



Fatness, friendship, and “corpu-allyhood” stratagems

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ABSTRACT

The practice, theory, and critique of allyship have been central to feminist scholarship and activism. Identities once not regarded as identities at all but as neutral givens, such as maleness, whiteness, cisnormativity, heterosexuality, abledness, and settlerhood, have all become politicized planes of analysis and action. Yet little scholarship, praxis, and activism has held people with thin privilege accountable for the role they play in fueling the fires of fatphobia in the day to day. Even while fat studies and fat activism have worked to dismantle fatphobia, thin people have rarely been asked to play pivotal roles in dismantling fatphobic worldviews. In this piece, we draw on anti-racist feminism, disability studies, and fat activism to think about what it might take to become a fat ally. Grounded in our collaborative corporeality as a (very) fat and (very) thin person, we hone the method of research-practice in this part theoretical essay and part action zine. Specifically, we argue that for fat allyhood to be possible, allies need to hone *anti-* rather than *non-fatphobic* commitments and practices grounded in what Mia Mingus frames as “access intimacy.”

KEYWORDS

Fat activism; thin privilege; zines; research-creation; anti-fatphobia; access intimacy

I believe that this is the only nobility to which we should aspire—that is, to be the best fighters against each other’s oppression, and in doing so, build links of solidarity and trust that will forge an invincible movement against all forms of injustice and inequality. (Feinberg 1997, 92)

Introduction

Being an ally, an accomplice, or coconspirator in coalitional work, across differences, has been a central tenet of feminist theory and activism for decades (Beltrán and Mehrotra 2015; Ghabra and Calafell 2018). Identities historically regarded as neutral and not as “identities” at all – such as whiteness, abledness, cisnormativity, heterosexuality, and settlerhood – have become politicized as points in need of critical engagement, deep thought, and even deeper action (McRuer 2010; Sullivan 2014; Worthen 2016). That said, little theoretical and activist work has been demanded of people who are thin to engage both their

thin-bodied privilege and their role in nurturing a fatphobic society through microaggressions, hate speech, “fat talk” (Fahs and Swank 2017; Nichter 2009), and their investment in thin and health-oriented beauty norms (Van Amsterdam 2013). While invigorating fat activist work of all genres has challenged the veritable hatred of fatness and fat bodies, thin people have rarely been called upon to support such efforts or to work actively to eradicate the everyday mundane aspects of fatphobia.

Fat studies as a field continues to evolve in new and important directions. While much work has targeted the inaccurate and problematic medical framings of fat bodies (Ward and Deborah 2019) and the importance of injecting fat studies work into the academy (Boling 2011), fat studies has also begun to embrace a more radical edge (Fahs 2016). Looking more to the *root causes* of fat oppression has asked scholars to consider the shared roots of misogyny, patriarchy, capitalism, and racism as driving forces of fatphobia (Strings 2019; Taylor 2018; Tovar 2018; Wann 2009). Nevertheless, the calling out of thin people to *do more*, or the insistence on allyship as a key step forward for fat activism, has been sorely underdeveloped.

In this piece, we draw inspiration from the work of disability studies, anti-racist feminist studies, and fat activism to imagine stratagems for “corpuallyhood” or being/becoming a fat ally. While, as we explore, qualifying bodies as fat or thin is fraught, highly context-dependent rather than ahistorical, and reliant on harmful binary categories, we call on those who experience thin privilege to account for it. Corpuallyhood emerges for us as an embodied strategy for thinking about embodied allyhood, grounded in the body. Drawing from our corporeal subjectivities as a (very) fat and a (very) thin person, our piece interrogates activism and serves as a form of activism, as it is part theoretical essay and part action zine. We ground our thinking on corpuallyhood by focusing on “access intimacy” (Mingus 2011) and honing *anti-* rather than *non-fatphobic* principles. In our zine, inspired by the work of feminist “praxis-tioners” such as fat activist zinesters (zine-makers), we provide a pedagogical and community guide that can be shared widely toward increasing knowledge of fatphobia and concrete action against its operation.

