FASHION & BODY POSITIVITY

THE IMPACT OF BODY POSITIVE FASHION BLOGGERS IN THE BLOGOSPHERE & BEYOND

BY ALICIA PERRY
MEANINGFUL, PERSONAL, PASSIONATE

- SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
- INTERSECTIONAL, FEMINIST LENS
- PERSONAL PASSIONS & EXPERIENCE AS A WOMAN
- LIFE ASPIRATIONS

Admire someone else's beauty without questioning your own.

Every body is beautiful.
METHODOLOGY

- CONTENT ANALYSIS OF 3 PLUS-SIZE, BODY POSITIVE BLOGGERS
- NICOLETTE MASON (NICOLETTEMASON); JES BAKER (THE MILITANT BAKER); RAGINI NAG RAO (A CURIOUS FANCY)
- FIVE STEP METHOD - CATCHING UP, SHARING, EXPLORING, INTERACTING, ARCHIVING
- QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT ANTHROPOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH
- QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS OF 3 COLLEGE-AGED WOMEN
"I KNOW YOU DON’T FEEL LIKE YOU FIT INTO THE CATEGORY OF GORGEOUS THAT OUR WORLD CREATES. I KNOW THAT IT’S HARD. I KNOW THAT IT’S A DAILY BATTLE...THE SECOND YOU STOP LOOKING FOR A THIN MODEL IN YOUR MIRROR AND START LOOKING AT YOU... IS THE SECOND YOU WILL START TO APPRECIATE WHAT YOU ARE. YOU ARE PERFECT. YOU ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH. AND YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL.

- JES BAKER

- SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED GENDER ROLES
- PATRIARCHAL SEXISM & THE OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN
- PLUS-SIZE BLOGGERS CHALLENGE RESTRICTIVE STANDARDS & A CULTURE OF FAT-SHAMING

SETTING THE STAGE
THE CULTURAL OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN

- MEDIA PORTRAYAL & REPRODUCTION OF RIGID, UNATTAINABLE BODILY & BEAUTY STANDARDS
- PLUS-SIZE BLOGGERS RESPOND TO IMPLICATIONS THROUGH COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

- "...somehow we find it acceptable, especially when we're talking about women, to reduce them to their body" (Sherman, 2014)
- "My reaction to this sort of widespread societal rejection was always one of self destruction... I'm a fat, outsized single working woman in a society which values women on smallness & marriageability" (Rao, 2013)
THE WAR ON FAT & EMERGENCE OF THE
BODY POSITIVE MOVEMENT

THE MEDICALIZATION OF WEIGHT, BIOPEDAGOGICAL FAT TALK & FAT AS DISEASE

PLUS-SIZE BLOGGERS FIGHT BACK & RECLAIM POWER THROUGH NOT ACCEPTING THE CULTURAL WEIGHT NARRATIVES IMPOSED UPON THEM

• EMERGENCE OF THE "OBESITY EPIDEMIC"
• FAT AS A "SITE OF DominATION"
• MEDICAL PERSONNEL & THE "CLINICAL GAZE"
• THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE PERPETUATION OF THE THIN-IDEAL

COUNTERING THE PERVERSIVE EFFECTS THROUGH FASHION: BRANDS & BLOGGERS OFFER NEW OUTLETS FOR REPRESENTATION & AFFIRMATION
SETTING A NEW STANDARD

BRANDS & A PLUS-SIZE COMMUNITY Emerge, Actively Challenge Cultural Ideals

THE PERFECT “BODY”
perfect fit, perfect comfort, perfectly soft.
explore the collection

CONTEXT & THE MEDIA
- time period, geographical location, cultural context
- production of particular images are internalized, reified, reproduced

THE INDUSTRY & NEW BRAND CAMPAIGNS
- driven by a distaste for the lack of representation of women in the media & industry, Aerie & ModCloth pledge their allegiance to refrain from retouching while Aerie hires “real women” as models

PLUS-SIZE COMMUNITY
- Problematizing beauty & body ideals through visibility, interpersonal affirmation
- Fostering community, solidarity, self-love

