

If Bears Can Get Insecure, Imagine Being a Woman!: How Dieting Language Becomes Moralized and Gendered

Cid C. Muang

Description:

The purpose of this microfilm was to share a foundational text from my literature review that I used to prepare for my PWR 2 Research-Based Argument. I explored how dieting culture and the Western obsession with thinness is an inherently racialized, gendered, and classist process. The use of my stuffed bear (endearingly referred to as Desmond) was a way to transform a difficult, uncomfortable, and deeply personal topic into something more lighthearted and engaging. The premise of a bear who also struggles through insecurities is meant to highlight the absurdity of societally imposed beauty standards: Bears are bears. They should not be defined or hierarchized based on ambiguous conventions of beauty. In the same vein, humans are humans, and what makes us beautiful is our capacity to breathe, to think deeply about ourselves and our world, and our ability to be in community with each other. These standards and insecurities did not emerge out of a vacuum, but instead were deliberate processes that were organized for several centuries in order to justify a certain social and economic hierarchy.

As I recorded myself in dim lighting in my dorm room, moving my bear around on my bed and sitting in a corner to record Desmond's voiceovers, I felt prior insecurities and experiences get projected on Desmond himself. It was cathartic to release this energy onto my stuffed bear, to know that for now, Desmond was holding on to these experiences as well. I hope, too, that those who may be struggling with feelings of insecurity or inferiority are also able to critically step back and analyze the material and historical conditions that led them to feel this particular way; then to ask and think: What if my beloved stuffed bear was struggling, too?

References:

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