Friendship and allyhood across size difference

Recent work on feminist friendship has pointed to the profound political implications of taking seriously gender, racialization, class, sexuality, and ability when mapping out strategies for political activism. We know many things about friendship that make it a useful precursor to activist work: First, people engage with activism most often if they are asked by a friend to do so (Schussman and Soule 2005). We also know that friendship across social identities can be a productive site for self-understanding and empathy, political engagement and righteous anger (Galupo et al. 2014; Goins 2011; Naples

2012). Friendship represents a fruitful site of political knowledge-making, growth, and political engagement, particularly for religious networks (Lewis, Ann Macgregor, and Putnam 2013), queer politics (Hunt and Holmes 2015), and Indigenous communities (Leeuw, Cameron, and Greenwood 2012).

Research has not (yet) examined friendships between fat and thin people as a site of political engagement or activism, though empathy and solidarity generated by fat/thin romantic relationships has received some attention (Whitesel and Shuman 2013). Rather, friendships between fat and thin people are often saddled with body weight comparisons (Young, Gabriel, and Schlager 2014), and “fat talk” and its links to disordered eating (Cruwys, Leverington, and Sheldon 2016) and depression (Tan and Chow 2014). Even during childhood, thin people often avoid having fat friends or speak in negative ways about fatness in their peers (Fikkan and Rothblum 2012; Harrison, Rowlinson, and Hill 2016). Women’s choices of friends often reinforce rather than reduce their eating disordered behavior (Woelders et al. 2010), suggesting that friendship can be a *contributor* to negative attitudes about fatness rather than something that expands people’s perceptions of weight and body diversity.

It is thus no surprise that allyhood, more commonly than friendship, is used to think about solidarity across social identities. As Shannon Sullivan (2014) argues, “a relationship of alliance is not necessarily the same thing as friendship,” because, as mentioned above, friendships can be sites of increased disciplinary attention and oppression (11). Developing theory around white accountability, Sullivan (2014) points out that too often white people seek friendships with People of Color out of deeply held feelings of white guilt or as a form of accumulating social capital through “proving” they are not racist. In similar ways, people in positions of relative privilege (whether straight, white, abled, settler, and/or thin) have been known to claim “friendship” with a person from a socially oppressed group as a form of guilt-elimination and virtue-signaling.

Allyhood, including “white allyhood,” can thus exist either alongside or outside of friendship (Sullivan 2014, 14). The practice of white allyhood, stemming out of anti-racist organizing, emphasizes white self-education on privilege, racism, and white fragility (DiAngelo 2018); daily action against white privilege; and commitment to supporting Black, of Color, and Indigenous communities and organizations. It also involves active listening, believing, and amplifying the experiences and knowledge of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Importantly, being a white ally necessitates recognizing one’s whiteness as a point of unjust advantage in contemporary society and a refusal to neutralize or ignore whiteness as a biased standpoint.

Yet allyhood, like friendship, can also be used for personal gain. The language of “accomplice” rather than ally has been put forward to critique the “ally industrial complex,” or the way in which being an ally has become a business of its own that

advances careers, is invested in white salvation politics, and upholds oppression (Indigenous Action Media 2014). Indigenous Action Media (2014) argue that because the term “ally” has become an identity separate from action, it “has been rendered ineffective and meaningless” (2). Accomplice, and specifically “anti-colonial accomplice,” instead points to action, anti-colonial struggle, and accountability. Still more, whiteness – particularly when understood as the congealing of power, violence, and willful degradation of others (Baldwin 1968) – must be continually undermined, sabotaged, and undone. (There is, after all, nothing more dangerous than the well-intentioned liberal imagining themselves as an active agent for change but nevertheless reinforcing the status quo.) Drawing on these anti-racist and anti-colonial approaches to and critiques of allyhood, we see the need for those with thin privilege to become invested in challenging the prevalence of fatphobia as it intersects with race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability in colonial contexts. For example, understanding fatphobia as a class issue allows for recognition of fatness *and* social class as a systematic version of assigning people their worth based on material bodies/material wealth, which sets up problematic hierarchies between people rather than forming alliances between them.

