ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply indebted to all of the Girth & Mirthers whom I met along my research journey. They gave generously of their time for interviews and shepherded me through the ins and outs of the organization. To the Girth & Mirthers—the "Big Eats" bunch, my travel companions to Oklahoma City, especially my roomie at the motel, and my monthly Friday lunch date and travel companion to Convergence—I owe a great deal. They included me, someone who suffers a little from "group" anxiety, in their group and made me feel at home. They even opened up their doors to me beyond the club, making my research experience a delight. I hope I have done them justice in these pages. As one Girth & Mirther aptly pointed out, maybe the story of our collaboration will result in greater visibility for this wonderful organization.

Over the years it took me to complete this book, I had the perfect trifecta of intellectual mentors. Amy Shuman's guidance was invaluable. She deserves a great deal of credit for many of the analytical ideas in this book and for persuading me to refine them. She has extraordinary intellectual breadth and an eye for the big ideas in seemingly unimportant events, the smallest moments, and rituals of everyday life. She understands my work even better than I do and knows what I am up to on

every page, and in each passage. Townsand Price-Spratlen, my academic guardian angel, served as the sounding board for my developing ideas. Steve Lopez played a critical role in helping me clarify and organize my thoughts through his tough, constructive criticism. I also want to thank my former graduate student colleagues in the Ohio State University (OSU) Department of Sociology and the Center for Folklore Studies.

Müge Galin was a writer's best friend and provided generous hands-on editorial advice. Her encouragement and her home as a writing sanctuary were sustaining forces throughout the course of revising the manuscript. An amazingly talented and genuinely wonderful person to work with, she helped me serve as a mouthpiece for Girth & Mirth and in the process she herself became a champion for the Girth & Mirthers. I learned a great deal from Müge that improved my book, and I could never have finished it without her.

I gained much from my talks with Peter Hennen, who is an expert in the world of the Bears. I am grateful to him for sharing his expertise on this narrower domain. The vast network of fat studies scholars gave me a forum to share my ideas and brought me up to speed on a more radical view of *fat*'s not being the "four-letter word" our sizist society has made it. I especially want to thank among these scholars Esther Rothblum, Lee Monaghan, Ariane Prohaska, Stefanie Snider, Michaela Null, Marilyn Wann, and Lesleigh Owens for their comments on earlier presentations and drafts of my work, for inviting me to sit on panels, and for participating in some of the conference panels I organized. I also want to extend my gratitude to Susan Alexander, who helped me feel at home in the academy with my particular research interest. She encouraged me to share my work in its various stages in her conference sessions and undergraduate classrooms.

While living in Florida, I could not have asked for a group of more supportive colleagues than those I found at Seminole State College. The faculty in the Social Science Department and my second-floor hallway colleagues were generous sources of strength. I want to thank especially Kerri, Scott, Michael, Patrick, Katie, and Monica. Katie Steinhaus

encouraged me to share my work with her humanities undergrads. Monica Butler boosted my self-confidence in my academic potential and gave honest, helpful feedback to me on some of the passages I shared with her.

My research was made possible by several different grants: a Social Justice Research Grant from Coca-Cola and OSU's Multicultural Center, an OSU Sociology departmental award for human rights research, and conference travel grants from the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association and the American Folklore Society. Through these monies, I was also able to procure the services of Ben Stout and Greg Matthews for their careful transcription assistance.

I want to express my appreciation to the faculty, staff, and graduate students at the Criminal Justice Research Center at Ohio State, who commiserated with me throughout my research and writing years. I appreciate the kind support Ruth Peterson and Laurie Krivo continue to give me as a junior scholar. After I moved to Florida, Ruth helped me get back to Ohio by selecting me to be a fellow of the Crime and Justice Summer Research Institute funded by the National Science Foundation, for which I am deeply grateful. Thus, for a month in the summer of 2011, I was able to work on revisions unencumbered by life's usual distractions, plus I could seek the help of my old support network. During the summer institute, Laurie pushed me to rewrite the opening chapters to identify clearly the heart of the ethnographic story I wanted to tell. I also received helpful feedback from fellow participants at the summer institute and at the Racial Democracy, Crime, and Justice Network conference. It was Ruth and Laurie who introduced me to Ilene, one of the acquisitions editors at New York University Press. I am grateful to the following people at NYUP for their support and enthusiasm for my book: executive editor Ilene Kalish; assistant editor Caelyn Cobb; managing editor Dorothea Stillman Halliday; copy editor Eric Newman; former editorial assistant Aiden Amos; and the series editors, Michael Kimmel and Suzanna Walters. I also thank the anonymous peer reviewers for NYUP who gave me valuable feedback.

During my long journey from project proposal to this book, I appreciated my long walks and talks with Amanda Kennedy, both in person and on the phone. She helped me work out ideas and gain confidence, and she was my go-to person for decompressing and professional release. She always listened to my repeat performances of why I was incapable of writing something or other, and she always let me off easy whenever I became my own worst critic. I am equally indebted to Wade Moore, my partner-in-crime on the gay scene during the years I spent in Ohio. He also became a "poor man's" accountant for me, keeping me out of financial trouble while I was in graduate school. Finally, I don't even know how to begin to acknowledge the loving support of my steadfast partner, Brian Sayers. He suffered alongside me, the struggling academic; he gave me the freedom to disappear for long spells so I could do my writing and he held down the fort so I had a home to come back to.