"It's Good To Be Thin":
The Impact of Metaphor on Our Beliefs about Diet and Exercise

A thesis submitted to the Miami University Honors Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for University Honors with Distinction

by

Shireen Palmer Baghestani

Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

December 2008
Abstract

This paper is a critique of the way issues of diet and exercise are discussed in contemporary society. My analysis centers around the use of metaphor in media discourse to propagate certain ideological frameworks that are beneficial for the continued success of consumer culture. I draw my data from diet books, health, beauty, and fitness magazines, group exercise classes, television, and my own experience. The fact that much of the secondary literature I consulted speaks of women's experiences makes this paper appear female-centered, although I specifically address both genders in my argument since both women and men feel pressure to "enhance" their appearance. This study finds the overall message of diet and exercise discourse to be harmful to individuals, since it engenders body-focused anxieties and supports the adoption of extreme or unhealthy body-enhancing practices. I conclude by suggesting an alternative metaphor that offers a more positive way to conceptualize body work.
"It's Good To Be Thin":

The Impact of Metaphor on Our Beliefs About Diet and Exercise

by Shireen Palmer Baghestani

Approved by:

_________________________________, Advisor
Dr. Jacquelyn Rahman

_________________________________, Reader
Dr. Ann Fuehrer

_________________________________, Reader
Mr. Wm Eric Aikens

Accepted by:

_________________________________, Director
Dr. Carolyn Haynes,
University Honors Program
Acknowledgements

This thesis has been in the making ever since I was first introduced to metaphor by Dr. Rahman two-and-a-half years ago. Dr. Rahman has been an amazing help to me, and this thesis would not have gotten to where it is without her. I am deeply grateful for the support she so generously gave me throughout the research process. I would also like to thank the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at Miami University for funding my research through the Undergraduate Summer Scholars program. I am also thankful to my readers, Mr. Aikens and Dr. Fuehrer, for their valuable questions and insights about my thesis. Finally, I send a big thanks to all my friends and family who discussed ideas with me and offered their support and encouragement.
# Table of Contents

Introduction........................................................................................................................................................................6

Methodology..............................................................................................................................................................................9

Analysis....................................................................................................................................................................................12

*Origins of a Beauty-Obsessed Society*.................................................................................................................................12

*The Metaphors*..........................................................................................................................................................................15

Implications................................................................................................................................................................................34

Conclusion..................................................................................................................................................................................41

Bibliography..............................................................................................................................................................................44

Appendix A..................................................................................................................................................................................49
"It's Good To Be Thin":

The Impact of Metaphor on Our Beliefs about Diet and Exercise

by Shireen Palmer Baghestani

Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3)

"Burn fat." "Sculpt your body." "Slim down and shed those excess pounds."
"Break free of the yo-yo dieting cycle." "Reveal the real you." "All the taste and none of the guilt." "Reprogram your metabolism so it works overtime." These phrases are just a few of the metaphors that exist in English to describe "body work," the practice of using diet and exercise to achieve a desired appearance. These expressions appear on the covers of magazines that line grocery store checkouts, they blare out of our radios and televisions, and some are probably phrases we have used ourselves. Despite their pervasiveness, most people are unaware that the metaphors that generate each of these phrases contain powerful ideologies that shape the way individuals perceive and enact body work practices.

The goal of this investigation is to analyze the messages that consumers receive about how and why to diet or exercise, and how these messages can contribute to
disordered eating and negative self-image. Although we so often blame the media for displaying images that promote an unhealthy degree of thinness (e.g. Halliwell & Dittmar, 2005), less attention, it seems, is paid to the actual text of weight loss and exercise books and magazines. Not surprisingly, many of these messages contain ideologies that function for the gain of the diet and exercise industry. In the pages to come, I will discuss the ideological narrative of body work put forth by consumer culture and the effects it can have on individuals.

This investigation focuses on metaphor, as it is an effective means of propagating ideologies. Metaphor is defined simply as an instance where one concept is discussed in terms of another. In addition, metaphors are an important part of our conceptual system since they allow us to understand abstract concepts in more concrete terms. We refer to these conceptual metaphors as metaphor systems. An example is the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 4). War (fighting) is the more concrete of the two concepts, being that for humans and animals, fighting is a basic, innate instinct. When we state metaphors, the abstract concept (target domain) comes first, and the concrete concept (source domain) comes second. Metaphorical systems give rise to metaphorical expressions, or "what we say." According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), "We talk about [things a certain way] because we conceive of them that way—and we act according to the way we conceive of things" (p. 5). Examples of metaphorical expressions generated by the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR include "He attacked every weak point in my argument," and "You disagree? Okay, shoot!" (Ibid, p. 4). Notice that

---

1 In order for a concept to function as a source domain, its meaning must be clearly evident to the group using the metaphor. While certain concepts, such as war, are innately understood by all humans, knowledge of other meanings may be shared by only a certain sub-community. Therefore, the usefulness of a metaphor depends on a shared cultural understanding of the source domain.
metaphorical expressions can creatively make use of the conceptual knowledge contained in metaphor systems.

When a concept (target domain) is understood metaphorically, it naturally takes on characteristics of the source domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 10-13). Metaphors therefore create one picture of reality and conceal other possible "realities." This makes metaphors useful for the subtle propagation of ideologies. As noted by Koller (2004, p. 4) predominant voices in a society (such as the media) will employ certain metaphor systems more often than others in order to reinforce a particular view of reality. These messages are conveyed through metaphorical expressions that many of us probably do not even recognize as metaphor. While beneficial for consumer culture, these beliefs can negatively affect individuals, as evidenced by high rates of body-focused anxieties, eating disorders, and disordered eating patterns among men and women (see Bordo, 1993, p. 104).

To illustrate the power of metaphor in defining our everyday realities, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, pp. 143-144) give an example of a metaphor for problem-solving that provides an alternative to the mainstream PUZZLE metaphor. The PUZZLE metaphor generates expressions such as "how can I solve this problem?" or "what is the solution to this problem?" which imply that the problem solver is looking for one "correct" and permanent way to solve the problem. Alternatively, the CHEMICAL metaphor represents problems as solutes that are either dissolved (for the moment) or precipitate into a visible solid, but are never truly gone forever. In this view, temporarily solving a problem, even if it were to reemerge later, would be considered a success. By contrast, a recurring
problem in the PUZZLE metaphor would be viewed as a failure to completely solve the problem.

One question my investigation raises is whether the metaphors in place create reality for members of society, or whether the metaphors themselves arise from the reality individuals experience. My response is that both are true. On one hand, people certainly select the metaphors they use based on the message they want to convey. For example, if I wanted to argue that there is a critical period in which it is easiest to learn a foreign language, I might employ the metaphor \textit{THE YOUNG BRAIN IS MORE MALLEABLE THAN THE OLDER BRAIN}. On the other hand, metaphors often appear to be intuitive, or to have an experiential basis (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 19). For instance, the metaphor \textit{HAPPY IS UP}, as in "Thinking about her always gives me a \textit{lift}" (Ibid, p. 15), intuitively derives from the fact that drooping posture is a sign of sadness, while erect posture is a sign of happiness (Ibid).

This paper is organized as follows: the first section is an overview of the reasons people engage in weight management. In the next section I provide a description of my methodology. This is followed by a discussion of the metaphors I found to be present in body work discourse. I proceed to then discuss the impact of such ideologies on individuals' mental and emotional well-being. I conclude with suggestions for reforming body work discourse.