The urgent necessity of examining thin privilege has begun to emerge in fat studies literature in recent years (Laymon 2018; Strings 2019; Van Amsterdam 2013). Looking critically at the internalization of thin privilege both within and outside of feminist circles shows some of the contradictions of the incessant pressures for thinness mapping onto political beliefs in body diversity and fat acceptance (Donaghue and Clemitshaw 2012); for example, body diversity is still often exclusively thin even if it includes diversity in race and gender. Analysis of thin privilege forms a key part of feminist pedagogies within fat studies, as students are introduced to the relative invisibility of thinness as a symbol of power (Boling 2011). A small body of work has taken up the subject of thin privilege as a form of privilege newly recognized as deserving of interrogation, self-reflection, and critique (Bacon 2009; Bacon, O’Reilly, and Aphramor 2016; Van Amsterdam 2013). For example, Lindo Bacon (2009) argues that thin people need to hold themselves responsible for their privilege and work to challenge body size bias, while online engagements such as the blog *This is Thin Privilege* document examples of the daily social advantages received when thin (Nash and Warin 2017). That said, as Nash and Warin (2017) note, thin privilege should *not* be taken as a form of self-evident bodily difference; interrogations of the deployment and circulation of thin privilege are necessary to nuance and politically engage with it. For example, thinness might rightly be seen as an unstable category, as becoming *too* thin can also attract criticism and negative attention, just as gender constructs around thinness change for different groups (e.g., gay men, cisgender women, etc.). As they point out, the “essentialist position in which physical fatness becomes a pre-requisite for having a voice about fat/fatness” (Nash and Warin 2017, 79), fails to effectively reflect the ways that body size changes over a life course, that fat/thin are

unstable categories, and that thin people *need* to be involved in the challenging of fatphobia. Ragen Chastain (2016), discussing the potential harms and benefits of those with thin privilege doing fat activist work, usefully frames thin allies as “people who don’t identify as fat who engage in fat activism” (para. 1), challenging any self-evident sense of who counts as “thin” or “fat” in a fatphobic society. As these critiques highlight, fat activism needs to explore the roles that those who have thin privilege can play. While we do not want to see people with thin privilege dominating discussions of fatness or taking credit for decades of work by fat activists aimed at shifting understandings of fatness and problematizing fatphobia, we are invested in putting pressure on those with thin privilege to be held responsible for *doing the work* of dismantling fatphobia and sabotaging it in all of its existing manifestations.

A deeper critical interrogation of thin privilege also has roots in disability studies, which has offered numerous frameworks for thinking about relationships between abled and disabled people. Mia Mingus (2011) has offered a framework called “access intimacy” described thusly:

I have grappled with how to describe the closeness I would feel with people who my disabled body just felt a little bit safer and at ease with. There have been relationships that carried emotional, physical and political intimacy, but sorely lacked access intimacy. And there have been relationships where access intimacy has helped to create the conditions out of which emotional, familial and political intimacy could grow.

Access intimacy is that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else “gets” your access needs. The kind of eerie comfort that your disabled self feels with someone on a purely access level. (Mingus 2011, para. 3 – 4)

Here, Mingus hones a sense of access intimacy as one person’s deep understanding of the access needs of another. Having one’s access needs seen and validated by another person, Mingus asserts, allows for a deep and embodied closeness and intimacy that cannot be replicated by any other form of intimacy. Building on this, we wonder how friendships between fat and thin people can act as a form of allyhood and build upon notions of access intimacy, particularly as thin people learn how to imagine the bodily needs of their fat friends. For example, accessibility can serve as a starting point for understanding that fat people might differently experience physical exertion, spatial arrangements (e.g., restaurants, airplanes, sharing hotel rooms, sitting in living rooms), and notions of comfort. Friendship as allyship, we argue, is not only a state of political solidarity but also one of intimate awareness of how bodies interact and how the world makes frameworks that exclude or include certain bodies in the most literal and metaphorical ways.

Zine research-creation as activism

We decided to address friendship as allyhood as well as thin accountability through the medium of the zine. Zines are an ideal form for honing activism by creating countercultural knowledge and community. They are DIY (do-it-yourself) publications that are easily reproducible, distributable, and portable. Routinely utilized by feminists, queer and trans people, and BIPOC, zines' DIY quality places control of publishing in the hands of the creator(s). Whereas most forms of publishing require review, appraisal, cultural capital, and networked connections, making and sharing zines requires ideas, paper, and electronic or print forms of media sharing (Bold 2017; Licona 2012; Piepzn-Samarasinha 2004; Zobl 2009). Not surprisingly, zines have been effectively utilized by fat activists for some time. For example, Charlotte Cooper has created multiple zines such as coordinating the making of *A Queer and Trans Fat Activist Timeline* zine to engage in an open access dissemination of knowledge around the histories of fat activist struggle. She writes that “self-publishing zines is still one of my favourite means of making my ideas public, not least because it gives me full creative control of what I produce” (Cooper 2011, 7). In contexts where most academic publications exist behind a paywall, the radical sharing that zine-making affords continues to offer an important medium for activism, including for scholar-activists. As Cooper (2012) frames it, zines offer a “practice of autonomous cultural production” (8). Shareable in spaces and ways that academic work might not be, zines can provide to-the-point actionable activism while also building a community of readers and potential zinesters (or zine-creators) and activists. Zines also offer means of playing with text through color, design, and visual elements in ways that academic work often does not.

