nature towards fat women and labeling them as a depiction of poor health continues to reinforce social structures composed of cultural schemas and material resources. Fatphobia and anti-fat discrimination is "deep and pervasive and generally unconscious, and in Western society, fatness signified laziness, ill-health, and ugliness" (Saguy & Ward, 2011, p.55). The experience of anti-fat stigma alone due to the health discourse impacts a woman's wellbeing negatively through constant discrimination (Saguy & Ward, 2011). Puhl and Heuer (2010) argued that "fat stigma is not a beneficial public health tool for reducing obesity or improving health. Rather, stigmatization of obese individuals poses serious risks to their psychological and physical health, generate health disparities, and

interferes with implementation of effective obesity prevention efforts" (p.1019). While this focus is still on obesity prevention, it is clear the discrimination and stigma remain a pervasive impact on fat women's health specifically.

Expanding on the pervasive nature of fatphobia, O'Hara & Gregg's (2012) study argued that the war on obesity of focusing on body weight as a measure of health is inconsistent with a human rights approach to health and wellness. O'Hara & Gregg (2012) critically examined each of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and highlight pertinent points within each area that excludes and restricts fat bodies. While the article explained that there are no explicit weight paradigms within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, O'Hara & Gregg (2012) believed that "Anti-obesity policies and programs implemented over the past twenty years have contributed significantly to a broader societal level of anti-fat bias" (p.41). Unfortunately, while public health sectors typically focus on economic and social justice disparities when considering a society's health, the discussion around fatness appears to be absent in public health ethics or health & human rights literature (O'Hara & Gregg, 2012).

Lee & Pause (2016) conducted an autoethnographic paper exploring the barriers to health for fat women focusing on how structural and institutional policies, attitudes, and practices permeate fatphobia in healthcare settings. Their findings demonstrated a significant disparity in fat women accessing healthcare due to the constant, repetitive experience of stigma and discrimination that fat women face in healthcare settings (Lee & Pause, 2016). Participants explicitly stated feelings of fat shame, stigma, and eventual avoidance of engaging with the healthcare system (Lee & Pause, 2016). The healthcare system is guided by regulated practices and policies that impact a fat woman's experience in these settings when Lee & Pause (2016) argued, "from a neoliberal perspective, policy comes first and this then impacts practice; the

patients are simply recipients of the practice. We argue that we must center the lived experiences of the patients, to develop best practice, and devise ethical policy” (p.12). If the cycle of the neoliberalist perspective continues in biomedical settings, it remains questionable whether or not the discrimination that fat bodies face will ever be dismantled without first dismantling the neoliberalist perspective.

There is a need to identify how biomedical discourses impact the perception of fatness because of how these discourses diminish women’s power over their bodies and rights to adequate, non-discriminatory health care. It also examines how scientific knowledge sometimes becomes popularized and transformed into something simplistic and how this knowledge often prevails and informs public health policies (Wray & Deery, 2008). Biomedical knowledge is implicit in the pathologizing of women’s bodies, centralizing fatness as a health problem and excluding how this pathologizing causes physiological and psychological harm on women (Wray & Deery, 2008). This issue is underprioritized by government policy makers, biomedical scientists, and those involved in the procurement of health care services (Wray & Deery, 2008). Additionally, the reinforcement of this physiological and psychological harm on women remains pervasive from Moses' feminist framework, which believed that women are disempowered and subordinated compared to men (Moses, 2012). If further analyzed through feminist theory, it could be argued that women's bodies are controlled through stigmatizing, patriarchal beliefs that fat women's bodies are wrong and represent an overall picture of poor health (Bell et al., 2019).

The knowledge production around fatness and obesity is highly influenced by the position of power within the medical discourse. Pause (2020) explained the assumptions around the fat body are comparable to how “white settlers have long confused their understandings of land and people being colonized as objective truths and objective realities; fat people have

historically been removed from the knowledge production around fatness” (p.177). The notion is that there are ‘knowers’ of fat bodies, where knowledge is placed unto these bodies and it is often done by doctors, public health officials, and politicians, and these knowledges are deeply rooted in fatphobia (Pause, 2020). The reality is that fat bodies are the ultimate knowers about fatness, and it is evident that within research done about fat bodies, the lives of fat people should be at the heart of the analysis, but it rarely is (Pause, 2020). Unfortunately, the research done on fat bodies is primarily biomedical focused, reinforcing that fatness is a disease (Manokaran et al., 2020).

