

Chloe Mayfield

Professor Bednar

Critical/Cultural Method

17 April, 2023

First Final Draft

Fatphobia has been the center of nearly every aspect of life between people in the fashion world for decades. Though there has been such progress of accepting plus size men and women in commercial fashion, high-end luxury fashion brands appear to be intent to keep those doors from being open. High-end fashion brands have had a reputation of hating fat women and men. The ideals of being thin are a body image they have demanded women to get down to, to even be considered to walk in the show and participate in advertisements. Not only have these companies promoted such instances of fatphobia, but *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Teen Vogue* have been few of many. Fashion journalism companies such as those have ridiculed even the attempt of plus size people walking the runway or being featured in an ad for such a brand. Highlighting *Vogue's* piece "*Is My Body About To Go Out Of Style*", Marielle Elizabeth tells us "the plus-size lines that have been pulled or the promise of expanding sizes that simply never came", elaborating on how plus-size bodies have been promised a place but it is never followed through. The instances of fatphobia have carried on through the decades of fashion, regardless of the supposed inclusivity of Balmain and Jacquemus and the lack of inclusive sizing in general of Gucci and Loewe. There has been a recent surge of a shift in a demand for inclusivity. These high-end luxury brands are being forced to acknowledge and include plus-size bodies.

In this project, I will analyze how everyday women are calling out the rhetoric of Fatphobia within high-end Luxury Companies (Balmain, Loewe, Gucci and Jacquemus) & their marketing. I will start with the history of why the companies, Balmain, Loewe, Gucci & Jacquemus have kept plus-size bodies out of fashion. Plus size women being seen in the fashion world have been few. Society used to believe that if you were curvy, fat, or plus-size you were a well off and successful person in the time period of the 19th Century. But as the world has shifted viewpoints, society has labeled being plus-size as being unhealthy, ugly and depriving yourself of a happy life. Dr. Lauren Downing Peters, a plus size history expert states “things changed in the 1900s as technology became more advanced and clothing was no longer made to order, mass manufacturing meant that fewer variations in body type could find the clothes they wanted” (Hudson 2019). Individuals within the mass marketing of clothing created the necessity for regularizing sizing making it difficult for plus-size bodies to have alterations and additions done for their bodies compared to thinner bodies.

To even consider what seamstress deemed a difficult job to continue mass producing plus-size clothing, it also begins with the ideals that were expected of women during the time of the 21st century. As the “1940s rolled around, America was trying to assert itself as a global superpower in the fashion industry,” trying to make its mark against other countries that were rising with designer global power houses (Hudson 2019). But to even assert their dominance of fashion, they questioned the ideals of what a woman is supposed to be: “It was decided that she was tall, athletic, and well-rounded. Unfortunately, investment in creating great clothes for women who didn’t fit into those categories fell by the wayside. Even when retailers did sell clothes in plus sizes, the illustrations in ads didn’t realistically portray the women they were selling to, or the language used bordered on offensive” (Hudson 2019). America helped create an

identity of what a woman should look like and knowing that America has been viewed as the leading trendsetter among nations, it was soon that the “adoption of the American woman was going to be taken” (Hudson 2019). As Europe adopted the “typical” American woman identity, they in turn created the European woman identity. “They have been expected to be thin, lean and model ready to meet the beauty standards of being a woman”; this is the standard definition in such fashion houses like Prada (McCall 2018).

These idealized identities that were created for women were in turn pushed aside for a small time. In the 1960's, the Vietnam War was on the rise making waves between women, leading ultimately to what at the time was called the “women’s liberation movement,” where “women banded together to fight weight bias and discrimination through the radical fat-acceptance movement” (Hudson 2019). Though this was not a movement within the fashion industry, this jump-started the call for plus-size women to be included everywhere. With this call for change with actions, High end luxury designers except for Givenchy and Valentino jumped on the wave of following along with the demand.

But since then, there was still very much a lack of designers wanting to make the change of being inclusive. Loewe and Gucci, for instance, has been a well-known company-owned high-end fashion luxury brand that have made it known they do not support plus-size inclusivity regardless of saying they have ready-to-wear clothing for all. Designer Miuccia of Prada highlights how there is a chain reaction of high-end companies following one after another based on what one brand is doing at the time, “ supports size diversity on the runway, she says, at least in theory. In practice, however, she considers it something of a joke. “The subject is very trendy now,”. “And that I don’t like so much. I don’t want to do it for those reasons.” Loewe’s spring 2022 and Gucci’s winter 2022 show featured no plus-size models

around the same time that all of Prada's 2022 runway shows featured no plus-size bodies. As head designers within high-end luxury brands are contributing to how all high-end luxury fashion houses started to view plus-size inclusivity. It begins the trend of how acceptance is lacking within these brands, "Size diversity, again, in theory I accept, but so far I didn't really have the courage to do it" (Manning 2018). Leading viewers to establish that Loewe and Gucci do not accept plus-size bodies due to the lack of presence.