\textbf{Methodology}

I analyze each of the metaphors within the context of consumer culture—simply, a culture in which products are mass-produced and mass-consumed (Featherstone, 1991;
Thompson & Hirschman, 1995; Bordo, 1993). Therefore, my data were drawn from products of consumer culture: diet books, women's health, beauty, and fitness magazines, group exercise classes and television. As someone who lives in this culture, I also drew examples from my own experience. I then sorted the expressions into different groups based on the metaphor each represented (see Appendix A). For instance, I placed the phrases "burn fat" and "sizzle calories" under the category of the metaphor THE BODY IS A MACHINE. I also came across several expressions which could be counted in more than one category since they derived from multiple metaphor systems. For example, the phrase "blast fat" could be taken as an expression of THE BODY IS A WORK OF ART as well as BODY WORK IS WAR. This speaks to the fact that the metaphors in our conceptual system interact when we produce utterances.

The fact that appearance-aiding commodities are marketed to those who have the financial means to consume luxury goods (Featherstone, 1991, p. 176) makes this investigation most pertinent to members of the upper socio-economic classes. In addition, this study looks at how body work is experienced by both men and women. It is important not to focus solely on women, since men, too, feel pressure to engage in body work (Adams, Turner, & Bucks, 2005; Silberstein, Striegel-Moore, Timko, & Rodin, 1988, p. 228; Featherstone, p. 184). As Lupton (1996, p. 139) points out, public health discourses show disdain for men with "beer guts" and men are highly aware of the negative stereotyping that goes on around being overweight. Furthermore, men are known to be just as calculating about what they eat as women, especially when attempting to increase their body's percentage of muscle and decrease its percentage of fat (Lupton, p. 139). The expectation for men to be strong and muscular causes many
men to take up rigorous diet and exercise programs designed to burn fat and use steroids to increase muscle.

In spite of this, Silberstein et al. (1987, p. 94) argue that women face harsher judgment of their appearance, saying that "women's bodies are under the constant scrutiny of society, including the gaze of both men and women, with an attentiveness unparalleled by that given to men's bodies." In addition, there is striking evidence that suggests that appearances more critically affect a woman's quality of life than they do a man's. Studies have shown that having an unattractive appearance can be a liability for women's success in the workplace (Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux & Heilman, 1991; Snow & Harris, 1985; as cited in Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 178). Silberstein et al. (1987, p. 92) also argue that obese women suffer greater discrimination in social and professional domains because of their appearance than do men.

Bordo (1993, p. 108) also points out that advertisements encourage women to eat very little or eat the "diet" versions of foods, while men are "supposed to have hearty, even voracious, appetites" (see also Silberstein et al., 1987, p. 96). Even some diet books which are intended to be unisex, such as *Eat, Cheat, and Melt the Fat Away* (2003), implicitly favor a female audience through the use of phrases such as "beautiful new slim waistline" (p. 103). Bordo also points out that women's bodies throughout history have faced greater manipulation (such as foot binding and corsets), and hypothesizes that this has to do with the fact that "women, besides having bodies, are also associated with the body, which has always been considered a woman's 'sphere' in family life, in mythology, in scientific, philosophical, and religious ideology" (p. 143).
In short, one should be aware that women face tremendous pressure to be thin, and some believe that this pressure is unparalleled by what men experience. Nevertheless, it is important to address both sexes in this investigation since both women and men are compelled to engage in body work and do so extensively. In instances throughout this paper where women's experience is highlighted, it should not be assumed that men do not or could not have the same or similar experience.

Analysis

Origins of a Beauty-Obsessed Society

The emphasis placed on appearances arises from the modern belief that "true pleasure [can] be obtained by making oneself pleasant to others" (Susman, 1979, p. 221; as cited in Featherstone, 1991 p. 189). While part of maintaining this "pleasantness" is in how a person acts, another component is in the way one looks. Lupton (1996, p. 140) argues that in the present day the body has come to be viewed as a commodity that must be "as conventionally attractive as possible to maximize its exchange value." Added to this is the fact that public space has come to be organized in such a way that individuals are on-display, increasing opportunities to be evaluated on physical appearance (Featherstone, 1991, p. 173). How one looks is also used to convey one's identity through the choices of clothing one wears, make-up, nail polish, and tanning. Presenting an appearance that is accepted by others is an important part of maintaining face in today's society.

The beauty ideal for both men and women has become increasingly difficult to attain, as the female ideal grows thinner (Bordo, 1993, p. 202), and the male ideal more
muscular (Adams et al., 2005, p. 272). Female beauty is defined in terms of thinness and youthfulness (Silberstein et al., 1987, p. 92; Lupton, 1996, p. 137; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995), though this investigation focuses on thinness. In addition to being thin, the ideal body is tight, firm, and without bulges or flab (Bordo, 1993, p. 189; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995, p. 143; and Silberstein et al., 1987, p. 97). Muscle tone is desirable, but only up to a point; being overly muscular is perceived as "unfeminine" (Markula, 1995). The ideal male physique is similarly lean, but places more of an emphasis on being muscular (Lupton, 1996, p. 139). Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000; as cited in Adams et al., 2005, p. 272) observe that muscularity is important to males since it has become more central in defining masculinity over the years.

Despite there being a backlash in recent years among female celebrities wanting to promote a healthier, more realistic body type, our culture still eschews wiggly flesh and flab, likely because it is a sign of aging. For instance, actress Queen Latifah whose Jenny Craig endorsement focuses on "a healthy lifestyle rather than getting into a specific dress size" (http://www.jennycraig.com/corporate/media/news/detail/401133), may be larger and more curvaceous, but she never appears flabby. Even if a curvy figure becomes the standard, women are likely to still feel the need to tone their bodies and maintain a youthful appearance.

According to Ogden (2003), "The dieting industry creates a need for itself by being part of the media which perpetuate the stereotypes associated with body size," equating thinness with a "wealth of positive attributes" (p. 108). Moreover, consumer culture fosters a belief that beauty is the key to happiness (Featherstone, 1991, p. 178). These beliefs compel many individuals to engage in body work, even if they are not
overweight (Ogden, p. 110; Featherstone, p. 178). Consumers are led to believe that any physical imperfection is fixable, and therefore one must never "settle" for being unattractive. This environment creates a ripe market for the sale of beauty-enhancing commodities, including weight-loss and body-sculpting products.

Also, the fact that prescriptions for being healthy (Hodgetts, Bolam, & Stephens, 2005, p. 130) and beauty-enhancing products (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995, p. 143) are readily available makes individuals more "responsible" for taking care of their health and appearance. In our society it is seen as normal for people to engage in activities such as going to the gym (Hodgetts et al., 2005, p. 130) and following a healthy diet (Lupton, 1996, p. 148). Choosing to adopt the consumerist mindset is constructed as virtuous, a sign of "being in control" (Ogden, 2003, p. 108). Our culture promotes the active resistance of aging and weight gain for women, and weight gain and muscle loss for men through the valorization of choosing one's destiny (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995, p. 144).

Fitness magazines act as "health authorities" by disseminating health and beauty knowledge to the public. Madden and Chamberlain (2004) identify the predominant discourses in women's magazines which include the moral discourse (p. 588), the biomedical (p. 590) and scientific (p. 591) discourses, and the discourse of beauty and health (p. 593). No doubt, these discourses are probably similar to those contained in men's magazines. The moral discourse stresses individual responsibility for one's own health and the importance of making the "right" choices. The biomedical discourse paints the body as a machine in need of expert care, while the scientific discourse depicts scientifically-proven advice as the only trustworthy information. Lastly, the discourse of
beauty and health implies that all women should want to be more beautiful, and that beauty is attainable through health. These discourses compel individuals to stay up-to-date on the latest health knowledge and consumer health-enhancing commodities.

