

Call for Papers

Regulating Bodies in the ‘Obesity Era’: Ethical, Social, and Legal Perspectives

It is commonplace to note that we are experiencing an ‘obesity epidemic’ in developed countries such as the United States. A dramatically higher portion of the population counts as obese now than in previous decades, and many obese people are children. Both the causes and the effects of obesity are multiple and contested: weight is determined by a complicated cocktail of eating and exercise practices, genetics, and social and material pressures; the health risks associated with being obese or overweight are scientifically underdetermined. Obese bodies are loci for a variety of social meanings, and because of negative attitudes and structural disadvantages, obese people are socially vulnerable in a variety of ways. Furthermore, this vulnerability is deeply intertwined with vulnerabilities attaching to race, class, and age, as obesity rates and consequences vary along these lines.

Obesity rates have recently been and will likely increasingly be the target of a wide variety of policy and public health initiatives, from restricting legally available portion sizes, to workplace weight loss incentives, to banning vending machines in schools, to targeting mothers’ feeding choices with shame-based PSAs. Such initiatives inevitably raise tricky ethical and social questions. Any proposed intervention will be mired in issues such as the politics of blame, lifestyle regulation in the face of cultural pressures and social constraints, consumer and corporate freedom and paternalism, the ethics of urban planning, social determinants of health and co-traveling systematic inequalities, social perceptions of attractiveness, productivity, and character, ableism and disability rights, and more. At the same time, any proposed intervention will confront vexed scientific debates over what our public health goals should be and what will be effective in helping reach them.

The *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* solicits submissions for an upcoming special issue that will explore the regulation of bodies in the face of the normative and scientific complexities raised by the ‘obesity epidemic.’ Articles that address ethical, legal, and social issues in body regulation are welcome. This could include formal regulation at the level of policy, or informal regulation, such as social practices of discipline and normalization. Articles that engage a feminist, anti-racist, or anti-ableist perspective, or otherwise focus on critiquing systematic oppression and inequality, are especially (although not exclusively) encouraged.

Instructions: Papers should be **between 6000 and 8000 words and prepared for anonymous review.** The deadline for submission is **March 1, 2014**, with a tentative publication date of September 2014. Please use the standard *KIEJ* submission process, but indicate in your cover letter that you wish your paper to be considered for this special issue. Please also indicate whether you are interested in having your paper considered for publication in a regular issue of the journal, should we be unable to fit it in the special issue. Questions may be directed to Rebecca Kukla, Editor-in-Chief, at rk75@georgetown.edu.