Even though fellow high-end fashion designers have continued actions of how they view plus-size inclusivity by lack of plus-bodies within the brand itself, it has also been influenced by those in fashion school that they must meet the European standards. Teen Vogue made an article discussing the process of being inclusive in design school. "We're still not seeing an influx of plus-size models on the runway and some students argue that a lack of training for how to design for plus-sized bodies may be a factor" (Ishmael 2022). The design teachers are not doing their part by following the demand that large power houses have set for their overall design image. Quite like the instances that no one is born a racist but that they are taught, these students who are going through design school must be taught to be inclusive in order to establish inclusivity in the high-end luxury market. Even though there has been an increase in demanding schools to open opportunities, they are not teaching the proper way to dress and design for plus-size bodies. Designer Iyomi Ho Ken has said, "To put it plainly, the only way I got plus-size experience was from not working with the models my school provided [but instead] making my friends models for my collection and then forcing [my professors] to show me what to do for their body and how certain things need to be graded out"(Ishmael 2022). In most cases they are either not tailored and fitted to their bodies, demonstrating the ideals that their bodies do not belong in fashion.

Plus-size models for commercial fashion and high end luxury brands have had similar experiences of being not included in the ideals of being “models”. Knowing that society has demanded an image and identity of women, the refusal of teaching how to dress plus-size bodies and the views that certain high end luxury brands have created, has told these models that they will never be viewed like their fellow coworkers who fit the criteria. “Being overweight is not very healthy, so it doesn’t matter how much of the population is fat; it’s not a healthy image to be putting out there,” said one executive at a luxury brand, who also equated having a plus-size line with promoting an “anorexic” look”, this rep highlighted how they will never make room for plus-size inclusivity and that right there is the problem (Schiffer 2017). Women who walk the runway should not feel like they are there as a token to be an image of “Oh yes, we do promote inclusivity, here is our own plus-size woman.” An example of such an instance is Oliver Rousteing, who came into Balmain to make an immediate change of including plus-size women, but was met with heavy criticism and no support from the owners of the company, “It was always shocking that I could not get girls of different diversities. Because the agencies didn’t have much diversity either. Different casting directors didn’t help either. So I decided to create my own story by getting my own models of different shapes, ages and colors. For me, that was really important. It was not easy. Sometimes fashion is really avant-garde and people don’t understand that. Now everybody is talking about it. But it was really hard for me to introduce that” (Darcella 2018). Though Rousteing started a process of being inclusive, it did not stick. That is an issue that is troubling the fashion industry, as a trend of being inclusive will happen but as soon as heroin chic or a celebrity deems being curvy is no longer in it is a “fad” (Sitton 2022).

The rhetoric of Fatphobia and “Othering” bodies in high end luxury demonstrates that it is part of something grander, as fatphobia has caused many people within many different aspects of life to face problems from those that deem being plus-size as a horrible identity. Fatphobia has contributed to fat hate and body shaming of individuals. There needs to be a reform of how society has allowed for it to be a trend of being in and out when being skinny is allowed to be here at all times. How are we as individuals allowed to say someone's body does not belong? But we must also ask: How might these fashion houses play on fatphobia, even if they are highlighting one “fat” model? How can I change the perspective of something that was set before most of us have even been thought of? The ideal of inclusivity is not a trend but an ongoing demand that plus-size individuals be included.

The research object presented focuses on an analysis of two TikTok videos and two Youtube videos of plus size women trying on supposedly ready-to-wear (RTW) clothes from Balmain, Loewe, Gucci and Jacquemus, in relation to an analysis of the 2022 winter runway show of Balmain, the 2021 summer runway show of Jacquemus, the 2022/23 winter runway show of Loewe, and the 2023 winter runway show of Gucci. I will analyze the phenomenon of supposed ready-to-wear plus-size clothing that's not actually accessible outside of the runway as a way. Understanding the standard ideals that are placed on plus-size women in a world that deems them unnatural. High-end luxury brands have “cultivated a reputation for seeming to dislike the inclusiveness of overweight women and men within clothing”, shows, and marketing all from the lack of visible plus-size bodies (Entwistle 15). The “ideals of being thin are a body image that fashion houses have demanded women fulfill”, in order to even be considered to walk in the show and participate in advertisements (McClendon and Peters 17). This paper will

therefore analyze how everyday women are calling out the rhetoric of fatphobia within high-end luxury companies (Balmain, Loewe, Gucci and Jacquemus) and their marketing.