The discourse of achieving beauty through health has certainly been effective in promoting body work practices. According to a marketing survey conducted by Eckerd/Glamour, younger women are more likely to engage in health-beneficial practices such as "eating right" in order to enhance their appearance rather than improve their health (Grossman & Fried, 1998, ¶ 4). Furthermore, the importance placed on being healthy and looking beautiful may cause a greater number of individuals to feel overweight than otherwise would. A number of studies report that a majority of women perceive themselves as overweight, although only a minority actually are (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 181; Silberstein et al., 1987, p. 93).

The Metaphors

*Goodness is Beauty.* The metaphor GOODNESS IS BEAUTY is different from the ideology "What is beautiful is good," which simply means that individuals with an attractive appearance are stereotyped more positively. GOODNESS IS BEAUTY actually suggests that goodness and beauty are linked in our minds so that what is perceived as beautiful is thought to be inherently good (see Lakoff, 1996, p. 264). Ugliness is likewise associated with evil and immorality—hence the depiction of villains as monsters and hideous beasts. The GOODNESS IS BEAUTY metaphor serves to reinforce the ideology that "What is beautiful is good" by solidifying our conceptual link between beauty and morality.
Children learn to associate goodness with beauty at a very young age, and, as they grow into adults, appearance becomes an integral part of their identity. Take, for example, the Disney movie *Cinderella* (1950). Forced to work as a maid for her evil stepmother and stepsisters, Cinderella wears rags and is never permitted to dress up and attend parties. One evening, a fairy godmother appears in Cinderella's room and gives her a dress and transportation to a royal ball being held that night. When Cinderella enters the ball, the partygoers are stunned by her breathtaking beauty. The Prince, too, is awestruck and without saying a word to her, falls in love with her. She leaves at the stroke of twelve, before he has a chance to find out where she lives. As Cinderella runs to her carriage, she leaves behind one of her glass slippers, and the Prince takes it in hopes he will be able to match it to her foot and find her. The next day, the Prince arrives at Cinderella's house. Each of her stepsisters tries on the glass slipper, but their feet are much bigger than Cinderella's dainty, delicate ones. When the Prince finds out Cinderella is indeed the woman from the ball, the two marry and live happily ever after.

Disney's depiction of this story demonstrates the cultural importance of beauty in several ways. First, there is the obvious distinction between Cinderella, who is kind and good, and her stepmother and stepsisters, who are wicked and evil. The fact that Cinderella is so beautiful that the Prince falls in love with her on the spot is not a mere coincidence, but the result of the very powerful metaphor GOODNESS IS BEAUTY. The ugliness of Cinderella's stepsisters' character is paralleled by their physical ugliness conveyed by the enormity of their feet.

One could argue that it is Cinderella's inner beauty that captivates the Prince's attention at the ball, while the ugliness of her stepsisters is a consequence of their evil
souls. This does not change the fact that Cinderella's beauty is the reason the Prince chooses her at the ball. Furthermore, young children probably do not distinguish between inner and outer beauty. Instead, they see a correlation between Cinderella's kind-heartedness and her beauty, her ability to triumph over her evil stepsisters and her beauty. Young girls want to be beautiful—they do not want to be ugly like Cinderella's wicked stepsisters. This is just one of the ways girls become socialized to feel that their self-worth is largely based on their appearance.

As in Cinderella, one's beauty and physical appearance is seen "as a symbol for the emotional, moral, or spiritual state" of an individual (Bordo, 1993, p. 193). In one woman's point of view, (referenced in Spitzack, 1993, p. 66) outer beauty is symbolic of other positive attributes such as "liking oneself" which in itself implies that there are inner qualities to like about oneself:

If you're thin...you just take better care of yourself...you'd do your hair in a nice way and wear good make-up because you'd like yourself more...and all that will help you to seem more confident in yourself, and that right there will get your foot into many doors.

For this woman, looking good on the outside lets others know that she likes herself on the inside. In this way, physical beauty once again is thought to represent positive inner qualities.

Weight Gain is Up. When we speak about weight gain or loss, we usually speak of it in terms of up or down. This is due to the fact that weight is something we quantify,
and quantities are oftentimes conceptualized through spatial metaphors (LESS IS DOWN/MORE IS UP). This metaphor yields the following phrases:

(i) She got down to her high school dress size.
(ii) I can tell she has really slimmed down.
(iii) Whenever I eat sweets, I balloon up.
(iv) Her weight went up over the holidays.
(v) Drop pounds effortlessly!

Here there is a conflict of values, where the metaphor WEIGHT GAIN IS UP conflicts with the metaphor GOOD IS UP, since for women, gaining weight has a negative connotation. This conflict is resolved by the fact that the metaphor WEIGHT GAIN IS UP is prioritized over GOOD IS UP. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 23) hypothesize that MORE IS UP, the metaphor from which WEIGHT GAIN IS UP stems, "has the highest priority since it has the clearest physical basis."

An alternate metaphor used to describe weight gain or loss is BODY FAT IS A GARMENT. This metaphor also builds on the fact that we conceptualize weight as a quantity. An analogy is drawn between the wearing of clothing and the "wearing" of fat—both result in a greater quantity of substance being "worn" by the individual.

(i) He finally shed those last fifteen pounds.
(ii) I have put on quite a bit of weight since we last met.
(iii) Many new moms have trouble taking off the pregnancy weight.
(iv) Peel off those excess pounds!
The metaphors BODY FAT IS A GARMENT and WEIGHT GAIN IS UP are coherent since they both operate on the assumption that weight is quantifiable. Therefore expressions employing both metaphors can be used in the same sentence, such as "Lose weight and keep it off." The statement "more of me to love" runs counter to the cultural value that women should be thin in order to be liked.

The Body is a Work of Art. The BODY IS A WORK OF ART metaphor is an extension of the metaphor THE BODY IS A SHAPEABLE OBJECT, since the shapeable object metaphor is implicit in the work of art metaphor. The similarities between the two include the fact that both objects and works of art are observable from the outside and can be manipulated to look a certain way. THE BODY IS A WORK OF ART metaphor goes further to capture the aesthetic importance our society places on the body. It is likely that we have adopted this metaphor in part because of our familiarity with sculptures that glorify the body. The result is that individuals project their knowledge of artwork onto how they perceive their own bodies, therefore viewing them as "plastic", non-feeling, moldable entities that can be made to look perfect, if the right amount of effort is made (Ogden, 2003, p. 133).

Moreover, this way of conceptualizing the body fosters a belief that one's body is meant to be looked at.

The view of the body as an object is so culturally entrenched that, according to Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), women assume the role of outside observer, judge, and critic of their own bodies. This theory could reasonably be applied to men since men also engage in efforts to sculpt their body and perfect the way others see them. For example, actor John Travolta, after training for the movie Staying Alive, is
quoted as saying, "I now look at bodies almost like pieces of clay that can be molded" (in Bordo, 1993, p. 246).

Many aerobics classes are focused on burning fat in order to reveal the tone and definition of the muscle underneath. The focus on "toning" emerged in the 1980s, where, for women, being thin was not enough—bodies were also expected to be tight and smooth (Bordo, 1993, p. 189). As a result, aerobics classes provide exercises designed primarily to sculpt the body rather than increase general fitness (Markula, 1995, p. 433). This objective of exercise classes is often reflected in their name, such as "Body Pump™" (www.bodypump.org) and "Cardio Blast" (http://www.units.muohio.edu/rsp/recsports/groupfitness/programs.html#C Blast) which refers to "blasting" excess fat. One instructor teaching a pre-Fourth of July class I attended remarked that she was targeting the arms "because everyone was going to be wearing tank tops and sleeveless shirts tomorrow."

Our association of the body with an object is exemplified through the practice of "spot training" (Markula, 1995, p. 432), and is captured in the title of Prevention's regular column "Body By Design." Ideal bodies are said to be "ripped," "chiseled," "defined," and "sculpted," and magazines boast promises such as "Fix problem areas," "Whittle your waistline" or "Trim fat." As one female body builder said, "It's up to you to do the chiseling; you become the master sculptress" (Bordo, 1993, p. 152).