In choosing to work with the medium of the zine, we are thus building on this mode of activist and subversive means of publication as well as on the utilizations of this medium by fat activists and scholar-activists such as Charlotte Cooper (*A Queer and Trans Fat Activist Timeline* 2011), Marilyn Wann (*Fat!So?* 1994–1996), Nomy Lamm (*i'm so fucking beautiful* 1991), Laura Contrera and Nicolás Cuello (*Cuerpos Sin Patronos* 2017), Rachele Abellar (*Fat Acceptance 101*, year unknown), Crystal Hartman (*Fat is Beautiful* 2006), FaT GiRL Collective (*FaT GiRL: A Zine for Fat Dykes and the Women Who Want Them* 1994–1997), Max Airborne and Cherry Midnight (*Size Queen: For Queen Size Queers and Our Loyal Subjects* 2005), Ajuan Mance (*The Little Book of Big Black Bears* 2015), and many others (Cooper 2012; Snider 2009; Wann 2017). Creating a visual and textual landscape of fat activism and countercultural worldmaking, fat activist zines “form self-representative and self-loving communities” and challenge representations of fatness as deviance (Snider 2009, 223 and 229; Wann 2017). Yet few fat activist zines fully address the role that thin allies need to play to dismantle

fat hatred in society; as we have been arguing, thin people need to be held accountable for feeding pernicious ideas around fatness as well as need to be called upon to act as allies or accomplices, or at the very least to unlearn fatphobia.

In creating a one-page foldable portable zine directed at those with thin privilege, we are engaging in a form of scholar-activism known as research-creation. While research-creation is taken up in different ways by different scholarly communities, in general it refers to a mode of scholarship that is co-constituted by both scholarly and art-based practice. Much of the knowledge produced by academia proceeds along disciplinary lines, according to what art historian Natalie Loveless (2019) terms “the disciplined university” (28). Conversely, feminist knowledge has a distinct history in that it has always been multi- and inter-disciplinary as well as multi- and inter-media – it is and has been a site of “polydisciplinamory” or “theoretical polyamory” (Loveless 2019, 59 and 60). For example, feminist publications, in contrast to many other academic publications, have a long history of including academic scholarship alongside art and poetry. Rather than creating hierarchies of which forms of knowledge-making matter, much feminist publishing is and has been at its core polydisciplinamorous, multimedial, and activist. Research-creation embraces both polydisciplinamory as well as practice-theory, wherein practice and theory are linked through praxis.

With our zine, *How to be Anti-Fatphobic: Corpu-Allyhood Stratagems*, we are “bringing together [...] different methodological literacies” (Loveless 2019, 30). Written from the perspective of both a fat person and thin person who are both white, our zine tries to consider what questions thin people need to ask themselves to eradicate their fatphobia and approach an anti-fatphobic stance that does no harm to fat people. While friendships between fat and thin people can often be more harmful than helpful to eradicating fatphobic sentiments, in writing across body sizes, our zine strives to use these different subject positions as an opening for confronting fat hatred by asking those with thin privilege to reflect on anti-fatphobic stratagems. The other way in which we draw on “different methodological literacies” (Loveless 2019, 30), is through using graphic design-augmented zine-making in combination with theory. Co-constructing our theoretical and zine-based output, we are striving to play with multiple forms of scholarly and activist creation. We have wondered throughout the process of making the zine and writing this article, what would knowledge look like if every academic article had the requirement of being co-constructed through the medium of the zine? A zine need be no less theoretical than a piece of academic writing just as a piece of academic writing need be no less activist than a zine. This is important to understand in contexts that have historically and to this day demoted certain forms of knowledge-production – including

zines – by certain creators (women and nonbinary people, BIPOC, queer and trans people, disabled people) as less legitimate than other forms. Energized by the work of fat activism, we are honing the necessity for practice and theory to be co-cultivated in the pursuit of activism.

