

Light as a Rock



Examining the role of family messages and food relationships in the normalizing of weight obsession in college women

By: Vincia Jones

Medical Anthropology

- Subfield of anthropology that seeks to better understand those factors which influence health and well being



Significance

- Presently the troubles concerning women and weight are being handled with gym memberships, anorexia and/or bulimia, calorie counting or overeating.



- The only solution is to develop a healthy relationship with both food and weight

Culture, Gender & Food

- Body Image
- Body Dysmorphic Disorder
- Eating Disorders
 - Binge Eating
 - Anorexia
 - Bulimia
- Maternal influence



My Purpose

- To explore the dynamics of different women's relationship with weight and food, and how it relates to their overall health.
- Expand from Maternal to Family influence



Research Questions

- What messages do women receive from family members concerning weight and food?
 - Are they contradictory?
- How do relationships with food effect the health / body image of college aged women?
- How do one's ideals concerning weight affect eating and exercise behaviors?

Methods

- Participant Observation
- Survey
 - Free list (100)
 - Body Image scale statement(33)
- Interviews
 - Individual (10)
 - Group
- Questionnaires
 - Family messages (33)
 - Exercise and Diet(33)
- Body Mass index Measurements(33)



Participant Observation

- Drunken Fish
- 54th Bar and Grill
- Twist (Frozen Yogurt)
- Student Fitness Center



Interviews

- Type of Interview
 - Formal
 - Phone
 - Group Interview



Surveys

Freelist

- Beauty
- Weight
- Healthy
- Food
- Perfect
- Exercise

Short Answer

- Family influence
 - Approval
 - Who
 - Messages
 - Food
 - Weight

Body Image States Scale

Scale A	Scale B
1. Extremely dissatisfied	1. A great deal worse
2. Mostly dissatisfied	2. Much worse
3. Moderately dissatisfied	3. Somewhat worse
4. Slightly dissatisfied	4. Just slightly worse
5. Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	5. About the same
6. Slightly satisfied	6. Slightly better
7. Moderately satisfied	7. Somewhat better
8. Mostly satisfied	8. Much better
9. Extremely satisfied	9. A great deal better



Scale A

1. Right now I feel . . . regarding my physical appearance 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 ___ 6 ___ 7 ___ 8 ___ 9
2. Right now I feel . . . regarding body size and shape 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 ___ 6 ___ 7 ___ 8 ___ 9
3. Right now I feel . . . with my weight 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 ___ 6 ___ 7 ___ 8 ___ 9
4. Right now I feel . . . regarding my physical attractiveness 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 ___ 6 ___ 7 ___ 8 ___ 9

BMI

- Measurements
 - Digital Scale
 - Self reported Height
- Calculation:
$$\left[\frac{\text{WEIGHT IN LBS}}{(\text{HEIGHT IN INCHES})^2} \right] \times 703$$

[Español](#)

STANDARD METRIC

Your Height:
(feet) (inches)

Your Weight:
(pounds)

Your BMI:

BMI Categories:

- Underweight = <18.5
- Normal weight = 18.5-24.9
- Overweight = 25-29.9
- Obesity = BMI of 30 or greater