More specifically, when considering how public health research influences anti-fat stigma, a study within New Zealand found that it “reinforces the belief that fatness is a public health crisis and it seeks ways to prevent, address and eradicate fatness from society. Work is done on the individual health behaviours that contribute to fatness and what role public health policy and campaigns can play to alter or fix these behaviours” (Manokaran et al., 2020, p.4). Studying only these areas tends to ignore how anti-fat stigma impacts those living in fat bodies. One could argue that anti-fat stigma is a social determinant of health and that experiencing it impacts one's physical and mental health and social relationships. Pause's (2017) study found that anti-fat stigma increases cortisol levels, blood pressure, and inflammation while decreasing executive function. It was also discovered that anti-fat stigma results in lower self-efficacy and self-esteem, poor body image, depression, feelings of isolation and alienation, and suicidal ideation in youth specifically (Pause, 2017, p.512). Based on these findings, it is clear that there are many factors that contribute to anti-fat stigma and, as a result, factors that contribute to poor health in individuals who experience anti-fat stigma directly.

Women in particular have a unique way of experiencing anti-fat stigma within health discourse. A qualitative study including 24 ‘overweight’ female participants in two Canadian cities analyzed how anti-fat stigma influenced women’s experience of accessing and receiving reproductive healthcare specifically. This is a healthcare service that would not hold the same level of impact on the male body, furthering the belief that women experience fatphobia in a more direct and stigmatizing way. Through the study, participants discussed their experience with a healthcare provider as having a focus on risks and poor health, often perceived as blame and judgment and “negative, humiliating, and stigmatizing.” (Bombak et al., 2016, p.100). There is a strong assumption that to be a fat woman is to be a lazy woman, and by normalizing this belief through the health & medical discourse, the myth is further reinforced that fat bodies are lazy, inactive and are merely awaiting their mortality as a result of these individual lifestyle choices (Otis, 2020). Adding to the pressure placed upon women’s bodies, Wray & Deery (2008) argued:

The discourse of ‘feel good/look good’ is underpinned by simplified and popularized biomedical knowledge that encourages women to connect health to appearance. In order to understand the persuasive power of such discourses, critical reflection on the construction of scientific biomedical knowledge and its relation to formations of hegemonic power is essential. (p.239)

A fat model and activist mentioned earlier, Tess Holliday (n.d.), rejected this myth that fat women are lazy by publicly posting videos since 2016 on her Instagram account of her engaging in exercise and fitness. By doing this, “Holliday (n.d.) directly combats the assumption that fat bodies are inherently inactive, lazy and sedentary, which breaks the thin=active/fat=lazy binary and thus queerly reimagines and rearticulates the fat body as a particular type of healthy body” (Otis, 2020, p. 172). Fat women who are perceived as lazy and out of control are often seen as undeserving of equal experiences to their thinner counterparts. To dismantle these

longstanding discriminatory beliefs, fat women are still required to prove themselves to others that they deserve equal respect and opportunity.

Fat as a social justice and feminist issue

Fatness and the beauty ideal affects women every single day. Women's bodies are scrutinized for how they look – their shape, weight, and age are discriminated against. There is a known societal expectation on women to remain youthful and thin as they age, which is unrealistic and unattainable. Through this section, existing literature is explored to address the main research question of how fatphobia impacts women and sub question how fatphobia is pervasive in a person's life.