“Corpu-allyhood” stratagems

Stratagems, even more so than strategies, demand both careful planning and plotting toward achieving certain ends. If the goal of this zine is to build anti-fatphobia in people holding thin privilege, our nine stratagems invite a challenge to internalized thin privilege and a call to building embodied allies. Our stratagems for dismantling thin privilege and fatphobia are what we understand as a practice of “corpu-allyhood.” Understanding that allyhood, as discussed previously, is all too easily usurped for personal gain, we seek corpu-allyhood not as a solution to becoming the “perfect ally” but as an embodied friendship model grounded in the body. Mingus’s (2011) access intimacy offers a model for this as it articulates the possibility for an embodied friendship grounded in allyship. In talking about access intimacy as “the kind of eerie comfort that your disabled self feels with someone on a purely access level,” Mingus (2011) points to the possibility of an embodied friendship grounded in allyhood practice.

We understand corpu-allyhood as embodied activism, drawing on the Latin word for the body, *corporis*. Thin privilege succeeds in its fraudulent commitments to forgetting the thin body as a socio-culturally constructed site of value (Boling 2011; Nash and Warin 2017). Snuck in as a signifier of “health,” “success,” and “normality,” the thin body in itself too-often supports thin privilege through these signifying qualities. Yet fatness is never forgotten, including by people with thin privilege who continue to enforce hierarchies and referents that link the thin body to health, success, and beauty while they avoid gaining weight. In emphasizing *corporeality* in our stratagems and in the framing of this work, we are thus pushing back against the neutralization of the thin body, holding the thin body accountable. Acknowledging the privileges and presumed neutrality and normality of the thin body as a social construct is the obvious first step in asking thin people to be held accountable for the routinization of fat hatred that they benefit from. Activism, including fat activism, starts from the body, the *corporis*. This is no less true when we demand *anti-* rather than *non-fatphobia*.

Theorists of race and BIPOC activists state that the importance of striving for anti-racism, rather than being “not a racist” are that the former demands action while the latter accepts and forgives inaction (Dei 1999). While, of course, even anti-racism can and has been coopted for personal gain (Sullivan 2014), distinguishing between anti- and not- strives to mark a commitment to social change that includes waking white people up from the passive slumber

of inaction and presumed innocence (DiAngelo 2018; Kendi 2019; Lorde 1977/1984; McIntosh 1988/2015; Sullivan 2014). Ibram X. Kendi (2019) goes even further to suggest “non-racism” *is* racism and that one either is anti-racist or racist, fighting and opposing racist structures, or being complicit in them. Anti-racism for Kendi, then, “requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination [...] a radical reorientation of our consciousness” (Kendi 2019, 47).

Similarly, Nash and Warin (2017) discuss being “anti-thin” (as in opposed to pressures to conform to thinness) as a positionality from which to challenge fatphobia regardless of one’s body size, implicating thin people in the work of fat activism. Drawing on this, our work in this zine asks that thin people awaken from the passivity and complicity of the “not-fatphobic” stance and engage in the commitment of being anti-fatphobic. While even just being “not-fatphobic” is important in societies that so decry fat bodies and fatness, being not-fatphobic does not address the internalization of fatphobia that is drilled deep into all bodies. Anti-fatphobia thus stems from the commitment to routinely dismantle internalized fatphobia as well as to act ethically toward fat people. This commitment also makes space for the anti-social implications of power and powerlessness, including, for example, making space for fat people to use anger and crankiness as a form of self-care. Rather than honing a savior-complex that asks thin people to “save” fat people from fatphobia, our zine hopes to end the toxicity of fatphobia so that thin people can make steps toward being active ally-friends, accomplices, and coconspirators in dismantling fat oppression without merely resorting to “body positivity” as the end point.

While it is impossible to outline exactly what might characterize corpu-allyhood, as it is not the same for everyone and in all contexts, in our zine we decided on nine stratagems that hone corpu-allyhood. We use the language of “femmes” instead of women in one stratagem that addresses misogynist deployments of fatphobia, because we see fatphobia as affecting feminine presenting people across genders (including cisgender and transgender feminine presenting women, nonbinary femmes, and femme presenting cis and trans men) in particular ways. Importantly, the zine is aimed as people with thin privilege; it is an invitation to people with thin privilege to hone anti-fatphobia and cultivate corpu-allyhood. We will not go into expanding on what each of the stratagems is, since we do that in the zine, but allow us to name the stratagems: (1) recognizing fatphobia in yourself; (2) understanding that fatphobia is internalized and often invisible; (3) seeing fatphobia as connected to racism and classism; (4) being attentive to fatphobia’s link to sexism and patriarchy; (5) fighting fatphobic hate speech; (6) avoiding the comparing of experiences; (7) recognizing food’s many meanings; (8) not prescribing body love or happiness to fat people; and (9) cultivating access intimacy. Any nine stratagems that try to eradicate fatphobia in people with thin privilege will necessarily be lacking,