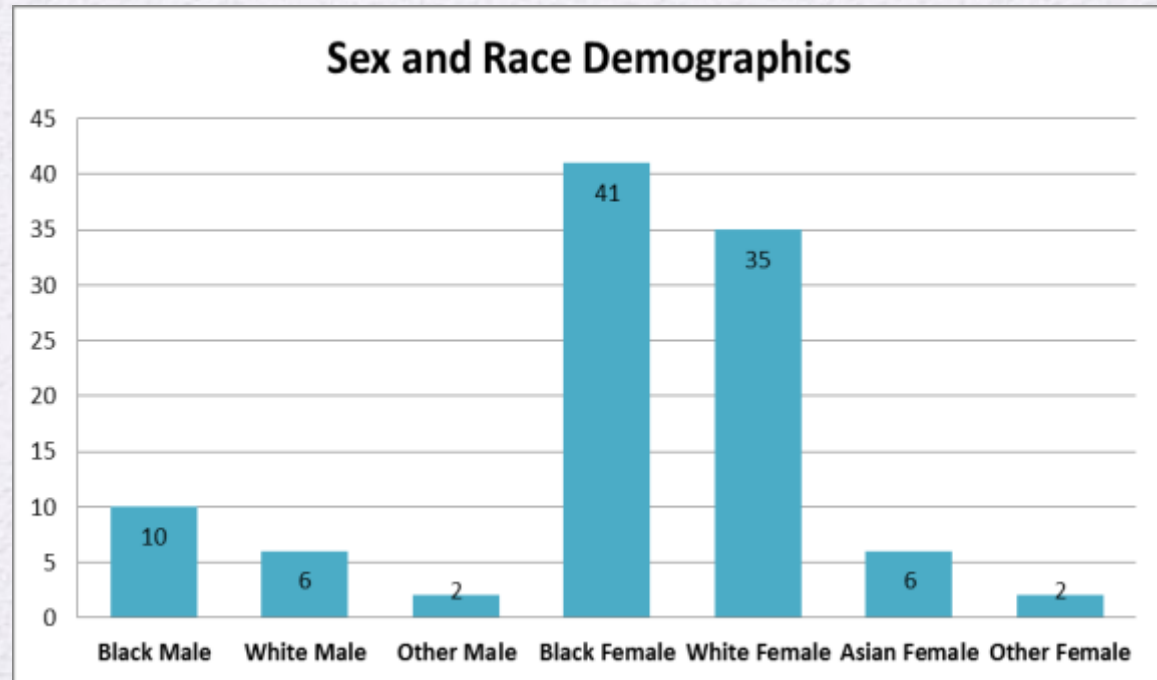
[The BMI Tables](#)

[Aim for a Healthy Weight:](#)

- [Limitations of the BMI](#)
- [Assessing Your Risk](#)
- [Controlling Your Weight](#)