A common theme among adjectives for the ideal body is that they connote destruction. This is due to the fact that we also speak about weight loss in terms of war metaphors, where fat is the enemy target. These are a class of expressions that derive from the metaphor THE BODY IS A WORK OF ART and BODY WORK IS WAR:

(i) *Whip* your body into shape.
(ii) Banish your belly.

(iii) Blast away fat.

The Real-Me Metaphor: The REAL-ME metaphor is derived from the DIVIDED-PERSON metaphor. Lakoff (1997) proposes that through the DIVIDED-PERSON metaphor, we conceptualize ourselves as being composed of one Subject, or "the locus of reason and consciousness," and multiple different Selves which are manifested according to the situation (e.g. personality traits, emotions, physical needs and desires, and physical characteristics). The Selves are the true actors in the real-world, and the body (physical exterior) is actually considered a Self.

Lakoff's (1997, p. 107) REAL-ME metaphor builds upon the suppositions of the DIVIDED-PERSON metaphor. This metaphor entails that "a person is a container with one Self outside and one Subject and other Selves inside" and "the actions of the whole person are the actions of the exterior Self." This metaphor explains why one's appearance is believed to reflect the self, and why first impressions are based largely on appearances. It also explains why certain individuals place such stock on their appearance, and why some women criticize and view their bodies as objects. Since each individual chooses which of their various "Selves" they let define them most strongly (Silberstein et al., 1987, p. 95), not everyone's sense of self will be defined by appearance to the same degree. This explains why not every individual adheres to these body ideals or believes that they are the be-all-and-end-all for being happy.

The REAL-ME metaphor is present in the notion that an individual's "fat self" is not his or her "real" self. Millman (1981, p. 193) writes that for a woman dissatisfied with her weight, "Her present self and her present life circumstances are discounted as
temporary...Real life...will start after she loses weight" (as cited in Spitzack, 1990, p. 67). That is, an individual who is unhappy with their body might want to disassociate from their current state by not acknowledging it as real. This outlook is characteristic of someone who feels their sense of self bound to their outward appearance, for whom having an attractive physical appearance is of utmost importance to retaining a positive sense of self. Persons who see their identities in things besides physical appearance, however, would more likely feel that they exhibit their "real selves" through their actions.

The Body is a Machine. THE BODY IS A MACHINE metaphor is the metaphor most responsible for creating the notion that our bodies are in need of expert care (Madden & Chamberlain, 2004, p. 590). Just as we have specialists trained in repairing certain types of machines like appliances, cars, and computers, this metaphor implies that some kind of "expert" knowledge is required to care for the body. This belief causes the consumer to be more likely to discount their own health knowledge in favor of what they read in a diet or exercise text.

This metaphor allows us to apply the terminology of machines to the body, and vice versa. This connection can be traced back as far as Descartes, who said, "The rules of mechanics' are 'the rules of nature'" (as cited in Synnott, 1992, p. 93). For example, like a machine, the body can "malfunction" at any time. However, regular "upkeep" or "body maintenance" (Featherstone, 1991, p. 182) can lower this risk. Individuals are encouraged to use their leisure time in order to "service" their own bodies, which require regular care and upkeep (Featherstone, 1991, p. 182). This servicing can take the form of exercise, preparing healthy meals, dieting, or taking supplements. In this regard, weight gain is seen as a case of insufficient body maintenance. One indoor cycling instructor
whose class I attended stated the hour-long class is a time to "give back to your body," as it "gives you so much the rest of the time." According to this view, placing strenuous physical demands on one's body is seen as a form of "body maintenance."

THE BODY IS A MACHINE metaphor can be specified as to what type of machine serves as the source domain. Metaphors where "car" serves as the source domain usually refer to food, making a food/gasoline analogy. This metaphor highlights not only the quantity, but the quality of food or gasoline. As one registered dietician stated, "The difference between our bodies and cars is that the body can repair itself—if we give it the right foods—while a car just gets worn down over time" (J. Roberts, personal communication, July 24, 2007). Numerous references are made to this metaphor in daily life. For instance, I observed one fitness instructor try to motivate his class by saying, "You should have no gas left in the tank by the end of your workout." You: On a Diet (2006, p. 44) talks about the full stomach as a "topped off tank," while a similar expressions is "to run out of steam."

The car metaphor for the body is also used for describing thermodynamic properties of energy use. Just as a car burns gasoline, our bodies burn fat for energy. Prevention magazine refers to metabolism as "the body's fat-burning engine" (July 2008, p. 71), and provides tips to "stoke your fat burn all day long" (Prevention, March 2008, p. 138). The belief that "heat destroys fat" is expressed through phrases such as "burn fat," "melt the pounds off," and "sizzle extra calories while you sleep" (Self, July 2008, p. 4). We may also use expressions that refer to car engines to talk about boosting the metabolism, such as "rev up," "jumpstart" and "fire up."
Expressions where "computer" is the source domain usually appear in contexts related to the functioning of the body and are instances of the metaphor THE HEALTHY BODY IS A WELL-FUNCTIONING COMPUTER. Just as the computer's ability to operate relies on commands and responses, the body's operation depends on hormonal signals and feedback mechanisms. For instance, in The Fat Resistance Diet, the author describes inflammation as the "'on' switch" for producing anti-inflammatory chemicals." Similarly, Eat, Cheat, and Melt the Fat Away (2003, p. 11) promises to "reprogram your metabolism," while You: On a Diet (2006, p. 236) discusses "automating your biology to reboot your body back to its factory settings that make you lean and healthy." As technology continues to advance, it is likely that we will make new metaphorical links between machines and the body.

Performing Body Work is Fighting a War. War is a much-used source domain for describing situations involving struggle or difficulty. War metaphors appear in a number of contexts including discourses on the environment, politics, sports, and the business world. Romaine (1996, p. 177) describes environmentalist discourse as being centered on the notion that the earth is being "attacked" by humans. Lakoff (1991) discusses how politicians use war metaphors as a rhetorical strategy for justifying their actions. Sports are conceptualized as war, since opponents must compete for victory. Raghavan (1990, p. 81) discusses how in business media discourse, "the military metaphor generates augmented understanding of a competitive situation…and thus has the ability to foster creativity in formulating competitive strategies" (as cited in Koller, p. 111).
The metaphor PERFORMING BODY WORK IS FIGHTING A WAR points to the fact that we conceptualize body work as a struggle. The metaphor is mapped in the following way:

(i) The self's objective is to lose weight; losing weight is a victory.
(ii) The body is an enemy whose objective is to store fat.
(iii) The body employs tactics to make us eat more and store more fat.
(iv) Self-control is thwarting the tactics of the body/enemy.
(v) The right foods can be an ally to thwart the tactics of the body/enemy.
(vi) The self must actively resist the body's desire to store fat.

One of the most common phrases formed from the "body work-as-war" metaphor is "Fight X!" where X can be fat, cellulite, wrinkles, or anything else thought to detract from the aesthetic appeal of the body. We can also substitute the word "fight" with words connoting a similarly violent meaning such as blast, banish, whip, and whittle; e.g. "Blast, banish, and whip fat," and "Whittle fat away." The conceptual difference between X (which is an enemy) and the enemy body is that X is the cause for which we are fighting, while the body is our actual opponent.

The BODY WORK IS WAR metaphor is structured dualistically as the self versus the body, where the self's objective is to master control over the body. The phrase "Mind over body" is evidence of the fact that we conceive of this dichotomy. Eating is understood as something requiring self-restraint, so as to prevent the body from exerting its "animalistic" desire for food (Lupton, 1996, p. 131). The body, by threatening the dominance of the self, is thus seen as an enemy. Victory is defined as the triumph of mind over body, exemplified in the words of an anorexic girl: "When I fail to exercise as
often as I prefer, I become guilty that I have let my body 'win' another day from my mind" (Bordo, 1993, p. 147).