This topic as a whole is heavily impactful on our society and the internet as this has intertwined the way that plus-size individuals are perceived, especially in the fashion industry, so I will establish how this began, how it operates now, and what is to come of fatphobia in fashion. Asking such questions will elicit the when, what, how, and now questions of where bodies that are not typical are being criticized. How might these three TikToks highlight the fatphobia that these designer brands are promoting, even if they say they are inclusive? This is beginning to explore what these TikToks mean and just how the runways spread into social media applications showing plus-size women not fitting into ready-to-wear fashion. How might these three fashion houses play into fatphobia, even if they are highlighting one "fat" model? This exemplifies how, yes, there might be one plus-size model, but just because they have that one does not excuse them from being fatphobic. This seeks to question the fairness of a tokenizing system that makes three-fourths of the collection one size, and then claims to be inclusive by having one plus-size model with only one ready-to-wear outfit for plus size women. How do everyday women use platforms like TikTok and Youtube to speak back to the fatphobia and fat-shaming embedded in high-end fashion? Tying into the first question, this shows the evolution of how these women are fighting back on the over and under representation of plus-size models. These research questions tackle the ideals of plus-size models and the fight they are putting up to demand a change, but also draw attention to the toxic environment that is continuously developing and seems to worsen over time. The methodological approach I intend to take includes a personal recognition of the lack of plus size women in the fashion industry, as well as rhetorical scholarship on what plus size models are going through in order to fight back against a non-inclusive industry that makes a

point of highlighting the overrepresented skinny models to the underrepresentation of plus-size bodies.

Through questioning individuals about their views of obese models, Ulf Aagerup, in his article "Men's and women's implicit negativity towards obese fashion models," discusses the different perspectives of how men and women have viewed obese women. Aagerup establishes the ideals that men and women have of certain models when he says, "Men find brands worn by skinny models more attractive, whereas women find brands worn by obese models more attractive" (Aagerup 273). However, regardless of people's model preferences, the fashion industry makes a point of ignoring such ideals, claiming that they will make their own decisions. "However, women's relatively positive response to obese models is difficult to reconcile with the overwhelming dominance of skinny models in advertising directed towards women", marketing their ideal fashion woman, showing women the standard regardless of a shift (Aagerup 273). Quite like Aagerup, Anna Ward and Abigail Saguy present in their piece, "Coming Out as Fat: Rethinking Stigma," the scary reality of coming out as fat in a community that is fatphobic. Ward and Saguy advocate for breaking free from the fat stigma imposed by society and what society deems appropriate. Coming out meant "mustering the courage to engage in activities normally thought proper only for thin people, giving up futile diets, and rebuilding one's self-esteem," establishing a sense of what breaking the fat stigma would entail (Ward & Saguy 54). These two pieces tie into exploring the lens of what plus-size women are fighting against and what is keeping them down by such a fashion industry.

Another important way I will study fatness in fashion is through visual analysis from TikTok, a social media platform, and footage of live runway shows of supposed inclusivity or lack thereof. From the comfort of their own homes and beyond, social media has had a

significant impact on how people view plus size models. However, social media has influenced how we will continue to view plus-sized individuals. The work "Experimental Effects of Viewing Thin and Plus-size Models in Objectifying and Empowering Contexts on Instagram," by authors Joshua Hendrickse, Russell B. Clayton, Elizabeth C. Ray, Jessica L. Ridgway, and Rachel Secharan, arguably highlights how the platform Instagram allows for objectification. Highlighting how the 2 TikTok and 2 Youtube videos I am examining are showing the continuous objectification of their bodies from viewers. "In the absence of an objective standard, people are motivated to compare their attributes and abilities with the attributes and abilities of others," Festinger's theory states, highlighting how plus size women compare their bodies to skinny women who have much easier access to their posts and feed showing up than a plus size woman (Hendrickse, Clayton, Ray, Ridgeway, and Secharan 2). Festinger's theory contributes to how these plus-sized women who are not models on TikTok are trying on the clothing in a way to show other plus-sized women, the fashion industry, and the skinny community that they are struggling with inclusivity. Crystal Money's "Do the Clothes Make the (Fat) Woman: The Good and Bad of the Plus-Sized Clothing Industry" and Jiayan Liu's "The Influence of the Body Image Presented Through TikTok Trend-Videos and Its Possible Reasons" elaborate on plus size women on the runway and how their bodies on the runway are perceived through TikTok as it is on Instagram. "Every day, TikTok videos flood social platforms with unrealistic ideal bodies, that is, what the bodies of men and women look like to make them attractive.", how the bodies of men and women are supposed to look (Liu 359). Quite like the standard of what bodies are to look like, "As a woman who identifies as being fat and therefore a target market for the plus-sized fashion industry, there is an innate bias that cannot be avoided", putting a target on

their backs for being plus-size models (Money 6). I am seeking answers to why these women are perceived on TikTok as such and how they are made victims of the fashion industry runway.

