

arrogant white-coated white men who in having control over the facts seemed to have control over everything else.”

Dilemmas of Coming Out. Our second theme captures how we each have grappled with what it means to come out as fat, as disabled, as mad—to pridefully inhabit differences that remain devalued and even despised in our professional fields. What does it mean to break out (or be edged out) of normative bodily existences and inhabit the space of “other”? As we storied the extreme vulnerability involved in coming out and our resolve to do so to initiate change, we identified a cascade of emotions, both feelings of relief and empowerment as well as terror and regret. Andrea describes her struggle with putting her fat body on display in her profession:

Who would I be? As my body grew larger, I knew that respect for my professional self would shrink... But being preoccupied with my body size for so long and then finally, and terrifyingly, being fat, has also given me a lot. While it contributed to discomfort with my “otherness,” it also informed me and being undeniably fat felt like permission to explore what this could offer.

Kaley shares how coming out as fat felt like giving up power and privilege even as she had started to reconcile being disabled *and* professional.

As I write this, I am aware of the conflicted feelings I have about coming out as fat. I go back to when I was 13-years-old and newly disabled. Marked with difference, pitied and othered, no one looked to me for advice or wisdom.

As a dietitian who holds thin privilege, Meredith describes the risks and possible harms of coming out in support of fat people, given that this move might have the unintended effect of further silencing fat voices: “I don’t want to be the centre-point of this work. How do I show up in an embodied way as an ally to this movement, while recognizing my thin privilege?” She layers this concern with the knowledge that health care’s hostile relationship with fatness means that non-fat dietitians need to do fat liberation work but simultaneously wonders whether speaking out about harmful discourses as a minoritized voice in a minoritized semi-profession can actually contribute to systemic change: “If all the fat affirming, non-diet dietitians feel uncomfortable and incapable of changing things within the health care system, who is left to push back against these harmful norms?”

KAT CAMERON

Weapons of a Warrior

*Viking skeleton, Bj.581
Birka, c. AD 1000*

Viking warrior buried in Birka
with two horses
a sword
two spears
a quiver of two dozen arrows
a knife
tassels of a cap made in Kiev
What it means to be a warrior

Weapons of a grave
excavated in the nineteenth century
beer-swilling giants
bearded explorers
marauders
What it means to be a Viking

Twentieth-century genomics show
a slender humerus
short tibia
two X chromosomes
suddenly the grave is not of a warrior
What it means to be a woman

Carla reflects on how coming out as fat/not fat/fat again, and as disordered and distressed has comprised not an erstwhile event but an ongoing process, one whose terms have changed dramatically since she has transitioned from a professional to an educational space:

Leaving professional practice was like finally letting out a long held-in breath. I had far more room in which to move—to acknowledge, explore, interrogate the hidden parts of me that professionalization disallowed. *Coming out* in this new context unleashed the energies required to *come into* once rejected parts of myself.

Despite the differences in our professional contexts, we recognize that the ongoing, uneasy process of coming out as other (fat, disabled, femme, sick, mad) can challenge the positivistic narrative of professionalism even as it carries its own psychic costs and benefits.