

# Weight Stigma and Social Justice

# Social Justice

- Justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society
- The way in which human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people at every level of society
- Promoting tolerance, freedom, and equality for all people regardless of race, sex, orientation, national origin, handicap, etc...

# NASW definition of Social Justice

- “Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Social workers aim to open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone, particularly those in greatest need.”
- “Indeed, from the beginning of their profession, social workers have been involved in “connecting the dots” between peace and social justice”

# The Social Work Dictionary

- “An ideal condition in which all members of a society have the same basic rights, protection, opportunities, obligations, and social benefits. Implicit in this concept is the notion that historical inequalities should be acknowledged and remedied through specific measures. A key social work value, social justice entails advocacy to confront discrimination, oppression and instructional inequities.” p.405

# Prejudice

- preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience
- an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics
- the Latin *praejudicium* means "judgment in advance."
- Unreasonable dislike or distrust of someone different from you

# Stigma

- a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person
- a set of negative and often unfair beliefs
- a strong feeling of disapproval shared by others in society
- An association of disgrace or public disapproval with something, such as an action or condition

# Bias

- a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others
- prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair
- a strong inclination of the mind or a preconceived opinion about something or someone

# Stereotype

- An exaggerated belief about people based on their membership in a group
- Serves as justification for how they are treated
- Supported by the culture and the media



# Discrimination

- Any form of group-based negative treatment
- Preconceived negative judgment based on a person's membership in a certain group
- Other definitions specify that the harmful action is unjustified or represents some form of injustice

# Oppression

- prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control.
- the state of being subject to unjust treatment or control.
- mental pressure or distress.
- unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power
- Social oppression is the socially supported mistreatment and exploitation of a group of individuals. Social oppression is based on power dynamics, and an individual's social location in society

# Microaggression

- a subtle but offensive comment or action directed at a minority or other nondominant group that is often unintentional or unconsciously reinforces a stereotype
- behaviors or statements that do not necessarily reflect malicious intent but which nevertheless can inflict insult or injury
- Insults, assaults, invalidations



**Equality**



**Equity**



**Justice**

Justice is removing the systematic barrier causing the inequity

“A culture fixated on female thinness is not an obsession about female beauty, but an obsession about female obedience. Dieting is the most potent political sedative in women’s history; a quietly mad population is a tractable one.”

