

Researcher analyses fatphobia through her experience

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Nina Navajas Pertegás. Credit: Asociación RUVID

Nina Navajas Pertegás, assistant professor and researcher at the UV Department of Social Work and Social Services, has carried out a study on the consequences of fatphobia and the cultural imposition of thinness

through her own experience, with a body itinerary that ranges from her childhood to adulthood. This scientific methodology, called autoethnography, has helped the researcher to conclude that the stigma of being fat generates a substantial renunciation of physical and psychological well-being to favor the normative body ideal, in which those people whose body is not normative are marginalized.

This work, published by the social research journal *Athenea Digital*, explains how the obesity epidemic—declared by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2020 due to the global increase in overweight and obesity—favors considering being thin self-evidence of the individual's [health status](#). In this sense, there are several social studies that have denounced that this epidemic has been constructed in an alarmist way, since there is little research that supports that being fat is harmful to health and its methodology is questionable.

The author argues that, despite the fact that the so-called war against obesity operates in the name of health, it actually causes the opposite: Physical and psychological well-being is renounced to achieve idealized thinness. Furthermore, autoethnography indicates that this is not only rooted in the population, but also in government and health institutions, which, according to some authors, constructs fat people "as a medical, social and socioeconomic problem." And not only that: the research shows that both men and women suffer the consequences of this imposition. However, it affects women more and encourages their strengths to be compromised by their [body](#) weight.

"There are many interests in researching and financing studies that show the opposite of what I explain in my article, even in international organizations such as the WHO. It is not about [conspiracy theories](#), but about seeing what interests there are so that one message or another is spread," says Navajas Pertegás. Along these lines, the author explains that it is very difficult to combat the established discourse because,

although there is empirical evidence that being fat or fat does not imply not being healthy, "there are many people who have a preconceived idea and you run into a wall." Moreover, the author comments that for her the important thing is not the debate on whether you can be fat and healthy, but whether it is ethical to discriminate against people based on their body size, sexual identity, ethnicity, etc.

In addition to denouncing the consequences of the imposition of thinness, the article aims to highlight that autoethnography is as valid as any other scientific methodological technique, since it allows affected people to speak and become "not only research targets, but individuals who produce knowledge." In the particular case of the researcher, she explains how all her life processes since childhood have been marked by an obsession with calories, kilos and the opinions of her surroundings.

The study's title, "You should lose weight, I'm telling you this because I love you," was one of the many phrases that the researcher had to listen to until she decided, as an adult, to abandon the dictatorship of diets. As she herself says, it was as a result of studying the Master of Gender and Equality Policies of the UV that she began to investigate the stigma of being fat. That is why she is now dedicated to the study of discourses on [health](#) and fat or the sociology of the body with a gender perspective. Her intention with this work is clear: "to contribute to making other lives possible and to naturalize the idea that you can live being fat, because our lives are also interwoven with affection, enjoyment, beauty and happiness."

More information: Nina Navajas-Pertegás. "You should lose weight; I tell you that because I love you": Autoethnographic reflections about fatness, *Athenea Digital. Revista de pensamiento e investigación social* (2021). [DOI: 10.5565/rev/athenea.2434](https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/athenea.2434)

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