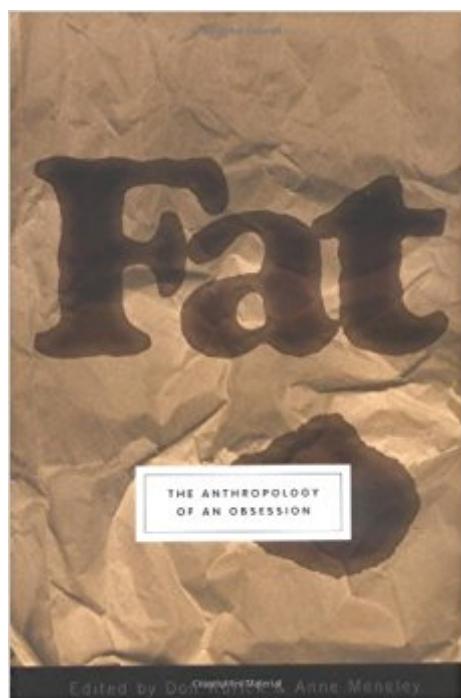


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Fat: The Anthropology Of An Obsession



Synopsis

An eclectic and highly original examination of one of the most dynamic concepts-and constructs-in the world. With more than one billion overweight adults in the world today, obesity has become an epidemic. But fat is not as straightforward-or even as uni-versally damned-as one might think. Enlisting thirteen anthropologists and a fat activist, editors and anthropologists Don Kulick and Anne Meneley have produced an unconventional-and unprecedented-examination of fat in various cultural and social contexts. In this anthology, these writers argue that fat is neither a mere physical state nor an inert concept. Instead, it is a construct built by culture and judged in courts of public opinion, courts whose laws vary from society to society. From the anthropology of "fat-talk" among teenage girls in Sweden to the veneration of Spam in Hawaii; from fear of the fat-sucking pishtaco vampire in the Andes to the underground allure of fat porn stars like Supersize Betsy-this anthology provides fresh perspectives on a subject more complex than love handles, and less easily understood than a number on a scale. Fat proves that fat can be beautiful, evil, pornographic, delicious, shameful, ugly, or magical. It all depends on who-and where-you are.

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Customer Reviews

This engaging collection of essays by academic anthropologists examines fat as a symbol of aesthetics, social status, economic success and cultural belonging. Many of the pieces look at foreign societies or marginal subcultures that, contrary to the fat-phobic Western norm, view fat as a sign of beauty, health and prosperity. Rebecca Popenoe studies villages in Niger where women try

to be as fat as possible, while Kulick and Matti Bunzl explore the world of fat porn. Joan Gross writes about phat rappers whose girth is taken as evidence of masculine potency and financial success, and Julia Harrison writes about the role of Spam in the construction of Native Hawaiian identity. Mary Weismantel probes Andean legends of white fat-sucking vampires—metaphors, she thinks, for the exploitation of Indian communities by the elite. Articles on mainstream Western attitudes toward fat uncover even more strangeness. Fanny Ambjörnsson details the byzantine ways Swedish high school girls talk about fat; Kulick and Thaís Machado-Borges expose the odd Brazilian enthusiasm for intestinal leakage as proof that fat-dissolving pills are working; and Margaret Wilson asks why Starbucks patrons order their coffee with skim milk—only to dump whipped cream on top. The writers wear their scholarly apparatus lightly and offer a readable, thought-provoking survey of one of the most intimate and complicated issues of contemporary life. Photos. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Don Kulick is a professor of anthropology at New York University. His books include *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture Among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes* and *Language & Sexuality* (with Deborah Cameron). Anne Meneley is an associate professor of anthropology at Trent University in Ontario, Canada, and is the author of *Tournaments of Value: Sociability and Hierarchy in a Yemeni Town*.

I might not have otherwise read this book were it not assigned reading for my graduate course on the anthropology of food, but I found it to be a fascinating read. After I read the eight assigned essays (out of 14), I continued to read them all and was glad I did. I think the compilation of essays is a very interesting way to present and explore the concept of fat, representing a complex and diverse array of views. Some of the ways fat is explored is as an aesthetic, as a substance to be guarded or discarded, valued and desired, or abhorred. Most importantly, the essays examine the social, political, psychological, and historical contexts in which "fat" is constructed. I would recommend at least a few of the essays to friends (and have), in particular the essays on olive oil and Starbucks. While I thought some of the essays might be a little dated (the book was published in 2005 and I read it in 2011) (e.g. the essay titled "Phat"), the book nevertheless presented valuable and intriguing points of view. I think it challenges people to think about fat in new ways.

Very interesting read that made me think about many different aspects of the word "fat." I learned a

lot about different things related to fat such as the olive oil industry to Swedish teenagers trying to avoid being fat to the stories of men who suffer from AIDS who cannot put on fat. This book teaches a lot about the different variations of fat culture and I would recommend it to anyone who wants an interesting read!

This study reflects differing perspectives on fat. I enjoyed reading the comprehensive, informative collection. Taken together, the writings gave me a generous frame within which to observe and consider what is going on in my own country, culture, and unique/personal perspective. Glad I bought it, will pass it on to friends. . .

Interesting easy read

I very much enjoyed reading this interesting and well researched book. I found lots of new information about FAT that lead me to ask more questions on the topic of FAT. I learned a lot. This is not a boring scholarly book but rather an adventure in learning. FAT is interpreted many different ways. There were angles and perspectives I had never contemplated before. A great read!

It was very interesting. I learnt a lot about how fat is viewed, perceived and valued in different cultures. I highly recommend it.

exempting the first essay which was both eloquent and provocative, the individual anthropological pieces are not expertly written, and not terribly interesting either.

Orginally purchased for class and it was actually used. Was not too bad of a novel, better than a textbook.

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