Meet the Participants

- Free-list
 - 102 respondents
 - 18-58 years old
 - 40 females
 - 25 males

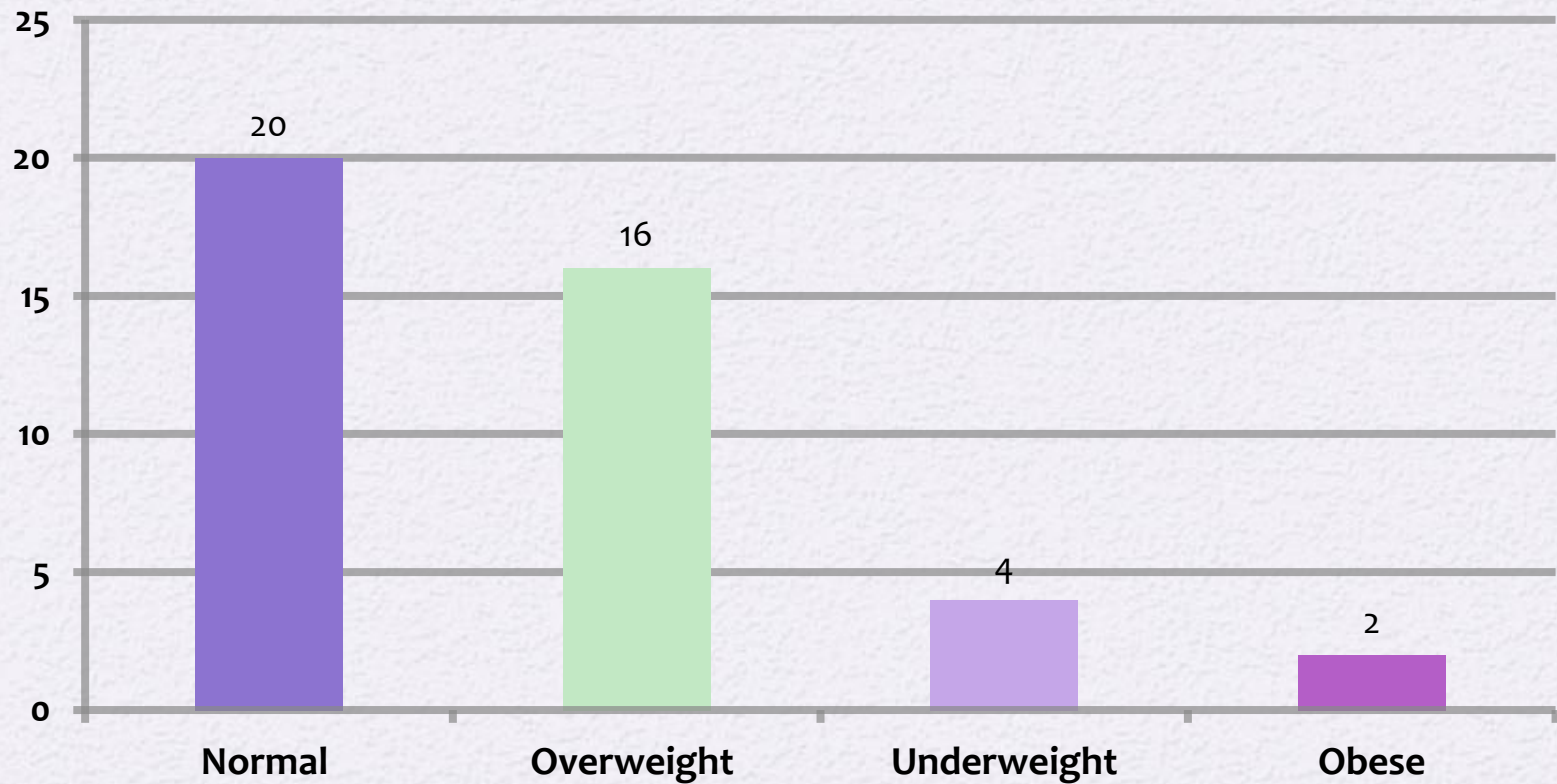


Meet the Participants

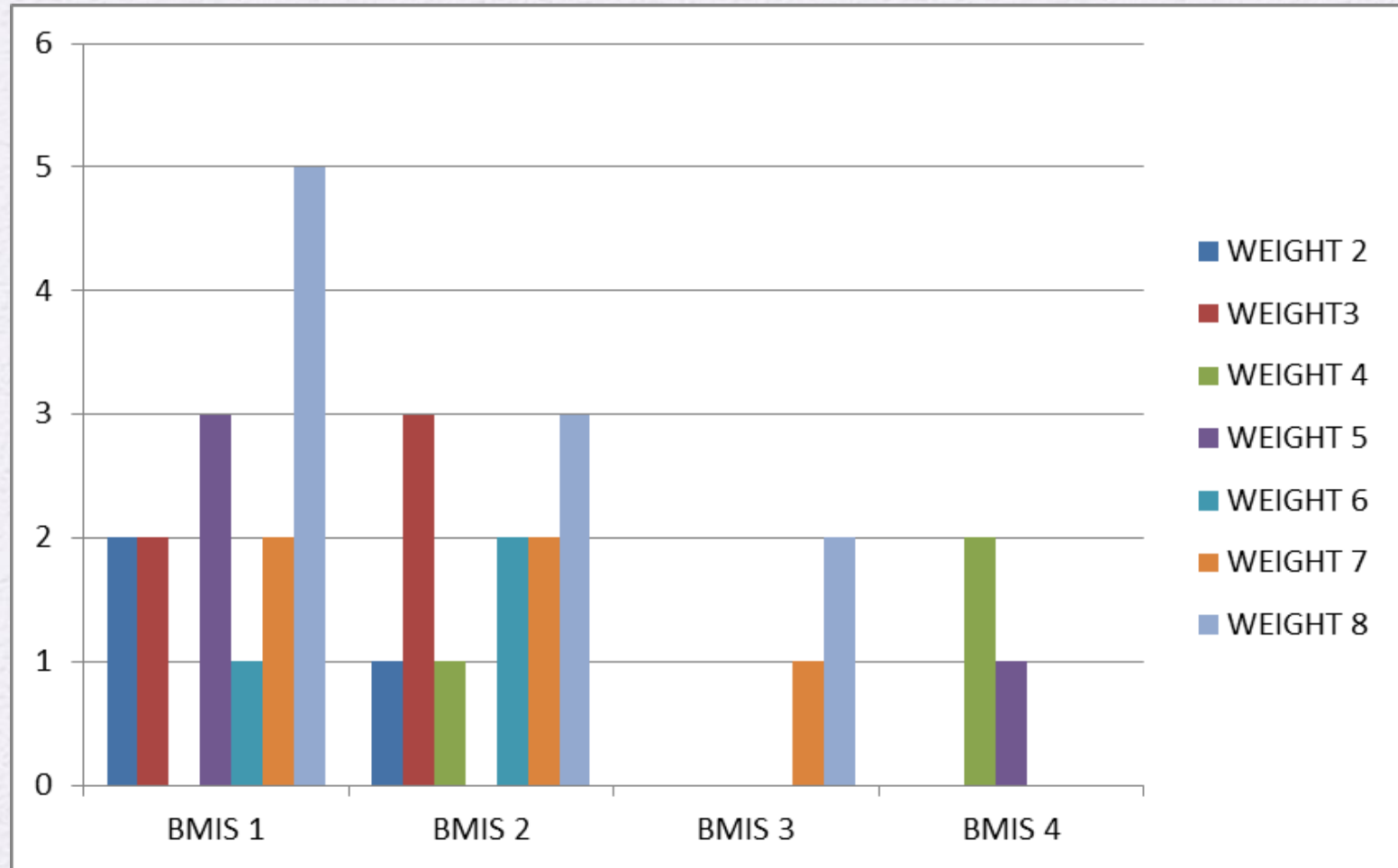
- Questionnaires
 - Health Questionnaire
 - BISS
 - 33 respondents
 - 18-53
 - 27 females
 - 6 males

Measuring up

Body Mass Index



Eye of the Beholder



Thigh Expanding?

- Expression of Cultural Norms
 - Beauty :Feminine, women, breast, make up, Long hair, Nice body (curves, thin, sexy), models, happiness
 - Weight: Fat, skinny, anorexic, food, obese, blubber, size ,shape, lazy, burden, judgment, problem
 - Healthy: beauty, diet, fun, in- shape, active, veggies, skinny, happy
 - Food: Love, obesity, fat, McDonalds, diet, moderation, fat, junk, home cooked, Yum

Strive for Imperfection

- “There is no such thing as perfect but it’s what I’m supposed to look like”
 - Female 22 years old
- “Perfection can not be achieved, but people try to be anyway (pause) I do too”
 - Female 18 years old