The methodological concepts are meant to illustrate the ideals, expectations, and reality of plus-size women within the fashion industry, but working towards the concepts, there is a development of theoretical frameworks and what they are drawing from their work. Body image, culture, the fashion industry, fat discourse, plus size models, social media, and fatphobia are just a few of the many theoretical frameworks being developed. "Exploration of plus-size women's apparel satisfaction, non-wear, and discard" by Halimat Ipaye and "Obesity Bias and Body Image: How Do Fashion and Retail Students Compare to Other Personal Service Majors?" by Nancy A. Rudd, Jennifer Harmon, Valerie Heiss, and Janet Buckworth both highlight the development of fatphobia, body image, and plus-size models. "The fashion industry uniformly communicates and endorses an ideal of thinness, through both the models repeatedly used in advertising and the clothing sizes offered by major retailers. Visible professionals within the fashion industry have espoused the belief that women's bodies can be malleable to clothes", when this is clearly not true as women are not "one size fits all," but have bodies that deserve to be dressed accordingly (Ipaye 12). The idea that all bodies can fit in a size small is something that has forced the fashion community to step out and acknowledge that plus-size women are struggling under the weight of being overlooked. Rudd, Harmon, Heiss, and Buckworth argue that "within the apparel-sizing spectrum, women plus size consumers are among the most dissatisfied with apparel in terms of the consumption process", highlighting their continuous struggle within apparel fitting. It is evidenced however, that plus size women are dissatisfied with apparel fit, apparel style or aesthetics, and the amount of apparel options available", telling how these women are intentionally forgotten by fashion houses because of sizing, determining

the demand of fixing and educating fashion students and fashion houses (Rudd, Harmon, Heiss & Buckworth 4).

"Fashioning Fat: Inside Plus-Size Modeling" by Amanda Czerniawski, "The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress, and Modern Social Theory" by Joanne Entwistle, and "Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture" by Amy Farrell all provide a broadening of culture, fat discourse, and social media. As the runways spread into social media applications, showing plus-size women who are ostracized from ready-to-wear fashion. "Fat is not cool and sexy", the unspoken yet widely accepted rationale for why the cutting edge of fashion does not want to cater to larger sizes, signifies how women with such bodies are quoted routinely and that such authors believe in the ideals that such bodies need to be allowed and accepted (Czerniawski 429). A systematic change that occurs in order to make the desired movements, "A system of dress distinguished by an internal logic of regular and systematic change" (Entwistle 45). That we have allowed a system of how plus-size models are perceived in and out of fashion to evolve. Farrell argues, that "Primitive cultures," is, "where a big stomach continued to bestow cultural status", that no matter how well off plus size women were, they were now challenged and ridiculed for being fat, all because of a vast and growing industry that deems these bodies unnatural (Farrell 62). All these authors have in common the fact that they accept plus-size bodies within the fashion industry.

Overall, the scholarly sources above will help me in exploring and exposing the pressure of plus-size bodies within the fashion industry that are being underrepresented in a community of overrepresented thinner bodies. With an industry that does not want them there, now leading to the pushback of necessary change. This will allow me to take a critical stance on

the whys, hows, and wherefores of body image, culture, the fashion industry, fat discourse, plus-size models, social media, and fatphobia, which are all on the agenda.

Through an analysis of three TikToks and two Youtube videos of plus-size women trying on Gucci, Loewe, Jacquemus, and Balmain supposedly ready-to-wear (RTW) clothing and the analysis of the 2022 winter runway show of Loewe, the 2021 summer runway show of Jacquemus, the 2012 spring/summer runway show of Balmain and the 2023 winter runway show of Gucci, I will show the phenomenon of supposed ready-to-wear plus-size clothing not being accessible outside of the runway. High-end fashion brands have had a reputation for hating fat women and men. The ideals of being thin are a body image that fashion brands have demanded of women in order to even be considered to walk in the show and participate in advertisements, but ordinary women are fighting back. This paper will therefore analyze how everyday women are calling out the rhetoric of fatphobia within high-end luxury companies (Loewe, Gucci, Jacquemus and Balmain) and their marketing.