The experience of fatphobia is specific to women and cannot be compared to the fat male experience. Adowa & Ricciardelli (2015) stated that, "Health is narrowly defined within beauty standards that reify neoliberal discourses of public citizenship and control the extent in which fat women experience every day social interactions and navigate public spaces" (p.453). Fatphobia is pervasive to women and bleeds into multiple aspects of a woman's self-concept with the most centralized one being around weight loss. Welsh (2011) argued:

The ability to reject the demonization of fat in one context and to accept fat's negative status in another is based in the idea that one view of fat (the bad one) arises from sexism and that the other (the good one) arises from a concern about health. It is wrong to equate a woman's value with her looks, but it is acceptable to encourage that same woman to lose weight if it would augment her health. (p.33)

Fatphobia is experienced differently between men but also by different women themselves as a result of various pressures placed on women's bodies to implicit items like food. One example was shown in a study that found that, "high caloric foods (red meat, snacks) are associated with masculinity for muscle building and that low calorie foods (salads, diet soda) are associated with femininity" (Chrisler, 2012, p.611). As well, "Gender-role socialization about

health attitudes and behaviours can possibly position women into being held more responsible for their shape and size especially by those who harbor medical discourse and/or fatphobia.” (Chrisler, 2012, p.611). The areas discussed in this section demonstrate how pervasive fatphobia is within society because of the multiple areas it exists within different spaces. As well, it addresses the research question of how women experience fatphobia because the perception of women’s bodies as fat bodies is layered and complex, and is unique to women specifically. When reflecting on possible barriers that fat men face with discrimination, it is apparent that women also experience those barriers, layered with additional complexities. Welsh (2011) stated:

In a society that embraces a more and more plastic and photoshopped model of beauty, women aren’t just told to be thin, but to manage their appearance. The idea of managed bodies encourages the view that if you are willing to devote yourself to self-improvement, you can have an ideal body. Dieting, chemically treated and dyed hair, makeup, a skincare regimen, toning exercises, cosmetic surgery, clothes, and teeth-whitening have all made the female body a site of infinite improvement and modification. Admittedly, men’s bodies are also increasingly a site of such improvements, but women are by far the main target of the diet and beauty industry. (p. 40-41)

Fatness and women’s bodies become a feminist issue because of the unique bias, discrimination and outward abuse fat women experience on a daily basis and it is clear that the difference between how a fat woman's body is portrayed is vastly different from that of a fat man. Feminism supports this when Saguy (2012) stated that fatphobia is experienced differently depending on sex, class, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Feminist theory is looking for women’s equality, however, this arguably is not enough according to hooks’ theory and that feminist scholars should be working towards dismantling oppressions that impact one’s identity (hooks, 1984). While feminist literature recognizes these issues, there is a belief that feminist analysis must start to push the boundaries within research because of the simple fact that fat women experience fatphobia differently than men and to highlight how women are held at a higher standard than men (Saguy, 2012). When incorporating intersectionality theory into this

analysis, Samuels & Ross-Sheriff (2008) argued that intersectionality challenges beliefs about women beyond oversimplification. It allows us to construct space for all who identify as ‘woman’ and challenges the oppression and privilege experienced in the world, creating space through the lens of lived experiences and intersecting identities to be heard (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008).

The type of discrimination faced between sexes and the level of fatphobia experienced could also be considered a feminist and social justice issue through an intersectionality perspective. Society, in general, do not view fat people as people and instead view them as less than human, subjects to be cured, fixed, changed through weight loss (Kersbergen & Robinson, 2019). Since fat people experience discrimination in employment, media representation, politics, interpersonal relationships, healthcare as well as intersecting with sexism, race and social class, there is a need for additional dialogue and analysis of this particular topic (Cooper Stoll, 2019). It is believed there is a significant gap in research on the impact of fat discrimination on fat women's bodies and that fatphobia is "underrepresented as though it is not a social justice issue because it has been framed as a ‘choice’ and more on point, we are conditioned to think it is a bad choice” (Cooper Stoll, 2019, p.423). It is argued that these beliefs have developed as a result of several health myths that remain unquestioned and lack analysis. This level of discrimination causes hyper(in)visibility on the fat woman’s body, a term which is derived from a study on the experience of anti-fat stigma on women’s bodies in North America and Finland. Hyper(in)visibility means that fat women’s needs and desires are ignored and dismissed, yet their bodies are continuously shamed and publicly judged (Gailey & Harjunen, 2019). The experience of anti-fat stigma holds a great impact on the lives of all women, and as Simic (2015) described, “It is symptomatic of the unequal burden placed on women to accrue ‘erotic capital’ in

patriarchal, capitalist societies” (p.30). These experiences of inequity and burden are often always placed on a woman’s body while it continues to be ignored and oppressed.