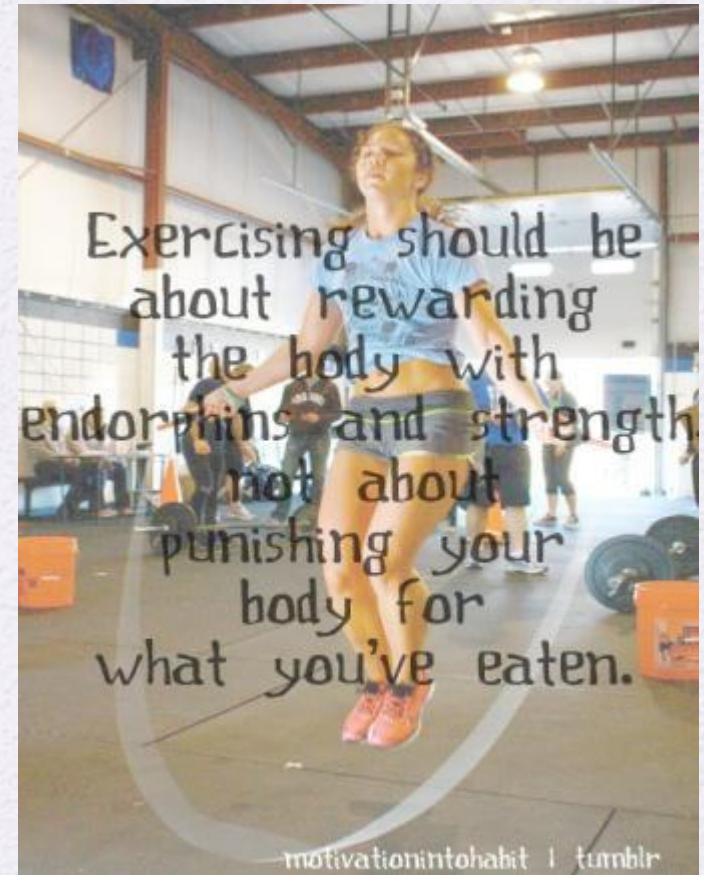
If you give a woman a cookie...

- “That’s going to make you fat”
- “What are you eating? You are gaining weight.”
- “You’re going to eat that?”
- You don’t want your belly getting bigger do you?”



Worth the Sweat?

- Working for Fitness
- Fitness Goals



Drastic Measures

- Risk of Eating Pathologies
- “ I’ve tried vomiting once. I couldn’t, its probably the only thing stopping me from being bulimic” 22 year old female (Black)
- “ I’ve tried it all... diet pills, fad diets, and sometimes starving myself” 22 year old female (White)

**HAVING A HEALTHY MIND
IS JUST AS IMPORTANT
AS A HEALTHY BODY**

Girl Talk

- Expression of Cultural Norms
- Food: Friend or Foe?
- Worth the sweat?
- Risk of Eating Pathologies
- Overall Health

Acknowledgements

- Dr. Aminata Cairo and the entire Anthropology Department
- All the wonderful women who shared their stories
- My Motivation
 - Congrats Mom and Dad for receiving the lifetime achievement award 22 years ago

Baugh, Eboni, Ron Mullis, Ann Mullis, Mary Hicks, and Gary Peterson.
2010. Ethnic Identity and Body Image among Black and White College Females.
Journal of American College Health 59(2):105-109.

Bruch, Hilde

1997 Body Image and Self-Awareness. In *Food and culture: A Reader*. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, eds. Pp. 211-225. New York. Routledge.

Cash, Thomas F., Emily C. Fleming, Jenny Alindogan, Laura Steadman, and Abigail Whitehead.

2002. Beyond Body Image as a Trait: The Development and Validation of the Body Image States Scale. *Eating Disorders* 10(2):103-113.

Counihan, Carole

1999. *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power*.
New York: Routledge.

Hortense, Powdermaker

1997. An Anthropological Approach to the problem of Obesity. In *Food and Culture:*

A
Reader. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, eds. Pp. 203-210. New York:
Routledge.

Hughes, Marveline

Soul, Black Women, and Food. *In Food and culture: A Reader*. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik eds.273-280. New York. Routledge.

Linder, Danielle with Alan Hughes and Rebecca Fahy.

2008 Eating Pathology and Social Comparison in College Females. *North American Journal of Psychology* 10(3):445-46

Massara, Emily

1997 Que Gordita. *In Food and culture: A Reader*. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, eds.Pp.251-255. New York. Routledge

Racette, Susan B with Susan S. Deusinger, Michael J. Strube, Gabrielle R. Highstein, and Robert H. Deusinger

2008 Changes in Weight and Health Behaviors from Freshman through Senior Year of College. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 40:39-42.

Sira, Natalia and Carmel Parker White

2010 Individual and Familial Correlates of Body Satisfaction in Male and Female College Students. *Journal of American College Health* 58(6): 507-514

Thank You

You, yourself, as much as anybody
in the entire universe,
deserve your love and affection.

Buddha