incomplete, and in need of further incitement to action. Because fatphobia reaches far and deep, we could make an endless list of stratagems. Yet we settled on nine stratagems as a starting point to motivate people with thin privilege to think about how they can start to hone anti-fatphobic thoughts and actions and thus start the lifelong process of eradicating fatphobia and honing corpu-allyhood. Crucially, anti-fatphobia requires deep and committed unlearning and it is a process rather than a point that is arrived at.

In our zine's final stratagem, we draw explicitly on crip theorist and activist Mia Mingus's (2011) concept of access intimacy toward honing anti-fatphobia. As mentioned earlier, access intimacy involves the feeling of closeness and being seen that comes with having one's access needs understood. Access intimacy builds trust and friendship between people with different disabilities as well as between disabled people and abled people. Also, access intimacy removes the burden from disabled people of having to educate others about not only their access needs, but also abled privilege and the social model of disability (which posits that disability emerges not from the limitations of one's own body but rather from the limitations that arise when our bodies are navigating spaces that are not designed for them).

In building the zine and this piece together, the coauthors themselves enacted a form of access intimacy. Making a very teeny tiny one-page zine that could be easily copied, circulated, emailed, folded, sat on, hurled, and cut-up, as coauthors we thought about both the practice of making the zine and the zine itself, as a process of corpu-allying and working together. As Mingus (2011) writes, access intimacy is more a feeling of "eerie comfort" than a tangible "check the box" moment. Similarly, in making the zine together, the coauthors developed corpu-allyhood through their research-practice, idea development, collaboration, drafting, and redrafting, toward the end goal of not only creating a zine, but also learning more deeply about what we each identify as the tools (i.e., the stratagems) needed to crush the ways that fatphobia shapes relations of friendship between bodies of different sizes. This project, in other words, including the zine-making, research-creation, and collaborative writing turned out to be our own practice of corpu-allyhood.

Reflecting on the zine as a whole, in applying the practice-based theory of access intimacy to fat-thin friendships, we want our zine to begin the process of asking thin people to show up for their fat friends as corpu-allies and to take active steps toward eradicating fatphobia within themselves. While not a complete list of stratagems (since we end at nine), our zine stems from a friendship that is characterized by differences in body size and by a scholar-activist hope that fatphobia can and will be dismantled. Friendship, in this sense, emerges in the zine as an active commitment to creating better embodied worlds of anti-fatphobic corpu-allyhood.

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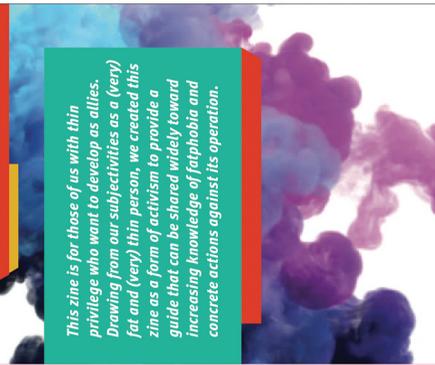
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Appendix A: Zine Folding Instructions

To learn how to fold the attached zine, watch: “How Do You Do: A One-Page Zine.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXZ9Jw4HnJpw>. For a downloadable and printable version, see the online supplemental file at <https://doi.org/10.1080/21604851.2021.1907046>.



This zine is for those of us with thin privilege who want to develop as allies. Drawing from our subjectivities as a (very) fat and (very) thin person, we created this zine as a form of activism to provide a guide that can be shared widely toward increasing knowledge of fatphobia and concrete actions against its operation.

Corpu-Allyhood Strategems

How to be Anti-Fatphobic:

Learn to recognize fatphobia in yourself and others.