MAKING SPACE FOR BODY & IDENTITY AFFIRMATION IN A "FAT HATING" WORLD
FASHION BLOGS & THE BLOGOSPHERE

- identity work
- give meaning to the "mundane" task of getting dressed
- production of style knowledge
- questions of authenticity remain

Body positive fashion bloggers use their blog as a platform for self-expression, community empowerment, & cultural defiance against normative, narrow standards of beauty.

the blogosphere: a complex digital arena
IDENTITY & THE SELF

PLUS-SIZE BLOGGERS UNIQUE EXPERIENCE SHAPES HOW THEY ENGAGE WITH STYLE & THE WORLD

RAGINI NAG RAO: A CURIOUS FANCY
- "unapologetically fat & femme"
- clothing as "an extension of the self"

NICOLETTE MASON: NICOLETTE MASON
- "a diary on style, beauty, travel"
- clothing as "distributed personhood embodied practice of dressing: construction of the self"

JES BAKER: THE MILITANT BAKER
- "lose the BS. love your body"
- intersectionality: beyond binaries towards acceptance

IDENTITIES AS SHAPED BY THEIR EXISTENCE IN A WORLD THAT HAS FORCED THEM "FAT TALK"
I EMBODY A MULTITUDE OF IDENTITIES AND THAT’S WHAT INFLUENCES MY PERSPECTIVE ON FASHION. I’M MIDDLE-EASTERN, I’M JEWISH, I’M GAY, I IDENTIFY AS A FEMME IN TERMS OF MY GENDER EXPRESSION AND PRESENTATION, AND I THINK THAT APPROACHING THE FASHION INDUSTRY WITH THIS VERY INTERSECTIONAL LENS OF IDENTITIES IS A HUGE ASSET TO ME BECAUSE I CAN THINK ABOUT INCLUSIVITY ON MANY DIFFERENT SPECTRUMS (GUBER, 2016).

- NICOLETTE MASON (GUBER, 2016)

CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLUS-SIZE BLOGGER’S SELF IS A SOCIAL, VISIBLE, INTERACTIVE PROCESS WHEREBY INTERSECTIONALITY & A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY REIGN
STYLE OF THE
BLOGS

eistence as resistance

disregard normativity, embrace diversity

NATURE OF THE POSTS

WRITTEN & IMAGE
CLOTHING
activism through dress
& other forms of
community mobilization
ISSUES OF AUTHENTICITY

"I SOMETIMES FEEL AT ODDS WITH THE IDEA THAT THE IMAGE I PROJECT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA AND THROUGH PHOTOS IS NOT COMPLETELY CONSISTENT WITH HOW I'M FEELING OR WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH. I WANT TO BE TOTALLY TRANSPARENT, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT SHARING YOUR VULNERABILITIES THAT IS COMPLETELY OVERWHELMING AT TIMES..." - NICOLETTE

QUESTIONS OF AUTHENTICITY DUE TO SPONSORSHIP OR COLLABORATIONS ARE OFTEN MANAGED THROUGH TEXTUAL TRANSPARENCY
BLOGGING AS HOBBY OR CAREER?

PASSION WORK

BLOGGERS ENGAGE IN TASTE PRODUCTION WITHIN A SOCIAL, ARENA, WHEREIN THEIR AGENCY & HYPERPOLITICAL PRESENCE MAKES A STATEMENT.
"BECAUSE "BODY IMAGE WORK" ISN'T JUST ABOUT PLUS, CIS, WHITE GIRLS, BUT YOU WOULDN'T KNOW IT IF YOU WERE TO GOOGLE BODY LOVE OR BODY POSITIVITY" - SEPT 15, 2016

"A PLACE IN THE BLOGOSPHERE THAT OFFERS FRESH AND COLORFUL PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT IS PRESENTED TO THOSE IMMERSE IN OUR GENDER BENT, BODY LOATHING SOCIETY"

"I AM ON A MISSION TO TURN OUR SOCIETY'S CONCEPT OF BEAUTY ON ITS OPPRESSIVE HEAD AS I GENUINELY KNOW FOR A FACT THAT EVERY PERSON IN THE WORLD IS WORTHY OF RESPECT AND FEELING VALUED REGARDLESS OF THEIR SIZE, SHAPE, SHADE, SEX, ABILITY, GENDER OR AGE." - ABOUT ME

ON SEEKING BODY IMAGE REFORM: JES BAKER
"A BRIEF LOOK AT NICOLETTE MASON'S NAMESAKE BLOG...COULD LEAVE YOU THINKING SHE WAS JUST ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE GIRLS, YOU KNOW, THE KIND WHO ARE DETERMINED TO FASHION THEIR LIVES INTO A LIFESTYLE BRAND."

