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FEEDERISM

Eating, Weight Gain, and
Sexual Pleasure

**Kathy Charles and
Michael Palkowski**





Feederism

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Feederism: Eating, Weight Gain, and Sexual Pleasure



Kathy Charles

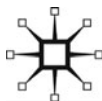
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Introduction



This text is the most comprehensive published discussion of feederism currently available. The first chapter offers an analysis of what is currently known about feederism and how it has been studied. The authors present the mainstream depictions available such as documentaries, films, websites, and journalism. They then analyse the psychological research carried out to date, which mainly focuses on feederism as a form of masochism or other paraphilia. Psychological ideas concerning addiction and evolutionary mechanisms are also discussed, in an effort to give the fullest picture of how psychological understanding has contributed to knowledge in this area. The second half of the chapter is dedicated to the work of sociologists and spans research encompassing fat studies, stigmatized identities, and historical perspectives on sexuality. Considerable space is also given to a critical appraisal of the feminist perspective taken by much of the previous research. The first chapter concludes by highlighting some of the methodological limitations of previous research into feederism.


The second chapter presents new data gathered from the feederism community. A thematic analysis of 23 participants is presented in three blocks. Seven participants who took part in an interview by writing their answers are analysed first, followed by ten individuals who answered questions conversationally in real time, and finally six participants in the form of three couples who also answered questions in real time. In addition to this new data, a thematic analysis of five pieces of feederism fiction is also

presented. This chapter gives authentic commentaries from participants adopting a variety of feederism roles (e.g. feeders, feedees, and mutual gainers), and it also offers the first-ever analysis of couples engaged in feederism practices. The key themes that emerge from these analyses are an early attraction to fat, agency, and fantasy. Childhood fascination with fat is very common, and issues of agency are of considerable importance to this community, as they have often been depicted as coercive and deeply pathological individuals. The importance of fantasy as a place to explore the extremes of feederism is also discussed, as real-life interest in issues such as immobility is very limited. The sociological analysis of five feederism stories supplements the interviews by presenting alternative ways of understanding the lived world and different identities. Feederism fiction allows extreme and “deviant” fantasies and identities to be explored safely.

The final chapter brings together the findings of Chapter 2 to offer a theoretical contribution, an analysis of the practical applications of this work, and suggestions for where feederism research can go next. It is argued that attempting to understand feederism using a psychological framework of pathology is inappropriate. The childhood attraction to fat and lifelong interest and erotic feelings for it into adulthood suggests a form of sexuality more so than a fetish. The desire of psychology to explain feederism as a paraphilia limits research in this area and continues to stigmatize it as a “deviant” sexual practice. The non-coercive nature of feederism, and the potential happiness it can bring to those who practice it, are discussed in a health context and it is suggested that awareness of feederism should be increased among medical professionals. The ways in which obese individuals can remain active and healthy is discussed along with recent research supporting the value of the “Health at Every Size” message in encouraging exercise. Future research into feederism should explore more diverse research methods and populations. There is currently no quantitative research on this subject, and ideas for this are discussed along with suggestions for autoethnographic accounts – particularly from women who have previously been regarded as “victims” of feederism rather than legitimate participants. Cultural and sexual diversity in feederism is also an area for new work. Most research has focussed on North America and Europe and has also centred on heterosexual relationships (despite a considerable quantity of gay feederism activity online). The limitations of the new research are also discussed, with the main focus being participant demographics.

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Feederism in Context: Mainstream Depictions, Psychology, and Sociology



Abstract: *This chapter explores mainstream depictions of feederism and erotic weight gain, alongside an analysis of psychological and sociological research in this field. Mainstream portrayals come from documentaries, films, journalism, and websites. Psychological analysis encompasses studies on masochism and other paraphilia, evolutionary mechanisms, and addiction. Sociological work to date has often taken a feminist perspective regarding feederism as part of a patriarchal power dynamic. The feminist perspective is critically appraised alongside studies into stigmatized identities and framing. This chapter also highlights some of the methodological limitations in previous feederism research.*

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Introduction

This chapter provides a systematic review of the academic literature available on feederism and outlines connections that can be made with other fields of inquiry, such as the sociology of the body, fat studies, the psychology of addiction, and paraphilia. The chapter also describes the online spaces where feederism is talked about as a lifestyle and reflects on the gendered diversity of the community. Attention is paid to providing a historical background to sexuality and considering the issue of fat in other cultures. Feederism is placed within a wider context – out with the individual – by recognizing the macro social and cultural issues surrounding it. It is also considered at the individual level by looking at psychological issues relating to paraphilia and evaluating briefly the literature which links feederism to masochism. The literature discussed here acts as context for the present research and themes that are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. To date there have been no attempts at a comprehensive review of the literature available on feederism, so this chapter addresses that gap by critically discussing and evaluating the main theories and methodological work available.

It is necessary to outline some of the terminology used within the feederism community. The range of terminology associated with feederism varies depending on the perspective, role, and sexuality of the person using it. For the purposes of this book, “feederism” refers to a sexual interest where individuals are sexually aroused by either gaining weight themselves (feedee) or by helping another person to gain weight (feeder). A person may adopt both of these roles simultaneously (mutual gainer) or at different points in their lives and relationships. The word feederism itself is contested, with some individuals preferring feedism. For some, feederism suggests that the feeder is dominant and that the feedee is simply the recipient of another person’s wishes, whereas feedism suggests a more equal relationship between the feeder and feedee. The word feeder is also shunned by some who may prefer “encourager” or “feedist” – again reflecting a more consensual situation rather than one where the feeder is dominant. Equally, feedee is sometimes replaced with “gainer” which suggests a more active role on the part of the person gaining weight. Although feederism, feeder, and feedee are all used in this research, this by no means undermines or rejects other terminologies. The considerable range of terminology that is used in indicating sexual preferences for erotic weight gain is indicative of the different