



# Diet Culture & Consumer Behavior



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# Diet Culture: Defined

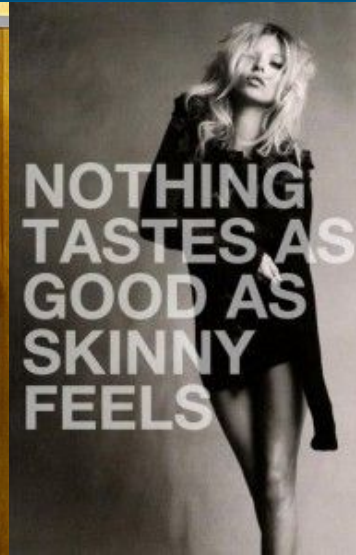
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**Diet culture: a set of beliefs that values thinness, appearance, and shape above health & well-being**

- Diets (Weight Watchers, keto, paleo, calorie deficit)
  - Restriction
  - Food Guilt
  - Food Rules
  - Food moralization: “good” food, “bad” food
- “Fitness”
  - Over-exercising and exercise guilt
  - Exercise to compensate for food eaten
- Photo-editing and Plastic Surgery

# Diet Culture: Defined (cont.)

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# Background Information

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- Misinformation about health and weight
  - BMI - bad health measurement
  - Health at Every Size
- Negative impacts of fatphobia and diet culture
  - Disordered eating
  - Eating disorders
  - Body dysmorphia/poor body image
  - Stigmatization and discrimination
- Networks and Marketing:
  - Friends
  - Family
  - Ads
  - Social Media
  - Influencers

# Why Does it Matter?

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- Access to proper healthcare
  - Fat people are less likely to access healthcare AND are less likely to receive unbiased and evidence-based healthcare (Lee 2016)
  - Medical students report that fatness is often the targets of derogatory jokes
- Societal perceptions of fatness
  - Socialization
  - Fat = bad
- The racist, sexist, classist, ableist history of fatphobia