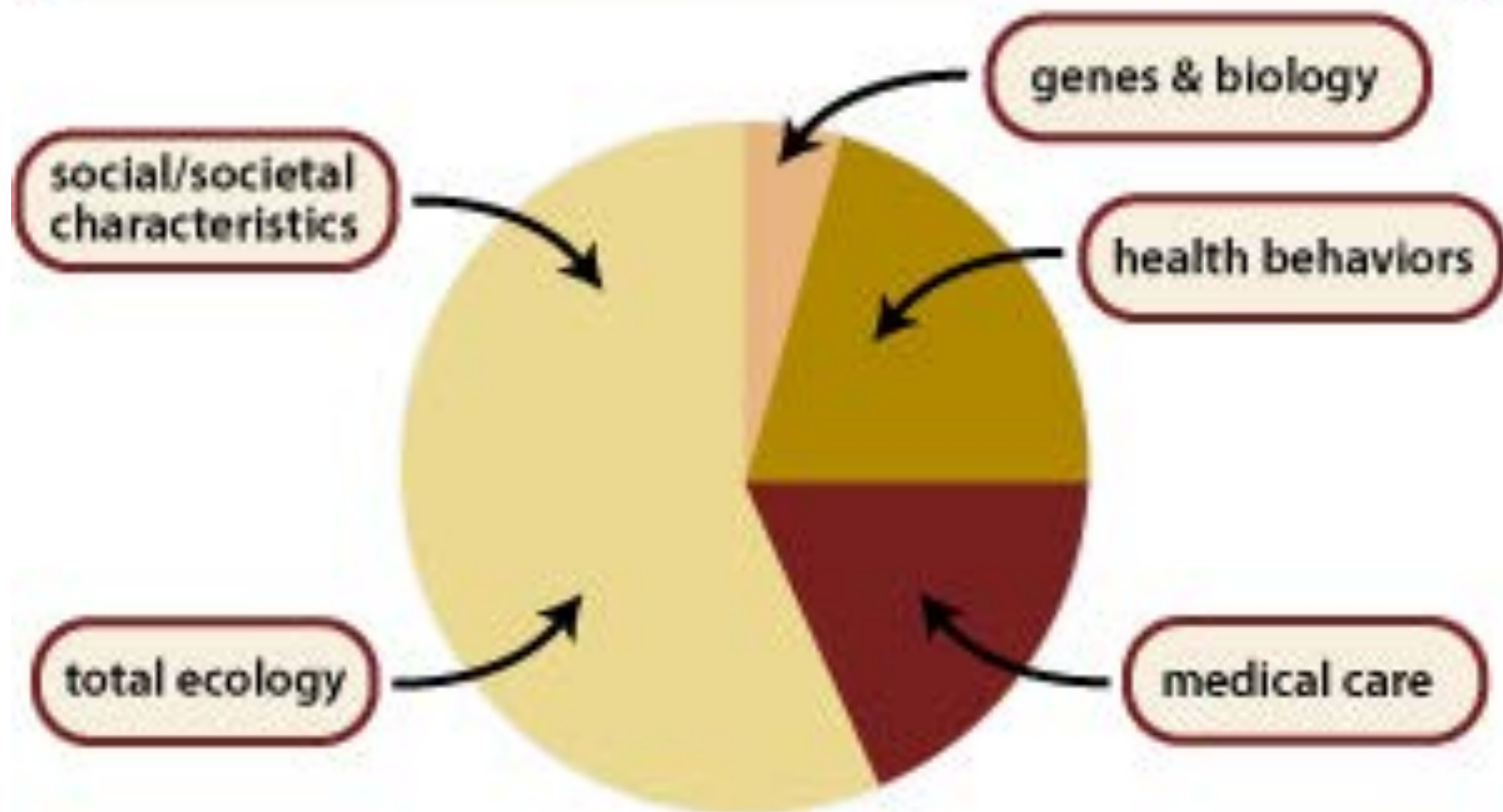
Naomi Wolf, 1990

THAT WAS THEN



THIS IS NOW

# DETERMINANTS OF POPULATION HEALTH



# Weight and Income

- Fatness and income are highly correlated
- Poverty may be fattening but a stronger case can be made that fatness is impoverishing
- Fat people are less likely to be hired, are paid less, more harshly disciplined and may be fired for not losing weight

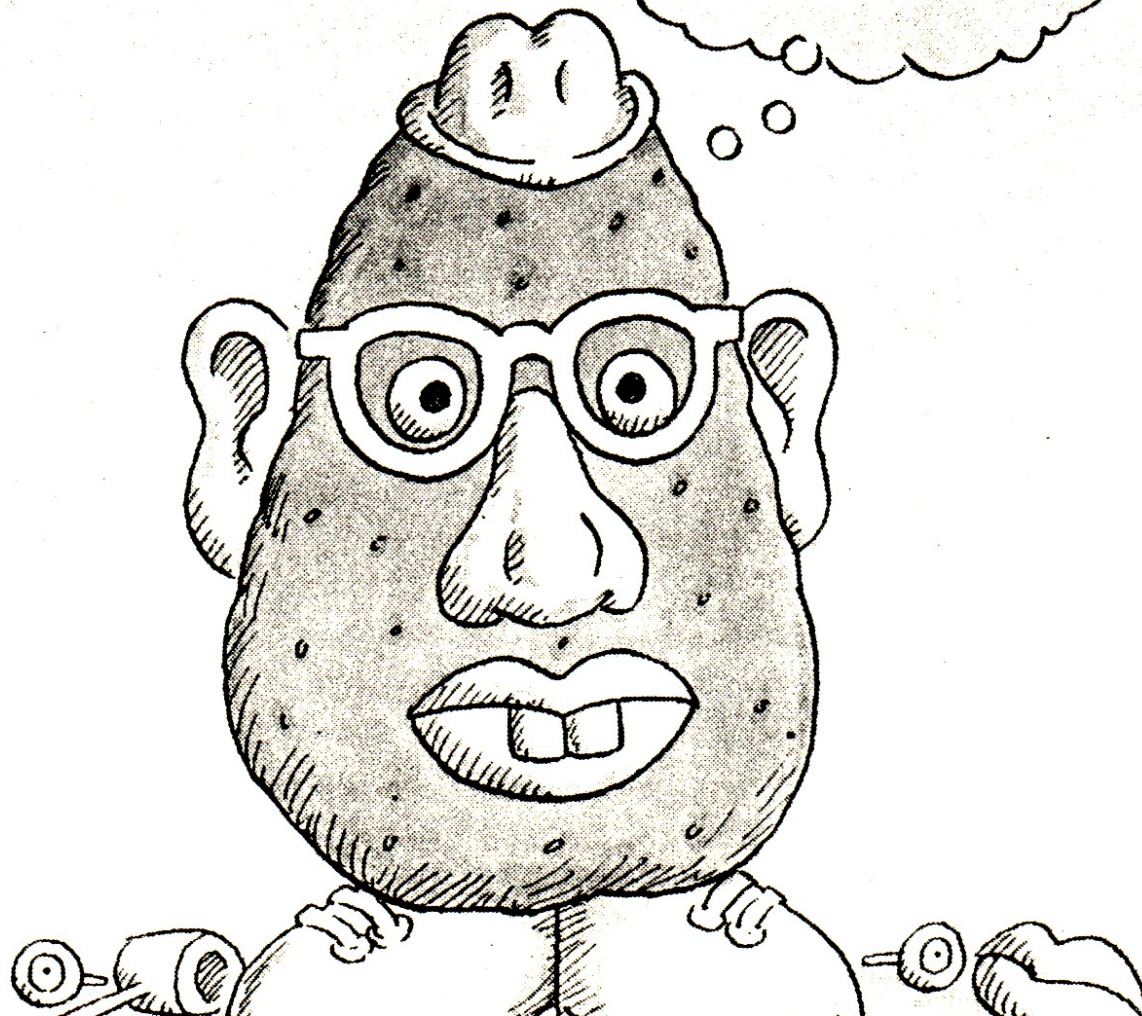


## Brene Brown, *Women & Shame*, 2004

- "Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging." p. 15
- the result of layered, conflicting and competing expectations based on rigid social and community expectations
- Fundamentalism is "any group espousing a belief system that holds itself so right and true that it discourages or even punishes questioning." p 114

A COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATE

NOBODY  
UNDERSTANDS  
ME!



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