"MY PLATFORM HAS NEVER BEEN JUST ABOUT TALKING TO THE PLUS-SIZE WOMAN. IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT EMPOWERING ALL PEOPLE - NOT JUST WOMEN EITHER - TO BE ABLE TO APPROACH STYLE IN A REAL AND TANGIBLE WAY AND FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE ACCESS TO FASHION. AND THAT'S SOMETHING THAT I THINK REALLY SURPASSES SIZE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY."

- NICOLETTE MASON FOR NEW YORK MAGAZINE (SHERMAN, 2016)
From self-loathing upon her return to India, "A country which had managed to destroy [her] utterly with its rampant fat hatred" to the development of self-love & confidence that transcends outfit posts & challenges the thin-ideal in the blogosphere, industry, & beyond

"I’ve spent the past six years griping about the utter desolation of plus size fashion in India, and I’m finally seeing changes in the way brands perceive us fat women as a demographic, especially in the past year or so. Maybe, there’ll soon be a time when I’ll just be able to walk into a store with the expectation of finding a whole bunch of cute clothes in my size. I look forward to that."

- A Curious Fancy, "Little Black Dress"

On making oneself visible in a fat-shaming world: Ragini
THE WHOLE ENSEMBLE

THE UTILIZATION OF FASHION AS AN EMBODIED, ARTISTIC, VISIBLE REPRESENTATION OF ONE’S EXPERIENCED SELF BY THE PLUS-SIZE BLOGGERS ACTS AS A FORM OF REBELLION AGAINST A SOCIAL ORDER THAT SUGGESTS LARGER SIZED BODIES OUGHT NOT TO BE EMBRACED OR CELEBRATED.

THE BLOGOSPHERE & BEYOND
- Actively challenge bodily norms within society in a social, visible arena
- Potential for the message to spread through myriad of platforms

PASSION WORK: VISIBILITY & STYLE
- Blog posts act as modes of empowerment
- Making their bodies seen & their words heard

SHifting DISCOURSE, DIMINISHING IDEALS
- Reclaiming power over plus-size & fat
- Utilization of fashion as an embodied, artistic representation of the self to rebel against a body-shaming social order & emphasize the need for wider representation & acceptance

HOW MIGHT WE DO OUR PART TO BOLSTER THE MOVEMENT & MAKE BODY POSITIVITY THE NEW NORM?
RESPONDENT TESTIMONIALS

BODY ❤️ POSITIVE

"EMBRACING WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT MAKES YOU YOU...EXpressing YOUR TRUE SELF,"
"IS LOVING YOURSELF."
"IS LOVING YOUR BODY, TREATING IT WELL."

THE MOVEMENT: MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

"I DEFINITELY HAVE SEEN IT [SHIFTS IN BODILY DISCOURSE] COMING THROUGH...EXPOSURE IS COMING THROUGH IN SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOME [FASHION] CAMPAIGNS...THE MORE THE MESSAGE IS GETTING OUT THERE, THE MORE PEOPLE CAN FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES, NOT WORRY WHAT OTHERS THINK ABOUT THEM..." RESPONDENT A
LOVE YOUR BODY
NOURISH YOUR SOUL
AFFIRM ONE ANOTHER
STAY STYLISH

YOU ARE
SO BEAUTIFUL,
JUST THE WAY
YOU ARE

No flat belly here!! See! You don’t need a specific body type to feel and be beautiful!! All you need is a warm selfless heart, my friends.
THANK YOU! ❤️ QUESTIONS?
AWorks Cited