In our society, the overweight body is often depicted as an impediment to life enjoyment. One metaphor is THE OVERWEIGHT BODY IS A CAPTOR, as Rachael Heller, co-author of *The Carbohydrate Addict's Lifespan Program*, describes: "My dreams were filled with images of flying free—free of the body that held me prisoner all during waking moments. Each new diet gave me hope of attaining that freedom…" (p. 7). Another woman describes being overweight as "living with the brakes on" and comments that she hated "being held back" (Featherstone, 1991, p. 185). The metaphor HAPPINESS IS FEELING LIGHT draws upon the idea that the body is a burden to the self (Bordo, 1993, p. 144), and transcending the body results in a feeling of lightness, or happiness. Thus, the fact that many women equate thinness with happiness (Spitzack, 1990, p. 65) may be linked to the fact that body reduction literally decreases the weight of the body (Bordo, 1993, p. 147).

Coupled with the perception that the body is carnal and out-of-control is the view that the body "wants" to store fat, antagonistically defying an individual's desire to be lean and trim. We view various fat-promoting mechanisms (hormones, muscle loss with age, hunger, cravings, etc.) as "tactics" that the body uses to thwart weight loss efforts. For instance, *The Carbohydrate Addict's Lifespan Program* (1998, p. 51) refers to hormones and the aging body in the war-like terms "loaded guns, ready triggers, and time bombs." *Prevention* magazine refers to hormones and muscle loss as "conspiring to slow [the aging woman's] fat-burning engine" (March 2008, p. 131). Similarly, compulsive
binge eating is conceptualized as an offense launched by the body, conveyed through terms such as "snack attack" and "ice cream crisis" (Lupton, 1996, p. 140).

The fear of being dominated by the body is evident in the statements "the physical cravings that ruled your eating habits will be gone" (Agatston, 2005, p. 4), "I no longer live in fear of the cravings, or the pounds, returning" (Heller & Heller, 1998, p. 9), and "No matter how hard you try not to eat, some hidden force deep inside is always prying your mouth back open, making it impossible for willpower to win" (Oz & Roizen, 2006, p. 4). Unsurprisingly, dieting literature promises to help people "take control" of their eating habits by offering "strategies" (Oz & Roizen, 2006, p. 5) or ways to "outsmart" the body (Prevention, July 2008, p. 129; Fitness, July 2008, cover), as in the article "Craving Control: Learn What to Eat and When" (Body & Soul, July/August 2008, cover).

The Body is an Ally. Despite the pervasiveness of the "body work-as-war" metaphor, the idea that one can accomplish weight loss by cooperating with the body is frequently evoked as well. Diets claim that the body is out of control because there is something physiologically out of balance (see Oz and Roizen, 2006, p 240; Galland, 2005, p. 27; and Heller & Heller, 1998, p. 108), and in order to gain back control one must "heal" the body. This idea is summarized by the subtitle of an article in Prevention magazine: "Win Back Your Metabolism" (July 2008, cover). Some diets even go so far as to claim that they can stop an individual from craving foods that are "bad" for them (Heller & Heller, 1998, p. 9; and Agatston, 2005, p. 4).

The notion of "healing" also exists in the metaphor THE BODY IS A COMPUTER. Because THE BODY IS A COMPUTER metaphor and weight-loss-through-cooperation metaphors share the notion of healing, they can be combined to form the metaphor THE
WELL-FUNCTIONING MACHINE IS AN ALLY. This overlap allows us to join both metaphors in the same utterance, as in "Automate your biology to reboot your body back to its factory settings that make you lean and healthy" (Oz and Roizen, 2006, p. 236) and "Repair through healing." In this metaphor, the body is seen as being innately "good," or healthy. This would imply that the body-as-enemy is an unnatural, albeit common, state of the body.

The weight loss texts I analyzed utilize the body-as-enemy and body-as-ally frameworks conjunctively. When the body is in a state of "distress," such as when it is overweight, the body (or more precisely, the state), is seen as an enemy. The individual then undergoes a war (a diet and/or exercise program) to bring the body from a state of distress into a state of harmony. This state of harmony is equated with thinness and viewed as the natural state of the body.

Food as Combatant. Foods are often viewed in terms of whether they help or hinder weight loss. In metaphorical terms, they are either fighting on the "ally" or "enemy" side of the self. This metaphor generates expressions such as "12 Foods that Fight Fat" (Fitness, July 2008, cover), "Essential Fats: Your Weight-Loss Allies" (Galland, 2005, p. 87), and the weight loss drug Alli™ (currently on the market). Snacks are also marketed as allies, such as Quaker "Mini Delights," as in the slogan "Mini Delights are there for you anytime a snack 911 happens" (http://www.quakerrice snacks.com/products/tastyflavors).

Certain "ally" foods are further conceptualized as being strong—that is to say, good at fighting "evils" such as weight gain or disease. This idea is conveyed by the title of the Body and Soul article "Power Up Your Diet!" (July/August 2008, cover), and
Prevention's list of juices with "antioxidant power" (July 2008, p. 65). Similarly, foods high in healthy nutrients are given the label of "superfoods." Likewise, foods that promote weight gain are viewed as enemies, e.g. "Fat was...Public Enemy Number One" (Agatston, 2005, p. 18), and "...sugar is the body's greatest enemy!" (Somers, 2003, p. 21).

A similar metaphor, FOOD IS MEDICINE OR PATHOGEN (Lupton, 1996, p. 77), is coherent with the FOOD IS A COMBATANT metaphor. The coherency of these metaphors is due to the fact that they each stem from root metaphors which use "war" as their source domain: LOSING WEIGHT IS FIGHTING A WAR and TREATING ILLNESS IS FIGHTING A WAR (Romaine, 1996, p. 183). We view illness and excess body fat the same way in the sense that both are things we want to expunge from the body. Because slimness and health tend to be conflated (especially in contexts where the slim body is viewed as a healthy, well-functioning machine), weight loss foods are often depicted as medicine.

In line with the pathogen/medicine metaphor of food, a healthy body may be represented through the clean/polluted metaphor, which is used in the diet book Fit For Life (Diamond & Diamond, 1990, as cited in Lupton, 1996, p. 86) and The Fat Resistance Diet (Galland, 2005, pp. 145-161). Consequently, a healthy body is viewed as "cleansed" while an unhealthy body is viewed as "clogged" (Lupton, 1996, p. 87). Weight-loss is implied as a natural result of detoxifying the body. The clean/polluted metaphor is an extension of the "weight loss is war" metaphor, since toxins are the "enemy" or "pathogen" and purification of the body requires "allies" or "medicine."

Performing Body Work is a Moral Act. Health practices are quite often discussed in moral terms, with healthy behaviors classified as "good" (Backett, 1992, p. 261).
Likewise, the discourses surrounding diet and exercise make use of moral terms. The trim and toned physique, a sign of being engaged in body work practices, is viewed as a symbol of "being good." In contrast, the overweight body represents an inability to uphold the "correct" body work practices (Featherstone, 1991, p. 178).

Spitzack (1990, p. 77) offers a more specific view of this metaphor as she compares breaking a regimen to committing a criminal act. She further compares health and dietary guidelines to "scripture" or "doctrine" (p. 69, 74). Paralleling this idea, Backett (1992, p. 261) explains that two of the couples she interviewed admitted to her later that they felt uneasy about taking part in her study since "it felt like the priest coming to check up on them." Within the conceptual framework where body work is seen as a moral act, junk food may be referred to as "forbidden," "off-limits," and "sinful," and eating food one is not supposed to is viewed as "cheating." The notion of moral accountability is expressed in a phrase from The South Beach Diet (2005) that states, "to protect the guilty, we won't name this dieter [who failed]" (p. 104).

