

A Critical Discussion of Normativity in Discourses on Eating Disorders

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In the recent decade there has been a noteworthy shift, meaning positive change, in attitudes surrounding eating disorders and body management. *Critical Feminist Approaches to Eating Disorders* is a collection that address the structures in place within American society and the approaches taken to create dialogue within the arena of eating disorders. The overall goal of this book is to address the developments behind eating disorders and how personal experiences coincide with post-structuralist feminist frameworks through deconstructing disordered eating habits and reflecting on the challenge's women face to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Paula Saukko's chapter, "A Critical Discussion of Normativity in Discourses on Eating Disorders," investigates the norms placed on the female body and contributes context to the historical change of eating disorders. The chapter begins with investigating eating disorders and outlines the normative practices of what the female self should be viewed as. It then continues to analyze how to effectively make sense of anorexia. The major implications of this research can be highlighted to emphasize that certain pressures placed on female's within society create an unnatural tendency toward unhealthy habits and further promote a negative stigma around conversations that look to discuss disordered eating. In summary, this chapter tried to complicate dominant discourses on anorexia by identifying how disordered eating emerged, and questions the normative expectation that is placed on appearance.

On American Freedom

Understanding how disordered eating came to be can help to define how it has continued to play a role in the progression of society. The influential psychologist Hilde Bruch transformed the historical context surrounding eating disorders, that anorexia developed from a deep need for self-control, and itself is rooted in a lack of autonomy. Bruch defined the condition of anorexia

as being someone with an insufficient autonomous self. Bruch started out investigating obesity in the 1930's and 1960's, and introduced significant research explaining that overweight children were framed as such due to the limits of the traditionalism of Eastern Europeans. Her results indicated that obesity wasn't an issue for a child's biology, but instead, of their habits. A child's family circumstances play a role on one's eating habits and Bruch reasons that eating disorders relate back to the mother-child relationship.

Alternatively, after the war, Bruch conducted research on middle-class, self-starving women and found that they were victims of post-war suburban culture. Post-war, Bruch shifted her attention to anorexia, and once more focused on mother-child relationships. She found that people with anorexia were over compliant, yearning to live up to expectations of perfection. This attribute, combined with mothers placing a certain high level of pressure on girls to live up to their idealized futures and to the father's traditional expectations resulted in detrimental health habits.

Bruch's theories resonated well with the insights of the Frankfurt school, criticizing post-war America for social complacency. She emphasized that in terms of culture, mass production is an agent of minimization and dulls the senses of the intellect. Mass culture influences a weak and easily manipulated disposition. Those with anorexia, who worship appearances and displayed complacency seemed to epitomize cultural and political decline.

Anorexia is generally assumed to affect young girls who have fallen victim to peer pressures, rendering their self-images affected by the demands of the middle-class families. Bruch claims that anorexia relates to a woman's battle with autonomy and articulates women's unconscious resistance to limiting gender roles associated with the female body. This can be unpacked to explain that anorexia comes into play to demonstrate the struggle women have with

themselves and rationalizes women opposing the standard presumption of how women dress. These historical contexts seek to emphasize the pressures that women are placed under and how they come about forming the value they place on themselves.

Beyond Normativity

Saukko challenges eating disorder mobilization and the significant encouragement granted to the normativity of expectation placed upon one's appearance and how society is inclined to scrutinize it.

Psychiatric practices resemble the same practices that reflect anorexia, psychiatric treatment of anorexia reflect the same discursive structures that drive women to become anorexic. It is generalized that women with eating disorder experience tend to be perceived as narcissistic, vain, and superficial. These judgments affect women by placing a negative connotation and stigma around talking about eating disorders. These social tendencies frame women as naive targets shaped by outside forces. Women are subjected into the media representation that idealizes extreme thinness or autonomy. These idolized views of women contribute to the unrealistic expectations placed on women. The treatment suggested, such as narrative therapy, claim girls should acquire critical distance from conversations that define their bodies in order to re-narrate their lives and come up with altering viewpoints of their own bodies. In simpler terms, this treatment suggests girls separating themselves from conversations about how their body should be and rather develop their own identification of how they view their body. This formulates the source of eating disorders on historical norms and contexts rather than on women's psyches and is promising in the discourse that surrounds anorexia. Anorexia is

acknowledged to be fueled by our media and the emphasis of the norms demanded of the female body.

Personal and Political Space

Volosinov (1973) and Bakhtin (1981) ascertain that consciousness is constituted by signs which can be seen to develop a process between social groups and overarching worldviews. Women are encouraged to be successful, the origins to be specific to historical time and social context. This notion of social nature helps to recognize autonomy, the central notion forming an increase in anorexia. They link a personal component and a political component on eating disorders in a style unlike the typical thesis of a masked cognition. The event of developing anorexia is frequently understood by the presumed search of normative truths.

To contextualize this, they bridge the space between understanding intrapersonal voices and the existence of reality, they help to unpack the concept of autonomy, offering up a clearer understanding that autonomy of their body stems from an intrinsic and systemic place.

Autonomy articulates many social and political contexts, creating antagonism toward political feminist traditions. Autonomy can be understood through a feminist lens as the freedom from constraining social forces. However, autonomy can be seen on a continuum, the good and the bad. This contributes to the linear approach of eating disorders, which idolizes an autonomous self with new qualms in society.

Conclusions

The perception of our bodies and what we feed them is conditioned by economic, historical, biographical, and ideological discursive factors. Young women become disdainful and

fearful of oppression. Anorexia and bulimia come along with a sense of strong moral rhetoric which places people into two categories, either a somebody or a nobody. This dichotomy emphasizes the distinction between how these diseases shape people's views. It is one that uses hegemony of our values to exploit people to act under self-control, self-discipline, and individual achievement, done through appealing to others' vulnerabilities. The emphasis on normativity in the media is a large factor when it comes to the development of eating disorders; the perception of "skinny" is seen as the phenomenon in human societies that designate some specific action or outcome as desirable and others as impermissible.

The implications behind anorexia call to question how this disease transforms people into punishing themselves, thereby exposing themselves to serious health consequences. Eating disorders are presumed to originate within the psyche, meaning the root cause of them develops from the mind and self. This exemplifies how discourse in anorexia tends to reinforce historical normative notions, and contributes to the production of eating disorders to begin with. The issue behind this discourse is not of the precedent being supported but of the dichotomies between the two. The dimensions surrounding politics and critiques of mass culture contribute to the critical self-reflexive women and influence their relationship with their bodies.

For decades, people have tried to wrap their heads around the idea that anorexia can take normal healthy people and force them into being prisoners of themselves of their own accords while simultaneously becoming more "perfect." They think in opposition to where bad turns to good and good turns to bad.

To perceive how this relates to feminist critical theory, cultural studies are an analysis of the individual and understood as the social structure relating to class, gender, and so forth. To understand this phenomenon, you must focus on the perception of the institutions in place. The

norms that people place on themselves create a standard for evaluating outcomes and result in detrimental body dysmorphia. The purpose of analyzing this article is to demystify hegemonic structures through calling or creating social change and to think about the world through a different lens, particularly through the field of eating disorders. When it comes to the field of eating disorders a stronger sense of skepticism is called for, particularly in terms of the attitudes and discourse around eating disorders. The implication of this in terms of eating disorders examines that the communication around it should be more open and available for discussion. In terms of anorexia in the advocacy context, it should be given more awareness, and supplement ability to form open dialogue around it.