

Fat Comedic Relief is a Thing of The Past: *This is Us* Shows the Value of Body Positivity

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Introduction

Too often, television programs and movies choose to adopt stereotypical archetypes of real-life people to portray single-dimensional characters that do not accurately represent the complexity of the world. According to *MediaSmarts*, Canada's Center for Digital and Media Literacy, "television programs are quite short, [thus] the identities of characters must be established as quickly as possible." In this case, stereotypes are an easy scapegoat for creating "easily recognizable and relatable" characters, yet they also can encourage "false impressions of various societal groups" (MediaSmarts 9). One societal group that is frequently misrepresented in the media is overweight people. Usually depicted as stooges, overweight characters are primarily utilized for fat comedic relief, an outlet for other characters to pick on them for their weight. Fat comedic relief can also be a technique used, where an overweight character's size becomes a characteristic that presents them as an unattractive character rather a dynamic protagonist ("Fat Comedic Relief" 1).

For example, in the 1990s sitcom *Friends*, Courteney Cox played Monica Geller, a girl who was referred to as "Fat Monica" in her youth. "In high school, Monica was approximately 100 pounds heavier and possessed every negative stereotype ever assigned to plus-size people. She was always eating, always a slob, and always naïve" (Harper 1). Cox is not overweight outside of the show, which evidently makes her past persona humorous. Below the surface level humor, though, "present day" Monica is no longer overweight, informing the audience that losing weight should always be the end-goal because it makes you more desirable and attractive. By exemplifying overweight characters as punchlines and embarrassments, it becomes inherently acceptable to demean and dehumanize those who are fat.

In fact, Alisa Solomon, the director of the arts and culture concentration in the MA program at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, notes in her article "Who Gets to Be Human on the Evening News?", how the news media frames a group of people usually

defines how that group is perceived by others. She discusses how the news may play on the audiences' emotions by depicting people in anguish as "victims," causing viewers to care. The news' mentality is that if the audience "only knew" then they would want to help; however, this emotional appeal can be "counterproductive...[and] can just as easily dehumanize their subjects" (Solomon 1587). This mindset takes away the alleged "victims'" agencies and presents them as people who desperately need to be saved rather than allowing them to save themselves. By dramatizing a group of people's situations, the news is presenting information in the mass entertainment's genre of melodrama (1585-1592).

While *Friends* is a TV sitcom and not a news outlet, Solomon's concept of melodrama still applies. She states that:

The absolute imperative of melodrama [and, one might add, of the evening news] is the restoration of the moral, social, and domestic order – and consequently, the reassurance of the audience – by subjecting its characters to a high degree of risk and uncertainty and lifting them out of danger. Melodrama must satisfy its audiences' expectations rather than present a confrontation with belief and value. (Solomon 1591)

Instead of trying to make a social point about how being "overweight" is not necessarily bad, the creators of *Friends* appeased the audience's minds about what was socially acceptable by ensuring that "present day" Monica was thin and successful. When Cox transformed into "Fat Monica", the audience watched her be dehumanized "by presenting [her] as helpless, voiceless, and generic" (1590). People's pity for her was rooted in humor, not distress.

With negative portrayals, however, there is often positive counterparts. Overlapping with *Friends* was *Rosanne*, a comedy about a blue-collar family lead by two overweight parents, Rosanne Conner, played by Rosanne Barr, and Dan Conner, played by John Goodman, who were not used as comedic relief (Tucker 1). Focusing less on their weight as a joke and more on the family dynamic, *Rosanne* began to break the stereotypes of overweight characters being "helpless and generic" by making their storyline's more about their working-class lifestyle. Presently, NBC's new hit drama *This is Us* can be considered a melodrama because of its appeal to the viewer's emotions, and its overall theme of placing the fictional

characters in “a high degree of risk and uncertainty and lifting them out of danger” (1591). Kate, one of the show’s protagonists played by Chrissy Metz, challenges the concept of melodrama within her specific character by not “satisfying the audiences’ expectations” of actresses needing to be thin (1591). Metz’s character frames weight in an authentic and complex way which aids in breaking the stereotypical use of fat characters as comedic relief

Airing its pilot episode on September 20, 2016, *This is Us*, directed by Dan Fogelman, is a dramedy that follows the life of the Pearson family. The show transitions back and forth between flashbacks of the family’s past in the 1980s and the family’s present today. In the 1980s, the plot focuses on how the father Jack Pearson, played by Milo Ventimiglia, and the mother Rebecca Pearson, played by Mandy Moore, shaped their children’s lives. In the present, the plot focuses on the children’s lives, Kevin, played by Justin Hartley, Kate, and Randall, played by Sterling K. Brown, 37 years later (NBC 1). With each character, Fogelman wanted to ensure that he accurately portrayed his characters, especially Kate Pearson who struggles with body acceptance and weight-related problems. Basing Chrissy Metz’s character on his own sister, Deborah Fogelman Devine, Dan Fogelman had Devine on staff as a consultant to ensure the show accurately represents an overweight person’s journey. Beyond Metz’s weight, however, her character deals with other problems such as coping with her father’s early death, her emotional journey in losing her baby during pregnancy and balancing her love life with Toby, played by Chris Sullivan. Despite this, though, weight always finds a place in every one of her problems due to its natural existence.

In episode eight of season one, “Pilgrim Rick,” the audience is provided with a breakthrough moment that helps them to understand Kate’s battle with weight as she exchanges a serious conversation with Toby. Despite her genuine background, Kate’s body authenticity associated with her weight-related narrative has been criticized, especially in this episode and the remainder of season one, for being her main storyline. A weight-related narrative is one that involves the existence of an overweight actress or actor who is not in a fat suit and can or cannot be losing weight as a part of their character. If Metz’s character is scrutinized, that begs the question: Is the existence of a weight-related narrative valuable for Hollywood joining in a body positivity movement?

Annotated Bibliography

Source 1

Barnes, Brooks. "In a Body-Positive Moment, Why Does Hollywood Remain Out of Step?" *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 16 Aug. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/08/16/movies/in-a-body-positive-moment-why-does-hollywood-remain-out-of-step.html.

Summary

"In a Body-Positive Moment, Why Does Hollywood Remain Out of Step?" by Brooks Barnes discusses how Hollywood's choice to cast based on weight is leading to both a lack of opportunities for overweight actresses and an expectation for them to play primarily fat-driven roles. The article follows Danielle Macdonald, the lead role in "Patti Cake\$", while she talks about her view on how Hollywood expects girls to be "scarily skinny" and how she tries to not get caught up in that mindset (Barnes 1). In Hollywood, "for women—less so for men—weight is perhaps the most stubborn of the entertainment industry's many biases. Have an average-sized body? Call us when you've starved yourself" (1). When the overweight actress makes a debut, Hollywood loves it and the media believes it is the beginning of the end of "Hollywood's insistence on microscopic waistlines" (2). However, this often leads to overweight actresses only starring in overweight roles.

For example, Nikki Blonsky from *Hairspray*, Gabourey Sidibe from *Precious*, and Rebel Wilson from *Pitch Perfect* all have struggled to find roles that are not focused on their weight. David Rubin, a casting director and Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences board member, discusses how Hollywood is caught up on ideal thin body types and how they should move towards casting overweight actresses in roles not focused on weight. Rubin goes on to use Chrissy Metz as an example saying, "It's terrific to see Chrissy Metz do such fine work on 'This Is Us,' but casting won't fully reflect the real world until someone like Chrissy is cast in Mandy Moore's role" (3). It is positive that Metz plays a major role in the show, though. Danielle Macdonald argues how Hollywood is not representing most Americans and thus is falling behind in the body-positive movement.

Connection

This source serves as evidence and provides me with other exhibits for my topic. This provides a basis for the idea that there is a body-positive movement occurring, but not in Hollywood. The connection between this source and my research question is that it mentions how overweight actresses are used for their weight to promote weight-related narratives. This provides me with a jumping off point on how weight-related narratives should not be held in such a negative regard. While viewed critically, they at least give opportunities for overweight actresses to join the acting business. They can be beneficial for showing people in an audience that there is a journey to losing weight and it has the potential to be not just about weight.

Response

As demonstrated by Blonsky, Sidibe, and Wilson, overweight actresses can be categorized in one of four ways: they stop working after one movie or show, they lose weight and continue to work, they own their weight and work in their present state, or they are Melissa McCarthy. Blonsky did not have much work following her debut in *Hairspray* other than another movie called *Queen Sized* and a TV series called *Huge*. Sidibe, now starring in *Empire*, underwent laparoscopic bariatric surgery to combat her Type 2 diabetes and still works, but it is still a struggle because she is still not “scarily skinny” (Nelson 1). Wilson owns her weight in her role as “Fat Amy” in *Pitch Perfect*, however, when she tried to star in a romantic TV show, audiences just were not interested. Even better known than all the above actresses, Melissa McCarthy has starred in countless blockbusters such as *Spy* and *The Boss*. Rather than McCarthy acting as a catalyst for other overweight actresses to break into the business, however, “...her success is viewed by studios as an anomaly” (3).

I agreed with Barnes and all his external sources that weight-related narratives can be insulting when fat actresses are only used for their weight, yet in Chrissy Metz’s case, she has been an inspiration to many girls because of her weight-related narrative. Weight is already a stigmatized conversation so by showing authentic stories of people struggling with weight, people outside of the show can feel more confident in themselves. New information that I learned from the article is that movies tend to be stricter about weight than TV shows and that many actresses must lose weight to portray a specific look for a movie. When

Jeremy Jasper cast Danielle Macdonald for the role of in *Patti Cake\$*, he thought she was incredibly beautiful which positively counters the stigma that fat actresses must be “ugly” to fulfill the meaning of the role.

Source 2

Boothroyd, Lynda G. “Visual Diet versus Associative Learning as Mechanisms of Change in Body Size Preferences.” *PLOS ONE*, Public Library of Science, 7 Nov. 2012, journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0048691.

Summary

“Visual Diet versus Associative Learning as Mechanisms of Change in Body Size Preferences” is a study that was conducted by Lynda G. Boothroyd, Martin J. Tovee, and Thomas V. Pollet about how the body types we see affect our preferences to which bodies are acceptable in society. Western worlds have determined that thin is more attractive than heavy while other developing countries have determined the converse. “The ‘visual diet’ mechanism represents a cognitive adaptation effect, where changes in preferences are induced by visual exposure to a certain variety of a given stimulus” (Boothroyd 2). In simpler terms, visual diet is the images we consume daily. Associative learning is when “observers determine the relationship between body size and adaptively relevant traits, specifically status and health. Within Western media and culture...being overweight is stigmatized...[and] thinness is associated with high socioeconomic status, high prestige and better health” (2). There is evidence that the more girls watch TV featuring thin women, the more they will prefer thin bodies. The opposite is also true. When girls view more overweight bodies, they will prefer them.

To prove these statements, the study itself consisted of showing females pictures in one of three categories: (1) aspirational women, ones that were healthy and attractive in high-status clothes, (2) non-aspirational women, ones who struggled with eating disorders and were clothed in gray leotards, or (3) a combination of both women. During the visual diet portion of the study, the first group of female observers was divided and shown either thin bodies or large bodies that they could manipulate. Those who were shown thin bodies during the beginning

portion preferred thin bodies in the post-preference test while those who viewed large bodies preferred large bodies. In the associative learning portion of the study, two new groups were shown both thin bodies and large bodies in various states. Those who were shown aspirational thin bodies and non-aspirational large bodies preferred thin bodies while those who were shown large aspirational bodies and thin non-aspirational bodies preferred large bodies. All of this can be concluded that the more we are view different body types, especially in media, we will be more preferential towards them.

Connection

This source provides me with a psychological study that can explain why Hollywood needs to showcase more overweight actresses because it could destigmatize Westerner's views on what weight is preferable. It connects to my research question because if both aspirational thin and large bodies are shown authentically and often in the media without the preconceived notion that thin is more successful, then a larger percentage of the nation will be represented. Furthermore, body authenticity can encourage more people to embrace the way they look and encourage people to individually work to reprogram our definitions of beauty.

Response

This study helped me understand why we should encourage the casting of overweight actresses regardless of their narratives. On a small scale, it confirmed that there is a difference between being overweight and being healthy at a larger weight by showing both aspirational and non-aspirational body types on both extremes. Being thin does not always equal healthy and fat does not always equal unhealthy. Chrissy Metz and her character Kate are losing weight with the intentions of being healthy not to be thin which makes both aspirational to audiences. This study did not promote the stigmatization of thin people to promote larger people, but rather it encouraged a variety of body types to encourage widespread acceptance

Source 3

Rochlin, Margy. "Creator Dan Fogelman Knew He Had a Gem with Breakout Hit 'This Is Us'." *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 22 Nov. 2016, www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/la-en-st-1122-this-is-us-20161106-story.html.

Summary

In the article "Creator Dan Fogelman Knew He Had a Gem with Breakout Hit 'This Is Us'" by Margy Rochlin, she discusses how Dan Fogelman took precautionary steps to ensure his narrative was an accurate representation of real-life problems. Fogelman, the creator of *Cars* and *Crazy, Stupid, Love*, disclosed how he had a feeling the show would be a hit, but he was surprised it caused so many tears. Beginning as a movie script and then being transformed into a TV series, *This is Us* "comes down to seeing the extraordinary in ordinary people's lives" (Rochlin 1). NBC, the network that the series airs on, has given Fogelman complete artistic freedom, so all choices are made by him and are not influenced by the network.

To ensure that the characters Randall and Kate were represented correctly, Fogelman brought in outside sources. "Fogelman brought in an expert on trans-racial adoption so that his writing staff could better absorb the intricacies of Randall's story arc, of what it is like to be an African American child raised in an all-white family" (2). As for Kate's character, Fogelman based her story on his biological sister, Deborah Fogelman Devine, who works as a consultant on the show. Deborah reads every script to provide her input on Kate's character and will send notes on her opinion of the accuracy of the representation of an overweight character. She says that she is "'...trying to find stories for Kate that aren't always about the weight,' [because] 'It's *always* about the weight'" which inspired one of Kate's monologues. Metz agreed that too frequently everything is about the weight for someone who is overweight. Metz also believes that Kate is an accurate representation because she shows a "complex journey" (3) rather than being a flat character in place for comedic relief.

Connection

This source serves as analysis for my topic. It connects to my research question because it confirms that Kate's character is an authentic representation of what it is like to struggle with being overweight and trying to lose weight. By Deborah Fogelman Devine saying, "It's *always* about the weight" that shows how weight can affect almost every aspect of a self-conscious person's life. Because life is "about the weight" for plus-sized people, it is valuable to show a character that understands the feeling of having one's life controlled by numbers on a scale (Rochlin 1).

Response

While Deborah Fogelman Devine is not the creator of the show, it is still important that she plays such a role in the creation process. It is positive that Metz sees a lot of herself in Kate's character because that means that the story is being portrayed in a truthful manner. If Metz herself or the audience did not feel that her character accurately represented the struggle of weight, her character's existence could have a converse effect and further stigmatize an already overweight people ever further. Even though Kate struggles with much more than just weight, for example, her relationship with Toby, within all her problems weight is present and looming.

Source 4

Variety. "This Is Us Interview - How Has the Show Changed Your Life?"
YouTube, YouTube, 10 Apr. 2017,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXmHNPYQ3aw.

Summary

"This Is Us Interview - How Has the Show Changed Your Life?" by Variety is a video interview with the cast and they talk about how they have been impacted by the show outside of shooting. The whole cast discusses how their performances have changed not only their own lives but random civilians' lives as well. Chrissy Metz speaks specifically to how a lady has told her that she used to never know how to talk about being overweight with her daughter, but Metz is helping her bridge that gap. Milo Ventimiglia, Jack on the show, closed out the interview by emphasizing the

point that “people want to let you [the cast members] know that you’re impacting them” (Variety 2:25).

Connection

This source serves as background for my topic. It connects to my research question because it goes beyond the realm of the show and discusses the actual positive consequences of the show’s existence. When Metz talks about the people who approached her regarding her role in the show, it exemplifies how the show has left an impact beyond an entertaining one. Connecting the cast interview to the article about Dan Fogelman, the show seems to be having such a large impact because it is written about ordinary people.

Response

This source confirmed that having characters portray a weight-related narrative can be important if that weight-related narrative shows positive aspects of becoming healthy and not extreme ones. It is comforting to see that people can feel comfortable know that they are not alone in the journey of weight acceptance when they have representation in media. Like the “Visual Diet vs Associative Learning as a Mechanism of Change in Body Size Preferences” discovered, if the media shows more weight-related narratives, the chance of it becoming destigmatized is significantly greater.

Synthesis

While *This is Us* does successfully break traditional expectations of weight in the media, the way it achieves that is controversial. In his article “In a Body-Positive Moment, Why Does Hollywood Remain Out of Step?”, Brooks Barnes, a Hollywood reporter for the New York Times, describes how casting can be a vicious and dangerous process as actresses are expected to fulfill a standard of beauty that is defined as “scarily skinny”. If they are not up to that expectation, they are often required to lose weight to achieve it or risk not being casted (Barnes 1). Chrissy Metz is not absolved from this expectation. According to an interview by *People Magazine*, Metz contractually agreed to lose weight for her role, yet she can do it in her own way, on her own terms (Mazziotta 1). This does seem

counterintuitive to the agenda the creator is pushing regarding the body authenticity, yet Kate openly struggles with weight. Evidently, struggles present solutions, and in this case, it is in the form of weight loss. Barnes mentions that there is indeed a body positivity movement occurring across the nation especially on the Internet. Although he would disagree, it does appear to slowly be seeping into traditionally-skinny Hollywood. Despite her contract, David Rubin, a casting director and Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences board member commemorated Chrissy Metz from landing a protagonist role on the show, but he still believes that "...casting won't fully reflect the real world until someone like Chrissy is cast in Mandy Moore's role" (Barnes 3). Fat comedic relief is being replaced by overweight characters telling their narratives about the struggles of being overweight. Because of this, we are making strides in some direction by having Metz in a lead role, but is it the right direction?

In the "Pilgrim Rick" episode of *This is Us*, the audience is informed on how the past can alter the future using Thanksgiving traditions to connect the two times. In present-day L.A. on a date, Toby is doing most of the talking about how he hopes Kate's mother likes him when the two of them fly to New York together for Thanksgiving. Clearly upset, Kate admits to Toby how she wants to break-up and not spend the holiday with each other. Confused by Kate's sudden change of heart, Toby asks why she wants to break-up. Kate explains how as a little girl she believed that she would be endlessly happy if she was to find a man like Hugh Grant who would solve all her problems. To her, Toby is a better Hugh Grant, yet she is still unhappy. To be truly happy she needs to find it by herself, for herself. She says how she "needs to get a handle on all of it, the weight and all of it" (NBC). While Kate does mention her weight as a part of the reason she doesn't want to be with Toby anymore, her story is much deeper than that. The concept of self-love should be promoted more frequently for all people and all body types. If Kate the character or Chrissy Metz wants to work on their weight, their choice should not be marked as an unfair conformation of beauty standards, but rather a personal choice. The portrayal of overweight characters with weight-related narratives should not be contested as misrepresentation because when people struggle with weight in real life, weight is prevalent in everything: love, work, etc.

When reviewing the episode, Raina Deerwater, a contributing critic at *The Tracking Board*, disagreed saying that Kate's weight-related

narrative ruined the seemingly good episode, bringing it down to a “C level” (Deerwater 2). At the end of “Pilgrim Rick”, following some airplane turbulence that could have ended poorly, Kate has a revelation that amplifies how she must get a handle on her life. Upon arriving to Thanksgiving, she surprises the audience, and her family, when she announces that she will be pursuing Gastric Bypass surgery. Deerwater was enraged by this choice saying, “Kate being restricted to a story about weight loss is a bad story move. Let her do other things” (2). Deerwater alluded to that she wishes Kate’s revelation on the airplane would have been about her mistake of breaking-up with Toby. Deborah Fogelman Devine, the director’s sister, a show consultant, and the real person Kate is based on, agrees that Kate deserves more story plots than just weight, but it is much more difficult than that because “it’s *always* about the weight” (Rochlin 1). When everything comes back to the fact that Kate is unsatisfied with her weight, it would be inappropriate to not address that as a crucial aspect of her plot.

Viewing the break-up as well-scripted and not based on one problem, critic Jay Bamber for *PopMatters*, described the scene as a valuable moment for Kate’s character. On the date, Bamber observes that “as [Kate] sits forking through her salad and [Toby] enjoys a plate of spaghetti, she realizes what her life might look like with him: constantly denying herself in the face of someone who’s decided to deny himself nothing” because he is portrayed having a supernatural level of self-esteem (Bamber 1). Considering this observation, it is important to note that it is not selfish for Kate to want to put her weight before being with Toby because Kate’s weight and health are a part of her. Self-love is crucial for her before she can love another, “a concept that seems foreign to Toby” (Bamber 1). It is important that Toby is confused by this concept because that can transfer into real-life regarding how everyone has their own “complex journey.” Someone may not understand another’s struggles, but that does not make them any less real.

Moreover, the dinner scene emphasizes losing weight as a process and not a simple feat. In the scene, Toby enjoys his pasta while Kate pushes a salad around her plate. That is a perfect example of showing rather than telling on how weight loss includes giving up pleasantries like pasta for results that may not show for a long time. On top of that, Kate takes working out and *Weight Watchers*, the place where she and Toby met,

seriously, while Toby is not concerned about continuing either those things. The idea of weight as a process is challenged when it was revealed that Chris Sullivan, the actor who plays Toby wears a fat suit to fulfill his role as Kate's fat boyfriend. In terms of the definition of weight-related narrative not including those who wear fat suits, it appears that the show undermined its own goal of authenticity. Many audience members were outraged leading some people to question the show's choice to do that. Sullivan spoke about his fat suit in a dismissive manner during an interview with Andy Cohen on *Watch What Happens Live* saying that he thinks "...that the show is just too good; they [the audience] had to find something wrong with it" (Longeretta 1). He expands passed his attitude to mention how the fat suit is "a tool" and how "logistically speaking, it allows me to travel back and forth through time when Toby was not as heavy as he is now" (1). By articulating the idea that his fat suit allows him to move back and forth between weights with ease makes weight seem as simple as taking on and off clothes. That does not show weight as a process, that shows weight as a manipulatable factor. Applying this back to the dinner scene and the dynamics of the characters, Toby can easily give-up trying to lose weight because if the show wants him to be thinner, they will just give him a smaller fat suit or remove the one he uses now completely. For Kate, however, to portray even the most minor changes in weight, she must actively lose real weight.

In response to her co-star's fat suit, Metz reaffirmed why the entire show's authenticity is not lost by this flaw. In her own interview with Andy Cohen, Metz defends Sullivan's use of a fat suit by saying how "Chris has been heavier" so she thinks "he understands the plight of being overweight" (Vivinetto 1). This comment brings some redemption to the situation because at least Sullivan has internalized what it is like to struggle. If the show chose to cast a naturally skinny actor and place him in a fat suit, the authenticity would be destroyed due to the person's lack of experience with what it means to be overweight. In an interview with Ellen DeGeneres, Metz moves past her initial justification for a deeper thought on how "like most actors, we are chameleons. We play different roles" (1). That is powerful because being an overweight actress comes with baggage of being judged for your weight alongside your acting skills and not just your acting skills like thin actresses experience. Overweight actresses must work twice as hard to prove themselves as viable options. So, while

Sullivan's role does not empower the audience, his fat suit should not dismiss the fact that Metz's storyline is authentic and expands outside of just acting. Again, in her interview with Ellen, Metz explained how she was excited to play Kate saying "Oh, I *hope* I get to lose weight. Because that is a win-win for me" (2). She is winning because she gets to portray something that is aspirational to the audience while she experiences the positive the effects outside just entertainment.

In comparison with Monica Geller's insensitive humorous fat role on *Friends*, Kate's character exudes body positivity because of the raw personal emotion behind Metz's experience. In another interview with *People Magazine*, Metz disclosed that as a child she joined Weight Watchers at eleven years old because her mother did not how to talk about weight with her, yet she wanted her daughter to love herself regardless. Metz herself had a revelation, like the one Kate had on the show, at thirty following a breakdown that landed her in the hospital that she wanted to get her life together for her own benefit even if that meant giving up on acting. She knows what she is doing is worth it even on "frightening" days when she has to do things that make her feel exposed because of the impact she is having beyond mere entertainment (Beard 1).

The use of a weight-related narrative for an overweight actress can at first appear demeaning and unfair because a person is much more than her weight. Yet, beyond first glance, the positives outweigh the potential negatives. According to the study conducted by Lynda G. Boothroyd on body size preferences, our visual diets, what we consume daily, can and will consume whatever they are provided, whether those images are positive or negative. If the only portrayals of overweight people in the media are examples like Courteney Cox in a fat suit directly mocking plus-sized people, then that is what we will consume and, therefore, retain as acceptable behavior. Our associative learning, how we correlate weight and status, will also teach us that overweight people should be dehumanized as jokes for our own amusement (Boothroyd 1-9). With the utilization of weight-related narratives and role models like Metz, we are consuming stories of people like us, and we are opening our minds to a new definition of beauty. Weight is a personal concept and if anyone understands that, it's Chrissy Metz. Knowing that Kate's struggles are also Metz's demonstrates to the audience that she is not just acting, she is experiencing. After Hollywood normalizes weight-related narratives and

casting overweight actresses, only then can we work to fulfill David Rubin's hope for more people like Chrissy Metz playing roles like Mandy Moore without any hesitation or questions.

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