The choice to go on a diet is often marked by a desire to improve one's quality of life. Diets are viewed as a means of achieving "salvation," while being overweight is equated to being "damned" to a life of unhappiness (Spitzack, 1990, p. 65). This view is captured by the metaphor THINNESS IS SALVATION. Women who adopt this view envision a post-diet "blissful afterlife" (p. 65) that contrasts with their pre-diet "mediocre" state of existence.

Somewhat paradoxically, indulging in "sinful" foods to reward oneself is considered acceptable at times (Spitzack, 1990, p. 75). Eating junk food occasionally is positively apprised since it indicates an ability to "let go" and "enjoy life" (Lupton, 1996,
p. 148). In her interviews to determine the health beliefs of middle-class parents, Backett (1992, p. 263) finds that for many participants "Too great a preoccupation with 'healthy behaviors' was seen as suspect and perhaps an indication of other undesirable personality traits or unappealing ways of living." Because of this belief, most participants qualified their healthy behaviors with a statement that they were in no way "fanatical" about health (p. 263). This brings up the fact that metaphors can exist to counter other metaphors—in this case, the metaphor PERFORMING BODY WORK IS FANATICAL counters, or at least tempers, the metaphor PERFORMING BODY WORK IS A MORAL ACT.

Up until this point I have spoken of morality as simply "doing good." However, morality is actually conceived of metaphorically (Lakoff, 1996). The reason "morality" can serve as a source domain for body work metaphors is that it is a very basic concept that everybody shares common knowledge of. Out of Lakoff’s ways to conceptualize morality, I selected two that are most prevalent in body work metaphors: MORAL STRENGTH and MORAL BOUNDS. Note that the source domain used to construct morality will be projected onto the target domain, "performing body work."

The MORAL STRENGTH METAPHOR (Lakoff, 1996, pp. 259-261) is the source domain for the metaphor PERFORMING BODY WORK IS STRENGTH. The entailments of this metaphor are as follows:

(i) An individual has the choice to act morally or immorally.
(ii) An individual is usually tempted to act immorally.
(iii) Acting morally requires strength of will.
This metaphor can be manifested in numerous ways, such as the common saying "I have a weakness for…” (chocolate, junk food, etc.). A dessert at Applebee's restaurants gets its name, "Triple Chocolate Meltdown," from this metaphor, where "melting" appears to be a pun for ice cream and the melting (weakening) of willpower. Similarly, *Fitness* magazine features a diet especially designed for "diet wimps" (July 2008, cover). As Spitzack (1990, p. 13) points out, "The source of anguish for the dieter...is a body at odds with mental strength, thereby revealing the relative impotence of reason and intellectual prowess."

The fact that body work and morality are conceptualized metaphorically allows either one to function as the source domain. Thus we can switch body work to the source domain, so that the act of dieting becomes a metaphor for being good (see Silberstein et al., 1987, p. 101). To many people, the act of dieting or exercising makes them "good," as suggested by several women interviewed by Spitzack (1990, p. 75) who refer to eating the "right" kinds of food as "being good."

FOLLOWING A REGIMEN IS STRENGTH can be specified further as pertaining to the self versus the body. As with the BODY WORK IS WAR metaphor, the goal is for the self to be in control of the body. The terms "yo-yo dieting," and "the diet roller coaster" (Somers, 2003, p. 11) express the notion of the body being out of control. "Chocoholic" "carbohydrate addict," imply a state of desperation where people's lives are dominated by the body through food cravings. Note that because of the conceptual overlap between BODY WORK IS WAR and FOLLOWING A REGIMEN IS STRENGTH, we get the expression "willpower." Extending the metaphor FOLLOWING A REGIMEN IS STRENGTH to include self-control looks like this:
(i) The body is the locus of sinful desire.
(ii) Self-control is the active resistance of desire.
(iii) Acting virtuously requires self-control.

In the metaphor of MORAL BOUNDS (Lakoff, 1996), moral behavior is conceived as that which does not cross the bounds defining a path. A common expression of this metaphor is "to go astray," where veering off the correct path refers to immorality. Although in theory we could apply this metaphor to an exercise regimen, it is usually used to refer to diets. The metaphor A DIET IS A PATH generates the following expressions:

(i) I haven't been following my diet.
(ii) This diet is hard to stick to.
(iii) He has been on a diet for several months now.
(iv) The temptation of donuts at work has really caused me to go off track.

This metaphor can be expanded upon where instead of there being only one path which stands for morality, there are additional paths that stand for immorality—thus one can say they are "on the right path." You: On a Diet uses the phrase "YOU-turn (p. 197) as a metaphor for going back on their diet if they find themselves going off it.

The diet as a path metaphor is also coherent with the metaphor PROGRESS IS FORWARD (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 22), since to follow a path means to walk forward towards a destination. DIETS ARE PATHS and PROGRESS IS FORWARD combine to create the metaphor DIETING SUCCESS IS FORWARD, as expressed in the phrase "Near your goal
Another expression of this metaphor are the phrases "backsliding" (Agatston, 2005, p. 104), and "falling back into comforting old habits" (Ibid). A variation on the metaphor DIETING SUCCESS IS FORWARD is the metaphor BEING ON A DIET IS GOING UPHILL. This metaphor can be expressed as "Backsliding" and "Splurge without Slipping" (advertisement for "Prevention's Diabetes Diet Cookbook"). Also since height is conceptually linked to virtue (Lakoff, 1996), failure is seen as falling (e.g. "to fall off the diet wagon").

Body Work Acts are Currency. The BODY WORK ACTS ARE CURRENCY metaphor says that "sins" can be "bought" in exchange for virtuous acts. This type of rewards system mentality is applicable to many domains of life. For instance, parents tell their children they can have dessert only if they eat their vegetables, or reward them for a good deed by letting them watch television. The CURRENCY metaphor is even more fitting in the domain of weight loss since "calories in versus calories out" is a kind of exchange system (see number (ii) below). Expressions of this metaphor as it applies to body work include the following:

(i) Peddle hard up this hill so you really earn the flat road.
(ii) I don't deserve dessert today because I didn't go to the gym.
(iii) You can afford to indulge every once in a while. (Somers, 2003, p. 103)

Implications

This section discusses selected metaphors which point to culturally pervasive beliefs that can lead to emotional disturbances such as shame, low self-esteem, and a desire to engage in unhealthy methods to lose weight or bulk up. I will discuss the
metaphors in conjunction with each other, since it is the sum of these metaphors that determines the cultural messages and ideologies people receive. There are certain metaphors that I discussed in the previous section which will not be discussed here, such as WEIGHT GAIN IS UP and BODY FAT IS A GARMENT. This is due to the fact that I did not find them to contain harmful ideologies.

THE BODY IS A SHAPEABLE OBJECT points to a pervasive cultural notion of determinism, in this case the notion that everybody can have any body they want given that they are willing to work hard enough to make it happen. This metaphor hides the fact that genetics play a role in determining an individual's physique (Silberstein et al., 1987, p. 96), and exercise and diet cannot give someone a whole new body as many diet and exercise companies would like us to believe. The possibility of failure is never addressed, as "Diet books all present their product as an inevitable pathway to success" (Ogden, 2003, p. 109). As a result of the expectation for perfection, people may view their inability to achieve a certain physique as a personal failure, rather than a fact of everyone's body being differently shaped and proportioned.