The idea that plus size women have a place in high-end fashion has been questioned since the very beginning, especially regarding an understanding of their body structure and how to accentuate their curves. Such high-end luxury brands as Balmain, Loewe, Jacquemus, and Gucci have explicitly expressed the lack of care and culture towards the plus-size community. However, on two different platforms, YouTube and TikTok, people are showing the same message about these high fashion brands: the clothing they are portraying to fit plus-size women does not fit that demographic, despite the brands showing that it does. Companies are claiming to be inclusive but are not actually making clothing for plus-size bodies. They are creating oversized looks and spreading the idea that there is a normal size, but portraying plus-size women as oversized, highlighting the new aesthetic of comfy heroin chic, and spreading the

idealism of a negative sense of what plus-size women's bodies actually represent to such brands. They can make inclusive sizes, but they refuse to make them public or part of their image.

With heavily increasing oversized fashion it poses the ideals of a theoretical angle of othering what feminist theorists call “abject” bodies. Abject bodies are “bodies and things that an individual or group finds repulsive or disgusting, and in order to preserve one's identity they are cast out, telling readers it cannot be denied that women’s bodies play a major role in determining their lives”(Taylor 349). Because plus-size bodies are set aside within the world of high-end luxury brands, views and acceptance of oversized clothing is praised significantly as if those items are the redeeming abject bodies that had formerly been cast aside. Evidently it shows what high-end luxury fashion brands deem a redemption for their own names against what each brand has done to abject bodies. All because plus-size bodies do not meet the standards of what society and those high-end luxury brands have deemed the natural beauty standard.

Many companies have incorporated various pieces of oversized clothing, especially ready-to-wear looks straight from the runway that claim to be designed to fit multiple body types. Though the oversized ready-to-wear is being sized to fit all, it is being labeled small, medium, and large. The brands such as Jacquemus and Gucci extend all the way to an extra-extra large, while Loewe only extends to a large. In fashion sizing guides, anything that begins with a single letter or double letter fits in the demographic of skinnier individuals, while anything with an x and a number fits into the plus-size demographic.

Loewe has strived to produce more oversized ready-to-wear outfits than any other high-end brand. However, within their spring 2019 runway show, they sent models as thin as a child down the runway, showcasing a size that was double their own original size. The item at

hand is an orange knitted crew neck sweater in mohair blend with open cable knit balloon sleeves and a 3D anagram on the front with a relaxed fit. This item made its way down the runway not fitting the model's body whatsoever. From sliding down her shoulders quite often at every movement, to dangling on her body with no actual fit to it, this was the represented look sent down the runway. She looked quite consumed by the sweater, to the point that if she moved her shoulders one wrong way, one side of it would slide completely down her arm. Telling us that this is not even her own accurate size to accentuate her own body. Though the model seems supposedly small, the sweater is consuming them when it is labeled a relaxed fit. Though the model looked quite comfortable in such a sweater, this raises some questions about what the true size of the sweater is. This supposed relaxed fit correlates very much with the oversized fit; in turn, the small should be a large and the large is actually a 2XL fit.

This has been shown by Stylish Curve on YouTube. Stylish Curve, aka Alissa, is a plus-size black female YouTuber who upfront tells the audience that she is a size 2XL in plus-size clothing. Stylish Curve's main focus is on how her size is never portrayed in high-end fashion brands. She did however recently come across the knitted crew neck sweater in mohair blend with open cable knit balloon sleeves and a 3D anagram on the front with a relaxed fit, but in green. It is not quite the same color as the model on the runway, but it is the same ready-to-wear sweater that was presented during the Loewe spring 2019 runway show.

Stylish Curve begins her video by showing the sweater's dimensions through the puffy long sleeves and comparing it to her body from the outside. She held the sweater up to her body to see if there was a chance that it would fit. As the video progresses, Stylish Curve tries on the sweatshirt to demonstrate the sweater on a plus-size body. From that, I am able to dissect that though the fits are very different from the models, they still fit her. Wearing the largest size, a

large, and her normal size being a 2XL, viewers would expect the sweater to not fit, but due to the oversized fit of the sweater, it fits her as if the sweater was a standard fit instead of the relaxed fit. The viewer can see how it hugs her body more than the models, as it does not hang in the way of being oversized, but for her it is comfortable and it does fit. The only downside that Stylish Curve has is that she wishes it would be longer in the front and back instead of hitting right at the top of her hips.