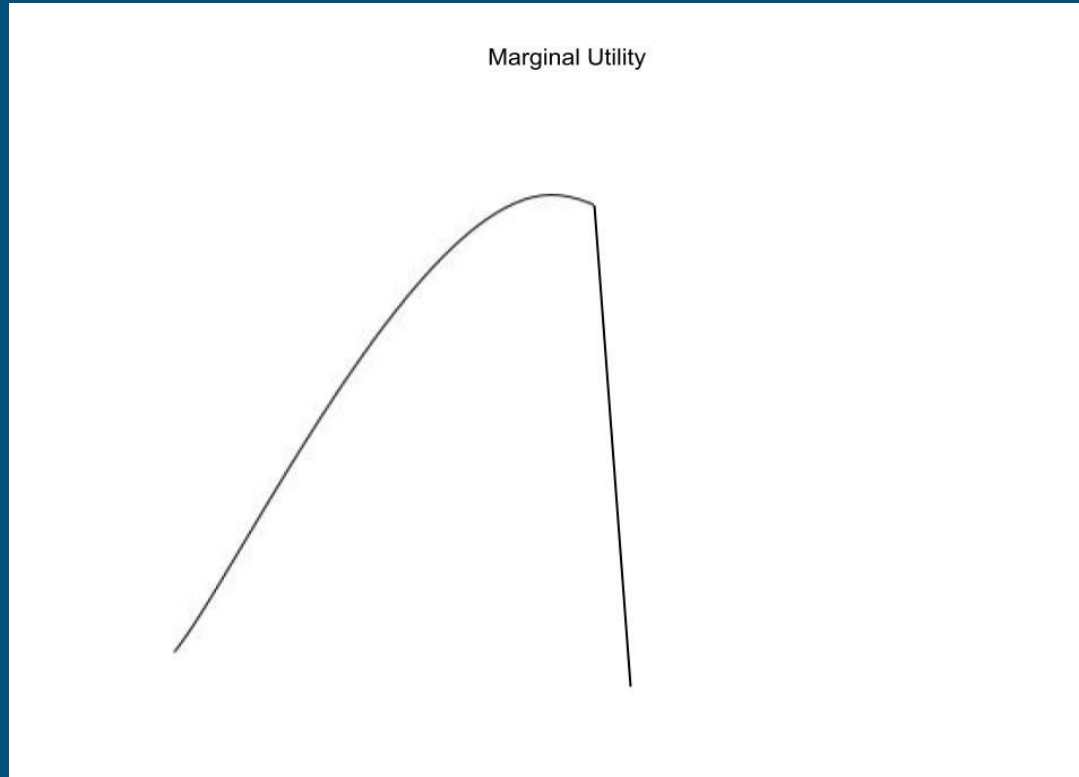
# Our Hypothesis

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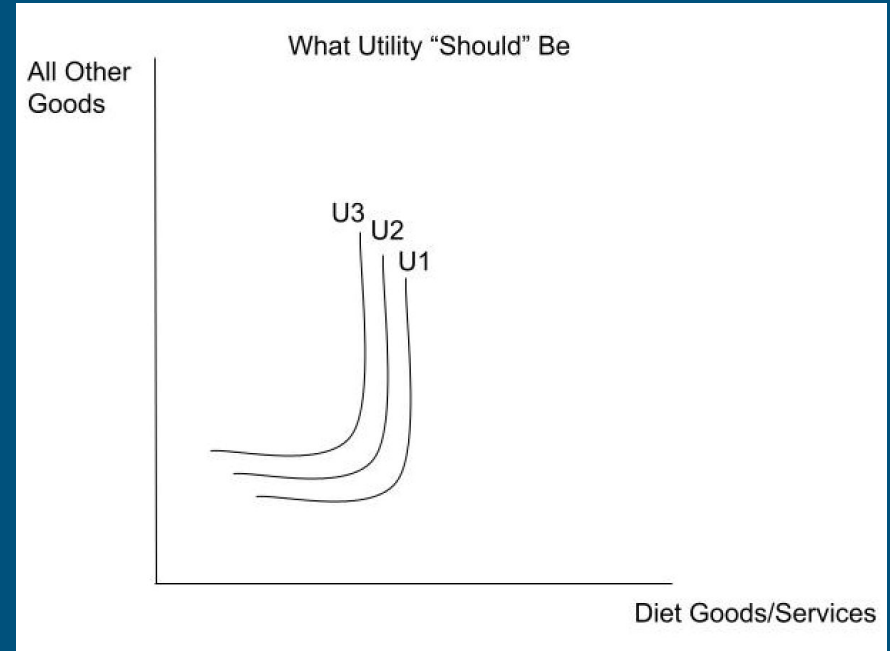
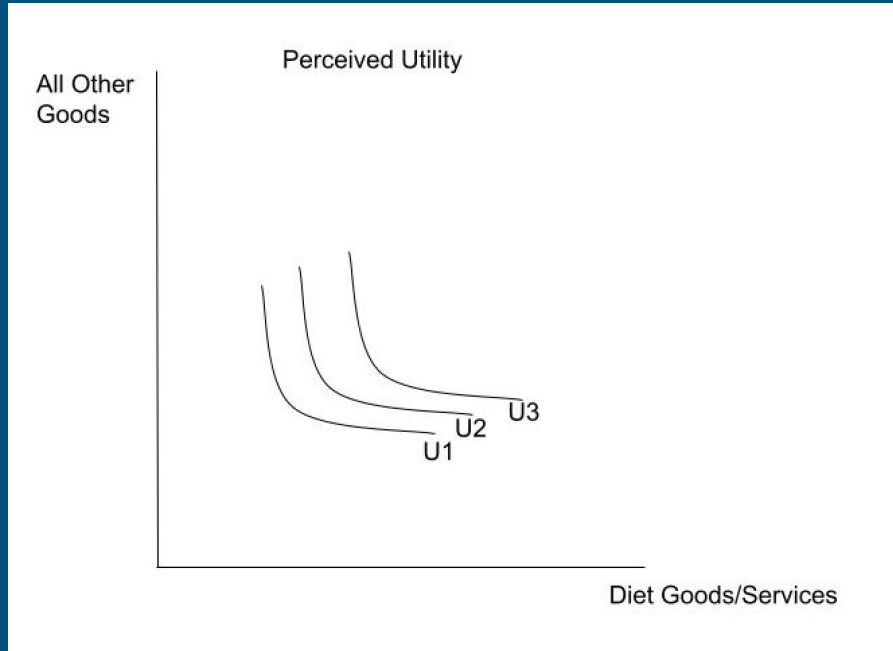
- $MC \neq MU$  in the case of diet-related goods
- $MC = MU + \beta_{\text{Fatphobia}} + \beta_{\text{Socialization}} + \beta_{\text{Misinformation}} + \beta_{\text{Other}}$
- Or,  $MC = MU + \alpha$  where  $\alpha$  = all aspects of diet culture

# Marginal Utility Curve

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# Graph of Hypothesis / Utility Curve Considerations





# Information Problem

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**Asymmetric Information:** When one party has more knowledge of the goods and services being trade.

- Marketers/sellers of diet goods and services are often perpetuating a “lemons problem”, knowing their product does not produce desired outcomes.
- Doctors and Scientists who study fatness know BMI is not a good measure of health yet continue to use it against fat patients and continue to spread the anti-fat stigma to patients of all sizes.
- Instead, fat people have a better understanding of the “fat experience” and can balance out the asymmetric information.

# Policy Considerations & Recommendations

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- Health at Every Size Education
- Educating healthcare providers on the implications of fatphobia, anti-fat biases, and diet culture
- Remove BMI as a measure of health
- Nutrition education in schools that focuses on fueling bodies instead of what they look like
  - Remove moralization/diet industry-related imagery or language from K-12 schools
- Increased education on disordered eating and continued conversation on healthy relationships with food
- Focusing on movement instead of “fitness”, “exercise”, or “working out”

# Future Research

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- Literature review + survey design regarding the correlations between fatphobia and consumer behaviors
- How is food talked about with K-12 students?
- Is there a better model that can represent MC  $\neq$  MU relationships?

# Suggestions for Furthering Your Own Anti-fatness Journey

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## Podcasts:

Matter of Fat - Cat Polivoda owns Cake Plus-size Resale in Minneapolis

Maintenance Phase

Food Psych

The Love Food Podcast

@Kenziebrenna on Instagram

Aubrey Gordon - @yrfatfriend on Instagram / <https://www.yourfatfriend.com/>

@mynameisjessamyn on Instagram

@tessholliday on Instagram

@lizzobeating on Instagram

# Sources

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Burkhauser, Richard V, and John Cawley. "Beyond BMI: The Value of More Accurate Measures of Fatness and Obesity in Social Science Research." *Journal of Health Economics* 27, no. 2 (2008): 519–529.

Daryanani, A. (2021, January 28). "Diet culture" & social media. UCSD Recreation. Retrieved December 13, 2021, from <https://recreation.ucsd.edu/2021/01/diet-culture-social-media/>.

Jackson, Matthew O. "Networks in the Understanding of Economic Behaviors." *The Journal of economic perspectives* 28, no. 4 (2014): 3–22.

Lee, J. A., & Pausé, C. J. (2016). Stigma in practice: Barriers to health for fat women. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.02063>