Fitness magazines that offer exercises to tone and sculpt specific muscles propagate the belief that the body can be molded into whatever shape is desired. This belief can induce more self-scrutiny than would otherwise occur, because while "improving" the body, one must go looking for flaws. This can induce negative body image and intense criticism of one's own existing "imperfections." Individuals are far less likely to accept their body as it is when the pervasive cultural dialogue says that anything one does not like can be changed.
One of the reasons people feel ashamed for being overweight is because of the widespread belief that one has the ability to control what they weigh (Silberstein et al., 1987). In addition to THE BODY IS A SHAPEABLE OBJECT, THE BODY IS A MACHINE suggests that the self should be able to control the body. The overweight person is therefore stereotyped as being either lazy or ineffectual at controlling their weight, and the un-toned body is a sign of failing to exercise hard enough.

Individuals who choose not to engage in body work are viewed as deviant, especially when their appearance is considered to be "flawed" in some way (Bordo, 1993, p. 204; Spitzack, 1990, p. 77). Stereotypes about people who are overweight or unattractive propel individuals to enhance their appearance so as to avoid being negatively judged. The knowledge that "others are looking" leads individuals to adopt an automatic self-monitoring practice referred to by Foucault as the "disciplinary gaze" (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995, p. 149).

Those who accept THE BODY IS A MACHINE metaphor believe that feelings of hunger or cravings can easily be turned on and off since the self is superior to and should dominate the machine/body. Certain diet books claim that "during the first week [on this diet] cravings will virtually disappear" (Agatston, 2005, p. 4), and "Feelings of deprivation, sacrifice, and even the desire to cheat, are signs that a weight-loss plan has not corrected the cause of your eating or weight problems" (Heller & Heller, 1998, pp. 107-108). These statements not only glorify being in a state of not-craving, they persuade readers that this state is completely attainable and relatively easy. As Bordo (1993, p. 198) points out, "…self-mastery is presented as an attainable and stable state," an idealization created by the ease with which humans control machines.
The REAL-ME and THINNESS IS SALVATION metaphors imply that being overweight diminishes a person's happiness. Silberstein et al. (1987, p. 96) explain: "Women commonly report a fantasy that their lives would be totally transformed if only they were thin. Thinness and happiness have become nearly synonymous." This mindset can lessen people's enjoyment of life by causing them to cloister themselves until they feel thin or attractive enough to join the rest of the world. Alternatively, individuals might embark on a weight loss program seeking a better life, and this weight loss may or may not provide them with the happiness they were searching for.

The metaphor PERFORMING BODY WORK IS FIGHTING A WAR implies that the body is conspiring against us, "wanting" to store fat. One belief that supports this claim is that are bodies our designed to store fat in case of famine. While it is true that the body has a need to store some fat, the BODY AS ENEMY metaphor hides the fact that the body has active mechanisms to keep weight from getting too high. One such mechanism is the hormone leptin, which is produced in proportion to the amount of fat present in adipose cells. Leptin acts to decrease appetite and prompts an individual to increase physical activity (Flier & Maratos-Flier, 2007). People who do not know about leptin may accept the "fat in case of famine" explanation to be the whole picture. This lack of knowledge is one reason why certain metaphors such as the WAR metaphors predominate over others.

The danger with adopting war metaphors is that people view their bodies as an enemy, and may therefore try to suppress or fight internal body cues. A young female runner quoted in Bordo (1993, p. 196) describes how running was like fighting a war on her body:
You may think I was crazy to put myself through constant, intense pain. But you have to remember, I was fighting a battle. And when you get hurt in a battle, you're proud of it. Sure, you may scream inside, but if you're brave and really good, then you take it quietly, because you know it's the price you pay for winning.

Ignoring bodily cues has many other negative side effects. For example, restricting food intake disturbs an individual's ability to concentrate throughout the day, as well as negatively affecting mood (Coelho, Polivy, & Herman, 2006, p. 354). Numerous studies have found that fasting increases the likelihood of having obsessive thoughts about food (Bordo, 1993, p. 59), often causes episodes of binge eating (Putterman & Linden, 2004, p. 187; Soetens, Braet, Dejonckheere, & Roets, 2006; Ogden, 2003; Coelho et al., 2006), and can actually lead to eating disorders (Polivy & Herman, 1985; Tuschl, 1990; as cited in Putterman & Linden, 2004, p. 187). Silberstein et al. (1987, p. 100) hypothesize that a reason restrictive eating leads to binge eating is that "Both the physiological and psychological deprivation that are induced by dieting seem to propel the person to seek relief from restraint, and binge eating provides this gratification."

The conceptualization that ENGAGING IN BODY WORK IS A MORAL ACT can lead to an unhealthy level of rigidity in how one follows a diet or exercise regimen. The dichotomization of food and behaviors sets people up to frame things in a dichotomous way, such as "If I eat one cookie, I've ruined my diet for the whole day." This mentality, extreme as it may seem, is not limited to people with eating disorders; as Bordo (1993, p. 59) argues, dichotomous thinking, among other "disordered" mentalities, is "a fairly
accurate representation of social attitudes toward slenderness or the biological realities involved in dieting" (Bordo, 1993, p. 58-59). In striving to be "good" all the time, individuals might rigidly follow a diet or exercise regimen to the point where they can harm the body as a result of ignoring their body's needs.

Diets are notorious for dichotomizing foods as "good" and "bad," such as those which disallow entire food groups like carbohydrates. For example, various women quoted in Spitzack (1990, p. 77) comment that being on a diet exacerbates feeling bad about what they eat and spurs them to be overly careful about eating the right things. It is almost inevitable that people will return to eating the foods they like, even if they consider those foods "bad." For people who believe that what they eat makes them either "good" or "bad," the inevitable "slip" once in a while can lead to feeling guilty and disappointed in oneself.

Guilt and shame are recurring products of our weight and appearance-focused society. Spitzack (1990, p. 77) argues that feeling guilty is a result of society's moralization of appearance and body work, since "Guilt functions as evidence for an acknowledgement of deviance." Silberstein et al (1987, p. 98) attribute shame to the fact that individuals may see themselves as not living up to an internally-held ideal of physical beauty or attractiveness.

Feeling ashamed about one's appearance can often affect a person's general level of self-esteem—particularly when that person places a great deal of importance on the way he or she looks (Silberstein et al., 1987, p. 95). Individuals who experience a high degree of shame over their bodies might resort to methods such as getting cosmetic
surgery (Henderson-King & Henderson-King, 2005; Ogden, 2003, p. 99), abusing laxatives or steroids, exercising compulsively, and crash dieting.

Oftentimes, individuals feel ashamed of their appetite or the amount of food they consume. For example, women are expected to eat small portions and have little interest in food (Bordo, 1993, p. 100; Silberstein et al., 1987, p. 96; and Thompson & Hirschman, 1995, p. 148). Moreover, simply being on a diet can trigger shame since the dieter will inevitably want more food than he or she is allowed on the diet (Orbach, 1979, p. 28; as cited in Spitzack, 1990, p. 18).

The moral connotations of sticking to a diet or exercise regimen may also indirectly lead to shame, since individuals who struggle to follow a regimen may believe themselves to be "failures." Since we view thinness as an indication of being in control (Bordo, 1993, p. 193, 201; Ogden, 2003, p. 108), the tendency is to believe that there is something wrong with a person who has difficulty controlling their weight or fitting within the culturally-held ideal. Children are especially at-risk for suffering because of these stereotypes: "The overweight child…learns the societal view that if one is obese, there is something fundamentally wrong with one's character..." and "Normal weight children may learn a deep-seated fear of becoming overweight" (Silberstein et al., 1987, p. 92).