There is a heavy significance of how the sweater is intended to look on a thinner body compared to how it fits Stylish Curve; showing that this sweater is able to fit a plus-size body. This viewing of Stylish Curve does show that Loewe is able to make larger size clothing, but she is not truly comfortable in it as she elaborated on the disadvantages of how short it is, the front is tight on her chest, and the ends of the sleeves do not quite reach her hands. Stylish Curve tells viewers, especially plus-size women, that it fits, so go get one even though they only extend to a large in the sweater, showing a piece of ready-to-wear that can include a community that they have seemingly intentionally left out with the short size range, regardless of the fact that it does fit a plus-size body as Stylish Curve demonstrates. By leaving this community out, they are able to keep producing clothing that falls within the lines of being plus-sized but will only be known as oversized clothing.

Through the increase in availability of oversized fashion, especially among high-end brands, they are showing that their fabrics can extend beyond the sizes offered based on the fact that plus-size bodies can wear a oversized large like Stylish Curve and explain it fits like a 2XL, highlighting the notion that it seems they can make size inclusive clothing but refuse to incorporate such size labeling ideals. This has increased largely through the years, and when ready-to-wear collections from runways are shown off highlighting the oversized clothing, there

are items that seem questionably inclusive but are actually not, as they are hand-made for the one single inclusive model. Because of the lack of inclusion among high-end fashion brands, this is causing micro and major fast-commercial brands to put out duplicates, or “dupes,” of the designer brands.

This has been highlighted in many fashion runway shows, but most notably at Balmain. For instance, their fall/winter 2012–2013 runway show, showed off several embellished dresses that were soon featured on Kim Kardashian. Such dresses were accentuated on skinnier models that hugged their bodies in a tone of confidence and sophistication from Balmain. Though there were no plus-size models to be found within this show, the brand ASOS took it upon themselves to recreate such dresses, but for plus-size bodies—and with an affordable price range for those with plus-size bodies that are at the short end of the stick again with prices being increased due to more fabric and accessories on clothing items. This inclination of higher prices shows society that for an added inch of material, they could be charged anywhere from twenty dollars to hundred dollars. Showing that any additional sizing of materials, equipment, etc. will come at a price for plus-size bodies in high-end luxuries compared to ASOS they are only needing to pay for the shipping and not the extra material itself. Highlighting that a plus-size body and a thin body can buy a dress the exact same size and material and pay the same through ASOS, while that expectation is expected in high-end luxury brands, it is not.

This phenomenon has been vividly depicted by French plus-size fashion blogger and influencer, Viriginie Grossat, who attended the Balmain fashion show of fall 2023 in a dress that is a look-alike from the fall/winter 2012-2013 fashion show that was modeled on a skinnier woman. Viriginie Grossat has become a prominent activist among the fashion community,

advocating for more plus-size inclusivity, especially among high-end fashion brands. Grossat begins her TikTok video split between two ideas: ‘Start the day with me,’ and ‘What I am wearing to the Balmain fashion show’. In her start of the day, it just follows her getting ready for the Balmain show and how long it took her to get ready for the breathtaking experience she felt that she had, especially being one of several plus-size models on the runway. But the main focus of Grossat’s TikTok is on ‘What I am wearing to the fashion show’.

In this video, Grossat shows off her white embellished, expensive-looking dress, but with further information provided by Grossat in the voice-over, the audience learns that it is in fact not an authentic Balmain dress but a dupe from the London-based brand ASOS. Grossat continues to explain that the detail and the embellishments remind her of the Balmain dress, and the reason she decided to get the dress is because it was a plus-size dupe of the real thing that would fit her body. But even though it fits her body, it does not accentuate the curves of her hourglass-shaped plus-size body like the designer dress does for the skinnier model. In her first appearance, she is hunched over, so you are not getting the full effect, but as she begins to stand, there is a noticeable lack of contouring to her body, as if the dress has just been slapped on her. There is no care or determination to make it suit her body in an appealing way. You can tell that she herself has altered the dress to hang a little more down on her, so it is tighter, as the dress seems to be too big on her body. This shows a lack of practicality in the dress, alongside the lack of care and consideration for the plus-size body on the part of ASOS. It is their attempt to say ‘we create plus-size clothing’, while at the same time not doing much for the dupe-based only on looks. This simply reinforces the original problem of Balmain not creating clothing for plus size models.

ASOS's half-hearted strategy is also shown among even lower-level fast fashion companies like Ashley Stewart. Creating a dupe for the iconic Gucci crystal embellished double G jeans, Ashley Stewart made high fashion styles accessible for plus size bodies. Similar to Balmain, Gucci struggles to be inclusive, and is also a victim of duping from companies like Ashley Stewart.