If oppression and discrimination are major components of fatphobia in the literature, then this clearly becomes a social justice issue, which then becomes a social work issue as a field that strives for anti-oppression, activism, and social equity. While the discussion and acknowledgment of fatphobia is to be considered a step in the right direction, there is still very little information on fatphobia in social work literature (Friedman, 2012). While social workers have a responsibility to oppose the discrimination and oppression of all bodies, it is ironic that the fight for social justice for fat bodies is a topic that remains largely ignored in social work scholarship.

Friedman (2012) stated:

Social workers must become familiar with the intricacies of fat oppression and its specific and intersectional permutations. As both practitioners and activists, social workers must acknowledge and become educated about the needs of fat service users and the specifics of working in communities with a range of responses to body diversity. (p.64)

Social work scholarship should be acknowledging the magnitude of fatphobic beliefs and enhance the idea that ‘fixing’ fat bodies is a dangerous and unnecessary goal. Taking on the form of activism and arguing that fatness is a part of the human experience should be explored when dismantling fatphobia is a form of social activism (Cooper, 2010). It is impossible to actively engage with social justice advocacy or efforts towards equality without first considering fatphobia as a form of experienced oppression. Without fatphobia regarded as a significant discriminatory issue within social work scholarship specifically, the field cannot be considered true advocates of social justice and equity in an all-encompassing way as it does not teach its students about its pervasiveness.

Summary

It remains clear that the experience of anti-fat stigma stems from deeply rooted historical beliefs within a Western lens that fatness is a rejected type of appearance. These deeply rooted beliefs are reinforced by colonialism and the rejection of fat bodies and their acceptance in non-Western cultures. To reject fat bodies is to conform to colonialist beliefs and to then assimilate to Western preference. Over time, the chronic reinforcement of the belief to reject the fat body became a knowledge base for how society develops. It has been reinforced through neoliberalist discourse and classist ideologies around fatness resulting from poor individual choice and personal failure. Western culture believes that everyone is capable and has the same opportunity to make informed decisions about themselves and their lifestyle. When the appearance of a fat woman's body becomes a result of personal choice alone, it continues to reinforce the personal failure aspect of fatphobia. It ignores the multiple intersections that play a role in the experience of anti-fat stigma such as race, social class, and equal access, which is where feminist and intersectionality theory are essential in allowing these issues to be explored and exposed. The positions of fat bodies and how they experience anti-fat stigma, or how there is a lack of freedom in what they can choose for themselves due to these systemic barriers and oppressions of race, income, and accessibility, remains pervasive in society. Without considering these aspects of identity, it is truly impossible to understand the actual experience of fatphobia. From there, the experience of anti-fat stigma itself appears to be minimized by the biomedical and health discourse around obesity being a disease. It reinforces the belief that people in fat bodies should be working to change them, and that if they do not change their bodies, they are merely waiting for illness and eventually mortality.

Ironically, the experience of anti-fat stigma was found to raise stress levels and impact physical and mental health, which appears to be the more prominent contributor to poorer health in fat bodies. While there is dialogue around where anti-fat stigma stems from, how it is reinforced and experienced, there remains gaps in providing a platform for the fat body to be the ‘knowers’ of their own bodies and to name the impact that anti-fat stigma has on their personal lived experiences. It is also largely absent from social work scholarship and education when discussing oppressed and marginalized bodies. This is problematic for a field that strives for social justice and equity for all because if social workers do not consider or interrogate the multiple intersections that oppress the fat body, it is not possible to dismantle the injustice of experiencing anti-fat stigma.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Implications for practice, policy, and education

The experience of fatphobia on people is explored in this paper. The literature shows that fatphobia is an extremely oppressive experience due to multiple factors such as race, class, neoliberalism, fat stigma, biomedical discourse, and policy. Fatphobia is a complicated topic that requires considerable action on multiple levels to attempt dismantling it. However, the positive side is that there are ways to understand the impact of fatphobia and working on ways to dismantle it can continue with effectiveness.