It is very likely that the weight loss and exercise phrases we experience on a near-daily basis will represent "truth" to us rather than simply one group's interpretation of reality. The fact that individuals speak about body work using the same metaphorical language espoused by consumer-driven media is strong evidence that metaphors can and do frame our thought patterns. The metaphors presented here contain a number of
ideologies which have been shown to have a negative impact on individuals' well-being. By selecting our metaphors more carefully, it may be possible to dispel some of the harmful messages that pervade our current discourse about diet and exercise.

**Conclusion**

Metaphors reveal the way people conceptualize phenomena around them and can help us to better understand people's perceptions, attitudes and mindsets. The metaphors examined here overwhelmingly point to the fact that we are a society that values being in control of our destiny. Modern consumer culture has seized upon this value to persuade the public to consume body-enhancing commodities in order to "take charge of their body." Body work metaphors are encoded with the message that being beautiful translates to having a better life. The repercussions for improperly managing one's appearance may be imagined ("people won't like me"), or very real (workplace discrimination). I argue that consumer culture creates fear of being ugly that helps perpetuate the commodity market.

Metaphors such as **FOLLOWING A REGIMEN IS MORAL** tell us that we are better people if we eat right and exercise. People who do not have a weight problem may not be expected to diet or exercise, but may do so anyhow in order to keep their body in check. We view the self as needing to dominate the body, as exemplified in **THE BODY IS A MACHINE** and **THE BODY IS A WORK OF ART**. These metaphors dehumanize the body so as to make it appear more controllable. The **WORK OF ART** metaphor teaches consumers that our bodies can be altered to any degree, and one does not have to settle for a body they dislike. The value of control is likewise conveyed in the metaphor **ENGAGING IN BODY**
WORK IS FIGHTING A WAR. This metaphor constructs the body as a battleground, where fat and cravings are meant to be "conquered."

One important step towards reducing the negative impact of these metaphors is to discontinue their use. For instance, rather than labeling foods "good" or "bad," parents can refer to certain foods as "treat foods" and others as "health-serving foods" (G. Matuszak, personal communication, December 9, 2008). Instead of telling people that they should try to make their bodies match a certain "ideal," we must raise awareness that it is normal for everyone to have a unique shape and size. There needs to also be more discussion of the benefits and efficacy of moderate diet and exercise behaviors so that people can feel that a healthy lifestyle is within their reach. Too often I see signs in gyms with the harmful all-or-nothing message, "Go Hard or Go Home," which is counter-productive to getting people to exercise regularly.

An alternative metaphor I propose to counter damaging body work metaphors is THE BODY IS A PERSON. This metaphor targets three of the metaphors I have identified as being detrimental: BODY WORK IS WAR, THE BODY IS A MACHINE, and THE BODY IS A WORK OF ART. THE BODY IS A PERSON implies that we should treat our bodies as people. In treating them as people, we are not aiming to sculpt and chisel them like pieces of stone. Just as we do favors and kindnesses to other people, so should we do them to our body. Exercising and eating right are two such favors we can do for our body to keep it healthy. At the same time, this metaphor says that we should not deny our body food, just as we would not deny food to a person who was starving or hungry. Above all, the notion of "controlling" the body is never raised in this metaphor. We allow our body to exist and
to assert itself when it is in need of food or exercise—we ourselves cannot "decide" this for our bodies.

Having discussed the fact that numerous body work metaphors express an ideology that it is good to be thin and desirable to be in control of the body, and the fact that this type of thinking may do more harm than good, it is incumbent upon us to reduce our usage of harmful body work metaphors. I believe that by increasing discourse about moderation and self-acceptance, we can actually change the way we conceptualize body work, leading to the use of more positive metaphors such as the PERSON metaphor. Such modifications in our language and the ideas we express will increase the likelihood that the culture we pass down to future generations is one that fosters healthy diet and exercise behaviors and positive body image.
Bibliography


*Body and Soul* January/February 2008.


*Body and Soul* July/August 2008.


*Fitness* July 2008.


*Prevention* October 2007.

*Prevention* November 2007.


*Prevention* February 2008.


Albany: State University of New York Press.


*Women's Health* June 2008.
### Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goodness is Beauty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;If you're thin...you just take better care of yourself...you'd do your hair in a nice way and wear good make-up because you'd like yourself more...and all that will help you to seem more confident in yourself, and that right there will get your foot into many doors.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Real-Me Metaphor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Her present self and her present life circumstances are discounted as temporary...Real life...will start after she loses weight.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Body is a Machine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Burn</em> fat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Melt</em> the pounds off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sizzle</em> calories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reprogram</em> your metabolism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reboot</em> your body back to its factory settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metabolism is the body's fat-burning engine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflammation is the &quot;on&quot; switch for producing anti-inflammatory chemicals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You should have no gas left in the tank by the end of this class.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topped off tank, running out of steam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nouns:</strong> body maintenance, upkeep, servicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs:</strong> Rev up, jumpstart, fire-up your metabolism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight Gain is Up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She got <em>down</em> to her high school dress size.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can tell she has really <em>slimmed down</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whenever I eat sweets, I <em>balloon up</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her weight went <em>up</em> over the holidays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Drop</em> pounds effortlessly!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Fat is a Garment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He finally <em>shed</em> those last fifteen pounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have <em>put on</em> quite a bit of weight since we last met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many new moms have trouble <em>taking off</em> the pregnancy weight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Peel off</em> those excess pounds!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lose</em> weight and keep it <em>off</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Peel off</em> pounds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Body is a Work of Art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Fix</em> problem areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Whittle</em> your waistline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Banish</em> your belly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Blast</em> away fat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Trim</em> fat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It's up to you to do the chiseling; you become the master sculptress.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardio Blast, Body Pump™</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spot training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjectives:</strong> toned, defined, ripped, chiseled, sculpted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performing Body Work is Fighting a War</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Whip</em> your body into shape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fight</em> fat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We must strive to <em>kill</em> off [the body's] desires and hungers.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The body is the locus of all that threatens our attempts at control.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;When I fail to exercise as often as I prefer, I become guilty that I have let my body 'win' another day from my mind.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I no longer live in fear of cravings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The body is filled with "loaded guns, ready triggers, and time bombs."
Our bodies are conspiring to slow our fat-burning engine. |
| **Strategies,** ways to *outsmart* the body |
Body Work is War cont'd
Snack attack and ice cream crisis
Some hidden force...making it impossible for willpower to win.
Verbs: blast, banish, whip, whittle

The Body is an Ally
Win back your metabolism.
Reboot your body back to its factory settings that make you lean and healthy.

Food as Combatant
12 Foods that Fight Fat
Essential Fats: Your Weight-Loss Allies
Alli™ weight loss drug
"Quaker Mini Delights are there for you anytime a snack 911 happens."
Power Up Your Diet!
Juices with antioxidant power and superfoods
"Fat was Public Enemy Number One."
"Sugar is the body's greatest enemy!"

Performing Body Work is a Moral Act
"To protect the guilty, we won't name this dieter."
Adjectives for junk food: forbidden, off-limits, cheating, sinful

Source domain MORAL STRENGTH
"A body at odds with mental strength [reveals] the relative impotence of reason and intellectual prowess."
I have a weakness for chocolate.
"Triple Chocolate Meltdown" cake
The physical cravings that ruled your eating habits will be gone.

Morality Cont'd
Source domain MORAL STRENGTH
This diet is so easy, diet wimps can do it.
Chocoholic and carbohydrate addict
Yo-yo dieting and the diet roller coaster
Craving control: Learn what to eat and when
Nouns: willpower

Source domain MORAL BOUNDS
I haven't been following my diet.
This diet is hard to stick to.
He has been on a diet for several months now.
The temptation of donuts at work has really caused me to go off track.

Body Work Acts are Currency
Peddle hard up this hill so you really earn the flat.
I don't deserve dessert today because I didn't go to the gym.
You can afford to indulge every once in a while.