However, the most recent fashion show of Gucci, the Spring 2023 collection, shows a new era of Gucci, and things are not moving in a positive direction. Even though there were plus-size models included in previous shows, this show exhibited no plus-size models once again. There is not a single size that even attempts to reach the XXL, which has become the supposed 2XL of the industry, despite the fact that that size is greatly different from the true 2XL. The jeans that are shown on the runway, which are recreated by Ashley Stewart, highlight the desire that fast fashion companies have to show the inclusivity that could potentially be accomplished by these bigger high-end luxury brands that refuse to accept and acknowledge such bodies on their runways and clothing.

Like Viriginie Grossat, CCLVCHRISTINA, aka Christina, is a plus-size fashion and lifestyle YouTuber that highlights the continuous duping of clothing in order to feel included in the high-end fashion lifestyle. Despite the dupe of the Gucci product that Christina is showing to the audience, she also speaks on the price. She had to pay for jeans that are not luxury but the dupes of the luxury jeans that cost her more than a pair of regular non embellished jeans. She explains the advantages and constraints that yes, dupes include plus-size bodies, but at the same time, consumers are paying double for dupes just to feel like they belong in a luxury society.

To begin her YouTube video, Christina opens up with showing a variety of dupes of various high-end fashion brands. The one that stuck out the most to me and the audience was the Gucci dupe crystal embellished jeans. Christina explains that these jeans cost more than roughly three of the shirts that she bought, and the material of the jeans is not like a pair of Levi's. Christina tries them on, and you can see the lack of support that is provided to hold up her lower stomach and thighs. She obviously loves them, but there is a lack of actual support and comfort beyond the top-quality showcasing of the crystal embellishments that highlight the signature Gucci G's. Though Christina is quite happy with her purchase, this still shows the expanding growth of duping designers for plus-size bodies, while now highlighting the increasing price for the extra fabric needed to meet the needs of all the curves. This video shows once again that ready-to-wear is not a thing. These high-end fashion brands are not making ready-to-wear for everybody, not even for the quote-unquote oversized bodies, which factors in the dupes as they are portraying the plus-size bodies as these high-end luxuries are not. However, at the same time, such duping companies are not showing the ideal care of plus-size bodies, just claiming that they can create plus-size clothing compared to high-end fashion brands.

Though duping has heavily continued among the increasingly oversized fittings within these high-end luxury fashion brands, there is still a struggle even when they attempt to include the XXL. Though most high-end luxury brands stop at a large, there are a few that will continue to an XXL. Regardless, it is not plus-size sizing; such brands as Jacquemus consider it plus-size inclusivity by reaching beyond the XXL and going to a XXXL. This establishes that they are being inclusive up to a point, but these are not the same measurements that are established for a 2XL and 3XL in the plus-size demographic.

This can be clearly seen in their spring 2021 fashion show, which featured three plus-size models showcasing the inclusive sizing that seems to be hidden behind excess material—especially compared to skinnier models, who are showing all aspects of their bodies. In retrospect, it turns out that those outfits were custom-made for the models and did not meet the actual sizing that represents the plus-size community. Also worth noting is that they only go up to an XXL for women and an XXXL for men.

This is something critiqued by @itschelseajackson aka Chelsea Jackson on TikTok, who is a fashion insider and stylist and tries not one but two of the Jacquemus le Baci tees on a size 2XL body instead of the designer based XXL. @itschelseajackson introduces her audience by showing the shirt off, as if she is saying, “Here ladies and gentlemen, look at this top and look at me. This supposed XXL is actually a solid fit for a 2XL plus-size woman. Upon first glance, when you look at the shirt on Chelsea’s body, you might say it fits, but with further examination, there is the slipping of her boobs and the seeming appearance as if the string is cutting into her skin. This highlights that she might be comfortable in it, but from the perspective of an audience member, it seems as if she is signifying that beauty is pain, and her beauty is the pain of fitting into a designer top that says it is an inclusive XXL when in reality it is the skinny plus-size version of a top.

Once again, this shows that even though these certain brands are extending to an XXL, they are not inclusive sizing in any way, as if they are saying, “Here, we tried; please do not cancel us.” But to the plus-size community, that is not enough. When you are saying and showing you are plus-size but your actual sizing does not work as plus-size, it shows that you are just like any other company that stops at a large. In fact, it is actually worse, because it gets the hopes

of plus size bodies up that there is a place for them in a high-end luxury fashion, when in reality there is not.