Include fat voices

An implication that would be considerably influential is conducting professional research on ways to dismantle fatphobia or on the topic of fat acceptance. Fat people are knowledge producers and should be recognized as such. Those in positions of research or policy making must support giving fat people space and opportunity to produce knowledge (Felkins, 2019). Fat people must be involved in this process rather than researching fat people without their voices or experiences. Without a fat person's perspective about their very experience, it would be impossible to represent their experience accurately. Manokaran & Pause & Roßmüller & Vilhjálmsdóttir (2020), stated:

It is vital that the fat community is involved in all aspects of research. If scholars are not identifying, brainstorming, and proposing solutions with fat people involved at each step along the way, they are not performing fat ethical research. They are doing solutions to us. (p.7)

The oppressive nature of the experience and the impact fatphobia has on people is an issue that needs more discussion, acceptance, and space. Adequately representing how to dismantle fatphobia must be centered in the voices of those who experience it directly.

Fat Agency, Fat Resistance

Acts of resistance by fat people is another way to combat the pervasiveness of fatphobia. Providing platforms, spaces, and having an open dialogue about fat positivity is an act of fat resistance and can play a role in shifting the ingrained narrative that fat equals bad. According to Pause (2020), "Agency is found in the actions of oppositional acts of resistance by fat people. Crafting fat positive identities, creating fat positive spaces, embodying fat bodies in the ways we want – this is fat agency; this is fat resistance; this is the autoethnography of hope" (p.182). The act of 'coming out' as a fat person and providing space and safety for others to do so is another act of resistance. It is imperative that within public (virtual) spaces, there is room for fat people to assert their right to occupy space and asserting themselves with language that challenges the dominant discourses within science, medicine, and government (Pause, 2020). Without space being occupied by fat voices and without acts of fat resistance, it allows dominant discourses around fatphobia to prevail.

Health At Every Size (HAES)

A term that appeared in the 1960s and is rarely discussed is the Health At Every Size (HAES) framework within fat acceptance movements. HAES rejects the idea of weight and body size as being the primary signifier in determining whether or not a person is healthy and goes beyond nutrition and movement. Instead, HAES advocates for a holistic approach to health and reconceptualizes parts of the discourse around what determines health, often reinforced through the biomedical model of health (Gailey & Harjunen, 2019). It positions health as being on a continuum, with varying stages depending on a person's environment and overall life. It promotes health as a resource and not a finite goal for living (Gailey & Harjunen, 2019). HAES has five principles, which are "inclusivity, health enhancement, respectful care, eating for well-

being, and life-enhancing movement" (Gailey & Harjunen, 2019, p.9). HAES is an inclusive and radical framework that encourages joyful movement, encouraging people to move their bodies in a way that feels good for them, without the pressure to follow a specific fitness plan or maintain a goal of body modification (Felkins, 2019). If the dominant biomedical discourse on what determines health adopted this framework, it is likely to reduce the feelings of oppression that fat women face in healthcare settings.

Health Policy Changes

Health policy should begin to be informed by understanding how and when fat stigma impacts individuals. When the biomedical health discourse frames fat bodies as unhealthy bodies, it reinforces fatphobia. As Brewis & Wutich (2015) have demonstrated, "Fat stigma carries a clear and well-documented risk of harming those struggling with their weight, and we urge extreme caution in the use of fat stigma (both implicit and explicit) in clinical public health settings" (p.279). Throughout history, it has been shown that changing stigmatizing policies within health discourse (i.e., discourse on HIV/AIDS, mental illness) has been shown to improve population health (Thille & Friedman & Setchell, 2017). According to O'Hara & Gregg (2012), "Public health must reorient their health policies and programs to ensure they are consistent with a human right approach to health" (p. 42-43). HAES also encourages healthcare frameworks to operate within their approach as it has been found to offer more viable and compassionate healthcare (O'Hara & Gregg, 2012). Dismantling stigma and changing the narrative around fat bodies within health discourse are necessary to change how fat people are treated in these settings. It is recommended that a shift in the public health and medical discourse toward investing in a healthier society across all sizes should be considered because while promoting

health is essential, and it should be separate from reference to body weight (Thielle et al., 2017).