Strategem 1

Fatphobia is all too obvious for fat people. Yet if you have thin privilege, you are taught to not see fatphobia, to accept it, and to practice it daily. To be anti-fatphobic (rather than merely non-fatphobic), a person must commit to a systematic study of fatphobia in themselves and others. This is a lengthy process that requires learning from the words of fat people—fat friends, activists, writers, theorists. Unlearning does not happen overnight. *Can you think of ways in which you enact fatphobia? What microaggressions have you seen yourself and others take part in?*

Strategem 2
Fatphobia is internalized and often invisible.

On recognizing white privilege within herself, Peggy McIntosh wrote, “My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an

Strategem 6
Cultivate access intimacy.

Individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will.” The same is also true of fatphobia in that western societies so strongly demonize fatness that they teach each of us to never question where this hatred derives from or to deaturalize it. *In what ways have you internalized the hatred of fatness?*

Strategem 3
“Fatphobia is the New Language of Classism and Racism” (Virgie Tovar).

Fat theorists and activists such as Virgie Tovar, Sabrina Strings, and Sonya Renee Taylor bring attention to the ways in which social hatred of fatness is intertwined with racism and classism, as a way of imposing white and middle-to-upper class tastes on marginalized communities, fatphobia is fueled by false assumptions that everyone has equal access to healthcare, exercise regimens, and “clean” food. Like white privilege and wealth, the benefits of thin privilege often become invisible *Can you think of how your identities connect to privilege in your daily life?*

Mia Mingus writes that access intimacy “is that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else ‘gets’ your access needs.” If access intimacy is the recognition of someone else’s needs as important, valid, and urgent, it can be a term usefully implemented in contexts of corpu-ally-hood. Mingus writes that she experienced access intimacy with people who were not necessarily political activists knowledgeable about disability, ableism, or access, suggesting that access intimacy goes deeper than learning about oppression. Also, importantly, “access intimacy is not charity” nor should it be with corpu-allyhood. It is, rather, the erotic energy of solidarity and understanding. It connects to the notion that we deserve to be seen and recognized in our bodies within friendships and alliances. *What sorts of access needs do you need to better see, notice, and imagine with your fat friends?*

Strategem 8
Do not prescribe happiness or love.

Happiness and love have become co-opted. Born from radical activist struggles such as the writing of Audre Lorde, self-love and body care have been resold to us as part of a consumerist ethos. If you are a person with thin privilege, advising fat people to participate in body-love, happiness, health, and wellness can be prescriptive. It narrows the possible range of feelings people have about their bodies and the fluctuating realities of the relationships people have with themselves. To be fat-positive should never have to mean that you are always happy and confident in the face of the ongoing violence of fatphobia. Similarly, “self-care” can be more expansive and include things like anger, activism, protest, crankiness, and friendship. *What else should be included in a more radical framework for “self-care” for our bodies?*

Strategem 4
Fatphobia is at its heart a repackaging of old-fashioned patriarchal and sexist norms.



Fatphobia reinforces binary sexist tropes and is particularly harsh on women and femmes: Teaching women and femmes to seek approval from men and masculinity; encouraging women and femmes to take up less space or be less “extreme”; forcing women and femmes to look/act/be similar to each other; discouraging women’s and femme’s appetites or pleasures; pitting women and femmes against each other in competition; and discouraging solidarity with each other. *How can thin and fat women and femmes have more solidarity in the fight against patriarchy and sexism?*

Strategem 7
Food has many meanings.



Like many other experiences of life—particularly those grounded in the body—food is a complex and multi-faceted experience for people. We all too often assume that fatness implies a “dysfunctional” or “problematic” relationship with food, while thinness implies a “healthy” relationship with food. Let’s complicate this a bit! *What are the range of emotions, experiences, and connections you make to food?*

Strategem 5
Fight fatphobic hate speech.

“Fat Talk” is the practice of putting bodies down (e.g., saying “I’m fat” in a derogatory way in order to express distress). Fat people are routinely exposed to slurs, put-downs, and verbal humiliations about their bodies from strangers, coworkers, acquaintances, and friends/family. This must stop! Let’s strategize. *What are some examples of fatphobic hate speech and how can you challenge it?*

Strategem 6
Avoid competing experiences.

Self and body-love can be transformative for folks of all body sizes, genders, and racializations. Yet in a society that systematically shames people of size, body-love means something different for different people. When a person who has thin privilege draws comparisons between their own experiences and those of fat people, they are participating in a refusal to see fatphobia for what it is—a systemic hatred of people who are not thin. Instead, we want to champion trans activist Leslie Feinberg’s claim: