

# What is weight stigma?

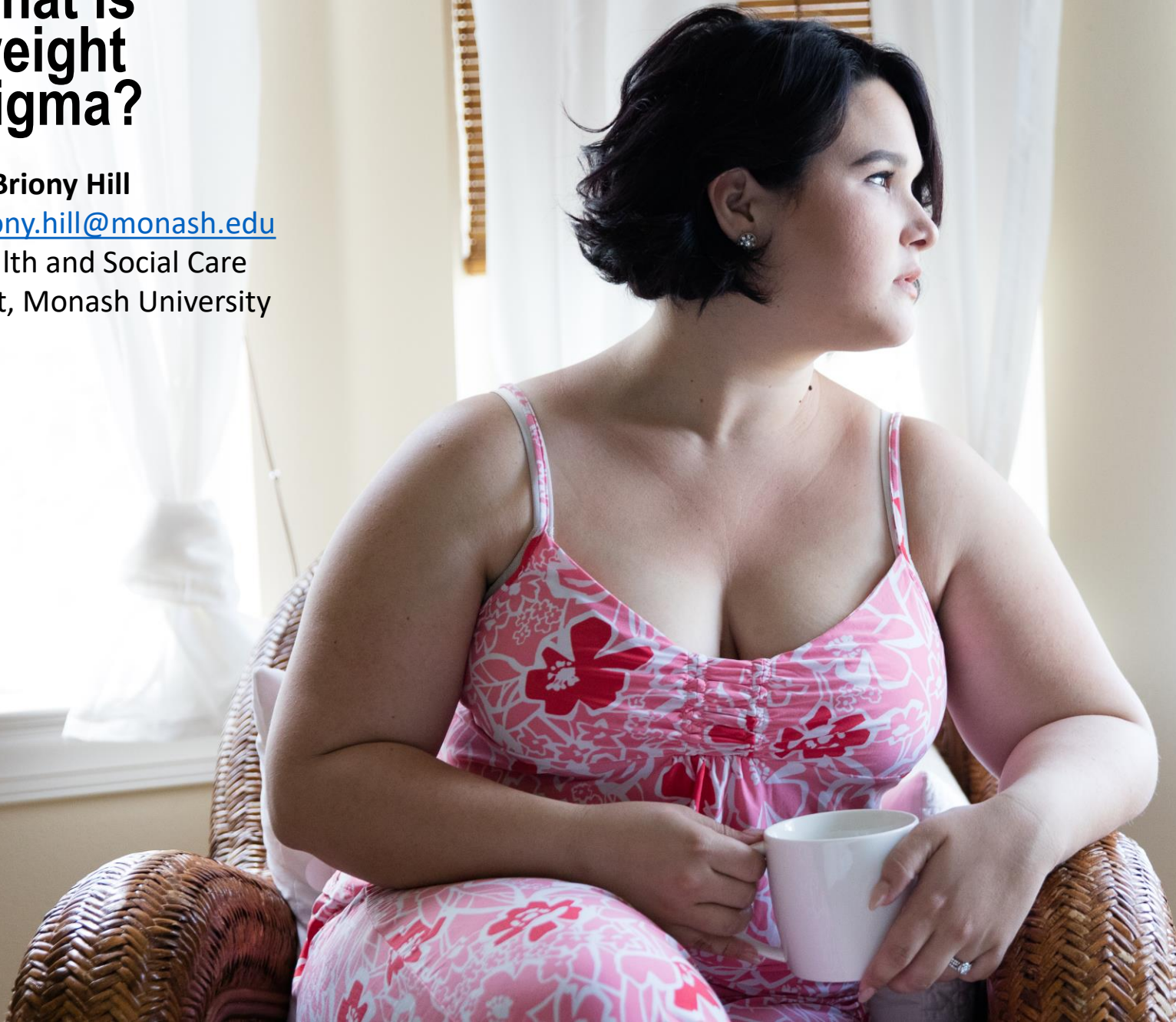
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**Weight stigma is the phenomenon of discrimination, stereotyping, social exclusion, and devaluing based on an individual's weight where it does not comply with prevailing social norms**



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- Receipt of grants/research supports: Australian Research Council DE230100704 and DP220101107



<https://hipp.org.au/networks/body-positive-birth-alliance/>



Policy and practice pack for weight stigma



## Weight stigma in preconception and fertility care



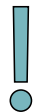
The reproductive years are a period of weight gain for women – vulnerability to weight stigma



Women experience weight stigma in everyday life – including education, employment, and **healthcare**



Weight stigma is prevalent in healthcare settings – including fertility and maternity care



The stress of stigmatisation can elicit adverse physiological, psychological and behavioral responses

# Women's stigma experiences

Affects both women living in a larger body and smaller bodies (weight bias internalisation)

Feeling hurt, judged, shamed, embarrassed, and humiliated

Are blamed as individually responsible for their own weight and any issues that arise in preconception/pregnancy

Assumptions made about food/exercise habits, lazy, lack self-control

# Health and Social Impacts of Weight Stigma

Lower quality  
reproductive  
healthcare

Mental health,  
stress, body image

Poorer motivation/  
self-efficacy and  
health behaviours  
and coping  
strategies

Poorer pregnancy  
and birth outcomes

Adverse impact on  
breastfeeding

Poorer longer-term  
mother and child  
outcomes

# Where does weight stigma come from?



- Societal and social norms
- Policies and guidelines
- Education and training

## Vignette

Lee is longing for a second child and is experiencing secondary infertility. After a long process of referral and waiting to see the specialist, her appointment time has finally arrived.

Several minutes into her appointment, the specialist pulls out a business card and writes “80 kg” on it. She hands it to Lee, says, “come back when you are under 80 kg,” and ends the appointment.

## Vignette

Ava is seeing you for antenatal care. She is 36 weeks pregnant. You weigh her and she weighs 102 kg.

Hospital policy states she cannot give birth at this hospital because the cut off is 100 kg.

However, you are aware that Ava has two toddlers at home, her family does not own a car, and the other hospital is more than 1 hour from her home.



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