These brands are conveying very different messages to the plus-size fashion community. Jacquemus and Gucci are telling us and showing us that they can be inclusive by having a size that continues to an XXL or, if you're lucky, an XXXL, but that they are not the right and proper size for the plus-size demographic. Unlike those two brands, Loewe demonstrates that they could be inclusive by making oversized clothing, but they will never show it or demonstrate it along the runway to establish that plus-size clothing is possible within their brand. Balmain is the cream of the crop for plus-size bodies, as they will send two plus-size bodies down the runway for their show to demonstrate their supposed inclusivity, but there is no real extension of such ready-to-wear beyond the runway, making plus-size bodies rely on dupes to meet the desire for a place in high-end fashion luxury. This establishes a pattern among these high-end luxury brands that there will be no change among their ready-to-wear for plus-size bodies. That reinforces the continuous fatphobia that is there among their clothing, advertisements, and runways through skinnier models that highlight what the brand deems high-end fashion.

Overall, this analysis of high-end fashion shows how plus-size bodies are left out of a community that deems them oversized or “Othered” bodies. It is time to call out such luxury fashion brands (Gucci, Loewe, Jacquemus, and Balmain) for their poor attempts at inclusivity among the plus-size community and the continuous abuse of plus-size bodies through the lens of those with no regard for such bodies. The plus-size fashion media influencers I have analyzed here are leading the way, directly challenging the way that plus-size bodies are seen within the high-end luxury fashion industry and beyond, with their impact on commercial fashion as a whole.

Works Cited:

Aagerup, Ulf. "Men's and women's implicit negativity towards obese fashion models". *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 2022. 13:3, 273-288, DOI: 10.1080/20932685.2021.1977164

Björnsdóttir, Valgerður Lilja. "I am allowed to buy their clothes, but I am not allowed to be seen in them". Malmö University. 2021.

Czerniawski, Amanda M. "Beauty beyond a Size 16." *Contexts*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2016, pp. 70–73. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26370382>.

Czerniawski, Amanda. "Fashioning Fat: Inside Plus-Size Modeling". New York: New York University Press, 2015. 205 pp. ISBN: 9780814789186.

Entwistle, Joanne. "The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory". 2000. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Farrell, Amy Erdman. "Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture". 2011. New York and London: New York University Press, 20.

Hendrickse, Joshua, Russell B. Clayton, Elizabeth C. Ray, Jessica L. Ridgway & Rachel Secharan. "Experimental Effects of Viewing Thin and Plus-size Models in Objectifying and Empowering Contexts on Instagram". 2020. *Health Communication*, DOI: 10.1080/10410236.2020.1761077

Ipaye, Halimat. "Exploration of Plus Size Women's apparel satisfaction, non-wear, and discard". 2015. University of Missouri-Columbia.

Limatius, Hanna. "We Portray OURSELVES': The Empowerment Potential of Fashion Blogging for plus-Size Women." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, vol. 119, no. 2, 2018, pp. 443–64. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26835467>.

Liu, Jiayan. "The Influence of the Body Image Presented Through TikTok Trend-Videos and Its Possible Reasons". 2021. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, volume 559.

McClendon, Emma, and Lauren Downing Peters. "Shaping the Standard Body: SIZING IN AMERICAN FASHION." *Fashioning America: Grit to Glamour*, edited by Michelle Tolini Finamore, University of Arkansas Press, 2022, pp. 125–37. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2zrpddm.12>.

Meijer, Irene Costera, and Baukje Prins. "How Bodies Come to Matter: An Interview with Judith Butler." *Signs*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1998, pp. 275–86. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175091>.

Money, Crystal N. "Do the Clothes Make the (Fat) Woman: The Good and Bad of the Plus-Sized Clothing Industry". 2017. Siegel Institute Ethics Research Scholars: Vol. 1 , Article

O'Neil, Ashley. "A Call for Truth in the Fashion Pages: What the Global Trend in Advertising Regulation Means for U.S. Beauty and Fashion Advertisers." *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2014, pp. 619–41. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2979/indjglolegstu.21.2.619>.

Park, Minjung. "Virtual influencers' attractiveness effect on purchase intention: A moderated mediation model of the Product–Endorser fit with the brand". 2023. *Computers in Human Behavior* 143(1). DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2023.107703

Rudd, Nancy & Harmon, Jennifer & Silfee, Valerie & Buckworth, Janet. "Obesity bias and body image: How do fashion and retail students compare to other personal service majors?". 2015. *International Journal of Fashion Design*.

Saguy, Abigail C., and Anna Ward. "Coming Out as Fat: Rethinking Stigma." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 74, no. 1, 2011, pp. 53–75. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41303969>

Taylor, Guadalupe. "The Abject Bodies of the Maquiladora Female Workers on a Globalized Border." *Race, Gender & Class*, vol. 17, no. 3/4, 2010, pp. 349–63. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41674772>.