Specifically, Thielle et al. (2017) stated:

Simplistic messages about weight, such as ones that imply that weight loss is always achievable or desirable, should be disrupted. Deliberate acknowledgment of fat stigma as a health issue and population health threat is necessary for this to be achieved. (p. e224)

Without acknowledging fatphobia's impact as a health issue in itself or as an oppressive form of discrimination, there is no way to resolve the stigma. Fatphobia must be recognized as a problem, and it must change within social policies to begin the work of shifting the narrative, which can be done through educating healthcare providers and the general public on these impacts (Pause, 2017). Fostering change within areas that perpetuate and reinforce fatphobic beliefs will significantly impact how fatphobia is experienced, with the goal of abolishing it altogether.

Recommendations for Social Work

From personal experience in the social work field and through nearly seven years of post-secondary education in social work, I noticed an absence on the topic of fatphobia in general. From my perspective, the field prides itself as one that is anti-oppressive, recognizing structures and systems that oppress and exploit marginalized members in society, yet the discussion on fatphobia as an intersection of oppression is absent from course content. Friedman (2012) argued:

There is very little social work literature that seriously considers the structural nature of fat oppression, in contrast to other sites of structural discrimination. There is also extremely limited writing from the field of social work that positions fat activism alongside other activist movements (p.54).

An area of oppression that I experienced directly as a fat woman was never considered a significant enough issue in society, let alone the field I was studying. The field of social work must recognize that fat bodies are discriminated against in a variety of individual and structural

ways, with the individual impact being debilitating, and the structural impact stemming from social policy (Friedman, 2012). Unfortunately, within the field of social work, the fat body remains under-theorized (Mik-Meyer, 2010), and the limited literature that exists within social work on the implications of fat bodies is centered on an individualistic clinical model on the topic of countertransference when working with fat bodies (Friedman, 2012). It does not yet include literature on the impact and experience of fatphobia, nor fat activism as a movement.

Social work as a profession recognizes that stigma, oppression and discrimination are rampant within multiple populations (i.e., the unhoused, refugees, women, people of colour, etc.) and that they result from structural issues (Friedman, 2012). However, the field of social work as an educator and as a profession must extend its awareness, analysis, and effort to engage with the discourse around fatphobia and begin to recognize it as flawed and harmful (Friedman, 2012). Furthermore, an examination of the lack of relationship between social work and fatphobia forces an awareness of “the ways that social work has both neglected fat bodies as sites of oppression and perpetuated a commitment to the potential policing of subjects that hearkens to some of the profession’s unfortunate historical missteps” (Friedman, 2012, p.64). The acknowledgment of fatphobia as oppression needs to begin in social work education to create awareness around its pervasiveness in people's lives. For a field that I interpret as striving for social justice and equality, I question how this is possible while excluding and ignoring the oppressive form of discrimination that is fatphobia. Friedman (2012) acknowledged that social workers who are committed to social justice within their practice “can no longer ignore the relevance and depth of the need for fat activist work and scholarship” (p.64). It is time to acknowledge and become educated about the experiences and needs of fat service users so that social work as a field can respond effectively to working with their clients with a range of

responses to body diversity (Friedman, 2012). Within a field that seemingly strives to reduce oppression and marginalization, the work must begin by acknowledging and accepting the reality of fatphobia, and understanding that it is pervasive and dangerous to the fat community.

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Appendix 1: Search Strategy Chart

Search Strategy Chart

Keywords/Synonyms	Keywords/Synonyms	Keywords/Synonyms	No. of Search Results	No. of relevant sources used
Concept 1: Fatphobia	Concept 2: Women	Concept 3: Lived Experience	421	21
Synonym 1: Anti-fat Stigma	Synonym 1: Woman	Synonym 1: Lived as	6606	6
Synonym 2: Fat Discrimination	Synonym 2: Female-identifying	Synonym 2: Impact on	1306	19
Synonym 3: Obese/Obesity	Synonym 3: Female	Synonym 3: Exposure to	24, 253	14